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Engendering the Republic of Letters: Reconnecting Public and Private Spheres in Eighteenth-Century Europe

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Abstract

This thesis shows that the public/private frameworks currently employed by Anglo-American and Italian scholars studying eighteenth-century elite women in France and Italy are not a useful tool for understanding these women's political and intellectual experiences. By undertaking a close reading of the correspondence of four French and Venetian salon women, I have shown how their participation in the republic of letters necessarily mixed personal and professional considerations. In their letters, salon women propagated the values of civility and sociability: beauty, wit, spontaneity, transparency and sometimes charity and humanity were all cultivated and enriched through the practices of polite exchange (based on modesty and discipline). The ethic of exchange as the means of improving both aesthetics and society at large was particularly important and the *gens de lettres* worked hard to establish the conditions for its existence. The salon women I have studied not only systematically circulated the documents, criticism and compliments that made intellectual exchange possible, but they also ran errands, did favours, defended political and literary causes and made recommendations in order to show their commitment to other members of the republic and thus to the cohesion of the community. In other words, friendship and personal loyalty underwrote political and intellectual relations by mapping a social obligation onto a professional one to ensure that exchange would continue. In light of this evidence, it is impossible to speak of a division between public and private spheres in eighteenth-century elite society.

Résumé

Cette thèse démontre que les études anglo-américaines et italiennes, faisant une distinction entre les sphères publique et privée, ne permettent pas de comprendre complètement les expériences intellectuelles et politiques de l'élite féminine de France et de la Vénétie, à la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Grâce à une analyse de la correspondance de deux salonnières françaises (Julie de Lespinasse (1732-1776) et Marie-Jeanne Roland (1754-1793)) et de deux salonnières vénitiennes (Giustina Renier Michiel (1755-1832) et Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini (*c.*1751-1807)), nous pouvons établir que leur participation à la République des Lettres implique à la fois des considérations personnelles et professionnelles. À travers leurs écrits épistolaires, ces salonnières célébraient les valeurs de civilité et de sociabilité : la beauté, l'esprit, la spontanéité, et parfois la transparence et la charité. Toutefois, au-delà de ces valeurs, ces femmes trouvaient essentiel de partager une vision cohérente du monde, vision qui ne pouvait être maintenue que par leurs échanges. Par conséquent, la socialisation à travers la conversation, mais également par la correspondance épistolaire, prenait une importance considérable. En maintenant une correspondance abondante et suivie, on démontrait son attachement à la communauté. Dans la France des Lumières, cet attachement promouvait la cause de l'humanité. Mais l'échange ne devait pas nécessairement avoir comme but la réforme sociale. Ainsi, dans la Vénétie, le commerce épistolaire pouvait également viser l'amélioration de la littérature et le raffinement de la beauté.

Étant donné l'importance que l'on accordait à la correspondance pour assurer la

pérennité de la République des Lettres, Lespinasse, Roland, Mosconi et Renier Michiel travaillaient à renforcer la cohésion de la communauté par l'amitié et la loyauté. L'échange de lettres et de livres était une preuve d'amitié à laquelle il fallait être fidèle, pour être un membre vertueux de la communauté. C'était donc à cause de cet amalgame entre l'amitié et la vertu, que l'on recommandait ses amis et ses connaissances pour une fonction politique ou un prix littéraire. En effet, comment aurait-on pu appuyer la candidature d'une personne sans la connaître et, par conséquent, sans être garant de sa loyauté?

Si les recommandations des femmes avaient un certain poids, c'était parce qu'on les considérait aptes à juger et à exprimer les valeurs fondamentales de la République. Non seulement elles pouvaient reconnaître et créer la beauté et la grâce, mais également la vertu et l'amitié. Connaître l'étendue et la nature de la participation des femmes aux débats intellectuels et politiques de l'époque nous permet de comprendre que leur comportement divergeait à la fois des modèles sexuels conservateurs et de leur propre perception du rôle de la femme au sein de la société. Même si elles insistaient fréquemment sur leur sensibilité et la faiblesse de leur jugement, les salonnières étudiées se reconnaissaient également dans la vision moins conservatrice des femmes, offerte par les gens de lettres. Mais au-delà de ces considérations de genre, ces femmes utilisaient, pour se définir, un vocabulaire qui ne se limitait pas aux questions de masculinité et de féminité, même si parfois cela heurtait leur propre discours sur les rôles sexuels. Cette flexibilité dans les normes de comportement s'accentuait en période de crise, alors que les femmes mobilisaient leurs réseaux de connaissances pour venir en aide à des amis.

Toutefois, même en temps normal, les échanges intellectuels de ces quatre

salonnières avaient un impact politique et social. En répétant les pratiques établies pour maintenir la cohésion au sein de la République des Lettres, elles renforçaient l'aspect exclusif de la communauté. En demandant de l'aide à des amis et en s'acquittant des faveurs demandées, en intégrant à la République des Lettres des amis et des membres de leur famille et en ne recommandant que des intimes pour des positions politiques, ces femmes limitaient aux seuls membres de l'élite l'accès au pouvoir politique et à la vie intellectuelle. Par conséquent, à travers leurs gestes quotidiens, Lespinasse, Roland, Mosconi et Renier Michiel collaboraient au maintien d'une structure sociale conservatrice et élitiste.

Tous ces points ne se retrouvent pas illustrés de façon identique dans la correspondance de chaque salonnière. Pour mieux comprendre l'expérience de chacune de ces femmes, j'esquisse, au chapitre 1, un portrait du débat intellectuel sur les femmes dans la France et l'Italie du XVIIIe siècle. Je décris les possibilités intellectuelles et politiques offertes aux femmes de l'époque, je dresse un bilan de l'historiographie sur l'élite féminine de l'Italie et de la France du XVIIIe et je présente plus en détail le cadre théorique de ma thèse. Le chapitre se termine par une discussion méthodologique des différents courants de l'histoire culturelle auxquels j'ai eu recours.

Au chapitre 2, j'analyse les lettres écrites par Julie de Lespinasse à son amant, Jacques-Hippolyte de Guibert, ainsi qu'à son ami, Nicolas de Condorcet. Je montre comment Lespinasse utilise les écrits de Rousseau pour définir son propre rôle au sein de la République des Lettres, cette République qui chérissait les valeurs mondaines de la fin du XVIIe et du début du XVIIIe siècle : la sensibilité, la beauté, l'esprit et le plaisir. Ces qualités étaient utilisées pour le bien-être de la communauté à travers l'échange de critiques, de livres

et de nouvelles. Ainsi, on employait les mêmes techniques que celles utilisées par les membres de la République des Lettres du XVIIe siècle pour prouver son amitié et sa loyauté et assurer la cohésion de la communauté.

Le cas de Marie-Jeanne Roland, étudié au chapitre 3, est très différent. Contrairement à Lespinasse, Roland, plus préoccupée par la carrière de son mari et par son jardin que par les valeurs esthétiques, était en marge de la République des Lettres. Toutefois, la Révolution allait la projeter au coeur de la tourmente politique et l'amener à correspondre pour défendre les valeurs de sa communauté, c'est-à-dire l'unité et la transparence, des thèmes fréquemment utilisés pendant la Révolution. Les lettres de Roland illustrent la flexibilité des normes de comportements masculines et féminines, particulièrement en temps de crise politique.

De son côté, la correspondance de Giustina Renier Michiel, que j'analyse au chapitre 4, montre comment les normes sexuelles pouvaient varier non pas à travers le temps, mais à travers l'espace. Son mari déplorait la participation de Renier Michiel à des échanges intellectuels et littéraires. Mais la facilité avec laquelle les femmes pouvaient intégrer la République des Lettres de Venise (de même que son rang social) permettait à Renier Michiel de rejeter la vision conservatrice de la féminité de son mari. Elle contribuait donc à sa guise à la promotion de la beauté et de la grâce. De plus, sa correspondance avec Gaetano Pellizzoni indique jusqu'à quel point l'échange de nouvelles politiques, autant que des critiques littéraires, pouvait servir à démontrer sa loyauté et son affection.

Le dernier chapitre est consacré à Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini, une salonnière de Vérone. Plus que les trois autres femmes, Mosconi exprimait des doutes sur ses propres

habilités intellectuelles. Comme Lespinasse et Renier Michiel, elle cherchait dans la littérature la grâce et la beauté et appréciait l'importance de l'amitié pour cautionner les échanges intellectuels et les faveurs politiques. Cette dernière facette est clairement exprimée dans la correspondance avec son futur gendre, Giovanni Antonio Scopoli, qui s'élèvera au sein de l'élite sociale grâce à l'intimité familiale. Cette correspondance révèle également l'importance du statut social pour l'élite terrienne, l'accès à un poste qui lui conférerait l'honneur étant nécessaire pour Scopoli, s'il espérait épouser la fille de Mosconi, Laura.

Les résultats de cette recherche mettent en lumière trois aspects importants. Tout d'abord, ils montrent jusqu'à quel point les relations privées des salonnières ne peuvent être évaluées séparément des questions publiques que sont la politique et la littérature. Les quatre salonnières étudiées défendaient et recommandaient leurs amis parce qu'elles pouvaient rendre compte de leur loyauté. Deuxièmement, l'étude de la correspondance de ces salonnières illustre que les normes du genre étaient élastiques. Non seulement ces quatre femmes fabriquaient leur propre code de conduite en s'inspirant de diverses sources, mais transgressaient également leur propre dogme sur la féminité. Finalement, en exposant les pratiques intellectuelles et politiques qui renforçaient l'exclusivité, les résultats de cette recherche viennent corroborer la thèse de Robert Darnton selon laquelle le gouvernement et la République des Lettres étaient liés à travers leur affection commune pour l'élitisme. L'itération de ces pratiques dans les quatre cas étudiés suggère un modèle plus large existant au sein des gens de lettres du XVIIIe siècle, semblable à celui découvert par Anne Goldgar dans son étude sur les lettres de la République au XVIIe siècle.

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Soyons justes & disons que pour mériter des amis fideles il faut être fidele soi-même aux devoirs de l'amitié. Avez-vous soigneusement rempli tous ces devoirs? Avez-vous partagé les plaisirs & les peines de votre ami? L'avez-vous consolé dans ses afflictions? Lui avez-vous prêté dans son infortune le secours qu'il étoit en droit d'attendre de votre attachement? Avez-vous défendu avec chaleur les intérêts de sa réputation quand elle étoit attaquée? Avez-vous été au-devant de ses besoins quand il étoit dans la détresse? Avez-vous dans vos bienfaits ménagé la délicatesse de son coeur? Eh bien, vous avez acquis le droit d'attendre de sa part un attachement inviolable.

Paul Thiry, baron d'Holbach, 1776

Introduction

To what extent is it accurate to continue to speak of a division between public and private spheres when discussing the intellectual and political experiences of elite women in France and Italy at the end of the eighteenth century? Until now, the majority of scholars who have considered elite women in France and Italy have relied heavily on this framework,[1] and yet there is reason to doubt that it captures all the nuances of women's political and intellectual participation. At a theoretical level, the public/private split has been under fire since the 1980s for being reductive and inaccurate.[2] Moreover, a

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[1] Madelyn Gutwirth, *Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolution*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992; Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988; Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994; Luciano Guerci, *La discussione sulla donna nell'Italia del Settecento. Aspetti e problemi*, Turin: Tirrenia Stampatori, 1987; Rebecca Marie Messbarger, *Woman Disputed: The Representation of Women in Eighteenth-Century Italian Public Discourse*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Chicago, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, June 1994.

[2] Lawrence Eklein, "Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions About Evidence and Analytic Proceedure", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 19, 1 (Autumn, 1995), pp.97-109; Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History", *Journal of American History*, 75 (June, 1988), pp.9-39; Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History", *The Historical Journal*, 36, 2 (1993), pp.383-414; Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, eds., *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to Present*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987; D.O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby, *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History. Essays from the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press,

number of studies on English bourgeois and elite women have shown that this division does not bear out in practice.[3] It would seem, then, that the time is ripe to undertake an investigation that sets out to discover if the public/private split truly is tenable in the case of France and Italy.

There have already been some inroads made in the scholarship on French women. Several authors have examined how non-elite women have mobilized in the face of political crises, including the French Revolution, the Flour War and an assortment of riots.[4] Furthermore, Anne Soprani, Béatrice Didier and Annette Rosa have considered how women intellectuals threw themselves into the political fray during the French Revolution.[5] In contrast, my intention is to show how four elite women were integrated into intellectual and political life through daily interactions and exchanges. In other

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1992; Linda J. Nicholson, *Gender and History: The Limits of Social Theory in the Age of the Family*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986; Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, pp.15-27; Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

[3] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998; Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* New York: Longman, 1998.

[4] Harriet Branson Applewhite, Darline Gay Levy and Mary Durham Johnson, eds., *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979; Paule-Marie Duhet, *Les Femmes et la Révolution, 1789-1794*, Paris: Julliard, 1971, Olwen Hufton, "Women in Revolution 1789-1796", *Past and Present*, 53 (November 1971), pp.90-108. For more recent histories of non-elite women, see Harriet B. Applewhite and Darline Gay Levy, *Women and Politics in the Age of Democratic Revolution*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990; Dominique Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses : Les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française*, Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1988; Arlette Farge, *La vie fragile. Violences, pouvoirs, et solidarités à Paris au XVIIIe siecle*, Paris: Hachette, 1986; Olwen Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992; Cynthia A. Bouton, *The Flour War: Gender, Class and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993; Suzanne Desan, "The Role of Women in Religious Riots during the French Revolution", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 22 (Spring 1989), pp.451-68.

[5] Anne Soprani, *La Révolution et les femmes, 1789-1796*, Paris: MA ed., 1988; Béatrice Didier, *Écrire la Révolution*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989; Annette Rosa, *Citoyennes. Les femmes et la Révolution française*, Paris: Messidor, 1988.

words, I want to map out the more systematic ways in which women participated in their political and intellectual communities and in so doing explore the way in which public and private worlds were inseparable.

Looking particularly at the case of salon women in the late eighteenth century, I examined the correspondence of two French women (Julie de Lespinasse (1732-76) and Marie-Jeanne Roland (1754-93)) and two Venetian women (Giustina Renier Michiel (1755-1832) and Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini (*c.*1751-1807)) to understand their role in the republic of letters. The republic of letters emerged in the seventeenth century as a self-proclaimed community of scholars and literary figures which stretched across national boundaries but respected differences in language and culture. Its members were linked to one another by their commitment to the advancement of knowledge and, in the eighteenth century, to the progress of humanity achieved through the exchange of information and critiques.[6] How were salon women integrated into this general context? I found that, drawing on the traditions of *honnêteté*, Enlightenment values and Revolutionary discourse, the four women I studied continually reinforced the ethics of beauty, wit, pleasure, modesty, charity, humanity, sincerity and spontaneity. Above and beyond the values themselves, though, they accorded importance to the idea of sharing a

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[6] For more on the republic of letters, see Paul Dibon, "Communication in the Respublica Literaria of the 17th Century", *Res Publica Litterarum,* 1 (1978), pp.42-55; Idem, "L'Université de Leyde et la République des Lettres au 17e siècle", *Quaerendo*, 5 (1975), pp.4-38; Françoise Waquet, "Qu'est-ce que la République des Lettres? Essai de sémantique historique", *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 1 (1989), pp.473-502; Daniel Roche, *Les Républicains des lettres : Gens de culture et Lumières au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: Fayard, 1988; Maarten Utlee, "*The Republic of Letters*: Learned Correspondence, 1680-1720", *Seventeenth Century*, 2 (January 1987), pp.95-112. I will expand on the elements of this definition in the next chapter, pp.57-62.

cohesive worldview, one which could only be maintained through exchange. Consequently, the act of socializing through conversation, but also through letters, took on heightened significance. To engage in literary commerce, to send news, books, literature--even compliments and criticism--was to show one's commitment to the community as a whole. In the case of Enlightenment France, this exchange was valued as the means through which humanity would be served, but socializing did not always have to serve an overtly political goal. As in Venetia, it could simply serve to improve literary production and refine beauty.

Given the importance of these exchanges for ensuring the perpetuation of the republic of letters as a community, Lespinasse, Ronald, Mosconi and Renier Michiel worked to reinforce cohesion through friendship and loyalty. Thus, sending a letter or procuring a book was a sign of personal devotion which engendered a social debt to be fulfilled. In turn, one's ability to fulfill these charges marked one as a good friend and therefore a virtuous member of the republic. The fact that both qualities had to overlap explains the practice of recommending one's friends and acquaintances for literary prizes and governmental posts. If one had no personal experience with a candidate, if one could not account for his or her loyalty, how could one truly recommend him or her in good conscience?

If women were able to make recommendations that carried weight for both political posts and literary prizes, it was because they were thought capable of evaluating and expressing the values integral to relations in the republic. Not only could they judge

and produce grace and beauty, but also friendship and virtue. In fact, by tracing the nature and extent of their participation in intellectual and political debates, it is possible to show the degree to which women's actions diverged not only from conservative gender models, but also from their own formulations concerning women's proper social role. Although they often insisted on their own sensibility and lack of critical capacities, the salon women I studied also defined themselves into the republic of letters not only with reference to the very different conception of gender offered by the *gens de lettres*, but also with reference to a wider, gender-neutral vocabulary of personal qualities revered by them even when it contradicted their discourse on gender. This fluidity in gender prescriptions became even more pronounced in times of political crisis, during which women mobilized their networks of acquaintances to help their friends' causes.

Even during times of relative stability, however, the intellectual exchanges of these four salon women had a fundamentally, if often inadvertently, political effect. By reiterating the practices designed to create cohesion in the republic of letters, they ended up reinforcing this community's exclusivity. In other words, by asking favours of and fulfilling favours for people they knew, by incorporating friends and family into the republic of letters and by recommending only loyal acquaintances for government jobs, they effectively limited the extent to which both the government and membership in the literary community were open to those from outside the landed elite. As a result, through their very innocuous everyday actions, Lespinasse, Roland, Mosconi and Renier Michiel actually engendered a conservative and elitist social structure.

Each of these points is not illustrated with equal clarity in the correspondence of every woman I have studied. Almost all the themes outlined above recur in the letters of all four women, but are always differently configured. In order to better frame each woman's experience, I provide an overview of eighteenth-century philosophical debates concerning women in France and Italy and outline some of the political and intellectual opportunities available to them in the first chapter. I then review and evaluate the literature on elite women in France and Italy before describing in more detail the theoretical underpinnings of my own argument. I close the chapter with a methodological discussion of the various strains of cultural history which I will employ in my analysis.

In the second chapter, I study the letters that Julie de Lespinasse wrote to her lover, Jacques-Hippolyte de Guibert, and her friend, Nicolas de Condorcet. I show how she used Rousseau's writings to define herself into the Enlightenment republic of letters which cherished late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century *mondain* values of sensibility, beauty, wit and pleasure. These qualities were put to the service of the common good through the exchange of criticism, books, news--in other words, the same methods employed by members of the seventeenth-century republic of letters to prove friendship and loyalty and generate cohesion.

The case of Marie-Jean Roland, explored in the third chapter, is quite different. In opposition to Lespinasse, she was a marginal member of the republic of letters, more concerned with helping her husband with his work and with her garden than with

perpetuating aesthetic values. With the arrival of the Revolution, however, she was brought to the centre of a political maelstrom which caused her, too, to use correspondence as a way of defending community values, this time configured in terms of unity and transparency--themes commonly used during the French Revolution. Moreover, her letters are important because they demonstrate the extent to which gender prescriptions were fluid, especially in the face of a quickly evolving political crisis.

In contrast, the letters of Giustina Renier Michiel, which I discuss in the fourth chapter, show how gender norms shifted across space, not time. Her husband thought her vain and impudent for participating in literary and intellectual pursuits and for engaging in social activities without asking his permission. The easy integration of women in the Venetian republic of letters (along with her elevated social status) meant that Renier Michiel could reject her husband's view of femininity (and him along with it) and continue to do her part to promote the beauty and grace her literary friends esteemed. In particular, Renier Michiel's correspondence with Gaetano Pellizzoni demonstrates the degree to which the exchange of political news, as much as literary critiques, also could serve as a means of demonstrating loyalty and personal attachment.

The final chapter is devoted to examining the correspondence of Veronese salon woman Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini. Mosconi expressed her doubts about her intellectual abilities more than any other woman and yet was no less a part of the republic of letters. Like Lespinasse and Renier Michiel, she too admired grace and beauty in literature and valued the ethic of friendship which underwrote intellectual

exchange and recommendations for political posts. The latter is explicitly illustrated in her correspondence with her future son-in-law, Giovanni Antonio Scopoli, in which the cultivation of familial intimacy is the means through which Scopoli is integrated into the upper echelons of elite society. The correspondence with Scopoli also indicates how much social status counted for the landed elite, as the acquisition of a post which would confer honour was a necessary prerequisite for his marriage to Mosconi's daughter Laura.

These findings are important in three senses. First, they illustrate the extent to which "private" personal relations were inseparable from "public" political and literary questions. The four salon women I studied defended and recommended their friends and family because they could account for their loyalty. Second, they illustrate the degree to which gender prescriptions were malleable in practice. All four women not only patched together codes of proper behaviour from various sources, but also deviated from their own dogma concerning femininity. Finally, the findings flesh out Robert Darnton's claim that the government and the republic of letters were linked through their commitment to elitism by detailing the intellectual and political practices which reinforced exclusivity.[7] The iteration of these practices in four cases suggests a wider pattern existing among the

[7] Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1982.

gens de lettres in the eighteenth century similar to that uncovered by Anne Goldgar in her study of the seventeenth-century republic of letters.[8]

[8] Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Chapter 1

Elite Women in the Eighteenth Century

Philosophers have been discussing women's intellectual capacities, their fundamental nature and their proper social role since the beginning of Western civilization[1] and the writers of eighteenth-century France and Italy were no different: a variety French and Italian thinkers considered the "woman question", as Rebecca Messbarger calls it,[2] in order to address these very questions. The negative and positive views of femininity that were articulated in their work had tangible influences on women's lives. Women had lower literacy rates and restricted access to education, government posts and intellectual institutions.[3] They were nonetheless able to make a

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[1] Giulia Sissa, "The Sexual Philosophies of Plato and Aristotle" in Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, ed., *A History of Women in the West*, vol. 1: *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992, pp.46-82; Jacques Dalarun, "The Clerical Gaze" in Pauline Schmitt Pantel, ed., *A History of Women in the West*, vol. 2: *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992, pp.15-42; Claude Thomasset, "The Nature of Women" in Pauline Schmitt Pantel, ed., *A History of Women in the West*, vol. 2: *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992, pp.43-69.

[2] Rebecca Messbarger, *Woman Disputed: The Representation of Women in Eighteenth-Century Italian Public Discourse*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Chicago, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, June 1994, p.2.

[3] I define intellectual institutions as sites of intellectual exchange guided by established patterns or rules.

place for themselves within these institutions, most notably in the salons, but also, to a lesser degree in journalism, masonic lodges and Italian universities.

But a study of philosophical discourse and institutions alone does not tell us everything we need to know about elite women and their participation in intellectual and political life. In fact, women were able to participate most significantly in these areas in the everyday conversations and correspondence that took place outside institutional settings, a point which has been missed by scholars who insist on a public/private division in examining the history of elite women in France and Italy. In their letters, the four women salon women I have studied helped to set the agendas for salon debate, propagated the values of beauty, pleasure and loyalty and influenced the awarding of government posts and literary prizes through their recommendations. The configuration of these exchanges shows that the public/private distinction is untenable and opens the door for a wider vision of women's political and intellectual activities.

The Philosophical Debate on Women

In France, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) affirmed that women and men were equal at the beginning of human existence but that a division of labour subsequently made women inferior. In fact, Rousseau believed that as women emerged from the state of nature they underwent a spontaneous mutation in which their behaviour was fixed by their biological function. Reinforcing this mutation was the repetitive and ordinary

nature of women's work, which did not encourage the development of characteristics which civilization perfected: memory, imagination and reason.[4] As Rousseau himself stated, "Women became more sedentary and accustomed to minding the hut and the children while men searched for subsistence".[5] Charles-Louis de Secondat, the baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755), also believed that the natural division of biological tasks was at the root of women's dependence, but also thought that individuals had a certain amount of liberty in deciding whether or not they would conform to "natural law".[6]

The idea of a natural biological function often recurs in the writings of Paul Thiry, baron d'Holbach (1715-89) and Rousseau. Holbach believed that women's primary function was that of motherhood, and that women's education should be more directly related to preparing them for it.[7] Similarly, Rousseau believed that women's most important job was the formation of citizens; this is how they were to participate in political life.[8] Reflecting women's close link to family, nature and sexuality according to Rousseau was their natural ease and spontaneity, their modesty, and their innate

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[4] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3: *Écrits politiques*, edited by Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond. Paris: Gallimard, 1964, p.168-74; Christine Fauré, *Democracy without Women: Feminism and the Rise of Liberal Individualism in France*, translated by Claudia Gorbman and John Berks, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, p.85; Paul Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée des Lumières*, Paris: Editions Ophrys, 1977, p.378.

[5] "Les femmes devinrent plus sedentaires et s'accoutumérent à garder la Cabane et les Enfans, tandis que l'homme alloit chercher la subsistance commune". J.-J. Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes..., p.168. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

[6] Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2, edited by Roger Caillois. Paris: Gallimard, 1949-51, p.518; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée...*, p.337.

[7] Paul Thiry, baron d'Holbach, *Système social*, vol. 3. Hildesheim: G. Olms Verlag, 1969, p.127; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée...*, pp.470-71.

[8] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 4: *Emile, Emile et Sophie, Lettre à Christophe*, edited by Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond. Paris: Gallimard, 1969, p.249; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée...*, p.380; C. Fauré, *Democracy without Women...*, p.89.

knowledge of the heart.[9] Reinforcing the concept of biological function was the idea that women's physiological weakness made them unequal to all but domestic chores. Denis Diderot (1713-84), for example, thought that women were physically weak, prone to hysteria and excess and incapable of sustained periods of concentration.[10] He thought that their physical suffering resulted in both angelic and demonic behaviour: to escape their torment, they engaged in reverie. Thus, woman was mysterious and contradictory; her happiness was carnal and fantastic, as she was tied to her body and threatened by it.[11] Holbach held similar beliefs, judging that women were naturally unsuited to abstract thought,[12] and that their passions had to be reigned in by the logical structure of social relations which ascribed them a maternal role.[13] Montesquieu, too, thought that women's natural frailty meant that they would be unable to make difficult governmental decisions.[14]

Montesquieu did leave the door open for some sort of participation in intellectual life, however. Given what he described as women's natural softness and tenderness, they

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[9] J.-J. Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*..., vol. 4, p.259, 734-35; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2: *La Nouvelle Héloïse, Théâtre, Essais littéraires*, edited by Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond. Paris: Gallimard, 1961, p.361; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée*..., pp.379, 383, 399.

[10] Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2, edited by J. Assézat and M. Tourneux, Paris: Garnier, 1875-77, p.361; Elizabeth Gardner, "The Philosophes and Women" in Eva Jacobs et al., eds., *Woman and Society in Eighteenth-Century France: Essays in Honour of John Stephenson Spink*, London: The Athlone Press, 1979, pp.23-24.

[11] D. Diderot, Oeuvres complètes, p.257; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée*..., p.533.

[12] Paul Thiry, baron d'Holbach, *Ethocratie*, Amsterdam: M.M. Rey, 1776: reprinted Hildesheim-New York: G. Olms, 1973, p.199; E. Gardner, "The Philosophes and Women", p.24.

[13] P.T., baron d'Holbach, *Ethocratie*, chpt. X; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée*..., p.486.

[14] Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, edited by Jean Brethe de la Gressaye. Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1950-61, XIX, p.27; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée*..., p.341; C. Fauré, *Democracy without Women*..., p.77.

were thought to refine the morals of those frequenting salons and the court by their very presence.[15] Diderot also admitted that women's manners were more polished, that they were more intuitive and perceptive and, when endowed with genius, were more original than men.[16] Furthermore, he thought that, although women's inferiority was most basically rooted in their physiology, education did contribute to their behaviour. He said, in response to Helvétius, who argued that "education was responsible for all", that "education did a lot".[17]

Many of the same themes re-emerged in the thought of Italian intellectuals in their writings on women. As in France, the majority of Italian scholars believed that women's place was in the home, and her natural role was that of wife and mother. Melchiorre Delfico,[18] for example, placed very high importance on a division of labour in which women were identified with the domestic sphere. In his view, society needed the stability of institutions to flourish, and the most important of these institutions was the family. Women, as guardians of the home, constituted the cornerstone of happiness. The

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[15] C.-L. de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, XXVIII, p.22, XIX, p.8; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée...*, p.318.

[16] Robert Niklaus, "Diderot and Women" in Eva Jacobs et al., eds., *Woman and Society in Eighteenth-Century France: Essays in Honour of John Stephenson Spink*, London: The Athlone Press, 1979, p.76.

[17] "Il dit : L'éducation fait tout. Dites : L'éducation fait beaucoup". D. Diderot, Oeuvres complètes, p.356; Eva Jacobs, "Diderot and the Education of Girls" in Eva Jacobs et al., eds., *Woman and Society in Eighteenth-Century France: Essays in Honour of John Stephenson Spink*, London: The Athlone Press, 1979, pp.92-93.

[18] Mechiorre Delfico (1744-1835): Philosopher and politician, he served as the king's military councillor (assessore militare) for the province of Teramo from 1783 to 1791, and held a number of posts (including Member of the Provisory Government of the Napoleonic Republic) during the various waves of French occupation of the region and of San Marino, where he moved in 1799. He returned to Teramo in 1823 and retired from political life. He was a member of numerous academies and societies and president of the *Istituto d'Incoraggiamento di Napoli*. Raffaele Aurini, *Dizionario bibliografico della gente d'Abruzzo*, vol. 3. Teramo: Cooperativa tipografica "ars et labor", 1958, pp.5-6.

reason that women should be in charge of the domestic sphere had to do with their physical weakness, which Delfico saw as proof that they were naturally disposed to motherhood. Women's delicacy, refined spirit, meticulous nature and sincere affections all helped them with their maternal tasks.[19] Antonio Conti[20] also thought that women's physical weakness made them unsuited to anything other than domestic chores. He believed that women's reproductive functions left their fibres soaked with blood and milk, and thus weaker and less elastic. This physical weakness was the cause of women's dependence on both their husbands and on their children's needs.[21]

Women's feeble constitutions was also thought to have repercussions for their capacity to take part in intellectual enterprises. Conti believed that women's aortas were larger (also due to their weaker fibres), and because of this, their pulses were weaker, their heartbeats slower and their intellects more sluggish. Also thought to be caused by weaker fibres was their more active imagination, their superstition, their gullibility, and their lack of courage in battle.[22] Finally, he found women frivolous, unstable and erratic, evidence of which was found in the greater variability of their hair and skin colour, and which was caused by their precarious and passionate nature.[23] As a consequence, Conti

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[19] Melchiorre Delfico, *Saggio filosofico sul matrimonio*, Teramo: 1774, p.189; R. Messbarger, Woman Disputed..., pp.181-88.

[20] Antonio Conti (1677-1749): A scholar of aesthetics working out of Padova, he believed that poetry should be derived from science. He wrote poetry, prose, dissertations, and four tragedies (Giunio Bruto, Marco Bruto, Giulio Cesare, and Druso). Nicola Francesco Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo*, vol. 2: *Lettere inedite*, Rome: Edizioni Abate, 1968, p.561.

[21] Antonio Conti, "Lettera dell'Abate Antonio Conti" in *Saggio sopra il carattere, i costumi e lo spirito delle Donne*, by Antoine Léonard Thomas, Venice: Giovanni Vitto, 1773, p.206; R. Messbarger, *Woman Disputed...*, p.161; Luciano Guerci, *La discussione sulla donna...*, pp.145-46.

[22] A. Conti, "Lettera dell'Abate...", p.209, 217; R. Messbarger, *Woman Disputed...*, pp.162-64.

[23] R. Messbarger, *Woman Disputed...*, pp.164-65.

held that women were incapable of the conceptual thought required in critical activity, metaphysics and mathematics.[24]

Conti was not alone in thinking that physical causes were at the root of women's poor intellect. Petronio Zecchini[25] thought that the perpetual irritation of women's uteruses caused them to be inconstant, covetous, hysterical, spastic and convulsive. The heavy burden of these physical complaints limited their capacity to reason. He writes, "The predominance of this visceral irritation results in the disruption from this one point of the entire animal economy; it reduces hysterical women to spasms, convulsions, delirium and the anguish of death".[26] Paolo Mattia Doria[27] also thought that women were more subject to physical defects than men, and thus had less potent reason and were more likely to fantasize. Women were capable of liberty and virtue, but they could not ascend to the highest virtue needed by legislators. Furthermore, unlike Conti, Doria judged that

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[24] A. Conti, "Lettera dell'Abate...", p.164; L. Guerci, *La discussione sulla donna...*, pp.146-47.

[25] Petronio Ignazio Zecchini (1739-93): Professor of anatomy at the University of Bologna, and later at the University of Ferrara, he was the author of *Dì geniali della dialettica delle donne ridotta al suo vero principio*, Bologna: A. S. Tommaso d'Aquino, 1771. L. Guerci, *La discussione sulla donna...*, p.156, note 10.

[26] "...il predominio di questo viscere irritato...[da]... isconcertare in un punto tutta l'animale economia, e da ridur le donne isteriche in ispasimi, convulsioni, deliri, ed angosce di morte". Petronio Zecchini, *Dì geniali della dialettica delle donne ridotta al suo vero principio*, Napoli: Raimondi, 1773, p.121. See also pp.120, 124-25; L. Guerci, La discussione sulla donna..., pp.158-59.

[27] Paolo Mattia Doria (1667-1746): Member of the *Accademia Palatina* in Naples, he was particularly interested in metaphysics, politics, geometry and mathematics, he penned *Vita civile e l'educazione del principe* (Napoli, 1709), *Nuovo metodo geometrico* (Augusta, 1714), and, concerning women, *Ragionamenti ne' quali si dimostra la donna, in quasi tutte le virtù più grandi, non essere all'uomo inferiore* (Napoli, 1716). Pierluigi Rovito, "Doria, Paolo Mattia" in Fiorella Bartoccini and Mario Caravale, eds., *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 41. Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 1992, pp.438-45.

women could acquire scientific knowledge, but agreed that they were incapable of truly original thought.[28]

Not everyone thought that women were the inferior sex, however. There were also a number of thinkers who claimed that women's intellectual capacities were equal to those of men, but that they should not develop them. Giuseppe Antonio Costantini (1692-1772), for example, thought that women had the same spirit, the same capacity to learn and exercise literary professions as men, but that they should not take up "male" occupations. They were capable of morality, but only in their own sphere, and thus should be chaste, religious, submissive to their husbands and solicitous of the house and family.[29] Giovanni Niccolò Bandiera (1695-1761) was more explicit in his expression of women's natural equality, but came to the same conclusions as Costantini. Using logic similar to that of François Poullain de la Barre (1647-1723), he argued that women were capable of the most arduous studies, because their spirits were separate from their bodies. Moreover, women's heads and brains were identical to those of men. In contrast to Pouillain de la Barre, however, he said that women should not give up their domestic role, even if they could. Instead, they should use their education to become better wives.[30]

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[28] Paolo Mattia Doria, *Ragionamenti ne' quali si dimostra la donna, in quasi tutte le virtù più grandi non essere all'uomo inferiore*, Napoli: 1716, pp.207, 287-88, 344, 344-47; L. Guerci, *La discussione sulla donna...*, pp.164-68.

[29] L. Guerci, *La discussione sulla donna...*, pp.173-76.

[30] Giovanni Niccolò Bandiera, *Trattato degli studj delle donne, in due partie diviso. Opera d'un Accademico Intronato*, Venice: Pitteri, 1740, vol. 1, pp.86, 92-93, 413-43.; L. Guerci, *La discussione sulla donna...*, pp.181-87.

In short, a large number of philosophers in Italy and France, whom I shall designate as conservative, believed that women should occupy themselves with domestic, as opposed to political and academic, tasks. Although there is very little research available on Italy, we know that in France this position had the effect of imposing very practical limits on elite women's ability to participate in intellectual life, the most important of which was education. According to the principles established by François de la Mothe-Fénelon (1651-1715), for whom the ideal woman was still (in Carolyn Lougee's words) "simple, industrious, dutiful, preoccupied with household cares",[31] girls did learn the fundamentals of academic education (writing and basic arithmetic), but the majority of their time was taken with learning principles of domestic economy and moral instruction.[32]. If a family wanted their daughter to be more learned, they had to supplement her education with dance and music lessons.[33]

The widespread legitimacy accorded to the idea of women's non-intellectual nature also resulted in other barriers to their participation in intellectual endeavours. Although universities and academies admitted women in Italy, their French counterparts were only rarely afforded the same luxury.[34] Furthermore, Natalie Zemon Davis states

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[31] Carolyn Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes. Women, Salons and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, pp.175-76.

[32] Roger Chartier, Marie-Madeleine Compère and Dominique Julia, *L'éducation en France du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: CDU and SEDES, 1976, p.232.

[33] Martine Sonnet, "A Daughter to Educate" in Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge, eds., *A History of Women in the West*, vol. 3: *Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993, p.128.

[34] Samia I. Spencer, "Women and Education" in Samia I. Spencer, ed., *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, p.94; Daniel Roche, *Le siècle des Lumières en province. Académies et académiciens provinciaux, 1680-1789*, Paris-La Haye: Mouton, 1978, p.193; Paula Findlen, "Science as a Career in Enlightenment Italy: The Strategies of Laura Bassi", *Isis*, 84, 3 (1993), pp.441-69.

that the scope of women's official participation in government or political life in early modern France was severely restricted. Women had some specific powers as queen (they could act as regents, for example), but could not inherit the throne. Other opportunities to hold official positions were limited to attending provincial assemblies to elect deputies to the *États généraux* and serving on hospital committees.[35]

One of the consequences of these restrictions was that upper-class women in France were generally less literate than their male counterparts, despite a slight increase in literacy rates which took place over the course of the century. In France, 78% of women of the leisure class could sign their marriage certificates between 1688 and 1720 in comparison to 80% between 1761 and 1791. 80% of men of the same class could sign in the first period, in comparison to 95% in the second.[36] These differences do not appear that dramatic when compared to figures that include all classes. At the end of the eighteenth century, 48% of French men from all classes could sign their marriage certificates in comparison to 27% of women, while the comparable figures for the 5 Italian cities of Piacenza, Parma, Reggio, Modena and Bologna, were 42% and 21%.[37] For Europe as a whole, these numbers were 60-70% for men and 40% for women.[38]

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[35] Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women in Politics" in Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, eds., *A History of Women in the West*, vol. 3: *Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993, pp.167-83.

[36] R. Chartier, M.-M. Compère and D. Julia, *L'éducation en France...*, p.100.

[37] One could imagine that rural rates of literacy throughout Italy would pull this rate down even lower, as those in the countryside surrounding these five cities indicate that only 17% of men and 5% of women could sign. Roger Chartier, "Les pratiques de l'écrit" in Roger Chartier, ed., *Histoire de la vie privée*, vol. 3: *De la Renaissance aux Lumières*, Paris: éditions du Seuil, 1986, pp.115, 118-19.

[38] *Ibidem*, pp.115, 121.

Nevertheless, we should always remember that these figures only indicate the ability to sign one's name. No doubt, if literacy could be measured by one's mastery of the language, gender differences would be more significant.

Exposing the restrictions on women's intellectual participation in the eighteenth-century does not tell the whole story, though. Certain thinkers looked favourably on women and their intellectual capacities, opening the door to women's participation in Enlightenment institutions. One of the most important sources upon which eighteenth-century defenders of women drew was their seventeenth-century predecessors' belief in the Cartesian separability of mind and body.

> [Descartes's] dualism can be read as an endorsement of either the separability or the inseparability of mind and body. Seventeenth-century literature by and about women was generally consistent with the first possibility and included variations on the theme "the mind has no sex". With the diffusion of Cartesianism, this phrase became a feminist rallying cry. The concept of a soul freed from bodily and therefore sexual impediments lent philosophical weight to the commonplace.[39]

Women such as the Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, Anne de la Vigne, Marie Dupré and Catherine Descartes relied on this logic to claim that women's mental capacities were no different from those of men,[40] but the best-known philosopher to argue for women's equality in these terms was Poullain de la Barre. He sought to establish the autonomy of thought with respect to physiology, claiming that men and women were equally endowed with reason and therefore had an equal right to liberty. Consequently, neither sex had the

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[39] Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, p.81.

[40] E. Harth, *Cartesian Women...*, p.78.

right to dominate the other. Moreover, Poullain de la Barre claimed that physical differences were not that great, as women's bodies performed the same function as men's, and that the differences between the sexes were the result of social custom. Education encouraged women's subordination, pointing them towards domestic and maternal functions. Whereas in the beginning of human existence, all relations were equal, performing domestic duties made women ill and weak, limiting their *esprit* and rendering it superficial.[41]

The argument which based women's equality on their similarity to men was adopted by certain eighteenth-century philosophers in their discussions of women. Neither Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715-71) nor Nicolas de Condorcet (1743-94) believed that women's biology in any way negatively affected their rational capacities. Helvétius thought that both men and women were born without ideas, that the contents of the mind were socially acquired.[42] Furthermore, he reduced organic influences to simple impulses which become determinant only when stimulated in certain ways.[43] Consequently, he thought women's inferiority was culturally conditioned. This did not mean that he advocated equal rights for women, however. In fact, he thought that sexuality should be regulated by the state and that women should be legally at the disposal of men.[44]

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[41] François Poullain de la Barre, *De l'égalité des deux sexes. Discours physique et moral où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des préjugés*, Paris: J. du Puis, 1693, pp.33, 109, 181, 201; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée*..., pp.293, 294-96, 299.

[42] Claude Adrien Helvétius, *De l'esprit*, introduction and notes by Guy Besse. Paris: Éditions sociales, c1968, pp.162, 180. E. Jacobs, "Diderot and the Education...", p.92.

[43] P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée*..., p.459.

[44] E. Gardner, "The Philosophes and Women", p.21.

Condorcet, by contrast, was much more solidly pro-woman. Like Helvétius, he thought that since women were able to receive sense impressions, they were potentially rational and thus men's equals. Not only did women's equality afford them a political status in Condorcet's eyes, but was also constituent of the natural social order, free from prejudice, which was the true foundation for happiness and morality. The way to assure women's equality was through education: they had to have opportunities equal to those offered to men.[45]

In Italy, the most ardent defender of women's intellectual equality was Giacomo Casanova.[46] In contrast to Petronio Zecchini, he argued that it was women's education that was responsible for their ignorance, not the effect of their uteruses. Women thought in the same way that men did. Furthermore, he questioned the logic of Zecchini's argument that men were able to surpass their sexuality, but not women. In fact, he argued that neither men's nor women's actions were determined by their sexual organs; rather, they were shaped by social and historical circumstance. Female modesty, for example, was not a natural characteristic but rather an artificial trait which was socially acquired.[47]

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[45] Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *Oeuvres*, edited by M.F. Arago and A. O'Connor, vol. 10. Paris: Firmin Didot frères, 1847-49, p.122; E. Gardner, "The Philosophes and Women", pp.25-27; C. Fauré, *Democracy without Women...*, pp.91-94.

[46] Giacomo Casanova (1725-98): In the course of his travels throughout Europe, Casanova had an enormous literary production, including his much reproduced *Histoire de ma vie* and his *Histoire de ma fuite des prisons de la République de Venise qu'on appelle les Plombs* (Leipzig, 1788). Regarding his thoughts on women, see his *Lana caprina. Epistola di un lincatropo indiritta a S.A. la Signora Principessa J.L. n. P.C. Ultima edizione, In nessun luogo, [i.e. Venice] L'anno 100070072 [i.e. 1772]*, Bologna: 1772.

[47] Giacomo Casanova, *Lana caprina. Epistola di un lincatropo indiritta a S.A. la Signora Principessa J.L. n. P.C. Ultima edizione, In nessun luogo, [i.e. Venice] L'anno 100070072 [i.e. 1772]*, Bologna: 1772, pp.29, 32, 42-43, 45; L. Guerci, *La discussione sulla donna..*, pp.161-62.

In addition to the discourse proclaiming equality based on similarity, certain authors insisted on the value of women's difference. Poullain de la Barre himself, after arguing women's similarity, went on to assert that women's singularity was at the root of their moral superiority. He stated that women naturally had a sensitive and soft disposition proper to philosophizing, and that they were also spontaneously persuasive and eloquent, proof that they were endowed with the gift of clear ideas. Maternity, he thought, made them more readily virtuous. In short, he judged that women impulsively manifested the highest human values, including politeness, reason, peace, repose and love.[48] Although Poullain de la Barre's focus on superiority contradicted his discourse on equality, it was not entirely surprising given that he picked up on many of the ideas circulating about women's character in France in the seventeenth century. Carolyn Lougee claims that the social importance ascribed to the *précieuses* was based on changing social mores which valued what were thought of as feminine traits. For the *mondains*, civility and *honnêteté* was predicated on feeling, virtue, weakness and delicacy, and love.[49]

By the eighteenth century, the terms of the debate had changed somewhat. The Cartesian vogue in the debate on women had passed, since women had found that it had born no fruit.

> Irigaray's seventeenth-century predecessors were half in love with the logocentrism that she defies because it offered them an escape from

[48] F. Poullain de la Barre, *De l'égalité*..., pp.40-41, 49-50, 53-58, 177-78; P. Hoffman, *La femme dans la pensée*..., pp.306-07.

[49] C. Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes*..., p.31. I will expand on the notion of civility in the next chapter.

> imprisonment in their bodies. To think was to be ungendered. By the eighteenth century, dualism had worn out its welcome for women who had gained no significant recognition as thinking subjects.[50]

Those interested in supporting women's cause could still assert equality in difference. Emilie du Châtelet (1706-49) and Olympe de Gouges (1748?-1793) proclaimed the natural distinctiveness of women, but denied that this singularity rendered them inferior.[51] In fact, Gouges claimed that this difference made women superior, echoing the Poullain de la Barre's rhetoric. Dena Goodman also states that salon women's authority still resided in their "feminine" traits. She argues that politeness, which regulated conversation in the republic of letters, was thought to be naturally present in women, making the *salonnière*'s government of the republic acceptable and appropriate.[52]

In light of the circulation of both currents validating women's rational capacities and specific virtues, women were able to find room to participate in some of the more institutional settings of intellectual debate. The most important of these institutions was no doubt the literary salon. Examining the specific case of the Enlightenment salon in France, Dena Goodman argues it was the institutional base upon which truly independent critiques of government could be founded. The advent of the guild system and the subjection of printing to royal and ecclesiastical authority by the seventeenth century meant that humanists writers and printers were no longer able to fulfil this function. Similarly, academies were ruled out because of *their* links to the monarchy, who had

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[50] E. Harth, *Cartesian Women...*, p.237.
[51] *Ibid*, p.234.
[52] Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, pp.105, 119.

helped to found them and partially influenced who was admitted. According to Goodman, the salons were different. First, they were free from any relations of dependence on the monarchy. Second, the *salonnière*, regarded as naturally virtuous and lacking in ego, embodied and represented the principles of politeness and equality to which the republic of letters aspired. Not only this, but the *salonnière* also provided discipline to meetings by paying attention, asking questions and harmonizing dissident voices. As a result, her presence prevented intellectual relations from degenerating into chaos. Recognizing the value of her contribution, men submitted to her leadership and in this sense, the *salonnière* governed the salon in republican style--that is, she was "elected" by popular consent.[53] For all these reasons, the salon was a key institution in the French Enlightenment culture.

Very little information is available on salons in Italy. The most recent work available is on individual literary figures who held salons, and is less concerned with the institutional side of salon women's work. Consequently, they provide a very sketchy view of salon life. Gilberto Pizzamiglio, for example, describes Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi's salon as more a place of refined meeting than a cultural circle.[54] This conclusion is supported by Ernesto Masi, who claims that Italian salons lacked the focus and discipline of their French counterparts. He says that social life was too fragmented

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[53] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., pp.19-21, 101-02, 185; Dena Goodman, "Governing the Republic of Letters: The Politics of Culture in the French Enlightenment", *History of European Ideas*, 13, 3 (1991), pp.185, 187. Regarding the ties between academies and the French government, see D. Roche, *Le siècle des Lumières*..., p.137.

[54] Gilberto Pizzamiglio, "Ugo Foscolo nel salotto di Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi", *Quaderni Veneti*, 2 (1985), p.49.

and diversified to enable the same quality of discussion to take place.[55] In contrast, Giulio Natali draws parallels between the experience of the two countries, stating that the ideals of politeness and gallantry upheld in the French salons were equally important in Italy.[56] Furthermore, he claims that not all salon activity was frivolous,[57] while Paula Findlen reports that Italian salon culture " . . . privileged women as arbiters of intellectual debate".[58] Contradictory opinions on the nature of Italian salons even seems to be mirrored in the *salonnière*'s behaviour itself. Cinzia Giorgetti claims that Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi (1760-1836) underwent a real transformation over time, shifting from polite and captivating notetaker to active participant in the discussion.[59] In the face of this contradictory and disparate evidence, it is difficult to reach any conclusions. More information has to be culled from primary sources before generalizations can be made.

Despite the lack of information on the Italian case, it is possible to assert that salons were unique in eighteenth-century intellectual culture, in that, as institutions dominated by women, they were very much linked to the gender of the salon woman. In no other intellectual institution was a woman's role so clearly based on her gendered qualities. In France, for example, women were able to participate in mixed-gender freemasonic lodges. As a consequence, they were exposed to and adopted the principles of fraternity, which Janet Burke argues was the ". . . strongest form of Enlightenment

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[55] Ernesto Masi, *Parruche e sanculotti nel secolo XVIII*, Milano: Fratelli Treves, editori, 1886, pp.209-22.

[56] Giulio Natali, *Storia letteraria d'Italia. Il Settecento*, Milan: Dotto Francesco Vallardi, 1936, p.127.

[57] G. Natali, *Storia letteraria...*, p.128.

[58] P. Findlen, "Science as a Career in Enlightenment Italy...", p.465.

[59] Cinzia Giorgetti, *Ritratto di Isabella. Studi e documenti su Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi*, Florence: Le Lettere, 1992, p.96.

thought experienced by these women" in so far as it was thought to be a deep friendship, and thus a union of virtuous souls.[60] The way in which they applied the principles of fraternity outside the lodge was shown in their ". . . strong dedication to charity, an interest in new ideas and profound loyalty to friends . . .".[61] In this sense, they were no different from their male counterparts.

Similarly women's participation in university life in Italy was not strictly defined by their gender. As stated above, the university and academic climate in several Italian cities was different from that of France, in that it sought to integrate, not to exclude, women.

> Rather than creating a salon culture that served to formalize the separation of the world of the academies from the society of learned women, scholars in numerous Italian cities formed academies that linked the university, the salon, and the leisure activities of the urban patriciate.[62]

At the University of Bologna, for example, three women had teaching positions by the 1750s: philosopher and physicist Laura Bassi (1711-78), mathematician Maria Gaetana Agnesi (1718-99) and anatomist and wax modelist Anna Morandi Manzolini (1716-74).[63] This is not to say that there was no awareness of women scholars' sex, nor that they were accorded all the privileges of their males colleagues. One of the reasons that women were welcomed at the university was that their presence was seen as a way to revitalize

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[60] Janet Burke, "Freemasonry, Friendship and Noblewomen: The Role of the Secret Society in Bringing Enlightenment Thought to Pre-Revolutionary Women Elites", *History of European Ideas*, 10, 3 (1989), pp.283-84.

[61] *Ibid*, p.285.

[62] P. Findlen, "Science as a Career in Enlightenment Italy...", p.445.

[63] *Ibid*, p.446.

its declining status. In particular, Paula Findlen says that publicizing Laura Bassi as one of the most learned women even to have lived "would add lustre to the reputation of Bologna".[64] Furthermore, Bassi's academic activities were limited because she was a woman. For example, at the beginning of her career, the Senate declared that she should restrict her public readings and the governing board of the university recommended that she give one lecture every trimester. In the face of these restrictions, however, Bassi chose to "test the limits of her authority" by giving private lessons, managing a scientific salon, and requesting a salary increase and a reduction on the limits of her teaching, both of which were granted. With time, limits on Bassi's intellectual activity became even less significant as Bassi managed to participate more and more fully in academic life, eventually becoming the chair in experimental physics in 1776.[65]

Journalism was another Enlightenment institution in which women participated often in spite of their sex. Nina Rattner Gelbart documents how *Le Journal des Dames* functioned as what she describes as a *Frondeur* paper, one of ". . . a subgroup of permitted journals that expressed opposition sentiment yet still managed to circulate and that teach us a great deal about the regime and its internal enemies".[66] The journal was not only aimed at women, but was also occasionally edited by them, involving women in the process of "challenging entrenched institutions--the academies, the stage, the official state-protected press--in less and less tolerable ways, stretching acceptable protest to its

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[64] *Ibid,* p.448.

[65] *Ibid,* pp.450-51, 456-57, 466.

[66] Nina Rattner Gelbart, *Feminine and Opposition Journalism in Old Regime France: Le Journal des Dames*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, p.11.

very limit".[67] Furthermore, while the journal was concerned with women's rights and issues pertaining to other groups of marginal status under its female editors, it also pursued other goals. For example, the journal sought to involve the public in political debate and increase its awareness of a variety of issues, both of which allied it more closely to other oppositional presses.[68] It is unclear whether women's participation in journalism in Italy was of the same character. Rebecca Messbarger states that Italian women's magazines functioned less as a forum for opposition to government policy, and more as conservative feminine conduct manuals.[69] Meanwhile, Giulio Natali identifies Fanny Morelli's contribution to *Giornale di letterature straniera* and Caterina Cracas' (1691-1771) *Il Cracas* of Italian women's activity in this area,[70] although he does not specify the nature of their writing.

Literature Review

In the above overview, I have drawn on primary and secondary sources which discuss the conflicting philosophical stances regarding women and explore women's participation in specific intellectual institutions. In addition to this literature, the 1980s and 1990s saw a number of publications which have attempted to use philosophical and literary sources to provide a broader account of elite women's condition in the eighteenth

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[67] *Ibid*, p.3.
[68] *Ibid*, pp.18, 29.
[69] R. Messbarger, *Woman Disputed*..., p.131.
[70] G. Natali, *Storia letteraria*..., p.166.

century, and occasionally their integration into political and intellectual communities. Although these studies differ in the conclusions they reach, they all describe elite women's place in society in terms of public and private spheres, despite the criticism this practice has sustained on a number of fronts.[71] Two interpretations of the public/private split are offered. On the one hand, the republican public/private division which highlights women's dwindling or complete lack of public influence in the eighteenth century, is used by Lynn Hunt, Madelyn Gutwirth and Joan Landes. On the other hand, Dena Goodman and Rebecca Messbarger insist on women's public participation in the eighteenth century. Goodman, for example, uses Habermas's concept of the authentic public sphere of Enlightenment institutions which included the salon.

No matter how one defines it, though, the public/private division itself is problematic. It ignores that intellectual and political culture was generated and reiterated in the everyday exchanges in which women could participate. Correspondence provides a key to mapping these exchanges and making the links between them and the culture of institutions, whether governmental or literary. The salon women I studied set the agendas for salon debates, propagated aesthetic and political values and circulated the news that helped members of the republic of letters formulate a cohesive community. More pragmatically, they defended their political allies and helped to maintain the structure of elitist rule by furnishing recommendations and introductions. The study of these intellectual and political practices in turn shows how elite women of letters mixed

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[71] See Introduction, pp.1-2.

and matched philosophies to suit their intellectual and political purposes. To advance their causes and justify their actions (both to themselves and others), they created a pastiche of conservative and progressive gender prescriptions, combined simultaneously lauded reason and sensibility and drew on a variety of *mondain*, Enlightenment and Revolutionary themes.

1. The French Case

Anne Soprani and Béatrice Didier have described how women intellectuals reacted to and participated in the Revolution in France at the end of the eighteenth century without reference to a public/private frame.[72] The same is not true of authors who have attempted to gain a wider understanding of elite women's participation in politics and intellectual life. They have employed two versions of the public/private split. Joan Landes and Madelyn Gutwirth use the republican division,[73] which insists on women's absence in the public sphere, but this explanation, as Dena Goodman rightly points out, does not adequately represent the philosophy of the Enlightenment, nor its vision of women. Instead, she uses Habermas's concept of the authentic public sphere of

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[72] Anne Soprani, *La Révolution et les femmes, 1789-1796*, Paris: MA ed., 1988; Béatrice Didier, *Écrire la Révolution*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989.

[73] The republican public sphere was the masculine world of freedom, equality, individualism and reason, and the republican private sphere was the feminine world of particularity, sexuality, and emotion. This division draws on eighteenth-century conceptions of Roman republicanism and social organization. Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, p.43.

government critique to show that Enlightenment salon women were an integral part of public life.[74] But this interpretation, which considers how political philosophy mediates gender prescriptions, only focuses on one aspect of Enlightenment culture: that which was propagated in institutional settings. In fact, the content of intellectual debates which took place in the entire last half of the century (including the Enlightenment) were inextricably linked to the exchanges which took place outside the salons and academies, a point which I will illustrate in more depth when discussing the literature concerning Italy.

The object of both Madelyn Gutwirth's and Joan Landes' studies is to explain the process leading up to, in their view, the watertight separation of spheres which existed in nineteenth-century France.[75] In order to do so, both chart the gradual process of elite women's disempowerment through categories of binary opposition: the public sphere of culture is the sphere of political power while the private sphere of nature is defined by the absence of power. These spheres are described in quasi-geographical terms of increasingly gendered character, culminating in a clear separation of spheres at the time of the Revolution.

Madelyn Gutwirth documents the change in attitudes about women from a literary perspective; in studying seventeenth- and eighteenth-century art and literature, she is able

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[74] For Habermas, the authentic public sphere was the sphere of disembodied, rational and critical literary and political debate. It was authentic because both the grounding the bourgeoisie received in family life and its economic independence allowed its members to contest government policy in a truly disinterested and thus "authentic" way. I will discuss Habermas's public sphere in more detail below.

[75] Madelyn Gutwirth, *Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992; Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

to posit certain facts about the position of women in French society. For example, Gutwirth claims that seventeenth-century rococo art linked women and desire by extolling their physicality. Since this style was popular in the court, a social space, Gutwirth seems to imply that the same attitudes represented in the art were held by court members, signifying the acceptance of according social space to women.[76]

Throughout the eighteenth century, Rococo's positive vision of women and courtly life was challenged and reconfigured as *galanterie* and desire came to be seen as the instruments of crass seduction.[77] Culture was increasingly defined in more masculine terms, whereas nature came to be seen as the proper domain for women. Any contravention of this division of spheres was seen as a return to what came to be seen as the artifice and immorality of the previous era.

> The central issue of eighteenth-century French culture, if we are obliged to choose one, revolves about the definitions of nature and of culture, their respective rights, and the determining of the most favorable valence between them. Social woman...as the flagrant sign of the regnant culture, will be viewed by her most savage male critics as a triumph of cultural artifice, of appearance, as dazzling surface at best, as morally grotesque at worst.[78]

Gutwirth illustrates this by showing how a number of women who held positions of political or cultural influence in the eighteenth century, both salon women and royal mistresses (including Claudine-Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin (1682-1749) and Jeanne-

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[76] M. Gutwirth, Twilight of the Goddesses..., p.22.
[77] *Ibid*, p.25.
[78] *Ibid*, pp.78-79.

Antoinette Poisson, the Marquise de Pompadour (1721-64)), were criticized on the basis of their sex.[79]

This opposition to "cultured" women became increasingly radical during the French Revolution. Even though they benefited from certain initial liberties, Gutwirth presents copious evidence to support her assertion that women's natural role was firmly entrenched after 1793. Women were not allowed to participate as active citizens in the Revolution, and those that claimed this right, including Madame Roland, Olympe de Gouges, and the members of the *Club des citoyennes révolutionnaires républicaines*, were denied it, sometimes violently.[80] In short,

> After Thermidor, despite the demise of the Jacobins, the regime of compulsory female conjugality was firmly in place, as it had been tending to become since well before the Revolution: the épouse et mère (wife-mother) was relentlessly installed as the sole acceptable ideal for women.[81]

For Gutwirth, the gendered separation between nature and culture was complete.

Joan B. Landes discusses a similar slide towards women's exclusion from politics and intellectual life in her book, although she refers to the separation of spheres in terms of public and private. In doing so, she wants to challenge Jürgen Habermas's definition of the bourgeois public sphere as a political ideal, claiming that he forgets that women were slowly excluded from participation. For example, Landes states that although salon women, drawn from the aristocracy and haute bourgeoisie, were still able to maintain

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[79] *Ibid*, pp.82-103.
[80] *Ibid*, pp.297-315.
[81] *Ibid*, p.366.

some measure of social prominence in the mid-eighteenth century, they were increasingly attacked for ". . . their frivolity, luxury and impropriety".[82] By the time of the Revolution, there was no room for the Old Regime's "feminine" culture of luxury and artifice; all relations had to be transparent, with everyone playing his or her naturally assigned role. In this sense, revolutionaries drew on classical republican political models, which fixed gender differences, denying women an active role in the public sphere.[83]

The similarities of these two works transcend the differences in the types of sources they use and in the terminology they employ. Although Gutwirth makes much more use of art work and sketches, and Landes looks at more literary sources, both agree on the way that women were represented in both the Old Regime and Revolutionary era. This leads to the question of terminology. Although Gutwirth speaks of a division between nature and culture, and Landes of one between public and private, they are both essentially referring to the same phenomenon: the exclusion of women from positions of power. Both oppose the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century "feminine" court culture of the Old Regime,[84] which emphasized the importance of luxury, to an eighteenth-century "masculine" revolutionary republican culture, which denied women access to power.

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[82] J. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*..., p.26.

[83] *Ibid*, p.46.

[84] Landes is careful to point out that the salon was "...Neither strictly bourgeois nor aristocratic".(p.23) She claims that it could not belong to Habermas's bourgeois public sphere because of its conservative and feminine character (p.40), but it could not belong to the court because "...the salon belonged to a wider urban culture--beyond the sphere of the court proper".(p.25) Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*.... Landes nevertheless make important links between salons and the absolutist regime, which I will discuss below.

One of the strongest critiques that can be made of this argument is that it is too simplistic. No one denies that the Revolution showed many signs of antagonism towards "public women". As Sarah Maza states,

> That the Revolution, at least in its Jacobin phase, was explicitly and aggressively antifemale is at this point widely accepted: there has been much written in recent years about the closing of the women's political clubs in 1793, about the executions of prominent women (including the Revolution's most articulate feminist, Olympe de Gouges) under the Jacobin regime, and about the virulent misogyny directed at "public women" in general and Marie-Antoinette in particular.[85]

What is not clear is whether this misogynist phase is part of a larger dynamic in the history of women in France. Did the Revolution truly constitute a turning point, a watershed of anti-woman sentiment that had been building over the century and which eradicated women's public life? Carolyn Lougee and Lynn Hunt give us reason to doubt the slide towards the enclosure of women in the private sphere. First, Lougee shows how, even in the seventeenth-century, salon women faced virulent opposition of their social reforms articulated in terms of gender. Second, Hunt stresses that the French Revolution actually created opportunities for women's political activism which did not exist before. For instance, although women had previously participated in and often initiated food riots, during the Revolution they began to participate in marches, demonstrations and political clubs.[86] Moreover, even after the Terror, as Olwen Hufton

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[85] Sarah Maza, "Women, the Bourgeoisie, and the Public Sphere: Response to Daniel Gordon and David Bell", *French Historical Studies*, 17, 4 (Fall 1992), p.943.

[86] Lynn Hunt, "Male Virtue and Republican Motherhood" in Keith Michael Baker, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 4: *The Terror*, New York: Pergamon, 1994,

shows, women were politically active in reviving religious ceremony and re-establishing churches.[87]

The fact that Landes and Gutwirth make such a clear distinction between public and private women pre- and post-Revolution can be explained by their desire to uncover the roots of women's subordination. They both presumed to find the origins of the radical nineteenth-century gender split in the eighteenth, and thus were both necessarily more teleological and deterministic in finding and presenting their evidence.[88] Their determinism also led them to accept the Marxist view of the Revolution as a triumph of the bourgeoisie and its masculinist ideals over a women-friendly aristocracy that held power until 1789.[89] As William Doyle has shown, however, the Revolution was not a triumph of the bourgeoisie or the "bourgeois culture of the Enlightenment" as formulated by Albert Soboul.[90] Enlightenment institutions were frequented by landed elites including both enlightened nobles and bourgeois together, and, as we shall see below, were more interested in propagating the idea of polite sociability than republicanism. In fact, class in political philosophy never align in any clear-cut way, and this was just as

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p.205; Lynn Hunt, "Reading the French Revolution: A Reply", *French Historical Studies*, 19, 2 (Fall 1995), p.294; C. Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes*....

[87] Olwen H. Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992, pp.120-30.

[88] Sarah Maza asks whether this is not the case with Landes, at least. See S. Maza, "Women, the Bourgeoisie, and the Public Sphere...", pp.946, 956.

[89] Landes explicitly finds "bourgeois" republican ideals at the source of the Revolution. See her *Women and the Public Sphere*..., pp.1, 23. Gutwirth does not use this terminology but ascribes to its logic in linking Enlightenment thinkers with republicanism and the Revolution.

[90] Albert Soboul, "L'Encyclopédie et le mouvement encyclopédiste", *La pensée*, 39 (November-December 1951), pp.41-51; William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp.11-24, 116-38.

true of aristocratic and bourgeois views of women. Philosophy intersected with class to make views on gender more complex than the picture that Landes and Gutwirth present.

Landes, in particular, has been criticized for ignoring the role of political philosophy and merging several strains of late eighteenth-century thought in order to prove her argument about women and justify her criticism of Jürgen Habermas. She presents the Revolution as a victory of Enlightenment ideals championed by Rousseau, who excluded public roles for women, over the more public-woman-friendly Old Regime. In other words, she is applying a classic republican public/private split to the eighteenth century and claiming that this is the division that Habermas makes. Habermas and republicans define public and private in distinct ways, though. For republicans, the public sphere was the masculine world of freedom, equality, individualism and reason, and the private sphere was the feminine world of particularity, sexuality, and emotion.[91] For Habermas, the authentic public sphere was a sphere of disembodied reason and Enlightenment sociability, critical of government action, which included both men and women. Habermas's frame defines the *philosophes* as both cohesive in their social and political goals, and at the same time distinct from other public figures.

This distinctiveness extended to their opinions regarding women. In opposition to Rousseau, whom Daniel Gordon states can be more profitably seen as a critic of the Enlightenment than one of its leading figures,[92] Habermas recognized that many of the

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[91] C. Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract", p.43.

[92] Daniel Gordon, "Philosophy, Sociology, and Gender in the Enlightenment Conception of Public Opinion", *French Historical Studies*, 17, 4, (Fall 1992), p.900.

philosophes, including Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (1717-83) and Condorcet, actually advocated a social role for women in the eighteenth century. Because Landes fails to differentiate between Rousseau and the *philosophes*, she claims that the latter did not fully accept salon women as part of the authentic public sphere.[93] The result is Landes's contested classification of the salon as an institution lying between the realms of court and the republic of letters.[94] Dena Goodman and Daniel Gordon strongly object to the links that Landes makes between the salon and the court, claiming that, although sometimes ambiguous, Landes ultimately defines the salon as an absolutist institution.[95] Although Landes' position on the salon is debatable, there is no question that she neatly defines it out of the republic of letters, which serves to preserve her hypothesis that the Enlightenment was anti-woman. In short, in ignoring political philosophy as an independent force in shaping culture, both Landes and Gutwirth obscure some important realities about the position of women in eighteenth-century French society.

Lynn Hunt is another scholar studying public discourse on gender in France at the end of the eighteenth century who does not sufficiently take political philosophy and the existence of diverse cultural currents into account. Like Gutwirth and Landes, she also identifies a broad consensus about attitudes towards women (especially in the years leading up to and during the Revolution), stating that philosophic and revolutionary

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[93] *Ibid*, p.40.

[94] J. Landes, Women and the Public Sphere..., p.23.

[95] D. Gordon, "Philosophy, Sociology and Gender...", p.901; Daniel Gordon, "Daniel Gordon Responds to Sarah Maza", *French Historical Studies*, 17, 4 (Fall 1992), pp.951-53; D. Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life...", p.16.

opinion placed virtuous women in the private sphere of domestic activity while virtuous men undertook political reconstruction in the public sphere.[96] In her opinion, this idealization about the separation of spheres is what led to the sexual vilification of Marie Antoinette in pornographic literature which circulated through the streets of Paris. It expressed an extreme fear about the feminization of the public sphere which was also evident in the outlawing of women's clubs and the public condemnation of the political activities of Olympe de Gouges and Madame Roland.[97]

The reinforcement of clear gender boundaries was also evident in the symbolic meaning attributed to femininity in Revolutionary culture. In *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, Hunt explains how the feminine symbol of Liberty was gradually upstaged and replaced by a more dominant, more powerful Hercules figure, who was supposed to represent Fraternity.[98] One of the most prominent forums in which this change was evident was in the configuration of the Festival of the Supreme Being, organized by Jacques Louis David for June 8, 1794 as an alternative to the Festival of Reason (celebrated in the fall of 1793), in which Reason was embodied by a woman.[99]

In contrast to Landes and Gutwirth, Hunt is more careful about the connection she makes between representations of women and women's appropriation of these

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[96] Lynn Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution" in Lynn Hunt, ed., *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, pp.124-25.

[97] *Ibid.*

[98] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, pp.94-106.

[99] Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p.154.

representations. Her concern for linking theory and practice is evident in *Politics, Culture and Class* in which she ties her investigation of Revolutionary images in the first half of her book to the politics underlying election results in the second half. Although examining election results did not allow her to study the effect of culture on women in politics, she does explore this issue in an article on Marie Antoinette. Here, she makes an argument similar to that of Landes and Gutwirth by stating that during the Revolutionary period, the ideal of domesticity propagated by Rousseau and Montesquieu had the effect of limiting women's actions and enclosing them in the private sphere. In her most recent book, she has abandoned her concern with material outcomes altogether, remaining at the level of ideas. In so doing, she avoids the sticky problem of determining what effect these ideas had on society.[100]

Hunt is also careful to avoid her colleagues' teleology. As we saw above, she is one of the voices which questions the negative outcomes of the Revolution on women, bringing to light the opportunities it provided them. Evidence of this conviction is available in her own analysis. While she describes how at the height of radical government, the feminine figures of Liberty and Equality were overshadowed and protected by their Herculean brother, Fraternity, she also goes on to say that after the fall of the Radicals, the figure of Hercules became less imposing. On the coins of the

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[100] L. Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class...*; *idem*, "The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette..."; *idem*, *The Family Romance....*

Republic after 1795, for example, he was same size as his sisters, held no club and generally looked less threatening.[101]

Nevertheless, Hunt is taken to task by Dorinda Outram, who criticizes Hunt for her unitary vision of culture.[102] Hunt writes as if everyone in Revolutionary France, with the exception of certain rebellious women, was in agreement about women's private role. While it is true that during the Revolution the number of voices condemning women was particularly high, there has never been a consensus on women's proper social role or intellectual abilities, and late eighteenth-century France is no exception. In fact, it was the existence of these tensions and disagreements that enabled women to be active participants in social and political debates.

This is the point which Dena Goodman makes so elegantly. In defining culture as a network of diverse discourses and cross-cutting political cleavages, she makes room for Enlightenment *salonnières* in "public" life.[103] As we have seen above, Landes and Gutwirth employ a public/private frame which identifies aristocracy with public women and the bourgeois republicanism with private women. Dena Goodman, in contrast, understands that class was not the determining factor in shaping social views and views concerning women: political philosophy was also significant. Drawing on the work of Jürgen Habermas, she underlines the existence of a public sphere in the realm of non-governmental action: the authentic public sphere. In this sphere, members of the French

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[101] L. Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class...*, p.113.

[102] Dorinda Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class and Political Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. p.32.

[103] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters...*, pp.2-6.

intellectual community came together in Enlightenment institutions, including academies, salons and masonic lodges, to reflect critically on social and political life.[104] In light of findings showing that bourgeoisie and aristocrats socialized together, Goodman dismisses Habermas's Marxist claims that the authentic public sphere was strictly bourgeois.[105] She does, however, agree with his contention that men and women both acted in this sphere to further the cause of humanity.[106] By defining the public sphere in revised Habermasian terms, Goodman is able to distinguish between court women and salon women in a way that Landes does not: she states that they did not have the same political goals, and therefore were not subject to the same types of critiques.[107] Moreover, recognizing the salon as an Enlightenment institution also allows her to reveal a more dynamic and innovative role for elite women in social and political life, as opposed to one which simply links them to a decaying aristocracy.

On a less positive note, Goodman is perhaps over-enthusiastic in her appropriation of Habermas. Although he does make room for salon women in the public sphere, his definition of this sphere as a realm of disembodied reason distinct from the intimate sphere of family and commodity exchange leaves him (and Goodman) open to the feminist criticisms which insist on the inseparability of public and private in the generation of political culture. To better demonstrate this, I will undertake a brief review of Habermas's description of public and private spheres in the private domain.

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[104] *Ibid*, pp.12-15.
[105] D. Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life...", p.8.
[106] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters...*, p.28.
[107] *Ibid*, p.16.

According to Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the critical space of sociability which constituted the bourgeois public sphere was brought into existence by a very specific combination of circumstances in eighteenth-century England, France and Germany. The birth and expansion of commodity exchange forming the basis of capitalism created a community held together by lateral, as opposed to hierarchical, connections.[108] A series of institutions and communications networks developed in order to accommodate and institutionalize this exchange, including a postal system and the press.[109] A bourgeois sense of consciousness, however, only arose through the state's attempts to institute mercantilism policies which affected trade.

> In this stratum [the bourgeois], which more than any other was affected *and* called upon by mercantilism policies, the state authorities evoked a resonance leading the *publicum*, the abstract counterpart of public authority, into an awareness of itself as the latter's opponent, that is, as the public of the now emerging *public sphere of civil society*. For the latter developed to the extent to which the public concern regarding the private sphere of civil society was no longer confined to the authorities but was considered by the subjects as one that was properly theirs.[110]

Furthermore, it was only when the bourgeoisie came to *debate* issues of commodity exchange that the bourgeois public sphere was able to assume its properly political and public function of criticizing government policy and influencing it in the bourgeoisie's interest. As Habermas makes clear in a chart mapping private and public spheres, civil

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[107] *Ibid*, p.16.

[108] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989, p.15.

[109] *Ibid*, p.16.

[110] *Ibid*, p.23.

society, the realm of commodity exchange and social labour itself (the activity which precedes debate), belongs in the private sphere of the private realm.[111]

Figure 1. Habermas' Public and Private Spheres.[112]

Private Realm		Sphere of State Authority
Civil society (realm of commodity exchange and social labour) Conjugal family's internal space (bourgeois intellectuals)	Public sphere in the political realm Public sphere in the world of letters (clubs, press) (market of culture products)	State (realm of the "police") court (courtly-noble society)

Commodity exchange was not the only subject of discussion in Habermas's bourgeois public sphere, though. Prior to the establishment of political institutions capable of supporting this type of exchange, that is (in Habermas's opinion), prior to the Revolution,[113] the principles of critical debate based on reason had already been established in the literary public sphere. In place of discussing economic life, deliberation centred around the common exploration of subjectivity. The subjectivity in question was as crucial to the constitution of the bourgeois public sphere as the birth of capitalism. Arising in the heart of the newly-emerged and smaller bourgeois family (the intimate sphere of the private domain),[114] the cultivation of subjectivity provided

[111] *Ibid*, pp.30, 51.
[112] Reproduction of figure in J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation...*, p.30.
[113] *Ibid*, pp.69-70.
[114] *Ibid*, pp.28, 44.

individuals with the tools to question the state's monopoly on culture in the literary public sphere and anchored the bourgeois's intellectual independence in political life.

But where do women fit into this scheme? Habermas says that women played a larger role in the literary public sphere than the economic and political one.[115] It is true, therefore, that Habermas did make room for women in public life; but by stating they were exclusively involved in literary debate, as opposed to debates over economic interest, he only accorded them a marginal role in influencing public policy in the eighteenth century. While the developments which took place in the literary sphere were an essential part of government criticism, they were insufficient to challenge public authority on their own. They had to be subsumed into the economic debate over commodity exchange to take on any political force.[116]

Since Habermas conceived of his bifurcated bourgeois public sphere, however, there have been changes made in the way that culture is conceived in eighteenth-century France. Largely as a result of the wide circulation of Michel Foucault's thought and the impact of François Furet's work, the definition of what is properly political has been widened to include discourse and the avenues through which power structures are contested and criticized in a more general sense. This new respect given to the political power of culture is what has allowed Dena Goodman to revamp Habermas's theory to challenge traditionally republican notions of women's place in eighteenth-century

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[115] *Ibid*, p.56.
[116] *Ibid*, p.51.

society.[117] Elite women played an important role in the Enlightenment questioning of absolutist institutions through their salon work--work which was recognized and esteemed by the *philosophes*.

Goodman's findings have provided valuable new insight into eighteenth-century intellectual life by underlining the place of salon women in it. Nonetheless, in accepting the clear-cut division between public and private life which Habermas makes, she also impoverishes her own theory. Of course, both she and Daniel Gordon would be perplexed by the assertion that Habermas makes a distinction between public and private life. In fact, the whole beauty of his theory in their eyes is that the bourgeois public sphere is also private.[118] But it is only private in the sense that it is non-governmental, not in the sense that it incorporates elements of republican privacy, including family, particular interests and inequality. This will become clearer if we turn once again to Habermas.

What does he mean by private? His private sphere, like the public, is split into the sphere of commodity exchange and the sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family. In his analysis, individuals believed that both provided them with complete freedom, economic in the market and psychological in the family. Of course, this idea of complete freedom was illusory, but to different degrees in each domain. The material freedom

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[117] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., pp.1, 303.

[118] D. Gordon, "Philosophy, Sociology and Gender...", p.903; D. Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life...", p.20.

afforded by the market was significant;[119] even if subject to some governmental regulation, it still provided the basis for autonomy vis-à-vis the state. The actual existence of freedom in the latter domain was more problematic. Not only was the family still subject to market forces; it was also the site of the inequality born of patriarchal relations.[120]

How much did individuals' position in the realm of commodity exchange and in the conjugal family affect discourse in the public sphere, then? Not in any meaningful way, according to Habermas. Individuals in their economic position as bourgeois did carry their vested interests into public debate, but these interests were only economic, those of property owners, and not cultural in any wider sense. With regard to the particular interests existing in the conjugal family, Habermas considers that they did not have any bearing on the public sphere: they were eliminated through the process of rational-critical debate.[121] All that was left of the intimate sphere of the family was the solid awareness of subjectivity and the individual's belief in the reality of his or her freedom, which grounded his or her humanity and thus ensured resistance to cultural and ultimately political domination. The contents of this subjectivity had been evacuated.

This is the side of Habermas that feminist critics take issue with, and rightly so.[122] In describing the public sphere as the sphere of universal reason untouched by inequality and particularity, he presents an idealized vision of the bourgeois public sphere based on

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[119] *Ibid*, pp.46, 55.
[120] J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation...*, pp.46-47.
[121] *Ibid*, p.54.

liberal tenets. But these tenets themselves are problematic. They deny that individuals were influenced by personal consideration in their decision making and, consequently, cannot provide an adequate account of culture.[123] Humans are language animals, which means that they not only function in the world that has meaning for them (a meaning which is in some sense "given" to them in that they are always born into an already existing speech community), but also that each individual is continually reshaping the meaning of his or her surroundings--that in each expression (which cannot be separated from one's preferences or "who" one is), he or she is not only reiterating, but also generating culture.[124] As Keith Baker states,

> The action of a rioter in picking up a stone can no more be understood apart from the symbolic field that gives it meaning than the action of a priest in picking up a sacramental vessel. The philosopher picking up a pen is not performing a less social action than the ploughman picking up a plough, nor does the latter act lack intellectual dimensions. Action implies meaning; meaning implies cultural intersubjectivity; intersubjectivity implies society. All social activity has an intellectual dimension that gives it meaning, just as all intellectual activity has a social dimension that gives it a point.[125]

Consequently, the debates that take place inside academies, salons and government can never be separated from the discussions that take place outside of them. To ignore this is to ignore the contribution of marginalized groups, including women, who could only

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[122] Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women*..., p.123; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Exiting Democracy", *Social Text: Theory/Culture/Ideology*, 25-26 (1990), pp.62-65, 70-74.

[123] Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere" in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992, p.34.

[124] Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp.231-34.

rarely hold official positions in most intellectual and political institutions, to the formation of political and intellectual life. In defining the authentic public sphere as the sole seat of political and intellectual life, then, Habermas' framework is too limited. Similarly, in accepting the essence of this framework which insists on this clear separation (because it defines salon women into the public sphere), Goodman's work cannot account for the participation of the majority of elite women in politics and the world of letters.

2. The Italian Case

The nature of the literature on women in Italy in the eighteenth century is very different from that concerning French women of the same period. The eighteenth century in general has received very little scholarly attention and the study of Italian women in this era has received even less. As such, the theoretical and historiographical framework is not as sophisticated as that developed for France, and consequently, not open to the same critiques. Like the literature on France, it discusses the authors who wrote about women's intellectual capacities and behaviour. Conversely, almost no one writing about Italian women discusses how these theories affected women's lives. One important exception is the work of Paula Findlen, whose acknowledgement of the

[125] Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.13.

interconnection between private and public can be used to nourish thought on the French case.

Because so little has been written on women in eighteenth-century Italy, the research that has been undertaken attempts to give an overview of attitudes towards women as expressed in the work of journalists and those who wrote treatises, catalogues, eulogies and memoirs which I have discussed in the first section of this chapter. Included in this category is Luciano Guerci's *La discussione sulla donna nell'Italia del Settecento*,[126] and Fiorenza Taricone and Susanna Bucci's *La condizione della donna nel XVII e XVIII secolo*.[127] In these two books, a variety of views towards women and their proper social role is expressed: As we saw above,[128] some eighteenth-century Italian writers stressed women's duplicity, their seductive powers, and their moral, physical and intellectual inferiority while others underlined that their intellectual defects were socially imposed through absence of instruction rather than being innate, and even supported education for women, as it would help them in their role of mother. However, neither book considers how women responded to these prescriptions.

Rebecca Messbarger tries to address this deficiency somewhat by considering how literate women formulated their own thoughts about women's place in society.[129] In order to do so, she examines the writings of women working for two Italian fashion magazines, *La donna galante ed erudita* and *Giornale delle dame e delle mode di*

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[126] L. Guerci, *La discussione sulla donna....*
[127] Rome: Carucci editore, 1983.
[128] See pages 14-18, 22-23.

Francia, as well as Diamante Medaglio Fiani and Rosa Califronia's defences of women's rights and education. Although her work gives us some idea as to the ". . . often equivocal methods of women's resistance to authoritative constructions of femininity", she does not consider the effect of gender prescriptions on women's day-to-day lives.[130] Luciano Guerci also provides a more complex view of gender in *La sposa obbediente. Donna e matrimonio nella discussione dell'Italia del Settecento*, in which he investigates how concern over population influenced views on matrimony, breastfeeding and conjugal obedience. Despite Guerci's attention to historical context, though, he is not interested in exploring how women reacted to the increased pressure to embrace matrimony and maternity.[131] In fact, Paula Findlen stands out in her ability to show how women themselves negotiated questions of gender in relation to other social, cultural and intellectual matters. In her article on Laura Bassi, she is able to show not only how Bassi's sex was capitalized on by the University of Bologna to reinvigorate its reputation, but also how Bassi was able to ensconce herself in the academic environment and the subsequent effect of her success on other women's intellectual opportunities.[132] In this sense, Findlen's methodology is closer to Dena Goodman's, as it concentrates on the role actually taken by women working in the system of intellectual activity. Where it departs from Goodman is in her decision to eschew the language of private and public to

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[129] R. Messbarger, *Woman Disputed....*
[130] *Ibid*, p.239.
[131] Turin: Tirrenia Stampatori, 1988.
[132] P. Findlen, "Science as a Career in Enlightenment Italy...".

concentrate on describing how patronage and social connections affected Laura Bassi's professional life.

> Aspiring natural philosophers could no more make their way in the world without patrons than they could lay claim to the title of 'philosopher' without having read Aristotle. Social connections in conjunction with learning made acceptance into the scientific community possible; they mediated the awarding of university positions and promotions and paved one's entry into the courts, salons, and academies, where knowledge was put on display in front of a largely patrician audience.[133]

Laura Bassi was no exception to this rule. She provided gossip and kept Flaminio Scarselli, Bolognese ambassador at the papal court, informed about the local scientific and political scene in exchange for his encouragement of papal intervention in favour of her career.[134]

In describing the sociability surrounding intellectual life, then, Findlen underlines the connection between public and private spheres. Furthermore, even though she only focuses on the three women professors at the University of Bologna, women who attained a degree of professional success not common among their peers, her conception of culture recognizes the openness of the university environment to external influences. The university was linked to the outside world through its faculty who had relations, both personal and professional, outside its walls. Moreover, this sociability necessarily affected the working of the institution.

It was exactly the porous nature of more formal political and intellectual institutions which allowed officially marginalized groups, including women, access to

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[133] *Ibid,* p.447.

power and which makes any strict division between private and public spheres untenable. The explicit illustration and exploration of this theoretical point in the case of salon women in eighteenth-century France and Venetia is the principal goal of this thesis. I want to specifically take aim at both republican and Habermasian public/private division which still have such a strong hold on scholarship concerning elite women in France and Italy. In contrast to arguments which link power and objectivity, and separate them from particularity and powerlessness, a close reading of the salon women's letters shows that the process of political and intellectual debate was much more organic. The correspondence of Julie de Lespinasse (1732-76), Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini (*c.*1751-1807), Marie-Jeanne Roland de la Platière (1754-93) and Giustina Renier Michiel (1755-1832) shows that opinions were formed and agendas were set for not only salon discussions but also academy meetings and government policy long before anyone set foot in the spaces reserved for official political and intellectual polemics.

Their correspondence also reveals the way in which gender and political philosophy intersected to affect women's literary and political participation outside of the salons. One can see reflections of the most conservative conduct manuals in the presentation of literary critiques and the dissemination of political information. Julie de Lespinasse continually claimed that she had no reason, Manon Roland said she had no interest in politics and Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini made self-deprecating remarks about her writing. Nevertheless, between women's comments about their intellectual and political activities and the activities themselves lay a significant gap. Lespinasse made

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[134] *Ibid,* pp.460-61.

incisive criticism of plays and eulogies, Roland fervently informed her political allies of Revolutionary events and Mosconi was proud enough of her *stroffette* to send them to the top men and women of letters in Italy. In short, intellectual women were afforded much more freedom than even they themselves were either aware of or chose to admit.

Therefore, modesty was one factor which gave women more room to manoeuvre. Even more important in affecting their freedom were social and political conditions and community allegiances. If women were defending the proper cause, their gender became decreasingly relevant in their own eyes and those of their compatriots. This is particularly clear in the cases of Giustina Renier Michiel and Manon Roland, who, during the Revolution and Napoleonic wars respectively, ensured that their friends and family had the proper political information. Roland pushed gender boundaries even further by publishing letters in her name discrediting the *Montagne* by exposing the irregular conditions of her arrest. Salon women did not have to be so dramatic to implicate themselves politically, however. As members of the elite, if not the aristocracy, they sought to maintain the integrity of their select group (members of the republic of letters) against the incursion of those without virtue and *honnêteté*. These women achieved this through introductions and recommendations, and by reiterating the fine qualities and good reputation of their correspondents, in distinction from the vulgarity of the common people.

The question of elitism among the *gens de lettres* has been discussed in a number of forums. According to Norbert Elias, the bourgeois appropriation of aristocratic

manners constituted a strategic attempt to gain access to power through the assimilation of culture.[135] As Daniel Gordon has pointed out, however, the culture of men and women of letters (which, as we should recall, was not strictly bourgeois) was founded on a distinctive premise. Gordon reveals the way in which Enlightened sociability merged the ideal of conviviality contained in seventeenth-century courtesy literature with natural-law discourse to engender the idea of civility. In the eyes of Enlightenment philosophers, the Enlightenment republic of letters was a space of mixed sociability (privileging the idea of natural equality) committed to the concept of polite conversation. Public opinion was the consensus which would necessarily emanate from this type of exchange, and would ultimately be the basis upon which social order would be founded. The fact that order could be attained outside the political process convinced the French that they were the most civilized and the most moral nation in the world.[136]

This type of interpretation focuses on a very specific aspect of the philosophy of the republic of letters: the goal of certain Enlightenment thinkers to put conversation to work for the good of humanity. Both Gordon and Goodman consider the politics of the republic in relation to this political philosophy because it was the aspect which was most evident in Enlightenment institutions and philosophical writings they study. While for Goodman the goal of aiding humanity through sociability was political in the sense that it

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[135] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manner and State Formation and Civilization*, translated by Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, pp.32-33.

[136] Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp.93, 117-18, 122-27, 130, 172-74.

helped to shape the social and discursive practices of culture in the Old Regime,[137] Gordon is careful to underline the degree to which the pursuit of equality was *a*political, in that it did not challenge the social hierarchy which existed outside the republic of letters.

> [I]n this book I have tried to establish how French authors created a unique ideological space that was neither democratic nor absolutist. Many French thinkers were profoundly egalitarian without advocating the distribution of sovereign power.[138]

In making his case, he cites (among others) Holbach, who wrote that "whoever strives to be gay must, upon entering into company, forget himself and make others forget their pride, their pettiness, their titles and their pretensions", and yet who also stated that "real morality . . . does not propose to suppress the nobility, but to place before its eyes its duties towards society".[139] In contrast to Gordon, I would argue that this type of position was political, because part of its mandate was to uphold a social hierarchy which worked to the benefit of the *gens des lettres.*

Contra Elias, it is true that the eighteenth-century republic in both Venetia and France had a distinctive ethic which was egalitarian. Nevertheless, their commitment to this distinction also underlined the extent to which they were elitist. In recognizing the equality of the *gens de lettres*, one also recognized their superiority to others. This

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[137] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., p.303.

[138] D. Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*..., p.4.

[139] "Quiconque veut être gai, doit, en entrant dans une compagnie, oublier lui-même, & faire oublier aux autres son amour-propre, ses petitesses, ses titres, ses prétentions". Paul Thiry, baron d'Holbach, *La morale universelle ou les devoirs de l'homme fondés sur sa nature*, vol. 3. Amsterdam: M.M. Rey, 1776; "La vraie morale...ne doit pas se proposer de déprimer la Noblesse, mais de lui mettre sous les yeux ses engagements

elitism, as much as the ethic of egalitarianism, was a legacy of seventeenth-century *mondain* culture which Elisabeth Goldsmith describes in the following way:

> Salon habitués cultivated the idea that they constituted a kind of ideal elite, which could always close ranks and create a separate reality even when surrounded by the heterogeneous crowd of courtiers.... By asserting the principle of absolute equality within the confines of the ruelle, salon life helped break down traditional systems of social stratification, while also creating a new concept of elite solidarity based on certain kinds of personal accomplishments. The ideology of sociability underlying salon culture, however, remained aristocratic in the sense that it cultivated the image of an exclusive group of superior beings. If salon habitués were increasingly bourgeois, the style of interaction they were learning was nonetheless directly descended from the courtly notions of polite conversation. As the principal expression of salon culture, ideal conversation was understood to be possible only if all participants were confident both of their equal standing within the group, and of their superiority to all who were outside it. The coterie of speakers had to be sure of the boundaries separating them from the rest of society, and at the same time they had to be able to comfortably contemplate that society.[140]

The promotion of both egalitarianism and elitism together caused as much difficulty for the eighteenth-century republic as it did for *le monde* of the seventeenth. The eighteenth-century republic, like *le monde*, was in theory open to all those of talent and yet exclusive in needing to distinguish itself from the rest of society. This resulted in a tension between openness and closure which increased the urgency with which the republic patrolled its boundaries, ensuring that only those who were truly superior gained entry. Moreover, despite the rhetoric which claimed that "nobility" was based only on talent and a commitment to humanity, birth was still a crucial factor in determining who was

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envers la société...". P.T., baron d'Holbach, *La morale universelle*..., vol. 2, p.111. D. Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*..., pp.68-69.

[140] Elisabeth C. Goldsmith, *"Exclusive Conversations": The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988, p.45.

admitted to the republic and who was left at the gate. Robert Darnton, following Tocqueville, states that the principle of open access was only sporadically applied, and that, with rare exception, only the landed bourgeoisie and aristocracy really had any chance of gaining entry into this world.[141]

Therefore, in addition to the propagation of an egalitarian ethos, the members of the republic of letters also propagated an elitist one. This elitism was as political as the discourse on equality in that it, too, addressed the question of power by circulating a specific vision of "proper" social organization. One should be recommended for a government post or acquire literary accolades only if one already benefited from a recognized social standing, and the proof of this social standing was one's reputation, which could be vouched for by an existing member of the republic. Moreover, for the men and women of letters, promoting the idea of equality simultaneously meant promoting the idea of elitism. Recognition and recommendation were not aberrations from the Enlightenment ideal which undermined its philosophy in practice, but instead constituted the fundamental principles upon which it was based.

In practice, this meant that who one was was as important as the philosophy one peddled. The fact that the court and the republic of letters accepted this principle bound them together in advocating elitism with regard to other social classes despite their differing opinions concerning the basis upon which hierarchy should be founded among the elite itself. Their shared vision of social organization created points of contact in

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[141] Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, Cambridge: Harvard University

which both worked together to ensure its perpetuation. Robert Darnton and Dorinda Outram stress the degree to which the government supported the least radical thinkers of the republic of letters through royal privilege accorded to printed material and government pensions.[142] In contrast, my study of salon women's correspondence shows how their links to the government provided them with a much more immediate impact on politics. They influenced not only policy, but also the choice of government officials. Mosconi was able to find a position in the French provisional government for her son-in-law and Roland was able to influence the actions of the Brissotins and later the Girondins.

Both the idea and practice of nepotism were reiterated and systematized not only, or even mainly, in intellectual institutions of the eighteenth century, but in everyday social interactions which included women in a more comprehensive way. The commitment to social cohesion through nepotism was yet another legacy from the seventeenth century--this time the seventeenth-century republic of letters, the erudite *gens de lettres*. Anne Goldgar has recently studied the republic of letters from 1680 to 1750 (the republic of letters before the high Enlightenment of the *Encyclopédie* and the *philosophes*) and has found that, as opposed to the ideological commitment to the improvement of humanity that united the republic in the last half of the eighteenth century, members of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century version smoothed ideological differences by focusing on the cultivation of cohesion as a goal in itself. This

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Press, 1982, pp.6, 12-14, 22-23.

cohesion was iterated through a series of intellectual practices including recommendations, introductions, running errands, providing news and sharing ideas.[143] Lespinasse, Roland, Renier Michiel and Mosconi used the very same tools in the eighteenth century to create the cohesion that ultimately resulted in exclusivity and elitism. They engaged in flattery, recognized equality, abided by the edicts of reciprocity, exchanged news and more tangibly, made recommendations and provided the introductions to assure the success of people they knew. Moreover, their recommendations and introductions were taken seriously because they were defending a collective ethic which outweighed the stain of their sex.

The examination of these letters considered in light of the question of elitism is revealing in a number of senses. First, it shows yet again the degree to which public and private were inextricable in the eighteenth century. The formulation of policy, the choice of government ministers and the promotion of literary works and their authors were as much grounded in considerations linked to particular circumstance as objective merit. Loyalty to people and their political and literary stances was based in friendship--in who they were and who they knew. This is particularly evident in correspondence, which, in opposition to institutional sociability, reveals all the backstage negotiations that led to literary production and political decision-making. Mapping out these negotiations in four cases suggests the degree to which nepotism was a systematic philosophy enacted by

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[142] R. Darnton, *The Literary Underground...*,pp.7, 21; Dorinda Outram, "'Mere Words': Enlightenment, Revolution, and Damage Control", *Journal of Modern History*, 63 (June 1991), p.330.

women of letters in a variety of contexts in the late eighteenth-century, a finding which distinguishes this study from biographical works on individual women and their political and intellectual contributions.

This study also shows how the writing of women of letters cannot be understood with reference to a single philosophy of gender. Women drew on a number of sources in constructing their own theories of femininity--theories which would allow them to confront and adjust to diverse and changing intellectual and political contexts. Used together, a mix of ideas drawn from the Enlightenment, late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century courtesy literature and republicanism allowed women and their friends and colleagues to feel confident mediating and adjusting gender prescriptions to suit their purposes.

Methodology

In terms of methodology, I chose to look at letters as my source because I was principally interested in comparing elite women's vision of gender with those prescribed in conduct manuals. I chose to study salon women in particular because they allowed me to examine the links between the sociability of intellectual institutions and the exchanges that took place in the wider republic of letters, a strategy that ultimately led me to show how the public/private dichotomy itself was an illusion. The fact that Dena Goodman

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[143] Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, pp.6-13.

had already detailed the configuration of Enlightenment sociability in the salon provided me with a point of reference for describing and contrasting the patterns of sociability outside of it. More specifically, I found the concept of political philosophy as a mediating factor affecting gender particularly helpful. If, inside the salon, women's natural politeness and their commitment to the ethic of equality assured their primordial place, outside this institutional setting women were granted intellectual and political leverage based on their heightened sensibility, their political allegiances and commitment to their friends.

The literature on intellectual sociability and elitism[144] was especially important given the small number of women that I was studying. By deliberately keeping this number small, however, I was able to study salon women's relationships to their colleagues, friends and family in detail and show how these categories connected and overlapped. I gave preference to sets of correspondence in my analysis for similar reasons. Examining women's letters to individuals in isolation allowed me to provide a richer account of how social and political questions together affected the dynamic of each relationship. In adopting this strategy, I was drawing on two waves of cultural history as practised in American scholarship.

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[144] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*...; D. Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*...; R. Darnton, *The Literary Underground*...; François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, [Paris]: Gallimard, 1978; E. Goldsmith, *"Exclusive Conversations"*...; Marino Berengo, *La società veneta alla fine del Settecento. Ricerche storiche*, Florence: Sansoni, 1956.

Born out of a rising interest in the power of language, cultural history challenged the supremacy of Marxist and Annalist approaches to French history in the late 1970s.[145] As opposed to viewing social and economic structures as determining social reality (including culture), cultural history sees culture and language as influencing the development of economics, politics and society.[146] Practitioners of French cultural history may be divided roughly along geographic lines between French scholars and American ones. The latter rely more heavily on literary sources and methodologies, whereas their French counterparts have preferred more traditional material sources, connecting culture more closely with social and economic indicators. Some of the principal differences between these two schools are raised in an exchange in the *Journal of Modern History* between Roger Chartier, who prefers to eschew textual readings of events, and Robert Darnton, who defends them.[147]

The American branch itself has undergone important developments. In the beginning of its existence, cultural historians such as Robert Darnton, Lynn Hunt and Natalie Zemon Davis, heavily influenced by Geertz's "thick description", sketched particular moments of French History, micro-contexts, in order to add texture and depth to historical understanding.[148] The appropriation of this more hermeneutic style arose in

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[145] Lynn Hunt, "Introduction: History, Culture, Text", in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp.4-10.

[146] Colin Jones, "A Fine 'Romance' with No Sisters", *French Historical Studies*, 19, 2 (Fall 1995), p.280.

[147] See Roger Chartier's critique of Robert Darnton's book, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes of French Cultural History*, New York: Basic Books, 1984, entitled "Text, Symbols, and Frenchness", *Journal of Modern History*, 57 (December 1985), pp.682-95, and Robert Darnton's response to it in "The Symbolic Element in History", *Journal of Modern History*, 58 (March 1986), pp.218-34.

[148] Donald A. Kelley, Review of *The Return of Martin Guerre* by Natalie Zemon Davis, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 37, 2 (Summer 1984), p.254.

response to the quantitative nature of French social history. In a review of Michel Vovelle's *Ideologies and Mentalities*, published in English in 1990, Daniel Gordon compares quantitative or "serial" history to "thick description" in the following way:

> [S]erial history classifies a large number of texts under a small number of rubrics (such as the presence or absence of a certain clause), whereas "thick description" classifies a small number of texts under a large number of rubrics (to reveal the full symbolic texture); [Furthermore], serial history chooses its indicators in accordance with the global pattern of stability or change that it seeks to depict (such as secularization), whereas the hermeneutic method focuses on local meaning, the dimensions of action that were most important to the actors themselves....[149]

Therefore, this first wave of cultural historians sought to bring to the fore cultural specificities to provide a valuable counterpoint to social and economic approaches. They studied the meaning of events rather than trying to account for causes.

One of the advantages of this approach is that it makes room for the examination of cross-cutting cultural cleavages. In focusing on one specific historical moment, historians are able to explore all the different currents which were brought to bear on a particular event. This has led cultural historians to turn their attention more seriously to the idea of culture as a network of discourse which is propagated through the norms of sociability. Under the influence of Foucault, cultural history has turned away from the meaning of micro-contexts to the system through which meaning was constructed. This shift towards the study of discourse and practice allows cultural historians to address the question of change more comfortably. Dena Goodman, for example, is situated in this

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[149] Daniel Gordon, Review of *Ideologies and Mentalities* by Michel Vovelle, *History and Theory*, 32, 2 (1993), p.207.

camp. She examines the place of salon women in the republic of letters in light of how they contributed to the exchanges which took place in the Enlightenment institution of the salon.[150]

First- and second-wave influences are present in this thesis. In the tradition of "thick description", I have chosen to study a small number of women and to focus on how they understood gender and how they helped to constitute the republic of letters. Nevertheless, examining salon women's letters has also revealed the extent to which culture is always fragmented. The government and the republic of letters upheld different values of sociability, in spite of a shared commitment to elitism. Similarly, each salon woman I have studied cobbled together a unique vision of the proper feminine social role which drew from a number of contradictory sources, but also adapted to changes in political circumstance.

I chose to study women from two different nations, three different regions, facing four distinctive political climates in order to draw out the more fundamental similarities in the role that elite women played in the extra-institutional culture of sociability which defined the European republic of letters. This strategy proved effective, as thematic concerns and ideological strategies (the importance of elitism and sensibility, for example) reappeared in all four women's correspondence, despite the particularity of their circumstance. Paris and Venetia were natural choices, given the strength of their salon traditions in this period. Within this general context, I chose women whose

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[150] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, pp.101-20; D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*....

correspondence covered periods of political turmoil and tranquillity in order to understand the nature of their everyday intellectual and political contributions and yet also see how their participation was affected in periods of political crisis.

Chapter 2

"The Most Excellent Men of the Century": Julie de Lespinasse and Friendship in the Republic of Letters

Julie de Lespinasse was born the illegitimate daughter of countess Julie d'Albon and count Gaspard de Vichy in 1732. She was raised by her mother (who claimed that Lespinasse was actually the daughter of a fictitious couple, Claude Lespinasse and Julie Navarre) and spent her childhood in a chateau situated between Lyon and Tarare. She was eight when her father married her half-sister, to whom her mother had given birth in 1716--the fruit of a failed marriage. Lespinasse's mother bequeathed her an annual pension of 300 *livres* and a dowry of 6 000. After the death of their mother, Lespinasse went to live with her sister, the countess de Vichy in Signy-en-Brionnais.[1]

While in residence there, she met the count of Vichy's sister, the marquise du Deffand, and, after living two years in a convent in Lyon, went to live with her at the Saint-Joseph convent in Paris in 1754. Deffand was a noted *salonnière* in her own right, receiving guests such as Anne Robert Jacques Turgot (1727-81), d'Alembert and

Fontenelle. During Lespinasse's stay with Deffand, she helped her with her salon duties and began to form special relationships with a number of Deffand's guests, and d'Alembert in particular. Deffand was jealous of the attention Lespinasse received and this jealousy came to a head when, in 1764, Deffand discovered that Lespinasse had been secretly meeting with some of her guests in her room before the beginning of Deffand's salon.[2] Lespinasse was forced to leave and establish her own residence, which she did with financial assistance from her friends. She occupied the second and third floor of a house on Saint-Dominique in Paris; shortly after she arrived, d'Alembert moved into the third floor. After attending the salon of Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin (1699-1777),[3] Lespinasse decided to open her own in order to discuss both political and literary topics between 6 and 10 p.m. every night. Men of the court, high-ranking clergymen, ambassadors, and, of course, men of the *Encyclopédie* were among those present.[4]

Lespinasse had two great loves, a central theme discussed in the literature which concerns her. The first was the Marquis de Mora (1744-74), son of the Spanish ambassador to France, whom she met in 1766. Their marriage plans were skewed by Mora's poor health, which forced him to spend much of the 1770s in Valencia, and by Lespinasse's meeting with Jacques-Antoine-Hippolyte de Guibert (1743-90) in 1772, who

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[1] René de la Croix, le Duc de Castries, *Julie de Lespinasse. Le drame d'un double amour*, Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1985, pp.12-17.

[2] For information on Deffand's salon and her relationship with Lespinasse, see Benedetta Craveri, *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, translated by Teresa Waugh. Boston: David R. Godine, 1982, pp.60-98, 158-85.

[3] For more on the life of Mme Geoffrin, see Pierre de Ségur, *Le royaume de la rue Saint-Honoré*, Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1897. On her salon, see Dena Goodman, "Filial Rebellion in the Salon: Madame Geoffrin and Her Daughter", *French Historical Studies*, 16, 1 (Spring 1989), pp.28-47.

was to become her second love. The two consummated their relationship in 1774, the year that Mora died. Guibert, however, did not wish to continue to see her romantically and married another woman, Mlle de Courcelles, in 1775. Lespinasse died one year later in May 1776.[5]

The secondary literature on Lespinasse focuses on her sensibility in three ways. The most prevalent analysis, as Catherine Blondeau has pointed out, centres around details of Lespinasse's romantic life, painting her as a woman who loved passionately.[6] Recent biographies also take Lespinasse's love-life as their organizing principle and remain silent about Lespinasse's salon duties and her position in the republic of letters.[7] Conversely, Dena Goodman identifies Lespinasse as one of the three Enlightenment *salonnières* who were at the helm of the republic of letters in France.[8] When writing about Lespinasse in particular, though, Goodman has focused on Lespinasse's sensibility and characterized it as antithetical to her salon work. In an early article on Lespinasse, Goodman states that the *salonnière* sought consolation for her lack of recognition in her salon through the construction of an authentic self "in the private world of letters and

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[4] R. de la Croix, le Duc de Castries, *Julie de Lespinasse...*, p.80.

[5] Jean Lacouture and Marie-Christine d'Aragon, *Julie de Lespinasse. Mourir d'amour*, Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 1980, pp.175-295.

[6] Catherine Blondeau, "Lectures de la correspondance de Julie de Lespinasse: une étude de réception", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 308 (1993), pp.226, 229.

[7] J. Lacouture and M.-C. d'Aragon, *Julie de Lespinasse...*; R. de la Croix, le Duc de Castries, *Julie de Lespinasse...*.

[8] The other two were Mme Geoffrin and Suzanne Curchod Necker (1739-94). Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, pp.99-111; for more on the life and salon of Suzanne Necker, see Vicomte d'Haussonville, *Le salon de Mme Necker d'après des documents tirés des archives de Coppet*, Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882.

love".[9] Lespinasse was powerless to resist the institutional necessities of the Enlightenment which pushed her towards an "ultimately self-destructive search" for authenticity.[10] This interpretation of Lespinasse is repeated again in her 1994 book entitled *The Republic of Letters*.[11]

For literary critic Katherine Jensen, this interpretation of Lespinasse's sensibility does not do her justice. Jensen does state that Lespinasse was a victim of a masculinist discourse which sought to confine women's achievement in the publishing world by praising their ability to write letters in a "passionate and spontaneous" style and then defining the epistolary genre out of literature.[12] In embracing this model of femininity, however, Jensen argues that Lespinasse sought to control her own objectification, thereby linking Lespinasse's sensibility to a limited form of empowerment.[13] Felicia Sturzer agrees with this view of Lespinasse's discourse on sensibility, taking the fact that Lespinasse defined herself through writing (even if she did so in traditional ways) as a sign of her power and autonomy.[14]

In my own study of Lespinasse, I would like to draw on elements of these arguments to study her place in the late-eighteenth-century republic of letters.

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[9] Dena Goodman, "Julie de Lespinasse: A Mirror for the Enlightenment" in Frederick M. Keener and Susan E. Lorsch, eds., *Eighteenth-Century Women and the Arts*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1988, pp.3-10

[10] *Ibidem*.

[11] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters...*, p.103.

[12] Katharine Jensen, *Writing Love: Letters, Women and the Novel in France, 1605-1776*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995, pp.2-11.

[13] K. Jensen, *Writing Love...*, p.151.

[14] Felicia Sturzer, "Epistolary and Feminist Discourse: Julie de Lespinasse and Madame Riccoboni", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 304 (1993), pp.739-42.

Sensibility, I would agree, is a central theme in all of Lespinasse's correspondence. Furthermore, like Jensen, I would argue that Lespinasse insists on her sensibility because it gave her a certain legitimacy in literary and political debates, given that this trait is seen to be naturally present in women. However, if we want to understand Lespinasse's participation in the world of politics and literature, as I do, we have to situate the discussion on sensibility in terms of the broader ethics shaping the republic of letters. This is easier to do now that Jean-Noël Pascal has published Lespinasse's letters to Nicolas de Condorcet (1743-94).[15] Up until 1990, the most reliable published collection of her letters consisted of her correspondence with her lover, Guibert.[16] While the latter are long on bitter reproach and short on evidence of political allegiance and intellectual sociability, the letters to Condorcet are of a different ilk. Here Lespinasse shows more clearly her commitment to maintaining the cohesion of the republic through the circulation and exchange of documents, news and friendship. Furthermore, in her literary critiques and in her exchanges with d'Alembert, she propagates the ideals valued by eighteenth-century *gens de lettres*, including reason, sensibility, beauty, wit, pleasure, charity and loyalty. In defence of these values, Lespinasse promoted the causes and careers of her friends by drawing on the network of the republic she has helped to create.

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[15] Julie de Lespinasse, *Lettres à Condorcet suivi du portrait de Condorcet rédigé par Julie de Lespinasse en 1774*, notes and introduction by Jean-Noël Pascal. Paris and Desjonquères: Diffusion, P.U.F., c1990. These letters, 57 in all, were written between 1769 and 1776.

[16] C. Blondeau, "Lectures de la correspondance...", pp.223-42. Julie de Lespinasse, *Correspondance entre Mademoiselle de Lespinasse et le comte de Guibert, publiée pour la première fois d'après le texte original par le comte de Villeneuve-Guibert*, notes by comte de Villeneuve-Guibert. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1906. This collection contains 201 letters from Lespinasse to Guibert and 39 from Guibert to Lespinasse written between 1773 and 1776. Lespinasse's manuscript letters are contained in a variety of French

For example, Lespinasse did what she could to help her friend Turgot in his quest to institute and defend the free circulation of grain. More insidiously, by promoting the work of her friends because they were her friends and by reinforcing the cohesion binding the republic of letters, she was also perpetuating elitism as a model for social organization. Lespinasse does broach some political and intellectual questions in her letters to Guibert, however, and, for this reason, I have studied both collections together in order to chart Lespinasse's place in the world of letters and politics.

Lespinasse, Sensibility and Gender Prescriptions

Julie de Lespinasse was eager to present herself as someone who was ruled by passion, especially in her letters to Guibert. She repeatedly describes herself as "folle" and writes that she has no common sense.[17] She states that she not only gains strength through suffering, but prefers it to happiness.[18] She says that she flees from reasonable people because they have no common language.[19] Finally, Lespinasse often contrasts her ability to feel (her *âme*) with her lack of critical capacities (her *esprit*).[20] The manner in which Lespinasse describes herself very much reflects the terms of debate concerning

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archives, including the *Archives Vichy* of the Rouanne archives, the *Archives d'Albon* at the d'Avauges chateau, the comte de Rochambeau's archives and the *Archives des Affaires étrangères*.

[17] J. de Lespinasse, *Correspondance entre Mademoiselle...*, letter 4, May 30, 1773, p.11; letter 134, July 4, 1775, p.334. I will subsequently refer to this collection simply as *L à Guibert*. J. de Lespinasse, *Lettres à Condorcet...*, letter 24, April 5, 1773, p.70. I will subsequently refer to this collection as *L. à Condorcet*.

[18] *L. à Guibert*, letter 35, [1774], p.90; letter 8, June 24, 1773, p.25.

[19] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 28, April 24, 1774, p.77.

women in the eighteenth century and also speaks of a desire not to be provocative with regard to social norms concerning women. As we have seen in the first chapter, philosophers disagreed on a number of issues concerning women's fundamental nature and their intellectual abilities, but not all of these issues were equally explosive. While women's possession of reason was hotly contested, their natural sensibility was affirmed by conservative and progressive thinkers alike. By choosing to emphasize her sensibility, then, Lespinasse was showing respect for one of the most widespread beliefs concerning women.

Having said this, exploring Lespinasse's place in the republic of letters requires that we understand the issue of sensibility and Lespinasse's use of in more depth. Sensibility was also part of two seventeenth- and eighteenth-century intellectual traditions on which Lespinasse could draw to add weight to her specifically feminine contribution to intellectual and political debate: Rousseau's pre-romantic sensibility and French courtesy literature. First, let us consider the effect of Rousseau's sensibility. Mary Trouille points out that in France, Rousseau's *Confessions* ". . . created a major literary sensation, captivating countless readers, scandalising many others".[21] Among his appreciative audience was a community of eighteenth-century women intellectuals who found in his example a means of rehabilitating feminine sensibility. If the spontaneous expression of emotion was evidence of transparency and sincerity for Rousseau, so it

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[20] *L. à Guibert*, letter 13, December 1775, p.489; letter 33, [1774], p.85; letter 38, [1774], p.99; letter 46, [July 1774], p.114; letter 60, [September 15, 1774], p.153; letter 114, 1775, p.284; *L. à Condorcet*, letter 24, April 5, 1773, p.70.

could be for them, too. Manon Roland, whom I will study in the next chapter, mimicked Rousseau's style in writing her memoirs.[22] Olympe de Gouges identified with his "egalitarian spirit and with his persona of persecuted virtue . . .".[23] Mme de Staël was even more explicit in her admiration, identifying Rousseau's sensibility and "lack of reason" with genius.[24] Julie de Lespinasse was affected in the same way by Rousseau, although she could not have read his *Confessions*, which were not published until 1782 (books i-vi) and 1789 (books vii-xii).[25] First, she says that she prefers Rousseau to Diderot due to the former's strong passion: "Oh! how Jean-Jacques, how *le Connétable* are far more to my taste! I like nothing halfway, nothing indecisive, nothing timid".[26] Furthermore, she identifies with his suffering: ". . . I would almost dare to say, like Jean-Jacques: 'My soul was never made for degradation.' The strongest, the most pure passion has animated it for too long".[27] Finally, she states that she has felt his feelings: "I have

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[21] Mary Trouille, "Strategies of Self-Representation: The Influence of Rousseau's Confessions and the Woman Autobiographer's Double Bind", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 319 (1994), p.314.

[22] Mary Trouille, "Mme Roland, Rousseau, and Revolutionary Politics, or the Art of Losing One's Head", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 304 (1993), pp.809-12.

[23] Mary Trouille, "Eighteenth-Century Amazons of the Pen: Stéphanie de Genlis & Olympe de Gouges" in Roland Bonnel and Catherine Rubinger, eds., *Femmes Savantes et Femmes d'Esprit: Women Intellectuals of the French Eighteenth Century*, New York: Peter Lang, 1994, p.346.

[24] Mary Trouille, "A Bold New Vision of Woman: Staël and Wollstonecraft respond to Rousseau", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 292 (1991), pp.299-300.

[25] It is possible that Lespinasse was exposed to this work, as Trouille states that Rousseau held readings in private homes between late 1770 and early 1771. M. Trouille, "Strategies of Self-Representation...", p.313, note 1.

[26] "Ho! que Jean-Jacques, que *le Connétable* sont bien mieux à mon ton! Je n'aime rien de ce qui est à demi, de ce qui est indécis, de ce qui n'est qu'un peu". *L. à Guibert*, letter 8, June 24, 1773, p.25. *Les Connétables de Bourbon* was written by Guibert. I have faithfully transcribed all quotations from both published letters and manuscripts, including errors in spelling and grammar. The only changes I have made are to the quotations from manuscript letters, in which I have modernized the script.

felt that which Rousseau describes, that there are situations which elicit neither words nor tears".[28]

By likening her passion to Rousseau's, Lespinasse also distances herself from the flighty women and *gens de lettres* that he criticizes. She states that most women are frivolous, vain and lazy, and although, by valuing gallantry, they believe that they are gentle and generous, they are in fact cold, base and contemptible. Lespinasse, in contrast, admires women who are simple, modest and natural, whose souls reach the heights of love and passion.[29] Lespinasse does not stop at criticizing women, though. Again following Jean-Jacques, she criticizes the intellectual community of which these women were a product: *le monde*, a world of both reason and artificial gaiety which her fervid and sincere passion places her outside of.[30]

> You are all made of ice, you happy people, you people of *le monde*! Your souls are closed to intense, deep imprintings! I am prepared to thank Heaven for the sadness which overwhelms me, and which is taking my life, as it leaves me with this gentle sensitivity and this deep passion which connects me with all that suffers, all that has known pain, and all that is tormented by the pleasure and the misfortune of loving. Yes, my friend, you are happier than me, but I have more pleasure than you.[31]

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[27] "[J]'oserais presque dire comme Jean-Jacques : 'Mon âme ne fut jamais faite pour l'avilissement.' La passion la plus forte, la plus pure, l'a animée trop longtemps". *L. à Guibert*, letter 60, September 15, 1774, p.152.

[28] "J'éprouvais ce que dit Rousseau, qu'il y a des situations qui n'ont ni mots ni larmes". *L. à Guibert*, letter 137, July 1, 1775, p.322.

[29] *L. à Guibert*, letter 137, July 1, 1775, p.326; letter 141, July 10, 1775, p.341; letter 199, December, 1775, p.479.

[30] Letter 8, June 24, 1773, p.25.

[31] "Vous êtes tout de glace, gens heureux, gens du monde! Vos âmes sont fermées aux vives, aux profondes impressions! Je suis prête à remercier le Ciel du malheur qui m'accable et dont je meurs, puisqu'il me laisse cette douce sensibilité et cette profonde passion qui rendent accessible à tout ce qui souffre, à tout ce qui a connu la douleur, à tout ce qui est tourmenté par le plaisir et le malheur d'aimer. Oui, mon ami, vous êtes plus heureux que moi, mais j'ai plus de plaisir que vous". *L. à Guibert*, letter 197, December 1775, p.473.

Who is Lespinasse referring to when she speaks of the *gens du monde*? Taking her cues from Rousseau's critique of civility, she is referring to the men who frequented her salon (including François-Jean, marquis de Chastellux[32] and Jean-François Marmontel)[33] and whose language combined the imperatives of seventeenth-century courtesy literature--sensibility polished by reason--with the Enlightenment interest in aiding humanity.[34] This is evident not only in her reference to Diderot,[35] but also more clearly in her characterization of those who came to her salon as boring and abominable pedants.

> Ha! good God, was there ever so much pride, so much vanity, so much disdain, so much contempt, so much injustice, so much conceit, in a word, the assembly and assortment of all which has constituted Hell and inhabited mad houses for a thousand years? All of this was in my room last night, and the walls and the floors did not give way! It is extraordinary. Amidst all the *bad writers and all the prigs, fools, pedants,* the abominable people with whom I spent my day, I only thought of you and your foolishness....[36]

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[32] François-Jean, marquis de Chastellux (1734-88): A marshall in the French army, he was also well known in literary circles, becoming a member of the *Académie française* in 1775. In his *De la félicité publique* (1772), he argued that the human race improved with the spread of Enlightenment. Eyriès, "Chastellux (François-Jean, marquis de)" in Joseph François Michaud and Louis-Gabriel Michaud, eds., *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne*, vol. 8. Paris: Michaud, 1813, pp.265-66.

[33] Jean-François Marmontel (1723-99): author and playwright, he contributed articles to the Encyclopédie and became the perpetual secretary of the *Académie française* in 1783. His best known work was his *Contes moraux. Bélisaire*, (1767). D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., pp.308-09.

[34] "Voilà comment le luxe, la dissolution et l'esclavage on été de tout tems le châtiment des efforts orgueilleux que nous avons faits pour sortir de l'heureuse ignorance où la sagesse éternelle nous avait placés. Le voile épais dont elle a couvert toutes ses opérations, sembloit nous avertir assez qu'elle ne nous a point destinés à de vaines recherches. Mais est-il quelqu'une de ses leçons dont nous ayons sû profiter, ou que nous ayons négligée impunément? Peuple, sachez donc une fois que la nature a voulu vous préserver de la science, comme une mere arrache une arme dangereuse des mains de son enfant; que tous les secrets qu'elle vous cache sont autant de maux dont elle vous garantit, et que la peine que vous trouvez à vous instruire n'est pas le moindre de ses bienfaits. Les hommes sont pervers; ils seroient pires encore, s'ils avoient eu le malheur de naître savans". Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3: *Écrits politiques*, edited by Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond. Paris: Gallimard, 1964, p.15.

[35] See note 26.

[36] "Ha! bon Dieu, y eut-il jamais tant d'orgueil, tant de vanité, tant de dédain, tant de mépris, tant d'injustice, tant de suffisance, en un mot, l'assemblage et l'assortiment de tout ce qui peuple l'Enfer et les petites maisons depuis mille siècles? Tout cela était hier au soir dans ma chambre, et les murs et les planchers

The irony, of course, is that Lespinasse was also clearly part of this world. In addition to Rousseau's republican discourse, she upheld the values of the republic of letters through the contents of her remarks and criticism, through her commitment reinforcing the lines of communication and through political affiliations and stances. This will become clear if we study the currents which influenced the republic of letters in greater detail.

Courtesy Literature and Enlightened Sociability

As I have stated in chapter 1, the Enlightenment republic of letters was not fundamentally republican. Instead, it promoted the ethic of polite sociability, which, as Daniel Gordon has revealed, was founded in part on natural-law discourse and in part on the courtesy literature of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century *mondain* society.[37] This literature promoted the value of sensibility polished by reason, or exchanges eased by the discipline and restraint shown in following the rules of polite conversation. As we shall see below, Lespinasse, in addition to denigrating the *gens de lettres*, also defined her own sensibility to underline the basis of her authority within this system.

There were many different and sometimes conflicting views of civility and sociability circulating in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1630,

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n'en sont pas écroulés! Cela tient du prodige. Au milieu de tous les *grimauds et de tous les cuistres, les sots, les pédants*, les abominables gens avec lesquels j'ai passé ma journée, je n'ai pensé qu'à vous et vos folies...". Emphasis in original text. *L. à Guibert*, letter 27, [1774], p.74.

[37] See chapter 1, p.56.

Nicolas Faret, inspired by Castiglione's *Il cortigiano*,[38] provided a pragmatic guide, entitled *L'honnête homme ou l'Art de plaire à la cour*, describing the manners one had to adopt in order to assure one's advancement at the court. In contrast, in his *Les règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne divisé en deux parties à l'usage des écoles chrétiennes* (Reims, 1703), Jean-Baptiste de La Salle provided a Christian model of civility, in which one's external comportment would be an expression of the respect for the divine presence inhabiting every being.[39] In addition, a third ethic, one which would be highly influential for *mondain* society in the eighteenth century, developed at the end of the seventeenth. Both the Chevalier de Méré (1610-85) and Jean-Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde (1648-1734) emphasized not only the importance of authenticity in social interaction but also of aesthetics and form. For them, all attention was focused on assuring the ease and flow of pleasurable conversation, meaning that the *honnête homme* had to be selfless and modest. He also had to be both spontaneous and attentive to the needs of his audience, and yet show proof of personal discipline.[40]

For Méré and Bellegarde, the concept of the *honnête homme* was also relatively exclusive, in that the qualities necessary for *honnêteté* were a natural gift and could not

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[38] Jean-Pierre Dens, *L'honnête homme et la critique du goût. Esthétique et société au XVIIe siècle*, Kentucky: French forum, 1981, p.11.

[39] Roger Chartier, "From Texts to Manners: A Concept and Its Books: Civilité between Aristocratic Distinction and Popular Appropriation" in *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, pp.88-89.

[40] Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp.98, 99, 103, 104, 109, 110; J.-P. Dens, *L'honnête homme...*, pp.14, 20, 18; Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the* Honnête Homme *and the* Dandy *in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, p.27.

be learned.[41] One had to find the source of generating and appreciating conversation inside oneself, in one's sensibility.[42] The possession of this sensibility in itself, of course, was not sufficient to be a man of taste. One had to add polish to nature through reason: "Only taste nourished by reflection and enlightened by reason is able to feel beyond the immediate phenomenon. One must listen to the work, let its interior resonance guide us".[43] This quotation also makes apparent the close link between art, sociability and morality. According to Daniel Gordon, the world of the *mondains* was one in which the hierarchy of the political world and the corruption contained within it was suspended. For *salonnières* like Madeleine de Scudéry (1607-1701), it was a space in which politeness, grace and wit, not birth, were taken as indications of one's morality and worth.[44] Furthermore, by the second half of the eighteenth century, philosophers thought that sensitive and intelligent banter would actually work to produce the equality necessary to exchange in the salons. As Charles Pinot Duclos (1704-72) states in his *Considérations sur les moeurs de ce siècle* (1767),

> They say that play and love create equality in the conditions of all: I am persuaded that we must also mention wit, if the proverb has been written since wit has become a passion. Play creates equality by absorbing the superior; and wit, because true equality comes from the soul. It has yet to

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[41] Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, p.237; Jacques Revel, "Les usages de la civilité" in Roger Chartier, ed., *Histoire de la vie privée*, vol. 3: *De la Renaissance aux Lumières*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1986, pp.196, 203; J.-P. Dens, *L'honnête homme*..., p.14.

[42] J.-P. Dens, *L'honnête homme*..., p.80.

[43] "Seul un goût nourri par la réflexion et éclairé par la raison est capable de sentir au-delà de l'immédiat phénoménal.... [I]l faut...se mettre à l'écoute de l'oeuvre, laisser sa résonnance intérieure nous guider". J.-P. Dens, *L'honnête homme*..., p.77.

[44] D. Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*..., p.118; D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., p.4; Carolyn Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, pp.41-55.

> be determined that virtue produces the same effect; but only the passions can reduce men to men, that is to say, to renounce all external distinctions.[45]

Art, music, conversation and correspondence were all expressions and enactments of the same moral and aesthetic value, meaning that *mondain* values were a way of life, that they constantly had to be embodied. Consequently, witty remarks could be appreciated and produced in the same way as opera and literature: through sensibility polished by reason.

As the century progressed, the *gens de lettres* in France increasingly thought that good manners had a role to play in a larger social project than that conceived of by Méré or Scudéry. Not only did sociability correlate with morality in the minds of philosophes and literary figures alike, but it was also put to the service of humanity in the quest for truth,[46] truth which was thought to be the *opinion publique* generated through conversation.[47] Furthermore, this public opinion should form the basis for government. As Duclos stated, "Of all empires, that of *gens d'esprit*, without being visible, is the most extensive. The powerful command, but the *gens d'esprit* govern, because in the long run, they form public opinion, which sooner or later subjugates or overthrows every kind of

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[45] "On a dit que le jeu & l'amour rendent tous les conditions egales : je suis persuadé qu'on y eût joint l'esprit, si le proverbe eût été fait depuis que l'esprit est devenu une passion. Le jeu égale en avilissant le supérieur ; & l'esprit, parce que la véritable égalité vient de cèle des ames. Il seroit à definir que la vertu produisît le même èfet ; mais il n'apartient qu'aux passions de réduire les homes, à n'être que des homes, c'est-à-dire, à renoncer à toutes les distinctions extérieures" Charles Pinot Duclos, *Considérations sur les moeurs de ce siècle*, Paris: Prault, imprimeur, Quai de Gêvres, 1767, pp.269-70.

[46] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., p.33.

[47] D. Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*..., p.31; Mona Ozouf, "'Public Opinion' at the End of the Old Regime", *Journal of Modern History*, 60, suppl. (September 1988), p.S8.

despotism".[48] The interconnection between reason and sensibility resurfaces again in this context, this time in the form of common sense, which Dena Goodman defines as "an internalization of the rules expressed as the consensus of public opinion". This common sense also functioned as a form of recognition that would allow the Enlightened *gens de lettres* to distinguish between true and artificial politeness.[49]

Therefore, as Gordon and Goodman have pointed out, Lespinasse's job in the salon would have been to enforce the rules of polite conversation and reason which would add polish to sensibility. Moreover, the ethics of courtesy literature and Enlightened sociability were also influential in the exchanges of the republic outside the salon setting, in which Lespinasse was a more active participant. The important place accorded to sensibility in this system was underlined by Lespinasse and defined in Rousseauian terms to legitimize her assessments of literature and people. She affirmed that despite her lack of reason, her sensibility made her an astute judge of beauty and sincerity in art, literature, music and people. In reference to Guibert's *Éloge de Catinat* (1775), for example, she writes,

> Without doubt, the *author will go far*; it is not enough to say that he has talent, soul, intelligence and genius: he possesses that which is absent in almost all that is good, the eloquence and warmth which allows one to feel it before one judges it. This is what allows me, without presumption, to praise and to approve with as much truth as if I possessed intelligence and taste. I know neither how to discuss nor evaluate anything; but that

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[48] "Cependant, de tous les empires, celui des gens d'esprit, sans être visible, est le plus étendu. Le puissant comande, les gens d'esprit gouvernent, parce qu'à la longue, ils forment l'opinion publique qui tôt ou tard subjugue ou renverse toute espêce de despotisme". C. P. Duclos, *Considérations sur les moeurs...*, pp.270-71. Translated by Keith Michael Baker in his *Inventing the French Revolution: Essay on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.187.

[49] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters...*, p.118.

> which is beautiful raises my soul, and consequently I am right, no matter what you say.[50]

Therefore, despite the fact that Lespinasse says that she despises reasonable people, she also makes a place for herself within a system which privileges both by stressing that the possession of sensibility is an incontrovertible starting point for recognizing the beauty of art.

Conversely, Lespinasse also recognizes overtly that reason is a necessary complement to sensibility in political and intellectual life. In her criticism of Helvétius's *Le Bonheur* (1772), for example, she emphasizes the importance of sensibility, form and intelligence together.

> I would very much like you to read the poem on happiness by Mr. Helvétius, or rather the editor's preface: it is an excellent work, of exquisite taste, captivating and skilful in its daring, and of charming sensibility. Twenty times my eyes filled with tears. The poem is ill-formed: it is an intelligent work, but it is a challenge. It is not reading verse, it is work. You will judge for yourself upon your return, because there is no way to send it to you; it is even difficult to find it here; few people have seen it.[51]

In addition to stressing this combination in her critiques, Lespinasse often equates sensibility with reason when she is flattering Condorcet or praising one of their mutual

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[50] "A coup sûr, *l'auteur ira loin* ; ce n'est pas assez dire qu'il a du talent, de l'âme, de l'esprit, du génie : il a ce qui manque à presque tout ce qui est bon, cette éloquence et cette chaleur qui fait qu'on le sent avant que de le juger. C'est ce qui fait que, sans présomption, je puis louer, approuver avec autant de vérité que si j'avais de l'esprit et du goût. Je ne sais ni discuter, ni mesurer rien; mais ce qui est beau enlève mon âme, et alors j'ai raison, quoi que vous en puissiez dire". *L. à Guibert*, letter 109, 1775, p.276.

[51] "Je voudrais bien que vous puissiez lire le poème du bonheur de M. Helvétius, ou plutôt la préface de l'éditeur : c'est un excellent ouvrage, d'un goût exquis, d'une hardiesse adroite et piquante et d'une sensibilité charmante. Vingt fois j'ai eu les yeux remplis de larmes. Le poème est informe : c'est un ouvrage d'esprit ; mais c'est un défi. Ce n'est pas lire des vers, c'est labourer. Vous jugerez tout cela à votre retour, car il n'y a pas moyen de l'envoyer; il n'y en a guère même de se le procurer ici : peu de gens l'ont vu". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 20, August 23, 1772, p.63.

acquaintances. When, for example, d'Alembert is struggling with a bout of melancholy, Lespinasse asks Condorcet to accompany their friend to Italy, calling on both his sentiment and his judgement. She states that she loves Condorcet with her heart and d'Alembert does so through taste, through choice and through the similarity of their virtues and talents. She writes that more important than Condorcet's ability to reason is his sensibility, a quality which allows him to understand Lespinasse and be indulgent towards her.[52] Louis XVI was also the object of praise. According to Lespinasse, the new king showed wisdom, goodness and firmness during the Flour War and the two letters that he wrote to Turgot "were a great tribute to his soul and his sound mind".[53] Finally, in the debate over the future of the grain trade, which I will discuss in more detail below, Lespinasse counsels Condorcet that, in making his case, he should not only adopt a pleasant tone, but also use solid arguments:

> It is not sufficient to be captivating, tasteful, agreeable; it is necessary to be right, and to prove and show it through good arguments. I ask you, who in the world could fulfil this task if not the good Condorcet?...[A]fter M. Necker and abbé Galiani are forgotten, your book will remain, bolstered by the force of truth supported by education. You will have enlightened the ignorant and confounded the wicked.[54]

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[52] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 7, July 27, 1770, p.37; letter 27, April 1774, p.76; letter 33, September 1774, p.87.

[53] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 44, May 1755, p.104.

[54] "Il ne suffit pas d'être piquant, de bon goût, agréable, il faut avoir raison, et de cette raison qui se prouve et se démontre par bons raisonnements, et je vous demande s'il y a quelqu'un dans le monde de qui on doive en attendre, si ce n'est du bon Condorcet....Et quand M. Necker et l'abbé Galiani seront oubliés, votre livre restera avec la force que donne la vérité soutenue de l'instruction. Vous aurez éclairé les ignorants et vous aurez confondu les méchants". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 47, June 1, 1775, p.110. Abbé Ferdinando Galiani (1728-87): Author of *Della moneta* (1750), he was named secretary of state and then secretary to the Neapolitan ambassador to France in 1759. He remained in Paris until 1769. D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., pp.306-07.

Even more interesting is Lespinasse's contradictory descriptions regarding her own talent. As we have seen, Lespinasse valued her sensibility and defended it as a sign of morality and a critical tool. During a few passages of her correspondence, however, she is unsure of even this strength. Of her upcoming attendance of the Pierre-Laurent Du Belloy's (1727-75) *Gaston et Bayard* (1770), she writes that she feared she would not even be moved, due to her weak and common nature.[55] Furthermore, in describing one of her *synonymes*, she criticizes its lack of interest and warmth: "I have reread it and ripped it up, so bad did I find it. It was, I assure you, enough to make you weep from boredom: long, slack and cold. This, without boasting or being humble, it is the exact truth...".[56] Therefore, in her modesty, she places herself in the same category as the *gens de lettres* that she claims she abhors.

In drawing on Rousseau and the norms expressed in courtesy literature in Enlightened discourse, then, Lespinasse simultaneously defined her place out and inside the republic of letters. The position that she adopted depends to a large degree on the identity of her correspondent. Guibert, for example, was a member of some standing in the republic of letters, having written a popular text on battle tactics.[57] Consequently, Lespinasse, kept Guibert in the literary loop by passing along her comments and

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[55] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 9, May 4, 1771, p.43.

[56] "Je l'ai relu et je l'ai déchiré, tant je l'ai trouvé mauvais. Il était, je vous assure, à faire pleurer d'ennui : long lâche et froid, et cela c'est sans me vanter ni m'humilier, c'est la vérité exacte...". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 29, May 8, 1774, pp.79-80. Jean-Noël Pascal writes that Lespinasse was composing several "synonymes" modelled after those written by abbé Girard, entitled *Synonymes français* (1747). See his *Lettres à Condorcet*..., letter 29, note 4, p.150.

critiques.[58] Nonetheless, this was not the main goal of her correspondence. She was writing to him as an attestation of her love and regret, and, for this reason, played up her sensibility.

Lespinasse had a different relationship to Condorcet. Not only was she less intimate with him, but he had a different relationship to the republic of letters. As he was more integrated to the community, Lespinasse knew that her letters to him would produce reverberations across the wider literary network. Consequently, she could not afford to disparage the *gens de lettres* in the same way, nor was she motivated to. Yes, she felt slightly marginalized by her "lack of reason", but ultimately she believed in the cause of the republic of letters (charity) and some of the most basic values that it promoted, which extended beyond the questions of reason and sensibility. Her dedication to these issues--wit, beauty, pleasure and virtue--and the people who constituted the republic caused her to promote its ideals and reinforce its exclusivity in a systematic manner.

Lespinasse and the Perpetuation of the Republic

Julie de Lespinasse was integrated into the republic of letters in a number of ways. First and most importantly, she was introduced into literary society through the

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[57] Jean-Noël Pascal notes that Guibert's *Essai général de tactique* (1773) was popular with the *gens de lettres* because of the patriotic and bombastic tone of its introduction more than for its original contribution to military strategy. J.-N. Pascal, ed., *Lettres à Condorcet...*, letter 17, note 1, p.146.

[58] Lespinasse praises Voltaire's *Éloge de La Fontaine*, Antoine-Léonard Thomas' *Éloge de Marc Aurèle* and Jacques Necker's *Éloge de Colbert*, and defends Helvétius against criticism. See *L. à Guibert*, letter 62,

proper connections. Even though Lespinasse was an illegitimate child, she was still the daughter of a count--a count whose sister happened to be a prominent Parisian *salonnière*: Mme du Deffand. Consequently, Lespinasse not only came from good stock, but her talent was also recognized and promoted by someone who already had standing in the republic. Her years with Deffand eventually furnished Lespinasse with the tools and clientele (much to Deffand's chagrin) to open her own salon, to which Lespinasse makes repeated reference in her letters. Sometimes she is bored and annoyed by those who crowd her room day and night, but she also claims that she finds conversation stimulating and instructive.[59]

Lespinasse's salon work brought her into contact with the wider community of the republic of letters, including the institutions, books and events which constituted its points of reference. She was a voracious reader and makes reference to a dizzying array of authors (Molière, Racine, Gessner, Richardson, Grandisson, La Fontaine, Plutarch and Tacitus, to name only a few). She went to plays and concerts. She speaks of attending Du Belloy's *Gaston et Bayard*, Diderot's *Le fils naturel* (1757), Jean-François Ducis's (1733-1816) adaptation of *Roméo and Juliette* (1772), a version of *Henri IV* and, of course, Christoph Willibald Gluck's (1714-87) *Orphée* (composed 1762-64).[60]

September 20, 1774, p.158; letter 135, May 1775, p.320; letter 13, August 9, 1773, p.48; letter 79, October 21, 1774, p.215.

[59] For reference to Lespinasse's impatience with her guests, see *L. à Guibert*, letter 65, October 14, 1774, p.205; letter 127, May 13, 1775, p.311; letter 172, October 26, 1775, p.419. In contrast, she manifests her appreciation of them in the following letters: *L. à Guibert*, letter 189, [December 1775], p.462; letter 203, December 1775, pp.485-86; *L. à Condorcet*, letter 10, September 16, p.45.

[60] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 9, May 4, 1771, p.43; letter 11, September 28, 1771, p.47; letter 18, July 26, [1772], p.60; letter 37, [November 1774], p.97; letter 40, [1775], p.100. Jean-Noël Pascal remarks that two

Lespinasse was also familiar with the academic world. She knew what tone characterized debate there, who was admitted, and the content the debates themselves.[61] Finally, Lespinasse showed some familiarity with the political controversies taking place in the world of print, including books, pamphlets, gazettes and journals. She comments on Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet's (1736-94) praise for Guibert's *Éloge de Catinat* in his *Journal de politique et de littérature* and on several publications concerning the liberalization of the grain trade, from one-page flyers to Galiani's and Jacques Necker's (1732-1804) books on the topic.[62]

Lespinasse's place in the republic of letters was also recognized by others. Dena Goodman underlines that she was one of three well-known Parisian salon women at whose homes the philosophers of the Enlightenment gathered to hammer out their literary and political agendas.[63] And if their presence was appreciated, their absence marked their contribution even more. Friedrich Melchior Grimm (1723-1807) describes the effect of the loss of Geoffrin and Lespinasse from the literary community in the following way:

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plays concerning Henry IV were playing in Paris at the time: Collé's *La Partie de chasse de Henri IV* (1766) and de Durosoy and Martine's *Henri IV* (1774). J.-N. Pascal, ed., *Lettres à Condorcet*..., letter 37, note 3, p.153.

[61] "M. d'Alembert vous aura dit qu'aujourd'hui il lira à l'Académie une manière de préface de l'histoire de l'Académie". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 20, August 23, 1772, p.63; "Les deux nouveaux académiciens ont été reçus lundi". Letter 17, [July 1772], p.57; "C'est aujourd'hui que M. de Duras a été reçu". Letter 45, May 20, 1775, p.106; regarding Guibert's failure to win top prize for his *Éloge de Catinat*, Lespinasse writes, "Eh bien! comment les aveugles ont-ils jugé avec les lumières de leur esprit et la sensibilité de leur âme". Letter 50, August 25, 1775, p.114.

[62] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 53, September 28, [1775], p.119; letter 46, May 21, [1775], p.108; letter 47, June 1, [1775], p.110. Necker's book, published at the end of April, 1775, was entitled *Sur la législation et le commerce des grains* and Galiani's, published in 1770, *Dialogues sur le commerce des blés*.

[63] The other two were Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin and Suzanne Necker. D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., pp.53-54.

> The disorder and anarchy into which the party of the philosophes was put after the death of Mlle de Lespinasse and the paralysis of Mme Geoffrin proves how much the wisdom of their government had averted evils, how much it had dissipated storms, and above all how much it had rescued it from ridicule.[64]

Other indications of Lespinasse's renown are found in the epithet Deffand somewhat maliciously assigned her, *Muse de l'Encyclopédie*, and the important place her character occupies in Diderot's *Rêve de d'Alembert* (1784).

The appreciation shown towards Lespinasse was due not only to her talent and charm, but also to the fact that she upheld and propagated the ideals dear to the republic. In addition to stressing both sensibility and reason, she also expressed her appreciation of beauty, wit, virtue, and a commitment to the progress of humanity, both inside the salon and out. Inside, Lespinasse underlined the importance of form by commenting on the quality of the readings. For example, when Michel-Jean Sedaine (1719-97) came to Lespinasse's salon to read his adaptation of Antoine-Alexandre Poinsinet's (1735-69) lyric tragedy, *Ernelinde* (1769),[65] she had this to say:

> I think that you are entirely correct in your opinion of Sedaine's play; for myself, I would like to see it performed, as long as I only arrived at the end of the second act, as the first two bored me so much that they did not hold my attention, and the last three forced it such that I could not breathe, and as attention is a violent state for me, I was dead last night; my machine was exhausted from the state of tension that my soul had experienced. I have to say that Sedaine does not recite his work; he reads it in an unbearable manner.[66]

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[64] Quoted in Dena Goodman, "Governing the Republic of Letters: The Politics of Culture in the French Enlightenment", *History of European Ideas*, 13, 3 (1991), p.184.

[65] J.-N. Pascal, *Lettres à Condorcet...*, letter 24, note 3, p.148.

[66] "Je crois que vous jugez à merveille la pièce de Sedaine ; pour moi, je désirerais la voir jouer, pourvu que je n'arrivasse qu'à la fin du second acte, car les deux premiers m'ont ennuyée au point de ne pas retenir

Presentations in the academies were judged on the same basis, as Lespinasse reveals in stating that she had heard that Emmanuel de Duras' (1715-1789) admission into the *Académie française* was marked by a speech which was "short, simple, noble and appropriate in every regard".[67]

The importance of this oral skill is echoed in Lespinasse's evaluation of the tone and language of written work read outside the salon. In criticizing the work of Antoine-Léonard Thomas (1735-85), for example, Lespinasse states that his style is exaggerated and that he makes use of too much analysis and too many enumerations.[68] Similarly, she writes that a tragedy written by Claude-Joseph Dorat (1734-80) is "devoid of wit and talent", while one of his comedies is "the summit of bad taste and bad tone; it is unintelligible jargon".[69] Finally, in a letter to Condorcet, Lespinasse wants Condorcet to admire the elegant French of the Swedish ambassador, Gustave-Philippe, comte de Creutz's (1726-85).[70]

The ultimate goal of the attention focused on form is the creation of beauty which provokes pleasure. In speaking of La Harpe's reading in her salon, Lespinasse makes this connection clear:

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mon attention, et les trois derniers l'ont forcée de manière à ne pas me laisser respirer, et comme l'attention est pour moi un état violent, j'étais morte le soir ; ma machine était affaissée de l'état de tension où avait été mon âme. Il faut avouer que Sedaine ne parle pas son ouvrage ; il lit d'une manière insupportable". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 24, April 5, [1773], p.69.

[67] "...court, simple, noble et convenable à tous égards". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 45, [May 20, 1775], p.106.

[68] *L. à Guibert*, letter 3, May 24, 1773, p.7.

[69] "Une tragédie de M. Dorat : elle est dénuée d'esprit et de talent. Et une comédie de M. Dorat, c'est le chef-d'oeuvre du mauvais goût et du mauvais ton, c'est un jargon inintelligible". *L. à Guibert*, letter 13, August 9, 1773, p.49.

[70] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 36, October 15, 1774, p.94.

> I have recently heard Mr. de la Harpe's *les Barmécides*, which contains beautiful verses, which, altogether, gave me the greatest pleasure, and I said: 'If Mr. de Condorcet were here, my pleasure would be repeated tomorrow; he would have retained all the pleasure worthy of remembering'. Two days ago he read us charming stanzas about the regrets of an abandoned lover. Well, Sir, of all this we have not retained a word, my secretary and I; we only know that it gave us pleasure.[71]

Giving pleasure was also the goal of wit. As we have seen in her comments concerning the work of Dorat, wit is a quality Lespinasse appreciates in the work of others, but it is also a form which she cultivates in her letters to Condorcet, especially when she is dictating her letters to d'Alembert (whom she refers to as her secretary). In a letter written August 7, 1769, for example, Lespinasse and d'Alembert satirize the form of letter itself by providing an overly specific date: "Paris, this 7th of August, 1769, nine and a half hours, five minutes and four seconds in the morning. Reasonable weather".[72] The letter continues in this joking tone, employing irony and making literary allusions.

> Has your health deteriorated, or is it that you enjoy bathing? Or are you born under the sign of the fish? (this astronomical observation comes from the secretary). I think that you have made a bad choice in reading this *horrible book* in the water, as *wind* causes storms when one is on the water and, even more so when one is in it. This is rather light reading

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[71] "...j'ai entendu ces jours-ci *les Barmécides* de M. de la Harpe, où il y a de très beaux vers et qui en tout m'ont fait le plus grand plaisir, et je disais: 'Si M. de Condorcet était ici, j'aurais encore du plaisir demain ; il aurait retenu tout ce qu'il y a du plaisir à se rappeler.' Il nous a lu avant-hier des stances charmantes, qui sont des regrets d'un amant quitté. Eh bien! Monsieur, de tout cela nous n'en avons pas retenu un mot, mon secrétaire et moi ; nous savons seulement que cela nous a fait plaisir". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 30, [June 25, 1774], p.81. Jean-François de la Harpe (1739-1803): Best known as a poet, he was elected to the *Académie française* in 1776 and became a professor of literature at the new *Lycée* in Paris in 1786. D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., pp.307-08.

[72] "A Paris, ce 7 août, lundi 1769, neuf heures et demie et 5 minutes du matin et quatre secondes. Temps moyen". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 4, August 2, 1769, p.31.

> material for a man who has as little wind his head as you. What I fear most, though, is that it is too demanding, especially in the bath.[73]

Given that the book that Lespinasse is referring to is d'Alembert's *Réflexions sur la cause des vents* (1747), her disparaging comments are not serious.[74] In fact, the teasing tone, the attribution of fantastic powers of animation to d'Alembert's book and the word play all show the effort that Lespinasse is making to amuse her reader.

Furthermore, the nature of d'Alembert's participation in the composition of this letter, and in fact of every letter they write together (thirteen in all), is also contrived to provoke pleasure. At one level, Lespinasse and d'Alembert have staged the dictation format in order to allow both of them to communicate with Condorcet in a more stimulating manner. The very idea that Lespinasse is the creative force and d'Alembert is the scribe is in itself humorous, given that it usually Lespinasse's job to promote, guide and comment on the work of the *philosophes*. At the same time, the discipline to which Lespinasse subjects d'Alembert in forcing him into an inferior position in the letter-writing process satirizes the real power that Lespinasse possesses to impose discipline in the salon. Regarding a conflict between Condorcet's uncle (the bishop of Lisieux) and the chapter of his cathedral, for example, d'Alembert writes, in parentheses that "the secretary would have liked to have offered his reflections on the matter, but he is

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[73] "Est-ce que votre santé serait moins bonne, ou bien est-ce par goût que vous vous baignez et seriez-vous né sous le signe des poissons -- (cette observation astronomique est du secrétaire)? Je crois que vous faites fort mal de lire ce *méchant livre* dans l'eau, parce que les *vents* excitent des tempêtes quand on est sur l'eau et, à plus forte raison, quand on est dedans. C'est une lecture bien creuse pour un homme qui a aussi peu de vent dans la tête que vous. Mais ce que je crains surtout, c'est qu'elle ne soit trop appliquante, surtout dans le bain". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 4, August 7, 1769, p.31.

[74] J.-N. Pascal, ed., *Lettres à Condorcet...*, letter 4, note 1, p.140.

forbidden to do so and it is the very least little sacrifice that he could make".[75] Finally, Lespinasse and d'Alembert engaged in a fictitious mutual criticism which was amusing in the contrast it provided to the reality of their mutual estimation. Lespinasse writes of d'Alembert that "[m]y secretary never knows what he is saying nor what he is doing", to which d'Alembert responds in parentheses, "pure nonsense: this thought comes from the secretary".[76]

Lespinasse and d'Alembert's collaboration is ironic at a deeper level, however. Overtly, both parties have come together for the purpose of writing to Condorcet and are staging their performance for him. Nevertheless, there are also indications that composing a letter to Condorcet is simply a pretext for cultivating intimacy. On one occasion, for example, Lespinasse dictates to d'Alembert from her bath.[77] In this sense, the attention of Lespinasse and d'Alembert is less focused on Condorcet than on each other; Condorcet is the audience who renders their intimacy all the more titillating because it is exposed.[78] The ambiguity of Condorcet's simultaneously central and marginal position in the correspondence is yet another play in the meaning of the letter which provides an additional source of pleasure.

But the cultivation of wit, beauty and pleasure were not the only aims of the *gens des lettres* in Lespinasse's circle, nor of Lespinasse herself. In contrast to their

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[75] "Le secrétaire voulait faire là-dessus ses réflexions, mais on les lui interdit, et c'est bien le plus petit sacrifice qu'il puisse faire". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 6, September 9, [1769], p.35.

[76] "Mon secrétaire ne sait jamais ni ce qu'il dit, ni ce qu'il fait -- (pure bêtise de dire cela: cette pensée est du secrétaire)". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 4, August 7, 1769, p.31.

[77] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 5, [March 22, 1769], p.33.

seventeenth-century counterparts, the members of the Enlightenment republic of letters were also concerned with ensuring social progress and the common good through politics. These questions, too, Lespinasse addressed both inside and outside of her salon. Lespinasse shows her interest in specific policies considered in salon debate in the following quote:

> Since I left you, my friend, I have seen many people and I have heard them talk of the most pressing issues these days; I listened attentively, because these people knew what they were talking about. I concluded that this flighty and miserable human species is truly difficult to govern, especially when one wants to better it and improve its lot.[79]

Lespinasse's general concern with humanity's lot is also revealed in earlier comments concerning charity outside the context of the salon. To Condorcet, she writes that "only passionate love and charity make life worth living".[80] Similarly, in writing to Guibert she states that the charitable actions of the leader of the opposition in the English parliament, milord Shelburne, establish him as an honourable politician.

> Do you know how he rests his head and his soul from the agitation of government? It is in performing acts of charity worthy of a sovereign; it is in creating public establishments for the education of all the inhabitants of his lands; it is in informing himself of all the details of their instruction and their well-being.[81]

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[78] For a discussion of triangular relations in correspondence, see Benoît Melançon, *Diderot Épistolier. Contribution à une poétique de la lettre familière au XVIIIe siècle*, [Quebec]: Fides, 1996, pp.369-421.

[79] "Depuis que je vous ai quitté, mon ami, j'ai vu bien du monde, j'ai entendu cause de ce qu'il y a de plus important dans ce moment-ci ; j'ai bien écouté, parce que c'étaient des gens qui savaient ce dont ils parlaient. J'en ai conclu que cette sotte, que cette malheureuse espèce humaine est bien difficile à gouverner, lors surtout qu'on voudrait la rendre meilleure et plus heureuse". *L. à Guibert*, letter 203, December 1775, pp.485-86.

[80] "...il n'y a que l'amour passion et la bienfaisance qui me paraissent valoir la peine de vivre". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 36, [October 15, 1774], p.95.

[81] "Savez-vous comment il repose sa tête et son âme de l'agitation du gouvernement? C'est en faisant des actes de bienfaisance dignes d'un souverain ; c'est en créant des établissements publiques pour l'éducation de

This sense of charity also influenced Lespinasse's more general beliefs about politics. Good government (like that found in England) worked to the benefit of the people. In turn, it also served to make men good. Conversely, the despotic rule of tyranny (like that found in Russia and Prussia) led not only to slavery, but also baseness.[82] The government of France was situated in between these models: "A man gifted with energy, elevation and genius is like a chained lion in this country, in this zoo, and his knowledge of his strength tortures him; he is a Patagonian, forced to walk on his knees".[83] In short, through her flattery, her political commentary and her literary critiques, inside her salon and out, Lespinasse upheld and propagated not only the ideals of sensibility and reason, but also of wit, beauty, pleasure, and charity shared by members of the republic of letters. Those who possess these qualities in combination she refers to as honest (*honnête*) and virtuous.[84]

Exclusivity and the Republic

The republic of letters was not only committed to creating and propagating certain ideals, however, but also to doing so through the right channels. Jean-Pierre Dens speaks about the importance of polite conversation, based not only on reason and

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tous les habitants de ses terres ; c'est en entrant dans tous les details de leur instruction et de leur bien-être". *L. à Guibert*, letter 86, November 1, 1774, p.240.

[82] *L. à Guibert*, letter 5, June 6, 1773, p.12; letter 86, November 1, 1774, pp.240-41.

[83] "Un homme doué d'énergie, d'élévation et de génie, est dans ce pays comme un lion enchaîné dans une ménagerie, et le sentiment qu'il a de sa force le met à la torture ; c'est un Patagon condamné à marcher sur les genoux". *L. à Guibert*, letter 86, November 1, 1774, p.241.

[84] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 8, [April 1771], p.41; letter 20, August 23, [1772], p.62; letter 7, July 27, 1770, p.38; letter 44, [May 1775], p.104.

sensibility, but also on discipline and restraint.[85] The latter two qualities are important because they permit conversation to flow more easily. This facilitation of exchange, of "commerce" was crucial, because it was the means through which disputes would be properly resolved and social progress would be made. Through learned discourse, public opinion was formed, and this public opinion was to become the point of reference against which all actions were judged.[86]

The relevance of polite conversation to the formation of public opinion underlined the importance of the ethic of cohesion. In order to achieve the proper result, exchanges should not be aggressive or combative; they had to be underscored with the affection and esteem of friendship. Dena Goodman brings this out clearly when discussing the criticism heaped on abbé André Morellet[87] for personally attacking Galiani in responding to his dialogues on the grain trade published in 1770 (which I will discuss in more detail below).

> Diderot was even more outraged by Morellet's *Réfutation*. More than anyone else, he understood that the *Dialogues* demonstrated how to change the common way of thinking by inviting the reading public to participate in forms of discourse developed in the Enlightenment Republic of Letters. Morellet had violated both the norms of friendship and the rules of enlightened discourse. Diderot's *Apologie de l'abbé Galiani* was therefore an act of friendship and in defence of friendship. Its main

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[85] J.-P. Dens, *L'honnête homme...*, p.19.

[86] M. Ozouf, "'Public Opinion'...", pp.S9-S13.

[87] André Morellet (1727-1819): Eighteenth-century reformer and man of letters, he defended the philosophes against Palissot in his *Préface de la comédie des Philosophes* (1760), translated Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* (1766) and wrote *Mémoire sur la situation actuelle de la Compagnie des Indes* (1769) and *Réfutation de l'ouvrage qui a pour titre dialogues sur le commerce des blés* (1770). Campenon, "Morellet (André)" in Joseph François Michaud and Louis-Gabriel Michaud, eds., *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne*, vol. 30. Paris: Michaud, 1821, pp.118-24.

> concern, as Ellen Marie Strenski has said, was not the grain trade but philosophical method.[88]

Consequently, friendship was an important component in the philosophical system of the Enlightenment as it facilitated the conversations that would eventually serve the common good. As Holbach states, "Veritable and frank politeness emanates from feelings of attachment . . . ".[89]

In everyday dealings, proof of one's commitment to the principle of friendship was shown by promoting the careers and causes of one's friends, what I would like to refer to as "virtuous nepotism" in that the end goal was "charitable". Nepotism was a particularly effective way to reinforce the bonds of friendship because it served two purposes at once. It not only provided tangible proof that the promoter valued friendship as a common good, but it also created a personal relationship between the person to whom the recommendation was made and the one benefiting from it. Both would show loyalty to each other based on their already existing friendship with the intermediary who brought them together.

Consequently, it was tacitly understood that the beneficiary of a recommendation owed loyalty in return. The demonstration of this loyalty, in turn, ensured that one cemented one's reputation as a good friend and would continue to benefit from more recommendations in the future. This is demonstrated in Lespinasse's description of the

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[88] D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., p.214.

[89] "La politesse franche & vraie est celle qui part des sentiments d'attachement...". Paul Thiry, baron d'Holbach, *La morale universelle ou les devoirs de l'homme fondés sur sa nature*, Amsterdam: M.M. Rey, 1776, p.157.

process surrounding Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard's[90] bid for the position of secretary of the *Librairie*. Lespinasse writes,

> Madame Suard will have told you that we are pursuing a position worth a thousand *écus*, but it is not without inconveniences; it puts one in a dependent position with regard to forty or fifty *Pairs* [vassals by feudal tenure]; I will find some solace in this if Mr. Gaillard is awarded the post. We have also heard that Mr. d'Aiguillon covets the post for one of his protégés, whose name I have forgotten. If this is the case, Mr. Suard will withdraw his name, because he would not like to displease the duc d'Aiguillon.[91]

The systematic place and the importance accorded to nepotism is evident here. Lespinasse and Amélie Suard (whose brother owned the most important Parisian printing house) are tapping into their resources in order to secure Suard his post. All three will stop short, though, if they receive news that continuing in their effort would displease duc d'Aiguillon, as courting the latter's favour would in the long run be a more productive strategy than gaining this particular position.

As stated above, Lespinasse's own influence in the republic of letters resided in part in her knowledge of literary form and talent for governing conversation in her salon. In addition to this, however, she, too, was well connected; her entry into Deffand's salon put her in touch with the most illustrious men of the Enlightenment. As she herself says, "I am sometimes tempted to take pride in my incredible good fortune of having for my

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[90] Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard (1734-1817): Along with the abbé Arnaud, he edited the *Journal étranger*, the *Gazette de France*, and the *Gazette littéraire de l'Europe*. He also translated works from English (notably Robertson's *History of Charles V* in 1771) and became a member of the *Académie française* in 1774. D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., p.311.

[91] "Madame Suard vous aura mandé que nous étions à la suite d'une place qui vaut mille écus, mais qui n'est pas sans désagrément ; elle met dans la dépendance de quarante ou cinquante Pairs ; cette considération fait que si M. Gaillard a la préférence je m'en consolerai. L'on dit aussi que M. D'Aiguillon la demande pour

intimate friends the most excellent men not only of this century but surely of any other".[92] And these intimate friends and excellent men had power. D'Alembert, to name only one, had already established himself in the world of letters as co-editor of the *Encyclopédie*, the eighteenth-century best-seller which illustrated the Enlightenment program. At the time of Lespinasse's correspondence with Guibert and Condorcet, he was also a member of both the *Académie des sciences* and the *Académie française*. In the latter, he was the recognized leader of the *Encyclopédiste* party (as well as its temporary director in 1769), and anyone interested in pursuing an intellectual career would have done well to be on good terms with him.[93]

Lespinasse called on the power of these more established friends to promote the causes of others in times of trouble. For example, at the time that Lespinasse met her future lover, Jacques-Antoine-Hippolyte de Guibert, he was just beginning to be known in literary circles and Lespinasse did what she could to bolster his reputation. She recommends the introduction of Guibert's *Essai général de tactique* to Condorcet, stating that it is "full of vigour, elevation and liberty".[94] Three years later, Guibert entered a competition held by the *Académie française* to choose the best *Éloge de Catinat*. Lespinasse throws her support behind Guibert by encouraging her friends in the

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un protégé à lui, dont j'ai oublié le nom. Si cela se confirme, M. Suard se retirera, car il serait bien fâché de déplaire à M. le duc d'Aiguillon...". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 14, November 18, [1771], p.51.

[92] "...je suis quelquefois tentée de m'enorgueillir du bonheur inouï d'avoir pour amis intimes les plus excellents hommes de leur siècle et qui les auraient honorés tous". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 27, [April 1774], p.76.

[93] J.-N. Pascal, ed., *Lettres à Condorcet...*, letter 4, note 5, p.140. For more information on the life of d'Alembert, see Ronald Grimsby, *Jean D'Alembert* (1717-1783), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

[94] "[C]ela est plein de vigueur, d'élévation et de liberté". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 17, [July 1772], p.57.

Académie (François Arnaud,[95] Suard and d'Alembert) to champion his work, which they did, but to no avail. In the end, they were outvoted: La Harpe received the prize and Guibert and another author were awarded honourable mentions.[96]

Lespinasse's commitment to friendship again surfaces in her reaction to the polemics surrounding the liberalization of the grain trade in France. In 1763, Henri-Léonard-Jean Baptiste Bertin, in his role as controller general, decided to remove the restrictions on the free circulation of grain and on its commercial exchange. The following year, Clément-Charles-François Laverdy inherited his post and expanded his liberal policy to the export of grain. The failure of this system to prevent rising prices led to the circulation of conspiracy theories of a "famine pact" designed to enrich speculators and monopoly-holders, including the king, who was also said to be involved. Subsistence riots led abbé Joseph-Marie Terray, appointed controller-general in 1769 to reinstate the government's pre-1763 grain regulations in 1770. After Louis XV's death in 1774, Louis XVI made Turgot controller general, and the latter did not waste any time in making his mark. Within two weeks of his appointment, he again liberalized the grain trade in France. His timing, however, was not fortuitous. The 1774 harvest had not been good and within a year the price of bread had doubled. This again raised the spectre of famine, and rumours of a "famine pact" once more began to circulate. The end result was a series of riots in Paris and the provinces in April and May of 1775 called the Flour War. The

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[95] François Arnaud (1721-84): Inducted into the *Académie française* in 1771, Arnaud was an ardent defender to Gluck, writing a number of pieces in the *Journal de Paris* in 1777 in defence of German music as part of the music war opposing the Gluckistes to the Piccinnistes. He also wrote *Lettre sur la musique*, au

king and Turgot together were successful in suppressing the riots, and the end of the year was relatively peaceful. In the winter and spring of the following year, however, criticism began to mount against Turgot, who was finally dismissed on May 12, 1776, just over a year and half after his appointment.[97]

Closely tied to these policy decisions were debates surrounding the philosophy of the grain trade. Galiani hastily completed his *Dialogues sur le commerce des blés* before his return to Naples in the summer of 1769 and published it in December of the same year. Galiani criticized the physiocrats' free-trade policy, framing his comments in the form of a polite dialogue. In a response commissioned by the government, entitled *Réfutation de l'ouvrage qui a pour titre 'Dialogues sur le commerce des blés'*, abbé André Morellet not only refuted Galiani's economic position by supporting liberal grain policies, but also launched an *ad hominem* attack on Galiani himself. By the time Morellet's work was completed, however, the government had changed its position on the issue to mirror Galiani's. As a consequence, Morellet's book was only published with the return of free trade in 1774. It was soon joined by other essays considering the grain

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comte de Caylus (1754). Beuchot, "Arnaud (François)" in Joseph François Michaud and Louis-Gabriel Michaud, eds., *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne*, vol. 2, Paris: Michaud, 1811, p.494-96.

[96] *L. à Guibert*, letter 144, August 1775, p.357, 359.

[97] Joël Cornette, *Histoire de la France : Absolutisme et Lumières, 1652-1783*, Paris: Hachette Livre, 1993, p.132; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *L'Ancien Régime de Louis XIII à Louis XV*, vol. 2: *L'Absolutisme bien tempéré, 1715-1770*, Paris: Histoire de France Hachette, 1991, pp.243, 250-51; John Hardman, *Louis XVI*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, pp.44-45, 52-54; Cynthia A. Bouton, *The Flour War: Gender, Class and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society*, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1993, pp.79-98; Steven L. Kaplan, *The Famine Plot: Persuasion in Eighteenth-Century France*, Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1982, pp.52-61. For more on subsistence crises, see Ernest Labrousse, "Les ruptures périodiques de la prospérité : les crises économiques du XVIIIe" in Fernand Braudel and Ernest Labrousse, eds., *Histoire économique et sociale de la France*, vol. 2: *Des*

question, including Necker's *Sur la législation et le commerce des grains* (1775) and Condorcet's response to Necker in his *Lettres sur le commerce des grains* (1775).[98]

Lespinasse was intensely interested in the debate because of her close friendship with Turgot, one which was established long before he was named controller general in August 1774.[99] From her letters, it is evident that he was part of her circle of powerful friends and colleagues. He attended her salon and awaited the arrival of literary works as eagerly as any of Lespinasse's acquaintances.[100] Lespinasse was concerned about his health (he suffered from gout), passed along news and messages to and from Condorcet (with whom Turgot also had a close relationship) and frequently dined at his home.[101] They remained in close contact after he was appointed to his post.[102] Given the intimacy and affection between them, Lespinasse did not hesitate in defending Turgot and his liberal policies during the political crisis of the Flour War and in the polemics surrounding them. She writes to Condorcet that she found both Turgot and the king's reaction to the spring uprisings admirable,[103] but was aware that the injurious rumours concerning the "famine pact" had to be addressed.[104] Consequently, she encouraged

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derniers temps de l'âge seigneurial aux préludes de l'âge industriel, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970, pp.529-45.

[98] For a full account of these philosophical debates, see Steven L. Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976, pp.257-68; D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*..., pp.183-232; D. Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*..., pp.208-25.

[99] J.-N. Pascal, ed., *Lettres à Condorcet*..., p.11; see also letter 8, [April 1771], note 2, p.142.

[100] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 8, [April 1771], p.40.

[101] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 11, September 28, 1771, p.46; letter 15, June 14, [1772], p.54; letter 17, [July 1772], p.58; letter 18, July 26, [1772], p.60; letter 20, August 23, [1772], p.63; letter 32, [August 1774], p.85; letter 33, [September 1774], p.87.

[102] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 35, October 8, [1774], p.92; letter 38, [January or February 1775], p.98; letter 46, May 21, [1775], p.107; letter 52, September 24, [1775], p.116.

[103] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 44, [May 1775], pp.103-04.

[104] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 45, [May 20, 1775], p.105.

Condorcet to circulate his *Lettres sur le commerce des grains* more widely among Turgot's loyal Parisian friends.[105] Lespinasse was eager to ensure that these letters would have the strongest possible impact. She convinced Condorcet's publisher, Dumont de Nemours, to publish his fourth, fifth and sixth letters together and counsels him to adopt the proper tone, one which was both convincing and polite.[106]

The loyalty that Lespinasse showed both Guibert and Turgot in promoting their careers and defending their causes shows not only her commitment to them personally, but her commitment to the ethic of friendship valued by the republic of letters. More than this, it shows her commitment to the republic's ethic of *building* cohesion as a means for promoting the common good. In this sense, we can also understand Lespinasse's visible appreciation of wit, beauty, pleasure, honesty and virtue as an attempt to reinforce these shared values among her friends. The manner in which Lespinasse applies her enlightened *mondain* vocabulary is also significant. Her comments concerning plays and essays, Turgot and his enemies, not only promote the values she cherishes, but also help to forge a united opinion among the *gens de lettres* with regard to specific literary objects and players.[107]

The exchange of literary and political news is just one of the ways that the creation of cohesion was systematized through the norms of epistolary exchange in the

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[105] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 46, May 21, [1775], p.108.

[106] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 47, June 1, [1775], p.110.

[107] I will explore this issue in greater detail with regard to Giustina Renier Michiel. For a discussion of the importance of creating shared interpretations through the circulation of information, see Elisabeth C. Goldsmith, *"Exclusive Conversations": The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988 p.117.

eighteenth century. Anne Goldgar has recently explored how members of the seventeenth-century republic of letters sought to gloss over their ideological differences through a series of intellectual practices which underlined their commitment to one another and the pursuit of knowledge. These practices included running errands, exchanging scholarly information and providing news, recommendations and letters of introduction.[108] Members of the eighteenth-century republic of letters used the same strategies for creating the cohesion which would eventually be put to the service of humanity.

Like her seventeenth-century predecessors, Lespinasse strove to create unity through the exchange of information, sentiment and literary works. In addition to the information on political and literary events which I have already discussed, Lespinasse also provides Condorcet with news of friends common to them both. For example, in a letter written September 28, 1771, Lespinasse chronicles the news of their circle in seven paragraphs. She tells him of Turgot's gout, as well as describing the dinner parties, theatre outings, comings, goings and even the weight of various acquaintances. In the same letter, Lespinasse also chastises Condorcet for not providing her with news: "It is quite silly of you, Condorcet, to not tell me a word about anyone; I thus conclude that

[108] Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

everyone was doing well and *was very complimentary* towards me. Is this not the proper way to see things?"[109]

The provision and exchange of news served as an attempt to bridge a gap in time and place that necessarily separates all correspondents. Through her letter and by its very substance, Lespinasse is making herself and the other members of the republic more present to the person receiving it. This is what Benoît Melançon refers to as the letter's power of "fetishism".[110] The ability that the material aspect of the letter has to evoke presence is also reinforced by the circulation of documents. Lespinasse makes reference to her letters being sent in conjunction with others and to the circulation of books and packages between scholars.[111] The tactile nature of these appended documents serve to further underline the immediacy and reality of a literary community.

Of course, documents were also circulated as part of a practical process of exchange which helped intellectuals to accomplish their work. Even this, however, served to further reinforce cohesion by tapping into an ethic of reciprocity which was based on the cultivation of debt and obligation. Everything that one provided in the letter--friendship, sentiment, compliments, information--had to be returned in kind. The response then engendered an obligation of its own, and so on. The sense of mutual obligation underlying commerce is what Benoît Melançon refers to as the epistolary pact

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[109] "Vous êtes bien bête, bon Condorcet, de ne pas me dire un mot de personne ; j'en conclus que tout le monde se portait bien et me *faisait bien des compliments*. N'est-ce pas voir les choses comme il faut?" *L. à Condorcet*, letter 11, September 28, [1771], p.47.

[110] B. Melançon, *Diderot épistolier*..., p.207.

[111] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 8, [April 1771], p.40; letter 16, June 24 [1772], p.55; letter 17, [July 1772], p.57; letter 24, April 5 [1773], p.69; letter 36, [October 15, 1774], p.94.

and its rules were understood by all who wrote letters, including Lespinasse.[112] To Concorcet, she writes, "You are very kind, sir, to have thought of me upon your return and I deserve it, as I have thought of you since your departure".[113] Occasionally Lespinasse is even more explicit in marking their exchange as one implying obligation: "I will not tell you how I appreciate the sentiments that you show me; I pay my debt to you with the tender attachment that I have vowed".[114]

The systematic cultivation of debt through correspondence provided an everyday forum for demonstrating one's loyalty to the community, and, as a consequence, to the cause of humanity. As a result, abiding by the rules of exchange was also a sign of one's virtue. Lespinasse writes to Condorcet,

> Thus, I was very harsh for the good and excellent Condorcet? And he, who is so tender, responds with interest and friendship to my brutal and uncivil manner; but he knows that I am truly touched by the marks of his friendship. One would have to be weak and unfair to not be sensitive to it and to not respond with all one's soul.[115]

In the same way that Lespinasse demonstrated her virtue by supporting the causes of Guibert and Turgot, then, she showed her commitment to the cause of humanity by strengthening the ties which kept the republic strong and united in her letters.

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[112] B. Melançon, *Diderot épistolier...*, pp.161-62.

[113] "Vous êtes bien aimable, monsieur, d'avoir pensé a moi en arrivant et je le mérite, car j'ai bien pensé à vous depuis votre départ". *L. à Condorcet*, June 3, [1769], p.25

[114] "Je ne vous dirai pas combien je suis reconnaissante des sentiments que vous me marquez ; je m'acquitte envers vous par le tendre attachement que je vous ai voué". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 3, [July 1769], p.30. For a discussion of how the language of commerce is applied to epistolary exchange, see B. Melançon, *Diderot épistolier...*, pp.162-84.

[115] "J'ai donc été bien dure pour le bon et excellent Condorcet? Et lui, qui est bien tendre, répond avec intérêt et amitié à ma manière brutale et incivile ; mais c'est qu'il sait bien que je suis bien réellement touchée des marques de son amitié. Il faudrait être imbécile et injuste pour ne pas y être sensible et pour n'y pas répondre de toute son âme". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 10, September 16, [1771], p.44.

We have seen how Lespinasse's membership in the republic of letters directly determined her political allegiances in causing her to support the cause of her friends. Nevertheless, her reinforcement of the republic's cohesion through both the promotion of its members and systemized exchanges also had the broader political effect of perpetuating the elitist social structure that Lespinasse opposed in theory. Lespinasse, like most of the Enlightenment *gens littéraires*, played down the importance of birth and wealth in determining one's worth. When her respected friend, the comte de Crillon, announced that he was to marry a woman (Mlle Carbon) more wealthy than he is, for example, Lespinasse heartily approved of the match.

> By all rights, she should have married the worst subject at the Court, who would have given her the singular honour of the taboret. She escaped the danger of this frivolity and of the *reason* of people who have influence over her future. Here she is as well married as she could have wished if she had thirty or forty thousand *livres* of annuity, and she has the good fortune to give one hundred more to a man who is worthy of her affection and that she should have chosen, if she had had experience and virtue.[116]

Of course, Lespinasse was not against making any brand of distinction between people. She often states that possessing sensibility or virtue "elevated" some souls above others,[117] and opposes that which is elevated to that which is "common",[118] but these distinctions were made on the basis of talent and moral purity, not birth. Lespinasse's

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[116] "Elle devait naturellement épouser le plus mauvais sujet de la Cour, qui lui aurait donné le singulier honneur d'avoir le tabouret. Elle a échappé à cet écueil de la sottise et de la raison des gens qui ont de l'influence sur son établissement. La voilà aussi bien mariée qu'elle aurait pu le souhaiter, si elle avait eu trente ou quarante mille livres de rentes, et elle a le bonheur d'en donner cent de plus à un homme qui est digne de son affection et qu'elle aurait dû choisir, si elle avait eu de l'expérience et de la vertu". *L. à Condorcet*, letter 34, [September 29, 1774], p.88. As Jean-Noël Pascal clarifies, only duchesses are permitted to sit on the taboret in the presence of the king. *Lettres à Condorcet...*, letter 34, note 2, p.152.

[117] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 16, June 24, [1772], p.55; letter 44, [May 1775], p.103.

commitment to this worldview was especially pertinent given her slightly suspect background. Lespinasse had, after all, been born out of wedlock and was cheated by her family of her fortune. She did not offer the elaborate meals in her salon that Necker and Geoffrin were able to, and only managed to live independently through the charity of her friends.

How ironic, then, that most of Lespinasse's everyday exchanges worked to undermine her political ideals. As we have already determined, late eighteenth-century *gens de lettres* comprised a single landed elite and the incorporation of those from outside this circle into it was rare.[119] Part of the explanation lies in the fact that the wit and polish, the dress and style of those admitted into the republic were necessarily the product of education and wealth. Another explanation can be found in the importance accorded to the values of friendship, loyalty and virtuous nepotism. If being known was one of the criteria for admittance into the republic, it is not surprising that social mobility was restricted. Therefore, in promoting her friends Lespinasse perpetuated the exclusivity of this social and economic elite. Moreover, she reinforced the cohesion of this group systematically through her everyday exchanges.

In short, examining Lespinasse's letters shows us how she combined bits and pieces of philosophical principles taken from Rousseau, courtesy literature, the enlightened discourse of sociability and combined them with the practices of epistolary commerce and the behavioural norms established by the seventeenth-century republic of

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[118] *L. à Condorcet*, letter 9, May 4, [1771], p.43; letter 44, [May 1775], p.104.
[119] See chapter 1, pp.59-60.

letters to make a place for herself as a woman in the eighteenth-century republic of letters. She supported the literary ideals of beauty, wit and pleasure and defended the political principles of elitism and virtuous nepotism through the web of personal contacts that constituted the republic of letters. In so doing, she shows the extent to which public and private were inextricably linked for both her and the people she admired most in the world: her friends.

Chapter 3

Marie-Jeanne Roland, Woman Patriot

Marie-Jeanne Phlipon, the future Madame Roland, was born an engraver's daughter in Paris in 1754. As a girl, she spent most of her time studying, reading such classics as Tacitus, Voltaire, and Helvétius and in a brief fit of religious fervour, asked to be sent to a convent to study in 1765 with the intention of becoming a nun. She soon abandoned this plan, and, in fact, only remained at the school one year. During her stay, she made the acquaintance of two sisters, Henriette and Sophie Cannet, and it was with the latter, who was closer to her own age, that she struck up a close friendship.[1] Sophie and Manon, as she was known, carried on a voluminous correspondence, and, in fact, it was through the Cannet sisters that she was to meet her future husband, Jean-Marie Roland de la Platière, inspector of manufactures of the Picardy region, in 1776. Jean-

[1] Marie-Jeanne Roland de la Platière, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, edited and annotated by Paul de Roux, Paris: Mercure de France, 1966, pp.212, 213, 223, 232, 277. Henriette was 18, Sophie was not more than 14 and Manon was 11. See pp.225, 228.

Marie proved to be a somewhat reluctant suitor, and it was only after almost four years of courtship that they were married in 1780.[2]

For the next 10 years, she lived primarily in the provinces; the couple stayed in Paris their first year together, but in 1781, they moved to Amiens, home of the Cannet sisters, where Roland gave birth to her first and only child, a daughter name Eudora.[3] In 1784, they moved to Jean-Marie's family home at Villefrance-sur-Saône, near Lyon. The couple spent summers and autumns at the family's country estate, *Le Clos de la Platière*, and some time in the winter in Lyon itself.[4] In 1789, they moved to Lyon and in 1791, to Paris, where Jean-Marie, as a representative of the municipality of Lyon, sought financial aid from the Constituent Assembly. During their stay in Paris, the Rolands became more actively involved in political life, and it was during this period that Manon Roland held her salon. Jacques Brissot[5] and his radical friends (Robespierre, Pétion,[6] Buzot[7]) would

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[2] Gita May, *Madame Roland and the Age of Revolution*, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970, pp.75-101.

[3] M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, p.333.

[4] *Ibid*, p.88.

[5] Jacques Brissot (1754-93): Publisher of the *Le Patriote Français* (1789-93) and leader the Brissotin faction, which later became the Girondins, in the Legislative Assembly and the National Convention. Robert Chesnais, ed., *Appel à l'impartiale postérité par Madame Roland (1754-1793)*, Paris: Éditions Dagorno, 1994, pp.238-39. For more information on Brissot, see Suzanne d'Huart, *Brissot: La Gironde au pouvoir*, Paris: Laffont, 1986; Eloise Ellery, *Brissot de Warville*, Boston: Houghton, 1915; Leigh Whaley, "A Radical Journalist of the French Revolution: Jacques-Pierre Brissot and the Patriote Français", *Nottingham French Studies* (Spring 1922), pp.1-11.

[6] Jérôme Pétion (1756-94): Leftist deputy of the Constituent Assembly and the National Convention, he was also elected Mayor of Paris in June, 1791 and served one year before his dismissal, June 20, 1792. R. Chenais, ed., *Appel à l'impartiale...*, p.259.

[7] François Buzot (1760-94): Leftist deputy in the Constituent Assembly and deputy in the National Convention, he also had a secret romance with Manon Roland, which she revealed to her husband in January, 1793. *Ibid*, p.239.

meet at her house about four times a week during the interval between the closing of the Assembly and the start of Jacobin-club meetings at six.[8]

In the fall of 1791, many of the Rolands' friends were elected to the newly formed Legislative Assembly; by contrast, Roland's employment prospects dimmed with the abolishment of the inspectors of manufactures.[9] The Rolands returned briefly to Le Clos, and then again to Paris, where the couple's close friend, Louis Bosc,[10] ensured that Jean-Marie was admitted to the Jacobins, and then invited Jean-Marie to share his duties as secretary of the correspondence committee.[11] In March of 1792, Jean-Marie was named Minister of the Interior, and Manon was able to resume her salon activities in a more formal manner; Monday and Friday evenings were reserved for receiving dinner guests--one night for Roland's colleagues, the other for heads of different departments of the Ministry.[12] Jean-Marie was dismissed from his post in June 1792,[13] only to be reinstated in August until his resignation January 22, 1793, the day after Louis XIV's execution. The couple stayed in Paris the winter and spring of 1793 and Manon, a few days before her scheduled departure for Le Clos, was arrested and imprisoned just after her husband

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[8] M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, pp.63, 131.

[9] M.-J. Roland, *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, letter 465, to Champagneux, October 12, 1791, p.389. (From this point on, all letters without references will be drawn from this collection.) The removal of inspectors was decreed September 27, 1791. See Claude Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland*, vol. 2: *1788-1793*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902, p.389, note 2. Luc de Champagneux (1744-1807): Publisher of the Courrier de Lyon and elected member of the municipality of Lyon, he was called to Paris by Jean-Marie Roland to help him in his duties as Minister of the Interior. R. Chesnais, ed., *Appel à l'impartiale...*, p.241.

[10] Louis Bosc (1759-1828): High ranking bureaucrat in the mail service, member of the Jacobin club, he published Manon Roland's memoirs in 1797. R. Chesnais, ed., *Appel à l'impartiale...*, p.237.

[11] C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, p.397.

[12] M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, pp.66, 72; M.J. Sydenham, The Girondins, London: The Athlone Press, 1961, pp.87-88.

[13] G. May, *Madame Roland...*, p.219.

had fled.[14] She spent the remainder of her life in prison, except for a brief reprieve on June 24, when she was released only to be arrested again the same day, this time following proper procedure.[15] Roland spent her time in prison writing letters and her memoirs. She was tried for treason November 7-8, 1793, and executed on the 8th. On November 15, Jean-Marie, who was in hiding with friends of the family near his boyhood home of Rouen, committed suicide after hearing of the execution of his wife.[16]

Manon Roland left a collection of written pieces and letters which survive in manuscript form and are held at the *Bibliothèque nationale* in Paris.[17] She is best known, however, for her letters and her memoirs, both of which have been published in various forms. Her memoirs are actually a collection of pieces on political and personal themes. The first section is her *Notices historiques*, a justification of the actions of the Girondin deputies which she began writing June 8; some parts of this section were burned August 2 by an associate of Luc de Champagneux, to whom Manon had entrusted the manuscript.[18] Believing her work entirely lost, she began rewriting parts of the *Notices* August 8, in the form of her *Portraits et anecdotes*. One day later, she began her *Memoires particuliers*, a collection of personal reminiscences modelled on Rousseau's

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[14] G. May, *Madame Roland...*, p.256; letter 525, to the National Convention, June 1, 1793, p.471.

[15] Letter 536, to Lauze de Perret, June 24, 1793, p.488. Claude-Roman Lauze de Perret (1747-93): Deputy for the Bouches-du-Rhône in the Legislative Assembly and the National Convention. C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, pp.474-75, note 3.

[16] R. Chesnais, ed., *Appel à l'impartiale...*, p.231.

[17] France. Paris. Bibliothèque nationale. Département des manuscrits, "Dossier Roland", Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises.

[18] Paul de Roux, ed., *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1966, p.99, note 1, [p.309]. V. Kapp, "Madame Roland ou l'autothématisation comme moyen de combat dans la France révolutionnaire" in G.T. Harris and P.M. Wetherill, eds., *Littérature et Révolutions en France*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990, p.46.

Confessions.[19] In these last three months of her life, her writings continued to mix the personal with the political, setting out her reflections on the king's ministries, her arrest, making notes for her defence, general political observations and penning her last thoughts before her projected suicide in October, which never came to fruition.

If Roland's memoirs is perhaps her best-known work, her letters are nonetheless a similarly important part of her *oeuvre*. She wrote a significant number of letters throughout her life, 1 500 in all according to Brigitte Diaz.[20] Her published correspondence can be divided roughly into four sections. The first is composed of the letters which she wrote to her girlhood friend, Sophie Cannet, and occasionally to Sophie's sister, Henriette. These letters were written between 1767 and 1781, the year that the newly married Roland moved to Amiens, Cannet's place of residence. The Rolands left Amiens in 1784 to move to Villefranche. Before their departure, Sophie and Manon had a disagreement and they stopped writing. There was a short reconciliation before the death of Cannet, during which time some letters were exchanged, but it is safe to say that after 1784, Sophie Cannet no longer played a large role in the life of Roland. A second section is composed of letters to Jean-Marie which were sent during their courtship and the early years of their marriage. Between 1777 and 1780, Manon sent 113 letters; the frequency with which she wrote dropped off sharply in the first year after their marriage (during which only 2 letters were sent), and picked up speed again between

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[19] Béatrice Didier, *Écrire la Révolution*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989, p.245.

[20] Brigitte Diaz, "'Le bonheur dans les fers'. Lettres de prison de Madame Roland (juin-novembre 1793)" in André Magnan, ed., *Expériences limites de l'épistolaire. Lettres d'exil, d'enfermement, de folie. Actes du Colloque de Caen, 16-18 juin, 1991*, Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 1993, p.356, note 59.

1781 and 1787, during which time her husband remained Manon's primary correspondent; in these years, she sent him a total of 157 letters while he was away on business, his next closest epistolary competitor being Bosc, who received 106. The third section of Roland's letters include those she sent to friends and acquaintances throughout France and in London, including Bancal,[21] Brissot and Bosc (the letters Roland sent to her friends between 1782 and 1793 totalled 352). The letters she wrote in prison constitute the final section. These letters (33 in all) tend to be either overtly political and utilitarian, or romantic letters to Buzot, with whom she had fallen in love at some point during the last two years of her life.

This chapter centres on Roland's published letters to friends and acquaintances from 1788 to 1793, totalling 266. The letters begin the year before the couple moved to Lyon and end during the Terror, thus revealing the shift in Roland's position in the intellectual and political community from the margins of the republic of letters to the centre of national politics. This focus afforded me the opportunity to study how Roland continually renegotiated gender prescriptions to confront political crises in a way that she judged proper to her sex. Furthermore, it was during the revolutionary period that Roland most actively cultivated a web of relations which she put to the service of political ends. In both her letters and her political salon she helped to propagate Revolutionary ideals and reinforce the links which unified her political allies. Therefore,

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[21] Jean-Henri Bancal des Issarts (1750-1826): Named *électeur de Paris* for the district of Saint-Eustache in 1789, he was one of the founding members of the Jacobin club and the *Club de 1789*, he was also elected president of the forerunner to the Jacobins in Clermont, the *Société des amis de la constitution* in 1790 and

during the period in question, her letters gradually become a tool that is intricately linked with a wider social and political movement that also included her salon, and, for this reason are of greatest interest to me here.

Roland in the World of Gender Prescriptions

Conservative gender prescriptions dictated that women in the late eighteenth century were to occupy themselves with family and the home. In a world divided between the private sphere of particularity and the public sphere of government and society, women were thought to be destined by nature to dwell in the private sphere, and, as such, should be modest, and shun political and intellectual activities.[22] If we accept that this theory reflects the reality of eighteenth-century life, Manon Roland's actions seem to be contradictory: at certain points she seems to want to adhere to these prescriptions while at others, she freely contravenes them. The literature on Roland has sought to reconcile this apparent contradiction by identifying an evolution in Roland's thought or suggesting that she was pursuing a covertly subversive strategy. Both interpretations have merit. Roland's attitudes towards gender did adapt to changing political circumstances and she would have preferred to be more overtly politically active if such action had been more acceptable for women.

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member of the National Convention in 1792. C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, pp.736-52.

[22] For a full discussion, see chapter 1, pp.11-18.

Nonetheless, applying the language of public and private to Roland's experience obscures our understanding of her political participation. The seemingly private roles that she carved out for herself (inciting others to action, circulating information, suggesting policy) were political and in fulfilling them, she was contributing an important aspect of the Revolutionary battle. Furthermore, by insisting on the dichotomy which separated Roland's public and private selves, authors gloss over the fact that Roland constructed her own evolving vision of proper gender roles, drawing on a number of philosophical sources to confront shifting political circumstances.

In both her letters and her memoirs, Manon Roland seemed conflicted with regard to conservative gender prescriptions outlined by Rousseau and Holbach, who wanted women to occupy themselves with domestic concerns. In her memoirs and in her early letters, Roland seems to want to adhere to these prescriptions. This tendency was especially marked in her letters to Sophie Cannet, in which Phlipon's exultation of feminine modesty was combined with a reverence for Catholic doctrine which called for individuals to subsume their individual selves to God. In a letter written on July 24, 1774, Phlipon wrote that she wanted to live doing good but without witnesses.[23] In order to do so however, she would have to sublimate her particularly feminine nature, which was predisposed towards vanity.

> We are all born with the unfortunate seed of passion. Budding reason finds itself assailed by it before arriving at a degree of maturity that protects it against passion's pernicious attacks; the sex is inclined

[23] Marie-Jeanne Phlipon, *Lettres de Madame Roland. Nouvelle série. 1767-1780*, vol. 1, edited by Claude Perroud. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1913, pp.211-12.

> particularly to vanity; all women eventually feel its malignant impressions: it is a vice inherent to their nature; wisdom consists of continually resisting it.[24]

One of the ways to achieve this sublimation was to flee from one's particularity through union with friends and God. Thus, in reference to her union with God, she writes,

> But I think that reason alone is too weak a tool for such a large undertaking; I am persuaded that it is only a real and solid piety that can keep the soul clean of the blemishes that affect its virtue and consequently its happiness.[25]

Similarly, the cleansing union of souls could also be accomplished through friendship, as Phlipon makes clear in the following passage to Cannet:

> Oh! kind union, which, aside from the happiness that it gives us, also provides the delicious hope that the further we advance on the road to virtue, the more dear and precious it will become and the more her beautiful knots will mutually tighten.[26]

It is clear from these passages that in her youth, Manon accepted the notion that women were the less noble sex and was determined to take the steps necessary to suppress her natural proclivity for depravity.

In later years, Roland moved away from the fervour of these sentiments and was much less derisive in her comments about women. Nevertheless, some of the same

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[24] "Nous naissons tous avec le germe malheureux des passions, la raison naissante se trouve assaillie par elles avant de parvenir à un degré de maturité qui l'assurerait contre leurs attaques pernicieuses; le sexe est enclin particulièrement à la vanité, il n'est pas de femmes qui n'en ressentent tôt ou tard les malignes impressions, c'est un vice inhérent à leur nature, la sagesse consiste à y résister continuellement". M.-J. Phlipon, *Lettres de Madame Roland. Nouvelle série...*, letter 12, to Cannet, January 25, 1772, p.75.

[25] "Mais je crois la raison toute seule beaucoup trop faible pour un si grand ouvrage, je suis persuadée qu'il n'y a qu'une piété réelle et solide qui puisse conserver l'âme nette de ces souillures qui altèrent sa vertu et par conséquent son bonheur". *Ibid.*

[26] "Oh! l'aimable union, qui, outre le bonheur dont elle nous fait jouir, nous donne encore la délicieuse espérance que plus nous avancerons dans le chemin de la vertu, plus elle nous deviendra chère et précieuse et plus ses beaux noeuds se resserreront mutuellement". M.-J. Phlipon, *Lettres de Madame Roland. Nouvelle série...*, letter 6, to Cannet, September 24, 1770, p.14.

themes which were present in her earlier letters continued to recur, including the desire to efface her particularity by uniting with others in the name of virtue. In her letters to Bancal, especially, she often made references to the union of souls that is much more easily accomplished in times of Revolution, although in this case Catholicism, long abandoned in favour of deism,[27] was replaced with the Revolutionary doctrine of transparency and recognition. For example, in her letter to Bancal on July 18, 1790, she writes,

> It is true that souls communicate, that I had calculated perfectly the day of your first letter:...Certainly, you will be, you are our worthy and good friend; who else could provide the affinities which draw us together, the connections which link us? If you quickly saw in us these simple morals, companions of wise principles and tender affections, we soon recognized your loving and generous heart, made to taste all that sentiment and virtue can produce.[28]

These could simply be the words of a budding patriot and do not necessarily indicate that Roland was concerned with behaving properly as a woman. More conclusive was Roland's stated devotion to her husband. In her memoirs, Roland wrote that despite the fact that the relationship was often not satisfying to her, she fulfilled her duty with regard to him. In describing her reflections concerning the prospect of marriage with Jean-Marie Roland, she wrote,

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[27] G. May, *Madame Roland...*, p.34.

[28] "Il est vrai que les âmes s'entendent, que j'avais parfaitement calculé le jour de votre première lettre;...Assurément, vous serez, vous êtes notre digne et bon ami; quel autre nous pourrait rendre les convenances qui nous rapprochent, les rapport qui nous lient? Si vous avez promptement aperçu en nous ces moeurs simples, compagnes de sages principes et des douces affections, nous avons bientôt reconnu votre coeur aimant et généreux, fait pour goûter tout ce que peuvent produire le sentiment et la vertu". Letter 360, to Bancal, July 18, 1790, pp.106-07.

> If marriage was, as I judged it, a serious bond, an association in which the woman normally assumes responsibility for both individuals, would it not be better to exert my faculties, my courage, in this honourable task than in the isolation in which I lived?[29]

In her insistence that fulfilling her marital duty was a personal sacrifice, however, Roland also marks her departure from conservative gender prescriptions.

Roland's contravention of conservative doctrine concerning gender was most visible in her intellectual and political activities. As a young woman she read voraciously, discussing the relative merits of Pope and Bayle with Sophie Cannet.[30] Even during the years she spent in the provinces, she helped her husband research and promote his *Dictionnaire des manufactures*[31] and often took an academic interest in gardening, asking Bosc technical questions about plants and insects. For example, after receiving a response concerning the insects that were attacking her artichokes, she writes,

> Honour to science and especially to scholars for such clever expedient measures! My artichokes have been preserved and I have increased the sum of my knowledge in learning to give the name *larva* to that which I aptly used to call *black bug*.[32]

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[29] "Enfin, si le mariage était, comme je le pensais, un lien severe, une association où la femme se charge pour l'ordinaire du bonheur des deux individus, ne valait-il pas mieux exercer mes facultés, mon courage, dans cette tâche honorable que dans l'isolement où je vivais?" M -J Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, p.332.

[30] M.-J. Phlipon, *Lettres de Madame Roland. Nouvelle serie* , letter 25, to Cannet, June 5, 1772, p.113; letter 107, to Cannet, December 25, 1775, p.352.

[31] When Charles-Joseph Panckoucke (1736-98) decided that he wanted to publish a thematic presentation of d'Alembert and Diderot's *Encyclopédie* in 1780, he took advantage of the opportunity to update the technical and scientific sections and asked Jean-Marie Roland to write a *Dictionnaire des manufactures, arts et métiers* in two volumes (published in 1784 and 1785), which grew into three (the third was finally published in 1790, with some sections only printed in 1792). See C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, pp.641-43.

[32] "Honneur à la science et surtout aux savants pour des expédients si bien trouvés! Ne voilà-t-il pas mes artichauts bien préservés? Et n'ai-je pas notablement augmenté la somme de mes connaissances en apprenant à donner le nom de larve à ce que je désignais fort bien par celui de bête noire". Letter 303, to Bosc, July 4, 1788, p.19.

Roland was still conceivably within the limits prescribed by Rousseau: both Julie (*La Nouvelle Héloïse*) and Sophie (*Emile*) had some access to education, even if, in the case of the latter, its goal was strictly to make her a better companion.[33] As the Revolution approached, however, Roland became more actively involved in politics, something Rousseau would never have approved of. She shared her husband's duties as secretary of the correspondence committee of the Jacobin club,[34] was an anonymous correspondent for Brissot's *Patriote Français* and reported on the progress of the Revolution and the actions of the Assembly in her letters. Furthermore, in writing her memoirs based on Rousseau's model, she was stepping out of the shadows. She even boasted of her own talent, stating that,

> Roland, without me, would have been no worse an administrator; his activity, his knowledge, like his integrity, are his own; with me he produced a greater effect, because I placed in writings a mixture of strength and softness, of the authority of reason and the charm of sentiment, qualities which only a sensitive woman endowed with a sound head possesses. It was with delight that I undertook the pieces that I thought would be useful, and I found more pleasure in it than if I had been known as the author.[35]

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[33] Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, pp.35-38.

[34] Marie-Laure Girou Swiderski, "La lettre comme action politique : Madame Roland" in Georges Bérubé and Marie-France Silver, eds., *La lettre au XVIIIe siècle et ses avatars. Actes du Colloque international tenu au Collège universitaire Glendon, Université York, Toronto (Ontario), Canada, 29 avril-1er mai, 1993*, Toronto: Édition du Gref, 1996, p.163.

[35] "Roland sans moi n'eût pas été moins bon administrateur; son activité, son savoir sont bien à lui comme sa probité; avec moi il produit plus de sensation, parce que je mettais dans ses écrits ce mélange de force et de douceur, d'autorité de la raison et de charmes du sentiment qui n'appartiennent peut-être qu'à une femme sensible douée d'une tête saine. je faisais avec délices ces morceaux que je jugeais devoir être utiles, et j'y trouvais plus de plaisir que si j'en eusse été connue pour l'auteur". M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, p.155.

Although Roland is careful to note that she did not want glory, the pride she took in her workmanship was evident and this pride itself was at odds with the value of feminine modesty as described by conservative philosophers.

The ambiguity that Roland exhibited towards gender as defined in conservative thought is taken up in the literature written on her. Several authors highlight Roland's sensitivity. The most striking example is Gita May who, basing her analysis primarily on Roland's memoirs, paints Roland as a product of the preromantic era. This is most obviously her goal in her book on preromanticism's influence on Roland, but is also the guiding thread of her biography of Roland.[36] In the latter, she judges that Rousseau's influence on Manon was decisive, devoting an entire chapter to "The Revelation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau". She wrote that "Rousseau kindled an already passionate temperament, awakened too sensitive a heart to dreams of fulfilment that had so far been dormant".[37] She claims that Manon's marriage to Jean-Marie was patterned after Julie's to Wolmar, and that Rousseau affected her appreciation of the countryside and influenced her to write her memoirs.[38] Other authors, too, pick up on Rousseau's influence on Roland. Marie-Laure Girou Swiderski notes that Roland, as a faithful disciple of Rousseau, thought that all hopes of the Revolution rested in his precepts. Furthermore, she states that Roland in her letters to Bancal echoes passages of Julie's

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[36] Gita May, *De Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Madame Roland. Essai sur la sensibilité préromantique et révolutionnaire*, Geneva: librairie Droz, 1964; G. May, *Madame Roland*....

[37] G. May, *Madame Roland*..., p.56.

[38] *Ibid*, pp.67, 147, 268.

letters to Saint-Preux.[39] Finally, in contrast to the freedom Brigitte Diaz claims that Roland felt when she was imprisoned, she writes that "Madame Roland always submitted, at least in theory, to the obligation of reserve, that is, silence, that her feminine duty required".[40]

Even though authors have been quick to point out that Roland conformed to conservative gender models in many ways, they have by no means ignored her departures from them. Thus, Diaz states that in prison Roland signed letters in her own name, consented to have her writings published and fully indulged her love for Buzot.[41] Mary Trouille also emphasizes the rebellious side of Manon Roland. Even as a young woman writing to Sophie Cannet, Trouille points out that Phlipon regretted not being born a woman in Rome or Sparta or a man in France.[42] Furthermore, Trouille claims that under the guise of helping her husband with his work, an activity permitted to women by even the most conservative standards,[43] Roland actually subverted Rousseau's feminine ideals.

> ...[W]hile seeming to conform to the feminine ideals and norms advocated by Rousseau in his novels, Mme Roland in fact subverted those models by undermining the gender dichotomies (public/private, self-assertion/self-effacement, reason/sensibility) that lay at the very core of his discourse on women. While appearing to relegate herself to a role of silence and self-effacement in the domestic sphere, she in fact transformed her home into a public forum, her tiny office into the unofficial center of Roland's ministry, and her devotion to her husband

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[39] M.-L. Girou Swiderski, "La lettre comme action politique ", pp.169, 171.

[40] "Madame Roland s'est toujours soumise, en théorie du moins, à l'obligation de réserve, voire de silence, que lui imposaient selon elle les devoirs de son sexe". B Diaz, "'Le bonheur dans les fers'...", p.344.

[41] *Ibid*, pp.345-46, 352.

[42] Mary Trouille, "Revolution in the Boudoir: Mme Roland's Subversion of Rousseau's Feminine Ideals", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 13, 2 (May 1989), p.72.

[43] Mary Trouille, "Mme Roland, Rousseau, and Revolutionary Politics, or the Art of Losing One's Head", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 304 (1992), p.810.

> into a dynamic political partnership--thereby giving herself the power to influence public affairs in a very direct and dramatic manner.[44]

Thus, those who write about Roland pick up on both her rebellion against and her submission to gender models.

Rather than choosing to emphasize either one or the other, the majority of authors make room for both in their writings, seeking to understand the seeming confusion of their co-existence. There are two main ways in which they do so. The first is the identification of a split in Roland's life before and after prison. According to this interpretation, Roland followed conservative gender models before she was taken to prison, but the particular circumstances of her confinement led her to contravene them. Thus, as we have seen above, Brigitte Diaz identifies Roland's willingness to assume the position of author publicly and her concession to her love for Buzot as evidence of Roland's disregard for the social mores that previously constrained her.

> First the writing of her Memoirs (where the self searches for cohesion in the reconstitution of her story), but especially her more risqué letter writing, would cause a few of the somewhat stiff masks that she had previously worn to fall away: that of the republican 'Clorinde' and that of the virtuous wife of the austere Minister Roland, for example.[45]

Similarly, Nicole Trèves argues that it is due to her imprisonment that Roland "discovers and liberates herself".[46] Faced with immanent death, and encouraged by the amount she

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[44] M. Trouille, "Revolution in the Boudoir...", p.74.

[45] "L'écriture de ses Mémoires d'abord, où le moi se cherche une cohésion dans la reconstitution de son histoire, mais surtout l'écriture plus risquée de ses lettres, qui vont faire tomber quelques-uns des masques un peu empesés qu'elle portait naguère : celui de la 'Clorinde' républicaine ou de la vertueuse épouse de l'austère ministre Roland, par exemple". B. Diaz, "'Le bonheur dans les fers'...", p.342.

[46] "...se découvre et se libère". Nicole Trèves, "Madame Roland ou le parcours d'une intellectuelle à la grande âme" in Roland Bonnel and Catherine Rubinger, eds., *Femmes Savantes et Femmes d'Esprit: Women Intellectuals of the French Eighteenth Century*, New York: Peter Lang, 1994, p.322.

has been able to write, all the social constraints on Roland's behaviour fall away. Finally, she was able to give in to the "literary dimension that she had always held inside".[47]

Scholars from a second group are in agreement with scholars from the first on a number of points. They also think that death spurred Roland on in her writing,[48] and that she would have never written were she not in prison.[49] Nevertheless, they also see that she continued to be dogged by gender prescriptions. In other words, she was not as free as she appeared. Thus, Renée Winegarten states that Roland still felt reluctant to assume the status of woman writer, for whom she showed disdain in her memoirs.[50]

Others agree that Roland's glorification of the modest woman shows her continuing concern for adhering to gender stereotypes, but for a different reason. In contrast to Winegarten, Mary Trouille, Béatrice Didier and Judith Scheffler believe that Roland's attempt to paint herself as the eighteenth-century ideal of feminine sensibility, along with her assertion that she never held the reigns of power in her husband's stead, were false. Roland's claims to this effect simply constituted Roland's effort to justify her actions and downplay her participation in the political affairs of her husband to save her reputation (and that of the Girondins) against accusations that she was not conforming to

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[47] "...dimension littéraire qui l'habite depuis toujours". *Ibid,* pp.326-27.

[48] Renée Winegarten, "Marie Jeanne Phlipon (Manon) Roland de la Platière (1754-93)" in Eva Martin Sartori and Dorothy Wynne Zimmerman, eds., *French Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Source Book*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991, pp.385-86; Chantal Thomas, "Heroism in the Feminine: The Examples of Charlotte Corday and Madame Roland" in Sandy Petrey, ed., *The French Revolution, 1789-1989: Two Hundred Years of Rethinking*, Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1989, p.78; Mary Trouille, "Madame Roland, Rousseau...", p.812.

[49] M. Trouille, "Madame Roland, Rousseau...", p.812.

[50] R. Winegarten, "Marie Jeanne Phlipon (Manon) Roland de la Platière (1754-93)", pp.385-86.

the proper model of femininity.[51] It was possible she was even trying to save her life. Thus, according to these scholars, the sensitive and modest woman that is present in the majority of her memoirs was not the true Manon Roland. The real Roland was a woman of strong will and keen intelligence, a woman who, given a choice, would have lived as a man. She engaged in political discussions with the deputies of the radical left and wrote letters on her husband's behalf and she would have participated much more actively and overtly in political life had gender prescriptions not been so strict. In describing her reaction to the Revolution, Marie-Laure Girou Swiderski writes, "We finally see [Roland's] struggle to reconcile the contradiction between her visceral need for action and her profound reticence towards women's participation in political life ".[52]

This interpretation is supported by the existence of a few passages in her memoirs where, in the words of Mary Trouille, Roland's "mask" falls away, "revealing a woman of intense personal and political ambitions".[53] The logical conclusion is that we should latch onto passages in which Roland claimed that her husband's work bored her and that she often felt unfulfilled in the relationship[54] and ignore those in which she claimed to be a dutiful wife--passages which seem to contradict her actions. For example, how can we

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[51] M. Trouille, "Madame Roland, Rousseau...", p.811; B. Didier, *Écrire la Révolution*, p.246; Judith Scheffler, "Romantic Women Writing on Imprisonment and Prison Reform", *The Wordsworth Circle*, 19, 2 (spring 1988), pp.99-100.

[52] "On y perçoit enfin le débat de conscience que suscitent en elle les contradictions entre son besoin viscéral d'action et ses profondes réticences envers la participation des femmes à la vie publique". M.-L. Girou Swiderski, "La lettre comme action politique...", p.160.

[53] M. Trouille, "Revolution in the Boudoir...", p.76. Chantal Thomas also describes Roland as ambitious. See her "Heroism in the feminine...", p.79.

[54] M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, pp.155, 332.

take Roland seriously when she claims that she would have chewed her fingers off before becoming a writer,[55] given that she was incessantly putting pen to paper?

In this view, Roland's ambition was at odds with the feminine model of behaviour, a contradiction she was aware of and struggled with up to the end of her life. Therefore, in this second camp of scholars, Roland's reserve on the gender front was a veil that hid her true frustration.[56] What this interpretation has in common with the first is the acceptance of the necessary existence of a gap which separates Roland's compliance to conservative gender models from her "rebellion" against them. The first is a gap in time, where Roland first conforms, then rebels. The second is a gap between appearance and reality, in which Roland seems to conform, but in reality wants to, or finds a way to, rebel.

In contrast, I want to argue that gender models were not as strict in reality as they appeared to be in conservative theory, which means that there was no necessary contradiction in Roland's behaviour. As we saw in the first chapter, conservative views of women were not the only ones circulating at the end of the eighteenth century. At least some communities who formed the republic of letters actually accepted women's intellectual and political contribution as valid. This was the case for Lespinasse and the Enlightenment. As a woman, Lespinasse was to play an important role in estimating sensibility and imposing order. Moreover, her commitment to the political and aesthetic

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[55] M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, p.321.

[56] Both Mary Trouille and Chantal Thomas use the language of seeming and reality explicitly. Trouille says that Roland had confined herself to the domestic sphere "on the surface" in her "Madame Roland,

values of the republic made room for her integration in the community. Not only was she part of a systematized web of relations that promoted cohesion, but she also was able to effectively support the causes of her friends through her connections.

Roland's correspondence highlights different aspects of the female experience in the republic. As opposed to Lespinasse, her role in the republic of letters in the 1780s was marginal at best. She did not promote the values of beauty, wit and pleasure that Lespinasse did, nor did she abide as explicitly by an ethic of debt and exchange in her correspondence. In short, Roland was, much as the secondary literature reviewed above affirms, less a product of Enlightenment sociability and more one of Rousseau's republican discourse which insisted on nature, sensibility, transparency and social unity. These were the values that she sought to promote in her correspondence. This did not mean, however, that she felt the need to strictly abide by his thoughts of femininity. Like Lespinasse and many other intellectual women of the era, by the time of the Revolution, she was patterning her behaviour more on Rousseau himself than on his literary heroines. The explanation for this is that for Roland and other women, gender prescriptions were not the only factors determining her political and intellectual activity: political allegiances were also influential. Once the revolution got underway, Roland was tied through her husband to the Brissotins and the Girondins, a group of eighteenth-century intellectuals who welcomed women's political support.

Rousseau...", p.812, and Thomas claims that Roland's ambition and personality could not remain hidden behind her declarations of modesty in her "Heroism in the Feminine...", p.79.

Furthermore, like Lespinasse, Roland worked out her own gender prescriptions which were based on her personal evaluation of what constituted women's proper political role and intellectual role, that of what I would like to call the "woman patriot". Given her goal of helping her friends on the radical left to steer the revolution in the proper direction, Roland identified three activities appropriate to her sex: she could incite men to action, set out political plans of action, and reinforce the unity of the party and the people by sending letters which would propagate the truth about the events in Paris and provide a means through which patriots would recognize one another's virtue.

The importance of each of these activities changed as Roland saw the Revolution speeding off-track. Roland shifted her attention away from inciting others to action and took matters more into her own hands by circulating "accurate" information to ensure the cohesion of virtuous revolutionaries. She did so both in published and unpublished letters and speeches at the Constituent Assembly. This more vocal role was one that Roland did not approve of early on, but soon deemed appropriate given the severity of the political crisis. Furthermore, the more radical shift in Roland's definition of femininity was accepted by her Brissotins friends. In this sense, Roland's experience shows the fluidity of gender prescriptions even more glaringly than does Lespinasse's, whose promotion of her friends and propagation of elitism was nonetheless a well-established role for women in the Enlightenment republic of letters. The principle is the same, though. For both women, the demonstration of political loyalties created political

and intellectual opportunities that even progressive thinkers on gender in the eighteenth century would not have explicitly promoted.

Another similarity linking Roland to Lespinasse in terms of their positions in the wider political and intellectual communities concerns their desire to foster unity through correspondence. Lespinasse's letters promoted the values of friendship and loyalty which provided the basis of the polite conversation which would further humanity's cause. Roland was less inspired by courtesy literature and more by Rousseau's doctrine of truth and transparency. In providing news, she was not creating an obligation to be fulfilled. Rather, she was telling the truth, bringing light to the countryside, as she notes, and providing the means for citizens to recognize each other's virtue. In doing so, however, she was making use of a web that was constituted by both personal friendships and political alliances simultaneously. Like Lespinasse, the mobilization of this web in the context of political crisis shows the extent to which it is impossible to distinguish between public and private spheres.

Roland on Gender

In her early letters, Roland seems to have been very aware of the pressures on women to play no official role in political life. In a letter to Bancal, she claims that a

woman's recommendations did not carry weight,[57] and in an earlier a letter to Bosc, she writes that the majority of men believe that women should be seen but not heard:

> I know full well, Sir, that *silence is the adornment of women*; the Greeks said it: Mme Dacier recognized it, and in spite of the general opposition of this century to this type of ethic, three-quarters of sensible men and especially husbands still profess it.[58]

If silence is golden for women, this is doubly true regarding their official participation in politics. Women, it would seem, could only act in matters of a personal nature,[59] and could only make pronouncements in their own name in literature, theatre and other such "frivolities".[60]

But what could have justified such limitations in Roland's eyes? There is at least one hint that she was in agreement with conservative thinkers that women were not moral, virtuous or courageous enough to become involved in political affairs: in Roland's letter to Bancal on October 8, 1790, she writes that women's courage was not as firm as men's.[61] In opposition to Holbach and Rousseau, though, who found the origin of this

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[57] Letter 418, to Bancal, April 14, 1791, p.259.

[58] "Je sais fort bien, Monsieur, que le silence est l'ornement des femmes; les Grecs l'ont dit: Mme Dacier l'a reconnu, et quelle que soit l'opposition générale du siècle à cette espèce de morale, les trois quarts des hommes sensés et surtout des maris la professent encore". Letter 319, to Fenille, March 21, 1789, pp.43-44. Philibert-Charles-Marie Varenne de Fenille (1730-94): Collector of the taille, agronomist and forester, he was an active member of the *Société d'Émulation* of Bourg-en-Bresse, to which Jean-Marie Roland sent a paper. C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, p.44, note 3. Anne Lefèvre Dacier (1654-1720): literary figure and translator, she was best known for her translation of *The Odyssey* (1716). *Women Critics, 1660-1820: An Anthology*, edited by the Folger Collective on Early Women Critics, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

[59] Letter 425, to Champagneux, May 27, 1791, p.281.

[60] "Aussi je me garderais de me mêler dans votre discussion littéraire avec M. de La Platière, s'il n'était question de romans, de théâtre, de frivolités, et que vous n'eussiez cité les femmes à leur occasion. Ma place m'est donc assignée par vous-même". Letter 319, to Fenille, March 21, 1789, p.44.

[61] "Et dois-je avoir, pour vous qui le sentez si bien, des alarmes et des craintes? Non, elles vous seraient injurieuses; pardonnez celles qui m'ont émue à cette tendre inquiétude trop voisine de la faiblesse d'un sexe

flaw in women's nature, or in the repetitive and dull tasks of childrearing and domesticity, Roland agreed with those (such as Poullain de la Barre and Condorcet) who faulted feminine education.[62] Women's frivolity and vanity were a reflection of the corruption of the Old Regime which privileged and encouraged this behaviour, and of which women were the symbol.

> From all sides I hear repeated that which you express, that at present there are very few women patriots. Ignorance and weakness seem to be at the heart of the problem; they are the source of this miserable vanity that withers all generous sentiment, that is repugnant to the spirit of justice and equality. The century and education are to blame more than sex. The same sensibility which is dissipated and attenuated on bagatelles where it results in foolishness and egoism could easily be concentrated and solidified upon objects of great significance.[63]

Again, like the most progressive thinkers on gender, she thought that if education was at the bottom of the problem with women's virtue, then their character could also be ameliorated. As a true child of the Revolution, she thought that this was the force that would create the necessary rupture to not only replace the "feminine" qualities of the eighteenth-century with the masculine traits of virtue, courage and honesty, but also to elevate those who were degraded by the old political system, including women, to the point where they would be able to participate openly. Thus, when discussing the issue in her letter to Bancal written April 5, 1791, she writes that, for now, women

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chez qui le courage même n'a pas toujours l'accent de la fermeté". Letter 381, to Bancal, October 8, 1790, p.167.

[62] See chapter 1, pp.11-15, 22-23.

[63] "J'entends répéter de tous côtés, ce que vous nous exprimez, qu'il y a à présent bien peu de femmes patriotes. Ignorance et faiblesse me semblent les mots de l'énigme; elles sont les sources de cette misérable vanité qui dessèche tout sentiment généreux, qui répugne à l'esprit de justice et d'égalité c'est la faute du siècle et de l'éducation bien plus que celle du sexe. La même sensibilité qui se disperse et s'atténue sur des

> ...should inspire good and nourish, inflame all feelings useful to the homeland, but not appear to engage in politics. They will only be able to act openly once all French people merit the title of free men: until then, our flightiness, our poor morals would at the very least render ridiculous that which women seek to do, and would thus nullify the advantage that might otherwise result.[64]

In saying that women's frail moral fibre would render any political action ridiculous, though, Roland was not saying that all women were contemptible. Rather, she was trying to assert that as long as some women clung to Old Regime values, all women would be painted with this brush, rendering public action impossible.

The fact that Roland makes a distinction between different types of women with regard to how openly they embraced Revolutionary ideals is very important, and one that she makes clear in contrasting proud egocentric women aristocrats to honest, loyal and modest *patriotes*.[65] While aristocrats refused to abandon their frivolous way, women patriots had already achieved the Revolutionary ideals of virtue, courage and generosity. The only reason that they could not officially participate in politics was that it would have undermined the Revolutionary project among those who were not already convinced of its wisdom. Once all were in agreement and all women were reformed, everyone

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bagatelles, d'où elle se résoud en sottise et en égoïsme, peut aisément se concentrer et se sublimiser sur de grands objets...". Letter 431, to Bancal, June, 1791, pp.301-02.

[64] "[E]lles doivent inspirer le bien et nourrir, enflammer tous les sentiments utiles à la patrie, mais non paraître concourir à l'oeuvre politique. Elles ne peuvent agir ouvertement que lorsque les Français auront tous mérité le nom d'hommes libres : jusque-là notre légèreté, nos mauvaises moeurs rendraient au moins ridicule ce qu'elles tenteraient de faire, et par là même anéantiraient l'avantage qui, autrement, pourrait en résulter". Letter 417, to Bancal, April 5 [-6], 1791, p.258.

[65] "...si l'on confond indifféremment avec ses ennemis déclarés ses défenseurs et ses amis avoués,...si la femme honnête et sensible qui s'honore d'avoir une patrie, qui lui fit dans sa modeste retraite ou dans ses différentes situations les sacrifices dont elle est capable, se trouve punie avec la femme orgueilleuse ou légère qui maudit l'égalité, assurément la justice et la liberté ne règnent point encore, et le bonheur à venir est douteux!" Letter 549, to Robespierre, October 14, 1793, p.523.

would be able to participate on an equal footing. Until that time, women would have to be content to "watch and preach".[66]

What is most important to realize in the case of Roland is that she *was* content to watch and preach, and encourage and incite, because the role of woman patriot was in no way degrading to her. As a patriot, it was understood that she shared all the moral virtues of her male counterparts. With the exception of the quotation above,[67] in which Roland claimed that women's courage lacked firmness, Roland never denigrated herself. She continually claimed that she was interested in the public good, and that she was brave, honest and transparent.[68]

Her contentment also arose from the fact that her inability to participate officially in politics still left her a lot of latitude to participate unofficially through her correspondence and her discussions with members of the governmental ministries, elected assemblies and political clubs, and therefore satisfied her intellect. These avenues offered her the opportunity not only to encourage action, as she herself stated, but also, as we shall see below, to influence governmental policy and to influence popular opinion by reporting on the political events.

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[66] "veiller et prêcher". Letter 399, to Bancal, January 22, 1791, p.221.

[67] See p.131, note 61.

[68] "Adieu brave homme; je me moque du sifflement des serpents, il s'en sauraient troubler mon repos". Letter 356, to Lanthenas, June 30, 1790, p.105; "Au reste, il ne faut qu'un peu de contrariétés extérieures pour appeler ma vigueur : rien ne me donne du courage comme le besoin d'en user, et depuis la crise de Lyon je me sens ranimer". Letter 367, to Bancal, July 31, 1790, p 127; "mais que M. de Landine m'ait traitée en femme qui fait des façons et meurt d'envie qu'on publie ce dont elle prie de se taire, c'est ce que je vois avec quelque peine. Cette idée s'accorde mal avec mon allure franche et ronde". Letter 297, to Madame de Landine, May, 1788, p.11; "Si vous avez promptement aperçu en nous ces moeurs simples, compagnes des sages principes et des douces affections, nous avons bientôt reconnu votre coeur aimant et généreux, fait pour goûter tout ce que peuvent produire le sentiment de la vertu". Letter 360, to Bancal, July 18, 1790,

Roland in the Republic of Letters

While Manon Roland was not a woman who followed gender prescriptions uncritically, she was not a woman who intentionally sought to disrupt them either. Rather, as far as possible in Revolutionary France, she carved out a niche for herself in which she could satisfy her own intellectual thirst and ambition and still respect the limitations imposed on women's behaviour. This pattern of behaviour was already established when Roland was living in the countryside with her husband at the extreme margin of the republic of letters.

As we have seen, at the end of the eighteenth century, the republic of letters was an educated community committed to the exchange of information, documents and literary commentary for the purposes of personal edification and the progress of humanity. Manon Roland, as the wife of a manufactures inspector living in the provinces, hovered at the margins of this community, a fact illustrated by the nature of her political and intellectual exchanges. Living a tranquil life in the provinces with her husband, she was neither interested or informed enough to be among the republic's leading figures. Regarding national politics, Roland asks Bosc his opinion of Necker, whose merit she doubted,[69] and makes references to money shortages gripping France.[70] She shows her republican leanings through her interest in the *Amis des Noirs*, which she

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p.107. Mme de Landine, or Mme Delandine, was the wife of Antoine-François Delandine, who published Roland's *Voyages en Suisse* in 1788. See note 81.

refers to as the *Société pour l'affranchissement des nègres*, her admiration for America,[71] and her disdain for both monarchies and aristocracies.[72] Roland is a bit more loquacious when considering politics at the local level. In a letter written on April 3rd, 1789, Roland responds to Bosc's inquiry into the character and competence of Antoine-Claude Rey, lieutenant general of the police, councillor in the seneschalsy and assessor of the mounted constabulary,[73] by giving an account of the role he played in several local events. She noted his enthusiasm, but, in the end denounced his policy.[74] In general, then, Roland shows only a sporadic interest in politics at this point, making her off-hand observations in passing.

If Roland is blasé about politics, it is because her energy is going elsewhere, namely, into assisting her husband in researching and writing his *Dictionnaire des manufactures*.[75] Roland asks Bosc, an amateur naturalist, to furnish her with information regarding plant life,[76] whips and cauliflower seeds, and also asking him to procure Botany books for her and her husband.[77] In turn, this work fed Roland's own intellectual interests. She was curious as to the "science" of her own garden, asking Bosc about the plants and insects she found there.[78] Roland was also a writer at heart, and her literary

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[69] Letter 301, to Bosc, June, 1788, p.16; letter 306, to Bosc, August 26, 1788, p.25; letter 309, to Bosc, October 1, 1788, p.28; letter 310, to Bosc, October 8, 1788, p.31.

[70] Letter 303, to Bosc, July 4, 1788, p.20; letter 309, to Bosc, October 1, 1788, p.29.

[71] Letter 312, to Bosc, end of November, 1788, p.33-34.

[72] Letter 310, to Bosc, October 8, 1788, p.30.

[73] C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, p.50, note 2.

[74] Letter 320 to Bosc, April 3, 1789, pp.50-52.

[75] Letter 294, to Bosc, April 7, 1788, p.8.

[76] Letter 300, to Bosc, June 11, 1788, p.15; letter 313, to Bosc, December 4, 1788, p.34-35.

[77] Letter 316, to Bosc, February 23, 1789, p.41; letter 317, to Bosc, March 7, 1789, p.42; letter 327, to Bosc, September 1, 1789, p.59.

[78] Letter 302, to Bosc, June 18, 1788, p.18; letter 305, to Bosc, August 24, 1788, p.23.

leanings were evident in a long letter she wrote to Philibert-Charles Marie Varenne de Fenille[79] on the beauty and versatility of the English language.[80] Her most important independent project prior to the revolution, however, was her *Voyages en Suisse*,[81] of which she seems quite proud, planning on sending it to Bosc for his comments,[82] as well as having it published, under the conditions that her name would not appear on it.[83]

Consequently, in 1788 and the early part of 1789, Roland subscribed to the ideal of feminine modesty while at the same time pursuing her own intellectual development as a very marginal member of the republic of letters. Her prime occupation was helping her husband in his dictionary, but at the same time she wrote works of her own (although not published under her name) and exchanged information and news with her one tenuous link to the republic of letters in Paris, Louis Bosc. At this point in her life, Roland had neither the interest nor the resources to be a key player in the republic of letters in the same way that Lespinasse was, but this situation was about to change. With the arrival of the Revolution, the republic of letters was mobilized into competing political factions which soon did battle with each other in the name of unity. Through her husband's incorporation into politics at the local and then national level, Roland, too, was swept into the centre of political and intellectual life in a way that forced her to

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[79] See note 58.

[80] Letter 319, to Fenille, March 21, 1789, pp.43-49.

[81] This piece was published anonymously in Antoine-François Delandine's *le Conservateur*, a small Lyon magazine, in 1788. Luc de Champagneux published a modified version in his collection of Roland's writings. C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, p.10, note 2, p.12, note 3.

[82] Letter 299, to Bosc, June 2, 1788, p.14.

[83] Letter 298 to Bosc, May 22, 1788, p.12.

confront and rework gender prescriptions to meet the shifting needs of the Revolutionary cause.

Roland Confronts the Revolution

Shortly after Roland got wind of the first incidents signalling the start of the Revolution, her letters were filled with little else. As we shall see, she was an active participant right from the start, welcoming the changes that such a decisive rupture with the past would bring. Furthermore, in light of such a foundation-shaking event, she realized how the interests which formerly filled her days were quickly becoming irrelevant.

> All these small quarrels and insurrections of the people seem inevitable to me; I imagine that it will never be possible to find our way clear of the heart of corruption to lift ourselves to liberty without some lively convulsions. They are healthy crises of a serious illness, and a terrible political fever is necessary to purge us of our bad humours. Carry on, then; would that our rights be declared, that they be submitted to our approval, and let the constitution follow.
>
> We will squabble; I expect that. What to do? Arm ourselves with courage. I would gladly abandon science and the rest to engage in and dream politics only; can there be anything of comparable interest at the moment? But it is necessary to stay in one's place and not rebel against the influences of one's coterie.[84]

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[84] "Toutes ces petites querelles et insurrections du peuple me semblent inévitables; je n'imagine pas qu'il soit jamais possible de sortir du sein de la corruption pour s'élever à la liberté sans des convulsions un peu vives. Ce sont les crises salutaires d'une maladie grave, et il faut une terrible fièvre politique pour épurer nos mauvaises humeurs. Allez donc votre train; que nos droits se déclarent, qu'ils soient soumis à notre aveu, et que la constitution vienne ensuite.

"On se chamaillera, je m'y attends : qu'y faire? s'armer de courage. Je camperais bien là la science et le reste pour ne faire et rêver que politique; peut-il y avoir en ce moment comparaison d'intérêt? Mais il faut se tenir à sa place et n'être pas rebelle aux influences de ses entours". Letter 326, to Bosc, August 25, 1789, p.58.

In this passage, Roland lays out the essence of what her political role would be: she should "s'armer de courage" and adopt republican values, make politics a priority in relation to all particular interests, and yet at the same time not step outside the proper boundaries of behaviour. Roland manages to do all of this in three ways, all of which are present in her initial, spontaneous reactions to the Revolution.[85]

First, she deemed it important for women in particular to incite action in others by provoking Revolutionary sentiment. Thus, after the storming of the Bastille, in the face of irregular mail delivery, she writes, "If this letter does not reach you, may the cowards that read it blush in learning that it is written by a woman, and tremble at the thought that she can create a hundred enthusiasts who can create thousands more ".[86] There is even evidence that Roland herself is undertaking this task by writing "I preach with all my force".[87] A second role that Roland adopts is informing the country of Revolutionary happenings. Roland realized that Paris was still the epicentre of the Revolution, and still relied on Bosc and Revolutionary journals to keep her abreast of the latest developments.[88] In this sense she was still more a consumer of news than a source. Nonetheless, Lyon constituted a hot-bed of aristocratic conservatism which Roland

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[85] Marie-Laure Girou Swiderski underlines the political character of Roland's correspondence and makes reference to Roland's attempts to "Répandre l'information, éclairer, instruire, critiquer, mais aussi rapprocher les esprits frères, entretenir les liens, encourager l'action et la lutte pour la liberté...". Grouping these activities under three headings allows me to show the shifting priorities she accorded to each activity. See M.-L. Girou Swiderski, "La lettre comme action politique...", p.170.

[86] "Si cette lettre ne vous parvient pas, que les lâches qui la liront rougissent en apprenant que c'est d'une femme, et tremblent en songeant qu'elle peut faire cent enthousiastes qui en feront des milliers d'autres". Letter 322, to Bosc, July 26, 1789, p.53.

[87] "Je prêche tout ce que je puis". Letter 329, to Bosc, September 4, 1789, p.61.

[88] Letter 322, to Bosc, July 26, 1789, p.53; letter 329, to Bosc, September 4, 1789, p.61; letter 329, to Bosc, September 4, 1789, p.61; letter 333, to Bosc, October 27, 1789, p.71.

judged to be a threat to the Revolutionary project, and she must have felt it important to report on the local political scene. She wrote several letters to Brissot that were published in his *Patriote Français*, although anonymously, describing the events taking place in the Beaujolais region, and explaining what were the origins of these tensions.[89]

A third role that Roland filled was unofficial political advisor, suggesting plans of action for politicians and the Assembly. In another letter to Brissot published in the *Patriote Français*, Roland underlined what she thought should be the Assembly's priorities.

> In God's name, be very careful not to declare that the National Assembly can irrevocably set the Constitution; it is necessary, if [the body] composes the draft, that it be sent to all the provinces to be adopted, modified, approved by the constituents.
>
> The Assembly is constituted only by constituents, who do not have the right to decide our fate. This right is that of the people, and it cannot be ceded nor can it be delegated.[90]

As if the tone of this passage were not strong enough, in her correspondence that was not destined for publication, Roland also was even more virulent. First, she was not afraid to criticize governmental action when she thought that it was going awry.

> Your good letter provides us with quite bad news; we roared in learning it and in reading the public papers. A rotten constitution will be forced

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[89] Letter 324, to Brissot, August 7, 1789, p.55-56; letter 328, to Brissot, September 1, 1789, p.59.

[90] "Au nom de Dieu, gardez-vous bien de déclarer que l'Assemblée nationale peut fixer irrévocablement la Constitution; il faut, si elle en trace le projet, qu'il soit ensuite envoyé dans toutes les provinces, pour être adopté, modifié, approuvé par les constituants.

"L'Assemblée n'est formée que de constitués, qui n'ont pas le droit de fixer notre sort. Ce droit est au peuple, et il ne peut ni le céder, ni le déléguer". Letter 323, to Brissot, August 3, 1789, p.55.

> on us in the same way that the faulty and incomplete Declaration was botched.[91]

More than this, though, she was also explicit in setting out the necessary conditions for the Revolution's success. In her detailed plan, she noted that the country needed a centralized, public bank, a subsistence committee, and to establish more secure communication to the provinces to ensure the supplies and aid. She also underlined the importance of assuring the restricted entry of foreigners and the public scrutiny of all mail and the dispatches from the court.[92]

As we can see, in contrast to her political musings of the previous year, Roland was much more adamant in her political opinions, speaking with the urgency of someone who was fighting for a cause she believed in and thought that she had an important contribution to make. Nevertheless, she still felt that she could make this political contribution without overstepping the boundaries of what she deemed proper behaviour, because she did not sign any of her published work and held no official political position.

1790 in Lyon

Shortly after the Revolution began, Roland had already assumed her three political roles in a spontaneous manner. By 1790, Roland, who still resided in Lyon, had the chance to sort out the Revolutionary principles which underlay her actions, and it is to this context that I now turn. In 1789, Roland spoke with the urgency of someone in

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[91] "Votre bonne lettre nous donne de bien mauvaises nouvelles; nous avons rugi en les apprenant et en lisant les papiers publics : on va nous plâtrer une mauvaise constitution comme on a gâché notre Déclaration

the midst of a political crisis in which the stakes were very high. In the Revolution, she at last saw an opportunity to dispose of all the corruption of the Old Regime and put into place a government and constitution which would establish a republic in which all would be free and equal. In the context of instability, Roland was eager to act quickly and often spoke in term of the courage necessary to accomplish the task, and the cowardice of those who were not devoted to the public good.[93] By 1790, the Revolution seemed like it was on slightly more stable footing: the Constituent Assembly was in place, feudal rights and privileges had been abolished, and church lands had been secularized. There were some smaller crises, but not of the scale of the events of the previous year. For example, Roland was excited at the probable domination of patriot candidates in the Lyon election in February,[94] and fearful of the election of anti-patriot departmental authorities.[95] But in the face of all this, she was relatively calm, even regarding the uprisings against Lyon's *octroi* duties, writing, "You see that this storm barely stirs us: we have seen worse".[96]

Similarly, after declaring that she had no more time for science, she made time to write Bosc for information on the proper hierarchy of botanical categorization,[97] and to ask him for his comments on an essay Jean-Marie had written on the cultivation of nuts

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incomplète et fautive". Letter 329, to Bosc, September 4, 1789, p.61.

[92] Letter 331, to Bosc, October 6 or 7, 1789, pp.65-68.

[93] Letter 323, to Brissot, August 3, 1789, p.55; letter 326, to Bosc, August 25, 1789, p.58; letter 331, to Bosc, October 6 or 7, 1789, p.65; letter 333, to Bosc, October 27, 1789, p.72.

[94] Letter 341, to Bosc, February 18, 1790, p.82.

[95] Letter 345, to Lanthenas, May 3, 1790, pp.85-86.

[96] "Vous jugez que cet orage nous inquiète peu : nous en avons vu de plus affreux". Letter 362, to Bancal, July 21, 1790, p.113. There had been a series of uprisings in Lyon during the previous year, most notably July 1-14, 1789 and February 7, 1790. W.D. Edmonds, *Jacobinism and the Revolt of Lyon, 1789-1793*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, pp.43-62.

[97] Letter 346, to Bosc, May 17, 1790, pp.88-89.

and the production of nut oil.[98] She again had time to take pleasure in the joys of the countryside.[99] The spirit of relative calm was also reflected in the preparations being made for and the celebration of the *Fête de la Fédération* in Lyons on May 30, 1790.[100] It was in this context that Roland could let herself get swept away in the ideals of the Revolution and weave herself a more extensive language of republican virtue.

Bancal was the recipient of her most effusive letters, perhaps because there was the suggestion of romantic feeling between the two.[101] Even in her first letter to him, however, before she even met him, she spoke to him in the hyperbolic language of unity and transparency as a way of promoting and reinforcing Revolutionary values.

> Since the French have acquired a homeland, a powerful bond has necessarily been established between all those who are worthy of this possession, despite the distances, uniting them in a single cause. A friend of the Revolution could not be unknown to anyone else who loves the Revolution and who wants to contribute to its complete success.[102]

Roland, caught up in the Revolutionary fervour, believed that the event signalled the birth of a new type of society. Now that the chains of the oppressive old political regime were cast off, humanity could progress to a new level in which all were dedicated to the public good; the purity of their desires simultaneously linked them to their fellow patriots and rendered them transparent to one another.

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[98] Letter 343, to Bosc, March 20, 1790, p.84.
[99] Letter 346, to Bosc, May 17, 1790, p.89.
[100] Letter 346, to Bosc, May 17, 1790, p.90.
[101] Letter 381, to Bancal, October 8, 1790, p.165.
[102] "Depuis que les Français ont acquis une patrie, il a dû s'établir, entre tous ceux qui sont dignes de ce bien, un lien puissant et nouveau qui les rapproche malgré les distances et les unit dans une même cause. Un ami de la Révolution ne saurait être étranger à aucun de ceux qui aiment cette Révolution et qui désirent contribuer à son plein succès". Letter 352, to Bancal, June 22, 1790, pp.97-98.

Roland strongly showed her dedication to the Revolutionary cause through her declared reverence for the public good[103] and her recommendations for policy to the Constituent Assembly.[104] Similarly, she also continued to report on the happenings in Lyon, particularly the uprisings, to a widening circle of friends including Bosc, Bancal, Lanthenas and Brissot.[105] It was through this network of friendships that the battle over public opinion would be fought later in the Revolution. At the time, however, it was put to the service of more optimistic Revolutionary projects, such as finalizing the details of the intended purchase of ecclesiastic property to establish a Revolutionary commune (a plan which never came to fruition),[106] and the creation of unity in the people. Roland expresses this second goal best in her letter of July 25 to Bancal, when she writes that her letters are the way in which she can serve the country; in telling the truth, she provided the means for patriots to come into contact, and thus see and recognize one another.

> We have recently received a letter from a patriot deputy. I thought I should send it to you, because good citizens should be aware of their

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[103] "la chose publique". Letter 388, to Bancal, November 1, 1790, p.191; "[J]e ne dirai pas des faits, mais des considérations qui peuvent être utiles à l'humanité". Letter 365, to Bancal, July 25, 1790, p.121; "Quels que soient les événements auxquels nous soyons réservés, je ne gémirai que sur ma patrie, je me consolerai de mes propres maux si le bien général s'opère; ce bien seul aura tous mes voeux et, s'il ne peut s'effectuer, j'en regretterai moins la vie, mais je pourrai la quitter, à quelque moment qu'il le faille, sans qu'on me surprenne avec un soupir indigne de qui sait être citoyenne et amie". Letter 370, to Bancal, August 8, 1790, p.141.

[104] Letter 367, to Bancal, July 31, 1790, p.128; letter 386, to Bancal, October 26, 1790, p.184; letter 389, to Bancal, November 5, 1790, p.192.

[105] Letter 363, to Brissot, July 23, 1790, pp.114-20; letter 366, to Lanthenas and Bosc, July 28, 1790, p.126; letter 369, to Bancal, August 4, 1790, pp.132-38; letter 380, to Bosc, September 27, 1790, pp.163-64; letter 392, to Bancal, November 30, 1790, pp.199-201.

[106] See C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, p.77; letter 386, to Bancal, October 26, 1790, pp.182-83; letter 389, to Bancal, November 5, 1790, p.193.

> corresponding views: it is the way to truly know the truth and to serve the homeland more solidly.[107]

By far her most important role at this time, however, was that of inciting patriots, politicians and Parisians to action. Time and again, she told them that it was their job to lead the rest of the country. In a letter to Bosc, for example, she writes,

> The storm brews, the rogues are being discovered, the wrong party triumphs and we forget that *insurrection*, in principle, is the most sacred of duties when the well-being of the homeland is in danger! Oh Parisians! would that you again resemble the inconstant people who knew only *effervescence*, which we falsely called *enthusiasm*!
>
> Unite with what can be found of *honnêtes gens*, protest, reason, shout, pull the people from their lethargy, discover the dangers that will burden them and give courage to the small number of wise deputies who will soon triumph if the public voice is raised to support them.[108]

This is a sentiment that she repeats in October, 1790, when she tells Bosc to wake up Parisians and the Assembly,[109] and again when she writes to Bancal that the Assembly needs to be incited by the Revolutionary clubs, who themselves must be led by enlightened men.[110]

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[107] "Nous avons reçu dernièrement une lettre d'un député patriote; j'ai pensé qu'il fallait vous la communiquer, parce que les bons citoyens doivent être au courant de leurs manières de voir réciproques : c'est le moyen de bien connaître la vérité, de servir plus sûrement la patrie". Letter 365, to Bancal, July 25, 1790, p.121.

[108] "L'orage gronde, les fripons se décèlent, le mauvais parti triomphe et l'on oublie que l'insurrection en principe est le plus sacré des devoirs lorsque le salut de la patrie est en danger! O Parisiens! que vous ressemblez encore à ce peuple volage qui n'eut que de l'effervescence, qu'on appelait faussement l'enthousiasme!...

"Réunissez-vous avec ce qui peut exister d'honnêtes gens, plaignez-vous, raisonnez, criez, tirez le peuple de sa léthargie, découvrez les dangers qui vont l'accabler et rendez le courage à ce petit nombre de sages députés qui reprendraient bientôt l'ascendant si la voix publique s'élevait pour les soutenir". Letter 380, to Bosc, September 27, 1790, p.164.

[109] Letter 382, to Bosc, October 9, 1790, p.170.

[110] Letter 371, to Bancal, August 11, 1790, pp.141-42.

The fact that inciting was the main activity in which Roland was engaged at this time cannot be separated from her excitement over Revolutionary principles. Roland believed that the newly liberated people naturally formed a united body whose desires were self-evident, and it was this "public opinion" alone which should determine public policy.[111] Nevertheless, the people, after living so long in a state of domination, were susceptible to evil influences,[112] and had to be led to the point where they could lead themselves.

> Only the people cherish the Revolution; because their interest is so closely linked to the general good, they are just by their situation and by their nature; but the people, poorly educated, are in danger of falling prey to perfidious insinuations, and, although they judge well, they are still timid--the blackened remains of the irons they have worn for so long. It will take a generation to erase their vestiges and to bring into existence and inspire the noble pride that keeps man at the level of liberty and perfect them together.[113]

There are several elements which mirror Rousseau's *Du contrat social* in these statements: the idea of the people forming one united body,[114] as well as the idea of the Legislator who was needed to bring the people to the point where they could speak in one voice.[115]

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[111] Thus, we can see that the concept of public opinion no longer is the result of discussion but rather is the transparent will of all imposed from above. For a discussion of both visions of public opinion, see Mona Ozouf, "'Public Opinion' at the End of the Old Regime", *Journal of Modern History*, 60, suppl. (September 1988), S1-S21. Letter 395, to Bosc, December 20, 1790, pp.206-07.

[112] Letter 396, to Bancal, December 30, 1790, p.209.

[113] "Il n'y a que le peuple qui chérisse la Révolution, parce que son intérêt tenant immédiatement à l'intérêt général, il est juste par sa situation comme par sa nature; mais ce peuple peu instruit est en proie aux perfides insinuations, et lors même qu'il juge bien, il a encore cette timidité, reste flétrissant des fers qu'il a si longtemps portés. Il faut une génération pour en effacer les traces pour faire naître et motiver cette noble fierté qui soutient l'homme au niveau de la liberté et les perfectionnera ensemble". Letter 352, to Bancal, June 22, 1790, p.99.

[114] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social (extraits)*, Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1958, VI, pp.25-26.

[115] *Ibid*, chpt. VII, pp.45-47.

Because Roland believed that Rousseau's narrative represented the probable progression of the Revolution, she concentrated her efforts on the role of inciting. If the leaders (including the Assembly, patriots and Revolutionary clubs) would bring the people out of the darkness, all would be well. This is not to say that Roland was ignorant of the existence of dissenting voices: living in Lyon, she was very much aware that certain forces wanted to overturn the Revolution. In fact, it was this conservatism of the provinces that led her to call more fervently to the capital to establish its dominance.[116] As far as she could see, however, these forces were aristocratic,[117] and thus represented the history of oppression which the people could shake off in their movement towards Enlightenment.

Roland in Paris

In 1791, Jean-Marie Roland, as an officer of the Lyon municipality, was chosen, along with François Bret, public prosecutor of the *Commune* of Lyon, to go to Paris to try to convince the national government to relieve the city of some of the weight of the debt under which it staggered.[118] This move provided Manon Roland with the opportunity to be more directly involved in Revolutionary politics. Many of the most important men in

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[116] Letter 367, to Bancal, July 31, 1790, p.128.

[117] Letter 366, to Lanthenas and Bosc, July 28, 1790, p.124; letter 369, to Bancal, August 4, 1790, p.138.

[118] This aid was granted in a general decree ordered August 5-10, 1790, by which the State agreed to assume 33 1/2 million livres of Lyon's debt, leaving only 6 million to the city. C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, p.214; W.D. Edmonds, Jacobinism and the Revolt..., p.41.

national politics began meeting at her home several times a week,[119] and Roland herself had the opportunity to attend both meetings of the Assembly as it struggled with the Constitution[120] and meetings of Revolutionary societies such as the Jacobin club and the *Cercle social*.[121]

Roland's greater involvement with politics and her increased and more intimate knowledge of issues of national importance changed the way that she participated in Revolutionary politics. First, in her letters, her role of inciting men to action became proportionately smaller. Of course, she still was preoccupied with similar issues as she was when she was in Lyon. She called for Bosc to inflame the courage of the people, and to finish the Constitution, to Brissot to lead and electrify the people, and told Champagneux that the Assembly must excite good.[122] Nevertheless, now that Roland was in the capital, she had other preoccupations which she judged to be more imperative than this task.

Being in the thick of Revolutionary action, Roland was much better placed to hold forth authoritatively about what path the government should take. Her presence at the Assembly allowed her to form opinions on Revolutionary figures, such as Mirabeau,

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[119] C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, p 213; M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, pp. 63, 131.

[120] Roland writes that this was one of her first priorities after her arrival in Paris. See letter 413, to Bancal, March 7, 1791, p.241.

[121] Roland reports on the happenings at the Jacobin club in letter 433, to Bancal, June 22, 1791, pp.304 and letter 434, to Bancal, June 23, 1791. On her attendance at the meeting of the *Cercle social*, see letter 415, to Bancal, March 22, 1791, p.248.

[122] "Il faut enflammer votre courage et celui de tous les bons citoyens, il faut réclamer, tonner, effrayer". Letter 399, to Bosc, January 22, 1791, p.220; "Il faut les chercher, ces honnêtes gens, les électriser et les conduire". Letter 421, to Brissot, April 28, 1791, p.270; "Notre Assemblée a grand besoin d'être excitée au bien". Letter 439, to Champagneux, July 6, 1791, p.322.

whom she saw as self-serving,[123] and of the Assembly itself, with which she often expressed her dissatisfaction.[124] She also had very specific ideas about what the priorities of the government should be, writing to Champagneux that it was necessary for the Assembly to look to its finances[125] and to Bancal that the King should be suspended from his functions.[126] More than this, however, she also felt the need to put her ideas out into the political marketplace. She wrote a scathing letter to Brissot about the corruption of the Assembly, which he published in the *Patriote Français* on April 30, 1791,[127] and took to writing important letters in her husband's name. It was probably she who wrote to the President of the Constituent Assembly[128] after he was forbidden from speaking to the body about Lyon's debt,[129] and who wrote to the Lyon deputies concerning the same matter.[130] In her memoirs, Roland also took credit for writing the letter to Pope Pius VI on the behalf of the Executive Council, asking for the release of two French artists,[131] and for writing a letter from Jean-Marie to the king.[132]

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[123] Letter 417, to Bancal, April 5, 1791, pp.255-56.

[124] For example, she writes to Bancal, "Je n'aurai jamais le courage de vous écrire tout le mal que je pense de notre Assemblée, je suis dégoûtée d'aller à ses séances et je suis intimement convaincue qu'elle ne saurait plus faire que de mauvais décrets". Letter 422, to Bancal, May 5, 1791, p.274.

[125] "C'est ici, comme chez nous, la finance qui demeure la plus embrouillée; elle n'est encore qu'un chaos, et nous serons encore perdus si l'Assemblée prochaine n'est composée d'hommes laborieux, fermes et incorruptibles". Letter 425, to Champagneux, May 27, 1791, p.285.

[126] "Eh bien, mettez-le [roi] non en interdit proprement dit, mais en suspens, comme on faisait autrefois des magistrats qui avaient prévariqué...". Letter 435, to Bancal, June 24, 1791, p.310.

[127] Letter 421, to Brissot, April 28, 1791, pp.268-71.

[128] Letter 426, to the President of the National Assembly, June 7, 1791, pp.286-88.

[129] C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, p.242, note 1.

[130] Letter 427, to the Lyon deputies, June 9, 1791, pp.289-91.

[131] Letter 504, to the Pope Pius VI, November 23, 1792, pp.442-43. M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, p.304.

[132] M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, pp.69, 154.

This more active personal involvement cannot only be explained by Roland's arrival in the capital; it also had to do with a shift in the political climate and with Roland's loss of optimism with regard to the Revolution's progress. Whereas she had previously shown disappointment with the actions and decisions of the Assembly,[133] she was now often thoroughly disgusted.[134] The patriots, it seemed, were forgetting the public good, and working in their own particular interests.

> The best patriots seem to be more occupied with their selfish glory than the broader interest of their country, and, in truth, they are mediocre men, even with regard to talent itself. It is not intelligence that they are lacking; it is heart. It is only this that can lift man to the generous neglect of himself in which he only sees the good of all and only thinks of bringing it about, without taking care to ensure his own glory.[135]

This realization further dampened Roland's hopes for a unified people. Not only did true patriots have to battle against the aristocracy, but they also had to recognize and root out those who falsely claimed to be working in the name of the Revolution. Therefore, the

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[133] "J'ai vu avec peine que l'esprit public paraît s'affaiblir même dans la capitale; j'en juge par tout ce qui se passe à l'Assemblée". Letter 374, to Bosc, August 15, 1790, pp.152-53; "Vous nous apprenez une excellente chose en nous assurant qu'il y a encore à Paris une grand énergie, mais j'ai peur que vous en jugiez ainsi d'après vous-même. S'il est vrai qu'elle soit générale, comment ne forcez-vous pas l'Assemblée de mettre l'ordre dans les finances?" Letter 378, to Bosc, August 23, 1790, p.160.

[134] "Représentez-vous le fer des indignes, le jeu de tous les intérêts particuliers tendant continuellement à détruire partout ou à altérer les principes et les bons effets de la Constitution; l'Assemblée même devenue le foyer où se concentrent toutes les manoeuvres et d'où elles influent au dehors...". Letter 418, to Bancal, April 14, 1791, p.260; "Je ne vais plus à l'Assemblée, parce qu'elle me rend malade". Letter 425, to Champagneux, May 27, 1791, p.284.

[135] "Les meilleurs patriotes me semblent plus occupés de leur petite gloire que des grands intérêts de leur pays et, en vérité, ils sont tous des hommes médiocres, quant aux talents mêmes. Ce n'est pas l'esprit qui leur manque, c'est de l'âme; il n'y a qu'elle qui puisse élever un homme à ce généreux oubli de lui-même dans lequel il ne voit que le bien de tous et ne songe qu'à l'opérer, sans s'occuper des moyens de s'en assurer la gloire". Letter 423, to Bancal, May 12, 1791, p.276. See also letter 415, to Bancal, March 22, 1791, p.249.

Revolutionary movement was much more fragmented than Roland originally thought, a realization that was behind her call to create a political party.[136]

In this climate of uncertainty, in which transparency became obscured, it became evident that inciting, writing letters and developing policy were not enough to assure equality and liberty. There was also a battle to be fought over the question of legitimacy. Who spoke in the true interests of the nation? Roland established her own legitimacy and that of her radical political allies by telling the truth. Because the people were ignorant and corrupt,[137] they were in danger of being misled by those who used the language of the Revolution to further their own personal ambition. For example, there were those who tried to make the king look indispensable,[138] and those who used a variety of methods, including calumny, writings, agents, money, depositions and false witnesses, to discredit those, like Brissot and Robespierre, who were working for the public good.[139] To counter these forces, Roland and her allies had to bring light to the countryside,[140] exposing the facts and the sentiments they provoked[141] by giving an accurate account of the political situation.

> I think that, from my different letters, you can formulate a sense of the development of things and of the secret workings that determines events.

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[136] "Nous avons hier longuement et vivement conféré sur les moyens de faire un parti, puisqu'il en faut un même à la vérité". Letter 435, to Bancal, June 24, 1791, p 312

[137] It is also interesting to note here that Roland's original generosity with regard to the people had been worn away by frustration. See letter 414, to Bancal, March 15, 1791, p.243; letter 436, to Champagneux, June 29, 1791; letter 442, to Bancal, July 15, 1791, pp.327-28

[138] Letter 435, to Bancal, June 24, 1791, p.313.

[139] "Tous les moyens sont employés : écrits, agents, préventions de toute espèce et argent, par conséquent dépositions et faux témoins". Letter 446, to Bancal, July 20, 1791, p.341; letter 462, to Bancal, September 11, 1791, p.381.

[140] Letter 438, to Bancal, July 1, 1791, p.319.

[141] Letter 445, to Bancal, July 18, 1791, p.337.

> Do so, and spread the word as far as you can, privately and by the members of your Society to the members of Societies in various locations in order to stop, if it is possible, the effect of the poison which is consuming the empire.[142]

Therefore, for Roland, the pages and pages she filled reporting on the debates in the Assembly and the principal events which transpired in Paris constituted an important political weapon in the struggle over the direction of the Revolution.

Roland seemed to be aware that the active role that she was taking in politics went beyond what some might see as the proper social role for women, but also thought that the desperation of the Revolutionary struggle (signalled by the king's attempted escape from his confinement at the Tuileries on June 20-21, 1791) justified her actions.

> But, as long as peace lasted, I kept to the peaceful role and the type of influence that I judged were proper to my sex; since the departure of the King has declared war, I have thought that everyone must devote himself without reserve; I gained entry to fraternal societies, persuaded that zeal and the correct mind can sometimes be very useful in times of crisis.[143]

Therefore, Roland thought that the boundaries limiting women's behaviour during the Revolutionary crisis were much less rigid. We should, nonetheless, be sceptical when Roland says that she thought everyone should devote him or herself without reserve. Even though she became more actively involved in political life, at this point she did not do so in an official capacity in her own name. In this way, she continued to abide by her

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[142] "Je crois que, de mes différentes lettres, vous pouvez extraire un aperçu de la marche des choses et des ressorts secrets qui déterminent les mouvements; faites cet extrait, répandez-le tant qu'il vous sera possible, privément et par les membres de votre Société aux membres des Sociétés de divers lieux, afin d'arrêter, s'il est possible, l'effet du poison qui consume l'empire". Letter 446, to Bancal, July 20, 1791, pp.341-42.

[143] "Mais, tant que la paix avait duré, je m'en étais tenue au rôle paisible et au genre d'influence qui me semblent propres à mon sexe; lorsque le départ du Roi a déclaré la guerre, il m'a paru que chacun devait se dévouer sans réserve; je suis allée me faire recevoir aux Sociétés fraternelles, persuadée que le zèle et une

original opinion that women should not engage in politics overtly until the Revolution was completed.

Prison

Roland's imprisonment (along with that of many of the Girondins) is what drove her to write letters in her own name and to seek to have them published. Brigitte Diaz sees this as evidence that Roland felt free of the gender restrictions that bound her actions previously;[144] in being removed from society, she was also removed from the reach of mores governing social behaviour. This may account in part for Roland's decision to sign her own letters, but we can also understand her actions as an extension of the struggle in which she was engaged prior to her imprisonment. As we have just seen, much of the space in her correspondence was taken up with her desire to establish the truth. Furthermore, we have seen that Roland considered gender prescriptions of modesty increasingly irrelevant in the face of the cowardly and selfish actions of certain "patriots" which threatened the Revolution.

Roland realized that her imprisonment signalled a new phase of the Revolution, one in which tyranny reigned. These desperate times surely called for desperate measures: the treachery of the government had to be unmasked, and she seemed to be one of the few people remaining in Paris who was able to do it. All of her Girondins

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bonne pensée peuvent être quelquefois très utiles dans les instants de crise". Letter 434, to Bancal, June 23,

allies were either imprisoned or had fled Paris, and the particular context of her isolation meant that it would have been difficult to write in anyone else's name. As she herself stated, publicity was the only weapon she had left,[145] and her own experience was the only raw material she had to work with. Consequently, she wrote letters to a litany of public officials[146] and the National Convention[147] denouncing the irregular circumstances of her arrest and the failure of the government to follow proper procedure by interrogating her within 24 hours of her imprisonment.

It is true that Roland did find the time for activities in prison which brought personal satisfaction and was not directly connected to the Revolutionary cause and that this seemed to distinguish this period from that which preceded it. She indulged her passion for Buzot, writing long, sentimental letters, and rediscovered a fondness for literature, manifest both in her reading[148] and in the writing of her personal memoirs. This indulgence in no way constituted a complete self-abandonment, however; Roland always continued to be aware of the outside world. In contrast to authors such as

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1791, p.307.

[144] B. Diaz, "Le bonheur dans les fers...".

[145] "Brave citoyen, je vous fais passer mon véritable interrogatoire, dont la publicité est la seule réponse qu'il me convienne de faire aux mensonges de Duchesne et de ses pareils". Letter 535, to Lauze de Perret, June 24, 1793, p.487.

[146] See letter 526, to Dominique Garat (1749-1833), Minister of the Interior, June 2, 1793, p.472; letter 528, to Claude-Romain Lauze de Perret, Deputy from Bouches-du-Rhône, June 6, 1793, pp.474-75; letter 529, to Louis Gohier (1746-1830), Minister of Justice, June 8, 1793, pp.475-76; letter 531, to Jacques Dulaure (1755-1835), deputy from Puy-de-Dôme, author of the Le Thermomètre du jour, June 9, 1793, pp.477-79.

[147] Letter 525, to the National Convention, June 1, 1793, pp.472.

[148] Letter 543, to Jacques-Bernard-Marie Montané, ex-President of the tribunal criminel extraordinaire, September 11, 1793, p.513; letter 545, to Jany, September 28, 1793, p.517. Claude Perroud identifies Jany as Edme Mentelle (1730-1815), historian and geographer who was charged with receiving some of the booklets of her *Mémoires particuliers*, her *Dernières pensées* and two final letters to her servant and her daughter. C. Perroud, ed., *Lettres de Madame Roland, 1788-1793*, pp.767-77.

Winegarten, who underline Roland's continued awareness of gender prescriptions, I want to emphasize her continued concern over the state of the Revolution. While catering to her personal longings, she always kept an eye simultaneously turned towards the common good. For example, Roland claimed that part of the joy she was able to find in her love for Buzot derived from the fact that she was also serving her husband by being imprisoned in his stead.[149] Similarly, even while writing her memoirs, she continued to write other historical documents exposing false patriots and setting the political record concerning her imprisonment straight. This continued attention to serving the Revolutionary cause speaks of a continued concern for the value of modesty, of quelling her personal desires for the good of others. This seems to suggest that the political letters that she wrote from prison were punctual contraventions of gender principles that were only undertaken out of desperation. When it was clear that her pleas were falling on deaf ears, she tried another strategy, one which held out more hope that she would achieve her goal of vanquishing the Revolution's enemies: telling the truth in her memoirs.

Reactions to Roland

Through inciting others to action, counselling her colleagues on economics and policy, and reporting the actions of the Assembly and the events taking place in the

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[149] "Ainsi, par la captivité, je me sacrifie à mon époux, je me conserve à mon ami, et je dois à mes bourreaux de concilier le devoir et l'amour : je me plains pas!" Letter 534, to Buzot, June 22, 1793, p.484; "Je trouvais délicieux de réunir le moyen de lui [Roland] être utile à une manière d'être qui me laissait plus à toi. J'aimerais à lui sacrifier ma vie pour acquérir le droit de donner à toi seul mon dernier soupir". Letter 538, to Buzot, July 3, 1793, p.493.

capital, Roland played what she considered to be a role proper to women in the Revolution--that of the woman patriot. The influence that she had in this role was considerable. In holding a political salon, she provided a space in which ordered conversation could take place due to her very presence.[150] In this setting, however, Roland did not actively take part in the conversation: in a much quoted line from her memoirs, she states that when she received men in her home, she had to bite her lip to keep from speaking.[151]

For me what is more interesting than Roland's institutional involvement in the Revolution was her participation in the informal web of relations, a web which was largely constituted through letters. Here, as much as in the salon, strategy was devised for political action and, in contrast to the salon, Roland was not shy about stating her opinions or lauding Revolutionary ideals. In this way, Roland both promoted the political values of her allies and helped to shape government policy. More than this, though, letters were also the vehicle through which Roland circulated "accurate" information on Revolutionary events. It was this function which constituted Roland's most important contribution to Revolutionary politics, as the combat over political allegiances was not only a question of policy but, as François Furet stresses, also one of legitimacy; in the battle between darkness and light, which leaders truly *embodied* public opinion--the imaginary ideal which led the people--transparently?[152] Roland's letter sought to persuade by providing evidence which would allow her correspondents to see

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[150] See chapter 1, pp.24-27.
[151] M.-J. Roland, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, p.63.

the "truth", and therefore recognize their compatriots more clearly. In this sense, the letter's representative function again serves as an agent to promote unity, just as it did for Lespinasse and her friends. The main battle of the Revolution was fought not only in the intellectual institutions which François Furet mentions, the salons, cafés, lodges and societies[153] but also in the correspondence that linked their members. This means that even Roland's letters that were not destined for publication were inherently political, and thus cannot be classified as private or public according to any definition.[154] Roland was writing to her friends as friends and political allies.

The connection between private and public is what allowed Roland to play such an important part in the making of French history. Because correspondence was acknowledged as an acceptable female occupation,[155] Roland could participate in the web of social relations that underwrote Revolutionary action. Furthermore, her involvement in this web seemed unproblematic for her political allies: her letters often included sections written by her husband or by Lanthenas, and were circulated among their friends.[156] Her friends on the radical left had to be aware that she wrote some of her husband's letters, and yet none of them protested against her political involvement. Although they might not have been aware of the implications of the power to be wielded in influencing public opinion through the task of "informing", this task in itself was

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[152] François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, [Paris]: Gallimard, 1978, pp.49-53, 66.
[153] *Ibid*, p.58.
[154] See chapter 1, p.32.
[155] M.-L. Girou Swiderski, "La lettre comme action politique...", p.163.

certainly a respectable one, one in which all good patriots were engaged, and which Bosc himself undertook, keeping the Rolands informed while they resided in the Beaujolais region. In short, by identifying correspondence as an avenue for political action proper to both men and women, Roland was redefining the norms of gendered behaviour.

Part of the reason that Roland could engage so actively in Revolutionary politics was that the Revolution, as she said, was a time of rupture, not only in the system of power, but also in meaning, including, as Roland points out, the meaning of femininity.[157] It was a time when all humans, no matter what race and gender, potentially would be recognized as equals, and thus equally able to participate in political life. Political offices were opened to Protestants and Jews were granted rights of citizenship.[158] Women also benefited under the law, with the legalization of divorce in 1792, the accordance of equal rights to community property to both spouses, and the prohibition against the unequal division of estates, both established in 1793.[159] Moreover, this potential was actively played out in Revolutionary politics. On more than one occasion, women took the lead in political events. They marched on Versailles during the October Days of 1789 and in March 1792, Pauline Léon led a contingent of

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[156] Letter 306, to Bosc, August 26, 1788, pp.24-25; letter 327, to Bosc, September 1, 1789, p.59; letter 343, to Bosc, March 20, 1790, p.84; letter 381, to Bancal, October 8, 1790, p.168; letter 386, to Bancal, October 26, 1790, p.185, etc.

[157] See p.152, note 143.

[158] Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France*, vol. 1:1715-1799, New York: Penguin Books, 1963, p.174.

[159] *Ibid*, p.175; Lynn Hunt, "Male Virtue and Republican Motherhood" in Keith Michael Baker, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 4: *The Terror*, New York: Pergamon Press, 1987, p.199.

women into the Legislative Assembly to demand women's right to bear arms.[160] The more general increased visibility of women in politics helps to explain why Roland's actions were not the object of intense scrutiny or universal condemnation, especially before the fall of 1792.

This is not to say that everyone agreed with Roland's actions. One of the most cutting insults made to Jean-Marie Roland and the Girondin party was that it was controlled by women. As Jean-Paul Marat stated, "Roland is only a ninny whose wife leads him by the nose; it is she who is Minister of the Interior".[161] This public censure only began to take place in a climate of increasing political tension, however, in which the left wing had already begun to splinter, and the definition of who constituted "the people" was beginning to tighten like a noose around the future of the Revolutionary project. In this context, it is not surprising that insults should fly, and what better insult to throw than one which abases with allusion to gender? As Lynn Hunt points out, misogyny did not begin with the Revolution, and in fact, Carolyn Lougee traces the same process 100 years earlier, in which political enemies were also attacked with references

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[160] Darline Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite. "Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris" in Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine, eds., *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, p.88. Pauline Léon (b.1758): as one of the most radical women activists in the revolution, she became one of the leaders of the *femmes sans-culottes* in 1793. Harriet Branson Applewhite, Darline Gay Levy, and Mary Durham Johnson, eds., *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979, p.63.

[161] Jean-Paul Marat, *Ami du Peuple*, 684 (19 September 1792) in *Oeuvres de Jean-Paul Marat*, edited by A. Vermorel. Paris: Décembre-Alonnier, 1869, p.230, as quote in M. Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics...*, p.182; see also Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p.118.

to their effeminacy.[162] This does not deny that a broader scope of political action was open to women before this point, and even after the Terror was over.[163]

What this means in the case of Manon Roland is that her ambition was not necessarily separate from her gendered behaviour. Sometimes she was frustrated by gender barriers, but generally, these were barriers that she accepted and worked with because fighting gender barriers was not her first priority: she was more concerned with the success of the Revolution.[164] Besides, before 1793, gender prescriptions were flexible enough to allow her to play an important role in politics. And when continuing to follow them seemed to threaten the Revolution's success, she contravened them. But even as this contravention took place, even as Roland wrote and sought to publish letters in her own name, she continued to believe in the importance of the most sacred of gender prescriptions: modesty. She was perceptive enough to know that embracing radical equality was not in the best interest of the Revolution and would discredit her position and that of her allies. Thus, whereas abiding by the norms of gendered behaviour while serving the Revolution implied no real contradiction before June 1st, 1793, her imprisonment and the flight of the Girondins created circumstances which would make the integration of these two much more problematic. Nevertheless, this is exactly what

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[162] Lynn Hunt, "Male Virtue and Republican Motherhood", p.205; Lynn Hunt, "Reading the French Revolution: A Reply", *French Historical Studies*, 19, 2 (Fall 1995), p.294; Carolyn Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, pp.70-84.

[163] Regarding women's role in Catholic philanthropy after 1795, see Olwen H. Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992, pp.145-54.

[164] Roland was not alone in doing so. Lynn Hunt affirms that women's clubs "devoted relatively little attention to republican motherhood, being more concerned to combat counter-revolutionaires and moderates". L. Hunt, "Male Virtue and Republican Motherhood", p.202.

she sought to do, even as they seemed to be increasingly difficult to reconcile: the broad consensus on the limits of feminine behaviour became more conservative as Roland's actions became more radical. Reconcile them she did, at least in her own mind. It is in understanding this action that we can begin to unravel the contradiction the literature sets out between her personal desires and the social mores which constrained them.

The proposition that Roland could reconcile such radically different elements seems improbable and has led those who study her writings to identify a gap separating her desire to participate in politics with her desire to conform to conservative gender prescriptions. One group identifies the gap as a gap in time, one which separated the Roland who followed gender prescriptions in society to the Roland who abandoned them in prison. The second gap is one which separated myth from reality in opposing the Roland who seemed to be following prescriptions to the true Roland who was secretly subverting them.

The impulse to create two Rolands originates in the idea that the voices of ambition and acceptance of gender roles are the voices of public and private, the voices of two separate and disharmonious spheres. This impulse speaks of women's history's continued acceptance of the terms set out by contract theorists which separates the rational voice of public sphere of public influence from the informal and apolitical sphere of private affairs. The story of Madame Roland tells us that no such separation existed in the world of Revolutionary politics. Roland did hold a political salon, but it was in the circulation of her letters that she really made her contribution. It

was here that she struggled for control over public opinion--a struggle which François Furet places at the heart of the Revolution. Correspondence provided an acceptable avenue through which women could significantly participate in politics, because it allowed women to be politically active and yet still modest. Roland understood the fragile system and worked within it to accomplish her Revolutionary goals.

Chapter 4

"Forging News According to Everyone's Divergent Passions"

Giustina Renier Michiel in Venice

Giustina Renier Michiel was born October 14, 1755 to a highly aristocratic family. Her maternal grandfather (Paolo Renier) was the penultimate doge, and her maternal uncle (Ludovico Manin) was the last doge of the Venetian Republic. She was educated in the manner of most noble girls, learning English, French, music and art at a Capuchin monastery in Treviso from 3 years old to the age of 9. She also received instruction in mathematics and natural history. She married Marc'Antonio Michiel on October 25, 1775, and shortly afterwards the couple followed her father to Rome (he had been named the Venetian ambassador to Pope Pius VI). The couple stayed in the city only one year, but during this time Renier Michiel was able to integrate into Roman intellectual life, where her presence was apparently much appreciated.[1]

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[1] Lina Urban, "Giustina Renier Michiel (Venezia 1755-1832)" in Antonio Arslan, Adriana Chenello and Gilberto Pizzamiglio, eds., *Le stanze ritrovate. Antologia di scrittrici venete dal Quattrocento al Novecento*, Venice: Editrice Eidos, 1991, pp.163-67.

During her stay in Rome, Renier Michiel became a mother, giving birth to her first daughter, Elena, in 1776. Two other daughters, Chiara (who died at the age of 10) and Cecilia, were born over the course of the next two years. Often left alone with her children while her husband travelled, Renier Michiel was unhappy in her marriage and was divorced on August 4, 1784. This divorce left her free to pursue her active social life, something that her husband had deplored. Renier Michiel served as first lady in official ceremonies during the reign of Doge Paolo Renier from 1779-89,[2] and, after 1790, spent her time pursuing her studies and holding her literary salon. Her salon had a particularly Venetian character and was frequented by well-known literary figures such as Ugo Foscolo,[3] Ippolito Pindemonte,[4] Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi,[5] Antonio Canova,[6] Marina Querini Benzon[7] and Giustiniana Wynne, countess Rosenberg.[8] Also in

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[2] As a Turkish bourgeois, Polo Renier's second wife could not fulfil this function.

[3] Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827): Born on Zante in the Ionian archipelago, Foscolo moved to Venice in 1792. After the treaty of Campoformio, he left Venice to fight with the French army. His best know work is his *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis*. Nicola Francesco Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo*, vol 2: *Lettere inedite*, Rome: Edizioni Abate, 1968, p.565; Mario Scotti, "Foscolo, Ugo" in Fiorella Bartoccini and Mario Caravale, eds., *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 49. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1997, pp.457-73.

[4] Ippolito Pindemonte (1753-1828): Veronese poet and one-time lover of Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini. Luisa Ricaldone, ed., *Al mio caro ed incomparibile amico. Lettere di Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini all'abate Aurelio De' Giorgi Bertola*, Padua: Editoriale Programma, 1995, p.21, note 5.

[5] Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi (1760-1835): Born in Corfù, Teotochi moved to Venice with her first husband, Antonio Marin, in 1779, and began to hold her salon in 1782. Her first marriage was annulled in 1795, and in 1796, she married the Venetian State Inquisitor, Giuseppe Albrizzi. Her best known works were *Opere di scultura e di plastica di Antonio Canova descritte da Isabella Albrizzi nata Teotochi* and her *Ritratti scritti da Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi*, Milan: Schweiller, 1987. Cinzia Giorgetti, *Ritratto di Isabella. Studi e documenti su Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi*, Florence: Le Lettere, 1992, p.94; Vanna Marisa Fonsato, *Giudizi letterari di Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi nel carteggio inedito della raccolta Piancastelli*, Master's Thesis, McGill University, Department of Italian Literature, July 1992, pp.33-39.

[6] Antonio Canova (1757-1822): A famous sculptor, his creations (including Dedalo e Icaro and Amore e Psiche) were the subject of one of Albrizzi's major works (see note 5). Massimiliano Pavan, "Canova, Antonio" in Alberto M. Ghisalberti, ed., *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 18. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1975, pp.197-219.

attendance were the French Mme de Staël (1766-1817), and the English Lord Byron (1788-1826).

After the French invaded Italy under the leadership of a young General Napoleon Bonaparte,[9] Renier Michiel closed her salon, spending the next ten years publishing her translations of Shakespeare,[10] studying Botany and trying to keep abreast of the precarious political state of Venetia. Shortly thereafter, Renier Michiel, in response to a request from the French government for more statistical information regarding Venice, began research on her best-known work, *Origine delle feste veneziane*.[11] Her goal in this work was to show her patriotism and express a sense of loss over the fall of the Venetian Republic. She eventually reopened her salon, which she continued to hold until her death on April 7, 1832.

A significant number of Renier Michiel's letters have survived and can be found in several civic libraries throughout the north of Italy. Among the manuscript letters, Renier Michiel's most voluminous correspondence consists of the *saloniera*'s family letters to her niece, Adriana Zannini (295 letters, 1826-30), her husband, Marc'Antonio

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[7] Marina Querini Benzon (1757-1839): Born in Corfù, she was among the most popular of the Venetian *saloniere* and was the inspiration behind Lamberti's famous song, *La biondina in gondoleta*. N.F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo...*, p.555.

[8] Giustiniana Wynne, contessa di Rosenberg (1737-1791): Wife of the count of Rosenberg, an Austrian minister living in Venice. When he died, she began a relationship with Bartolomeo Benincasa (1745-1816), with whom she co-published *Altichiero* (Padua, 1788). Wynne di Rosenberg also penned the comedic play entitled *Le nouveau préjugé à la mode* and *Les Morlasques* (Venice, 1788). L. Ricaldone, *Al mio caro ed incomparibile amico...*, pp.60-61, note 2.

[9] Bonaparte took control of Venice in May 1797, but ceded it and the lands east of the Adige to Austria in the Treaty of Campoformido on October 17, 1797.

[10] *Opere di Shakespeare volgarizzate da una Dama Veneta. Ottello [sic!] o sia il Moro di Venezia, Coriolano, Macbeth*, Venice: eredi Costantini, 1798-1800, 3 volumes.

Michiel (67 letters, 1772-1808) and to the administrator at her son-in-law's family estate, Gaetano Pellizzoni (87 letters, 1796-1806).[12] Among her less important correspondents are contessa Marina Beneti Cicciaponi (28 letters) and Elena Correr Michiel, Renier Michiel's mother-in-law (24 letters).[13] Renier Michiel also wrote to other intellectuals and friends and some of these letters survive in manuscript collections.[14] Renier Michiel's published letters include those which have been printed for wedding celebration (including letters to abate Angelo Dalmistro,[15] abate D. Sante Valentina, and Ippolito Pindemonte, among others),[16] and two small collections of her letters to Saverio Bettinelli.[17] Even these published letters are very few in number: the *Biblioteca*

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[11] The first version of this work was published with the Italian text beside it (Venice: Alvisopoli, 1817-27, 6 vols.). The definitive version was published in 6 volumes in 1829 in Milan.

[12] Some of the letters from the Pellizzoni collection appear to be missing; only 78 of 87 remain.

[13] All of the above letters can be found in Venice, Italy, at the *Museo Correr*, in the P.D. 1441-42 and P.D. 766 collections.

[14] Thirteen letters to various addressees, including Bartolomeo da Gamba and Antonio Canova are held in the *Biblioteca Civica Bassano del Grappa* in two collections: *Epistolario raccolta da Bartolomeo Gamba* and *Carteggio Canoviano*. Similarly, 18 letters to Renier Michiel are held at the *Biblioteca Comunale di Forlì, Collezioni Piancastelli*. At the *Museo Correr* in Venice, a total of 198 manuscript letters to various correspondents, not including those mentioned in the text above, can be found in the *P.D.*, *Cicogna* and *Moschini* collections. Also at the *Museo Correr* is a transcribed collection of Renier Michiel's letters to Vincenzo Bussetto (P.D. 124c). Bartolomeo Gamba (1766-1841): Editor and bibliographer, he was named Inspector General of Publications (*Inspettore generale alle stampe*) by Napoleon and Head Censor under the Austrian government of Venetia. N.F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo...*, p.566.

[15] Angelo Dalmistro (1754-1839): Venetian poet and literary figure, he taught at the *Collegio S. Cipirano* in Venice. He was also the founder and editor of the *Anno poetico* from 1793 to 1800. N.F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo...*, p.562.

[16] The *Biblioteca Marciana* in Venice holds a number of these collections, including the ones mentioned here: Giustina Renier Michiel, *Quattro lettere pubblicate per le nozze di Canosssa-de Reali Lucheschi-de Reali da L. Bailo*, Venice: 1893; *Idem*, *Lettere di Giustina Renier Michiel a D. Sante Valentina intorno all'Opera delle feste veneziane, pubblicate per le nozze Treves-Todros*, Venice: Tipografia Merlo, 1844; *Idem*, *Lettera a N.N. sulla caduta di Venezia pubblicate da A. ed E. De Chantal per le nozze Donati-Zannini*, Venice: 1884.

[17] Giustina Renier Michiel, *Lettere inedite della N.D. Giustina Renier Michiel e dell'Abbate [sic] Saverio Bettinelli tratte dagli autografi*, Venice: Tipografia del commercio, 1857; *Idem*, *Lettere inedite di Giustina Renier Michiel all'Abate Saverio Bettinelli*, edited by Alessandro Luzio, Ancona: A. Gustavo Morelli, editore, 1884. Saverio Bettinelli (1718-1808): A man of letters from Mantua, he wrote plays, poems, and historical works, as well as teaching in a variety of cities across northern and central Italy.

Marciana contains only 40 in total. Considering my interest in intellectual culture in the second half of the eighteenth century, I have to focus on Renier Michiel's letters to her husband and Gaetano Pellizzoni, her two most important correspondents in this period, and her published letters written before 1810.

Interestingly, most of Renier Michiel's published letters are those which she wrote after 1800. This reflects the interest in Renier Michiel's status as an important Venetian patriot, a status that she gained principally through the publication of her *Feste veneziane*. In a poem composed by Francesco Maria Franceschinis[18] upon Renier Michiel's death, for example, the *saloniera* is lauded for her patriotism.

After the insolent victor vanquished
The threshold of the defenceless Adriatic betrayed
she woke the sleeping virtue
Living in those determined to suffer no more

And immersing herself completely in eras gone by,
In the artistry and pomp of her ancestral people
And from their Festivals, their history was devised
and painted through an offering of splendid patriotic love

Thus from the ancestors in the entire society
carrying the day, almost taking
the memory of the lost empire

Thus from her land joy was unleashed
The ancient spirit generous and proud

Collections of his writing were published in eight volumes from 1780 to 1782, and in 24 volumes from 1799 to 1801. L. Ricaldone, ed., *Al mio caro ed incomparibile amico...*, p.25, note 15; Ada Zapperi, "Bettinelli, Saverio" in Alberto M. Ghisalberti, ed., *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 9. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1967, , pp.739-45.

[18] Francesco Maria Franceschinis (1757-1840): Best-known as a mathematician, he also wrote poetry and prose. He was named the rector of the University of Padua in 1809. N.F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo...*, p.565.

She was accepted out of the Shadows as Hero of the Venetians.[19]

Iacopo Vincenzo Foscarini (1783-1864) also composed a number of verses lamenting the "cruel loss for [his] country": that of the "defender of Venice".[20]

These descriptions indicate the role that Renier Michiel assumed in the second half of her career. Before this point, however, she had different preoccupations. At the end of the eighteenth century and the first few years of the nineteenth, she was a member of the small and exclusive Venetian elite, the members of whom she entertained in her salon. Her husband, who had a more conservative view of women's proper social role, approved of neither her independence nor her intellectual curiosity. In the end, the pressure he exerted on her to limit her socializing actually had the opposite affect.

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[19] Poichè insolente vincitor sovverse
Il soglio della inerme Adria tradita
Costei svegliando la virtù sopia
Viver ne' suoi di più non sofferse;

E nelle andate età tutta s'immerse
Tra l'opre e i fasti della gente avita,
E delle feste lor la storia ordita
Di patrio amor splendido pegno offerse

Così degli avi nel consorzio intero
Traendo il giorno, quasi le fu tolto
Il sovveniersi del perduto impero;

Quindi dal suo terren gaudio disciolto
Lo spirto antico generoso e altero
Fu de' Veneti eroi fra l'ombre accolto.

Cited in Vittorio Malamani, "Giustina Renier Michiel: I suoi amici, il suo tempo", *Archivio Veneto*, 39, part 2, (1889), pp.364-65.

[20] For complete versions of Foscarini's verses, see A. Pilot, "Quattordici sonetti inediti di I.V. Foscarini per la morte di Giustina Renier Michiel", *Fanfulla della domenica*, xxxvi, 34 (September 13, 1914), p.3.

Renier Michiel eventually divorced Marc'Antonio, leaving her much more free to go to cafés, receive salon guests and, of course, write letters.

What helped Renier Michiel disregard the criticism that her husband and others levelled at her was her integration in the republic of letters, a community that was welcoming towards women. Like Lespinasse, Renier Michiel ascribed to and propagated the norms of civility cherished by the republic. In her comments regarding people, literature and theatre, she makes reference to the values of modesty, sensibility mixed with reason and self-discipline. Furthermore, like Lespinasse and Roland, Renier Michiel helps to create the cohesion necessary to the republic through the exchange and circulation of documents and the loyal recommendation and promotion of her friends achieved through her social network.

The circulation of political news has a particularly important place in the correspondence of Renier Michiel. As France and Austria struggled for control of the Rhine and Northern Italy, Renier Michiel and her friends exchanged the information they had in order to try to get a clear idea of the political events which would determine their future. But even this very pragmatic goal provides an occasion to reinforce ties of intimacy, as Renier Michiel stresses her personal commitment to Gaetano Pellizzoni by stating that the news that he provides is certainly more reliable than that which she receives from other sources. Thus, as with Lespinasse and Roland, we can see the degree to which personal and professional services and relations are intermingled.

Renier Michiel on Gender

Although Renier Michiel had relatively little to say directly about the normative standards of women's behaviour, she did comment on women's role in politics and on their intellectual abilities. Concerning the first, she seemed to be of two minds. On the one hand, she acknowledged that it was ludicrous to expect that women would take an active role in promoting violence. In the context of the political turmoil which followed the transfer of power over Venice by Austria, Renier Michiel writes to Gaetano Pellizzoni that the government should have little to fear in the way of political insurrection from a woman.[21] On the other hand, she expected that women be taken into account in political matters. With reference to political crisis, she writes ". . . reflection cannot vanquish nature; it is the latter which leads to death. This is how she takes vengeance when men attach no importance to women; we are beings precious to nature itself".[22] This ambivalence towards women's role in politics is also underlined in her *personal* relation to political matters. In the years following the fall of the Venetian Republic, Renier Michiel tried to establish the facts in the transfer of authority over Venice to Austria and, a few years later, in the armed conflict which was taking place

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[21] Italy. Venice. Museo Correr. *Collezione P.D.* 1442/1, letter 11 [9], to G. Pellizzoni, April 25, 1798, to Brescia, from Padua. (Henceforth, I will refer to letters from this collection simply as *Col. P.D.* 1442/1. I will cite individual letters by first referring to the number marked on the document and then in square brackets to its place in the collection.) Resistance to French domination and the demands for war contributions that accompanied it was felt throughout the Cisalpine and Helvetic republics in 1798. Martyn Lyons, *France under the Directory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p.211.

[22] "...la reflection ne pux pas vaincre la nature c'est elle qui l'entrenne a la mort; elle se vange ainsi, quand les hommes ne veulent faire aucun cas des femmes; nous sommes des êtres precieux a la nature même". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, to G. Pellizzoni, letter 71 [62], May 20, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

between France, Austria and England in Europe. At more than one point, however, she stated that she no longer had any interest in politics. In a letter written after the Lunéville treaty, for example, she writes "As for me, to speak frankly, since the peace settled everything for us, I have little interest in the rest and I only hold dear the preservation of the good friendship of my friends, of which you are one of the principle objects".[23] She continued, nonetheless, to write about it incessantly, not only receiving information and updates, but also actively seeking them to keep herself and her friends abreast of the latest developments, thus belying her claim that her friends had become her only consolation.[24] I will examine the significance of Renier Michiel's circulation of political news below; for now, I would simply like to state that she did ascribe women a limited role in political life, one seemingly limited to consultation and circulating information.

Renier Michiel was more expansive about her intellectual ability, despite evidence that she encountered some resistance in this area based on her sex. Her attempts to educate herself was the object of ridicule. In the years immediately following the fall of the Venetian republic, she developed an interest in Botany, asking Pellizzoni to send her *Philosophie de la botanique* (*Philosophia Botanica*, 1751) by Carolus Linnaeus

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[23] "Quant a moi, pour vous parler franchement, depuis la paix qui a tout decidé pour nous je m'interesse fort peu du reste et je n'ai a coeur que la continuation de la bonne amitié de mes Amis, dont vous en ete un des objets pincipals". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 57 [49], to G. Pellizzoni, March 25, 1801, from Venice to Brescia. See also letter 63 [55], to G. Pellizzoni, April 1, 1801; letter 71 [62], to G. Pellizzoni, May 20, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

[24] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 57 [49], to G. Pellizzoni, March 25, 1801, from Venice to Brescia; letter 74 [65], to G. Pellizzoni, June 6, 1801, to Brescia.

(1707-78) in Latin,[25] and expressing her pleasure for her pastime on several occasions.[26] She even obtained enough knowledge to feel confident prescribing herbal remedies and dispensing them like a pharmacist.[27] Nevertheless, "people" (she is no more specific) mocked her interest in the subject.[28] Two decades earlier, it was her husband who derided her intellectual pursuits. Renier Michiel was learning Latin, studying Astronomy, taking music lessons and attending lectures in Physics.[29] Her efforts made her husband laugh; he called them a woman's fancy and labelled them as evidence of her "amour propre".[30] In fact, Renier Michiel relates that her husband had such a poor opinion of women's intellect that he was sure that Rosenberg was not the author of a story she had sent to him.[31]

None of this criticism was absorbed by Renier Michiel. She continued on with her studies in spite of it, largely due to the positive reinforcement she received from her friends in the republic of letters. End-of-the-century literary Venice was welcoming towards women intellectuals, as demonstrated by the popularity of published authors

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[25] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 25 [20], to G. Pellizzoni, [July, 1800], from Padua to Brescia; letter 26 [31], to G. Pellizzoni, [July 30, 1800], from Padua to Brescia.

[26] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 30 [25], to G. Pellizzoni, [1800], from Padua to Brescia; letter 73 [64], to G. Pellizzoni, June 3, 1801, from Padua to Brescia; letter 82 [73], to G. Pellizzoni, September 9, 1801, from Venice.

[27] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 37 [32], to G. Pellizzoni, October 15, 1800, to Brescia; letter 41 [36], to G. Pellizzoni, [November 13, 1800], to Brescia.

[28] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 26 [21], to G. Pellizzoni, [July, 1800] from Padua to Brescia.

[29] Italy. Venice. Museo Correr. *Collezione P.D.* 1442/3, letter 25, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p.; letter 45, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., from Venice; letter 65, n.d., n.p.. Henceforth I will refer to letters from this collection simply as *Col. P.D.* 1442/3.

[30] "Se sapeste la nostra vita d'oggi ci applaudireste; ma quand vi dirò che comincio a pretendervi anche sopra la lingua latine vi metterete a ridere assai, e direte ecco l'immaginazione di Moglie. Ma questo è fatto". *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 20, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p.; "Per iscusarmi invece d'addoperare del genio vi ci voleva del amor proprio, ecco come avereste ritrovato per prima azione della giornata l'occupazione piacevole di scrivervi". *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 68, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p..

[31] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, to M.A. Michiel, letter 5, n.d., from Padua.

such as Giustiniana Wynne and Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi (1760-1836) (not to mention Renier Michiel herself) and of *saloniere* such as Cecilia Zen Tron (?-1828), Caterina Delfin Tron (?-1793) and Marina Querini Benzon. In addition, Renier Michiel's friends supported her efforts by editing her work. Even leaving aside her *Feste veneziane*, begun in 1808, Melchiorre Cesarotti[32] was very much involved in the correction of Renier Michiel's translations of Shakespeare's *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*.[33] Furthermore, Renier Michiel was never apologetic about her writing. She sometimes claimed that she was surprised that such great men were writing to her,[34] or that her letters were by far inferior to theirs,[35] but these comments constituted expressions of modesty that were common currency for both men and women of letters.

The support which she received in the literary community helped Renier Michiel face the more serious challenges in her marriage. Her husband's teasing comments about women's intellectual abilities were actually indicative of his fundamentally conservative stance regarding women's social role, one which mirrored the vision of femininity to be found in conservative writings of Antonio Conti and Giuseppe Antonio Costantini.[36] Marc'Antonio was often away from Giustina on business, and at the beginning of their

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[32] Melchiorre Cesarotti (1730-1808): Both a teacher and literary scholar of Padua, Cesarotti was best known for his translation of Macpherson's *Ossian's poems*. Giorgio Patrizi, "Cesarotti, Melchiorre" in Alberto M. Ghisalberti, ed., *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 24. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1980, pp.220-29.

[33] V. Malamani, "Giustina Renier Michiel...", p.48.

[34] Italy. Bassano del Grappa. Biblioteca Civica Bassano del Grappa. *Carteggio Canoviano*, VI.661, document 3916, to Canova, April 26, 1809.

[35] Letter to S. Bettinelli, May 13, 1807, from Venice. G. Renier Michiel, *Lettere inedite della N.D....*, p.10.

[36] See chapter 1, pp.15-17.

marriage, when she was left at home with two small children, she was lonely and resented his absence. Upon the couple's return from Rome, she often wrote that his children missed him and that she wanted him to return soon.[37] Renier Michiel eventually grew accustomed to the separation from her husband, though, and began to spend more time with her friends in the literary community, something that her husband had trouble accepting.

In an letter written from Venice in *c.*1781, Renier Michiel responded to her husband's criticism of her socializing by defending her actions, stating that they were not designed to displease him.

> For some time, it is true that my misfortune has increased, in that my actions are not appreciated or recognized, and they are always misinterpreted, as are my words. I usually do the opposite of what pleases you, but in friendship, let us examine this opposition. Compare my life in Venice, only occupying myself all day with my little pleasures, and with the acquisition of some useful notions, reserving my evenings for seeing those travellers who might drop in and going to the boring *casini*. Is there anything in all this that could displease an honest Husband and a good Friend?[38]

Marc'Antonio was not convinced by her arguments, however, and requested that she abstain from her social activities. Furthermore, in Giustina's letters we learn that he

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[37] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 3, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., to Padua; letter 6, to M.A. Michiel, July 2, 1779, from Venice; letter 18, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p.; letter 29, M.A. Michiel, Sunday at 4 p.m., n.p.; etc.

[38] "Da più-tempo è vero và accrescendo la mia sfortuna di non esser riconosciute, aggradita le mie azioni, e d'esser sempre male interprete come pure le mie voci. Questa è già la solita di far sempre all'opposto di ciò che vi piace, ma in amicizia annaliziamo quest'opposto. Confrontate la mia vita che faccio a Venezia, non occupandomi tutta la giornata che nelle mie picenine, e con l'acquisto di qualche utile nozione, riservandomi soltanto la sera a vedere qualche d'uno a postarmi possia al passeggio ed agli nojosi Casini. E in tutto questo vi può essere di chè spiacere ad un'onesto Marito, a un buon Amico?" *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 38 [second letter marked 28], to M.A. Michiel, n.d., to Venice.

expected that she consult him and ask his permission before taking any trips.[39] His desire to assert his authority over her was one of the main causes of the breakdown of their marriage. Renier Michiel wrote that she could not bear the humiliation of not partaking in cultural activities, and, having run out of excuses for not doing so, wanted to leave Venice.

> My miserable situation has reached a point where it requires much deliberation. I am therefore going to the country if you permit it. I can no longer take pleasure in any entertainment. I can no longer take advantage of the theatre every day. It is too painful to renounce everything; it would be better to be far away from these surroundings. I can no longer find any excuses not partaking in that which generally brings pleasure and delight. I would not blush to allege the reasons, I would like to hide them forever. You cannot help me, nor do I ask for sacrifices. I only ask that you honour my request.[40]

She was clearly unhappy, and so it was not surprising that, in her following letter, she suggested that the two separate: "If you yourself think impartially about everything that that has happened between us in the last six years, you will find that a reunion is not possible. I do not want to offend your delicacy by proposing it, nor mine by accepting it".[41] Marc'Antonio was not prepared for this reaction. He was hurt and embarrassed at being "pushed aside" and claimed that her rejection of him was based on the fact that he

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[39] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 50, to G. Renier Michiel from M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p..

[40] "La mia angustiosa situazione è giunta a segno che necessaria mi riesce una forte deliberazione. Mi porterò adunque in Campagna se mel permetete. Io non posso più godere di nessun divertimento. Il Teatro stesso giornalment più non posso approffitare. Troppo mi duole di dover già rinunziar a tutto, il farò meglio lontana dalle circostanze. Non so più che ragione addure per esentarmi da ciò che generalment viene riputato per dileto, e piacere; non arrossirei d'addurre le ragioni, amerai potterle taccer sempre. Voi non potete aiutarmi, ne vi dimando sacrifizi; spero solo sentirvi compiacente alla mia domanda". *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 48, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p..

[41] "Se voi stesso imperzialmente rifflettete a tutto ciò ch'è passato frà di noi nello spazio di sei anni, trovarette non esser possibile un riunione frà di noi senza offendere il delicatezza vostra nel proporla, la mia nell'accettarla". *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 49, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p..

could not afford to keep her in the style to which she had become accustomed, which suggests that financial factors contributed to his desire that she curtail her socializing.[42] It is clear, however, that there was more than money at stake. Marc'Antonio and Giustina had different visions of how Giustina should spend her days, and this is what eventually led them to separate.[43]

A combination of factors allowed Renier Michiel the freedom to end a marriage which no longer suited her. First, she belonged to an elevated social class in which the sanctimony of marriage was taken relatively lightly. All over Europe, elite women often had lovers, as did all four of the women in this study.[44] More important here is the fact that Renier Michiel had a status in the intellectual community which was not dependent on her husband's. Her acceptance was based on her own talents, making her marriage unnecessary. But this not only made her divorce possible; in some senses it made it desirable. Her membership in the republic of letters actually created tension in her marriage to a man that wanted a more conservative wife. Furthermore, her integration into the intellectual community was of such importance to her that when her loyalty to her husband began to interfere with her socializing, she left her husband. So what were the principles which underlay the "socializing" that Renier Michiel was so committed to? In the politically conservative climate of Venice, she promoted the production of beauty and pleasure produced through polite exchange.

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[42] *Col. P.D.* 1441/3, letter 50, to G. Renier Michiel from M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p..

[43] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 57, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., to Carpenedo; letter 58, to M.A. Michiel, n.d, n.p; letter 62, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., to Brescia, from Padua.

Renier Michiel and Venetian Intellectual Culture

The extent to which any idea challenging the established political order circulated in Venice at the end of the eighteenth century was much more severely restricted than it was in France. This was tied to the strength and exclusivity of the reigning nobility and its resistance to political reform. The names of all Venetian noble families, the only families who were represented in the Great Council, were noted in the *Libro d'Oro*, created at the time of the great closure in 1297. One could only gain admission into the book through election by the Great Council. As the number of nobles fell, there were occasional calls to admit a group of families together, as was the case in 1381, 1646-69, and 1775, but these did nothing to fundamentally alter the declining size of the nobility, nor its exclusivity.[45] Furthermore, no official attempts at establishing equality, even among the nobility were successful in altering the political structure. The *correzioni* of 1761-62 (led by Angelo Querini) and 1780 (led by Giorgia Pisani and Carlo Contarini) called on the government to effect a redistribution of power, but to no avail. The leaders of both *correzioni* were arrested and imprisoned for their effort.[46] In the end, the government was essentially run by the Senate and the Council of Ten, and, to a lesser

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[44] Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe*, vol. 1: *1500-1800*, London: Harper Collins, 1995, pp.145-46.

[45] In 1581, nobles accounted for 4.5% of the population; in 1790, they only constituted 2.3%. Marino Berengo, *La società veneta alla fine del Settecento*, Florence: G.C. Sansoni, ed., 1956, p.6. For information on the Great Council, see Oliver Logan, *Culture and Society in Venice, 1470-1790. The Renaissance and its Heritage*, New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1972, p.25.

[46] Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, vol. 5: *L'Italia dei Lumi*, no. 2: *La Repubblica di Venezia*, Turin: Giulio Einaudi, editore, 1990, pp.199-216; Franco Valsecchi, *L'Italia del Settecento dal 1714 al 1788*, Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, Editore, 1959, pp.637-38.

extend, the *Quarantìe*.[47] To put it differently, 30-40 families (out of a total of 165 in the Republic's last year) ruled Venice through key senatorial and judicial positions.[48]

The Venetian oligarchy was also better insulated from challenges to their authority than were leading political figures in France, even when these challenges were indirect. Masonic lodges in Venetia were small in number in the eighteenth century, but their egalitarian ethic was radical enough to draw the attention of the Inquisition who shut them down in May 1785.[49] Inquisitors were also responsible for closing the political and cultural salon of Caterina Delfin Tron because of the ardent conversation over ideas of the *Encyclopédie* which took place there,[50] and for the censorship that stopped the works of Rousseau, Helvétius and Voltaire at the border.[51] They required that a modified version of the *Encyclopédie* be printed in Italy so that anti-religious passages could be removed.[52] Similarly, the Senate was able to control the research of the academies, turning it away from social questions and towards more pragmatic issues concerning agricultural reform.[53]

The Senate and Inquisition's power to quell any agitation for reform had the effect of creating a conservative intellectual climate at the end of the century. Intellectuals

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[47] Marino Berengo, *La società veneta alla fine del Settecento*, Florence: G.C. Sansoni, ed., 1956, p.7.

[48] George B. McClennan, *Venice and Bonaparte*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931, pp.12, 28.

[49] M. Berengo, *La società veneta...*, pp.190-92.

[50] Guy Dumas, *La fin de la République de Venise. Aspects et reflets littéraires*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964, p.192.

[51] The influence of this type of censorship should not be over-estimated, however. Marino Berengo claims that the restrictions on the entry of books did not prevent anyone from procuring the reading material they desired: one could simply bundle the restricted book in with others or have books sent by the post. M. Berengo, *La società veneta...*, pp.144-45.

[52] G. Dumas, *La fin de la République...*, p.174.

watched what transpired in France with great interest, but they were not necessarily prepared to follow the French model.[54] They reproached French authors for their lack of piety;[55] they accepted Rousseau's contract theory, but shied away from the materialist stance of Helvétius; they embraced Montesquieu, with his political moderation and his attention to pragmatic economic facts.[56] Not surprisingly, the conservative nature of the intellectual climate had repercussions for the salons. Salon conversation generally focused on aesthetic questions, discussing the popular comedies of Carlo Goldoni (1707-93) and Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806),[57] and provided as much an opportunity to engage in social games and gambling as discussions of theatre and literature. Instead of agitating for social change, Renier Michiel and her friends concentrated on promoting the norms of civility which ascribed value to beauty, pleasure, spontaneity, modesty and sensibility polished by reason and at the same time reinforcing the community's cohesion through the exchange of documents, critiques, compliments and news.

The information available on Renier Michiel's intellectual sociability in the eighteenth century is limited. Vittorio Malamani describes in detail the setting of Renier Michiel's nineteenth-century salon and provides information on those who attended it, but does not consider the one she held in the eighteenth. He says that her guests often arrived after the theatre, at midnight, to discuss the works that they had just seen, to read

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[53] See Brendan Dooley, "Le Academie" in Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi, eds., *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. 5/1: *Il Settecento*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza editore, 1985, pp.77-90.

[54] M. Berengo, *La società veneta...*, p.149.

[55] Paolo Preto, "L'illuminismo veneto" in Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore, eds., *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. 5/1: *Il Settecento*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza editore, 1985, p.14.

[56] M. Berengo, *La società veneta...*, pp.149, 151.

compositions, and to play society games.[58] More troublesome is the absence of comprehensive collections of Renier Michiel's letters to other literary figures. No letters survive from the 1780s and early 1790s, the period when Renier Michiel held her first salon, and the existing letters to intellectuals from the nineteenth century are few in number. Nevertheless, by considering the information provided in letters to her husband, as well as those written to abate Angelo Dalmistro, abbé Saverio Bettinelli, Tommaso Olivi, Antonio Canova, and Pagani-Cesa before 1810 and comparing this with more general work on Venetian culture, it is possible to understand Renier Michiel's participation in intellectual life at the end of the eighteenth century.

A quick look at Renier Michiel's social schedule reveals that she actively attended the events and partook in the institutions that constituted the Venetian republic of letters. In the 1770s and 1780s, for example, during Renier Michiel's short marriage, she describes a variety of outings. She went to the opera, shows, concerts, and the theatre and even makes mention of a ship launching.[59] Even after the fall of the republic, cultural life continued, despite the closing of literary salons in Venice in 1797,[60] as shown in Renier Michiel's mention of her attendance at the theatre in Padua and her absence from a ball at the Fenice.[61] In addition to consuming culture, Renier Michiel also had the

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[57] *Ibid,* pp.166, 189.

[58] V. Malamani, "Giustina Renier Michiel...", vol. 39, pp.281, 299.

[59] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 3, to M.A. Michiel, July 2, 1779; letter 7, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., from Padua to Ponte-Casal; letter 9, to M.A. Michiel, n.d. to Venice; letter 68, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p.; letter 26, to M.A. Michiel, September 11, 1779.

[60] L. Urban, "Giustina Renier Michiel", p.165.

[61] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 25 [20], to G. Pellizzoni, [July 1800], from Padua to Brescia; letter 46 [40], to G. Pellizzoni, February 18, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

occasion to discuss it before 1797 in her salon, in the academy and at the *caffè*.[62] In her correspondence, however, she was not very effusive. In contrast to the careful and detailed evaluations of Veronese *saloniera* Elisabetta Mosconi, Renier Michiel is much more vague and offhand when discussing shows that she has seen and the books she has read.[63] In reference to a piece by Rosenberg, for example, she writes that it is celebrated and exceptional and says of a performance of Marchesini that while he surpassed even himself, the music was only passable.[64] Even her more serious critiques are quite short. In reference to a tragedy written by Pietro Antonio Zorzi,[65] she has only this to say:

> To me, the results are rather beautiful; but my love of Shakespeare and my indulgence towards Zorzi may make me a poor judge. I would like to see the style more sustained and the verses more lively, but based on what I have seen, I believe it could be presented to the public. In any case, you will judge for yourself.[66]

Although the absence of critiques can partially be explained by the absence of letters for this period, it is also related to the intellectual climate in Venice, which was a vibrant international cultural centre at the time. Housing seven theatres at the fall of the

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[62] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 38 [second letter marked 28], to M.A. Michiel, n.d. [to Venice]; letter 25, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., to Ponte-Casal; letter 46, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p.; letter 66, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p..

[63] I will discuss the intellectual sociability of Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini in the next chapter.

[64] "Vi spedisco la relazione della Rosemberg tanto famosa, e molto rara". *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 3, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., [to Padua]; "Certamente fate una grandissima perdita a non venir subito ad udir l'inerivabile Marchesini, veramente egli si sorpassò lui stesso. La musica è passabile". *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 9, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., [to Venice].

[65] Pietro Antonio Zorzi (c.1765-1849) was the nephew of the cardinal bearing the same name who eventually became the archbishop of Udine, and author of *Il pegno di pace*, published for the wedding of Napoleon and Marie Louise, Venice: Pinelli, 1810 and *Cecilia di Baone, ossia la Marca Trivigiana al finire del Medio Evo. Romanzo storico*, Venice: Tipografia del Commercio, 1830. L. Bailo, ed., *Quattro lettere...*, p.12.

[66] "A me, riesce quella piuttosto bella ; ma il mio amore per Shakspeare e la mia indulgenza verso il Zorzi, possono rendermi un cattivo giudice. Vorrei però lo stile più sostenuto, ed i versi più nervosi, ma io

Republic, it attracted artists from surrounding areas and was also a prolific centre for literary and scientific journalism.[67] Renier Michiel herself (although in 1816) qualified Venice as a place of culture and Padua as one of science.[68] As a result, Venetian *saloniere* were required to spend less time co-ordinating the study of written works and setting agendas for their discussion. Intellectuals were often in Venice, and would simply attend performances or pick up the works they needed and discuss them later in the salons.

Even in her relatively rare comments concerning literature, theatre and opera, however, it is evident that Renier Michiel admired the qualities outlined in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century courtesy literature as much as her French counterparts.[69] The ideals of civility, of modesty, sensibility, reason and self-discipline, find their echo in Venetian literary culture and in the letters of Renier Michiel. Renier

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credo che si dia anche al pubblico in ragione di quel che si ha. Voi deciderete ogni cosa". Letter to Angelo Dalmistro, December 23, [1805] in *Quattro lettere...*, p.11.

[67] Philippe Monnier, *Venise au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin Éditeur, 1937, p.191; G. Dumas, *La fin de la République...*, p.165.

[68] Italy. Forlì. Biblioteca Comunale di Forlì. *Collezioni Piancastelli: raccolta autografi e carte*, letter to Marina Benzon, January 31, 1816, from Venice.

[69] While several works in cultural history and literature have discussed the links between civility, sociability and politics in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, no such literature exists for Venice. Concerning civility and courtesy literature in France, see Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manner and State Formation and Civilization*, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994; Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994; Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995; Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the Enlightenment*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994; Jacques Revel, "Les usages de la civilité" in Roger Chartier, ed., *Histoire de la vie privée*, vol. 3: *De la Renaissance aux Lumières*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1986; Roger Chartier, "From Texts to Manners: A Concept Its Books: Civilité between Aristocratic Distinction and Popular Appropriation" in *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, pp.71-109; Jean-Pierre Dens, *L'honnête homme et la critique du goût. Esthétique et société au XVIIe siècle*, Kentucky: French forum, 1981; Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the*

Michiel praises all that is beautiful and delicate and shows disdain for that which is rude, unpolished and immodest. These concepts are brought together in the comments she makes regarding Germaine de Staël and her work.

> This Mme de Staël seems to be someone for whom there is a great contrast, although this is far from rare, between the person and the writer, that I absolutely detest. All that one reads of hers has a certain pathetic quality, a certain delicacy, a certain refinement, an insinuating sweetness, that forces one to love her respectfully. But then to see her, one is presented with easy and militant step; her black eyes cast an impudent look; her fashionably curly hair seems like Medusa's serpents; her big lips, big shoulders and large proportions should be more moderate and gentle.[70]

Also present in this passage is evidence of the importance of embodiment. Certainly Renier Michiel takes exception to the fact that de Staël is unrefined in her person. Just as irritating, though, is the contrast between her literary and her real-life personae. Renier Michiel cannot admire someone who has not completely incorporated the values of the literary community into her behaviour.

This complete endorsement of the values of civility can also be seen in the similar terms that Renier Michiel uses to describe her appreciation of both literary works and letters. In discussing one of Bettinelli's dithyrambs with him, Renier Michiel underlines its beauty, a beauty engraved in her heart.

Honnête Homme *and the* Dandy *in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. For a discussion of courtesy literature, see chapter 2, pp.78-81.

[70] "Questa mad. de Stael mi porse uno di que' contrasti, pur troppo non rari, fra la persona e lo scrittore, ch'io poi assolutamente detesto. Tuttociò che si legge di lei ha un certo patetico, un certo delicato, un certo fino, dolce insinuante, che sforza ad amarla rispettosamente. Nel vederla poi essa si presenta con un passo molto sciolto e marziale ; l'occhio nero getta uno sguardo ardito ; i capelli inanellati alla modo sembrano i serpenti di Medusa ; gran bocca, grandi spalle, grosse proporzioni, quelle pure che si vogliono più moderate e gentili...". Letter to S. Bettinelli, June 20, 1807, from Venice. G. Renier Michiel, *Lettere inedite della N.D....*, p.12.

> Oh, how I will be forever grateful to you, my valued friend, for having provided such beautiful reading for me! Oh, I have read so many things that will remain engraved in my heart! What a contrast of different sensations did this awaken![71]

Renier Michiel is equally appreciative of the beauty of Bettinelli's *letters*. She writes, "And I am always more full of your sweet and marvellous letters that I read and reread every day, always with renewed pleasure".[72] Furthermore, as with her appreciation of Bettinelli's dithyramb, she savours this beauty in her heart.

> You thanking me? On the contrary, I thank you a thousand times over for so many beautiful and very polite things you have sent me in you letter of June 15! I would like to read it to the entire world: this alone would provide the basis for allegations of my vanity; I fear that my sin would be revealed; I reread it, press it to my heart, then hide it....[73]

In short, her enthusiasm for art is always matched by the pleasure her correspondence provides because all forms of expression are in some sense aesthetic.

Renier Michiel does not privilege sensibility alone, however. She also admires how sentiments were structured through reason, both of which find their expression in literary form. Again in reference to Bettinelli's dithyramb, she claims that it is ingenious for its choice of subject. More conclusive are her comments regarding the work of an

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[71] "Oh quanto mai vi sono grate, mio pregiato amico, di avermi procurato una sì bella lettura! Oh, quante cose io lessi che mi resteranno scolpite nel cuore! Qual contrasto però di sensazioni differenti essa mi destò!" Letter to S. Bettinelli, May 13, 1807, from Venice. G. Renier Michiel, *Lettere inedite della N.D....*, p.10.

[72] "Ed io sono sempre più piena delle vostre mirabili e soavissime lettere, che mi leggo e rileggo ogni giorno con un piacer sempre nuovo". Letter to S. Bettinelli, May 13, 1807, from Venice. G. Renier Michiel, *Lettere inedite della N.D....*, p.9.

[73] "Voi grazie a me? Io bensì grazie mille e mille a voi che tante belle, bellissime, gentilissime cose mandate a me colla vostra lettera del 15 giugno! Io vorrei leggera a tutto il mundo : essa sola basterebbe per formare il soggetto di mia vanità; temo che si vegga il mio peccato; io rileggo, la presso al mio cuore, poi la nascondo...". Letter to S. Bettinelli, June 22, 1802, from Venice. G. Renier Michiel, *Lettere inedite di Giustina Renier Michiel...*, p.10.

unknown woman author. After admiring the beauty and unity of her *Poemetto*, she writes more generally of her work that it goes straight to one's heart and head.

> For many years, she has already given me the right to admire her, and I have also kept a manuscript as a precious object, which publication has made no less precious; and since then, my appreciative heart applauds my judgement. It did not have to renew my sentiment of gratitude now to reclaim the same effect; each of her works goes straight to the heart and to the head, and spreads this sweetness which attract everyone towards the happy and skilful writer.[74]

The importance of reason and sentiment combined are again underlined in a letter to Pellizzoni in which Renier Michiel stresses the importance of both qualities in negotiating the challenges of everyday life.[75]

The tension between spontaneity and discipline discussed in French courtesy literature is also present in Renier Michiel's correspondence. In a letter to Antonio Canova, she begins by stating her surprise and pleasure at seeing a letter for her in response to a quick note she wrote to him: "I would have never thought that a small sketch of sentiment jotted down with a pen in a swelling of the heart could bring me such a sweet kindness one day".[76] Even in the wording of this passage, though, a passage which underlines the value of spontaneity, there is evidence of a certain discipline:

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[74] "Ella già fin da vari anni mi ha dato il dritto di ammirarla, e conservo pur anco come cosa preziosa un suo manoscritto, che la stampa non mi rese men caro; e fin d'allora il mio cuore riconoscente festeggiò il mio giudizio. Ella non avea bisogno di rinovare adesso il mio sentimento di gratitudine per richiamare un medessimo effetto; ogni sua produzione và dritta al cuore e alla 'mente, e vi sparge quel dolce che attrae ognuno verso il felice e valente scrittore". Italy. Bassano del Grappa. Biblioteca Civica Bassano del Grappa. *Epistolario raccolto da Bartolomeo Gamba*, XVI, A.24, document 2515. Letter to Urbano Pagani-Cesa, October 1, 1803, from Venice, to Belluno.

[75] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 85 [76], to G. Pellizzoni, May 6, 1806, from Venice.

[76] "Io non mi sarei mai pensata che un piccolo abbozzo di sentimenti gettati giù colla penna per una espansione di cuore potesse recarmi un giorno una compiacenza sì soave!" Italy. Bassano del Grappa.

modesty. The merit of this quality is underlined later in the same letter in reference to the monument he created in 1795 to honour admiral Angelo Emo (1731-92): "...and I remember well that while we were rapt by the charm of the art, we were brought to equally admire the modesty of the craftsman".[77] This modesty is a virtue that Staël lacks and which feeds the poor opinion that Renier Michiel has of her. Renier Michiel writes that Staël ". . . takes all praise as merited, all comments as unbiased; her face never reddens, neither in modesty nor in embarrassment...".[78]

The attention Renier Michiel gives to modesty, the sublimating of the self to the art, which, in turn, civilizes and improves the people of all nations, is a sign of the existence of some concern with the social aspect of politeness. In the correspondence with her husband, Marc'Antonio Michiel, around the time of their separation, and later, in her letters to Gaetano Pellizzoni, both she and her husband make this link a little more explicit when pleading their causes. Each calls on the other to be "humane". When expressing his regret at their separation, Michiel asks his wife to think of humanity (and his sobbing mother) if she does not care about what people would think of her husband.[79] Later, during the Austrian occupation of Venice, humanity takes on a more classical flavour, bringing it close to virtue, as Renier Michiel states, "Among so many people, I can find neither a Caesar nor a Tiber; I am with people that I detest because they do not

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Biblioteca Civica Bassano del Grappa. *Carteggio Canoviano*, VI-661, document 3916, letter to Antonio Canova, April 26, 1809, from Venice to Rome.

[77] "...e ben mi ricordo che mentre eravamo rapiti dell'incanto dell'arte, eravamo sedotti ad ammirar egualmente la modestia dell'artifice". *Ibid.*

[78] "...ascolta ogni sua lode come meritata, ogni discorso come spregiudicata ; la sua fronte non arrossisce mai, nè per modestia, nè per pudore...". Letter to S. Bettinelli, June 20, 1807, from Venice. G. Renier Michiel, *Lettere inedite della N.D....*, p.12.

know what humanity is".[80] In a letter written a few months later, it is clearer that Renier Michiel is using this term to denote the common good. She writes, "I think that it would be a truly unfortunate for humanity if Bonaparte were to die now".[81] In all cases, though, the reference to humanity is a call for one to be selfless in one's thoughts and motivations, a value very much underlined in French civility.

In addition to using the language of civility in her evaluations of both people and literature, Renier Michiel also uses the same means as the French *gens de lettres* to help to encourage cohesion in the literary community. Renier Michiel requested and sent books and texts, introduced scholars to one another, promoted the work of her friends and gathered and circulated news on Venice and the political conflict in Europe. In her letters to her husband, Renier Michiel refers twice to waiting for a book from him [82] and to receiving one from the Preacher of S. Zacheria (a friend of either Cecilia or Caterina Tron).[83] For her part, she arranges to send him two works: one by Giustiniana Wynne di Rosenberg's and another by the Roman author, Petronius.[84] In Renier Michiel's letters to Gaetano Pellizzoni, she continues to request books from him and send packages despite, and sometimes because of, the frustratingly unreliable mail delivery. In particular, she asks Pellizzoni to procure books for her in Milan and to send her the *Voyages des*

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[79] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 50, to Giustina Renier Michiel, n.d., n.p..

[80] "La mais parmis tans des Etres je me rencontre ni avec un Cesar ou un Tiber, enfin avec de ces gens que je deteste, car ils ne savent pas ce que c'est que l'humanitè". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 25 [20], to G. Pellizzoni, July 1800, to Brescia from Padua.

[81] "Je croi que ce seroit un vrai malheur pour l'humanitè si Bonaparte alloit mourir a ce moment". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 33 [28], to G. Pellizzoni, August 20, 1800, to Brescia from Padua.

[82] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 43, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p.; letter 45, to M.A. Michiel, n.d. [from Venice].

[83] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 47, to M.A. Michiel, n.d. [from Ponte-Casal].

Deportés (*Journal de l'adjudant-général Ramel*, (1798)) by Jean-Pierre Ramel (1768-1815), La Harpe's correspondence and *La Minerologie* (*Elements of Mineralogy*, (1784)) by Richard Kirwan (1733-1812) for her friend Rizzo.[85] She herself recommends and comments on books and sends him a package.[86] In the few letters written to other intellectuals at the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, Renier Michiel does not refer to receiving or sending out any written pieces.

Ensuring the steady supply of reading material was just one way to maintain one's contacts in the republic of letters. Renier Michiel also exchanged favours, provided introductions and promoted the work of her friends. In her correspondence to Pellizzoni, she asks him to lodge a friend (only identified as "V.") who will only stay with him for a few days and agrees that she "will certainly do [her] best to be useful to him if he needs it and if [she] can".[87] Later, Renier Michiel acted as an advocate on behalf of a young student who wanted to get ahead in the world of Venetian culture: he asked Renier Michiel to introduce him to Angelo Dalmistro so that the latter could direct his studies.[88] In another letter to Dalmistro, dated June 30, 1807, the structure of the system of

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[84] *Col. P.D.* 1442/3, letter 3, to M.A. Michiel, n.d. [to Padua]; letter 68, to M.A. Michiel, n.d., n.p..

[85] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 21 [18], to G. Pellizzoni, [--- 13, 1800], from Padua to Brescia; letter 27 [32], to G. Pellizzoni, October 15, 1800, to Brescia; letter 83 [74], to G. Pellizzoni, November 18, 1801, from Venice; letter 84 [75], to G. Pellizzoni, August 10, 1803, from Venice; letter 86 [77], to G. Pellizzoni, n.d., to Brescia.

[86] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 28 [23], to G. Pellizzoni [July 1800], from Padua to Brescia; letter 63 [55], to G. Pellizzoni, April 1, 1801, n.p.; letter 81 [72], to G. Pellizzoni, August 19, 1801.

[87] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 33 [28], to G. Pellizzoni, August 20, 1800, to Brescia; "Je vient de voir l'Ami que vous m'avez adressé; et je ne manque pas certainement de lui être utile s'il en aura besoin, et si je le pourai". Letter 48 [42], to G. Pellizzoni, February 25, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

[88] L. Bailo, ed., *Quattro lettere...*, pp.9-10. [Autumn, 1805?]

recommendations is revealed more clearly. Dalmistro was interested in receiving a government post and Renier Michiel indicates all the people to contact to help his cause.

> I added my fervid recommendations to those of [Tommaso] Condulmer, although in this case, I do not think it is the best means. I also wrote to my Friend in Brescia to this effect; and when a cause is pressing, one should not leave any path unexplored. Therefore, I would like you to write to Stefan Gallini to petition his Brother in Milan; to Lady Albrizzi to petition the Prefect; to Miollis himself, who, with your letter will listen to me also when I speak to him. In short, when something is important, one must give one's all. Perhaps Zendrini will also be able to find some other way.[89]

Introductions were not the only way to render services in the republic of letters; one could also recommend and praise the work of a colleague, which Renier Michiel does in the same letter to Dalmistro. In reference to Melchiorre Cesarotti's *La Pronea* (Florence, 1807), she writes,

> Believe me, Cesarotti's Poem not only surpasses everyone's expectations, but also surpasses all known writing, both ancient and modern. If there is any fault in it, it is found in the richness of its great beauty. What poetry! So many and such beautiful images! Such a bounty of beautiful colours! I assure you that I was enchanted, and I am increasingly impatient to see it completed. What compassion for immortality that will be recognized for centuries! This is a classic work, unique, the most perfect. It would be

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[89] "Ho aggiunto alle vostre le mie fervide raccomandazioni al Condulmer, benchè nel nostro caso nol credo il miglior mezzo. Ho scritto anche ad un mio Amico in Brescia a tal'effetto ; e come quando una cosa preme, non si deve lasciare intentato nessun mezzo, così vorrei che scriveste a Stefan Gallini per interessare il di lui Fratello a Milano ; alla Dama Albrizzi per il Prefetto ; a Miollis istesso, che con un vostra lettera ascolterà me pure quando gli parlerò ; insomma quando una cosa preme bisogna darsi molto molto ; forse anche Zendrini saprà trovare qualche altro mezzo". Letter to A. Dalmistro, June 30, 1807, from Venice. L. Bailo, ed., Quattro lettere pubblicate..., p.13. Alexandre Miollis (1759-1828): French general posted in many Italian cities, including Venice and Mantua. As a patron of the arts, he was well known in Venetian literary society. Angelo Zendrini (1763-1849): secretary of the I.R. Istitututo Veneto and author of Riflessioni sul sistema della mitologia allegorica (Venice, 1791). N.F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo...*, pp.572, 583.

> well worthwhile for you to take a trip expressly to hear it. Who better to judge than you?[90]

Just like Julie de Lespinasse does for the comte de Guibert, Renier Michiel is helping to create a positive image of Cesarotti in the intellectual community. In exchange for the promotion of their work, Renier Michiel's colleagues helped her with her own. Both Cesarotti and Dalmistro revised her translations of Shakespeare, just as other intellectuals would later help her with the research on her *Feste veneziane*.[91]

As we have seen in preceding chapters, the exchange of favours and recommendations, as well as defending the political causes of one's friends, in short, the systematized exchanges engaged in by members of the republic of letters, served to build cohesion not only by evoking physical presence, but also by demonstrating friendship and loyalty. It is also true, however, that the circulation of political news also provided an opportunity to demonstrate one's loyalty and good manners. In one sense, the provision of news was just as much a product of friendship as literary critiques, thus engendering a perpetual cycle of personal debt and payment that would spur on correspondence. Given the notorious inaccuracy of all reports of news and the difficulty of sorting through divergent accounts, political news also provided one with the opportunity to flatter one's

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[90] "Credete a me, il Poema di Cesarotti supera non solo l'aspettazione di tutti, ma supera quanto si conosce fin quì di antico e di moderno ; se v'è difetto, è la ricchezza delle somme bellezze. Qual poesia! quali e quante immagini! quali e quante tinte! vi assicuro che ne fui incantata, e sono sempre più impaziente di vederlo compito. Qual compassione che per l'immortalità vi vogliono dei secoli! quest'è opera classica, unica, la più perfetta. Ben meriterebbe che faceste un viaggio appositamente per sentirlo ; qual mai giudice migliore di voi?" Letter to A. Dalmistro, June 30, 1807, from Venice. L. Bailo, ed., *Quattro lettere*..., pp.13-14.

[91] Concerning Renier Michiel's work on Shakespeare, see L. Bailo, ed., *Quattro lettere*..., p.11. December 24, [1805?]; L. Urban, "Giustina Renier Michiel", p.166. For her requests regarding the Feste veneziane, see V. Malamani, "Giustina Renier Michiel...", p.334.

correspondent by asserting one's faith in the reliability of his or her report. The more devoted the friend, the more stock one could place in his or her account. Elisabeth C. Goldsmith illustrates in discussing the principles governing exchanges of Mme de Sévigné and her circle in seventeenth-century France:

> For Sévigné and her interlocutors, the principle of complicity is even more important, for without complicity the information she gathers and distributes is unreliable and thereby valueless. Unlike a modern-day journalist, she trusts news coming *only* from interested parties, and all the observers in her circle act to promote, through their talk, a view of events that will confirm their notions of how the principal actors...might be expected to behave.[92]

The frequency and fervour with which politics was discussed depended on the urgency of the political context. Just as Lespinasse's interest was piqued when Turgot became embroiled in the Flour Wars, so Renier Michiel turned her attention to international conflicts after Venice fell under the control of the Austrians. Between 1796 and 1806, Renier Michiel corresponded with Gaetano Pellizzoni, the administrator of her son-in-law's estate. In so doing, she certainly wanted to exchange news regarding her daughter; at the same time, however, she reinforced her personal tie to him by exchanging whatever information she had concerning the successive waves of battles in Europe.

News and Reliable Sources

Renier Michiel's daughter married into the noble Martinengo di Barco family of Brescia, whose estate Gaetano Pellizzoni administered, and the link that Pellizzoni and

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[92] Elisabeth C. Goldsmith, *"Exclusive Conversations": The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988, p.117.

Renier Michiel had through their attachment to Cecilia provided the foundation for the correspondence. Even if details regarding the political news they exchanged often outweighed news regarding the younger woman in their letters, Cecilia was nonetheless the reason they were writing and, consequently, each was obliged to update the other as to her activities and her health. When Cecilia is absent from Brescia, visiting her mother, Renier Michiel tells Pellizzoni that Cecilia is amusing herself, that she went to Venice, that she visited her sister, and, in August 1800, that she is eager to return to Brescia, although her husband would like to stay.[93] When Cecilia is in Brescia with Pellizzoni, it is he who is charged with relaying news between mother and daughter and with smoothing a misunderstanding that arises between the two.[94]

In addition to sharing knowledge about Cecilia, Pellizzoni and Renier Michiel are also corresponding in order to keep each other abreast of political developments in Europe. Their correspondence takes place during a turbulent period in both Venetian and European politics: over the course of their exchange, Venice fell under French control and was subsequently handed over to the Austrians until 1805, at which point it was returned to the French until 1814 when Austria re-established its hold on the north of Italy. Venice was only one area that was affected by the struggle to control Europe,

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[93] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 20 [17], to G. Pellizzoni, [---- 6, 1800], from Padua to Brescia; letter 28 [23], to G. Pellizzoni, [July 1800], from Padua to Brescia; letter 33 [28], to G. Pellizzoni, August 20, 1800, from Padua to Brescia; letter 41 [36], to G. Pellizzoni, November 13, 1800, [from Padua] to Venice; letter 21 [18], to G. Pellizzoni, [---- 6, 1800], from Padua to Brescia; letter 24 [19], to G. Pellizzoni, July 1800, from Padua to Brescia; letter 32 [27], to G. Pellizzoni, August 16, 1800, from Padua to Brescia; letter 34 [29], to G. Pellizzoni, August 30, 1800, from Padua to Brescia.

[94] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 57 [49], to G. Pellizzoni, March 25, 1801, from Venice to Brescia; letter 61 [53], to G. Pellizzoni, April 8, 1801, to Brescia; letter 84 [75], to G. Pellizzoni, August 10, 1803, from Venice; letter 59 [51], to G. Pellizzoni, April [1], 1801, from [Venice] to Brescia.

however. Armed conflicts were also taking place across Northern and Central Italy and in the Rhineland and Renier Michiel was equally interested in these events.

The treaty of Campoformio (October 18, 1797) established France's control over the left bank of the Rhine, the Austrian Netherlands and northern and central Italy. In the following year, France engaged in openly hostile behaviour as it sought to extend its boundaries in violation of the terms previously agreed upon. First, the Directory established the Helvetic Republic (among the Swiss cantons) and the Roman Republic (among the papal states). Second, in the ratification of Campoformio which took place in Rastatt, the Directory sought to extend its control over the left of the Rhine to include Cologne, which was expressly excluded from the Campoformio treaty, without offering any compensation in Italy. The inability of France and Austria to come to an agreement over this issue quickly led to the formation of the second coalition (Russia, Turkey, Austria, England and the Kingdom of Naples) against France. Hostilities began with the invasion of Rome by the Neapolitans on November 22, 1798. By the summer of 1799, the Austrians had taken control of northern Italy as far as Turin and had pushed the French back off of the Rhine to Zurich.[95]

In March 1800, Napoleon began his spring campaign to win back the European territories that Austria had taken from France the previous year. Starting in April 1800, France again launched attacks on two fronts: northern Italy and the areas surrounding the

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[95] Denis Woronoff, *The Thermidorean Regime and the Directory, 1794-1799*, translated by Julian Jackson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp.62-90; Georges Lefebvre, *La France sous le directoire (1795-1799)*, Paris: Éditions sociales, 1977, pp.613-49.

Rhine. After a series of conflicts, armistices were signed in Alessandria on June 15 and in Parsdorf on June 23. In the peace negotiations which took place in June and July 1800, French Foreign Minister Talleyrand and Austrian representative Comte de St. Julien agreed on a preliminary peace settlement (signed July 28, 1800) which closely resembled the conditions of the Campoformio treaty. St. Julien had overstepped the boundaries of his authority in negotiating the settlement, however, because the Austrians had signed a treaty with England on June 20, 1800 which prevented them from negotiating any settlement with France unless England was involved, at least until February 1801. This was to be the principal stumbling block to achieving peace between Austria and France throughout the summer and the fall of 1800 and would lead to the renewal of hostilities on the part of the French on November 28, 1800. In re-engaging in conflict both in northern Italy and along the Rhine, Napoleon sought to pressure Austria into negotiating a separate peace, which it finally did: Austria and France again signed armistices on the Rhine on December 25, 1800 (the Steyer armistice) and in Treviso on January 16, 1801. Both were concluded with a treaty signed at Lunéville on February 9, 1801, re-establishing the French on the left of the Rhine and setting the eastern boundary of the Cisalpine Republic at the Adige, giving France control over all of northern and central Italy.

In the meantime, France had reached no separate settlement for peace with England and used its influence with Russia and Prussia to encourage the formation of the Second League of Armed Neutrality (which also included Denmark and Sweden) in

December 1800. After the Danes occupied Hamburg and the Prussians moved into Hanover, England was completely cut off from its markets in the Baltic and in the German states. In order to overthrow the alliance and break the embargo, England attacked Copenhagen April 2nd, 1801. The effect of this assault was not nearly so great as the assassination of Paul I of Russia, the main supporter of the association and loyal ally to France. His son, Alexander, was much better disposed towards the English than his father had been and his ascension to the thrown, in combination with a general apathy towards the cause on the part of the other members, led to a *de facto* armistice, followed by the signing of a series of peace treaties between England and Denmark, Sweden and Russian in May and June 1801. Within a year, England and France would agree on a division of conquered territories for long enough to sign the Treaty of Amiens on March 25, 1802.[96]

Renier Michiel made reference to a number of these political events in her correspondence with Pellizzoni, but her attention was concentrated on three events in particular: the Rastatt negotiations in 1798, a conflict over the Rhine in July 1800, and the signing of the peace treaty in Lunéville in February 1801. In all three circumstances, she was concerned with establishing whether there would be peace or war, whether armistices would hold and whether peace would last. Her comments were not those of someone with a casual interest. She actively sought to gather information from a variety

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[96] Georges Lefebvre, *Napoleon: From 18 Brumaire to Tilsit 1799-1807*, translated by Henry F. Stockhold, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, pp.25-110; Jacques Lovie and André Palluel-Guillard, *L'épisode napoléonien*, vol. 2: *Aspects extérieurs*, [Paris]: Éditions du Seuil, 1972, pp.7-40;

of sources (including Pellizzoni), while at the same time sharing the news that she had procured with him. Given the poor system of communication and the strict censorship that gagged European gazettes and pamphlets, the cultivation and verification of news was an activity one had to undertake with energy and vigour.[97]

The uneven quality of print journalism is evident in Renier Michiel's letters. On the one hand, she accords gazettes a certain amount of authority, given that she receives a number of foreign papers. In fact, in October 1800, she claims to be confident that the French-Austrian armistice will hold because of what she has read in the English papers: "But for me, I still firmly believe in peace. We are ignorant of all things here, but I who read the English Gazettes see very well the reasons why a new war is impossible".[98] On the other hand, given that the gazettes contradict one another,[99] she shows a healthy scepticism with regard to their reports. For example, Renier Michiel writes that it "appears that [Brescia's] independence is assured despite what the Gazettes of Manheim say"[100] and shows a critical distance with regard to reports concerning the conditions of the Lunéville treaty published by the Gazette of Padua.

> They say here that the conditions for Peace are about the same as those of Campo Formio, the difference being that Austria will have a bit more

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Alphonse Thiers, *History of the Consulate and the Empire of France*, vol. 1. London: Chattos and Windus, 1893-94, pp.195-526.

[97] G. Lefebvre, *Napoleon...*, p.89-90.

[98] "Mais pour moi, je suis toujours ferme a croire a la paix. On ignore ici toute chose, mais moi qui lis les Gazzettes Anglaises je vois fort bien les raisons pour l'impossibilitè d'une nouvelle guerre". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 37 [32], to G. Pellizzoni, October 15, 1800, to Brescia.

[99] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 45 [39], to G. Pellizzoni, February 14, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

[100] "Il paroit donc que vôtre independance est assurè magré ce que puisse dire les Gazzettes de Manheim". It is unclear if there was any specific event that provoked this comment or whether Renier Michiel was speaking about the situation of the Cisalpine Republic in general. *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 73 [64], to G. Pellizzoni, June 3, 1801, from Padua to Brescia.

> territory and the rest of the Cisalpine will belong to the Duc of Parma. The news has attained so much credibility that the Padua Gazette has printed that peace has been made on the basis of Campo Formio and that Thugut is preparing to come to Italy to organize the areas that have been ceded to the House of Austria....As soon as this news in printed in Padua, it becomes an article of faith.[101]

The last line of this quote suggests that, in contrast to the majority, she does not believe everything that is printed.

In fact, Renier Michiel places more faith in the tangible evidence she can gather. First are the indications that she witnesses first hand: disruptions in the mail service and the movements and activities of the troops. In July 1800, for example, as Renier Michiel is trying to establish the situation on the Rhine, she writes that "the preparations signal peace and war equally".[102] Similarly, in March 1801 she notes that the certainty of peace is by no means assured by the ratification of the peace articles, as requisitions in direct violation of it continue. "There is no doubt peace is on the way" she writes, "and yet there is talk that the war is beginning to heat up".[103] With regards to the mail service, Renier Michiel refers to disruption as both a consequence and a signal that hostilities have resumed.[104] Ironically, in one instance, the tardy arrival of the Rovereto Gazette is

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[101] "...on parle ici que les conditions de la Paix sont a peu pres les mêmes que celles de Campo Formio avec cette difference que l'Autriche aura une peu plus grande etendue de terrain, et le reste de la Cisalpine appartiendra au Duc de Parme. La chose est rendu si croyable que la Gazzette de Padoüe a imprimé que la Paix est faite sur la base Campo Formio, et que Thugut se dispose pour venir en Italie a organiser les pays qui on été cedé a la maison d'Autriche....Dès que l'on publie a Padoüe de tels articles ils deviennent des articles de foi". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 46 [40], G. Pellizzoni, February 18, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

[102] "...les preparatifs annoncent egalement la paix et la guerre". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 30 [25], to G. Pellizzoni, [1800], from Padua to Brescia.

[103] "On ne doute plus de la paix, et on comence a parler du rechauffement de la guerre". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 57 [49], to G. Pellizzoni, March 25, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

[104] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 39 [34], to G. Pellizzoni, October 29, 1800, to Brescia; letter 40 [35], to G. Pellizzoni, October 1800, from Padua; letter 41 [36], to G. Pellizzoni, November 13, 1800, to Brescia; letter

probably a more reliable indication of the political situation in northern Italy than the contents of the paper.[105]

Another reliable, but often scarce, source of information is the collection of official documents that Renier Michiel either requests, has heard of or has acquired. At various points in her correspondence, she notes that she has been informed that official manifestos have been published. On July 13, 1800, she asks Pellizzoni if he can send her a manifesto she heard was published in Milan declaring that the terms for peace had been reached between France and Austria.[106] Seventeen days later she writes that she heard that articles for peace were signed on July 14 in Berlin and will be posted on August 10th.[107] In this case she is presumably making reference to the alliance between France and Russia which was being negotiated about this time.[108] In January and February 1801, the publication of the peace articles between the French and Austrians appears to be the litmus test assuring its existence. Renier Michiel writes that she has heard that the provisions for peace will be published both in Milan and Vienna and that official word has come from Vienna that the European conflict has been resolved. Nevertheless, her friends in Vienna tell her that "we should not put stock in the articles of peace published thus far because in Vienna itself the population knows absolutely nothing of them".[109]

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42 [37], to G. Pellizzoni, November 19, 1800, from Padua to Brescia; letter 46 [40], to G. Pellizzoni, February 18, 1801, from Venice to Brescia; letter 61 [52], to G. Pellizzoni, April 4, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

[105] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 30 [25], to G. Pellizzoni, [1800] from Padua to Brescia.

[106] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 21 [18], to G. Pellizzoni, [July 13, 1800], from Padua to Brescia.

[107] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 31 [26], to G. Pellizzoni, [July 30, 1800], from Padua to Brescia.

[108] A. Thiers, *History of the Consulate...*, vol. 1. London: Chattos and Windus, 1893-94, pp.321-25.

[109] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 50 [45], to G. Pellizzoni, January 31, 1801, from Venice to Brescia; letter 48 [42], to G. Pellizzoni, February 25, 1801, from Venice to Brescia; "[Les nouvelles] des gens raisonables de

Finally, Renier Michiel pulls off a coup in claiming that she was to receive from Frankfort a speech that Napoleon was said to have given his troops in Toulon.[110]

While official publications and reports could be reliable, they often came long after peace had been reached, and thus did not provide Renier Michiel with the more topical reports she sought. To get a more immediate sense of where things were heading, she had to rely on other sources. Of course, she listened to the rumours that circulated among her acquaintances in Venice.[111] She also took into account her own knowledge of the personalities of senior statesmen and even appreciated a report that the happy faces of State Councillors leaving an assembly indicated that peace was on the way.[112] But she was also more proactive in her search for information, soliciting the opinions of those who were in a better position to know what was really happening: French and Austrian officers.[113] She also relied on foreign correspondents to confirm or deny rumours she had

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Vienne nous assurent de ne point pretter fois aux articles de paix publié jusqu'ici, puisque a Vienne même ont les ignorent entierement". Letter 49 [44], to G. Pellizzoni, February 28, 1801, to Brescia.

[110] Toulon was a common departure point for French troops heading for Egypt. Admiral Gauteaume headed just such an expedition in the winter and spring of 1801, although it is unclear if Renier Michiel is making reference to it here. *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 74 [66], to G. Pellizzoni, June 9, 1801, from Padua. G. Lefebvre, Napoleon..., pp.111-12.

[111] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 27 [22], to G. Pellizzoni, July 1800, from Padua to Brescia; letter 45 [39], to G. Pellizzoni, February 14, 1801, from Venice to Brescia; letter 46 [40], to G. Pellizzoni, February 18, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

[112] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 31 [26], to G. Pellizzoni, July 30, 1800, from Padua; letter 33 [28], to G. Pellizzoni, August 20, 1800, from Padua to Brescia.

[113] "C'est un Officier Autrichien qui arrivè ici a debité cette nouvelle". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 20 [17], to G. Pellizzoni, [---- 6, 1800], from Padua; "C'est le General Brentana qui l'assurè hier au soir au Theatre". Letter 25 [20], to G. Pellizzoni, [July 1800], from Padua to Brescia; "On ajoute aussi que les Autrichiens irons jusqu'a l'Ada....il-y-a des Officiers qui tiennent bourse ouverte pour toute les gajeures que l'on voudroit faire, tant ils sont bien surs que cela arrivera". Letter 58 [50], to G. Pellizzoni, March 28, 1801; "Les Officiers pourtant ici ne soupçonnent nullement du renouvellement de la guerre". Letter 66 [57], to G. Pellizzoni, May 2, 1801, from Venice; "...nous avons vûs part tout un grand mouvement des trouppes, cependant les Officiers ne croyent point a la guerre". Letter 79 [70], to G. Pellizzoni, June 20, 1801, from Padua.

heard pertaining to international conflicts. In relation to the Rastatt negotiations for example, Renier Michiel writes that she has heard that the "powers of the North and the Emperor also has made it known to the Directory to move out of the area to the right Rhine immediately", but also notes that her Austrians contacts knew nothing about this.[114] In another case, she has heard that England has taken Copenhagen, but says that she does not necessarily believe it. She feels that her suspicions are "confirmed" when letters from Copenhagen made no mention of capitulation.[115]

In both of the above cases, Renier Michiel is served with distorted versions of the truth. Copenhagen was attacked, not occupied, on April 2nd, and signed an armistice with England on April 8. Regarding the Rhine, Austria did not require that France evacuate it; rather, it refused to grant Cologne without compensation in Italy.[116] In the end, it is Renier Michiel's discriminating judgement which is her best ally in helping her to determine which accounts are accurate. In fact, only when she receives confirmation of an account from several different sources is she convinced of its legitimacy. For example, in July 1800, she claims that "everyone is talking about the peace and it is almost sure it has a basis" because she has five other pieces of evidence which point to this outcome:

> The armistice on the Rhine indicates Peace. The Manifesto printed in Vienna talks of Peace to appease the People. The Tribunat in Paris tells of

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[114] "...l'on dit que toute les puissances du Nord et l'Empereur aussi ont fait savoir au Directoire de faire sortir immediatement de la droite du Rhin...". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 15 [12], to G. Pellizzoni, May 16, 1798, to Brescia.

[115] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 63 [55a], to G. Pellizzoni, April 11, 1801; letter 64 [55b], to G. Pellizzoni, April 18, 1801, to Brescia; letter 65 [56], to G. Pellizzoni, April 24, 1801 to Brescia.

[116] G. Lefebvre, *La France sous le Directoire*..., pp.634-36.

> Peace in declaring Bonaparte the Conqueror. The demolition of Fortresses indicates peace. Finally, necessity demands Peace.[117]

As Renier Michiel remarks, under these circumstances, there is little reason to doubt that peace will arrive. Nevertheless, the concordance of this many factors is rare and Renier Michiel, like everyone else, is forced to "forge [her] news according to everyone's divergent passions".[118]

Renier Michiel's frustration with this situation is shown in her claims that conflicting reports, instead of informing her, actually have the effect of underlining her isolation and ignorance. In trying to establish whether peace has in fact been established in Lunéville, she has heard that "in Padua, they imprison those who speak of peace" while in "Milan they are printing its conditions". The result is that they know nothing.[119] Similarly, she writes that since "It seems that all letters, all gazettes and all people are equally divided in their opinions" concerning the Lunéville treaty, "we are entirely ignorant of the future".[120] Her correspondence is peppered with such statements. She says that they are "in the greatest dark concerning politics", that "here we are again

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[117] "De la Paix en parle tout le monde; et toujours plus sur des fondemens. Paix indique l'armistice aussi au Rhin, De Paix parle le Manifeste imprimè a Vienne pour appaiser le Peuple. De Paix parle le Tribunat à Paris en voyant Bonaparte Vainqueur. Paix, indique les demolitions des Fortresses. Enfin la necessité demande Paix". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 26 [21], to G. Pellizzoni, [July 1800], from Padua to Brescia. The Tribunat was an assembly of departmental representatives created by the Year VIII constitution and charged with approving government bills. Jean-Louis Halperin, "Tribunat" in Jean Tulard, ed., *Dictionnaire Napoléon*, Paris: Fayard, 1987, pp.1655-57.

[118] "...on forge des nouvelles selons les différentes passions de chacun". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 32 [27], to G. Pellizzoni, August 16, 1800, from Padua to Brescia.

[119] "A Milan on impriment même les conditions; à Padoüe on emprisonnent ceux qui parle de paix". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 48 [42], to G. Pellizzoni, February 25, 1801, to Brescia.

[120] "Il parait que tout le monde, toutes les lettres, toutes les Gazzettes soient partagé egalement dans les opinions de sorte que on ignore entierement l'avenir". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 45 [39], to G. Pellizzoni, February 14, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

uncertain of all things", states that they are "ignorant of the truth regarding everything", asks "who dares to find the truth" in the accounts they receive and that she feels isolated for not knowing what is going on in the world.[121] In the end and despite her best efforts, she admits that all that she can assure him of is her affection.[122]

Renier Michiel recognizes her paradoxical position. On the one hand, the request for and distribution of accurate information is one of the main motivating forces behind her exchange of letters with Pellizzoni. Besides the news she passes along about her daughter, it is practically the only topic of conversation.[123] And yet she is almost never sure that the information she is providing him with is correct and often undermines what she says by claiming that she does not believe it. Conversely, because Renier Michiel cannot be sure of anything, she also cannot be sure that what she believes is *not* true. Consequently, she provides him with all the evidence, including her opinion, and lets him decide for himself. She is engaging in the most objective form of political reporting, going even so far as to state her bias.

At the same time, by stating her opinion, she is underlining the extent to which reporting also constituted a means of reaffirming one's subjectivity by emphasizing her relationship with Pellizzoni. If Renier Michiel included her opinion in the letter, it was

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[121] "Nous somes dans la plus grande obscurité des nouvelles politiques". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 19 [16], to G. Pellizzoni, May 9, 1798, from Padua to Brescia; "Nous voila encore d'en l'incertitude de toute chose". Letter 40 [35], to G. Pellizzoni, October 1800, from Padua; "mais enfin l'on ignore ici la vérité de toute chose" and "Qui peut oser de trouver la vérité dans tout cela?". Letter 57 [49], to G. Pellizzoni, March 25, 1801, from Venice to Brescia; "Vous savez que je suis isolé". Letter 76 [67], to G. Pellizzoni, June 10, 1801, from Padua.

[122] "Je n'ai donc qu'a vous assurer de ma constante amitié". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 74 [65], to G. Pellizzoni, June 6, 1801, to Brescia.

because it was significant, since it constituted another piece of evidence that Pellizzoni could take into account in sorting the information he received. This is certainly a strategy that Renier Michiel used in discerning between various reports: how close and loyal a friend was the source? Certain friends provide her with information that was "too laconic", and thus it is "up to you [Pellizzoni] to tell her more if you can".[124] Renier Michiel also remarks on Pellizzoni's special status in August 1800 when she says that she has received letters from Brescia telling of impending war, but that the fact that Pellizzoni mentions nothing convinces her that it is not so.[125] Personal relations also comes into play in dissuading Renier Michiel from believing that peace has been established; the "reasonable people of Vienna" warn her not to put stock in reports given that the articles have not yet been published there.[126]

If Pellizzoni's news was more reliable than that which Renier Michiel received from others, it follows that it also constituted a personal gift that only he could bestow and therefore was a sign of his affection for her. In turn, Renier Michiel's acknowledgement of his unique position in her letters constitutes the flattery that repays him for his kindness (and which is necessarily coupled with her own news). In fact, the ritual of this exchange and the intimacy and cohesion that it provides is as important as the information which is exchanged, given that no one can provide conclusive and

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[123] As I have already mentioned, Renier Michiel occasionally mentions her interest in Botany and refers to books and documents she is either requesting or sending.

[124] "Tout va bien me dit-on, mais cela est trop laconique c'est donc a vous de me dire d'avantage si vous pouvez". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 75 [66], to G. Pellizzoni, June 9, 1801, from Padua.

[125] *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 32 [27], to G. Pellizzoni, August 16, 1800, from Padua to Brescia.

accurate reports. Renier Michiel acknowledges as much when she writes "I write this because, in the end, I must write something; but I am quite sure that we can know nothing".[127] This is clearly an exaggeration, but it does point to the fact that the contact established in literary commerce was an important goal in itself.

The practice of reinforcing the ties that linked the members of the republic of letters to one another also had the effect of insulating it against mobility that was too radical. Even though relations inside the republic were free of hierarchy based on titles and fortune, entry into this group still necessitated money and status.[128] This was especially true in Venetia, where the progressive political ideas that so captured the imagination of the French *gens de lettres* were either stopped at the border or were disdainfully dismissed. Renier Michiel's own unquestioning acceptance of the propriety of a social hierarchy which she and her literary friends so clearly dominated is revealed in contradictory expression of her social concerns. On the one hand, she claims that she is a supporter of democracy, writing, "They say I am a democrat, and in so doing, are not unjust".[129] She even feels empathy for the poor who have been left starving as a result of the French occupation of Venice, writing, "Venice is in a pitiful state. Night and day one encounters beggars only covered with a white trembling hand asking for [illegible]. A

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[126] "...des gens raisonables de Vienne". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 49 [44], to G. Pellizzoni, February 28, 1801, from Brescia.

[127] "Je vous écris cela puisqu'enfin il faut bien écrire quelque chose; mais je suis bien sure que nous ne pouvons rien savoir". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 86 [77], to G. Pellizzoni, n.d., to Brescia.

[128] See chapter 1, pp.58-60.

[129] "On me tient pour une democrate et en cela on ne me fait pas un tort". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 11 [9], to G. Pellizzoni, April 25, 1798, from Padua to Brescia.

hail of cannon-fire would be more human than leaving so many to starve like this".[130] On the other hand, her concern for others has very strict limits. One of the potential outcomes of the Lunéville treaty that most concerns her is a rumour that she has heard that a secret convention calls for the demolition of the Verona Chateau. The reason? "It would destroy my nice summer walks", writes Renier Michiel.[131] Renier Michiel also believes that she is still entitled to certain privileges, asserting that she felt that "[her] birth, [her] station and [her] sex were insulted" at having to present herself to the police to be interviewed "rather than being interviewed at [her] palace". She then adds that "you will say that this is very Aristocratic. I am not guilty. I have seen that up until now, it has been our duty to feel this way".[132]

Therefore, Renier Michiel's sympathy for the people in no way threatened her firm conviction that her aristocratic status was legitimate. Furthermore, her commitment to social hierarchy cannot be separated from the exchange of political news that she engaged in with Pellizzoni, nor her literary exchanges with Dalmistro, Canova and other intellectuals. As demonstrated in her correspondence with Pellizzoni, Renier Michiel's personal attachment fuelled her epistolary commerce. In turn, the care that Pellizzoni

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[130] "Venise est dans un état pitoyable. Nuit et jour l'on rencontre de mandiant tout couvert qu'avec une main blanche tremblante demandant [illegible]. Un canon a mitraille seroit plus humain que de laisser ainsi perir tant de monde". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 12 [10], to G. Pellizzoni, May 5, 1798, from Padua to Brescia.

[131] "...en ce cas on detruirois mes belles promenades d'été...". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 49 [44], to G. Pellizzoni, February 28, 1801, to Brescia.

[132] "[C]'est d'avoir senti ma naissance, mon rang, mon sexe blessé pour avoir a me presenter moi même à un tel lieu pour être examiné au lieu d'être examinée a mon Palais. Cela est bien Aristocrate dite vous. Je ne suis pas coupable j'ai vu jusqu'à present que ce fût notre devoir de sentir comme cela". *Col. P.D.* 1442/1, letter 45 [39], to G. Pellizzoni, February 14, 1801, from Venice to Brescia.

took in informing Renier Michiel about politics, as much as Bettinelli's dithyrambs and letters, were signs of his devotion. This brand of reciprocity was not indiscriminately effected, though: it was predicated on Renier Michiel's recognition of a pre-existing social equality. Had her correspondents not been of a certain social standing, Renier Michiel would never have expressed her affection and attachment so freely and, consequently, could never have been such an upstanding member of the Venetian republic of letters.

Chapter 5

Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini:

Veronese Matriarch and Woman of Letters[1]

Very little is known about the life of Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini. In fact, the only significant biographical information published on Mosconi Contarini is contained in two books and one article.[2] Moreover, only one of these works, the edited volume of Mosconi Contarini's letters published by Luisa Ricaldone, is devoted entirely to the *saloniera*. The other two, Angelo Fabi's article and Antonio Piromalli's book, focus on Mosconi Contarini's friend and lover, Aurelio Bertola,[3] providing information on Mosconi Contarini only insofar as it illuminates Bertola's life.

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[1] A previous version of this chapter, entitled "Elisabetta Mosconi's Letters to Giovanni Antonio Scopoli: A Noble Marriage Negotiation at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century in Verona" is to appear in *Lumen: Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, forthcoming.

[2] Angelo Fabi, "Canzonetta veronese inedita di Aurelio Bertola" in Toni Iermano and Tommaso Scappaticci, eds., *Studi in onore di Antonio Piromalli. Da Dante al secondo Ottocento*, Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1993, pp.277-90; Antonio Piromalli, *Aurelio Bertola nella letteratura del Settecento, con testi e documenti inediti*, Florence: Olschki, 1959; Luisa Ricaldone, "Premessa" in Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini, *Al mio caro ed incomparibile amico. Lettere di Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini all'abate Aurelio De' Giorgi Bertola,* edited by Luisa Ricaldone with commentary by Marco Cerruti, Padua: Editoriale Programma, 1995.

[3] Aurelio Bertola (1753-98): One-time professor of History and Geography at the *Accademia marina* in Naples, Bertola cast off his monk's habit to become a secular clergyman in 1783. In 1784 he began to teach history at the University of Pavia and in 1785 was made a member of the *Accademia degli Affidati*. In 1793,

What we do know is that Mosconi Contarini, a countess,[4] was born in either 1751 or 1752[5] and that she died in 1807. She lived in Verona, and spent many summers at Novare, the Mosconi family's summer villa just outside the city. She was married to Giacomo Mosconi[6] and had four children, all girls: Marietta, Clarina, Laura and Clementina. One of these children, Laura, was the daughter of Aurelio Bertola, whom Mosconi met in 1783, and eventually took her romantic distance from, due to his infidelity with Paolina Secco Suardo Grismondi.[7] As for Mosconi's interests and activities, we know from her letters that she was educated and cultured. She spent her days writing letters, receiving guests in her salon, going to the theatre, reading, and visiting with friends, including some of the most renowned literary figures of the time:

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he returned to Rimini, where he accepted the post of member of the Committee of Public Instruction of the Emilia region upon the arrival of French forces. Among his best known works are *Le Notti Clementine* (first published under the name *Le Notti*, (Perugia, 1774) and *Favole* (Verona, 1783). Emilio Bigi, "Bertola de Giorgi, Aurelio" in Alberto M. Ghisalberti, ed., *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 9. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1967, pp.564-66.

[4] Giuseppe Franco Viviani, "Il Conte Giovanni Scopoli", *Studi storici veronesi Luigi Simeoni* 15-17 (1966-67): 225.

[5] Luisa Ricaldone, "Premessa", p.9.

[6] Giocomo Mosconi must have died in November 1788, as on September 14, 1788, Mosconi makes no reference to his death in her letter to Clementino Vannetti, while on November 22, 1788, she thanks Vannetti for his condolences. Italy. Rovereto. Biblioteca Civica di Rovereto. *Collezioni Vannetti*, col. Miniscalchi-Fontana, reel 27, letter 139, to Vannetti, September 14, 1788; col. Mosconi-Giuliani, reel 17, letter 92, to Vannetti, November 22, 1788. Furthermore, in a letter to Giovanni Cristofano Amaduzzi, written November 28, 1788, she states that she lost her husband just a few days before. Italy. Savigno sul Rubicone. Biblioteca dell'Accademia di Filopatridi di Savignano sul Rubicone. *Carteggio Amaduzzi-Veneti*. letter 85, to Amaduzzi.

[7] Vera Lettere, "Contarini, Elisabetta" in Alberto M. Ghisalberti, ed., *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 28. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1983, p.152; Luisa Ricaldone, "Premessa", pp.13-15. Paolina Grismondi Secco Suardo (also known as Lesbia Cidonia, 1746-1801): A Bergamese countess who was invited to become a member of the Arcadia in 1779, she wrote verses, maintained contact with Italian and French scientists and intellectuals and is thought to have conducted scientific experiments. Giulio Natali, *Storia letteraria d'Italia. Il Settecento*, Milan: Dottor Franceso Vallardi, 1936, p.142; Rosa Troiano, "Scrittura femminile del Settecento" in Toni Iermano and Tommaso Scappaticci, eds., *Da Dante al secondo Ottocento. Studi in onore di Antonio Piromalli*, Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1993, pp.295-96.

Ippolito Pindemonte,[8] Giovanni Cristoforo Amaduzzi,[9] Clementino Vannetti,[10] Melchiorre Delfico,[11] and Silvia Curtoni Verza.[12]

Of all the letters that Mosconi Contarini wrote, 326 remain, and these can be found in six different collections in libraries throughout Northern and Central Italy. These collections include letters to nine identifiable recipients written between the years 1780 and 1806: 52 letters to her future son-in-law, Antonio Scopoli;[13] 17 to her daughter, Laura Mosconi Scopoli;[14] 46 to Clementino Vannetti;[15] 180 to Aurelio Bertola;[16] 18 to

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[8] See chapter 4, note 4.

[9] Giovanni Cristoforo Amaduzzi (1740-92): Jurist and classical-languages scholar, friend and collaborator of Clementino Vannetti and Ippolito Pindemonte, he translated Proclo's hymns from Greek to Latin, although his death prevented their publication. Nicola Francesco Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo*, vol. 2: *Lettere inedite*, Rome: Edizioni Abate, 1968, p.552.

[10] Clementino Vannetti (1754-95): Poet and scholar of Italian and Latin literature, he defended Italian language and culture against the late eighteenth-century mania for those of France and England. N. F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo*..., p.10.

[11] Mechiorre Delfico (1744-1835): Philosopher and politician, he served as the king's military councillor (*assessore militare*) in the province of Teramo from 1783 to 1791, and held a number of posts (including Member of the Provisory government of the Napoleonic Republic) during the various waves of French occupation of the region and of San Marino, where he moved in 1799. He returned to Teramo in 1823 and retired from political life. He was a member of numerous academies and societies and president of the *Istituto d'Incoraggiamento di Napoli*. Raffaele Aurini, *Dizionario bibliografico della gente d'abruzzo*, vol. 3. Teramo: Cooperativa tipografica "ars et labor", 1958, pp.5-6.

[12] Silvia Curtoni Verza (1751-1825): Like Mosconi, Curtoni Verza was a Veronese countess and salon hostess. She was an actress, and also penned a series of portraits (*Ritratti*) and a collection of poems (*Terze rime*), published in 1812. N.F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo*..., pp.581-82.

[13] Italy. Verona. Biblioteca Civica di Verona. *Carteggi*, b.473, letter 1, Verona, May 30, 1801 to letter 42, letter 52, St. Menet, April 19, 1804.

[14] Italy. Verona. Biblioteca Civica di Verona. *Carteggi* b.473, letter 1, Novare, June 9, 1795 to letter 17, Novare, August 12, 1806. Laura Mosconi Scopoli (1785-1836): Daughter of Elisabetta Mosconi and Aurelio Bertola, she married Antonio Scopoli in 1802 and had ten children with him before her death. Giuseppe Franco Viviani, "Il conte Giovannni Scopoli", *Studi Storici veronesi Luigi Simeoni*, 16-17 (1966-67), p.225, note 28.

[15] Italy. Rovereto. Biblioteca Civica di Rovereto. *Collezioni Vannetti*, various collections, reel 22, letter 52, Verona, February 11, 1784 to reel 20, letter 265, Verona, February 18, 1795. See also Italy. Forlì. Biblioteca Communale di Forlì. *Collezioni Piancastelli*, Sezione "Carte Romagna", senza destinazione, letter 65.3, Verona, September 13, 1787. Despite the fact that this letter is apparently written to an unknown addressee, Mosconi indicates that it is to Vannetti at the bottom of the page, where she writes "Addio Vannetti mio caro".

Giovanni Amaduzzi;[17] 6 to Melchiorre Delfico;[18] 4 to Ippolito Pindemonte;[19] 2 to Francesco Fontana;[20] and 1 to Giuseppe Remondini.[21] For the purposes of this paper, I would like to concentrate on two sets of correspondence: those of Vannetti and Scopoli. The first is more literary, revealing Mosconi's views on gender and her place in the republic of letters. The second traces Mosconi's negotiation of her daughter's marriage to her future son-in-law, revealing her position as part of the elite of Venetian society through her elevated social standing and her political connections.

In contrast to Marie-Jeanne Roland's experience in the republic of letters, which highlights the fluidity of gender norms in the face of a progressively intense political crisis, Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini's encounter with gender, politics and the intellectual community in Verona is much closer to the experiences of Julie de Lespinasse and Giustina Renier Michiel. She, too, explicitly contributed to the perpetuation of the republic's ethics of politeness and loyalty and the already established practices of

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[16] Italy. Forlì. Biblioteca Comunale di Forlì. *Collezioni Piancastelli*, sezione "Carte Romagna", to Aurelio Bertola, letter 61.117, Verona, November 26, 1783 to letter 61.289, Verona, June 26, 1797. The first letter in this collection cannot be to Bertola, despite the romantic tone, as it is dated November 8, 1780 (letter 61.115), three years before Mosconi met him. The second is a letter of introduction for Bertola, and not to him (letter 61.116). Letters 61.290-96 are not dated, and documents 61.297-99 are verses.

[17] Italy. Savignano sul Rubicone. Biblioteca dell'Accademia di Filopatridi di Savignano sul Rubicone. *Carteggio Ammaduzzi-Veneti*, to abate Giovanni Cristoforo Amaduzzi, letter 70, Verona, January 19, 1786 to letter 95, Verona, February 18, 1790.

[18] Italy. Teramo. Biblioteca Provinciale Melchiorre Delfico. *Fondo Delfico*. Letter 61781, to Delfico, July 29, 1789 to letter 66105, [September] 8, 1791.

[19] Italy. Verona. Biblioteca Civica di Verona. *Carteggi*, b. 40, June 23, 1799 to January 23, 1803 [no letter numbers].

[20] Italy. Rovereto. Biblioteca Civica di Rovereto. *Collezioni Vannetti*. reel 564, letter 125, Verona, June 5, 1790 and letter 127, [no place], [no date]. Francesco Fontana (1750-1822): Cardinal of Casalmaggiore, scholar of classical languages and historian, he was a close friend of Ippolito Pindemonte. N. F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo...*, p.565.

[21] Italy. Bassano del Grappa. Biblioteca Civica Bassano del Grappa. *Epistolario raccolto da Bartolomeo Gamba*, letter XVI.6-4355, Verona, March 16, 1786. Giuseppe Remondini (1747-1811): Printer working

intellectual exchange by circulating documents, running errands, making recommendations, being modest and giving flattery and furnishing critiques. She is also similar to Renier Michiel (and different from Lespinasse and Roland) in her overt commitment to maintaining the social structure of elitism, as demonstrated in her correspondence with Antonio Scopoli.

Clementino Vannetti

Clementino Vannetti (1754-95) was a publisher and scholar who lived in Rovereto.[22] Mosconi's correspondence to him comprises 45 letters, the earliest dated February 11, 1784 and the latest dated February 18, 1795.[23] Six letters were written in 1784, 10 in 1785, five in 1786, two in 1787, seven in 1788, four in 1789, three in 1790, three in 1792, and one each in 1793-95. In the course of her letters to him, Mosconi marks her place as a woman in the Venetian republic of letters. Despite declarations of humility regarding the poor quality of her work and critiques (attributed to her lack of education and the demands of motherhood), Mosconi nonetheless participates fully in the circulation of literary pieces, critiques and news from other literary figures. She also

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out of Bassano, it was he who published Bertola's *Osservazioni sopra Metastasio* (1784) and *Operette in verso e in prosa* (1785). Luisa Ricaldone, ed., *Al mio caro ed incomparibile amico...*, p.71, note 2.

[22] See note 10.

[23] Italy. Rovereto. Biblioteca Civia di Rovereto. *Collezioni Vannetti*, various collections. Letters to Clementino Vannetti. Two of the letters have no date. Subsequently, I will refer to letters from this colletion simply as *Col. Van.*

propagates the values of civility and politeness both through the nature and form of her critiques.

Most of Mosconi's comments regarding gender concern what she identifies as the barriers which kept women from being valuable and productive members of the literary community: training, maternity and natural proclivity. Regarding the first, when apologizing for the poor quality of her comments, Mosconi often mentions that she did not have any formal education. For example, in her letter of February 11, 1784, she writes, "For pity's sake pardon me if I, being a Woman, and ignorant of all manner of study, dare to give my opinion frankly . . .".[24] In another letter, she explains that she does not know how to write good poetry,[25] and in several other letters, deplores her ignorance of Latin.[26] Her most explicit discussion of her education, however, is contained in a letter to Vannetti written on May 24, 1787.

> You ask me what studies I cultivate? Do you know, my dear Vannetti, that such a question makes me laugh, and also blush? I have never studied; I read mostly when I can for my pleasure, I write many letters, I intend to study the English language, but with infinite slowness; I also still study music, which I have almost completely forgotten. My little daughters also demand much of my time, and I bore myself most of the time with visiting and receiving visitors. Thus you see my entire life, which certainly does not always make me happy enough with myself.[27]

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[24] "Per pietà perdonate s'io, essendo Donna, e ignara d'ogni sorta di studi, oso dire così francamente la mia opinione...". *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 52, February 11, 1784.

[25] *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 61, August 4, 1784.

[26] *Col. Van.*, reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 48, September 21, 1786; *Col. Van.*, reel 24, col. Pindemonte-Rossi, letter 40, December 2, 1787; *Col. Van.*, reel 26, col. Pompei-Tesino, letter 119, June 10, 1790.

[27] "Voi mi chiedete quali studi coltivo? Sapete voi, Vannetti mio caro, che una tal dimanda mi fa da ridere, e insiem rossore? Io non ho mai studiate ; leggo soltanto quando posso per mio diletto, scrivo moltissime lettere, segno a studiare la lingua inglese, ma con somma lentezza, coltivo ancora la musica, che avea quasi del tutto dimenticata, le mie figlielle pure esiggono una qualche mia ora, poi m'annojo il più delle

Two things jump out of this passage. First, it is clear that Mosconi thinks that her training was inadequate. Second, Mosconi refers to maternity as an impediment to her scholarly activity, a remark which is supported with evidence from other remarks concerning her children. Although she was an aristocratic woman who had help caring for her daughters,[28] she also seems to have spent a significant amount of time with them herself, particularly during their illnesses. In her letter of May 11, 1788, for example, she describes how she has been occupied with the after-effects of her children's inoculations: "I am still in the city, much occupied with the maternal care of the inoculation of my three daughters, who have now happily weathered the storm".[29] Moreover, throughout her correspondence with Antonio Scopoli, she often describes how she was constantly beside her children's beds when they were sick.[30]

But education and maternity were both circumstantial impediments to Mosconi's full intellectual participation in the republic of letters. Mosconi also seemed to be at least partly convinced that there was another, more essential barrier: her natural capacity for learning as a woman. In her letter of August 4, 1784, she makes a comment that seems to imply just that: "I am not yet made to familiarize myself with the muses in their

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volte a fare e ricevere visite eccovi tutta la mia vita, la qual certamente non mi rende sempre abbastanza contenta di me medesima". *Col. Van.*, reel 24, col. Pindemonte-Rossi, letter 44, May 24, 1787.

[28] At several points in her correspondence with her daughter, Mosconi makes reference to Alice, who seems to have been Laura's nurse who went to live with Laura after her marriage. Italy. Verona. Biblioteca Civica di Verona. *Carteggi*, b.473, letters to Laura Mosconi Scopoli, letter 9, July 24, 1803.

[29] "Io sono sempre stata in città, ma occupatissima nelle cure di mia maternità per [l']innesto fatto a tre mie bambine, le quali ora han felicemente superata la burrasca". *Col. Van.*, reel 27, col. Miniscalchi-Fontana, letter 141, May 11, 1788.

[30] Italy. Verona. Biblioteca Civica di Verona. *Carteggi*, b.473, letter 17, October 18, 1801; letter 18, October 24, 1801; letter 19, November 1, 1801; letter 21, November 7, 1801; letter 36, March 13, 1802; letter 37, March 20, 1802; letter 38, March 27, 1802.

house: even if I like them, venerate them and hold a party for them in my house".[31] This could simply be making reference to her own lack of talent, however. More convincing is her statement of June 5, 1785, where, after discussing one of the characters of her *Terza Grazia*, she writes,

> I wanted a man without such sumptuous ideas, and this need to try to correct the defects of nature weighs heavily on me. It is not that I am an enemy of my sex, and such a strange opinion I acknowledge to be a defect resulting from producing a girl; but at the same time as I condemn them, I am forced to adopt the bizarre maxims and the barbarous conventions of a sex who usurps all our rights.[32]

In short, Mosconi felt that she had neither education, time and natural talent of her male counterparts.

Mosconi's discomfort reflects the competing discourses regarding women in Italy at the end of the eighteenth century. She drew on themes expressed by Antonio Conti and Petronio Zecchini concerning women's physical limitations to intellectual thought, as well as Giacomo Casanova's conviction that women's poor education was at the root of their ignorance.[33] In spite of her beliefs about the weakness of her intellect, Mosconi nonetheless was a very active member of the republic of letters in Venetia. She held a salon in which letters and works of literature were read, discussed and critiqued. Mosconi tells Vannetti that she had read his *Lanterna magica d'Amore* "in company" and

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[31] "Io non son già nata per familiarizzarmi colle Muse in casa loro : le amo bensi, le venero e lor fo festa in casa mia". *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 61, August 4, 1784.

[32] "...io volea un maschio senza tanta sontuosità di concetti, e questo dover di bel nuovo tentare di correggere i difetti della natura mi pesa stupendamente. Non è già che nemica io sia del mio sesso, e che così strana opinione io accolga essere un difetto il produrre alla luce una bambina ; ma nel tempo stesso che le condanno, sono forzata di adottare le bizarre massime e le barbare convenzioni d'un sesso che usurpasi tutti i diritti sul nostra". *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 71, June 5, 1785.

[33] See chapter 1, pp. 15-16, 22-23.

had a few suggestions to make.[34] Her "little gathering" read an ode Tiziano di Ticofilo composed on the occasion of Voltaire's death, and found it very beautiful.[35] Similarly, upon the reading of Vannetti's letter and his epigrams in her salon, all were in agreement that he was "a gracious genius and an elegant writer".[36]

Just as important as the salon discussion itself, however, was the epistolary commerce which supported it. The circulation of letters facilitated and reinforced scholarly exchange in a number of ways. At the most basic level, commerce helped to reinforce the community by evoking the presence of others through the letters themselves and the news they contained. These personal attachments were also cemented through the exchange of news of other members of Mosconi's circle. Mosconi tells Vannetti about Pindemonte's run-in with a carriage, damaging his leg, about Silvia Curtoni Verza's trip to Milan, Genoa and Turin and about Bertola's European tour and his weak lungs.[37]

In addition, epistolary commerce provided one of the means through which men and women of letters had access to literary production that was not always published or was difficult to obtain. On several occasions, Mosconi refers to copying out the work of others, or not having time to, as the case may be.[38] In addition, Mosconi agrees to send

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[34] "in compagnia", *Col. Van.*, reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliari, letter 4, August 8, 1794.

[35] "piccolo crocchio". *Col. Van.*, reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliari, letter 22, August 24, 1785.

[36] "...un ingegno grazioso e uno scrittore elegantissimo". *Col. Van.*, reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 50, November 1, 1786.

[37] *Col. Van.*, reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 50, October 1, 1786; reel 27, col. Miniscalchi-Fontana, letter 139, September 14, 1788; reel 24, col. Pindemonte-Rossi, letter 40, December 2, 1787; reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliani, letter 88, July 20, 1788; reel 27, col. Miniscalchi-Fontana, letter 142, February 3, 1790.

[38] *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 71, June 5, 1785; reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giulari, letter 23, September 18, 1785; reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 48, September 21, 1786.

Vannetti Bertola's *Favole* (Verona, 1783), Girolamo Pompei's *Eroidi d'Ovidio*, and Giuseppe Pellegrini's poems.[39] Mosconi also procures books for Vannetti more actively, sending him all three volumes of Stefan Arteaga's work and asking him for the money to pay for them.[40] On July 20, 1788, she visits Silvia Curtoni Verza in order to pick up books which Vannetti has requested: "I had to wait until I had returned from the city to respond to your very sweet letter, since the books that you requested have been in the hands of our amiable Silvia (who, by the way, sends her greetings) for several days".[41]

The circulation of these documents was necessary for the literary community constituting the Venetian republic of letters to attain its goals, which included not only self-edification, but also raising the quality of literary writing. Through Mosconi's comments and critiques, it is clear that she and her contemporaries valued beauty, grace, gallantry, sincerity, simplicity and spontaneity, in short, qualities very similar to those admired in French courtesy literature. Regarding Vannetti's translation of Pliny's letters, Mosconi notes the "infinite pleasure"[42] she had in reading them: "With the elegant and

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[39] *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 65, April 20, 1785; reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliari, letter 16, July 9, 1785; *Col. Van.*, reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 43, February 7, 1786. Giuseppe Luigi Pellegrini (1718-99): Veronese man of letters and Jesuit, he was called to Vienna to preach to the court. Luisa Ricaldone, ed., *Al mio caro ed incomparibile amico...*, p.51, note 5. Girolamo Pompei (1731-88): Instructor to Mosconi, Pindemonte and Curtoni Verza, Pompei was also a Veronese man of letters who was best known for his translations of Plutarch and as author of tragedies, sacred verses, his dissertation entitled *Della imitazione degli antichi*, and his *Canzoni pastorali*. N.F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo...*, p.577.

[40] *Col. Van.*, reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 41, December 25, 1785; reel 23, col. Pindemonte Mosconi, letter 50, November 1, 1786. Stefan Arteaga (1747-99): Spanish Jesuit who sought refuge in Italy after the expulsion of Jesuits from Spain in 1767. The work that Mosconi probably is referring to here is his *Le rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano dalla sua origine al presente*, which was published in 1783. Luisa Ricaldone, ed., *Al mio caro ed incomparibile amico...*, p.67, note 5.

[41] "Ho dovuto ritardare sino al mio ritorno in città a far risposta all'ultima vostra carissima giacchè i libri che mi chiedete sono stati per alcuni giorni nelle mani dell'amabilissima nostra Silvia, la quale (fra parentesi) assai vi saluta". *Col. Van.*, reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliari, letter 88, July 20, 1788.

[42] "infinito piacere".

spontaneous naturalness of your poetry, you have truly found the way to reconcile me somewhat with the lunghi periodi, which I have never liked in prose, and which I always detested in verse".[43] Similarly, Mosconi describes Vannetti's *Sermone* as "beautiful and elegant".[44] In the best of cases, a truly well-crafted piece would provoke pleasure in the reader: "I am sending you two copies of the cavalier Pindemonte's new book, one of which is for you, the other, I pray you pass along in my name, along with my respects to the esteemed conte Rosmini. I am sure that given your exquisite taste, you will both find in it much to pleasantly feed your spirits".[45]

Literary critique consisted of more than compliments, though. In order to assist authors to attain the ideals outlined above, their friends also criticized their work. Following the requisite laudatory remarks, readers made very specific suggestions.

> This you will also deny, no matter how sincere my congratulations for your graceful work of poetry, in my opinion superior to all others that I have seen. And should I not also thank you for remembering my illness, which causes me so little suffering regarding the *lunghi periodi*? In your entire Sermone, I only find one, which is close to being a bit long, but even this one is so clear, so sweet, and gives such a feeling of comfort that my lungs do not feel the least exertion in sustaining it. But you ask me for

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[43] "Voi in vero avete trovato la strada con l'elegante e spontanea naturalezza del vostro verseggiare di riconciliarmi alcun poco con i lunghi periodi, ch'io non ho mai amato in prosa, e che ho sempre detestati in versi". *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 52, February 11, 1784.

[44] "bello ed elegante". *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 58, June 24, 1784. For similar comments, see reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliari, letter 4, August 8, 1784; reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 64, March 6, 1785; reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 65, April 20, 1785; reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 80, August 2, 1785; reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliari, letter 22, August 24, 1785; reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 46, August 14, 1786.

[45] "Due copie vi invio del nuova libro del cavalier Pindemonte, una delle quali per voi, e l'altra pregovi passarla in mio nome insiem co' miei rispetti al pregitissimo conte Rosmini. Son certa ch'ambedue di squisito gusto come siete troverete in quest'opera moltissimo da pascervi piacevolemente lo spirito". *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, August 2, 1785. Carlo Rosmini (1758-1827): Vannetti's uncle, Rosmini was a well-known biographer. His works included *Vita del Filelfo, Vita di Seneca, Vita di Ovidio and Storia di Milano*. N.F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo...*, p.578.

> criticism: in truth, even in the eyes of the most severe critic, only small trifles appear in comparison to the many beautiful things that are found throughout your work. However, to adhere to you sweet desire, and to the ingenuous nature of my spirit, I will show you a few small things that I was able to note for you, although I am also still willing to acknowledge your spirited defences.[46]

After this preamble, Mosconi takes issue with a series of passages concerning word choice and style which she judges will improve the beauty and poetry of his work.

Criticism is, in fact, so important that it becomes an art form in itself. Mosconi evaluates Vannetti's comments on Pompei's *Eroidi* in her letter of July 4, 1785, judging that his comments did justice to the talent of her friend.[47] Sometimes critiques even resulted in tiffs between authors and reviewers. For instance, Vannetti sent a copy of his comments regarding Bertola's translation, *Il Parnaso Tedescho*, to Mosconi, Bertola and Bettinelli. Mosconi is charmed by Vannetti's and Bertola's different views of the piece. Bertola claims that Vannetti has lauded the worst passages, and Mosconi sees this as a sign of both their mutual generosity: "you in thinking him worth of praise; him in confessing the criticism was warranted".[48] It becomes soon clear that Bertola was not

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[46] "Da ciò prendete pure argomento quant'or sincere sieno le congratulazioni mie per il vostro leggiadro poetico lavoro, a mio giudicio superiore a tutti gli altri vostri sciolti ch'io abbia veduto. E non dovrò pur ringraziarvi che vi siate ricordato della mia infermità che rendemi si poco sofferente dei lunghi periodi? In tutto il vostro Sermone non ne trovo che un solo, il qual s'accosti un pò al lungo, ma questo pure è si chiaro, si soave, e nulla sente del conforto che i miei polmoni non rissentirono la menoma fatica ne sostenerlo. Ma voi mi chiedete delle censure : in verità che anche allo sguardo del più severo critico non può comparire che delle inezie a fronte delle tante bellezze di cui è sparso il maestoso vostro sciolto. Pure per aderire al docilissimo genio vostro, e all'indole ingenua del mio animo, vi mostrerò alcune piccole cose che mi riusci di notarvi, disposta però sempre ad ammirare le spiritose vostre difese". *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 58, June 24, 1784.

[47] *Col. Van.*, reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliare, letter 16, July 9, 1785.

[48] "...voi credendolo degno di lode; egli nella cofessione di meritar la critica". *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 65, April 20, 1785.

just being modest, though. He was angry at Vannetti for highlighting his failings.[49] Their quarrel lasted a few months, and eventually Mosconi says that they would have to work their disagreement out amongst themselves.[50]

This type of dispute was bound to arise given the often trenchant criticism engaged in by Mosconi and her circle. Ultimately, however, criticism had to be accepted and disputes ironed out because the literary community was at its best work when its members collaborated. The commitment of all to the ethic of exchange is highlighted in the importance attributed to the form it took. As we have seen above, negative comments had to be couched in flattery. Moreover, compliments had to be modestly denied. In discussing the praise that she and Vannetti gave each others work, Mosconi notes that "you know the difference between your praises and mine: yours are exaggerated and come from the golden goodness of your heart which makes you appreciate the more tenuous production of an even more tenuous mind, while my affirmations originate in the most scrupulous truth".[51] Thus, it was necessary to focus one's attention outside oneself, to subsume one's pride to the good of the whole.

This commitment to others was also marked in a more significant way: through the importance accorded to friendship. The cohesion that the republic of letters required

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[49] Mosconi writes to Vannetti "...mi disse Bertola fino dall'anno scorso che trovava in quella lettera molto artifizio diretto a screditare il Parnaso Tedesco : poichè voi avete scelto diligentemente il luoghi più deboli e avete trascurato i migliori". *Col. Van.*, reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliare, letter 16, July 9, 1785.

[50] *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 80, August 2, 1785.

[51] "Vi sarebble questa differenza però tra le vostre, e le mie lodi, che le vostre esaggerate vengono da quell'aureo bontà di cuore che vi fa apprezzare le cose più tenui d'un ancora più tenue ingegno, quando le mie dettate sono dalla più scrupolosa verità". *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 58, June 24, 1784.

to function was based on personal loyalty and indulgence. Mosconi and her friends needed to be committed to one another to ensure they were prompt in sending their replies, comments and books and patient in waiting for them.[52] It also meant that they had to be forbearing in accepting criticism, because it served the author's and the community's best interest.

> I received your letter concerning the death of your illustrious fellow citizen and I showed it to the people that you indicated to me - We then read it together in my circle together with the epigrams, and apart from a few signs of modest critique, which you know are permitted to friendship itself, we all agreed that you are a gracious intellect and a truly elegant writer.[53]

In this sense, all the practices engaged in by members of republic, including running errands, circulating literature and furnishing criticism did not simply constitute the intellectual exchanges that made literary production possible, but was also a testament to one's personal attachments to the people involved. The gratitude they expressed when they received their missives speaks of this Janus-faced nature of republican relations.[54] Mosconi was pleased to get mail and whatever literary assistance it brought, but was also thankful for the gesture itself as a sign of personal devotion.

For this reason, threats to friendship manifest in the literary community were quickly denounced. When Vannetti had broken ties with Rosmini over the latter's

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[52] *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 61, October 4, 1784; reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 65, April 20, 1785.

[53] "Ebbi la vostra lettera in morte del vostra illustre concittadino e ne feci parte alle persone da voi indicatemi - Si lesse poi nella mia società insieme cogli epigrammi, e tranne alcuni pochi cenni di modesta critica, che sapete esser permessi all'amicizia stessa, si convenne esser voi sempre un ingegno grazioso, e uno scrittore elegantissimo". *Col. Van.*, reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 50, November 1, 1786.

indiscretion in informing Mosconi of Vannetti's comments regarding Pompei's *Eroidi*, Mosconi was the one who sought to reconcile them in the name of friendship: "I am writing you two lines, my Vannetti, to signal my true displeasure, that I have a right to think your friendship for me will want to put to an end".[55] She states that Rosmini did not violate the dictates of the friendship that he professed for Vannetti, because he surely did not know that Vannetti's remarks were made in confidence. For this reason, Mosconi tells Vannetti not to make "so much noise over such a small matter"[56] and to repair the damage that has been done: "I am asking you with the most keen pledge to amply return your friendship to the cavalier Rosmini, and to give me sure proof of it".[57] Just over a month later, perhaps influenced by Mosconi's directive, the two made up.[58]

The friendship that Mosconi promoted was also integrated into intellectual life in a much more profound way. It not only served to secure the republic's exchanges; it also constituted the inspiration for literary compositions themselves. Upon the death of Girolamo Pompei, Mosconi's tutor and friend, in 1788, a number of Mosconi's friends, including Silvia Curtoni Verza, Aurelio Bertola and Ippolito Pindemonte, composed eulogies and verses in his honour, a common practice of the day.[59] For his part, Vannetti

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[54] *Col. Van.*, reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 22, February 11, 1784; reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 58, June 24, 1784; reel 17, col. Mosconi-Giuliari, letter 4, August 8, 1784; reel 22, col. Pindemonte-Grismondi, letter 80, August 2, 1785; reel 26, col. Pompei-Tesini, letter 119, June 10, 1790.

[55] "Io vi scrivo due righe, Vannetti mio, per significarvi una mia vera dispiacenza, a cui ho diritto di lusingarmi che l'amicizia vostra per me vorrà porvi fine". *Col. Van.*, reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 41, December 25, 1785.

[56] "...tanto romore per si lieve cosa".

[57] "...pregandovi col più vivo impregno a didonar ampiamente l'amicizia vostra al Cavalier Rosmini e a darmene sicure prove". *Col. Van.*, reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 41, December 25, 1785.

[58] *Col. Van.*, reel 23, col. Pindemonte-Mosconi, letter 43, February 7, 1786.

[59] *Col. Van.*, reel 24, col. Pindemonte-Rossi, letter 42, February 25, 1788.

comments on the eulogy composed by Pindemonte, but unwittingly does so in a way that provokes the ire and condemnation of his friends.

> You say very well that the most important point for those who write history is to impartially serve the truth, you also know what that great luminary among historians decided to not be afraid to tell the truth, nor to dare to tell a lie. But who commissioned the cavaliere to give a critical judgement as opposed to a Eulogy of our Pompei, especially given that the latter was deemed to be truthful in every way? Why are you so eager to appear the philosopher and so reluctant to appear the friend?[60]

Mosconi is not so much castigating Vannetti for being disloyal to Pindemonte or to Pompei, but for doing violence to the ethic that maps friendship onto truth by separating them out from one another.

The inseparability of these two elements is key to understanding the role of introductions and recommendations in the republic of letters. One proved one's value in the republic through both one's loyalty and one's literary talent. Consequently, one could only recommend in good conscience one's friends or the friends of friends, because it was the only way to account for loyalty. This is clearly shown in a letter of recommendation that Mosconi wrote to Vannetti on behalf of a young acquaintance of hers, Giuseppe Tramontini, for a post as engineer to work on the roads. The Ministry of Rovereto is holding a competition open to all members of the public with the requisite training. Tramontini, according to Mosconi, is full of will and superior ability, he knows German and studies literature and Italian poetry. He deserves the post "as much for his golden

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[60] "Voi dite benissimo, che il gran punto per chi scrive storia lo servire imparzialmente alla verita, sapete pure quello che dicca quel gran lume degli storici, che non decsi aver paura di dir in quella la verità nè l'ardire di proferir una menzongna. Ma, e chi diedi al cavaliere la commissione di estendere un Giudicio critico, in luogo d'un Elogio del nostro Pompei, quand'anche questo in ogni sua parte fosse trovato esser

character as for the distinctive talents of which my excellent Vannetti is the patron".[61] Furthermore, Mosconi signals that this recommendation "keenly interests her heart",[62] and, at the end of her letter, "I do not want to go on because I think that I would be showing disrespect for your lovely heart so inclined to do good and to favour the concerns of your Bettina".[63] In supporting her candidate, Vannetti would not only be showing loyalty to Mosconi, but would be doing what was right by favouring a candidate that was endorsed by someone he knew understood the value of loyalty.

In short, despite reservations concerning her talent, it is clear that in practice Mosconi was very tightly integrated into the Venetian republic of letters. She was in regular contact with the most important literary figures of Verona and tied to them through her commitment to the ethic of cohesion based on friendship and exchange and her appreciation of beauty, elegance, simplicity, spontaneity and loyalty. The systemization of these practices seems separate from the world of politics, but at a deeper level it served to promote a structure of social organization which was fundamentally political. Like Lespinasse, Condorcet and d'Alembert, Mosconi and her circle all had links to the world of politics through friendship and were not afraid to make use of their connections to serve overtly political ends, as, for example, we saw above in Mosconi's

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veridico? Perchè tanto mostrarsi bramoso di comparir filosofo, e si poco amico?" *Col. Van.*, reel 27, col. Miniscalchi-Fontana, letter 141, May 11, 1788.

[61] "...egli merita ancora per il l'aureo suo carattere quanto pei distinti suoi talenti che il mio eccellente Vannetti gli sia Mecenate".

[62] "... vivamente interessa il mio cuore".

[63] "Non mi estendo di più perchè crederei di far torto al vostro bel cuore tanto inclinato a far il bene ed a favorire le premure della vostra Bettina". *Col. Van.*, reel 18, col. Pellegrini Trieste-Carreri, letter 146, June 10, 1792.

recommendation. Moreover, these recommendations were not *only* based on talent and loyalty, but also on social standing. This is also true for Lespinasse, but in comparison to her French counterpart, Mosconi makes the importance of "honour" clear in her negotiation of her daughter's marriage to her future son-in-law, Giovanni Antonio Scopoli.

Giovanni Antonio Scopoli

In contrast with the information available on Elisabetta Mosconi Contarini and Clementino Vannetti, the life of her son-in-law, Giovanni Antonio Scopoli, is fairly well documented. He was born in 1774 in Shemnitz, Hungary (now Banska Stiavnika, Slovakia), his father was a doctor and naturalist, and the family moved to Padua in 1776 when the father received a university teaching post in chemistry and botany. Scopoli's father died in 1788, leaving the family in the most squalid poverty.[64] Nevertheless, this did not prevent Scopoli from receiving his *laurea* in medicine from the University of Padua in 1793. He worked as a doctor in Rimini in 1798, and as a government administrator in the department of Olona in 1800. From this point on, he had a number of administrative posts in the Napoleonic government until 1814, when the Austrians took control of Milan, where Scopoli was stationed at the time. He continued on in his duties for a short time until he was dismissed by the Austrian government, at which point he returned to Verona. There, he lived a private life until his imprisonment in 1848. He

was then deported to Salzburg for the duration of the Lombardo-Veneto war.[65] He died in 1854.

As well as being an important government official, Scopoli was a man of culture. In Verona, he was a member of the *Accademia d'agricoltura, commerci ed arti* and of the *Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti* and the author of several texts on public education.[66] As far as his social status is concerned, he was a knight of the *Ordine della Corona di Ferro*,[67] and was conferred the title of count when he became part of the nobility on November 16, 1817.[68] Thus, Scopoli would become a man of significant accomplishments. At the time that Mosconi met him, however, he was simply a 27 year-old with promise from a family with a certain amount of status and thus lower down on the social scale than Mosconi.

The inequality in their positions is evident in the dynamic of the marriage negotiations. Mosconi makes all the demands--demands which Scopoli eagerly tries to meet. Mosconi makes it clear that Scopoli will not marry her daughter until he finds a position which is suitable. Through the process of negotiation, we discover that for Mosconi, this means that the post should be (in order of priority) honourable, close to Verona, stable and well paid. In the end, honour reveals itself to be the one condition

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[64] G.F. Viviani, "Il Conte...", p.220.

[65] Angelo Fabi, "Giovanni Scopli e Maurizio Bufalini", in Giuliano Pancaldi, ed., *Atti del Convegno Maurizio Bufalini. Medicina, scienza e filosofia, Cesena, 13-14 novembre 1987*, Bologna: Editrice CLUEB, 1990, pp.165-72.

[66] A. Fabi, "Giovanni Scopoli...", pp.165, 172.

[67] G.F. Viviani, "Il Conte...", p.226.

upon which Mosconi is not willing to compromise. The importance attached to honour, which is conferred through a powerful government post, shows Mosconi's commitment to the idea of social hierarchy based on more than personal virtue, which she states that Scopoli already possesses at the beginning of the bargaining process but which is insufficient in itself to secure his marriage to Laura. In addition, the correspondence also exposes the cultivation of intimacy through the exchange of news and favours, a process which serves to strengthen Scopoli's connection to her family. At the same time, the cultivation of these personal relations provide the basis upon which Scopoli is inducted into a broader governmental and literary elite. Once he has proved that he is trustworthy, Mosconi can not only recommend him for a government post, but call on him to provide favours to other acquaintances.

At another level, the correspondence suggests new way of understanding family relations at the end of the eighteenth century. I have identified three separate voices assumed by Mosconi during the negotiation: that of surrogate parent (where Mosconi consoles and counsels Scopoli), that of in-law (where she is defending her daughter's best interests in the negotiation process) and that of romantic proxy (where she is giddy and adulatory towards Scopoli). Not only are these three voices present in the correspondence; they also fuse into various combinations. Mosconi sometimes integrates the role of romantic proxy with that of parent, for example. Rather than representing this combination as idiosyncratic, I think that it is possible to assert that the parental and

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[68] Francesco Schröder, *Repertorio genealogico delle famiglie confermate nobili e dei titolati nobili esistenti nelle provincie venete*, vol. 1. Bologna: Forni Editore, [1830] 1972, p.264; A. Cartolari, *Cenni*

romantic roles were more easily overlapped in the eighteenth century, an affirmation which gains credibility when we compare Mosconi's correspondence with that of Élisabeth Bégon, the wife of the governor of Trois-Rivières, who also wrote in what seems to be a romantic tone to her son-in-law.[69]

Mosconi began to write to Scopoli shortly after they were introduced,[70] and continued to write to him regularly for over a year. Her correspondence ended, with the exception of one final letter,[71] when he received a post in Verona, just a few months before the marriage to her daughter, Laura.[72] The body of letters, which, on average, were one to two pages in length, can be divided into three phases. The first, spanning from May 10, 1801 to August 5, 1801, I will call the honeymoon phase, in which Mosconi is delighted to have found Scopoli for her daughter: the tone is flattering and enthusiastic. The second section, the longest, beginning August 28, 1801, and ending May 23, 1802, is the negotiation phase, in which the terms for the marriage are expressed and resolved. The third phase, which consists of only three letters, is the resolution phase, in which all conditions have been satisfactorily met and pre-wedding pleasantries are exchanged.

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sopra varie famiglie illustri di Verona, Bologna: Forni Editore, 1855, p.66.

[69] Élisabeth Bégon, *Lettres au cher fils. Correspondence d'Élisabeth Bégon avec son gendre, 1748-53*, Montreal: Hurtubise, 1972.

[70] Italy. Verona. Biblioteca Civica di Verona. *Carteggi*, b.473, letter 1, to A. Scopoli, 10 Pratile [May 30], 1801. Henceforth, unless otherwise noted, all letters will be drawn from this collection.

[71] I only want to consider the negotiation of the marriage in this chapter, and therefore will omit Mosconi's final letter, (letter 52, April 19, 1804), written a little over two years after the marriage took place, which relates family news.

The Honeymoon Phase

In the first phase of the correspondence, we hear all three of Mosconi's voices: that of surrogate parent, that of in-law and that of romantic proxy. The main way in which Mosconi assumed her role as in-law, that which is most consistently present throughout the correspondence, was through her concern over assuring Scopoli's elevated status through his career. In fact, we hear this voice not only in the first section, but in the very first letter. On May 30, 1801, she is already making use of her connections in an attempt to find him employment.[73] She mentions that she had already been able to help him in some way while he was in Verona (for which he has thanked her in a previous letter) and evaluates the potential utility of two of her friends in the provincial government of Verona. These are but the first of numerous attempts on her part to use her influence on his behalf.

Her concern over his lack of employment is expressed in a number of ways. Even in the midst of her compliments, she often laments his bad fortune. First, she regrets his family's situation: "And why are your family's circumstances so difficult and unpleasant?"[74] Then, on July 16, 1801, she writes of the "extraneous circumstances which oppose our mutual happiness".[75] Finally, on August 2, 1801, she explicitly states how bad his luck has been.

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[72] Letter 51, August 18, 1802.
[73] Letter 1, 10 Pratile [May 30], 1801.
[74] "E perchè si difficili e ingrate sono le circostanze della vostra famiglia?". Letter 4, July 5, 1801.
[75] "...estrinseche circostanze" which "s'oppongono alla mutua nostra felicità". Letter 6.

> I must ask you, my Scopoli, if you would consider a position in law? There is someone, who, by his heart, would strive to give it to you. Oh God! and what do you want? I do not know what I would give to see you in an honourable post, which would place you in this blessed mediocrity, which would be enough to fulfil our common wish. Would that time either lessen this bitter and lovely passion, or favourably change your unjust fortune.[76]

The attention Mosconi focuses on Scopoli's career and on his family's social and economic position show that she was thinking of her daughter's future welfare, placing her in the somewhat adversarial position of in-law with regard to Scopoli.

Nevertheless, this concern over Scopoli's position coexists with equal amounts of joy. Indeed, the abundance of her expressions of appreciation and flattery set the tone for the first nine letters: even though she does show her concern for his employment prospects, Mosconi wants to communicate that she is happy with the tentative deal they have struck. For example, in her third letter of June 25, 1801, she exclaims how lucky Scopoli's mother is to have him as a son: "Oh my Scopoli, you have made me feel my inferiority through your proposal to come to live with me at Novare. I do not know what of your nature you owe to your mother, of whom you are such a virtuous son? Oh, what a truly fortunate mother!"[77] In her fourth letter, written July 5, 1801, she expresses her own good fortune at having found him, writing, "Oh where would I find a son of better

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[76] "Debbo chiedervi, Scopoli mio, se inelinereste ad un impiego nella giurisprudenza? V'e chi di cuore s'adoprerebbe per farvelo ottenere. Oh Dio! e che volete? io non so cosa darei per vedervi in un onorato impiego, il qual vi ponesse in quella beata mediocrità, che sola barterebbe a compiere i comuni nostri voti. Possa il tempo o mitigare una così acerba, ma insieme bella passione, o cangiare favorevolmente l'ingiusta vostra fortuna". Letter 8.

character, closer to my heart's wishes . . .".[78] And again in her sixth letter, she wonders where she was able to find a man for Laura who so united "so many and such beautiful moral qualities, a more sensitive and pure soul, a heart made so truly one for the other".[79]

All of these sentiments are proper to an in-law, but they are not the only expressions of affection on Mosconi's part. She also seems to harbour feelings which are more intense, and, from a modern perspective, seem a little surprising. For example, when Mosconi's bubbling enthusiasm reaches its high point on July 23, 1801 (her seventh letter), she writes,

> I have such a great interest in you, and think of you so often, that surely your well-being can be no closer to my heart than that of my own daughters. Are you not the dear, excellent son of my affection? Oh my Scopolino, how I love you, esteem you, and how my soul caresses your image, which to me represents the rare gifts of your spirit and the delicate and heroic virtues of your heart! You know that I have again written calling on your warm offices in the favour of the Congregation of the Preti Filippini of Verona....

In addition to the fervent tone of the passage, the alternation between the "tu" form, the familiar form of address, and the "voi", or formal, form, is also significant.

> Io m'interesso tanto io penso tanto a voi, che certo il ben vostro non può essermi più a cuore di quello che me lo è quello delle proprie mie figlie, e non siete voi il caro l'ottimo figlio del mio affetto? Oh Scopolino mio quanto ti amo ti stimo e quanto la mia anima accarezza la tua immagine, la qual rapresentami le rare doti del tuo spirito, e le delicate ed eroiche virtù del tuo cuore! Voi sapete che vi ho scritto altra volta raccomandandomi ai caldi uffici vostri in favore della congregazione de' Preti Filippini di Verona....

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[77] "Oh Scopoli mio, voi m'avete fatto sentire la mia inferiorità nella proposizione di viver meco a Novare, e non so io ciò che dovete per natura alla madre, di cui siete si virtuosamente figlio? Oh fortunatissima madre!"

[78] "Oh dove trovare un figlio d'un miglior carattere, più secondo il mio cuore...".

[79] "...tante e si belle qualità morali un'anima più sensibile e più pura, un cuore fatto si veramente l'un per l'altro". July 16, 1801.

It is the first of only six occasions that Mosconi uses the "tu" form in addressing Scopoli, which is normally reserved for her letters to her immediate family and Aurelio Bertola during the period they were romantically involved. On first reading, the second sentence (in which the "tu" form is employed) represents a smooth and steady escalation from the sentence which precedes it. Mosconi so laments his lack of employment opportunities--which she has been discussing in the few sentences preceding the passage--that she works herself to almost fever pitch, abandoning herself to a few giddy moments of impropriety.

Perhaps this is the case. But upon reflection, it becomes clear that it is also possible to interpret the passage in order to draw very different information from it. In order to do so, we must first cast doubt on the proposition that Mosconi's use of "tu" is a momentary lapse or an unconscious slip. In studying French correspondence from the same period, Benoît Melançon makes clear that no matter how much authors affirm that their letters are spontaneous, they are, in fact, very carefully crafted.[80] Thus forewarned, if we return to our passage, we can see that the slip into the "tu" form was perhaps more of a step: the "tu" sentence is sandwiched between two sentences which employ the "voi" form. What is the difference between the middle sentence and the two that surround it?

At one level, the very shift from "voi" to "tu" indicates that Mosconi is switching roles in the middle sentence. The "voi" form is the one she usually uses in addressing Scopoli as a prospective in-law. Even after he is married to Laura, in her last letter to Scopoli on April 19, 1804, Mosconi addresses him in this way. By contrast, the "tu" form

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[80] Benoît Melançon, *Diderot épistolier: Contribution à une poétique de la lettre familière au XVIIIe*

that she employs in the next sentence is used almost exclusively with immediate family and her lover. Which role is she playing here? Both. First, Mosconi wants Scopoli to understand that she feels as much affection for him as she does for her other children. This interpretation is further reinforced by the fact that Mosconi often says that Scopoli is her "chosen son".[81] Moreover, on the other rare occasions that she employs the "tu" form with Scopoli in the negotiation phase, she is doing so as a way of cementing family relations. The tone is conspiratorial and maternal as she consoles him (letter 11, 16 Fruttifero [sic] [September 3], 1801; letter 39, April 3, 1802; letter 41, April 18, 1802) and teases him about a rival for Laura's affection (letter 19, November 1, 1801). Furthermore, the "tu" form often creeps in at the end of the letter, the space reserved for family news and greetings.

To interpret the use of the "tu" form as being solely indicative of Mosconi's desire to claim Scopoli as her own son, however, would be mistaken: not only in this letter, but also in other passages of her first ten letters, Mosconi is excited and giddy in a way that suggests infatuation. Starting with the passage above, Mosconi writes that she loves Scopoli, esteems him, and caresses his image (letter 7, July 23, 1801). These are strong words for a mother-in-law, especially given the fact that Mosconi is never this ardent in her letters to her daughter Laura. To her daughter, she writes, "All that is missing to

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siècle, [Québec]: Fides, 1996, p.149.

[81] "figlio della mia elezione". Letter 2, June 13, 1801.

complete my happiness is you . . ."[82] and "And you, my Lauretta, accept the most affectionate kiss from your mother, who will soon begin to grow tired of not seeing you".[83] In comparison to the following passages written to Scopoli, the language she uses with Laura is restrained:

> All that I can tell you, oh dear, is that I think of you very often, and no less strong is my desire to see you, to rejoice in your sweet company, and that my separation from this so precious son of my choice is oh so very painful.[84]

Again, on June 25, 1801, Mosconi writes,

> In me you have a fond mother, a friend who honours and esteems you, an admirer of your virtues, and someone who loves your heart alone. My daughters are your tender sisters, who love you because you are made to wring the heart of whoever can recognize virtuous sensibility.[85]

How can we explain Mosconi's strong statement of feeling for her son-in-law? Why does she supplement her expressions of maternal sentiment with the language of romance? One possible explanation is that it is, in some ways, what the circumstance requires of her. Although there has clearly been an agreement struck between Scopoli and Mosconi regarding an engagement before the correspondence begins, the reader gets the

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[82] "Non mi manca che te per essere pienamente contenta...". Italy. Verona. Biblioteca Civica di Verona. *Carteggi*, b.473, letter 3, to L. Mosconi, June 1, 1803.

[83] "Et tu Lauretta mia ricevi il più affettuoso bacio della tua Mamma, che presto comincia d'essere stanca di non vederti". Italy. Verona. Biblioteca Civica di Verona. *Carteggi*, b.473, letter 4, to L. Mosconi, June 4, 1803.

[84] "Ciò solo che posso dirvi, o caro, è ch'io penso assai spesso a voi, che non men vivo è in me il desiderio di rivedervi, di godere della si soave vostra compagnia, e che assai ma assai penosa m'è la separazione da cotesto si prezioso figlio della mia elezione". Letter 2, June 13, 1801.

[85] "Voi avete in me una tenera madre, un'amica che vi onora vi stima un ammiratrice delle vostre virtù, ed un'amante del solo vostro cuore. Le figlie mie sono le tenere vostre sorelle, che vi amano perchè voi siete fatto per i strappare il cuore di chi conosce cos'è una virtuosa sensibilità". Letter 3.

impression that the fish has yet to be hooked; Scopoli still needs to be flattered and seduced, and yet Laura is not available to fulfil this role until letter 9.[86] Therefore, I would suggest that Mosconi functions as a romantic proxy until Laura and Scopoli establish an independent relationship.

This interpretation can be further supported by the way in which Mosconi talks about the marriage project in her first letters, which is to say, as if it were hers and Scopoli's alone. By framing the situation in this way, Mosconi seems to bind them together in a romantic union. On July 16, 1801, for example, which is essentially a letter of apology and reassurance for having bemoaned his jobless state, Mosconi writes,

> I am so touched and sad after having received your last letter that I cannot be at peace before you know my true feelings. Oh my son! (a name my heart will always employ with equal affection) how could I ever have thought of robbing you of your pride, when all I sought to do was bemoan a sad fate, the only barrier to achieving your wishes and mine?[87]

Again, on July 23, 1801 (letter 7), she states that his welfare is close to **her** heart, and, in a truly striking passage in her letter of July 5, 1801, deplores "the inveterate uses of society and luxury" to which "the most delicious sensations of two hearts perhaps made for one another sacrifice themselves!",[88] which is to say, hers and Scopoli's! At this point, they are the only ones who suffer from cruel and deep-rooted social custom. After letter

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[86] There is no evidence that they have even spent any time together before August 2, 1801, letter 8, when Mosconi speaks of Laura's opinion of him.

[87] "Io sono così afflitta e dolente dopo la recezione dell'ultima vostra ch'io non ho pace, come prima voi non conosciate i veri miei sentimenti. Oh mio figlio! (che sempre con eguale affetto seguirà con tal nome chiamarvi il mio cuore) come avrei io mai pensato di mortificare il vostro amor proprio volendo soltanto lagnarmi d'una trista fortuna, sola contraria a' vostri e a miei voti?" Letter 6.

[88] "...usi inveterati della società e del lusso" to which "si sacrifica le più deliziose sensazioni di due cuori forse fatti l'un per l'altro!" Letter 4.

11, however, when his relationship with Laura is established, Laura is included as the third party who wishes for circumstances to right themselves. On September 18, 1801, Mosconi refers obscurely to "our wishes", on October 3, 1801 to "our common hopes" and on January 26, 1802, refers several times in the first person plural form (noi) to their hopes and desires.[89] More explicit is her formulation of October 18, 1801, where she writes, "Would that the post be one which would fulfil we three in our single desire",[90] and her statement that Scopoli's transfer to Verona would do so much good for "three objects at once".[91] This is not to say that after the beginning of August Mosconi does not express her wishes for his future in her own name: she does. What changes is that she no longer speaks of the marriage project as hers and Scopoli's alone.

The modification in the way Mosconi refers to the marriage project reflects a more profound change in the nature of the correspondence: Mosconi has ceded her romantic role to her daughter. The change happened relatively quickly. In her first letters to Scopoli, mention of Laura almost gets lost among the other news and Mosconi's own flattery. In her first letter, written May 30, 1801, Laura is not mentioned at all; on June 13, in a second, three-page letter, she mentions that she will miss Laura if she leaves Verona, that Laura is learning English, and sends greetings from her in the last line; in her third letter, written June 25, 1801, she sends only her daughter's greetings. In all, Laura does not figure prominently until August 2, 1801, written after Scopoli and Laura

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[89] "nostri desideri". Letter 13, 1 de Complem.tris [September 18], 1801; "delle comuni nostre speranze". Letter 15, October 3, 1801; letter 29, January 26, 1802.

[90] "Voglia il cielo che l'impiego sia tale onde rendere consolati i nostri triplici in un sol voto". Letter 17.

appear to have had some sort of disagreement. Mosconi is still as enthusiastic about Scopoli, but in this instance her affection is closely linked to his relationship with Laura.

> Oh how happy I would be if instead of crying over the difficult situation of the heart of my beloved son, I could sweeten his bitter circumstance with a happier prospect: but, my dear, I see that I am condemned to cry for you, for me and for L.... So often, I say to myself, and forgive me my folly, but why is he so loveable, so virtuous, so exquisitely sensitive, and why do I love him so? You, badly thought of by my tender L...? Oh, do not believe it![92]

This letter is somewhat transitional, where her "folly" for him coexists with her assurances of Laura's own warm feelings towards him. Just three days later (August 5, 1801), though, she is focusing more strongly still on Laura's feelings. Almost the entire letter is devoted to describing how Laura is spending her time in this moment of tension between the new couple. Also, interestingly, Scopoli and Laura seem to have established a relationship which Mosconi respects. Although her daughter tells her how she is feeling, she also forbids her to share it with Scopoli and Mosconi complies. Furthermore, it is the young couple who now share the excitement of reunion, and who dream of being together, as well as mourning their mutual absence.

> Oh friend! Oh son! and to whom and for whom can she live and think? I make her laugh as much as I can. If I threaten to ask for your help and to tell you all, she gives a cry, begs me and implores me not to do it; I watch to see that she is not alone too often, that is, I suppose, with you: thus, between good and bad do we spend the long hours far from you,

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[91] "tre oggetti ad un tempo". Letter 41, April 18, 1802.

[92] "Oh quanto io sarei lieta se in luogo di piangere sull'affannosa situazione di cuore del mio diletto figlio, io potessi addolcirne l'amaro con una prospettiva più felice: ma mio caro, io veggomi condannata a piangere su voi, su me e su di L...., io tal volta mi dico, e perdonatemi la mia follia, ma perchè mai è egli si amabile si virtuoso si squisitamente sensibile, e perchè l'amo io tanto? Voi mal noto alla tenera mia L..? Oh guardatevi dal crederlo!" Letter 8.

> anticipating not a little your return, and trembling at your perhaps brief absence.[93]

The shift in Scopoli's relationship with Laura is also confirmed by one line in the following letter, in which Mosconi writes, "In the mean time, my son, you uphold our common hopes; already it is no longer forbidden to love and to correspond with the object that loves you".[94] After this letter, Mosconi forever abandons the role of romantic proxy. Her remarks towards Scopoli are affectionate and warm, but she respects and encourages Scopoli's greater intimacy with Laura.

The meshing of parent and romantic proxy is not the only instance in which Mosconi's roles are integrated; the roles of surrogate parent and in-law are also difficult to separate. The best illustration is Mosconi's desire to bring Scopoli into the fold of the family. She cultivates intimacy between Scopoli and her family in two ways. The first is through the relation of family news. In her first letter to Scopoli, Mosconi only mentions her family and friends at the end of the letter, writing, "Daughters [and] friends miss you [and] send greetings . . .".[95] On June 13, 1801 (letter 2), she talks a little bit about what Laura is doing, and sends greetings only from Laura and Don Antonio Zamboni (who figures in almost every letter, and presumably had a close relationship with the family,

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[93] "Oh amico! Oh figlio! e a chi e per chi può ella vivere e pensare? Io la fo ridere più che posso, se la minaccio d'appellarmi a voi, e di tutto dirvi, ella dà un grido, mi prega e mi scongiura di non farlo; cerco che non istia troppo con se stessa, cioè io suppongo con voi: ecco come tra bene e male si passan l'ore lungi da voi, bramando non tanto poco il vostro ritorno, e tremando per la vostra forse non troppo lunge partenza". Letter 9, August 5, 1801.

[94] "Voi intanto figlio mio sostenete le comuni nostre speranze; già non v'è più disdetto d'amare e di corrispondere coll'oggetto che vi ama". Letter 11, 16 Fruttifero [sic] [September 3], 1801.

[95] "Le Figlie gli amici vi salutano vi bramano...". 10 Pratile [May 30], 1801.

and Mosconi and Laura in particular). She signs in the same way on June 25, 1801 (letter 3). On July 5, 1801 (letter 4), Mosconi begins to include some family news in her letter, stating that the family is going to her country home, Novare, and sends greetings from the whole family. Mosconi offers more specific news on July 9, 1801 (letter 5). She talks about the health of her children--not only Laura, but also Clarina and Marietta--in detail for the first time. The next progression towards intimacy occurs on August 5, 1801, just after Laura and Scopoli have developed an independent relationship; in this letter, Mosconi enumerates the people who send Scopoli greetings, signing, "Accept the most tender greetings first from Lauretta, then from Marietta, Pindemonte, D.A., my brother and D. Bernardo".[96] From this point on, family members are often enumerated in the greetings they send, and Mosconi writes in more and more detail about the health of her children.

A second way in which intimacy and trust is established between Scopoli and Mosconi's family is the request and fulfilment of favours. The favours that Mosconi does for Scopoli are structural in that they are inherent to the logic of their roles in the marriage negotiation: she uses her contacts to arrange for employment for him. Because this assistance is taken for granted, it is rarely expressed. The only other favour Scopoli seems to have asked for comes in the negotiation phase, where he asks Mosconi to write to Sebastiano Salimbeni (a Veronese architect) to publish his work.[97] For her part,

[96] "Ricevete i saluti i più teneri prima di Lauretta, poi di Marietta, Pindemonte, D.A., mio fratello e D. Bernardo". Letter 9, August 5, 1801.

[97] Even this favour he asks for through a letter to Laura. Letter 22, October 14, 1801.

Mosconi is not so shy about asking for a variety of services. She thanks him for visiting her sister, and, more seriously, asks him to get her brother out of trouble with the police.[98]

Both the relation of news and the asking of favours implies a cultivation of intimacy which is ambiguous in its aim. Does Mosconi truly feel like a second mother to him, or is she cementing the deal that would assure her daughter a safe future? Her expressions of affection, as well as her use of the "tu" form, as noted above, imply the former, whereas the logic of the correspondence implies the latter: in her negotiations with Scopoli, she works more in her daughter's interest than his. In fact, there is no need to choose between these options: as with the merging of romantic and parental roles, it is possible that the roles were not distinct in her eyes. This is reflected in the vacillation in Mosconi's signature in the first ten letters. She is either "La Mamma", "Mamma Elisa", "Elisa", "Mamma", "La vostra Mamma d'elezione" (your chosen mother), and other slight variations of this form, all very similar, but each emphasizing a different aspect of role of parent or in-law. As we shall see, this ambiguity gets played out in more detail in the negotiation phase and so I will resume my discussion of it below.

The Negotiation Phase

The primary characteristic separating section one, the honeymoon phase, from section two, the negotiation phase, is the absence of the romantic voice, leaving the way

[98] Letter 8, August 2, 1801; letter 10, August 21, 1801.

open for Mosconi to concentrate her efforts on playing the roles of the surrogate parent and the in-law. As we shall see, many of the themes which appeared for the first time in section one reappear here, but with increased force. For example, because Mosconi's primary role in this section is to ensure that the necessary conditions for a successful match are fulfilled, she strongly assumes her role of in-law by bargaining with Scopoli and setting out the demands she requires of him. Her role as surrogate parent is expanded and reconfigured, as her expressions of affection are coupled with attempts to console Scopoli and counsel him through the marriage process. Finally, integration of these two roles continues to be played out in the intimacy she cultivates by asking favours of Scopoli and relating news regarding family health to him in order to cement their relationship.

In her role as in-law defending the interests of her daughter, Mosconi is necessarily placed in a position where she is Scopoli's "opponent" in the demands she makes of him. Consequently, she sets out her conditions, which become more and more clear as the correspondence progresses. Whereas the relative importance of Scopoli having a post which is close to Verona, stable, honourable and which pays well in the first letters of this section is vague, the pressure of circumstance and time (which are Mosconi's real enemies in this battle, given the weakness of Scopoli's bargaining power) force Mosconi to make tough decisions as to what she is willing to compromise. In the end, it is clear that honour is the only one of the four requirements which is not negotiable.

Beginning on September 3, 1801, Mosconi starts to be more direct in terms of exactly what she expects from Scopoli: at this point, she writes, "Mamma does not wish you to be rich, but established in an honourable post, one fitting the artless integrity of your disposition and your golden genius".[99] She repeats the same sentiment on October 18, 1801 (letter 17), expressing her worry at his lack of success at the same time. In time, however, Scopoli formulates a clear career plan--he is proposing a career in the diplomatic service--and in Mosconi's reply (January 6, 1802), we see another condition for his marriage to Laura come to the surface: proximity. She writes that although, for the many reasons Scopoli has pointed to, a diplomatic career would be a fine choice, she wonders whether he would have the courage to be so far away from his mother. Further on in the letter, however, we see that she has a more immediate concern with a career which would take Scopoli far from Verona: it would also mean that Laura would be far from her own mother. She writes, "Oh my Scopoli, how could I ever consent to see such a precious daughter torn from my breast, to see her taken from me to lands far away! For pity's sake, spare me from so horrible an idea".[100] If we return to previous letters, we can find prior indications that this is a concern for Mosconi in the marriage. First, she is keen on Scopoli becoming a Veronese citizen. Even before this, however, on June 13, 1801, she signals her desire to keep Laura close by. Just after having stated that she regrets,

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[99] "Mamma non vi brama ricco, ma stabilito in un posto onorifico e confacente all'aureo ingegno vostro, e a quell'ingenua probità dell'indole vostra". Letter 11, 16 Fruttifero [sic] [September 3], 1801. We should be sceptical about Mosconi's statements that money is not a concern for her. While it is true that it is less important than other factors, Mosconi does continue to mention financial compensation as something to be taken into account, as we shall see below.

although understands the departure of her acquaintance, Professore Simone Stratico, from Padua,[101] she writes that she would not be so complacent if Laura were to leave: "I do not promise, however, to be so philosophical if I were forced to see a more dear object separated from me, one which you know well, even for the best of reasons . . .".[102]

As Mosconi's letters progress her demands are stated more strongly. Initially, the relative importance of each condition is difficult to pin down. On January 23, 1802 (letter 31) for example, her desire to not have Laura very far away seems like a very loose preference, as she asks if Scopoli would be interested in a post in Verona, trying to convince him what a good reputation he has there, but does not insist on this matter. By contrast, the order of preferences on February 6, 1802 (letter 32) is quite different. Mosconi mentions the possibility of employment with the new government, which would fulfil several demands at once: it would be in Verona, it would be honourable and it would be profitable, although it would not necessarily be stable. Her insistence on proximity is especially surprising, given that in her last letters, it did not necessarily seem to be a condition that Mosconi would take action to assure. Now she is willing to take money from the dowry to support them both with servants and children to have them stay close to her until their fortunes improve. To be fair, she does hope that his proximity will

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[100]3 "Oh Scopoli mio, come mai potrei consentire di vedermi strappar dal seno una si preziosa figlia, per vedermela portar in paesi lontani! per pietà risparmiatemene una si orribile idea". Letter 28, January 6, 1802.

[101] For Milan, presumably, as Mosconi asks Scopoli, who was stationed there, to give him her sincerest congratulations. Simone Stratico (1733-1824): Physics and Mathematics scholar, he taught in Pavia and Padua, and died in Milan. He was also the author of *Vocabolario di marina*. N.F. Cimmino, *Ippolito Pindemonte e il suo tempo...*, p.580. Mosconi refers to seeing him in Padua in *Col. Van.*, reel 25, col. Bevilacqua-Tiraboschi, letter 153, April 30, 1789.

[102] "Non mi prometterei però d'un eguale filosofia se io dovessi vedermi allontanato un più caro oggetto, che voi ben conoscete, quantunque si trattasse della più grande fortuna...". Letter 2.

eventually result in stability--the better known he is in Verona, the better his chances of finding employment there. Nonetheless, she also seems to realize that his success is in no way certain.

Comparing the two letters, there are several indications that we should accord more importance to the emphasis she places on proximity and honour in relation to stability and financial compensation in this last letter. First, it is here that she sets out marriage arrangements in detail for the first time. She states that with the necessary caution, she would consign him the dowry, whereas he would use his provisions for his family and for his own pleasure. Also for the first time, she begins to consider the obstacles to the match concretely, writing, "You will need more details concerning this affair, which, as you see, could have many, many obstacles, which in a letter would be too long to list, and to which I am not so romantic as to be blind".[103] Moreover, she herself notes a degree of difference in the tone of this letter; after having spoken in detail about the arrangements that would be made, she states that he now knows her true feelings: "You now know my secret and my sincere desires. Would that destiny smile on you once, and be assured of my warmest solicitude to render you happy within a few years".[104] If Mosconi's tone seems more serious at this point in the correspondence, it is surely because Scopoli's employment prospects are improving and, in fact, he seems much closer to getting a position. Mosconi expects that after the creation of the Italian

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[103] "Più dettagli vi vorrebbero su questo affare il quale come voi vedete può aver molti e molti ostacoli, che in una lettera sarebbe troppo lungo a dire, e ch'io non sono poi tanto romanzesca per non vederli". Letter 32, February 6, 1802.

Republic (February 9, 1802), both she and Scopoli can call on their network of friends for help. In awaiting this event, Mosconi writes that, before attempting to obtain a position in Verona, ". . . it would be best to wait, as I expect the stumbling block of the important affairs in Lyon, and then . . . and then time will tell, said the First Consul to our deputies".[105] In fact, Mosconi thinks that he might be able to get a post through a connection to the Vice President of the newly created Italian Republic, Francesco Melzi d'Eril.[106] Three months later, she calls on her friends to establish a link between Scopoli and one of the candidates for Vice Prefect, Giacometto Leonardi Vicentino.

> Now I must conditionally recommend that you keep the Citizen Giacometto Leonardi Vicentino, a man of your acquaintance, in mind, in case he is elected the Vice Prefect for Verona. A combination of unlucky circumstances brought him seven months ago to reside in this part of Verona. His excellent character and ability recommend him to all who know him, including [our] friend Mobil, who would also like to see this unhappy young man (who does not so much seek a lucrative position as a civil one that would permit him to escape idleness) civilly employed.[107]

The importance of honour and proximity are again underscored on March 6, 1802 (letter 35), when Mosconi learns that Scopoli has an honourable position (about which

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[104] "Voi conoscete ora il mio segreto e i sinceri miei voti, possa una volta sorridervi il destino, e siate sicur della mia più calda premura per rendervi fra qualque anno contento". Letter 32, February 6, 1802.

[105] "...ma convien attendere, [--]spetto lo scioglimento de' grandi affari di Lione, e poi...e poi il tempo è galantuomo disse il primo Console à nostri Deputati". Letter 31, January 23, 1802.

[106] The Italian Republic was established by Napoleon Bonaparte February 9, 1802, as a reorganization of the République cisalpine, of which he was elected president January 25, 1802. Jean-Paul Bertaud, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire. Chronologie commentée, 1799-1815*, Paris: Perrin, 1992, p.42; Louise Trenard, "Consulta Cisalpine" in Jean Tulard, ed., *Dictionnaire Napoléon*, Paris: Fayard, 1987, p.506. Mosconi made her comment about Scopoli's connection to Melzi in letter 33, February 13, 1802.

[107] "Ora debbo condizionatamente raccomandarvi d'avere in memoria al caso che venga eletto per Verona un Vice Prefetto di vostre conoscenza la persona del Cit.no Giacometto Leornardi Vicentino le di cui disgraziate combinazione lo portarono da sette mesi a domiciliarsi in questa parte di Verona, et il di cui ottimo carattere e capacità lo rendono raccomandabile a quei che lo conoscono, fra quali l'amico Mobil, che vorrebbe veder pure impiegato civilmente quest'infelice giovine, il quale non cerca tanto un posto lucroso quanto lo desidera civile e da porlo in necessità di fuggio l'ozio". Letter 45, May 1, 1802.

we know very little, except that it was near Milan), but not one which is suitable enough to set wedding plans in motion. Not only is it not in Verona, but Mosconi also makes clear in this letter that it is only a step on the ladder towards the post which will win him Laura: it will give him the opportunity to be better known, and, in time, to obtain even better positions. Furthermore, on April 10, 1802 (letter 40), she states that she wants to see him in a position worthy of him, one which is secure, and would not injure his delicacy and honour, implying that the position he currently held did not fill these requirements.

Just over a week later, however, Mosconi shows that honour is even more important to her than proximity. It is true that Mosconi seems desperate to have Scopoli transferred to Verona.[108] Nevertheless, when it looks as if a position worthy of Scopoli has opened up, Mosconi is willing to accept that he take it, even if it meant that she would be separated from Laura. On May 5, 1802 (letter 46), Mosconi has just learned that Scopoli may be able to obtain the position of Secretary General of the Prefecture of an unspecified province. She is pleased with its advantages: it is an honourable post and comes with a large annual stipend. Nevertheless, several details concern her. She wants to know whether it is stable or not, and where the position is situated. Despite her worries, however, she says that the post is not to be refused, and in the end, accepts that he take it although it would separate her from Laura: "I also wanted to be able to make

[108] "Oh s'o conoscessi Melzi, io si che gli direi ciò che megli potrebbe far per Verona e per tre oggetti ad un tempo, che lo colmerebbero di mille benedizioni! Ma saranno sempre sterili i nostri voti? No caro,

other arrangements preferable to my heart, but since this is impossible, I will adapt when the time comes to see myself separated from this daughter, so precious to me, to make your hearts happy".[109] Therefore, in the end, honour is more important than proximity. Stability is also critical, but means nothing if not allied with one of these two elements. Financial compensation is a consideration, but a luxury more than a requirement. Luckily, Mosconi is not forced to sacrifice any of her desires, as soon after she learns that Scopoli will be appointed Secretary General and assigned to work in Verona.[110] In her next letter, she confirms that he accepted the post and says that she is looking forward to seeing him in Verona soon.[111]

Mother-in-law is not the only role played by Mosconi in this phase, however. As stated previously, Mosconi was negotiating more against time and circumstance than against Scopoli, who, instead of making counter-demands against Mosconi's insistence that he get a post, was instead working with her to ensure that he could meet her requirements. In some ways, this frees Mosconi up to use a more maternal voice in her dealings with Scopoli. She spends a good amount of time in her letters consoling him over his lack of employment, and assuring him that she still wants him as a son-in-law. She writes,

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consolati ; la tua tenera mamma ad onta di strapparsi dal cuore ciò che ha di più caro te ne farà col tempo un dono!" Letter 41, April 18, 1802; letter 42, April 20, 1802.

[109] "Avrei altresi desiderato di poter fare altre disposizioni più analoghe al mio cuore, ma giacchè quest'è impossibile, io m'adatterò a suo tempo ad allontanarmi anche questa a me tanto preziosa figlia per render felici i vostri cuori".

[110] Letter 47, May 15, 1802. Angelo Fabi notes that Scopoli was employed as an assistant to the Secretary General before receiving the post of Secretary General itself. A. Fabi, "Giovanni Scopoli...", p.169. See also Livio Antonielli, *I prefetti dell'Italia naploeonica*, Bologna: Il mulino, 1983, p.109, note 1.

[111] Letter 48, May 23, 1802.

> My dear Scopoli, so far away from my heart I find the need to pardon you that which you see as a fault, that in sharing your deep regret caused by your present unlucky situation, I am also conceiving plans to bring to fruition your hopes, which are at one with our common desires. Thus, calm your imagination, and know that I love you too much to ever want to destroy that which, although unintentionally, was in large measure of my own making.[112]

Not only does she console him, however; she also counsels him through various parts of the marriage negotiation. In their correspondence, there are a number of points at which she offers advice regarding his relation with his family. For example, on January 6, 1802 (letter 28), Mosconi advises Scopoli to make his career decision first and foremost for himself and for his family, for whom he will have to make provisions when he is married. On March 13, 1802 (letter 36), she states that now that he has a post, he must think of placing his sister and finding employment for his brother. Even her discussions of the dowry contain financial advice for Scopoli. She writes, "I hope that you will soon be able to place your sister, such that subsequently, with the pension of 8 000 Milanese lire and the fruit of the dowry, you and the dear creature you would like for your precious and inseparable companion will be sufficiently comfortable and well-off".[113] Granted, these are issues which could affect Laura's marriage if not properly dealt with before the wedding, but still, we are left with the impression that it is Mosconi who

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[112] "Caro Scopoli mio, io trovo cosi lungi dal mio cuore il bisogno di perdonar a voi ciò che vi pare una colpa, che nel divider coll'animo, come pur fa, l'attual vostra non lieta situazione, vado io pure sognando progetti per ravvicinare al possibile le speranze vostre in un co' nostri comuni voti. Calmate dunque l'immaginazion vostra, e sappiate ch'io v'amo troppo per voler distrugger mai ciò ch'è stata in gran parte, senza però che ne avessi l'intezione, opera mia". Letter 29, January 16, 1802.

knows the ins and outs of this process,[114] and that she is guiding Scopoli through it. Because she is older and belongs to a different social class, she finds herself in the position of mentor with regard to Scopoli. Paradoxically, then, as well as being opposed to Scopoli in the marriage negotiation, Mosconi is also on his side.

Moreover, Mosconi seems to feel genuine affection for Scopoli. She makes clear time and again how important Scopoli's personal qualities are to her. Not only is he a man who possesses character traits that she admires, such as honesty, delicacy and virtue,[115] but she also feels that she and he have a special connection. For example, she states from the beginning that she feels true maternal affection for him, writing that she will always call him her son, and that she regards him as one of her own children.[116] This sentiment is further reinforced later in this section of the correspondence, even when such expressions of exuberance become more rare. Just after he has obtained a position in Milan, signifying continued separation, Mosconi writes, "I know that you misunderstood a passage in my last letter, but with it I wanted to make you understand that not all my sons-in-law are sons, as you will always be, just as I will always be your tender Mother, and I hope that in time I can give you unequivocal proof".[117]

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[113] "Io vorrei che poteste ben presto collocare la sorella vostra, mentre poi in seguito con la pensione delle 8000 lire Milanesi e il frutto della dote vi sarebbe assai comodo e agiato il viver per voi, e per la diletta creatura che voi volete per vostra inseparabile e preziosa compagna". Letter 46, May 5, 1802.

[114] This comes out most clearly in letter 46, May 5, 1802, where Mosconi states that she would like his sister placed soon, presumably because she would be a drain on their finances if she continued to live at home.

[115] Letter 4, July 5, 1801; letter 6, July 16, 1801; letter 7, July 23, 1801; letter 15, October 3, 1801.

[116] Letter 6, July 16, 1801; letter 7, July 23, 1801.

[117] "So che non avrete ben inteso un tratto della passata mia lettera, ma volea con ciò farvi capire che non tutti i Generi son figli, e che voi me lo sarete sempre, com'io vi sarò tenera Madre, e spero che a suo tempo potrò darvene delle prove non equivoche". Letter 36, March 23, 1802.

Mosconi's maternal feelings for Scopoli are not the only theme upon which she expands in this section, though. Her desire to integrate and attach Scopoli to the family through sharing news about family health, creating opportunities for personal contact and asking favours is also much more present. For example, even though Mosconi makes more references to her health than any one else's,[118] Scopoli is privy to details not only about Laura's well-being, which would naturally be of interest to him, but also to information about that of Mosconi's daughters Marietta and Clarina, who both had to undergo operations.[119] Furthermore, as Scopoli becomes more intimately acquainted with his future in-laws, Mosconi also seems to want to establish contact with Scopoli's mother, sister and brother. She personally does not have the opportunity to meet them, but was surely implicated in the decision to have Marietta and her family stay with them in Milan on their way to relocating in Marseilles.[120] In terms of favours, she asks him to send a copy of a Monti tragedy to Pindemonte.[121] Also, Scopoli has become one of Mosconi's contacts, meaning that she sends him people who are interested in making his acquaintance, presumably to ask favours of their own.[122] Finally, Mosconi asks a number of personal favours, including asking him for souvenirs for the family, asking him to get

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[118] After letter 9, Mosconi makes reference to her health in 14 letters, to Laura's in 11, to Clarina's in 7 and to Marietta's in 4. Mosconi's most common complaint is rheumatism in her left arm, which, according to letter 27, December 26, 1801, started in 1778.

[119] Mosconi writes about Marietta's operation in letter 21, October 7, 1801, and Clarina's in letter 38, March 27, 1802.

[120] A. Fabi, "Canzonetta veronese...", p.283.

[121] Letter 28, January 6, 1802.

[122] See letter 34, February 26, 1802; letter 50, June 16, 1802; letter 44, April 28, 1802. In all fairness, Mosconi also thought that Cesare Realdi, who hand delivered his own letter of introduction (April 28, 1802, letter 44), would be a useful acquaintance for Scopoli.

passports for a friend of hers who wants to work in France, and finally for him to ask his employer to help her brother get his money back for a tax or duty he was forced to pay.[123]

The exchange of influence and services allows both Mosconi and Scopoli to gradually assume the heightened responsibility that their new relationship requires. It is clear that this, in conjunction with the increased contacts between the two families, is the way in which the alliances that the marriage entails are secured. What is less clear is how to categorize this behaviour: surrogate parent or in-law? Again, the answer is both, although this is not to say that their integration does not sometimes give rise to tensions. On May 5, 1802, for example, after having told Scopoli that he must rectify his financial situation, Mosconi writes, "Forgive me if I enter into certain minute economic details with you; in truth, I would like to have them dealt with through a mutual friend, rather than deal with such matters with you".[124] Her embarrassment arises from the fact that her exacting demands for the match, where she is clearly working in her own and her daughter's best interests in opposition to Scopoli, belie her statements that she makes no distinction between Scopoli and her own children, and that her interests mirror his own.[125]

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[123] Letter 14, 3 Vendemiaso [September 20], 1801; letter 42, April 20, 1802; letter 45, May 1, 1802.

[124] "Scusate s'io entro con voi in qualche minuto dettaglio economico; per la verità amerei più di farlo trattando con persona scambievolmente amica di quello di trattar su tali materie con voi". Letter 46, May 5, 1802.

[125] For example, after Scopoli got his job in Milan, Mosconi wrote to him, "In short, inform me of everything that concerns you, as you know that, henceforth, your interests can no longer be separate from my own" ("Insomma informatemi d'ogni cosa che può rigardar voi, mentre sapete che gli interessi vostri non possono oramai disgiungersi più da miei propri"). Letter 35, March 6, 1802.

Resolution

In contrast with the previous two phases, there is very little to say about the resolution phase. Because Scopoli has obtained a post which satisfies Mosconi and because the terms of the marriage have been settled, the principal conflict has been resolved and the tension disappears. Furthermore, as of June 1802, Scopoli is living in Verona, meaning that there is no more reason to continue their correspondence. In fact, these last three letters are written from Novare. The first announces her imminent return to Verona with Laura, the second is a letter of introduction, while the last letter of this year is a simple assurance that a spat she had with Laura will be quickly resolved.[126] The wedding took place as planned on December 16, 1802.[127]

Summary

Mosconi's correspondence with her future son-in-law is significant to the extent that it raises questions about family relations that existed among nobility at the turn the nineteenth century. I have identified three voices in Mosconi's letters: that of surrogate parent, that of lover and that of in-law. Certainly, circumstances dictate how and when these voices are used, but perhaps the most important detail uncovered by a thorough analysis of the letters is not only how they intertwine, but also merge, implying that the three roles are not necessarily antithetical to one another. This seems logical when we think of the ambiguity which still exists today between parent and in-law. More shocking

[126] Letter 49, June 13, 1802; letter 50, June 16, 1802; letter 51, August 18, 1802.

to us is the lack of distinction between lover and surrogate parent or lover and in-law which sometimes makes its way into Mosconi's letters. Perhaps, however, this merging was not so shocking at the time, and was even expected in certain situations, such as when the child was unable to fulfil his or her romantic role. We have seen that these were the circumstances in which Mosconi adopted her romantic voice, the one with which she wooed Scopoli until he established an independent relationship with her daughter.

How can we be sure that we are dealing with a social phenomenon here, instead of one extraordinary case? We cannot, of course, but a comparison with the case of Élisabeth Bégon, the wife of Claude Michel Bégon, the Governor of Trois-Rivières until his death in 1748, should give us pause. In her letters to **her** son-in-law, Honoré Michel de Villebois de la Rouvillière, she also adopted an ardent tone which has been interpreted as idiosyncratic, misplaced passion.[128] Catherine Rubinger has sought to challenge this interpretation by explaining that her expressions of affection reflected conventional epistolary forms used in a variety of contexts[129], and that the feelings she described were manifestations of a particular type of closeness proper to family life in the eighteenth century.[130] I think that the same can be said of many of the expressions of warmth in Mosconi's letters, but would take this even further to say that it does not necessarily negate the existence of a romantic overtone. This comparison suggests to me that the

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[127] A. Fabi, "Canzonetta veronese...", p.289.

[128] Catherine Rubinger, "Love, or Family Love, in New France. A New Reading of The Letters of Madame Bégon", *Man and Nature. Proceedings of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 11 (1992), pp.187-99.

expression of parental affection was not necessarily at odds with playing the role of romantic proxy where the circumstances required. No answer can be conclusively drawn on the basis of two examples, but the concordance of these two cases seems to suggest that there is research needed here.

Mosconi's correspondence with Scopoli also complements her letters to Vannetti by showing how the boundaries of polite society were policed by those who were already at its centre. In order to integrate Scopoli into her family, Mosconi had to ensure that he acquired proof of an elevated social standing and demonstrates his loyalty to her through the exchange of news and favours. This ethic of friendship and personal attachment was the necessary foundation upon which exchanges in the republic of letters were built, and which also provided the bridge which linked literary society to politics. Not only were many of the same people involved in both governmental administration and literary society, but they also shared a regard for demonstrated loyalty. The result was that the literary and political communities were bound together into a single social elite which perpetuated social hierarchy by only accepting recommendations from people they knew and trusted.

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[129] C. Rubinger, "Love, or Family Love...", p.188.

Conclusion

Studying the letters of French and Venetian salon women shows the extent to which they drew on a number of sources to justify their participation as women in the republic of letters at the end of the eighteenth century. For example, Julie de Lespinasse and Marie-Jeanne Roland both emulated the models provided by Rousseau himself as much as by the heroines he created in his writing. To varying degrees, salon women also drew on divergent and sometimes contradictory themes circulating in the philosophical literature of the day concerning women's intellectual capacities. Mosconi made mention of her lack of education, the constraints of motherhood and physiological barriers in discussing the limits to her intellectual production and ability. Lespinasse, somewhat coyly, also proclaimed her lack of reason and her inability to formulate opinions counter to her sensibility. Finally, Roland and Renier Michiel held up modesty as a particularly important value to be respected.

Nonetheless, examining women's discourse on gender can only serve as a starting point for understanding the position they occupied in political and intellectual life, because their actions and words extended far beyond the terms used to define and constrict femininity and masculinity. In other words, women employed the language of

sexual roles to clear a space for themselves in cultural debate. Once this place was secured, gender guidelines were quite supple, and elite women were able to become actively involved in political and intellectual life. Both women and men were thought capable of judging and creating beauty and wit to provoke pleasure. For example, Lespinasse, Renier Michiel and especially Mosconi all reviewed and criticized the work of their colleagues on a regular basis. Of course, Roland, in the very specific context of the Revolution, was less an arbiter of taste; rather, she was one of the loyal patriots who was able to immediately see the virtue of her fellow Revolutionaries transparently. Nonetheless, by continuing to use the same brand of aesthetic language in their critiques and compliments, all the salon women I have studied extended and reinforced the cultural values that literary friends and political allies held dear.

Salon women did not only contribute to the literary and political culture through language, though. Their day-to-day intellectual and political practices also helped to reinforce the ethics of cohesion and friendship. Like their seventeenth-century predecessors, members of the eighteenth-century republic of letters all engaged in a variety of exchanges through which they incurred and fulfilled social debts. Friends sent other friends personal and political news, books, essays, eulogies, critiques and compliments. The act of exchange encouraged cohesion through invoking physical presence and the cycle of debt and payment in itself provided some of the impetus which fuelled epistolary commerce. Friendship, however, was the primary means through which the exchanges crucial to the survival of the republic were secured. By replying

promptly and duly fulfilling favours, one showed one's personal affection, which, in turn, was judged to be a sign of professional loyalty and virtue.

The link between personal and professional loyalty is illustrated most clearly in the letters of Mosconi, who insists that criticism constitutes a sign of friendship. Equally compelling, however, is the evidence provided in both her correspondence and that of Renier Michiel that truth itself cannot be separated out from personal attachments. Mosconi writes in reference to a eulogy for her friend Pompei that Pindemonte's task in composing it was to not be objective, but rather laudatory, which in itself would result in the truth. Similarly, in her correspondence with Gaetano Pellizzoni, Renier Michiel writes that she is sure that the political information that he is providing her is accurate because he is a loyal friend. Loyalty was also a quality which Roland demonstrated in supplying accurate political information to her friends who lived abroad or in the countryside, as it was this information that would unify the people and allow them to recognize one another through their common interests.

The web of friendships which were created and reinforced through intellectual exchanges also constituted a network of social relations that could be mobilized in times of crisis, whether large or small. Lespinasse, for example, thought that Guibert should win the prize for the best *Éloge de Catinat* and asked Condorcet, d'Alembert and Suard to make it happen. In the same way, she did what she could to ensure that Turgot's free-trade policy would be properly supported and defended by Condorcet. Mosconi and

Renier Michiel also pulled whatever strings they could to make sure that the talent of their literary friends was lauded and their acquaintances found suitable employment.

In doing so, they were not only working in their own interests and those of their friends, but were also reinforcing the ethics of loyalty and friendship--ethics upon which the republic of letters was founded. The fact that the government also prized the virtue of loyalty provided the means to further reinforce the ties that already bound the two communities. It is, after all, important to remember that both intellectuals and politicians already formed a single landed elite linked not only through their elevated social status but also through social bonds and ties of blood. It was natural, then, for members of one community to call on the people they knew in the other when they were in need of personal recommendations.

This practice of seeking and making recommendations, no less than the systematic exchange of favours and documents, was a way of reinforcing the exclusivity of the government and the republic as a united elite by insulating them from the intrusion of those they did not know. In this sense, even the most innocent-looking missive was not only an agent of intellectual production but also of political regeneration and actually ran counter to the stated political goals of the French women, who generally tended to be against elitism in theory. In contrast, the very same practices performed by the Venetian *saloniere* were more in line with their stated political views. Neither Mosconi and Renier Michiel were ashamed of showing their support for the social hierarchy atop

which they were perched--a sign of the more politically conservative climate in which they lived.

These difference point to the existence of others, many of which have yet to be uncovered. The study of political and intellectual culture in late eighteenth-century Venetia is still in its inception and political culture, in particular, needs to be explored. Even in France, though, it would be interesting to question the role that loyalty and friendship played out in the world of policy and politics to see how and if public and private were integrated in the same way as in the intellectual arena. In this sense, I hope that this thesis has not only contributed to the debate on elite women, but will also help to engender the discussion and debates that constitute the modern-day republic of letters.

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