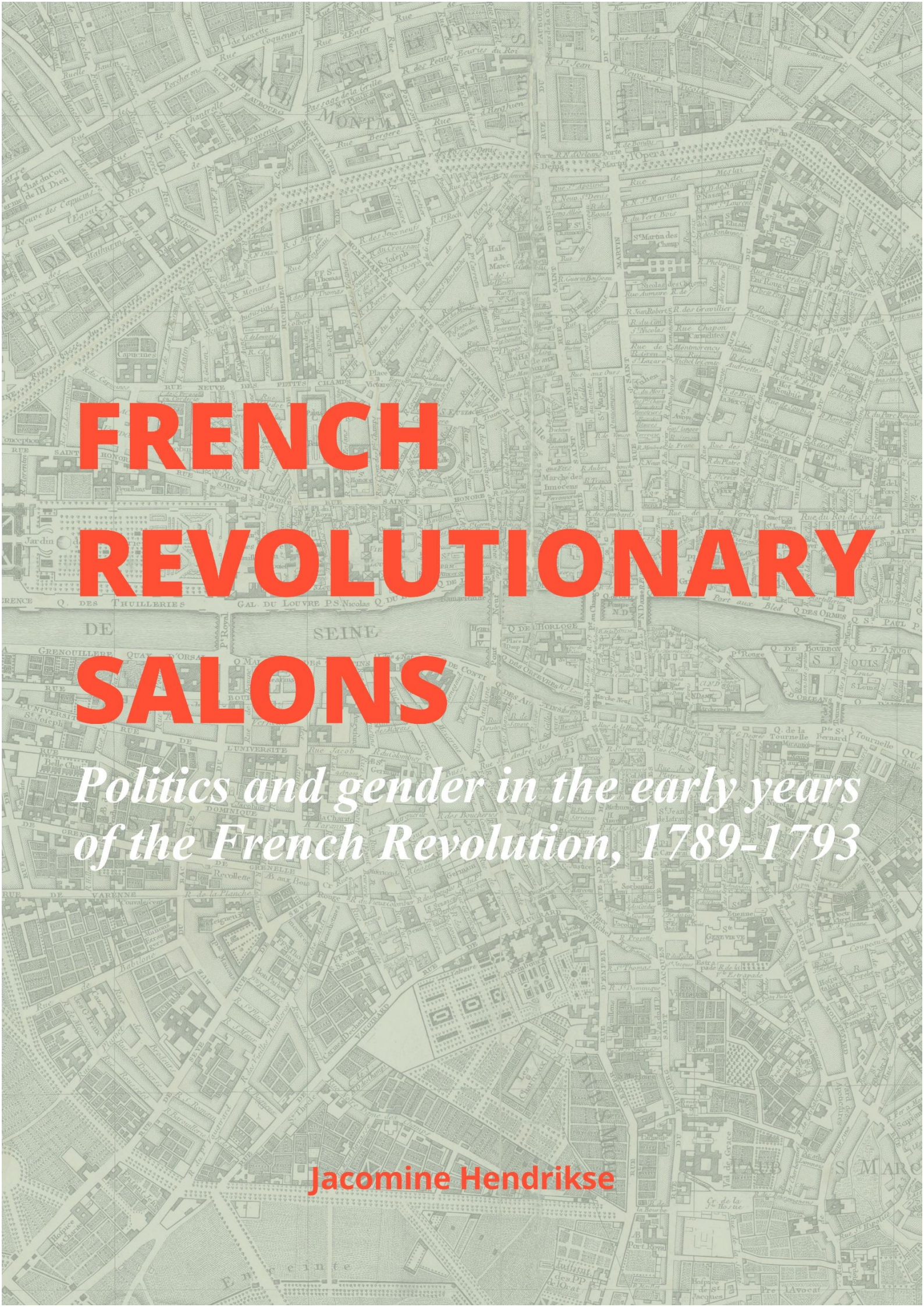


FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY SALONS

Politics and gender in the early years of the French Revolution, 1789-1793

Jacomine Hendrikse

French revolutionary salons

Politics and gender in the first years of the French Revolution, 1789-1793

Thesis Research Master Political Culture and National Identities

Institute of History, Faculty of Humanities

Leiden University

Supervisor: Prof. dr. H. te Velde

Jacomine Hendrikse

Student number: S1920197

Address: Eerste Atjehstraat 107-3

1094KG Amsterdam

The Netherlands

Email: j.hendrikse.2@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Universiteit Leiden

The Netherlands

Abstract

Salons were a widespread phenomenon in late eighteenth-century Paris, but their political role during the first years of the French Revolution has been overlooked. As centres of news and information, places for education in political culture and political sociability, and public opinion shapers, salons were of vital importance for professional politicians and revolutionaries. The *salonnière* or hostess formed the centre of the informal conversation held between a select company of elite people, invited at her home and on her initiative. In this way she could wield power and have an informal political 'career'. The flexible character of a salon, which is a concept changing according to its context rather than a fixed institution, makes it hard to give a definition. The case study of the political meetings at the home of Madame Roland questions the way in which salons have been regarded so far, for their place functioned as a headquarters of the Girondin political movement, a propaganda institution and a political salon in which she initially played little to no role. In the radicalising political environment leading towards the Terror, Jacobin revolutionaries who often were former visitors of the salons themselves increasingly regarded the salons with suspicion, rejecting its non-transparency, aristocratic character and female activities. By the end of 1793, both the revolutionary politicians and public opinion had turned against the salons and the elitist salon society, which disappeared from Paris.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank prof. dr. Henk te Velde, my thesis supervisor at Leiden University, for his input, time, and enthusiasm, which encouraged me to dive into the world of salons. I am grateful to Annelotte Janse, my friend and fellow history student, for her presence during the process of writing this thesis, our valuable discussions, and her feedback on my work. I thank Annabella Grant, my former classmate at King's College London, for peer reviewing my text in its final stage. Last but not least, I am indebted to Daniël Hendrikse for proofreading part of my work, and to Max Graven for his help with the design of the graphics and for his moral support at all times.

Table of Contents

Note on the text

In order to provide optimum legibility of my text, I have translated most of the French quotes from French to English. When I found the choice of words and the phrasing in the French original untranslatable or necessary for the understanding of my point, I have quoted it and added the English translation in the footnote. Some of the French concepts, like *Ancien Régime* and *Assemblée Nationale,* speak for themselves and I have not translated these to English.

Obviously, the spelling in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century sources I have used differs from present-day French, but, again in order to improve legibility, I have left out the addition of [sic] to the quotes as much as possible. Concerning the names of the many aristocratic people who play a role in this research, I have left their noble titles untranslated, because these titles have become part of their names. Various Anglophone authors do the same in their works, making it easier to look up further information on these persons in literature in different languages.

Introduction

On 8 November 1793, a lady named Madame Jeanne-Marie Roland was executed at the guillotine on the Place de la Révolution in Paris.[1] Thousands of French men and women of the upper class and of noble descent suffered the same fate in the period of the French Revolution that came to be known as the Terror; yet, the death of Madame Roland marked the end of an era. She was the last remarkable *salonnière* of Paris, as all other salon holders had either fled Paris or had found their death at the massacres of September 1792. With Madame Roland's decapitation the salon culture of Paris that had flourished and declined in the course of the Revolution came to a final standstill. It would not be rejuvenated until after the Terror and under Napoleon's reign.

French salons first appeared in Paris in the early seventeenth century and were based on an Italian example that changed little over the following centuries.[2] In the private and intimate setting of a *maison* or *hôtel particulier* of the Parisian aristocracy and bourgeoisie, the lady of the house invited writers, artists, scientists, politicians, journalists and other intellectuals for discourse on culture and politics. Ceremony and parade were absent in the salon, and the visitors were not required to appear in formal dressing, making visiting a salon a rather low-key activity for the upper classes. The influence of salons reached much further than the walls of the salonnière's residence. Salon culture reached its peak in the eighteenth century, the salon fitting the Enlightenment ideas perfectly by providing a place where new discoveries, theories and ideas could be exchanged. Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau as Enlightened philosophers were frequent visitors of Parisian salons. The French capital formed the cultural and political centre of the country, where the salons were concentrated on the Right Bank of the Seine around the rue St. Honoré and on the Left Bank around the rue du Faubourg St. Germain.[3] Interestingly enough, despite the focus in the Ancien Régime society on hierarchy and nobility, being of noble descent was not a requirement to participate in the Parisian salon culture at the end of the eighteenth century. In the salons, a rather diverse public of nobles and non-nobles was brought together as conversation partners on the basis of equality.[4] The salon nevertheless remained an elite gathering, kept exclusive by the necessary invitation of a salon holder or prominent visitor. Visiting a salon required a delicate cultural and political know-how which only a small group within society, usually high society, possessed. This group came to be known as *le monde*.[5]

In the Enlightenment salons, the social and political sphere coincided. The criticism on society that developed in salons from the seventeenth century onwards was first of a literary order and then of

[1] The Place de la Révolution is currently known as the Place de la Concorde.
[2] Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters. A cultural history of the French Enlightenment* (New York, 1994), 111.
[3] See appendix 2.
[4] Dena Goodman, 'Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22 (3) (1989), 329-350, 331.
[5] Antoine Lilti, *Le monde des salons. Sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2005), 95. *Le monde* or 'the world' was a common term used by the upper class. One was not part of le monde by birth, but one entered le monde at a certain age when one started visiting salons, balls and other high society events.

a political order, as Jürgen Habermas points out in his theoretical work on the bourgeois public sphere.[6] Literature was a relatively safe topic in the absolutist political culture of the Ancien Régime and accessible to women, in which politics could nevertheless be strongly involved. Robert Darnton notes that by 1788 literature had become politicised and Rousseau in his *Lettre à d'Alembert* argued that literature was essentially a political institution.[7] Whether politics became a more prominent topic in Parisian salons in the build-up to the French Revolution is a point of discussion in the existing historiography of salons. Two of the most prominent contemporary authors, Antoine Lilti and Steven Kale, strongly disagree on this point. The former claims that politics did not play a significantly larger role in Parisian salons shortly before and during the French Revolution than under the Ancien Régime, while according to the latter a process of politicisation took place in the salons in the years leading up to 1789, when with the outbreak of the Revolution and the emergency of a parliamentary government salons acquired a political vocation and even became political institutions.[8] According to Olivier Blanc, many Parisian salons continued to exist and they were more present and active than ever in the midst of the Revolution.[9]

Without a doubt, the Revolution caused a change in French society that could not remain unnoticed in the salons. The salon culture proved to be strong and flexible, with women continuing to organise weekly gatherings in the early years of the Revolution. In the words of Madame Germaine baronne de Staël: '[W]e can truthfully say that never has this salon culture been that brilliant and serious altogether as in the first three or four years of the Revolution.'[10] The political role of the salons and the salonnières, from the start of the Revolution until their disappearance in 1793, will be central in this research. This introduction is dedicated to the study of the problematic term 'salon' and its definition according to different authors as well as to myself. In the first chapter, the salons will be studied in the political and cultural context of the final years of the Ancien Régime and the beginning of the Revolution. The second and third chapter consist of close studies of prominent salons under the Revolution: how did these function? And what was the role of politics and gender in these revolutionary salons?

---

[6] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Massachusetts, 1989), 56.

[7] Robert Darnton, 'The Facts of Literary Life in Eighteenth-Century France' in: Keith Michael Baker (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture. The Political Culture of the Old Regime*. 4 vols. (Oxford, 1987), i. 261-291, 279, 287.

[8] Steven Kale, *French salons. High society and political sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore, 2004), 2, 3, 43.

[9] Olivier Blanc, 'Cercles politiques et salons du début de la Révolution (1789-1793)', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 344 (2) (2006), 63-92, 64.

[10] Jacques Godechot (ed.), *Considérations sur la Révolution française* (Paris, 1983), 228. '(…) mais on peut dire avec vérité, que jamais cette société n'a été aussi brillante et aussi sérieuse tout ensemble, que pendant les trois ou quatre premières années de la revolution, à compter de 1788 jusqu'à la fin de 1791'. Madame de Staël refers to the period between 1788 and 1791, because she was active herself only until the summer of 1792, when she fled to Coppet, Switzerland.

The salon as a concept

What exactly a salon was, is a question that is not easy to answer. The French word salon derives from the Italian *salone* and *sala*, which was a central hall in late medieval residencies with multiple purposes. It was a space in which guests were received, dinner was served, most part of the day was spent, music was made and one could dance.[11] In late eighteenth-century sources the French term salon had gained a slightly more modern meaning as a living room or reception room. For example, Madame Lucy marquise de La Tour du Pin used salon in such a way: '[O]n the day of our wedding, we gathered in the salon at noon'.[12] Only from the early nineteenth century onwards, salon came to refer to a cultural instead of a spatial concept. It was a meeting and conversation of intellectuals, taking place at a private dining or living room.[13] The salons in Paris should not be confused with the *Salon de Paris* with a capital 'S' that was established in the eighteenth century as well, which was an art exhibition in Paris that would become world-famous and was organised on a yearly basis. Its name is an abbreviation of the *Salon carré* at the Louvre.

In the first years of the French Revolution, the word *cercle* was more widespread than salon; at first referring to the court, from 1787 onwards it was used in relation to private gatherings.[14] Another common expression was *société*, meaning an organised group that regularly came together for a common activity or with common interests.[15] Like le monde, société implies to refer to society as a whole, but was actually often used in the sense of the aristocracy or high society. An alternative term, mostly used in revolutionary accusations of salon holders, was *bureau d'esprit (public)*. Inspired on the expression *bel esprit*, it referred to the freedom of spirit that was dominant in salons and which the revolutionaries considered the threat of public opinion that was partly shaped in salons.

Modern-day historians without exception understand a salon in the sense of an intellectual gathering. They consider the term a common expression and rarely give a definition, even though close study of their works makes clear that they all mean different things by it. Jacqueline Hellegouarc'h describes a salon as a circle with charm which stimulated the spirit and whose quality depended on the host, who could be someone from the middle classes to the high aristocracy.[16] Lilti in his work

[11] Larousse Dictionnaire de français: http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/salon/70719?q=salon#69952 (15 May 2018).
[12] In all the 1783 editions of the fourth part of *Tableau de Paris* by Louis-Sébastien Mercier in the chapter called 'Comédie clandestine' the word 'sallons' can be found, referring to a *salle* (reception room). In the *Trésor de la langue française* the first occurrence of salon is in 1793. Hellegouarc'h, Jacqueline, *L'esprit de société. Cercles et ''salons'''parisiens au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2000), 451; Lucy marquise de La Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans, 1778-1815* (Paris, 1913), 105.
[13] See for example: Laure Junot duchesse d' Abrantès, *Histoire des salons de Paris. Tableaux et portraits du grand monde, sous Louis XVI, le Directoire, le Consulat et l'Empire, la Restauration et le règne de Louis-Pilippe Ier.* 6 vols. (Paris, 1837-1838), ii.
[14] Hellegouarc'h, *L'Esprit de société*, 451-452.
[15] Larousse Dictionnaire de français http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/soci%c3%a9t%c3%a9/73150?q=soci%c3%a9t%c3%a9#72319 (16 May 2018).
[16] Hellegouarc'h, *L'Esprit de société*, 421.

sometimes distinguishes aristocratic from bourgeois salons, and at other times differentiates salons with *gens des lettres* visitors and salons with all kinds of visitors. For Marisa Linton, a salon was a *locus* often presided over by a woman, whose primary function was to serve as a conduit for the promotion of aristocratic interests through patronage, sociability, and *politesse*.[17] Kale includes salons at the French court at Versailles in his study, whereas these gatherings differed from the worldly Parisian salons because of their exclusively aristocratic and extremely secluded nature.

The evolution of the salon in France from the seventeenth century until the years of the French Revolution, and even far into the nineteenth century, proves that the 'salon' is a versatile concept rather than a static historical phenomenon. The majority of authors agree that salons disappeared after 1793, and returned under Napoleon. In the *Monarchie de Juillet* (1830-1848), the Parisian salon culture flourished anew, but would come to a final end afterwards. At least, this is believed by among others Kale, who argues that during the Monarchie de Juillet the public sphere became relatively free, introducing specialised institutions of sociability which replaced the salons, and left the salons as places of trivial leisure.[18] Thus, despite the absence of the use of the term 'salon' in the period that this research focuses on and in the primary sources of the late eighteenth century, I have nevertheless decided to adopt this common terminology. The concept of a 'salon' is an anachronistic, historical framework aimed to offer a basic structure to the wide variety of social, cultural and political meetings. Throughout this research, the question of what a salon was will be repeated in relation to different case studies and circumstances. In my view, the salon is a rather flexible concept with various characteristics, which varied depending on the social, cultural and political context. Unchanging factors are the salonnière, the semi-public and semi-private character, the regularity of the gatherings, the required political and cultural know-how of the visitors, and the high level of conversation. My definition of a salon in this research is thus: an informal conversation between a select company of elite people, invited on the basis of individuality to the home of a salonnière.

Salons differed remarkably from cafés, coffee houses, societies, *académies* and *clubs* because of the high standard of conversation that was maintained among the exclusive group of visitors, which had to have a sufficient level of sociability and mundanity in the eyes of the salon holder. Places for conversation were multiple in the late eighteenth century. Coffee houses arose after English example, and among the many clubs that emerged were some with hundreds or even a thousand members. *Sociabilité* and *mondanité* indeed had become central at the salons at the eighteenth century, best expressed in the polite conversations. Already in their own time, salons were seen as places where the most elevated level of conversation was practiced, which was 'the biggest charm of the French société' on a whole, according to Madame Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, herself a salonnière.[19]

[17] Marisa Linton, *Choosing Terror. Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 2013), 30.
[18] Kale, *French salons*, 199.
[19] Hellegouarc'h, *L'Esprit de société*, 441.

Visiting salons was a requirement to hold a respectable position in Parisian upper class society, for men as well as, though to a lesser extent, for women. Salons absorbed a considerable amount of time of their visitors, who by visiting them showed that they had enough leisure time. But visiting salons was no vain pastime: as much as the world of salons was about to see and to be seen, it was of vital importance for acquiring information and networking as well. For Gouverneur Morris, who moved to France for business in 1789 and was the American Minister to France from 1792 to 1794, visiting salons was the most important part of his work: here he met diplomats, politicians, and important men and women. Dena Goodman confirms: 'Pleasant as salon gatherings certainly were, they were not mere leisure activities created to while away the hours or as relaxation from serious work or business'.[20] Salons were not meant to sit and listen, but spaces that challenged their visitors to participate in the intellectual conversations: 'it was not only a game', Hellegourac'h emphasises.[21] Salons were the defining social institution of the Republic of Letters: an intellectual network of communicating European intellectuals of which Paris was the unofficial capital. Urban nobility in Paris set the standard for the rest of Europe as even after leaving Paris, many diplomats still kept in touch with their Parisian salon acquaintances, the *gens des lettres*. People in le monde were even discouraged to go abroad for a longer period, because they would no longer know anyone in high society anymore when they returned.[22] For writers and artists, success in le monde was of great significance for their social recognition and career.

When modern politics was born in the French Revolution with the summoning of the *États Généraux* and the founding of the Assemblée Nationale, political sociability was structured at the salons. Here the first professional politicians could speak freely without the fear of being overheard, they could form their political ideas and organise themselves in factions. 'Political' in this research comprises the formal political institution of the Assemblée Nationale and the people holding formal political positions, as well as those with informal political careers who found themselves in proximity to power and functioned as advisors or influencers of political decision or the political culture. Salons were public to the extent that their existence was no secret and that they were open to most of the French upper class. Simultaneously, their private character was shown in their exclusiveness and lack of transparency. It is not surprising that outsiders of salon society considered these practices, particularly the active role of salonnières and female visitors, mysterious and threatening. The Ancien Régime police feared for spies among the foreigners in salons. This was especially true for revolutionaries who held a republican political view and were therefore extremely cognisant of transparency and visibility in politics. They

[20] Goodman, 'Enlightenment Salons', 337-338.
[21] Beatrix Cary Davenport (ed.), *A diary of the French Revolution by Gouverneur Morris. 1789-1793,* 2 vols. (London, 1939); Hellegouarc'h, *L'Esprit de société*, 423.
[22] Lilti, *Le monde*, 127-128. This point is illustrated by a letter of Morris to marquis de La Luzerne in London in March 1789: 'In being absent therefore from your Friends during a few Months you avoid the Risque of being sperated for Years, if not from your Friends, at least from Persons to whom you wish well & who wish well to you. Stay where you are a little while & when you come back you will hardly know your own country'.

often regarded salons with suspicion, and associated them with back-room politics and lobbying practices.

'Les femmes ont les pouvoirs, les hommes ont le pouvoir'

Without women, salons could not exist. Women initiated salons, hosted the gatherings, and decided who was invited. As the host, the salonnière was most defining for the character and the quality of the salon. Salonnières were incredibly active in le monde, not only by inviting guests but also by frequently visiting salons of befriended 'colleagues'. Of the upper classes, every self-respecting woman set up a salon, claims Verena von der Heyden-Rynsch.[23] For women who did not (yet) have a salon themselves, it was not uncommon to visit salons of friends and family members, or to be taken to salons by others, such as parents who were engaged in the salon culture. Madame Stéphanie comtesse de Genlis, for example, recalled in her memoirs the period shortly after she got married but before she started to host a salon herself, when she visited the salon of the Madame duchesse de Civrac. The next winter she spent in Paris, where she dined weekly at Madame de Montesson, who happened to be her aunt, Madame duchesse de Mazarin, Madame de Gourgue, Madame marquise de Livri, Madame duchesse de Chalnes, Madame comtesse de la Massais and Madame la Reynière.[24] It was not unusual to visit multiple salons in a day, and the salonnières took into consideration the days and times they received guests when planning their own salon nights, so as not to overlap other salons that were frequented by the same visitors.

Salons also functioned as a means of furthering education. Young people learned how to hold a proper conversation, what were good manners and taste, and they were educated in culture and politics. For women, salons offered an addition to the optional tutors a girl would have had at home in the best case or to the lack of proper education in the worst. They provided the only opportunity for women to be among men, and even encouraged women to socialise with men and be challenged intellectually. According to Goodman, 'the initial and primary purpose behind salons was to satisfy the self-determined educational needs of the women who started them'.[25] To what extent a salonnière engaged with the visitors of the salon, participated in the discussions and influenced the course of events outside the salon has remained understudied and a point of discussion among historians so far. The role of women in salons often went much further than organisation and entertainment. Hosting a salon differed from hosting an occasional dinner because salonnières received guests at set times, often several meetings per week. Salons usually took place at night, but during the day as well. Morris often had lunch (in French:

[23] Verena von der Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons européens. Les beaux moments d'une culture féminine disparue* (Paris, 1993), 16. '(…) toute dame qui se respectait fondait un salon'.
[24] Stéphanie-Félicité du Crest comtesse de Genlis, *Les Dîners du baron d'Holbach dans lequels se trouvent rassemblés, sous leurs noms, une partie des gens de la cour et des littérateurs les plus remarquables du 18e siècle* (Paris, 1822), 245, 275.
[25] Goodman, 'Enlightenment Salons', 333.

diner) with other guests at one of his female high society friends or acquaintances, and visited multiple others at night or for a late dinner (*souper*). Drinking was part of salon culture as well. In August 1792, Morris was at Madame de Staël's where the visiting men desired to drink after lunch, and Morris sent for wine and 'let them get preciously drunk'. The rest of the afternoon, he continued to visit two of his other female friends as usual.[26] Madame Vigée-Lebrun noted in her memoirs that she considered the hours of the day too precious to be spent in society, and stated that she only went out at night.[27] Salons were thus quite time-consuming, both for the salon holder who hosted them and for the visitor who moved from salon to salon to hear the news, and to see and be seen. Also required was a certain level of financial independence, especially for women who paid for the drinks and food which was sometimes provided at the salon. Complaints about the high costs of a salon can be found in writings, just like remarks about the restriction of mobility some salonnières experienced. Salonnières were rather confined to their homes because they received guests most nights of the week.[28] Salons thus had grown into a regular and serious business at the end of the eighteenth century.

While a woman was independent in her role as salonnière, her status could not be seen fully separately of her husband's or lover's, who often was the most prominent visitor of her salon. The difference between male and female power in pre-revolutionary France is beautifully expressed in French: 'les femmes ont des pouvoirs, les hommes ont le pouvoir'. However subtle the linguistic difference, powers and power are two completely different things.[29] It implies that male power is in the public domain, while women pull strings behind the scenes, in a private setting. This fixed, over-simplified way of thinking does not apply to the salonnières at the end of the eighteenth century. Salons formed a particular sphere, in between public and private. Throughout the eighteenth century, the salons had gained a central position in the public eye, or had even become the public sphere themselves as Habermas argues.[30] The rising notion of individualism that was characteristic of the Enlightenment granted people more confidence of their individual reason, power and intellect. For the first time, the world seemed feasible; individuals could change the world. The public sphere, which before had only been inhabited by the King, could be penetrated by individuals. However, to state that the social status of a salon holder's husband was a basis for a woman's own activities in le monde, as Lougee does, is giving too much credit to the male role in history.[31] A woman such as Madame de Staël functioned fully

[26] Davenport, *A Diary*, ii, 489.
[27] Élisabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs de Madame Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, de L'Académie Royale de Paris, de Rouen, de Saint-Luc de Rome et d'Arcadie, de Parme et de Bologne, de Saint-Pétersbourg, de Berlin, de Genève et Avignon* (Paris, 1835), 41.
[28] Lilti, *Le monde*, 93. In 1786, Queen Marie-Antoinette asked Necker worriedly about the expenses of Madame de Staël at her salon. Certainly not at every salon guests were offered a meal, as some salon nights finished before dinnertime and others only started afterwards. For Madame Julie de Lespinasse providing her guests meals was out of the question because of financial reasons.
[29] Michelle Perrot, 'Women, Power, and History: the case of nineteenth-century France' in: Siân Reynolds, *Women, State and Revolution. Essays on power and gender in Europe since 1789* (Brighton, 1986), 44-59, 44-45.
[30] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 31.
[31] Carolyn Lougee, *Le paradis des femmes. Women, salons, and social stratification in seventeenth-century France* (Princeton, 1976), 168.

independently of her husband, who was barely present at the nights at her salon. Instead, her successive lovers were among the most prominent guests. For many other women, like Madame Sophie de Condorcet and Madame Anne-Cathérine Helvétius, the peak years of their salons were after their husbands had passed away.

A salon was virtually the only opportunity for intelligent upper class women to have a sort of political profession. For a long time in history, the only political role women could play was giving advice to men active in politics, and this is exactly the case in salons. Even though some women, like Madame de Staël and Madame Roland, did publish on politics and political theory in the first years of the Revolution, they mostly did so anonymously. Many of the salon holders had a direct connection to politics as they were married to a politician or had a close relationship with someone involved in politics, which gave them an indirect introduction to politics. Others functioned more independently, visiting the public galleries of the Assemblée Nationale and inviting politicians they had met and friends of friends. Most of the salon hostesses, especially in the politically turbulent first years of the Revolution, were strongly aware of and even involved in politics. According to Blanc, the decision makers who visited the salons were certainly inspired and influenced by the women whose circles they visited.[32]

Though salonnières were central at the gatherings at their homes, outside of the salons their role was significantly smaller. Under the Revolution, women were not granted citizenship and they were not included in the *Déclaration des Droits de L'Homme et du Citoyen* written in 1789. The majority of revolutionaries, especially the Jacobins, thought that a woman's place in society was marginal and focused on children and the home; not among men and not at all discussing politics, rather wielding 'petticoat power'.[33] Only a handful of influential men dared to oppose this emphasis on the female domestic role, one of them being Nicolas de Condorcet, who argued that women should be granted citizenship in the same terms as men, an opinion he based on classic individualistic grounds.[34] Women's involvement in politics was tolerated and even encouraged at least by the visitors of the salons. Yet, there were major differences among women in the political role they saw for themselves. Madame Roland for example, who hosted a Girondin salon and helped her husband in his work as Minister of the Interior, was convinced, at least before the Revolution was completed, that women should not officially partake or even engage in politics in their own name. Her contemporary Madame Olympe de Gouges can be called a true feminist *avant la lettre*, because she most explicitly advocated women's rights, citizenship and female suffrage.[35] Eventually, the Jacobins managed to significantly reduce the role of women in society. The law of 2 November 1792 prohibiting women to organise *réunions* and cercles

[32] Blanc, 'Cercles politiques', 16-17.
[33] Siân Reynolds, 'Marianne's Citizens? Women, the Republic and Universal Suffrage in France' in: Reynolds, *Women, State and Revolution*, 102-122, 113.
[34] Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat marquis de Condorcet, 'Art social. Sur l'admission des femmes au droit de cité', *Journal de la Société de 1789* 5 (1790), 1-13.
[35] Susan Dalton, 'Gender and the shifting ground of revolutionary politics: the case of Madame Roland', *Canadian journal of history* 36 (2) (2001), 259-282, 280; Olympe de Gouges, *Les droits de la femme. À la Reine* (n.p., 1789-1793).

and the Law of Suspects of 17 September 1793 which reduced individual liberty, meant the final end of Parisian salon life.

Historiography

In the nineteenth century, salons modelled after Parisian eighteenth-century example became a widespread phenomenon all over Western Europe. The Romantics regarded the French salon culture of the previous century with nostalgia, focusing on its literary and cultural aspects. During the *Restauration* (1814-1830), the first historical writings on salons appeared, often written by female authors who had still experienced the late eighteenth-century salon culture themselves. Madame Laure Junot duchesse d'Abrantès, who was born in 1784 and started her own salon after her marriage in 1800, published a history of Parisian salons, including memories of salonnières under the Revolution whom she had known herself.[36] In 1857, Madame Virginie Ancelot's work appeared, significantly titled *Les salons de Paris. Foyers éteints*.[37] The biggest boom of early nineteenth-century literature on salons was caused by the massive publications of memoirs, letters and diaries of eighteenth-centuries salonnières by their children and grandchildren. If these primary sources about their relatives lacked, they put their lives in writing themselves, like *Vie de la princesse de Poix, née Beauveau* by her granddaughter Madame Léontine vicomtesse de Noailles.[38] The Parisian publishing house Charpentier even produced a whole series of memoirs and correspondences of French salon society in the second half of the nineteenth century.[39] The memory of salons stretched further than literary publications: in 1812, the first version of *A reading of Voltaire's tragedy 'L'orpheline de la Chine' in the salon of Madame Geoffrin* was painted by Anicet-Charles-Gabriel Lemonnier. Empress Josephine commissioned the painting and the work was exhibited at the Salon de Paris in 1814. Replicas of the painting appeared and books on salons depicted it on the cover, for it is one of the rare visual impressions of what happened behind the closed doors of eighteenth-century salons. From then on, the salon of Madame Marie Thérèse Geoffrin came to be seen as the typical eighteenth-century salon and functioned as a frame of reference for salons in the next century.[40]

In the later decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, considerably less literature on salons was written, which matched the decreasing importance of the salons in society. Most authors agree that salons finally disappeared in this time and that they have ceased to exist entirely, while Von der Heyden-Rynsch considers spaces of cultural liberty, of freedom

[36] Abrantès, *Histoire des salons,* ii.
[37] Virginie Ancelot, *Les salons de Paris. Foyers éteints* (Paris, 1857). 'The salons of Paris. Extinguished centres'.
[38] Léontine vicomtesse de Noailles, *Vie de la princesse de Poix, née Beauveau* (Paris, 1855).
[39] Vigée-Lebrun, Souvenirs, i. title page. The series are called *Mémoires et correspondances sur l'histoire et la société françaises'*.
[40] Anicet-Charles-Gabriel Lemonnier, *A reading of Voltaire's tragedy 'L'orpheline de la Chine' in the salon of Madame Geoffrin* (1822). Musée National du Château de Malmaison, Malmaison; Sotheby's Auctions E-catalogue http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/old-master-paintings-n08952/lot.93.html (29 June 2018). Visual representations of salons during the French Revolution do not exist.

of spirit and of changing conscience as modern-day salons. She thus argues salons still exist, although in a completely different form.[41] With the end of the Romantic period in Europe, nostalgia on the salons faded. In 1949, Marguerite Glotz and Madeleine Maire started their monograph on eighteenth-century salons with the question: 'Is it not vain to try to recall the life of high society in the eighteenth century?' They did not doubt the most animated conversations had been held at salons, comparing these with fireworks which were now extinct.[42] Like most works on salons in the eighteenth century, Glotz and Maire focus on literary salons under the Ancien Régime. Madame de Staël, who fled Paris in September 1792, is briefly mentioned and called one of the last salonnières of Paris. It seems that many authors are reluctant to study the complicated developments after 1789, like Hellegouarc'h, whose book title promises it concerns the cercles and salons parisiens in the eighteenth century, but who in her conclusion writes that this is narrowed down to the period between 1720 and 1789.[43] Others refer briefly to the upheavals of the French Revolution, causing the closure of salons and the flight or assassination of salonnières, but do not study the revolutionary years in detail either. In the older literature, the general idea that salons did not survive the outbreak of the Revolution and did not exist after 1789 is dominant.

With the increasing attention for gender issues in the last decades of the twentieth and in the beginning of the twenty-first century, women came to play a more prominent role in the works on the salons. See for example the subtitle of Von der Heyden-Rynsch's *Salons européens. Les beaux moments d'une culture feminine disparue*, Elizabeth Susan Wahl's *Invisible relations. Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of the Enlightenment* and various articles in Sara Melzer's and Leslie Rabine's collection of essays called *Rebel Daughters. Women and the French Revolution* and in Siân Reynolds' edited work *Women, State and Revolution. Essays on power and gender in Europe since 1789*.[44] Recently, Karen Green has published scholarship on female political thought and put effort into promoting research on sources written by women instead of men, when studying women. This research has made use of her book *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe* and her contributions to *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women. Virtue and Citizenship* and *Virtue, Liberty, and Toleration: Political Ideas of European Women, 1400-1800*.[45] Joan Landes, a feminist herself, has highlighted the role of gender in the (political) public sphere during the French Revolution.[46]

---

[41] Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons européens*, 10.
[42] Marguerite Glotz and Madeleine Maire, *Salons du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1949), 1. 'N'est-il pas vain de chercher à évoquer la vie de société au XVIIIe siècle?'.
[43] Hellegouarc'h, *L'Esprit de société*, 423.
[44] Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons européens*; Elizabeth Susan Wahl, *Invisible Relations. Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1999); Sara Melzer and Leslie Rabine (eds.), *Rebel daughters. Women and the French Revolution* (New York, 1992); Reynolds, *Women, State and Revolution*.
[45] Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Though in Europe, 1700-1800* (Cambridge, 2014); Lisa Curtis-Wendlandt, Paul Gibbard and Karen Green (eds.), *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women. Virtue and Citizenship* (New York, 2016); Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green (eds.), *Virtue, Liberty, and Toleration: Political Ideas of European Women, 1400-1800* (Dordrecht, 2007).
[46] Joan Landes (ed.), *Feminism, the Public and the Private* (Oxford, 1998); Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1988).

All authors of the mentioned works are female, just as most biographers of salonnières are. Despite proving that women did play significant political roles in the late eighteenth-century salons, many authors of recently published biographies on salon holders automatically pay close attention to female topics such as love, affairs, marriage and motherhood. Reynolds' double biography on the Roland couple *Marriage and Revolution: Monsieur and Madame Roland* for example thoroughly examines the affairs the couple had, the love letters they wrote and the ups and downs of their marriage.[47] Of the many biographies on Madame de Staël only a minor part is dedicated to her political thoughts and Parisian life, in contrast to more detailed accounts on her adventurous voyage through Europe to flee Napoleon and her later affair with Benjamin Constant. An exception to this phenomenon is the work of Goodman, who believes men and women in salons to be equal and who discusses the political and philosophical views of the 'Women of Letters'.[48]

A detailed study focusing only on the revolutionary salons in Paris and their role in the French Revolution does not exist, even though in modern literature it is commonly agreed that salons continued to exist in the years after 1789. Research on the role of women in the French Revolution in general does not focus on salon holders and upper class women, but on lower class women such as those who undertook the march from Paris to Versailles in October 1789. Studies on women's political involvement are understood via men's views, for they developed political theories and held political functions.[49] Kale's *French Salons. High society and political sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848*, published in 2004, comes closest to this research, in the sense that he focuses on the political history of the salons and the role of salons in French politics. Yet, his book covers a long period, from the early eighteenth century until the Revolution of 1848, and dedicates only one chapter to the salons of the French Revolution.[50] Nevertheless, *French salons* has become a standard work, together with Lilti's *Le monde des salons. Sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* which appeared the following year.[51] Rather than offering a sequence of case studies of salons, like d'Hellegouarc'h and Glotz and Maire do, they name dozens of salonnières in a rather messy overview covering a long historical period.[52] Drawing comparisons between different times, Lilti and Kale make it hard for the reader to keep track, even though they should be credited for offering an insight in the rather extensive scale of salons.

[47] Siân Reynolds, *Marriage and Revolution: Monsieur and Madame Roland* (Oxford, 2012).
[48] Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*; Goodman, 'Enlightenment salons'.
[49] Green, *A History*, 2.
[50] Kale, *French Salons*. See chapter 2: Liberals and Émigrés (1789-1799), 46.
[51] Lilti, *Le monde*.
[52] Hellegouarc'h, *L'Esprit de société*; Glotz and Maire, *Salons du XVIIIe siècle*.

Methodology

The aim of this research is not to study exactly what happened inside the salons between 1789 and 1793, who visited from day to day or what was said every minute. The outcome of such research would not be an answer to the question what the role of salons was, but how the salons were utilised. Instead, I take a wider perspective in researching the dialogue between salons and politics as the Revolution started and proceeded. In the early years of French professional politics, the Assemblée Nationale was in continuous interaction with society. The role of salons in the first years of the Revolution was two-fold: salons actively influenced society, politics and public opinion, while at the same time society, politics and public opinion did influence the salons. This active role of the salon could roughly be divided in three different levels.

First of all, salons shaped the opinion of those who held power. Salons were frequently visited by people involved in politics, both under the Ancien Régime and increasingly under the Revolution, when salon visits were scheduled after the meetings of the Assemblée had ended and before the opening of the Parisian clubs at night. As mentioned before, the salons were of vital importance for the political sociability of men with political ambitions. As the founding of the États Généraux and the Assemblée Nationale marked the birth of professional politics in France, many of the politicians of the first years of the Revolution had come to Paris for their careers without their families, which enabled them to spend all their time on their new professions. The rather intimate gatherings at salons and the required invitation made that the members of the Assemblée did not visit as a group, but rather on an individual basis or with a small group. At the salons, they created factions with colleagues who held similar political ideas, or discussed with opponents while the salonnière made sure the conversation remained polite and did not get out of control. Instead of the focus on oratorical talent expressed in formal speeches at the Assemblée and the clubs, the salons were about ideas which could be invented and developed in low-key discussions and conversations. On this level, the most refined lobbying and back-room politics took place, practices in which women did play major roles too, as will be argued in this research.

In the second place, salons were important for members of the upper class who held high functions in French society: politicians, publishers and business men. Among them were the men of letters: the philosophers, writers and scientists. At the salons, these notables mixed with and participated in the debates on an equal level with the politicians and in some cases became politicians themselves as the Revolution proceeded, like journalist Jacques Pierre Brissot who became active in municipal politics in 1789 and in national politics in 1791. The salons were a means to extend their networks, which were shaped by their professional backgrounds, and to acquire information.

In the third place, the salons' influence was on the people in a broader sense who had no entry into le monde. To them, the salons were closed off institutions which they often did not fully understand and only became aware of in indirect, non-transparent ways: by rumours circulating in the streets. This made the lower classes suspicious of what happened behind the closed doors of fancy hôtels particuliers.

While under the Ancien Régime the court had not paid any attention to the general will of the people, this had changed significantly when Jacques Necker in his function of *directeur général des finances* had published the *Compte Rendu au Roi* in 1781, making the finances of the state public to the nation. The fury this publication evoked, made that public opinion for the first time was seen as a powerful force.

The role of the salons concerned all three levels. The other way around, politicians, notables and public opinion influenced the salons as well. While politicians depended on the salons for the successful start of their careers, once they were established they could turn the salonnières and salons down. While laws were developed and created in the salons, the salons eventually fell under these laws themselves. And while the upper class in salons influenced the general will by making policy and deciding what would be published, the people's opinion could lead its own life and the masses could turn against the few in the salons. Politics in this research will be understood as everything and everyone involved in proximity to power: from formal policymaking and the people in political positions, informal political advising and lobbying to influencing political modes of behaviour. Instead of politics at the Assemblée Nationale, the whole of French political culture is concerned. In this research, I will study the political role of salons and salonnières in these three levels of influence with the help of various case studies of salons.

Gender plays a leading role in this work. I will not define the role of women by their husbands or their family relations, but by their own actions instead. The salonnière, who undoubtedly is a decisive factor in this history, is the starting point of my research. Nevertheless, because this work is a political history, the role of men as holders of formal official power, is significant. The way in which men regarded women, as salonnières and more generally as the other sex in society, underwent important changes over the course of the years with which this research is concerned.

In every existing work on the Parisian salons in the late eighteenth century different names of the most prominent salonnières appear. In order to provide the reader with a clear and an as complete as possible overview of the active salonnières in the period between 1789 and 1793, I have composed a database. This quantitative research complements this project's qualitative research. It consists of a Detailed overview of active salonnières in the early years of the French Revolution (appendix 1a) and a list of active women in high society (appendix 1b). The detailed overview contains biographical information such as the name under which salonnières hosted their salons, their maiden names and their year of birth and death. All of this will make it easier for the reader to understand who these women were, and for scholars to continue doing research on them. Furthermore, both the date in which the salonnière ceased to participate in salon activities in Paris, and the reason why she quit her salon activities are included. I have tried to broadly define the political character of their salon, choosing between either Royalist/Conservative, constitutional monarchist, revolutionary/Girondin, revolutionary/Jacobin or Liberal. Royalist/Conservative were the people who kept supporting the King, either opposing the revolution on a whole or welcoming the revolutionary reforms to a certain extent

while remaining loyal to the monarchy. Constitutional monarchists were in favour of the monarchy as well, but thought a constitution should be founded to limit its power. Revolutionary/Girondin refers to supporters of a moderate revolutionary unofficial political movement which was critical on the court and the clergy and which aimed to spread the Revolution internationally. The Girondins were initially part of the Jacobin movement. Revolutionary/Jacobin were the people supporting the radicalised Jacobin movement lead by Robespierre, who strongly opposed the monarchy and the clergy, wanted to have everyone executed who opposed the Revolution and to reshape French revolutionary society as a whole. If I could not find whether people who were sympathetic to the Revolution were in favour of Girondins of Jacobins, I have simply defined them as Revolutionary. Lastly, liberals used Enlightenment philosophy to defend their ideal of a democratic state.

Most surprising is the result of incorporating the current address of the salon or where it would have been nowadays and the current arrondissement of Paris where the salon was located, insofar this could be traced. This information is converted to a map as well, in order to show the hubs in Paris where most of the salons were concentrated, and their relative distance to the meeting place of the Assemblée, the Louvre where the King's family lived temporarily and the political clubs in Paris. As is shown on the map in appendix 2, there were two centres of salon activity: one on the Right Back of the Seine, around the Louvre and the Palais Royal and one exactly on the opposite side of the river, in the former publishing district which is now called Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Concerning geography and distances, the reader should keep in mind that the eighteenth-century upper class Parisians' means of transportation was either by carriage and horseback or, for men, by foot.[53] Of the women whose names I have found in primary sources as salonnières or (prominent) figures in high society, but about whom I have not been able to trace further information in the time frame of this research I have composed a list, which is added as appendix 1b. The database and this list are work in progress and are by no means finished nor complete, but serves as a stepping stone to further research.

Sources

Thanks to the large-scale digitisation process of the documents of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* started by president François Mitterand in 1988, most of this research on Paris in the late eighteenth century could have been done from anywhere in the world. On their website Gallica.bnf.fr, over four million sources have been made freely accessible.[54] Sources about the salons are scarce: rare lists of attendants exist, and no notes of conversations were made systematically. The salon holders' letters and diaries are the most important sources in this research. To my initial surprise, the salonnières dedicated relatively little text to their salon activities in their own writings. Apparently, hosting a salon was such

[53] See appendix 1a and 1b for the overview of active salonnières and appendix 2 for the map.
[54] Gallica, The Bibliothèque Nationale de France digital library: http://gallica.bnf.fr

an ordinary activity in upper class circles, that it was not considered worthy to describe the setting and practices of a salon in great detail. This is already an interesting finding in itself. The same goes for the writings of the most prominent French salon visitors; instead, foreigners offer the most comprehensive descriptions of the world of salons, like Morris' diaries of his period in France between 1789 and 1793 and Arthur Young's travel memoirs between 1787 and 1791.[55] Unfortunately, in the French Revolution many of these documents of the pre- and early revolutionary years have been lost or destroyed, either intentionally or accidentally. In cases in which they still exist, they are the most important primary sources I have used. Letters were a popular and common means of communication in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. One should nevertheless keep in mind that letters by strangers were borrowed, read and copied, and some correspondences were from the outset intended for publication.[56] Letters were thus written with indirect or direct audience orientation.

As an alternative, I have made use of the memoirs of salonnières and salon visitors, often composed in the later years of or after the Revolution and in most cases published by their children or close friends after their deaths. In some works, these editors mention that they have made small adjustments or changes to the original text, for reasons of legibility or modernisation. In other cases, they do not, which does not mean that the reader can assume that the published text is of undisputed origin. The memoirs are usually extensive, between fourteen and twenty volumes consisting of over 300 pages each are the norm. Memoirs are written with hindsight, based on inaccurate memory. The past is as easily forgotten, reshaped or even invented, often well-meant and without even being aware of it, especially in the turbulent times of the revolutionary era with its quickly succeeding events, changing political agendas and propaganda. In hindsight, causal relations might be sought between events. This problematises the use of memoirs as a primary source. Besides possible censorship of the editor, authors might have self-censored their memoirs as well. Under influence or threat of radicalising revolutionaries, many salonnières tended to minimise their role in politics and history in their writings to save their reputations or their heads. Memoirs are usually intended to be published unlike like diaries that are written for oneself, to serve as an extra memory. Memoirs thus are by no means a fully reliable historical source, while they do provide us with the most extensive information on salons.

In the late eighteenth century, the printing industry was booming with many newspapers, journals and pamphlets appearing daily. By, for and about the people of le monde, the cultural newsletters *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique* appeared between 1753 and 1790, copied outside of France to avoid French censorship.[57] The many societies and clubs were responsible for a major part of all the publications, offering the opportunity to politicians to publish articles about

[55] Davenport, *A Diary*, 2 vols.; Matilda Betham-Edwards (ed.), *Arthur Young's travels in France during the years 1787, 1788 and 1789* (London, 1892).
[56] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 49.
[57] 'Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique de Grimm et de Diderot', The Project for American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language (ARTFL): https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/grimm/ (15 June 2018).

their political viewpoints. Since the first meeting of the Assemblée Nationale, detailed notes have been drawn and published on a daily basis. In collaboration with the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Stanford University has digitised these parliamentary archives which span from May 1789 until November 1794 as part of their French Revolution Digital Archive.[58] Other official state sources, like documents of the Parisian police, inventories and administrational documents are used as well. Because of this research's limited scope, it relies solely on published sources, not on manuscripts. Lastly, for biographical information and information on family ties and relations to the court the database of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, the Dictionary of women under the Ancien Régime and the website of the research centre of the Château de Versailles have been used.[59]

[58] French Revolution Digital Archive: https://frda.stanford.edu/en/catalog

[59] Data Bibliothèque Nationale de France: http://data.bnf.fr; Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: http://www.oxforddnb.com/; Dictionnaire des femmes de l'ancienne France. Société internationale pour l'étude des femmes de l'Ancien Régime (SIEFAR): http://siefar.org/dictionnaire/fr/Accueil; Centre de Recherche du Château de Versailles: http://www.chateauversailles-recherche-ressources.fr.

Chapter 1. Change and continuity: the outbreak of the French Revolution

In 1788, a year before the outbreak of the French Revolution, Paris had a population of 600,000 inhabitants.[60] It is very hard to estimate how many salons did exist in the French capital at that time; there are virtually no historians who tried to make an educated guess. More than a century before, in 1661, 251 salons in Paris were listed by Antoine Baudeau de Somaize, all of which were hosted by women, as he noted.[61] It is rather likely that over a century later, this number had only grown. However, tracing the number of eighteenth-century salons is problematic because of the vague and fluid definition of a salon; it is hard to distinguish between personal visits, occasional receptions and regular salon nights. The Parisian upper class was a relatively small world, which kept close contact by writing letters and meeting regularly, both on planned visits and when crossing each other in the streets or during a ride or walk in the park. Its members paid each other frequent visits: they dined together or just held a conversation. In his diaries, Morris noted how he went to see his many male and female friends almost every day. These visits often seemed to be rather spontaneous: sometimes he found the man or woman of the house was out, at other times he found them in bed, getting dressed, or having dined already. This usually did not prevent him from staying with them, demonstrating the informal relationship he had with many high society people. In other cases, he was invited for a more formal dinner or conversation night together with friends and acquaintances of the host or hostess. Whether these nights were actual salons nights or incidental group visits, is hard to determine.

In order to define the size of Parisian high society, historians have used numbers of literacy. Because of the elite and intellectual character of the salons, in all probability all salon visitors were literate. This seems obvious, but in the eighteenth century it was not uncommon for upper class women to be educated in moral and behavioural issues instead of in writing and scientific knowledge. Madame de Genlis was taught by a private teacher together with her older brother, but when he moved to Paris for his further education, she stayed in their hometown and her schooling ended. She was then six years old and could only read, not write. Madame Adélaïde comtesse de Flahaut received diplomats in her salon with whom she spoke English, a language that she did not have written proficiency in.[62] Orville Murphy estimates that the French literate elite around the outbreak of the Revolution numbered between 30,000 and 50,000 people, on a population of approximately 24,5 million French.[63] It is plausible that the majority did live in the French capital. Likewise, it can be expected that most of the 20,000 copies of the *Mercure de France* circulated among the Parisian upper class, and that this same group was

[60] Louis Messance (ed.), *Nouvelles recherches sur la population de la France: avec des remarques importantes sur divers objets d'administration* (Paris, 1788), 49.
[61] Lougee, *Le Paradis*, 116.
[62] Genlis, *Mémoires*, i. 11; Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 17.
[63] Murphy, Orville, *The Diplomatic Retreat of France and Public Opinion on the Eve of the French Revolution, 1783-1789* (Washington, 1998), 138; Messance, *Nouvelles recherches*, 52; Darnton, 'The Facts'.

responsible for the majority of the 7,000 subscriptions to the *Gazette de France*.[64] We can assume these were the same intellectuals who visited the salons. However, it is known that groups of intellectuals subscribed to single copies of a variety of newspapers, contributing a sum each and reading them in turn, making it hard to conclude anything on the size of the literary public that read the newspapers related to the number of subscribers.[65] In addition, when someone did not receive a copy of a newspaper himself, he could go to one of the many clubs which appeared in Paris around the beginning of the Revolution, where the members were offered a variety of newspapers too.[66] The same was done with books, which circulated among groups of friends. Another difficulty is that the uncensored foreign press was more popular in France than the national press, which include the *Mercure* and *Gazette.* Therefore, it is very hard to trace the actual number of readers of the French press, and to relate this number to the size of the salon public.

At large, the world of salons in Paris was so extensive that salons, cercles, bureaux d'esprit and sociétés are spoken of without further explanation in the late eighteenth century. They were common in the sense that everyone knew about their existence. Subject to popular mockery, various comedies on salon culture were performed in Parisian theatres and apparently were successful, because the texts of the plays were often published and even appeared in various editions.[67] The line between regular receptions of guests and paying informal visits and a proper salon was rather thin. Together with the unclear definition of a salon, goes the indistinctiveness of a salonnière. While for upper class women themselves their entry in le monde was rather important, for outsiders it was often hard to understand if this had taken place and if so when exactly. Both primary and secondary sources present a large number of names of women who were active in le monde around the outbreak of the French Revolution. Many of these names barely appear elsewhere and information on them is hard to find, but there certainly is a great number of salonnières who appear in every work as the most remarkable and important in the late eighteenth century. An overview of these active salonnières can be found in appendix 1.

This chapter starts with the status quo of the salons in Paris just before the Revolution broke out. Already before July 1789, a process of politicisation of French society had begun, which impacted the salons. Salons increasingly became part of the political public sphere. While some salons continued to function as they had done under the Ancien Régime, containing their aristocratic and cultural character, others changed into political gatherings where even political movements were formed. With this latter part of the salons this research is concerned.

[64] Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News. The Press in France 1789-1799* (Durham, 2012), 19.
[65] Goodman, 'Enlightenment Salons', 347.
[66] Davenport, *A Diary,* i. 116.
[67] See for example: James Rutledge, *Le bureau d'esprit. Comédie en cinq actes et en prose* (London, 1777). The first edition was published in Paris in 1776, a second edition appeared a year later.

The functioning of salons on the eve of the Revolution

Goodman divides the long history of salons leading up to 1789 into two phases: the literary Ancien Régime salon until around 1750, and when it was replaced by the more political Enlightenment salon.[68] These 'new' salons were oriented less on the court, and instead of religion and royalty, now reason and nature were central. Despite the fact that upper class women who hosted the salons were usually familiar with court circles and even engaged in the court society, based in Versailles until October 1789 when it moved to the Louvre in Paris, the orientation to the court of pre-revolutionary salons was fading in the years leading to the Revolution.[69] *L'art du cour* gradually came to be replaced by *l'art de la société*. A new elite culture was born; critical, sociable and in relation to the wider public, Habermas argues.[70] Salons functioned independently from the court, without needing its approval. Closely related to Enlightenment reasoning, the idea that the monarchy and the government could be subject to logic and rational scrutiny came into existence. The criticism, and eventually satire, ridicule, and mockery focused on Louis XVI and his entourage developed in the years before the Revolution.

Salons offered social mobility, but instead of an entry into aristocracy, late eighteenth-century salons provided an entry into intellectual high society, or the world of the Republic of letters.[71] Goodman affirms that 'the Parisian salon was the seed from which an enlightened public could develop, its character becoming progressively less elite as it grew'.[72] Compared to the exclusive, non-representative and exceptionally non-transparent court at Versailles, salons were 'egalitarian in form and democratic in aspiration', according to Goodman.[73] For Lougee, however, this statement goes to far, as she believed that while salons were 'internally egalitarian, deliberately blurring distinctions between family backgrounds, they nonetheless comprised a social elite set off from the rest of French society at large'.[74] While the salons were undoubtedly Parisian, they reached beyond the French borders by receiving foreigners and being in contact with international intellectual elites, either on a private basis or as part of international correspondence networks.[75] If not all of its visitors were men and women of letters, the salon public was certainly lettered. Salons were taken seriously by the salonnières who hosted on set nights, sometimes for years in a row, and by salon visitors who came over daily or weekly. Visiting a salon was also not completely non-committal. Madame Angélique comtesse de Chastellux expressed her disapproval to a guest who went away early the previous night and came late the following, though

[68] Goodman, 'Enlightenment Salons', 340.
[69] See for example: Genlis, *Mémoires*, i. 3: 'J'ai dû croire encore qu'ayant passé une grande partie de ma vie à la cour et dans le plus grand monde, je pourrais donner un tableau fidèle d'une société éteinte ou dispersée'.
[70] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*.
[71] Goodman, Dena, 'Enlightenment Salons', 329-331.
[72] Ibid., 350.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Lougee, *Le Paradis*, 170.
[75] Goodman, 'Enlightenment Salons', 350.

similar behaviour cannot be found in many other sources.[76] On a regular day just weeks before the storming of the Bastille, 22 June 1789, Morris noted in his diary who he visited and was visited by:

> This morning La Caze calls (…). A Note from the Maréchal de Castries (…). Mr Parker calls (…). I dress and visit the Duke de La Vauguyon, who is at Versailles. Call on Madame de Flahaut who has taken Medicine and is not visible. On Mr. Le Couteulx who is better but not visible either. Visit Madame de Fouguet. She is dressing and hurried to go to dine at two o'Clock, it being already a Quarter after the Hour. Call on Monsieur and Madame Lavoisier who are at Versailles. Return Home and dine. After Dinner visit Madame D'Espanchalle who is abroad. Madame de Boursac. A Deal of Politics with her Husband (…). Visit Madame de Corney who has been ill (…). Call on Mr. Jefferson who has not been, as he intended, at Versailles. Return Home and meet Mr. Parker at the Door. We have a long Conversation (…).[77]

Salons were not a pastime activity when one had nothing else to do because they were both entertainment and work in itself. Visiting particular salons could feel as an obligation. Morris noted on 20 January 1791: 'Thence go to see Madame de Vannoise who disappoints me by being at Home; stay a few Minutes'.[78] Even though entertainment still did play a role in the salons in the second half of the eighteenth century, where literature was read, plays were performed and music was played, (social) games and gambling were fully absent. Over the years, the public of salons had granted itself an established position as a critical authority; at the end of the eighteenth century, art, plays and writings were often 'tried out' at salons, where the artist's new work was commented on and approved or disapproved by the 'circle of connoisseurs'. Artists in this way 'emancipated themselves from the constrictions of the guilds, the court, and the Church', developing their work into an *ars liberalis*, as Habermas points out.[79] French was the central language at salons, but Latin – still the language of science – was influential as well, though certainly not known by everyone. In popular plays for the Parisian lower classes, actors made fun of this strange language used by the upper class.[80]

While conversation was central in the salons, letters played quite a significant role in late eighteenth-century society and the world of salons as well. They were the primary means of communication of the upper class, who could write and afford the price of sending mail. Large part of the day was dedicated to writing letters: in the four years his diary covers, Morris noted that almost no day passed of which the morning was not fully dedicated to writing, and some days he even did nothing other than write.[81] Letters offered a man and a woman a private means of communication in which they

[76] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 285.
[77] Ibid., 120.
[78] Ibid., ii. 102.
[79] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 40.
[80] Rutledge, *Le bureau d'esprit*.
[81] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. For example, see 8.

could express themselves freely and intimately, as is shown in the correspondence between Condorcet and Madame Amélie Suard.[82] Salons were unique in allowing men and women to meet as well and have private conversations; Madame de Staël's Swedish husband could not get used to the intimacy that was allowed in French upper class circles between men and women, which went hand in hand with the alienation of a wife's affection from her husband, arguing that in France women are 'greater Whores with their Hearts and Minds than with their Persons'.[83] When an unmarried man and woman wanted to go out in the public, however, they needed to 'save appearances' by being accompanied by a servant or maid.[84] Even face-to-face conversations were sometimes replaced by writing letters, for example in the salon of Madame de Staël everyone withdrew to write letters to each other after dinner.[85]

Only part of all letters was meant to be read by the recipient exclusively. The open letter, the circulating letter, the copied letter, the published letter and the letter to the editor circulated not only among Parisian but French and even European and Northern American upper classes.[86] After the Revolution had broken out and she had fled to England, Madame de Genlis wrote a letter to her close friend, politician Jérôme Pétion, to which she never received a reply but which she found published in the newspapers *Patriote Français*.[87] The two-weekly newsletter *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique* was based on the concept of a private correspondence between someone inside and outside the Parisian literary world. It appeared between 1753 and 1813 on a two-weekly basis under the edition of the French-German diplomat and writer Friedrich Melchior baron von Grimm and later the Swiss writer Jacques-Henri Meister.[88] The *Correspondance* offered a clear insight in the environment of the salons of the second half of the eighteenth century by containing extensive updates about the cultural life in the French capital. From the beginning of its publishing, pieces on politics were added too.[89] The *Correspondance littéraire* was read by the Parisian upper class, but existed mostly for the European cosmopolitans. Even foreign rulers and court societies held subscriptions, making obvious how far the exemplary role of le monde in Paris stretched.

The most prominent women of high society gained fame by their appearance in the *Correspondance Littéraire*, among others the salonnières Madame Geoffrin, who was active until shortly before the Revolution broke out, Madame Suzanne Necker and Madame de Staël. Even though le monde was a small and intimate group, it was far from uniform. Various levels were distinguished

[82]Elisabeth Badinter (ed.), *Correspondance inédite de Condorecet et Madame Suard. 1771-1791* (Paris, 1988).
[83] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 292.
[84] Ibid., 245.
[85] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 50.
[86] Goodman, 'Enlightenment salons', 340-341.
[87] Genlis, *Mémoires*, iv. 122-125.
[88] Maurice Tourneux (ed.), *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister, etc. Revue sur les textes originaux comprenant outre ce qui a été publié à diverses époques les fragments supprimés en 1813 par la censure, les parties inédites conservées à la bibliothèque ducale de Gotha et à l'Arsenal à Paris*. 16 vols. (Liechtenstein, 1968).
[89] Ulla Kölving, 'La ''Correspondance littéraire'' de Grimm et Meister à la lumière des manuscrits - une première approche', *Revue Romane* 17 (1) (1982), 27-28.

like *le grand monde* and *le plus grand monde* and individuals could fall out of grace by political and personal rivalries or bad reputation.[90] More important than lineage or occupation among salon women was wealth, making the salon world accessible to specified power groups, like the rising bourgeoisie. Instead of earning an income with their careers, the salonnières only spent money on their salons. Distinctions between various family backgrounds were erased by a high plateau of luxury and a uniform code of behaviour.[91] For women born in aristocratic families with mothers, aunts or other relatives who hosted salons, it was very likely to start receptions themselves at a certain point, after having been apprentices in established salons. For others, the marriage to a man of superior status marked their entry into the world of salons, using their husband's social status as the basis for their own activities.

Late eighteenth-century ideas about gender were based on the assumption that men and women were fundamentally different. These differences were best shown in salons, where it became clear how the nature of men and women were complimentary, as was commonly believed. While men were believed to be egoistic and hot-headed in their political discussions, the selfless female salonnière was supposed to stand above all political differences and to function as a patient and harmonious intermediator, conciliator, and arbiter of taste and manners.[92] Because women prevented that political debates got out of hand, they encouraged political consciousness and articulated the concept of and demand for general and abstract laws, Habermas even argues that salons did serve the French society as a whole.[93] Madame Necker stated that the government of a conversation very much resembled that of a State, and the influence of a conversation could scarcely be doubted.[94]

When discussing the power of women in the late eighteenth century, the debate often goes in terms of public and private female power. Lacking the former, women were condemned to the latter; private power stretched to the corners of the home, where women ruled over servants and were the secret wielder of private power behind their husbands. Yet, the salons offered women a semi-private forum where they could exercise power, and the realisation that men needed women in salons and, more generally, that female power was vital in Enlightenment political culture often caused discomfort.[95] While *homme publique* refers to a man holding a public, usually respectable position, a *femme publique* is a prostitute because a woman was not desired to be out in the public sphere.

Conversation, friendship and love were ways in which women could influence men, always hiding their knowledge behind a veil of polite sociability, which came to be understood as woman-centred and mixed-gendered.[96] The supposedly different nature of men and women offered an excuse for the imagined natural superiority of men over women, which was a common idea in the late eighteenth

[90] See for example: Genlis, *Mémoires*, i. 3.
[91] Lougee, *Le Paradis*, 168, 128-129.
[92] Green, *A History*, 16-17.
[93] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation,* 45, 54.
[94] Goodman, *The Republic*, 100.
[95] Ibid., 8-9.
[96] Green, *A History*, 16-17; Goodman, *The Republic*, 8.

century. Rousseau's antifeminist ideas, which developed in the late eighteenth-century, were very influential among both his male contemporaries and many women. *La femme n'est pas inférieure à l'homme* took an opposing stance, and was a pre-feminist booklet against the idea of natural differences between the two sexes. Originally published in English in 1739, it appeared in French only a decade later. It urged all women to reject vain amusements and dedicate themselves to the development of their souls, in order to be respected by men.[97] Another voice of resistance came from Madame Thérésia Fontenay who argued that women were not banned from citizenship by nature itself but by those who spoke in the name of nature: men.[98] Salonnière Madame Louise-Félicité de Kéralio-Robert believed that women who were educated for their own sake were more charming in private and public society.[99] From the aristocratic milieu, the salon world had inhabited the ideal of *honnête homme* and *honnête femme*, both having gallantry, *politesse, bienséance* and sensibility as virtues. Beside their role as intermediaries, already their pleasant appearance made men in the salons generally happy with female presence. As Morris expressed to a British friend: 'The Science of Politics is at best a dry one. The French therefore discuss it with the Ladies, and indeed the Presence of a fine Woman is so pleasant that it diffuses general Gladness'.[100] He had several affairs and flings with the women he visited and talked chit chat and politics.

For men as well as for women, the years surrounding the outbreak of the Revolution was an insecure time. Some salonnières fled, but in some cases they returned a couple of months later when it became clear that they were not in direct danger in Paris.[101] On the night of 14 July 1789, Madame de Flahaut tried to convince her husband, a field marshal in the King's army, to flee the city because she feared for his life.[102] Madame Vigée-Lebrun in her memoirs spoke about 'the horrible year 1789', which could have been a nineteenth-century reflection on the past.[103] She dramatically recalled how she had lost most of her will to live because of the insecure future that awaited her and the others from her class, even though she admitted she could not have imagined what would happen. In the months following July 1789 she was often afraid of the hatred in the lower classes, just like many of her visitors. One night, the visitors came to her salon dismayed, because on their way poor people had climbed the footboards of their coaches, screaming 'Next year, you will be behind your coaches, and we will be

[97] Madeleine de Puisieux, *La femme n'est pas inférieure à l'homme. Traduit de l'anglois* (London, 1750), 139-140. 'C'est pourquoi j'exhorte toutes les femmes à rejeter les vains amusements, & à s'appliquer à la culture de leur ames, afin de se rendre capables d'agir avec toute la dignité à laquelle la nature nous à destinées; (…) faisons voir que nous méritons des hommes, autant de part dans leur estime,'

[98] Amy Freund, 'The ''Citoyenne'' Tallien: Women, Politics, and Portraiture during the French Revolution', *The Art Bulletin* 93 (3) (2011), 325-344, 330.

[99] Green, *A History*, 208.

[100] Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 582. Letter of Gouverneur Morris to the Lady Countess of Sutherland in January 1793.

[101] See for example Madame Adèle de Boigne, who returned from England in March 1790. Louise-Éleonore-Charlotte-Adélaide d'Osmond comtesse de Boigne, *Récits d'une tante. Mémoires de la Comtesse de Boigne, née d'Osmond*. 4 vols. (Paris, 1921), i. chapter 4.

[102] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 148.

[103] Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 193. Letter xii. '(…) l'affreuse année de 1789'.

inside!'.[104] On 5 October 1789, Madame Vigée-Lebrun finally decided to flee by stagecoach for reasons of safety, but found out that they were fully booked for the next two weeks. 'Everyone who emigrated left by stagecoach like me', she recalled.[105] In the same week, Morris noticed that during a visit at the Club Valois that most men started to perceive that things were not going well.[106] As frightening and instable the whole situation was, it also was an exciting and adventurous time. Morris admitted that he was happy to be in Paris, because he found the outbreak of the Revolution a time of 'great Intrepidity'.[107] Of course, as a foreigner he might have felt less exposed to danger. A week after the storming of the Bastille, he went on an adventurous tour through the ruins of the demolished former prison, together with Madame de Flahaut and Mademoiselle Duplessis who wished to accompany him.[108] As aristocrats, the fear for their own lives was apparently outweighed by their hunger for news and excitement – not only to be brought to them by others, but to be experienced themselves as eye witnesses.

Politicisation of the salons

In the summer of 1788, the États Généraux were called for the first time in almost two centuries and on 5 May 1789 their meeting took place in Versailles. The front rows of the 2,000 seats in the public galleries were reserved for the ladies, who came in big numbers. According to the report in the *Correspondance Littéraire*, high society women's presence, elegance and the opulence of their finery gave the whole meeting even more the character of a spectacle.[109] Among them was Madame de Staël, who wrote that she would never forget the moment when she saw the 1,200 deputies of France.[110] This shows that there was an interest in politics among high society already before the outbreak of the Revolution. Horace Walpole argued that already in the two decades leading to up the storming of the Bastille, the conversations in the salons were heavy and seditious of politics.[111] In the time between the calling and the actual meeting of the États Généraux, *cahiers de doléance* were compiled. These were lists of grievances and hopes which every État composed and presented to the King. They marked an important first step in the involvement of the French people in public affairs.[112] At the end of June 1789, the Assemblée Nationale, the first representative French parliament, was founded. Before this event, French politics had been the business of the King alone and his ministers and advisers were all appointed by him and functioned under his supervision. The Assemblée Nationale made room for the first politicians in a modern sense who, although still not answering to all French people, at least were

[104] Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 193. Letter xii. 'L'année prochaine, vous serez derrière vos carrosses, c'est nous qui serons dedans!'
[105] Ibid. '(…) tout ce qui émigrait partant comme moi par la diligence'.
[106] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 247.
[107] Ibid., 150.
[108] Ibid., 157. The tour took place on 21 July 1789.
[109] Tourneux, *Correspondance Littéraire*, xv. 451.
[110] Godechot, *Considérations*, 139.
[111] Hellegouarc'h, *L'Esprit de société*, 399, 451.
[112] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 69.

representing more than one man in Versailles. Besides the clergy and the nobility who formed the first two États, the parliament consisted of members of the Tiers-État: the bourgeoisie, artisans, and peasants. Normally, everyone who had the means to buy the ticket could attend the daily sessions of the Assemblée Nationale or read the reports which were published every day. This transparency has since been one of the most important criteria of modern parliaments, but was completely new in 1789. Especially after its move from Versailles to Paris in October 1789, the Assemblée became a full part of the lives of the Parisian elite. Politics became the talk of the day. The *Correspondance Littéraire* reported of its work in such detail that one could follow politics without having been present at the boisterous room that housed the Assemblée where it was hardly possible to hear what was said. Besides focussing on the speeches, it offered descriptions of the setting, the clothes of the speakers and the reactions of the public.

The degree of politicisation of high society can be followed in the diaries of Morris. That politics took a prominent place in Morris's life can be expected, for he was a business man and later a diplomat himself, but he discussed public affairs in great detail with high society members who were not holding political office. When he had just arrived in Paris in February 1789, he wrote: 'Altho far removed from the Scene of our Politics I cannot be indifferent to some Things which pass even in that [high society] Circle which tends only to little Mischief.'[113] As well as men, women were interested in the new field of politics: some of them considered it something playful, forming an ill-considered opinion about it like they did of a play or a novel. Madame de La Suze, for example, was determined to support the political side which would provide money, and Madame de Boursac was 'of a somewhat different opinion' than her husband, just because she did not want to share his view, at least this is the conclusion of Morris.[114] Many other women, however, took politics more seriously and were by no means inferior to men in talking politics. Over the course of 1788, the correspondence between Condorcet and his friend Madame Suard came to speak almost exclusively about politics. While he was very actively engaged in French public affairs and was even a candidate for the État of nobles, he asked for her advice on political matters.[115] On 2 May 1789, three days before the États Généraux would meet, Morris was having tea with Madame de La Suze, Madame de Chastellux and Madame de Puisignieu, when 'the conversation in our corner turns as usual upon politics'.[116] After he had attended the meeting of the États Généraux in Versailles, he stopped at Monsieur Millet's to tell him about the meeting, where Madame Millet was present as well and was very much interested in his description of what had happened.[117] Later that month, with Madame Flahaut, Monsieur and Madame de Boursac and the d'Espanchalle couple he talked 'a good Deal of Chit Chat' before the conversation turned to politics. 'The Women prattle a Plenty of Nonsense about the Election of Paris, (…) and thereby put their two Husbands out of Patience'.[118]

[113] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. xxxi. Letter to Benjamin Franklin, 23 February 1789.
[114] Ibid., 116, 120.
[115] Badinter, *Correspondance*, 238-254.
[116] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 64.
[117] Ibid., 70.
[118] Ibid., 85.

On another day, 'Common States General Chit Chat' apparently was so normal that is was not worthy of any further notes or explanation.[119] After May 1789, interest in and the attention paid to political affairs only increased.

Many salons gradually developed a more political character in the early years of the Revolution and kept combining political topics with literature and culture. In the period until the late summer of 1792, politics was as common a topic as literature, plays, gossip and art. One day a ball could be attended, and the next day an Assemblée session. Politics and culture could be interwoven nicely in plays and books on the Revolution, as happened as soon as the Revolution had started. Sociability remained central at salons. This was clear to revolutionary politicians as well, who visited salons for political sociability. Female interest in politics was often started, stimulated or increased by their politically engaged husbands. Days before the storming of the Bastille, Madame de Ségur held a conversation on the public affairs, 'which she understands as well as any Body' according to her conversation partner.[120] Whether the salonnières were themselves interested in politics and made it a topic of discussion of their salons, varied from person to person. Not every intellectual woman who was part of the salon culture around the Revolution aimed for an active, politically engaged role for women or agreed with it. To what extent the conversation at salons was political, differed even per night, according to the invited guests and the moderation of the salonnière. Madame Necker usually received guests on Friday, but soon added Tuesday as an extra night with a more intimate atmosphere with a less philosophical and political character. Madame Helvétius, who held her salon in Auteuil at the outskirts of Paris, remained neutral among her radicalising friends with strongly conflicting political opinions.

Part of the salonnières was, rightfully, afraid that the introductions of politics would mark the regrettable end of polite conversation in their salons. They turned their backs to politics, stubbornly continuing to host solely cultural meetings. These women's salons usually did not last for a long time after the start of the Revolution. Madame de La Tour du Pin found all political talk as a result of the events preceding the Revolution tiresome and disconcerting.[121] 'We are laughing and dancing our way to the precipice', she wrote in the months leading to the storming of the Bastille.[122] Madame Vigée-Lebrun, a famous painter of the Parisian and Versailles elite, dined in June 1789 in company of 'amateurs de la Révolution' who spent the whole night screaming at each other, trying to convince one another of their own political opinions. To Madame Moley she concluded they should have lost their way, who then agreed that this was a disastrous foresight for the rest of the Revolution.[123] In Madame Vigée-Lebrun's own salon, where she received so many people that she could not all name them in her memoirs, but where she claimed to have received all the men of letters and *hommes d'esprit* of Paris,

[119] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 98.
[120] Ibid., 142.
[121] Kale, *French Salons*, 41.
[122] Ibid., 43. This quote is from May 1789.
[123] Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, letter xi.

politics was no topic of discussion during the dinners she hosted.[124] 'Politics have wasted everything; we chat nothing else in Paris' she was told in a letter when she had fled to Rome in 1790. When she returned to the French capital, she saw this was right and that conversation, 'un des plus grandes charmes de la société française', had come to an end.[125] The salon of Madame de Genlis kept a very cultural instead of political character: nights were filled with playing the harpsichord, performing plays she had written, or reading from her own writings. She nevertheless was engaged in politics via her lover: she eventually left France because of the political circumstances, the involvement in the Revolution of her former lover Louis Philippe II, duke of Orléans, and most of all his support for regicide.[126] Even when women disliked the politicisation of society as a whole and of high society in particular, politics could not be left out of the salon. According to Madame d'Abrantès, the sociable tradition was poisoned by politics.[127] Point of discussion is whether disinterest in politics was sincere, or just an internalised social expectation, as Marcia Pointon argues. In her opinion, the idea that politics was not for women remained embedded in the minds of both sexes until very recently. 'Women have tended to accord higher value to social or informal than to political activity, thus internalising traditional norms', she states.[128] At the same time, there are many examples of salon holders who had a passionate interest in politics before 1789, but because of the nature of political institutions like parliaments they were forced to play only social or informal political roles.

Thus after 1789 the political was added to the public sphere. Outside of the salons, a trend of increasing politicisation could be recognised in Paris, which was the centre of French politics and the Revolution. People added blue-white-red accessories and cocardes to their outfits, and women's fashion followed the quickly changing political regimes. During the bloody Terror, they cut their hair short like was done to prisoners before they were led to the guillotine, and instead of dresses of luxurious materials they wore simple white underdresses with red ribbons tied around their breasts and neck, symbolising bloody cuts of the guillotine. Political awareness was also stimulated from a young age. In the Republican Alphabet published in 1793, every letter was connected with a word and an image to teach children to read, starting with A for Assemblée Nationale.[129] Further, politics affected every class in society. Morris, who was used to talking about public affairs with his friends from high society and with international contacts abroad, even started to discuss politics with his tenant.[130] The political awareness within the society at large, stimulated the development of public opinion. In our times this is understood

[124] Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 10, 93. Letter xi.
[125] Ibid., 232. 'La politique a tout perdu; on ne cause plus à Paris'. Letter of l'abbé Delille.
[126] Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons européens*, 121.
[127] Kale, *French salons*, 51.
[128] Marcia Pointon, 'Liberty on the Barricades: Woman, Politics and Sexuality in Delacroix' in: Reynolds, *Women, State and Revolution*, 59.
[129] Jean-Baptiste Chemin-Dupontès, *Alphabet républicain, avec lequel on apprend à lire aux enfans, en les amusant par des figures agréables , suivi de conversations simples & à leur portée, propres à leur inspirer l'amour de la liberté, de l'égalité, & de toutes les vertus républicaines ; et à les mettre en état de bien entendre la Déclaration des droits, & la Constitution* (Paris, 1793-1794).
[130] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 250-251; Ibid., ii.109.

as the views prevalent among the people as a whole, but in the late eighteenth century public opinion usually referred to the Enlightened opinion of people with *bon sens*. In other words, this was the opinion of the elite who held conversations in salons and corresponded in letters, and in whose hands the political power lay. It was centred in Paris. Communication between provinces was not simple, and newspapers did not tell news nor ideas according to Madame de Staël in May 1789.[131]

Public opinion could be influenced and in turn could influence as a power in its own right. In the eighteenth century, 'public opinion' was used in these two different ways. Madame Roland sometimes referred to public opinion as the existing will of the people and at other times as the truth which must be brought to the people.[132] The political elite considered worthy only the opinion of the public they believed to be sufficiently important, or, as the British writer and theorist Mary Wollstonecraft observed: 'When learning was confined to a small number of the citizens of a state, and the investigation of its privileges was left to a number still smaller, government seem to have acted, as if the people were formed only for them(…)'.[133] In the new political system of France, the power of the people was increased to the extent that public opinion influenced the politicians. On 4 July 1789, in a letter to a Spanish acquaintance Morris summarised the situation in France: 'Thus Opinion, which is every Thing, becomes daily fortified'.[134] He ended with: 'A Democracy. Can that last? I think not. I am sure not, unless the whole People are changed…'.[135] The political future of France thus depended on the people instead of the King. For the first time, the opinion of the public was permitted and taken seriously. In January 1790, a play performed at one of the Parisian theatres was titled *Les Dangers de l'opinion* and was very successful.[136] On 16 April 1791 Madame de Staël's first political article was published in the short-lived newspaper *Les Indépendants*, in which she formulated the question: which signs show what the opinion of the majority of the nation is?[137] The public, most of all in the salons, had become a critical authority.

Under the Ancien Régime, political journalism in France was forbidden and all press and publications were subject to strict state censorship. Foreign newspapers like the *Gazette de Hollande,* the *Gazette de Leyde* and *Le Courier de L'Europe* were popular. Printed abroad, often in the tolerant Netherlands, they expressed free thought and were often better informed about the situation in France than the Parisian and French newspapers themselves.[138] Free speech in times of the Revolution was often interpreted as uncensored, free press. The number of newspapers increased rapidly after the start of the

[131] Godechot, *Considérations*, 143.
[132] Susan Dalton, 'Gender and the shifting ground of revolutionary politics: the case of Madame Roland', *Canadian journal of history* 36 (2) (2001), 259-282, 275.
[133] Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (ed.), *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft. An Historical and Moral View on the French Revolution. Letters to Joseph Johnson. Letters written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Letters to Gilbert Imlay*. 7 vols. (London, 1989), vi. 5.
[134] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 137. Letter to Carmichael in Madrid.
[135] Ibid., 138.
[136] Tourneux, *Correspondance Littéraire*, xv., 585.
[137] Godechot, *Considérations*, 13.
[138] Murphy, *The Diplomatic Retreat*, 155.

Revolution: 250 newspapers existed in France between July and December 1789.[139] The revolutionary newspapers placed anyone involved in public affairs under an unprecedentedly high level of public scrutiny. In Jeremy Popkin's view, the political press was an indispensable symbol of public opinion of a people that lacked the means to speak for itself. He claims that the 28 million inhabitants in France were informed about the Revolution by the periodical press, while in actuality outside of Paris it was nearly impossible to obtain on a newspaper and to attain news about the Revolution.[140] In Moulins, in the late eighteenth century an important city in central France, Arthur Young in August 1789 went to the best coffeehouse and asked for newspapers, but 'I might as well have demanded an elephant':

> Here is a feature of national backwardness, ignorance, stupidity, and poverty: in the capital of a great province, (…) at a moment like the present, with a National Assembly voting a revolution, and not a newspaper to inform the people whether Fayette, Mirabeau or Louis XVI is on the throne. (…) Curiosity not active enough to command one paper. What impudence and folly! (…) Could such a people as this ever have made a revolution, or become free? Never, in a thousand centuries: the enlightened mob of Paris, amidst hundreds of papers and publications, have done the whole.[141]

He continued to express his disapproval on the lack of newspapers and the backwardness of the people in Moulins for another two pages of his diary, showing how the press had become of vital importance even just after the Revolution had started. Obviously, with the increasing attention to public opinion a lot of fake news was spread as well, trying to influence that opinion. Salonnières discovered untrue information about themselves or their husbands in the revolutionary newspapers, and Morris notated in his diary: 'I am told that Yesterday's News is all false'.[142]

While the Revolution gave way to the expression of public opinion and free expression compared to the Ancien Régime, within four years this was reversed by the radicalising revolutionaries. The first days of September 1792 marked the radicalisation of the Revolution, seriously threatening the upper class for the first time. The different political opinions which were shaped in salons and divided the French elite, which had been rather uniform and unified before the French Revolution. In her memoirs, Madame Genlis described her first meeting with the future Madame de Staël as a sixteen-year old who accompanied her mother Madame Necker. Her first impression of the young girl was very positive, but she noted: 'By no means could I imagine that this same person would one day be my enemy'.[143] A letter written in June 1791 in Paris emphasised the existence of the same phenomenon:

---

[139] John Gilchrist and William James Murray, *The Press in the French Revolution. A Selection of Documents taken from the Press of the Revolution for the years 1789-1794* (Melbourne, 1971), 7.
[140] Popkin, *Revolutionary News*.
[141] Betham-Edwards, *Arthur Young's travels*, 229-230.
[142] Davenport, *A* Diary, ii. 587.
[143] Genlis, *Mémoires*, xiii. 317.

'This change of government has made the bitterest enemies the best friends but what is melancholy indeed it has often made the dearest friends the bitterest enemies. Among almost every family we know anything of there are the most cruel divisions (…).'[144] The political spectrum would only polarise as the Revolution proceeded.

Salons: a home to political movements?

As clearing houses for news and information, and communication and meeting centres alike, salons were the places *par excellence* for the upper classes who wanted to be updated about the events of the Revolution, not least the politicians. It was at the salons that revolutionaries in the early years of the French Revolution could make contacts, establish political alliances, and strike deals. In reaction to the lack of transparency of the Ancien Régime, where politics took place behind the golden gates and closed doors of Versailles, publicity was of vital importance for revolutionary politicians. Their politics were meant to be a fully transparent process, taking place in the public gaze in contrast to the secrecy of the Ancien Régime.[145] For the radicalising revolutionaries, the salons with their semi-public setting were not public enough/ The required invitation of the salonnière inevitably led to an exclusive public only which discussed politics, raising feelings of suspicion among revolutionaries.

According to Habermas, the institutions for public debate of political matters had been lacking until the Revolution and were created overnight: club-based parties, and a politically oriented daily press.[146] Of course, this did not happen in one night and salons as forums of political affairs had existed for a long time already, but Madame de Staël confirmed that the people sought means to exercise its power. This was done in clubs that were set up, denunciations of official newspapers, and by making them heard on the public gallery of the Assemblée.[147] Between 1788 and 1790 political clubs and societies were founded, among others by deputies of the États Généraux, who sought a means to plan a political strategy, to influence public opinion, and to recruit support outside of the Assemblée.[148] The aristocratic public of these clubs often was the same as the public of the salons. Besides at their salons, many women were actively involved in Parisian political clubs, the most well-known among them the Cordeliers club. In 1790 the revolutionary club *Cercle social* opened, which was among the political associations to admit women as well.[149] While salons combined culture and politics, these clubs were fully political: the interior of the Jacobin Club, for example, was a copy of the setting of the Assemblée

[144] Peter Allan, Alan Dainard and Marie-Thérèse Inguenaud (eds.), *Correspondance générale d'Helvétius.* 3 vols. (Toronto, 2000), iii. 1774-1800. Letters 721-855, 191. Letter 838. Jane and Isabella Alexander to Christine Alexander and Marianne Alexander, dame Williams. The letter was written in English.
[145] Linton, *Choosing Terror*, i.a.: 65.
[146] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*, 70.
[147] Godechot, *Considérations*, 215.
[148] Kale, *French salons*, 49.
[149] Calogero Alberto Petix, and Karen Green, 'Etta Palm d'Aelders and Louise Keralio-Robert: Feminist Controversy during the French Revolution' in: Curtis-Wendlandt, Gibbard and Green, *Political Ideas*, 63-78, 66.

Nationale, where politicians could rehearse their speeches. The club was open only for its members, and membership and regular attendance was a requirement as well to call oneself a Jacobin, but some politicians drifted in and out of the Jacobin Club or never even went there at all, as Linton points out.[150] Young noted in early 1790 that the politicians who were member of the Jacobin Club were so numerous,

> that all material business is there decided, before it is discussed by the National Assembly. (…) The motions are read, that are intended to be made there, and rejected or corrected and approved. When these have been fully agreed to, the whole party are engaged to support them. Plans of conduct are there determined; proper persons nominated for being of committees, and presidents of the Assembly named.[151]

Modern political parties as we know them, were not formed during the French Revolution. The revolutionary leaders did not accept parties, which were seen as acting against the public good, since party politics were assumed to be inherently self-interested.[152] In their absence, salons did structure political sociability. This was allowed by the small size of the elite which was in close contact, the proximity of the court, parliament and ministries and the intimate nature of political communication in a time of limited (census) suffrage because, as Kale emphasises.[153] Compared to the salons, the clubs missed the weight of tradition and offered less sociability, which required visitors with a high-standing network. Clubs opened up to all their members, whereas salons had a much more exclusive, intimate and personal character because of the central figure of the salonnière, who arranged links between their visitors. Salons were based on the idea of personal connections, instead of on oratorical qualities like the Assemblée Nationale and the Clubs. Linton emphasises the implications of visiting a salon: accepting the invitation was to accept the hand of friendship in her opinion. This did not mean that all visitors and the salonnière became close friends and agreed with each other on the topics they discussed. It rather implied that the visitors felt sympathetic towards each other and their salon holder and agreed with her way of conversing and hosting. Especially when a dinner was provided as well, the sharing of food was a sign of mutual trust and intimacy in which social and political aims could coincide.[154]

Salons have long been associated with the aristocratic order of the Ancien Régime, because of the cliché idea of women scheming in back-rooms and influencing politics. In the discourse of political virtue, women who took an active part in politics were seen as having a corrupting influence coming from their self-interested position. Because of their sensitive character, it was believed that women acted in the interest of themselves and of their relatives.[155] Naturally, women in the eighteenth century had no

[150] Linton, *Choosing Terror*, 8.
[151] Betham-Edwards, *Arthur Young's travels,* 293, 305.
[152] Linton, *Choosing Terror*, 7.
[153] Kale, *French salons*, 14.
[154] Linton, *Choosing Terror*, 63-64.
[155] Ibid., 30.

formal political power. Yet, salons were unique in the way that they could grant women significant informal political power. Madame Helvétius in her salon in Auteuil, close to the Bois de Boulogne south-west of Paris, received politicians Cabanis, Destutt de Tracy and Mirabeau.[156] In the later years of the Revolution, Madame Roland's salon became home to the political movement of the Girondins. Madame de Staël knew that women could not be politically active themselves by representing the nation in a government, but she desired to influence those who 'led the world'.[157] It was most likely for this reason that she was more interested in attracting men than women to her salon. In order to obtain more political influence, Madame de Staël went as far as pushing her lover Louis de Narbonne, who held a high rank in the French army, to become Minister of War in December 1791.[158] Furthermore, between January and May 1791 the project of a new constitution was designed at the salon of Madame de Staël.[159]

According to Amy Freund, there were hundreds of women who published political tracts during the French Revolution.[160] The first signed feminist treatise under the French Revolution was published in 1790 by Madame Marie-Madeleine Jodin. The work, titled *Vues législatives pour les femmes*, was dedicated to the French politicians and opened with the call 'And we too, we are citizens'. This followed her earlier works such as *Sur les femmes* (1773) which replied to Antoine-Léonard Thomas's misogynistic *Qu'est-ce qu'une femme?*.[161] One of the most explicit advocates of women's rights is Madame de Gouges, who composed a *Déclaration des Droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne* in 1791 in reaction to the *Déclarations des Droits de L'Homme et du Citoyen* of 1789 and to the debate whether its rights should count for women (*citoyennes*) too. That same year, Madame Etta Palm d'Aelders published *Appel aux Françoises sur la régénération des moeurs, et nécessité de l'influence des femmes dans un gouvernement libre.* Rare newspapers in which women could (anonymously) express themselves were the *Thermomètre du Jour, Journal des 83 départements* and *Chronique de Paris*.[162] Madame de Kéralio-Robert set up the journal *Jounral d'état et du citoyen* not long after the start of the Revolution, which promoted the aims of the French Revolution.[163] She thought that women should actively participate in the political deliberations of the public sphere in which public opinion was formed.[164] At the same time, she emphasised women's domestic role and their importance as children educators, in line with the revolutionaries' opinions.[165] Many of these women held salons themselves, but instead of only conversing on politics they went further by publishing on the topic.

---

[156] H. J. Damave, *De Franse Salon. Ontstaan, ontwikkeling en maatschappelijk betekenis van een instituut* (Zeist, 1986), 135.
[157] Godechot, *Considérations*, 20.
[158] Ibid., 13.
[159] Hellegouarc'h, *L'Esprit de société*, 409.
[160] Freund, 'The ''Citoyenne'' Tallien', 330.
[161] Felicia Gordon, 'Performing citizenship: Marie-Madeleine Jodin enacting Diderot's and Rousseau's dramatic and ethical theories' in: Curtis-Wendlandt, Gibbard and Green, *Political Ideas*, 49-62, 49, 52. 'Et nous aussi, nous sommes citoyennes'
[162] Blanc, 'Cercles politiques', 17.
[163] Green, *A History*, 207.
[164] Ibid., 213.
[165] Ibid., 209-210.

In the July 1793 edition of the *Journal de Société de 1789* Condorcet, a prominent French political scientist and Girondin who had gone into hiding, questioned the inferior role in society in general and in politics in particular which women held.[166] He blamed the (lack of) education for women and their social environment instead of their nature for their way of judging based on feelings instead of on conscience.[167] Furthermore, he argued that their occupation in domestic duties was no excuse for legal exclusion of women to be involved in politics anymore: in the richer classes, women did not even work in the household and men also had duties and work which they combined with politics. Thus, women should be able to become member of the Assemblée Nationale in Condorcet's view, and while they could be discouraged from actively participating when they had small children, they should at least be given the right to make these choices themselves. 'Whatever constitution they have, it is certain that in the actual state of civilisation of European nations, there was only a very small number of citizens who can busy themselves with politics', which Condorcet saw as an inherently negative thing.[168]

Clubs and sociétés, which were set-up in great number and which were political from the beginning, could not replace the salons in the early years of the French Revolution. The political role of the salonnières as advisors and influencers of politicians, as well as independent political thinkers and publishers, granted salons a different place in French society after the Revolution broke out. However sudden and brutal the storming of the Bastille was, the French Revolution did not put French society upside down overnight. After 14 July 1789, salons continued to function as before. Gradually, though, the world of le monde and the salons did change: when more men entered into formal political positions, political sociability, reputation and lobbying made the salons even more important than before.

September 1792: a turning point

How influential the power of the masses and of public opinion had become, became clear in the summer of 1792. On 10 August 1792, the Jacobins overthrew the monarchy and started to arrest political opponents at a large scale. Many royalists feared for their lives and fled or went into hiding, like the husband of Madame Suard who felt threatened by everyone, as she wrote.[169] In late August, rumours that all prisoners of Paris would be provided with weapons and that they would be liberated collectively spread through the city.[170] Proclamations saying that 'the Enemy are at the gates of Paris' appeared, which produced 'Terror and Despair among the People' as Morris observed.[171] In reaction, popular

[166] Condorcet, 'Art social'.
[167] Ibid., 6-7.
[168] Condorcet, 'Art social', 10. 'Quelque constitution que l'on établisse, il est certain que dans l'état actuel de la civilisation des nations Européennes, il n'y aura jamais qu'un très-petit nombre de citoyens qui puissant s'occuper des affaires publiques'.
[169] Badinter, *Correspondance*, 253.
[170] *Gazette Nationale de France*, 7 Sept. 1792, No. 166, 662. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6394658x.r=gazette%20nationale%20de%20france?rk=450646;0 (15 June 2018).
[171] Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 537.

crowds took matters into their own hands. They stormed the Parisian prisons to massacre suspects from 2 to 6 September 1792. Among the approximately 1,200 victims were many of the Parisian upper classes, as well as clergy who had refused to take the revolutionary oath. While the royalist newspaper *Gazette* claimed otherwise, the Assemblée Nationale and the Parisian authorities in fact had no idea what to do with the feelings of hate and violence that had taken over the Parisian people.[172] Because of the war with Prussia and Austria, the majority of the army was away and not able to control the situation in Paris, which completely got out of hand. Official news about the events always lagged behind; the *Gazette* published an article written on 5 September in its edition of 7 September, stating that it became clearer every day that the massacres were part of a conspiracy. Rumours about the motives and numbers of victims circulated; responsibility for the September Massacres became subject of heated debate and struggle in politics.

The impact of the September massacres was enormous, inside as well as outside Paris. The general reaction to the September massacres of the Parisian elite as well as of the politicians was stupefaction. The events were a shocking proof of the power of the masses – like Condorcet wrote: 'There is nothing to fear for the people than the people itself'.[173] Madame de Genlis, who had fled to England already in October 1791, described in her memoirs how she spent sleepless nights following those early September days, pacing up and down her room and praying to God.[174] Madame de Staël tried to flee Paris on 3 September, but was stopped by an outraged crowd. Only because of her marriage to the Swedish ambassador, which was still intact despite her serious affair with De Narbonne, she was granted diplomatic inviolability and could escape. In January 1793 she joined the latter in England.[175] The husband of Madame de La Tour du Pin spent some time in The Hague in the Netherlands between the 10 August and the massacres in September 1792 before deciding not to return to France but to move to London.[176] For those who stayed in Paris, life had changed significantly. For the rest of September and October 1792 Morris made no accounts of visiting any salonnières or female friends. Only by the end of November the visits and dinners seem to have resumed but were much less frequent than they had been before.[177] Madame de Genlis considered it an 'absurd idea' to return to Paris in September 1792, dramatically adding that she could add another volume to her memoirs if she wanted to write all the painful ideas that troubled her imagination during this time. A month later, however, she considered

[172] *Gazette Nationale de France*, 7 Sept. 1792, No. 166, 663. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6394658x.r=gazette%20nationale%20de%20france?rk=450646;0 (15 June 2018).
[173] Badinter, *Correspondance*, 250.
[174] Genlis, *Mémoires*, iv. 126. 'Il n'y a rien à craindre pour le people que le people lui-même'.
[175] Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 537.
[176] Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une femme*, 283.
[177] Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 536-602.

it safe enough to make the trip, and on the night of her arrival in Paris went to the theatre as if nothing had happened.[178]

Throughout the next months, the situation radicalised and became increasingly unbearable for Parisian society. On 30 October 1793, the revolutionaries declared all women's political clubs and associations illegal. The *Société des citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires*, an activist group of women mostly from the lower classes, that had only been founded in July 1793, was closed as well.[179] For some time, part of the salon culture in the Jacobin Republic survived in the fourteen improvised Parisian prisons of the French Revolution, mostly former monasteries, annexed aristocratic or royal property and government buildings, where the aristocracy was reunited.[180] Certain prisons, like the prison du Port-Royal, granted their prisoners a bit more freedom than others, allowing them to gather at the former chapel at night to play music, have dinner and read.[181]

In order to process all the cases of those arrested, the *tribunal criminal extraordinaire* was founded, which came to be known as the 'tribunal du sang' because it was peremptory, with no derogation.[182] The longer the Tribunal existed, the higher the number of death sentences, following the simplification of the juridical procedure and eliminating the right of defence. Executions were carried out with the help of the guillotine, most often at the Place de la Révolution (now Place de la Concorde). At the Place du Carrousel at the other end of the Tuileries, close to the Louvre, and the Place de Grêve (now Place de l'Hôtel de Ville) death sentences were carried out using guillotines as well.[183] The victims were neatly administrated in a series of eleven leaflets, appearing around every fifteen days in Paris. On the first page of this *Liste générale et très-exacte des noms, âges, qualité et demeures de tous les Conspirateurs qui ont été condamnés à mort par le Tribunal révolutionnaire, établi à Paris par la loi du 17 août 1792, et par le second Tribunal établi à Paris par la loi du 10 mars 1793, pour juger tous les ennemis de la patrie* the reader was promised that all the personal details of victims were researched as thoroughly as possible and that the remaining part of the list would be published as soon as possible. One could buy the editions separately for 15 *sols* per leaflet or subscribe for the whole series, in which case every leaflet would only cost 12 *sols* each, money which would fully support the Republic.[184]

---

[178] Genlis, *Mémoires*, iv. 126, 132. '(…) qu'il seroit absurde de choisir un tel moment pour l'y reconduire. Je ferois un volume de plus, si je voulois écrire toutes les idées douloureuses qui, dans ce temps, troubloient mon imagination!'

[179] Société des citoyennes républicaines, *Réglement de la Société des citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires de Paris* (Paris, date unknown); Geneviève Fraisse, 'Rupture révolutionnaire et l'histoire des femmes' in: Danielle Haase Dubosc and Eliane Viennot (eds.), *Femmes et pouvoirs sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1991), 291-305, 293.

[180] Kale, *French Salon*, 61.

[181] Damave, *De Franse salon*, 135.

[182] Gérard Walter (ed.), *Actes du tribunal révolutionnaire* (Paris, 1968), x.

[183] *Liste générale et très-exacte des noms, âges, qualité et demeures de tous les Conspirateurs qui ont été condamnés à mort par le Tribunal révolutionnaire, établi à Paris par la loi du 17 août 1792, et par le second Tribunal établi à Paris par la loi du 10 mars 1793, pour juger tous les ennemis de la patrie.* 10 vols. (Paris, 1794), iii. 2.

[184] *Liste Générale*, iii. 1.

For the French Revolution as a whole and for the Parisian upper classes in general, September 1792 marked a turning point. The bloody events in the first week of the month made clear that the Revolution had taken a more radical turn and that the power of the masses should not be underestimated anymore, it should even be feared. Yet, the Parisian aristocracy had learned to adapt itself and its salons to the political 'revolutions' since 14 July 1789.[185] Public opinion now stretched further than the Enlightened upper class opinion of the people holding political power: the masses in the streets seemed to be powerful too, both by their number and by their means. Tradition, descent and titles did not grant the aristocracy inviolability anymore. On the contrary, when even King Louis XVI, the personification of God on earth, could be overthrown, the people he had always protected could as well.

[185] In sources from the early years of the French Revolution, often every major event is called a revolution in itself.

Chapter 2. Politics and salons after the start of the Revolution

After the French Revolution had started, salons as places of intellectual activity became even more important for the public sphere and French society on a whole than before. Their aristocratic character was fading when salons opened up to professional politicians who came from various backgrounds. The rise of public opinion as an important political influencer made that salons came to be concerned with the people outside le monde as well. Salonnières were involved in politics in their own ways, from conversing with male visitors on political affairs to actively influencing the decision-making of those in power. In this chapter, the various levels of political involvement of salons and salonnières will be discussed. In the first revolutionary years, from July 1789 to September 1792, the salons that were active had been set up before the Revolution already. The salonnières allowed for the politicisation at their homes to different degrees. Among the most political salons in this period was the one of Madame de Staël, where all prominent people came together and Morris could not keep up with the high level of conversation. To what extent was her salon 'a vast engine of power', as Amelia Gere Mason defined the political salons of the Revolution?[186]

Levels of political involvement

In March 1787, Thomas Jefferson, the American ambassador in Paris, wrote a letter to salonnière Madame Adrienne-Catherine comtesse de Tessé. He had been travelling through France for three weeks without receiving any news from the capital, which had given him the time to reflect on the recent political affairs. He had formed ideas about political reform, which he shared in a letter with Madame de Tessé, and concluded with the remark: 'These, Madam, are my opinions; but I wish to know yours, which, I am sure, will be better'.[187] It could be that the latter part of the sentence was added to flatter her, but Jefferson would not have shared his thoughts with her and asked her opinion, had he not greatly valued Madame de Tessé's thoughts and ideas on political matters.

Madame de Tessé held a salon in Paris at 59 rue de Varenne faubourg Saint-Germain, on the Left Bank of the Seine, as well as outside the city at her chateau in Chaville.[188] Through her nephew Lafayette she was brought into contact with Jefferson, with whom she corresponded until the end of her life. As can be concluded from Jefferson's quoted letter, Madame de Tessé had a fond interest in politics, probably stimulated by her husband who was a deputy of the État des Notables. In her thoughts on

[186] Amelia Gere Mason, *The women of the French Salons* (Fairfield, 2007). See chapter 8: Salons of the Eighteenth Century – The Salon an Engine of Political Power.
[187] Thomas Jefferson, 'To Madame d'Enville, New York, April 2, 1790'. American History. From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond: http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/thomas-jefferson/letters-of-thomas-jefferson/#1789 (6 June 2018).
[188] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 6; Henri Cordier, *Un coin de Paris. L'École des langues orientales vivantes* (Paris, 1913), 20-23.

philosophy, she was very much influenced by Voltaire and in her political thinking by Lafayette, according to Madame Anne marquise de Montagu who knew Madame de Tessé from her later period in exile in Switzerland.[189] When Morris paid Madame de Tessé a visit in July 1789 he found her 'deeply engaged in a political Discussion'.[190] Already before the Revolution, she defined herself as a 'republican' and Morris noted that he found at her place 'Republicans of the first Feather'.[191] He asked her, then, if she did not find him 'too aristocratic' for her salon, which she denied and two months later he learned that Madame de Tessé 'is become a Convert, she says, to my Principles of Government' and had become more in favour of his conservative and royalist opinions. He added: 'there will be many more such Converts'.[192] In the words of Madame de Montagu, Madame de Tessé was one of the most remarkable persons of her time because of the superiority of her spirit and holding a conversation had always been her 'grande affaire', at which she shone because of the 'manliness' of her thoughts. It was joked that the older she got, the more manly she became in her character.[193] Indeed, she conversed with and was taken seriously by men because of her opinions on politics, while traditionally, general literary and cultural topics have been considered much more feminine topics than philosophy or political theory.

An equal conversation partner for general chit chat but most often political affairs Morris found in Madame de Flahaut, another salonnière in Paris, who lived in the Louvre. He visited her almost daily or multiple times a day, more often than any of his other Parisian contacts, and in his diary referred to her by name, Madame de F- or simply as 'my Friend'. Love played a role in the close relationship between Morris and Madame de Flahaut, and they often alternated between conversations on the future of their affair and revolutionary politics. The intelligent Madame de Flahaut did not necessarily like politics, but nevertheless paid attention to political matters when they could not be avoided any longer. Madame Vigée-Lebrun wrote of Madame de Flahaut that she was among the most distinguished women she had known before the Revolution. Yet if this really was the case or is meant to flatter Madame de Flahaut is unsure, for Madame Vigée-Lebrun remarked that there might be a chance she would read her text and then she would know that she had not been forgotten.[194] As with many female friends, Morris had such a close relationship with Madame de Flahaut that he visited her outside her 'salon hours' as well. When one day he found her 'at her Toilette and with her Dentist', he stayed nevertheless to discuss politics, wanting to hear her opinion.[195] This shows how easily these salon contacts turned into close and informal friendships between men and women.

---

[189] Auguste Callet, *Anne-Pauline-Dominique de Noailles, marquise de Montagu* (Paris, 1869), 133-134.
[190] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 161.
[191] Ibid., 6. Quote from March 1789. Already in March 1789, Morris described republicanism as 'a moral Influenza'. See: Ibid., xli.
[192] Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 220. Morris remained sympathetic towards the French monarchy during the early years of the Revolution.
[193] Callet, *Anne-Pauline-Dominique*, 24, 136-137. The quote about manliness is of Madame de Montagu: '(…) la virilité de ses pensées. Quelqu'un disait d'elle, en plaisantant, qu'elle avait fait comme des poules qui prennent, en vieillissant, l'allure et le chant du coq'.
[194] Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 305-306.
[195] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 227.

The relationship between salonnières and visitors was symbiotic: Morris asked Madame de Flahaut to help him with a diplomatic reception, and in return she desired him to come by her salon that night to tell her the news. The next morning, it was her turn to report him the news from Versailles where she had been.[196] Between these men and women existed an equal power balance of mutual dependence. Eventually, the salon of Madame de Flahaut fell apart because of the groups in favour of and against the constitutions that formed during the Revolution. She herself was liberal, and thus part of the former group. Madame de Flahaut was among the high society women who stayed in Paris even after the September massacres, seeing her friends and former salon visitors disappear from the capital.[197] At the end of September 1792, she fled to England.[198]

Up until the September massacres, salons seemed to function as they used to. Politics took up the vast majority of the conversations, concentrating on the events in the capital and the wars that France was fighting. How deeply politics did influence private lives in the politicised society under the French Revolution of both men and women, is proven by another letter from Jefferson. Written in 1790, shortly after his appointment as the American Secretary of State, it was intended for Madame duchesse d'Enville, a Parisian salonnière. His personal feelings of affection for her were in this letter connected to his political ambitions to cement the friendship between America and France: 'The change of your government will approximate us to one another'.[199] As pleasant conversation partners, the above mentioned women may have aimed to convince their interlocutor of their point of view on political matters, but they did not exert their influence to make them change their political preferences or activities. Madame de Tessé, Madame de Flahaut and many others in le monde played the political game within the boundaries of the pre-revolutionary acceptable gender standards. Salons provided them a space to converse with intelligent men, and to be challenged by a serious conversation on politics. This role was already that extraordinary, that these women differed enough from the majority of their gender to be called manly.

There were salonnières, however, who went further much further in wielding influence, lobbying and scheming. On 10 January 1790, the British writer Young dined at the duc de la Rouchefauld 'with a large party' of 'ladies and gentlemen, and all equally politicians', of which he noted in his diary:

> But I may remark another effect of this revolution, by no means unnatural, which is, that of lessening, or rather reducing to nothing, the enormous influence of the sex: they [women] mixed themselves before in everything, I think I see an end to it very clearly. The men in this kingdom

[196] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 227.
[197] Kale, *French salons*, 51, 59.
[198] Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (ed.), *Oeuvres de Madame de Souza* (Paris, 1865), iii.
[199] Thomas Jefferson, 'To Madame d'Enville New York, April 2, 1790'. American History. From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond: http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/thomas-jefferson/letters-of-thomas-jefferson/#1789 (6 June 2018).

> were puppets, moved by their wives, who, instead of giving the *ton*, in questions of national debate, must now receive it, and must be content to move in the political sphere of some celebrated leader, - that is to say, they [men] are, in fact, sinking into what nature intended them for; they will become more amiable, and the nation better governed.[200]

Among these women setting the tone in public affairs, was Madame de Condorcet. She was married to the famous scientist, writer and politician Condorcet, 'a big name' in late eighteenth-century France, who was completely absorbed in his own philosophical and political activities.[201] Madame de Condorcet hosted her own salon at the impressive Hôtel des Monnaies at the Quai Conti along the Seine.[202] Madame de Condorcet's ideas were elevated and serious, and when Morris met her, he noted she looked clever.[203] When Young dined with her in January 1790, he talked 'not a word but politics'.[204] During the course of the Revolution, the salon of Madame de Condorcet became more in favour of the Girondins, influenced by the political career of her husband. At her salon, she received among others the politicians Chamfort, Beaumarchais, Roucher, Garat, Volney, Morellet, Suard and Christian VII of Denmark, Beccaria, Adam Smith and Thomas Paine.[205] Through her husband, who knew him from the Club Valois at the Palais Royal, Madame de Condorcet got to know Lafayette, with whom she started an affair. Contrary to many other affairs in the late eighteenth century which were public secrets – Morris in his diary constantly refers to De Narbonne as the lover of Madame de Staël –, Madame de Condorcet and Lafayette's love remained rather hidden. Mirabeau, however, knew about it and found it a reason to withdraw from Madame de Condorcet's salon society, for he considered her 'le veritable crime' for Lafayette.[206] This shows the thin line that existed between being liked or disliked in high society, influenced by affairs, gossip and friendships. Sociability, network and reputation could not be seen separately.

Close to Madame de Condorcet was Madame Helvétius, who hosted a salon in Auteuil on Thursdays and Sundays.[207] When the Revolution had radicalised, Madame de Condorcet came to live with her in the small village outside of Paris which offered relative freedom for the Parisian upper class who feared for their lives, not only because of their noble ranks and descent but also because of their active political involvement.[208] The idyllic setting of the small house and garden of Madame Helvétius, as well as the pleasant society, did her close friend Benjamin Franklin, who had lived in Paris from 1776

---

[200] Betham-Edwards, *Arthur Young's travels*, 294.
[201] Armandine Rolland, *Mes souvenirs sur Mirabeau* (Paris, 1869), 102-103. 'Ce grand nom'. The marquis de Condorcet was a self-made man, who despite his title had no money. Because of his intelligence and his writings, and with the help of d'Alembert, he was adopted by le monde. Badinter, *Correspondance*, 10.
[202] See appendix 1a.
[203] Rolland, *Mes Souvenirs*, 105-106; Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 143. 'Une Air spirituelle'.
[204] Betham-Edwards, *Arthus Young's travels*, 292.
[205] Hellegouarc'h, *L'esprit de société*, 417.
[206] Rolland, *Mes Souvenirs*, 102.
[207] Roger Picard, *Les salons littéraires et la société française 1610-1789* (New York, 1943).
[208] Kale, *French salons*, 59.

to 1785 as the American Minister of France, look back on the days in Auteuil with nostalgia when he had returned to America.[209] It was Franklin as well who had introduced Morris to all his Parisian friends in 1789, when Franklin had already moved back to Philadelphia. Shortly after his arrival, Morris regretted that Temple Franklin had returned to America with his grandfather and was 'not in some public Situation here, for certainly his perfect knowledge of the Manners and the Ton of Society could not but be useful'.[210] That the Founding Fathers and other prominent foreign visitors of Paris went to the salons and were fully integrated in Parisian high society, affirms that salons were open to newcomers, as long as they were respectable people knowing the manners and habits of salon culture.

Madame Helvétius had only began to receive guests at her salon after her husband, the politician Helvétius, had passed away, thus functioning fully independently. She liked to keep control herself, and was not pleased when her visitors invited others over to her house without informing her.[211] Madame Helvétius' own political preferences were so strong that despite being 'in most things so compassionate for the foibles & follies of others, [she] had quarrelled with a great number of her friends merely they thought differently from her'.[212] 'Madame Helvétius & all her friends are violent patriots', one of the guests of her salon wrote in a letter in 1790, and according to Morris 'a raving mad democracy forms this Society' of hers.[213] From January 1791 onwards, she became increasingly suspected of bringing together all the 'tormentors of the monarchy', and it was thought that in her salon, where she received all 'rebels', movements against the throne and the altar were developed.[214]

The larger the role of women in their salons and the more involved they were in politics, the stronger the rumours and feelings of suspicion among the outsiders of their salons. The semi-private character of the salon, making those who were excluded from it guess what happened inside, made them even more mysterious and often falsefully suspected of scheming practices. Because the men who visited their salon depended on them as sources of news and as intermediaries to get into contact with people outside their own network, the salonnières could use this power to influence them or get things done. At the same time, the women needed their visitors as well and could not put their vulnerable position in high society at risk by going too far in their political activities.

Madame de Staël

In late eighteenth-century French salon culture, Germaine Necker, the later Madame de Staël, has come to be seen as the most prominent figure. While many sources and publications of her life still exist, only

[209] Allan, *Correspondance*, iv. 174. Letter 830. 'Je pense continuellement des plaisirs que j'ai joui dans la douce société d'Auteuil'.
[210] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. xxx-xxxi.
[211] Allan, *Correspondance*, 203. Letter 840.
[212] Ibid., 191. Letter 838.
[213] Allan, *Correspondance*, iv. 185. Letter 835, Alexander John Alexander to Henry Jonathan Williams. Letter written on 29 July 1790; Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 235. Diary entry of Sunday 7 August 1791.
[214] Allan, *Correspondance*, iv. 207. Letter 842.

few of them originate in the first years of the French Revolution. The young Germaine Necker was basically raised in the aristocratic Parisian salon of her mother Madame Necker. Madame de Genlis condemned this way to raise a child: in her opinion, her mother had done wrong by allowing her young daughter into her salon most time of her days where the 'foule des beaux-esprits' that surrounded her had a bad influence. They talked to Germaine Necker about passions and love when her mother was distracted by the other guests, according to Madame de Genlis, who thought the solitude of her room and books would have been better for her. At the age of sixteen, Germaine Necker's experiences in her mother's salon had learnt her to talk quickly and without giving her words too much thought, which was also true for her writing, according to Madame de Genlis, who was much embarrassed by her behaviour.[215] Saying whatever came up in one's mind was not considered part of the art of conversation in late eighteenth-century France, which women of the upper classes had to master. In this respect, the future Madame de Staël differed strongly from her mother who paid much attention to what she discussed and with whom. The salon of Madame Necker was nicknames 'the sanctuary' because of the air of solemn and yet affable majesty with which she received her guests.[216] Morris seemed to share Madame de Genlis' opinion on Madame de Staël, because when he met her at a dinner at De Tessé in September 1789, he was annoyed by her curiosity and directness.[217]

On 14 January 1786, when she was nineteen years old, she married Éric-Magnus de Staël-Holstein, the Swedish ambassador in Paris. Part of Madame de Staël's new social status was an introduction at court, where she had little success. Though visitors of Madame Necker's salon had written complimentary about her daughter, impressed by her beauty, knowledge and social skills, everyone in Versailles found her nasty, liberal and fake and Madame de Staël herself felt out of place as well.[218] At the Swedish Embassy in the Hôtel Dillon in the rue du Bac in Paris where she lived with her husband, she started to receive guests herself. Although this was her proper entrance in le monde as an adult, she was not unknown and even already popular thanks to her parents' introduction.[219] That the opening of her salon took place around the time of her father Necker's retour to Paris after having been absent for a year, when he seemed to hold a favourable position again, must have had a positive effect as well.

The salon of her mother had taught her the virtues of a typical pre-revolutionary upper class salonnière: entertaining guests, holding a conversation and providing an enjoyable evening. At the age of eleven, Madame de Staël had been introduced to Voltaire and she had read and admired Rousseau from a young age. Although she was fully integrated in the cultural and literary life of the Parisian high society, she felt more drawn towards philosophical and political conversations in her own salon and wished to be taken seriously as a thinker. Contrary to her mother, who carefully prepared the

[215] Genlis, *Mémoires*, 316-319.
[216] Picard, *Les salons*, 339.
[217] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 233-234.
[218] Hellegouarc'h, *L'Esprit de société*, 402.
[219] Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii. 390.

conversations in her salon, Madame de Staël did not prepare anything in advance and yet held profound discussions according to her visitors. Her father, who was originally from Geneva, had been France's Finance Minister in the late 1770s. Between 1788 and 1790 he held political functions on and off, until his resignation and retirement in Coppet, Switzerland. Madame de Staël felt closely attached to her father, followed his political work and success and was sympathetic towards his liberal ideas.

While at first her interest in politics was inspired by Necker's position in the French government, from the summer of 1789 onwards when the Assemblée Constituante was founded, Madame de Staël became interested in the new French political environment more generally. She was not revolutionary in any sense, but she regarded 14 July 1789 with enthusiasm as the creation of a 'new world': one in which a constitution, the law and mutual trust between rulers and the people would reign.[220] At the public gallery of the Assemblée she was able to form her own opinion about politics, independently from her father and his liberal ideas, even though his political heritage would remain visible throughout her life. The first years of the Revolution have been formative for her political thought, about which she started to write and publish extensively since the 1790s. During the days preceding the meeting of the États Généraux, her salon was filled with an enormous mass of people every morning, who came to her not only for news, but for advice and an interpretation of the events.[221] Madame de Staël held a powerful and influential position in society as daughter of an important minister and wife of an ambassador.

In her salon, Madame de Staël predominantly functioned independently from her husband, who did not share her passion for politics. 'Le salon (…) c'était elle-même', Madame d'Abrantès wrote in her *L'Histoire des Salons*.[222] This book is often quoted in the biographies of Madame de Staël and was one of the first works about her salon, but was only written in 1830 and Madame d'Abrantès was too young to have been a visitor of Madame de Staël's salon in the early years of the Revolution. Madame de Staël did not use the term salon herself; according to Madame d'Abrantès her aim was not to found an académie nor bureau d'esprit, but a *lieu de réunion* where her guests, 'all the nobilities of her time', liked to gather, knowing they could find each other there again the next day.[223] Indeed, the salon of Madame de Staël was predominantly aristocratic, in this respect showing many similarities with the salon of Madame Necker. Madame de Staël was at her best when eight to ten people attended her salon, but sometimes friends and admirers came en masse, attracted by her increasing fame.[224] In the early years of the Revolution, the constitutional liberal Mirabeau was a frequent visitor of her salon, just like Lafayette, Clermont-Tonnerre, Talleyrand and Lameth, on whose constitutional politics she had a rather shaping influence.[225] Another central figure was De Narbonne, son of Louis XV, with whom she had

[220] Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii, 394 ; Germaine de Staël, 'Réflexions sur la paix, adressées a M. Pitt et aux Français' in: *Oeuvres complètes de Madame de Staël, publiées par son fils ; précédées d'une notice sur le caractère et les écrits de Mme de Stael, par Madame Necker de Saussure* (Brussels, 1830), ii. 35-125, 56.
[221] Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii. 389, 391.
[222] Ibid., 383.
[223] Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii. 375.
[224] Ibid., 388.
[225] Ibid., 392.

two sons during the first years of the Revolution while she was still married to baron de Staël-Holstein. Later on, these visitors were joined by the Girondins Vergniaud, Buzot, Barnave, Gaudet and others.[226]

Morris met Madame de Staël for the first time in the summer of 1789, and his dislike grew stronger during the following visits. Yet, her salon must have been so important to get news, that he continued to visit her and gradually started to feel more sympathetic towards her. Madame de Staël's involvement in politics made Morris visit her to hear 'all the News she knows'.[227] On 30 October 1789, he visited Madame de Staël's salon for supper and noted that there was held 'a Conversation too brilliant for me'.[228] This famous quote is often used to demonstrate the outstanding intellectual environment of Madame de Staël's salon. The next month, Morris was again impressed by the 'great Deal of *bel Esprit*' at her place, confessing 'I am not sufficiently brilliant for this Constellation'.[229] The conversation at the salon of Madame de Staël had a 'Sententious Style':

> To arrive at Perfection in it one must be very attentive and either wait till one's Opinion be asked or else communicate it in a Whisper. It must be clear, pointed and perspicuous and then it will be remembered, repeated and respected. This however is playing a Part not natural to me, I am not sufficiently an Œconomist of my Ideas. I think that in my Life I never saw such exuberant Vanity as that of Madame de Stahl upon the Subject of her Father.[230]

Madame de Staël did not make her home into a sort of headquarters of a liberal political movement, though there were some prominent visitors of her salon who came regularly. On the contrary, based on her liberal ideas, she made her salon a democratic place where every topic could be discussed and members of all political movements were invited, thereby setting a model for liberal salons in the nineteenth century.[231] Her intimate friends were exactly the men whose political ideas she opposed: the liberals Mirabeau and Clermont-Tonnère, revolutionary Montmorency, constitutional monarchists brothers Lameth and Barnave.[232] All these men were aristocrats who became politicians after the Revolution had started. In the Assemblée, Mirabeau, Clermont-Tonnère and Montmorecny abandoned their noble privileges and became sympathetic with the lower classes.

As the Swedish ambassador's wife Madame de Staël met many women, but did not consider them part of their intimate society. Generally, at her salon, she was not fond of the company of women. As an explanation, Madame d'Abrantès wrote that Madame de Staël conversed about important topics that occupied Europe, and her conversation thus was not appealing to other women. An exception was

[226] Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii. 377-380.
[227] Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 329.
[228] Ibid., i. 277.
[229] Ibid., 285-286.
[230] Ibid., 286.
[231] Kale, *French Salons*, 54.
[232] Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii. 378, 391.

made for some of the women she had met at her mother's salon, among others Madame Anne princesse de Poix and Madame princesse de Beauveau, who hosted their own Parisian salons where politics were discussed as well.[233] Her activities were not limited to her own salon: she also visited other salons, for example of Madame d'Angivillier, whose salon had a moderately royalist character.[234] As for herself, she claimed that her womanhood and the consequential exclusion from any formal political role or career granted her the independence to express the opinions she thought important.[235] She considered her role as salonnière actively, intellectually and politically, contrary to her mother's salon in which culture and literature had been central and where Madame Necker's role had been less formative for her guests.[236] At the same time, nevertheless, Madame de Staël's salon did fit in the eighteenth-century aristocratic salon tradition with its luxurious setting in the Hôtel Dillon on the Left Bank on the Seine and its intimate character.

Since her own salon had proven to be effective in debating political issues, bringing together rival political movements and influencing public opinion already in the last years of the Ancien Régime, Madame de Staël contributed a major role to salons in the shaping of French politics in the early years of the Revolution. According to Madame de Staël, who in this respect agreed with a more common idea of late eighteenth-century Parisian upper class thought, salon sociability was crucial for the moral education of the representatives; she saw it as a woman's role to provide for these salons where politicians could gain the wisdom necessary to govern with wisdom and morality.[237] In *Des circonstances actuelles qui peuvent terminer la Révolution et des principes qui doivent fonder la République en France* she even proposed that salonnières could help to form a 'political combination' of representatives with different political opinions who acted according to the will and in the interest of all.[238] This ideal she already tried to bring into practice in her own salon, where her role stretched much further than being a *maîtresse de maison*. In contrast to many other Parisian salon holders who had been part of le monde before the Revolution, Madame de Staël thus did not consider the outbreak of the Revolution as a social disaster and as the downfall of sociability. Instead, the Revolution's early years marked for her the heydays of high society and the birth of manifold opportunities for salon holders, granting salons with a public responsibility.[239]

In the last months of 1790, Madame de Staël left Paris to join her parents in Coppet, Switzerland where they had moved after Necker's resignation from French politics. This choice thus was politically motivated. In the conversation in her salon, Madame de Staël proved to be very closely connected to her father and his political work. In the discussions, the salon visitors were aware not to say negative things

[233] Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii. 376.
[234] Lilti, *Le Monde*, 401.
[235] Kale, 'Women', 319.
[236] Ibid., 320.
[237] Ibid., 309-312.
[238] Lucia Omacini (ed.), *Des circonstances actuelles qui peuvent terminer la révolution et des principes qui doivent fonder la république en France* (Geneva, 1979), 19.
[239] Kale, *French Salons*, 52.

about him, which could enrage her.[240] From Coppet, she corresponded with friends in Paris about ways in which the Jacobins could be countered, expressing her disappointment in the politicians' reaction.[241] In January 1791, Madame de Staël returned to Paris, while her parents stayed in Coppet, because she could not bear to be so far away from the French political centre.

On 16 April 1791, the *Journal des Indépendants* published Madame de Staël's first political article titled 'À quels signes peut-on reconnaître quelle est l'opinion de la majorité de la Nation?' in which she raised the question what the French people really wanted after two years of Revolution.[242] Public opinion was crucial in Madame de Staël's thought on the ideal political functioning of France. She was strongly in favour of a representative government, which she considered the most democratic form, because she believed in the representatives' power and will to strive for proper representation of the people.[243] The representatives would be controlled by public opinion, which in essence always aspired to justice, security and peacefulness, but was poisoned by the many years of abuse under the Ancien Régime.[244] Public opinion thus would be the real sovereign power in a representative government, for ideas instead of people reigned France, she explained.[245] The notion of public opinion was new in the early years of the Revolution and she struggled with the question how it could best be gauged.

Influencing public opinion and politicians in her own salon was not enough for her: Madame de Staël desired an even more direct influence on French politics. She is believed to have pushed, or certainly have helped, her lover De Narbonne to become Minister of War, which happened on 6 December 1791, thereby granting Madame de Staël with an even bigger political influence than before, even though he remained in power for only little more than three months.[246] He sat in a government that was dominated by constitutional monarchists known as Feuillants, whose ideas corresponded more or less with Madame de Staël's ideal of a 'monarchie limitée', as she called a monarchy that was limited by a constitution.[247] 'The principal task of the États Généraux, without a doubt, was to form a constitution', she had stated already in early 1789.[248] Madame de Staël declared her love of France often in her writings, but always regarded her *patrie* in European perspective. Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland she considered the happiest countries in Europe and examples for France, but especially England with its parliamentary government, its two chamber model and most of all its (unwritten)

[240] Davenport, *A Diary*. See for example: ii. 290. Entry of 22 October 1791: 'I dine at M.de de Stahl's and say too much against the Consitution, to which she provoked me by fishing for the Praise of her Father. I did not swallow the bait'.
[241] Fontana, Biancamaria, *Germaine de Staël. A political portrait* (Princeton, 2016), 27.
[242] Godechot, *Considérations*, 13.
[243] Omacini, *Des circonstances actuelles*, 19.
[244] Ibid., 22, 33. 'L'opinion publique générale veut toujours la justice, la sûreté et le repos'.
[245] Omacini, *Des circonstances actuelles*, 21; Staël, 'Réflexions sur la paix', 35.
[246] Godechot, *Considérations*, 13.
[247] Omacini, *Des circonstances actuelles*, 57.
[248] Godechot, *Considérations*, 141. 'Le principal objet des états généraux, sans doute, étoit de faire une constitution'. Also see: 'Le roi, l'on ne saurait trop dire, avait toutes les vertus nécessaires pour être un monarque constitutionnel' in: Ibid., 156.

constitution, she admired. Madame de Staël described French politics before the constitution was formed as a mess: back then, nothing was written in laws, and there was no framework for politics.[249]

In the radicalising political environment, Madame de Staël became the object of royalist attacks in the press. She was made fun of in among others *La guerre des districts, ou la fuite de Marat. Poème Héroi-comique, en trois chants*, which concerned the political dispute between Necker and Marat. Apparently, she was still considered so close to her father that she underwent the consequences of his political actions.[250] From the summer of 1791 onwards, after the flight of the royal family, her salon gained a more outspoken anti-Jacobin character: in the wake of the Terror, she aimed at taming fanaticism, establishing harmony and laying the basis for successful self-government.[251] In this time she was also accused of having a bureau d'esprit: a centre that actively tried to influence public opinion or the public spirit by spreading ideas and writings.[252] Officially she was still married to De Staël, whose public spirit ('civisme') was doubted in relation to his contacts with the Girondins.[253] Suspicion that he was only 'a pretended secret ambassador of Sweden' was taken seriously in a time when foreigners in Paris were generally viewed with suspicion. Between 1774 and 1789, even a special police department called *Côntrole des étrangers* was in function to control potential spies.[254] Her political involvement only grew in this time. In October 1791, Madame de Staël hosted a coalition dinner with a 'Motley Company' of prominent French men ('Beaumetz, Bishop d'Autun, Alexander Lameth, the Prince de Broglio &ca., &ca.', Malouet, count de La Marck and Ségur), about which little is known.[255] In 1792, Madame de Staël was accused of organising soupers for Girondins. In hindsight, she indeed confirmed that after the death of Louis XVI 'the last men who, in this time, are still worth of a place in history, are the Girondins (…). Every day and every hour with an intrepid eloquence the Girondins fought against the discourse that was pointed like a dagger, giving a death sting in every sentence'.[256] To the Girondins condemned to death in 1793 she referred as 'these men, who defended everything there was of respectability in France'.[257]

As for so many aristocrats in Paris, the outbreak of the September massacres on 1 September 1792 marked a turning point for Madame de Staël. Urged by warnings of friends, she managed to flee on 2 September thanks to the diplomatic inviolability granted by her marriage, after being held up by a

[249] Staël, 'Réflexions sur la paix', 52, 47-49.
[250] Fontana, *Germaine*, 13.
[251] Kale, 'Women', 310.
[252] Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii. 402.
[253] *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860 ; 52-61, 63-82. Convention nationale. Série 1 / Tome 69*, 20 July 1793, 221.
[254] Lilti, *Le monde*, 126-127.
[255] Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 279-280.
[256] Godechot, *Considérations*, 305. 'Les derniers hommes qui, dans ce temps, soient encore dignes d'occuper une place dans l'histoire, ce sont les Girondins. (…) Les Girondins combattoient chaque jour et à chaque heure avec une eloquence intrépide contre des discours aiguisés comme des poignards, et qui renfermoient la mort dans chaque phrase.'
[257] Ibid., 306. '(…) que ces hommes qui défendoient tout ce qu'il y avoit d'honnêtes gens en France (…)'.

raging crowd in the Parisian streets.[258] Madame de Staël would only return to Paris in 1814, after having travelled through and lived in various European countries. From her family's château in Coppet in Switzerland she continued to closely follow the developments in France, while she continued her salon activities with assembled European guests, among whom some who had fled France as well. This salon, as well as her affair with Benjamin Constant and her ten years in exile when France was reigned by Napoleon have given Madame de Staël remarkable fame, which makes that her role and position in the Parisian revolutionary salon world are often overestimated in hindsight as well. Morris' and other contemporaries testimonies of the distinguished level of her salon, however, make clear that the fame attributed to Madame de Staël already in the early years of the French Revolution is just.

Philosophy and politics

In 1789, when the Revolution had just started, French modern politics was still new to the imagination of all French people. In the eyes of Madame de Staël everyone flattered themselves by playing a role and everyone saw a role for themselves in the multiplied opportunities that appeared everywhere. One hundred years of events and writings had prepared minds to bring forth an uncountable number of blessings that people believed the time was ripe to seize.[259] Politics before the French Revolution had exclusively been the business of the King and the court. One was born into politics, instead of being able to acquire a political position as an individual, independently of one's family, capital or title.

In the last years of the Ancien Régime, Madame de Staël had come to consider the salon as the meeting place par excellence for aristocrats with political power and intellectuals with Enlightened ideas mutually influencing each other. In the early years of the Revolution, when the power was still in the hands of 'la première classe' (the upper class), members of the Tiers État with talent and knowledge of philosophy and Enlightenment, governed the country together with the old nobility with its political experience. The ideas of the Enlightenment would finally be represented in politics, which was important in Madame de Staël's view because the Revolution could not have happened without its build-up in the previous century.[260] For the first time the French people were represented by educated minds instead of people selected because of their noble title. Yet, she soon felt disappointed when the revolutionary politicians used the Enlightenment ideas for their own merit, and when they pursued their own ambition instead of aiming to represent the nation. Corruption, envy, vanity and cowardice were

[258] Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii. 490-494.
[259] Godechot, *Considérations*, 149. 'La politique était alors un champ nouveau pour l'imagination des François; chacun se flattoit d'y jouer un rôle, chacun voyoit un but pour soi dans les chances multiplies qui s'annonçoient de toutes parts; cent ans d'événemens et d'écrits avoient prepare les esprits aux biens sans nombre que l'on se croyoit prêt à saisir'.
[260] Omacini, *Des circonstances actuelles*, 19; Godechot, *Considérations*, 228.

common among the representatives of the Assemblée, who strove for individual fame instead of setting aside their pride for the greater good of the representation of the people.[261]

Madame de Staël considered her salon, and salons in general, a meeting place for philosophy and politics: the former represented in the intellectuals and the latter in the aristocrats.[262] These groups never met at the court.[263] According to Kale, 'she worked to make her salon a place where those responsible for exercising power would gain the wisdom necessary to bring reason and morality into the crafting of legislation'.[264] This idea is adopted and elaborated on by more authors, most famously by Pierre Bourdieu in *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* in 1992. He defines salons as places where 'le champ intellectuel' meets 'le champ du pouvoir', and where contact, interaction and transaction between the two are encouraged.[265] While men of letters were denied access to power under the Ancien Régime, the French Revolution at first did seem to offer an opportunity to allow intellectuals some more authority. Since political power was still in the hands of the aristocracy, the new concept of liberty and the old tradition of politesse merged in the same people.[266] In practice, this did not happen on a large scale, leading to Madame de Staël's disappointment in the politicians in the Assemblée Nationale.[267]

Though Bourdieu does not address the role of women in the salons, Madame de Staël considered their position central. At the salons, women had the role to intermediate between the philosophers and the politicians by actively managing the discussion and supervising the transmission of information in her view. They could guide their visitors through a smooth conversation with different ways of thinking, as well as a counterweight to male hot-headedness and passion involved. While Madame de Staël admired the English for many reasons, she seemed to have been proud of the prominent role of French women in politics compared to their English counterparts:

> Women in England are accustomed to remain silent before men, when politics are mentioned; women in France are accustomed to lead almost the conversations, and their spirit is already at a young aged formed to the talents which that requires. Discussions on public affairs thus were softened by them, and often intermingled with amiable and lively jokes.[268]

---

[261] Fontana, *Germaine*, 35.
[262] Kale, 'Women', 309-338. Steven Kale's interpretation of Madame de Staël's writings is disputable in my opinion, especially his translation and understanding of Godechot, *Des circonstances actuelles*, 19. See Kale, 'Women', 312. Note 7.
[263] Godechot, *Considérations*, 228. 'À la cour, les deux bataillons de la bonne compagnie, l'un fidèle à l'ancien régime, et l'autre partisan de la liberté, se rangeoient en présence et ne s'approchoient guère'.
[264] Kale, 'Women', 311.
[265] Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris, 1992), 348.
[266] Kale, 'Women', 316.
[267] Fontana, *Germaine*, 35.
[268] Godechot, *Considérations*, 228. 'Les femmes en Angleterre sont accoutumées à se taire devant les hommes, quand il est question de politique; les femmes en France dirigeoient chez elles presque toutes les conversations, et leur esprit s'étoit formé de bonne heure à la facilité que ce talent exige. Les discussions sur les affaires publiques étoient donc adoucies par elles, et souvent entremêlées de plaisanteries amiables et piquantes.'

This role perfectly suited Madame de Staël's ideal of a salonnière and a woman who could influence politics on the highest level and with the most direct result. At her salon, she tried to bring together the most intelligent men of both 'sides' because they, she thought, being of a superior intellectual level, would understand each other despite the differences. Yet, conversation did not last too long as a successful mediator between the two parties. Due to a change of the political circumstances, her salon could not play this role for a long time. When the Revolution radicalised and the contrast between the two parties – in interests, sentiments and matter of thinking – became too big, even the most elevated spirits were no longer capable or ignoring the daily attacks in the press, the acts of violence, and the erected scaffold.[269] The revolutionaries lost their heads in their strive for power, marking the end of the era of sociability and finally of salon culture as a whole.

In the period from the start of the Revolution until September 1792, French politics changed drastically and Madame de Staël was at the forefront during all stages. The course the Revolution had taken was a disillusion for her, especially the failure of her ideal of a constitutional monarchy. When in 1794 Madame de Staël looked back on five years of revolution in her essay *Réflexions sur la Paix*, she acknowledged the flaws of the constitution of 1789, but claimed that it still had 'a thousand more supporters than the Ancien Régime had had'.[270] Yet, unlike many revolutionaries, she understood what the limitations in reality were of the abstract notions of freedom, liberty and progress.[271] There is no proof in her writings or in others of Madame de Staël complaining about the limits to direct and official female political power. Since her death, her political life has been somewhat overshadowed by her cultural activities and literary successes. This is unfortunate, as she should also be acknowledged for pushing the limits of her own political role as a woman as far as she could, and even using men around her as intermediator to obtain more power. In Coppet, Madame de Staël set up a famous salon which was attended by the most prominent French émigrés, close to the rather similar salon of Madame de Tessé in Holstein.[272] The flexible character of the salon, and its mobility because of the domestic setting, made that it could move throughout Europe together with its salonnières and guests, who emigrated.

Madame de Staël's ideas, writings and her salon were fully political, leaving no place for literature, music and other cultural expressions after the Revolution had started. As a woman who was equal to the most distinguished political men in Paris in her conversations and way of thinking, her influence on the men in power was significant. Unlike other salonnières, whose role was smaller as advisors or conversation partners, Madame de Staël almost had entered a formal political position herself and her salon can be considered an engine of the French Revolution.

---

[269] Godechot, *Considérations*, 229.
[270] Staël, 'Réflexions sur la paix', 45. 'La constitution de 1789, malgré ses défauts, a mille fois plus de partisans en France que l'ancien régime'.
[271] Fontana, *Germaine*, 235.
[272] Eugène Forgues (ed.), *Baron de Vitrolles. Souvenirs autobiographiques d'un émigré* (Paris, 1924), 121.

Chapter 3. The final salons in radicalising Paris

The only officially acceptable role for women according to the Jacobin revolutionaries was a Republican wife and mother, inspiring patriotism in her husband and raising citizens for the nation: an ideal that was promoted in speeches, prints and visual representation.[273] The gradual restriction of freedom of women, together with the increasing number of executions carried out by the Jacobins, made life in Paris for upper class women and men more and more unbearable. In the remaining salons, culture faded into the background and politics were the topic of all discussions, in some cases to such an extent that it is doubted whether these salons actually were political meetings. This chapter's case studies ask for a reconsideration of the definition of a salon, and its relation to politics and women. Madame Roland's salon is unique for its existence even after the September massacres and her level of political involvement in her husband's work, as well as in the Girondin movement. Can the meetings at the Rolands' ministerial residence be defined a salon with an outspoken political character, or did Madame Roland rather provide the setting for a Girondin headquarters or a political think tank? How far some authors push the flexible definition of a salon, is demonstrated in the extreme case of prison salons during the Terror. Besides questioning what a salon was, they thereby query when salons did finally disappear, or if the definition of a salon can still be adapted to any kind of political meetings.

Madame Roland

Madame Roland arrived in Paris on 20 February 1791; about one and a half year after the Revolution had started. From Lyon, where she had been based for her husband Jean-Marie Roland's work, Madame Roland had closely followed the course of the Revolution which she and her husband had welcomed enthusiastically, and studied the Assemblée's most significant politicians 'with interest difficult to imagine'.[274] The couple asked friends living in the capital for news about the events, and in her letters to them she expressed a clear political view. The closest contact of Madame Roland was Louis Bosc, an old friend from Paris who also had been the tutor of the couple's daughter Eudora. In total, 241 letters have been saved that Madame Roland sent and received in the period between 1789 and 1793, mostly to and from politically engaged friends, which express her political involvement.[275]

On 26 July 1789, two weeks after the storming of the Bastille, Madame Roland wrote Bosc: 'you give me no news updates at all, while there should be many'. She could not wait for political news

[273] Freund, 'The ''Citoyenne'' Tallien', 325.
[274] Louis Augustin Guillame Bosc (ed.), *Appel à l'impartiale postérité, par la Citoyenne Roland, Femme du Ministre de L'Intérieur; ou Recueil des Écrits qu'elle a rédigés, pendant sa Détention aux Prisons de l'Abbaye et de Sainte-Pélagie. D'après l'Edition de Paris, faite au profit de sa fille unique, privée de la Fortune de ses Père et Mère, dont les Biens sont toujours séquestrés.* 2 vols. (Paris, 1796), i. 35. 'J'avois suivi la marche de la révolution, les travaux de l'assemblée, étudié le caractère et les talents de ses membres les plus considérables, avec un intérêt difficile à imaginer'.
[275] Claude Perroud (ed.), *Lettres de Madame Roland.* 2 vols. (Paris, 1900-1902), i. xxiv.

and constantly wanted to be updated about the latest events. A month later, she told him: 'we [Roland and she] do not abandon politics, which is way too interesting right now, and we would not deserve to have a fatherland if we would stay indifferent to public affairs'.[276] A civil war Madame Roland considered inevitable to eventually reach individual freedom, which she did not doubt the Revolution would bring.[277] Her excitement about the move to Paris, away from 'our stupid provincial cities', and the possibility to attend the meetings of the Assemblée herself thus is understandable: she got up at five in the morning to queue for a good place in the public gallery, while the sessions started only at nine or ten.[278] At the Assemblée, she was impressed by 'the power of reason, the courage of probity, the geniuses of philosophy'.[279]

Roland's task in Paris was to lobby the Assemblée for a bailout for Lyon's municipal debt, as a result of the silk crisis since the 1780s. At the two furnished rooms the couple rented in the Hôtel Britannique at the rue Génégaud, they started to receive people engaged in French politics and public affairs who could be helpful to or important for Roland's business, together with some old relations they had in Paris. Madame Roland wrote in her memoirs that she considered herself 'bien logée' and that she was home-loving, and thus liked to invite people over instead of visiting.[280] She hated games and got bored by silly people who apparently were among *la grande société*, while she loved studying and reading in the environment of her own home.[281] She thus was not very much involved in the outgoing Parisian social life at theatres, balls and salons. Their accommodation was, at the tenants' request, not luxurious, and offered just enough space for the couple and their three servants. In this respect, the meetings at the Rolands took place in a setting highly different from that of the close by salon of Madame de Condorcet in the impressive Hôtel de la Monnaie and from the other townhouses and fancy apartments of the Parisian high society where cultural and political nights were hosted.

Whether the gatherings at rue Génégaud can rightfully be called a salon, a word Roland nor his wife certainly used himself or herself, is debated among historians.[282] It was not at all on Madame Roland's initiative that their guests came together. Most of the exclusively male visitors knew each other via journalist Brissot. Even though she was born and raised in Paris, Madame Roland had been away

[276] Perroud, *Lettres*, i. 53. Letter 322. 'Vous ne me dites point de nouvelles, et elles doivent fourmiller'; Ibid., 56. Letter 325. 'Nous n'abandonnons pas la politique; elle est trop intéressante dans ce moment, et nous ne mériterions pas d'avoir une patrie si nous devenions indifférents à la chose publique'. This quote is in accordance with the quite well known phrase 'Un people ignorant n'est souverain que de droit et de nom, mais il est esclave de fait' in: *Instructions générales pour les commissaires nationaux nommés par le Conseil exécutif* (15 December 1792). See: Anne Kupiec, 'La Gironde et le Bureau d'esprit public: livre et révolution', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 302 (1995), 571-586, 571.
[277] Perroud, *Lettres*, i. 58. Letter 326.
[278] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 136; Perroud, *Lettres*, i. 58. Letter 326. 'Nos sottes villes de provinces (…)'.
[279] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 35. 'la force de la raison, le courage de la probité, les lumières de la philosophie'.
[280] Ibid., 37.
[281] Ibid., 53.
[282] Siân Reynolds is among the historians who deny to apply the word salon to Madame Roland's gatherings, because she sticks to define salons more culturally, like Lilti does as well. See: Reynolds, *Marriage*, 138-140; Lilti, *Le Monde*, 7-8. Steven Kale is not fully convinced of Madame Roland's status as a salonnière either, see: Kale, *French Salons*, 55-59.

long enough to be considered a newcomer in revolutionary Paris, and unlike many salon holders had not gained fame by hosting a salon and participating in activities of the Parisian monde already before the Revolution. Madame Roland herself referred to the guests as 'le petit comité' that gathered at their home, with as its most prominent members Brissot, Pétion, Buzot, Robespierre, and Clavière, sometimes joined by others who came less frequently and are mentioned less in the literature.[283] It was a meeting place for both deputies of the Assemblée as well as people who were not (yet) professionally engaged in politics, with backgrounds in journalism, banking and law, who found themselves in proximity to power. These men were at the very heart of the Jacobin political movement.

The meetings at the Rolands' showed similarities with a salon: first of all, the main goal was a combination of political sociability, networking, and the exchange of information. In a time when newspapers published about the latest events only days after they had happened, news spread more rapidly orally. Madame Roland wrote about this: 'In a city like Paris, and in the present state of affairs, it mattered to have le monde to be informed in time what was happening or what was going to happen (...).'[284] Many of the politicians at the Assemblée had come to Paris since the start of the Revolution and left their families behind, just like the Rolands had made the move without their young daughter. Their lives were fully absorbed by their jobs: the Assemblée met seven days a week, with sessions starting at nine or ten in the morning 'and it was not unknown for the evening sessions to be prolonged until midnight or one in the morning' with only a short break for dinner.[285] When they finished earlier, the night was spent with their colleagues and others at salons and clubs, which functioned as the lobby of parliament. A political career thus had become a fulltime, serious profession.

In the second place, the meetings at the house of the Roland couple took place as regularly as other salon nights. Four times a week the guests came to their apartment, which was not far from any of their residencies. Indeed, the Hôtel Britannique was centrally located close to the Théâtre Français on the Parisian Left Bank, which was a publishing district in 1791. The Assemblée's committees and offices were nearby, and deputies and journalists often lived within walking distance. Timothy Tackett noticed that:

> the deputies found themselves scattered far and wide across the great metropolis [of Paris]. To some extent at least, the relative distance of a deputy's lodgings from the meeting hall was a rough measure of the individual's involvement and commitment to the Revolution. While many of those most swept up in events sought residencies as near to the manège [which housed the Assemblée] as possible, the more conservative deputies often preferred a greater distance, far

[283] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 38; Reynolds, *Marriage*, 140.
[284] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 54. 'Dans une ville comme Paris, et dans un tel état des choses [i.e. in revolutionary times] où il importoit d'avoir du monde pour être informé à temps de ce qui arrive ou de ce qui se prépare (…)'.
[285] Timothy Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary. The deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture (1789-1790)* (Princeton, 1996), 243-244.

from the noise and bustle of the city centre – and from the potential dangers of the politized crowd.[286]

The Jacobin Club was located in the former monastery Jacobins St Honoré.[287] Encouraged by Bosc, Roland was engaged in this club as well from the year 1791-1792, but had already frequented the local Jacobin club in Lyon. According to Madame Sophie Grandchamp, Madame Roland was supposed to follow her husband to the Jacobin Club whether she wanted to or not, insinuating that she preferred not to go.[288]

In the third place, visitors were received after dinner, like in other salons. Suiting the sober interior of their apartment, Madame Roland did not serve their guests a fancy meal or alcoholic drinks, but only a jug of water and a sugar shaker were presented. She received them after dinner, and before they went to the Jacobin Club.[289] In radicalising revolutionary times when the atmosphere in Paris could be cut with a knife, any reference to luxury relating to the pre-revolutionary salons and the displaying of wealth under Ancien Régime had to be avoided, even though the Rolands were not aristocratic themselves. However, it can be argued what was understood as luxury in the early 1790s: when in prison, Madame Roland wrote in her diaries that she set herself to a strict and sober diet, allowing herself only water, bread, chocolate and coffee, the latter of which apparently counting as nothing extraordinary.[290]

At the same time, Madame Roland was not the salonnière who initiated the salon nights, who invited the guests and played a central role in the conversations. The guests who were received came for each other and for Roland himself. Nevertheless, Madame Roland was always present at the meetings. In her memoirs, she noted how she was considered trustworthy by the male visitors and thus was allowed to be present at their confidential conversations on public affairs. She paid attention never to cross the boundaries of what she called the role of her sex. Besides being present at the meetings, she claimed to never have taken part in the discussions, sitting behind the circle of men while doing some embroidery or writing letters without missing a word of what was said. It happened she had to bite her lips not to say anything herself, which must have been almost impossible seen her vivid interest in politics expressed in her writings.[291] While she remained silent, it is even more surprisingly that in a letter written in March 1789, Madame Roland expressed her discontent with the fact that 'three-quarters of all men' still agreed with the Ancient Greek rule that women were supposed to be silent in conversation. In the same letter, she characterised herself as babbly.[292] Her silence was not the result of shyness, for in

[286] Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary*, 242. The Théâtre Français was named Odéon in 1796, and still exists today.
[287] The Jacobin Club, its unofficial name, would hold different official names over the course of the revolutionary years. Officially called *Société des amis de la constitution* in 1791, I will consequently call it the Jacobin Club.
[288] Claude Perroud, 'Une amie de Madame Roland (1791-1793). Souvenirs inédits de Sophie Grandchamp', *La Révolution française. Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 1 (2) (1899), 65-89, 84. '(…) le soir, je restais seule avec elle, excepté les jours où, bon gré, mal gré, il fallait suivre Roland aux Jacobins
[289] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 138.
[290] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 26.
[291] Ibid., 38.
[292] Perroud, *Lettres*, i. 44. Letter 319.

another letter she seemed rather convinced of her own power as a woman, writing to Bosc: '[I]f this letter does not reach you [because it would be opened and kept by others], let the cowards who read it blush by learning that it is from a woman, and tremble by thinking that she can organise ten enthusiasts, who can organise millions of others.'[293] Madame Roland in hindsight confessed to very much like the gatherings at her home that kept her up-to-date about the topics that interested her, and which granted her the opportunity to follow political style of argumentation and to 'observe men', about whom she complained that they could talk for three or four hours without ever resuming or concluding.[294]

Already before the Revolution, Madame Roland had had an outspoken political opinion, as is proved by the articles she anonymously published in *La Patriote*, the newspaper that Brissot was an influential journalist for. At the same time that she remained silent during the meetings at her place, she expressed her political views in letters. Madame Roland's presence at the political nights at her house certainly made it easier for her to help Roland with his work, in which she was engaged, mostly by writing and composing letters for him. Roland's repeated visits to the Assemblée had little or no success, and Madame Roland often wished she were a man, so that she could help him not only invisibly by preparing his work but also more visibly by pleading for the Assemblée herself, which demonstrates that she too had political ambitions. Her husband's weak chest did not help him much at the manège at the Tuileries, where a loud voice and oratorical talent was essential in the long chamber with bad acoustics and noise from the crowd. Madame Roland's initial eagerness to see the politicians at the Assemblée soon turned into disappointment about what she considered their mediocracy and corruption, and she realised that they did not really value liberty and the constitution.[295] She, on the other hand, admired the American constitution.[296] The royal family's flight on 20 June 1791, gave spark to the idea of a state form without a king: a Republic. The Rolands were in favour of this, strongly agreeing with the Jacobins, and with Robespierre in particular. For most of the Parisians, as well as for the deputies at the Assemblée, the republican regime would be too radical, seeing a constitutional monarchy as their ideal instead.

Revising the definition of a salon

The meetings in 1791 at the house of the Roland couple raise the question where ends the definition of a salon and where starts the definition of (backroom) politics. May calls Madame Roland the hostess of a political 'revolutionary salon', even though her place was in the background of the meetings. May

[293] Perroud, *Lettres*, i. 53. Letter 322. '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 songeangt qu'elle peut faire cent enthousiastes qui en feront des millions d'autres'.
[294] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 38.
[295] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 136-137. To Louis Bosc, for example, Madame Roland wrote already in August 1789 that she hoped that a constitution would be found: Bosc, *Appel*, ii. 428. Letter of 14 August 1789.
[296] Perroud, *Lettres*, i. 46. Letter 319.

argues this was expected of a woman, denying the other examples of late eighteenth-century salons where a woman was at the forefront. She admits that at the same time 'it goes without saying, however, that such an attempt at self-effacement did not prevent her from exerting a certain influence on the men who regularly met in her salon'.[297] This conclusion is rather invalid: the role of Madame Roland at the meetings at rue Génégaud was passive, and her influence did not stretch any further than her mere presence. May's conclusion that Madame Roland did host a salon clashes with my view that women did have an active, essential role in salons. Other historians do use this as a criteria to define a salon as well.

Defining a salon as an informal conversation at the home of a salonnière, where she was at the centre and played a prominent role, prevents the meetings at the Rolands' residence in 1791 to be called a salon, which is an informal conversation between a select company of elite people, invited on the basis of individuality to the home of a salonnière in my definition. Reynolds prefers to call the gatherings at the Rolands' lodging at Hôtel Britannique a 'modern think tank' rather than a salon.[298] She does so because she understands a salon as a cultural gathering, in line with Lilti's definition of a salon, instead of as meeting where politics were discussed. The political character of the meetings at the Rolands did not differ much from the ones at Madame de Staël's or Madame de Condorcet's salon: the only dissimilarity being that all visitors at the Rolands had the same, Jacobin, political orientation instead of being of opposing political 'parties'.

In September 1791, seven months after their arrival, the Roland couple left Paris, only to return in December. Roland's job had been abolished, depriving him from his pension. There was no political future for him in Lyon, and the move to Paris had financial motives: to take the necessary steps to obtain a pension, or to find a new position.[299] The 'dreadful state of public affairs' inspired their doubts whether Roland, who was 57 years old, should retire and dedicate himself to the encyclopaedia he was writing and with which Madame Roland helped him as well.[300] The members of le petit comité that they had been close with now had either entered into high positions and seemed to have forgotten about them or had moved out of Paris. Brissot in the meantime had acquired new allies, the most prominent ones among them from the Gironde department of France; Vergniaud, Gensonné, and Gaudet. At first referred to as Brissotins, they soon came to be known as Girondins. These deputies met regularly at the salon of Madame Louise-Marie Dodun at the Place Vendôme, where Roland was invited as well, though he almost never went because of the distance.[301]

Instead of retiring, Roland joined three societies in Paris and became secretary of the correspondence committee of the Jacobin Club. On 23 March 1792, Roland was informed that he was appointed Minister of the Interior, which came as a surprise to many, not least himself. His lack of experience, of a proper Parisian network and political know-how were outweighed by his rather neutral

[297] Gita May, *Madame Roland and the Age of Revolution* (London, 1970), 184-185.
[298] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 139-140.
[299] May, *Madame Roland*, 199.
[300] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 44.
[301] Ibid., 218.

political position in Brissot's view, who had suggested him for the position.[302] Roland's appointment as a minister marked a turning point in his and his wife's life and would determine their future.

The couple moved to the Ministry of the Interior at the impressive Hôtel de Lionne Pontchartrain, rue des Petits Champs, north of the Seine and close to the Palais Royal. For Madame Roland, the ministerial position of her husband meant a second introduction into Parisian revolutionary politics and an intensification of her political activities. Every Friday night she received Roland's colleagues from the 'Brissotin ministry' (De Grave, Lacoste, Daranthon, Clavière, Dumouriez and Servan) for dinner, sometimes joined by members of the *Assemblée Législative*. The rest of the week the ministers dined at the homes of the others.

In June 1792, the ministers were in crisis over the war with Bohemia and Hungary and Roland decided to send a letter of protest to king Louis XVI without the approval of his colleagues. This letter was in Madame Roland's handwriting. In her memoirs she confirmed to have written 'this famous letter' and at least partly composed it, after having convinced Roland of sending it despite the other ministers' criticism.[303] The letter gave Roland increasing fame and popularity in provincial France, especially in the Midi 'where a free spirit reigned', while in Paris the people did not go 'far enough' by tolerating the court, according to Madame Roland.[304] The turmoil of public affairs gave her a 'moral fever' with no release.[305] In reaction to the letter, Louis XVI dismissed who had come to be seen as the 'Jacobin' ministers: Servan, Clavière and Roland himself. The Roland couple thus had to move out of their ministerial residence, this time to a second floor apartment at 51 rue de la Harpe, where they continued to receive politically engaged friends and acquaintances.[306] Madame Roland remained in close contact with their political friends by frequently sending letters to among others Brissot. In the summer months, she discussed the founding of a Republic and the principles of freedom with Barbaroux and Servan.[307]

After the final fall of the Monarchy on 10 August, the ministerial council was reformed. Servan, Clavière, and Roland were reinstalled on their old posts. Among the new ministers was Danton, who would soon become Roland's biggest political rival and about whom Madame Roland noted that he spoiled the whole ministry.[308] He nevertheless came over to the Rolands often, who had moved back to the Ministry of the Interior at the rue des Petits Champs after Roland's reappointment, and on those occasions Madame Roland spoke with him and Fabre-d'Eglantine about patriotism.[309]

During the period of Roland's second ministry, Madame Roland received around fifteen guests two times a week: one evening the colleagues of Roland and other deputies were received, and the other

[302] May, *Madame Roland*, 204.
[303] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 50. The letter was sent on 10 or 11 June 1792.
[304] Ibid., 55; Reynolds, *Marriage*, 182-183.
[305] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 226. '(…) la tourmente des affaires publiques me donnoit une fièvre morale qui ne me laissoit pas de relâche'.
[306] Perroud, 'Une Amie', 85. See footnote 3. Madame Grandchamp was the one who rented this apartment for the Roland couple.
[307] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 55.
[308] Ibid., 57.
[309] Ibid., 61.

night was for others who were engaged in public affairs. The guests were served dinner around five in the afternoon, which consisted of only one course, followed by coffee and conversation in the living room. By nine o'clock, everyone had left.[310] Madame Roland in her memoirs emphasised that her table was laid simply and with taste, without decorations or *ornements*. Again, this was in line with the revolutionaries' philosophy. 'We were at ease', she wrote, 'without spending too much time at the table' and she made sure to address everyone a compliment during the night.[311] Around her table usually took place Vergniaud, Gaudet, Gensonné, Duprat, Duperret, Carra, Fauchet, Sillery, Brissot, Fonfrède, Ducos, Barbaroux, Birotteau, Buzot, Salle, Louvet, Lehardy, Mainville, Dufriche-Valazé and others who can be counted among the Girondins.[312] Foreigners, mostly those sympathising with the Gironde, visited as well, for example Thomas Paine. The meetings were kept rather small. She still followed her own rule not to invite any women, because that would mean she would host a social circle, which was a reference to the pre-revolutionary salons under the Ancien Régime. Because she only received people whose activities and jobs were officially of interest to her husband, she claimed to never have had a real cercle or a visite, which was a dangerous business in 1792.[313] The hôtel of the Rolands was not the only place where the Girondins met in Paris – moreover, many of them rarely or never visited the Ministry of the Interior. Valazé affirmed that after the sessions of the Convention had ended, they often met at Madame Valazé's salon as well.[314]

Can the meetings at the Ministry of the Interior, during Rolands first and second ministries, be defined a salon with an outspoken political character, or did Madame Roland rather provide the setting for a Girondin headquarters or a political think tank? Did Madame Roland host a salon that became political, or did she host a political meeting which showed similarities with a salon? The line between a political salon and an informal political meeting is thin and fluid. I argue that Madame Roland did host a political salon in 1792 and 1793, which in the light of the revolutionary circumstances turned out to be different from other and earlier salons in Paris.

While pre-Revolutionary salons with their musical nights and literature readings could be defined as cultural, in which politics gradually came to play a larger role in the run-up to and during the French Revolution, the meetings at the home of Madame Roland had been fully political from the beginning. Having moved (back) to Paris only after the Revolution had started, she had never known the world of the pre-revolutionary salons, let alone hosted one. Instead, she entered Parisian society at a time of far-stretching politicisation – a novelty in France – in which her husband soon became a central figure. This politicisation did not only concern the ministers and deputies who found themselves in the capital; as mentioned before, politics stretched further than the men in formal political positions. The

[310] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 243.
[311] Ibid., 243. '(…) on y étoit à l'aise, sans y consacres beaucoup de temps'.
[312] Walter, *Actes*, 257-280.
[313] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 242-243.
[314] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 227.

salonnières were part of the political elite that was shaped around these politicians and served as a sounding board which influenced as well as reacted on their work.

Madame Roland's own role did not stand in the way of calling the meetings at her place a salon anymore either: while the guests still were attracted by Roland's position as minister, she had made a name for herself as well. She actively and independently participated in the conversations over dinner, received visitors and intermediated between the politicians. The letters she received of friends holding political positions show that they valued her company, opinion and advise. Compared to the gatherings in 1791, Madame Roland played a much more prominent role when Roland had become minister, both in her salon as well as in his political work. The confidence she aroused in people who did not have a chance to speak to the Minister of the Interior themselves made them turn to her to pass on a message or to make an appointment in his schedule.[315] Now that Roland had become minister, people grew more interested in the Roland couple because of his distinguished political position. It was quite common for women to function as intermediaries between visitors and their husbands: when Morris visited Madame Lavoisier, he expressed his desire to meet her husband and 'finally it is fixed that I shall meet her ToMorrow at the Opera and return to Tea, when he will be at Home'.[316] Madame Roland from March 1792 onwards had left her self-imposed silence behind and held conversations with friends and colleagues who previously had been exclusively her husband's, but now had become hers as well. This rather sudden transformation of Madame Roland is not paid much attention to by authors who have written on her life. According to Madame Grandchamp, Madame Roland had suffered from depression which was believed to be caused by 'a secret ambition that she nourished', but which was surprisingly cured on the day Roland became minister.[317]

Madame Roland was closely engaged in the political work of Roland in his function as minister and actually even became his political spokesman. As a well-educated woman, her love for and knowledge of literature undoubtedly had helped develop her skill to find the right words for speeches and musings, which was admired by her husband's colleagues as well. Her political view seemed to have corresponded with Roland's, and in hindsight, she wrote that they worked together with 'this confidence that has always reigned between us'.[318] Madame Roland claimed that without her, Roland would not have been a less good minister, for his activity, his knowledge and integrity were all his. With her influence, however, he had caused more sensation, because she 'put in his writings this mix of strength and of pain, of the authority of reason and of the charms of sentiment'. This contribution could

[315] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 54. Bosc, Appel I 54?
[316] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. 227.
[317] Linton, *Choosing Terror*, 126. Madame Grandchamp wrote in her 'Souvenirs' that she thought she was dreaming when she saw Madame Roland, 'who had been on the point of death that morning', but had now 'recovered her freshness and graces'.
[318] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 54. 'Je me suis ainsi trouvée dans le courant des choses sans intrigue ni vaine curiosité: Roland y avoit l'agrément de m'en entretenir ensuite dans le particulier avec cette confiance qui a toujours regné entre nous(…)'.

maybe only come from 'a sensible woman, gifted with smart brains', as she said herself.[319] Even though at the time of his second ministry, she was having an affair with his colleague Buzot, Madame Roland helped her husband with everything that had to be written, which she saw as a completely normal thing to do ('I wrote with him, like I ate') and they worked as closely together as before.[320] More than his secretary, she was his speech writer, his right hand and his confidante. In her memoirs, with hindsight, she sometimes made an exaggerated point of her dedication to Roland, claiming she existed only for his happiness and to serve him.[321] However, the extensive volume of letters she sent to the men she received at her home, are proof of the separate relation she had with them, apart from her husband. At the same time, in order to protect herself from accusations of involvement in their activities, she distanced herself from the political conversations of the men: 'I often saw, together with Brissot, several other members of the Assemblée Législative; they were sometimes at my place with the ministers and talked to them about this kind of liaison necessary for men who, all devoted to the public cause, need to hear and to get clearer to serve it better'.[322]

It had become impossible to imagine Roland's political work without his wife, not least by herself: Madame Roland's proclamation that 'I was not useless to the ministry of Roland' is an understatement.[323] Madame Roland's involvement in the political work of her husband and his colleagues, stretching as far as writing their letters or speeches, made her a political figure as well, holding an informal political position. Culture did not play a role in Madame Roland's salon. Defining salons as cultural institutions, as some authors do, simply was not possible anymore by 1792 because of the politicised and radicalised context of the French Revolution. Conversation and discussion were central at the salon of Madame Roland, but more as a medium to discuss political matters than as an art, joy or goal in itself.[324] In this respect, political salons in general actually held many similarities with the Assemblée: both places offered a platform for elevated conversation on politics as a means to reach agreement among the exclusive group of people present, for an elite public. The late summer of 1792 until January 1793 formed the heydays of Madame Roland's salon. Her nickname 'queen of the Gironde', mockingly used during her days of imprisonment and trial, also originated in this period, and is evidence of her political involvement in the Girondin movement.

---

[319] Bosc, Appel, i. 235. 'Roland sans moi n'eût pas été moins bon administrateur; son activité, son savoir, sont bien à lui, comme sa probité; avec moi il a produiot plus de sensation, parce que je mettois 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 faisois avec délices ces morceaux que je jugeois devoir être utiles, et j'y trouvois plus de plaisir que si j'en eusse été connue comme auteur'.
[320] Ibid., 234.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 45-49. 'Je voyais souvent, avec Brissot, plusieurs autres membres de l'assemblée législative; ils se trouvoient quelquefois chez moi avec les ministres et entretenoient avec eux ce genre de liaison nécessaire parmi les hommes qui, tous voués à la chose publique, ont besoin de s'entendre et de s'éclairer pour la mieux servir.'
[323] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 79. 'Je n'étois pas inutile au ministère de Roland'.
[324] Kale, *French Salons*, 51, 56. Madame Suard expressed her pity about the loss of the 'joy of conversation' after the start of the Revolution.

A bureau d'esprit public

Madame Roland's own political activities increasingly offended the Jacobins, who strongly opposed a public role for women. When Madame Roland would have been asked herself if she hosted a salon, cercle or visite, she probably would have answered in denial, but in her memoirs she confessed having hosted a bureau d'esprit public.[325] Sources on the existence of this bureau, which was founded during the period of Roland's second ministry, are hard to find and are barely researched.

A bureau d'esprit public can be defined as a place where the public spirit, a particular set of beliefs was formed and propagated by most commonly financing and distributing publications (newspapers, books, pamphlets).[326] While Roland himself gave it the official name of 'Bureau de la correspondance relative à la formation et la propagation de l'esprit public', historian Jules Michelet has banally called it a 'bureau des journaux'.[327] Roland's bureau was set up in mid-August 1792 to print writings that would be distributed in the *départements* and to the armies. What exactly its activities were remains unclear, for they were never precisely defined. However, it is known that the bureau d'esprit public printed pamphlets, letters, periodicals (*La Sentinelle* appeared multiple times a week or 'every day following the circumstances') and translations of 'bons écrits', mostly from German. These appeared in large numbers: according to Anne Kupiec, of a letter of Roland addressed to the Parisians 10,000 copies were printed, while other writings appeared in 1,000 copies meant to be circulated among members of popular societies.[328] This work was financed by the state. Letters from Roland and Madame Roland prove that they both were in touch with paid agents in early autumn 1792 who listened to Parisian coffee-house gossip, and tried to influence it. Madame Roland received notes from the couple's close friends from the Gironde about favours to be dispensed, and men to be appointed in certain positions.[329]

The idea behind the bureau d'esprit public was to engage the people outside of Paris in national politics. Madame Roland in her letters to Bosc expressed her thoughts on the inherently good nature of the people and their intention which is always right because it comes from the majority. Because the people acted out of ignorance, they should be guided 'the good way' by the bureau.[330] In order to make the publications more widely accessible, Roland wanted them to be translated in the different French dialects.[331] These efforts were aimed at inspiring the people to actively participate in politics, which Roland and Brissot philosophised deeply about. By making the people aware of their ability to form public opinion, this 'could not be false anymore; none private association would be able to dominate it,

[325] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 246.
[326] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 235.
[327] Kupiec, 'La Gironde', 572.
[328] Ibid., 574.
[329] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 256.
[330] Kupiec, 'La Gironde', 579. 'Le peuple n'agit jamais mail que par ignorance, que son intérêt est toujours juste parce qu'il est celui du plus grand nombre, on doit le prêcher quand il s'égare; mais non le blâmer légèrement surtout lorsqu'il souffre'. Letter to Brissot of 12 July 1790.
[331] Ibid., 574.

including the aristocracy and the riches' in the words of Lathenas.[332] However, the emissaries of the bureau reported disillusioned of the attitude of the people in the départements. Of the Haute-Loire, one wrote: '[N]othing is read in the municipalities or it is only at the rate of individual opinions so that the majority of the inhabitants on the countryside ignore what they should have to know.' To keep up the spirit of the minister in Paris, the emissaries took the edge of these stories in their reports to him, emphasising how the majority of the people was good in nature and that in order to form public opinion, they should be prevented distractions.[333]

Over the course of the year 1792, the polarisation between the Girondins and the radicalising Jacobins increased; the latter attacking Roland daily verbally, especially at the Jacobin Club and in certain newspapers.[334] By his political adversaries, Roland was seen as a manipulator of public opinion. Of all the Girondins, he became subject of mockery in particular.[335] In hindsight, Madame Roland argued that the bureau d'esprit public was a task imposed upon her and her husband, which they just carried out.[336] Robespierre, at the head of the *Conseil générale de la Commune*, had become part of a political movement that gained the name 'La Montagne', which included among others Danton and Marat. On 29 September, Roland and Servan's functioning was subject of discussion in the Assemblée, when at a certain point Danton noted that 'the whole world knows that Roland is not alone in his department'. When Roland was addressed, Madame Roland should be addressed as well. He, on the contrary, was alone in his department, 'and the nation is in need of ministers who can act without being led by their wife'.[337] This was the only time the Assemblée paid attention to Madame Roland, and her help to Roland apparently was that unusual that Danton could humiliate Roland by mentioning it. Brissot and Roland's mutual hatred of Robespierre, a former visitor of the salon of Madame Roland, benefitted their friendship, the former protecting Roland in the Assemblée.

The massacres in September 1792 meant the collapse of old sociability of traditional elites when many salonnières fled Paris. The Rolands were convinced, and with them many others, that Danton was behind the September massacres.[338] Madame Roland expressed her disappointment about the incapable and weak Assemblée which did nothing in reaction to these horrible events, which forced the salonnières Madame de Condorcet, Madame de Flahaut, Madame de Genlis, Madame de Sainte-Amaranthe and Mademoiselle de Sainte-Amaranthe, among others, to flee Paris. It was up to the Parisians, she thought,

---

[332] Kupiec, 'La Gironde', 580. '''(…) aucune association particulière ne sera capable de la dominer y compris l'aristocratie des riches'''.
[333] Ibid., 578. 'Rien n'est lu dans les municipalités ou ne l'est qu'à raison des opinions individuelles de sorte que la moitié des habitants des campagnes ignorent ce qu'ils devraient savoir'; '(…) que la masse du peuple est bonne et qu'elle a principalement besoin d'être prévenue de l'égarement par l'instruction'.
[334] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 80.
[335] Kupiec, 583.
[336] Ibid., 572.
[337] Stanford University Libraries and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, *Archives numériques de la Révolution française, Archives parlementaires. Tome 52: Du 22 septembre au 26 octobre 1792. Séance du samedi 29 septembre 1792*, 229: https://frda.stanford.edu/en.
[338] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 230.

to give the right example in the Revolution: to show the Assemblée that they knew their rights, that they wanted to preserve them and that they were ready to defend them.[339] For it was public opinion and the people who had caused the Revolution, not the representatives in the Assemblée – or at least maybe about fifteen of them, but not the rest.[340] As for her husband, she would have preferred that he dedicated his talents to his *patrie* as a deputy, instead of as a member of a lifeless *conseil* and minister of a government without action.[341]

Madame Roland's salon continued to exist for another half a year after the bloody September days. This might be explained by its recent founding and its full focus on politics, which made the definition of the gatherings at her home fluid already in her time: in between salon, club, a dinner with friends and political headuqarters. In the atmosphere of political repression, Jacobins associated women with hidden influencers and reactionary intrigue, and saw salons as networks of conspiring aristocrats.[342] At the same time, members of the Jacobin Club had needed the salons in the early years of the Revolution as well for exactly the same reasons as other politicians, making their reasoning paradoxical.[343] In January 1793 the Jacobin Club published a letter in which Roland was called a tyrant and his politics monstrous.[344] They accused him of bribing the public spirit and in this way to retrograde or even annihilate the whole Revolution. The idea of a conspiracy of the Girondins who gathered at the house of the Rolands was mentioned in the same letter.[345] Furthermore, Roland was believed to have smuggled away documents about the King when as Minister of the Interior he was allowed entrance into the King's apartments.[346] By December, Roland was regularly receiving death threats.[347] From then on, he slept in the same room as Madame Roland for reasons of safety, where she kept a pistol under her bedtable, afraid of raiding Jacobins at night.[348]

On 22 January 1793, a day after the execution of Louis XVI, Roland resigned from his ministerial position. Most colleagues and friends broke contact because of fear of association; this can be seen as the end of Madame Roland's salon activities.[349] The Convention did not grant Roland permission to leave Paris, and when Madame Roland tried to do so she was stopped by 'Maratists'.[350] Madame Roland still was in close contact with many of the Girondins by correspondence, but had withdrawn from le monde and almost did not receive or visit anyone anymore.[351] In the afternoon of 31

[339] *Bosc Appel*, ii. 219. Letter to Bosc of 4 September 1789.
[340] Ibid., 227. Letter to Bosc of 20 December 1790.
[341] Ibid., i. 74-75, 78.
[342] Linton, *Choosing Terror*,
[343] Kale, *French Salons*, 60.
[344] Société des amis de la Liberté et de l'Égalité, *Réponse de la Société des Amis de la Liberté & de l' Égalité, Séante au Jacobins, a celle de Troye* (Paris, 1793).
[345] *Réponse de la Société*, 9 ; Bosc, *Appel*, i. 81.
[346] *Réponse de la Société*, 11.
[347] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 245.
[348] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 11.
[349] May, *Madame Roland*, 255.
[350] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 252.
[351] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 12.

May, the day of a Jacobin coup, Roland was arrested, and Madame Roland spent that day travelling to and from the Convention, trying to speak to deputies to prevent her husband being sent to prison. Her own arrest followed that same night. Roland himself eventually escaped and spent the last months of his life in hiding in the French countryside.

'Just a woman'

Madame Roland's fame stems from her *Appel à l'impartiale posterité* written during her stay of over five months in the Parisian Sainte-Pélagie and Saint-Abbaye prisons, rather than from her political activities in the preceding years. The *Appel* are her memoirs, diary and testament in one: their volume and the information detailed is unique and makes that Madame Roland has become one of the most famous and studied salonnières of the late eighteenth century.

On 20 August 1793, she wrote in the *Appel* that all her friends were outlawed, on the run or arrested, but nevertheless she received visits from her old friend Bosc, Champagneux, general Grandpré and her close friend Madame Grandchamp in prison.[352] The day after her arrest and immediate imprisonment, twenty-one Girondins were arrested, among whom were Brissot, Vergniaud and all other prominent politicians who had visited her salon.[353] Her interrogation took place only months later, on the same day of Brissot's execution, 2 November 1793.[354] At the time of her arrest, Madame Roland had still reason to believe in the justice of the Revolutionary Tribunal, which had been founded recently and had not yet put any form of trial overboard. Despite her nickname being 'the soul of the Gironde' and her clear involvement in the Gironde movement, she still thought that she had little to fear as a woman who had never been active as an official politician herself.[355] Even in the spring of 1794, Madame Anne duchesse d'Ayen and one of her daughters, who had moved back to Paris in 1793, did not believe for a moment that they were personally threatened. When they were arrested little later, they remained full of courage about a good ending.[356]

The official report of the interrogation described how Madame Roland obviously was suspected of having (personal) connections with Girondins. Furthermore, she was suspected of having prepared plans to destroy the unity of the Republic and to establish a federal Republic and more particularly of involvement in conspiracy plans to demolish Paris. These ideas were thought to have been developed by her husband and the people who visited their bureau d'esprit public, which she was thought to have established and was the director of. The bureau was meant to attack and divide public opinion in order

[352] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 263, 259. Prison of Sainte-Pélagie, Paris, 20 August 1793.
[353] Walter, *Actes*, 147-262.
[354] Bosc, *Appel*, i. 302.
[355] Damave, *De Franse salon*, 135.
[356] Marie-Antoinette-Virginie de La Fayette marquise de Lasteyrie du Saillant, *Vie de madame de Lafayette. Précédée d'une Notice sur la vie de sa mère , Mme la duchesse d'Ayen* (Paris, 1869), 142-143. Madame duchesse d'Ayen and her daughter were arrested in May 1794 and Madame d'Ayen was put in the Luxembourg prison.

to create disunity and the undermining of the Republic, it was believed.[357] When asked for a reply to these accusations, she started to defend herself by emphasising that she was 'just a woman', who had never taken part in public affairs.[358]

Pretending she was innocent, she claimed that she knew only what all citizens knew, from public papers and conversations. While according to Louvet the information in the French revolutionary newspapers was general and not accurate, Madame Roland seemed to be very well informed from these same sources. She was asked if she could name the men and women who visited her société, to which she answered that her meetings were quite generally known and were visited merely by relations of her husband's time as a minister. Madame Roland could thus hardly contest the names of the most prominent Girondins who had visited her house over the course of the three previous years, but emphasised that they came for her husband, not for her.[359] She stated that the number of visitors had been so big that she could not possibly name all of them, and they were all such fervent patriots that it could not even be doubted that they had any relations with traitors. She continued to deny knowing anything about the written plans for a conspiracy to annihilate the city of Paris that were found in her apartment, and defended her husband and all the other persons who she had met in relation to him, who had behaved accordingly to the principles of justice and freedom and who had wished nothing but the best for Paris and the entire Republic.[360]

Most importantly, she denied to ever have hosted a cercle, conference or bureau d'esprit, for only the ministers and colleagues of his husband were received around the table at their place once a week, when 'very public conversations' took place which discussed openly what interested everyone'.[361] The full responsibility of Roland's work she laid in her husband's hands. In her own defence, she even claimed it was Roland who received the guests once a week. Unlike other salonnières it had not been by her initiative that the guests came together. The visitors were ministers and deputies who knew each other already. But her home offered the space where they could talk semi-privately, and while they initially came for Roland and each other, they soon befriended Madame Roland as well, who argued she was friends fully independent of all political opinions.[362]

In respect to her political activities, she denied ever having inspired Roland by sharing her thoughts, claiming she only helped him as a secretary with some writings.[363] She admitted to have copied by hand the 'famous letter to the King', but 'his knowledge and his integrity are his, and he did not need

[357] Walter, *Actes*, 264-265, 270.
[358] Ibid., 263.
[359] Ibid., 264.
[360] Walter, *Actes*, 263-264.
[361] Ibid., 268; *Copie littérale prise sur la minute, du style et de la main de Marie-Jeanne Roland. Femme du ci-devant Ministre de l'Intérieur* (Paris, 1794), 9. 'Jamais il ne s'est tenu chez lui de conférences ni de conciliabules; ses amis, ses collègues, quelqu'ils fussent ses connoissances, se réunissoient chez lui, à table, une fois la semaine; là, dans les conversations très-publiques, on s'entretenoient ouvertement de ce qui intéressoient tout le monde'.
[362] *Copie littérale*, 11. '(…) j'étois liée d'amitié, fort indépendamment de toutes considérations politiques'
[363] Walter, *Actes*, 270.

a woman to be a good minister', she just used the talents she had.[364] Madame Roland called herself a friend of liberty and admitted having followed the course of the Revolution with interest and having talked passionately about the public cause, but that she had never passed the limits which her sex imposed.[365] But she certainly would have loved to widen these limits, though she never developed feminist ideas like Madame de Gouges who advocated woman's rights and female suffrage.

By never having taken part in politics under her own name, Madame Roland had lived by her own rule that women should not actively engage in politics – at least until the Revolution would be finished.[366] It is surprising that during her time in prison and at her interrogation, she hid behind the argument that she was 'just a woman' and thus was by definition more innocent than a man. In the previous years, though, she had often expressed her surprise that not more wives of men in political functions worked as their secretaries. Downplaying her role in Roland's politics did not help her much. After the interrogation Madame Roland was sent back to her cell, until on 24 June 1793 she was suddenly freed, but rearrested as soon as she set foot on the stairs leading to her Parisian home. This time she was sent to the prison at the former convent of Sainte-Pélagie, where she would remain until 31 October. It was here that she wrote the *Appel*. Madame Roland managed to keep in contact with many of her friends and political relations during her time at the Sainte-Pélagie prison. Most frequently she was visited by her maid Fleury and by Madame Grandchamp, who came every other day after lunch for the last three months of her imprisonment.[367] Thanks to the latter's mediation, Madame Roland was moved from her miserable cell on the first floor to a bigger room on the ground floor in mid-July, where she stayed for three weeks and where her imprisonment was made quite comfortable by the presence of a piano in her room.[368] Visitors smuggled her food, utilities, and even luxury products, and it was Madame Grandchamp as well who carried the writings by Madame Roland out of prison.

On 24 October, Madame Roland was summoned as witness at the trial of the Girondins, although she left unheard.[369] That she was not even given the opportunity to speak at the trial and defend her friends, left her defeated. A couple of days later, it was announced that the jury of the Tribunal could move to judgement after three days, if they deemed 'their consciences sufficiently enlightened'.[370] The next day, this law was put into practice when thirty-one Girondins were sentenced to death and executed on the following day. Madame Roland herself was executed on 8 November 1793, without any tribunal. While being led to the guillotine on the Place de la Révolution, she was believed to have cried 'O

[364] *Copie littérale*, 9, 12.
[365] Ibid., 8. 'Amie de la liberté, dont la réflexion m'avoit fait juger le prix (…), j'ai suivi les progrès de la révolution avec intérêt; je m'entretenois de la chose publique avec chaleur ; mais je n'ai dépassé les bornes qui m'étoient imposés par mon sexe'.
[366] Dalton, 'Gender', 280.
[367] Reynolds, *Marriage and Revolution*, 274-275.
[368] Ibid., 271.
[369] Ibid., 281.
[370] Ibid., 281.

Liberty! Nothing than crimes committed in your name!'. A couple of days later, on hearing of his wife's execution, Roland committed suicide.

Already shortly after her death, Madame Roland had become famous. Her friend Madame Grandchamp wrote down her memoirs because people wanted to know the details of her close friendship to Madame Roland.[371] Madame Roland's Parisian years and death have been sensationalised in a handful of biographies that have been dedicated to her.[372] For her political work and writings she has been admired by Chateaubriand, Stendhal, Goethe, Lamartine, Michelet, and Carlyle.[373] Madame Roland is now generally referred to as the last salonnière of Paris, even though the salons of Madame Anne de Lameth and Madame Fanny comtesse de Beauharnais might have stayed open longer in 1793 than hers.[374]

Remnants of salon culture

Sources from the period after the September massacres are generally scarce. Morris did constrain his diary entries since September 1792, leaving out names of people and places. In January 1792, he decided to end his diary for reasons of safety, because 'the Situation of Things is such that to continue this Journal would compromise many people'.[375] With salonnières who had fled starting salons at their new homes, salon life partly was moved to European hubs of émigrés like London, Coppet, Hamburg, and Berlin. Le monde remained in contact by writing letters, but even sending and receiving them was made difficult by the longer distances and the political situation. Letters were given to friends who were arrested during their travels, they were opened by officials or simply got lost. Being abroad did not fade the interest of the French high society for the politics in their homeland. Lafayette wrote extensively to Madame Adélaïde princesse d'Hénin on 27 August 1792 about French politics from the Netherlands, still expressing his steadfast support for the King.[376]

Surprisingly enough, there was a place in Paris where salon culture continued to exist, at least to a certain extent: the prisons. Anonymous memoirs about their time in prison of various French men and women are assembled in *Mémoires sur les prisons. Contenant ceux qui concernent les prisons de Port-Libre, du Luxembourg, de la rue de Sèvres, etc., etc.*, published in Paris in 1823.[377] In the *maison*

[371] Perroud, 'Une amie', 75. The first phrase of Madame Grandchamp's memoirs is: 'Quelques personnes m'ayant demandé de connaître en detail l'histoire de ma liaison intime avec Mme Roland, j'ai extrait d'une ouvrage, où elle se trouve plus etendue, ce que j'ai pensé pouvoir en communiquer sans blesser les lois que l'amitié m'impose'.
[372] See for example: Abbott, John, *Makers of History. Madame Roland* (New York, 1904).
[373] Lesly Walker, 'Sweet and consoling virtue. The memoirs of Madame Roland', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34 (3) (2001), 403-419, 415.
[374] Kale, *French Salons*, 59.
[375] Davenport, *A Diary*, ii. 598.
[376] La Fayette, *Mémoires*, iv. 478.
[377] Joseph Paris de l'Epinard (ed.), *Mémoires sur les prisons. Contenant ceux qui concernent les prisons de Port-Libre, du Luxembourg, de la rue de Sèvres, etc., etc., suivis du voyage de cent trente-deux Nantais, et d'une relation des maux soufferts par les prêtres déportés dans la rade de l'Ile d'Aix, avec des notes et des éclairissements historiques.* 2 vols. (Paris, 1823), ii.

d'ârret du Port-Libre, the former Port-Royal on the north side of Paris, like in many other prisons, men and women lived in different sections. At night, they all gathered in the 'grand foyer' which they called the salon. Everyone brought their own candle, and the men seated themselves around a big table to read or write while the women worked on pieces of embroidery or knitwear – 'c'était une veritable cabinet de littérature', according to one of the people present.[378] Among the prisoners, the evening newspapers were distributed. Madame Roland had had access to newspapers, though slightly old ones, in her prison as well.[379] Dinner was also served in the big hall, which was a moment of cheerfulness making the prisoners forget their circumstances, according to a witness.[380] After dinner there was time to converse about 'la bonne société', and on special nights there was music performed or literature read.[381] Even though politics was discussed, based on the limited news that was brought inside the salon, these nights mainly had a cultural character. As an exception, the Maison d'ârret du Port-Royal allowed prisoners to gather in their rooms and prisoners with friends or acquaintances outside of the prison even were entitled to spent the evening there.[382] When at nine o'clock everyone had to go back to their cells, they all hoped to see each other the following day. Of course, the prisoners did not gather out of free will and they could not meet whenever they wanted.

In the prisons, aristocrats held a privileged position, at least until the end of 1792. They arrived at the prison in their usual dress, including wigs and luxurious clothing, and often brought a servant or maid. According to the writer of the Port-Libre prison memoirs, they 'deserved' a better cell in prison, but they had to pay for what they received as well. Madame Roland's memoires testify to this habit. Although she did not have a noble title, she was only given a basic cell, and she had to pay for a bed, meals, and any other necessities herself. In other prisons, private cells were only for the rich who could afford it, and other prisoners stayed in halls which were turned into dormitories.

It seems rather odd to call these gatherings in prison salons. The people gathered not really on a voluntarily basis, and would probably not have met or spent the night together in a different setting. Most importantly, the salonnière was lacking. In the early nineteenth century, when memoirs from prisoners under the Revolution were published, 'prison salons' are commonly spoken of. The prison salon nights existed longer than the salons in the rest of Paris. On 26 December 1793, a 'very beautiful salon, embellished by grace and spirit' took place in the Port-Libre prison, where different verses were sung.[383] In the last month of that year, the dinners at the common room of the prison were abolished.[384] By then, groups of prisoners had been sent to the scaffold on a daily basis for months. By the beginning of 1794, however, the nights seemed to have resumed: in the midst of the Terror the male prisoners

[378] Paris de L'Epinard, *Mémoires sur les prisons*, ii. 4-5. This quote is from an anonymous writer of memoirs of the Port-Libre prison.
[379] Ibid., 8.
[380] Ibid., ii. 5.
[381] Ibid., 5-6.
[382] Ibid., 7.
[383] Ibid., 21. 'un très-beau salon, orné des graces et de l'esprit'.
[384] Ibid., 23.

needed 'la société des femmes' more every day to keep up the spirit.[385] In the early months of 1794, also the salons at the Port-Libre prison were disappearing. Instead of a place for conversation based on equality and gaiety, it turned into a place of *bonne compagnie* where women gathered for the pleasure of men, who watched them and flirted with them.[386] However, a month later it is still recorded that everyone made verses in the salon and the women awarded the best poet.[387]

Though culture might have been a pleasant and welcome refuge on the eve of and during the bloody Terror, the salons in the years 1791-1793 did focus without exception on politics. The meetings hosted by Madame Roland, which were purely political, in this sense are typical and are unique for they continued long after other salons had stopped functioning. Political affairs were not only among the topics which were discussed, but were a serious business in itself. Politicians in the salons were lobbied, and political movements and public opinion were shaped in the intimate sphere of the salon. Kale is thus wrong when stating that:

> salons may have played a complex and subtle role in politics, but politics was never their singular or original purpose. As a ritual of sociability rather than a political organization [sic] per se, salons continued to bring together people who had begun to attend them regularly before political disagreements might have prompted them to gravitate to rival clubs.[388]

The salon of Madame Roland pushed the boundaries of the definition of a salon, but as long as political headquarters and debating societies did not yet exist, politicians and the Parisian elite had to deal with it.

[385] Paris de l'Epinard, *Mémoires sur les prisons*, 28-29. Quote of 17 January 1794. Prisoners had been taken away from the prison to be executed since 18 March 1793, see: Ibid., 8.
[386] Ibid., 34-35.
[387] Ibid., 41.
[388] Kale, *French Salons*, 49.

Conclusion

A month after his arrival in Paris, the American business man Morris described his observations of his new life in the French capital in letters to friends. He had started to frequent the salons of the 'society which forms here the delight of life'. At the salons, he heard 'as much Politics among the Ladies of Paris as you ever did among those of Philadelphia', where he had been living before.[389] The closely related themes of salons, politics and gender in Paris the early years of the French Revolution have been central in this research.

The salon's definition has a slippery history and its application to late eighteenth-century meetings is an unavoidable anachronism. Instead, contemporaries referred to a cercle, société, or visite. The definition of a salon as proposed at the beginning of this research reads: an informal conversation between a select company of elite people, invited on the basis of individuality to the home of a salonnière. The evolution from seventeenth-century cultural salons where literature was read and music was played, to late eighteenth-century political salons which were hard to distinguish from political meetings, shows that a salon is a concept with various characteristics that varied depending on the social, cultural and political context. As much as on the salonnières, salons depended on their visitors: an exclusive group with the required level of social, cultural and political know-how. Reputation, fashion, and gossip defined whether someone was in favour in 'le monde'. In salons, nobles and non-nobles met on an equal footing, which was revolutionary in itself.

A few hundred salons in Paris did exist around the outbreak of the Revolution. In general, historians who have studied salons have paid little attention to the years during the French Revolution. Researchers of the French Revolution have taken even lesser notice on salons. Salon nights took place regularly, and had become a serious business for everyone in high society who aimed at holding a distinguished position. Although the group of visitors was exclusive, salons were accessible to most of the people in the political public sphere: those in proximity to power or holding informal power. In between the public and the private, salons allowed women to step out of their domestic sphere, into the political realm. Women usually made their entrance in le monde after they had married. They started hosting a salon, visiting other salons, and corresponding with friends independently from their husbands. These were the only opportunities for them to be among men and converse with them on an equal level. Some salonnières or salon visitors did develop feminist ideals: Condorcet, Madame Jodin, and Madame de Gouges for example advocated citizen rights, female suffrage and membership of the Assemblée for women and published their writings on these topics. Even though the formal political rights of women were very limited, revolutionary salons were emancipatory in granting them informal political power.

Over the course of the early years of the French Revolution, salons did not only adapt themselves to the birth of modern French politics, but also professionalised as political centres. Salons did gain

[389] Davenport, *A Diary*, i. xli.

importance in the political public sphere, not only by receiving people in formal political positions as their guests, but also by reaching out to those who found themselves in proximity to power, influencing political decision-making or shaping political culture. Salons were safe havens for free thinking and speaking in an intellectual environment. As the first French representative political institution, the Assemblée Nationale, was founded in 1789, the Parisian salons came to function as its lobby. Here the political game was played, with seduction, gossip, culture, art, reputation, friendship, and sociability all being subtly interwoven with politics – as diaries, memoirs, and letters of the period 1789-1793 testify.

The influence of salons stretched further than its select group of visitors. In the first place, salons did shape the opinion of politicians who were in power. Madame de Condorcet, for example, invited two opposing groups of revolutionaries to her salon in order to raise mutual feelings of sympathy and provide a setting for negotiations. In the second place, salons shaped the upper class opinion of people in high positions in French society by inviting, advising and exchanging ideas with influential publishers, bankers and diplomats, as most salonnières did. In the third place, salons influenced public opinion as well. Even though general people had no entrance into the salons, their opinion was consciously and unconsciously manipulated by the rumours and gossip that spread from the salons. Without doubt, salons in the early years of the French Revolution thus did play a political role. This was not only because their visitors were actors of the Revolution, as Lilti argues, but because politics had penetrated the salons in every sense.[390] While all authors agree that French society reached an unprecedently high level of politicisation when the Revolution broke out, some still doubt the degree of politicisation in salons. Yet, the events happening outside the salons could not be seen separately from the conversations in the salons. Salons were no closed-off leisure institutions, but were a full part of the political public sphere of French society.

Clubs and societies, which were set up in great number in the French Revolution and which were political from the beginning, could not replace the salons. Every salonnière politicised to a different extent: from conversation partners on political topics to influencers of political behaviour and policy. The Englishman Young noted in 1790 how men and women at a salon dinner he attended were equally politicians.[391] Women who were not interested in politics and did not allow for political conversation in their salons usually withdrew from the world of salons shortly after the Revolution had started.

Salons where all conversations were political are usually defined as political salons, opposing cultural salons. The course of the Revolution and its radicalising political environment asked for a redefinition of 'political salon' when it came to show similarities with a political meeting, in which the characteristics of a salon were fading. A political meeting is a formal conversation between people in power who discuss decision-making and policy. The setting of a salon, on the contrary, was informal, and a salonnière was present to intermediate between the conversation partners and prevent that the

[390] Lilti, *Le Monde*, 399.
[391] Betham-Edwards, *Arthur Young's travels*, 1794.

discussions and disagreements went out of hand. Unlike Reynolds, I argue that the material situation of a salonnière, the presence of women beside the salonnière, and talking social chitchat are no requirements to define a meeting as a salon.[392] While most salons took place in a luxurious reception hall of a Parisian townhouse, its domestic setting made that the concept of a salon could travel along as the salonnière and salon visitors moved. The composition of male and female visitors usually differed per night, and while the salonnière invited guests at set times, they sometimes came earlier or later or did show up at different moments of the day, as is written in Morris' diary of his years in Paris. By chance, some nights women might have been absent, while at for example the salon of Madame de Staël almost no female visitors were received at all. The gradual replacement of social chitchat by serious political conversation in the salons in the early years of the French Revolution is debated among historians, while primary sources are evidence of the process of politicisation in French society in general and in salons in particular. In some salons, not a word but politics was exchanged, leaving no place to social chitchat, as was common in salon conversation before the Revolution.

One of the most successfully politicised salons of the early revolutionary years was of Madame de Staël. In her salon, the conversation among most elevated spirits of French society was too brilliant for some visitors. By inviting to her salon both noble politicians and Enlightened intellectuals, she aimed to provide for the moral education of politicians, who at her place could gain the wisdom necessary to govern. In Madame de Staël's view, a salonnière could even help to form a political combination of representatives in power who best presented the will of the people.[393] Based on her liberal ideas, formed under the influence of her father Necker, she made her salon as neutral a place as possible where people with all different political ideas were received. However, most politicians became more interested in their own success and careers than in representing the people, which left Madame de Staël disillusioned.

The open-minded salon of Madame de Staël stood in sharp contrast with the salon of Madame Roland. When her husband was appointed Minister of the Interior in 1792, Madame Roland started to receive his colleagues and politically engaged friends at the ministry in the Hôtel de Lionne Pontchartrain. This salon was political from the beginning. Because the visitors were at the heart of the Girondin movement, Madame Roland gained the nickname queen or soul of the Gironde and their home became the informal headquarters of the Gironde. The first Parisian meetings in the Rolands' residency in the Hôtel Britannique cannot be defined a salon, because Madame Roland remained in the background while her husbands conversed business with his network of men in in public affairs. While the Roland couple had moved to Paris and started receiving visitors at their house in 1791, only from 1792 onwards, the meetings at the Rolands' new ministerial residency could be regarded as a salon. In general, the role of the woman in the salon is clear: without a salonnière, it is impossible to speak of a salon. Within salons in the early years of the French Revolution, elite women – often of noble descent – played an

[392] Reynolds, *Marriage*, 139-140.
[393] Omacini, *Des circonstances actuelles*, 19.

important role. They were politically active, independent and powerful in influencing politics and politicians.

The September massacres in 1792 marked a turning point in the French Revolution for high society: the slaughter of aristocratic and ecclesiastical prisoners by the people on a massive scale, made clear that the Revolution had taken a dangerous turn. The majority of the salon society fled to the French countryside or even abroad. Some European cities, like Coppet, Berlin, Hamburg and London, became hubs of émigrés, where salonnières set up their salon anew. This proves the flexible character of a salon.

Tackett calls the salon culture from 1789 until 1793 'an Indian summer of the Old Regime salon culture', but I would argue instead that a unique, new salon culture was developed in these mere four years which was political in nature.[394] The political role of salons has remained understudied so far, while French society and revolutionary politics would have looked differently without salons or when they would have remained cultural and had faded as soon as the French Revolution broke out. As recent as in 2005, Lilti concluded his influential work on the history of salons with the remark that the French Revolution 'opens a new period which deserves a detailed study'.[395] Salons and salonnières have benefitted from the rising attention to gender and history through the eyes of women; yet, in most of the works their political role is examined together with their private role as wife, lover or mother. Even Reynolds, who has published extensively on politically engaged women in revolutionary France, seems unable to see a woman's status and role apart from the men who surrounded her in her private life.

This research on the political role of salons and salonnières has aimed to offer a new perspective on the importance of salons and salonnières for French Revolutionary politics and political culture. It has made clear that political lobbying and scheming did not happen in dark back rooms, but in the reception rooms of luxurious town houses. Under the eye of an amiable salonnière and over a tasteful dinner and (alcoholic) drinks, political decision were made, fights were fought and factions were created. The Revolution was a democratising process in France, which made politics accessible to men and women who were not of noble descent. The salons highly attributed to widening the political public sphere: a change whose effects would remain visible in the nineteenth century, when the Parisian salon culture revived. But sociability and mundanity would never be the same as under the Ancien Régime and in the first years of the Revolution. The political cadre and the social context in which the salons were situated, had changed.

This research does not pretend to be complete nor finished: about the world of salons, much more can be written. Especially the vibrant first four years of the French Revolution, that have been central in this research, offer sufficient material for many other studies, which I hope will be undertaken. Researching the Archives Nationales in Paris, especially their archives of the Parisian police that closely followed foreigners as well as politically active women in Paris in the early years of the Revolution, will

[394] Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary*, 242.
[395] Lilti, *Le Monde*, 399.

give insight into how salon visitors and salonnières were regarded by people outside le monde. Furthermore, more detailed research can be done to every single case study that I have touched upon in this research. The extensive volumes of memoirs and correspondences of salonnières contain enough information for further research in itself, while interesting conclusions can also be drawn from comparisons to writings from the visitors of their salons. Lastly, the exact number of salons is Paris remains unknown. By composing appendix 1a and 1b, this research has aimed to combine most of the existing information in both primary and secondary sources of the salons and salonnières in Paris in the period 1789-1793, in an attempt to show the scale of salons. However, this database can be complemented by adding more names, as well as information on the locations and political orientations of the salons.

Appendices

Appendix 1a. Names and detailed information of active salonnières in Paris during the first years of the French Revolution, 1789-1793

Name	**Maiden name**	**Lived**	**Address of the salon (current *arrondissement* of Paris)**[396]	**On the map (see Appendix 2)**	**Political orientation of the salon**	**Active as salonnière until**	**Reason for quitting the salon**
Madame comtesse d'Angivillier	Elisabeth-Josèphe de Laborde[397]			-	Royalist/ Conservative		
Madame comtesse d'Astorg	Marie-Thérèse Éon de Cely	1763-1828		-	Revolutionary		
Madame duchesse d'Ayen	Anne-Louise-Henriette d'Aguesseau	1737-1794	Hôtel de Noailles, rue de Rivoli (1)	1	Royalist/ Conservative	September 1792	Fled to Poissy, later guillotined
Madame Bailly	Cecila Guichon				Constitutional monarchist		
Madame comtesse de Beauharnais	Marie-Anne-Françoise (Fanny) Mouchard de Chaban	1737-1813	Rue Montmartre (on the edge of the first and second arrondissement). Later: Couvent de la Visitation, rue du Bac (7)	2a, 2b	Revolutionary		

[396] When applicable, the street name and the number allotted to the house have been updated to the current address and numbering. The division of Paris in twenty arrondissements or administrative districts did not yet exist in the first years of the Revolution, but is mentioned here to show the proximity of many salons which were located in the same arrondissement. The current arrondissements are arranged in the form of a clockwise spiral, starting from the centre on the Right bank.

[397] Madame comtesse d'Angivillier had been married Baron Binet de Marchais before. After he had died in 1780 she remarried to Claude-Charles de Flahaut de la Billarderie comte d'Angivillier. Data BNF: http://data.bnf.fr/15527871/elisabeth-josephe_de_laborde_d__angiviller/ (20 June 2018).

Madame comtesse de Beaumont[398]	Pauline de Montmorin Saint-Hérem	1767-1803	Hôtel Montmorin, rue Oudinot (15)	3	Revolutionary	September 1792	Fled to Rouen
Madame comtesse de Boufflers-Rouveret	Marie-Charlotte Hippolyte Camps de Saujon	1725-1800?[399]	Hôtel de Boufflers, rue d'Anjou Saint-Honoré (8). Later: Auteuil (16)[400]	4a, 4b	Royalist/ Coservative		
Madame de La Briche	Adélaïde Edmée Prévost	1755-1844					
Madame comtesse de Brionne	Louise Julie Constance de Rohan	1734-1815					
Madame duchesse de Broglie			Rue de Lille (7)	5	Revolutionary		
Madame comtesse de Chastellux	Angélique Victoire de Durfort-Chivrac	1752-1816					
Madame duchesse de Choiseul	Louise Honorine Crozat du Châtel	1734-1801					
Madame Clavière	Marthe Louise Garnier-Hugue				Revolutionary/ Girondin		
Madame marquise de Coigny	Anne-Françoise-Aimée de Franquetot	1769-1820					

[398] Madame comtesse de Beaumont divorced comte Christophe de Beaumont in 1800. Between 1801 and 1803 she was the mistress of Chateaubriand. Data BNF: http://data.bnf.fr/en/10613750/pauline_de_beaumont/#allmanifs (13 June 2018).

[399] Auguste Jal guessed '18..?' as Madame de Boufflers-Rouveret's year of death and Data.bnf.fr puts '1800?'. Auguste Jan, *Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d'histoire : errata et supplément pour tous les dictionnaires historiques d'après des documents authentiques inédits* (Paris, 1867), 260; Data BNF. http://data.bnf.fr/14959163/marie-charlotte_hippolyte_boufflers-rouveret/ (13 June 2018).

[400] Auteuil is now part of Paris: the sixteenth arrondissement. In the late eighteenth-century, it was a village outside of the city.

Madame marquise de Condorcet	Marie-Louise Sophie de Grouchy	1764-1822	Hôtel des Monnaies, Quai Conti (6) Later: Rue de Lille (6)	6a, 6b	Revolutionary/ Girondin	September 1792	Fled to Bordeaux
Madame marquise de Créqui	Renée Caroline Victoire de Froulay de Tessé	1714-1803					
Madame Desmoulins	Anne-Lucile-Philippe Laridon Duplessis	1770/1771?-1794			Revolutionary/ Jacobin		Guillotined
Madame Dodun	Louise-Marie-Julie Bourgeois		12 place Vendôme (1)	7	Revolutionary/ Girondin		
Madame Duval d'Epremésnil	Françoise-Augustine Sentuary	1754-1794	13 rue Bertin-Poirée (1)	8	Royalist/ Conservative	1793	Guillotined
Madame baronne d'Escars					Revolutionary		
Mme de La Ferté-Imbault	Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin	1715-1791			Revolutionary		
Madame comtesse de Flahaut	Adélaïde Filleul[401]	1761-1836	Louvre (1)	9	Liberal	1792	Fled to Mickelham, Great Britain
Madam marquise de Fontenay[402]	Thérésa Cabarrus	1773-1835			Revolutionary	1793	Moved to Bordeaux

[401] Monsieur de Flahaut was executed in the final months of 1792. Madame de Flahaut met the Portuguese ambassador De Souza in Hamburg where she was living as an emigrant and where she hosted a salon as well. She married him and became Madame de Souzo-Botelho in 1802. Siante-Beuve, *Oeuvres*, iii.

[402] Madame marquise de Fontenay was more commonly known as Madame Tallien. She divorced Fontenay in 1793, moved to Bordeaux and later became Madame Tallien. When she married for the third time, to the prince de Chimay, she became Madame comtesse de Caraman. Freund, 'The "Citoyenne" Tallien', 325-344.

Madame comtesse de Genlis[403]	Caroline-Stéphanie Félicité du Crest de Saint-Aubin	1746-1830	Rue de Bellechasse (7)	10	Royalist/ Conservative	1791	Exile
Madame duchesse de Gontaut-Biron	Joséphine de Montaut-Navailles	1773-1862			Revolutionary		
Madame comtesse de Gouvernet[404] La Tour du Pin	Henriette-Lucy Dillon	1770-1853			Constitutional monarchist		
Madame duchesse de Gramont	Béatrix de Choiseul-Stainville	1729-1794			Royalist/ Conservative	September 1792	Guillotined
Madame Helvétius[405]	Anne-Catherine de Ligniville	1720/1722?-1800	Rue Sainte-Anne (on the edge of the first and second arrondissement). Later: 59 rue d'Auteuil (16)	11a, 11b	Revolutionary/ Girondin		Fled to Auteuil
Madame princesse d'Hénin	Adélaïde-Félicité-Étiennette de Guinot de Monconseil	1750-1823	Rue de Verneuil (7)	12	Royalist/ Conservative		
Madame comtesse d'Houdetot	Élisabeth Françoise Sophie (Mimi) de la Live de Bellegarde	1730-1813					

[403] Madame comtesse de Genlis is sometimes referred to as Madame (marquise) de Sillery, see for example: Abrantès, *Histoire*, ii. 28.
[404] Henriette Lucie Dillon married Frédéric-Sépharin, comte de Gouvernet, in 1787. When her father died in 1794, her husband took the name of La Tour du Pin-Gouvernet. He was granted the title of Marquis de La Tour du Pin by patent letters in 1815 and 1820. La Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une femme*, v.
[405] Helvétius was often spelled as Helvetious, see for example: Allan, Dainard and Inguenaud, *Correspondance générale d'Helvétius*, 192. Letter 838.

Madame Kéralio-Robert[406]	Louise-Félicité de Keralio	1758-1822	Rue de Condé (6)	13	Revolutionary/ Girondin, later Revolutionary/ Jacobin		
Madame marquise de Lafayette	Marie-Adrienne-Françoise de Noailles	1759-1807	Hôtel de La Fayette, rue de Lille (7)	14	Revolutionary		
Madame marquise de Laval					Revolutionary		
Madame Lavoisier	Marie-Anne Pierrette Paulze	1758-1836	Rue des Bons-Enfants (1). Later: L'Arsénal (4)	15a, 15b	Liberal		
Madame duchesse de Mirepoix	Anne Marguerite Gabriëlle de Craon						
Madame de Montesson	Charlotte-Jeanne Béraud La Haye de Riou	1738-1806					
Madame de Murinet					Revolutionary		
Madame Necker	Suzanne Curchod	1739-1794	Rue de Bergère (9)	16	Liberal	1792	
Madame maréchale de Noailles	Catherine Françoise Charlotte de Brissac	1724-1794			Royalist		

[406] Madame Kéralio-Robert called herself Soeur Louise during the French Revolution. See: Petix, Green, 'Etta Palm d'Aelders', 68.

Madame Palm d'Aelders[407]	Etta Lubina Johanna Aelders van Nieuwenhuys	1743-1799	Rue Favard (2)	17	Revolutionary/ Jacobin	1792/1793?	Fled to The Hague, the Netherlands
Madame marquise de Pastoret	Adélaïde-Anne-Louise Piscatory	1765-1843	Hôtel de Lionne Pontchartrain, rue des Petits Champs (on the edge of the first and second arrondissement)	18	Liberal		
Madame Permon	Panoria Comnène		Rue Sainte-Croix (4)	19	Royalist/ Conservative		
Madame princesse de Poix	Anne Louise Marie de Beauvau	1750-1833/4			Royalist/ Conservative		
Madame duchesse de Polignac	Yolande Martine Gabriëlle de Polastron	1749-1793	Versailles	-	Royalist/ Conservative	July 1789	Fled to Switzerland
Madame de la Reynière	Suzanne Françoise de Jarente	1735-1815	Avenue des Champs-Élysées (8). During summer: Château de la Thuilerie, Auteuil (16)	20a, 20b	Royalist/ Conservative	1793	Imprisoned

[407] Madame Palm d'Aelders was known at her salon as Madame baronesse d'Aelders, a title which did not belong to her nor her husband's family. She had married Christian Ferdinand Lodewijk Palm in 1762, but he disappeared from her life a couple of years later. See: Petix and Green, 'Etta Palm d'Aelders', 63-78.

Madame Roland de la Platière	Marie-Jeanne (Manon) Phlipon	1754-1793	Hôtel Britannique, rue Génégaud (6). Later: Hôtel de Lionne Pontchartrain, rue des Petits Champs (on the edge of the first and second arrondissement). Later 51 Rue de la Harpe (5)	21a, 21b, 21c	Revolutionary/ Girondin	1793	Guillotined
Madame de Sainte-Amaranthe	Jeanne Louis Françoise d'Archiac de Saint-Simon	1751-1794	50 Arcades du Palais-Royal (1)	22	Royalist/ Conservative	September 1792	
Madame de Sainte-Amaranthe	Charlotte-Rose-Émilie	1773-1794	50 Arcades du Palais-Royal (1)	23	Royalist/ Conservative	September 1792	Fled to Rouen
Madame de Sainte-Hilaire					Revolutionary/ Girondin		
Madame comtesse de Simiane	Diane-Adélaïde de Damas	1761-1835					
Madame baronne de Staël-Holstein	Anne-Louise Germaine Necker	1766-1817	Hôtel Dillon, rue du Bac (7)	24	Constitutional monarchist	2 September, 1792	Fled to Coppet, Switzerland
Madame Suard	Amélie Panckoucke	1743-1830				1793	Fled to Fontenay-aux-Roses
Madame Talma	Louise-Julie Careau	1756-1805					

Madame comtesse de Tessé	Adrienne-Catherine de Noailles		Hôtel de Tessé, rue de Varenne faubourg Saint-Germain (7)[408]	25	Liberal	1790	Fled to Switzerland
Madame Valazé			12 Place Vendôme (1)	26	Revolutionary/ Girondin		
Madame Vigée-Le Brun	Élisabeth Louise Vigée	1755-1842	Hôtel de Lubert, rue de Cléry (2)	27	Royalist/ Conservative	October 1789	

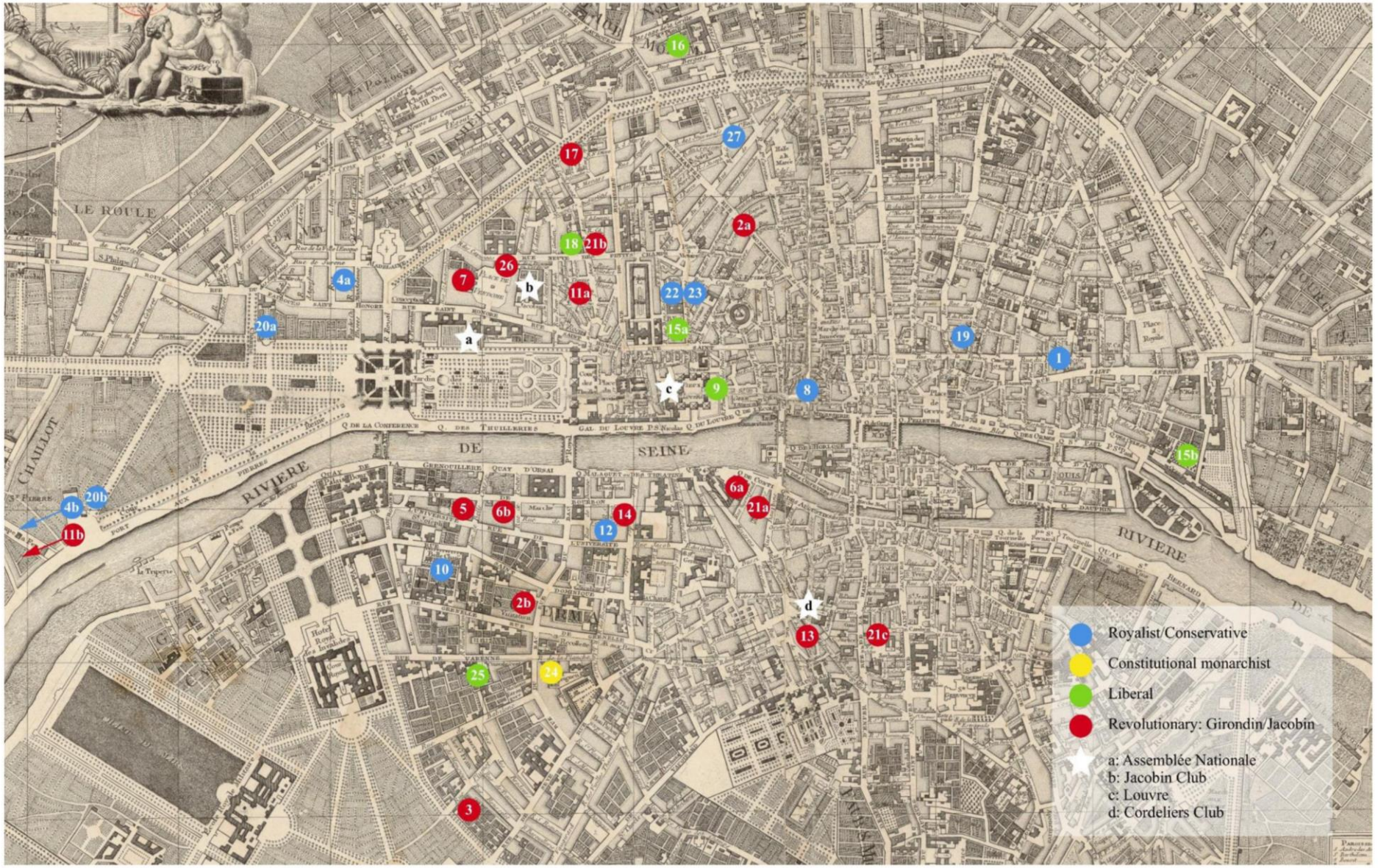
[408] Cordier, *L'École des langues orientales*, 23.

Appendix 1b List of names of women active in the salons in Paris during the first years of the French Revolution, 1789-1793

Madame d'Angivilliers
Madame duchesse d'Anville
Madame duchesse d'Ayen
Madame comtesse du Barry
Madame de Beaumanois
Madame de Beaumont
Madame princesse de Beauvau
Mademoiselle de Beltz
Madame de la Blédoyères
Madame du Bois
Madame de la Borde
Madame de Bost
Madame du Bourg
Madame marquise de Boursac
Madame duchesse de Brancas
Madame marquise de Brehan
Madame de Canteleu
Madame de Cantellux
Madame de Capellis
Madame Cappadocia
Madame de Carro
Madame de Caumont
Madame de la Caze
Madame duchesse de Chalnes
Madame comtesse de Chastellux
Madame marquise de Chastellux
Madame duchesse de Civrac
Madame de Chaumont
Madame Cogels
Madame de Coigny
Madame de Corny
Madame de Courcelles
Madame le Couteulx
Madame comtesse de Damas
Madame Dubourg
Mademoiselle Duplessis
Madame Duplessis
Madame d'Epinchalles
Madame d'Espanchale
Madame de Ferensac
Madame Fontenay
Madame de Fontenille
Madame marquise de Foucault
Madame de Fouguet
Madame comtesse de Frieze
Madame duchesse de Gordon
Madame Grandchamp
Madame de Gouges
Madame de Gourgue
Madame Grand
Madame de Guibert
Madame Houdon
Madame Jodin
Madame marquise de Lafayette
Madame de Lameth
Madame marquise de Laval
Madame Lavoisier
Madame marquise de Livri
Madame de Lostange
Madame vicomtesse de la Luzerne
Madame marquise de Marigny
Madame Martinville
Madame Massac
Madame duchesse de la Massais
Madame duchesse de Mazarin
Madame Millet

Madame duchesse de de Mirepoix
Madame du Moley
Madame de Monciel
Madame de Montboisier
Madame marquise de Montesson
Madame de Montmorin
Madame de la Mothe
Marquise de Nadaillac
Madame la Norraye
Madame Ossey
Madame d'Ossun
Madame Pétion
Madame Petit
Madame de Pignieu
Madame duchesse de Polignac
Madame de Puisignieu
Madame le Ray
Madame de Reichteren
Madame de Rully
Madame comtesse de Sabran
Madame marquise de Sabran
Madame de Sainte-Foy
Madame de Saint Priest
Madame de Saint Simon
Madame de Sardis
Madame comtesse de Ségur
Madame Spinola
Madame de la Suze
Madame comtesse de Tessé
Madame la Tournelle
Madame de Tott
Madame de Trant
Madame de Tronchin
Madame duchesse de la Vallière
Madame de Vannoise
Madame marquise de la Vaupalière
Madame de Vergennes
Madame de Villeblanche
Madame de Vingtimille
Madame de Warsi

Appendix 2. Locations of salons in Paris during the first years of the French Revolution, 1789-1793 (corresponding to appendix 1a)



Bibliography

Primary sources

Allan, Peter, Dainard, Alan and Inguenaud, Marie-Thérèse (eds.), *Correspondance générale d'Helvétius*. 3 vols. (Toronto, 2000).

Badinter, Elisabeth (ed.), *Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et Madame Suard. 1771-1791* (Paris, 1988).

Betham-Edwards, Matilda (ed.), *Arthur Young's travels in France during the years 1787, 1788 and 1789* (London, 1892).

Biré, Edmond (ed.), *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. 6 vols. (Paris, 1899).

Boigne, Louise Éleonore Charlotte Adélaide d'Osmond comtesse de, *Récits d'une tante. Mémoires de la Comtesse de Boigne, née d'Osmond*. 4 vols. (Paris, 1921).

Bosc, Louis Augustin Guillame (ed.), *Appel à l'impartiale postérité, par la Citoyenne Roland, Femme du Ministre de L'Intérieur; ou Recueil des Écrits qu'elle a rédigés, pendant sa Détention aux Prisons de l'Abbaye et de Sainte-Pélagie. D'après l'Edition de Paris, faite au profit de sa fille unique, privée de la Fortune de ses Père et Mère, dont les Biens sont toujours séquestrés.* 2 vols. (Paris, 1796).

Broglie, Albert duc de (ed.), *Mémoires du prince de Talleyrand. Publiés avec une préface et des notes par le duc de Broglie de l'Académie Française*. 5 vols. (Paris, 1891-1892).

Centre de Recherche du Château de Versailles: http://www.chateauversailles-recherche-ressources.fr

Chemin-Dupontès, Jean-Baptiste, *Alphabet républicain, avec lequel on apprend à lire aux enfans, en les amusant par des figures agréables, suivi de conversations simples & à leur portée, propres à leur inspirer l'amour de la liberté, de l'égalité, & de toutes les vertus républicaines; et à les mettre en état de bien entendre la Déclaration des droits, & la Constitution* (Paris, 1793-1794).

Cloots, Anacharsis, *Ni Marat, ni Roland. Opinion d'Anacharsis Cloots, député du department de l'Oise, à la Convention Nationale* (Paris, 1792).

Condorcet, Jean-Antoine Nicolas de Caritat marquis de, 'Art social. Sur l'admission des femmes au droit de cité', *Journal de la Société de 1789* 5 (1790), 1-13.

Copie littérale prise sur la minute, du style et de la main de Marie-Jeanne Roland. Femme du ci-devant Ministre de l'Intérieur (Paris, 1794).

Data Bibliothèque Nationale de France: http://data.bnf.fr

Davenport, Beatrix Cary (ed.), *A diary of the French Revolution by Gouverneur Morris. 1789-1793*, 2 vols. (London, 1939).

Dictionnaire des femmes de l'ancienne France. Société internationale pour l'étude des femmes de l'Ancien Régime (SIEFAR): http://siefar.org/dictionnaire/fr/Accueil

Forgues, Eugène (ed.), *Baron de Vitrolles. Souvenirs autobiographiques d'un émigré* (Paris, 1924).

Gallica, Bibliothèque Nationale de France: http://gallica.bnf.fr

Gazette Nationale de France (1792): http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6394658x/f2.image.r=massacres%20de%20septembre%201792

Genlis, Stéphanie-Félicité du Crest comtesse de, *Les Dîners du baron d'Holbach dans lequels se trouvent rassemblés, sous leurs noms, une partie des gens de la cour et des littérateurs les plus remarquables du 18e siècle* (Paris, 1822).

Genlis, Stéphanie-Félicité du Crest comtesse de, *Mémoires inédits de Madame la comtesse de Genlis, sur le dix-huitième siècle et la Révolution française, depuis 1756 jusqu'à nos jours*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1825).

Godechot, Jacques (ed.), *Considérations sur la Révolution française* (Paris, 1983).

Gouges, Olympe de, *Les droits de la femme. À la Reine* (n.p., 1789-1793).

La Fayette, Gilbert du Moitier, *Mémoires correspondance et manuscrits du general de La Fayette, publiés par sa famille*. 6 vols. (Paris, 1837-1838).

Liste générale et très-exacte des noms, âges, qualité et demeures de tous les Conspirateurs qui ont été condamnés à mort par le Tribunal révolutionnaire, établi à Paris par la loi du 17 août 1792, et par le second Tribunal établi à Paris par la loi du 10 mars 1793, pour juger tous les ennemis de la patrie. 3 vols. (Paris, 1794).

Luchet, Jean-Pierre Louis de la Roche du Maine marquis de, *Amusement des gens du monde* (n.p., 1785).

Maréchal, M. Syvlain (ed.), *Costumes civils actuels de tous les peoples connus, dessinés d'après nature, graves et coloriés. Accompagnés d'une Notice Historique sur leurs Coutumes, Mœurs, Religions, &c., &c.* (Paris, 1788).

Messance, Louis (ed.), *Nouvelles recherches sur la population de la France: avec des remarques importantes sur divers objets d'administration* (Paris, 1788).

Nougaret, Pierre-Jean Baptiste, *Histoire des prisons de Paris et des départemens; conténant des Mémoires rares et précieux*. 4 vols. (Paris, 1797).

Omacini, Lucia (ed.), *Des circonstances actuelles qui peuvent terminer la révolution et des principes qui doivent fonder la république en France* (Geneva, 1979).

Paris de l'Epinard, Joseph (ed.), *Mémoires sur les prisons. Contenant ceux qui concernent les prisons de Port-Libre, du Luxembourg, de la rue de Sèvres, etc., etc., suivis du voyage de cent trente-deux Nantais, et d'une relation des maux soufferts par les prêtres déportés dans la rade de l'Ile d'Aix, avec des notes et des éclairissements historiques*. 2 vols. (Paris, 1823).

Perroud, Claude (ed.), *Lettres de Madame Roland.* 2 vols. (Paris, 1900-1902).

Perroud, Claude, 'Une amie de Madame Roland (1791-1793). Souvenirs inédits de Sophie Grandchamp', *La Révolution française. Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 1 (2) (1899), 65-89.

Puisieux, Madeleine de, *La femme n'est pas inférieure à l'homme. Traduit de l'anglois* (London, 1750).

The Project for American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language (ARTFL), University of Chicago: https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/

Réglement de la Société des citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires de Paris (Paris, n.d.).

Réponse de la Société des Amis de la Liberté & de l'Égalité, Séante au Jacobins, a celle de Troye (Paris, 1793).

Rivarol, Antoine de, *Le Petit almanach de nos grandes femmes, accompagné de quelques prédictions pour l'année 1789* (London, 1789).

Rolland, Armandine, *Mes souvenirs sur Mirabeau* (Paris, 1869).

Rutledge, James, *Le bureau d'esprit. Comédie en cinq actes et en prose* (London, 1777).

Sainte-Beuve, Charles-Augustin (ed.), *Oeuvres de Madame de Souza* (Paris, 1865).

Staël-Holstein, Auguste-Louis de and Necker de Saussure, Madame (ed.), *Oeuvres complètes de Madame de Staël, publiées par son fils ; précédées d'une notice sur le caractère et les écrits de Mme de Staël, par Madame Necker de Saussure.* 6 vols. (Brussels, 1830).

Staël, Germaine de, 'Réflexions sur la paix, adressées a M. Pitt et aux Français' in: Staël-Holstein, Auguste-Louis de and Necker de Saussure, Madame (ed.), *Oeuvres complètes de Madame de Staël, publiées par son fils ; précédées d'une notice sur le caractère et les écrits de Mme de Stael, par Madame Necker de Saussure* (Brussels, 1830), ii. 35-125.

Stanford University Libraries and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Archives numériques de la Révolution française, 'Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860': https://frda.stanford.edu/en.

The Letters of Thomas Jefferson 1743-1826. American History. From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond: http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/thomas-jefferson/letters-of-thomas-jefferson/#1789

Thiéry, Luc-Vincent, *Paris tel qu'il étoit avant la Révolution, ou Description raisonnée de cette ville, de sa banlieue et de tout ce qu'elles contenoient de remarquable pour servir de guide aux amateurs et voyageurs français et étrangers.* 2 vols. (Paris, 1795-1796).

Todd, Janet and Butler, Marilyn (ed.), *The Works of May Wollstonecraft*. 7 vols. (London, 1989).

Tour du Pin, Lucy, marquise de La, *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans, 1778-1815* (Paris, 1913).

Tourneux, Maurice (ed.), *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister, etc. Revue sur les textes originaux comprenant outre ce qui a été publié à diverses époques les fragments supprimés en 1813 par la censure, les parties inédites conservées à la bibliothèque ducale de Gotha et à l'Arsenal à Paris.* 16 vols. (Liechtenstein, 1968).

Vigée-Lebrun, Louise-Élisabeth, *Souvenirs de Madame Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, de L'Académie Royale de Paris, de Rouen, de Saint-Luc de Rome et d'Arcadie, de Parme et de Bologne, de Saint-Pétersbourg, de Berlin, de Genève et Avignon* (Paris, 1835).

Walter, Gérard (ed.), *Actes du tribunal révolutionnaire* (Paris, 1968).

Secondary sources

Abrantès, Laure Junot duchesse d', *Histoire des salons de Paris. Tableaux et portraits du grand monde, sous Louis XVI, le Directoire, le Consulat et l'Empire, la Restauration et le règne de Louis-Pilippe Ier.* 6 vols. (Paris, 1837-1838).

Ancelot, Virginie, *Les salons de Paris. Foyers éteints* (Paris, 1857).

Balayé, Simone, *Madame de Staël. Lumières et liberté* (Paris, 1979).

Blanc, Olivier, 'Cercles politiques et salons du début de la Révolution (1789-1793)', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 344 (2) (2006), 63-92.

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris, 1992).

Brassanville, Anaïs Lebrun, *Les salons d'autrefois. Souvenirs intimes* (Paris, 1866).

Calhoun, Craig, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Massachusetts, 1993).

Callet, Auguste, *Anne-Pauline-Dominique de Noailles, marquise de Montagu* (Paris, 1869).

Cameron, Vivian, *Woman as image and image-maker in Paris during the French Revolution* (Yale University dissertation, 1983).

Challamel, Augustin, *Les clubs contre-révolutionnaires: cercles, comités, sociétés, salons, réunions, cafés, restaurants et librairies* (Paris, 1895).

Cordier, Henri, *Un coin de Paris. L'École des langues orientales vivantes* (Paris, 1913).

Dalton, Susan, 'Gender and the shifting ground of revolutionary politics: the case of Madame Roland', *Canadian Journal of History* 36 (2) (2001), 259-282.

Damave, H. J., *De Franse Salon. Ontstaan, ontwikkeling en maatschappelijk betekenis van een instituut* (Zeist, 1986).

Darnton, Robert, ‘The Facts of Literary Life in Eighteenth-Century France’ in: Baker, Keith Michael (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture. The Political Culture of the Old Regime* (Oxford, 1987), i. 261-291.

Dow, Gilian, ‘Women readers in Europe: Readers, Writers, Salonnières, 1750-1900’, *Women’s writing* 18 (1) (2011), 1-14.

Duras, Louise-Charlotte Philippine de Noailles duchesse de, *Journal des prisons de mon père, de ma mère et des miennes* (Paris, 1888).

Fairweather, Maria, *Madame de Staël* (London, 2006).

Feggelen, Barbara van, *‘’La Salonnière et l'Internaute’’: Systèmes de socialité et conversation de la Révolution française jusqu'au présent* (University of Connecticut dissertation, 2010).

Fontana, Biancamaria, *Germaine de Staël. A political portrait* (Princeton, 2016).

Fraisse, Geneviève, ‘Rupture révolutionnaire et l’histoire des femmes’ in: Haase Dubosc, Danielle and Viennot, Eliane (eds.), *Femmes et pouvoirs sous l’Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1991), 291-305.

Freund, Amy, ‘The ‘’Citoyenne’’ Tallien: Women, Politics, and Portraiture during the French Revolution’, *The Art Bulletin* 93 (3) (2011), 325-344.

Gilchrist, John and Murray, William James, *The Press in the French Revolution. A Selection of Documents taken from the Press of the Revolution for the years 1789-1794* (Melbourne, 1971).

Glotz, Marguerite and Maire, Madeleine, *Salons du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1949).

Goodman, Dena, ‘Enlightenment salons: the convergence of female and philosophic ambitions’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22 (3) (1989), 329-351.

Goodman, Dena, ‘L’ortografe des dames: Gender and Language in the Old Regime’, *French Historical Studies* 25 (2) (2002), 191-223.

Goodman, Dena, *The Republic of Letters. A cultural history of the French Enlightenment* (New York, 1994).

Gordon, Felicia, ‘Performing citizenship: Marie-Madeleine Jodin enacting Diderot’s and Rousseau’s dramatic and ethical theories’ in: Curtis-Wendlandt, Lisa, Gibbard, Paul and Green, Karen (eds.), *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women. Virtue and Citizenship* (New York, 2016), 49-62.

Green, Karen, *A History of Women’s Political Though in Europe, 1700-1800* (Cambridge, 2014).

Gustafson, Bruce, ‘Madame Brillon et son salon’, *Revue de Musicologie* 85 (2) (1999), 297-332.

Habermas, Jürgen, *Democracy and the Public Sphere* (London, 2005).

Habermas, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Massachusetts, 1989).

Hanken, Caroline, ‘Lucy de la Tour du Pin. Portrait of a Grande Dame in Eighteenth Century France’ in: Hoekstra, Hanneke and Oldersma, Jantine (eds.), *Lady Macbeth’s Sisters. Women’s Power in Political Elites in the Transition from Monarchy to Democracy* (Leuven, 2011), 27-46.

Haussonville, Gabriel Paul Othenin de Cléron comte d’, *The Salon of Madame Necker*. 2 vols. (London, 1882).

Hellegouarc’h, Jacqueline, *L’esprit de société. Cercles et ‘’salons’’parisiens au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2000).

Heyden-Rynsch, Verena von der, *Salons européens. Les beaux moments d’une culture féminine disparue* (Paris, 1993).

Kale, Steven, *French salons. High society and political sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore, 2004).

Kale, Steven, ‘Women, Salons and Sociability as Constitutional Problems in the Political Writings of Madame de Staël’, *Historical Reflections/ Réflexions Historiques* 32 (2) (2006), 309-338.

Kale, Steven, ‘Women’s Intellectual Agency in the History of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Salons’ in: Curtis-Wendlandt, Lisa, Gibbard, Paul and Green, Karen (eds.), *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women. Virtue and Citizenship* (New York, 2016), 123-140.

Kölving, Ulla, ‘La ‘’Correspondance Littéraire’’ de Grimm et Meister à la lumière des manuscrits - une première approche’, *Revue Romane* 17 (1) (1982), 22-34.

Kupiec, Anne, ‘La Gironde et le Bureau d’esprit public: livre et révolution’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 302 (1995), 571-586.

Landes, Joan (ed.), *Feminism, the Public and the Private* (Oxford, 1998).

Landes, Joan, ‘Representing the Body Politic: The Paradox of Gender in the Graphic Politics of the French Revolution’ in: Melzer, Sara and Rabine, Leslie (eds.), *Rebel daughters. Women and the French Revolution* (New York, 1992), 15-37.

Landes, Joan, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1988).

Lasteyrie du Saillant, Marie-Antoinette-Virginie de La Fayette marquise de, *Vie de madame de Lafayette. Précédée d’une Notice sur la vie de sa mère , Mme la duchesse d’Ayen* (Paris, 1869).

Lilti, Antoine, *Le monde des salons. Sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2005).

Linton, Marisa, *Choosing Terror. Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 2013).

Lougee, Carolyn, *Le paradis des femmes. Women, salons, and social stratification in seventeenth-century France* (Princeton, 1976).

Mason, Amelia Gere, *The women of the French Salons* (Fairfield, 2007).

May, Gita, *Madame Roland and the Age of Revolution* (London, 1970).

Murphy, Orville, *The Diplomatic Retreat of France and Public Opinion on the Eve of the French Revolution, 1783-1789* (Washington, 1998).

Noailles, Léontine vicomtesse de, *Vie de la princesse de Poix, née Beauvau* (Paris, 1855).

Orr, Linda, ‘Outspoken Women and the Rightful Daughter of the Revolution: Madame de Staël’s *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*’ in: Melzer, Sara and Rabine, Leslie (eds.), *Rebel daughters. Women and the French Revolution* (New York, 1992), 121-138.

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: http://www.oxforddnb.com/

Ozouf, Mona, ‘’’Public Opinion’’ at the End of the Old Regime’, *The Journal of Modern History* 60 (1988), 1-21.

Perrot, Michelle, ‘Women, Power, and History: the case of nineteenth-century France’ in: Reynolds, Siân, *Women, State and Revolution. Essays on power and gender in Europe since 1789* (Brighton, 1986), 44-59.

Petix, Calogero Alberto and Green, Karen, ‘Etta Palm d’Aelders and Louise Keralio-Robert: Feminist Controversy during the French Revolution’ in: Curtis-Wendlandt, Lisa, Gibbard, Paul and Green, Karen (eds.), *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women. Virtue and Citizenship* (New York, 2016), 63-78.

Picard, Roger, *Les salons littéraires et la société française 1610-1789* (New York, 1943).

Pointon, Marcia, ‘Liberty on the Barricades: Woman, Politics and Sexuality in Delacroix’ in: Reynolds, Siân (ed.), *Women, State and Revolution. Essays on Power and Gender in Europe since 1789* (Brighton, 1986), 25-59.

Popkin, Jeremy, *Revolutionary News. The Press in France 1789-1799* (Durham, 2012).

Reynolds, Siân, *Marriage and Revolution: Monsieur and Madame Roland* (Oxford, 2012).

Reynolds, Siân, ‘Marianne’s Citizens? Women, the Republic and Universal Suffrage in France’ in: Reynolds, Siân (ed.), *Women, State and Revolution. Essays on power and gender in Europe since 1789* (Brighton, 1986), 102-122.

Tackett, Timothy, *Becoming a Revolutionary. The deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture (1789-1790)* (Princeton, 1996).

Velde, Henk te, *Sprekende politiek. Redenaars en hun publiek in de parlementaire gouden eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2015).

Vick, Brian, *The Congress of Vienna. Power and politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, 1970).

Wahl, Elizabeth Susan, *Invisible Relations. Representations of Female Intimacy in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1999).

Walker, Lesley, 'Sweet and Consoling Virtue: The Memoirs of Madame Roland', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34 (3) (2001), 403-419.

Images

Cover image: Louis-Joseph Mondhare, *Plan de la Ville et Faubourg de Paris avec tous ses accroissemens. Et la nouvelle Enceinte des Barrieres de cette Capitale* (Paris, 1788), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (detail).

92: Ibid.