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Women's Memoirs in Early Nineteenth Century France

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ABSTRACT

Although historians have acknowledged the importance of gender as a factor in the social and political life of post-revolutionary France, and bibliographical studies have revealed that vast quantities of memoirs were composed during the half century after the outbreak of the Revolution, the lives of women between the late 1790s and the 1830s, and the works in which they wrote about their lives and about the age in which they lived, have hitherto attracted relatively little attention from literary critics and historians. Previous research, moreover, has concentrated on women as writers of poetry and fiction, on the portrayal of women in novels, and on their position in society as it was defined by legislators, doctors, philosophers and the authors of manuals on female education and conduct. As a result, the diversity of women's writing and the complexity of their lives as historical subjects during this period have often been obscured. It is this diversity and complexity which are revealed by studying memoirs.

This thesis examines women's memoirs from both a literary and a historical perspective, focusing on the relationship between gender, genre and historical circumstances. It argues that women wrote memoirs and wrote them in the way they did because of the political and social conditions of the age in which they lived. A short introduction outlines the reasons why the memoirs written by women in the first decades of the nineteenth century have been neglected: the preoccupation of literary scholars with memoirs of the *ancien régime*; the memoir's apparent lack of depth compared to 'true' or 'literary' autobiography; the weakness of most women's memoirs as sources of information on political and military affairs for the Revolution and Empire; and the narrow focus of recent women-centred histories. The rest of the thesis is an attempt to fill in some of these gaps.

Chapter One places the memoir and its female practitioners in context. It looks at how the term 'Mémoires' was used in the early nineteenth century, explaining the heterogeneity of the memoir by tracing the development of the genre up to that time. Using the 'Déclarations des imprimeurs' and other contemporary sources, it establishes the memoir's important - though hitherto neglected - position in the literary marketplace and political arena during the Restoration and July Monarchy. It examines the reasons why women of the period were attracted to the memoir as a form of literary expression (the lack of formulated conventions and the memoir's ambiguous position on the boundary between the public and

the private, which meant that it fitted well with their education and lifestyle); the ways in which they used the memoir in order to write their lives and their versions of the past into the historical record; and the difficulties, arising from social and literary conventions which were emphatically gendered, which they had to negotiate when writing memoirs.

Central to this thesis is the belief that women's memoir-writing was influenced, not only by the writer's sex, but also by her civil status, class, political allegiance and intended readership, as well the images of herself which were already in circulation. In illustration of this, case studies of three women who wrote from different positions in society and for different readers provide the focus for the next three chapters. In each case, after a discussion of previous readings of the memoirs, a combination of printed sources and archival material (manuscripts of the memoirs, letters and other documents) is used in order to reveal the circumstances in which the memoirs were produced, the writer's relationship with her readers, and the effect which the interaction of gender with other factors had on the writer's crafting of history and on her self-imaging.

Chapter Two focuses on the aristocratic Henriette-Lucie de La Tour du Pin. Written for the most part when she was an impoverished widow, and addressed to her family and friends, Mme de La Tour du Pin's two-volume *Journal* both reinforces the image of herself as an epitome of the 'bonne épouse et bonne mère' and traces the development of her identity as an individual.

Chapter Three is devoted to the liberal monarchist Victorine de Chastenay. A spinster and author of botanical and historical works, Victorine composed two volumes of memoirs for posthumous publication: 'Mémoires historiques', an interpretation of the period from Revolution to Restoration which is informed by her political sentiments and her desire to vindicate the Charter promulgated by Louis XVIII; and 'Mémoires particuliers', in which she attempts to redeem both her work and her femininity and affirm the value of her life.

Chapter Four examines the *Souvenirs* of the artist Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, which were written specifically for publication and appeared in 1835-1837. Here we see the memoirist attempt to redeem her image as a woman and her reputation as a painter at the end of a long career by negotiating between diverse models of 'Woman' and 'the Artist'.

This approach reveals the inadequacy of many of the existing editions of women's memoirs and opens the way to further research into this field by demonstrating the richness of memoirs as literature and as historical testimony.

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KEY

Annales: E.S.C.

Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations

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l'Histoire de France*

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I declare that this thesis embodies the results of my own work, was composed by myself and does not contain material which has been submitted for another degree.

Introduction

'[...] Ce n'est pas seulement une urne et des larmes que vous demandent ces morts. Il ne leur suffit pas qu'on recommence leurs soupirs. [...] Il leur faut un Oedipe, qui leur explique leurs propres énigmes dont ils n'ont pas eu le sens, qui leur apprenne ce que voulaient dire leurs paroles, leurs actes, qu'ils n'ont pas compris. [...] Il faut faire plus, il faut entendre les mots qui ne furent dits jamais, qui restèrent au fond des coeurs (fouillez le vôtre, ils y sont); il faut faire parler les silences de l'histoire, ces terribles points d'orgue, où elle ne dit plus rien et qui sont justement ses accents les plus tragiques.'

(30 janvier, 1842, *Journal de Jules Michelet*)

Although they produced memoirs in comparatively large numbers, the life-writing and indeed the lives of women in France in the first decades of the nineteenth century have nevertheless remained among the least well-explored areas of the past for, until recently, interest in the genre, and especially in its female practitioners, was virtually non-existent. This marginalisation of women's memoirs of the post-revolutionary period by both literary critics and historians is the result of several factors: the post-war valorisation of 'true autobiography' at the expense of the memoir; the persistence of a tradition which depicts the *ancien régime* as a Golden Age of memoir-writing; and the late development of interest in women's history and its predominantly feminist agenda, which has drawn attention away from the seemingly barren years between the abolition of the revolutionary women's clubs in 1793 and the emergence of the Saint-Simonians and Fourierists in the 1830s. The aim of this introductory chapter is, firstly, to examine in greater detail the forces which have conspired to make early nineteenth century women's memoirs one of the 'silences' of literary and social history; and, secondly, to begin the process of drawing the women and their works out of obscurity by putting the memoir as a genre and the women who practised it back into their historical context.

Treatment of the memoir in literary criticism - particularly in Anglo-American literary criticism - has been neither extensive nor favourable. James Cox's observation in an essay published in 1980 that 'much criticism avoids the memoir' remains pertinent almost twenty years later and for many of the same reasons that he outlines.¹ Instead of reading the works of past centuries which their authors describe as memoirs on their own terms by taking into account the characteristics and functions of the genre within the specific historical and geographical context of their production, literary scholars have tended to judge them according to the aesthetic criteria which have been elaborated over the last four decades for a genre with greater academic prestige: autobiography. Almost invariably, this strategy has pushed the memoir into the wilderness at the level of theory and resulted in the negation of its value as literature. In some cases, the memoir is acknowledged to be a distinct literary genre, but one which is either explicitly (as in Roy Pascal's *Design and Truth*, Richard Coe's *When The Grass Was Taller* or John Sturrock's *The Language of Autobiography*) or implicitly (as in William Spengemann's *The Forms of Autobiography*), relegated to a position in the hierarchy of literary genres well below that of autobiography, on the grounds that it lacks the latter's psychological depth and formal integrity. In other cases, the very notion of the memoir as a distinct genre with its own conventions and functions disappears altogether and works which combine the story of the author's life with a chronicle or tableau of the age in which (s)he lived are presented as nothing more than second-rate autobiographies which have been flawed by the author/narrator's lack of individuality and his/her failure to confer meaning on his past.

Perhaps because the French themselves have long been convinced that their nation possesses a richer store of memoirs than any other,² critics and historians of French literature have generally treated the memoir genre and its practitioners with a degree of interest and respect which contrasts markedly with the disdain so often displayed by their counterparts when dealing with memoirs written in English. Not all periods of memoir-writing in France, however, have received equal attention. Although Charles Caboche's survey of memoirs and history in France covers the 700 years between the crusades and the mid nineteenth century,³ most studies have focused exclusively on memoirs which were written

between the middle of the sixteenth and the middle of the eighteenth centuries, from those of Montluc and Marguerite de Valois through to those of Retz and Saint-Simon who, according to many commentators, were responsible for bringing the genre to the peak of perfection. The nineteenth century critic Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve is typical in his admiration. 'Avec les Mémoires du Cardinal de Retz,' he wrote in 1851, 'il semblait que la perfection fût atteinte, en intérêt, en mouvement, en analyse morale, en vivacité de peinture, et qu'il n'y eût rien à espérer qui les dépassât. Mais les Mémoires de Saint-Simon sont venus, et ils ont offert des mérites d'ampleur, d'étendue, de liaison, des qualités d'expression et de couleur, qui en font le plus grand et le plus précieux corps de Mémoires jusqu'ici existant'.⁴ Interest in historical works in which the author, narrator and a character share the same identity and which were composed after the end of the eighteenth century, in contrast, has been slight; and, in spite of the quantitative importance of memoirs in the first half of the nineteenth century, which is attested to by the impressive bibliographies compiled by historians,⁵ there is at present no corpus of critical works on memoir-writing of this period comparable to that which has been established for memoirs of the *ancien régime*.⁶ The major reason for this imbalance is the pivotal role which has been attributed to Jean-Jacques Rousseau by influential scholars such as Georges Gusdorf and Philippe Lejeune in their attempts to identify the conventions of 'l'autobiographie proprement dite'. By assigning the memoir a place within the tradition from which the *Confessions* emerged, by hailing Rousseau as a literary innovator, and by concentrating on those writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who openly acknowledge Rousseau as a precursor or reveal the unmistakable influence of his work in their own,⁷ they have fostered the impression, firstly, that the memoir is a relatively primitive form of autobiographical writing which belongs essentially to the pre-history of 'true autobiography'; and secondly, that self-referential narration 'à la Rousseau' rapidly replaced the history-based memoir as the standard form for writing about one's life. As a result of this, the memoir's existence as a living literary form in early nineteenth century France has been obscured.⁸ The appearance of innumerable books and articles on autobiographical writing during the last forty years, therefore, has contributed little to our understanding of memoir-writing after the end of the eighteenth century - and this is particularly true in the case of women's memoir-writing.

Until relatively recently, female-authored texts and the relationship between gender and genre were overlooked in most studies of autobiographical writing: no women are mentioned, for example, by Pascal or Spengemann and they are discussed by only one of the contributors to the volume of essays on autobiography which was edited by James Olney in 1980. Although the corpus of theoretical and critical works on women's self-writing has expanded enormously since that date, the territory explored has nevertheless remained comparatively small as researchers have concentrated their efforts on texts written in English, particularly those by middle-class professional or 'achieving' women. Even collaborative works on women's self-writing, such as the collection of essays edited by Estelle Jelinek (*Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980) or those edited by Shari Benstock (*The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) deal primarily - if not exclusively - with autobiographies produced by English or American women. The list of French women whose autobiographical works have been the subject of academic study, has varied little over the last two decades: Georges Sand, Daniel Stern/Marie d'Agoult, Colette, Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Duras, Nathalie Sarraute and - to a lesser extent - Manon Roland and the diarist Marie Bashkirtseff. Attempts to look beyond this small group are still rare. One such example, Philippe Lejeune's *Le Moi des demoiselles: enquête sur le journal de jeune fille* (1993), although invaluable in that it brings to light the autobiographical writings of many previously obscure women in nineteenth century France, paradoxically reinforces certain prejudices about women's writing as it removes others. Firstly, Lejeune's observations on the scarcity of 'journaux personnels' before the 1850s foster the impression that women in the first decades of the century paid scant attention to the issues of selfhood and gender.⁹ Secondly, the choice of the diary as the object of investigation is in line with the prevalent perception of a radical disjunction between male public forms of literature of the self (such as autobiography) and private female forms (such as diaries and letters).¹⁰ Thirdly, his avowed predilection for 'les insatisfaites' who reveal distinctly 'modern' preoccupations, such as religious doubt and 'la revendication du Moi', leads him to erect a hierarchy in which such diaries (which were written mainly in the late nineteenth century or in the early years of the twentieth) occupy

a position far above the conventionally pious and those in which 'l'histoire ou la géographie font de vous un "je" qui est légitimé à prendre la plume par autre chose que son "moi".¹¹

This last point is symptomatic of a tendency evident in studies of autobiographical writing in general and of that by women in particular: a preference for texts written in the present century. The only women included in Michael Sheringham's book *French Autobiography: Devices and Desires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) are Simone de Beauvoir, Nathalie Sarraute and Marguerite Duras; ten of the fourteen essays in Jelinek's *Women's Autobiography* are devoted wholly or predominantly to works written after 1900; and Sidonie Smith, who questioned the legitimacy of a male-dominated canon, nevertheless established her own hierarchy in *The Poetics of Women's Autobiography*, claiming that it was not until the present century that female autobiographers began to grapple self-consciously with the ideology of gender and the question of self-identity in a patriarchal culture, to examine their relationship to language, and to experiment with genre.¹²

Neglected by literary critics and theorists who have privileged 'true autobiography' over the memoir, memorialists up to Saint-Simon over those who succeeded him, men's autobiographical writing over women's, and women's autobiographical writing in English over that in French, the memoirs written by women in early nineteenth century France have unquestionably received more attention from historians. Even this, however, has had distinct limitations. All too frequently regarded as little more than a fund of inert facts, memoirs have been assessed by historians primarily according to the gravity of their subject-matter and the accuracy of the information which they contain. This is the approach taken by Jean Tulard, for example, in his bibliography of memoirs on the Consulate and Empire. Moreover, since the traditional matrix for histories of the Revolution, Empire and Restoration has been composed of wars, treaties and the struggles between different political factions, the relevance of all but a few female-authored memoirs has been considered minimal. Interest specifically in women's lives and in the relationship between the sexes is a relatively recent development in historiography. Until the appearance of Olwen Hufton's essay 'Women in Revolution, 1789-1796' in the early 1970s,¹³ French women of the period had rarely entered history in their own right except through biographical studies of the

more romantic or flamboyant (and thus atypical) characters, such as Mme Roland, Germaine de Staël, the duchesse d'Abrantès or the Empress Josephine. Since then, the experiences of women and the role of gender in the ideological struggles of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period have come under increasing scrutiny. New ground has been broken by approaching history through sociolinguistics and the visual arts: Dorinda Outram, for example, has examined the sexually-charged discourse of the Revolution, its implications for women and their response to it;¹⁴ and Lynn Hunt has discussed the role allotted to them in revolutionary iconography.¹⁵

In spite of methodological innovations, however, recent scholarship, for the most part, still operates within the parameters established by Jules Michelet in *Les Femmes de la Révolution* (1854). The women on whom historians focus almost invariably belong to the same three groups: those of the urban working-classes who rioted for bread and joined republican clubs;¹⁶ those 'famous women' (*salonnières* or political activists) who espoused the ideals of the Revolution, especially those who can be regarded as 'founding mothers' of French feminism (Mme de Staël, Mme Roland, Olympe de Gouges, Théroigne de Méricourt, Pauline Léon and Rose Lacombe);¹⁷ and finally, counter-revolutionary women who, in league with, or manipulated by, the clergy, aborted the Revolution.¹⁸

Thus, while great progress has undoubtedly been made, large gaps nevertheless remain in the history of women in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century France. Except as objects put into circulation through speeches, pamphlets or caricatures, women of the aristocracy (the class to which most memoir-writers belong) rarely figure in the recent women-centred histories of the period.¹⁹ In part, this neglect of the upper-classes is a consequence of the attention granted to feminism which historians, such as Claire Goldberg Moses, have identified exclusively with the bourgeoisie and urban (especially Parisian) working-classes.²⁰ The fascination exerted by feminism - or at least by those pro-revolutionary activists who displayed the self-affirming energy so admired by modern feminists - has also diverted research away from the period between the Consulate and the early 1830s, which is habitually depicted as an era when women were forced into silence and submission. 'Les lendemains de la Révolution française sont les plus sombres de l'histoire des femmes,' declared

Maité Albistur and Daniel Armogathe in their *Histoire du féminisme français*. The Napoleonic period, they argue, saw the introduction of political and legal measures which effectively stifled women's claims that they were intellectually and morally equal to men and their demands for greater civil and political rights. Following the demise of the short-lived feminist periodical *L'Athénée des Dames* in 1808, the only female voices heard for several decades were those of writers who complied with the oppressors of their sex: 'Elles prirent la parole mais pour vanter les vertus de l'abnégation et du silence. Ce silence ne devait être rompu que vingt ans plus tard'.²¹ Even the major work to date on this period of women's supposed public silence - Geneviève Fraisse's *Muse de la raison: La démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes* (Aix-en-Provence: Editions Alinéa, 1989) - reveals little about the experiences of actual women. Intent on constructing a theoretical framework for the examination of post-revolutionary social and political history formulated around the issues of knowledge, rights and power, Fraisse eliminates actual political events (including the Restoration) and substitutes 'Woman' as a discursive object circulating in both male- and female-authored texts for women responding to the demands of a specific context.

One of the few scholars who have attempted to bridge the gap between historical and literary studies of the revolutionary era is Marilyn Yalom who, in *Le temps des orages* (Paris: Maren Sell et Cie, 1989) and *Blood Sisters* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), examines the autobiographical works in which women recall their experiences during the Revolution. Two features of Yalom's books are particularly noteworthy in the present context: the fact that the author looks beyond the small group of celebrated female activists who exclusively people most histories of women and the Revolution (although she does not ignore them); and the fact that she brings together the issues of gender, genre and historical context. Yalom's use of the memoirs primarily in order to construct a woman's-eye view of the Revolution, however, imposes certain limitations on her work. The generic conventions of the memoir in the early nineteenth century receive only superficial treatment, as does the influence of Rousseau on women's autobiographical writing; and the neglect of those sections of memoirs which are devoted to the years before and after the Revolution obscures the richness of certain works, including those of Mme de la Tour du Pin and Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun.

It is within the gaps in literary and historical studies of early nineteenth century France, which have been outlined above, that the present study of women's memoirs is to be located. My intention here is to move away from both analyses of genre that ignore or negate the influence of gender and of a historically variable horizon of expectation, and analyses of women's writing that ignore the concept of genre and wrench texts from the circumstances of their production and reception. What is offered, therefore, is an exploration of the relationship between the two fluctuating elements of gender and genre within the context of a specific historical era - revolutionary and post-revolutionary France - which it is hoped will shed new light on the literary landscape and the lives of women in this period.

Historically, as feminists have long recognised, sex matters. The place which women have occupied in Western society - and thus the place from which they have written - has consistently differed from that of men. Having experienced the world differently, they have responded to it differently, and their sense of self-identity has been formed within - and against - a culturally prescribed notion, not only of difference, but of weakness and inferiority: an inequitable sexual order which places the female under the dominance of the male is, in the words of one eminent anthropologist, 'a universal fact of human societies'.²² Women have been the second sex, Man's 'Other' and, as such, they have found that they could not with impunity behave as men did and that the works which they produced would be judged, first and foremost, as 'women's works'. The emphasis on women's 'different space', however, must not be allowed to obscure the fact that this space has not been the same for all women at all times; and the difficulties which they have faced in writing - particularly in past centuries - does not mean that their relationship to the pen has invariably been one of anxiety and frustration. It is in nuancing this emphatically bleak image of the woman writer of the past as a mere interloper, alienated by the 'master narratives' symptomatic of patriarchal oppression, that the concept of genre is useful. Once the image of literature as an undifferentiated field to which there is but a single approach has been dispelled, we can begin to ask the questions that will allow women of the past to reappear in literary history and bring to light the diversity and ingenuity of their interventions in the past: Which literary forms were available to women? What functions did these serve? How could women adapt them? What bearing did their sex have on their

writing?

In the chapters which follow, I will examine in greater detail how women in post-revolutionary France exploited the heterogeneity of the memoir and the fluidity of its boundaries in order to provide a 'speaking space' when convention dictated that they should be publicly mute; how they responded to contemporary constructions of 'Woman' in the light of their experiences during the Revolution and Empire; and how the particular circumstances in which they wrote, as individuals, influenced the form of their narrative, their vision of the past and their presentation of themselves - in other words, how gender interacted with other factors, such as class, civil status, political allegiance and intended readership. Although reference will be made to the memoirs of various writers,²³ I have chosen to concentrate on those of three women which illustrate a range of authorial preoccupations and textual strategies.

Chapter two examines the two-volume *Journal* of the aristocratic Henriette-Lucie de La Tour du Pin (1770-1853). Regarded by her contemporaries as the embodiment of pastoral elegance and wifely devotion, she was the wife of a soldier and diplomat who emigrated to America during the Revolution, served as a 'préfet' under Napoleon and rallied to the Bourbons in 1814; and the mother of six children, one of whom played a leading role in the Vendean uprisings in the 1830s. Her memoirs, which she envisaged circulating only among members of her family and a small group of friends, were written over a long period of time (at least twenty-five years), and blend together family history and social portraiture within an autobiographical framework.

Chapter three looks at the memoirs of a woman who, although almost an exact contemporary of Henriette-Lucie, wrote from a very different position in society. A translator and author (anonymously) of works on historical and botanical subjects, Victorine de Chastenay (1771-1855) was a spinster of ancient aristocratic stock whose family had traditionally been linked to that of the duc d'Orléans. Published editions of her memoirs disguise the fact that the original work is divided into two parts which belong to different branches of the genre. In one manuscript volume, labelled 'Mémoires historiques', which she appears to have written with a view to posthumous publication, the author attempts to

impose an interpretative framework on the Revolution and Restoration. In the other manuscript volume, labelled 'Mémoires particuliers', which she probably did not intend to make public, she recounts her life, weaving the story of her intellectual and emotional development into a portrait of French society between the last decades of the *ancien régime* and the first years of the Restoration.

The subject of the fourth chapter is the *Souvenirs* of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755-1842), who was a renowned artist and society hostess, a mother and a divorcee. It is not simply the social status of the narrator/protagonist which sets this work apart from those of Mme de La Tour du Pin and Mme de Chastenay, however. Unlike the works of the two aristocrats, the *Souvenirs* were written specifically with a view to publication during Vigée-Lebrun's lifetime (they appeared in 1835-1837); and may have been composed by the artist in collaboration with friends and relatives. Here we have a work in which the writer negotiates between pre-existing images of herself which are visual as well as textual; and between images of 'Woman', images of 'the Artist' and images of the 'Woman Artist'. These various pressures transpire textually in the memoirs which draw on several generic models and combine an account of Vigée-Lebrun's life as daughter, wife and mother and a record of her career with pen portraits of friends and acquaintances and professional advice on portrait painting.

*

Because of their greater accessibility, I have worked primarily with published editions of the memoirs. I am aware, however, that the published texts will not necessarily be a faithful reflection of the manuscripts. Indeed, the circumstances in which many of the memoirs came to be published worked against the appearance of unexpurgated texts. The majority of the memoirs which are considered here were published in the nineteenth century or in the first decades of the twentieth century, a time when few editors considered that the integrity of a manuscript was inviolable, particularly when it was the work of a woman. That most memoirs were made public only after the death of the author and were prepared for publication by the relatives, friends or political allies of the memoirist to whom the manuscripts had been bequeathed, moreover, greatly increased the likelihood of distortion. Intent on promoting their own political agenda, or on

upholding family honour by conveying a socially acceptable image of their ancestor, such editors were inevitably inclined to modify the original. I will return to the question of editing in the chapters which follow.

Before considering selected texts in detail, however, we need to explore the constraints or limitations implicit in the genre, clarifying the relationship between genre, gender and historical context.

Chapter One

Genre, Gender and Historical Context: Limits and Constraints

(i) Identifying the Genre

If we are to examine women's writing by means of a specific genre, the genre in question must be made discernible. What, then, is a memoir? The difficulty in defining the memoir, as in defining any other genre, is the need to consider both its synchronic and its diachronic dimensions. On the one hand, the definition proposed must take into account the conventions or formal, stylistic and thematic characteristics which distinguish the memoir from other textual acts and which have remained stable over time; on the other, it must take into account the ways in which changes in culture and in the expectations of readers over the centuries have altered the composition and reception of memoirs. Identifiable primarily through opposition, the memoir becomes visible as a genre when it is set in relation to others. This relationship, however, is subject to modification over time: the contours of individual genres alter as writers manipulate conventions, and the boundaries between genres shift as the number of generic categories recognised by literary theorists expands. Attempting to define the memoir differentially by comparing and contrasting it with other genres without taking into account the element of historical change is thus inherently flawed.

The importance which is currently attached to autobiography can be particularly misleading, for although the memoir's relationship to autobiography is the crucial starting-point for most definitions of the genre in the late twentieth century (those of Pascal, Lejeune, Gusdorf, Coe and Sturrock, among others), it does not provide the most constructive angle from which to approach memoir-writing in France in the first decades of the nineteenth century. In the first place, the term 'autobiographie' did not enter circulation in France until long after the term 'mémoire'. In its primitive sense, as an 'écrit où sont exposés les faits et les idées qu'on veut porter à la connaissance de quelqu'un', the word 'mémoire' is recorded in France as early as the twelfth century; and, by the late fifteenth century, it was

being used to describe historical accounts written in the first person singular. In contrast, the word 'autobiography/autobiographie' appeared only at the end of the eighteenth century: in England, in the *Monthly Review* in 1797, and in Germany in 1798 in a piece by Friedrich Schlegel in the *Athenäum*. It is not recorded in France until the mid-1830s, when it was defined as a 'biographie faite à la main, ou manuscrite'; and it was not until the early 1840s that this definition was revised and the French were brought into line with English and German usage: in the *Complément to the Dictionnaire de l'Académie* (1842), 'autobiographie' is defined as '[la] biographie d'une personne faite par elle-même'.¹ In the second place, the French continued to regard autobiography as a fundamentally alien genre until well into the nineteenth century. According to the *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle* of 1866, for example, 'autobiographie' was 'plutôt un genre anglais et américain' which the French seldom practised. Even on the rare occasions when they did produce works in which more space was devoted to the personality of the writer than to contemporary events - works which English-speaking writers would automatically have labelled 'autobiographies', according to the author of the article 'Autobiographie' in the *Dictionnaire* - the French persisted in describing them as 'Mémoires'. As the concept of 'autobiography' as a genre distinct from, and aesthetically superior to, the memoir was not clearly established in France in the first half of the nineteenth century, there is a danger of anachronism in using recent definitions of autobiography which are permeated by assumptions about the memoir's relative lack of sophistication as a mode of writing about one's life and times as the basis for the definition of the memoir in the post-revolutionary era.

In view of these difficulties, I want to move away from the notion of definition in terms of differences between the memoir and a range of the other genres which fill the literary landscape at the end of the twentieth century, towards description based on perception of the memoir's characteristics and of its position within the system of genres which was operative in France during the lifetime of the writers whose works are examined in this thesis. I will focus on the way in which the term 'Mémoires' was used in the early nineteenth century, highlighting the criteria according to which contemporary writers, readers and classifiers established patterns of affiliation and differentiation between the memoir and the other textual modes of expression practised at this period. Such an approach evidently blurs the distinction between classification according to form and classification

according to function or intention on which theories of genre usually rest. It does, however, restore to view the diversity and complexity of the memoir that explain why it was both an attractive and a problematic genre for the women of revolutionary and post-revolutionary France.

Empirical analysis of works written, published or re-published in France in the first half of the nineteenth century which include the word 'Mémoires' in their title, which were referred to by the author or others as 'Mémoires', or which were published as part of a collection of 'Mémoires', indicates that the memoir in this period was a genre with remarkably flexible boundaries. Even if we limit ourselves to the works included in two of the largest collections of memoirs published in the 1820s, the *Mémoires relatifs à l'Histoire de France* and the *Mémoires relatifs à la Révolution française*, it is evident that the genre cannot be equated with the name of the genre for these collections comprise works entitled *Commentaires, Journal, Discours, Relation, Histoire, Souvenirs, Exposé, Rapport, Annales, Notice* and *Vie*, as well as *Mémoires*. Even those works in which the term 'Mémoires' appears in the title differ from each other in fundamental ways. Some were written contemporaneously with, or soon after, the events recorded; others were composed after a lengthy interval.² Some are less than a hundred pages long; others run to several volumes. Some are written in the first person singular; others in the third person. Some recount the author's own life; others recount the life of someone else. Some give details about a single incident or a short series of events; others offer panoramic tableaux of an entire era. And in terms of form and tone, they include everything from philosophical reflections [in the *Mémoires du marquis d'Argenson, ou Essais dans le goût de ceux de Montaigne* (M.R.R.F., 1)], personal reminiscences, satirical portraits and whimsical anecdotes to depersonalised 'précis historiques' and transcripts of official records, as in the *Débats de la Convention nationale* (M.R.R.F., 36) or Sully's *Oeconomies royales* (M.R.H.F., 2^{ème} série, 1-9). For French men and women of the period, then, the term 'mémoire(s)' was one which could be applied to a broad range of works. Although certain general principles tie these works together - they are based on (or purport to be based on) events which occurred in the world outside the text; and they combine, in widely differing measures, personal and historical elements - the boundaries of the memoir genre were nevertheless flexible enough to allow the inclusion of works which would now be classified under a variety of headings:

autobiography, biography, history, chronicle and diary, as well as memoir as it is presently recognised.³

What the diversity of the works that were labelled as 'Mémoires' in the early nineteenth century reflects is the memoir's long and complex history and its ambiguous position 'au carrefour des genres en prose'.⁴ Linked initially to the chronicle, from which it began to emerge in the late Middle Ages,⁵ the genre underwent constant modification over the following centuries. The notion of enrichment, however, is more appropriate here than that of evolution which risks conveying a false sense of linearity. The developments which took place in memoir-writing - most notably, in the second half of the seventeenth century and again at the end of the eighteenth century - did not entail the immediate extinction of what had previously existed. On the contrary, each development served to enhance the genre by extending the range of subjects, forms and styles that it encompassed. Thus, while trends in memoir-writing might alter, the diverse types of memoir formulated by previous generations of writers continued to serve as models for their successors. It is by taking into account this process of enrichment that we are able to grasp the potential of the memoir in the first half of the nineteenth century.

From the Renaissance until at least the middle of the nineteenth century, the way in which memoir-writers defined themselves in France and the status and functions which they attributed to their work remained closely tied to the conventions of historiography and the image of the historian which were prevalent at the time of writing.

At the level of theory, it was always recognised that history and the memoir differed from each other in several fundamental ways. Until the Restoration, when the character of history began to change under the impact of men such as Prosper de Barante and Augustin Thierry, few aspects of the past were deemed to be worthy of the historian's attention. History, according to works such as Marmontel's *Elémens de littérature* (1787) and Chateaubriand's *Génie du christianisme* (1802), was concerned only with 'serious' matters (politics, diplomacy, religion, warfare);⁶ and, within these areas, only events which had had

widespread repercussions and the lives of those whose actions had determined the fate of nations were likely to find a place. When Chateaubriand proposed as a suitable subject for treatment by the historians of his day 'le changement que le christianisme a opéré dans l'ordre social', for example, the framework of the narrative which he outlined comprised two major elements: military exploits ('les croisades [...], une bataille de Bouvines, un combat de Lépante') and the lives of prominent (male) individuals ('Charlemagne [...], un Conradin à Naples, un Henri IV en France, un Charles I en Angleterre').⁷ By implication, the minutiae of daily existence and the lives of those who had played no major role in events were matters of indifference. The purpose of history, it was maintained, was to trace the broad sweep of change: 'l'histoire,' as Mme d'Abrantès puts it, 'crayonne à grand traits'.⁸ It transcended the particular and provided a comprehensive overview of events by collating material from a range of sources, among the most important of which were memoirs. Hence the topos of the memoir as the simple handmaiden of history which runs through the works of historians, memoirists and literary theorists throughout the centuries. Among those who claim that they wrote their memoirs with the explicit aim of providing material for use by future historians are Martin and Guillaume du Bellay, Doppet, Ferrières, Lavalette and Mme Campan.

In comparison to history, memoirs were routinely regarded as less ambitious undertakings. While the historian worked on a grand scale, drawing together those moments of decisive change which shaped the public life of a nation, the memoir-writer worked in the gaps between and behind these events, revealing 'les ressorts secrets', 'le dessous des cartes', 'ce qui se passe derrière la toile'.⁹

He/She accumulated details, recounting things 'par le menu',¹⁰ and finding space even for the trivial and the commonplace: the memoir is the realm of 'le curieux', 'les futilités' and 'la vie privée du siècle' - in short, the 'multitude de détails oiseux' which the good historian, according to Marmontel, would eliminate from his account.¹¹ History, in consequence, demanded of writers a degree of intellectual rigour far beyond that associated with the composition of memoirs. 'L'Historien,' explained H. A. Hanses in a piece that was published in 1708,

'est tenu à s'informer honnêtement de tout ce qui

concerne les parties en présence, et à ne rien omettre [...]. Alors que le rédacteur de Mémoires n'est tenu à mettre fidèlement à jour que cela seul qu'il trouve dans ses propres archives, et il passe le reste sans y toucher.'¹²

Co-terminous usually with the writer's field of vision and his personal lines of communication, memoirs were characteristically fragmentary accounts, rich in detail but lacking, as Prosper de Barante observed, 'l'intelligence de l'ensemble'.¹³ They were also self-referential in a way that history was not. While the latter covered vast expanses of time and space and, in principle, was synonymous with impartiality,¹⁴ memoirs were characterised as distinctly partisan accounts, indelibly marked by the personality of an author who recounted his life, defended his interests and gave free rein to his passions. 'L'intérêt privé et l'intérêt public,' wrote Marmontel,

'[...] occupent inégalement l'homme qui écrit l'histoire et celui qui écrit ses mémoires. Le dernier ne songe qu'à dire ce qu'il a fait ou ce qu'il a vu; et l'objet qui l'occupe le plus essentiellement, c'est lui-même. Le premier, au contraire, ne se compte pour rien dans cette longue suite d'événemens publics qui entraînent son attention.'¹⁵

This distinction was recognised by practitioners of the genre as well as theorists. 'En écrivant l'histoire,' declared the comte de Ségur in the introduction to his memoirs,

'il faut que l'auteur s'oublie si complètement qu'on puisse presque douter du temps où il a vécu, du rôle qu'il a joué, et du parti vers lequel il a incliné. Mais, quand on fait des Mémoires et qu'on retrace les souvenirs de sa vie, on est forcé de parler de soi, de sa famille: car cette famille est le premier élément où l'on vit et le premier horizon qu'on aperçoit.'¹⁶

Linked to these differences in scope and orientation, moreover, were differences in tone and style. While the memoir was of medieval origin and indeterminate literary status, history, with its roots in the civilisations of classical Greece and

Rome and its long-established connections with poetry, philosophy and oratory,¹⁷ was classified as one of the most eminent branches of literature in the sense of 'les Belles-Lettres'. From the Renaissance onwards, both historians and memoir-writers alike identified history as a genre practised by professional writers ('des gens de lettres'), and its more sophisticated style was cited as one of the foremost distinctions between it and the memoir. Olivier de La Marche, for example, who was one of the first writers to identify their works as 'Mémoires', was quick to contrast the 'ronces et espines de [ses] rudes et vains labours' with the 'hautes oeuvres' of the historian;¹⁸ and his depreciatory remarks about the literary quality of his memoirs were to find an echo in the works of many later writers, including René du Bellay, Montluc, Marguerite de Valois, Mme de Motteville, the maréchal d'Estrées, Saint-Simon, Bernis and General Marbot. Despite the tendency for the rhetorical embellishments associated with history to diminish over time, the convention that 'un ton sévère et retenu' should be maintained,¹⁹ and that history should be written in a dignified and elegant style, remained unaltered. Even Marmontel, who advocated the historian's use of a variety of styles, was nevertheless adamant that he should avoid 'le langage commun, le ton bourgeois, [et] les phrases proverbiales'.²⁰ As the remarks of writers like La Marche indicate, the aesthetic standards set for memoir-writing were much lower than those for history. Memoirs, it was reiterated over the centuries, were essentially artless, unsophisticated works, written in a simple, familiar style, and devoid of rhetorical flourish. 'Peu importe le degré d'élégance de son style,' declared Hanses of the memoir-writer; 'il semble même qu'un style familier, et pas trop orné convienne parfaitement à ce genre d'écrit'.²¹

And yet, despite the differences in subject-matter, form and style which existed in theory between history and the memoir, in practice the frontier between the two genres was never clearly defined. Even a cursory examination of the many works published as 'Mémoires' up to the nineteenth century reveals serious weaknesses in Charles Caboche's assertion that memoirs remained clearly distinguishable from history from the time of Villehardouin onwards by virtue of the fact that they were 'personnels', 'particuliers' and 'simples'; and that memoir-writers sought only to complement and never to rival or 'de marcher de pair avec l'histoire'.²²

If memoirs were, in the main, works which were imbued with the passions of the author-narrator and which took their structure from the circumstances of his/her life, there are nevertheless works which were described as 'Mémoires' by their authors or by generations of readers which contain few - if any - biographical details about the author. In some cases, the individual whose name appears on the cover of a work did little more than thread together a collection of documents; there is little that is personal, for example, in the *Mémoires* of the seventeenth century writers Omar Talon or the Grand Prévôt de Sourches. In such works, we are closer to 'mémoires' as the plural of the word 'mémoire' as it was originally used (in the singular, in the twelfth century, it signified an 'écrit où sont exposés les faits et les idées qu'on veut porter à la connaissance de quelqu'un')²³ than to any notion of memoirs as 'confidences historiques personnelles'.²⁴ In other cases, although the writer produced a narrative account, rather than an annotated collection of documents, (s)he did not place his/her own life at its centre, but instead focused the spotlight squarely on momentous events or on a figure whose life was - from a historical perspective - more noteworthy than the writer's own. The *Mémoires de la cour de France pour les années 1688 et 1689*, for example, reveal nothing about the life of the ostensible author, Mme de La Fayette; those of Mme de Motteville focus on the writer's mistress, Anne of Austria; and those of the duchesse de Nemours or the maréchal d'Estrées show them only in their public roles as actors in historical events.²⁵

Moreover, although memoirs could contain the flotsam and jetsam of the past - the picturesque and the trivial, the comic and the lascivious - certain writers expressly rejected such matters and chose subjects and styles which implicitly, if not explicitly, placed their works on the same level as history. A prime example of memoirs that were fit to rival history in terms of their subject-matter and tone, at least in the eyes of one seventeenth century commentator, were those of the maréchal d'Estrées. 'La régence de la reine Marie, mère du feu Roi, les mouvemens qui l'ont troublée, et les guerres qui l'ont suivie, font le sujet de ces mémoires,' declared Le Moyne in a letter prefacing the first edition of the work (1666):

'Sujet noble et magnifique par la grandeur des actions et des acteurs, instructif et curieux par la diversité des événemens et des intrigues, plaisant même et divertissant, mais d'une manière haute et sérieuse, mais sans bassesse et sans bagatelle. [...] [L'auteur] se tient dans une constante et invariable neutralité.'²⁶

Not all memoirs, Le Moyne implies, are of equal calibre. At one end of the spectrum, are the egocentric and indiscreet works of writers who seek only to amuse and titillate;²⁷ at the other, are works such as those of the *maréchal*, which possess the gravity and instructiveness of history, as it was written by a Caesar or a Tacitus.

It was not simply the fact that they treated serious subjects and contained only minimal references to the life of the author, however, that led to some memoirs being located on or near the threshold of history. In some cases, it was because their writers had clearly aspired to encompass a world that stretched far beyond their immediate field of vision, to bring together record and analysis and integrate the various parts of the narrative. Duclos, for example, in composing the *Mémoires secrets* which he began in 1750, drew on 'une infinité de mémoires, et les correspondances de nos ambassadeurs', as well as on his own experience and on what he could glean from the recollections of others;²⁸ and Saint-Simon offered a panoramic view of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in a work of unprecedented scale that was supported by the work of others (Dangeau and Torcy). Indeed, in the section entitled 'Savoir s'il est permis d'écrire et de lire l'histoire, singulièrement celle de son temps' (dated 1743), which serve as a preface to his *Mémoires*, Saint-Simon's descriptions of 'l'histoire générale' and 'l'histoire particulière' convey the impression that he saw very little difference between history proper and certain types of memoir. 'L'histoire générale,' he writes, is that which covers a wide geographical area or a long period of time or treats 'un fait ecclésiastique éloigné et fort étendu'. The nature of 'l'histoire particulière' is less clear. It adopts the conventions of the memoir in that it takes its temporal and geographical framework from the life of the writer: it is '[l'histoire] du temps et du pays où on vit'. As Saint-Simon goes on to describe it, however, it seems that he did not regard it as being necessarily less objective,

less coherent, less analytical or stylistically less sophisticated than 'l'histoire générale'.²⁹ Implicit in the works of both Saint-Simon and Duclos, in fact, is the assumption that very little separates the historian from well-informed memoir-writers, like themselves, who have drawn on various sources of information, ordered their work and illuminated the causes that underlie events.

Far from being consistently harmonious, as Caboche declared, the relationship between the memoir and history, from the beginning, was profoundly ambivalent. The earliest works to be entitled 'Mémoires' (those which were written around the turn of the sixteenth century), frequently retained close ties in terms of their form and subject-matter with works which had previously been entitled 'Chronique' or 'Histoire'.³⁰ The adoption of the new label was not a wholly innocuous gesture. André Bertière has linked this change of title to the changes in historiography that were brought about by the spread of humanism from Italy to France in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.³¹ Under the influence of Renaissance humanists, history came to be identified as an unequivocally 'literary' form which was concerned with illuminating the universal, as opposed to the particular, and which drew heavily on classical models (chiefly Livy, Sallust, Plutarch and Thucydides). The first writers to identify their works as *Mémoires* (Olivier de La Marche and Philippe de Commines), in contrast, highlighted their unpolished style and their limited field of vision with the specific intention of setting their work apart from that of historians such as Georges Chastelain and Du Bouchage.³²

It would be wrong, however, to assume from the self-denigratory remarks of these and subsequent memoir-writers that the superiority of history over the memoir was uncontested in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. If the decision to refer to one's work as 'Mémoires' was, for some, the result of genuine modesty, for others, it was a matter of pride or a conscious gesture of defiance towards authority. Even apparently unpretentious descriptions of a writer's work may be fraught with ambiguity. Marguerite de Valois, for example, began her memoirs by explaining to the historian Brantôme:

'Je traceray mes memoires, à qui je ne donneray plus glorieux nom, bien qu'ils meritassent celui d'histoire, pour la verité qui y est contenue

nuement et sans ornement aucun, ne m'en estimant pas capable, et n'en ayant aussi maintenant le loisir. Cette oeuvre donc d'une après disnée ira vers vous comme le petit ours, lourde masse et difforme, pour y recevoir sa formation. C'est un chaos, duquel vous aviez desjà tiré la lumiere. Il reste l'oeuvre de 5 ou 6 aultres journées. C'est une histoire, certes, digne d'estre escrite par cavalier d'honneur, vrai françois [...].³³

This passage, in which the writer oscillates between self-deprecation and self-commendation, is a prime illustration of the ambivalence with which memoir-writers of the period viewed historians. For the former, the crudity of their style and their lack of distance from the events about which they wrote were the basis for their inferiority to - but also for their superiority over - historians. Their plain-speaking, they imply, contrasts with the historian's rhetorically sophisticated productions in the same way that naked truth contrasts with the duplicity of artifice. Moreover, attention is always drawn to the fact that the information which they supply makes them indispensable to the historian. If men did not record what happened in their lifetime, declared Guillaume du Bellay, historians, however great their literary skills, would be unable to write 'certainement et à la verité'. Here, once again, we see a memoir-writer simultaneously acknowledging and undermining the ascendancy of the historian, deferring to the latter on the issues of scope and literary style, while emphasising the ultimate dependency of the 'good' historian upon the memoirist.³⁴

A further distinction which was commonly drawn between memoir-writers and historians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries concerned their respective social positions. Montaigne's disdainful remarks about official historiography and its producers are typical. 'Le plus souvent on trie pour cette charge, et notamment en ces siecles icy,' he wrote, 'des personnes d'entre le vulgaire, pour cette seule considération de sçavoir bien parler; comme si nous cherchions d'y apprendre la grammaire!' The only good histories, he went on, were those composed by 'ceux mesmes qui commandoient aux affaires, ou qui estoient participans à les conduire, ou, au moins, qui ont eu la fortune d'en conduire d'autres de mesme sorte' - in other words, they were memoirs.³⁵ This belief that

responsibility for preserving the memory of the past and transmitting it to future generations lay with the man of action - the soldier, the diplomat, the royal counsellor, rather than with the scholar or the professional writer - led to the memoir being identified primarily with the aristocracy. History thus occupied a paradoxical position in the hierarchy of literary forms as it was conceived at this time: noble by virtue of its style and its classical antecedents, it was also tainted by its association with writers of non-noble birth who sold their services for money.

For the aristocracy of the early modern period, memoir-writing had much to do with the preservation of family honour. Recording the noble deeds of one's ancestors and oneself was a way of making manifest 'le génie d'une race' and so providing inspiration and guidance for one's descendants. It was a way of insuring that the honour or 'vertu' of one's family was kept alive in the memory of the nation and, specifically, in that of the king - a task which it was believed could not be entrusted to low-born, venal historians for whom the traditional noble ethos was utterly alien.³⁶ It was also a way in which stains on one's honour could be cleansed and one's conduct justified. Hence the significant rise in memoir production in the early seventeenth century as participants in the international conflicts and internal dissensions generated by the Wars of Religion sought to defend their actions or put forward demands for the reward of their services. In the words of Marc Fumaroli, 'mémoires' in this period 'sont donc à prendre dans un sens très concret, celui de dossier préparé devant le tribunal de la postérité, mais aussi celui de compte exact de la balance pour ainsi dire entre une grande famille et la dynastie régnante'.³⁷ Reference to one's work as 'Mémoires' in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, therefore, carried multiple connotations: identification with French traditions (as opposed to humanist historiography which was a foreign importation) and with the nobility (as opposed to 'le vulgaire'); acknowledgement of one's subordination to the historian whom one served, yet also possibly distrust of royal historiographers and distrust of - or even opposition to - the sovereign or the regime for which the historiographers were the mouthpiece.³⁸

If one branch of memoir-writing involved the composition of works which complemented or sought to rival the historian's record of the past, a second

branch of memoir-writing - and one which became progressively more prominent - took the memoir away from 'l'histoire événementielle', social portraiture and the transcription of documents towards the exploration of the author's own existence as both a public and a private individual.

Although memoirs in which the life of the author-narrator forms the core of the narrative were already being written in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (those of Montluc or Marguerite de Valois, for example), it was still rare for writers of this period to move beyond a record of the great public deeds which they had performed or observed. The desire to bear witness, it seems, was stronger among these early memoir-writers than the desire to bare themselves. Around the middle of the seventeenth century, however, began what Marc Fumaroli has described as 'une métamorphose des mémoires',³⁹ one aspect of which was the development of more introspective works, in which the life traced was more than the sum of the writer's acts in the public domain. A combination of factors at this time appear to have favoured this shift towards more personalised and more introspective memoirs, including Louis XIV's efforts to regulate the lives of the aristocracy and stifle the outward expression of singularity, which may have made the idea of composing a record of one's life that highlighted the writer's individuality more appealing;⁴⁰ and the increasing influence of Jansenism, which fostered habits of introspection within a framework of concern for one's personal salvation, following the appearance of Arnauld d'Andilly's translation of St Augustine's *Confessions* in 1650.⁴¹

This branch of memoir-writing, which was exemplified in the seventeenth century by the works of Mlle de Montpensier or the cardinal de Retz, was pursued in the following century by writers such as Mme de Staal-Delaunay. With the 1780s and the publication of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, however, came another turning-point in the development of the memoir.⁴² In certain respects, Rousseau's work belongs within existing literary traditions. Relatively obscure individuals who gave limited insight into the political or military affairs of their time had already left accounts of their lives; and a variety of works - from Montaigne's *Essais* to the *Mémoires* of Mme de Staal-Delaunay - were already moving in the direction of self-analysis and conscious self-creation through writing. Yet, if there

are elements of continuity in Rousseau's work, there is also originality.⁴³ What is important in the present context, is not only the changes which Rousseau made to the memoir genre as it existed in the second half of the eighteenth century, but also the reception which his work was given and the impact which it had on the reading public of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

That Rousseau regarded himself as an innovator is incontestable. In contrast to other writers who fitted themselves into an established tradition of memoir-writing in terms of the scope and purpose of their work by citing other writers whose memoirs had inspired them, or who located the origins of their enterprise in the pleas and encouragement of friends, Rousseau broke openly with all tradition. The first words of the preamble to the *Confessions* proclaim the uniqueness of the work that follows: 'Je forme une entreprise, qui n'eut jamais d'exemple, et dont l'exécution n'aura point d'imitateur'.⁴⁴ What he offers is neither recollections of momentous events, nor the portrait of a particular social milieu, nor the story of an individual's public life and achievements, nor an account of the soul's search for God. Rousseau places himself squarely at the centre of a work in which he addresses God directly and without any sense of humility. He invites judgment, but remains firmly convinced of his fundamental innocence and thus does not seek absolution. If this is the story of a quest, it is a secular one, directed inwards - not, as it might have been in the Middle Ages, towards God - but towards a self that is constantly eluding the writer who gropes for it through memory and imagination. The past, in Rousseau's eyes, is valuable not in itself, but in its relationship to the present. The *Confessions*, therefore, are less a record of events than an exploration, in and through writing, of the impression which the incidents in his life had made on him. His career as a writer (which one might have expected him to make the focus of his work), in fact, constitutes only a minor strand in a more complex story - that of Jean-Jacques the man, presented not simply from the outside in terms of his deeds, but also 'Intùs, et in Cute'.⁴⁵ As he explains himself, 'l'objet propre de mes confessions est de faire connoître exactement mon intérieur dans toutes les situations de ma vie. C'est l'histoire de mon âme que j'ai promise [...]' (278).

Never before had a writer claimed so imperiously that his life - including those

aspects of his life that had nothing to do with the public domain - were worthy of public attention. Never before had a writer been so insistent when offering apparently trivial details.⁴⁶ Never before had a writer devoted such attention to the workings of memory and to its potential for distortion; and never before had a writer relished so openly the pleasures of recollection as, for example, in the following passage:

‘Que j’aime à tomber de temps en temps sur les moments agréables de ma jeunesse! Ils m’étoient si doux; ils ont été si courts, si rares, et je les ai goûtés à si bon marché! Ah! leur seul souvenir rend encore à mon coeur une volupté pure dont j’ai besoin pour ranimer mon courage et soutenir les ennuis du reste de mes ans.’ (134-35)

Here, for the first time, the reader is confronted with a memoir-writer who embraces his singularity (‘je suis autre,’ 5); who seeks to reveal the truth of a man ‘tel qu’il étoit en dedans’ (516); and who dares to disclose the ridiculous and shameful aspects of his behaviour. Rousseau, in short, pushed the autobiographical branch of memoir-writing into previously uncharted territory, offering the reader, not simply ‘l’histoire d’une personne’, but ‘l’histoire d’une personnalité’.⁴⁷

With almost 8000 copies of the first edition sold within a few months of their appearance in May 1782, the *Confessions* were undoubtedly one of the best-selling works of the late eighteenth century; and the appearance of over twenty editions between 1794 and 1829 indicates that they retained their popularity into the post-revolutionary period.⁴⁸ Contemporary responses to the *Confessions*, however, varied considerably. According to Bernard Gagnebin, few of the earliest readers seem to have grasped the work’s originality when the first six books appeared in 1782 and there was little favourable criticism of it in France before the appearance of Mme de Staël’s *Lettres sur [...] Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, in 1788/1789.⁴⁹ Although some took to print in order to defend Rousseau against his detractors, including François Chas who published his *J. J. Rousseau justifié* in 1784, the vast majority of the comments made by readers in the 1780s were

disparaging or, at best, ambivalent; and a strong current of hostility to the work and the man persisted through into the nineteenth century.⁵⁰

The author of the *Confessions* was attacked on several fronts. Arrogance, or the closely related faults of egoism and vanity, were among the charges most frequently laid against him. Typical of such critics was Volney, who wrote in disgust in 1795 that Rousseau's decision to publicise his life had been motivated by nothing more than 'l'amour-propre ambitieux de gloire et de considération';⁵¹ and many other readers of the *Confessions* in the late eighteenth century claim to have been irritated by the author's impertinence in choosing to record for posterity what La Harpe describes as 'niaiseries puériles'.⁵² If some of the details given were simply so trivial that they were not worth recording, others, it was felt, were so disgusting that it was an assault on good taste to publish them. 'Je vous avoue,' wrote the sister-in-law of Mme de Charrière, for example, in 1790, 'qu'il y a des tableaux dans Son livre qui me révoltent, qu'a t'on besoin de Savoir la manière dont il a examiné et Caressé Ses maîtresses?'⁵³ Although this particular reader was outraged only by certain aspects of the *Confessions*, others denounced it as utterly scandalous. Recording the more shameful aspects of the writer's life, it was argued, simply repeated the original offence. It is to be regretted, wrote Volney,

'que l'auteur d'*Emile*, après avoir tant parlé de la nature n'ait pas imiter sa sagesse, qui montrant au dehors toutes les formes qui flattent nos sens, a caché dans nos entrailles et couvert de voiles épais, tout ce qui menaçait de les choquer.'⁵⁴

Reproached for the obscenity of his work, Rousseau was also charged with hypocrisy, vindictiveness and paranoia. The publishers Barde and Manget, for example, wrote to Pierre-Alexandre Du Peyrou in December 1789 to inform him that they had chosen to omit from their edition of the *Confessions* 'environ deux pages de grossières, plates et basses injures envers les personnes vivantes et respectables' that they judged to be 'inutiles au public'.⁵⁵

The most heinous of Rousseau's crimes in the eyes of many of his readers (including Chateaubriand and George Sand in the nineteenth century), and the one which was almost universally deplored, even by those who were otherwise favourable to the *Confessions*, was his decision to 'confess' others. Quesné, for example, who accepted the author's admission of his own faults and who was prepared to defend him against his detractors on most issues, nevertheless had difficulty accepting 'le déhonorant vernis' with which Rousseau had covered Mme de Warens. 'On est forcé de convenir,' he wrote,

'que les actions de cette femme singulière sont tout-à-fait étrangères aux aveux de Jean-Jacques. Les confessions de l'un ne sont pas celles de l'autre. Pour en dire du bien et du mal, il eût sans doute beaucoup mieux valu n'en rien dire du tout.'⁵⁶

If the *Confessions* had many detractors, however, they also had many admirers. Two aspects of the work, in particular, attracted praise: Rousseau's style and the attention which he gave to seemingly inconsequential details. For Métra, for example, who was one of the first to read the *Confessions*, Rousseau was 'cet éloquent écrivain [...], cette âme brûlante qui sait donner de l'intérêt aux détails les plus minutieux'.⁵⁷ In the case of others, enthusiasm for the work was inextricably bound up with admiration for the man - the lover of the countryside and the simple life, the 'défenseur des faibles, ami des malheureux, amant passionné de la vertu'.⁵⁸

When considering the impact of the *Confessions*, it is necessary to bear in mind that Rousseau, unlike previous memoir-writers, had already acquired the status of a cult figure by the time his memoirs appeared, thanks to his other works, in particular *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. If men of letters were divided in their opinions about his *Julie*, women had responded enthusiastically to the novel. 'Dans le monde,' he recalled,

'il n'y eut qu'un avis et les femmes surtout s'enivrèrent et du livre et de l'auteur, au point qu'il y en avoit peu, même dans les hauts rangs, dont je

n'eusse fait la conquête, si je l'avois entreprise.'⁵⁹

Given the fame which Rousseau already enjoyed in the 1780s and the intensity of the emotions which his novels had aroused in readers, there was undoubtedly much truth in La Harpe's claim that it was 'la curiosité qu'inspire le nom de Rousseau [qui] a fait dévorer [les *Confessions*]'.⁶⁰ In the following decades, the fate of the man and that of his memoirs continued to be linked. On the one hand, the commercial success of the *Confessions* owed much to the fame of their author; on the other, the cult of the author - what R. A. Leigh dubbed 'rousseaulâtrie' - was fostered by the popularity of his memoirs.⁶¹ Pilgrimages were made to his tomb at Ermenonville and to other sites associated with him; relics were sought after; verses were dedicated to him; and his 'sensibilité' and simple lifestyle made him a model for many: according to Nicolai Karamazine, an admirer of the author who visited Ermenonville in 1790, 'Rousseau a eu plus d'admirateurs fervents et enthousiastes que tout autre auteur moderne. L'admiration de quelques-uns a approché de la folie'.⁶² Even during the Consulate and Empire, when he was officially out of favour, the *Confessions* continued to be read and admired by 'les âmes sensibles et généreuses' as a work of genius.⁶³

There can be no doubt, then, that with the appearance of Rousseau's *Confessions* new trends were set in memoir-writing and the position of the genre between the literary and the non-literary, the public and the private became more difficult to determine. Rousseau's work brought the personal and the trivial into the domain of literature.⁶⁴ It was in his handling of such matters above all, explained the author of a review of the work in the *Journal de Paris* (29th November, 1789), that Rousseau's genius as a writer was revealed. 'Le plus grand charme de cette lecture,' he wrote,

'vient du talent rare de l'Auteur, pour intéresser aux plus petits objets, & même à des détails qui ne seroient que puérils sous toute autre plume, tels que la description de l'aqueduc & de la fontaine de Héron, dans les six premiers livres.'⁶⁵

The *Confessions* also stimulated interest in the previously neglected phases of childhood and adolescence,⁶⁶ in the exploration of 'la vie intérieure' and in the practice of secular confession. According to Sainte-Beuve, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was this work which was primarily responsible for the remarkable proliferation of 'confessional' writing among women of the leisure classes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Following Rousseau's example, he declared,

'Chaque femme d'esprit et de sensibilité [...] tenait registre de ses impressions, de ses souvenirs, de ses rêves; elle écrivait en petit ses *Confessions*, fussent-elles les plus innocentes du monde.'⁶⁷

Corroboration for this can be found in Blanche de Maillé's *Souvenirs des deux Restaurations*, in a passage dating from January 1828. Here, although she does not link the phenomenon specifically to Rousseau's *Confessions*, she records that it was then 'une sorte de mode pour les femmes [...] de mettre sur le papier ses idées ou ses sentiments'.⁶⁸ In addition, other observers of the period claimed that the *Confessions* had led to a change in the status of those who were prepared to make their memoirs available to the public. The success of this study of one man's thoughts and feelings, it was argued, had implicitly sanctioned the composition and publication of autobiographical works by those whose life stories contributed nothing to the understanding of 'la grande histoire'. Among those who deplored such 'democratisation' of the memoir genre was the journalist Féletz. Commenting on the memoirs of Rousseau and Marmontel around the turn of the nineteenth century, he declared:

'Dans les âges précédents, c'étaient les hommes d'Etat, les généraux, les négociateurs, qui publiaient des Mémoires; et leur histoire, liée à l'histoire publique leur en donnait le droit, et promettait un véritable intérêt aux lecteurs.'

Now, he continued in disgust, 'les gens de lettres' have taken it into their heads to make public all the petty details of their lives and the quality of the memoir has suffered as a result.⁶⁹

If the historical and the self-biographical represent the two branches of the memoir which had developed over the centuries, and which, by the early nineteenth century, provided precedents for memoirs as diverse as those of Sout and Stendhal, Charlotte Robespierre and Chateaubriand, Mme de Rémusat and Elisabeth Le Bas, or Mme de Chateaubriand and la reine Hortense, the way in which memoirs were written and the way in which they were read from the seventeenth century onwards was also influenced by developments in the novel and by the existence of pseudo-memoirs - 'ces productions informes et amphibies qui n'appartiennent ni au roman, ni à l'histoire,' as the author of the preface to the *Mémoires de Lucien Bonaparte* aptly describes them.⁷⁰

It was in the second half of the seventeenth century, when both genres were going through a period of transition, that the memoir and the novel were first drawn closer together. In an effort to raise the status of their works, novelists of the period attempted to distance themselves from the discredited, rambling heroic or pastoral novels popular earlier in the century by endowing their fictions with greater 'vraisemblance'. Among the strategies which they employed to this end were the replacement of the word 'roman' in the title by a term which lent the work a spurious air of factuality, such as 'mémoires', 'histoire' or 'vie'; the adoption of the 'style moyen' of aristocratic memoirs; and the exploitation of history (especially 'la petite histoire') in order to ground their work in reality.⁷¹ As a result of these developments, the boundary between genuine memoirs and novels in the second half of the seventeenth century became increasingly difficult to discern. Both were digressive in structure; both claimed to be filling the gaps in 'la grande histoire';⁷² both were frequently written in the first-person singular; and both were moving in the direction of 'le réalisme subjectif', exploring the emotional turmoil of real people in the case of the first and of imaginary characters in the case of the second.⁷³

The destabilisation of the boundaries between the memoir and the novel which already existed in the works of seventeenth century writers, such as Mme de Villedieu and Courtiliz de Sandras, was exacerbated in the following century by a massive upsurge in the popularity of both memoir-novels and genuine memoirs.

Appearing in print for the first time, the memoirs of Retz (1717), Mlle de Montpensier (1718), Mme de Motteville (1723) and l'abbé de Choisy (1727), for example, all went through several editions before the Revolution; while over 200 works of fiction were published between 1700 and 1750 alone in which the main character recounts his life story.⁷⁴ Indeed, as early as 1709, Richard Steele issued the following 'warning' in the *Tatler*. 'I hereby give notice to all booksellers and translators whatsoever that the word Memoir is French for a novel'.⁷⁵

As in the previous century, it was a two-way process in terms of influence. On the one hand, novelists drew on the conventions of, as well as the information in, genuine memoirs. In Prévost's *Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité* (1728-31) and Marivaux's *Vie de Marianne* (1731-42), for example, not only does the text take the form of genuine memoirs, but elaborate paratexts are also constructed in order to foster the illusion of their authenticity. On the other hand, memoir-writers and historians - particularly those writing biographical history ('l'histoire particulière' or 'l'histoire d'un particulier') - drew on the techniques and themes found in contemporary novels. For example, in the preface to his *Histoire de Marguerite d'Anjou* (1740), Prévost draws attention to his strategy of deliberately obfuscating the line between the novel and history in order to 'réunir l'agrément à l'instruction'. If this work (which he describes as 'une histoire particulière') proves to be a success with readers, he explains, it will be due to his care 'd'accorder tous les droits de la vérité avec cette douce illusion qui naît de la surprise, ou de l'incertitude ou de l'impatience, et qui fera mettre peu de différence pour l'agrément, entre cette histoire et les ouvrages d'imagination les plus amusants'.⁷⁶ Later in the same preface, when he outlines the 'règles' and 'bornes' operative for the different genres, he places the memoir in a distinctly ambiguous position between 'l'histoire générale' and 'le roman', claiming that it gives the personal and the trivial more attention than the first, but less than the second. 'Ce qui est propre à l'histoire particulière,' he writes,

'c'est qu'elle admet des détails qui paraîtraient quelquefois puérils dans l'histoire générale, et qu'à la noblesse de celle-ci elle peut joindre l'agrément des mémoires les plus circonstanciés. Rien n'y est petit ni méprisable, lorsqu'il peut servir à la connaissance du caractère principal. Ce serait abuser néanmoins

de cette règle, que de se croire autorisé à s'étendre beaucoup sur les sentiments et sur la peinture des passions. Cette sorte d'ornement, dont l'unique but est d'émouvoir, est propre aux romans [...].⁷⁷

One indication of the impact which novels had on genuine memoirs of the period is the frequency with which memoir-writers took the novel as a reference-point for their own works. One such figure, Mme de Staal-Delaunay, who was writing her memoirs in the 1740s, certainly assumed that those who read her work would be familiar with the conventions of the novel. On the one hand, her work appears to be closer to the memoir-novel than to the aristocratic memoir: it is an account, written in the first-person singular, which relates the private life of a relatively obscure individual, rather than major historical events. As in novels of the time, what the reader is offered is essentially a story of friendships, blighted love, and the author-heroine's struggle for independence for, with the exception of the Cellamare affair (which led to the arrest of Mlle Delaunay and her mistress, the duchesse du Maine), little of general historical interest appears in these memoirs. On the other hand, however, the author repeatedly establishes an ironic distance between herself and novelists. She debunks the clichés of contemporary novels, mocks the extravagant romantic notions which they fostered, and explicitly sets herself in contradistinction to the stereotypical fictional heroine. As she remarks on the opening page of her memoirs, 'Il m'est arrivé tout le contraire de ce qu'on voit dans les romans'.⁷⁸

The process of cross-fertilisation between the novel, the memoir and history received fresh impetus in the post-revolutionary period from Walter Scott. Scott, who had edited memoirs and who drew on memoirs when composing his novels, generated an enthusiasm for dramatic works filled with the circumstantial details and touches of local colour that brought the past alive; and, in following his example, historians and novelists alike were drawn towards memoirs as both sources and models.⁷⁹ Prosper de Barante, for example, hailed them as 'relations animées et vivantes',⁸⁰ which brought out the diversity of the past that the dry, orderly, commentary-laden histories of the Enlightenment had obscured; while Augustin Thierry saw in them a means for restoring to view 'la partie la plus

nombreuse et la plus oubliée de la nation'. 'Il faut lire, non dans les histoires classiques,' he wrote, 'mais dans les mémoires du temps, les traits naïfs, quoique bizarres, sous lesquels se présentait alors cette inspiration de la masse, toujours soudaine, rarement sage en apparence, mais à laquelle rien ne résiste'.⁸¹ At one point in the mid-1820s, 'séduit et tant soit peu égaré' by the popularity of memoirs, he even contemplated producing 'une grande histoire ou plutôt une grande chronique de France' by binding together 'tous les documents originaux' which survived from the different periods.⁸²

Novelists of the period, too, were conscious of their debt to memoir-writers. In memoirs, they reiterate, which reveal the private face of public figures and contain those details of daily life that enable them to recreate a vanished era in their novels. Even the manner in which memoirs were written was informative, according to Prosper Mérimée: 'le style de ces auteurs contemporains,' he declared after listing a number of sixteenth century memoir-writers in the preface to one of his novels, 'en apprend autant que leurs récits'.⁸³ Stylistically and thematically, therefore, the historical novels which flourished in the 1820s and the 'romans de mœurs' set in the writer's own era which emerged in the 1830s, maintained close ties with the memoir. Like generations of memoir-writers before them, novelists of the period contrasted the colour and drama of their works with the aridity of history.⁸⁴ Again, like memoir-writers, they claimed to be writing in the gaps in conventional history, filling in what the historian ignored or dismissed as irrelevant. In the preface to his historical novel *Le Château d'Amboise en Touraine* (1829), for example, Thomas Giberton claimed as his territory the 'foule de détails d'intérieur, d'habitudes domestiques, de particularités et de caractère et de mœurs, dont la connaissance est [...] nécessaire', but which were beneath 'la dignité de l'histoire';⁸⁵ while in 1842, Balzac declared that his aim in writing *La Comédie humaine* had been to provide 'l'histoire oubliée par tant d'historiens, celle des mœurs', and that he had done so by granting 'aux faits constants, quotidiens, secrets ou patents, aux actes de la vie individuelle, à leurs causes et à leurs principes autant d'importance que jusqu'alors les historiens en ont attaché aux événements de la vie publique des nations'.⁸⁶

In spite of the many points of contact between novels and memoirs, at the level of

theory, one fundamental difference was still deemed to exist. While the memoir-writer offered his work to the reader as literal truth, as something that was related in every particular to the world outside the text, the novelist offered his only as an imaginative arrangement or interpretation of reality that was not bound by the same rules. The first, to use the distinction formulated by Alfred de Vigny, was concerned with 'le vrai du fait', the second with 'la vérité de l'art' which, as he explains, is based on '[le] vrai visible' but transcends it: 'ce n'est pas lui, c'est mieux que lui'.⁸⁷

The concept of an authorial pact - of a pact whereby the writer invites the reader to 'take' a text in a particular way, as a record of actual events or as a story of possible events - is not sufficient to separate the memoir from the novel in the early nineteenth century, however, for straddling the frontier between the two genres are the pseudo- or fabricated memoirs which flourished at this time. These were works which purported to be 'vrais', not simply 'vraisemblables', and which were ostensibly penned by figures who had a verifiable historical existence. Their composition, moreover, does not adhere to a single formula. On the contrary, the distance between the actual author and the titular author, and the extent to which the contents were the product of the writer's creative imagination, vary considerably. On the one hand, there are works where 'teinturiers' had merely arranged (and supplemented) material which had been left or supplied by the putative author, as in the case of the *Souvenirs de la marquise de Créqui* or the *Mémoires* attributed to Vidocq and to Mlle Avrillion.⁸⁸ On the other, there are those (such as the *Mémoires de madame du Barry* or the *Mémoires de madame de Pompadour*) where the writer had no connection - either verbal or written - with the figure to whom the work was attributed and which, consequently, differed little from historical novels written in the first-person singular.

As it existed in the early nineteenth century, then, the memoir was a multifaceted genre, enriched by over four centuries of development, capacious and with fluid boundaries. Among the various memoirs composed by earlier generations of writers, those of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period could thus find precedents and models for writing about the past that accorded with their diverse circumstances and objectives. Never had the potential of the genre been greater. By placing oneself within the line of writers such as Pierre de L'Estoile, Mme de

Motteville, La Rochefoucauld and Saint-Simon, and turning one's gaze predominantly outwards, a writer could become a historian 'sans cesser d'être écrivain de mémoires' (to use the formula devised by Chateaubriand),⁸⁹ or even take his/her work to a point where it was indistinguishable from history. By exploring another branch of memoir-writing and accentuating that which was personal, as Rousseau had done so spectacularly, (s)he could produce a work which theorists would later come to classify as 'autobiography'. Alternatively, by pushing his/her work away from the description of events which (s)he had witnessed personally towards an imaginative account of what might have been, or by romanticizing the circumstances of his/her own life, a writer could take the memoir into the territory of the pseudo-memoir and the novel, opening up new story-telling possibilities.

(ii) The Memoir in Context: 'le plus rétrospectif des siècles'

The links between the memoir and history and between the memoir and the novel in the early nineteenth century, however, were not simply textual: they were also commercial and political. It is only by taking into account the social as well as the literary context of the memoir, therefore, that we can understand the full range of possibilities which the genre held for women of the period.

Although there is a lack of precise statistical information relating to the circulation of memoirs in the first half of the nineteenth century, the evidence available tends to confirm the observations of writers such as Villemarest, who began the *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Avrillion* (published in 1833) with a reference to the current 'mode des mémoires' and ended them with a description of the age as 'une époque si féconde en confidences historiques ou littéraires'.⁹⁰ The 'Déclarations des Imprimeurs', for example, reveal that a wide range of memoirs were printed in the quarter century after 1815: new works and new editions of old works; the memoirs of actors, artists and courtesans, as well as those of soldiers, courtiers, diplomats, ministers and financiers.⁹¹ They also show that the print run for individual titles was generally high: around 2000 in 1826, at a time when the print run for other works was frequently 1000 or less, the exception being those by a writer with an established reputation.⁹² Certain memoirs, moreover, such as

those of Mme d'Épinay, Rovigo, Bourrienne, Ida de Sainte-Elme ('La Contemporaine') or the Regency courtesan Harriette/Henriette Wilson (in translation), were printed on a scale that was exceptional for the period and rapidly went through several editions. It should be borne in mind, however, that these annual registers indicate the number of works printed, not the number actually sold.

That memoirs appeared on the market as part of large collections, and not simply in isolation, however, does reinforce the impression that public demand for such works was high. In addition to the *Collection des Mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France* (1819-1829)⁹³ and the *Collection des Mémoires relatifs à la Révolution française* (1820-1828),⁹⁴ there also appeared collections which blurred the line between chronicles and memoirs, such as the *Collection des Mémoires relatifs à l'Histoire de France depuis la fondation de la monarchie française jusqu'au XIII^e siècle* (1823-1835)⁹⁵ or the *Collection des chroniques nationales françaises écrites en langue vulgaire, du XIII^e au XVI^e siècle, avec notes et éclaircissements par J. A. Buchon* (1824-1829).⁹⁶ The public appears to have responded to these large-scale projects with enthusiasm. According to the publishers of the *Collection des Mémoires relatifs à l'Histoire de France*, it was the pressure exerted by subscribers that led them to extend the collection to include works composed after the end of the sixteenth century.⁹⁷ The publishers of the *Mémoires relatifs à la Révolution française*, too, claim to have had substantial public support for their enterprise. In 1821, it was reported that the success of the collection had far exceeded expectations, stocks of the first volume published having been exhausted within two months;⁹⁸ and by 1823, it was announced that the collection had already attracted 'plus de deux mille souscripteurs'.⁹⁹

Further testimony to the commercial importance of memoirs during the Restoration and July Monarchy is the proliferation of fabricated memoirs in these years that was noted above. In the wake of Ladvocat's success with the *Mémoires d'une contemporaine* in 1827-28, Mame and Delaunay launched a series of pseudo-memoirs in 1828-29, among the most celebrated of which were

Lamothe-Langon's *Mémoires d'une femme de qualité* and *Mémoires de madame du Barry*.¹⁰⁰ Another of the 'teinturiers', Paul Lacroix, later recalled how he encouraged Mame and Delaunay-Vallée to build on the success of the *Mémoires de madame du Barry* by bringing out a collection of *Mémoires secrets et inédits sur la cour de France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, to which he would be one of the main contributors:

'Ma proposition fut acceptée avec enthousiasme et séance tenante, on acheta aux conditions les plus brillantes quatre volumes in-8° des *Mémoires inédits du cardinal Dubois*, et quatre volumes des *Mémoires inédits de Gabrielle d'Estrées* qui devaient sortir de mon encrier et dont je n'avais pas encore écrit une ligne.'¹⁰¹

The clearest indication of the genre's popularity in the post-Napoleonic period, however, is the frequency with which contemporaries discuss memoirs in their private journals and correspondence and cite the works of others in their own memoirs. References to memoirs abound, for instance, in the letters of Stendhal and the papers of Victorine de Chastenay (both of whom had a passion for the genre), and in works such as the *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, the *Souvenirs* of Blanche de Maillé or Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. Taken together, the evidence from the various sources indicates that the memoir was very much in vogue in the early nineteenth century, popular with both readers and writers.

It was not memoirs alone, however, but history in all its manifestations, which flourished in the decades after 1815. Studies into the publishing industry which were carried out in this period and those which have been undertaken more recently all tend to confirm the accuracy of the claim made by Augustin Thierry in 1820 that the moment had come 'où le public va prendre plus de goût à l'histoire qu'à toute autre lecture'.¹⁰² According to Charles Dupin, for example, in his *Forces productives et commerciales* (1827), the proportion of histories among the total number of published works increased dramatically during the Restoration, rising from less than 13% in 1812 to over 46% in 1826.¹⁰³ History, moreover,

was said to have acquired a previously unsurpassed preeminence as a social force. 'Jamais la curiosité ne s'est portée plus avidement vers les connaissances historiques,' proclaimed Prosper de Barante in 1824. History was no longer the domain of the historian alone, he continued; it had become the major source of contemporary culture as a whole, exerting influence over philosophy, poetry, drama and the novel.¹⁰⁴ Others appear to have shared his opinion, for the year after Barante made these remarks about the growing influence of history on literature, a journalist in *Le Globe* declared that 'on n'écrit plus de nos jours que des romans historiques'.¹⁰⁵ Although this was clearly an exaggeration, studies of the historical novel in the two decades after 1815 have tended to confirm the view that history was the principal inspiration for the contemporary novel. Despite problems of generic demarcation, Claude Duchet has estimated that historical novels accounted for between a quarter and a third of all new novels published in France between the Restoration and the first years of the July Monarchy.¹⁰⁶

Undoubtedly, the popularity of historical works - both factual and fictional - in the post-Napoleonic period, owed much to the influence of Walter Scott. According to Augustin Thierry, writing at the beginning of the 1820s, Scott's novels played a key role in revolutionising 'la manière de lire et d'écrire l'histoire' and in stimulating interest in the past:

'C'est au sentiment de curiosité que [ces compositions, en apparence frivoles] ont inspiré à toutes les classes de lecteurs pour des siècles et des hommes décriés comme barbares, que des publications plus graves doivent un succès inespéré.'¹⁰⁷

Scott's influence alone, however, does not account for the striking growth of interest in history in general, or for the upsurge in the composition and publication of memoirs in particular, during the Restoration and the July Monarchy. More pertinent is the political and social upheaval that occurred in France between 1789 and 1815. As Louis-Philippe de Ségur observed in the early 1820s,

'on s'étonnerait à tort de voir publier aujourd'hui tant

de Mémoires, peindre tant de personnages, rappeler tant d'anecdotes. Jamais la curiosité ne dut être plus active qu'à l'époque où nous vivons: cette époque arrive après le siècle le plus fécond en orages. Pendant sa durée, institutions, politique, philosophie, opinions, lois, coutumes, fortunes, modes et moeurs, tout a changé.'

There was a sense of urgency in both the demand for information and the effort to supply it. On the one side, there was a generation which had grown up without first-hand experience of the Old Regime or the Revolution; on the other, a generation which had known the France of Louis XVI and been caught up in the cataclysm which followed. 'Echappé au naufrage et arrivé dans le port,' Ségur continued,

'on aime à se rappeler avec calme les tempêtes qui nous ont tant agités; on veut rendre compte à soi-même, à sa famille, et même au public, de la part que le sort nous a fait prendre à tant de passions, à tant d'événemens, à tant de vicissitudes.'¹⁰⁸

Not all set about writing their memoirs with the same degree of equanimity as Ségur, however. In many cases, as Marilyn Yalom observed, memoir-writing sprang from the trauma of the author's experiences and was felt to be a psychological and moral necessity.¹⁰⁹ For those who had suffered, it provided both an outlet for their pain and a means of seeking retribution for the loved ones whom they had lost - and few of those who lived through the Revolution and Empire did so unscathed.¹¹⁰ Behind the memoirs of Mme de Fars Fausse-Landry, for example, lay the horrific memory of the execution of her mother and beloved uncle;¹¹¹ behind those of Mme de La Rochejaquelein lay her grief at the loss of her husband and the consolation which she derived from recalling him;¹¹² while behind those of Meillan lay the desire to avenge the death of his wife at the hands of the revolutionary authorities. 'Tant qu'une goutte de sang coulera dans mes veines,' he vowed in the closing pages, 'tant que ma voix pourra se faire entendre, je demanderai vengeance, et je l'obtiendrai: elle m'est due, elle est promise à l'innocence opprimée'.¹¹³

For others, women as well as men, memoir-writing was less a form of therapy than an act of self-defence, the many changes of administration in France between the 1780s and 1815 having generated a climate of suspicion and recrimination. Controversial decisions had to be justified, failures had to be accounted for, rumours had to be quashed and political loyalties had to be reaffirmed. In these circumstances, an upsurge in memoir-writing was dictated by the internal dynamics of the genre. That is to say, it was inevitable that the composition and publication of works in which the writers cast aspersions on the conduct of others as they sought to justify their own would stimulate the composition of still more works, as those who had come under attack, in their turn, took up their pens in order to refute the charges brought against them. The duc de Choiseul, for example, claimed to have made his memoirs public because he felt he had been misrepresented in those of Bertrand de Molleville and the marquis de Bouillé;¹¹⁴ the memoirs of Mme Campan, which were intended to silence the malicious rumours circulating about her disloyalty to Marie-Antoinette, were themselves denounced by the baron de Goguelat, along with those of Bouillé and Molleville;¹¹⁵ Claire de Rémusat sought to defend her husband and herself against the ultra-royalists who castigated them for having served Napoleon;¹¹⁶ and the duchesse d'Abrantès reiterated throughout her memoirs that her prime motivation in writing was the desire to correct the false image of her husband which was being propagated by the memoirs of Bourrienne and Las Cases.¹¹⁷ This cycle of attack, defence and counter-attack, it should be noted, brought together genuine and fabricated memoirs. Hortense de Beauharnais, for instance, stated that one reason for writing her memoirs was the desire to counterbalance the effect of the 'absurd' works which had been published about her mother (in particular, Mlle Lenormand's popular *Mémoires historiques et secrets de l'Impératrice Joséphine* of 1820) and the letters falsely attributed to her;¹¹⁸ Charlotte Robespierre set out to contest the many falsehoods about her family in the apocryphal memoirs attributed to her brother Maximilien which appeared in 1830;¹¹⁹ and the *Mémoires de Mlle Avrillion*, which were arranged by Villemarest, repeatedly called into question the accuracy - and even the authenticity - of the memoirs of Georgette Ducrest, which were themselves a response to other works,

both genuine and fabricated.¹²⁰

In addition to the personal incentives for writing, such as the search for consolation or self-justification, there were also political factors inherent in the character of the Restoration that encouraged the composition and publication of memoirs in the two decades after 1815. The French of the post-Imperial era were living, as one observer described it, 'dans un temps de doute'.¹²¹ On the one hand, France was once again a monarchy and power rested in the hands of those who abhorred Republicanism and despised the Bonapartes; on the other, the old certainties about the naturalness of monarchical government had been undermined by the Revolution and Empire. Among large sections of the population, the belief persisted that the Revolution constituted a watershed which had irrevocably altered the relationship between the monarch and his people. Symptomatic of this change is the conversation between the marquis de Rivière and General Moreau which is reported in the *Mémoires d'une femme de qualité*. 'La France, c'est le roi,' the marquis was said to have told Moreau in 1804; 'Non,' replied the latter, 'le roi c'est le chef de la France. Ne répétez pas le mot de Louis XIV: "L'Etat, c'est moi". Ce mot n'a plus de sens'.¹²²

In their insecurity, those on both the right and the left of the political spectrum turned to the past in search of material that would strengthen their position in the present and future. History, in the words of Stanley Mellon, became the language of politics, and memoirs, like historical works of all kinds, were deployed as weapons in the ideological struggles of the period.¹²³ While Royalists attempted to strengthen the position of the Restored Bourbons by demonising those who had fought for the Republic, eulogising the heroes of the counter-revolution, fostering a cult of the executed sovereigns Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette and promoting the notion that France had been ruled by a long line of wise and beneficent monarchs (a strategy that can be seen, for example, in the preface to the *Mémoires de Mme de Bonchamps* which was composed by Mme de Genlis),¹²⁴ Liberals attempted to legitimate their existence after the Restoration by redeeming elements of the Revolution and integrating this period into the history of France. The first work to do this, according to Mme de Boigne, was Mme de Staël's philosophical-historical-autobiographical memoir, *Considérations sur la Révolution française*. Until the

appearance of this work in 1818, she writes, everything associated with the Revolution had been an object of opprobrium:

‘Le livre de Mme de Staël changea tout à coup cette disposition, en osant parler honorablement de la Révolution et des révolutionnaires. [...] Dès que le livre de Mme de Staël en eut donné l'exemple, les hymnes à la gloire de 1789 ne tarirent plus.’¹²⁵

Even if a work had not been composed specifically as a vehicle for political opinions, it might still acquire a political charge from the circumstances of its publication. The *Collection des Mémoires relatifs à la Révolution française*, for example, was given a distinctly Liberal accent through the judicious editing of Berville and Barrière;¹²⁶ while Laponneraye made the *Mémoires de Charlotte Robespierre* a vehicle for his Republican beliefs by attaching to his edition of them a long polemical introduction in defence of the principles espoused by her brother, the ‘incorruptible’ Maximilien.

Although it is a subject which has, as yet, received very little attention from historians, the politicization of the memoir during the Restoration and July Monarchy and the involvement of memoir-writers in the political battles of the day were widely recognised by contemporaries. Mme d'Abrantès, for example, mentions a certain ‘Mme de V***’ who used her memoirs - ‘une sorte de journal intercalé dans les Mémoires de Constant’ - in order to attack the deposed emperor during the Restoration;¹²⁷ and Mme de Maillé is even more explicit. It was ‘les passions politiques,’ she declared in 1823, which were fuelling the publication of innumerable memoirs relating to the execution of the duc d'Enghien;¹²⁸ and the flood of memoirs which entered circulation in the months prior to the Revolution of July 1830, in her view, was also motivated by political considerations. ‘Nous sommes inondés de Mémoires pour servir, dit-on, à l'histoire contemporaine,’ she wrote in May of that year:

‘Tout ce qui a vu passer par ses fenêtres Buonaparte ou Louis XVI veut nous faire part de ce qu'il en sait. Le plus souvent, ces Mémoires sont apocryphes, ce

n'est qu'une manière d'écrire une brochure politique. Ce sont des hommes qui rassemblent des anecdotes plus vraisemblables que vraies, pour servir leurs opinions ou parler aux passions qui agitent et qui ont le plus de crédit en ce moment et qui, par conséquent, donnent le plus de lecteurs.'¹²⁹

Sainte-Beuve, too, drew attention to the political functions which apocryphal memoirs could serve at this time in his article on the memoirs of the marquise de Créqui. Choosing to disguise himself 'en douairière', he pointed out, was a strategy which enabled the real author of her *Souvenirs* to make oblique political comments: 'Il n'y oublia pas les anecdotes malignes et chères à toutes les oppositions d'alors sur les origines et les antécédents de ceux qui occupaient le trône depuis 1830, et de ceux qui y adhéraient'.¹³⁰

(iii) Gender and Genre: 'une plume féminine'

If it is true that the key to memoir-writing during the Restoration and the July Monarchy - for both men and women - is to be found in the events of the Revolution and Empire, the situation was not exactly the same for both sexes. It is at this point that I wish to bring the concept of gender to bear on that of genre. While it cannot be claimed that the memoir was an inherently female genre (it was always cultivated predominantly by men),¹³¹ it was nevertheless one with which women had long been associated and one which had advantages for them that other genres, such as history or the novel, did not possess.

The key to the memoir's attraction for women lay in its flexibility. Memoirs, as we have seen, were hybrid works, in which documentation and recollection, personal observation and the reports of others, were combined according to a great variety of formulae. They allowed the writer to personalise and fragment the past and to embrace virtually any subject. Whatever their social status or experiences, therefore, the memoir was able to accommodate the world with which women were familiar. It was the genre for those who had first-hand experience of momentous events and wished to contribute to the memorialising process, but who lacked sufficient information to compose a history of the period, like the women of the Vendée who had been caught up in the counter-revolutionary

struggles. It was also the genre for those who were not in a position to provide information about events of national or international significance for, in spite of the frequent assertions that memoirs devoted to events in the public sphere were to be prized above all others,¹³² it was also recognised that the memoirist could be, in the words of Mme de Boigne, a 'chroniqueur des petites circonstances',¹³³ who recorded picturesque details and anecdotes illustrative of the manners of a particular class, region or age, that would have been considered too trivial for inclusion in other historical works. As Mme d'Abrantès explains:

'Il faut donner une vie à ce que l'on représente; et dans un ouvrage du genre des Mémoires, l'excès des détails qui donnerait la mort à un autre sujet, peut seul ici produire cet effet.'¹³⁴

Even those who led the most circumscribed lives found that the memoir was within their grasp, for the memoir-writer's field of vision, unlike the historian's, did not have to extend beyond herself, her family or her friends. 'On aime à lire la vie privée des princes,' declared Barrière in his introduction to the *Mémoires de madame Campan* in 1823; and, he might have added, that of generals, ministers, writers and artists.¹³⁵ The memoir-writers themselves did not have to be renowned public figures, however - and women like Vigée-Lebrun who had pursued a successful career or exercised power directly were the exception - it was sufficient for them to have been in a position to observe those who were. Charlotte Robespierre, for example, wrote about her brothers Maximilien and Alexandre, Georgette Ducrest about the entourage of the Empress Joséphine, and Laure Junot about Napoleon and his court. Furthermore, due to the long-established tradition of reading memoirs as conduct manuals, even the absence of connections to prominent public figures was no barrier to the composition of memoirs. If, on the one hand, readers looked to them for guidance in their professional lives - a fact that was acknowledged and accommodated by writers such as Vigée-Lebrun in her 'Conseils pour la peinture du portrait'; on the other, they also turned to them in search of 'le coeur humain', in the hope of deepening their understanding of themselves and others. In the words of Frédéric Briot:

'on lisait des Mémoires pour connaître un être, pour connaître l'humain, et, tout lecteur étant lecteur de lui-même, en cet autoportrait le lecteur savait se reconnaître.'¹³⁶

It was this aspect of the genre that prompted Stendhal to recommend the reading of memoirs to his sister Pauline. '[...] Songe à te garnir la tête de faits qui puissent baser tes jugements sur les hommes,' he advised her in September 1805, in one of many letters on the subject:

'En général tu ne saurais être trop avide de Mémoires particuliers. Leurs auteurs les écrivent ordinairement pour *sfogare*, déborder leur vanité, ils disent donc en général la vérité.'¹³⁷

From this perspective, no life, no matter how humble - and thus no life-story, even one recounting the experiences of a woman - was devoid of value. It was upon this basis, for instance, that l'abbé Trublet had defended the memoirs of Mme de Staal-Delaunay in 1755 against those who criticised their lack of historical facts:

'Il prétend que les Mémoires des simples particuliers font mieux connoître les hommes que ceux des ministres et des généraux, parce que tout homme est homme, et que tout homme n'est pas général ou ministre [...].'¹³⁸

That there were no formulated conventions governing the form, tone and style of memoirs also made the genre attractive to women. With the memoir, the writer was under no obligation to produce a continuous narrative, but could opt instead for a more disjointed form that utilised literary habits with which women were already familiar: letters (as in the case of Vigée-Lebrun), a journal (as in the case of Blanche de Maillé), or a collection of portraits, anecdotes and reflections (as in Mme de Rémusat's 'Portraits et Anecdotes' or Vigée-Lebrun's 'Portraits à la plume'). She could also choose whether to write in the first-person or the third-person singular; whether to focus on herself or on others; and whether to accentuate her role as a protagonist or reduce it to the point where her life 'servît

comme de fil à [ses] discours', and no more.¹³⁹ Such choices allowed her to control the image of herself which she offered to her readers (if not that which was to be found by reading between the lines). She was also at liberty to shift the balance between 'je' and 'autrui' in the course of her work. Areas of her life which she wished to obscure could thus be omitted, while her desires, ambitions and frustrations could be displaced into the portraits or stories of others. As Mary Corbett observed, the memoir thus enabled women simultaneously to reveal and conceal themselves, 'to speak and to remain silent about themselves', to express themselves yet avoid conveying an impression of self-centredness that would have been contrary to the prevailing ideas about appropriate female behaviour.¹⁴⁰

The attraction of the genre for women was particularly enhanced by '[le] négligé du style et [le] désordre de la narration'.¹⁴¹ As was noted above, from the late middle ages onwards, the simplicity or informality of the memoir was a - if not *the* - major distinction between it and history proper. While the latter demanded of writers a comparatively high level of literacy and intellectual discipline, the memoir, in contrast, as Jane Marcus puts it, 'made no grand claims to high artistic achievement'.¹⁴² It was an unpretentious form, requiring perspicacity and perhaps wit, but nothing more - social skills, therefore, rather than academic ones. 'N'eût-il aucun fond d'instruction solide,' declared René d'Argenson in the eighteenth century,

'l'homme du monde qui écrit ce qu'il a vu et entendu dire, ne peut manquer d'intéresser. [...] il n'est que trop vrai que la fréquentation des gens instruits, l'habitude de causer de tout et avec tout le monde, donnent aux esprits les plus superficiels, cette promptitude de jugement, cette familiarité de tous les sujets, cette quintessence de l'esprit des autres, qui offrent toutes les apparences du vrai savoir et en ont quelquefois la réalité'¹⁴³

- and this was equally true for 'les *femmes* du monde'.

Being a genre that required of writers neither extensive research nor great literary talent, the memoir was well suited to the education, literary habits and lifestyle of

women in France in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As the memoir-writers themselves reveal, the education available to women at this period was extremely limited. Illiteracy was the norm for women of the peasantry (Renée Bordereau, for example, dictated her memoirs of the Vendean wars). For those of the artisan class and the bourgeoisie, emphasis was placed on the acquisition of moral qualities, rather than intellectual skills: the education which Mme Roland strove to achieve was exceptional and was regarded with suspicion in certain quarters.¹⁴⁴ For women of the upper-classes, whether they were educated at home or in a convent, it appears that the primary purpose of education was to hone their social skills, not to expand their minds. 'Je me rappelle que les belles éducations du temps de ma mère,' wrote Mme d'Abrantès in the 1830s, 'se bornaient à savoir jouer du clavecin, danser et bavarder toute une nuit au bal masqué';¹⁴⁵ while Mme de Chastenay described her mother's time at the convent of Panthémont thus:

'On y prenait l'esprit et les habitudes de la dévotion; l'instruction d'ailleurs y était nulle. Les talents s'y ébaouchaient à peine, et on y commençait seulement les leçons de danse et de musique, mais sans aucune émulation.'¹⁴⁶

Little had changed by the next generation for, according to her grandson, Claire de Rémusat, who was educated at home, learned only music, drawing and dancing.¹⁴⁷ Rhetoric and the classics were rarely part of the curriculum for women under the *ancien régime*. Although some eighteenth century pedagogues advocated the study of Latin for girls (Mme d'Épinay, for example, in her *Lettre à la gouvernante de ma fille* of 1756), those, like Mme Roland or Mme de Chastenay, who were able to learn the language were the exception, not the rule. Even if they did gain some knowledge of Latin, social opinion dictated that they should hide the fact, not flaunt it, and it was considered undesirable for them to push their studies of the classics too far. Such subjects, declared Auger in 1804, were inappropriate for women:

'L'usage a prononcé: la connoissance du latin paroît exclusivement réservée aux hommes, et la femme qui se livre à cette étude choque l'amour-propre de notre sexe, en usurpant un de ses privilèges, et du

sien, en aspirant à s'en distinguer.¹⁴⁸

Female education after the Revolution remained superficial. Subjects which would have trained girls to order their thoughts or develop their literary skills were rarely included in their programme of studies. There was nothing intellectually challenging about the education which Hortense de Beauharnais received at the hands of Mme Campan at Saint-Germain in the late 1790s,¹⁴⁹ or about that available at the school run by Mme Migneron, which was praised by Georgette Ducrest in the 1820s.¹⁵⁰

Moreover, even when academic subjects were included in the curriculum, they were not taught to girls as they were to boys. History, for instance, when taught to boys, focused on dates and on the connections between events, the aim being to sharpen their minds and polish their skills as orators. When it was taught to girls, in contrast, the focus was on customs and on the lives of those distinguished by their virtues, the intention being that it should provide moral guidance.¹⁵¹

Such an education meant that conventional historiography was beyond the capabilities of most women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their access to source material was limited by their ignorance of Latin and Greek; and the omission of rhetoric from their studies, along with the perfunctory attention paid to speculative subjects, meant that they lacked practice in ordering their material and rarely attained the level of literacy expected of the historian.

A poor knowledge of rhetorical devices, however, was no barrier to memoir-writing. On the contrary, the qualities which readers prized most highly in memoirs were those which could be cultivated best through socialising in the salon and in literary forms, such as journal-keeping and letter-writing, which were, to a large extent, an extension of women's role as *salonnières*.¹⁵² Admiration for memoirs that resemble good conversation in their liveliness and lack of affectation abounds in letters, journals and review articles of the period. After reading the memoirs of Saint-Simon, for example, Mme du Deffand wrote

enthusiastically to Horace Walpole:

'J'aime les noms propres; je ne puis lire que des faits écrits par ceux à qui ils sont arrivés, et qui en ont été témoins; je veux encore qu'ils soient racontés sans phrases, sans recherches, sans réflexion, que l'auteur ne soit point occupé de bien dire; enfin, je veux le ton de la conversation, de la vivacité, de la chaleur, et, par dessus tout, de la facilité, de la simplicité.'¹⁵³

Similarly, in the following century, the literary critic Sainte-Beuve commended memoir-writers, such as Louis-Philippe de Ségur and Mme de Caylus, who gave to their work the tone and rhythm of conversation;¹⁵⁴ while Mérimée, in the preface to his *Chronique du règne de Charles IX* (1829), attributed his love of memoirs to the fact that they were - unlike history - 'des causeries familières de l'auteur avec son lecteur'.¹⁵⁵

There were, in fact, many links between the world of the salon and memoir-writing. Not only did salons bring their hostesses into contact with public figures (artists, writers, scientists, statesmen, soldiers) who supplied them with information on a range of topics (salons were for women, wrote Mme d'Abrantès, 'de vraies écoles');¹⁵⁶ but they also provided them with the opportunity to develop the social and linguistic skills associated with memoir-writing. Both the *salonnière* and the memoir-writer had to be perceptive, and the training which the former received in observation and in the analysis of character could be used to advantage by the latter.¹⁵⁷ Both also had to be capable of exercising control without being overbearing and of imparting information without being pedantic. Although it was acceptable for a woman to stamp her personality on a salon or on her memoirs, in both cases, her role was nevertheless essentially to stimulate and facilitate the interchange of ideas among those around her, not to enforce acceptance of her own. An excessive preoccupation with 'je' and 'moi' in the course of writing one's memoirs was regarded by many as distasteful (Morellet and Stendhal, for example, as well as the eighteenth century critics of Rousseau cited above); while overt egoism, as Vigée-Lebrun pointed out, ran contrary to the 'code social' governing salon culture:

'Il ne faut pas toujours parler,
 Citer,
 Dater,
 Mais écouter;
 Il faut savoir trancher l'emploi,
 Du moi,
 Du moi,
 Voici pourquoi:
 Il est tyrannique,
 Trop académique;
 L'ennui, l'ennui
 Marche avec lui.'¹⁵⁸

Given these connections, it is not surprising that many female memoir-writers in the early nineteenth century were women who played (or had played) a prominent part in salon culture: among others, Mme Vigée-Lebrun, Mme de Chastenay, Mme de Boigne, Mme de Rémusat, the duchesses de Dino, de Maillé and d'Abrantès.

Nor does it come as a surprise that many memoirists were also prolific letter-writers and diarists. In his study of girls' diaries, Philippe Lejeune draws attention to the close links which exist between conversation, letter-writing and journal-keeping:

'Le journal est à la place de la lettre, et la lettre à la
 place de la conversation. Aux autres on parle;
 quand ils ne sont plus là on leur écrit; quand on n'a
 plus personne à qui écrire on s'écrit à soi-même, et
 c'est ça le journal.'¹⁵⁹

From here, the next step - and at this period, it was not necessarily a large step - is the memoir composed for future consultation privately by the writer or for public circulation. Even such modest literary occupations as letter-writing and journal-keeping, as Mme de Rémusat reminded her son, were a way of forming 'le goût et le style'.¹⁶⁰ They offered women informal textual spaces in which to practise recording sights, sounds and feelings, building up descriptions and transcribing dialogue. Mme de Chastenay, for example, made voluminous notes about her studies and excursions; Louise Fusil kept 'une espèce de journal' in which she

recorded 'les choses qui [l']avaient le plus frappée';¹⁶¹ Georgette Ducrest had her memorandum books¹⁶² and Mme de Genlis her 'journal particulier';¹⁶³ while the duchesse d'Abrantès recalled how the *Souvenirs de Félicie* inspired her to keep a record of the age in which she lived. Referring to Napoleon's meeting with Alexander I at Tilsit, she wrote:

'[...] je prenais des notes, non pas dans l'intention de publier un jour des Mémoires; mais Mme de Genlis venait de publier une seconde partie des souvenirs de Félicie, et j'avoue que cette manière de conserver les traditions du monde social me paraissait charmante, et je voulus l'imiter.'¹⁶⁴

Besides the quality of their education and the mediated nature of their involvement in public life (through male relatives or those who frequented their salon), other aspects of women's lives made the memoir a more accessible genre for them than history proper. The burden of social conventions and family obligations restricted their freedom to travel and thus prevented them from carrying out extensive research. They also made it difficult for women to devote themselves to analysis and composition. 'Les études sérieuses,' as the marquis d'Argenson rightly observed, 'demandent à n'être point troublées par les soins domestiques, ni les inquiétudes pour l'avenir'.¹⁶⁵ Freedom from domestic and social responsibilities, freedom to concentrate on purely intellectual matters, however, were luxuries reserved almost exclusively for men. It is a pancultural fact, observed the anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, that the concept of personal space is more problematic for women than for men:

'Women's lives are marked by neither privacy nor distance. They are embedded in, and subject to, the demands of immediate interaction. Women, more than men, must respond to the personal needs of those around them.'¹⁶⁶

Even well-educated women who enjoyed financial security rarely had a lifestyle that was conducive to serious study. Not only were their lives subject to the constant interruptions associated with running a household, bearing and rearing

children, receiving visitors and returning calls;¹⁶⁷ but the prevalent tendency to ridicule studious women and dismiss their literary efforts as mere scribblings (Mme de Rémusat's husband, for example, described her as an 'écrivassière'¹⁶⁸) made it virtually impossible for them to obtain a space of their own in which to work. Victorine de Chastenay, for instance, recalled in her memoirs her frustrations as a young woman when she had to share her mother's room, hide her desk behind a screen and remove her books and papers from the family's small sitting room at the arrival of visitors;¹⁶⁹ and even Mme de Staël did not have a desk of her own in the Necker family home until after the death of her father, but had to rely instead on a portable *écritoire*.¹⁷⁰

For Virginia Woolf, who remained preoccupied throughout her life by the question of the influence which material circumstances had on women's writing, it was the difficulties which they faced in obtaining 'a room of their own' - a private space in which they had control over their time and activities - that explains the importance of the novel in the literary output of women in the early nineteenth century. The attraction of the novel, she suggests, lay in the fact that it was an interruptible form which demanded less concentration on the part of the writer than poetry, plays or, Woolf might have added, history.¹⁷¹ According to George Sand, however, it was not the novel, but the memoir, which was best able to accommodate the pattern of disruption that marked women's lives. Composing a novel, she claims in *Histoire de ma vie*, demands a far higher degree of discipline and literary effort than memoir-writing as there is an artlessness about the memoir that is lacking from the novel. While the latter must be coherent, the structure of the former is more fluid, allowing for digressions and even contradictions. Speaking of her own memoirs, she explains:

'Je ne fais point ici un ouvrage d'art, je m'en défends même, car ces choses ne valent que par la spontanéité et l'abandon, et je ne voudrais pas raconter ma vie comme un roman. La forme emporterait le fond. Je pourrai donc parler sans ordre et sans suite, tomber même dans beaucoup de contradictions.'¹⁷²

Others, including Mme de Boigne, Mme de Rémusat and the duchesse

d'Abrantès, also drew attention to the memoir's flexible structure and the advantages which it possessed for those who had little training in literary composition. With memoirs, there was no need to recount events chronologically since details could be added as they came to mind. 'Avec les Mémoires [...] l'on peut toujours revenir sur le passé,' writes Mme d'Abrantès:

'Ce sont des souvenirs évoqués par des souvenirs.
Une corde touchée fait vibrer dix autres, qui toutes
rendent un son différent, mais qui pour cela n'en ont
pas moins d'accord et n'en forment pas moins une
harmonie entière.'¹⁷³

The memoir lent itself particularly well to cultivation by women, not simply because it was in keeping with their education and habits, but also because it gave them a means of expression or self-expression that did not challenge - or, at least, did not appear to challenge - the status quo of contemporary sexual politics. Unlike history or the novel, which were essentially public forms (that is to say, they were usually written specifically for publication), the memoir occupied an ambiguous position on the boundary between the public and the private. Although all memoirs had the potential to become public, they were in essence private works, destined to be read, in most cases, only by the writer herself, her family and her friends, at least during her lifetime.¹⁷⁴ As such, the memoir constituted a space in which women could pass judgment on events in the public domain and give vent to feelings of anger and frustration without violating the social conventions of the period. Blanche de Maillé, for example, explicitly linked the composition of her *Souvenirs* to the silence which she was obliged to maintain regarding public affairs because she was a woman. Her husband's position, she explains in the introduction to her memoirs, gave her an excellent knowledge of the forces at work behind the scenes during the Restoration, while her sex made it impossible for her to express openly the opinions which she formed. In this situation, her journal acted as a safety-valve:

'J'étais placée, partout, à la fenêtre du premier étage
pour voir et juger cet imposant spectacle dont j'étais
appelée à être le témoin, et l'inaction à laquelle me
condamnait ma condition de femme me donnait plus

de facilité encore pour juger sans prévention; mais j'étais vive, [...] je ne pouvais quelquefois m'empêcher de parler d'une manière que je jugeais moi-même inconvenante dans ma position; et je pris le parti d'écrire parce que j'avais éprouvé que c'était un moyen de me calmer et que je réussissais à m'empêcher de parler lorsque je m'étais confiée au papier.'¹⁷⁵

It is likely that Mme de Chateaubriand's *Cahiers* served a similar function. Although Céleste de Chateaubriand apparently regarded writing for publication as vulgar, her correspondence and the testimony of friends reveal that she nevertheless derived great pleasure from contributing to discussions of 'des sujets les plus graves' and felt frustrated by the lack of opportunity which she had to communicate her opinions. 'On meurt de la politique et l'on ne peut pas vivre sans elle,' she wrote to Joubert, for example, in November 1817;

'On en parle sans cesse, non pas moi, mais malheureusement j'ai des oreilles qui entendent et quelquefois une langue qui répond.'¹⁷⁶

Given the strongly political character of the *Cahiers* and the virulence of the attacks which they contain on the Bourbons, the Congregation and political opportunists, it seems that she gave her pen the freedom that was denied to her tongue. This is particularly apparent in the *cahier vert*, where historical narrative is submerged by commentary.

If women such as Mme de Maillé and Mme de Chateaubriand were attracted to the memoir because it enabled them to avoid controversy by bringing public affairs into the private sphere, others were attracted to the genre because it allowed them to make the transition from the private to the public domain. By claiming to have taken up her pen in order to pay tribute to her family and friends or to defend them against their detractors, a woman could effectively 'domesticate' public space. That is to say, she could make her memoir-writing appear to be a natural extension of the traditional female role of carer and of her duties as a wife (as in the case of Mme d'Abrantès), a daughter (as in the case of la reine Hortense), a sister (as in the case of Charlotte Robespierre) or a mother

(as in the case of Mme de Bonchamps and Mme de la Rochejaquelein, who memorialised the actions of their families for their children).

Other important factors which have to be taken into account when considering the attraction of the memoir for women in this period are its marketability and its status as the aristocratic genre par excellence: it had, after all, been practised by those with royal blood, such as Marguerite de Valois and Mlle de Montpensier. At a time when authorship was one of the few ways in which women of good birth could support themselves when they were beset by financial difficulties, memoir-writing was thus particularly compatible with the desire to retain respectability. Moreover, because of the genre's popularity with readers, a woman was able to earn more money by writing her memoirs than by writing only novels - the novel being the other form which accorded particularly well with women's education and experiences. In the case of the duchesse d'Abrantès, for example, it appears that the decision to publish her memoirs was a deliberate attempt to maximize her commercial potential as a writer. After examining her correspondence, Hervé Rousseau argued convincingly that the duchess turned to memoir-writing largely, if not exclusively, at the instigation of the publisher Ladvocat. He cites one of her letters, dated 13th September 1835, which indicates that Ladvocat had advised her to launch her literary career with memoirs, rather than the novel she had already written, *L'Amirante de Castille*. 'Vous rappelez-vous,' she wrote to him, 'que c'est vous qui m'avez décidée à faire mes Mémoires, avant de faire paraître l'Amirante?'¹⁷⁷ The logic behind this advice, Rousseau speculates, was as follows. The publication of a novel by a woman with no literary reputation was unlikely to attract much attention; however, given the intense interest in the Napoleonic era at that time (around 1830), a set of memoirs penned by a figure who had moved in the circle round the imperial throne would almost certainly be a best-seller and a novel published subsequently would be able to take advantage of the sensation caused by the memoirs. The success of *L'Amirante* when it appeared in September 1832, just over a year after the first volumes of the duchess's memoirs, would seem to confirm the feasibility of this scenario.¹⁷⁸

Having considered how factors such as education, experience, domestic responsibilities and social convention made the memoir attractive to women in early nineteenth century France, we must also take into account the specific

historical circumstances and ask: What influence did the Revolution and Empire have on women's memoir-writing?

As Sidonie Smith points out, when society accords importance only to those whose lives have shaped events in the public domain, women, who are rarely active participants in - or even first-hand observers of - public affairs, rarely have a story to tell that is deemed to be culturally valuable and, consequently, little incentive to write autobiographically and little justification for making their work public.¹⁷⁹ This situation, which prevailed until the end of the eighteenth century (with the partial exception of the Fronde), changed dramatically with the Revolution, the historical significance of which was universally recognised: in the words of one observer, writing in 1804, 'ce grand événement, par ses effets, a changé la face de l'Europe entière'.¹⁸⁰ Women of all social ranks, as well as men, found their lives altered by the upheaval for, as Olwen Hufton reminds us, the effects of the Revolution were not optional for those who lived through it.¹⁸¹ Under the impact of events, the notion of a private sphere inhabited by women and cut off from the vicissitudes of public affairs was no longer tenable. Indeed, one of the recurrent themes in women's memoirs of the period is the invasion or violation of the domestic realm: Mme Vigée-Lebrun was harassed by the mob while living in the rue du Gros-Chenet in 1789; Mme de Chastenay, Elisabeth Le Bas and Charlotte Robespierre were incarcerated by the revolutionary authorities; Mme de La Tour du Pin was subjected to a domiciliary visit at Canolles soon after giving birth; and many were forced to adopt a peripatetic lifestyle, moving with the counter-revolutionary army from the Vendée into Brittany (like Mme de Bonchamps and Mme de La Rochejaquelein) or following husbands or parents into exile abroad (like Mme de Boigne or Georgette Ducrest).

As a result of their experiences during the turbulent quarter century after 1789, women from a wide variety of backgrounds had both an incentive to write and stories to tell which were of more than personal or family interest. Non-aristocratic women (such as Charlotte Robespierre, Elisabeth Le Bas and Renée Bordereau), who would not normally have considered producing memoirs, had found themselves placed in situations where their experiences and observations had a bearing on the composition of 'la grande histoire';¹⁸² and aristocratic women, who

might otherwise have recorded only the deeds of their male relatives, had come to lead lives in which their own deeds possessed a heroic or tragic quality that made them worthy of record and gave social validation to the publication of their accounts.

The years of the Revolution and Empire, however, did not simply provide women with an incentive to write and something to write about. They also determined the composition of their memoirs in a fundamental way, for the events of these years shaped both the character of the women themselves and the society in which they wrote.

That the events of the period 1789 to 1815 had a decisive effect on the character of women is implicit (and frequently explicit) in the memoirs written by those who lived through them. If it is widely acknowledged that the women of the *ancien régime* possessed a commendable charm or 'urbanité' which gave them a certain degree of influence in society through the salon,¹⁸³ those who were writing their memoirs in the early nineteenth century were nevertheless keenly aware of the negative aspects of women's lives in the pre-revolutionary period. At the root of the problem, in the eyes of most female memoir-writers, was the poor quality of their education and the circumscribed nature of their upbringing. Women of the bourgeoisie, such as Elisabeth Le Bas, were raised to be 'bonnes ménagères' and 'femmes vertueuses' - goals which gave them the opportunity to acquire only limited knowledge of the world beyond their family circle.¹⁸⁴ Women of the upper-classes apparently fared little better. For the aristocracy, it was standard practice, observed Mme de Boigne, for girls to be placed 'en nourrice, puis en sevrage, puis au couvent', from which they emerged only when it was time for them to marry and pass under the authority of their husbands.¹⁸⁵ Such was the experience recorded by Mme de Bonchamps. As a young child, she was placed by her guardians in Port-Royal and subsequently in the convent of Belle-Chasse. 'Je restai trois ans à Belle-Chasse,' she wrote later in her memoirs; 'mon tuteur ne m'en retira que pour me faire épouser Monsieur le marquis de Bonchamps, gentilhomme d'Anjou, alors inconnu, et depuis justement célèbre'.¹⁸⁶ Such a system, the memoirists concur, produced women with limited intellectual horizons and little understanding of practical matters,¹⁸⁷ who ran the risk of becoming

either narrow-minded bigots (like the aunts of Mme de Chastenay)¹⁸⁸ or empty-headed creatures, who led the sort of frivolous and futile lives described by Louise Fusil during the reign of Louis-Philippe. Recalling the years before the Revolution, she wrote:

'Il existait alors parmi les femmes du grand monde, du monde élégant, un instinct de coquetterie, bien autre que celui d'aujourd'hui; les choses étaient moins sérieuses, le siècle plus frivole, on faisait du plaisir sa principale affaire. Les femmes s'occupaient peu de littérature; tout se concentrait chez elles dans un insatiable désir de plaire, de briller, d'éclipser une rivale par sa beauté, son élégance. On mettait son ambition à faire parler de son bon goût, d'une toilette que personne n'avait encore vue, et que l'on se hâtait de quitter aussitôt qu'elle avait été adoptée par d'autres. On aimait les lettres, la musique par ton, on protégeait les arts sans y attacher d'autre importance que celle de la mode; on les effleurait pour soi-même.'¹⁸⁹

The Revolution, she argues, brought about a radical change in the lifestyle of such women. Forced to confront unprecedented situations, and often deprived of guidance from their menfolk as a result of their death or emigration, women learned to act on their own initiative and assert themselves in the face of authority. Driven by the desire to feed and protect their families and friends, hitherto timid women conquered their fears and frivolous women grew more sober and responsible. Emigration, declared Fusil, had a particularly beneficial effect on the previously 'faibles femmes' of the French aristocracy:

'[...] l'émigration, qui les avait ruinées les força bientôt à réfléchir plus mûrement. Le malheur donne expérience et courage à ceux qui savent le supporter noblement; elles se retremperent à son école. [...] Forcées de recourir au travail ou aux arts, elles s'en firent un honorable moyen d'existence pour elles et pour leur famille.'¹⁹⁰

The most forceful writer on this subject, however, is Laure Junot. According to her, the women who grew to maturity during the Revolution and Empire came to

possess greater strength of mind and character than their forebears had ever had the opportunity to develop. 'Nous sommes maintenant ce que nous fûmes toujours,' she wrote of the women of her generation,

'mais nous avons, de plus, un développement de facultés qui existaient bien autrefois dans nous, et que nos habitudes, notre éducation, et surtout le préjugé paralysaient et repoussaient même.'¹⁹¹

The Revolution, she claims, brought about the literal and metaphorical liberation of women: it exposed them to experiences that they would not otherwise have had; it broadened their horizons and broke down the intellectual, social and moral barriers which had previously enclosed and stifled them. Forty years ago, she wrote in the early 1830s, each social category of women, from shop-girls to duchesses,

'avait son monde à elle. Ce monde avait des frontières pour lesquelles on ne leur donnait jamais de passeport. [...] Tous les états ainsi divisés, ainsi séparés par de hautes murailles par-dessus lesquelles nous ne pouvions regarder même en nous haussant sur les pointes de nos pieds, que pouvions-nous faire? Rien, si ce n'était quelques broderies, quelques niaiseries dans le même goût; mais du reste, une extrême ignorance [...].'¹⁹²

Now, she continues, everything has changed. Women have gained in experience and confidence. A woman who has lived through the cataclysmic changes which shook France after 1789, she maintains, 'a été trempée avec vigueur, et son âme sera forte; elle jouera avec la mort, si la mort la rencontre; elle aura de grandes pensées et de grandes volontés'; and, in terms of intelligence and resolution, she will be on the same level as most (if not all) men.¹⁹³

These women were not only stronger, mentally and morally, than their predecessors, however. They were also more attentive to the realm of public affairs, their experiences during the Revolution and Empire having made them all too painfully aware of the extent to which their lives were affected by the

decisions taken by those in power. Is it possible for a woman to ignore questions concerning national finances, laws and wars? asked Constance de Salm in 1817. No, she replied, because these matters touch her directly:

'Peut-elle entendre avec indifférence
Ce que partout chacun sait discuter?
Ne faut-il pas qu'elle ôte à sa dépense
Ce qu'à l'impôt elle voit ajouter?

Oubliera-t-elle, insensible et futile,
Ces grands combats, effroi du genre humain?
Doit-elle, oh! dieux, rester froide et tranquille
Si son enfant peut la quitter demain?'¹⁹⁴

Similar sentiments can be detected in an unpublished piece on Mme de Staël's *Considérations sur la Révolution* which was written the following year by Victorine de Chastenay. Dismayed at the thought that women in post-revolutionary society would be condemned to 'le silence, la nullité sociale', unable to question the wisdom or legitimacy of the policies that affected them, she cites a pithy exchange between Bonaparte and Mme Tallien that encapsulates the reasons for women's heightened interest in politics during periods of instability and testifies to the author's own frustration:

"je n'aime pas," lui dit-il, que les femmes parlent politique". "Vous avez raison," reprit-elle, "mais dans un pays où on leur coupe la tête il est assez naturel qu'elles puissent demander pourquoi".¹⁹⁵

Paradoxically, however, if the Revolution brought about the expansion of women's horizons, stimulated their interest in politics and allowed (or forced) them to develop their identity as individuals, it also created a situation in which it was increasingly difficult for them to realise and assert their individuality or take an active part in public affairs.

Even before the Revolution, opposition to royal government and criticism of the aristocracy was being couched in emphatically gendered terms. The country was suffering, it was claimed, because of the degeneration of the upper-classes; and

the upper-classes were degenerate because women had been allowed to gain an 'unnatural' ascendancy over men, resulting in the emasculation of the latter and the spread of characteristically female vices - frivolity, egoism, artifice and intrigue. Adopting the language of Rousseau, critics of the existing system called for the segregation of the sexes, the elimination of female influence from public life, the eradication of preciosity and the introduction of plain-speaking.¹⁹⁶ The discourse of the Revolution, which continued the themes of the oppositional literature of the 1770s and 1780s, was also insistently gendered. In contrast to the Old Regime, when public life had been corrupted by the intrigues of ambitious, licentious women, the New Regime, according to contemporary rhetoric, was to be constructed around the concept of virtue. Virtue, however, as Dorinda Outram has demonstrated, did not - and could not - have the same connotations in the revolutionary vocabulary when applied to women as it did when applied to men. Male virtue meant the rejection of effeminacy and the dedication of oneself to the public good, as opposed to private interest. Female virtue, however, was equated with modesty, chastity and marital fidelity and, since the preservation of such qualities was held to be incompatible with visibility in the public sphere, it necessarily entailed the withdrawal of women from the world of public affairs.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, since the emasculation of government by unrestrained women had been a key element in the opposition's denunciation of the monarchy, female sexual and social containment became integral to the legitimation of the Revolution and to its survival. For the revolutionaries to maintain their moral authority after the execution of the king, decision-making in the Republic had to be demonstrably free from the debilitating influence of women. For this to happen, the women of the Republic had to behave - and had to be seen to behave - in a manner which was radically different from that of the women whose conduct was reputed to have brought down the monarchy. In these circumstances, it was inevitable that women who intervened in public affairs either by word (such as Mme Roland and Olympe de Gouges) or by deed (such as those who joined republican clubs) and whose behaviour consequently threatened to blur the distinction between male and female and between the Old Regime and the New, were treated with suspicion and hostility by the revolutionary authorities. For women who broke the rules of sexual differentiation and deviated from the allegedly 'natural' social roles prescribed for them by the men of the Revolution, there was a high price to be paid: this was the message

given by the trial and execution of the 'monstrous' Marie-Antoinette, Olympe de Gouges and Manon Roland.¹⁹⁸

The influence of the Revolution on the language of politics and on the constitution of social relations between the sexes in the following decades was profound. The resolutely gendered discourse of the Revolution, in which there was a constant slippage between the political and the moral, made the security of all subsequent regimes dependent upon their ability to distance themselves from any association with 'boudoir politics'. In addition, the memory of events such as the march on Versailles in October 1789 in which women had played a leading role, aroused fears among those of all political persuasions that the volatility of women and the intensity of their emotions made them a potential force for anarchy. It is not surprising, therefore, that the post-revolutionary period was marked by efforts to place women more securely under the control of men, curtail their participation in public affairs and induce them to subscribe to an ideal of womanhood which did not pose a threat to male authority.¹⁹⁹

The elimination of women's voices from the public sphere, which had begun during the Revolution with the suppression of female republican clubs in 1793 and continued when the Convention passed decrees in May 1795 banning unaccompanied females from its meetings and making it illegal for women to gather together in public, was pursued with particular vigour by Napoleon. Indeed, Napoleon's determination to prevent women from exerting any influence on public affairs and his contempt for those who attempted to do so is a recurrent topic in the memoirs of women who frequented the imperial court. Mme d'Abrantès recounts a conversation in which he told her that he disliked women who interfered in '[les] affaires sérieuses, parce qu'elles intriguent toujours'.²⁰⁰ Mme de Rémusat emphasises that it was Napoleon's intention that women should be reduced to the status of purely decorative objects; and she proposes that his aversion to female influence on political life was born of his conviction that it was this which had sapped the strength of the nation in the past:

[L'Empereur], absolument convaincu de cette idée que l'empire des femmes avait souvent affaibli les rois de France, avait irrévocablement arrêté dans sa pensée qu'elles ne seraient à sa cour qu'un

ornement, et il a tenu parole.’²⁰¹

Napoleon’s step-daughter Hortense presents a similar picture. During the Empire, she recalls, ‘on avait [l’habitude] de traiter comme vaines et légères toutes les réflexions des femmes sur la politique;²⁰² and, at the imperial court,

‘on se serait moqué d’une femme qui aurait fait des vers ou bien se serait mêlée de politique. Cela convenait à l’Empereur qui trouvait misérable ce temps où des femmes avaient quelque influence sur les gouvernements. Que de fois a-t-il répété à ma mère ou à moi sur une simple réflexion ou sur la demande d’une place pour quelque protégé: “Allons, nous allons tomber en quenouille, et moi je ferais de la tapisserie”.’²⁰³

The sexual and social containment of women was also a central tenet for the men of the Restoration, such as Louis de Bonald and Joseph de Maistre, according to whom the collapse of the Old Regime was due, in large measure, to the disreputable behaviour of the aristocracy and to the highly visible role in public life which women had been permitted to play.

Thus, it was the vision of womanhood formulated by Rousseau and embraced during the Revolution by republicans, which was taken up and perpetuated in the first decades of the nineteenth century by men of every political stripe. In contrast to the impudent ‘petites maîtresses’ of the *ancien régime* and the bloodthirsty furies who had taken to the streets during the Revolution, men from across the political spectrum were in agreement that the women of the post-revolutionary era were to be obedient, modest, virtuous and unambitious. Far from meddling in public life, they were to seek out obscurity and find fulfilment in the exercise of their domestic duties. This is the model of womanhood which was used by Laponneraye, for example, in the mid-1830s when penning the portrait of Charlotte Robespierre with which he intended to engage the sympathies of prospective readers:

‘Passionnée pour la vie privée, elle ne put jamais se résoudre à en sortir, et se garda toujours bien d’imiter ces femmes qui, oubliant le rôle qui convient

à leur sexe, se lancent follement et ridiculement dans une carrière qui n'est point faite pour elles. [...] Une madame Roland, ou telle autre femme-homme d'Etat, vous écrira des in-folios sur ce qu'elle a vu, sur ce qu'elle a fait; mais Charlotte Robespierre ne s'occupe de politique qu'autant qu'il lui est nécessaire pour suivre des yeux ses frères dans l'arène où ils luttent corps à corps avec le crime.'²⁰⁴

According to this scheme, the conventions governing male and female behaviour are radically different: men belong to the public realm and women to the private; men act and women observe; men record their own words and deeds and women focus their attention on the deeds of others, not on themselves.

The exclusion of women from the public sphere and the consecration of domesticity, which was the course typically taken by men in response to the Revolution, was one with which many women concurred. As Claire Goldberg Moses, Barbara Corrado Pope and Marilyn Yalom have pointed out, there were certainly powerful incentives for women to distance themselves from the public sphere.²⁰⁵ Experience had taught them that a role on the public stage could be dangerous, even fatal, for a woman. The fate of Mme Roland, wrote a journalist reviewing her memoirs in 1820, was there to encourage them 'à chercher la gloire et le bonheur dans l'accomplissement de devoirs plus doux que la mêlée des intérêts politiques'.²⁰⁶ Moreover, as nineteenth century editors of her memoirs never failed to point out, Mme Roland herself had stressed the virtues of domesticity for women and expressed the hope that her own daughter would not be a virtuoso who neglected '[les] devoirs de son sexe' and cultivated her talents in an effort to gain the attention of the public. 'Qu'elle conserve son innocence,' she wrote shortly before her execution, 'et qu'elle parvienne à remplir un jour, dans la paix et l'obscurité, le devoir touchant d'épouse et de mère'.²⁰⁷ Among women who had suffered as a result of the Revolution - and the situation was such that most women did suffer, irrespective of their class or political allegiance - there were undoubtedly many who feared the prospect of a return to civil war or the Terror (Mme de Maillé and Mme de Chastenay, among others) and who were enchanted by the prospect of leading a life devoted to tranquil domestic pursuits - a prospect which was all the more appealing on account of the enhanced status

that had been granted to wives and mothers by Rousseau and his followers.

For women of the aristocracy, there were particularly compelling reasons for accepting their exclusion from the public domain and the reinforcement of their subordination to male control after 1815. Even the least politically astute among them was aware that their security as individuals was dependent upon that of their class, and that this, in turn, was dependent upon the security of the monarchy. Fundamental to the security of the monarchy as an institution was acceptance of the notion that the king exercised authority over his subjects as 'le père commun de la grande famille des Français', just as a father, as head of the family unit, had authority over its subordinate elements - wife and children. As a result of the overlap between these two systems - i.e. the power invested in the figure of the father - any challenge to the hierarchical relationship between the sexes inevitably endangered the stability of the hierarchical relationship between the classes. For aristocratic women to involve themselves openly in public affairs, therefore, would have posed a double threat to the social order. In the first place, such behaviour would have called into question the 'naturalness' of the sexual hierarchy (in which the female was subordinate to the male) and hence the 'naturalness' of the social hierarchy (in which the king sat at the apex of power, above the aristocracy to whom all other classes were subordinate); and in the second place, it would have exposed the restored monarchy to attack on the grounds that women were once again exerting excessive influence on public life.

Socially and politically, then, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a time when women were permitted to exercise very little control over their own lives or those of others. As we have seen, they did not enjoy the same educational opportunities as men, and even the best educated found that few fields were open to them. In a letter to Galiani in 1771, Mme d'Epainay lamented the circumscribed world to which women were confined:

'Tout ce qui tient à la science de l'administration, de la politique, du commerce, leur est étranger et leur est interdit; elles ne peuvent ni ne doivent s'en mêler. [...] Il leur reste donc les belles-lettres, la philosophie et les arts.'

Even in these fields, however, social conventions obstructed women's progress,

with the result that they were 'réduites à la musique, à la danse et aux vers innocents'.²⁰⁸ Thirty years later, Fanny Raoul echoed Mme d'Épinay's complaints about the exclusion of women from the professions. Law and medicine are closed to them, she writes, as are the sciences and the arts:

'Les sciences? Elles ne leur seront d'aucune utilité, puisqu'elles ne sont point admises dans les sociétés qui les cultivent aux frais du gouvernement. Les arts? Quelques-uns sont avilis par le préjugé, quelques autres exigent une étude si continue, si opiniâtre, que des parents se décident difficilement à les faire étudier à leurs filles; les uns par manque de moyens, les autres par insouciance; tous par la certitude qu'ils ne leur produiront aucun avantage réel.'²⁰⁹

In such circumstances, virtually the only path open to women was marriage and motherhood. Marriage, declared the duchesse de Dino, was 'la seule grande question de la vie des femmes'.²¹⁰ It was not, however, a matter over which women generally exercised great influence. Although the number of arranged marriages may have been declining in the late eighteenth century, the concept of marrying purely for love certainly remained a novelty, especially among the aristocracy. It is clear from memoirs of the period that marriages were still essentially the product of negotiations between the prospective groom and the family of the bride, or between the two families. The part played by the prospective bride herself was often negligible: at worst, she might be used as a political pawn and married off against her will, like Stéphanie Tascher; or come under intense pressure from her family to marry a man whom she did not care for, like la reine Hortense and the duchesse de Dino. Even if some women had the power to reject suitors who were antipathetic to them, few had the freedom to choose their future husbands; and in all cases, parental consent to the match remained vital.

With her marriage, a woman passed from the hands of her parents into those of her husband. In the eyes of the law, a married woman had the status of a minor and was able to control very few areas of her life. From 1804, her obedience to

her husband was inscribed in the statute book (article 213 of the *Code civil*). It was he who fixed the family's place of residence and administered the family's finances. He could read her correspondence and dispose of the money which she earned without consulting her. She, in contrast, could not make any sort of financial transaction, sign any contract, or engage in any trade without his authorisation. Only if she had opted for a marriage settlement based on the separation of property ('le régime de la séparation des biens') could a woman retain some degree of financial control.²¹¹ With regard to children, the rights of the father outweighed those of the mother (*Code civil*, articles 371, 372, 373, 389). Thus, if a couple disagreed over an issue concerning their children, it was the father's decision which was final. As Napoleon told his step-daughter when she lost the legal battle to prevent her eldest son from being taken to live with her estranged husband abroad, 'l'autorité paternelle est tout'.²¹² Even over matters such as breast-feeding, choice was frequently denied to the mother and pressure was exerted on her to follow the course dictated by her husband or other relatives.²¹³

If a married woman was able to exercise only limited control over her children, she had even less control over the behaviour of her husband. While it was generally agreed that a wife deserved to be treated with a certain degree of respect by her husband,²¹⁴ it was also recognised that she could not demand - or expect - fidelity. Marriage, observed Mme de Maillé, did not, in practice, 'enchaîner] les actions des hommes'.²¹⁵ A double standard was inscribed in the *Code pénal* in the clauses relating to adultery, which was more broadly defined and more severely punished in the case of women than men (*Code pénal*, articles 324, 337, 339). The existence of a double standard was also accepted by society at large. When Mme d'Abrantès confided to Napoleon that she was worried by rumours that her husband was having an affair, for example, his response was to dismiss men's extra-marital affairs as mere trifles and instruct her not to badger Junot on the subject when he returned from service in Italy.²¹⁶ There was little, in fact, that a woman could do but stoically endure a husband's ill-treatment and infidelity. Divorce, which had been legalised in 1792, was more strictly regulated after 1804 (the grounds for divorce were reduced and the conditions for a divorce

by mutual consent were made more stringent), and was abolished in 1816.²¹⁷ Divorce, however, did not greatly increase a woman's freedom: she did not gain complete control over her finances or over her children (indeed, her contact with her male children over the age of seven diminished as they were, by law, entrusted to their father); and her conduct in society was subject to close supervision. It is not surprising, therefore, that some women remained sceptical about the benefits which divorce held for them. 'Si l'intérêt des hommes ne l'avait pas sollicité, il n'existerait pas,' wrote Fanny Raoul in 1801; 'De quelle utilité le divorce est-il pour [les femmes] d'ailleurs? Elles n'y trouvent que la faculté de changer de maîtres'.²¹⁸

Even a woman who avoided marriage completely was unable to control her life to the same extent as a man for, while a spinster may have possessed civil rights that were almost identical to those of a man, at no point during this period did she enjoy the same professional rights or the same political rights; and she could embark on a sexual relationship only at the cost of her reputation.

Denied any political rights, women had no legitimate means of controlling public affairs and no platform from which to speak openly. Even when they occupied positions from which they could observe those whose decisions affected the future of the nation (and these positions were usually dictated by the social status, function or political allegiance of their husbands or male relatives), women lacked the ability to effect changes directly in the public life of the nation. Those who wished to influence the course of politics necessarily had to resort to intrigue; and in the murky world behind the public stage, as Mme d'Abrantès explained to Napoleon, they risked becoming mere pawns in the hands of more powerful men: 'On dispose de nous; on nous fait agir, et nous ne sommes que des machines'.²¹⁹

From their earliest days, moreover, women found that strict controls were imposed on their speech. 'Les convenances sociales' dictated that girls should remain silent in company: Mme Roland, for example, recalled that she had spent her adolescence 'toujours près de [sa] mère, dans le silence que l'usage prescrit aux demoiselles'.²²⁰ When they did speak, they were expected to avoid certain

constructions (they were not to issue commands, contradict others or assert their own opinions) and certain topics. Mme d'Abrantès recalls that her mother used to reprimand her when she was a young woman for discussing what she considered to be 'des sujets de conversation peu faits pour des femmes', such as political conspiracies and murders.²²¹ Even as adults, their ability to participate in discussions of public affairs remained impaired. It was thought to be unbecoming for a woman to place herself openly on a par with men; were she to do so, she would be exposing herself to ridicule and censure and perhaps, incidentally, damaging the career prospects of her male relatives, as Mme de Maillé observed.²²² Hence the recurrent image in memoirs of the silent woman listening attentively to the men who exchange their opinions around her and struggling to maintain her composure. Among the most striking examples is Mme Roland's account of the meetings which took place in her salon during her husband's first period in office in 1791. It suited her for the men to gather at her home, she writes, because it allowed her to keep abreast of public affairs. She did not, however, take an active part in the proceedings, as she takes care to point out:

'Je savais quel rôle convenait à mon sexe, et je ne le quittai jamais. Les conférences se tenaient en ma présence sans que j'y prisse aucune part; placée hors du cercle et près d'une table, je travaillais des mains, ou faisais des lettres, tandis que l'on délibérait; eussé-je à expédier dix missives, ce qui avait lieu quelquefois, je ne perdais pas un mot de ce qui se débitait, et il m'arrivait de mordre les lèvres pour ne pas dire le mien.'

There was a great deal of fine talk on these occasions but few practical solutions to urgent problems emerged. This situation, she admits in her memoirs, appalled her: 'J'aurais quelquefois souffleté d'impatience ces sages'.²²³

In this society, where women had only limited control over their private lives and few opportunities to create a public life or forge their identity as individuals, one of the major attractions of the memoir was that it presented them with a space in which they *could* exercise control and push against the limits of the 'cercle borné' to which they were confined by law and custom; and, as Susan Kinsey points out,

it was a more satisfying form of control than that offered by the novel since the writer was dealing with real people, not merely fictional characters.²²² Free to determine the subject-matter and the emphases of her text, the woman who wrote her memoirs was in a position of power in relation to the past and to her reader. 'Il y a moyen de répandre l'ombre et la lumière sur les faits qu'on expose, de manière que, sans altérer le fonds, on en change l'apparence,' observed the eighteenth century memoirist Mme de Staal-Delaunay.²²⁵ By choosing her words carefully and modelling her subject in light and shade, foregrounding or omitting material as she wished, the memoir-writer was able to manipulate the responses of her readers and shape their perception of people and events - and all writers envisaged that their work would be communicated to others, in the near or distant future.²²⁶

In the first place, the memoir permitted women to exercise control over their own lives, albeit retrospectively, and over their self-image. Able to make their own past the subject of their text, women also found in the memoir the chance to *remake* their past. In this 'second life', which she created through writing, a woman was able to exercise the powers of decision-making and criticism of which she had been deprived in her 'first' (or lived) life. Here, she could explain the motives for her actions; erase all traces of her failures and errors of judgment; present her side of the story with respect to contentious family issues, such as an unsuccessful marriage or a quarrel; and explore hypothetical courses of action. For those who had been literally or metaphorically disfigured by age or slander, the memoir provided a means to repair the damage. Wresting her image from the hands of others and the ravages of time, the writer could fashion an image of herself that countered, modified or enhanced those already in circulation. She could immortalise her youthful beauty (memoir-writers who offer a physical description almost invariably depict themselves as they appeared in their youth); and undermine the credibility of those who had tarnished her reputation. She could also use the memoir to fight against anonymity or against the image of herself in the works of others as 'quelque chose de transparent, sans énigme ni double fond, bref un être réduit'.²²⁷ Here, she could fashion an account of her life that would convey her singularity and the complexity of her personality, one that highlighted her idiosyncrasies, talents, ambitions and achievements, and

revealed the hitherto hidden world of her thoughts and feelings. From being an object who was defined by others, the woman who wrote her memoirs had become the subject who defined herself and the world around her. She had appropriated the right to gaze and the power to name that were traditionally male privileges.

As well as giving women the opportunity to refashion their own past, the memoir also gave them the power to craft the past of others and thus to take an active part in history as both record and process. By controlling the information which she offered her reader, a memoir-writer could help to determine who and what would be remembered by future generations. Such had been Napoleon's intention in *Le Mémorial*, according to the duchesse d'Abrantès:

'*Le Mémorial*, a-t-il pensé, sera lu par cent millions d'individus, parmi lesquels peut-être comptera-t-on à peine mille qui connaissent les faits qui me déplaisent; ces mille personnes conserveront la mémoire de ces faits d'une manière peu inquiétante, par la tradition orale; *Le Mémorial* sera donc irréfutable.'²²⁸

The memoir-writer could choose which events to include in her account and whether to accentuate their positive or negative elements. She had the power to name an individual (thereby bringing him or her into the historical record) or to ignore his or her existence. She also had the power to determine whose voices would be heard and the capacity to control their speech: their words could be cited at length, paraphrased, interrupted or dissected; the obscure could be made eloquent and the powerful silenced. By the way in which she structured her work (the use of repetition or parallels, for example) and by her choice of details, metaphors and quotations, the writer could effectively influence whether a person would be seen as a hero or a villain, and whether a regime would be classified as a triumph or a catastrophe. When she allowed her work to enter circulation, moreover, a woman acquired the power to affect not only her reader's perception of the past, but also, by extension, his or her actions in the future. The memoir, in other words, was one of the few ways in which women were able to gain access to the public realm and a political voice that was officially denied to them - and, as I argued above, this was an age when the memoir occupied an important position

in the literary marketplace.

The memoir, however, was only partially a site of emancipation for women. If, on the one hand, as we have seen, the female memoir-writer was an active, empowered subject, capable of breaking the silence traditionally enjoined on her, erecting her own scale of values and conferring meaning - *her* meaning - on the events of the past; on the other, she was the object of her reader's gaze and, as such, she remained constrained by contemporary social and political forces. In all autobiographical writing, as Michael Sheringham notes, the reader represents both an object of desire (a potential source of love, esteem or validation for the writer; someone to be charmed and persuaded) and a threat (the embodiment of expectations and assumptions; a judge with the potential to criticise and refute the writer); and this relationship with the reader is one from which the writer can never extricate himself or herself entirely.²²⁹ Sheringham, however, does not introduce the issue of gender directly into his discussion of the writer/reader dynamic, and gender was a crucial element in the composition and reception of memoirs in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Readers of the period - both male and female - invariably highlighted the sex of a memoir-writer when that writer was female, and automatically attached certain expectations to the work. Mme de Boigne, for example, noted approvingly that Mme de La Rochejaquelein and her mother were depicted in the memoirs of the former as having taken part in the Vendean wars 'sans sortir du caractère de leur sexe';²³⁰ and Georgette Ducrest wrote of her admiration for Mme de La Rochejaquelein as both woman and memoirist and of her disappointment when she discovered the gap which existed between the Mme de Bonchamps constructed in the text of Mme de Genlis (a courageously self-abnegating wife and mother) and Mme de Bonchamps the woman of flesh and blood who brandished pistols and talked of her past with the unselfconscious gusto of a man:

'Elle racontait *ses campagnes* avec toute l'énergie d'un vieux soldat qui aime à se reporter aux batailles auxquelles il s'est distingué; elle avait l'air gai et satisfait en rappelant les coups de sabre distribués *aux bleus*; en un mot, elle me parut *trop masculine* dans ses récits. Ce n'est pas ainsi que madame de la Roche-Jaquelein a peint ses malheurs dans ses Mémoires; ses craintes, en s'exposant aux plus

grands périls pour suivre son mari, sont aussi touchantes que naturelles, et ajoutent un intérêt de plus à celui de sa position. [...] Ce qui [donne à ces Mémoires], à mes yeux, un charme qui leur est particulier, c'est l'extrême simplicité avec laquelle l'héroïne raconte tout ce qu'elle a fait, guidée par son coeur. C'est lui qui la faisait surmonter toutes les craintes naturelles à notre sexe et à son caractère timide. C'est précisément ce manque de bravoure qui rend admirable tout ce qu'elle a affronté. Voilà l'héroïsme qui me plaît dans une femme, et non celui d'un grenadier [...].²³¹

Thus, while a man could conflate maleness with humanity, unproblematically casting off his sex and posing before the reader as a representative human being, a woman was always a *woman* memoir-writer, whose performance as both author and protagonist was going to be assessed according to specific, gender-based criteria. Moreover, the extent to which a woman's reputation in this period ('ce qu'elle [avait] de plus précieux'²³²) was dependent on the judgment of others, and thus on the image of herself which she conveyed, meant that the 'threat' posed by the reader was inordinately greater for a woman than a man. As Rousseau explained in *Emile*, 'l'apparence même [est] au nombre des devoirs des femmes [...]; ce que l'on pense d'[une femme] ne lui importe pas moins que ce qu'elle est en effet; [...] l'opinion est le tombeau de la vertu parmi les hommes, et son trône parmi les femmes'.²³³

As a writer, therefore, a woman had to choose the subject-matter of her memoirs with care, particularly when she wrote about her own life. Although readers might be titillated by the details of a woman's private life ('une femme qui se confesse est toujours bonne à entendre,' as Jay wrote in *La Minerve* in 1818²³⁴), they were unlikely to admire the woman who revealed her indiscretions in print. If it were improper, in the eyes of many readers of the period, for men to follow the example of Rousseau and write openly about their sexual experiences (and this is indicated, for example, by the criticism levelled against the *Confessions* and by the ambivalence of editors in the 1820s and 1830s when dealing with men who confessed or celebrated their amorous exploits in their memoirs²³⁵), it was

universally held to be even more objectionable for a woman to do so. It was not fitting, declared Sainte-Beuve, for Mme Roland to have recorded in detail in her memoirs the scene in which one of her father's apprentices attempted to assault her sexually. 'Pour l'excuser, pour m'expliquer cette franchise que personne au monde ne lui demandait à ce degré,' he continued, 'j'ai besoin de me représenter l'autorité suprême et l'ascendant prestigieux que l'exemple de Rousseau avait pris sur elle et sur les personnes de sa génération. Nous y avons tous cédé plus ou moins dans nos propres confessions aussi, en vers ou en prose; *mais elle, elle était femme et devait s'en souvenir*'.²³⁶ Although this article on Mme Roland was written in 1864, its author had already voiced his objections to women exposing the intimate details of their lives to public scrutiny in their memoirs forty years earlier. In a review article which he wrote soon after the appearance of the first volumes of the memoirs of Mme de Genlis in 1825, for example, appears the following injunction to their author:

'Hé, madame, écrivez vos mémoires pour vous, dans le recueillement de la solitude et de l'âge; épanchez-y en silence vos souvenirs, vos joies, vos douleurs, et, si vous voulez, vos péchés et vos repentirs; confiez à l'amitié ou à la famille cet humble et sacré dépôt qui doit vous survivre.'

Do not, he warned, be tempted to follow the example of Rousseau:

'[...] vous le savez trop bien, en dévotion comme en amour, il y a une pudeur d'aveu qui sied trop à une femme pour que jamais elle s'en départisse; et quand la Madeleine était pénitente, elle se voilait de ses cheveux, même pour pleurer.'²³⁷

It was not simply public confession of their vices in the mode of Rousseau, however, that women were to avoid: it was everything that smacked of narcissism or self-absorption. While it was still a fault for men to dwell too heavily on their own lives (and the comments of readers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as the ambivalent response of many male memoir-writers themselves to the stark egoism displayed by Rousseau suggests that this

was indeed the case²³⁸), overpersonalisation or 'le culte du Moi' was always deemed to be more reprehensible in the memoirs of women, especially in those destined for publication. The dressmaker Rose Bertin, for example, was criticised by Sainte-Beuve for filling her memoirs with anecdotes about herself '[qui] n'import[aient] guère à l'histoire du dix-huitième siècle' since she was a figure of no historical importance; and Mme de Genlis was said to have displayed a ridiculously misplaced sense of her own importance in deciding to publish her memoirs during her lifetime.²³⁹

It was not simply the contents of women's works that had to conform to gendered conventions; so, too, did their style. Ideally, women's writing was to be a reflection of their femininity: 'aimable et doux comme elles,' as Louis de Fontanes declared in an article in 1800.²⁴⁰ In keeping with the notion popularised by writers such as Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre that women represented Nature as opposed to Culture, it was proposed that their writing was to be 'natural', that is to say, spontaneous and unpretentious, not bold, forced or pedantic. These were the recommendations laid down for women in the eighteenth century by men such as Melchior Grimm and the marquis d'Argenson;²⁴¹ and these were the ideals that prevailed into the following century, to judge from the editorial notices and review articles of the period, in which the same terms recur consistently in approbatory descriptions of women's memoirs: 'charme', 'grâce', 'simplicité', 'délicatesse', 'élégance douce', 'touche délicate', 'négligence', 'absence de toute prétention littéraire'.²⁴² Women's writing, they imply, has an appealing surface, but little depth; it is delicate and light, not dark and dramatic; and it comes from - and speaks to - the heart, not the head. For a woman to write in any other manner was a rejection of her femininity - and the rejection of femininity was never seen as a commendable act.

Conditioned from childhood to regard women as different from men and, especially in the wake of the Revolution, to see the social order as a construct based on the separation of male and female domains, female memoir-writers and those who adopted the persona of a woman when writing memoirs knew that their works would be read and judged as those of *women* writers. They knew, too, that they could gain the approval of society only by conforming to the prevailing cultural

conception of appropriate female behaviour as both writers and protagonists: as writers, they were to be discreet and self-effacing, avoiding the salacious and those subjects and styles which society had coded as masculine; and as protagonists, they were to be modest, virtuous creatures, who did not set themselves up as the rivals of men, but existed only through and for others. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising to find that in both the memoirs written by women and those attributed to women, issues of content and style tend to be discussed in explicitly gendered terms. Indeed, acute gender-consciousness is one of the major characteristics of women's memoir-writing.

One of the recurrent elements in these works is the notion that the capacities of male and female writers differ and that women will not treat the same subjects as men. Military matters, for example, are usually said to be beyond their sphere of competence. Mlle Avrillion's explanation for neglecting to discuss 'la campagne de Wagram' is typical. 'On n'attend sûrement pas de moi,' she writes, 'que j'entre dans aucun détail sur cette campagne, qui fut si glorieuse et fit pourtant tant de larmes'.²⁴³ Even those women who had been caught up in the civil war in the Vendée and whose memoirs necessarily included the events of this period, usually emphasize the inadequacies of their accounts of military engagements as material for the historian.²⁴⁴ Politics, too, is a subject which women memoir-writers explicitly place outside their field of reference. 'On ne peut pas attendre d'une femme un récit de la vie politique de Bonaparte,' declared Mme de Rémusat, for example, in 1818; and her words were echoed by Mlle Avrillion in the 1830s: 'On n'a pas pu attendre de moi des révélations de Cabinet ni des faits relatifs à la politique de l'Empereur [...]'.²⁴⁵ It was not lack of information alone which prevented women from discussing warfare and politics, as writers commonly point out; there was also the issue of propriety. Such serious subjects, stated Georgette Ducrest, were 'trop importants pour être écrits par une femme' and were properly the domain of male memoir-writers.²⁴⁶ The differentiation of memoirs on the basis of the writer's sex is a subject to which Ducrest returns several times. It is for men to take on the onerous task of depicting 'des scènes sanglantes', revealing 'des crimes atroces' and tearing away 'le voile qui couvre l'horrible peinture de tous les vices', she writes; hence 'la gloire plus grande, plus durable' which is accorded them. Women's memoirs, in contrast, properly fulfil more

modest objectives and have an altogether different tone. They are, she declares,

'si peu importants qu'on les lit sans y chercher des documens d'histoire, on ne désire y trouver que des anecdotes amusantes, des portraits ressemblans, beaucoup de *noms propres*, et la peinture de la société. Si nous sommes assez heureuses pour réussir en partie dans le petit genre qu'il nous est permis d'aborder, nous devons être satisfaites [...].'²⁴⁷

The notion that it was fundamentally unnatural for women to write with gravity and treat the same weighty and unpleasant subjects as men was certainly not unique to Ducrest. 'Peut-être me suis-je trop arrêtée sur ces détails,' pondered Mme de Rémusat, for example, after describing at length the marriage of the prince de Bade and the celebrations which ensued, 'mais il me semble qu'ils me reposent des graves récits que j'ai à faire, dont ma plume féminine est quelquefois un peu fatiguée'; while Mlle Avrillion turned away from battlefields and corpses with the remark that 'ces spectacles ne sont point, selon moi, de ceux qui conviennent à des femmes'.²⁴⁸ The female memoir-writer's proper concern, they suggest, was 'des sujets moins sévères' (fashion, dazzling social events, love, 'l'histoire de l'amabilité française'); and their mission was to console and edify, not to analyse or preach. To entertain loftier ambitions was to go against nature:

'Une femme, destinée à consoler, à adoucir tous les maux, doit n'écrire que pour peindre les tendres sentimens, pour faire briller des vertus ignorées, et tirer de l'obscurité de belles actions; voilà leur douce mission, lorsqu'elles prennent la plume: elles sortent des limites qui leur sont marquées par la nature, lorsqu'elles osent davantage.'²⁴⁹

For writers who were seeking to gain the approval of her readers - and all memoirists sought the approval of their readers, even if the only reader whom they envisaged was their future self - open rejection of the conventions

established for their sex, either in their writing or in the textual representation of their life, could be problematic and, ultimately, self-defeating.²⁵⁰ In transgressing 'les lois de la société,' as Claire de Rémusat pointed out in a portrait of Mme de Staël, a woman not only faced internal conflicts (what Virginia Woolf would later describe as her struggle against the 'Angel in the House', or her own internalised image of the socially-ordained ideal of womanhood²⁵¹); she also risked alienating the sympathy of others, of both sexes, and becoming trapped in a sexual no man's land. 'Tourmentée par une imagination qui la consumait, trop ardente à l'éclat et au succès, gênée par les lois de la société qui contiennent les femmes dans un cercle borné,' she wrote of the controversial author, '[Germaine de Staël] brava tout, surmonta tout, et souffrit beaucoup de cette lutte orageuse entre le démon qui la poussait, et les convenances qui ne purent la retenir. [...] Quoiqu'elle eût un grand fonds de bonté, elle a excité la haine et l'envie; elle effrayait les femmes, elle blessait une foule d'hommes auxquels elle se croyait supérieure. [...] Sa vie ne fut point précisément celle d'une femme, et ne pouvait pas être celle d'un homme [...].'²⁵²

When they wrote their memoirs, in consequence, women (and those writing in the name of women) who wished to ensure a positive reception for their work, found that they had to engage in a series of complex negotiations, in addition to those which were inherent in the memoir-writing process. Like male memoir-writers, they had to negotiate with the past, with memory, with generic paradigms, with pre-existing images of themselves, and with readers. They negotiated between historical time and personal time; between the narrating 'I' and the narrated 'I'; between recovered memories and imagination; between 'l'histoire générale' and 'l'histoire particulière'; and between self-exploration and self-construction. But they also had to deal with complications which were peculiar to their sex. Unlike men, they always wrote from a defensive position, constantly meeting and responding to the implicit assumption that women should remain historically invisible, and that recording their lives and passing judgment on others in works which were destined for publication (or which might one day become public) was essentially unseemly. All the other processes of negotiation in which they were involved ultimately led back to their need to counter this fundamental 'opposition of opinion', as Virginia Woolf termed it.²⁵³ They had to

negotiate between the generic models which could, without difficulty, serve a male memoirist (the account of the writer's public life; the record of historical events which the writer had shaped or witnessed from his position as soldier, government minister or diplomat; the introspective story of the antihero who affirms his uniqueness), and the prevailing conception of the admirable female as quintessentially dependent, self-abnegating and publicly silent, which rendered these models inapplicable. Thus, while a man could take *Emile* or *Saint-Preux* as a model for living and the *Confessions* as a model for turning his life into text, a woman could not easily reconcile the model of independent selfhood and the stylistic and thematic boldness of the *Confessions* with the model of Womanhood established by Rousseau in the immensely popular *Emile* and *Nouvelle*

Héloïse.²⁵⁴ The influence of such novels on women's memoirs, moreover, should not be underestimated for, in writing, women had to negotiate, not simply between pre-existing images of themselves, but also between the diverse images of 'Woman' then in circulation: 'Woman' as angel or devil, *ingénue* or seductress, victim or victimiser, muse or parasite; 'Woman' as she was embodied in figures such as *Clarissa* or *Manon Lescaut*, *Sophie*, *Julie*, *Virginie*, *Atala* or *Mme de Merteuil*; as well as 'Woman' in her social role as daughter, wife, mother or spinster. In addition, they brought to their conception of themselves and their recollections of the past, not only the knowledge that certain styles, subjects and narratorial postures were coded as 'feminine' while others were distinctly coded as 'masculine'; but also the knowledge that too faithful an adherence to either set of conventions was potentially disastrous. On the one hand, if the narrating 'I' spoke like a man or the narrated 'I' acted like a man, the writer and her work would be branded as 'masculine' and incur resentment or disdain. On the other hand, if the narrating 'I' spoke about 'womanly' subjects in a 'womanly' way, and the narrated 'I' conformed to the contemporary definition of the 'good' woman and subsumed her identity in that of her husband or family, her work would be labelled as trivial and second-rate - 'si peu importante,' in the words of *Georgette Ducrest* - and her identity as an individual would remain hidden from history. These dilemmas were not easy to resolve and women memoir-writers of the period tackled them in different ways and with varying degrees of success, as we shall see in the next three chapters.

Chapter Two

Madame de La Tour du Pin: *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans.*

'Les plus touchans exemples d'amour conjugal ont été donné par des femmes dignes de comprendre leurs maris et de partager leur sort, et le mariage n'est pas dans toute sa beauté que lorsqu'il peut être fondé sur une admiration réciproque.'¹

In many ways, the *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans* can be cited in support of Mme de Staël's assertion that the happiest marriages are those in which the wife is morally and intellectually on a par with the husband, bonded to him, as she puts it in the second preface to her *Lettres sur [...] J. J. Rousseau*, by 'une sympathie éclairée' rather than by 'une obéissance aveugle'.²

The author of the *Journal*, Henriette-Lucie Dillon, daughter of Arthur Dillon, hereditary colonel of the Dillon regiment, and his wife Thérèse-Lucy, was born on 25th February 1770, in Paris. After her mother's early death in 1782, she was brought up under the supervision of her maternal grand-mother, Mme de Rothe (whom she detested), and her uncle, the Archbishop of Narbonne. In 1787, she married Frédéric-Séraphin, marquis de La Tour du Pin de Gouvernet (1759-1837), a soldier and former comrade of her father, with whom she shared the next fifty years of her life. About the reciprocity of their esteem there can be little doubt. On the one side, there is the short autobiographical account written by M. de La Tour du Pin the year before his death, in which he described his wife as:

'celle qui, pendant une union de bientôt cinquante années, a fait le bonheur et la consolation d'une existence si douloureusement et si fréquemment agitée. [...] L'abnégation absolue de soi est la qualité

dominante de cette âme pour laquelle l'imagination ne pourrait inventer un sacrifice quelconque qui pût être au-dessus du dévouement dont elle est capable....
Allons, je m'arrête, car aussi bien je n'épuiserai pas tout ce que j'aurais à dire.'³

On the other side, there is the testimony of the memoirs in which Henriette-Lucie recounts her betrothal to M. de Gouvernet under the influence of 'un instinct, un entraînement venant d'en Haut' (1: 79), and her married life up to her hasty departure from Paris after Napoleon's return from Elba. Within the framework provided by the social and political upheavals of the Revolution and Empire, she tells a story of domestic hardships and triumphs, of love, loyalty and endurance.

(i) From Life to Text: The Composition of a Family Memoir

Mme de La Tour du Pin is one of the best known, yet also, it can be argued, one of the least known female memoir-writers of the nineteenth century. Long before the posthumous publication of her *Journal* by her great-grandson in 1913,⁴ this 'personnalité de choix', as Baldensperger has called her,⁵ had already caught the public's imagination and imposed itself as the epitome of devotion, endurance and bravery, combined with, and tempered by, genteel femininity. Among the earliest proponents of this view was the duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt who, in his *Voyages dans les Etats-Unis d'Amérique, faits de 1795 à 1798* (8 volumes, 1800), placed her at the head of those commendable women who strengthened the courage of the male victims of the Revolution; and he praised her both for her ingenuity in securing her husband's safety during the Terror and for her skill in rendering agreeable to him in exile 'a life little made, I believe, for his tastes and habits'.⁶ Perhaps more influential in shaping the public's perception of her, however, was Jacques Delille's poem *La Pitié*, to which, she acknowledged, she owed 'une sorte de réputation romantique' (2: 267). After having invented the characters of an aristocratic *émigré* couple in which the husband turns 'laboureur' and 'constructeur' and the wife becomes the very embodiment of rustic purity and pastoral elegance, Delille claimed to have discovered that his fiction had been almost perfectly realised in the lives of Henriette-Lucie de La Tour du Pin and her husband. In a note accompanying the poem, they are presented as 'deux jeunes époux, qui avoient vécu à la cour, comblés des dons de la nature et de la fortune,

élevés dans la magnificence du luxe', who find themselves forced by the Revolution to adopt a new and very different form of life - 'la vie champêtre'. Undaunted, the intrepid couple quickly adapted themselves to their new existence. While her husband was 'tantôt agriculteur, tantôt architecte et maçon', the note continues,

'Madame de Latour-du-Pin, qui étoit la ménagère, portoit, au marché d'Albani, les légumes du jardin et des produits de la basse-cour, qui étoit sous son inspection particulière; elle faisoit elle-même le pain, et s'occupoit de tous les détails du ménage.'⁷

This gloss on the poem, however, served to blur the boundary between the flesh and blood Henriette-Lucie and the fictional 'fermière'. In that she represented for her contemporaries the embodiment of an arcadian ideal, her body was already a zone for competing identities in which it was difficult to draw the line between 'cette dame de la cour de Marie-Antoinette [...] qui avait été, dans ces pays lointains, traire les vaches et vivre au milieu des bois' (2: 267) and her literary counterpart:

'Avec un air de nymphe, un habit de bergère,
Un maintien distingué sous sa robe légère;
[...] du lis son teint a la fraîcheur,
Du lait qu'elle exprimoit ses mains ont la blancheur.'⁸

The bucolic image of the 'femme jeune, jolie et riche' who becomes a charming 'fermière' complete with donkey and straw hat, which was propagated at the beginning of the century by Delille, reappears in 1841 in Louise Fusil's *Souvenirs d'une actrice*. One of Fusil's intentions in this work was to suggest that the French Revolution had a sobering - and thus in many ways salutary - effect on the frivolous upper-class women of late eighteenth century France. It was also her intention, however, to protest that 'on n'a pas rendu assez de justice aux femmes de cette époque'.⁹ The women she had in mind were those who not only responded to misfortune with courage and initiative, but who also managed to preserve 'cette fleur de bon goût, d'urbanité, de politesse, qui a toujours distingué les Françaises' (p. 119). Among those to whom the actress pays tribute, Mme de

La Tour du Pin occupies a prominent position, exemplifying those women '[qui] ont supporté noblement et sans se plaindre ce temps d'infortune' (p. 120).

In the present century, with the publication of her memoirs, Mme de La Tour du Pin has attracted attention for a number of reasons. Firstly, her *Journal* has been regarded as a source of historical information on a variety of subjects: upper-class society in the ancien régime;¹⁰ the course and consequences of the French Revolution;¹¹ the Emigration;¹² or American life at the end of the eighteenth century.¹³ It has also been quarried by the biographers of figures such as Talleyrand and Napoleon.¹⁴ On one level, therefore, Henriette-Lucie's value derives from her role as the portraitist of a lost society and as the author of a sharply-etched chronicle of momentous events, such as the opening of the States General, the October Days or the 'Fête de la Fédération' in 1790. Secondly, it is the personality of the writer which has ensured for her memoirs a privileged position among those of her contemporaries. For Turquan, she was 'la courageuse comtesse de La Tour du Pin', a model of the aristocrat-turned-colonist.¹⁵ Baldensperger, too, believed that she exemplified 'un type exquis de Française, souple, intelligente, courageuse et bonne'.¹⁶ More recently, a slightly different approach to the *Journal* has been taken by Marilyn Yalom, who combines concern for the historical details of the Revolution with an interest in the role of gender in the memoir-writing process. More sensitive to the ways in which the text has been inflected by the author's gender, she draws attention to certain aspects of the work which reveal the 'distinctly female parameters' of a woman's experience and recollection of the Emigration, such as the differing reactions of Henriette-Lucie and her husband to the prospects of returning to France in 1796, or the contrasting roles played by each of them in the liberation of their Negro slaves. In spite of this agenda, however, Yalom barely scratches the surface of the memoirs. Considering Henriette-Lucie primarily from the perspective of a historian, she subscribes complacently, like her predecessors, to the view that the *Journal* stands out by virtue of 'the sheer excitement of the narrative and the winning personality of its narrator [...]. By dint of her strength of character, resourcefulness and high spirit she became a model figure of the Frenchwoman in exile'.¹⁷ Almost nothing is said about such crucial subjects as the driving force of

the narrator, the ways in which the immediate circumstances of the writing self are brought to bear on the written self, the process by which the marquise constructed her self-image in writing, or the tensions within that image.

Although indifferent to the relationship between gender and genre, Diesbach, in his brief portrait of Henriette-Lucie in America, is nevertheless one of the few to have perceived the subtle ambiguities of the work. Eschewing unreserved admiration for the intrepid aristocrat-turned-dairymaid, he suggests that if one reads between the lines of the *Journal*, what emerges is the image of a woman '[qui] joue les fermières moins par goût ou par nécessité que par orgueil, pour le plaisir de donner une leçon de sagesse à ses compatriotes'. Critical of their lack of seriousness and foresight, Mme de La Tour du Pin, according to Diesbach, 'du fond de sa retraite champêtre, s'adonne aux joies de l'autosatisfaction'. This Henriette-Lucie is thus more complex than the one-dimensional character most other commentators have chosen to portray; and her *Journal*, according to Diesbach's reading, is fraught with tensions between love of simplicity and a desire for self-effacement on the one hand, and fascination with ostentation and a craving for self-assertion on the other.¹⁸

The few pages devoted to Mme de La Tour du Pin in Diesbach's work on the Emigration, however perceptive, inevitably cannot do justice to the complexity of the memoirs as a whole. Moreover, although he suggests that the character of the memoir-writer cannot be fully understood if the reader remains on the surface of the text, he does not go on to explore the source of the underlying ambiguities. On the contrary, by disregarding the temporal disjunction between the period of its composition and the years to which the narrative refers - and hence the disjunction between the personality of its author at the time when she was writing and that of the textual Henriette-Lucie of the mid-1790s - Diesbach is avoiding the difficulties posed by the autobiographical memoir as a work of literature. The reason for this omission is that he (like the other writers mentioned above who have drawn on the work of Mme de La Tour du Pin) has regarded the *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans* almost exclusively as a historical document. That is to say, they have emphasized the narrative rather than the narrator as *narrator*, and focused on content rather than process.

If previous critics of the memoirs of Mme de La Tour du Pin have generally failed to grasp their complexity, however, it is not simply because they have concentrated on content rather than on narrative technique: it is also because their focus has been extremely narrow. Since they have tended to turn to the *Journal* in order to illuminate specific subject areas, only fragments of the work have come under scrutiny at any one time. It is her recollections of the *ancien régime*, of the Terror in Bordeaux, or of life as an *émigrée*, and her comments on important military, political and literary figures that have been seized upon time and again. In contrast, the life and personality of the memoir-writer herself and the question of her self-(re)presentation in literary form have never been submitted to serious investigation. The aim of the present chapter, therefore, is to offer a reassessment of the *Journal* by taking into account the work as a whole and reading it specifically as memoir: that is, without losing sight of the fact that it is both a personal artifact which reflects the individuality of its author, and a self-conscious piece of literature which was created, for the most part, long after the events recounted, by a woman whose vision of the past inevitably came through the prism of the narrating present.¹⁹

Although it has occasionally been noted that Mme de La Tour du Pin's memoirs were composed relatively late in her life, very little attention has been given to extra-textual factors and the influence which they may have had on the form and content of the work. The date at which the memoirs were written, the material circumstances of their author at that time, and the readers for whom they were intended, however, are far from irrelevant issues.

Henriette-Lucie's memoirs are unusual in that they contain numerous references to the narrating present which make it possible to establish fairly accurately the chronology of their development. It soon becomes apparent, however, that the title by which the memoirs are generally known - *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans* - although significant in itself, is ultimately deceptive. The date at the very beginning of the *Journal* reveals that Mme de La Tour du Pin began her memoirs on New Year's day 1820, shortly before her fiftieth birthday. A few pages later, the date of composition still appears to be 1820: 'Lorsqu'à cinquante ans je me retrace mes jugements de dix ans' (1: 5). When she next refers to her age, however, five years have passed ('En écrivant à 55 ans [...]'; 1: 23); and four

pages further on, alluding to her mother's death, she presents herself as writing fifty-five years after the event - presumably, therefore, around 1827 (1: 27). The next temporal marker, which occurs scarcely more than twenty pages later, indicates that the date of composition lies in the late 1830s or early 1840s. Recalling the journeys which she made between 1783 and 1786 with her grandmother and great-uncle when the latter attended the *Etats de Languedoc*, she contrasts the difficult conditions endured by travellers in the mid-1780s with the ease of communications in the present, fifty-five years later (1: 49).

According to evidence contained within the memoirs themselves, it was during the early 1840s that Mme de La Tour du Pin worked most intensively on her *Journal*. Again referring to the period of her travels to the Languedoc, she protests that she will not enter into details concerning the *Etats* since 'après cinquante-sept ans' she remembers only the results (1: 53). Given that she declares only a few lines later that the contrast between conditions on either side of the Rhône was striking 'même pour les yeux de quinze ans', this passage was presumably written in her seventy-second year. Twenty pages further on, the author explicitly gives her age at the time of writing as seventy-one (1: 73). Within the following two hundred pages, there are numerous references indicating, either directly or indirectly, that the work took shape in 1841.²⁰ That the next date given in the text is 7th February 1843 (2: 1) would seem to confirm the belief that most of what constitutes volume one was composed (or given its final form) between 1841 and early 1843.

This outline fits in with the evidence provided by the letters of the marquise which allow us to trace in greater detail the evolution of her memoirs. On 19th February 1841, Mme de La Tour du Pin wrote to Félicie de La Rochejaquelein: 'pour te plaire, j'écris beaucoup dans le livre rouge mais je n'y ai pas encore que seize ans, et je m'en sens tellement davantage, que j'ai peur de ne pas aller jusqu'au bout de l'histoire'.²¹ This implies that she had not progressed far beyond the end of chapter four.²² Six months later, according to another letter, she had reached the tumultuous events of early October 1789;²³ and by the beginning of January 1843, she was able to inform her friend that she was currently engaged in copying up her recollections of the Terror.²⁴ At the start of the second volume of the

memoirs, under the date 'le 7 février 1843', comes the following reflection by the author on the progress of her work:

'Il est probablement très présomptueux de continuer à rédiger ses mémoires à soixante-treize ans moins dix jours. Mais ayant fini aujourd'hui de copier la partie que j'en avais écrite sur les feuilles volantes, je vous prévient, mon cher fils, que vous aurez le reste si Dieu le permet, avec ou sans rature, tant que je conserverai un peu de force, de raison et des yeux pour guider ma main.' (2: 1-2)²⁵

Most of the second half of the *Journal* appears to have been written between 1843 and 1845. Between pages one and 255 of the Chapelot edition, markers within the text repeatedly point to 1843 as the date of composition.²⁶ The final indications of the date at which certain sections were completed (both of which occur within the last forty pages of the memoirs) are for the year 1845.²⁷

It is clear from this examination of the temporal markers within the text that Mme de La Tour du Pin composed her memoirs over a considerable stretch of time - at least a quarter of a century. Furthermore, given that the evidence points strongly towards the first half of the 1840s as the period during which the major part of the memoirs received their final form, *Journal d'une femme de soixante-dix ans* would appear to be a more accurate reflection of the author's relationship to her work. Although we can trace the development of the memoirs up to 1845, when and why Mme de La Tour du Pin should have abandoned them remains unclear. Beginning with her childhood in the 1770s, the memoirs continue through to the Hundred Days, at which point they end abruptly with two brief notes: firstly, that M. de La Tour du Pin had set off for the south of France to assure the duc d'Angoulême that his resistance to Napoleon had the backing of the Allied powers; and secondly, that Mme de La Tour du Pin was able to greet her son-in-law, Auguste de Liedekerke, on his arrival in Brussels, with the news that '[elle avait] assuré sa position auprès du roi son maître' (2: 375). In terms of the balance of power between the sexes, this conclusion possesses the beauty of symmetry: both husband and wife appear as active figures, yet acting within their traditional, gendered, spheres. On the one hand, there is the image of M. de La Tour du Pin

speeding across Europe in the service of his sovereign and thus, in his eyes, in service to the public good. On the other hand, the reader is presented with the image of a woman who is capable of exerting considerable influence in matters of politics and diplomacy, yet who does so specifically in the interests of her family, or for the private good. In spite of this, the ending is unsatisfactory in several ways. In the first place, on both a personal level (her husband is abandoned in the process of travelling across Europe) and a historical level (Louis XVIII is still in exile in Ghent), the ending is awkward: events are unresolved, it is a conclusion which does not conclude but simply suspends the action.²⁸ More significantly, although Mme de La Tour du Pin never explicitly outlines the projected scope of her *Journal*, there are indications within the text that she intended to continue beyond the point reached in the memoirs as they stand. In a passage written in 1843, for example, she lamented the blow which had been dealt to the finances of the La Tour du Pin family by Providence, then continued:

'Elle [la Providence] nous condamna, hélas! à des peines autrement cruelles! Mais n'anticipons point sur les chagrins que j'ai éprouvés. Le récit en viendra assombrir les dernières pages de cette relation.'
(2: 153)

Since it is unlikely that these 'chagrins' refer to the death of her first grand-child in 1814 after only a few months (2: 358-59), the marquise was apparently intending to extend her account beyond Napoleon's return from Elba, for it was during the years following Waterloo that she experienced the most painful losses. At least two years after writing this passage, she gives another sign that the memoirs, as they stand, are incomplete. After mentioning the correspondence which she maintained with her husband while he was attending the Congress of Vienna, she declares that she will recount 'par la suite' how these letters came to be burned (2: 363) - a promise which she ultimately failed to fulfil. The most striking indication, however, comes less than a page before the end of the existing text:

'Plus tard, j'aurais encore à parler de ce Latapie, dont je viens de citer le nom.'
(2: 374)

Since there is no further reference to Latapie in the last paragraphs, it seems that only a very short time before she laid her memoirs aside she still envisaged

continuing with her writing. Why this intention was never realised remains at present a subject for speculation.

Given that Mme de La Tour du Pin was at least in her mid-seventies when she abandoned her *Journal*, there may have been purely physical reasons for discontinuing, possibly a deterioration in her health which rendered her incapable of writing.²⁹ Certainly, the letters of the marquise reveal that she suffered from rheumatism and the appearance of the last lines of the manuscript of the *Journal* also suggest that the writer was not in the best of health: the writing is very faint and the letters are small and unusually spiky. Even if this were the case, however, it does not explain why Henriette-Lucie did not continue by dictating her memoirs. Another possibility is that the work was suspended because of psychological, rather than physical, impediments. These psychological obstacles could have had two sources. The first of these lies in the material to be treated. It is conceivable that as her narrative approached a period filled with intensely painful memories - the deaths of two adored children in 1816 and 1817 - the author, feeling herself unable to relive these events through her writing, chose to avoid such a harrowing confrontation with the past and laid her *Journal* aside. The second possibility is that Henriette-Lucie abandoned her memoirs, not because she had difficulty in coming to terms with their subject-matter, but because her motivation had been undermined by the discovery that their intended recipient lacked sufficient interest in the work. A note in the margin of the manuscript, dated 14th May 1849, reads:

'Ayant lu une partie du cahier à mon fils (à Pise), je me suis aperçu que cela l'avait ennuyé, ce qui a été une petite humiliation pour mon amour-propre que je lui pardonne très volontiers.'³⁰

This note, although it may contain an explanation for the cessation of the memoirs, is intriguing in itself on account of the questions which it raises. How is one to explain the apparent gap of four years between the last dated reference in the text and this peripheral notation of 1849? Does it indicate that the marquise continued to work on her memoirs slowly and/or intermittently after 1845, taking several years to compose the last forty pages? Did she persevere with her writing

perhaps even beyond 1849, and was it only her death in 1853 which halted her pen?³¹ And finally, if her memoirs did continue to occupy her beyond May 1849, for whom was she writing at this time?

The importance for Mme de La Tour du Pin of her son's opinion about her reminiscences should not be underestimated when considering the reasons for their lack of completion, for one of the most crucial influences on the text in terms of the selection and presentation of material - yet one which has never been examined in detail by previous commentators - is the readership which the author had in mind while writing.

There is nothing in the text of the *Journal* to indicate that Mme de La Tour du Pin ever intended her manuscript for publication. On the contrary, there is much to suggest that its circulation was to be limited to a small circle of friends and family members. Within the first pages of the work, she draws attention (if hesitantly) to those whom she envisaged as eventual readers:

'Comme ces fragments seront peut-être conservés par mes enfants, je vais transcrire ici une note généalogique de la branche de ma famille établie en France et un historique sommaire du régiment de Dillon.' (1: 13)

Certain readers are even acknowledged by name: her grand-daughter Cécile is mentioned as an object of affection and gratitude,³² and her son-in-law, Auguste de Liedekerke, is reminded of the obligation which he has towards her.³³ In addition, two passages allude to the daughters of Mme de Duras. In the first, the hope is expressed that these dear friends will find in the memoirs 'l'expression de [la] vive et tendre reconnaissance' of the writer (2: 237); and in the second, Henriette-Lucie refers to the château at Ussé 'que ma chère Félicie vient encore d'embellir et que je ne reverrai plus' (2: 268). The person who is evoked most often, however, is the writer's son, Aymar, whom she describes as 'celui que je chéris plus que tout autre personne aimée par moi en ce monde' (1: 309).³⁴ Although the first direct reference to him occurs relatively late in the first volume (1: 290), thereafter he is recalled indirectly or addressed directly with increasing

regularity.³⁵ By 1841, his name was being invoked with great warmth (1: 290), and by 1843, it is clear that his mother regarded him as the principal recipient of her *Journal* (2: 2).

If the personal circumstances of Mme de La Tour du Pin during the period of composition are taken into consideration, the significance of Aymar in his mother's life and, consequently, the effect which he may have had on the form of the memoirs and on her presentation of herself within them, are more readily apparent.

In 1820, when she began to draft her memoirs, Mme de La Tour du Pin had already lost four of her six children who had been born alive. Two of these had not survived infancy: Edouard, born in England in 1798, had lived only a few months (2: 180); and Séraphine, born in 1793, had been carried off by a sudden illness two years later (2: 88-89). More dramatic was the loss of her eldest son, Humbert, whose death in a duel in January 1816 had a profound effect on his family. In the words of Mme de Boigne:

'M. de La Tour du Pin ne s'est jamais relevé d'un coup si affreux. On peut même dire que sa raison en fut altérée. Je ne chercherai pas à peindre le désespoir de cette famille désolée [...].'³⁶

The following year, the La Tour du Pin lost their seventeen year old daughter Cécile. A letter which Henriette-Lucie sent to Mme de Staël a month after this misfortune reveals the extent of the despair into which she had been plunged by these last two deaths:

'Que fais-je maintenant sur la terre? J'avais placé mon orgueil, ma gloire, ma tendresse, mes espérances, dans ces deux enfants dont le ciel a voulu me priver. [...] Après une telle perte il n'est pas possible de se relever; tout est fini pour moi maintenant, le monde et ses distractions me sont en horreur; je suis rentrée dans la carrière de la douleur pour ne plus en sortir.'³⁷

Only two years after commencing her memoirs, the marquise was again in mourning, this time for the last of her daughters, the twenty-six year old Charlotte, after whose death she became responsible for the upbringing of her granddaughter Cécile (born in 1818), who remained with her until shortly before her marriage in 1841.³⁸ From 1822, therefore, Aymar was the only one of the writer's children still alive. Moreover, after 1841 and the separation from the granddaughter who had been her constant companion for almost twenty years, Aymar, with whom she lived in Switzerland and Italy, became the unequivocal centre of his mother's life.³⁹

There is another crucial factor which has to be borne in mind when reading these memoirs. It is evident from her letters that one of Mme de La Tour du Pin's most pressing concerns during the years after she had begun writing was the precarious and deteriorating state of the family's finances. Lacking financial security even in the 1820s when M. de La Tour du Pin was ambassador in Turin (1820-30) because of the intrigues against him, the family were already contemplating selling off land in France.⁴⁰ In 1824, however, on the death of his great-aunt, Mme d'Hénin, Aymar inherited le Bouilh, the ancestral home of the La Tour du Pin family near Bordeaux. This succession, unfortunately, proved to be more of a burden than a blessing. The fact that the provisions of the will cancelled out any financial advantages which may have accrued to Aymar was nothing in comparison to the devastating news that the estate manager had absconded to England with all the late Mme d'Hénin's liquid assets.⁴¹ With this catastrophe, wrote Mme de La Tour du Pin to Félicie de La Rochejaquelein,

'[le] seul espoir de salut pécuniaire qui nous restait pour notre cher fils est complètement anéanti. Ce coup est dur à supporter, après tant d'autres. Toutes les pensées de M. de La Tour du Pin, toute son activité, toute sa sagacité, tendaient depuis huit ans à des arrangements qui avaient pour but de réunir quelque fortune sur la tête d'Aymar. Voir renverser en un moment cette espérance paternelle est une peine à laquelle il est difficile de se résigner. Tous les sacrifices que nous avons faits pour conserver le toit paternel d'Aymar sont comme non venus.'⁴²

With the 1830 Revolution and the declared opposition of the La Tour du Pin family to Louis-Philippe, their financial difficulties increased. As the channels to remunerative diplomatic or administrative positions were now closed, and as income from the family's estates was minimal, steps were taken to put more land up for sale, including le Bouilh.⁴³ In addition to these difficulties, Aymar's involvement in royalist conspiracies in the Vendée in 1831 and 1832 exacted a heavy cost in financial and personal terms from his parents. The first incident, which led to his arrest and imprisonment in November 1831, undoubtedly put a severe strain on the family's limited resources: '[...] les avocats, les amendes, etc., etc., tout cela met à sec nos pauvres ressources,' lamented Henriette-Lucie on 18th May 1832.⁴⁴ Having been compromised by his involvement in the uprising centred around the duchesse de Berry in 1832, Aymar was then obliged to flee France altogether. Following the publication of an article in his son's defence in *La Guyenne* on 7th August, M. de La Tour du Pin was fined 1000 francs and imprisoned for three months (20th December 1832-20th March 1833), and his wife voluntarily shared his confinement. On their release, the couple went into self-imposed exile, eventually settling with their son near Turin. From letters of the mid-1830s, it appears that the La Tour du Pin family, weighed down by debts, were living in ever more straightened circumstances.⁴⁵ By 1837, Mme de La Tour du Pin was residing in Lausanne in a house put at her disposal by Félicie de La Rochejaquelein and subsisting on the small pension which was accorded to her as the widow of an ambassador. From letters written in the early 1840s - the years when she was apparently most actively engaged on her memoirs - it emerges that the marquise not only continued to be preoccupied by financial worries, but was also subject to periodic bouts of depression during which she felt overwhelmed by feelings of decrepitude, futility and frustration: 'être pauvre et vieille et vouloir que je ne sois pas un fardeau,' she wrote, for example, in May 1841, 'je crois que c'est trop exiger de la nature humaine'.⁴⁶ This fear of being a burden to her son, accompanied by anger, regret and even guilt brought on by the thought that his talents were being wasted for want of money, is a recurrent theme in letters of this period.⁴⁷ As her correspondence makes clear, Aymar's happiness was his mother's chief consideration when any decision had to be taken. By late summer 1842, for example, money was so scarce that Mme de La Tour du Pin resolved to quit Lausanne and move to Italy, where the cost of living

was lower. The letter which she sent to Félicie de La Rochejaquelein notifying her of these plans reveals her pragmatism and courage, but also the extent to which she was pained by her son's situation and her own powerlessness to alter it:

'le mot privation n'est pas dans mon dictionnaire; dès que je crois qu'une chose est nécessaire, je l'embrasse avec une certaine passion romanesque dont l'âge n'a pas diminué l'ardeur, et je voudrais pouvoir assumer sur moi les chagrins, les privations de ce fils sur lequel j'ai reporté tout ce que mon coeur possède de tendresse et d'abandon.'⁴⁸

After a brief stay in Lucca, Henriette-Lucie and her son moved to Pisa and were settled there by the start of January 1843. Here the memoir-writer spent the last decade of her life, still apparently beset by worries about money and leading an increasingly humble existence.⁴⁹

In linking the letters to the text of the memoirs, two points deserve special consideration: the prominence of financial matters in the lives of the La Tour du Pin family, especially during the 1830s and 1840s; and the strength of the memoir-writer's attachment to her son.⁵⁰ When these two elements are examined together, they open up for interpretation previously neglected areas of the *Journal*.

Money undoubtedly has a central place in Mme de La Tour du Pin's memoirs. She records, for example, the income of the various members of the family;⁵¹ the cost of her trousseau and the favours at her wedding (1: 101-02, 107); the effects of 4th August 1789 (1: 200-01); the money which her husband took with him when he fled le Bouilh (1: 323); the cost of purchasing various pieces of property;⁵² the value of the legacies of which she was the beneficiary (2: 41, 170-71); the price offered to her by a wig-maker for her hair (2: 130); and even the cost of a horse in America and a mule in Spain (2: 55, 115). The writer was not only very retentive of financial details, however; she was also acutely aware of the disjunction between the reality of her situation at the time of writing and the existence which she could - or should - have been enjoying. What the early chapters of the memoirs highlight is the world of splendour and prestige in which the memoirist spent her youth and the inheritance which she could legitimately have expected to

pass on to her descendants. She grew up, she recalls, conditioned to regard herself as 'une héritière' and surrounded by those who believed that the fine estate of Hautefontaine and all its oriental luxuries would one day belong to her (1: 31-32). Similarly, at the Etats de Languedoc, as 'l'élégante nièce du puissant archevêque métropolitain' (1: 64), she basked in the reflected glory of her uncle's position. In addition, she lays out before the reader the sumptuous gifts which she received when she married (1: 101-02), and the elegant boxes at the theatre which she was privileged to occupy as a young woman (1: 133). These last details, she explains, are recorded specifically 'pour servir de contraste avec ma position actuelle'. Through the act of writing her memoirs, however, Henriette-Lucie was able to embrace both the irretrievable past and the unrealised future. It may be, therefore, that these early evocations of a magnificent lost world served a double purpose. On the one hand, they provided the writer with one of those escapes from the wretchedness of the present which she seems to have considered essential to her well-being,⁵³ and on the other, they supplied Aymar with a textual substitute for the patrimony of which he had been deprived. The many financial references also provide the author with a frame for the presentation of herself and her husband which is a core element in the memoirs.

When considering the functions that the *Journal* was intended to serve, it is important not to lose sight of the relationship which existed between its author and the man who was to be its primary reader. The former was a devoted wife and doting mother who, at the time of writing, was both elderly and financially dependent; the latter was her beloved son and companion. Given that the straightened financial circumstances of the family were among the most imperious facts in this son's existence, it is almost inevitable that one strand of the memoirs should be an attempt to render intelligible for him the deterioration in their fortune. It is equally inevitable, however, that the memoirs, as a family document, are not simply an explanation. On the contrary, they are consciously shaped by the author in order to justify, exculpate and redeem herself and, more particularly, M. de La Tour du Pin as the head of the household, in the eyes of their son. In her desire to exonerate herself and her husband, the writer emphasises, on the one hand, the energy and resilience which they put into trying to secure their children's future; and on the other, the part which is to be attributed to circumstances beyond their control. The crucial factor in their decline, according to Mme de La

Tour du Pin, was the decision to abolish feudal dues, which was proposed in the National Assembly on 4th August 1789:

'Mon beau-père y fut ruiné, et nous ne nous sommes jamais relevés du coup porté à notre fortune dans cette séance de nuit, qui fut une véritable orgie d'iniquités.'

Having detailed the damage which had been inflicted upon them, she concludes despondently:

'Voilà comment un trait de plume nous ruina. Depuis nous n'avons plus vécu que d'expédients, du produit de la vente de ce qui restait, ou d'emplois dont les charges ont presque toujours été plus fortes que le revenu qu'ils procuraient. Et c'est ainsi que nous sommes descendus pendant de longues années, pas à pas, dans le fond de l'abîme où nous resterons jusqu'à la fin de notre vie.' (1: 200-01)⁵⁴

A further blow was dealt by the decree following the coup of 18 fructidor 1797 which forced former *émigrés* to quit France once again:

'Cela mettait fin brusquement et d'une façon irrémédiable à tous les arrangements entrepris avec les acquéreurs de biens nationaux [...].' (2: 150-51).

On a personal level, there was also the discovery that her own inheritance had been consumed by the 1.8 million franc debts of her uncle 'dans lesquelles la fortune de ma grand'mère se trouva compromise' (1: 201).

As well as highlighting the obstacles which she and her husband faced, however, Mme de La Tour du Pin also presents events in a way which obscures the degree to which the couple were personally responsible for their problems. When it comes to explaining M. de La Tour du Pin's inability to make le Bouilh profitable after his return there in 1800, for example, she becomes evasive, masking the specific causes of her husband's failure with periphrasis:

'Nous avons vendu notre maison à Paris assez mal. [...] Je ne me souviens plus de l'affectation donnée par mon mari aux fonds provenant de cette vente. Il trouva à son retour un si grand désordre dans les affaires de son père et dans les siennes propres, tant de malheur s'attachait à tout ce qu'il entreprenait que, malgré son intelligence et sa capacité rien ne lui réussissait. Assurément, tous ses actes étaient uniquement inspirés par le seul désir d'améliorer la fortune de ses enfants! Paix et respect donc à sa mémoire.' (2: 223-24)

If M. de La Tour du Pin did not succeed, she implies, it was not because of personal inadequacy, but because, like the hero of a classical tragedy, he was the victim of supernatural forces, blighted by 'le malheur'. That their son did not perhaps share this opinion may account for the emphatic plea with which she ends this paragraph.⁵⁵

That she envisaged Aymar as the principal reader of the *Journal* also helps to explain why Mme de La Tour du Pin took great pains to present in such a favourable light the husband whom she referred to as 'l'être que j'aimais le plus au monde' (1: 365). She stresses, for example, his dignified bearing and air of assurance which struck her at first sight (1: 90-91); his audacity, as both soldier and diplomat (1: 259, 279-80);⁵⁶ his generosity towards his friends (2: 183); and his success as an administrator (2: 299, 328-29, 373). Furthermore, in contrast to the older, more staid figure remembered by his son, the memoirs propose the image of a vital, virile, adventurous man in the prime of his life. Recounting her husband's hair-raising escape from le Bouilh in 1793, she reminds Aymar:

'Votre père n'était pas alors, mon cher fils, comme vos souvenirs le représentent. Il avait trente-quatre ans, était extrêmement lesté et aurait pu rivaliser, en fait d'adresse, avec les sauteurs de chevaux les plus habiles.' (1: 324-25)

Regarding certain specific matters which may have been a cause for censure in the eyes of an impoverished and devoutly royalist son, the writer offers a justification of her husband's conduct. She turns aside any potential (or actual?)

criticism of M. de La Tour du Pin for not having joined the counter-revolutionary forces in the Vendée in 1793, for example, by laying the blame for this squarely on the fanaticism of the royalists there, and presenting her husband's decision, in contrast, as a reasonable and commendable act of filial and conjugal devotion. 'En rejoignant ouvertement les Vendéens,' she writes, 'il eût par là décidé de la mort de son père et de la mienne' (1: 326).

(ii) Madame de La Tour du Pin and the Memoir as History

An explanation for the financial decline of her family is only one element in the memoirs of Mme de La Tour du Pin. If such domestic strands have previously been neglected, it is because most readers of the *Journal*, since its publication, have concentrated on the historical information which it contains, as though this can be read in isolation from the rest of the work. Verdicts on the usefulness of the memoirs as history, however, have varied. Judged to be invaluable by those like Diesbach or Yalom whose principal interest is the period of the French Revolution and the Emigration, they have been described by the historian Jean Tulard, in his bibliography of memoirs on the Consulate and Empire, as disappointingly anecdotal.⁵⁷ Yet Tulard's dissatisfaction is the result of a reductive reading of the text. For him, the *Journal* is a failure because it does not answer the questions which he asks of it, and its form - 'anecdotique' - is not that which he deems appropriate for a historical work. The very inadequacy of such criteria for appreciating the *Journal*, however, raises questions about the intentions of the author and, consequently, about the nature of the text itself. These questions can best be answered by studying the way in which Mme de La Tour du Pin approaches the past - her claims, her perspective on events, her omissions - and by moving away from the notion that 'the historical' is an element with definable contours that can be easily detached from the autobiographical component and considered in isolation from it.

Although Mme de La Tour du Pin protests repeatedly in her *Journal* that she is not writing history,⁵⁸ this does not mean that she was unaware of the historical value of at least part of her work; nor does it mean that momentous historical events are entirely absent from her memoirs. If she explicitly drew back from political and military history, the marquise nevertheless regarded herself as making a

worthwhile contribution to what would now be called social history, and what her contemporaries referred to as 'l'histoire des moeurs' or 'la peinture de la société'.⁵⁹ Believing that the French Revolution had effected an irreparable break, creating a gulf between the world of the *ancien régime* in which she had grown up and the world of the telegraph, the steam ship and the railway in which she was writing (2: 286), one of her intentions, she states, was to offer her reader a portrait of this vanished age:

'Les moeurs et la société ont tellement changé depuis la Révolution que je veux retracer avec détail ce que je me rappelle de la manière de vivre de mes parents.'
(1: 7)

In the early part of her memoirs, therefore, Mme de La Tour du Pin sets out in considerable detail the lifestyle, mentality and customs of the upper echelons of society in the twenty years preceding the start of the Revolution. The reader is informed, for example, about eating habits (1: 7-8, 55); dress (1: 8, 9, 12, 91, 92, 95, 110-11); travel (1: 44-49); the arrangement and celebration of marriages (1: chs. 5 and 6);⁶⁰ the lifestyle and morality of the upper clergy (1: 46-47) and the aristocracy (especially, 1: 133-40); and the ceremonial routine of the court at Versailles (1: 111-12, 148). Extending her role as a social historian beyond the France of Louis XVI, the writer also took it upon herself to portray Bordeaux during the Terror, the conditions of a transatlantic crossing in the 1790s, rural America, the world of the *émigrés* in England, and Parisian society during the Consulate and Restoration. In these portraits, she claimed, her intention was to capture the essence of the period or the culture under consideration. When describing the consumption of Brouquens' wine cellar by his guards while he was under house arrest, for example, she focuses on the vivid image of the pile of broken glass from the empty bottles:

'Ces petits détails, je ne les rapporte que pour peindre les moeurs de ce temps si extraordinaire, et encore suis-je loin de savoir tout ce qui pourrait le caractériser.' (1: 318)

History, in the memoirs of Mme de La Tour du Pin, is composed of just such minor details: broken bottles; the quality of 'le pain de section' (1: 332-33); smuggled

provisions (1: 331); a wretched agitator at Forges (1: 192-93); a bonfire at Antwerp (1: 292-93); a stale ship's biscuit (1: 387-88); a white apron during the Terror (2: 132); or an order from Napoleon to serve as 'dame d'honneur' to the deposed queen of Spain or to organise a marriage in a short space of time (2: 255-61, 278-81).

Privileging social over military and political history is one way in which Mme de La Tour du Pin presents herself as writing in the margins of 'la grande histoire'. When she does treat political or military events, moreover, she does so in ways which expressly underline the peripheral position which she saw herself occupying in relation to the historian. Firstly, she repeatedly points out to the reader that she is providing only an incomplete record of the period: information that can be found in other sources is omitted from the *Journal* unless, like existing descriptions of the Escurial (2: 124-25), it is deemed to be unsatisfactory. She was not, therefore, writing what Mme de Genlis defined as 'Mémoires historiques' for, according to the latter,

'On ne peut appeler *Mémoires historiques* que ceux qui suivent sans interruption le fil des événemens politiques, et qui rendent compte de toute la conduite des personnages qui ont joué un rôle dans ces événemens publics [...].'⁶¹

On the contrary, Mme de La Tour du Pin makes it clear that she saw her role as a subsidiary one, supplying the supplementary details that might be used to fill the gaps in 'mémoires historiques'. Her account of the opening of the States General is a case in point (1: 180-82). After indicating and explaining the lacuna in her treatment of the subject - 'Le spectacle était magnifique, et a été si souvent décrit dans les mémoires du temps que je n'en ferai pas le récit' - she turns her attention to the king and queen, concentrating on the impression created by each. The focus then shifts to 'une circonstance que j'ai vue de mes propres yeux avec tous ceux qui étaient présents, mais que je ne me rappelle pas avoir lue dans aucune des relations de cette mémorable séance'. What follows is an anecdote concerning Mirabeau which occupies about three-quarters of a page. In contrast, the major event of this session from the point of view of the historian - the speech by the Finance Minister, Jacques Necker - is displaced to the margins of

Henriette-Lucie's account. This speech is disposed of in two brief sentences, and what she notes is not Necker's words, but the boredom which they induced in her and the lack of comfort in the seating arrangements. She then rounds off her discussion of this episode by emphatically distancing herself from the political and from any pretension to write history:

'Toutes les phases du commencement de l'Assemblée constituante sont connues. L'histoire les rapporte, et je n'écris pas l'histoire.'⁶²

Another way in which her role appears to be subsidiary to that of the historian is her use of the *Journal* as a means of responding to the work of others. Instead of giving a continuous account of events, she presents herself intervening only in order to correct certain specific points, such as the reported behaviour of the duchesse de Maillé during the so-called 'orgie de Versailles' (1: 213-14), or the supposed weakness of La Fayette (1: 244-45). The implications of such interventions, however, are ambivalent for if emphasis on the fact that she is providing an incomplete version of events, ancillary to the work of the historian, suggests modesty, the claim that she is setting the record straight is nevertheless a gesture of defiance. In the examples cited here, the memoirist adopts an accusatory stance. In the first case, it is towards those historians who have diffused nonsense in 'de graves histoires'; and in the second, her reproach is directed against the Bourbons and, in particular, against the duchesse d'Angoulême who, guided by passion rather than by reason in her judgment of La Fayette, 'avait accueilli tous les contes absurdes inventés à son sujet'.

It is the fragmentary character of the *Journal* that Mme de La Tour du Pin presents as the major distinction between it and history. While the historian took as his reference points those incidents which were significant from a national or international perspective and combined a multiplicity of viewpoints in his desire to produce a comprehensive version of the past, Mme de La Tour du Pin, in contrast, acknowledged that she selected and presented military and political incidents solely on the basis of personal considerations: her interest was in recording how she herself or those close to her were involved in, or affected by, particular situations. Her handling of the revolt by the garrison of Nancy in 1790,

for example, was conditioned exclusively by concern for her husband. It was only because of the family connection here, she protests, that she permitted her *Journal* to encroach on the realm of the historian:

'Ces détails sont dans le domaine de l'histoire. Je relaterai néanmoins ceux qui ont rapport à M. de La Tour du Pin.' (1: 257)

Likewise, in the section of her memoirs recounting the English attack on Flushing in 1809 (2: 295-301), she veers off at a tangent from the naval expedition itself in order to record the operation undergone by her husband; 'une petite anecdote personnelle assez singulière' in which she and l'abbé de Pradt are the central characters; and finally, an anecdote about Napoleon, the prime function of which seems to have been to highlight the integrity of M. de La Tour du Pin.

When treating such historically noteworthy occurrences as the trial and execution of Louis XVI, the coup of 18 fructidor, and Napoleon's return from Elba, Mme de La Tour du Pin is quite adamant about the distance that exists between the historian and herself, and reiterates that her only interest is that which is 'personnel'.⁶³ Given that she was not a military or political actor at the heart of the events which she records, but merely an observer who reacted to the decisions taken by others, what is personal to her is necessarily marginal to the composition of 'la grande histoire'. This does not mean that what she says is of negligible value, however, for by altering the questions asked of the text in order to take into account both the sex of the writer and the nature of the memoir as a genre, the potential of the form as a means of self-expression for women is brought to the fore.

A redistribution of emphasis is effected in the text of the *Journal* in various ways and in order to satisfy different private objectives. In her recollections of January 1793, for example, the author foregrounds a family, rather than a national, concern: the justification of her father's conduct, rather than the fate of the king:

'Ces événements sont du domaine de l'histoire [...]. Qu'il me soit permis seulement de venger ici mon père des odieuses imputations dont on n'a pas craint de ternir son honorable caractère.' (1: 304)⁶⁴

Furthermore, in this case, the historically momentous events are literally obscured, the writer having recorded them as she witnessed them, from her home at Passy, beyond the barriers of Paris. It is the atmosphere surrounding the events, therefore, rather than the events themselves, which is described (1: 304-05).

When she reaches 18 fructidor 1797 (2: 147-52), the disjunction between the events in which the historian is interested and the narrative perspective of the *Journal* becomes more evidently an issue of gender. Firstly, political principles are pushed into the background. Secondly, instead of concentrating on those who made the crucial decisions during this crisis, Mme de La Tour du Pin's account focuses on female figures - first and foremost herself - whose actions were almost wholly marginal to events and who would thus generally be omitted from the historical record. With her introduction to the episode Mme de La Tour du Pin establishes the distinctly personal and female parameters of her version: she was alerted to the disturbance, she recalls, while 'occupée à donner le sein à [s]a fille' (2: 147). Deprived of information about what was happening, she and a friend, Mme de Valence, decided to remedy the situation by exploiting a female network and went to call on Mme de Staël. Having learned of the Directory's intentions via Benjamin Constant, the writer's next concern was to get in touch with Mme d'Hénin, who was then residing at Saint-Ouen. To this end, she enlisted the aid of Mme de Pontécoulant who provided her with a false identity that enabled her to continue to care for her daughter:

'comme je ne pouvais abandonner ma petite Charlotte que je nourrissais, je lui demandais de m'adopter non pas à titre de femme de chambre, mais à titre de nourrice.'

Mme de Pontécoulant's vanity having been wounded, however, when the soldiers at the city gate devoted their attention exclusively to the attractive 'nourrice', she abandoned the latter, forcing her to complete her journey on foot. None of this is perhaps significant as history, but within the memoirs it serves to enhance the narrator's image in the eyes of her reader. On the one hand, it provides indirect testimony to her beauty; on the other, it demonstrates her resourcefulness and courage. In short, what the reader's attention is drawn to in this account is not the

political dimension (the defeat of the Royalists) but the personal one (the success of the author's self-appointed mission). A similar redistribution of emphasis also occurs in the section of the memoirs recounting Napoleon's return from exile for, if the political events of March 1815 provide the framework of the *Journal* at this point, it is nevertheless the memoirist herself who is placed in the forefront of the narrative (2: 369-72):

'J'ai souvenir de beaucoup de petits embarras dont je me tirai avec mon sang-froid ordinaire. Après tant d'années écoulées, ils n'offrent plus guère d'intérêt. Je conterai cependant le fait suivant.' (2: 370)

'Le fait suivant' is an anecdote which fills the following three pages, the function of which is to demonstrate the intrepidity and presence of mind of the protagonist/narrator.

In all three cases cited above, Mme de La Tour du Pin emphatically reverses the priorities of the historian. The resulting paradox, however, reveals tension within the memoirs. On the one hand, by noting the unpretentious, fragmentary character of the *Journal*, she underlined the peripheral position of her work in relation to that of the historian. On the other, by giving her memoirs a distinctly personal orientation, she displaced to the margins of her account the militarily- and politically-decisive events prioritised by the historian, and transposed those people and incidents which he would have ignored - in particular, herself - to the centre of the text. The modesty implicit in the distinction which she draws between herself and the historian as narrators is thus simultaneously undercut by her self-emphasis as a protagonist within the narrative. Tension is also evident in the writer's apparent self-contradiction, for although she repeatedly denies that she is writing history, she nevertheless returns again and again to an examination of the causes and character of the Revolution. For Mme de La Tour du Pin, as for many other Royalists, the Revolution was essentially an act of Providence, visited on France as a richly-deserved punishment for the moral degradation of society. 'La dissolution des mœurs descendait des hautes classes dans les classes inférieures,' she writes:

'La vertu chez les hommes, la bonne conduite chez les femmes, étaient tournées en ridicule et passaient pour

de la rusticité. Je ne saurais entrer dans les détails pour prouver ce que j'avance ici. [...] Plus j'avance en âge, cependant, plus je considère que la Révolution de 1789 n'a été que le résultat inévitable et, je pourrais même dire, la juste punition des vices des hautes classes, vices portés à un excès tel qu'il devenait infaillible, si on n'avait pas été frappé du plus funeste aveuglement, que l'on serait consumé par le volcan que de ses propres mains on avait allumé.' (1: 30-31)

According to this explanation, the Revolution was largely self-inflicted and, once begun, the memoirist goes on to suggest, it was fuelled by the self-interested machinations of Philippe-Egalité.⁶⁵

Although her moral decay/divine punishment/cynical manipulation theory lacks rigour from the point of view of the modern historian,⁶⁶ it would be an error to classify her analysis of events as simplistic and dismiss it out of hand. She does not, for instance, describe the Revolution in terms of a stark dichotomy between good and evil, right and wrong. Instead of moral absolutes, the *Journal* reveals a world in which groups and individuals combine the admirable and the ignoble: Louis XVI is fundamentally good, but also weak and unimposing; his wife possesses dignity, but lacks astuteness and tact; the 'enlightened' aristocracy, such as Lally-Tollendal, are commendable in their aims, but intellectually unsound, politically naive and incapable of transforming abstractions into reality; the royalist *émigrés* are frequently frivolous and intolerant, and their motives shallow - 'Tout est de mode en France' (1: 199); the revolutionaries, though generally characterised by a greed, duplicity and cruelty which make a mockery of their pretensions to Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, are nevertheless capable of unexpected gestures of kindness (1: 318-21; 352-53); and Mme Tallien is portrayed as both 'une courtisane corrompue' (1: 360) and a woman capable of compassion and generosity.

Furthermore, in spite of the acknowledged fragmentariness of her memoirs, Mme de La Tour du Pin sought to give a coherent vision of the revolutionary experience as a time when the world was literally and metaphorically turned upside-down. Topsy-turviness is manifest, firstly, in the circumstances which the marquise identified as the origins of the Revolution. The corruption of the aristocracy, she

claims, had the effect of blurring the moral and economic boundaries between the classes, rendering prostitutes indistinguishable by their appearance from genuine aristocrats (1: 135-36). The transferral of power from one group to another and the transposition of the social hierarchy which lie at the core of the Revolution are also repeatedly given concrete expression in the memoirs: the rise of men like Berthier (1: 209-10); the 'fête diabolique' which she witnessed in Antwerp (1: 293); and the 'filles publiques et les mauvais sujets' who paraded behind the 'Déesse de la Raison' during a revolutionary festival in Bordeaux (1: 345-46).

The third way in which the Revolution is shown turning the world upside-down in the *Journal* is connected specifically with gender. Among the previous sources of authority upset by the Revolution was that of aristocratic males in relation to females: the loss of political and economic power by the former was paralleled by the enhanced responsibility which was assumed by the latter. A subject which recurs frequently in the memoirs of women recalling the revolutionary period is the way in which the male role was transformed at this time into an increasingly passive one, while that of the female developed into an increasingly active one.⁶⁷ This reversal in status is illustrated in the memoirs of Mme de La Tour du Pin by the alteration in the relationship between the writer and her husband during the Terror. While he was in hiding - sometimes literally immobilised, 'étendu sur son lit' (1: 326) - the memoirist was taking care of her children, assuring food supplies, protecting the family's economic interests by securing 'certificats de résidence' and their lives by arranging passports for America.

On a personal level, the Revolution also serves an important structural function in the *Journal* by providing the framework through which crucial developments in the author's own character are traced. This process is marked by two symbolic crossings: from Belgium to France in December 1792 (1: 299-301), and from Bordeaux to Boston in 1794 (1: 386).

(iii) From History to Autobiography

One reason for the complexity of Mme de La Tour du Pin's presentation of the French Revolution is the fact that history as memoir is history stamped by the personality of the writer: the historical and the self-representational in the *Journal*

are thus inextricably interwoven. The same ambiguities and paradoxes, the same unresolved tensions between self-effacement and self-assertion, that can be detected in the handling of historical events such as 18 fructidor, recur in different forms throughout the memoirs: protestations of modesty made by the narrator as she recounts her life are counter-balanced by narrative in which Henriette-Lucie is the central character; and historical generalisations about the moral laxity of the upper classes in the *ancien régime*, the narrow-mindedness of *émigrés* or the incompetence of inexperienced colonists in America are presented in such a way that they throw into relief the singularity of the memoirist.

The interpretational ambiguities of the *Journal* begin in the 'zone indéfinie' of the 'paratexte'.⁶⁸ The anonymity of the title - *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans* - seems to indicate, at the outset, the writer's resistance to self-promotion. Instead of drawing attention to her individuality by incorporating her name, Mme de La Tour du Pin apparently places the emphasis on her representative status as a woman belonging to a particular age group.⁶⁹ The age and gender, however, are particularly significant. Firstly, for both sexes, the approach of 'la cinquantaine' appears to have given an impetus to self-exploration and stock-taking. Stendhal, for example, begins his *Vie de Henry Brulard* by depicting himself seated on the steps of San Pietro in Montorio, intrigued by the discovery of his impending half-century:

'J'ai rêvé une heure ou deux à cette idée: Je vais avoir cinquante ans, il serait bien temps de me connaître. Qu'ai-je été, que suis-je, en vérité je serais bien embarrassé de le dire.'⁷⁰

As the perception of age categorisation in early nineteenth century France was profoundly affected by gender considerations, however, for women more than for men, fifty constituted a 'seuil', a crucial zone of transition from one state to another. According to Etienne de Jouy, a woman who had reached fifty could be regarded as 'une vieille femme';⁷¹ and 'la vieillesse', in physical, psychological and social terms, carried more negative connotations for females than for males. The terror that Mme de Genlis recalled old age inspiring in her highlights the contrast between the prevailing male and female life-scripts of the period:

'Je me faisais une idée terrible de cet état, effrayant surtout en perspective pour une femme quand elle est leste, animée, brillante, et qu'elle se voit entourée d'admirateurs... Un vieux monarque, qui a régné avec bonté et avec gloire, présente la vieillesse sous un aspect divin [...]. Un vieux guerrier, un vieux magistrat, qui ont bien rempli leur devoir, inspirent une profonde vénération. Mais une vieille femme!...cette dénomination seule est si dure!'⁷²

The social role of a man is defined here by his activity in the public sphere, and the appreciation which he receives in old age is in direct proportion to the success with which he previously played his part. In contrast, the social role of a young woman is defined in terms of *being* rather than *doing*, and the interest which she arouses is shown to derive from qualities inherent in her youth. By sapping her vitality and withering her beauty, age diminishes her social value. Because man is identified here with moral and intellectual qualities, and woman with purely physical ones, his can be enhanced by time, while hers can only be degraded. Furthermore, according to Mme de Genlis, women's sphere in society - at its most extensive, the semi-public world of the salon - also becomes more restricted as she ages: 'sa société intime peut être agréable,' she concedes, but an old woman 'dans le grand monde [...] a quelque chose d'un peu moquable'.⁷³ For men, old age could be considered as the period that crowned a process of achievement. For women, it was literally and metaphorically a more sterile phase - the culmination of a progressive decline. The root of this distinction lay in the prevailing tendency to identify the male with the mind and the female with the body. Yvonne Knibiehler and Arlette Farge, who have studied the medical discourse of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have noted that the stress put on the womb as the site of female specificity and on reproduction as female destiny, meant that a woman was regarded as most truly 'female' during the years when procreation was possible. The post-menopausal period was thus effectively beyond the end of her life as a 'woman' and, as her child-bearing years were the period of her prime social utility, the result was an increase in the social marginalisation of the post-menopausal female.⁷⁴

Not everyone, however, subscribed complacently to the pessimistic scenario

played out when woman was reduced to the purely physical. Among those who did not was Mme de Staël. In the second preface to her *Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau* (which she wrote when she was forty-eight), while acknowledging that aging fundamentally worsened a woman's condition in many ways, she nevertheless exploded the equations 'homme/esprit' and 'femme/corps' and indicated the means whereby women could transcend the conventional limits imposed by age and gender. Through study, she declares, women can secure lasting happiness and counter the deterioration of the body which is an inevitable part of the aging process:

[...] il y a dans le développement et le perfectionnement de son esprit une activité continue, un espoir toujours renaissant, que ne saurait offrir le cours ordinaire de la vie. Tout marche vers le déclin dans la destinée des femmes, excepté la pensée, dont la nature immortelle est de s'élever toujours.⁷⁵

The title of Mme de La Tour du Pin's memoirs therefore implies that the work is written from the vantage-point of a frontier zone and that the protagonist will be representative of those on the verge of a double marginalisation as a result of their age and sex. Given their prominence in the title, however, the relevance of these factors is strangely minimised in the prefatory section of the *Journal*. What is more, here where one might expect to find a discussion of the author's intentions in writing and guidance for the text's interpretation, no clear answers are provided for even the most basic questions: What is she writing? Why is she writing? For whom is she writing? On the contrary, in the two paragraphs which serve as a preface, the author performs an enigmatic balancing act, revealing and concealing her intentions, asserting and undermining her individuality, criticising her own skill as a writer as she apparently appropriates and makes her own the texts of renowned male authors.

The first difficulty concerns the generic status of the work. Mme de La Tour du Pin initially shies away from any claims to literary talent or public recognition:

'Quand on écrit un livre, c'est presque toujours avec l'intention qu'il soit lu avant ou après votre mort. Mais

je n'écris pas un livre.' (1: 1)

As a gesture of modesty and feminine and/or aristocratic disdain for publicity, other women also protested that they did not consider themselves to be authors and thus would not describe their memoirs as 'un livre'. Some dissociated their works from the structural formality and intellectual pretensions that were synonymous with 'un livre' by underlining the informal character and the specifically domestic parameters of their work's production and consumption. Mme du Montet, for example, described her 'pauvres petites feuilles détachées' as 'une causerie intime de famille, [...] une conversation sans conséquence, de bons petit radotages même';⁷⁶ and Mme de Boigne warned her nephews to expect from her

'seulement une causerie de vieille femme, un ravaudage de salon; je n'y mets pas plus d'importance qu'à un ouvrage de tapisserie. Je me suis successivement servi de ma plume pour reposer mon aiguille, et de mon aiguille pour reposer ma plume, et mon manuscrit arrivera à mes héritiers comme un vieux fauteuil de plus.'⁷⁷

Where Mme de La Tour du Pin differs from these other memoir-writers is in the degree of ambivalence in her definition. She is not writing 'un livre', she declares, but 'un journal de [sa] vie simplement'. Although the choice of the term 'journal' implies both informality and self-centrality,⁷⁸ the marquise confuses the issue by presenting the intended scope of her text by means of negative and conditional statements. After implying that her memoirs will be more than a superficial account of the events of her life, she adds that writing a more introspective work would be an exceedingly difficult task for her:

'si c'est l'histoire de mes opinions et de mes sentiments, le journal de mon coeur que j'entends composer, l'entreprise est plus difficile, car, pour se peindre, il faut se connaître et ce n'est pas à cinquante ans qu'il aurait fallu commencer.' (1: 2)

Although it may be as intimate as 'le journal de [son] coeur', she continues, her

work will nevertheless be less revelatory than 'confessions'. Again, however, although she may not be prepared to adopt the radical stance of a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who disclosed to the world his 'indignités' and his 'misères' and proclaimed loudly: 'voilà ce que j'ai fait, ce que j'ai pensé, ce que je fus',⁷⁹ there are clear echoes of his ambitions in Mme de La Tour du Pin's declaration: 'je veux pourtant me montrer telle que je suis, telle que j'ai été' (1: 2).

As well as giving only an ambiguous outline of the character of her work, she also leaves implicit the reasons for taking up her pen. Unlike many of the other memoir-writers who were reluctant to put themselves forward as authors (such as Mme de Boigne, Mme d'Abrantès and the duchesse de Dino), Mme de La Tour du Pin does not attempt to displace responsibility for her action by claiming that she was writing at the instigation of others. Nor does she seek to excuse or justify her decision by presenting her memoir-writing as a defensive act prompted by public condemnation, or as a family monument intended for the enlightenment and edification of her children. Furthermore, in contrast to writers such as Georgette Ducrest or Mme de La Rochejaquelein, she does not try to legitimate the autobiographical in her memoirs by minimising its importance in relation to her account of the events she had witnessed or the life of another.

Since she offers none of the conventional explanations for self-contemplation, Mme de La Tour du Pin's intentions in writing can only be surmised. Since the title highlights her age, did she perhaps share with Stendhal the view that one's fiftieth birthday constituted a cross-roads from which to reflect on one's life? Was she, too, struck by 'l'idée lumineuse [qu'elle allait] avoir cinquante ans et qu'il était temps de songer au départ et auparavant de se donner le plaisir de regarder un instant en arrière'?⁸⁰ Did she, too, consider that the composition of a retrospective narrative represented a potential source of self-knowledge? Did she tell herself, as Stendhal claimed to have done, 'je devais écrire ma vie; je saurai peut-être enfin, quand cela sera fini dans deux ou trois ans, ce que j'ai été'?⁸¹ In contrast to Stendhal's belief that self-knowledge would arise from the very process of recollecting and transforming lived experience into literature, that self-exploration and self-creation would thus

proceed in tandem, however, Mme de La Tour du Pin seems to have believed that self-knowledge necessarily precedes self-portrayal: 'pour se peindre, il faut se connaître'.

Since gender is also highlighted in the title, was the *Journal*, like the *Souvenirs* of Mme de Maillé, perhaps intended to serve a double purpose? Was it to be, ultimately, a family document, but, first and foremost, a personal space in which the writer established her own scale of values, set her own rules, and gave voice to that which, for reasons of social propriety, could not be uttered elsewhere?⁸² There is, after all, no explicit reference in the first two paragraphs to any potential reader other than the author herself,⁸³ and the final sentence contains an allusion to a previously untold story ('les peines secrètes') which she seems to have intended incorporating into the *Journal*. In addition, the fact that her thoughts turned to '[ses] jeunes années' at a time when she presents herself as threatened by 'les infirmités de l'âge' may imply that, like Mme Roland, Mme de Boigne or the duchesse de Dino, she turned to the recreation of her past through writing primarily in order to set herself free from the oppressive circumstances of the narrating present.⁸⁴

Even if it is accepted that memoir-writers are not necessarily trustworthy when they set out their reasons for writing - in some cases, they may not even be fully aware of the functions which their work is to serve - Mme de La Tour du Pin's extreme evasiveness on the subject still makes her exceptional. Indeed, her evasiveness is such that it raises questions about the interpretation of the gaps and tensions in this prefatory section. As a challenge to the large body of feminist theory concerning women's relationship to language which has stressed the dangers and the difficulties, Patricia Yaeger has argued that it is possible to identify in the writing of some eighteenth and nineteenth century women 'contexts in which women find language empowering, in which women speak of their pleasure and find pleasure in speech'.⁸⁵ These 'honey-mad women', as she calls them ('mad for the honey of speech'), can be shown to have exploited a number of strategies which make their texts sites of emancipation from the prevailing constraints of the patriarchal order. Although Yaeger's study concentrated on novels and poetry as the realms of

emancipatory language for women, there is no reason why the memoir should not also be considered as a potentially liberating or empowering genre.

Whether such ideas can in fact be applied to women's memoirs in the early nineteenth century is one of the central issues that will be considered here and in the following chapters. Two fundamental questions then arise: Is it possible to detect a pleasure factor in the writing of Mme de La Tour du Pin? And if so, how does this influence the interpretation of the *Journal*?

If the author's equivocation and her self-deprecatory remarks regarding her compositional skills are accepted at face value, it can be argued that they occur simply because the marquise, who was not a professional writer, wished to fix on paper certain aspects of her past for future reference and was working quickly, before her faculties failed, and without the aid of any clear plan. According to this interpretation, the writer had no ulterior motives or provocative intentions, and the pleasure factor would be located primarily in the memories themselves and in the process of recollecting, rather than in the act of composing.

By adopting an alternative approach, however, a more 'suspicious' reading, it can be argued that the memoirist's pleasure had another source and lay principally in the act of writing. According to this interpretation, writing rather than memory was the source of pleasure because the author was conscious of the power which she could appropriate by laying hold of selected elements of her past and transforming them into words, re-forming herself and those around her on her own terms - and Mme de La Tour du Pin does emphasize the element of selection in the opening paragraphs of her *Journal*, hinting that she will record '*quelques faits d'une vie agitée*' and speak of her youth '*par fragments seulement*' (1: 2; emphasis added). Is the absence of any attempt to excuse or justify the egocentricity of her *Journal* to be interpreted therefore as a deliberate challenge to the conventions that were deemed to be appropriate for an autobiographical work, especially one written by a woman? Is the prioritization of her 'opinions' and her 'sentiments' over the events of her life - of the intellectual and emotional over the purely physical, the inner dimensions over the surface - an implicit reversal of the prevailing equations 'homme/esprit' and 'femme/corps'? Are her ostensibly self-deprecatory

protests about the lack of order and method in her thoughts merely intended to legitimate a digressive structure which can be made to serve the author's own ends, allowing her to highlight certain points by their repetition and obscure others by omission or by blurring the chronological framework of her account? Such confusion certainly occurs, most noticeably when she deals with the period of transition between the collapse of the Empire and the Restoration of the Bourbons. Finally, are the echoes of Rousseau's *Confessions* and Chateaubriand's *Essai sur les révolutions* in the opening paragraphs merely fortuitous, or are they implicitly parodic?⁸⁶ In short, is it justifiable to classify Mme de La Tour du Pin as a subversive, 'honey-mad' woman?

Although Patricia Yaeger acknowledges the heterogeneity of women's relationship to language, and does not reject entirely the notion that women of the past frequently saw language as oppressive and writing as difficult and possibly dangerous, she nevertheless focused on women who found ways of making writing a liberating and self-affirming experience. What her study does not take into account, however, are those women who do not fall clearly into either of these two categories. A third category would comprise those women who found literary self-expression problematic, but not paralysing; who had been culturally conditioned to define themselves through relationship to others rather than as individuals, but who were still aware of their unique moral and intellectual strengths; who had been enjoined to silence and self-effacement, but who were not prepared to accept marginalisation with complacency; and who felt the constraints of being read as women in general, and as wives and mothers in particular, but who also recognised that language could be manipulated to serve their own interests and that the memoir as a genre could be exploited in order to fill 'les silences de l'histoire'.

It is in this last category, among those women who had an ambivalent relationship to language, that it seems most appropriate to place the intelligent, pragmatic, family-oriented and politically-conservative Henriette-Lucie de La Tour du Pin. On the one hand, it would be difficult to substantiate claims that the interpretational difficulties of the *Journal* are the result of a radical, subversive intention on the part of the author. There is nothing in her letters to indicate that she regarded writing in general, or her memoir-writing in

particular, as a gender-conscious act of emancipation and self-affirmation. On the contrary, the letters convey the impression that she attached little value to such activities. Writing to Félicie de La Rochejaquelein in 1822 about Mme de Duras' novel *Ourika*, the marquise not only remained silent about the *Journal* which she had begun two years earlier, but she also drew attention to her association with the traditional female instrument, the needle, as opposed to the traditional male instrument, the pen.⁸⁷

'Quelle honte pour moi, qui ne puis enfanter que de la tapisserie! et tout au plus écrire mon livre de comptes!'⁸⁸

Later, in a letter of 1839, although she includes her memoir-writing - perhaps ironically - among '[ses] plaisirs', within this context, it appears not as a great feminist enterprise, but as one genteel, rather trivial pastime among others. 'Pour en revenir à mes plaisirs,' she wrote,

'je travaillerai, j'aurai la récurveuse, j'écrirai mes mémoires, j'arrangerai les pots de fleurs pour l'hiver et j'irai aujourd'hui dîner chez Mme de Cottens qui viendra dîner avec moi demain. Le temps ne me pèse jamais [...].'⁸⁹

References to it elsewhere as a 'rabâchage de famille' and as 'radotages' (on the grounds that 'ce titre va mieux que celui de mémoires') would appear to confirm the insignificance of the *Journal* in the eyes of its author.⁹⁰

On the other hand, however, it would be difficult to dismiss this memoirist as a naive, unprepossessing figure. That evasiveness, equivocation and self-fascination are evident not only in the opening paragraphs, but throughout the memoirs, suggests that the writer was conscious of the emancipatory, or at least the creative, potential of language. It also suggests that she exploited the space opened up by the memoir in order to affirm her strengths as an individual and counter the historical effacement of her sex. In other words, Mme de La Tour du Pin is neither self-assured and 'honey-mad', nor linguistically incapacitated by the prevailing ideology of gender. Subject to the competing demands of writing for her family and for herself, she is a woman in whose writing there is a double story,

in which text and subtext compete, and in which superficial insistence on the conventionally feminine is disrupted by the implicit projection of a less conformist self-image.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, through works such as his *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758), *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and the best-selling treatise-cum-novel *Emile* (1762), Jean-Jacques Rousseau crafted an image of woman as virtuous wife and conscientious mother that gained a powerful hold over the society of the period.⁹¹ This ideal woman was to look to her husband for guidance and seek to make his life agreeable. Like Julie at Clarens, she was to be competent in household management, in needlework and in the education of her children. She was to be obedient and submissive, capable of bending her will to that of others;⁹² and she was to behave with modesty and place her happiness in the rearing of her children, a task to which Rousseau gave a new dignity:

'Y a-t-il au monde un spectacle aussi touchant, aussi respectable, que celui d'une Mère de famille entourée de ses enfans, réglant les travaux de ses domestiques, procurant à son mari une vie heureuse, et gouvernant sagement la maison? C'est là qu'elle se montre dans toute la dignité d'une honnête femme; c'est là qu'elle impose vraiment du respect, et que la beauté partage avec honneur les hommages rendus à la vertu.'⁹³

Central to all of Rousseau's works, and to those of his followers such as Restif de la Bretonne and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, was the notion that sexual differentiation lay at the core of a healthy society. The increased visibility of some women in the public domain during the French Revolution did not substantially alter the belief that the two sexes should fulfil separate, though complementary, functions. On the contrary, the emergence of Republican women's clubs and the behaviour of a few high-profile females, such as Mme Roland, Olympe de Gouges, Théroigne de Méricourt and Charlotte Corday, provoked widespread fears that the differences between the sexes were in danger of being eroded; and these fears, in turn, led to the reinforcement of the Rousseauist belief that social

stability was incompatible with the emergence of women from the domestic realm. As a result, the post-Thermidorian period was marked by intensified efforts to reconstruct the family and the public sphere along emphatically gendered lines: women were to effect the moral regeneration of the nation from within the home, and remain physically and symbolically absent from public space.⁹⁴

Geneviève Fraisse has dramatised the process of demarcating social boundaries on the basis of gender in the aftermath of the Revolution by examining the relationship between the sexes in terms of the perceived links between 'savoir' and 'pouvoir'. For a woman to prioritize intellectual activity over her 'natural' reproductive function and, in particular, for her to advertise her learning publicly was held to be a deviation not only from her 'naturally' allotted social sphere, but also from her sex. Even if only implicitly, therefore, the acquisition and display of knowledge by a woman constituted a challenge to the male monopoly on political control that was based on man's supposedly greater 'natural' capacity for rational thought. As part of the defensive reaction to the experience of the Revolution, the early nineteenth century saw a resurgence in adherence to Rousseau's argument that women, because they were fitted by nature for different goals from men (i.e. motherhood),⁹⁵ possess a different sort of intelligence and, consequently, should receive a different form of education. 'Elles doivent apprendre beaucoup de choses,' declared Rousseau, 'mais seulement celles qu'il leur convient d'apprendre' (*Em.*, 702). 'Toute l'éducation des femmes,' he goes on to specify,

'doit être relative aux hommes. Leur plaire, leur être utiles, se faire aimer et honorer d'eux, les élever jeunes, les soigner grands, les consoler, leur rendre la vie agréable et douce: voilà les devoirs des femmes dans tous les temps, et ce qu'on doit leur apprendre dès leur enfance.' (*Em.*, 703)

Arguing that a woman's existence derives its meaning only through her relationship to others - parents, husband, children - and that 'la raison des femmes' is 'une raison pratique', it was Rousseau's contention that 'leurs études doivent se rapporter toutes à la pratique', with reading and writing as merely secondary considerations (*Em.*, 736; 708). In contrast to praiseworthy 'natural' woman, the 'femme bel esprit' who harbours intellectual pretensions, attracts only

disdain from Rousseau. In his eyes, such a woman confused the differentiation of the sexes instituted by nature when she rejected 'tous les devoirs de femme' and made herself into a man, 'à la manière de mademoiselle de l'Enclos'. Even a woman who possesses real talent, he continues, ultimately undermines it if she demands its recognition:

'Sa dignité est d'être ignorée; sa gloire est dans l'estime de son mari: ses vrais plaisirs sont dans le bonheur de sa famille.' (*Em.*, 768)

Testimony to the persistence of Rousseau's influence in the early nineteenth century can be found in various sources. The notion that women were destined to be relative creatures who would derive fulfilment from their devotion to others is expounded, for example, by Mme de Genlis in *La maison rustique [...] ou Retour en France d'une famille émigrée*, a didactic novel first published in 1810. 'Si une femme a toujours été fille soumise, épouse fidèle, bonne mère,' the heroine Elmire tells her husband when he laments her fate, 'elle a parfaitement rempli sa destinée'.⁹⁶ And the notion that the two sexes possessed different social and intellectual skills, and were thus destined by nature to play different roles in society, commanded almost universal acceptance. It can be found, for example, in a radical form, in Sylvain Maréchal's *Projet de loi portant défense d'apprendre à lire aux femmes* (1801), and in a more moderate form, in Antoine Caillot's *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des mœurs et usages des Français* (1827). The former made clear sexual differentiation and the existence of two separate spheres the cornerstone of his text:

'La Raison veut que chaque sexe soit à sa place et s'y tienne. Les choses vont mal, quand les deux sexes empiètent l'un sur l'autre.'⁹⁷

Caillot, too, believed that the two sexes should occupy different social spaces and regarded woman's role as fundamentally domestic. The type of education most appropriate for girls, he declares, is that which will ultimately enable them to be 'de bonnes épouses et de bonnes mères'. He then proceeds to extol the way in which girls were educated under the *ancien régime*. Before the Revolution, he writes, a girl of sixteen had learnt all that was necessary: she was able to run a

house, please a husband 'et faire rechercher sa société, comme celle d'une femme aimable et sans prétention'.⁹⁸

'Sans prétention' is a crucial requirement for Caillot who believed firmly that women should never seek to attract attention. The decision to put oneself and one's learning on show, he argued in the *Mémoires*, was incompatible with the maintenance of female dignity since even the noblest by birth were thereby reduced to the status of public women - 'des actrices de profession' and, by implication, prostitutes. He therefore denounced prize-giving ceremonies in girls' schools on the grounds that they involved exposing young girls 'à la vue d'un public nombreux' and making them the object of applause and compliments which increased their tendency towards narcissism. That public visibility was specifically an issue of gender is evident from the fact that the same author found nothing objectionable about prize-giving ceremonies in male institutions of learning.⁹⁹

In the section which follows, I want to examine more closely the ways in which Mme de La Tour du Pin demonstrates her conformity with the prevailing model of the obedient, self-effacing 'bonne épouse et bonne mère' in her memoirs. I also want to explore the fault lines and the gaps in the *Journal* that disrupt this image. In assessing the extent to which the Rousseauist tradition affected Mme de La Tour du Pin's conception of herself as a woman and the way in which she wrote her memoirs, there are four key issues which have to be taken into account: education, duty, visibility, and independence.

It has become a commonplace in studies of women's autobiographical writing to denounce as androcentric the definitions of autobiography proposed by theorists such as Georges Gusdorf, Roy Pascal, Richard Coe or John Sturrock, which are based on the writer's acute consciousness of his singularity and isolation.¹⁰⁰ The acceptance of such definitions, it is argued, serves to perpetuate the marginalisation of women for, as Sidonie Smith puts it, 'the concept of individuality may not motivate the most informed reading of women's autobiographical texts'.¹⁰¹ In contrast to men, who define themselves through conflict and separation from others, women, it is claimed, lack a sense of isolate individualism and, consequently, in their autobiographical works, they tend to construct their

self-image in terms of relationship to others.¹⁰² Writing about others and about one's relationship to them, however, does not necessarily imply that the writer defines herself in terms of dependency and possesses only a weak sense of self-worth.

In the *Journal*, two autobiographical stories and two self-images are interwoven. The first is a story of self-abnegation and altruism, in which the writer casts herself as a relative creature: an earnest daughter, a loyal wife and devoted mother. The second is the personal story of Henriette-Lucie defined in her singularity, which traces the development of her character and signals her distinctiveness. The complexity of the author's self-image in the *Journal* lies in the fact that this second story derives from and feeds back into the first, and yet is not eclipsed by it. Thus, while Mme de La Tour du Pin constructs in the *Journal* the image of herself as a good wife and mother, she nevertheless also projects the image of a woman who renders herself exceptional in various ways, one of which is by stressing her very dedication to the role of wife and mother. She points out, for example, that her unwavering loyalty to her husband and her extravagant notions of self-sacrifice made her a rarity among *ancien régime* aristocrats (1: 140, 204); and when she records her proficiency at conventional female tasks, such as sewing (1: 182, 191; 2: 106), ironing (2: 94-95, 182), or butter-making (2: 52, 95), she draws the reader's attention to her atypicality in performing such tasks since she is an aristocrat, and the superiority of her execution over that of others.

In the story of her personal evolution, too, the strands of the unique and the other-related are interconnected. The overcoming of timidity and her rejection of a life of frivolity, for example, are shown to have been motivated by a desire to serve her family better; while her conversion is shown to have arisen out of her grief as a mother, and her resulting disposition to resign herself to the will of God, her patience and resilience are traits to which she draws her son's attention in passages referring to the narrating present when her life was intricately bound up with his. Through the very act of narrating this evolutionary process, however, the marquise reaffirms its personal significance since the recognition and recounting of these stages of transition are instances when the previously unspoken is articulated and the text is most markedly 'le journal de [son] coeur'. Likewise, actions which she attributes solely to concern for her family, thereby counteracting

possible accusations of self-promotion - such as her encounters with Tallien (1: 337-39; 357-61), her intervention with Napoleon (2: 320-27), or her efforts to quash the publication of Dumont's pamphlet criticising the conduct of M. de La Tour du Pin (2: 356-57) - are also, paradoxically, made occasions for self-affirmation, in that the narrator is the principal protagonist and ultimate victor in these scenes of confrontation. She succeeds in such encounters, moreover, by exercising qualities which characterise her as an individual and are not inherent in the role of wife and mother: initiative, courage, energy and tact. In short, the portrayal of her systematic subordination of herself to others is intricately enmeshed in the portrayal of herself as a figure who delights in her singularity.

Although the author presents herself in the role of daughter and grand-daughter, in the section of the *Journal* describing the period before her marriage, she does not define herself here entirely in terms of these roles. On the contrary, her mother's rejection of her when she played the part of the dutiful daughter (1: 26); her position as a pawn during the hostilities between Mme de Rothe and Mme Dillon, when each one wished her to spy on the other (1: 22); and, later, her life as the victim of her grand-mother's 'fureurs', created and then reinforced in Henriette-Lucie the sense of her isolation. They also made her keenly aware of the gap which could exist between one's true feelings and the role which one might be obliged to adopt because of one's circumstances.¹⁰³ As they appear in the *Journal*, therefore, these years of physical and financial dependency are, paradoxically, also a time of emotional independence.

In Mme de La Tour du Pin's account of her moral and intellectual formation during childhood, self-definition through relationship is always combined with self-affirmation as an individual. She depicts her sense of moral values, for example, as partly innate (1: 5), partly moulded by herself from her own experience (1: 4-5), and partly guided and strengthened by her maid Marguerite:

'Je voyais tous les vices, j'entendais leur langage, on ne se cachait de rien en ma présence. J'allais trouver ma bonne, et son simple bon sens m'aidait à apprécier, à distinguer, à classer tout à sa juste valeur.' (1: 22)

Marguerite figures in the text therefore as both a mentor and a pendant for the author as the embodiment of 'natural' goodness (1: 6). Far from erasing the author's singularity, however, this relationship constitutes a subversive force in the memoirs in that the child and the peasant woman are shown occupying the moral high-ground and daring to judge 'les grands de la terre' (1: 6) - a situation which highlights the writer's distance from her aristocratic milieu.

Similarly, it is the sense of her singularity, rather than dependency, that marks the memoirist's account of her relationship with her tutor, for she presents herself as a child who possessed a desire and a capacity for learning which far surpassed the remit of M. Combes. Indeed, she consistently undercuts the relationship of inferior to superior which one might have expected to find between pupil and teacher, by employing Combes in the text primarily as a foil in order to draw attention to her own accomplishments, as in the following passage:

'M. Combes avait fait de bonnes études; il les continua et m'a avoué depuis qu'il avait souvent retardé les miennes à dessein, de crainte que je ne le dépassasse dans celles qu'il faisait lui-même.' (1: 21)

The whole story of Mme de La Tour du Pin's intellectual formation as a girl reveals tensions between conformity to Rousseau's injunction that a woman should acquire 'useful' knowledge in order to serve others, and the author's rejection of these limitations by emphasising the intensity and scope of her curiosity. The memoirs echo with assertions of her innately voracious appetite for knowledge (both practical and from books) primarily for its own sake - indeed, her aspirations to omniscience:

'A douze ans mon éducation était très avancée. J'avais lu énormément mais sans choix. [...] J'ai toujours eu une ardeur incroyable pour apprendre. Je voulais savoir toutes choses, depuis la cuisine jusqu'aux expériences de chimie [...].' (1: 21)

'Je voulais tout voir et tout savoir; apprendre tous les ouvrages des mains, depuis la broderie et la confection des fleurs jusqu'au blanchissage et aux détails de la cuisine. Je trouvais le temps de ne rien

négliger, ne perdant jamais un instant, classant dans ma tête tout ce qu'on m'enseignait et ne l'oubliant jamais. [...] C'est ainsi qu'avec de la mémoire j'ai acquis une multitude de connaissances qui m'ont été singulièrement utiles dans le reste de ma vie.' (1: 40-41)

Tensions in this early section of the *Journal* between the writer's personal desire for self-affirmation and the conventional exhortation to self-effacement are exemplified by an anecdote in which the thirteen year old Henriette-Lucie is presented as both superior to 'plusieurs graves évêques' and suitably feminine and retiring. During a conversation on astronomy, when none of those around her could recall the name of Galileo, she eventually grew so exasperated, she writes in her memoirs, 'que le nom m'échappa' (her resistance to self-promotion being underlined here by the passive construction of her role in the narrative): 'Je balbutiai très bas: "C'est Galilée"'. When a neighbour, who had overheard her, broadcast her words to the rest of the company, her response was a modest retreat into invisibility: 'Ma confusion,' she writes, 'fut si grande que je fondis en larmes, m'enfuis de la table et ne reparus plus de la soirée' (1: 41). Similarly, after noting her interest in some rather unconventional subjects for a female, such as experimental physics (1: 54) or the chemical processes used in the coal and copper sulphate mines of the Cévennes (1: 61), the author relates an anecdote which counterbalances her apparent deviations from the feminine norm by drawing attention to her timidity and her susceptibility to irrational fears (1: 62-63).¹⁰⁴

Although the author's relationship to her husband and children is unquestionably of paramount importance throughout the major part of her memoirs, her self-image in this section, as before, is never entirely circumscribed by the social roles of wife and mother. Even her decision to marry is presented in an equivocal manner. On the one hand, it is shown to have opened the way to a life of self-abnegation and subordination to the will of another. 'Et depuis cette parole,' she writes of her agreement to M. de La Tour du Pin's proposal of marriage, '[...] j'ai senti que je lui appartenais, que ma vie était son bien' (1: 79). On the other, it signified liberation from the constraints of her youth and constituted an implicit gesture of defiance towards her grand-mother.

The writer's account of her life after her marriage continues to trace the evolution of Henriette-Lucie as an individual, most significantly by recording the literal and metaphorical frontiers which she crossed in her transformation from giddy youth to mature womanhood. The first of these, the Belgian border, marks the beginning of her moral reform by bringing home to her 'l'inutilité de [sa] vie passée' (1: 299-301).¹⁰⁵ The second is her crossing of the Atlantic, during which she purged herself of the most striking manifestation of feminine frivolity by cutting off and disposing of her hair, thereby symbolically rejecting the shallowness of her past life (1: 386). The third, her passage over the bridge of logs near Troy soon after her arrival in America, denotes the culmination of the secular conversion which had begun in December 1792 and symbolises her entry into a new way of life (2: 28-29). Finally, it is the moment by the grave of her daughter, when her earlier secular conversion was crowned by a religious conversion, which the marquise identifies as the most decisive turning-point in her life: 'A dater de ce jour,' she writes, 'la volonté divine me trouva soumise et résignée' (2: 90).

The memoirs also continue to record the writer's progressive accumulation of knowledge. On occasions, this is clearly integrated into her presentation of herself as a good wife and mother. Her eagerness during the voyage across the Atlantic to acquire from the American Boyd 'des connaissances sur tout ce qui se faisait à la campagne dans son pays,' she implies, was motivated by the desire to prepare herself for her prospective role as 'une fermière' (1: 387). At other times, however, the satisfaction of her prodigious curiosity appears to have been an end in itself. Of a trip to Lille which she took shortly after her marriage, for example, she recalled:

'J'acquis beaucoup d'idées nouvelles, qui se fixèrent dans ma mémoire pour n'en plus sortir; et avec l'habitude que j'avais contractée en Languedoc de questionner les gens sur leur spécialité, je classai dans mon esprit tous les détails d'une ville de guerre et bien d'autres connaissances sur l'agriculture du pays, la filature du lin, son emploi, etc., etc.' (1: 129-30)

As in the earlier part of the *Journal*, aspects of the author's learning are again

highlighted by her in order to indicate not only her singularity, but also, on occasions, her superiority. Once again, however, Mme de La Tour du Pin balances assertions with denials. She distances herself, for instance, from meddling women who sought to intervene in public affairs, such as Mme de Staël (1: 203-05; 2: 141) or Mme Roland (1: 198),¹⁰⁶ by reiterating her lack of interest in politics (1: 93, 153, 161, 268-69; 2: 172), and stressing that she has never entertained 'la moindre prétention à l'esprit' (1: 203-04). Against these protests, however, it is necessary to set those parts of the memoirs which draw attention to the calibre of the writer's mind. Firstly, there are the references to her linguistic skills. She points out that she spoke English more fluently than her husband (2: 8-9), and that her ability to communicate with the Indian Squaw John in his native tongue bewildered M. de Novion '[qui] ne comprenait pas un mot' (2: 60). Secondly, there is the episode in which she demonstrated before Napoleon that her familiarity with details relating to the prefecture of her husband exceeded that of the duc d'Ursel (2: 291-92). This last example, it should be noted, forms a pendant to the Galileo anecdote mentioned above. Unlike the thirteen year old girl, however, the mature woman was not reduced to tears of embarrassment.

Mme de La Tour du Pin's account of her life between 1789 and the Restoration repeatedly interweaves examples of her devotion to her family with details which draw attention to personal qualities that mark her out as an individual. Frequently, the author asserts that she drew her strength directly from a self-sacrificial devotion to her family. It was her fears for the safety of her husband, for example, which distracted her from her labour pains at the time of Séraphine's birth and motivated her recovery. 'J'éprouvais un unique désir,' she wrote, 'celui de guérir le plus tôt possible pour être prête à tout événement' (1: 315). Later, during the Terror, the hope of protecting the family property led her to visit the redoubtable Tallien. Too timid at first even to raise her eyes, she nevertheless regained her strength, she claimed, on hearing him insult her father and father-in-law: 'L'indignation me gagna et me rendit alors tout mon courage. Hardiment, je levai les yeux sur ce monstre' (1: 339). Like her courage, her ability to endure physical hardship is also repeatedly shown to derive from love for her family. Not only did she manage to accommodate herself to hunger, unpalatable rations and uncomfortable sleeping arrangements on board the ship carrying them to safety in America; but, as her account of her journey across Spain in 1796 and her decision

to accompany her husband when he returned to France after 18 brumaire later confirm, no danger or difficulty was great enough to weaken Mme de La Tour du Pin's resolve to remain with her nearest and dearest.

However, if devotion to her family undeniably played an important part in determining many of the author's actions, the *Journal* also records occasions when her fortitude and initiative do not derive primarily from her role as a self-abnegating 'bonne épouse et bonne mère', but rather serve as self-affirming testimony to her singularity. When she learnt of the assault on the Bastille on the 14th of July 1789, on her arrival at Berny, she points out to her reader that she did not panic - quite the contrary:

'L'on conçoit mon étonnement, plus grand encore que mon inquiétude. Mais comme, malgré mes dix-neuf ans, les choses imprévues ne me déconcertaient guère, j'ordonnai à la voiture de rebrousser chemin [...].' (1: 188)

A few weeks later, at Forges in Normandy, when a stranger arrived and began scaremongering, the marquise again comes across as an intelligent and self-assured figure. 'Comme je ne suis pas peureuse,' she explains, she left her room and began to reason with the frightened crowd: by her own account, hers is the sole voice of sanity in the terror-stricken town. When her husband rejoins her, they share equally the task of gathering reliable information and allaying the fears of the local inhabitants (1: 192-95). Once again, during her trip to Switzerland in 1790, in the company of Mme d'Hénin and Pauline de Pully, it was the marquise who, according to her memoirs, took control when the three women were stopped in Dôle by the revolutionary authorities; and it was thanks to a suggestion which she made that they were eventually able to resume their journey (1: 249-54).

Mme de La Tour du Pin's active existence in her memoirs is thus shown to have continued beyond the limits of her relationship to her husband and children. Moreover, while the author never seriously throws into question the sincerity of her devotion to her husband, it is nevertheless possible to detect certain tensions in their relationship as it is portrayed in the *Journal*. Firstly, on several minor issues, she reveals her superiority over her husband: her command of English; her resistance to seasickness which always laid him low; and her ability to digest

the hard, worm-infested ship's biscuits when 'les seuls aliments qu'il supportait étaient le thé à l'eau et quelques morceaux de biscuit grillé, trempé dans du vin sucré' (1: 381). A more conspicuous sign of tension, however, is to be found in the memoir-writer's description of the couple's reaction to the news that it would be possible for them to leave their New England farm and return to France:

'Ces dépêches tombèrent, au milieu de nos tranquilles occupations, comme un brandon qui alluma brusquement dans le coeur de tous, *autour de moi*, des idées de retour dans la patrie, des prévisions d'une existence meilleure, des espérances d'ambitions futures satisfaites, en résumé tous les sentiments qui animent la vie des hommes. Pour moi, j'éprouvai une tout autre sensation. La France ne m'avait laissé qu'un sentiment d'horreur.' (2: 100) (emphasis added)

The decision to quit America is presented by Mme de La Tour du Pin as a painful test of her loyalty and her capacity for self-sacrifice, which both splits her from her husband along the lines of gender, by laying bare the contrast between male and female sources of happiness, and testifies to the strength of the bond between them:

'Je n'avais plus et je n'ai pas eu depuis dans l'âme que deux sentiments qui la maîtrisèrent entièrement et exclusivement: l'amour de mon mari et celui de mes enfants. La religion, seul mobile désormais de toutes mes actions, me commanda de ne pas opposer le plus léger obstacle à un départ dont je m'effrayais et qui me coûtait.'

Ultimately, however, it is to the gap which existed despite the bond that the author draws the reader's attention. The silence which she maintained as protagonist is here finally broken by her as narrator:

'M. de La Tour du Pin ne se douta jamais de l'intensité de mes regrets quand je vis fixer le moment où nous quitterions la ferme.' (2: 101)

Why did the thought of abandoning her existence in rural America cause the

marquise such anguish? Periods of domestic bliss in the *Journal* are generally depicted in accordance with conventional notions of sexual differentiation: both at Forges in 1789 and at le Bouilh in early 1793, her husband is shown engrossed in his books, while the writer herself is absorbed in 'les ouvrages des mains' (1: 191), 'tous les ouvrages que les femmes font d'habitude' (1: 308). The time of her greatest contentment, however, as she explained to Jeffreys on the boat to England, was the two years spent in America between 1794 and 1796 (2: 155-56). What distinguishes this period in the memoirs is the fact that Mme de La Tour du Pin and her husband appear to have existed during these years on a more equal footing than was the case when they lived in Europe. In America, the divisions between public and private domains were irrelevant; and her activities (the sale of her butter and cream), she implies, contributed as much as those of her husband - if not more so - to the economic well-being of the family (2: 52). Without rejecting her role as wife and mother, therefore, she was able to assert her singularity through her adaptability, her industry, the superiority of her produce and, paradoxically, the very conformity of her dress (2: 70). It was this world, in which her individuality could exist in harmony with her fulfilment of the role of wife and mother, which was brought to an end by her husband's decision to return to France, but which could be re-created - or, at least, created - through writing. The reality of this apparently idyllic life ultimately matters less than the fact that the author chose to project it as such when she composed 'le journal de [son] coeur'.

The independence which Mme de La Tour du Pin appears to have enjoyed in America contrasts markedly with the constraints which she experienced during the family's second exile in England (1797-1799). Significantly, just as her husband's decision to leave America revealed a fracture in the couple's relationship, his decision to flee to England also created tension which is articulated only retrospectively in the memoirs (2: 152-53). After 18 fructidor, when two courses of action lay open to them, instead of heading for le Bouilh and the Spanish frontier - which was the wiser choice in his wife's eyes - the marquise notes laconically in her *Journal*: 'Ma tante, Mme d'Hénin, avait beaucoup d'empire sur mon mari [more than herself, she implies]. Elle le décida à [aller en Angleterre]' (2: 152). Once in England, the influence exerted by Mme d'Hénin was again a cause of friction between M. and Mme de La Tour du Pin, though whether the author actually expressed her irritation at her failure to counter the ascendancy of another woman

over her husband at the time remains (perhaps deliberately) unclear:

'Mme d'Hénin [...] insistait pour nous avoir chez elle, à Richmond, où elle pouvait nous loger. Nous acceptâmes donc d'aller l'y rejoindre, quoique ce fût bien contre mon gré.' (2: 169)

'L'association de ménage avec Mme d'Hénin m'était insupportable. [...] Enfin, j'aspirais à avoir un ménage à moi, tel petit qu'il fût. Comme je n'en voyais pas le moyen, je me résignais.' (2: 171-72)

The previously muted voice of personal desire which is given expression in her memoirs thus reveals that her faultless adherence to the role of dutiful wife co-existed with a sense of isolation from her husband, at least to a certain extent, on an emotional level.

Although it remains only implicit in the *Journal*, one of the major fault lines in the relationship between the writer and her husband was the difference in their attitude towards Napoleon. While M. de La Tour du Pin agonised over the issue of accepting or rejecting the proposal that Napoleon should make himself emperor, his wife, who was allowed no public voice in the plebiscite and allowed herself no voice in the private domain, appears to have had no such hesitations:

'Je le vis se promener seul dans les allées du jardin, mais je ne me permis pas de pénétrer dans ses incertitudes. Enfin, un soir il rentra, et j'appris avec plaisir qu'il venait d'écrire oui comme résultat de ses réflexions.' (2: 233-34) (emphasis added)

If the memoirs suggest that M. de La Tour du Pin respected Napoleon, they also reveal that this respect was devoid of all real enthusiasm for, after accepting the offer of a post in the imperial administration and fulfilling his duties, the latter is shown to have embraced the restored Bourbon monarchy without a second thought (2: 343-44). In contrast, the author's portrayal of herself during the Empire and Restoration, and her reaction to the shift in power, are more complex. Once again, her depiction of herself performing her duties as a wife and mother

involves a combination of effacement and assertion. On the one hand, her self-portrayal underlines the notion that she is a dependent creature whose social role is defined solely through her relationship to others; on the other, it validates her own accomplishments by making her husband's success as a *préfet* appear fundamentally dependent on her skills as a hostess and her initiative as a mediator. Describing the importance of her husband's appointment to Brussels in 1808, for example, she both advances a claim to recognition in her own right, and retreats from any suggestion that she harboured an unfeminine desire to encroach on male territory. The previous *préfet*, she points out, though a competent administrator,

'n'avait exercé aucune action sur l'éloignement moral que les hautes classes conservaient pour la domination française. Cette tâche nous incombait, à mon mari et, j'ose le dire, à moi également, puisque la source de toute influence de cette nature se trouvait dans le salon.' (2: 267)

When her husband was dismissed from his post in Brussels in 1813, Mme de La Tour du Pin is unequivocal in stating that it was she who secured his transfer to Amiens, and she recounts at great length the action which she took, on her own initiative (2: 320-27):

'Je résolu de ne pas céder sans combattre, et me décidai, sans attendre M. de La Tour du Pin [...] de partir sur l'heure pour Paris.'

In the major part of this section, which is devoted to an account of her long meeting with the emperor, her self-effacing motivation (the dutiful desire to serve her husband) is subordinated to her self-asserting actions as protagonist and her self-fascination as narrator.

'C'était un événement assez important dans la vie qu'une conversation en tête à tête avec cet homme extraordinaire, et cependant je déclare ici dans toute la vérité de mon coeur, peut-être avec orgueil, que je ne me sentais pas le moindre embarras.' (2: 323)

Not only does she claim to have been completely self-assured during this

audience, but she also presents it in such a way that the expected balance of power between male potentate and female supplicant is apparently reversed: she appears to be in control and he is forced onto the defensive:

'L'Empereur chercha, en résumé, à me prouver qu'il avait dû agir comme il l'avait fait. [...] il prononça ces paroles - c'est la seule fois peut-être qu'il les avait proférées dans sa vie, et le privilège m'était réservé de les entendre -:

- J'ai eu tort. Mais comment faire?

Je répliquai: "Votre Majesté peut le réparer".'

(2: 323-24)

In contrast to her husband, Mme de La Tour du Pin's enthusiasm for 'le grand homme', as she almost invariably calls him, is deeply imprinted on the memoirs. Not only does she draw attention to the fascination which he exerted on account of his 'grâce', his 'séduction' (2: 278) and his remarkable smile (2: 326); but she also implies that, as a man, Napoleon was far superior to any of the Bourbons or the Allies who ultimately defeated him. In the former, she appears to have had little confidence,¹⁰⁷ and the latter, too, she generally treats with disdain. 'Tout rappelait Napoléon: les meubles, le souper, les gens,' she writes of a celebration given by the prince de Schwarzenberg which she attended with Mme de Duras in 1814; 'parmi tous ceux qui étaient là réunis [...] pas un me semblait digne d'être son vainqueur' (2: 349).

In the *Journal*, Napoleon is not simply the object of Mme de La Tour du Pin's admiration, however; he is also an active element in the creation of her own self-image. Throughout her memoirs, it has been argued above, the author interweaves two versions of herself: the dynamic individual, and the conventionally feminine 'bonne épouse et bonne mère' who never oversteps the allotted boundaries of her sex. This complex double-image is not contradicted, but is rather reinforced, by the relationship which she implicitly establishes between herself and Napoleon. On one level, the image of the latter forms a mirror in which the memoir-writer sees her own qualities reflected. On several occasions, she presents herself as enjoying a unique rapport with the Emperor, a silent, intimate communication of minds in which she is able to interpret his smiles,

his shrugs and his looks; and which both unites the two of them and separates them from all others present (2: 251, 281). This correspondence in their thoughts, moreover, is shown to be matched by a correspondence in their characters: both are courageous, intelligent, energetic, and efficient, and both succeed in circumstances where others would have failed. As well as being a mirror which brings to the fore the singularity of the memoir-writer as a person, however, the image of Napoleon created in the *Journal* is also a pendant to that of Mme de La Tour du Pin and, as such, it underlines her conformity as a woman. What it supplies is a male life-script which is both analogous to - and different from - her female version. Although they both possess the same qualities, they are shown exercising them in different ways and in different spheres. He organises military campaigns, and she organises marriages and family journeys; he stamps the imperial crest across the courts of Europe, and she stamps her family crest on pats of butter; he wins battles against the odds, and she manages to attend functions in two separate venues on the same evening; he defies sovereigns, and she dresses in blue in defiance of invitations which specify white.¹⁰⁸ The process is a complex one: self-assertion through identification with 'le grand homme' is complemented by modest retreat into demonstrations of gender conformity only to turn, once again, into claims of singularity and superiority - this time, as a woman among other women.

Although Mme de La Tour du Pin tends to focus on the contrast between herself and other women (her grandmother, Mme d'Hénin, Mme de Staël, Mme de Duras, her step-mother Mme Dillon, and the Empress Marie-Louise, among others); and although she certainly did not compose her text around the principle of female solidarity, she was neither complacent about the problems faced by women, both black and white, in European and American society, nor was she blind to the strength and pleasure to be derived from female company, as is witnessed by her reliance on Mme de Fontenay and her friendship with Mme Schuyler and Miss Lydia White. What the memoirs focus on, however, are not the constraints that were placed on women, but rather the ways in which they could negotiate these obstacles, for example, through cultivation of their minds, development of their skills, or association with other women.

Conclusion

The memoirs of Mme de La Tour du Pin, then, are those of a woman who thought of herself as both a relative creature - daughter, wife, mother - and an individual, someone who was of value in her own right. Destined only for herself and a small circle of friends and family members, and written, for the most part, when the marquise was an impoverished elderly woman, the *Journal* is a site of unresolved tensions between conformity and rebellion, accommodation and dissension; it is a place in which the Rousseauist ideal of female self-abnegation and self-effacement comes up against lived experience and personal desire for affirmation and self-definition. The writer's image in the *Journal*, created by the fusion of the historical and the autobiographical, is thus an ambivalent, fragmented one. What is significant, however, is the dynamic nature of the text itself, the way in which the writer is continually reconstructing and redefining herself by interweaving the story of her singularity with that of her performance in conventional roles.

Chapter Three

Madame de Chastenay: *Mémoires*

In a section of her memoirs apparently written in September 1825, Mme de Genlis described Victorine de Chastenay as a woman 'qui peut tout concevoir et tout entreprendre avec succès'. Having provided a brief biographical sketch in illustration of this point, she concluded:

[...] il est bien à désirer qu'elle écrive des Mémoires; personne au monde ne pourra en laisser de plus intéressans.¹

By 1825, however, the composition of her memoirs was a task which Mme de Chastenay had already undertaken, though whether this would have been known to Mme de Genlis is uncertain as the work was intended only for posthumous publication and did not in fact appear until forty-one years after the death of its author.

Born in 1771 in Paris, Louise-Marie-Victoire [Victorine] de Chastenay was the only daughter of Erard-Louis-Guy, comte de Chastenay-Lanty and Catherine-Louise (née d'Herbouville). As Victorine points out at the beginning of her memoirs, she was of ancient aristocratic stock:

'Ma race des deux côtés est antique et chevaleresque. Le nom de mon père date, en Bourgogne, des plus antiques souvenirs [...]. La maison d'Herbouville est normande et antique.' (1: 1, 8)²

Before being elected to the States General in 1789, her father had pursued a successful military career, becoming 'maître de camp de dragons' in 1785; and for a few years he aspired to make a name for himself as a diplomat. Her mother,

who was educated first at l'Abbaye-aux-Bois and, subsequently, at the convent of Panthémont, was attached to the household of the duchesse de Bourbon but resigned from her post because of pregnancy less than six months after her marriage in January 1770 (1: 14).

As they were written, Mme de Chastenay's memoirs comprise two quite separate compositions - the 'Mémoires historiques' and the 'Mémoires particuliers' - as well as two thematic strands which interweave through the two volumes. The first strand traces the origins of the French Revolution, the social evolution of France and the many political upheavals that occurred between the 1780s and 1816. The second strand is the story of the author's life up to 1818. She records her studies and the publication of her various works: her translations of Oliver Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* (1796), Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1797) and Molleville's memoirs (1797); her botanical work, *Le Calendrier de Flore* (1802-1803), and her historical works, *Le Génie des peuples anciens* (1808) and *Les Chevaliers normands en Italie et en Sicile* (begun in 1812 and published in 1816). She tells of her election as a canoness at Epinal in 1785 (hence her use of the title 'madame'); of her efforts to protect the interests of her family and others during the Revolution and Empire; of her relationship with Pierre-François Réal, Napoleon's *directeur de la police* between 1804 and 1814; of the numerous marriage proposals which she received; and of her friendship with the Murat family after her return to Burgundy in 1815.

With the exception of the two years (1792-1794) when her family withdrew to Normandy, living at first in Rouen and then in the abbaye de Saint-Ouen, Mme de Chastenay's life during the period covered by her memoirs was spent partly in Burgundy - in Châtillon-sur-Seine or at the ancestral home, the château d'Essarois - and partly in Paris. At the second Restoration, after her hopes of securing a position in the household of Mademoiselle, the sister of the duc d'Orléans, had been dashed, the author and her family returned to Burgundy, where her father endeavoured to repair the damage inflicted on his finances during the Revolution by establishing forges on his estate.³ According to Mme de Genlis, writing in the early 1820s, Victorine de Chastenay was closely involved in this venture:

[elle] a été de la plus grande utilité [à son père] dans ces entreprises dont les détails sont si ennuyeux pour

une femme [...]; elle vient de partir pour aller
renouveler des baux de forges [...].⁴

It was here, in Burgundy, that Mme de Chastenay was to spend most of the last forty years of her life. As well as administering the family's estate and devoting herself ever more diligently to charitable activities, she also continued to write, publishing a long study of Oriental religion, literature and philosophy in 1832 (*De l'Asie*), and leaving behind at her death in 1855 the unfinished manuscript of another work in a similar vein entitled 'De l'Europe'.⁵ In spite of her achievements, however, these years were a time of grief and disillusionment for Mme de Chastenay. The deaths of her father (1830), her mother (1831) and her beloved brother Henri (1834) appear to have left her deeply depressed. Among the family papers are tear-stained pages in which she recorded the years and months that had elapsed since their disappearance and gave vent to her sorrow and feelings of isolation.⁶ Her eyesight, too, began to deteriorate rapidly. By 1835, she was sinking into 'une nuit laiteuse'. In 1839, she underwent an operation to remove a cataract from her left eye and two years later she contemplated (though later decided against) having a similar operation performed on her right eye. Throughout this period, however, she continued to take an interest in the affairs of France and Europe, reading (or having read to her) newspapers (principally, *Le Journal des Débats*) and journals (such as *La Revue des deux mondes*), and writing or dictating her reflections on political, religious and literary matters.⁷

(i) Textual Problems and Authorial Intentions

As a memoir-writer, Mme de Chastenay's position contrasted markedly with that of Mme de La Tour du Pin. While the latter was a wife and mother who had circulated in the texts of others as the embodiment of femininity and domestic felicity even before she began writing, Mme de Chastenay was a spinster and the author of works which had received a muted response from the public. When she wrote her memoirs, therefore, she did so from a precarious position for, as a woman who was not a wife and mother, and as a writer who had failed to achieve widespread acclaim, she was in danger of being perceived as a double failure. It

is precisely because her memoirs show her striving to counter this danger by redeeming both her work and her femininity - a potentially paradoxical gesture in the early nineteenth century - that they are worthy of serious consideration.

Unlike Mme de La Tour du Pin, whose memoirs have been seized on repeatedly because of the singularity of her experiences as an *émigrée* in America and the charm of her personality, Mme de Chastenay has attracted relatively little attention. Although Marilyn Yalom praises the latter's account of the Terror in Rouen in a short bibliographical note at the end of *Blood Sisters*, she nevertheless refers to the memoirs only sporadically in the body of her work, and then merely in order to cite the memoirist's remarks on specific points of historical interest, such as the march to Versailles in October 1789.⁸ Concentrating on the later sections of the memoirs, Jean Tulard ranks them as a first-rate source 'pour l'histoire intérieure du Consulat', describing them as 'une vivante chronique du Consulat et de l'Empire' - and this view has been shared by other historians and biographers who have quarried the memoirs for information on individuals, institutions and contemporary 'mœurs'.⁹ Even Michel Lagrange and Maurice Chabeuf, who produced short biographical essays about Victorine, were interested in her first and foremost as 'un témoin de son temps'.¹⁰ Since none of these writers has paid much attention to the autobiographical element in Mme de Chastenay's memoirs, the influence of gender in shaping the text has consistently been overlooked.

Those who have edited the memoirs (with an interval of ninety years between them) have also glossed over the issue of gender in relation to their composition. What is more, they have revealed little about the nature of the memoirs as they exist in manuscript and have given no account of the extensive modifications which were introduced when the manuscript was prepared for publication.

Although Alphonse Roserot, who published the first edition of the work in 1896-1897, acknowledged their value as a portrait of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century society, his evaluation of them as literature - that is, as the product of a conscious desire for self-expression and historical myth-making - was superficial. He described them as being 'écrits sans prétention, avec une élégante facilité et une distinction contenue'; and declared that he had kept his

annotations to a minimum 'de manière à éviter tout appareil d'une érudition qui serait ici déplacée' (1: ii). In short, he presents Mme de Chastenay's memoirs to the public as piquant, charming, elegant, but intellectually and emotionally undemanding.

In his introduction to the 1987 edition of the memoirs, the historian Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret identified the character of the writer with that of the work itself, repeatedly describing both of them as 'aimable'. Although he praised Mme de Chastenay's skill in drawing portraits, handling details and capturing atmosphere, he nevertheless denied her a place among the greatest French memoir-writers. 'Elle est femme, et femme de goût,' he conceded, but

'les grandes vues dominatrices lui échappent, et sa plume ne taille jamais dans la pureté du cristal des maximes pour la postérité.'¹¹

Chaussinand-Nogaret certainly does not ignore the author's accomplishments, nor does he simply reduce her personality to a rather insipid 'amabilité'. Nevertheless, he does not pursue the darker side of the memoirs and fails to probe the evident tensions which they contain. The chief objective of the present chapter, in contrast, is to examine the complex relationship that exists between the author and her work by focusing on the way in which Mme de Chastenay's presentation of the past was shaped by the circumstances in which she was writing.

The memoirs as they exist today were not Mme de Chastenay's first attempt at the genre for she notes that she had begun to keep a record of events when she was not yet twenty. Soon after arriving at Versailles in 1789, where her father was attending the States General as a representative for the nobility of his native Burgundy, she had become caught up in the prevailing mood of optimism. This was a period when there was great faith in the power of words to regenerate an ailing nation and when reading and writing had consequently become significant forms of political participation.¹² As she presents it, her journal was imbued with this heady atmosphere and took shape initially as an outlet for her heightened emotions:

'[...] je lisais au lieu de dormir. Quelquefois je me

levais agitée, j'écrivais un journal de faits et de réflexions [...].’ (1: 115)

While her father and brother remained in Paris during the winter of 1789-90, Victorine and her mother returned to Châtillon-sur-Seine. Although she was now removed from direct contact with the heart of the revolution, through the letters which she received from her brother and through her own voracious appetite for words, she presents herself as having counteracted her geographical marginality. Central to this metaphorical relocation is the writing of her journal:

‘Je ne m'ennuyais pas. Je travaillais beaucoup; mon journal allait son train: j'écrivais sur toutes les questions, je lisais avec ardeur.’ (1: 136)

A few days after the Fête de la Fédération (14th July 1790), the Chastenay family was reunited in Paris. Referring to what seems to be late summer 1790, Victorine makes her first direct reference to memoir-writing:

‘Je commençais alors des mémoires historiques du temps, qui ont été détruits comme le reste; M. de Clermont m'entendait lire quelques morceaux de cet essai, il en parut content et me pria de lui confier le cahier tout entier. Je m'y refusai [...].’ (1: 141)

Following the sequence outlined above, it would appear that the journal and the historical memoirs formed two distinct projects, the composition of the former beginning over a year before that of the latter. The extent to which the two overlapped at this point is difficult to judge.

Until her family moved to Rouen in mid-1792, Victorine's attachment to her journal is shown to have been intense, and the urgency with which she transformed lived experience into narrative seems to mirror the revolutionaries' own passion for words:¹³

‘[...] je lus beaucoup, j'écrivis sur beaucoup de sujets et je ne quittai point mon journal.’ (1: 150)

Towards the end of 1792, however, the deterioration in the political situation having made the preservation of written materials too dangerous, Mme de Chastenay, at great personal cost, destroyed her existing manuscripts. Recalling this period in Rouen, she wrote:

‘Moi, je lisais beaucoup; mais écritures, journal, tout de ma part était interrompu, et bientôt même ces papiers, qui m’étaient si précieux, furent livrés aux flammes, par prudence; j’avoue que j’en ai pleuré très amèrement.’ (1: 169)

Her hopes having been consumed by the Revolution and her words having literally been reduced to ashes, her pen remained immobilised throughout the Terror: ‘Je n’écrivais point, c’était trop dangereux’ (1: 190).

There was apparently a gap of almost two decades between her destruction of one set of memoirs in 1792 and her decision to recommence memoir-writing; and another gap of six years between the completion of the first short section of the new memoirs and their continuation. As the family papers preserved in the archives in Dijon reveal, however, Mme de Chastenay was far from idle during these years. For the period 1795-1816, the Archives départementales de la Côte d’Or contain several thousand pages which have been grouped together under the heading ‘Journal’.¹⁴ In reality, this ‘Journal’ is a heterogeneous collection of documents, including lyrical and meditative pieces on the wonders of nature; short botanical essays and descriptions of plants; accounts of visits to monuments; the notes from a series of lectures which she received from the astronomer François Arago; scattered reflections on politics and society; and a vast quantity of extracts and commentaries based on her reading. Although it cannot be regarded as a systematic account of either national events or personal preoccupations, this ‘Journal’ is not entirely divorced from the memoirs. Not only did these pieces serve Mme de Chastenay as ‘aide-mémoire’ in a general sense, but certain of them contain passages which were subsequently incorporated into the manuscript of the memoirs with only slight modification, such as her reflections on the state of French society in 1813,¹⁵ or a piece written in January 1814 which records the pressure being exerted on France by the advancing Allied forces.¹⁶

In addition to these pieces, which the memoirist herself had written, it is likely that she was also able to draw on the resources of other members of her family when composing her memoirs. Both her parents, for example, kept journals, even if only intermittently. Fragments of her mother's (dating from 1800, 1803 and 1806) relate mainly to the state of her health.¹⁷ More useful would have been the journals kept by her father. Those relating to the years 1798-1800 and 1800-1802 deal mainly with financial matters, while that which he kept between December 1810 and June 1811 concerns his candidacy for membership of the Corps législatif. In addition to these, there are several pages on the working of the Corps législatif between 1810 and 1815. Erard-Louis-Guy was also the author of numerous undated fragments. These include manuscript 'Mémoires' which cover the early period of his life and end in mid-sentence with the arrival of the Chastenay family in Rouen in 1792; an account of his arrest and imprisonment in the Conciergerie in 1794; 'Souvenirs' devoted to analysis of the causes of the Revolution and the course of events during its first months; and various pieces relating to Napoleon and the collapse of the first Restoration. Even if these papers were indeed written during his last years, as Suzanne Girod suggests on the basis of the hand-writing, the material which they contain would certainly have been available to the author's daughter in oral, if not written, form when she was composing her memoirs in the second decade of the nineteenth century.¹⁸

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between the manuscripts of Mme de Chastenay's memoirs and the published version. In the introduction to his edition of the *Mémoires* which appeared in 1896, Alphonse Roserot dismisses the subject with the remark that the text was published 'd'après le manuscrit original' (1: v), and thus effectively conceals the extensive differences that exist between the two. A hand-written note, dated 1st March 1920, which he added to the first volume of the manuscript itself, however, is more informative. According to this, Mme de Chastenay had requested in her will that the manuscripts of her memoirs were to be deposited in either the archives of the Côte d'Or or the Bibliothèque impériale. Since she had bequeathed all her papers to her maid and there were grave doubts that the memoirist's wishes would be respected, however, Alexandre Lapérouse, her friend and testamentary executor, proposed taking charge of the manuscripts himself. Possibly because they had intended to prepare them for publication, the manuscripts were still in the

possession of the Lapérouse family when Alexandre's son Gustave died. It was at this point that they passed into the hands of the latter's son-in-law, Alphonse Roserot. The two volumes which he offered to the public at the end of the nineteenth century, he goes on to explain, differ in fundamental ways from the work left by Mme de Chastenay.

In their original form, the memoirs comprise two manuscript volumes, one entitled 'Mémoires historiques' and the other entitled 'Mémoires particuliers', each of which has its own distinctive character. The first volume (the 'Mémoires historiques') is divided into two sections. In the first of these, which dates from 1810, the writer analyses the origins of the Revolution and gives an account of events up to the enforced removal of the royal family from Versailles to Paris in October 1789. The second, much longer section, written in 1816, begins with the marriage of Napoleon and Marie-Louise in 1810 and continues through to the moment at which Mme de Chastenay was writing, in August 1816. The memoirist herself plays only a very minor role as a protagonist in this volume. It is here that we find, among other things, her account of the election of representatives for the States General in the 'bailliage' of Châtillon-sur-Seine, Louis XVI's entry into Paris after the fall of the Bastille, the October Days, Malet's attempted coup in 1812, Napoleon's confrontations with the Corps législatif, and Louis XVIII's entry into Paris. Here, too, are periodic surveys of the state of France and Europe and portraits of the major political figures of the Revolution, Empire and Restoration, such as Fouché and Talleyrand.

The second volume of the manuscript (the 'Mémoires particuliers'), which the writer began in 1817, opens with a genealogical note tracing her ancestors from the sixteenth century onwards and goes on to record the life of Victorine and her family between the early 1770s and 1818. It is this volume which contains most of the details about the author's studies, her publications, her friendships and the proposals of marriage which she received.

The two volumes of the published edition, therefore, do not correspond to the two volumes of the manuscript. As Roserot explains in the note penned in 1920, it is the volume entitled 'Mémoires particuliers' which forms the core of his edition of the memoirs. To this, he has added copious extracts from the 'Mémoires

historiques' and a preface constructed by fusing together '[les] principaux passages' from the two prefaces written by Mme de Chastenay for each of the two volumes, one dating from 1810 and the other from 1817. The manuscript note of 1920, however, does not record all the modifications made by Roserot. One important modification, which he discusses neither here nor in the introduction to the published edition, is his decision to alter the temporal framework of the manuscripts and end the published text with Louis XVIII's return to Paris after the Hundred Days.

As a result of Roserot's editing, evidence relating to the origins and progress of Mme de Chastenay's memoirs in the published text is sparse and perplexing.¹⁹ From the manuscripts, however, it is possible to trace in detail the development of the work.

As was noted above, the 'Mémoires historiques' were composed in two stages. From a note inserted in the top right-hand corner of the opening page of the manuscript, it is clear that Mme de Chastenay began writing on 4th May 1810. Although she does not indicate when she completed the ninety-five manuscript pages which make up what she designated 'le 1^{er} chapitre' of her memoirs, it is clear that she began work on 'le 2^e chapitre', which covers the period between the opening of the States General and the march on Versailles in October 1789, on 16th August 1810 (MH, p. 101). It is not known when she finished working on this second chapter, but there is a gap of five and a half years before the next indication of a date ('le 3 février 1816'), which appears at the beginning of a page which is labelled both '3^e cahier' and '1^{er} cahier' (MH, p. 201). To judge from the temporal markers contained within the five 'cahiers' which follow, this second section (433 manuscript pages) was written in approximately six and a half months. She began the second 'cahier' on 26th March 1816 (MH, p. 297), the third on 6th May (MH, p. 391), the fourth on 30th June (MH, p. 487) and the fifth on 28th July (MH, p. 583), marking the close of the memoirs with the date 14th August 1816 (MH, p. 634).

The 'Mémoires particuliers' were begun just over ten months after Mme de Chastenay had completed the 'Mémoires historiques', and she appears to have

worked intensively on this second volume of memoirs, filling almost 750 large manuscript pages in thirteen months. The first segment, which ends with her family's move to Normandy in the summer of 1792, carries the date '20 juin 1817' at the top of the opening page. The second segment, which was begun on 13th August (MP, p. 91), covers the period between the storming of the Tuileries in August 1792 and the acquittal of Victorine's father in September 1794. The third segment, which recounts the writer's activities through to the coup of 18 fructidor 1797, was begun on 29th September (MP, p. 191). Almost two months later, on 20th November, Victorine began work on the fourth segment, recording her recollections of the period through to the publication of the *Calendrier de Flore* (MP, p. 289). Perhaps because of interruptions, the pace of composition appears to have slowed down slightly at this point for it took the writer over two months to complete each of the next two sections: the fifth, which covers the years 1802-1808, was begun on 16th January 1818 (MP, p. 381); and the sixth, which ends with the Kellermann marriage plan of 1812, was begun on 19th March (MP, p. 477). The seventh, which covers the period between 1812 and Napoleon's return from Elba, was started on 26th May (MP, p. 577) and completed by 8th July, when Victorine began working on the final section (MP, p. 669). According to a note within the text, this concluding section, in which she reviewed her life after the second Restoration, was completed within a few weeks, on 25th July 1818 (MP, p. 741).

What emerges from this examination of the manuscripts is the complexity of Mme de Chastenay's memoirs. What she produced was not one unified work, introduced by a single preface and drafted methodically over an eight year period, but three separate pieces of work, accompanied by two prefaces and composed in three relatively short stages. The tripartite structure of the memoirs means that the question of origins and intentions must therefore be broken down into three questions: Why did Victorine de Chastenay begin writing historical memoirs in 1810 and then abandon her work? Why did she begin writing historical memoirs again in 1816, and why did she turn her attention to the Restoration at this time instead of continuing from the point at which she had left off? And, having announced in the last paragraphs of the 'Mémoires historiques' that she intended to return to that work at a later date, why did she apparently change direction and begin writing the 'Mémoires particuliers'? Underpinning these three questions is

another: For whom were the memoirs written? It is difficult to provide definitive answers to these questions, however, for Mme de Chastenay's opening gestures in the prefatory sections which accompany each of the two manuscript volumes frustrate, rather than facilitate, communication as her fundamental objectives are both present and absent; and the pattern of revelation and concealment visible in the prefaces is repeatedly played out in the memoirs which follow.

Although Mme de Chastenay reveals in the first line of the manuscript that the point of departure for the 'Mémoires historiques' was the twenty-first anniversary of the opening of the States General, she glosses over the reason why this particular anniversary should have triggered her desire to write. While a clear sense of urgency pervades the opening paragraphs of these memoirs ('Je me sens pressée de finir mes souvenirs,' she writes; 'j'éprouve le besoin de dire avec candeur ce que j'ai vu ou ce que j'ai cru voir'), the reason for this urgency is never given: no reference is made to internal or external pressures, such as her impending fortieth birthday or the increasing oppressiveness of the Napoleonic regime at this time. She even remains vague about the scope of the work, declaring 'je n'ai d'autre plan arrêté que celui de présenter les événements dans leur ordre et de chercher l'histoire du coeur humain dans celle de la révolution' (MH, p. 1).

While it is uncertain exactly when Mme de Chastenay abandoned her memoirs of the Revolution, it is reasonable to assume that she did so either late in 1810 or early in 1811. If this is the case, it is probable that work was interrupted because Victorine diverted her energy into her father's campaign to gain admission to the Corps législatif, as she had done when he had sought election in 1800 (1: 424-25). Erard-Louis-Guy, nominated as the candidate for Châtillon-sur-Seine, arrived in Paris on 30th December 1810 in order to solicit support for his candidacy and was elected to the Corps législatif on 4th May 1811.

The reason for Mme de Chastenay's return to memoir-writing in 1816 can only be surmised as no preface was composed specifically for these new memoirs. Given the date of their composition and their contents, however, it seems that they were born of their author's desire, as a constitutional monarchist, to consolidate - but also to bring an end to - the gains of the Revolution by creating a monument to 'la

Charte' which had been promulgated by Louis XVIII in June 1814. Although the focus of this second section was the Restoration of the Bourbons, as the 'Mémoires particuliers' make clear,²⁰ it was nevertheless tied to the previous section by the writer's preoccupation with the theme that liberty is ancient and that, far from being incompatible with monarchy, it is at its most secure when representative government is combined with the rule of a wise and dignified monarch.

From the last page of the manuscript, we learn that these memoirs on the Restoration were halted because the writer had brought her story of events up to date. Having noted Vaublanc's replacement by Lainé, Victorine writes:

'Je suspens ici mon récit; je me promets de le reprendre un jour et je vais laisser créer l'histoire. Plusieurs événements arrivés depuis trois mois [~~'depuis le 30 avril'~~] ouvriront mes nouveaux mémoires, entre autres, celui de la conspiration énergiquement repoussée à Grenoble, et l'événement plus doux du mariage de M. le duc de Berry. Peut-être des faits de guerre occuperont-ils ma plume! Puisse le ciel en préserver!' (MH, pp. 633-34)

Given these remarks, Mme de Chastenay's decision to shift her focus from historical events to her own life when she returned to memoir-writing in the summer of 1817 is, at first sight, surprising; and, in spite of the short preface which introduces this second set of memoirs, the reasons for the change in orientation remain open to speculation.

One important factor was surely the circumstances in which Victorine was working. Since leaving Paris with her family in November 1815, she had been living in Burgundy, travelling no further than Dijon. Here, deprived of both first-hand experience and direct contact with those at the centre of events, since her father was involved in administration only at local level and Réal was in exile, she had had to rely heavily on newspaper reports in order to keep abreast of politics. Frustrated by such methods, she may have decided to turn her attention to a subject about which she was much better informed: herself and her family.

Although it is possible that Mme de Chastenay did not resume her historical memoirs because she felt that her sources of information were insufficient for the task, it should be noted that Erard-Louis-Guy's letters during the years 1816-1818 and the sections of Victorine's 'Journal' in the archives in Dijon which relate to the same period, as well as the memoirs themselves, all show signs that the memoirist and her father were disappointed with those who had come to power after the Restoration and disapproved of many of the measures taken by the government. Early in 1816, for example, Erard-Louis-Guy wrote (probably to his brother-in-law) that 'cela va mal' (original emphasis):

'Cela va mal parce que la Chambre des députés extravagante, celle des pairs ne vaut peut-être pas mieux, mais on en peut bien moins juger parce que, chez eux, tout se passe à huis clos, et s'ils disent des sottises, ce sont des secrets qui se gardent en famille; quant au ministère je ne le crois pas fort.'²¹

As Suzanne Girod has pointed out, the incompetence of ministers, the government's inadequacy in dealing with economic matters and its misguidedness in prioritizing issues such as the abolition of divorce and the establishment of new bishoprics are recurrent themes in his letters between 1816 and 1820.²²

Similarly, although she appears to have retained her faith in Louis XVIII himself, Victorine criticized the quality of those who were elected in 1815 (the government of the time, she writes, had 'un caractère d'incapacité'; MH, pp. 611, 613), deplored the atrocities perpetrated by the ultra-royalists in the Midi after the Restoration (MH, p. 591) and condemned the anti-Bonapartist fanatics who brayed for blood during the trials of Ney and Lavalette (MH, pp. 591, 629). She may have begun writing personal memoirs in 1817, therefore, because she preferred to avert her thoughts from a government whose actions were, with increasing frequency, a source of disillusionment.

Another possible explanation for the shift in orientation is that Mme de Chastenay felt that she had not adequately fulfilled the objective which she outlined in the introduction to her 'Mémoires historiques': 'chercher l'histoire du coeur humain dans celle de la révolution' and 'répandre quelque jour sur les positions individuelles qui trop souvent échappent à l'histoire'. Since her account of the Revolution ends only a few months after the storming of the Bastille, and since

neither the memoirs written in 1810 nor those written in 1816 casts much light on the obscure individuals whose lives add the colour and texture that bring the past alive, Victorine may have turned to the composition of memoirs which centre on herself, her family and her friends with the aim of filling what she regarded as serious omissions in her earlier memoirs. As she herself acknowledges in the 'Mémoires particuliers', in a passage relating to the events of 18 fructidor 1797, the public story reveals only one facet of the Revolution and Empire and 'tout événement politique entrainé dans la destinée des personnes les plus éloignées des places' (MP, p. 258/*Mémoires*, 2: 311). The 'Mémoires particuliers', in other words, would serve as a complement and a supplement to the disjointed and largely 'fleshless' 'Mémoires historiques'.²³

As well as the desire to flesh out the 'Mémoires historiques', there were other, more personal incentives for Mme de Chastenay to look back at her life at this time. Undoubtedly, one factor was her age and her consciousness of aging for she begins the 'Mémoires particuliers' by attributing her retrospective impulse to the realization that she has reached a significant turning-point in her life:

'Je me sens pressée à cette époque de ma carrière que je puis en appeler le retour de reporter mes regards sur ces jours écoulés de ma vie qui ne sont pas tout à fait un songe.' (MP, p. 1)

If 'carrière' is read as a synonym for 'vie', then it seems that the forty-six year old Victorine de Chastenay, like the fifty year old Henriette-Lucie de La Tour du Pin, was motivated to write her memoirs by her awareness of the fact that she had entered that transitional phase, beyond which a woman slid into old age and social marginality: 'Entre quarante et cinquante ans,' observed Sainte-Beuve in 1849, is '[l']âge ingrat pour les femmes'.²⁴ It is possible to see the memoirs, therefore, as an attempt by the writer to fix moments of her past before they slipped into oblivion, to recapture her lost youth and preserve it for the benefit - and pleasure - of her future self. All these ideas are certainly present in the manuscript preface to the memoirs where Victorine, echoing earlier writers such as the cardinal de Bernis and Rousseau, declares: 'Ranimons le passé afin d'en jouir encore, ce tableau pourra dans l'avenir me présenter quelques leçons' (MP, p. 1).²⁵

It may not have been her age alone that prompted Mme de Chastenay to turn her gaze back on her own life, however, for the opening sentence of the preface lends itself to a second interpretation. If 'carrière' is taken to mean 'path' or 'career' (and since the writer is a woman there is inevitable irony in the use of this term), rather than 'life'; and if 'le retour' signifies, not 'le retour d'âge', but simply a change in direction, a moment of reversal, then the writer's sense of urgency may have arisen from her realization that the independent, fulfilling life which the circumstances of the Revolution and Empire had opened up for her was on the point of disappearing. Certainly, in the 'Mémoires particuliers', the Restoration is presented as an event which constituted a distinct watershed on a personal level. Contrasting the Restoration with the pre-1814 period, she wrote:

'J'entendais dire autour de moi qu'il était bien plus agréable de solliciter maintenant que sous le régime antérieur. Je doute que les personnes qui ont eu de sérieuses affaires à traiter, et à des époques différentes, l'aient véritablement pensé. [...] Il est vrai que mon appui était devenu moins nécessaire ou n'était plus qu'à demi voulu.' (2: 431-32/MP, p. 623)

When one considers that Victorine was residing in the provinces when she wrote the 'Mémoires particuliers', away from the centre of political events in Paris, and at a time when her value as an intercessor had greatly diminished, it is reasonable to believe that she turned to her past because the act of recollecting a time when her activities were of vital significance and reconstructing it in the form of a memoir was a way to regain control of her life and combat her relegation to the margins of society after the reestablishment of the Bourbons.²⁶

Given her observation, at the end of the manuscript (MP, p. 739), that after twenty-one years of marriage her sister-in-law, 'toujours meilleure et toujours mieux aimée', could increase the family's happiness in only one way - by bearing a child - it may be that Victorine was also moved to write personal memoirs by the desire to erect a monument that would preserve the Chastenay family name when it seemed to be on the verge of extinction. Another possibility is that her decision to write about her life was influenced by her close ties during these years with the young daughter of Murat, a local administrator. This child, she writes,

'est le premier enfant qui m'ait été livré, à moi seule, chaque jour et durant quelques heures. J'aimais à la tenir sur mes genoux, à étudier ses impressions; et je me trouvais payée bien amplement de mes soins quand, revenant d'elle-même à moi, elle me mettait ses bras autour du cou et m'embrassait avec tendresse!' (MP, p. 736)

If she wrote for the benefit of this child, whom she described as her 'écolière', it would explain why she decided to abandon her memoirs after the departure of Murat and his family. 'Maintenant il est préfet, maintenant il nous quitte,' she wrote on 18th July 1818:

'Je vois partir en ce moment la société qui, depuis deux ans et demi, a fait le charme de mon existence. Je ne sais pas si jamais je reprendrai ces mémoires.'
(MP, pp. 739-40)²⁷

The suggestion that the memoirs might have been envisaged as some sort of family monument, brings to the fore the question of readership: for whom was Victorine de Chastenay writing? According to Alphonse Roserot, in the note which he attached to the first manuscript volume in 1920, the 'Mémoires historiques' were addressed 'au grand public'; and this is supported by the author's remarks in the prefatory section of this work. Here, she explains that she is writing with a view to publication, though only in the distant future; and, like Stendhal,²⁸ she states that she will leave others to give the memoirs their final form:

'Je ne me propose point d'imprimer tout ce que je me propose d'écrire. Ceux qui me survivront, jugeront de l'intérêt que ma relation pourra avoir. Ils en disposeront à leur gré. J'écris pour être lue un jour; je pense que mon écrit pourra devenir utile parce qu'il sera vrai. Mais ce n'est pas en présence de mon siècle que je puis m'exprimer avec l'entière franchise que je promets à la postérité.' (MH, p. 1)

That she envisaged publishing these memoirs would help to account for the

tensions in the preface between self-effacement and self-assertion. For example, her elimination of all traces of the first-person singular from the opening paragraph apparently attaches her work resolutely to the historical branch of memoir-writing; and, in the second paragraph, her use of a conditional form ('[...] s'il arrivait que je me misse en scène [...]') suggests that self-revelation in the memoirs, far from being her prime objective, is fortuitous and exceptional. By proposing to realign the spotlight of history and illuminate 'les positions individuelles qui trop souvent échappent à l'histoire', however, she also retains the potential to bestow upon her own life a degree of prominence that it would not otherwise receive.

An oscillating construction, where explicit reluctance to foreground one's personal story is combined with implicit reluctance to exclude it entirely, also occurs in the memoirs of other women. For example, according to the preface attached to her work, Adèle de Boigne's initial intention in writing had been to record what she had heard from her parents about their youth and the court at Versailles.

Although the scope of her memoirs subsequently expanded so that her own life became part of their subject-matter, she takes great care to point out that the autobiographical element never came to dominate her work. Indeed, she appears to have regarded it as something that had to be explained, justified and minimized in order for her to retain her respectability as a woman memoir-writer. Explaining why she went beyond the transcription of the second-hand memories passed down from her parents, she wrote:

'L'oisiveté, l'inutilité de ma vie actuelle, m'ont engagé à continuer le récit de souvenirs plus récents; j'ai parlé de moi, trop peut-être, certainement plus que je n'aurais voulu; mais il a fallu que ma vie servît comme de fil à mes discours et montrât comment j'ai pu savoir ce que je raconte.'²⁹

That a cautious approach to the issue of personal visibility in their work should be a recurrent feature of women's memoirs of the period is not surprising for, as Mme de Genlis highlights in the preface to her *Mémoires*, the woman who put herself figuratively 'en scène' by exposing her life to public scrutiny in print ran the risk of being identified with the morally reprehensible and socially marginalized woman who put herself literally 'en scène' - the actress or prostitute. Anticipating the

horrified reaction of 'les gens du monde' when confronted with this scandalous woman who has dared to publish her memoirs during her lifetime, Mme de Genlis responded to the hypothetical protests '*qu'il ne faut pas se mettre en scène, qu'une femme surtout doit éviter l'éclat, etc, etc.*':

'Un auteur n'est que trop accoutumé à se *mettre en scène* lorsqu'il a fait imprimer une grande quantité de volumes [...]; aussi depuis long-temps suis-je entièrement blasée sur les injustices, les écrits satiriques, les libelles et la crainte de me *mettre en scène*.'³⁰

In contrast to the 'Mémoires historiques', the 'Mémoires particuliers', according to Roserot, were intended for the writer's family and friends 'et peut-être aussi ses compatriotes bourguignons'.³¹ Victorine herself is less explicit about her intentions for this work. The only reader she refers to directly is her future self - 'ce tableau pourra dans l'avenir me presenter quelques leçons' - although she also alludes to the small circle of friends and family who had been 'les protecteurs de [son] enfance, les amis de [sa] jeunesse, les compagnons de [sa] destinée'. Whether or not the manuscript was to be available to them before her death, however, remains unclear.³² It is also unclear how far the eventual readership of these memoirs was to extend. Never does she state unequivocally that the 'Mémoires particuliers' are to remain unpublished. On the contrary, the numerous references to the 'Mémoires historiques' which occur in the 'Mémoires particuliers', and which indicate that Mme de Chastenay intended the two works to be read intertextually, suggest that she came to regard them as two volumes of a single work, inextricably bound together, with the preface to the earlier work effectively standing before both of them. Such a scenario would imply that the writer was prepared to countenance the posthumous publication of at least sections of her personal memoirs. Her will, moreover, reveals clearly that she intended that both volumes of her memoirs should be available to the public: '[elle] avait ordonné,' notes Roserot in 1920, 'que ses Mémoires manuscrits fussent déposés soit aux Archives de la Côte d'Or, soit à la Bibliothèque impériale'.

(ii) Between History and Autobiography

Introducing her account of an accident in which one of her hands was badly injured, Mme de Chastenay declared: 'C'est mon histoire que j'écris' (2: 13). Although it occurs in the 'Mémoires particuliers' (MP, p. 430), in its ambiguity this statement captures the complexity of the memoirs as a whole. On the one hand, they are her story - a (re)construction of her own life through to 1818; on the other, they are her version of history. She writes herself into history, then, on two levels. Firstly, as a protagonist, she weaves her own life and that of her family inextricably into the fabric of national destiny. Secondly, as narrator, she weaves her own politically-charged version of the Revolution into post-revolutionary historiography. In the memoirs, these various strands feed into each other in such a way that no clear lines can be drawn between history and autobiography or between the life recorded within the memoirs and the role of the memoirs within the life of the author. For the purposes of the present analysis, however, an initial distinction will be made between the way in which Mme de Chastenay constructs her account of the period and the ways in which she writes herself into history as a protagonist.

(iii) Madame de Chastenay and the Memoir as History

Mme de Chastenay's approach to the past is fraught with ambiguity. She reiterates, in both sets of memoirs, that she is not writing history in the manner of a historian and repeatedly draws attention to the many gaps in her account of the period. She explains, for example, that she cannot follow in detail the Allied advance on Paris in 1814 (MH, p. 283), nor the circumstances leading up to the royalist revolution in Bordeaux in March (MH, p. 285), nor the reestablishment of Napoleon in 1815 (MH, pp. 463, 466), nor the discussions in the *Chambre des députés* in the session which opened in October 1815 (MH, p. 609), nor the trial of *maréchal Ney* (MH, p. 619). On occasions, she even explicitly adopts the position of simple handmaiden to the historian. 'Peindre ce qui se passa dans les quinze jours écoulés entre le 5 et le 20 mai [1815] est une tâche au-dessus de mes forces,' she writes; 'mais je serai encore assez fière si les matériaux que je rassemble peuvent être recueillis et mis en oeuvre un jour' (MH, p. 463).

Mme de Chastenay's protests about the inadequacy of her work as history,

however, are not marked by self-deprecation, as is frequently the case in the memoirs of women. Unlike Adèle de Boigne, for example, who describes her work modestly as 'ces barbouillages' and defines her 'spécialité' as 'le commérage',³³ Victorine uses no such disparaging terms when referring to her memoirs. Indeed, far from suggesting that the composition of history is beyond her capabilities, she intimates her intention of returning to the subject of the Revolution at a later date in order to write a detailed history of the Constituent Assembly (1: 113/MH, p. 117). Furthermore, she attempts neither to 'domesticate' her work nor to diminish the assertiveness implicit in her decision to write for public circulation by claiming that she was responding to a request from others (as do Georgette Ducrest and Adèle de Boigne), or that she drew her inspiration from her relationship to a famous (male) relative and was writing uniquely in order to immortalize his deeds (as in the case of Charlotte Robespierre or Mme de Bonchamps).

Victorine's treatment of the past is thus at once unpretentious and ambitious, an example of her conformity to contemporary notions of 'femininity', but also of her efforts to push against the boundaries of 'the female sphere'. Ostensibly, the role which she assigns herself in the preface to the 'Mémoires historiques' is a relatively modest one. She will explore those aspects of the past which the historian tends to disregard and will disregard those which the historian routinely places at the centre his text. Her only plan, she states,

'[est] celui de présenter les événements dans leur ordre et de chercher l'histoire du coeur humain dans celle de la révolution. Le texte des décrets m'échappera souvent; les détails des plus glorieuses campagnes me seront souvent interdits; les plus éloquentes orateurs ne revivront pas dans mon ouvrage. Je m'étendrai, sans proportion peut-être, sur certains événements que j'aurai mieux connus; je traiterai brièvement ceux qui m'auront été plus étrangers.' (MH, p. 1)

The proposal that her memoirs should fill in the gaps or silences of history as it was traditionally defined was certainly not novel.³⁴ On the contrary, as was noted

in Chapter One, it was a concept which had long been associated with the memoir genre, and with the works of women memoir-writers in particular. One of Mme de Motteville's explicit intentions when she composed her memoirs in the second half of the seventeenth century, for example, had been to furnish future generations with a rounded portrait of her mistress and friend, Anne of Austria. Believing that the queen would enter the works of historians only in so far as her actions had political or military repercussions - 'une longue régence [...], une guerre étrangère et deux guerres civiles' - Mme de Motteville took it upon herself to fill the lacunae that she imagined would be left in the queen's story:

'j'ai cru qu'il était nécessaire de joindre, aux grands événemens que les historiens ne manqueront pas de faire passer à la postérité, le particulier de sa vie, dont ils ne sont peut-être pas si bien informés que moi, qui l'ai étudié avec beaucoup d'application, par le zèle et la tendresse que j'avois pour elle.'³⁵

In the 1820s, Georgette Ducrest adopted a similar position to that of Mme de Motteville with regard to the Empress Josephine. In this case, however, the notion that memoirs were being written in the spaces left by historians is presented in explicitly gendered terms. Previous works, wrote Mme Ducrest, have paid insufficient tribute to Josephine's goodness and generosity, and the explanation for this lies in 'la qualité et le rang des écrivains qui s'en sont occupés'. They are men, and men's system of values differs from - and prevails over - that of women. Everything that is characteristically 'feminine', in consequence, is in danger of being consigned to oblivion:

'Des hommes d'état devaient surtout chercher à éclaircir tous les faits importans des événemens qui se sont succédés depuis vingt ans. La politique absorbant toutes leurs pensées, à peine trouvaient-ils nécessaire de s'entretenir d'une femme dont le plus beau titre était (pour eux) d'avoir été la compagne d'un héros. Les vertus naturelles à notre sexe, une sensibilité qu'ils ne peuvent concevoir, étaient presque inaperçues à leurs yeux toujours fixés sur les grandes et sanglantes scènes de notre histoire moderne.'

Ducrest, in contrast, announces that since she is moved only by 'des choses à [sa] portée', such as another woman and her 'qualités attachantes', she will use her memoirs to fill in the gaps which she perceives in the distinctly male genre of 'history proper'.³⁶

What both Motteville and Ducrest recognized were the possibilities which the memoir opened up for those who were culturally and politically disempowered.³⁷ The memoir, in other words, is a genre which allows for the subversion of the masculine values that inform the world of the historian, and which enables those writers and subjects which are excluded from the official historiographical process (women and the feminine) to be written back into the historical record. It is this space on the margins of literature and society that Mme de Chastenay, too, exploits in order to transmit to future generations her vision of the Revolution and Restoration, as well as a version of her life.

Although neither the editors of Victorine's memoirs nor the historians who have drawn on them, have regarded the work as anything more than 'témoignage' - a reproductive, rather than a creative, historical exercise - the memoirs reveal that Mme de Chastenay was well aware that the pen could be a powerful weapon and history a political tool. For example, when she lost her temper with the consul Lebrun for what she believed was unfair treatment, she recalls: 'Il m'était échappé de dire en propres termes que j'écrirai l'histoire et que chacun y serait jugé' (1: 428). She also records the covert warning given to Napoleon by Chateaubriand, for which the writer incurred the emperor's displeasure:

'M. de Chateaubriand perdit sa part d'intérêt dans le *Mercur* pour y avoir dit que Néron ne savait pas que Tacite enfant croissait sous son règne même et devait le présenter quelque jour à l'effroi de la postérité.'
(2: 80)³⁸

Conscious, as she evidently was, that a written account had the potential to influence the way in which future generations would perceive the past, Mme de Chastenay is the very antithesis of the naive chronicler who records his/her memories haphazardly, without regard for their possible effect. Although the

'Mémoires particuliers' are less obviously structured around the political evolution of the nation, it is my contention that both volumes of memoirs offer an interpretation of the period that is strongly coloured by the context in which they were written and by the writer's own political convictions.

The coherence of Mme de Chastenay's account of the Revolution and Empire derives from her admiration, as a liberal monarchist, for the Charter promulgated by Louis XVIII in June 1814 and her desire to defend it in the tense political climate of the Restoration. As a compromise document, born of the need to forge a unified nation from a multiplicity of hostile factions, the Charter of Louis XVIII dissatisfied those at both ends of the political spectrum.³⁹ On the one side, therefore, it had to be safeguarded against those Liberals and Republicans who wished to push further towards the goals of the Revolution and who were alarmed by the thought that it had been 'octroyée' by a king who dated it from the nineteenth year of his reign. On the other, it had to be safeguarded against those ultra-Royalists who opposed the idea of making any concessions and who wished to turn the clock back unconditionally to the pre-revolutionary period. In Mme de Chastenay's eyes, both these courses of action were prejudicial to the stability and future prosperity of France, and the only feasible solution lay in the adoption of a middle course of reconciliation and accommodation. What she endeavours to show in the memoirs is how the Charter represents this middle way, by binding the *ancien régime* to the Revolution, the Revolution to the Restoration, and the French people to the king.

As a thread tying together the 'Mémoires historiques' and 'Mémoires particuliers', as well as the turbulent years between the 1780s and 1815, the Charter appears at various points in the memoirs. More than a document granted on a single occasion, the Charter, for Mme de Chastenay, was also a metaphor for the spirit of liberty which she believed held together French society and animated her preferred mode of government - a representative system in which the balance of power rested in the hands of the monarch; and it is this which explains her tendency to focus on the Charter's symbolic value, rather than its actual contents.

What was granted by the king at the Restoration, according to the memoirist, had its origins in the aspirations of those enlightened members of the aristocracy and

third estate who were behind the 'true' or 'good' revolution which began in the last decades of the *ancien régime* and was cut short by the Terror, for the first glimmerings of the Charter of 1814, she suggests, are visible in a work published on the eve of the Revolution by the Burgundian lawyer Claude-Bernard Navier, a close friend of her father: 'C'était la charte, avec la nuance printanière que vingt-sept ans de froissement ont flétrie; c'était plutôt une préparation à la charte que la charte même,' she writes (1: 74/MP, p. 59).⁴⁰ A quarter of a century later, the proclamation issued on the 12th March 1814 by the duc d'Angoulême and drafted by the mayor of Bordeaux - a proclamation which is taken to signify the start of the Bourbon restoration - is expressly referred to as the basis for the Charter (2: 293). The publication of the declaration of Saint-Ouen on 2nd May 1814 is marked out as the next crucial stage in the process. This was the moment when the word 'Charte' entered the political vocabulary; and it is this word, writes Mme de Chastenay, '[qui] distinguera toujours l'oeuvre durable de la Restauration de toutes les ébauches précédentes' (2: 352). When the Charter itself is promulgated, she describes it as 'cette charte royale, monument national', fostering the impression that it embodies harmonious union between the monarch and his people, and between past, present and future (2: 373). Although she concedes that it might have been better, in the circumstances, if the Charter had been 'acceptée' rather than 'octroyée' by the king, she nevertheless defends Louis XVIII on the grounds that his decision removed all suspicions that the Charter had been forced upon him (2: 373). Her admiration for what she describes as a 'monument précieux de la sagesse et de la méditation' (2: 367), it should be noted, is in stark contrast to the Orleanist Mme de Boigne's undisguised disappointment at 'la manière dont on avait atténué les engagements de Saint-Ouen'⁴¹ - a modification which Mme de Chastenay strategically ignores, just as she glosses over the extent to which the Charter, after the second Restoration, continued several of the proposals in the *Acte additionnel aux constitutions de l'Empire*.⁴²

Victorine's desire to convey the impression that the Restoration, through the Charter of Louis XVIII, was the fulfilment rather than the antithesis of the Revolution had a profound effect on the composition of her memoirs as a whole.

Fundamental to the validation of this interpretation, she recognized, was the

integration of the Revolution into French history as something other than a wholly execrable break with the past. This she attempts to do in two ways. Firstly, she suggests that change, by the 1780s, was neither unwarranted nor unexpected. France, at this time, she maintains, was in urgent need of reform: the country was on the verge of bankruptcy; the taxation system was unjust and ineffective (1: 58/MH, pp. 63, 67); the moral fibre of the aristocracy had been corroded by the libertinism of the Regency (MH, p. 22); and at the apex of society, there was 'une cour de moeurs faciles' (1: 84). Considerable emphasis is laid on the flaws inherent in the *ancien régime* which were vitiating the monarchy. 'L'espèce de tutelle dans laquelle on tenait les princes,' she explains, 'ne leur laissait guère de route libre que celle qui les menait au vice' (1: 91). As a result of this, the royal family was in the process of being destroyed both morally and materially: the duc de Bourbon 'consumait sa jeunesse auprès des danseuses de l'Opéra; [...] il mangeait avec ses maîtresses l'argent qu'elles recevaient du frère de Louis XVI [i.e. le comte d'Artois]' (1: 95-96). The ideas of the enlightenment, however, according to Mme de Chastenay, were already in circulation before the States General were convoked, and the deterioration in the political situation after 1789 was therefore an unfortunate - because unnecessary - deviation from the natural course of progress: 'les circonstances de la Révolution ont fait un torrent d'un beau fleuve dont le courant était décidé' (1: 57). In other words, even without the Revolution, the world of the *ancien régime* would not - and should not - have escaped modification.

The second way in which Mme de Chastenay redeems the Revolution as an era in French history is by drawing a distinction between its positive and its negative aspects; and between the initial phase, in which idealism prevailed, and the later phase, in which brutality and terror reigned. According to the memoirs, the 'true' Revolution was that associated with the reforming element in the Constituent Assembly, and it is with the proponents of enlightenment - not those of bloodshed - that 'l'esprit de la Révolution' is identified. Described as 'un esprit d'émulation, et, si l'on veut d'orgueil qui ne connaît rien d'impossible, qui ne redoute aucun effort, pour atteindre un but désirable, qui ne veut trouver aucune entrave dans l'ordre social' (2: 368), it appears in Mme de Chastenay's work as a force for creation, not destruction. The Revolution, she is adamant, is not to be confused with the cruelty of the Terror. During the first two years of the Revolution, she

argues,

'c'était au nom des grands principes de liberté constitutionnelle et de celle d'égalité civile que tous les députés venaient d'être réunis et de recevoir leurs mandats. Il faut se reporter à cette situation si l'on veut juger de ces commencements d'une manière saine. Il ne faut pas se persuader que l'unique sagesse dut être de ne rien innover et que le mot de patriotisme fut, et dut être, un cri de coupables factieux.' (MH, p. 118)

Like the Liberal historians of the Restoration who are discussed by Stanley Mellon,⁴³ Mme de Chastenay emphasises the complexity of the Revolution and draws attention to the shift which occurred in the summer of 1792, when debate was replaced by violence as the principal means of effecting change, and when 'les révolutionnaires à discours et à prétention de vanité' gave way to the baser, more bloodthirsty 'gens à bonnet rouge' (1: 153).⁴⁴

Having dissociated the Revolution from the Terror, Mme de Chastenay's next task was to explain the rise and fall of Napoleon in such a way that it was the Bourbons and the Charter of Louis XVIII - not the Bonapartes - which were linked with the interests of France. The disintegration of the Directory (1: ch. 20) is therefore presented in such a way that the revolution of 18 brumaire 1799 appears to be 'un événement inévitable' (1: 409) and Napoleon the inevitable choice for leader. On his return from Egypt, she writes, 'la raison de la patrie, la gloire des armes, la modération de tous les gens raisonnables, l'appelaient à prendre le gouvernail d'un vaisseau presque sans pilote' (1: 410). In her account of the following fifteen years, however, Mme de Chastenay reveals the fragility of this initial bond. On the one hand, like Chateaubriand in *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons*, she depicts Napoleon as an outsider, a foreigner, and thus an 'unnatural' ruler for the French. Moreover, as the memoirs progress, the emphasis shifts from his Italian/Corsican (i.e. non-French) origins (2: 1, 13) to his fundamentally anti-French behaviour: repeatedly portrayed as indifferent to their suffering, he is referred to as 'le destructeur de la France' (2: 305). On the other hand, she distances the French from the despotism of Napoleon and thus also

from his defeat by the Allies. By late 1813, according to Mme de Chastenay, it was the Corps législatif (the body to which her father belonged), not the emperor, which was to be identified as the guardian of the nation. For example, the report by a legislative commission which provoked the dissolution of the session in December of that year is described in the memoirs as 'le manifeste de la France soulevée contre le despotisme et les excès de Napoléon' (2: 253). For the author of the 'Mémoires historiques', this document signifies the definitive break between the French people and their nominal ruler:

'Nous n'étions plus, aux yeux des étrangers, les esclaves de Bonaparte; nous étions une nation qui avait fait sa propre gloire, qui en avait été séduite elle-même, mais qui pouvait dire à l'Europe: "Les vertus de ce pays sont à lui, ses torts sont au maître qui prétend continuer son asservissement".' (2: 259)

The memoir-writer not only separates the nation from Napoleon, however, she also links the successes of the foreign powers with the wishes of the French themselves. There was no conquest, she urges, for if the Allies were able to advance it was because 'nous étions ses complices' (2: 288). She is equally eager to impress on her readers that the Allies fought uniquely in order to crush Napoleon:

'Ce n'était point la cause de la maison de Bourbon qui avait ligué les puissances, ce n'était point cette cause qui avait amené en France les souverains et leurs légions [...].' (2: 294)

Far from being imposed on the French or being the tools of alien powers, the restored Bourbons are depicted as having returned in response to intense popular enthusiasm - 'les explosions d'amour' (2: 332). In her highly emotive account of the arrival in France and the entry into Paris of the various members of the royal family, great emphasis is placed on the spontaneity of feeling and on the mutual joy and affection that characterised these occasions. It is the Bourbons, she implies, who are the natural rulers of France since their hearts are in tune with those of all 'reasonable' Frenchmen.

Although Chaussinand-Nogaret omits the sections on the Hundred Days and the second Restoration in his edition of the memoirs, these are integral parts of Mme de Chastenay's interpretation of the period and of her vindication of the Charter. The failure of the first Restoration, she makes clear, does not signify the failure of Louis XVIII's Charter. On the contrary, it highlights the danger of ignoring the changes which had taken place during the Revolution and Empire. According to Mme de Chastenay, the failure of the government's policies on military and religious affairs and the bad feeling created among those who had acquired their aristocratic titles from Napoleon were, in large measure, the result of an injudicious refusal by reactionaries to follow the Charter and acknowledge these changes. Similarly, when Napoleon made a second bid for power in 1815, it was the Charter, the memoirs imply, which made the resurrection of despotism impossible. 'Le libéralisme avait tué sa puissance,' writes Mme de Chastenay, and she cites a conversation between Réal and the newly reinstated emperor in which the latter was informed:

'Nous ne sommes pas ce que vous nous avez laissés; nous avons joui d'une liberté réelle; il ne faut pas songer à nous charger d'entraves, et les moyens de force ne peuvent plus qu'être odieux.' (2: 501)

In Mme de Chastenay's account, Napoleon's downfall, like his rise to power, was an inevitability. Not only does she present him as a man who lacked the ability to inspire genuine affection, but she also claims that the pressing need to conciliate others ran contrary to his personal desire for absolute mastery, and this desire for absolute mastery jeopardised all hopes of establishing stable government. For the memoirist, the failure of the Hundred Days is thus the ultimate proof that France's future strength will derive from the gentle, paternalistic rule of the legitimate monarch, the moderation of the Charter which he has bestowed, and the co-operation of those with the wisdom to carve out a middle path between Republicanism and reaction:

'La France ne devra son salut qu'aux modérés, qu'on calomnie, et à leur souverain, plus modéré qu'eux.'
(2: 552)

That the 'Mémoires historiques' and the 'Mémoires particuliers' tell essentially the same story of France's progression towards 'l'établissement de la liberté' is not their only connection, however, for, although the scope of the writer's role as a protagonist differs, these two volumes are also bound together by the fact that her principal interest, in both cases, is the motors of history - the forces which lie beneath the surface and which are revealed by illuminating 'les positions individuelles'.

It is the richness of the Revolution as a human tapestry and its complexity as lived experience, therefore, that Mme de Chastenay brings to light in her memoirs. She reveals, for example, that it was fuelled by - and went astray because of - a combination of factors: the 'Philosophes', 'trop anti-religieux', who stimulated discussion of religious, political and economic issues in society at large and attacked 'les institutions usées et subsistantes' (MH, pp. 3, 5, 60); the weakness of Louis XVI (1: 84-87); the obstinacy of reactionary aristocrats (1: 110-11); the activities of self-interested individuals who endeavoured to serve their own ambitions (1: 103-04); the recklessness of those 'enlightened' aristocrats 'qui jouaient avec du feu à côté d'un amas de poudre [et] qui croyaient aux bons effets de quelques actes de violence et d'injustice' (1: 103-04); the thoughtlessness of the *curés* who let themselves be swept along, 'et qui, fêtés à tout hasard par les membres du tiers état, se sentaient disposés à soutenir leur cause' (1: 100); the impetuosity of provincial lawyers 'enivrés de leur rôle' (1: 113); the economic hardship experienced by the lower classes in the late 1780s which made them susceptible to incitements to rebellion (MH, pp. 84, 119); and the desire by some of the third estate to avenge past injuries to their pride (Delmasse, for example, had reputedly been treated with contempt by his schoolfellows and rejected by the woman whom he loved because he was of inferior social status; 1: 271).

She also returns repeatedly to the notion that the Revolution blurred the distinction between good and evil, rendering absolute standards inappropriate for judging the period. As it is depicted in the memoirs, this was a time of nuances when 'les demi-vertus' and 'les demi-bienfaits' have to be taken into account. 'Dans les crises où tout se bouleverse,' she states, 'tout n'est pas vice, tout n'est pas crime, tout n'est pas vertu dans un même caractère, dans une même conduite' (1: 330). Furthermore, by drawing on personal experience and focussing on obscure

individuals, she exposes the disjunction that often existed between revolutionary ideology and the behaviour of individual revolutionaries. In the provinces, she suggests, it was boredom and a consequent thirst for novelty - not a thirst for blood - that led ordinary citizens to throw in their lot with the Revolution:

'Je crois en vérité que la Société populaire, comme distraction et comme spectacle, était dans la plupart des petites villes ce qui attirait surtout des sectaires à l'opinion vague de la République et de la Nation. [...] D'honnêtes artisans, de petits commerçants, trouvaient agréable le soir d'aller entendre lire tous les journaux, d'en raisonner, d'en pérorer avec leurs égaux en talent, et de se sentir partie de l'ordre politique.' (1: 240-41)

Consequently, when the private sphere came into contact with the public one and the author and her family were brought face to face with representatives of the Revolution, these frequently proved to be men and women who retained a fundamental sense of compassion amidst the atrocities of the Terror. Among those whose kindness she acknowledges are Lambert, *président du comité de surveillance* in Rouen and his sister (1: 182-83); Alquier, a 'régicide par peur' (1: 194-95); Godebin, a member of the *comité de surveillance* (1: 195); Guimberteau, a member of the Convention (1: 197); Gamart, 'un chirurgien, fort jacobin, mais brave homme' who accompanied them from Rouen to Châtillon (1: 205); and Bernard, one of her father's guards after his arrest. Indeed, in many cases, it seems that adherence to the Revolution was a complete sham. For M. Stone, for example, the Revolution was something to be put on and taken off along with his 'bonnet de police' (1: 272-74); and 'le farouche et redouté Guillet', it is claimed, adopted a ferociously republican persona quite contrary to his natural disposition uniquely out of fear for his own safety (1: 197).

In short, although it has been obscured to a large extent by the editors of the published versions, Mme de Chastenay's contribution to the history of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century France through her memoirs is not patchy 'témoignage', but a coherent liberal monarchist interpretation of the years between the 1780s and the Restoration and a powerful and complex history of the period in social and psychological terms, which highlights the gaps that would normally be left in the historian's account.

(iv) Madame de Chastenay and the Memoir as Autobiography

Foremost among the 'positions individuelles' illuminated by the memoirs is that of the memoir-writer herself. This realignment of the spotlight of history, so that the period between October 1789 and the collapse of the Empire is charted primarily in terms of the Chastenay family's experiences, raises interesting questions about the role of the memoirs in the life of the author and the effect that this had on their composition. Written for the most part at a time when Victorine, still unmarried and childless, had been displaced from Paris and from her function as an intercessor, they should be seen, I believe, as an attempt to counter geographical and social marginalisation through self-definition and self-affirmation.

When Mme de Chastenay's name appears in historical works on the Revolution or Empire, it is almost invariably because of her connection to, or her observations on, the major military, political or artistic figures of the period. This is hardly surprising, given that one of the principal ways in which she writes herself into history is by noting meticulously the various circles in which she moved, the salons which she frequented and the people with whom she came into contact. Far from concealing the writer by deflecting the reader's attention away from her, however, these references to others in the memoirs play a crucial role in Mme de Chastenay's definition of herself.

In the first place, the number, range and status of the individuals whom she mentions give the impression that the writer occupied a position at the heart of political and intellectual life in France between the fall of Robespierre and the Restoration. She recounts in detail a long conversation which took place between herself and Bonaparte in 1795 and notes, with undisguised satisfaction, that it was still fresh in his memory after sixteen years (1: 282-85; 2: 133-35). She shows herself assiduously cultivating the acquaintance of the most influential of the Directors: 'il se passait rarement deux jours,' she writes, 'sans que j'allasse au Luxembourg, soit chez Treilhard, soit chez Barras' (1: 358). Through them, she points out, she came into contact (among others) with Tallien and his celebrated wife, with Mme de Staël and Benjamin Constant, with Fréron and Bernadotte, Marie-Joseph Chénier and Mme Visconti. During the Empire, she was warmly received by the Empress Joséphine and notes that 'il ne se passait guère de semaine, durant l'hiver, que je n'allasse le soir une fois ou deux aux Tuileries' (2:

100). She was admitted to the salons of prominent ministers, such as Champagny, Talleyrand and Fouché. From these radiated other avenues: contacts with foreign diplomats (such as the Corsini or cardinal Albani), or with travellers (like François Péron and Alexander von Humboldt); and, through her friendship with l'abbé Turlot, she became acquainted with the scholars who worked in the Bibliothèque impériale, such as the hellenist François du Theil and the orientalist Antoine Silvestre de Sacy and Antoine-Léonard Chézy. At the Restoration, she continued to mix with those who were prominent in a variety of fields. She was introduced to the king of Prussia and became 'une de ses connaissances' (2: 363). She brought herself to the attention of the duchess of Wellington and became 'sa connaissance particulière et presque son amie de société' (2: 460). She frequented various salons, including those of Mme de Duras, Mme de Polignac, Mme de Brancas and Mme de Staël, where she encountered 'beaucoup de gens marquants' (2: 448). She also mingled with the finest - and, she emphasises, only the finest - of the English visitors to Paris. 'Nous allions chez plusieurs Anglaises, mais seulement chez celles d'un rang élevé et d'une brillante existence,' she explains, and proceeds to list some of the fascinating Englishmen whom she engaged in conversation (2: 455). In addition, the memoirs also testify to Victorine's acquaintance with such diverse figures as Arago and Cuvier, Pozzo di Borgo and maréchal Macdonald, Mme de Genlis, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand, Fontanes, Grétry and Talma. This is a woman, the memoirs affirm, who had established a network that encompassed the realms of politics and diplomacy, as well as those of literature, science, music and drama.

In the second place, these contacts are presented in the memoirs in such a way that they serve to highlight and validate the writer's own social, intellectual and artistic achievements. When she recalls Barras' salon, for example, she notes not simply those who frequented it, but also how she transposed herself from its margins to its metaphorical centre through her verbal and musical skills. Timid and isolated during her earliest visits, she gradually extended the group of males that gathered around her. At first, she writes, 'je causais avec qui voulait bien me répondre'. With time, and by dint of perseverance, however, she became an integral part of the company:

'Tallien, Réal et quelques autres me ménagèrent

l'intérêt des meilleurs amis de Barras. Fréron s'y livra entièrement. [...] Barras lui-même s'accoutuma à moi; il me pria de venir souvent dîner chez lui, et enfin j'y devins réellement à la mode. [...] je causais beaucoup, et comme la galerie de Barras n'avait point de centre, à proprement parler, j'avais le plus souvent mon cercle, dont on [exclusively male] se rapprocha volontiers [...].’ (1: 348, 366-67)

Her rise to prominence, she points out, had been helped by a concert, organised at her instigation, at which she played ‘une petite sonate que Pradhère accompagna’ and as a result of which ‘[elle passa] pour une virtuose’ (1: 349). She seems to have been equally well-thought-of in the household of Champagny where, she recalls, ‘J'étais [...] très à mon aise. [...] quand on avait dîné le cercle principal était autour de moi’ (2: 89). In both these cases, emphasis is placed on the author's centrality, on the talents which justified this and on the pleasure which she derived from it. She also appears to have relished the thought that she astonished and disconcerted men like Talleyrand and the consul Lebrun. For the former, she writes, she was ‘un objet de surprise’ (1: 367); while for the latter she was

‘une espèce d'animal rare. Une demoiselle appelée *Madame*, paraissant plus jeune que son âge [...], connaissant tout le monde, au niveau de toutes les conversations, considérée par ceux dont elle était connue, et recherchée par ceux qui ne faisaient que la rencontrer: tout cela était étranger à l'échelle de ses idées.’ (1: 427)

By presenting herself through the eyes of Lebrun, it should be noted, Mme de Chastenay was able both to depict herself in flattering terms and to distance herself from a charge of vanity: she both is, and is not, the speaker. She goes on to suggest, moreover, that she not only baffled the consul, but also alarmed him because she was one of the few people he encountered who were shrewd enough to perceive his mediocrity.

Criticism of the capacity of political, administrative or literary figures, either explicitly (as in the case of Lebrun) or implicitly (for example, her decision not to follow the advice given to her by Joubert and Fontanes when she was soliciting a

favour from the University; 2: 143), is only one of the means by which the memoir-writer draws attention to the quality of her mind, however. Another is by offering deflected images of herself. Barras, for example, is quoted as having told her: 'si j'ai une affaire pénible, je veux vous avoir pour avocat' (1: 386); Marie-Joseph Chénier is shown asking her judgment on a play which he had reworked in response to her criticism (1: 398); Bernardin de Saint-Pierre is reported to have predicted a glorious future for her botanical work, the *Calendrier de Flore* (1: 454); and, when Sismondi took the author as his partner in a waltz, Mme de Staël, according to the memoirs, declared 'qu'elle voyait tourner sous ses yeux l'Encyclopédie' (2: 448). What the reader is being offered throughout the memoirs, from various angles, therefore, is the image of an intelligent and talented woman, neither weak nor unbecomingly 'masculine', who was endowed with great charm, tenacity and perspicacity.

The spatial dynamics of margins and centres, of boundaries and their destabilisation, forms a strong undercurrent in Mme de Chastenay's memoirs.

'On m'appelait partout *madame Victorine*, ou *la citoyenne Victorine*; lui seul a affecté de m'appeler toujours *mademoiselle de Chastenay*, voulant, me dit-il, imprimer plus de respect à ceux qui pouvaient causer avec moi.' (1: 360).

This note on the form of address that Barras used towards her epitomises the writer's liminal position during the period covered by her memoirs. Fully integrated into neither one side nor the other, Victorine functioned as a zone of convergence, or bridge, between the progressive and the conservative wings of the aristocracy, between her family and the revolutionary authorities, between the old aristocracy and the society of the Directors, and between the faubourg Saint-Germain and the Tuileries; and it is first and foremost as an active figure mediating between the different sides that she writes herself into the history of France between 1789-1815. The image of herself which she creates in the process, however, is an unsettled and, in many ways, paradoxical one for, throughout the memoirs, as we shall see, self-effacement (both literal and syntactic) is checked by strategies which fix the reader's attention on the writer's personal qualities, her singularity and her achievements.

The memoir-writer's role as an active figure takes various forms, all of which, however, involve her making her voice heard, either directly or - as in the case of her entry into the public arena in 1789 - indirectly. When the writings of the lawyer Navier (whose liberal ideas were shared by her father) were attacked in a provincial journal by her conservative cousin in the spring of that year, Mme de Chastenay took up her pen and joined the fray:

'Un bon gentilhomme de notre société, M. de Fresne, me dit en riant de répondre à mon cousin, et je fis, en effet, une lettre dont les copies se multiplièrent. Elle fut envoyée à Dijon, où elle obtint un succès singulier. Je ne me souviens plus de cette lettre, sinon de cette phrase que j'y avais placée: "En général, MM. les nobles ne distinguent pas assez la justice de la bienfaisance". Cette vérité, qui m'échappait d'instinct sur le compte de la noblesse, mille fois j'en ai depuis trouvé l'application parmi ceux qui peuvent exercer une suprématie quelconque.' (1: 74-75)

Her account of this episode is a characteristic combination of modesty and self-valorisation. On the one hand, she plays down the affair and her part in it. She points out that she acted neither on her own initiative nor on her own behalf; she dissociates herself from the fate of her work through the use of passive constructions after the initial 'je fis [...] une lettre'; she claims to have forgotten what she wrote, and the sentence she does recall is attributed to instinct, which was conventionally associated with women, as opposed to the more elevated faculty of reason, which was associated with men. On the other hand, she still manages to impress on the reader the accuracy of her observation and her skill as a polemicist.

What she describes as her 'début politique', however, occurred in 1794, following the publication of a decree ordering nobles to quit 'les villes maritimes'. On this occasion, she was dispatched by her family to request permission from the local authorities for them to postpone their departure from Rouen on the grounds of her mother's weak health. Her encounter with an official named Gaillon, though ultimately fruitless, nevertheless reveals glimmerings of her intrepid spirit. When he remained unmoved by her case and informed her that he recognised only 'la

loi', instead of withdrawing silently from the room, she responded boldly: 'Citoyen, la justice et l'humanité sont à l'ordre du jour' (1: 203). This act of defiance is immediately followed in her account by a display of timidity: Gaillon's threat of arrest, she recalls, 'rompit le cours de [sa] fière éloquence' and she seized her papers and fled.

The real significance of this episode, however, lies in the fact that it forms a pendant to the later scenes of interrogation in prison, in which we see Victorine once again speaking out against authority. In these later scenes, she succeeds in subverting the traditional balance of power that exists between male and female, prisoner and interrogator, on two levels. As protagonist, she is depicted turning the tables on her accusers and seizing control of the situation through her wit and her anger. As narrator, she asserts (albeit retrospectively) her superiority over those men whose official positions at the time gave them power over her physically. Recalling her first appearance before the local authorities, she declares:

'Je me sentais si supérieure à tout ce monde, et à ceux qui me harcelaient surtout, que je répondais peut-être avec trop de hauteur.' (1: 235)

During the second session, she continued to laugh inwardly at her interrogators who remained ignorant of the multiple layers of meaning that she had introduced into the letters about which they were questioning her. While she manipulated two languages with ease, she suggests, they lacked the necessary intelligence to express themselves adequately in one: 'mes réponses,' she writes, 'furent aussi nulles que les questions étaient peu spirituelles'. Moving on to describe the moment when she learned that her case was to be laid before the Revolutionary Tribunal, the author heightens the dramatic intensity by inserting a passage of direct speech. Since this is the only such passage in her account of the interrogation, it serves to fix the reader's attention unequivocally on Mme de Chastenay herself: it is her voice that enters history, while those of her captors are almost entirely erased.

'A ces mots ["le Tribunal révolutionnaire"], ce furent la colère, l'indignation, et non la peur, qui saisirent

d'abord mon esprit. "Je vois, dis-je, le sort qui m'attend. Je ne me fais aucune illusion, mais il est odieux que douze hommes, dont pas un seul ne me connaissait il y a un mois, se soient unis pour conspirer ma mort".' (1: 249)⁴⁵

It is with the account of her efforts to protect her father when his name was put on the list of *émigrés* that the crucial turning-point is reached. Initially timid and acting on the initiative and with the guidance of others, Mme de Chastenay makes the transition to independent action when Delmasse, *chef du bureau d'émigration*, whom she had gone to consult on behalf of her father, informs her that the matter is out of his hands. Forced to quit Dijon and return home immediately, she leaves her companion Alexandrine de Guernichon behind and sets out alone to break the news and formulate a plan to save her father's life:

'Me voilà en route à six heures, seule sur le grand chemin, moi qui depuis quelques semaines seulement allais à peine dans les rues, sans guide. [...] Je voulais à la fois soutenir mon courage, afin de conserver mes idées, et réunir une espèce de plan pour le présenter à côté des nouvelles désastreuses que j'allais apporter chez nous.' (1: 221-22)

This passage brings to the fore one of the ironies of the Revolutionary situation. In that it obliged them to take an increasingly active part in the protection of their family's interests, the Revolution was (at least in certain respects) an emancipatory experience for women of the aristocracy. Despite the fact that she was literally incarcerated for a short period, the impression that the Revolution constituted in her life a force for liberation is indelibly imprinted on Mme de Chastenay's memoirs. From the time of her father's arrest through to the Restoration, we see her field of action gradually expand. In her tireless efforts to serve others, she moves, both symbolically and physically, out of domestic and into public space. When her father was sent to stand trial in Paris for 'unpatriotic' behaviour,⁴⁶ she inundated his lawyers with letters and petitions (1: 258, 261). Later, after her brother's marriage (which, in an inversion of standard gender roles, she arranged), she took on the formidably complex task of trying to obtain

the 'radiations' of her sister-in-law's father and brother: 'je pris la conduite de tout' (1: 317), she writes. In contrast to her first encounters with authority, when her actions were guided by the advice of others, Victorine emphasises that in the Laguiche affair it was she alone who took control, organising others and working indefatigably in order to bring about a successful conclusion:

'J'allais presque chaque jour veiller sur mon dossier, le feuilleter, le copier, l'apprendre par coeur, et commenter les lois diverses [...]. Moi seule j'avais décidé l'éloignement de M. Casimir; je forçais en quelque manière Mme de Laguiche à ne pas quitter Hermé; moi seule j'agissais enfin, j'étais devenue [le] tuteur [de mon frère et de ma jeune belle-soeur], et de ce moment, en parlant d'eux, je m'accoutumais si bien à dire *mes enfants*, que j'en ai longtemps après conservé l'habitude. Quelle responsabilité pesait en ce moment sur moi seule!' (1: 324, 326-27. Original emphasis.)

Just as she unsettled the boundaries between the sexes in her life by adopting the traditionally male role of protector, Mme de Chastenay also unsettles them grammatically here in her account of that life by juxtaposing the masculine noun 'tuteur' - a position which no spinster could legally hold - with a verb whose pronominal subject is clearly feminine.⁴⁷

Conventional notions about male and female spheres of activity are also insidiously challenged by the author when she recounts her involvement in legal battles. At the end of 1795, for example, when it became necessary for her family to bring a case against the factor of their estate at Essarois, it was apparently she alone who was entrusted with the matter. After a laconic note that she left for Dijon 'avec [son] frère', Henri vanishes from the scene and the reader's attention is focussed unequivocally on Victorine. Once again, she signals her extraordinary levels of dedication and endurance, while her lack of pretension merely accentuates the singularity of her 'victoire':

'Je passai la nuit à rédiger et à recopier un mémoire que M. Morisot [the lawyer] reçut à son réveil. Etonné de ce prodige, en lui-même si simple, il fit circuler dans le palais cette pièce [...]. Je gagnai mon procès tout d'une voix, et par suite tous ceux qui en découlèrent

rapidement.' (1: 291-92)

This combination of symbolic presence and physical absence on the part of the memoir-writer can also be found at several other points in the memoirs. At her father's trial, in the disputes with factors and in 1804 at the trial of Polignac and Rivière (after the Pichegru-Cadoudal-Moreau conspiracy), she effectively - yet discreetly - freed herself from the strictures regarding women and the professions, creating a space for herself in the public sphere by lending her 'voice' symbolically to Réal, Morisot and Guichard respectively through the exercise of her pen. Although it was a man who stood up in the court-room on each occasion, the reader is left in no doubt that the words which came out of his mouth were (at least in part) those of a woman. In the first case, without detracting from Réal's glory, she draws attention to her own small, but valuable, contribution to the case for the defence:

'Moi aussi, je fus associée à cette admirable défense. Réal cita une lettre qu'on lui avait remise et que je ne savais pas alors lui adresser [...].' (1: 265)

When she recounts the two later occasions on which she was actively involved in legal battles, she asserts herself more forcefully, conveying the impression that it was she - not the male lawyers with whom she collaborated - who played the leading role. Furthermore, she does not attempt to disguise her belief that she was distinctly superior to the lawyer engaged by the Polignac family, who not only repeatedly called upon her aid, but was also manifestly unsuccessful when he neglected to heed her advice:

'M. Guichard vint me consulter et me demander un plan pour une sage défense; j'osai le lui tracer [...]. M. Guichard suivit en partie mes idées; je crois qu'il aurait dû les suivre tout à fait.' (1: 476-77)

On the day before the 'plaidoyer', she recalls,

'Guichard, tout éperdu, me fit prier de venir et j'allais chez lui aussitôt. [...] je restai avec le défenseur jusqu'à plus de minuit, écrivant, proposant, scrutant jusqu'aux syllabes, préparant des effets de réplique.' (1: 477-78)

Here, where private and public history intersect, Mme de Chastenay takes what is so obscure that it is unlikely to appear even as a footnote in the work of a historian - her own part in the trial of Jules and Armand de Polignac - and places it at the centre of her account of the event. In shedding her original anonymity through the composition of her memoirs, she also shatters one of 'les silences de l'histoire'.

Mme de Brancas and Mme de Meun (through whom Mme de Chastenay became involved in the affairs of the Polignac brothers and Rivière) are only two of the many individuals who appear in the memoirs as recipients of the author's aid. Although she claims that her power was less extensive than it was frequently believed to be, the protests themselves become testimonies to her skill and her singularity, for the difficulties which were inherent in her situation and to which she returns repeatedly - her age, her limited financial resources and the lack of a husband - make her achievements appear all the more remarkable. She notes, for example, that she was able to serve well the interests of Valentin Haüy, founder of the Institution des jeunes aveugles, in spite of her youth and the sheltered existence which she led:

'je puis dire [...] qu'alors je fus sa protectrice et que, moi jeune personne n'allant point seule, ne sortant point, j'écrivais pour lui de belles lettres aux membres influents des comités de l'Assemblée constituante et du nouveau département de Paris [...].' (2: 154-55)

Even when she recounts her abortive attempt to secure her father's entry into the Corps législatif in 1800, she focuses not on her ultimate failure, but on how close she came to success in a matter where the odds were stacked against her. 'Le succès des affaires se compose de deux moyens,' she explains:

'Il faut [...] autant de position que d'adresse; je manquais par la position, et mes efforts ne purent tout pallier. [...] je le dis encore, je fus près de réussir.'
(1: 425)

It is at this point that Mme de Chastenay's endeavour to write herself into history fuses with her efforts to construct a self-history. The depiction of herself as an active figure is an integral part of a story which is profoundly marked by the fact that it was written by a spinster and woman author at a time when both were looked on at best with suspicion and at worst with outright hostility. In order to gauge the enormity of the tasks that Mme de Chastenay was setting for herself, however, we first need to consider in greater detail the spinster's place in early nineteenth century French society.

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as has been noted already, saw an intensification of Rousseau's ideal of domesticity and an increased emphasis, in both philosophical and medical works, on the notion that women were 'naturally' dependent creatures. As writers such as Roussel, Virey, Moreau and Cabanis repeatedly pointed out, women were not only physically weaker than men and emotionally more volatile (on account of their 'sensibilité exquise'), they were also anatomically predestined for maternity. In a work published in 1802, for example, Virey declared that

'L'existence de la femme n'est qu'une fraction de celle de l'homme; elle ne vit pas pour elle-même, mais pour la multiplication de l'espèce, conjointement avec l'homme; voilà le seul but que la Nature, la société et la morale avouent. [...] La seule destination du sexe est le mariage et la reproduction de l'espèce.'⁴⁸

Spinsterhood, in consequence, was an 'état-contre-nature' - a deviation - and the spinster, in the words of Balzac, was 'un être qui a manqué à sa vocation'.⁴⁹ Although she had never been depicted in very favourable terms, in the early nineteenth century, according to Cécile Dauphin, there was a new level of viciousness in images of the 'vieille fille'.⁵⁰ Balzac's Mlle Gamard, for example, whom he calls 'cette figure typique du genre vieille fille',⁵¹ is a repulsive amalgam of selfishness, despotism, pettiness, bitterness, 'méchanceté', 'rigidité' and 'sécheresse'. Situated 'en dehors de la société',⁵² she is also subject to a constant 'gêne intérieure', which the novelist attributes to her inability to fulfil the role allotted to women by nature. True happiness, it was frequently claimed, would constantly elude those who were denied the expérience of maternity. 'Je

ne crois pas,' declared the narrator of the *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Avrillion*, for example, 'qu'il y ait de bonheur réel dans ce monde pour une femme qui n'est pas mère!'⁵³ This image of the spinster's world as one of constraint, limited horizons and profound dissatisfaction is also evoked by Ernest Legouvé, who emphasises the humiliation associated with not having a husband:

'Le mot de vieille fille fait frémir les pères. Ce n'est pas assez, en effet, que ce mot signifie isolement, privation des joies les plus douces, misère parfois, il faut encore qu'il dise ridicule. Une vieille fille est, pour ainsi parler, honteuse dans la vie; elle se sent sous le coup des regards et des suppositions moqueuses.'⁵⁴

The only way in which an unmarried woman could redeem herself in the eyes of society was by being a model of selfless devotion to others: parents, relatives, the poor or God. This is the second type of spinster represented by Balzac in *Le curé de Tours*. In contrast to the embittered Mlle Gamard are those women, like Mlle Salomon, who discover 'le secret d'être femmes par l'âme' by remaining faithful in their hearts to a lost love, and those who devote themselves 'à la fortune d'un frère, ou à des neveux orphelins: celles-là se font mères en restant vierges'.⁵⁵ For a woman to be worthy of respect, in other words, she had to conform to the model of the 'bonne épouse, bonne mère' figuratively, if not literally. What was totally unacceptable was that she should attempt to be - or even believe that she could be - an end in herself: it was egoism, not infertility, that was the spinster's greatest crime against the society of her time.

Like spinsterhood, intellectual pretensions in a woman were also held to be fundamentally 'unnatural' and the second was likely to lead to the first for, as Joseph de Maistre wrote to his daughter Constance at the start of the century, 'Une coquette est plus aisée à marier qu'une femme savante'.⁵⁶ Devoting herself to study, moreover, was not only held to be dangerous for a woman's mental and physical well-being,⁵⁷ it was also profoundly detrimental to her social identity. According to Cabanis, it resulted in desexualisation and thus, ultimately, in social alienation. In privileging intellectual activity, he wrote, 'une femme sort de son sexe. [...] Dans la jeunesse, dans l'âge mûr, dans la vieillesse, quelle sera la place

de ces êtres incertains qui ne sont, à proprement parler, d'aucun sexe?'⁵⁸ It followed from this that a girl's education was to be dictated by her future social role as a wife and mother and her specifically 'female' nature: her 'sensibilité', her 'esprit vif et léger' (Virey), and her 'raison pratique' (Rousseau). As a result, original thought and literary creativity were not encouraged; rhetoric was not studied and Latin was thought to be unnecessary (since the professions were closed to her) and unfeminine. While 'un savant' earned universal respect, 'une femme savante', as de Maistre's remark indicates, was more likely to be the object of ridicule. 'Savante', moreover, was frequently taken to be a synonym for 'pédante', and pedantry in a woman was an unpardonable offence.⁵⁹

A woman's greatest fault, it appears, however, lay not in studying, but in choosing to put her learning on display. 'Amasser pour enfouir' was the guiding principle, even for writers who were among the most liberal on the subject of female education in the late eighteenth century, such as Choderlos de Laclos. Having recommended that a woman should study poetry, oratory and scientific works, as well as history, novels and travel literature, Laclos concluded the third essay which he wrote in response to the question posed by the Académie of Châlons-sur-Marne in 1783: 'Quels seraient les meilleurs moyens de perfectionner l'éducation des femmes?' with the wish 'qu'elle y gagnera un assez bon esprit pour ne jamais montrer ses connaissances qu'à ses amis les plus intimes, et pour ainsi dire, comme confidence'.⁶⁰

Writing for publication inevitably contravened such prohibitions, and even those who were prepared to countenance the existence of women authors did so only within very narrow limits. Works on serious subjects - such as science, politics, philosophy or history - were judged to be beyond their competence and out of keeping with their essential femininity. More appropriate genres were manuals on female education and morally elevating literature for children since these made the woman's writing an extension of her 'natural' role as 'la mère éducatrice' (as embodied, for example, in Rousseau's Julie), and kept its production and consumption within the confines of the domestic realm. As a contributor to *Le Courier des spectacles* advised Mme de Staël in 1807: 'Si vous aimez les lettres, vous pouvez les cultiver paisiblement, faire même des romans dont la mère

prescriera la lecture à sa fille'.⁶¹

One of Mme de Chastenay's principal aims in writing her memoirs, it can be argued, was to discover and make known the meaning or purpose of a life which, according to the conventional notions of femininity and female destiny outlined above, was fundamentally 'un non-sens'. This attempt, however, was only partially successful for her work is fraught with unresolved tensions. At the root of these tensions is the author's profound ambivalence towards the Rousseauist concept of woman as a self-abnegating, naturally dependent creature who could - and should - find fulfilment only through marriage and motherhood. On the one hand, she appears to have been sincerely attached to it, envying Mme Le Couteux her possession of the traditional 'bases solides du bonheur' which she identifies as 'vertu, bonté, agréments, richesse; un mari qu'elle aimait [...]; deux beaux enfants doucement élevés sous ses yeux. Point d'efforts dans sa conduite, point de trouble dans sa conscience, point de vide dans son avenir' (1: 429). On the other hand, however, she was shocked and revolted by an ideal of domesticity that negated her identity as an individual and stigmatized the spinster as a 'failure'.

Far from being a linear story of progression, Mme de Chastenay's self-history in the 'Mémoires particuliers' is depicted as a continually renewed struggle between forces of constraint and attempts at liberation, between the author's desire not to overstep the bounds of convention and her rebellion against an ideology of gender that denied her right to self-definition. In its ambiguities and its contradictions, this is a work which reveals the dilemma of the single woman torn between fear of social isolation and a sense of emptiness on the one hand, and a love of independence and pride in her own accomplishments on the other.

Two related issues preoccupy the author throughout her memoirs. The first is a desire to explain (and a feeling that she must explain) why she is unmarried; the second is a desire to testify, both to posterity and to herself, that her life had real value, and thus give the lie to the stereotype of the 'vieille fille' as an 'être improductif et inutile'. Her efforts to construct a positive self-image, however, were hampered by her apparent inability to decide precisely what that image should be.

In order to redeem her femininity, which could be cast into doubt by her lack of a husband and her decision to write and publish, Victorine de Chastenay knew that it was necessary for her to convince her readers of her devotion to her family, her submissiveness, her modesty, her virtue, and her lack of pedantry. All these elements are certainly present in the memoirs. From the outset, she fosters an image of herself as a dutiful daughter, obedient to the will of her parents and prepared to sacrifice her own happiness in order to secure theirs. Recalling the moment of enlightenment when she discovered that love and marriage were not necessarily incompatible, she claims to have taken a vow 'de tout sacrifier à l'intérêt de mes parents. [...] je me promis mieux que jamais, ou de rester à mes parents, ou de ne me marier que pour eux, mais alors de tout surmonter si leur intérêt l'exigeait' (1: 142-43). Loyal to her pledge, she records that she turned down numerous offers, including that of marriage to the nephew of the duc d'Aiguillon. Although Fortuné de Chabrilan was set to inherit '[une] fortune assez considérable', securing him as a husband, she explains, would have obliged her parents to provide a dowry that was far beyond their means. 'Les d'Aiguillon avait baissé de prix,' she continues; 'ils marchandèrent; je ne vis dans cet arrangement aucun des avantages que je voulais, en me donnant, donner à ma famille: je refusai' (1: 143).

She also draws attention to the numerous ways in which she fulfilled the conventionally female role of carer. She was continually attentive to the needs of her sickly mother, she emphasizes, even though this deprived her of her own rest and pleasure. In her account of her family's stay in Paris in 1790, for example, she points out that she occasionally got to bed very late 'car maman avait mal aux nerfs, et il fallait lire ou causer jusqu'à ce que le sommeil se fût emparé d'elle' (1: 150); while at social gatherings, she was obliged to renounce dancing because her mother, 'délicate et souffrante, se tenait presque toujours dans les arrière-salons, à cause de la chaleur' (1: 149). Her brother, in contrast, is shown to have participated fully in the political and social life of the period, attending sessions at the Constituent Assembly and joining the main group of revellers at balls. She notes the energy which she expended in helping others of her own class and her indefatigable charitable activities on behalf of the poor and the sick of Paris during the Empire (2: 153-57). Her motives in all these cases, she urges, were purely

altruistic.⁶² Furthermore, like the noble spinsters admired by Balzac, the Mme de Chastenay of the memoirs appears to have been a mother in spirit, who devoted herself zealously to the interests of her substitute 'children': her brother and his young wife, whom she repeatedly refers to as 'mes enfants' (1: 327, 340, 430); M. Dupotet '[qui] s'est plus d'une fois appelé [son] fils aîné' (2: 31); and the young daughter of Murat, who became her 'écolière' after her return to Burgundy in 1815 (MP, p. 736).

She is careful, too, to defuse potential criticism of her single status by suggesting that spinsterhood was not a condition that she chose deliberately in order to defy convention, but rather one that resulted, in large measure, from a combination of factors beyond her control: her family's financial difficulties, which were exacerbated by the Revolution, and her consequently meagre dowry; the sudden death of M. de Souza when there was the possibility that their relationship would lead to marriage (1: 143); and the obstacles raised by others, such as the sister of M. d'Aligre (1: 308) and the children of Kellermann (2: 176-77). Emphasizing that she is not a subversive 'femme-homme' who rejected marriage in order to pursue ambitions in traditionally male domains, she is openly critical of women who interfere in politics (such as the 'coteries de femmes' whose machinations brought to power the cardinal de Loménie, 1: 67-68), and she makes no radical demands for civil or political equality between the sexes. On the contrary, the memoirs imply that Mme de Chastenay subscribed without reserve to the notion that the exercise of political power should remain exclusively in the hands of men and that women should confine themselves to providing such men with 'un point de vue hors de la scène du monde', comfort and moral sustenance so that they could return to the public realm, not with 'des directions toutes faites, mais avec des forces nouvelles pour se diriger plus sûrement' (1: 68).⁶³

Although she placed herself in the public domain through authorship, Mme de Chastenay takes particular care to distance herself from the reprehensible 'femme bel esprit'. She points out, for instance, that it was not she, but two male acquaintances who were responsible for her work first appearing in print. Having been impressed by her translation of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, her friend Turlot took it to Paris where Réal, she writes, 'eut la bonne grâce de faire imprimer cet essai avec les presses qui lui appartenait' (1: 296). Even when

her works were successful, she claims to have retained a suitably feminine degree of modesty. She paid little attention, for example, to the fate of her translation of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1: 305), and the praise which she received for *Le Calendrier de Flore* did not make her in the least conceited: 'je fus moi-même étonnée du peu d'effet que j'en ressentis,' she writes (1: 445). This apparent lack of pretension is a point to which she returns in her account of the balls which she attended in Paris the year after the appearance of the final volume of her botanical work (1804). Within her social circle, she recalls,

'mes succès littéraires [...] ont été à peu près nuls. On me les a pardonnés, ainsi que mes talents, parce que, disait-on, quand par hasard quelqu'un en parlait, je les faisais totalement oublier en ne paraissant pas m'en occuper moi-même.' (1: 461)

Not only did she publish anonymously - thereby preventing her name from circulating in the public domain - but she also reiterates throughout the memoirs that her writing was not motivated by the desire to attract public attention.⁶⁴ 'Je n'avais point écrit pour un succès de vogue,' she writes with reference to *Le Génie des peuples anciens*; 'Bien souvent je le répétais: "Je n'écris pas pour être lue; je ne calcule point avec le temps"' (2: 62).

And yet, this image of conformity, this story of Victorine de Chastenay as a self-abnegating, self-effacing woman, is repeatedly disrupted by another story and by contradictory forces which project a more defiant self-image: the story of her impossible love for the married Réal and her frustration with a society that thwarted her aspirations to independence and circumscribed her activities.

The exact nature of Mme de Chastenay's relationship with Réal remains unclear in the memoirs: it is the story that is both spoken and unspoken. On several occasions, she alludes to the rumours that circulated regarding their intimacy, but treats the matter evasively, implying that they were without substance, yet never denying them categorically:

'Je sais les méchancetés que depuis on a voulu me faire, mais je doute qu'en les répétant, personne y ait

jamais positivement cru.' (1: 329; see also 1: 340 and 1: 402)

In her narrative she recreates - or perhaps simply creates? - a romance of which she is both heroine and author; and this split or double consciousness generates tensions within the work. Informed while still a young girl that she is 'faite pour inspirer une grande passion' and that if she does not marry 'une passion [...] pourrait faire le destin de [sa] vie' (1: 145), Victorine conveys directly the truth of the first part of Mme de Damas' prophetic utterance, and indirectly the truth of the second part. As a protagonist, she presents herself always as the adored object, never unambiguously as the adoring subject:

'Une âme pure, une imagination sage, un esprit occupé, une famille chère et toujours présente,* voilà ce qui se trouvait de mon côté; de l'autre un dévouement complet et chaque jour exalté d'un service nouveau.' (1: 396)

[* At this point, over two lines of the manuscript have been scrubbed out.]

'je me voyais l'objet d'une passion brûlante [...].'
(1: 429-30)⁶⁵

Furthermore, she emphasises that she strove to guide the relationship with Réal away from 'amour' towards 'amitié', and never in the memoirs does she depict herself yielding to him either verbally or physically. The image is consistently maintained, therefore, that her virtue remained intact.

Yet, even as she disguises the intensity of her attachment, she simultaneously betrays it as she writes. It emerges, for example, from the accumulation of superlatives in her description of Réal (1: 325); from the intensity of her despair when she contemplated the impossibility of their love (1: 430); and from the erotic charge of her recollections of working on the letters to him that were to become *Le Calendrier de Flore*:

'Le plaisir que j'y goûtai s'exprimerait difficilement; j'entrais dans un monde nouveau et tout charmant; [...] Chaque jour, je découvrais une merveille inaperçue;

chaque jour, je croyais créer [...]. En un mot, tout cet été, et tout le printemps qui vint après, je puis me féliciter d'avoir joui d'une sorte de ravissement que la nature peut seule produire, par l'effet toujours concordant de ses harmonies et de sa beauté.'
(1: 441-42)

In their original context, these botanical descriptions functioned as a coded language that bridged the gap between the lovers: they were the embodiment of passion translated through nature. When they are recalled in the memoirs, they function again as a second language, not between Victorine and Réal, but between Victorine and her readers, conveying her sensuality and indicating the story of unfulfilled desire which is one of the motors of the work. What we see in these passages recalling the genesis of the *Calendrier*, is a modification of Patricia Yaeger's suggestion that in women's writing 'the incorporation of a second language [can function] subversively, as an alternative form of speech which disrupts the repressions of the authoritative discourse and welcomes or shelters themes that have not yet found a voice in the text's primary language'.⁶⁶ Here, it is the language of flowers (not Latin or French, as in Yaeger's examples) which constitutes the alien language; and it is the recollection of using the language, rather than the language itself, which causes a fracture to appear in the text. In Mme de Chastenay's memoirs, however, the creation of a space in which to express her passion is, at best, an ambivalently emancipatory gesture.

An 'attachement légitime' with Réal being unattainable, Mme de Chastenay was obliged to seek an alternative means of affirming her existence and achieving happiness. From the story of her search, she emerges as a woman who both conformed to the socially prescribed model of filial devotion, piety and charitable works, and rebelled against its limitations. If the memoirs testify to the author's love for her family - for the mother whom she had idolized as a child (1: 16) and whose courage and dignity she admired; and for the father for whose safety she would have made any sacrifice (1: 223) - they also testify to her passion for independence and her desire to express her individuality - 'ce moi qui constitue, dit-on, l'individualité' (MP, p. 479) - and gain recognition for her talents.

Independence for Mme de Chastenay is identified with three things: freedom of

movement, freedom to make her voice heard, and freedom to shape her own life.

In the account of her childhood and her life as a young woman, the memoir-writer portrays her parents not simply as objects of affection, but also as obstacles to the expansion of her personality, and she looks back with amazement on 'l'excessive retraite où l'on [la] tint' (1: 119). Her mother, in particular, is associated in the memoirs with constraint. Politically conservative, she prevented Victorine from frequenting the salons of those who espoused progressive ideas during the early years of the Revolution and took her instead to those in which the daughter felt stifled by prejudice and irritated by the restrictions imposed on her speech and movements. Revolted by the pious Mme d'Albert's 'vie isolée et contrainte' and by Dubut's assertion that 'une jeune fille avec des notions d'indépendance ne pouvait se comparer qu'à un âne sauvage' (1: 146), Mme de Chastenay recalls that she was comfortable in only one salon, that of Mme de Moulins, where she was treated with respect and given liberty to express herself:

'On me goûtait mieux dans cette maison, [...] où j'avais plus de liberté, où j'étais moins clouée au fauteuil de maman, chose que je n'ai jamais pu souffrir. [...] Chez la bonne petite tante on me laissait causer avec quelques braves gens, qui avaient le courage de me trouver vraiment aimable et douce.' (1: 147)

Not only in this passage, but throughout the 'Mémoires particuliers', we see Victorine revelling in situations where she was free from her mother's supervision (such as the salon of Mme du Bourg in Rouen which she attended 'sans chaperon'; 1: 175), or where she was acclaimed for her talents and made the centre of attention, such as the musical gatherings which she attended in Rouen in 1793-94 (1: 173), in Dijon in 1794 (1: 276-77) and in Troyes in 1797 (1: 302). 'Bouger' and 'causer' - verbs of mobility and communication that defy the conventional strictures on female passivity, reclusion and silence - are consistently synonymous with pleasure in the work of this woman who described herself as 'bavarde à l'excès' (1: 16).⁶⁷

The presence of her mother curbed Victorine's activities not only in society, but also at home. When Mme de Chastenay senior arrived in Paris in 1790 to join the

rest of her family, the memoir-writer points out that it was she who was forced to modify her domestic arrangements and tolerate a contraction in the space that she could lay claim to as her own. Both the place where she laid her head and the place where she laid her books, she recalls with evident annoyance, were subject to disturbance:

'maman s'installa tout à fait dans la chambre qui avait été la mienne; j'y dormais sur un lit qui disparaissait dans le jour. [Her mother's old room was used as 'un petit salon'] un paravent y cachait mon bureau: dès que maman y recevait du monde, je transportais dans sa chambre à coucher mes livres et mes cahiers. Je ne puis dire que cela fût commode; peu de femmes de l'âge que j'avais alors envièrent ma manière de vivre à cette époque [...].' (1: 150)

In contrast to the frustration expressed in this passage is the pleasure which came from the possession of a room of her own when her family moved to Paris in the winter of 1808-1809. This was a period of true independence, Victorine recalls. She had her own apartment where she was able to live quietly, 'selon [ses] goûts', and shut her door 'aux visites en général, et surtout à celles des femmes' (2: 63).⁶⁸ She also had financial independence for the first time, enjoying 'une pension fixe et suffisante', and was able to escape the confines of the family home and move about as she pleased as her parents had acquired 'des chevaux de remise dont [elle pouvait] user sans restriction' (2: 64).

A further source of tension between Victorine and her mother was the subject of marriage. As a young girl, it was her mother's apparent lack of enthusiasm for marriage that the author claims to have found annoying (1: 51). Later, however, friction seems to have arisen from the opposite situation: when there was a possibility of marriage with M. de Sade, son of the infamous marquis (1: 402) or with Gabriel Dauvet (1: 422), for example, Victorine's decision to reject them appears to have gone against the wishes of her mother. Significantly, although the situations differed, what was at stake in each case - the writer's freedom - remained the same.

Marriage as an institution is depicted in the memoirs in two contradictory ways, and Mme de Chastenay's views on the matter appear to have evolved with age.

For the fourteen year old canoness who remained inferior to her married companions (1: 51), and for the seventeen year old girl at Plombières who was 'tenue comme un enfant' (1: 66), marriage represented liberation, in the sense that it would have granted her a recognised status in society and released her from close parental scrutiny and control. 'Dix-sept ans, quand on n'est pas mariée, n'est pas dans le grand monde l'âge heureux d'une jeune personne,' she remarks;

'on éprouve cent fois plus de contrariétés que de plaisirs; le genre de toilettes fait question chaque jour, la gaieté au bal est contenue, on vous mène, l'on vous emmène, vous ne pouvez lier une partie.' (1: 66)⁶⁹

As the work progresses, however, marriage appears in a very different light. In the later sections, it is associated, not with emancipation, but with nauseating insipidity (2: 109) and with a degree of female submissiveness that Victorine evidently regarded as intolerable. For example, she depicts herself as having been literally struck dumb by the reply which she received from one potential husband when she joked about 'l'obéissance passive qu'on [lui] avait prescrite à son égard':

"Eh bien, oui, dit-il sérieusement, c'est précisément ce que je désire; je voudrais le droit de l'exiger". Je restai muette, et il n'ajouta rien.' (2: 19)

This was not an isolated incident, for when another suitor (Kellermann) took a similarly high-handed approach several years later and wrote to inform her 'qu'il voulait être maître chez lui, dans le moindre détail comme en tout', Victorine again responded with a disdainful silence, with the unsurprising result that 'tout fut rompu' (2: 177).

That Mme de Chastenay was unmarried, therefore, was not solely the result of circumstances beyond her control. Demanding, obstinate and independent, the Victorine of the memoirs appears to have lacked the gentle, pliant nature that marriage demanded of a woman in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁷⁰ On each of the many occasions when matrimony appeared to be on

the horizon, the memoirs combine explicit claims of self-abnegation with various devious forms of self-assertion. Although she protests that she always subordinated her wishes to those of her family, making their happiness her paramount concern, she nevertheless uses the space created by the memoir in order to reassert control over her life. Through the 'Mémoires particuliers', against the plotline of Victorine de Chastenay the spinster by dint of circumstance, therefore, there runs the plotline of Victorine de Chastenay the woman for whom spinsterhood was a deliberate choice. She emphatically dispels the notion that she lacked a husband because of deficiencies in her mental or moral qualities. She points out with satisfaction that as a young woman she was regarded as a dangerous rival by mothers with marriageable daughters (1: 117), and that even when she was over forty, she was still desirable. She was forty-one, for example, when she aroused the ardour of Kellermann: 'Mon nom prononcé devant lui eut un effet presque électrique,' she recalls (2: 173). The Victorine of the memoirs, moreover, makes it plain that she did not build her life around the pursuit of a husband. We see her refusing proposals more often than we see her being refused; and, far from regretting the matrimonial plans that failed to bear fruit, she claims to have felt only relief, drawing attention instead to her superiority over many of her erstwhile suitors, including the juvenile Auguste de Damas (1: 144) and the mediocre M. de Charbonnière (1: 296). She also uses the memoirs to record how she converted herself from a conventionally passive object to an active subject by demanding that marriage contracts should meet the conditions that she stipulated, as in the case of her proposed alliance with M. de Serent (I, 70-71); or by inverting the traditional roles of male protector and 'damsel in distress', as when she became the 'utile protectrice' of the *émigré* vicomte Dauvet who was offered to her by his parents 'au prix de son retour' (1: 402, 422).

Marriage, however, was only one form of constraint against which Mme de Chastenay rebelled. Another was the constraint of courtly service for, like Mme de Boigne who adamantly refused to become what she disparagingly referred to as 'gibier de cour',⁷¹ Victorine records that she rejected offers to enter the service of Madame Joseph Bonaparte (2: 57-58) and la reine Hortense (2: 58). That this was not purely a political gesture, dictated by her lack of sympathy for the Napoleonic regime, is clear from her account of her refusal to marry M. de Serent before the Revolution (1: 70-71); and from her description of a position in the

household of the duc d'Orléans after the Restoration as 'un esclavage qui [l']eût fixée, une grande partie de l'année, dans les combles du Palais-Royal' (2: 448).

What she resented most about the society in which she lived, however, were the restrictions which it placed on female self-expression and its reluctance to acknowledge the talents of exceptional women and countenance their appearance in the public sphere. It was as an individual possessing great personal qualities that the author desired recognition; it was 'la gloire', not titles or material rewards, which she craved. 'J'ai toujours eu plus d'attrait pour le succès personnel que pour celui de la position,' she explains in recounting her attempt to be elected abbess of Epinal at the age of seventeen; 'l'ambition ne m'a jamais tourmentée, je n'en puis dire autant de la passion de la gloire' (1: 64-65). The conflict between her aspirations and the barriers raised by society comes across with particular clarity in her description of the enthusiasm with which she embraced the cause of the reformers in 1789. Like Fanny Raoul,⁷² Victorine links the forces of political oppression with those which oppress women, identifying the cause of the latter with that of the revolutionaries. It is the same people, she writes, who detest 'le savoir dans la nation et les talents dans une jeune fille'. 'Tout s'exaltait en moi,' she continues:

'La première impression produite par le bel art de la parole m'avait fait croire que j'eusse cueilli des palmes, s'il m'eût été permis d'approcher de l'enceinte où elles devaient se décerner. L'idée de n'être rien, quand le mérite allait être tout, ne me laissait pas fermer les yeux; [...] c'était la gloire qui me passionnait, c'était la gloire elle seule, et je n'étais pas seule aussi naïvement ravie!' (1: 115)

As Mme de Staël pointed out in *De la littérature* (1800), society tended to react with hostility to a woman's yearning for glory, perceiving it to be in contradiction with 'sa destinée naturelle' and conventional exhortations to self-effacement.⁷³ At the root of this hostility, she argued, lies anxiety. The woman who endeavours to raise herself 'à la hauteur de la réputation des hommes,' and who thus becomes man's rival, threatens to expose as specious the reasons given to account for women's inferior social status: if she succeeds by virtue of her intellect, she shows

that male supremacy rests on prejudice alone, and does not derive from nature.⁷⁴ To pursue 'gloire', therefore, is a subversive act. In adopting this course, women cease to be passive creatures, or what Virginia Woolf describes as 'looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size',⁷⁵ and become the active agents of their own destiny, securing a place for themselves in the minds of future generations. This is the point made by Constance Pipelet in a poem of 1797, in which she urged women to devote themselves 'aux dangers de la gloire':

'C'est à les admirer qu'on veut nous obliger;
C'est en les imitant qu'il faut nous en venger.
Science, poésie, arts, qu'ils nous interdisent,
Sources de voluptés qui les immortalisent.'⁷⁶

For Mme de Chastenay the spinster, unable to prolong her presence in the world after her death through children, writing constituted a valuable substitute. Not only did she inscribe herself in history through the numerous works published in her lifetime, therefore, she also embraced the opportunity to reinscribe herself by recording her achievements and her ambitions in the autobiographical text which she bequeathed to posterity.

The degree of attention that Mme de Chastenay gives to her studies and her literary activities in itself indicates her defiance of convention. Her childhood and adolescence are recounted almost entirely in terms of the subjects which she studied and the books which she read. Rosemary Lloyd has suggested that the accumulation of titles in the early part of the memoirs was less to give an accurate account of what she had read 'than to recreate metonymically the atmosphere of childhood through a device common to children's books, that of the list'.⁷⁷ This was not its only (or even its principal) function, however. Taken together with the mention that one of her earliest memories was that of herself reading, 'gracieuse et sérieuse' (1: 19-20); the description of her education as almost exclusively 'raisonnée' (1: 20); and her remark that 'le goût passionné de l'étude doit tenir quelque chose de celui de la liberté' (1: 29), the books listed by Victorine in the first chapters serve to establish for her readers an image of herself on which she

builds in the rest of the 'Mémoires particuliers': that of a woman with a voracious appetite for knowledge, who was capable of independent thought and intolerant of constraint. She writes that she was 'dévorée de la passion de l'étude' (2: 183), and claims that her principal delight was to be completely absorbed in her studies:

'il est certain que j'ai peut-être trop cédé à la propension de mon esprit vers tout ce qui est un objet d'étude. Jamais je n'ai été plus heureuse que quand je m'y suis plus absolument livrée.' (2: 187)

And the range of her studies, to judge from the memoirs, was extensive. As well as botany, which was regarded at this period as 'la science féminine par excellence',⁷⁸ she records an interest in less conventional subjects for a woman, such as chemistry, maths and astronomy.⁷⁹ She reveals that she was well-read in philosophy (from Plato and Boethius to Descartes, Locke and Condorcet), as well as history; and was competent, if not fluent, in several languages: English, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. She presents herself, moreover, as a woman whose attribute was a book, not as convention dictated, a needle;⁸⁰ as one who derived great satisfaction from being equal or even superior to men, particularly in traditionally male subjects, such as Latin (1: 40; 2: 458); and who had lofty ambitions, such as the desire to compose an opera (1: 455), produce a history of the Constituent Assembly (1: 113) and examine 'l'histoire de huit siècles, d'Auguste à Charlemagne' (2: 183).

The modesty that Mme de Chastenay shows in discussing her writing has already been noted. Claims that she had no literary pretensions, however, are contradicted by passages revealing the pride which she took in her published works and the renown which she hoped to acquire through authorship. In translating *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for example, she recalls that she was driven by 'l'idée de faire un nom dans la république des lettres' (1: 299). She also stresses the originality of *Le Calendrier de Flore* and notes bitterly that it never received the recognition which it deserved:

'l'ouvrage était entièrement neuf, et j'ai été mille fois copiée et pillée, pour le moins imitée, depuis sa publication, mais citée beaucoup plus rarement, car je

ne tiens à aucune coterie.' (1: 444).⁸¹

Furthermore, far from remaining within the confines of acceptably 'feminine' areas, such as translation or the composition of books on botany, Mme de Chastenay dared to publish works on serious subjects. Her frustration at the thought that knowledge should be a male prerogative is particularly visible in her account of the critical response to her 'grand ouvrage', *Le Génie des peuples anciens*, which she describes as 'l'un des plus savants ouvrages qu'une femme eût écrit depuis Mme Dacier' (2: 61). The general reaction to this work when it was published in 1808 was unfavourable. In her memoirs, the author endeavours to redeem the reputation of her *Anciens* and succeeds in turning the disdain of (male) critics into an attack on the reign of prejudice on which female subordination was founded. Identifying those who criticized her with those whose judgment does not merit great respect, she suggests that they disapproved of her work primarily because they perceived it as a threat. By publishing such a work - 'quatre gros volumes [...] du genre le plus sérieux' - she had demystified serious intellectual inquiry, revealing it to be a male domain by convention, not by nature:

'les érudits de second ordre se trouvèrent vivement offensés qu'une femme eût osé fouiller dans leurs archives et sonder le secret de leur savoir.' (2: 61)

Here, the writer associates knowledge (and the power and glory that accompany it) with a closed or secret world from which women were excluded because of prejudice, not because of an innate incapacity resulting from their sex. That Victorine felt both pride in her achievement in breaking through the frontiers associated with gender and frustration with a society that impeded the development of her talents and prevented the qualities of her mind from receiving the recognition they deserved, is confirmed by a remark on the final page of the manuscript of the 'Mémoires particuliers'. 'J'ai eu, je crois, plus d'esprit que je n'ai eu souvent l'occasion d'en montrer,' she writes; 'le secret de mon portefeuille en a absorbé une grande part' (MP, p. 742). With the composition of her memoirs, however, she shatters the silence of her 'portefeuille', for future generations at least.

Conclusion

Reading the memoirs of Victorine de Chastenay, it is difficult to avoid the impression that they are the work of a woman who regarded spinsterhood with ambivalence and who was uncertain of her duties or her role in society. Hers is not the calm, confident and self-satisfied voice of the English autobiographer Harriet Martineau, another spinster and author who also knew Latin and wrote on traditionally 'male' subjects. There is nothing in Mme de Chastenay's work to compare with Martineau's unambiguous declarations of contentment with the single life.⁸² Nevertheless, this woman, whose status in society was uncertain, resisted the threat of marginalisation by creating, and then re-creating, herself as an active figure, pushing against the boundaries of gender and venturing into the traditionally male domains of politics, law and history. Having refused to remain passive in the face of events, Mme de Chastenay, through her 'Mémoires historiques' and 'Mémoires particuliers', attempted to write herself back into a history that would have filtered out her experiences, her opinions and her achievements.

Chapter Four

Madame Vigée-Lebrun: *Souvenirs*

Born in Paris in 1755, Louise-Elisabeth was the eldest child of the painter Louis Vigée and his wife Jeanne (née Maissin). After the death of her father in 1767, her precocious artistic talent became an important financial resource for her mother and younger brother Etienne, and by the time she married the art dealer Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun in 1776, she was a member of the Académie de Saint-Luc and a highly successful painter welcomed in the best social circles of Paris. Although she derived little happiness from marriage, Mme Vigée-Lebrun's career flourished in the late 1770s and 1780s and her salon became one of the most famous in the capital. The cost of her fame, however, was high. In the decade before the outbreak of the Revolution the prices she was able to command for her work and the favour shown to her by the Queen not only aroused professional jealousy, but also became a political issue, and Elisabeth found herself the subject of frequently scurrilous rumours which cast doubt on her artistic abilities as well as her virtue. Too closely associated with the detested Marie-Antoinette to feel secure in revolutionary France, Mme Vigée-Lebrun chose to emigrate in October 1789 and spent the next twelve years pursuing a very profitable career as a painter in Italy, Vienna, Russia and (briefly) Prussia, before returning to Paris in January 1802. As a devoted supporter of the Bourbons, however, she was distinctly ill at ease in the new France and consequently chose to spend long periods abroad, residing in England for three years (1803-1805) and travelling to Switzerland in 1807 and 1808.¹ It was only after her return from this second trip that she settled permanently in France, dividing her time between Paris and Louveciennes until her death in 1842, with the exception of a trip to Bordeaux after the death of her brother in 1820. Although she exhibited paintings in the Salons of 1817 and 1824 and continued to work until she was in her seventies, it was on her skills as a hostess rather than as an artist that her celebrity rested in the last decades of her life. 'Certes, sa peinture, dans ses

dernières années, avait beaucoup perdu de son ancien charme,' recalled Jean Gigoux who frequented her salon during this period; 'mais,' he added, 'sa personne était restée tout aimable, gracieuse et même frétilante. [...] Mme Lebrun était très causeuse et très communicative'.² The same impulse to communicate that Gigoux notes here produced not only Vigée-Lebrun the *salonnière* but also Vigée-Lebrun the memoir-writer, for it was during these last years, when her travels were over and her art was no longer influenced by commercial considerations, that her *Souvenirs* took shape.

(i) Textual Problems and Authorial Intentions

The suggestion that Vigée-Lebrun - especially the Vigée-Lebrun of the *Souvenirs* - is a complex individual whose work deserves serious attention is still relatively novel. Even the most well-disposed of her biographers have generally failed to recognise the richness of her memoirs both as an example of a particular literary genre - the artist's (auto)biography - and as evidence of the tensions present in the life of professional women in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century France. All too frequently, the woman and her work have been conflated, with the result that the charm, superficiality and conventionality perceived in the one has determined the evaluation of the other.

For most of those approaching the subject in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Vigée-Lebrun was of interest on account of her beauty, her adventurous life and the success of her brushes in capturing the scintillating splendour of aristocratic life in late eighteenth century Europe and, in particular, the 'grâce séduisante' of its women and children. It was generally agreed, however, that the woman and her work were both too shallow to permit her inclusion in the list of great painters. Henri Bouchot, for example, called her 'cette amoureuse de fanfreluches, cette décorative'.³ Pierre de Nolhac judged her to be an attractive, frivolous, utterly feminine creature whose work was correspondingly 'élégante, fragile, futile, enveloppée de grâce et d'abandon'.⁴ According to André Blum, she was a coquette;⁵ according to Louis Hautecoeur, she was 'aimable', but sentimental, affected and lacking in originality;⁶ and according to William Helm, she was a 'bright, agreeable, very worldly' woman who was 'attracted

chiefly by the waterlilies of life, the beautiful things that float on the surface'.⁷ In the eyes of all these writers, the *Souvenirs* possessed the same charm and lack of depth as their main protagonist and putative author.

This disdainful attitude towards the artist's memoirs has remained strong. Even when more recent scholars, such as Germaine Greer, Joseph Baillio or Inès de Kertanguy have argued for a reassessment of Vigée-Lebrun's significance as an artist, by demonstrating her skill and commitment as a painter and her craving for professional recognition, they have done so without disputing the fundamental validity of previous readings of the *Souvenirs*. Baillio, for instance, who has repeatedly called attention to the intellectual basis of Vigée-Lebrun's paintings, has made no such claims regarding the memoirs. On the contrary, he has suggested that these give only 'a very pale reflection of her personality. [...] The often saccharine style in which they are written, or rather rewritten, can betray her thoughts and make the account tedious and self-adulatory'.⁸

Not everyone, however, has dismissed the *Souvenirs* as colourless and conventional. Jean Owens Schaefer, Paula Rea Radisich and Mary Sheriff, for example, who focus their attention on the issue of gender, have discovered in the artist's works a more complex Vigée-Lebrun than was previously suspected: playful, assertive, proud, stubborn, ambitious, anxious and defiant.⁹ One of the aims of the present chapter is to pursue the line of investigation opened up by Schaefer and Radisich by examining in depth the images of the woman and the artist present in the *Souvenirs*: How are they constructed? How do they relate to each other? How does Vigée-Lebrun attempt to control the reading of her work? In seeking to answer these questions, attention will also be paid to two subjects which are closely related to the creation of the artist's self-image in her memoirs but which previous scholars have barely touched on: the circumstances of the work's composition and the issue of sexual politics.

In contrast to the memoirs of Mme de La Tour du Pin and Mme de Chastenay, which take the form of an unbroken narrative, those of Mme Vigée-Lebrun comprise a variety of elements. There are two long sections in epistolary form: a series of twelve letters addressed to the Princess Kourakine which give an account of the artist's life up to her departure from France in the early days of the

Revolution; and a series of nine letters addressed to the countess Vincent Potocka which recount Vigée-Lebrun's travels in Switzerland. There are also two sections of narrative memoir which cover the period between the author's arrival in Turin in 1789 and the point at which she was writing, early in the reign of Louis-Philippe. In addition to these four sections, which constitute the major part of the memoirs, there are three others: a group of thirty-eight 'portraits à la plume', which vary in length and tone, and range from the passionate defence of maligned individuals to witty anecdotes recounted at second hand; a utilitarian piece entitled 'Conseils de Mme Vigée-Lebrun pour la peinture du portrait', written originally for the benefit of her niece, Mme Tripier-Lefranc (née Lebrun), and included in the belief that 'ces conseils peuvent aussi être utiles à d'autres' (2: 322);¹⁰ and finally, a catalogue of her works, probably compiled from account books or 'livres de raison', and which research has revealed to be neither comprehensive nor entirely reliable.¹¹

In February 1835, Mme Vigée-Lebrun signed a contract with the publisher Hippolyte Fournier who agreed to print 1500 copies of her *Souvenirs* which were to appear in several instalments. The first two volumes were published later that year and the third followed in 1837. A second edition of the *Souvenirs* was published by G. Charpentier in 1869, and it is this later work which has served as the basis for most of the subsequent editions. These two editions, however, differ from each other in several ways. While that of Fournier was composed of three volumes in-8°, each preceded by a portrait (Vigée-Lebrun with her daughter, Catherine II and Louise of Prussia respectively), that of 1869 is in two volumes in-12, without portraits. Along with changes in the format came changes in the arrangement of the text. In the Fournier edition, the first volume comprised the letters to princess Kourakine, the pen portraits and a list of the paintings executed before the artist's emigration. The second, which was preceded by an 'Avant-propos' explaining why the account was no longer in epistolary form, continued her recollections up to the burial of Catherine II and ended with a list of the paintings done in Italy and Vienna. The third chronicled her experiences from the reign of Paul I onwards, set out her advice on portrait painting and concluded the record of her works. In the 1869 edition, the pen portraits are displaced to the end of the second volume, the three lists of paintings have been gathered into a single list, and the 'Avant-propos' has been suppressed. The most noteworthy changes,

however, concern the text itself. The Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie in Paris possesses a first edition of the *Souvenirs* which is annotated in pencil by Justin Tripier-Lefranc, the husband of Vigée-Lebrun's niece Eugénie. Notes in the margins and on slips of paper inserted between the pages (these annotations are rare after the second chapter of volume two) modify certain statements, add biographical details which are to appear as footnotes, and refashion sentences, either in order to incorporate former footnotes into the main text or to raise the literary standard of the work.¹²

It is clear, therefore, that the Charpentier edition offers a text which is not the work of Vigée-Lebrun alone. It seems, however, that this is also the case with the Fournier edition. In 1870, Guiffrey proposed that the actual author of the *Souvenirs* was not the artist herself but rather someone whom she had supplied with information, a suggestion which was accepted by Tourneux in 1884. Two decades later, in 1905, Auguste Molinier published fragments of a manuscript in Vigée-Lebrun's hand-writing which he described as 'un essai de rédaction des premiers chapitres des *Souvenirs*'.¹³ Comparing this 'cahier manuscrit' with the Fournier edition, he concluded that the work had been rewritten by 'un littérateur de profession'. The belief that the artist had played only a minor part in drafting her memoirs and that the real author was to be found among the professional writers with whom she was acquainted at the time prevailed until the early 1980s.¹⁴ In 1982, the Kimball Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, mounted the first ever retrospective of Vigée-Lebrun's work and included in the exhibition part of the manuscript of the memoirs, which are held by the University of Rochester library, in the United States.¹⁵ Like earlier scholars, Joseph Baillio, who composed the catalogue of the exhibition, acknowledged that a gap exists between the text drafted by the artist herself (or dictated to her niece) and the text published by Fournier. These differences are not limited to the correction of Vigée-Lebrun's spelling, punctuation and grammar, which she treated in an idiosyncratic manner, like many of her contemporaries. Names which have been disguised in, or removed from, the published version exist in full in the manuscript;¹⁶ anecdotes which are absent from the rough draft (such as that of Marie-Antoinette and the upset paint-box; 1: 68) are included in the published text; and reminiscences which are recorded in the manuscript (such as those relating to her earliest years)

are omitted.¹⁷ Although he was working with the same 'cahiers' as Molinier, Baillio did not reach the same conclusions concerning their significance. If he does not deny that the *Souvenirs* were edited and rewritten before their publication, he nevertheless shifts the emphasis away from the reworking which took place and on to the proof which they furnish that Vigée-Lebrun was directly involved in the memoir-writing project.

Among those whose names are frequently mentioned in connection with the writing (or rewriting) of the memoirs are the artist's nieces, Caroline Rivière (née Vigée) and Eugénie Tripier-Lefranc; the latter's husband, Justin; her close friends, the writers Louis Aimé Martin,¹⁸ Charles Briffault and Sophie de Bawr;¹⁹ and, according to Baillio, the royalist historians, Michaud and Poujoulat. While it is beyond doubt that Aimé Martin was one of the major forces behind the undertaking and that Eugénie served as an amanuensis, if not as a literary guide, the part played by Mme Vigée-Lebrun herself in the process of revision which culminated in the published text remains unknown.

If Vigée-Lebrun did draw on the advice of acquaintances in polishing up her work and preparing it for publication, she was certainly not exceptional, for there are several sets of memoirs in which the generic boundaries have been blurred, making it difficult either to affirm or to deny the existence of the autobiographical pact described by Philippe Lejeune.²⁰ The illiterate, such as the Vendean peasant Renée Bordereau, of necessity dictated their memoirs and the resulting works almost certainly contain 'improvements' made by their editors.²¹ In other cases, the woman herself furnished a professional writer with notes or a rough draft which were then reworked. Such efforts at collaboration, however, could take various forms. The memoirs of the actress Louise Fusil, which appeared in 1841, were written with the aid of Darthenay, sub-editor of *L'Entr'acte*, according to Paul Ginisty;²² another actress, Mlle George, appealed to the poetess Marceline Desbordes-Valmore and her husband for help in arranging her reminiscences;²³ and Balzac has long been credited with having played a crucial role in the composition of the memoirs of the duchesse d'Abrantès.²⁴ If some are discreet, others bring the subject of literary collaboration out into the open. In her

introduction to the memoirs of Mme de Bonchamps, for example, Mme de Genlis sets out the part played by each of the women with the aim of conveying the impression that the two voices are inextricably interwoven:

'Je ne suis que l'éditeur des Mémoires de madame la marquise de Bonchamps. C'est elle qui en est l'auteur ainsi que l'héroïne, car je n'en ai fait que récrire, avec les développements indispensables, les cahiers qu'elle m'a confiés et que j'ai mis en ordre avec la plus scrupuleuse exactitude, sans me permettre jamais d'altérer un fait ou d'ajouter la moindre circonstance; et quand je détaille ses propres sentiments, c'est toujours elle qui parle; je ne fais que répéter littéralement ce que j'ai recueilli de ses entretiens.'²⁵

The compositional history of Mme de La Rochejaquelein's memoirs appears to be even more complex. Once her account was finished, she recalls in a preface of 1811, it was communicated to others who had participated in the Vendean wars. Given the amendments which they suggested and the stylistic weaknesses of the work (she describes the style as 'parfois diffus et incorrect'), it was evident that this first version would have to be revised. It was at this point that Prosper de Barante became involved, agreeing to 'correct' the work while preserving its 'grande simplicité', and adding to the fifth chapter his own description of the Vendée. From a later preface, however, it emerges that the work passed through more than these two stages before appearing in print. At the Restoration, a few years after her memoirs had received 'une sorte de rédaction nouvelle' at the hands of Barante, Mme de La Rochejaquelein found herself obliged to make them public in order to pre-empt their publication by others. Before doing so, however, she made further modifications (abridging the earliest chapters relating to her childhood), after which Barante was again consulted: 'Je corrigeai les épreuves. Elles passèrent aussi sous les yeux de M. de Barante'. By the time the sixth edition of the work appeared in 1848, further changes had been introduced by the marquise. She had re-established, 'd'après [son] premier manuscrit', two chapters dealing with the period before the outbreak of war in the Vendée; and she had incorporated 'un choix d'anecdotes éparses qu'[elle avait] écrites comme souvenir' and a host of details concerning the events of 12th March 1814 'qu'il n'eût pas été convenable de publier alors'. Her preface to this sixth edition also includes a

specific reference to the confusion which existed in the minds of many over the work's authorship, and she endeavours to set the record straight. As she points out, while some have attributed the memoirs in their entirety to Barante, others have claimed that he was responsible only for 'le Supplément' which recounts the royalist revolution in Bordeaux in March 1814. Both these allegations are erroneous: as the first edition states, the work was 'écrite' by the marquise and 'rédigée' by Barante; and his contribution to 'le Supplément' was minimal: 'je l'ai écrit à la hâte, à Bordeaux,' she explains, 'il l'a revu, mais il y a fait à peine quelques corrections'.²⁶ As the prefaces make clear, if Mme de La Rochejaquelein deferred to Barante's judgment on stylistic matters, she certainly did not relinquish all control over her work. On the contrary, after he had edited her original draft, he appears to have played only a minor role as an advisor, while the marquise herself took the lead in seeing her work through several editions. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the image of Mme de La Rochejaquelein which is projected by the memoirs which carry her name is not only one to which she subscribed, but also one which she took an active part in creating.

As in the case of Mme de La Rochejaquelein, there is sufficient evidence to believe that the voice of Mme Vigée-Lebrun has not been drowned out by that of others in the printed text of the *Souvenirs*, even if it has been blended with theirs. Although they are stylistically inferior to the published memoirs, autograph pieces, such as the Rochester 'cahiers', the 'Enoncé' sent to Natalie Kourakine in 1829 or the letters preserved in the Archives nationales and the Bibliothèque nationale, not only contain (in embryonic form) material which is found in the later *Souvenirs*, but also convey substantially the same image of Vigée-Lebrun, in terms of their tone and the preoccupations which they reveal.²⁷ Furthermore, a letter which Baillio dates to around 1834, in which the painter informs Aimé Martin that she has been noting down for six months 'à mesure ce dont [elle se] rapelle dans tous Les tems, dans tous les Lieux';²⁸ and a letter of February 1842, in which Mme de Joinville draws Eugénie Lefranc's attention to the strain placed on her aunt's health by 'les efforts de mémoire qu'ont occasionnés son travail littéraire',²⁹ reinforce the impression that the latter's interest in the *Souvenirs* was close and sustained. An additional reason for believing that the memoirs were not simply fabricated by those around her is the similarity that exists between the artist's self-

imaging in these and in her self-portraits. Beneath their smooth and charming surfaces, both paintings and text convey a dual image: Vigée-Lebrun the playfully provocative, self-confident artist, and Vigée-Lebrun the epitome of conventional femininity.

Diverse motives - commercial, personal and political - lay behind Vigée-Lebrun's decision to record her past for publication; and it is this diversity that explains not only the existence of several strands in the work, but also the gaps and factual distortions which have frequently been noted. Pressing financial difficulties were certainly not the principal incentive in the case of Mme Vigée-Lebrun who, unlike many of those who wrote for publication, such as Georgette Ducrest, Laure d'Abrantès, Louise Fusil or Mlle George, was able to pass the last years of her life in comfort and security as a result of careful investments. Shortly before her death, for example, her old friend Mme de Joinville, wrote to her niece Eugénie: 'J'ai toujours cru sa fortune plus considérable que 300000 francs. Apparemment elle avait des rentes viagères considérables [...]'.³⁰ However, if she was not under pressure to make money from her reminiscences, this does not mean that commercial forces were entirely irrelevant. Both for those who published the *Souvenirs* and for Mme Vigée-Lebrun herself, the reading public's appetite for accounts of the *ancien régime* and Revolution and for biographical material provided a powerful incentive to get the artist's life into print. If the former had their eyes fixed on the financial opportunities opened up by the vogue for such works, the latter was more ambivalent, for she recognised both the risk of deformation which it entailed, and the potential for revision and myth-making which it afforded. As she explains to Aimé Martin in the letter referred to above, it was the knowledge that as a public figure her life had been - and would be - subject to scrutiny and, consequently, open to distortion that led her to overcome her initial reluctance to recount her life-story:

'Monsr de Casperiny [Gaspériny] qui comme vous ma pressé de les eCrre, m'y [a] determiner en me diSant eh bien Madame si vous ne Les faites pas vous même, on Les fera après-vous; et dieu Sait ce qu'on y ecrira; J'ai compris cette raison...ayant été souvent si meconnûe, si Callomnié.'

The letter goes on to suggest, however, that in writing her memoirs she was

seeking not only to protect herself against ignorant or malicious biographers, but also to communicate those aspects of her life that would inevitably be absent from the accounts produced by others, however sympathetic. Referring to a recent article by Aimé Martin himself, she writes:

'Vous avez déjà tres bien exposer dans votre article quelques principaux événements de ma vie; on n'a pu croire [sic] par Ce Beau Coté que J'ai été La femme la plus heureuse, eh bien mon ami ses hommages, les distinctions si honorables, et si flateuse, ont été traverser des peines bien cruells...causée par ce qui m'étoit Le plus proche, Le plus Cher [...].'

In re-forming her past through writing, Vigée-Lebrun was seeking to do more than simply counter existing (and potential) images of herself as a corrupt 'petite maîtresse' whose life had been devoid of suffering. She was also intent on resisting what she considered to be unfair attempts to relegate her to obscurity. Once one of the most renowned figures in Europe, Elisabeth had no intention of being marginalized by the post-revolutionary artistic establishment, and the publication of her memoirs should not be divorced from other efforts which she made during the 1820s and 1830s in order to maintain a high professional profile. These included the exhibition of paintings in the Salon of 1824; and the steps taken to insure the public display of many of her major works, such as inquiries after the location of *Marie-Antionette et ses enfants* and the stipulation in her will that paintings were to be left to the Musée royal and to the academies of Rouen and Vaucluse.³¹

It may be that the memoirs were also intended to serve Vigée-Lebrun the artist on a personal, as well as on a public, level. From the text, it is clear that the writer was deeply troubled by the dispersal of her works and the loss of contact with certain paintings, such as those of the Indian ambassadors which she had exhibited in the Salon of 1789. 'Après la mort de M. Lebrun, qui s'était emparé de tous mes ouvrages,' she writes, 'ils ont été vendus, et j'ignore qui les possède aujourd'hui' (1: 63). For a woman for whom art and life were inextricable (1: 238), and for whom each painting was thus a tangible fragment of her past, writing memoirs in which she could recall the execution of such works and draw up a list

of her achievements offered the enticing possibility of gathering together symbolically what was physically beyond her grasp.

Yet another motive for writing - again associated with the recovery of the past - is indicated by the opening paragraph of the *Souvenirs*. Addressing princess Kourakine, Vigée-Lebrun exclaims:

'Que de sensations je vais éprouver en me rappelant et les événements divers dont j'ai été témoin et des amis qui n'existent plus que dans ma pensée! Toutefois, la chose me sera facile, car mon coeur a de la mémoire, et, dans mes heures de solitude, ces amis si chers m'entourent encore, tant mon imagination me les réalise.' (1: 23)

Once again, it is not the public function of the memoir as a form of self-defence or self-display which is highlighted, but rather its private function as a diversion and a source of comfort. Elderly and past her prime as a painter, Vigée-Lebrun, through her recollections of absent friends and of a long-gone period of public acclaim and foreign travel, was able to fill the emptiness of the present and give herself both the present pleasure of reminiscing and the anticipated pleasure of returning subsequently to the record of her memories. That she looked to her memoirs to provide her with a precious 'seconde vie' by forming a bridge between past, present and future, is borne out by the words which were placed on their title page: 'En écrivant mes Souvenirs je me rappellerai le temps passé qui doublera pour ainsi dire mon existence'. This quotation (or rather, misquotation) from Rousseau's *Réveries* is taken from a passage in which the 'promeneur solitaire' declares that he is writing for himself alone, in the belief that rereading his words 'dans [ses] plus vieux jours, aux approches du départ [...] rappellera la douceur qu'[il] goûte à les écrire et, faisant renaître ainsi pour [lui] le tems passé, doublera pour ainsi dire [son] existence'.³²

(ii) Madame Vigée-Lebrun and the Memoir as History

Two important details have been consistently neglected by those who have discussed the *Souvenirs*: the staunchly royalist circle from which they emanated; and the date at which they appeared, five years after the overthrow of the

Bourbon Charles X. Without claiming that it was the primary aim of either the artist or her collaborators, it is nevertheless likely that the memoirs were intended to be read, among other things, as a royalist apologia. In contrast to the more nuanced accounts of other royalists, such as Mme de La Tour du Pin, Mme de Chastenay or Mme de Maillé, the memoirs of the staunchly legitimist Vigée-Lebrun are informed by the writer's belief that the course of the Revolution and Restoration reveals a straightforward conflict between right and wrong, in which right is represented by the Bourbons. She recounts numerous anecdotes which highlight their goodness, generosity, wisdom and refinement: Marie-Antoinette encouraging her daughter to treat a young peasant girl with courtesy (1: 68); the comte d'Artois coming to the aid of his wretched compatriots in exile (2: 135); the duc de Berry doubling the savings of a thrifty servant (2: 213); the six-year-old duc de Bordeaux donating to the poor the small sums he receives (2: 221-22); or Louis XVIII reciting verse and greeting with charm those who had served the royal family before the Revolution (2: 211-12). Her silences, too, are revealing. She says nothing, for example, about the tensions within the royal household which are exposed by less indulgent memoir-writers, such as Mme de Boigne; and either ignores the scandalous (such as the liaisons of Louis XVIII with Mme de Balbi and Mme du Cayla and the philandering of the duc de Berry) or mitigates it, as in the case of the comte d'Artois whose relationship with the comtesse de Polastron is presented as testimony to his virtues, rather than as evidence of the family's moral degeneration.³³ She accentuates the enthusiasm with which the returning Bourbons were greeted in 1814 (2: 207-08), the devotion of 'le peuple' to their 'paire de gants'/'père de Gand' during the Hundred Days (2: 209-10), and the 'joie presque générale' when Louis XVIII was restored in July 1815 (2: 210). In contrast, events which cast doubt on the competence of the Bourbons as rulers or the strength of the bond between them and the French people - most notably, Napoleon's return to power in 1815 and the revolution of 1830 - are disposed of rapidly and made to appear unjustifiable, if not inexplicable. The reduction of the first Restoration to a series of jubilant reunions effectively obscures the reasons for Napoleon's successful reappearance ('[...] tandis que nous nous réjouissions de notre sort, Bonaparte débarquait à Cannes'; 2: 209); and the reasons for the fall of Charles X are likewise masked by a shift in emphasis from the political to the personal, combined with the writer's opportune withdrawal into silence:

'C'est aux hommes politiques qu'il appartient d'expliquer comment tant de vertus et de bonté n'ont pas suffi pour lui conserver le trône; mon coeur reconnaissant ne doit que le regretter.' (2: 213)

It is not simply by underlining the moral worthiness of the family as individuals that the author of the *Souvenirs* seeks to convince her reader of the desirability of Bourbon rule for France. She also enhances the attraction of the Bourbons by blackening the memory of the political alternatives, depicting the revolutionaries as irredeemably vulgar, bloodthirsty and greedy, and the Bonapartes as arrogant and callous. Eschewing abstractions, such as enlightenment, liberty and fraternity, which lend dignity to the Revolution, Vigée-Lebrun fills her memoirs with anecdotes which expose the base reality lurking beneath the professed ideals. Beauty, as embodied either in the persons of Mme Chalgrin, Mme de Filleul or Marie-Antoinette, or in sites such as Marly, Boutin's 'beau parc' or the pavilion of Mme du Barry at Louveciennes, is eradicated; the urbanity associated with places like Moulin-Joli (1: 119) is crushed by the crude materialism of the 'nouveaux riches' who arise from the ashes of the *ancien régime*; the kindness of a Mme du Barry is repaid with treachery (1: 127); the charitable 'gros propriétaires' who came to the aid of the peasants on their estates after a ferocious storm are engulfed by 'les cannibales révolutionnaires' (1: 131); and it is only the victims of the Revolution - Mlle de Sombreuil in prison, Mme Elisabeth or Vigée-Lebrun in Turin - who are seen to behave with courage and compassion.

Disdain for the Bonapartes is reflected in the series of parallels which the writer establishes between them and the legitimate monarchs - invariably to the advantage of the latter. The ill-mannered 'parvenue' Mme Murat, whose behaviour at sittings strained the portrait-painter's patience (2: 159-60), is contrasted with 'de véritables princesses', such as Marie-Antoinette (1: 64-70) or the 'gracieuse' and 'aimable' duchesse de Berry (2: 221-22), who treated the artist with consideration. The barbarity of the Napoleonic regime which is manifest in the slander which hastened the death of the Queen of Prussia (2: 92), the assassination of the duc d'Enghien (2: 136-37), or the Emperor's detachment in reckoning the cost of battles (2: 103) is contrasted with the numerous benevolent actions of the royal family; and the damage inflicted by Bonaparte's soldiers on Leonardo's *Last Supper* in Milan during the Italian campaign (1: 262) contrasts

with the medals distributed to painters and sculptors by a respectful Charles X (2: 212). The direct comparison between Bourbon paternalism and Bonapartist tyranny is reinforced in the *Souvenirs* by the memoir-writer's account of an analogous situation in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Russia. Through this, the reader is encouraged to regard Napoleon as the western counterpart of the cruel and capricious Paul I, so different from his predecessor, Catherine, the wise and beneficent 'matusha' (mother) of her people (2: 25), and from his successor, Alexander I '[qui] était d'un caractère noble et généreux' (2: 76). The accession of the latter, Vigée-Lebrun emphasises, was greeted with enthusiasm by a nation for which the change of ruler signified liberation and regeneration. 'Je trouvai cette ville dans le délire de la joie,' she writes of her return to Saint-Petersburg after the assassination of Paul in 1801; 'la mort de ce malheureux prince excitait l'allégresse publique' (2: 72). Under Alexander,

'les exilés revinrent et rentrèrent dans leurs biens;
justice fut rendue à tous ceux qui avaient été immolés
à des caprices sans nombre, enfin un siècle d'or
commença pour la Russie.' (2: 78)

The transition from Paul to Alexander recalled here is echoed in the writer's later description of the transition from Empire to Restoration. In 1814, it is stated that Louis XVIII returned from exile 'apportant le pardon et l'oubli pour tous' (2: 207) and offering a Charter which was received 'avec des acclamations de joie' (2: 208). In 1815, he is again given a rapturous welcome, according to the memoirist,

'car, après tant de malheurs qu'un autre que lui venait
de causer, Louis XVIII apportait la paix. Dès lors on
peut juger combien ce prince joignait de sagesse et
d'habileté aux qualités brillantes de son esprit. Les
circonstances étaient difficiles, et l'on n'en vit pas
moins la France et son roi sortir dignement de l'abîme
où Bonaparte les avait plongés.' (2: 210-11)

The insistence of the contrast between black and white in the *Souvenirs* of Mme Vigée-Lebrun makes it difficult to doubt that they were intended to serve a political function. They are political, however, without overtly violating the conventions associated with the feminine memoir, as set out by Georgette Ducrest in the late

1820s in the following passage:

'Les mémoires écrits par une femme, sont [...] si peu importants qu'on les lit sans y chercher des documens d'histoire, on ne désire y trouver que des anecdotes amusantes, des portraits ressemblans, beaucoup de *noms propres*, et la peinture de la société.'³⁴

They do not pretend to be 'documents d'histoire'. Rich in portraits and amusing anecdotes, they are almost completely devoid of the political, military and diplomatic incidents 'trop importants pour être écrits par une femme' that were the stuff of traditional histories. Descriptive rather than analytic, they are a work of social observation spanning eight decades and most of Europe, in which the writer conjures up for her reader the lost world of 'l'ancien Paris' with its theatres and other resorts of entertainment, and offers descriptions of life in Rome, Naples, Vienna, Saint-Petersburg, London and Bath that range from sweeping generalisations to carefully observed details on dress, food, recreations, customs and climate. In advocating Bourbon rule for France, the basis of the writer's appeal is emotional rather than rational, as might be expected in the work of a woman whose favourite topic of conversation after painting during the last years of her life, according to Jean Gigoux, 'était la reine Marie-Antoinette, qui l'avait appelée son amie et traitée comme telle'.³⁵ Like *L'Apothéose de la Reine*, which the artist painted under Bonaparte and gave to Mme de Chateaubriand 'pour être mis dans l'établissement de Sainte-Thérèse' (2: 215), the *Souvenirs* are thus an ambiguous work. On the one hand, as an emotive testimony to friendship infused by a sentimental royalism, they remain within the confines of the acceptably feminine. On the other, they push against such limits, for their version of the past has not only been carefully crafted, it has also been transformed (through publication) into a vehicle for engaging the political allegiance of others.

(iii) Madame Vigée-Lebrun and the Memoir as Autobiography: the Woman and the Artist

Conformity, or the manipulation of her readers in order to give the impression of conformity while discreetly creating a space for non-conformity, a process which we see in her treatment of history, is an important feature of the *Souvenirs*. Mme

Vigée-Lebrun, like other female memoir-writers of the early nineteenth century, was confronted with the difficulty of writing about herself and her achievements (of which she was justifiably proud), while avoiding the danger of being labelled as reprehensibly assertive, egotistical and, by implication, unfeminine. Society's disapproval of attention-seeking women meant that those like Vigée-Lebrun who resolved to publish an autobiographical account during their lifetime were necessarily placed in a delicate position. They had to negotiate a space for themselves in the public realm without alienating their readers' sympathy by appearing to crave admiration.

One way in which a potential charge of exhibitionism was diffused in Vigée-Lebrun's case was the decision to cast much of the memoirs in epistolary form. '[...] Vous n'y verrez n'y stil, n'y phrase, ni periode,' the artist informed Aimé Martin; 'Je trace seulement Les faits avec simplicité, et vérité, comme on écrit une Lettre a son amie'.³⁶ Although the claim to be writing autobiographical accounts 'comme une lettre à un(e) ami(e)' was made by both men and women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the implications were not the same. For men such as Stendhal, who professed to be writing his *Vie de Henry Brulard* 'sans mentir [...], sans [se] faire illusion, avec plaisir comme une lettre à un ami',³⁷ the allusion to a letter had two principal functions: it authorised what might otherwise have been dismissed as triviality or pretentious self-absorption; and it encouraged the actual reader of the memoir to place his trust in the reliability of the narrator who addressed him as if in confidence. The need to gain the reader's trust and the risk of losing it through impropriety were more pressing considerations for a female than for a male autobiographer. Conditioned to believe that it was their duty to be discreet, if not invisible, women were aware that they endangered their reputations by making themselves conspicuous in any way. As Mme Roland recalled telling M. de Boismorel: 'Pour nous, le temple de mémoire/Est dans le coeur de nos amis'.³⁸ By publishing part of her memoirs in the form of letters which were ostensibly written at the request of friends to whom she alludes several times (1: 23, 134, 148; 2: 161), Mme Vigée-Lebrun not only diminished the assertiveness implicit in the autobiographical act, but also demonstrated her conformity with contemporary notions of female propriety.³⁹ In the first place, letter-writing was looked on as a particularly feminine form of

literary activity. Closer to conversation than other literary genres - on the side of nature, therefore, as opposed to culture - and characterised by spontaneity, variability in tone and lack of intellectual pretension, a good letter, according to the marquis d'Argenson, writing in the eighteenth century, reflected the very essence of Woman:

'Le style épistolaire est le plus nécessaire aux femmes. [...] Il faut même qu'elles évitent de perdre ce tour aisé et naturel, un peu mou, mais tantôt spirituel, tantôt voluptueux, qui est vraiment le style des femmes: comme il ne faut pas qu'une dame ait l'air ni le ton hardi, qu'elle ait le regard trop élevé ni le nez trop au vent, il ne faut pas non plus que ses idées et ses expressions soient audacieuses, ni son style ce qu'on appelle ambitieux. Il faut qu'elle ait l'air d'écrire toujours rapidement, et qu'elle ne surcharge point ses phrases.'⁴⁰

In the second place, by addressing a specific individual - especially another woman - a female writer was able to create the illusion that her work remained within the private sphere, her supposedly 'natural' domain. 'This is not for public consumption,' she appears to say; 'this is nothing more than my correspondence with "ma bien bonne amie"'. Moreover, as Sanders and Larsen among others have noted,⁴¹ the introduction of a figure (the recipient of the letter) who serves as an intermediary between the writer and the real reader was one of the strategies commonly adopted by women in order to overcome their reluctance to speak about themselves. By personalising their writing, they were able to create for themselves an enclosed world in which they could speak freely and informally, safe from accusations of exhibitionism or egoism. Mme de Rémusat, for example, composed the first version of her memoirs (that which was destroyed in 1815) as 'une correspondance intime' addressed to 'une amie';⁴² and, as in the letters to the countess Potocka in the *Souvenirs*, it was a common format in travel literature. Incidentally, the travel memoir was one of the easiest and most acceptable ways for a woman to enter into autobiographical discourse since self-revelation occurred only indirectly.

Like the form in which the work is presented - a combination of fabricated letters, narrative memoir and portraiture - the title chosen for it was also intended to

indicate its author's lack of pretension. In contrast to 'Mémoires', 'Souvenirs' conveyed the impression that a work was informal, anecdotal and gossipy: in other words, that it possessed the same qualities and weaknesses, and aspired to the same goals, as female conversation and its written counterpart, female correspondence. This is the distinction made by one of the best known memoir-writers of the eighteenth century and it is echoed in the works of many of her successors, including Mme d'Oberkirch and Louise Fusil. 'Le titre de Mémoires,' wrote Mme de Caylus,

'quoique de toutes les façons d'écrire la plus simple et la plus libre, m'a cependant paru encore trop sérieux pour ce que j'ai à dire et pour la manière dont je le dis. J'écris des souvenirs sans ordre, sans exactitude et sans autre prétention que celle d'amuser mes amis, ou du moins de leur donner une preuve de ma complaisance [...].'⁴³

On account of the public image which she already possessed at the time of writing, Mme Vigée-Lebrun faced three particular difficulties in composing her memoirs. Firstly, if she were to retain public sympathy, she had to show that her professional success had not been won at the expense of her 'natural' female duties. Secondly, she had to counter the distressing rumours of sexual immorality and wild extravagance which, beginning in the 1780s, had followed her round Europe and persisted for decades. Finally, she had to find a way of reconciling the presentation of herself as a virtuous woman and devoted mother - roles which, in post-revolutionary France, were synonymous with anonymity and confinement within the domestic realm - with a desire to put herself forward, not only as a leading portrait painter (the category on which her professional reputation was primarily based), but also as a serious artist who was on a par with her male contemporaries. In an effort to achieve these potentially contradictory goals and construct an image that would be equally acceptable to herself and to her reader, Mme Vigée-Lebrun moves continually backwards and forwards in her memoirs between demonstrations of gender conformity and provocative demands for admiration. It is the writer's desire to secure both understanding for the woman and respect for the artist - and her refusal to sacrifice either - that make the *Souvenirs* a particularly interesting example of the influence of gender on genre.

Seeking to persuade her readers that she was a paragon of French womanhood, Mme Vigée-Lebrun negotiates between two rather different models. On the one hand, there was the model so prized by polite society in late eighteenth century France: the sociable, gay, witty, charming and beautiful woman who embodied 'urbanité' and who presided over the semi-public world of the salon by virtue of her intelligence and her skills as a hostess.⁴⁴ The Vigée-Lebrun of the *Souvenirs* is shown to possess all these qualities in abundance. In a age when 'réellement la beauté était une illustration' (1: 41), she recalls that as a young woman she could not appear in public without attracting attention (1: 38, 41). She gives proof of her tact and discretion, citing her witty replies when asked if her portraits of La Bruyère and Fleury had been done from life (1: 52) and when Monsieur sought her opinion on his merits as a singer (1: 71). In particular, she emphasises her conviviality and her success in society. From adolescence to old age, and across the length and breadth of Europe, the memoirist shows herself mingling with the elite and uniting around herself those distinguished by their birth with those distinguished by their talents. Recalling her salon in the rue de Cléry in the years before the Revolution, she writes:

'je recevais chaque soir la ville et la cour. Les grandes dames, les grands seigneurs, les hommes marquants dans les lettres et dans les arts, tout arrivait dans cette chambre; c'était à qui serait de mes soirées où souvent la foule était telle que, faute de sièges, les maréchaux de France s'asseyaient par terre [...] je crois avoir vu chez moi tout ce que Paris renfermait de gens à talent et à gens d'esprit.' (1: 79, 82)

Such occasions, she continues, possessed 'un charme que les dîners n'auront plus'; the atmosphere was relaxed, the hostess put her guests at their ease:

'on était gai, on était aimable, les heures passaient comme des minutes, et, vers minuit, chacun se retirait.' (1: 83)

The Greek supper, which her enemies had used as ammunition against her, becomes, in the memoirs, an illustration of Mme Vigée-Lebrun's exquisite taste

and of the esteem in which she was held by the cream of society. With a few antique vessels borrowed from a neighbour and some skillfully arranged drapery, the writer claims to have transformed an ordinary little room into an elegant 'tableau vivant' and provided her visitors - among whom were the financier Boutin, the poet Lebrun, the marquis de Cubières and the comte de Vaudreuil - with a novel and very amusing form of entertainment. Even the rumours to which this supper gave rise are turned to the painter's advantage, for their source, according to the memoirist, was her reluctance to satisfy the demand for a repeat performance:

'M. Boutin et M. de Vaudreuil en étaient tellement enthousiasmés qu'ils en parlèrent le lendemain à toutes leurs connaissances. Quelques femmes de la cour me demandaient une seconde représentation de cette plaisanterie. Je refusai pour différentes raisons, et plusieurs d'entre elles furent blessées de mon refus. Bientôt le bruit se répandit dans le monde que ce souper m'avait coûté vingt mille francs.' (1: 88)

Through her account of this episode, then, the writer conveys to her reader the impression that she was a woman whose company was sought by those in the upper echelons of society; who could draw inspiration from antiquity, but present it gracefully rather than pedantically; and who had the good taste to prevent creativity degenerating into banality through indiscriminate repetition. Later, in England and in post-revolutionary France, where urbanity was sadly lacking, she presents her own salon as one of the few islands of refinement in an ocean of mediocrity (2: 113-15, 126, 156-57). With her discretion, her charm, her ability to dissipate tension and facilitate the amusement of others - qualities which were acknowledged by such eminent judges as Hubert Robert, the Princess Dolgorouki and the Prince Regent, according to the *Souvenirs* - Mme Vigée-Lebrun kept alive the delightful femininity of the eighteenth century *salonnière* amidst the 'étouffants routs des salons de Londres' (2: 157) and the oppressive militarism and tedious solemnity of early nineteenth century France.

The publication of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Emile* in the 1760s, however, established another model of female behaviour in which the emphasis was placed on modesty, simplicity and domesticity, rather than on sociability and sophistication; and it was this model, as we have seen, which prevailed in post-

revolutionary France and was enshrined in the *Code civil*. Although the public image which she possessed as a renowned *salonnière* and professional artist was essentially at odds with the Rousseauist version of 'True Womanhood', Mme Vigée-Lebrun nevertheless constructs in her memoirs an image of herself which is in many ways its illustration.

One of the prerequisites for an aspiring Julie or Sophie was the rejection of affectation in all its forms. She would thus prefer the countryside and 'les travaux rustiques' to life in the city,⁴⁵ and, convinced that 'le vrai soin de la parure demande peu de toilette', she would shun extravagance, cosmetics and garments which constricted her body and would dress instead with decency and simple elegance.⁴⁶ In conformity with these precepts, the Vigée-Lebrun of the *Souvenirs* is presented as a woman who was sensitive to natural beauty, relished simple pleasures and lived modestly. Traces of her professed 'goût [...] pour la campagne' (2: 204) are evident throughout the memoirs. She recalls her delight as a girl when her step-father proposed renting a house outside Paris for use at weekends, and her bitter disappointment with his choice:

'un très-petit jardin de curé; point d'arbres, point d'autre abri contre le soleil qu'un petit berceau où mon beau-père avait planté des haricots et des capucines qui ne poussaient pas.' (1: 46).

Both in France and abroad, she happily accepted invitations to visit the country estates of friends and patrons; and in Austria and Russia, she eagerly quit the city once winter was over and headed for the tranquillity of woods and lakes (1: 286; 2: 7-8, 11). She favoured sites which were - or, like Julie's Elysée (*Nouvelle Héloïse*, IV, Letter 11), at least appeared to be - untouched by human hands. At Sceaux and Morfontaine, for example, she preferred the 'picturesque' or irregular areas of the parks (1: 48, 119). She enthuses over Moulin-Joli - 'si beau, si varié, si pittoresque, si élyséen, si sauvage, si ravissant enfin!' (1: 117); over Vevey, which she refers to as 'le site de [ses] rêves, [...] [son] lieu de prédilection' (2: 178); and over Louveciennes where, in 1809, she purchased the house in which she would spend much of the last period of her life (2: 203). On numerous occasions, moreover, she lingers over the intense pleasure - 'mes jouissances' (1: 239), 'ma béatitude' (2: 175) - which she derived from immersing herself in the

natural world; and the attention which she devotes to sights (colours, the effects of light), sounds (water, bird-song, the wind in the trees) and the scent of the plants around her in these descriptions fosters the impression that the writer whose bond with nature was so harmonious inevitably shared in its purity.

At the root of her attachment to the countryside is her devotion to the simple life. It is not only on Porporati's farm near Turin (1: 257), in the 'petite cellule' which she occupied at Caltemberg (1: 289) or in the 'petite maison construite en bois' which she rented on the banks of the Neva (2: 9) that her lifestyle was modest, for even when she resided in the city she disdained all forms of ostentation. In illustration of this, she underlines the simplicity of both the apartment where she resided and where she held her famous salon in the 1780s, and the way in which she dressed. Despite rumours to the contrary, all she had at her disposal in the rue de Cléry, she asserts, were two plainly-furnished rooms: 'une petite antichambre, et une chambre à coucher qui [lui] servait de salon' (1: 78-79); and she calls upon Talleyrand, among others, to bear her out (2: 314).⁴⁷ Her dislike of artifice in the appearance of others, and the simplicity of her own attire, are recurrent subjects in the memoirs. She points out that one of her major innovations as a painter was the portrayal of her sitters in informal, even rustic, clothes. In complete agreement with Rousseau on the matter, she presents herself as one of those in the forefront of the war against corsets, wigs and powdered hair:

'Comme j'avais horreur du costume que les femmes portaient alors, je faisais tous mes efforts pour le rendre un peu plus pittoresque [...].' (1: 56)

To this end, she draped her models in scarves, persuaded them to leave their hair unpowdered and sought to replace hoops and heavy fabrics with straw hats and muslin. Even when painting Marie-Antoinette, she preferred to depict her 'sans grande toilette et surtout sans grand panier' (1: 65). She herself was the embodiment of natural elegance for, according to the *Souvenirs*, very little time or money was spent on her appearance:

'Je dépensais extrêmement peu pour ma toilette: on me reprochait même trop de négligence, je ne portais que des robes blanches, de mousseline ou de linon, et

je n'ai jamais fait faire de robes parées que pour mes séances à Versailles. Ma coiffure ne me coûtait rien, j'arrangeais mes cheveux moi-même, et le plus souvent je tortillais sur ma tête un fichu de mousseline [...].’ (1: 93)

Her accounts of the infamous ‘souper grec’ and of her presentation to Catherine the Great serve to underline the habitual simplicity of her dress. In the former, she notes that she was able to transform herself rapidly into an Athenian because she always wore ‘des robes blanches en forme de tunique’ (1: 87); and in the latter, she draws attention to her embarrassment on being informed that the empress wished to see her the day after her arrival:

‘je n'avais que des robes de mousseline très-simples, n'en portant point d'autres habituellement, et il était impossible de me faire faire une robe parée du jour au lendemain, même à Saint-Pétersbourg.’ (1: 304)

Her taste for simplicity and her aversion to artificial embellishments, moreover, is an integral element in Mme Vigée-Lebrun's defence of herself against accusations that she had been the mistress of Calonne. Far from being the insatiable temptress described in the opposition literature of the 1780s and 1790s, who was reputed to have encouraged her lover to bleed the country dry in order to fund her extravagant lifestyle, the memoirist presents herself as a woman too enamoured with ‘le pittoresque’ to have carried on an affair with a man who wore a wig, and too indifferent to money and the external trappings of wealth to have wished to exploit the Controller General (1: 93).⁴⁸

In her approach to religion, too, Mme Vigée-Lebrun accords with Rousseau's description of his ideal woman as pious, but not bigoted. ‘Certes, si je n'allais pas en France régulièrement à la messe, ce n'est point par irrégion,’ the memoirist assures her readers, but rather because she found it difficult to concentrate in Parisian churches. Away from the city, however, the situation was very different. Drawing on the association of the countryside with a moral strength which was lacking in the urban environment, she declares that ‘les églises champêtres [!]’ont toujours vue prier avec plus de ferveur que les autres’ (1: 260). Again, as was

fitting, her devotion was manifested in discreet but practical actions, such as the distribution of aid to French refugees in Turin (1: 258-59), rather than in the sort of ostentatious gestures which, as Julie had sententiously informed Saint-Preux, really only satisfied an egotistical craving for attention:

[...] cette Mme Guyon dont vous me parlez, eût mieux fait, ce me semble, de remplir avec soin ses devoirs de mère de famille, d'élever chrétiennement ses enfants, de gouverner sagement sa maison, que d'aller composer des livres de dévotion, disputer avec des évêques, et se faire mettre à la Bastille pour des rêveries dont on ne comprend rien.⁴⁹

Devoid of all ambition to rival men or usurp their privileges, Rousseau's ideal woman was to find true happiness in 'une vie retirée et domestique'.⁵⁰ Demure, patient and obedient, her time would be spent rearing her children and serving her husband, instead of conducting illicit affairs and playing the 'femme bel esprit' for, as he and his disciples emphasised, the cultivation of a woman's talents should never interfere with the performance of her duties. Devoted to her children and loyal to her husband, she would be both sensitive and virtuous, loving virtue 'parce qu'il n'y a rien de si beau que la vertu [...] parce que la vertu fait la gloire de la femme'.⁵¹ 'La vertu' is a key term in the Rousseauist vision of Woman and in his definition of her status in society. Arguing that she was fundamentally good,⁵² Rousseau presented his female readers with an enticing image of woman as a powerful figure capable of bringing about not only her own happiness as an individual, but also that of society as a whole.⁵³ By taking Nature as her guide, he claimed, by assuming her femaleness as given by Nature - that is to say, accepting the physical, intellectual and moral differences which were deemed to exist between herself and a man - a woman would be guaranteed the love of the children whom she nursed and the husband whom she cherished, earn the respect of those around her and ultimately contribute towards the moral regeneration of society.⁵⁴ Medical discourse;⁵⁵ art;⁵⁶ novels;⁵⁷ and what David Williams describes as 'the vulgar world of bourgeois culture, of mass culture in its eighteenth century sense', as represented by works such as Boudier de

Villemert's *Ami des Femmes*,⁵⁸ all fostered the notion that a woman's happiness came from the cultivation of her domestic role.

Power and emotional comfort, however, had their price. Unlike a man, a woman, in Rousseau's scheme, was never an autonomous being and thus could never be an end in herself. Not only was her field of action severely restricted and her self-fulfilment made dependent on her devotion to the needs of others, but her value was determined as much by appearances as by reality. In order to reap the rewards of virtue, she not only had to *be* virtuous, she also had to be *perceived to be* virtuous:

'[...] fût-elle innocente, elle a tort sitôt qu'elle est soupçonnée: car les apparences mêmes sont au nombre de ses devoirs.'⁵⁹

'L'homme, en bien faisant, ne dépend que de lui-même, et peut braver le jugement public; mais une femme, en bien faisant, n'a fait que la moitié de sa tâche, et ce que l'on pense d'elle ne lui importe pas moins que ce qu'elle est en effet. [...] l'opinion est le tombeau de la vertu parmi les hommes, et son trône parmi les femmes.'⁶⁰

The importance which was attached to appearances in the case of women could have tragic consequences for those who sought to express themselves other than by reproduction. Society, lamented Mme de Staël in 1800, does not treat with indulgence those women, like herself, who dare to break out of the confines of domesticity and set themselves up as the rivals of men. When such women are maligned, as they almost certainly will be, their position is more awkward than that of a man for they are caught in a double bind. If she remains silent, the superior woman allows injustice to triumph; and if she speaks out in her own defence, she draws attention to herself and thus repeats her original transgression:

'L'homme calomnié répond par ses actions à l'univers; il peut dire: "Ma vie est un témoin qu'il faut entendre aussi". Mais ce témoin, quel est-il pour une femme? [...] Un homme peut, même dans ses ouvrages, réfuter les calomnies dont il est devenu l'objet: mais

pour les femmes, se défendre est un désavantage de plus; se justifier, un bruit nouveau.⁶¹

The importance given to sexual purity, conjugal fidelity and maternal solicitude in definitions of the exemplary female - an importance which increased in the post-revolutionary period - is conscientiously taken into account by Vigée-Lebrun the memoir-writer in her presentation of herself as daughter, wife and mother.

At no point in the *Souvenirs* does the writer suggest that her artistic ambitions brought her into conflict with her parents. On the contrary, her devotion to art appears to have strengthened the bonds between them. It was her father, she records, who first encouraged her efforts at drawing and who first predicted her future greatness (1: 24-25, 32). Her mother, too, is shown to have played an active part in the development her artistic skills, serving Elisabeth as a model (1: 26 and note),⁶² and cultivating her nascent aesthetic sensibility by taking her to see collections of the finest paintings. For her part, the memoir-writer appears to have been sincerely devoted to her parents. The death of Louis Vigée, whose talents as a portraitist and qualities as a man are described with a touching degree of indulgence in the memoirs, left her prostrate with grief: 'Je restai tellement abattue par ma douleur,' she states, 'que je fus longtemps sans reprendre mes crayons' (1: 32). Following her mother's remarriage, Mlle Vigée appears to have acted as the protector of her mother against her jealous and avaricious step-father, Jacques-François Le Sèvres, who is never referred to by name in the *Souvenirs*, probably as a mark of the writer's avowed loathing for the man. In spite of his wealth, she recalls,

'il nous refusait jusqu'au nécessaire, quoique j'eusse la bonhomie de lui donner tout ce que je gagnais. Joseph Vernet en était furieux; il me conseillait sans cesse de payer une pension, et de garder l'excédent pour moi; mais je n'en fis rien; je craignais trop qu'avec un pareil harpagon ma mère n'en souffrît.' (1: 36)

It is not merely her earnings which Vigée-Lebrun, as a caring daughter, sacrificed for the sake of her mother, for it is clear from the memoirs that reluctance to defy the latter was one of the prime reasons why the writer consented to marry Jean-

Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun - another being her desire to break away from her step-father (2: 53-54).

In addition to being affectionate and docile, the young Elisabeth Vigée, the memoirs emphasize, was also self-effacing, pious and virtuous. In company, she listened rather than spoke (1: 50). She accompanied her mother to mass, diligently attended every service during Lent (1: 26) and read edifying religious works rather than novels - the novel being a morally suspect genre. Referring to her youth, she writes:

'Le bonheur voulait que je ne connusse pas encore un seul roman. Le premier que j'aie lu (c'était *Clarisse Harlowe*, qui m'avait prodigieusement intéressée), je n'ai lu qu'après mon mariage; jusque-là je ne lisais que des livres saints, la morale des saints Pères entre autres, dont je ne me lassais pas, car tout est là, et quelques livres de classe de mon frère.' (1: 38-39)

Although she acknowledges that many of her male clients were attracted by her beauty and commissioned portraits from her because they hoped to seduce her during sittings, she also makes it clear that all such attempts were unsuccessful, not simply because her mother was present as a chaperone, but also because of her own strict moral principles and her devotion to her work. She recounts, for instance, how she delighted in foiling their plans by painting them 'à regards perdus' which forced them to look away from the painter (1: 39). Furthermore, in order to attest the spotlessness of her reputation, she records an anecdote in which the highly disreputable duc de Chartres (later Philippe-Egalité) and the marquis de Genlis, 'son compagnon d'orgies', who were amusing themselves by maligning every woman around them, were reduced to an eloquent silence when confronted with Mlle Vigée:

'- Ah! pour celle-ci, dit le duc très-haut en me désignant, il n'y a rien à dire.' (1: 45)

Although she was able to present herself without difficulty as an admirable daughter, Mme Vigée-Lebrun's account of her relationship with her husband and

her own daughter is more complicated, for here the text exhibits the sort of narrative and moral duplicity discussed by Linda Peterson in an article on the autobiography of the eighteenth century English actress and author Mary Robinson.⁶³ The two plotlines (her life as a woman and her life as an artist), which she had managed to integrate successfully in the section on her youth, thereafter cease to fit together harmoniously and numerous unresolved tensions fracture her recollections of the period after her marriage. Conscious of the fact that in pursuing a career, making a grand tour of Europe and earning her own living, she had played what most of her readers would regard as an essentially masculine role; aware, too, that she was tainted with the stigma of being a divorced woman who was rumoured to have had numerous adulterous affairs, Mme Vigée-Lebrun strives to convey the impression that she was a chaste, submissive and undemanding wife and a devoted and conscientious mother, ill-used by her egotistical husband, perfidious employees, jealous rivals and political extremists, and thus more deserving of sympathy than of reproach.

Exploiting the potential of the memoir as a vehicle for the reinterpretation of the past, the writer seizes on rumours which depicted her as an adulteress and turns them to her advantage in a skillful 'jeu du dit et du non-dit'. She passes in silence over claims that she had been the mistress of Vaudreuil (the rumours which her biographers generally regard as the most credible); and without ever formally denying that she has had an affair with Calonne, she offers such an eminently reasonable explanation for the existence of rumours to this effect that the reader is convinced that (s)he need look no further. Attacks on her virtue, she proposes, are attributable to the envy which she aroused in those whom she surpassed in beauty and talent (1: 90); to the intimacy of her links with the royal family, which made her a target for opponents of the *ancien régime* (1: 91); and, in particular, to an unfortunate act of generosity: the loan of her carriage and coachman to the real mistress of Calonne who left them outside the *hôtel des Finances* while she passed the night with the *contrôleur-général* (1: 94-95).⁶⁴

Vigée-Lebrun the wife was not merely 'honorable' (1: 95; 2: 232), however, she was also indulgent to a degree incommensurate with the conduct of her husband, who is depicted in the *Souvenirs* as a womaniser and a gambler who exploited her talent in order to finance his profligate lifestyle.⁶⁵ It was he, she states, who

fixed the price of her portraits, pocketed the money which she earned and obliged her (against her inclination) to augment her earnings by taking in pupils (1: 54, 55, 92-93). Not only does she appear to have borne all this with a martyr-like resignation at the time, but she also shows commendable restraint in avoiding the temptation to blacken his character excessively:

‘Ce n'est pas que M. Lebrun fût un méchant homme: son caractère offrait un mélange de douceur et de vivacité; il était d'une grande obligeance pour tout le monde, en un mot il était assez aimable [...]’ (1: 54)

Never in the memoirs, for example, does she refer to him with the bitterness discernible in private letters, such as that which she wrote to him from Moscow in January 1801.⁶⁶

The same process of selection and omission by which she seeks to control judgment of her behaviour as a wife is also employed by Mme Vigée-Lebrun in order to render herself sympathetic as a mother.

Throughout the memoirs, she speaks of her daughter Julie with great warmth, praising her beauty and her talents, and describing her as ‘le bonheur de [sa] vie’ (2: 49). She also makes it clear that she remained attentive to the needs of her daughter, in spite of her extensive social and professional commitments. She involved her in her pleasures and her discoveries, including the Greek Supper (1: 87), a nocturnal trip to Lake Némi (1: 193) and the ascent of Vesuvius (1: 211); and she showed great concern for her education, engaging ‘des maîtres d'écriture, de géographie, d'italien, d'anglais et d'allemand [...] et] de musique’ (1: 220-21; 2: 49) in order to insure that even in exile Julie was able to pursue her studies. ‘Mère éducatrice’, she was also a model of the ‘mère protectrice’ for much of the maternal plot in the *Souvenirs* concerns Vigée-Lebrun's efforts to safeguard and comfort her daughter. She records her intervention in order to silence their terrifying travelling companion in the coach out of Paris in October 1789 (1: 145); her desire to shield her child from the heat during a visit to la Solfatara (1: 224-25); her efforts to dissuade her from making an unsuitable marriage; her decision to leave England in 1805 when she learnt that Julie's father was allowing her to form ‘différentes liaisons [...] peu convenables pour une jeune

femme' (2: 152); and her attentiveness during her daughter's illnesses (2: 16, 53-54, 223). The reader is repeatedly offered the image of a woman for whom the happiness of her daughter counted more than her career or even her life: neither the temptation of lucrative commissions, nor the threat of imperial injunctions, nor the risk of contracting smallpox appears to have provoked a moment's hesitation when Julie's well-being was at stake.

Central to Vigée-Lebrun's refutation of her enemies' portrayal of her as a 'mère sans entrailles'⁶⁷ is her account of her daughter's marriage with 'un nommé Nigris', the secretary of the Russian count Czernicheff. According to the version of events given in the *Souvenirs* (2: 50-55), the writer was the innocent victim of an infernal 'cabale' led by Mme Charrot, her daughter's governess. The very badness of this substitute mother serves in the memoirs as a foil for the goodness of the natural mother. Mme Charrot, she states,

's'était totalement emparée de [l'esprit de Julie], et l'aigrissait contre moi au point que tout mon amour de mère se trouvait impuissant pour combattre cette funeste influence.'

Given the writer's emotive presentation of herself as a woman who responded to treachery and ingratitude with dignity and generosity; who sacrificed 'tous [ses] désirs et toutes [ses] répugnances' in order to satisfy her beloved only child; who continued to love even when her love was not returned; and who suffered 'au point que [sa] santé en était altérée' without revealing her pain to even her closest friends, it is difficult for readers of the memoirs to deny that Vigée-Lebrun deserves sympathy, even admiration. This is, after all, the conclusion to which they are guided by the apologetic letter attributed to Czernicheff which is inserted towards the end of the chapter. In this - an indirect means of validation for the memoirist - the count acknowledged that his hostility towards her had been unjustified and praised her conduct as a mother:

'Oui, Madame [...] je vous ai accusée de mille torts, j'ai osé même vous les reprocher avec assez d'amertume; mais votre conduite actuelle si digne d'admiration, votre tendresse pour Brunette si faite pour servir d'exemple à toutes les mères, me font rougir moi-même sur les soupçons honteux que j'ai osé former

contre vous.' (2: 54)

The other key moment in the maternal plot is the death of the memoirist's daughter in 1819. Once again, the writer's intention was to arouse the compassion of her readers. To this end, she focuses, not on her daughter's suffering (she notes only that 'la maladie marcha rapidement'), but on her own: 'Je m'étais hâtée de courir chez elle [...] je me trouvai mal [...] mes jambes ne me supportaient plus [...] mon désespoir [...]' (2: 223-24). In contrast, details which would detract from the image of Vigée-Lebrun as a grieving mother are omitted from the text. Very little is said about the years of strained relations between 1800 and 1819, for example, and no reference is made to the fact that Julie Nigris was heavily in debt when she died.⁶⁸

Although carefully constructed, the image of Vigée-Lebrun as a submissive wife and doting mother is far from dominant in the *Souvenirs*. Continually disrupted by that of Vigée-Lebrun the ambitious artist and passionate individualist, it lacks both coherence and force. Unlike other writers, such as Mme de La Tour du Pin, Elisabeth Le Bas or the Vendean memoirists, Mme de La Rochejaquelein and Mme de Bonchamps, Mme Vigée-Lebrun does not place her relationship with her husband at the centre of her memoirs. While they record the joy, the sense of plenitude even, which they derived from marriage, and stress the pain of separation, particularly separation by death,⁶⁹ she, in contrast, asserts her longing for independence and points to her work as her chief source of pleasure and the basis of her identity. For her, marriage was an unwelcome irritation, an obstacle to be negotiated, rather than a source of satisfaction and strength. Lebrun's proposal, she recalls, was received by her without enthusiasm:

'J'avais alors vingt ans; je vivais sans inquiétude sur mon avenir puisque je gagnais beaucoup d'argent, en sorte que je ne sentais aucun désir de me marier.'
(1: 53)

Repulsed, not by the man, but by the very notion of marriage, she claims to have hesitated right up to the very last moment:

'Je me sentais si peu entraînée [...] à faire le sacrifice de ma liberté, qu'en allant à l'église, je me disais encore: Dirai-je oui? dirai-je non?' (1: 54)

Significantly, this is the only information that the writer gives about her wedding day. By filtering out everything else - date, place, witnesses, etc. - she focuses the reader's attention on a single point: her reluctance to place herself under the authority of an other. The importance that she attached to self-definition is underlined in the following paragraph, in which she states that she willingly complied with her husband's desire to postpone publication of their marriage because she was loath to relinquish '[son] nom de fille, sous lequel [elle était] déjà très-connue' (1: 54). In her undisguised predilection for her maiden name, a choice which indicates her wish to prevent her identity from being swallowed up by that of her husband, Vigée-Lebrun differs dramatically from most of the other women who draw attention to family names in their memoirs. It is more common to find a writer recording her enthusiastic adoption of her husband's name or her fidelity to it. For Mme de Bonchamps, for example, her husband's name was a treasure bequeathed to their children and an inspiration to her after his death;⁷⁰ the widow of Lescure states that she was reluctant to remarry because she did not wish to give up the name of her heroic spouse and consented only when she could form an alliance with an equally honourable name;⁷¹ and Mme Junot signalled her admiration for her husband by declaring that 'on est fière de porter le nom d'un tel homme'.⁷² The most dramatic example, however, is that of Elisabeth Le Bas who insisted on remaining true to the name of her beloved Philippe even when this put her own life in danger. In prison, she refused to remarry in order to secure her freedom, informing her gaolers 'que la veuve Le Bas ne quittera ce nom sacré que sur l'échafaud'; and after her release, in spite of her poverty, she refused to accept financial aid from those who had persecuted her husband because, she writes, 'si j'étais jeune, je savais être fière du nom que je portais'.⁷³

To judge from the *Souvenirs*, the conduct of her husband had only a negligible effect on the happiness of Mme Vigée-Lebrun: it is art, not the love of a man, which she identifies as the driving force in her life. Such a woman was closer, then, to the Mme de Staël of the 1814 preface to the *Lettres sur [...] J. J.*

Rousseau, who recognised that women could derive pleasure from their own intellectual achievements,⁷⁴ than to the author of *De l'Allemagne*, who had declared that:

‘Il y a dans un mariage malheureux une force de douleur qui dépasse toutes les autres peines de ce monde. L’âme entière d’une femme repose sur l’attachement conjugal: lutter seul contre le sort, s’avancer vers le cercueil sans qu’un ami vous soutienne, sans qu’un ami vous regrette, c’est un isolement dont les déserts de l’Arabie ne donnent qu’une foible idée [...].’⁷⁵

As well as registering Vigée-Lebrun’s distaste for the notion of female destiny as marriage, the *Souvenirs* also reveal her profound anxiety about the relationship between the maternal and the professional in her life. Both implicitly and explicitly, biological reproduction and the responsibilities associated with motherhood are shown to conflict with artistic creativity. Even if only subconsciously, Vigée-Lebrun appears to have made a link between dedication to her work and the occurrence of domestic tragedy, for there are discernible traces of guilt in the brief mention of her ill-fated second pregnancy (1: 67) and in her account of the origins of Julie’s liaison with Nigris (2: 50). In the first case, the juxtaposition of work and illness hints at unspoken fears that it was her arduous workload when heavily pregnant which weakened her health and put her unborn child at risk; and in the second case, the memoirist concedes that it was her professional commitments which led her to entrust her daughter to countess Czernicheff and thus precipitated her seduction.

As well as the unarticulated fears that painting was an obstacle to mothering, the image of Vigée-Lebrun as a good mother is also troubled by her ill-concealed resentment that mothering was an obstacle to painting. We see her annoyance when giving birth forced her to postpone sittings (1: 59), and her disappointment when her hopes of producing a great work of art in Italy were frustrated (at least in part) by the need to provide her daughter with material security while in exile:

‘J’avais regretté à Naples, et je regrettais surtout à Rome de ne pas employer mon temps à faire quelques

tableaux dont les sujets m'inspiraient. On m'avait nommée membre de toutes les académies de l'Italie, ce qui m'encourageait à mériter des distinctions aussi flatteuses et je n'allais rien laisser dans ce beau pays qui pût ajouter beaucoup à ma réputation. Ces idées me revenaient souvent en tête; [...] mais, tantôt le besoin de gagner de l'argent, puisqu'il ne me restait pas un sou de ce que j'avais gagné en France; tantôt la faiblesse de mon caractère, me faisaient prendre des engagements, et je me séchais à la portraiture.' (1: 231)

As her account of her relationship with her husband and daughter shows, Vigée-Lebrun's position in the Rousseauist camp is not without ambiguity. This is one of the points made by Paula Rea Radisich in an essay which focuses on Elisabeth's 1786 self-portrait with her daughter (fig. 1). In this article, Radisich shows how the artist managed to endow her works with multiple (and even contradictory) layers of meaning. On one level, this painting can be read as an extremely conservative representation of femininity. Such is the interpretation put on it, for example, by Rozika Parker and Griselda Pollock, according to whom Vigée-Lebrun's self-portraits with Julie prefigure 'the modern bourgeois ideology that woman's place is in the home and that woman's only genuine fulfilment lies in child-bearing'.⁷⁶ On another level, however, this self-portrait is a complex and playful challenge to Rousseau's pronouncements about the limited artistic capacities of women and about their supposedly 'natural' vocation for domesticity. Although Vigée-Lebrun depicts herself as a mother, the pose which she adopts distinctly evokes two famous works by (or attributed to) Raphael: *La Fornarina* and the *Madonna della sedia*. As the creator of the painting as well as its principal subject - its source therefore in both senses of the term - Vigée-Lebrun breaks down the traditional opposition between female muse and male artist. As subject, she identifies herself with the virtue of the madonna and the beauty of la Fornarina, a beauty capable of inspiring great art; and, as the painter, she identifies herself with Raphael, the most revered figure in the classical pantheon. What is more, the relationship portrayed in oils (a mother clasping to her bosom the child whom she brought into existence) mirrors the relationship between the artist and the portrait itself (the works which she brings into existence with her brushes, she implies, are also close to her heart). In short, with this painting, Vigée-Lebrun places herself



Fig. 1. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun,
Madame Vigée-Lebrun et sa fille, oil on
panel, 105 x 84 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre.

simultaneously within the line of beautiful women and good mothers and within that of the great artists.⁷⁷

According to Radisich, Vigée-Lebrun added another twist to her identification with Raphael when she painted her friend and fellow-artist Hubert Robert in 1788 as a pendant to the self-portrait of herself with her daughter which had been exhibited the previous year. For Parker and Pollock, it is the Hubert Robert portrait which is the more successful embodiment of the Artist, in that it captures 'a new artistic persona, anti-social, self-contained, seeing with the eyes of the imagination', while the Vigée-Lebrun of the self-portraits, in their view, is offered to the viewer as 'Woman': 'sexual, physical, the spectacle of beauty'.⁷⁸ In other words, he is portrayed as an active subject, while she is merely a passive object. In a more subtle analysis of the relationship between the two artists as depicted by Vigée-Lebrun, however, Radisich argues convincingly that the iconography of Inspired Genius in the Robert portrait is deliberately ironic and is used by an Elisabeth who links herself with Raphael in order to indicate her superiority over him as an artist.⁷⁹

Concentrating as she does on the self-portrait of 1786, Radisich makes only a passing reference to an earlier self-portrait which is in many ways its parallel: that in which the artist depicted herself 'portant sur la tête un chapeau de paille, une plume et une guirlande de fleurs des champs, et tenant [sa] palette à la main' (1: 75) (fig. 2). As in the later work, Vigée-Lebrun here playfully combines affirmation of her femininity (she is a beautiful woman who offers herself coquettishly as an object to be admired) with claims about her status as an artist. This time, she explicitly quotes 'le fameux chapeau de paille', identifying herself both with the master-colourist Peter Paul Rubens and with a woman whom she believed to be his wife. Her fusion of model and artist and her modification of the original by casting the model as an artist who directly engages the eyes of the viewer, however, introduce an ambiguity that was absent from the original: is the viewer here being invited to contemplate a lovely woman or to pose before an artist?

Although she is concerned primarily with Vigée-Lebrun's representations of herself in paint, Radisich does note the existence of certain points of contact between these and the *Souvenirs*. In both, Elisabeth weaves together images of herself as



Fig. 2. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun,
Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat,
oil on canvas, 97.8 x 70.5 cm.
London, The National Gallery.

a woman with images of herself as an artist; and both visually and textually, she employs the same devices in order to shape the viewer's/reader's perception of her: irony, the fashioning of Hubert Robert as a pendant, and the identification of herself with Rubens and Raphael. It is the implications of these similarities - that Vigée-Lebrun was more cerebral, more interested in the construction of gender identities and sexual politics, and more ambivalent in her response to Rousseau than has previously been recognised - which I wish to consider now with reference to the *Souvenirs* as a whole.

It has already been shown that Vigée-Lebrun, in her memoirs, conscientiously fashioned an image of herself which conformed to contemporary notions of femininity. As in the paintings, however, this is undercut by the presence of a powerful counter-image: that of an ambitious and committed artist, proud of her achievements and critical of the prevailing ideology of sexual difference.

Those who have studied the autobiographical works of professional women have tended to emphasise the dominance of the domestic or private plot over that of the writer's career, the weakness of the theme of accomplishment, and the rarity of undisguised delight at success achieved in the public domain, particularly in those works which were composed before the early twentieth century.⁸⁰ Such generalisations, however, cannot be applied to the *Souvenirs* of Vigée-Lebrun. In these memoirs, the work does not take second place to the life because, for their author, the two were inseparable: 'peindre et vivre,' she states, 'n'a jamais été qu'un seul et même mot pour moi' (1: 238). Both directly (through the account of her career) and indirectly (through her pen-portraits and her account of her travels), Vigée-Lebrun offers herself to the reader as an artist whose talent merits respect - something which she felt she was not receiving from her compatriots at the time she was writing. Given the vexed references to her non-representation in the collection of works by modern French painters in the Luxembourg (1: 35) and to her present exclusion from the Académie de peinture (1: 78), it seems that Vigée-Lebrun intended the memoirs to be a vehicle for filling these gaps and reaffirming her presence as one of the major figures in contemporary French painting.

The very structure of the *Souvenirs* testifies to the importance of art in the life of

Vigée-Lebrun. It is not 'life events' - marriage, motherhood, widowhood - that provide their framework, but rather the formation of the writer as an artist and the course of her career. The orientation of the work is established at the outset in her words to princess Kourakine which mark the start of the memoirs proper:

'Je vous parlerai d'abord, chère amie, de mes premières années, parce qu'elles ont été le présage de toute ma vie, puisque mon amour pour la peinture s'est manifesté dès mon enfance.' (1: 24)

It is her predisposition for art, not her family or her own birth, which thus takes first place. Moreover, when the published text quoted here is compared with the Rochester manuscript pages, it is clear that the theme of artistic endeavour was intentionally accentuated in the former by the suppression of those details about her infancy and early childhood that contributed nothing to the story of Vigée-Lebrun the artist.⁸¹ This trend continues throughout the memoirs, for not only do they focus on the most productive years of the writer's life (the period up to her return from England), but even in the section devoted to the post-1805 period, considerable attention is directed towards Vigée-Lebrun the artist: her attempts at landscape compositions in Switzerland; the *Sainte Geneviève* which she painted for the church at Louveciennes (2: 216); her friendship with the young artist, Gros (2: 219-21); her portraits of the duchesse de Berry (2: 221-22); her trip to Bordeaux and the opportunities which it afforded for sketching (2: 224-31); and the guidance which she offered her niece, the painter Eugénie Lebrun (2: 231-32; and the 'Conseils', 2: 322-29).

Committed to winning her reader's admiration for the artist, Vigée-Lebrun carefully sifted and shaped her recollections in order to convey the impression that her career had been a resounding triumph. Thus, while achievements are highlighted, everything liable to cast doubt on her talent or detract from the brilliance of her reputation is eliminated. Crucial to Vigée-Lebrun's self-affirmation as an artist is her depiction of her relationship with her clients. As the plethora of names recorded in the *Souvenirs* is intended to indicate, she was capable of creating and sustaining an impressive network of contacts in royal, aristocratic, bourgeois, artistic and literary circles. As well as satisfying her patrons as an artist, however, she was also able to earn their trust as a friend. Marks of the high esteem in

which she was held, and of the power which she wielded as a result, are scattered throughout the memoirs. She notes with pride the waiting-list of the 1780s (1: 78); her freedom in Rome to choose 'parmi les plus grands personnages, les portraits qu'il [lui] plaisait de faire' (1: 172); the commissions which she refused, including one from the pope (1: 185-86); the conditions which she dictated to clients, such as the marquise d'Anspach (2: 146-47); and the unusual degree of discretion which she had in arranging her sitters. Even with royalty, her relationship appears to have been amicable. Marie-Antoinette, for example, altered her plans in order to avoid inconveniencing the painter, retrieved her paintbox when it fell and sang duets with her during sittings (1: 66-68); Paul I served her with coffee while she worked (2: 39); Poniatowski, the ex-king of Poland, and the prince de Kaunitz both called her their 'bonne amie' (2: 43); and the Prince of Wales granted her privileges which were denied to English artists (2: 131) and tolerated her scolding him when he missed a sitting (2: 129).

The impression of a harmonious bond between the painter and the crowned heads of Europe, however, depends as much on her silences as on her claims. According to the *Souvenirs*, Catherine II was a great admirer of Vigée-Lebrun who never wavered in her opinion of the latter's talent, in spite of Zuboff's efforts to discredit the artist in the eyes of his imperial mistress. On one occasion, she recalls, he tricked her into making disastrous alterations to a portrait of the grand-duchesses Alexandrina and Elena by telling her that 'Sa Majesté était scandalisée de la manière dont [elle avait] costumé les deux grandes-duchesses dans [son] tableau'. Too late, she learnt the 'truth':

'La vérité est que l'impératrice n'avait rien dit; car elle eut la bonté de m'en assurer la première fois que je la revis.' (1: 324)

This version of events, however, is contradicted by the harsh criticism of the work in a letter which Catherine wrote to Grimm on 8th November 1795:

'[...] en un mot non seulement la ressemblance est manquée, mais encore les deux soeurs sont tellement défigurées qu'il y a des gens qui demandent laquelle est l'aînée...il y a dans ce tableau-portrait ni ressemblance, ni goût, ni noblesse [...] Il fallait copier dame Nature et non pas inventer des attitudes de

singe.⁸²

To judge from other sources, this was not the only cause of tension in the relationship between the artist and the empress. Vigée-Lebrun's arrangement of the grand-duchess Elizabeth's costume for an imperial ball, for example, was apparently less of a triumph than she suggests in her memoirs (1: 329). According to the countess Golovine and Rostopchine, Catherine was extremely displeased with the artist's behaviour. 'L'impératrice a été très fâchée contre Mme Lebrun,' wrote the latter in December 1795;

'l'enthousiasme qu'elle a inspiré à nos dames, la fureur de se costumer d'après ses idées et tout plein d'extravagances a empêché Mme Lebrun de réussir de la manière qu'elle le croyait.'⁸³

Strategic silences can also be detected in the memoirist's description of her relations with the French royal family. While there is no indication in the *Souvenirs* of tension between herself and Louis XVI, for example, a bulletin dated 17th February 1785 and published in the *Correspondance secrète* refers to an order issued by the king forbidding the artist to appear at Versailles 'sans y être appelée'.⁸⁴ In addition, Vigée-Lebrun enhances her own status as royal portraitist by obscuring the career of her contemporary and fellow-academician, Adélaïde Labille-Guiard. The latter is mentioned only obliquely in the *Souvenirs* and it is the meanness of her character, rather than her talent as an artist, which is highlighted. Recalling the commission which she received in Rome to paint the king's aunts, Elisabeth writes:

'Je n'ignorais pas qu'une femme artiste, qui s'est toujours montrée mon ennemie, je ne sais pourquoi, avait essayé, par tous les moyens imaginables, de me noircir dans l'esprit de ces princesses; mais l'extrême bonté avec laquelle elles me traitèrent m'assura bientôt du peu d'effet qu'avaient produit ces viles calomnies.' (1: 232)⁸⁵

There is no trace here of the high regard in which Labille-Guiard was held in royal circles. She was, after all, granted the title 'Peintre de Mesdames Adélaïde et

Victoire' (the aunts of Louis XVI) in 1787 and, according to her biographer Joachim Lebreton, also that of 'Peintre de Monsieur';⁸⁶ she executed work for the king's sister, Mme Elisabeth, who, along with Diane de Polignac, supported the artist when she applied (unsuccessfully) for lodgings in the Louvre; and in 1788, she was commissioned by the comte de Provence to paint a monumental piece for which she was to be paid 30 000 livres, entitled *La Réception d'un chevalier de Saint-Lazare par Monsieur, Grand Maître de l'Ordre*.⁸⁷

Another aspect of her relationship with her clients which is advanced by Vigée-Lebrun in the memoirs as a mark of her success is the remuneration which she received - and being paid for her work, as Virginia Woolf pointed out, is one way in which a woman encourages others to take it seriously, for money distinguishes the professional from the amateur and 'dignifies what is frivolous if unpaid for'.⁸⁸ She is, she makes plain, a woman who succeeded in supporting herself financially from an early age. As a young woman, she felt no pressure to marry 'puisqu[elle] gagnai[t] beaucoup d'argent' (1: 53); and in exile abroad, she earned enough money to keep herself and subsidise the husband and mother she had left behind in France (1: 145). She notes the high prices which clients were prepared to pay (1: 91, 187-88); the fortunes which she made, lost and remade (1: 250, 319); and the gifts which were bestowed on her, including 'une belle boîte de vieux laque' from the Queen of Naples containing 'son chiffre entouré de très-beaux brillants' (1: 228), and a bracelet set with diamonds from the princess Dolgorouki (1: 345).

Vigée-Lebrun also establishes her distance from the amateur by drawing attention to the scale of her ambitions. She offers herself to the reader, not simply as a portrait painter, but also as the creator of landscapes and history paintings. In aspiring to omnicompetence, however, she went far beyond the limits of what was considered proper for a woman. According to Rousseau, drawing was 'naturally' attractive to women, but the whole exercise should have a utilitarian value and their subject-matter should be drawn from the lowest category in the artistic hierarchy of the period - still-life:

'Des feuillages, des fruits, des fleurs, des draperies
tout ce qui peut servir à donner un contour élégant aux
ajustements, et à faire soi-même un patron de
broderie quand on ne trouve pas à son gré, cela leur

suffit.⁸⁹

The notion that art for a woman should be nothing more than 'un accessoire agréable, un ornement ajouté' to which she should not devote too much of her time persisted into the following century.⁹⁰ Little was done to encourage the development of a woman's talent. Manuals on drawing directed at girls were consistently inferior to those directed at boys; pastels, watercolours and miniatures were considered to be the media best suited to the female temperament; and the exclusion of women from life-classes, together with the inadequacy (or absence) of their instruction in the classics, meant that they generally lacked the competence to tackle the most exalted branch of artistic endeavour - history painting.⁹¹ When artistic training for women was advocated, as for example by Mme Frère-Montizon who, along with Mme Fanny Beauharnais, opened the Ecole gratuite de Dessin pour les jeunes filles in Paris in 1803, it was often linked to economic arguments as well as to issues of morality: it provided the poor with a respectable living and saved the rich from idleness. 'Le dessin,' declared Mme Frère-Montizon,

'étoit applicable à nombre d'objets d'occupation lucrative, tels que: les étoffes; les papiers peints; la dentelle; les fleurs artificielles; l'éventail; l'enluminure; la peinture en tabatières; les camaïeux; les vignettes, etc..⁹²

There is no sense here of art as a mission, and the line between the artist and the artisan is a thin one. When Vigée-Lebrun recounts her life, however, it is as an artist for whom art was a calling, not merely a 'métier'. Not only was she born to draw, she claims, but her work possessed a spiritual dimension which raised it above that of the artisan:

'[...] la passion de la peinture était innée en moi. Cette passion ne s'est jamais affaiblie; je crois qu'elle n'a fait que s'accroître avec le temps; car, encore aujourd'hui, j'en éprouve tout le charme, qui ne finira, j'espère qu'avec ma vie. C'est au reste à cette divine passion que je dois non seulement ma fortune, mais aussi mon bonheur [...].' (1: 24)

Indeed, the theme of the 'divine passion', of a link between the artist and the gods, is a recurrent one in the memoirs. On three occasions, she cites verses addressed to her by others in which she is credited with the possession of superhuman powers and described as a giver of life and a preserver of beauty. While those of the marquis de Villette refer to her as the 'sublime Le Brun' 'Dont l'esprit créateur, dont l'immortel crayon/De plaire et d'étonner a la double puissance' (1: 117), the prince de Ligne and the author of the poem on her portrait of the Indian ambassador are even bolder in their praise. The latter invites Allah to acknowledge the painter as his rival:

"Tu conviendras [...]

Que, comme toi, le génie a ses flammes;

Et que Le Brun, en peignant des portraits,

Sait aussi leur donner une âme". (1: 62)

The former, in lines composed during Vigée-Lebrun's stay at Caltemberg, compares her to Prometheus and begs her to quit France ('Oubliez votre nation/ Par votre génie honorée') and take up residence in his mountain retreat where she will be 'Près de [son] habitation/De la voûte azurée/Dont [elle semble] être échappée' (1: 290).

These are certainly conventional terms of flattery, but it is possible to see in the memoirist's decision to record them an implicit desire to confound Jean-Jacques Rousseau's contention that '[les] ouvrages de génie' were beyond the capacities of women,⁹³ and his remarks about talented women:

'Toutes ces femmes à grands talents n'en imposent jamais qu'aux sots. On sait toujours quel est l'artiste ou l'ami qui tient la plume ou le pinceau quand elles travaillent; on sait le discret homme de lettres qui leur dicte en secret leurs oracles.'⁹⁴

A victim of such prejudice, Vigée-Lebrun stresses that she alone was responsible for her paintings and demonstrates the absurdity of rumours which attributed them to a man (1: 89).⁹⁵ It is as a serious artist who succeeded by virtue of her talent

and commitment that Elisabeth wished to be remembered. This desire, which pervades the whole of the memoirs, explains the liberties which the author took with the truth, most notably, in the account of her admission to the Académie de peinture (1: 76-78). According to the *Souvenirs*, Joseph Vernet decided to propose Vigée-Lebrun as a member because he was impressed by the quality of her work. Pierre, the *directeur de l'Académie*, 's'y opposa fortement, ne voulant pas, disait-il, que l'on recût des femmes'. She succeeded, however, in spite of Pierre's sexist objections, because she had the support of 'tous les vrais amateurs' who formed 'en [sa] faveur, une cabale contre celle de M. Pierre'. Without elaborating, she then passes to the outcome:

'Enfin je fus reçue. M. Pierre alors fit courir le bruit qu'il était par ordre de la cour qu'on me recevait. Je pense bien en effet que le Roi et la Reine avaient été assez bons pour désirer me voir à l'Académie; mais voilà tout.' (1: 77)

The reader is thus offered the image of a woman who triumphed over bigotry, not because she possessed influential contacts at court, but because her skill as a painter was recognised by other great painters and connoisseurs. This image, however, owes much to the writer's evasiveness for other sources offer a different version of events. According to these, Vigée-Lebrun's admission came about entirely through the exercise of royal patronage. Since her husband's profession disqualified her under the rules of the Académie (those engaged in trade either directly or indirectly were not eligible for membership), Vigée-Lebrun was accepted only after a dispensation had been granted by Louis XVI, and this was granted only after Marie-Antoinette had brought pressure to bear on the comte d'Angiviller, the *Directeur des Bâtiments du Roi*.⁹⁶ In contrast, Labille-Guiard, who was admitted at the same time, indubitably succeeded because her work commanded the respect of her peers. In his biography of this artist, Lebreton emphasises that she insisted on following the normal election procedure, even though friends, who feared she would be rejected on account of her sex, advised her to seek the protection of d'Angiviller:

'Elle repoussa avec force ce moyen oblique, déclarant qu'elle voulait être jugée et non protégée; que si son

talent n'était pas trouvé digne de l'Académie, elle travaillerait sans relâche à le perfectionner [...].'⁹⁷

In the election, she received twenty-nine votes out of thirty-three.

It is not just in the account of her admission to the Académie royale, however, that Vigée-Lebrun seeks to impress on the reader that she was a true artist for whom painting was an intellectual and sensual experience, not a purely manual operation; and a great artist, whose work met with more than commercial success. On the title-page of the *Souvenirs*, for instance, she lists the numerous academies of which she was a member (France, Rome, Parma, Bologna, Saint-Petersburg, Berlin, Geneva and Avignon); and records, in the body of the work, the honours paid to her throughout Europe by prestigious institutions and fellow artists: La Harpe's flattering speech to the Académie française (1: 57-58); the self-portrait which was requested by 'la ville de Florence' (1: 160) and those executed for the Academies of Rome (1: 172) and Saint-Petersburg (2: 49); the compliments which were bestowed on her by Joseph Vernet (1: 76), Sir Joshua Reynolds (2: 123), Jacques-Louis David (2: 249), and the students of the French Academy in Rome (1: 164); and, in particular, the admiration shown for the *Sibylle* which she painted in Naples 'd'après Lady Hamilton'. In Parma, this work procured for her one of the most profoundly satisfying experiences of her life. One morning, she writes, she was visited by a group of young painters who asked to see some of her work:

'- Voici un tableau que je viens de finir, répondis-je en montrant la Sibylle. Tous témoignèrent d'abord une surprise bien plus flatteuse pour moi que n'auraient pu l'être les plus gracieuses paroles; plusieurs s'écrièrent qu'ils avaient cru que ce tableau avait été fait par un des maîtres de leur école, et l'un d'eux se jeta à mes pieds, les larmes aux yeux.' (1: 240-41)

Her response to this scene reveals her awareness of the conflict between the conventions to which she was subject as a woman (in confessing her delight she was exposing herself to the charge of narcissism) and the freedom to assert herself which she possessed as an artist:

'Si mes lecteurs, en lisant ce récit, m'accusent de vanité, je les supplie de réfléchir qu'un artiste travaille

toute sa vie pour avoir deux ou trois moments pareils à celui dont je parle.' (1: 241)

It is pride in her achievement as an artist, however, which prevails, for she goes on to recall the success of the *Sibylle* - 'à [sa] vive satisfaction' - in Venice (1: 248-49), Vienna (1: 278) and Dresden (1: 295-96).

Vigée-Lebrun also establishes her artistic and intellectual credibility by a more oblique route, part of which has already been traced by Paula Rea Radisich in the article cited above. Something that is fundamental to my own interpretation of the *Souvenirs*, however, is present only implicitly in her analysis: the notion of play. Play, it should be stressed, does not necessarily preclude seriousness of purpose. On the contrary, as Patricia Yaeger has shown, one of the ways in which women of the past challenged the conventions of the male-dominated societies in which they lived was by being 'seriously playful' - seizing, recontextualizing and transforming what was intended to reinforce their subordinate position.⁹⁸

Yaeger's image of the 'honey-mad' woman, who consumes to excess the languages designed to consume her and who thus finds a means of self-expression and self-promotion through the manipulation of pre-existing signs or codes, is a particularly apt one for a woman like Vigée-Lebrun who established her status as an artist by appropriating two 'languages', one with her brush and the other with her pen. It is all the more apt as she chose to liken herself to a bee in a passage associating language - here, the language of high art - with the discovery of personal pleasure and profit. Recalling the collections which she visited with her mother as a young girl, she writes:

'Dès que j'entrais dans une de ces riches galeries, on pouvait exactement me comparer à l'abeille, tant je récoltais de connaissances et de souvenirs utiles à mon art, tout en m'enivrant de jouissances dans la contemplation des grands maîtres.' (1: 35)

Dispelling any notion of her passivity, she goes on to explain how she drew on these 'grands maîtres' in order to nourish her own talent:

'En outre, pour me fortifier, je copiais quelques tableaux de Rubens, quelques têtes de Rembrandt, de Vandik, et plusieurs têtes de jeunes filles de Greuze,

parce que ces dernières m'expliquaient fortement les semi-tons qui se trouvent dans les carnations délicates [...].’ (1: 35-36)

Far from feeling alienated or intimidated by the Old Masters whose work determined the language of high art, Vigée-Lebrun confronted them with a mixture of respect and defiance. The efforts to emulate them, absorb them and make them her own which art historians have noted in the paintings⁹⁹ are also evident in the memoirs. Although she refers directly only to her imitation (and, significantly, *adaptation*) of ‘le beau style des draperies de Raphaël et du Dominiquin’ (1: 56) and of the play of light in Rubens’ *Chapeau de paille* (1: 75), the *Souvenirs* testify to the extensive artistic vocabulary which she had at her disposal. In pages that are frequently dismissed as dull and unoriginal (by Hautecoeur, for example), she records the many works of art which she eagerly ‘consumed’ during her travels, particularly in Italy, and demonstrates that she was exceptionally ‘well-read’ in pictorial terms by recounting how she impressed a guide who had underestimated her familiarity with ‘les chefs-d’oeuvre des grands maîtres de l’école de Bologne’. In one of that city’s palaces, she recalls,

‘le custode me suivait, s’obstinant à me nommer l’auteur de chaque tableau. Il m’impatiait beaucoup, et je lui dis doucement qu’il prenait une peine inutile; que je connaissais tous ces maîtres.’

He then followed her around in silence:

‘mais comme il m’entendait m’extasier devant les plus beaux ouvrages en nommant le peintre, il me quitta pour aller dire à mon domestique: - Qui donc est cette dame? j’ai conduit de bien grandes princesses, mais je n’en ai jamais vu qui se connaisse aussi bien qu’elle.’ (1: 155)

The Vigée-Lebrun who wove herself into the tradition of Old Masters visually, by swallowing and transforming their work in the creation of her own, also did so textually by drawing on the conventions of the artist’s (auto)biography as a genre. Although the presence of stereotyped motifs in the *Souvenirs* has already been

noted by Jean Owens Schaefer, the writer's handling of these is even more ingenious than she suggests.

The early years of Vigée-Lebrun, as recounted in her memoirs, contain many of the motifs found in the biographies of other artists. A born artist, she was driven on by an irresistible impulse to draw. Like Cimabue, Filippo Lippi and Poussin, she filled her schoolbooks and those of her classmates with drawings; in defiance of the nuns responsible for her education, she covered the walls of the dormitory with figures and landscapes; and, like Giotto, 'dans les moments de récréation', she traced in the sand 'tout ce qui [lui] passait par la tête' (1: 24). An autodidact - 'je n'ai jamais eu de maître proprement dit' (1: 34) - she claims to have followed nature and then fortified her natural talent with assiduous study.¹⁰⁰ As was frequently the case (it occurs, for example, in the lives of Giotto, Michelangelo and Bernini), the memoirs also contain an anecdote relating how the genius of the child prodigy was recognised by another artist who correctly predicted her future greatness:

'Je me souviens qu'à l'âge de sept ou huit ans, je dessinais à la lampe un homme à barbe que j'ai toujours gardé. Je le fis voir à mon père qui s'écria transporté de joie: Tu seras peintre, mon enfant, ou jamais il n'en sera.' (1: 24)

Another theme common to the biographies of artists from classical times onwards is the respect shown for them by princely patrons.¹⁰¹ Once again, the *Souvenirs* are used to fit Vigée-Lebrun into a line of illustrious artists. Like Raphael, Rubens or Bernini, she is presented as the friend of the great. Not only does she sing duets with Marie-Antoinette and go drawing with the duc de Montpensier, but in a scene which offers a parallel to that of Leonardo dying in the arms of François I, she is shown being tended by the grand-duchess Elizabeth after having been overcome by dizziness during a portrait sitting (1: 327). One variant on the theme of princely deference involves the great acting as the servant of the artist: Maffeo Barberini, for example, holding a mirror for Bernini or Charles V stooping to pick up Titian's paintbrush. This device, too, appears in the *Souvenirs*, for there is a clear echo of the last example - significantly 'feminised', as Schaefer points out -

in Marie-Antoinette's retrieval of the pregnant Vigée-Lebrun's paintbox (1: 68).¹⁰²

The complexity of the image of Vigée-Lebrun the artist and the playfulness of its construction are even more apparent when we move from stereotypical episodes in the artist's life to character traits. According to Rudolph and Margot Wittkower, there is no 'timeless constitutional type of artist'.¹⁰³ On the contrary, since the Renaissance, two types can be recognised. On the one hand, there is the conformist: affable, self-assured, cultured and eager to establish claims to gentility; on the other, there is the (proto-)Bohemian: melancholic, tormented and anti-social. Although they co-existed, the trend towards one or other image varied over time, and the end of the eighteenth century has been identified as a key period of transition when the supremacy of the 'gentleman artist' was being undermined by the rise in popularity of the 'Romantic artist' or the artist as a sensitive, passionate, socially-alienated genius.¹⁰⁴ Just as she negotiates between two models of womanhood - the urbane *salonnière* and Rousseau's 'natural' woman - Vigée-Lebrun also negotiates between the two models of the artist.

A recurrent theme in artists' biographies is that of their extraordinary dedication to their work. This can take various forms. Some artists, for example Parmigianino during the sack of Rome in 1527, are shown to have continued creating under difficult conditions; others, such as Masaccio, are said to have behaved erratically or eccentrically because devotion to art made them indifferent to everything else; and some, such as Salvator Rosa, reputedly drove themselves to exhaustion.¹⁰⁵ Fitting herself into this tradition, Vigée-Lebrun emphasises the intensity of her passion for painting, the zeal with which she laboured and the self-discipline which she exercised. She notes, for example, the heavy workload which seriously undermined her health in the early 1780s (1: 78) and the gruelling schedule which she maintained, at least until after her return from England (1: 56; 2: 35, 125). In certain of the anecdotes which she relates, however, the themes of the artist's dedication and of the carelessness to which this could give rise are modified in ways that foreground the sex of the writer. Thus, although she stresses that the birth of her daughter brought her great joy, her account of the episode nevertheless dispels the notion that women are predisposed to regard

motherhood as their principal - if not their only - source of self-fulfilment, for it is the creative, rather than the procreative, instinct which appears to have been the more powerful in her case. Far from filling her existence, her impending maternity is presented as one of the 'petits détails de la vie' from which she was distracted by her passion for art; and even when in labour, she continued to paint, obstinately refusing to sacrifice the creative impulse to biological forces:

'Le jour de la naissance de ma fille, je n'ai point quitté mon atelier, et je travaillais à ma *Vénus qui lie les ailes de l'Amour*, dans les intervalles que me laissaient les douleurs.' (1: 58)

Her response to a friend's inquiry about her preparations for the birth reinforces the link between her 'étourderie' and her apparently 'unfeminine' devotion to her work:

'je lui répondis d'un air étonné que je ne savais pas ce qui m'était nécessaire. - Vous voilà bien, reprit-elle, vous êtes un vrai garçon. Je vous avertis, moi, que vous accoucherez ce soir. - Non! non! dis-je, j'ai demain séance, je ne veux pas accoucher aujourd'hui.'
(1: 58-59)¹⁰⁶

The other illustrations of Vigée-Lebrun's 'étourderie' serve a dual function: they indicate her conformity with a recognised artistic type and testify to the strength of the bond between herself and her father. Early in the memoirs, she explains that Louis Vigée's passion for painting frequently made him absent-minded and cites the following incident as proof. One evening, when he was already dressed to go out for dinner, he decided to do some more work on a picture he had started and, in order to make himself more comfortable, he removed his wig and put on his nightcap. So preoccupied was he with his work that he left the house with the nightcap still on his head, oblivious to the incongruity until it was pointed out by a neighbour (1: 25). The memoirist subsequently relates two anecdotes about herself which, together, contain all the ingredients present in that about her father. In the first, she recalls having ruined a white satin dress just before going out to dine because she returned to work on a painting and absent-mindedly sat down on her palette (1: 50). In the second, she recalls the visit of two English ladies to

her studio in London (2: 125-26). While awaiting their arrival, she tells us, she began painting, 'en toilette fort peu soignée', as was her habit. In response to the protests of her maid and companion Adélaïde, she promised to tidy herself up before greeting her visitors, but soon became absorbed in her work:

'Tout occupée de mon travail, je n'entends point frapper; mais j'entends ces dames qui montent l'escalier; vite je prends ma perruque, je m'en coiffe par-dessus mon bonnet de nuit; et j'oublie tout à fait d'ôter ma robe de peinture.'

Only with Adélaïde's return, after their departure, did she realise how bizarre she looked.

Odd behaviour due to absorption in one's work, however, was not invariably seen as a mark of genius. On the contrary, according to the biographer of Sir Joshua Reynolds, uncouthness and outlandish conduct were signs of inferiority.

Reynolds, wrote Northcote,

'had none of those eccentric bursts of action, those fiery impetuositities which are supposed by the vulgar to characterise genius, and which frequently are found to accompany a secondary rank of talent, but are never conjoined with the first.'¹⁰⁷

In spite of their apparent incompatibility, Vigée-Lebrun manages to assimilate both images of the artist. Her eccentricity, while sufficient to show her dedication to her work, never raises fundamental doubts about her sanity; and it is never associated with anything as degrading as a taste for squalor or violence, as was the case in the lives of Cristoforo Gherardi and Caravaggio, for example.

Vigée-Lebrun maintains the same delicate balancing act when depicting her relations with others. On the one hand, she displays qualities which link her with artists such as Raphael, Titian, Rubens and Reynolds: a sparkling conversationalist and celebrated hostess, she mingles easily with those of all social ranks. On the other, she reveals an affinity with more troubled characters, such as Michelangelo or Dürer: the bouts of melancholy; her craving for solitude;

her brusqueness with those like Poniatowski or Riverol who interrupted her work; her passion for movement; and her hypersensitivity.

It is probably not fortuitous that such traits also associate Vigée-Lebrun specifically with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In grafting her identity onto his, however, she calls into question both the Rousseauist construction of femininity and what Germaine Greer has described as the 'super-masculine Romantic concept of the artist'.¹⁰⁸ Like the author of the *Confessions* with his 'humeur solitaire',¹⁰⁹ Vigée-Lebrun loved lonely walks (1: 131, 190-91, 257, 287; 2: 11, 163), deliberately shunned company when visiting collections (1: 173) or exploring the glaciers at Chamonix (2: 187), and had a curtain rigged up in her carriage in order to isolate her from her travelling companions and allow her to contemplate in tranquillity (2: 197). Subject to melancholy, both were nevertheless sensitive to its charms (2: 171, 175) and to the soothing and restorative powers of water which, for both, was associated with reverie and the delights of escape into the intemporal.¹¹⁰ Profoundly opposed to all forms of constraint (1: 307), both professed a passion for wild beauty, for travelling,¹¹¹ and for 'les lieux élevés' (1: 288).¹¹² For both the writer and the artist, it was the sublime in nature that attracted them most and their autobiographical works reveal the same fascination with height, turbulence and danger. 'Il me faut des torrents,' declared Rousseau,

'des rochers, des sapins, des bois noirs, des
montagnes, des chemins raboteux à monter et à
descendre, des précipices à mes côtés qui me fassent
bien peur.'¹¹³

In the following century, Vigée-Lebrun recorded her ascent of various mountains, volcanoes and waterfalls; and wrote of the pleasure ('extase', 'jouissance') mingled with fear and awe that she experienced when faced with the Alps (1: 147), Vesuvius (1: 211) or the waterfalls of Narva (2: 83), Schaubach (2: 165-66) and Schaffhausen (2: 167). The mountain top - symbol of power and independence, the frontier between the world of men and the realm of the gods where the imagination can take flight - a leitmotif in Romantic art and literature (the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, Byron's *Manfred*, Chateaubriand's

René...) which has almost invariably been coded as masculine,¹¹⁴ appears in the *Souvenirs* as the natural element of Vigée-Lebrun. Caltemberg (1: 289) and Wunschestein (2: 175), for example, are presented as sites of emancipation and empowerment, of harmony and plenitude, and the time spent there is recalled as periods of pure joy.

This enthusiasm for the sublime is only one aspect of the tendency towards excess which is manifested by both writer and painter, whether in their passions, the power of their imagination or the acuity of their senses. Rousseau, wrote Mme de Staël, 'n'était pas fou; mais une faculté de lui-même, l'imagination, étoit en démente [...]'.¹¹⁵ This extravagance, she continued, was both his weakness and the source of his superiority. According to Vigée-Lebrun, her imagination, too, was both a burden and a strength. During her time in Florence, she recalls, she visited Fontana who showed her a life-size wax model of a woman which could be opened up to reveal the intestines. So profoundly was she affected by this sight that for a long time afterwards she was unable to look at anyone without mentally penetrating through to their innards, which, she adds, threw her into 'un état nerveux déplorable'. She continues:

'Quand je revis M. Fontana, je lui demandai des conseils pour me délivrer de l'importune susceptibilité de mes organes. - J'entends trop, lui dis-je, je vois trop et je sens tout d'une lieue. - Ce que vous regardez comme une faiblesse et comme un malheur, me répondit-il, c'est votre force et c'est votre talent; d'ailleurs, si vous voulez diminuer les inconvénients de cette susceptibilité, ne peignez plus.' (1: 238)¹¹⁶

With the intensity of her reactions, Vigée-Lebrun erases the distinction between 'l'exquise sensibilité' which was attributed to women in the medical discourse of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and used to explain both their intellectual inferiority and their vocation as carers,¹¹⁷ and 'l'exquise sensibilité' which l'abbé Du Bos had identified as an attribute of genius in his *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1719). 'Vivacity and delicacy of feeling are inseparable from genius,' he wrote:

'Genius is not to be found in the man of cold temperament and indolent humour. It is the artists of genius who have more exquisite sensibility than normal people.'¹¹⁸

Without detaching 'sensibilité' from femininity, Vigée-Lebrun counters its potential to be turned against women and used to perpetuate their subordinate position in society. The extreme 'susceptibilité de [ses] organes', she emphasises, is an integral part of her talent as an artist and, as such, it justifies her participation in the public realm, not her exclusion from it. Moreover, as her dedication to her work, the exacting standards which she set for herself,¹¹⁹ and the pragmatism of her 'Conseils' demonstrate, sensibility was not altogether incompatible with sense and the exercise of self-discipline.

Although she concedes that they often acted, individually or collectively, 'selon leur sensibilité féminine', Marilyn Yalom has argued that the works of most female memoir-writers indicate that they felt little sense of solidarity with other women.¹²⁰ For many, the *Souvenirs* unquestionably fall into this category. According to Germaine Greer, for example, Vigée-Lebrun never showed any interest in the artistic aspirations of her own sex and treats the only female artist whom she mentions by name (Angelica Kauffman) 'with a characteristic mixture of flattery, condescension and malice'.¹²¹ Given that she fuses her identity, visually and textually, with that of male artists (Rubens, Raphael, Hubert Robert and her father, among others) and the archetypal Romantic hero, Rousseau; that she claims to have worked with a diligence that was rare in women (1: 231); and admits that she made no preparations for the birth of her child (1: 58), had no aptitude for needlework (2: 99), and lacked the essential feminine virtue of patience (2: 133), it is certainly possible to interpret the representation of herself in her memoirs as an endorsement of male superiority and thus as a betrayal of her sex.

Closer examination, however, suggests that such an interpretation is untenable. Even if the point is not laboured in the *Souvenirs*, their author was nevertheless sensitive to the obstacles faced by female artists and to the contradictions in

which they were enmeshed on account of their sex: the differences between their artistic training and that of men (1: 32-33); the difficulty of controlling their careers after marriage;¹²² the difficulty of obtaining academic recognition in the eighteenth century and their exclusion from the Académie when it was reconstituted after the Revolution; the dangers and pain that accompanied fame (1: 95); and the advantages and disadvantages of beauty and royal patronage. The fact that she draws on male models in constructing her artistic identity, and devotes little space to other female artists,¹²³ should not obscure the importance which she attaches to her relations with women as a woman and, specifically, as a woman artist. Her mother, for example, is shown to have nurtured her talent as a girl by taking her to see collections and posing for the work which first brought her to the attention of the public; and the success of her career, according to the *Souvenirs*, clearly owed much to the confidence placed in her by female patrons, including the duchesse de Chartres and her daughters, Marie-Antoinette, the Queen of Naples, princess Dolgorouki and baroness Strogonoff. She also recalls with affection the many female friends who were a vital source of strength and comfort throughout her life. Among the most important of these were Rosalie Boquet, with whom she studied drawing; the duchesse de Fleury, whom she met in Rome and describes as 'une compagne comme je l'avais souvent désirée' (1: 183), and who, along with Mesdames de Bellegarde, succeeded in dissipating the melancholy which drove the artist to flee to the woods of Meudon (2: 115-16); Mme de Verdun, the friend whose wisdom helped her to cope with both the birth and the death of her daughter; Adélaïde, 'dont les soins et les conseils [lui] ont toujours été si utiles' (2: 117); and the nieces whose devotion cheered her old age.

Vigée-Lebrun's yearning for greatness, therefore, and her struggle to equal - and even surpass - men as an artist, did not result in the systematic denigration of women. On the contrary, the *Souvenirs* are in many ways a testimony to Vigée-Lebrun's profound admiration for women and her conviction that they exerted a positive influence on society. Women are praised for their beauty, their virtue, their grace, their kindness, their sociability and their attentiveness as mothers. They are also celebrated, however, for their talents (the artists Rosalba Carriera and Angelica Kauffman; the singer Mme Grassini; the writers Mme de Staël and Mme de Souza; and numerous actresses, including Mlle Raucourt, Mme Dugazon,

Mrs Siddons and Mlle Duchesnois), their intelligence (among others, the marquise de Grollier and the comtesse Golovine) and their achievements as administrators (in the case of Marie-Caroline of Naples and Catherine the Great). On several occasions, Vigée-Lebrun openly takes up the defence of women or redeems the image of those with tarnished reputations. Mme du Barry, for example, is presented as a woman uncorrupted by her adulterous liaisons, and worthy of admiration for her devotion to the duc de Brissac and her generosity towards the poor (1: 123-27); Mme Campan is defended against rumours that she betrayed and abandoned Marie-Antoinette (1: 134-36) and the duchesse de Polignac against accusations that she was 'un monstre'. 'Ce monstre, je l'ai connu,' writes Vigée-Lebrun:

'c'était la plus belle, la plus douce, la plus aimable
femme qu'on pût voir. [...] La duchesse de Polignac
joignait à sa beauté, vraiment ravissante, une douceur
d'ange, l'esprit à la fois le plus attrayant et le plus
solide.' (2: 298-99)

She also moves beyond defence, depicting Mme de Staël and Louise of Prussia as victims of Napoleon who nevertheless ultimately triumphed over him by virtue of their intelligence and their moral authority; and recounts with undisguised glee the witty reply with which the duchesse de Fleury once silenced the tactless emperor (1: 184).

Among those to whom the memoirist pays the greatest tribute is the empress Catherine II whom she describes as 'une femme dont notre sexe peut s'enorgueillir sous tant de rapports importants' (2: 19). 'La plus simple et la moins exigeante des femmes' in private, she ruled with wisdom and authority and her long reign, according to Vigée-Lebrun, was a time of glory, prosperity and happiness for the Russian people. The focus of her eulogy is particularly significant for she glosses over '[les] conquêtes dont l'orgueil national fut si prodigieusement flatté' in order to highlight '[le] bien réel et durable que cette souveraine a fait à son peuple': the construction of canals and towns in stone; the establishment of schools, banks and industries; the extension of the Academy's privileges; the creation of a law code and the introduction of vaccination (2: 18). In contrast to Napoleon, who valued only military might and was ready to inflict great hardship on the French in order to acquire it, Catherine's glory is identified

primarily with the arts of peace and, in the *Souvenirs*, it is undoubtedly the latter who is presented as the superior figure. Throughout the memoirs, indeed, the writer consistently valorises 'the softer virtues' (those qualities conventionally coded as 'feminine'), such as compassion, loyalty, self-abnegation and generosity. Again and again, women are shown aiding and comforting others (in most cases, other women), often putting themselves in grave danger in order to do so.

Although not every female in the *Souvenirs* appears in a favourable light and every male in an unfavourable one, the author nevertheless draws a broad distinction between the generally negative influence exerted on society by the male (who is associated with revolution, tyranny and warfare) and the positive force represented by the female (who is associated with harmony, beauty, peace and prosperity). This contrast is captured in a recurrent motif which evokes, perhaps intentionally, Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*: the feeding of birds by women and their destruction by men (1: 46, 287, 323).¹²⁴

Convinced that women exerted a civilising influence on society and that they played a crucial role in facilitating communication, the Vigée-Lebrun of the memoirs is critical of the segregation of the sexes and the stifling of women's voices which this invariably entailed. Far from being a sign of frivolousness or of her complicity with the patriarchy, her regret at the passing of the *ancien régime*, I believe, should be understood as testimony to her pride in her own sex and her personal hatred of constraint. The *ancien régime*, she writes, was a period when women possessed a centrality in society - and hence a power - which they subsequently lost:

'il est devenu fort difficile aujourd'hui de donner une idée de l'urbanité, de la gracieuse aisance, en un mot, des manières aimables qui faisaient, il y a quarante ans, le charme de la société à Paris. [...] Les femmes régnaient alors, la révolution les a détrônées.' (1: 122)

The overthrow of the traditional hierarchy, along with the instability and the transience of the administrations and forms of government that followed, not only increased men's opportunity to participate in the life of their country in the military and political spheres, it also gave their participation a new urgency. Politics and warfare - rather than art or literature - thus became the principal topics of

conversation; and since these were subjects on which women could contribute little (through lack of knowledge and the possession of the relevant vocabulary, lack of inclination, or fear of censure for having trespassed on exclusively male territory), they were reduced to silence as society literally split into a male and a female realm. This situation pained the artist greatly:

'L'abbé Delille m'écrivait à Rome: "La politique a tout perdu; on ne cause plus à Paris". A mon retour en France, en effet, je ne me suis que trop assurée de cette vérité. Entrez dans quelque salon que ce soit, vous trouverez les femmes bâillant en cercle, et les hommes, dans un coin du salon, se disputant sur telle ou telle loi; nous avons vu finir, comme tant d'autres choses, ce qu'on appelait la conversation, c'est-à-dire un des plus grands charmes de la société française.'

(2: 319; see also 2: 108)

By drawing attention to female voicelessness in a work intended for publication, however, Vigée-Lebrun explodes this circle, showing how the silence could be broken and how the refined and elegant voice of women could once again be heard in the gap which had been created.

Another aspect of Vigée-Lebrun's views on the relationship between the sexes appears in her account of her visits to the country estate of Lord Moiras while in England. After dinner, she recalls,

'on se réunissait dans une belle galerie, où les femmes sont à part, occupées à broder, à faire de la tapisserie, et sans dire un seul mot. De leur côté, les hommes prennent des livres et gardent le même silence.'

(2: 149)

Vigée-Lebrun herself, however, neither sewed nor read: she spent her time perusing engravings. So absorbed was she on one occasion that she even shattered the habitual silence:

'Au milieu d'un cercle aussi taciturne, me croyant seule un jour, il m'arriva de faire une exclamation à la vue d'une gravure charmante, ce qui surprit au dernier point tous les assistants.'

(2: 149)

What we see in this episode is a Vigée-Lebrun who, instead of identifying herself with either the men or the women, draws attention to the way in which her passion for art set her apart and led her to infringe conventional boundaries. Like Mme de Staël, the author of the *Souvenirs* acknowledged the existence of a category of beings - 'les génies' - who transcend their sexual identity and who, consequently, ought not be judged by the same standards as other, lesser, beings. This is one of the points which she makes in her approbatory portrait of Catherine II:

'Catherine le Grand, comme l'appelle le prince de Ligne, s'était fait homme; on ne peut parler de ses faiblesses que comme on parle de celles de François I^{er} ou de Louis XIV, faiblesses qui n'influèrent nullement sur le bonheur de leurs sujets.' (2: 19)

Without sacrificing the characteristically 'feminine' qualities which led her to cultivate the arts of peace, without ceasing to be a woman who was a credit to her own sex, Catherine, Vigée-Lebrun suggests, nevertheless enjoyed the right to defy with impunity the conventions with which society hedged round a woman's life because she was 'un génie' whose skill as a ruler put her on a par with the finest of her male counterparts.¹²⁵

Conclusion

That 'les génies' are not subject to the conventional expectations and limitations of gender identity is an argument which Vigée-Lebrun weaves implicitly throughout her memoirs, and it is a crucial element in her attempt to bridge the gap between the image of herself as a paragon of French womanhood and the image of herself as a great artist. It is her genius as a painter, she implies, that gives her the right to be 'unfemininely' ambitious and individualistic. Far from being 'le récit facile de cette facile destinée', as Henri Roujon claimed,¹²⁶ therefore, the *Souvenirs* of Vigée-Lebrun are a multidimensional work, indicative of the complexity of the life and the woman. Born of the artist's desire to produce a monument in words that would supplement and act as a commentary on (and a corrective to) the pictorial record she had created and the public reputation she had acquired, they show how the memoir could be used by a woman as a space for 'serious play', that

allowed her to extricate herself from 'le cercle étroit de sa destinée'¹²⁷ and make her voice heard in the public sphere, while still conveying the impression that she remained within the bounds of the conventionally feminine.

Conclusion

The writers whose works have been discussed in the preceding chapters are women whose lives had been subject to massive upheaval. They had seen a movement for reform turn into a bloody revolution, a king and queen executed and France torn apart by civil war. They had watched as various unstable regimes came and went. They had seen Napoleon rise to power and push the boundaries of his empire westward into the Iberian peninsula and eastward towards Russia. They had seen the Empire collapse and an exhausted, war-weary nation receive again the family of Louis XVIII and re-establish the monarchy. They had seen Napoleon's bid to regain power fail at Waterloo and watched as Louis XVIII was restored to the throne after a second period in exile. Some had even watched as the governments of Louis XVIII and then Charles X moved progressively to the right, eroding the liberties that had been enshrined - albeit ambiguously - in the Charter promulgated in 1814, until another revolution, in 1830, brought Louis-Philippe d'Orléans to the throne and signalled a definitive shift in power from the old aristocracy to the bourgeoisie.

These are women whose horizons had been broadened, literally and metaphorically, by their experiences during the Revolution and Empire. Some had seen fathers, husbands and brothers fall from positions of power with the collapse of the *ancien régime*, while others had been attached to those who rose to prominence at this time. Some had been forced to move around France, while others had travelled abroad as *émigrées* or as the wives of soldiers and administrators. Many had endured imprisonment, if not exile, and had supported and protected their families and friends, sometimes by taking up arms and, often for the first time, by labouring with their own hands. Some had frequented the courts of Louis XVI and/or Napoleon, and a few had gained admission to the courts of foreign rulers. All had witnessed events of an unprecedented kind.

Central to this thesis, however, is the notion that the Revolution and Empire had a profound impact, not only on the lives which these women led between 1789 and

1815, but also on the way in which they considered themselves and presented themselves to others in the decades that followed. Historical circumstances and social forces, in other words, are deemed to have had a fundamental influence on the relationship between the sexes and on their approach to writing. The women whose memoirs are discussed here were living in a society where, with the appearance of the *Code civil* in 1804, sex had become the prime factor determining the individual's relationship with society. Furthermore, those who grew to maturity during the Revolution and Empire had seen men of every political stripe unite in denouncing the nefarious influence that aristocratic women had wielded during the *ancien régime* and in condemning those of their sex who had sought to play an active role, on either side, during the Revolution. They had also seen successive regimes endorse the Rousseauist model of the modest, obedient, self-effacing wife and mother and were well aware of the penalties inflicted on those women who deviated from it. They were aware, too, that any move which appeared to subvert the sexual hierarchy posed a threat to the stability of the social hierarchy; and they had learned that political upheaval placed enormous burdens on women, both materially and emotionally.

Caught between the desire to preserve their memories of this extraordinary era or the need to formulate their own interpretation of events, on the one hand, and their inability or unwillingness, because of their sex, to compose a history of the period or publish their thoughts in the form of a political pamphlet, on the other,¹ women in early nineteenth century France were in a delicate position. It is this, as I show in Chapter One, which explains their attraction to an amorphous genre such as the memoir with its fluid boundaries, lack of formulated conventions and ambiguous position between the private and the public spheres. Socially marginalized figures, conditioned to avoid putting themselves on display and almost always lacking the education and training in rhetoric that were still a basic requirement for the writing of history, as well as the time, space and emotional support that were conducive to the successful completion of such a task, women saw in the memoir a marginal form of literature that could accommodate their weaknesses and the constraints to which they were subject. Gender, in short, bore heavily on genre.

The significance of gender in the study of genre is underlined by the differences

which exist between men's and women's memoirs of the period, the most striking of which are differences in content and construction.² Most of the men who wrote memoirs during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary decades were (or had been) active in the military, political, diplomatic, administrative, literary or artistic sphere. Having taken part in the public life of the nation, it is generally public concerns or their careers which they place at the centre of their texts, often making the stages of their career the primary structuring device in their work. If they write in order to justify themselves - as do Choiseul, Bouillé, Dumouriez or the duc de Gaëte, for example - the faults concerned are almost invariably 'public' ones: strategic errors, disloyalty, administrative incompetence or professional integrity. Women, in contrast, tend to devote more attention to private affairs, their friends and their families, using 'life events' (betrothal, marriage, childbirth, widowhood), rather than career changes, as a framework for their memoirs. When they do write about events of national significance, their accounts tend to be mediated through others (usually male), and their memoirs call attention to their lack of direct control over public affairs. Even when a writer had placed herself in the public domain or pursued a successful career - as had Mme de Chastenay and Mme Vigée-Lebrun - her memoirs still differ from those of a man for, while family life is frequently eliminated from the memoirs written by men and morally dubious liaisons are acknowledged, those by 'public' women are invariably split between a 'public' plot in which the writer records her activities and her achievements and a (frequently defensive) 'private' plot in which she seeks to assure her reader of her virtue and her essential 'femininity'.

Linked to the question of content and narrative construction is that of self-construction. According to certain theorists (Mary Mason and Susan S. Friedman, for example), the crucial distinction between men's and women's autobiographical works is the tendency for men to envisage themselves as isolated individuals when they write, while women construct their textual identity through relationship.³ It is not only modern theorists of the genre, however, who have claimed that the attention which women give to others when writing their memoirs sets their works apart from those by men. At the end of the eighteenth century, Jean-François Marmontel claimed that women's memoirs can be distinguished from men's by the fact that they are dominated by 'un intérêt d'affection', as opposed to 'l'intérêt public' or the writer's 'intérêt propre':

'Un homme, en parlant des affaires au milieu desquelles il s'est trouvé, comme acteur ou comme témoin, s'oublie rarement lui-même pour ne s'occuper que d'un autre; une femme, au contraire, s'attache à un objet qui n'est pas elle, mais qui dans ce moment est tout pour elle; et c'est de lui, c'est d'après lui, c'est pour lui qu'elle écrit. Les grands événemens ne la touchent que par des rapports individuels; et dans les révolutions de la sphère du monde, elle ne voit que les mouvemens du tourbillon qui l'environne: son esprit et son âme ne s'étendent point au-delà.'⁴

As if to bear out such claims, several women writing in the early nineteenth century make explicit references in their memoirs to their sex's outstanding capacity for compassion, devotion and self-abnegation, in contrast to men's preoccupation with ambition and the satisfaction of their own desires.⁵

Although such differences in content and construction may reflect differences in the development of male and female personality, as Friedman has suggested on the basis of Nancy Chodorow's work, it should be recognised that this is not the only way in which to account for them. Thus, while I agree that it is foolhardy to dismiss entirely the interpretative possibilities opened up by psychoanalysis, I nevertheless question the sufficiency of any interpretation of a text that ignores the specific historical context in which the writer was working. What draws together women's memoirs in post-revolutionary France, I have argued, is the writers' consciousness that their works would be read as women's works and judged according to their conformity to, or deviation from, social and literary conventions that were emphatically gendered. It may be, therefore, that the tendency for women memoirists to write about others, rather than about themselves, is the result of textual strategies which writers adopted consciously in response to their circumstances. For example, as this was an age when egoism and the revelation of one's 'intime intérieur' in print were socially unacceptable for a woman, a writer may have shifted attention away from herself in an attempt to gain the approval of future readers by displaying what was recognised as a properly 'feminine' concern for others; or she may have chosen to avoid direct self-exposure by transposing her desires and frustrations onto others or by inscribing her life and passions within the life story of another.

As Harriet Blodgett and Marilyn Yalom have pointed out, however, women may have devoted so much space to others in their autobiographical works simply because others played an extremely important part in their lives.⁶ For those, like Mme de La Tour du Pin, who had not pursued a career of their own, the relationship with their family and friends was fundamental to the way in which they defined themselves; while for those who had moved beyond the domestic realm, like Mme de Chastenay through her writing or Mme Vigée-Lebrun through her painting, others played a vital part in the transition from the private domain to the public. Their education, they show, depended heavily on personal contact with tutors and a network of acquaintances; and their careers could not have been forged without outside intervention. Mme de Chastenay, for example, reveals that she began publishing with the backing of Turlot and Réal, while Vigée-Lebrun relied on the help of Joseph Vernet and Marie-Antoinette in order to gain admission to the Académie royale.

It must be emphasized, however, that these differences between the memoirs of men and women - differences in content, structure and self-construction - are differences of degree. Not all women foregrounded their roles within the family when they wrote (Mme de Maillé and Mme de Rémusat, for example, certainly did not); while some men made others an integral part of their textual identity (Napoleon, for example, is used in this way in Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*).⁷ Only women's consciousness of writing as members of one sex rather than the other constitutes an absolute distinction.

That women tended to attach great importance to their relationships with others in their memoirs, moreover, does not mean that they did not also retain a strong sense of their individuality and personal worth or speak with a distinctive voice. On the contrary, what emerges clearly from the study of women's memoir-writing in post-revolutionary France is the diversity in women's treatment of the genre, the complexity of the works which they produced and the inadequacy of existing images of 'early nineteenth century Woman' which are based on normative texts, a limited range of novels and the biographies of a few exceptional women.

While there is no single model for women's memoir-writing in post-revolutionary

France, it is possible to divide the works which contemporaries recognised as memoirs into four broad categories.⁸ The first category ('mémoires de celui/celle que j'ai connu/e') would comprise the works of women such as Charlotte Robespierre and Georgette Ducrest, in which the writer concentrates on the life of another and relegates the details about her own life to the margins. The second ('mémoires de ce que j'ai vu ou entendu') would comprise the works of those writers who concern themselves extensively - if not predominantly - with the public or semi-public events of the period, as well as those which offer a portrait of society. This category would include the 'Mémoires historiques' of Victorine de Chastenay, the *Mémoires* of the duchesse d'Abrantès and the *Souvenirs* of the duchesse de Maillé.

The last two categories (which are 'mémoires autobiographiques', in contrast to the first two, which are 'mémoires plus ou moins historiques') can be headed respectively 'mémoires de ce que j'ai fait' and 'mémoires de ce que j'ai été'. The distinction between these two, however, is largely subjective - a matter of 'accent', rather than form or explicit content.⁹ Within the third category, I would include the works of writers who place their own lives at the centre of their memoirs, but record them with detachment, as if from a distance. Reading such works, to use Nancy Miller's apt analogy, is like shaking hands with one's gloves on: the reader has a distinct impression of the shape of the life in question, but large areas of that life remain hidden, and it is only intermittently, at best, that the reader is able to detect an emotional pulse.¹⁰ Although for many literary theorists (for example, Georges Gusdorf, John Sturrock or Kathleen Woodward¹¹), this category is the one to which most memoir-writers belong, I would include here only a few writers, such as Renée Bordereau. The fourth category, in contrast, comprises those memoirs in which the writer traces some form of personal development, consciously recording her past in terms of its relationship to the time at which she was writing; and it is the works in this category which consequently come closest to 'autobiography' as it is presently defined. Here we have writers who seek to understand - or to make others understand - not only the evolution of the society in which they lived (and it is the presence of this element which justifies their continued classification as memoirs), but also the way in which they had evolved as individuals, intellectually, emotionally or spiritually. Among the works in this

category are the *Journal* of Mme de La Tour du Pin with its clearly marked stages of transformation, the 'Mémoires particuliers' of Mme de Chastenay, the *Souvenirs* of the duchesse de Dino and the *Mémoires* of la reine Hortense. I would also include, however, the *Mémoires* of Mme de Rémusat, on the grounds that the writer uses them to chart her changing feelings about Napoleon as well as his rise and fall as a ruler;¹² and the brief *Souvenirs* of Elisabeth Le Bas, which begin with the writer as a naïve girl, entirely dependent on the guidance of others, and end with an unequivocal assertion of her maturity and self-confidence.¹³

To some extent, these differences in form are the result of differences in the readership for which works were destined. In some cases, memoirs were addressed - at least in the first instance - to the writer herself, and the memoir-writing process was used in order to resolve questions of self-identity or in order to give vent to the writer's frustrations and counter the impotence of her position at the time of writing or the lack of control which she had had over events. More commonly, however, they were addressed (at least ostensibly) to the writer's friends and family and were conditioned by the need to commemorate loved ones or political allies, to win approval or understanding for the memoirist's actions from those she knew, or to explain changes in the family's circumstances and provide her descendants with some sort of compensation for their loss. In other cases, memoirs were written for public circulation during the writer's lifetime, a situation which demanded that writers not only engage the interest and adherence of an anonymous readership, but also justify their decision to publish. Thus, while those who were already public figures, and consequently a target for venal biographers, could legitimately make their life story the principal subject-matter in their memoirs, those who were not famous in their own right recognised that their major claim to public attention lay, not in themselves, but in their relationship to a well-known other or in their recollections as a privileged observer of events or of a particular milieu.

The boundaries between categories, however, are far from rigid. Few works belong exclusively to one category. Some defy satisfactory classification, such as Mme de Staël's *Considérations sur [...] la Révolution française*; and others manifestly change categories as they progress, such as the memoirs of Mme de Bonchamps and Mme de La Rochejaquelein where the focus of attention shifts,

after the deaths of the titular heroines' husbands, from the fate of the counter-revolutionary forces in general to their own struggles for survival. Most memoirs, moreover, served a variety of functions, both personal and political, and did so overtly and obliquely, intentionally and incidentally. Similarity in form or explicit content, therefore, does not necessarily indicate similarity in function. Likewise, the same function - self-affirmation, historical testimony, political apologia - could be performed by works which differed superficially in form and content.

It is when we approach works in terms of their functions that notions of the memoir as 'failed history' or 'failed autobiography' appear particularly simplistic. As I have sought to show in the last three chapters, memoirs are often complex works which can be read on several levels. 'Récits historiques' and 'récits personnels', we saw, do not have clearly defined contours and do not lend themselves easily to analysis on a quantitative basis.¹⁴ In the memoirs of Mme de La Tour du Pin, Mme de Chastenay and Mme Vigée-Lebrun, we saw that the historical and the autobiographical continually feed into each other, with accounts of events and portraits of others often becoming an integral part of the writer's self-imaging, while her person serves as a prism through which the past is filtered and interpreted for contemporaries and/or future generations of historians. The end result is works in which the personal merges with the political; in which seriousness of purpose exists beneath an apparently innocuous surface; and in which a spirit of defiance can be found woven through the story of the writer's conformity with convention.

All three of the writers whose memoirs provide the major case studies in this thesis envisaged that their works would - ultimately - be read by others; and all show an awareness that outright rejection of the conventions of female memoir-writing or of the roles and qualities attributed to them as women risked alienating their readers and was potentially self-defeating. In their different ways, however, they (and the other women on whose works I have drawn) all used the memoir in order to push against the boundaries of genre and against the relatively narrow roles and images that were prescribed for them by the society of their time.

They push against the boundary between fact and fiction by drawing on the devices used in a range of genres - including the sentimental novel, 'le drame

bourgeois', the travel journal and the artist's (auto)biography - and using them to recount their own stories. They push against the boundary between the private and the public, subjecting public figures to private scrutiny and allowing their lives and opinions to enter public circulation (or at least opening up this possibility for the future). They take on the role of public chronicler, biographer or social portraitist in order to make their works serve as vehicles for social and political contestation. Turning to account the digressive, anecdotal character of the memoir, Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, Laure Junot and la reine Hortense, for example, edged their way onto subjects which 'les convenances sociales' prevented them from discussing openly in public. They adopted - and adapted - the language of sentimental fiction in order to give concrete form to the ideological abstractions of Republicanism, Bonapartism or Royalism; and, confirming the accuracy of Frédéric Briot's observation that '[la] légèreté' in memoirs cannot always be taken 'à la légère',¹⁵ they used irony and humour in order to deflate the pretensions of the powerful, undermine the credibility of critics and political opponents and call into question contemporary assumptions about women and about relations between the sexes. They push against the boundaries of conventional history by formulating, for the consideration of future generations at least, fragmented versions of the past which were often in contradiction with the versions already in circulation, but which satisfied their personal or political agendas. They turn history 'wrong side out',¹⁶ preserving a record of lives which would otherwise remain in obscurity and writing about the things that were important to them as women and as individuals: the joys and responsibilities of motherhood; the stigma of spinsterhood; the difficult position of talented, ambitious women; the bonds of friendship; the deaths of loved ones; the scurrilous rumours which blighted their reputations; and the injustices which they suffered.

Countering the medical and philosophical texts of the period and the educational programmes and novels which drew on them - all of which tended to work against female individuation and self-determination - as well as the historians who relegated them to the background of history, they affirm their uniqueness and importance. However self-effacing they may be as protagonists, women memoirists nevertheless present themselves as essentially active, not passive, figures in their works. They put on record for posterity the occasions on which they demonstrated exceptional courage or ingenuity and those on which they

manipulated or outwitted those in authority. They routinely note the skills, talents, intellectual achievements and personal qualities that set them apart from others; and frequently affirm the independence of their opinions, the astuteness of their judgement, and their distaste for servility and dependency. They bear witness, too, to the strengths and talents of other obscure figures - particularly other women. Georgette Ducrest, for example, praises Mme Delarue for her musical ability and Mme Huber for her patience and resourcefulness in helping her blind husband; the duchesse d'Abrantès praises Pauline Fourès for her dignity; and Louise Fusil takes up the case of the unjustly maligned Julie Talma.

On an individual level, memoir-writers push against images of themselves which were already in existence and against the limitations of prevailing female stereotypes. Mme de La Tour du Pin, for example, presents herself not only as the epitome of the 'bonne épouse et bonne mère', but also as a shrewd, capable individual who was endowed with immense curiosity and a strong sense of leadership; Mme de Chastenay, writing against the negative image of the spinster, presents herself as a devoted daughter, sister and friend, but also as an individual of beauty and talent, an author, historian and 'avocat', who was passionate about her independence and intolerant of constraint; and Mme Vigée-Lebrun, who was widely regarded as a beautiful but shallow portrait painter whose extravagance and debauchery had helped to precipitate the collapse of the *ancien régime*, presents herself as both loving mother and great artist in a carefully crafted piece in which multiple, internally coherent, images of Vigée-Lebrun the woman and Vigée-Lebrun the artist interweave and qualify each other.

What all the writers whom I have studied undermine in their memoirs is the prejudice which cast them as passive objects or meddlers, in contrast to the laudably active male; what they all invalidate fundamentally is the notion that their self-image should be created *for* them, rather than *by* them. In this sense, they are subversive. When we move beyond this to the issue of relations between the sexes in general and the status of Rousseau among women in post-revolutionary France, however, the responses offered by the memoirs are diverse and, in many cases, profoundly ambivalent. On the one hand, many writers show a preference for male company, delight in having their work praised by men, judge their intelligence, courage and creativity by male standards, and mock women who

display typically 'female' traits, such as vanity, superficiality and timidity. Few describe all members of their own sex with warmth or pride (in the memoirs of Charlotte Robespierre, for example, other women are always enemies and obstacles to her happiness); and some take pains to set themselves apart from other women in their daily lives. On the other hand, men are rarely presented as infallible or as innately superior to women in either intelligence or moral fibre. Indeed, women memoir-writers frequently contest the identification of traits such as volatility, indecision and irrationality as peculiarly female weaknesses, even if they depict women displaying them; and their highest praise is almost always reserved for those individuals - among whom writers usually include themselves - who transcend the conventional male/female dichotomies by combining sense with sensibility, reason with passion, and strength with compassion. Again, on the question of their role and status in society, the memoirs reveal a mixture of acceptance, accommodation and contestation among women. Certainly, there are few memoir-writers who dissent openly from the conception of woman as a being characterised by 'douceur', whose destiny was to love and comfort others; and most subscribe to the Rousseauist vision of motherhood as a positive, fulfilling experience. However, as I noted above, women's memoirs often obliquely call into question the notion that women derive their identity from men and are naturally dependent on them for guidance; that men alone possess 'génie'; that marriage and motherhood are the only legitimate goals in a woman's life and the unique source of her happiness and fulfilment; or that love is, can or should be a woman's whole existence. Thus, if there are no feminist revolutionaries aiming at the total subversion of the patriarchy among the women whose memoirs I have studied - and it seems that the carnage of the Revolution had impressed too deeply on their lives to make massive social upheaval anything other than a source of anxiety - it is nevertheless clear that descriptions of the post-revolutionary decades as an era when women were silent and submissive and the Rousseauist ideology of gender prevailed unchallenged are untenable.

This thesis began with a reference to two gaps or 'silences'. The first was the neglect of the memoir as a genre by literary critics and, in particular, neglect of the memoirs written by women after the end of the eighteenth century. The second was the neglect of women by historians in their studies of early nineteenth century France and, in particular, lack of interest in women's actual responses to the

society which emerged from the Revolution. My intention has been to fill in some of these gaps by examining in detail the memoirs of three women who wrote from different positions in society. I consider the general and particular circumstances in which each woman wrote, the constraints which they faced, the obstacles which they negotiated and the strategies which they employed in order to write themselves and their version of the past into history. Although I move beyond the works of Mme de La Tour du Pin, Mme de Chastenay and Mme Vigée-Lebrun, I have taken into account only a fraction of the memoirs written in France between the establishment of the Empire and the fall of the July Monarchy, and I recognise that further studies of individual texts are needed in order to test the validity of my conclusions. Such studies, however, must read memoirs 'on their own terms' - as works which combine history, biography and autobiography according to various formulae; as works which serve diverse functions; as works which are firmly rooted in a specific historical context; as textual spaces which were open to manipulation and in which writers could engage in what Patricia Yaeger calls 'serious play'.

One of the major obstacles in the way of such studies is the poor quality of many of the existing editions of memoirs by women. As in the case of Mme de Chastenay, there are often enormous differences between the manuscript drafted by the author and the memoirs which appear in print. If we are truly to appreciate the diversity and richness of women's voices in this period, therefore, we must first go back to the archives and begin to build up a corpus of good critical editions. Thus I end where I began - in the archives, with Michelet and his exhortation to 'faire parler les silences de l'histoire'.

NOTES

Introduction

- 1 J. Cox, 'Recovering Literature's Lost Ground Through Autobiography,' in J. Olney, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 123-45.
- 2 'Il n'est pas de nation qui possède, comme la France, un nombre aussi considérable et aussi précieux sous tous les rapports de Mémoires particuliers,' declared the author of the article 'Collection' in *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle* (1869); while at the beginning of the century, Chateaubriand had highlighted the aptitude of the French for memoir-writing in his *Génie du christianisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978). 'Pourquoi n'avons-nous que des mémoires au lieu d'histoire,' he asked, 'et pourquoi ces mémoires sont-ils pour la plupart excellents?' (p. 838).
- 3 C. Caboche, *Les Mémoires et l'histoire en France*, 2 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, 1863).
- 4 'Les Mémoires de Saint-Simon,' *Causeries du lundi*, 15 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1852-1862), 3: 211.
- 5 'Nulle époque n'a suscité la publication d'un nombre aussi élevé de mémoires que le Consulat et l'Empire'; J. Tulard, *Bibliographie critique des mémoires sur le Consulat et l'Empire, écrits ou traduits en français* (Genève: Droz, 1971), p. vii. Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny, however, points out that Tulard's bibliography includes works which cover earlier and later periods as well: 'Il serait donc plus exact de désigner comme l'époque faste de production des *Mémoires* la première moitié du XIX^e siècle, sans prétendre singulariser l'une ou l'autre des sections de quelque trois lustres traditionnellement découpées dans notre historiographie'; *Bibliographie critique des mémoires sur la Restauration, écrits ou traduits en français* (Genève: Droz, 1988), pp. 1-2.
- 6 Among the many works on memoirs of the *ancien régime* are: M.-T. Hipp, *Mythes et réalités: enquête sur le roman et les mémoires (1660-1700)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976); A. Bertièrre, *Le cardinal de Retz, mémorialiste* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977); F. Briot, *Usage du monde, usage de soi. Enquête sur les mémorialistes d'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994). Numerous articles have also appeared in the journal *XVII^e siècle*, in addition to those in the issue devoted exclusively to the memoir (94-95, 1971). This far exceeds the space given to memoirs in journals devoted to eighteenth and nineteenth century literature.
- 7 P. Lejeune, *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1975), p. 316; G. May, *L'Autobiographie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1979), pp. 21-23.
- 8 In using the word 'literary', I am following the definition proposed by Gary Morson. A text is 'literary' if 'its semiotic interest is not limited for its readers to its original context of communication [...]. Whenever readers treat a text as evocative of possible contexts and expect it to reward the process of interpretation itself (rather than simply a particular interpretation), they are treating it as literature. [...] literary texts may be treated by readers as documentary but are never exhausted in being so'; *The Boundaries of Genre* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 39.
- 9 *Le Moi des demoiselles: enquête sur le journal de jeune fille* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993). Lejeune claims that the habit of diary-keeping only became established around 1850. Although he eventually tracked down a few diaries dating from the 1830s, the lack of concrete evidence for period 1789-1829 seems to indicate that the practice

was neither widespread nor highly valued (p. 421).

10 Among those who have identified these private forms of writing with women are Suzanne Juhasz in her essay 'Towards a Theory of Form in Feminist Autobiography' [in *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, ed. E. Jelinek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), p. 222] and Béatrice Didier who claimed that for a long time 'la correspondance, le roman et le journal étaient les seules formes d'écriture féminine' and then proceeded, more controversially, to identify 'une certaine "féminité" de l'écriture diariste, et justement cette passivité, ce laisser-aller, cette fluidité un peu molle qui s'apparente à une image de la féminité telle que l'a divulguée le XIX^e siècle' [*Le Journal intime* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1976), p. 106]. A corrective to the tendency to see the diary as an *intrinsically* female form is Harriet Blodgett's *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen's Private Diaries* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1988). Emphasising the importance of historical circumstances, rather than biological or psycho-sexual forces, in influencing the form of women's writing, Blodgett argues that the diary was one of the few possible genres open to women in past centuries and it is this which has made it a *common* form of writing for women.

11 Lejeune, *Moi des demoiselles*, p. 26.

12 *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 56, 174-76. Similarly, Shari Benstock claimed that the great turning-point in the history of autobiography came in the early twentieth century with the birth of modernism which destabilised the concept of 'self' ['Authorising the Autobiographical,' in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. S. Benstock (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 20].

13 *Past and Present*, 53 (1971), pp. 90-108.

14 D. Outram, "Le langage mâle de la vertu": Women and the Discourse of the French Revolution,' in *The Social History of Language*, ed. P. Burke and R. Potter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 120-35.

15 L. Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1992).

16 For example: O. Hufton, 'Women and Revolution' (1971); D. Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses: les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1988); S. Desan, 'Constitutional Amazons: Jacobin Women's Clubs in the French Revolution,' in *Recreating Authority in Revolutionary France*, ed. B. T. Ragan (jnr.) and E. A. Williams (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992), pp. 11-35.

17 J. Abrey, 'Feminism in the French Revolution,' *American Historical Review*, 80 (1975), pp. 43-62; J. B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988).

18 O. Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1992), ch. 3. For a discussion of the major works on women and the French Revolution published in the late 1980s, see Karen Offen's bibliographical essay 'The New Sexual Politics of French Revolutionary Historiography,' *French Historical Studies*, 16 (1989-90), pp. 909-22.

19 Little has been written, for example, about the mainly aristocratic women who quit France during the Revolution since Joseph Turquan's factually inaccurate *Les femmes de l'émigration: 1789-1815* [2 vols. (Paris: Emile-Paul, 1912)] and Jules Bertaut's anecdotal *Les belles émigrées* (Paris: Flammarion, 1948).

20 C. G. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1984).

21 *Histoire du féminisme français du moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris: Editions des

femmes, 1977), pp. 239, 250. See also, J. Abray, *op. cit.*, pp. 59, 62; J. B. Landes, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

22 Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, 'Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview,' in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 22.

23 In establishing the corpus of works on which this study is based, I relied chiefly on the bibliography of women's memoirs given at the end of Marilyn Yalom's book *Blood Sisters*, which contains eighty-seven entries; Jean Tulard's *Bibliographie critique des mémoires sur le Consulat et l'Empire* (1971) and his *Nouvelle bibliographie critique des mémoires sur l'époque napoléonienne, écrits ou traduits en français* (Genève: Droz, 1991); and the *Bibliographie critique des mémoires sur la Restauration, écrits ou traduits en français* (Genève: Droz, 1988), which was compiled by Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny and Alfred Fierro. Inevitably, some works figure in several of these bibliographies. The works which I have selected were produced by writers from different social backgrounds (the old aristocracy, the new aristocracy created by Napoleon, the artisan class, the provincial bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the acting profession), who held different political opinions and adopted different positions with regard to the circulation and commercialisation of their memoirs. They were written, in the main, between the fall of Napoleon and the end of the July Monarchy, though some were begun slightly earlier and some were still being written or revised in the 1860s.

Chapter 1

Genre, Gender and Historical Context: Limits and Constraints

1 U. Janssens-Knorsch, 'The Aesthetics of Self-Representation in Eighteenth Century Autobiographical Writing,' *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century: Transactions of the Seventh International Congress on the Enlightenment*, 264 (1989), pp. 1088-91; G. May, *L'Autobiographie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1979), pp. 118-20.

2 This undermines the distinction that has been drawn by Béatrice Didier, for example, between the memoir (which she describes as 'une histoire réécrite après coup, en bloc') and the diary or journal (which is described as 'une chronique au jour le jour'); *Le Journal intime* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1976), p. 31.

3 'Ce que nous entendons aujourd'hui par Mémoires,' wrote André Bertière, are works in which neither the record of historical events nor the story of the private individual is allowed to dominate: 'Seuls nous paraissent mériter vraiment le nom de Mémoires des récits largement lestés d'histoire, où l'individu consent à s'interposer comme un écran [...] entre cette histoire et nous, c'est-à-dire où il accepte de dire "je"'; *Le cardinal de Retz, mémorialiste* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977), pp. 402-03.

4 M. Fumaroli, 'Les mémoires du XVII^e siècle au carrefour des genres en prose,' *XVII^e siècle*, 93-94 (1971), pp. 7-37.

5 According to André Bertière, the earliest work to be entitled *Mémoires* dates from the end of the fifteenth century (*op. cit.*, p. 14). These early 'Mémoires' differed little from chronicles: they were records of words and deeds (predominantly, or even exclusively, those of others, rather than those of the narrator himself), given in chronological order and without any attempt at analysis. Beyond the end of the fifteenth century, as both Bertière and Georges May point out, even works which included the term 'Mémoires' in their title and which gave more scope to the role of the narrator-as-actor still frequently retained close ties with the chronicle in terms of their form and subject-matter; see G. May, *op. cit.*, 2^e partie, ch. 2.

6 'Les points principaux sur lesquels semble, dans tous les temps, avoir roulé le monde, sont la religion et la politique [...]'; J.-F. Marmontel, 'Histoire', *Elémens de*

littérature, in *Oeuvres complètes de Marmontel*, 18 vols. (Paris: Amable Coste et Cie, 1819), 14: 52. Subsequent references are to this volume in this edition.

7 *Le Génie du christianisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 841.

8 *Mémoires de madame la duchesse d'Abrantès, ou souvenirs historiques sur Napoleon, la Révolution, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration*, 18 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-1835), 6: 378. Hereafter cited as *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*.

9 Such phrases occur, for example, in the introduction to the Wars of Religion in Petitot's *Collection des Mémoires relatifs à l'Histoire de France* (1^{re} série, 20: 5); the *Mémoires d'une femme de qualité sur le Consulat et l'Empire* [ed. G. de Diesbach (Paris: Mercure de France, 1966), p. 25]; and Marmontel's *Elémens* (p. 203).

10 This phrase can be found, for example, in the *Mémoires du maréchal de Bassompierre*, M.R.H.F., 2^e série, 19: 252.

11 Marmontel, *Elémens*, p. 52; the other phrases were used by numerous writers in connection with their own memoirs or those of others, including the cardinal de Bernis, Marmontel, Mme d'Abrantès, Mlle Avrillon and Mme de Chastenay.

12 Quoted by M. Fumaroli, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

13 'Préface,' *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne et de la maison de Valois*, 6th ed., 10 vols. (Bruxelles: Lacrosse, 1835). Among the writers who recognised this important distinction were Doppet and Thibaudeau, both of whom state that their need to rely heavily on their 'souvenirs personnels' because of their inability to gather large quantities of material from other sources was the reason for entitling their works *Mémoires* and not *Histoire de la Révolution* (M.R.R.F., 29: xii; M.R.R.F., 34 (2 vols.), 1: 1-2).

14 In his *Génie du christianisme*, Chateaubriand describes history as 'un genre de littérature dont le premier mérite est l'impartialité' (p. 838).

15 'Mémoires,' *Elémens*, pp. 203-04. According to Chateaubriand, one of the reasons why the French were poor historians but exceptionally talented memoir-writers, was that history required a degree of self-effacement that ran contrary to the Frenchman's natural tendency towards egocentricity and self-display, while 'les mémoires lui laissent la liberté de se livrer à son génie. [...] il n'est pas obligé de renoncer à ses passions [...]'; *Génie*, p. 839.

16 *Mémoires, ou Souvenirs et Anecdotes*, 3 vols. (Paris: Alexis Eymery, 1824), 1: 4.

17 Chateaubriand refers to it as 'une branche de la philosophie morale et politique'; *Génie*, p. 831.

18 *Mémoires de Messire Olivier de la Marche*, M.R.H.F., 1^{re} série, 9: 235. Philippe de Comynes, too, in the 'Prologue' addressed to the archbishop of Vienna, distinguishes his account of events from that of historians such as Du Bouchage who, he tells the archbishop, 'mieux vous en sçauroient parler que moy, et le coucher en meilleur langage' (*Mémoires de Messire Philippe de Comynes*, M.R.H.F., 1^{re} série, 11: 332).

19 This phrase occurs in the 'Avant propos' to the *Mémoires secrets sur la vie privée, politique et littéraire de Lucien Buonaparte, prince de Canino*, 2 vols. (London: Henri Colburn, 1818).

20 Marmontel, *Elémens*, p. 70.

21 Quoted by M. Fumaroli, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

22 Caboche, *Les Mémoires et l'histoire en France*, 2 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, 1863), 1: 24-25, 82; 2: 362-63.

23 *Grand Larousse de la langue française*: art. 'Mémoire'.

24 *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle* (1866): art. 'Mémoire'.

25 The duchess, who refers to herself in the third-person singular throughout her

memoirs, makes clear in the preface that it is the state of France during the minority of Louis XIV, not her own life, that will be her subject; *Mémoires de la duchesse de Nemours*, *M.R.H.F.*, 2^e série, 34: 391. For a discussion of these memoirs, see M. Cuénin, 'Mémoires et dignité littéraire: le cas de Marie d'Orléans-Longueville, duchesse de Nemours,' *XVII^e siècle*, 164, 3 (1989), pp. 263-74.

26 *Mémoires du maréchal d'Estrées*, *M.R.H.F.*, 2^e série, 16: 180, 183.

27 *Ibid.*, 183.

28 Duclos, 'Préface de l'auteur,' *M.R.H.F.*, 2^e série, 76: 41-50.

29 Saint-Simon, *Mémoires*, ed. Y. Coirault, 8 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 1: 5-17, esp. 6-9 and 15-16.

30 See above, n. 5.

31 Bertière, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-19.

32 Commynes, *op. cit.*, 332; La Marche, *op. cit.*, 235.

33 *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois*, ed. M. F. Guessard, nouvelle édition, Société de l'Histoire de France (Paris, Jules Renouard et Cie, 1842), pp. 3-4. Original spelling.

34 'Prologue des Ogdoades de Messire Guillaume du Bellay,' *Mémoires du Messire Martin du Bellay*, *M.R.H.F.*, 1^{re} série, 17: 206, 220-221.

35 Montaigne, 'Des livres,' *Essais*, ed. Maurice Rat, 3 vols. (Paris: Garnier, n.d.), 2: 95.

36 Fumaroli, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-24; Bertière, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

37 Fumaroli, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

38 See, for example, Blaise de Montluc's *Commentaires*, *M.R.H.F.*, 1^{re} série, vol. 20.

39 Fumaroli, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

40 For discussion of the presumed links between the particular social context (the aristocracy's move from the battlefield to the court) and the trend towards more personalised memoirs, see Bertière, *op. cit.*, p. 44 and Fumaroli, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-8.

41 Fumaroli identifies the year 1650 as a turning-point in memoir-writing. Quoting from the *Mémoires du père Rapin*, he argues that Arnauld d'Andilly's translation had a great impact on the mental climate of the upper-classes, encouraging a trend towards self-examination, even among those who did not hold profound Jansenist convictions (*op. cit.*, pp. 27-28).

42 'Mémoires' is the term used by Duclos when he wrote to Rousseau in 1764: 'J'ai toujours désiré que vous fissiez des mémoires de votre vie'; quoted in the introduction to the *Confessions*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, in *Oeuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1995), 1: xxiii. It is also the term used by Rousseau himself when referring to the work. All quotations from the *Confessions* are taken from this edition.

43 The elements of continuity are discussed by G. Gusdorf, 'De l'autobiographie initiatique au genre littéraire,' *R.H.L.F.*, 75 (1975), pp. 957-1002; and N. Bonhôte, 'Tradition et modernité de l'autobiographie: les *Confessions* de Jean-Jacques Rousseau,' *Romantisme*, 56 (1987), pp. 13-20.

44 *Confessions*, p. 5. The same idea is also present in the untitled note attached to the Geneva manuscript of the *Confessions*, which was first published in 1850: 'Voici le seul portrait d'homme, peint exactement d'après nature et dans toute la vérité, qui existe et qui probablement existera jamais'. The Neuchâtel preface (written in 1764; published in 1850) highlights the novelty of both Rousseau's revelations ('jamais homme n'a dit de lui-même ce que j'ai à dire de moi') and his style ('Il faudroit pour ce que j'ai à dire inventer un langage aussi nouveau que mon projet'); p. 1153. Subsequent references to the

Confessions will be given parenthetically in the text.

45 'Intérieurement et sous la peau' - the epigraph to Book 1 of the *Confessions*.

46 Recalling his boyhood at Bossey, for example, he declared: 'Les moindres faits de ce temps-là me plaisent par cela seul qu'ils sont de ce temps-là. Je me rappelle toutes les circonstances des lieux, des personnes, des heures. [...] Je sais que le lecteur n'a pas grand besoin de savoir tout cela, mais j'ai besoin, moi, de le lui dire' (*Confessions*, p. 21).

47 This is the fundamental difference, according to Yves Coirault, between the *Confessions* and the works of earlier writers who focus on the story of their public life and see their 'vraie vie' beginning only with their entry into 'le monde'; 'Autobiographie et mémoires (XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles), ou existence et naissance de l'autobiographie,' *R.H.L.F.*, 75 (1975), pp. 942-46.

48 B. Gagnebin, 'L'Etrange accueil fait aux *Confessions* de Rousseau au XVIII^e siècle,' *Annales de la société Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 38 (1969-1971), p. 107. The numerous editions of his works which appeared between 1794 and 1829 are given by J. Roussel, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau en France après la révolution, 1795-1830: lectures et légende* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), pp. 220, n. 38 and 429-30.

49 Gagnebin, 'L'Etrange accueil,' pp. 105-26, esp. pp. 113-14. Circulation of the *Lettres* was initially restricted: only twenty copies were printed in 1788. Announced in the *Correspondance littéraire* in January 1789, 500 copies of the work appeared in the following March.

50 As Bernard Gagnebin and Jean Roussel have pointed out, however, the reception of the *Confessions*, and of Rousseau's work in general in France between the 1780s and the 1830s, was heavily influenced by extra-textual factors, particularly after the outbreak of the Revolution. The judgments passed on Rousseau, they argue, frequently reflect the political opinions of the reader or the position which (s)he adopted with regard to the acrimonious relations between the citizen of Geneva and the 'philosophes'. The notion that political sympathies alone dictated responses to Rousseau, however, is a gross over-simplification, as Roussel acknowledged. The situation was complicated by the attraction exerted by Rousseau as 'l'homme de la nature' - a redeeming feature in the eyes of some of those, such as l'abbé Barruel, who denounced his political opinions.

51 *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, édition critique établie et annotée par R. A. Leigh*, 51 vols. (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1965-1995), 48: 188. Hereafter cited as *Corr. comp.*.

52 Letter to Andrei Petrovich Schouvalov, 20 May 1782; *Corr. comp.*, 45: 93.

53 *Corr. comp.*, 46: 192.

54 *Corr. comp.*, 48: 189.

55 *Corr. comp.*, 46: 110.

56 *Corr. comp.*, 49: 222-24. Although the 'confession' of Mme de Warens was seen by some, including Mercier (*Corr. comp.*, 45: 349), as an inevitable consequence of Rousseau's undertaking, the overwhelming majority of readers reacted negatively to his revelations about others, particularly about Mme de Warens. See, among others, Mme de Boufflers-Rouverel (*Corr. comp.*, 45: 83-84); the reviewer in *Le Mercure* of 28 November 1789 (*Corr. comp.*, 46: 94); Lesage (*Corr. comp.*, 46: 125); Mme de Créqui (introduction to the *Confessions*, edition cited, p. lxiii), Chateaubriand [*Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, ed. J.-C. Berchet (Paris: Bordas, 1989-), 2: 124] and George Sand in *Histoire de ma vie [Oeuvres autobiographiques*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1970-1971), 1: 13].

57 *Corr. comp.*, 45: 89.

58 Included among such admirers were Aymé Jourdan (*Le Moniteur*, 29 juin 1798; *Corr. Comp.*, 49: 179-80); and Mme de Staël [the quotation is from her *Lettres sur les*

écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau, in *Oeuvres complètes de madame la baronne de Staël*, 17 vols. (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1820), 1: 103].

59 *Confessions*, p. 545. Having studied both private letters and the reviews of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* that appeared in various contemporary journals, Anna Attridge suggested that reactions to the work were mixed and remained so for about twenty years (the public's attitude, in her words, ranged 'from the hostile to the rapturous,' p. 250). What is clear, however, is the high public profile which the novel gave Rousseau from its appearance in 1761 until after the Revolution; 'The Reception of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*,' *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 120 (1974): 227-67.

60 *Corr. comp.*, 45: 96.

61 *Corr. comp.*, 'Avertissement,' 46: xix.

62 *Corr. comp.*, 46: 214.

63 One such reader was Claire de Rémusat who admired Rousseau's talent as a writer, although she remained contemptuous of him as a man; *Mémoires de Madame de Rémusat, 1802-1808*, 3 vols (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1880), 2: 152.

64 R. Coe, *When the Grass was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press), p. 211.

65 *Corr. comp.*, 46: 96.

66 Although he claims that 'the Childhood' did not become established until the 1830s, Coe traces its emergence as a distinct genre back to the *Confessions*; *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31. The importance of childhood for the understanding of the adult was sufficiently well-recognised by the 1820s, however, for the connection between the two to be mentioned by the author of the biographical 'Notice' which prefaces the memoirs of Louvet in the collection of *Mémoires relatifs à la Révolution française* (23: v).

67 'Mémoires et correspondance de madame d'Épinay,' *Causeries du lundi*, 2: 188.

Approaching the subject from a slightly different angle, Sara Maza has argued that 'confessional' autobiographical writing drawing on the style and themes of Rousseau's work (especially that of innocence persecuted) became an increasingly noticeable feature of 'mémoires judiciaires' in the 1780s, leading to a destabilisation of the boundaries between private and public, personal and political; 'Le tribunal de la nation: les mémoires judiciaires et l'opinion publique à la fin de l'ancien régime,' *Annales: E.S.C.*, 42, 1 (1987), pp. 73-90.

68 *Souvenirs des deux Restaurations* (Paris: Perrin, 1984), p. 232.

69 Quoted by J. Roussel, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

70 *Mémoires de Lucien Bonaparte*, 1: v.

71 For a discussion of the various hybrid forms of history-cum-fiction that emerged in the later seventeenth century and developed in the eighteenth, see M.-T. Hipp, *Mythes et réalités: enquête sur le roman et les mémoires (1660-1700)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976), Introduction, ch. 2.

72 On the one side, we have Mme de Motteville, for example, who claimed that her memoirs were intended to preserve for posterity details of the life and character of her mistress and friend, Anne of Austria, that historians would inevitably neglect (*Mémoires de madame de Motteville, M.R.H.F.*, 2^e série, 36: 311, 315-6). On the other, we have l'abbé de Charnes who, in his defence of *La Princesse de Clèves*, declared, with reference to the intrigues at the court of Henri II that 'l'Histoire [la grande histoire] ne tient pas compte de ces sortes de choses' (quoted by Fumaroli, *op. cit.*, p. 35).

73 The complex links between history, the memoir and the novel in this period have been the subject of much academic attention. The most comprehensive treatment (though one which occasionally shows signs of self-contradiction) is *Mythes et réalités* by Marie-Thérèse Hipp. For more recent treatment of the subject, see E. Goldsmith, 'Les

lieux de l'histoire dans *La Princesse de Montpensier*, *XVII^e siècle*, 181, 4 (1993), pp. 705-15.

74 N. Bonhôte, *op. cit.*, p. 18. The memoir-novel appears to have reached its peak in popularity around 1730-1740. Although it was replaced by the epistolary novel as the dominant form of fiction by around 1760, writers nevertheless continued to produce memoir-novels after that date. On the history and conventions of the memoir-novel in the eighteenth century, see V. Mylne, *The Eighteenth Century French Novel: Techniques of Illusion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), especially ch. 3; and P. Stewart, *Imitation and Illusion in the French Memoir-Novel, 1700-1750: The Art of Make-Believe* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1969).

75 Quoted by R. Coe, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

76 *Histoire de Marguerite d'Anjou, Oeuvres de Prévost, publiées sous la direction de Jean Sgard*, (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1977-1985), 5: 10.

77 *Ibid.*, 10-11.

78 *Mémoires de madame de Staal-Delaunay*, 2 vols. (Paris, Colnet, 1822), 1: 1; see also 1: 33-34 and 2: 3.

79 The impact of Scott's novels on historians and novelists is well-attested. Augustin Thierry, for example, in the preface to his *Dix années d'études historiques* (dated 1834), described Scott as 'le plus grand maître qu'il y ait jamais eu en fait de divination historique' [5^e éd. (Paris: Furne, 1846), pp. 9-10]; while Balzac praised him for raising the novel 'à la valeur philosophique de l'histoire' ['Avant propos,' *La Comédie humaine*, 12 vols. (Paris, Gallimard, 1976-1981), 1: 10].

80 'Préface,' *Histoire des ducs*, 1: 3.

81 *Lettres sur l'Histoire de France* (Paris: Garnier, n. d.), Lettre 1, pp. 17-18. Of the twenty-five letters in the first edition (1827), ten had been published in the *Courier français* in 1820.

82 Thierry, *Etudes historiques*, p. 20.

83 'Préface,' *Chronique du règne de Charles IX* [1829], (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1925), p. i.

84 According to Claude Duchet, such a contrast is one of the topoi of historical novels; 'L'illusion historique. L'enseignement des préfaces (1815-1832),' *R.H.L.F.*, 75 (1975), p. 257. It can also be found in the 'Avant-propos' to *La Comédie humaine*, 1: 9.

85 Quoted by C. Duchet, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

86 *La Comédie humaine*, 1: 11, 17.

87 Vigny, 'Réflexions sur la vérité dans l'art,' *Cinq-Mars ou Une conjuration sous Louis XIII* (Paris: Louis Conard, 1913), pp. vi-x. A similar distinction was made by Balzac a few years later. 'J'ai mieux fait que l'historien, je suis plus libre,' he wrote, for, as a novelist, he was at liberty to arrange the outcome of events, while the historian was obliged to depict the world as it was: 'l'histoire est ou devrait être ce qu'elle fut; tandis que le roman doit être le monde meilleur' (original emphasis); 'Avant-propos,' *La Comédie humaine*, 1: 15.

88 In defence of their author, Courchamp's mother maintained that the *Souvenirs de la marquise de Créqui* 'ne sont pas si apocryphes qu'on prétend' because her son had relied on a fund of genuine source material - papers from the hand of the titular 'heroine' herself - 'auxquels il n'a guère ajouté que quelques fioritures' (quoted by G. de Diesbach in the introduction to the *Mémoires d'une femme de qualité*, p. 15).

89 Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (edition cited), 2: 278.

90 *Mémoires de mademoiselle Avrillion*, ed. M. Dernelle (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986), pp. 35, 324. Similar observations were made by other memoir-writers, including

Georgette Ducrest, who spoke of 'le goût général qu'on a pour [ce] genre d'ouvrage' [*Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine, ses contemporains, la cour de Navarre et de la Malmaison*, 3 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1828-1919), 2: 137]; and the duchesse d'Abrantès, who opened her memoirs with the words: 'Aujourd'hui chacun publie des mémoires; tout le monde a des souvenirs' (edition cited, 1: 1).

91 Paris, Archives Nationales, F18* II, 4-25. There is a gap in the records for the years 1835-37, and the registers covering the period 1831 to June 1833 are not presently available for consultation because of their fragile condition.

92 J. S. Allen, *Popular French Romanticism* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981), pp. 91-92. The figures proposed by Allen are averages for drama, history, novels and poetry between 1820 and 1840.

93 This collection, published by Petitot and Monmerqué, comprised two series of works - a total of 133 volumes - ranging from Villehardouin to Duclos. The print-run for titles was usually around 1500-1650 copies, though some were reprinted.

94 This collection, which comprised thirty-eight sets of memoirs - some containing several individual works - was published by Baudouin frères. Print-runs varied between 1200 and 3500 copies per volume; the average was 2000 copies, though some were reprinted or re-edited several times, such as the memoirs of Mme Roland, Louis de Bouillé and Mme Campan.

95 This collection, comprising thirty-one volumes, was published under the direction of Guizot. The print run was 1500 copies for each volume.

96 This collection comprised forty-seven volumes; the print-run was 1000 copies for each volume.

97 'Discours préliminaire,' *M.R.H.F.*, 2^e série, 1: i-ii.

98 *M.R.R.F.*, 7: i; *Mémoires de Mme Roland*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Baudouin frères, 1827).

99 *M.R.R.F.*, 15-16: v. From the 'Avis' accompanying the volumes of the collection which entered circulation in 1823, it appears that the public's appetite for memoirs was making the publication of such works a commercially attractive venture and hence a highly competitive field. In the introductory sections of volumes 15-16 and 23, the care taken to publicise the superiority of this particular collection implies that the literary marketplace was filling up with editions of memoirs to the extent that it was necessary for publishers to compete for readers and convince them of the superiority of one edition over others.

100 N. Felkay, *Balzac et ses éditeurs, 1822-1837: essai sur la librairie romantique* (Paris: Promodis, Editions du Cercle de la Librairie, 1987), p. 277, n. 45. In an entry dated May 1829, Blanche de Maillé writes of the recently published *Mémoires de madame du Barry*: 'leur authenticité ne m'est rien moins que prouvée. Cela m'a tout à fait l'air d'une spéculation fondée sur la curiosité d'une part, et de l'autre sur le succès dont un livre est assuré' (*Souvenirs*, p. 270).

101 Quoted by Felkay, *op. cit.*, p. 144. The eagerness with which writers exploited the success of fabricated memoirs was also noted by Sainte-Beuve in an article on the marquise de Créqui (22 Sept. 1856). Denouncing her *Souvenirs* as a fabrication, he offered the following imaginative reconstruction of the work's origins: 'l'homme d'esprit qui l'a compilé avait vu le succès des *Mémoires d'une contemporaine*, il s'était dit: "Et moi aussi je ferai une manière de Saint-Simon pour le dix-huitième siècle, et pour cela je me déguiserai en douairière. Je ferai une *Contemporaine*, mais royaliste et de qualité, la *Contemporaine de l'ancien grand monde*"; *Causeries du lundi*, 12: 442.

102 Thierry, *Lettres*, 6^e Lettre, p. 73. The success of Thierry's own works is impressive testimony to the public's interest in history. In an article published in the *Revue des deux mondes* in 1847, Charles Louandre claimed that almost 100 000 copies of Thierry's

works had already been printed; see L. Orr, *Headless History: Nineteenth Century French Historiography of the Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 16.

103 Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 130. Among the more recent studies, Allen discusses those based on wills and auctioned libraries (pp. 136-38).

104 Barante, *op. cit.*, 1: 22-23.

105 23 juillet, 1825; quoted by C. Duchet, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

106 *Ibid.*, p. 252.

107 Thierry, *Lettres*, 6^e Lettre, pp. 73-74. On the popularity of Scott and the proliferation of his imitators in France in the 1820s, see L. Maigrion, *Le roman historique à l'époque romantique* (Paris: Champion, 1912), esp. pp. 51-59, 62-68. Mme de Boigne noted the great - and, in her view, unhealthy - influence that Scott exerted around 1830: 'Tout le monde jouait au roman historique, avec d'autant plus de zèle que c'était sans danger. Sir Walter Scott avait remis des propos chevaleresques à la mode, aussi bien que les meubles du moyen-âge; mais les uns et les autres n'étaient que de misérables imitations'; *Récits d'une tante: Mémoires de la comtesse de Boigne, née d'Osmond*, 4 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1907-1908), 4: 120. Hereafter cited as *Mémoires de Mme de Boigne*.

108 Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 1-2.

109 *Le temps des orages*, p. 144.

110 Yalom has highlighted the suffering brought about by the Revolution, but the wars of the Empire also had a devastating effect on family life. With her lament 'Quel supplice Bonaparte a infligé à des mères, à des femmes pendant tant d'années,' Claire de Rémusat articulates what is implicit in the works of others (*Mémoires*, 2: 199).

111 'Je cherche à goûter la triste, mais douce consolation qui reste aux malheureux, celle d'épancher leur douleur' (*Quelques-uns des fruits amers de la Révolution*, *M.R.R.F.*, 25: 67).

112 *Mémoires de madame la marquise de La Rochejaquelein*, 6th ed. (Paris: Dentu, 1848), p. 332.

113 *Mémoires de Meillan*, *M.R.R.F.*, 21: 171.

114 Choiseul, 'Avant-propos,' *M.R.R.F.*, 10: 1-26. The marquis de Bouillé himself claimed to have written only because others had already criticised his conduct (*M.R.R.F.*, 12: 1-7).

115 Goguelat, *M.R.R.F.*, 13: 1-8, 18-20, et passim.

116 *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 1: 161-62; 2: 33.

117 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 1: 2-3; 5: 93-101, 115-17; 10: 111-15.

118 *Mémoires de la Reine Hortense*, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1927), 3: 153-54.

119 *Mémoires de Charlotte Robespierre sur ses deux frères* [1835] (Paris: Présence de la Révolution, 1987), p. 44.

120 *Mémoires de Mlle Avrillion*, pp. 222, 234-36, 265, 298, 299, 316. Among the memoirs mentioned by Ducrest are those of Rovigo, Ida de Sainte-Elme, Beausset and Mme de Genlis.

121 Barante, *op. cit.*, 1: 23.

122 *Mémoires d'une femme de qualité*, p. 225.

123 On the politicization of literature in general and of history in particular in the post-revolutionary period see: S. Mellon, *The Political Uses of History: A Study of Historians in the French Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958); L. Gossman, *Between History and Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 1990); J. Allen, *op. cit.*; and F. Parent-Lardeur, *Lire à Paris au temps de Balzac: les cabinets de lecture à Paris, 1815-1830* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes-Etudes en

- Sciences Sociales: 1981).
- 124 *Mémoires de madame la marquise de Bonchamps sur la Vendée* (Janzé: Yves Salmon, 1981), pp. 11-20.
- 125 *Mémoires de Mme de Boigne*, 2: 368-69.
- 126 Stanley Mellon describes this Collection as 'an arsenal of Liberal propaganda, a source book in which the Moderates and Constitutionals of the Revolution have their day' (*op. cit.*, p. 32; see also pp. 25-27, 32-34). Editorial forewords and the biographical 'Notices' attached to the each volume of the collection defend the ideals of the Revolution, condemn its excesses as a betrayal of these ideals, and tie Louis XVIII's 'Charte' into the Revolution by presenting it as the guarantor of the 'utiles réformes' instigated by the eighteenth century 'philosophes'.
- 127 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 9: 334-35.
- 128 Maillé, *Souvenirs*, p. 87.
- 129 *Ibid.*, pp. 313-14.
- 130 *Causeries du lundi*, 12: 442.
- 131 About ninety-five per cent of the memoirs, histories and collections of letters which were produced during the period 1715-1789 were written by men [S. Kinsey, 'The Memorialists,' in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. S. I. Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 213]; and less than eight per cent of the works listed by Jean Tulard in his bibliographies of memoirs on the Consulate and Empire are by (or attributed to) women.
- 132 Referring to the controversy surrounding the *Mémoires du sieur de Pontis* (1676), l'abbé Arnauld noted: 'Il y a des gens qui croient qu'on ne doit nommer Mémoires que ce qui peut servir à l'histoire générale, ou ce qui regarde la vie des personnes si éminentes en naissance ou en dignité, qu'elle fait elle-même une partie de cette histoire'; quoted by A. Bertièrre, *op. cit.*, p. 42. Evidence that this tendency persisted through into the early nineteenth century can be found in the 'Notices' which preface the works in the *Collection des Mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France*.
- 133 *Mémoires de Mme de Boigne*, 2: 157.
- 134 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 3: 286.
- 135 'Notice sur la vie de madame Campan,' *M.R.R.F.*, 5 (2 vols.), 1: i. This was a key factor, for example, in the pleasure which Mme de Maillé derived from Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Under the date 9 December 1823, she wrote: 'Les Mémoires de Goethe que je viens de finir ont très peu d'intérêt; les faits qu'il raconte n'ont aucune importance, cependant cette lecture m'a amusée. On aime toujours les noms propres et les détails de la vie antérieure d'un homme qui a de la célébrité' (*Souvenirs*, p. 98).
- 136 Briot, *Usage*, p. 196.
- 137 *Correspondance de Stendhal*, ed. H. Martineau et V. del Litto, 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1962-1968), 1: 225. 'Quelle bonne chose que les mémoires d'un homme non dupe et qui a entrevu des choses,' Stendhal wrote to Mareste in 1818; 'on en tire le jus de la connaissance de l'homme' (1: 915).
- 138 'Notice sur madame de Staal,' *M.R.H.F.*, 2^e série, 77: 213-14.
- 139 'Au lecteur s'il y en a,' *Mémoires de Mme de Boigne*, 1: xxxii.
- 140 M. Corbett, *Representing Femininity: Middle-Class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Women's Autobiography* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 12-13.
- 141 Briot, *Usage*, p. 33.
- 142 'Invincible Mediocrity: The Private Selves of Public Women,' in *The Private Self*, ed. S. Benstock, p. 120.
- 143 'Notice sur la vie [...] du marquis d'Argenson,' *M.R.R.F.*, 1: 124.

- 144 *Mémoires de Mme Roland, M.R.R.F.*, 19 (2 vols.), 1: 220. All subsequent references are to this edition (unless stated otherwise).
- 145 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 10: 167.
- 146 *Mémoires de madame de Chastenay, 1771-1815*, 2 vols. (Paris: Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1896-1897), 1: 10-11.
- 147 *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 1: 14.
- 148 'Notice sur [...] madame de La Fayette,' *Mémoires de la cour de France pour les années 1688 et 1689* (Paris: Colnet, 1823; ré-éd., Paris: Galic, 1962), p. xxiii.
- 149 *Mémoires de la reine Hortense*, 1: 37-39.
- 150 The curriculum here, as elsewhere, was dominated by music, dancing and drawing; *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*, 1: 194-95 (note). In extreme cases, however, even drawing, music and dancing were omitted. According to the mother of Rosalie de Watteville, in Balzac's *Albert Savarus*, for example, such subjects were likely to corrupt a young girl. By the age of fourteen, therefore, Rosalie had received 'une éducation exclusivement religieuse'; and, by seventeen, she had learned only 'la couture, la broderie, le filet' and read only 'les Lettres édifiantes et des ouvrages sur la science héraldique' (*La Comédie humaine*, 1: 922-23).
- 151 I. Bricard, *Saintes ou pouliches: l'éducation des jeunes filles au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1985), pp. 100-01.
- 152 J. Curtis, 'The Epistolières,' in *French Women in the Age of Enlightenment*, p. 231.
- 153 Quoted by C. Caboche, *op. cit.*, 1: 100-01.
- 154 Sainte-Beuve, 'M. de Ségur: Mémoires, Souvenirs et Anecdotes' (16 mai, 1826; 31 mai 1827), *Premiers lundis*, 3 vols. (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1874), 1: 125-30, 224-30; 'Madame de Caylus et de ce qu'on appelle urbanité' (28 oct. 1850), *Causeries du lundi*, 3: 45-61.
- 155 Mérimée, *op. cit.*, p. i. The analogy between informal conversation and memoirs was also frequently made by memoir-writers themselves: Mme de Boigne and Mme de Maillé, among others, routinely use verbs such as 'causer' and 'bavarder' when referring to their work.
- 156 *Histoire des salons de Paris* [1838], 4 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1898-1921), 1: 9.
- 157 Virginia Woolf's remarks about the influence of the circumscribed world of 'the common sitting-room' on women's novel-writing in the nineteenth century are relevant here; see *A Room of One's Own* [1929] (London: Penguin, 1949), pp. 67-68.
- 158 Extract from a song composed by the marquise de Boufflers; E. Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Editions des femmes, 1986), 2: 265.
- 159 Lejeune, *Moi des demoiselles*, p. 69.
- 160 *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 1: 63.
- 161 *Souvenirs d'une actrice* (Paris: Ch. Schmid, n.d.), p. 75.
- 162 *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*, 1: 178-79.
- 163 *Mémoires inédits de madame la comtesse de Genlis, pour servir à l'histoire du dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles*, 8 vols. (Paris, London: Colburn, 1825-26), 1: 1.
- 164 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 10: 155-56. She also refers to a journal kept during her time in Spain and Portugal (8: 95).
- 165 René d'Argenson, *Mémoires, M.R.R.F.*, 1: 410. The difficulties facing women who wished to write history at this period are discussed by Natalie Zemon Davis in 'Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820,' in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. P. H. Labalme (New York, London: New York University Press, 1980), pp. 154-57.

- 166 Rosaldo, *op. cit.*, p. 28. The same point, with specific reference to the nineteenth century, was also made by Virginia Woolf forty-five years earlier in a letter written in response to a review of her book *A Room of One's Own*. Quoting from Florence Nightingale's *Cassandra*, she makes concrete what in Rosaldo remains an abstraction: 'Women never have half an hour in all their lives (excepting before anybody is up in the house) that they can call their own, without fear of offending or hurting someone'; 'Women and Leisure,' in *Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing* (London: The Women's Press, 1979), p. 54.
- 167 These obstacles are discussed by Linda Gardiner in her essay 'Women in Science' in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment* (pp. 181-93) and, in greater detail, by Elisabeth Badinter in *Emilie, Emilie: l'ambition féminine au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983). Badinter cites a letter from Mme du Châtelet to Maupertuis that illustrates perfectly the differences between male and female lifestyles. 'La vie est si courte et si remplie de devoirs et de détails inutiles, quand on a une famille et une maison,' she wrote; '[...] Si j'étais un homme, je serais au mont Valérien avec vous, et je planterais là toutes les inutilités de la vie' (p. 452). An echo of this letter can be found in that which Claire de Rémusat sent to her son in September 1818, in which she highlighted the gap between male and female forms of historical writing. 'Si j'étais homme,' she wrote, 'bien certainement je donnerais une partie de ma vie à étudier *la Ligue*; mais comme je suis femme, je me borne à brocher des paroles de celui que vous savez [Napoleon]' (*Mémoires*, 1: 92).
- 168 *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 1: 62.
- 169 *Mémoires de Mme de Chastenay*, 1: 150.
- 170 J. C. Herold, *Mistress to an Age: A life of madame de Staël* (London: The Book Society, 1958), p. 64. In a biographical sketch of Mme de Staël, Mme Necker de Saussure recalls de Staël declaring after the success of *Corinne*: 'J'ai bien envie d'avoir une grande table, il me semble que j'en ai le droit à présent'; 'Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de madame de Staël,' *Dix années d'exil* (Paris: Garnier, 1906), p. 176.
- 171 *A Room of One's Own*, pp. 54, 67. See also, the following pieces in *Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing*: 'Women Novelists' (1918), p. 69; 'Women and Fiction' (1929), pp. 45-46; 'Professions for Women' (1931), pp. 57-63.
- 172 *Histoire de ma vie* (edition cited), 1: 13.
- 173 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 5: 235; 2: 211.
- 174 Briot, *Usage*, pp. 30-33.
- 175 Maillé, *Souvenirs*, pp. 1-2; see also: pp. 106, 288-89 and 325.
- 176 Quoted by J.-P. Clément in his introduction to the *Mémoires de madame de Chateaubriand: cahier rouge et cahier vert* (Paris: Perrin, 1990), p. 23.
- 177 'Quelques précisions sur la duchesse d'Abrantès et Balzac,' *L'Année balzacienne* (1968), p. 50.
- 178 *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51. The frequently stormy relationship between Mme d'Abrantès and her publishers is also discussed by N. Felkay, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-52, 268-70.
- 179 Smith, *Poetics*, p. 50.
- 180 Craufurd [Crawford], 'Introduction' to the *Mémoires de madame du Hausset*, *M.R.R.F.*, 2: 25.
- 181 *Limits of Citizenship*, p. 87.
- 182 Charlotte Robespierre wrote in defence of her brothers, whose memory had been sullied by the thermidorians who overthrew them; Elisabeth was a friend of the Robespierre family and the widow of the Montagnard *député* Philippe Le Bas; Renée Bordereau (known as 'l'Angevin') was a peasant who joined the counter-revolutionary

forces in the Vendée after forty-two members of her family had died at the hands of the republicans.

183 Mme d'Abrantès, in her *Histoire des salons de Paris*, remained ambivalent about the degree of influence that women were able to exert on politics and culture through the salon in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While she accepted that an astute woman was able to mould the opinions of those who frequented her salon, Mme d'Abrantès nevertheless seems to have had doubts about the reality of women's power: she describes the reign of Louis XVI, for example, as 'une époque où les femmes avaient un crédit et un empire qui leur donnaient encore une sorte de puissance apparente si elle n'existait pas au fond' (1: 21).

184 *Souvenirs d'Elisabeth Le Bas*, printed in M. Yalom, *Le temps des orages. Aristocrates, bourgeoises et paysannes racontent* (Paris: Maren Sell et Cie, 1989), pp. 223, 228.

185 *Mémoires de Mme de Boigne*, 1: 71.

186 *Mémoires de Mme de Bonchamps*, p. 25.

187 Mme d'Abrantès, for instance, recalls the difficulties which she and her brother faced after their father's death because their mother had no understanding of financial matters, never having discussed them with her husband (*Mémoires*, 2: 31); while Elisabeth Le Bas reveals that she lacked even the most elementary knowledge about agriculture and the passage of the seasons (*Souvenirs*, p. 236).

188 *Mémoires de Mme de Chastenay*, 1: 7.

189 *Souvenirs d'une actrice*, p. 118.

190 *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

191 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 10: 165.

192 *Ibid.*, 10: 166-67.

193 *Ibid.*, 10: 167. That a woman can be the intellectual and moral equal of a man is a subject to which the duchess returns several times in her memoirs: 10: 168; 11: 130; 12: 248-49.

194 *Sur les femmes politiques* (1817); printed in *Opinions de femmes de la veille au lendemain de la Révolution française*, ed. G. Fraisse (Paris: Côté-femmes éditions, 1989), p. 78.

195 5 August 1818; Archives départementales de la Côte d'Or, Fonds Chastenay, E378 (supp.) 8.

196 See, for example, K. Norberg, "Love and Patriotism": Gender and Politics in the Life and Work of Louvet de Couvrai,' in *Rebel Daughters*, ed. S. E. Melzer and L. W. Rabine (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 38-53; T. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1985), esp. pp. 211-29. Rousseau's theories on the links between female participation in public affairs and the decay of the body politic are discussed by J. B. Landes, *Public Sphere*, pp. 66-89.

197 D. Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 124-27. This subject is treated more fully in Outram's earlier article "Le langage mâle de la vertu": Women and the Discourse of the French Revolution,' in *The Social History of Language*, ed. P. Burke and R. Potter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 120-35.

198 An article in *le Moniteur* (29 brumaire an II/19 November 1793) brings together these three women and castigates them as 'hommes-femmes' who died for having forgotten 'les vertus de [leur] sexe'. On the significance of gender in the condemnation of these women, see D. Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses: les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1988), pp. 268-70; L.

- Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1992), ch. 4 ('The Bad Mother'); and M. Trouille, 'Revolution in the Boudoir: Mme Roland's Subversion of Rousseau's Feminine Ideals,' in *The French Revolution of 1789 and its Impact*, ed. G. M. Schwab and J. R. Jeanneney (Westport, Conn., London: Greenwood Press, 1995), pp. 80-84.
- 199 M. Albistur and D. Armogathe, *Histoire du féminisme français du moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris: Editions des femmes, 1977), p. 227.
- 200 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 11: 129.
- 201 *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 2: 303.
- 202 *Mémoires de la reine Hortense*, 2: 184.
- 203 *Ibid.*, 2: 113-14. The same point is made again later in her memoirs: 'Il eût paru ridicule à tout le monde [sous l'Empire] qu'une femme s'occupât d'aucune affaire politique' (2: 216).
- 204 'Introduction,' *Mémoires de Charlotte Robespierre*, pp. 22-23.
- 205 Pope, 'The Influence of Rousseau's Ideology of Domesticity,' in *Connecting Spheres*, ed. M. J. Boxer and J. H. Quataert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 136-45; C. G. Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 38-39. Yalom argues in the conclusion to *Blood Sisters* (New York: Basic Books, 1993, pp. 242-43) that women in the post-revolutionary period had little interest in public life and turned to family life for satisfaction.
- 206 Lémontey, *Le Constitutionnel*; cited in the introduction to the 3rd edition of the *Mémoires de Mme Roland, M.R.R.F.*, 2 vols. (1827), 1: iii.
- 207 *Mémoires de Mme Roland* (edition cited above, n. 166), 2: 135, 306.
- 208 Quoted by Badinter in *Emilie*, pp. 447-48.
- 209 *Opinion d'une femme sur les femmes* (1801), in *Opinions de femme*, pp. 155-56.
- 210 *Souvenirs de la duchesse de Dino* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1908), p. 121.
- 211 Even in this case, it was the husband who retained ultimate control over landed property as she could not dispose of it without his authorisation (*Code civil*, arts. 1536, 1538). The vast majority of couples, however, did not have this sort of marriage settlement: they were married either 'sous le régime dotal' (whereby the husband was unable to dispose of property belonging to his wife without her consent) or 'sous le régime de la communauté des biens' which gave the husband absolute control over his wife's possessions.
- 212 *Mémoires de la reine Hortense*, 2: 333.
- 213 *Ibid.*, 1: 136; *Mémoires de Mme de La Rochejaquelein*, p. 420.
- 214 *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 1: 356-59.
- 215 Maillé, *Souvenirs*, p. 232.
- 216 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 9: 75-77.
- 217 The *Code civil* recognised only three grounds for divorce: adultery (articles 229, 230); cruelty and grievous injury (article 231); commission of a crime resulting in 'condamnation à une peine infâmante' (article 232). Divorce by mutual agreement (article 233) was limited to marriages of more than two years and less than twenty years duration and required the consent of the parents of those intending to divorce. It was still possible to obtain a legal separation after 1816. In the eyes of the law, however, the woman who was separated was still classed as a *married* woman and thus required authorisation from her husband before entering into any legal or financial agreement.
- 218 Raoul, *op. cit.*, 144-145.
- 219 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 11: 131.
- 220 *Mémoires de Mme Roland*, 1: 148.

- 221 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 3: 187 and 205.
- 222 Maillé, *Souvenirs*, p. 325.
- 223 *Mémoires de Mme Roland*, 2: 347-48.
- 224 S. Kinsey, *op. cit.*, p. 224.
- 225 *Mémoires de Mme de Staal-Delaunay*, 1: 196.
- 226 Several of those who claimed that they did not intend to publish their memoirs (including Mme de Boigne and la reine Hortense), nevertheless gave readings or allowed their work to circulate in manuscript form.
- 227 Briot, *Usage*, pp. 89-90. The notion of the memoir as reaction or response is a key element in Briot's study of the genre.
- 228 *Mémoires de la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 1: 237.
- 229 M. Sheringham, *French Autobiography: Devices and Desires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), ch. 5., esp. pp. 140-42.
- 230 *Mémoires de Mme de Boigne*, 1: 70.
- 231 *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*, 1: 130-31 (n. 1), 141-42. Original emphasis.
- 232 *Mémoires de la reine Hortense*, 1: 333.
- 233 *Oeuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 4: 698, 702-03.
- 234 Quoted by Roussel in *Rousseau*, p. 443. Jay was attempting to explain the phenomenal success of the *Mémoires de madame d'Épinay*.
- 235 See, for example, the introduction to the memoirs of Besanval, *M.R.R.F.*, 3: xxix.
- 236 Emphasis added. 'Mémoires de madame Roland publiés d'après le manuscrit' (4 juillet 1864), in *Nouveaux lundis*, 2nd ed., 13 vols. (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1864-1870), 8: 199-200. Until the appearance of the Dauban edition of Mme Roland's memoirs, which is the subject of Sainte-Beuve's article, editors of the memoirs had modified or removed passages containing material of a sexual nature and those which detracted from the image of the author as a faithful wife, loving mother and noble victim.
- 237 'Mémoires de madame de Genlis' (2 avril 1825), *Premiers lundis*, 1: 35, 36. A similar attitude also prevailed across the Channel. In an analysis of the 'scandalous memoirists' of eighteenth century England who wrote works for publication in which they recounted their fall from chastity, Felicity Nussbaum rightly observed that the 'scandal' in such works resided primarily in the fact that they were public documents at a time when convention dictated that women should confess their indiscretions only privately to God [*The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth Century England* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 181-82].
- 238 Bailly, for example, who intended that his readers should be able to discern 'l'homme dans son ouvrage', nevertheless focussed on his role as historical observer and explicitly shied away from discussing his life outside the public sphere (*Mémoires d'un témoin de la Révolution*, *M.R.R.F.*, 6: 1-2); Louis-Philippe de Ségur, who regarded the life of the writer as the core-element in a memoir, still felt the need to apologize for offering his recollections of things that concerned only himself or his family (*Mémoires*, 1: 4-5); and even those who shared Rousseau's interest in 'la vie intérieure', such as Stendhal and Chateaubriand, nevertheless felt uneasy about the insistent egocentricity of the *Confessions*.
- 239 'Mémoires de mademoiselle Bertin sur la reine Marie-Antoinette' (11 nov. 1824), *Premiers lundis*, 1: 1-4; 'Mémoires de madame de Genlis' (2 avril 1825), *ibid.*, 1: 34-38.
- 240 Quoted by S. Balayé in 'Comment peut-on être madame de Staël? Une femme dans l'institution littéraire,' *Romantisme*, 77 (1992), p. 17.
- 241 Grimm's recommendations to Mme d'Épinay when she was writing the autobiographical novel that would be published in 1818 as her memoirs are quoted by Sainte-Beuve in the essay of 10 June 1850 cited above: '[...] sur toutes choses, oubliez

toujours que vous faites un livre; il sera aisé d'y mettre des liaisons; c'est l'air de vérité qui ne se donne pas quand il n'y est pas de premier jet, et l'imagination la plus heureuse ne le remplace point' (189). *Mémoires du marquis d'Argenson, M.R.R.F.*, 1: 413-14.

242 See, for example, the 'Notices' that accompany the memoirs of Marguerite de Valois and Mme de Staal in the Collection Petitot, and Barrière's introduction to the memoirs of Mme Roland (*M.R.R.F.*, 19). These same qualities were explicitly coded as feminine by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in the 'Préambule' to *Paul et Virginie*, which was published along with the novel for the first time in 1806. It was women, he states, who had endowed the French language with 'sa clarté, sa pureté, son élégance, sa douceur, tout ce qu'elle a d'aimable et de naïf'; *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. L. Aimé-Martin, 12 vols. (Paris: Dupont, 1825-1826), 6: 37.

243 *Mémoires de Mlle Avrillion*, p. 208. See also the memoirs of Mme d'Abrantès (3: 50) and those of Mme de Chastenay (2: 276).

244 See, for example, the memoirs of Mme de La Rochejaquelein, pp. 100, 163.

245 *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 1: 167; *Mémoires de Mlle Avrillion*, p. 277.

246 *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*, 1: 269. On the inappropriateness of politics as a subject for women, see also 1: 72 and 2: 79-80.

247 *Ibid.*, 3: 9-10.

248 *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 3: 23; *Mémoires de Mlle Avrillion*, p. 97.

249 *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*, 3: 10. See also: *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 2: 34-35 and 404; and *Mémoires d'une femme de qualité*, pp. 78-79.

250 I agree with Harriet Blodgett's claim that it is 'characteristic human behaviour to present oneself to an adored other in ways that one believes will be admired by that other or in ways that one can bear to present oneself' - hence the rarity of finding writers who condemn themselves irredeemably, even in their most personal and private works; *Female Days*, pp. 15, 61-62.

251 'Professions for Women,' in *Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing*, pp. 58-60.

252 *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, 2: 396-400.

253 'Women Novelists,' in *Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing*, p. 69.

254 At least seventy editions of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* appeared before 1800; and during the Consulate and Empire, when Rousseau's political texts were officially out of favour, *Emile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* were treated with greater indulgence and continued to be in demand. On the popularity of these works, see R. Darnton, 'Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity,' in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (London: Allen Lane, 1984), pp. 232-43; and J. Roussel, *op. cit.*, pp. 220, 429-30.

Chapter 2

Madame de La Tour du Pin: *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans*

1 Madame de Staël, *Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau*, 'Seconde préface' (1814), in *Oeuvres complètes de madame la baronne de Staël*, 17 vols. (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1820), 1: 8.

2 *Loc. cit.*

3 Quoted by Aymar de Liedekerke-Beaufort in the 'Préface' to *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans*, 19th ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Chapelot, 1920), 1: xxxi-xxxii. All quotations from the *Journal* are taken from this edition and references will be given in parentheses in the text; references to the *Journal* are given in the notes only when they are extensive.

4 In 1906-07, the comte de Liedekerke-Beaufort brought out, at his own expense, a four volume edition of the *Journal*. Since only a small number of copies were printed (75), and since distribution was strictly limited, the work was not generally available until

the second edition appeared in 1913. The manuscript of the memoirs is contained in two journals (corresponding to the two volumes of the Chapelot edition) which are preserved today in the archives of the château de Vêves in Belgium. The first journal is a red, leather-bound book of high quality paper (19 cm x 24 cm), kept inside a brown leather wallet on which is written 'Mémoires de Henriette Lucie Dillon La Tour du Pin'. The title by which these memoirs are generally known - *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans* - is found at the top of the opening page, just above the date '1^{er} janvier 1820'. The pages of this volume are numbered up to page 233, after which the practice is abandoned; page numbers are entirely absent from the second volume. The second volume (22.5 cm x 33 cm), in contrast to the first, is composed of six 'cahiers' of a thinner blue-grey paper, attached via cords. The first five 'cahiers' measure 19.5 cm x 25 cm; the sixth measures 20.5 cm x 30.5 cm.

5 *Le mouvement des idées dans l'Emigration française*, 2 vols. (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1924), 1: 217.

6 Quoted by M. Yalom in *Blood Sisters: The French Revolution in Women's Memory* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p. 234.

7 *Malheur et Pitié, poème en quatre chants, Oeuvres de Jacques Delille*, ed. Amar Du Rivier, 14 vols. (Paris: Michaud, 1824), 12: 192.

8 *Ibid.*, 172.

9 *Souvenirs d'une actrice* (Paris: Charles Schmid, n.d.), p. 120. Subsequent references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text.

10 For example, C. Kunstler, *La vie quotidienne sous Louis XVI* (Paris: Hachette, 1950).

11 For example, M. Yalom, *Blood Sisters*.

12 For example, J. Turquan, *Les Femmes de l'Emigration*, 2 vols. (Paris: Emile-Paul, 1912); F. Baldensperger, *op. cit.*; G. de Diesbach, *Histoire de l'Emigration, 1789-1814* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1975).

13 For example, C. Sherrill, *French Memories of Eighteenth Century America* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1915).

14 For example, J. Orieux, *Talleyrand, ou le sphinx incompris* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970); V. Cronin, *Napoleon* (London: Collins, 1971).

15 *Op. cit.*, 2: 381, 334. Turquan's account is riddled with inaccuracies and he does not appear to have been familiar with the *Journal* itself.

16 *Op. cit.*, 1: 216. Baldensperger echoes the descriptions of the marquise given in the many enthusiastic reviews which followed the publication of her *Journal* in 1913.

17 *Blood Sisters*, pp. 220-34. The passage cited is from p. 220.

18 Diesbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 468-69.

19 Lanzac de Laborie, in a review of the *Journal* in *Le Correspondant* (10 mars 1913, pp. 961-92), is one of the few to have noted the 'literariness' of the work. The term 'Journal' is inappropriate, he wrote, because 'il s'agit non point d'éphémérides, mais d'un récit suivi et très artistiquement composé malgré une feinte négligence' (p. 962, note).

20 *Journal*, 1: 79, 255, 276, 280. Present in the English translation of the memoirs by Felice Harcourt (*Memoirs of Madame de La Tour du Pin*, New York: McCall Publishing Co., 1971) but surprisingly absent from the Chapelot edition, is another reference to the memoirist's age which is given on page 103 of the first volume of the manuscript: 'Je n'écris ces détails assez futiles que pour faire contraste avec la position où je suis en les rappelant à 71 ans quand je me refuse une mauvaise chaise à porteur de 40 sols pour aller le dimanche à la messe quand il pleut'.

21 Quotations from published letters are taken from the *Mercure de France* edition of the *Mémoires de la marquise de La Tour du Pin* (Paris: 1989); this work is hereafter cited

as MF. MF, p. 419.

22 The division of the work into chapters is the work of the editors, not of the writer herself. The chapter divisions referred to here are those of the Chapelot edition cited above.

23 10th-11th August 1841 (unpublished). This corresponds to vol. 1, ch. 10 of the Chapelot edition. All unpublished documents which are cited in this chapter are in the archives of the comte de Liedekerke-Beaufort in the château de Vêves in Belgium.

24 'J'en suis dans ma copie au moment de la Terreur, et je me prends à ne pas croire ce que j'en ai écrit moi-même sur ce temps [...]' (1st January 1843; unpublished).

25 The manuscript here differs slightly from the published text: 'Il est probablement très présomptueux de commencer une seconde partie de mes Mémoires [...]'. In addition, the word 'copier' is underlined in the manuscript, as if to indicate that the second volume of the 'Journal', in contrast to the first, was not a copy. This suggestion is supported by the appearance of the manuscript: the hand-writing - which varies in quality in both volumes - is noticeably less elegant here than in the preceding volume. The second volume also contains a greater number of deletions and alterations of a type that suggests that the marquise was composing, not transcribing, her reminiscences.

26 *Journal*, 2: 39, 99, 202, 255. In a letter of 11th September 1843 (unpublished), the marquise informed Félicie de La Rochejaquelein: 'J'ai passé dans mes mémoires ta naissance et celle de Clara, et j'en suis au 18 brumaire, et à mon retour en France'.

27 'Au moment où j'écris ces lignes, à Pise, au commencement de 1845 [...]' (2: 330); and the claim that she was recalling the passage of the duchesse d'Angoulême through Amiens in 1814 'après trente ans' (2: 348).

28 It may be that the lack of resolution in the memoirs reflects the writer's pessimistic evaluation of the situation of the exiled Bourbons at the moment of writing, in the mid 1840s. To judge from her letters of this period (1842-1846), Henri, comte de Chambord, whom Legitimists wished to see restored to the French throne, appeared to the marquise to be in a state of limbo, similar to that of Louis XVIII who is stranded in Ghent when the *Journal* breaks off in 1815.

29 The last letter in the family archives dates from late 1848. Her letters to Félicie de La Rochejaquelein reveal that Mme de La Tour du Pin suffered, sometimes severely, from rheumatism. On 8th December 1839, for instance, she complained that rheumatism in her right arm and hand made it virtually impossible for her to hold a pen; and on 15th January 1842, she wrote that her back had been causing her pain and that '[ses] vieilles rhumatismes se sont réveillées' [sic] (both letters unpublished).

30 This notes appears on the bottom right-hand cover of the first 'cahier' of the second volume. Aymar was already familiar with at least part of his mother's memoirs before 1849 for, on 1st January 1843, the marquise wrote to Félicie de La Rochejaquelein: 'J'en ai lu quelque chose des brouillons à Aymar, mais ce sera beaucoup plus long quand je les aurai recopiés, ce que je fais [...]' (unpublished).

31 The memoirs end about half way down a page, and the last few pages of the sixth 'cahier' are unused.

32 Referring to Cécile ('celle qui parcourt peut-être ces lignes'), she writes: 'Qu'elle y lise ma reconnaissance pour tout le bonheur qu'elle a répandu sur ma vieillesse' (2: 207).

33 Referring to a conversation which she had with the king of Holland, the memoirist wrote: 'Probablement est-ce cette conversation qui lui a ouvert la carrière diplomatique. Je souhaite qu'il s'en souviennne' (2: 373). Her letters, too, suggest that Mme de La Tour du Pin's relationship with her son-in-law was somewhat strained. On 18th January 1823, for example, she wrote to Félicie: 'J'ai la satisfaction de lui avoir imposé un sentiment d'amitié qu'il m'avait refusé depuis tant d'années' (unpublished). A letter of 23rd February 1842, however, in which the marquise laments the impossibility of prolonging

her stay with Auguste at Noisy suggests that relations between them remained tense.

34 Her letters confirm that the principal readers envisaged by Mme de La Tour du Pin were her son and Félicie. On 11th September 1843, for example, she wrote to the latter that her memoirs were a 'rabâchage de famille qui sera bon, tout au plus, à amuser Aimar et toi quand vous serez vieux' (unpublished). The same readers are also indicated in a letter of 1st January 1843 (unpublished).

35 *Journal*, 1: 309, 324-25; 2: 2, 96, 145, 239-40, 255, 281, 305, 309, 335.

36 *Mémoires de la comtesse de Boigne*, 6th ed., 4 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1907-1908), 2: 121. One of the memoirist's earliest letters to Félicie de La Rochejaquelein concerns her inconsolable grief at Humbert's death (19th May 1816; unpublished).

37 24th April 1817 (MF, p. 376).

38 The pain caused by this death is evident in a letter of 7th May 1823 to Félicie (unpublished).

39 The important place which Cécile occupied in the life of Mme de La Tour du Pin and the void which her departure would create can be gauged from a letter of 8th May 1841, in which the latter declared: 'Cette petite est devenue une amie, une compagne, avec laquelle je causais de tout [...]' (MF, p. 429). It is possible, therefore, that the increased attention which the writer gave to her memoirs in the early 1840s was linked to the loss of this interlocutor, with writing becoming a substitute for their conversation.

40 Letters of the early 1820s mention plans to sell off the estate of Tesson in Saintonge (MF, p. 429). Efforts were still being made to arrange this sale in 1830 (MF, p. 409).

41 11th September 1824 (MF, p. 390).

42 25th September 1824 (MF, pp. 392-93).

43 Two letters of June 1835 referring to the sale of le Bouilh reveal that, on a personal level, the loss of this property was experienced by Mme de La Tour du Pin not only as the destruction of a cherished part of her past, but also as 'une sorte de mort anticipée', an obliteration of the future. It may be, therefore, that she came to look on the memoirs as a substitute for the loss of the ancestral home. In other words, the family's history as text to replace the family's history in stone. (MF, pp. 418-20)

44 MF, pp. 420-21.

45 See letters of 14th June 1833 (MF, p. 414); 10th October 1833 (MF, p. 416); 7th October 1834 (MF, p. 416); 5th June 1835 (MF, pp. 418-19); 14th June 1835 (MF, pp. 419-20).

46 19th May 1841 (MF, p. 430).

47 For example, 22nd January 1842 (unpublished); 10th June 1842 (MF, p. 433).

48 26th September 1842 (MF, pp. 436-37). See also the letter of 8th May 1841, which reveals the writer's despondency at the prospect of Cécile's departure. With the loss of this 'amie', she seems to envisage herself becoming even more dependent on the son who forms the centre of her world. 'Pour moi,' she wrote, 'je n'ai de projets que ceux d'Aymar, sur lequel je ne veux exercer la moindre influence; là où il ira, je désire aller aussi' (MF, p. 430).

49 On 11th October 1844, Mme de La Tour de Pin wrote to Félicie that in order to save money, she and Aymar had moved out of furnished accommodation and she had given up 'la tapisserie, qui est un plaisir trop cher' (MF, p. 442). It should be noted, however, that very little is known about this last period of the memoirist's life.

50 Her devotion to Aymar is evident in numerous letters, including those of 27th January 1842, 6th February 1842, 10th February 1842 and 11th September 1843.

51 Among those whose financial situation is discussed are her great-uncle, the archbishop of Narbonne (1: 7, 34, 201; 2: 160); her grand-mother (1: 70); her father-in-law (1: 201); and her uncle, William Jerningham (2: 168).

52 La Folie Joyeuse (1: 39-40); a farm in America (2: 29); the château d'Ussé

(2: 235).

53 In a letter of 14th June 1835, the marquise confided to Félicie de La Rochejaquelein 'on ne peut pas vivre sans un tout petit château en l'air [...]' (MF, p. 419).

54 Mme de La Tour du Pin returns to the catastrophic effects of this decision later in her memoirs. After protesting: 'Je n'entrerais pas dans les détails de notre ruine, dont le souvenir m'échappe maintenant, et ne les ayant d'ailleurs exactement connus,' she then proceeds to do just that, calculating their losses in annual revenue at 58 000 francs (2: 135-37).

55 A few pages further on, she is more specific about her family's difficulties at this period. The war with England having had a devastating effect on the price of wine, her husband, at great expense, set up 'une brûlerie à eau-de-vie' which made barely enough to cover its costs. Once again, she stresses that the paramount concern of herself and her husband was 'l'avenir de [leurs] enfants' (2: 232).

56 Her husband's daring in refusing to wear the orange ribbon when he was sent as plenipotentiary to the Hague in 1791 is highlighted by using the cowardice of the *chargé d'affaires* as a foil (1: 280). On the significance of this gesture, see Mme de Staël's letter of 2nd December 1791 to M. de La Tour du Pin and the accompanying notes in the *Correspondance générale*, ed. W. Jasinski (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1962), 1: 520-21.

57 *Bibliographie critique des mémoires sur le Consulat et l'Empire, écrits ou traduits en français* (Genève: Droz, 1971), p. 100.

58 1: 125, 153, 182, 304; 2: 141, 369.

59 [G. Ducrest], *Mémoires sur l'Impératrice Joséphine, ses contemporains, la cour de Navarre et de la Malmaison*, 3 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1828-1829), 3: 10.

60 'J'entre dans tous ces détails pour peindre les moeurs de la haute société dans ce temps-là, si éloigné de celui où j'écris' (1: 89; see also 1: 105). Her account includes details on the 'trousseau' and 'corbeille' and on 'la toilette de la mariée' (1: 101-02, 107). The same elements are also discussed by Mme Junot in her memoirs, a work which Mme de La Tour du Pin had certainly read (she refers to them twice, 1: 85 and 2: 32): *Mémoires de madame la duchesse d'Abrantès, ou Souvenirs historiques sur Napoléon, la Révolution, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration*, 18 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-1835), 3: 274-83, 286-87 note. Emphasising the importance of such details for the effectiveness of a memoir, Mme d'Abrantès explains: 'habiller les personnages qui sont en action avec la redingote ou la robe qu'ils portaient le jour du fait qu'on rapporte [...], c'est mettre les couleurs vives et fraîches au tableau qu'on présente [...]. Il faut donner une vie à ce que l'on représente; et dans un ouvrage du genre des Mémoires, l'excès des détails qui donnerait la mort à un autre sujet, peut seul ici produire cet effet' (3: 285-86).

61 *Mémoires inédits de madame la comtesse de Genlis, pour servir à l'histoire des dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles*, 8 vols. (Paris, London: Colburn, 1825-1826), 5: 179. This work was known to Mme de La Tour du Pin as she mentions it twice in the *Journal* (1: 176; 2: 32).

62 Other occasions on which the writer conveys information that is not given elsewhere include the flight of the *émigrés* into Belgium after the battles of Jemappes (1: 283-86) and the marriage of Mrs Fitzherbert and the Prince Regent (2: 216-17).

63 The events of January 1793, she writes, 'sont du domaine de l'histoire et chacun les a racontés selon son opinion' (1: 304); 'l'histoire du 18 fructidor' is glossed over on the grounds that 'on peut la lire dans tous les mémoires du temps' (2: 141); and the consequences of Napoleon's return in 1815, she states, 'rentrent dans le domaine de l'histoire' and she will record only 'ce qui [lui] est personnel' (2: 369).

64 In the presentation of her father and mother in her memoirs, Mme de La Tour du Pin

combines discretion with calculated inaccuracy in order to make the former appear more staunchly royalist and the latter more virtuous than they were in reality. On her father's Dantonist sympathies, see L. de Laborie, *Le Correspondant*, p. 975 note; and for a less indulgent portrayal of her mother's conduct at Hautefontaine, see Mme de Boigne, *Mémoires*, 1: 42-45. It should be noted, however, that Mme de Boigne detested Mme de La Tour du Pin, according to the latter (*Journal*, 2: 280).

65 See, for example, her account of the attack on Réveillon (1: 177-78).

66 Scant attention is paid to the influence of economic factors or the influence of legal and administrative injustices in fostering revolution. Describing the winter of 1788-89, Mme de La Tour du Pin says only that it was 'désastreux pour le peuple' (1: 171) and 'si cruel pour les pauvres' (1: 177); and she passes rapidly over 'des changements qui semblaient nécessaires à tous les hommes réfléchis et bien pensants' (1: 128) and 'l'abolissement des abus' (1: 244).

67 In an essay on autobiographical writing by royalist women in seventeenth century England, Mary Beth Rose argues that there is a link between the collapse of social and political power experienced by male royalists as a result of the civil war, and the lives led and subsequently recounted by their wives and daughters. The period of social upheaval presented women with responsibilities and opportunities and placed them in a paradoxical situation, the tensions of which can be read in their autobiographical writings. As royalists during the civil war and Interregnum, adherence to the old patriarchal power structure to which they were committed, obliged them to violate its conventions with regard to female passivity and modesty. It is my belief that royalist women in revolutionary France were placed in a similar situation and that their memoirs, too, show evidence of the tensions that this generated. M. B. Rose, 'Gender, Genre, and History: Seventeenth Century English Women and the Art of Autobiography,' *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. M. B. Rose (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 245-78.

68 The term is taken from G. Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987), p. 8.

69 Given the date at the beginning of the manuscript (1820), it is probable that it is indeed the writer's age and sex which are being prioritised in the title. In other words, the title signifies that this is the 'Journal of a Fifty Year Old Woman'. Letters preserved in the family archives at Vêves, however, render the title ambiguous. On 8th July 1838, the marquise wrote to Félicie de La Rochejaquelein that her grandson Hadelin was planning to write a biography of her late husband, who had passed away in February 1837 - and it is clear that she did not welcome the proposal. Such exposure, she states, would not only be contrary to the wishes of the unassuming M. de La Tour du Pin, it would also be inadequate. 'Je ne saurais te peindre la sensation pénible que j'ai ressentie en lisant cette pensée d'Hadelin,' she tells her friend; 'Je te prie de lui dire, si tu lui écris, comme je vais le faire moi-même, - il n'y a que moi, chère amie qui peux encore toucher d'une main tendre et respectueuse à cette vie, dont plusieurs incidents étaient dans notre intime confidence'. Her husband's private life is of no interest, she continues, and 'ses admirables vertus privées' should live on only in the memory of his family and closest friends. It is after having set out these arguments that the marquise broaches the subject of memoir-writing. 'Si je laisse des souvenirs pour Aimar et pour toi,' she writes, 'je parlerai de lui [M. de La Tour du Pin], comme je sais qu'il aurait aimé qu'on parlât. [...] Je ne puis, je ne veux transmettre pour personne au monde, des détails qui ne peuvent plus intéresser que moi; *publier sa vie serait publier la mienne, puisque pendant 50 ans, nous n'avons eu qu'un coeur et une pensée*' (emphasis added). A week later, on 15th July, the marquise sent a letter to Hadelin explaining to him why she was categorically opposed to his plan. Although this letter is remarkably similar to that which she sent to Félicie, it differs in one important respect: Mme de La Tour du Pin never indicates that

she herself is writing (or is contemplating writing) her memoirs. Since much - if not all - of the first volume of the manuscript appears to have been copied up during the late 1830s or the early 1840s, it may have been Hadelin's desire to publish a biographical article about his grand-father that provided the crucial stimulus for this activity. Did Mme de La Tour du Pin return to the memoirs which she had begun almost twenty years earlier in order to trace the story of a fifty year long marriage in which, as she wrote to Félicie, biography and autobiography were inseparably fused? By the early 1840s, therefore, did the title possess a double meaning: 'Journal of a Fifty Year Old Woman/Journal of a Wife of Fifty Years'?

70 *Vie de Henry Brulard*, ed. H. Martineau (Paris: Garnier, 1953), p. 6.

71 'Moeurs des salons,' *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin ou observations sur les mœurs et les usages français au commencement du dix-neuvième siècle*, 6th ed., 5 vols. (Paris: Pilet, 1815), 1: 131-38.

72 *Mémoires de Mme de Genlis*, 5: 124. The same sentiments were also expressed by Mme de La Tour du Pin in one of her letters to Félicie. As she approached her seventieth birthday, she bemoaned the negative connotations of the expression 'vieille femme' compared to those of 'vieillard': 'Vieillard pour un homme a quelque chose de grave, de respectable, mais vieille ne présente rien de beau [...]' (29th December 1839; unpublished).

73 *Mémoires de Mme de Genlis*, 5: 125.

74 Y. Knibiehler, 'Les médecins de la "nature féminine" au temps du Code civil,' *Annales: E.S.C.*, 31 (1976), pp. 824-45; A. Farge, 'Les temps fragiles de la solitude des femmes à travers le discours médical du XVIII^e siècle,' *Madame ou Mademoiselle? Itinéraires de la solitude féminine: XVIII^e-XX^e siècle*, eds. A. Farge and C. Klapisch-Zuber (Paris: Editions Montalba, 1984), pp. 251-63. See also, G. Fraisse, *Muse de la raison: la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes* (Aix-en-Provence, Editions Alinéa, 1989), ch. 3.

75 Staël, *Oeuvres complètes* (edition cited), 1: 5. For an insightful analysis of this second preface, see M. Trouille, 'A Bold New Vision of Woman: Staël and Wollstonecraft Respond to Rousseau,' *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 292 (1991), esp. pp. 313-20.

76 *Souvenirs de la baronne du Montet, 1785-1866*, 4th ed. (Paris: Plon, 1914), not paginated.

77 'Au lecteur, s'il y en a,' *Mémoires de Mme de Boigne*, 1: xxxiii. See also, 'Avant-propos,' *Mémoires de Mme de La Rochejaquelein*, 6th ed. (Paris: Dentu, 1848), p. 5; and Mme de Maillé, *Souvenirs des deux Restaurations* (Paris: Perrin, 1984), p. 3.

78 Bailly, for example, introduced his memoirs with the words: 'Si je parle souvent de moi dans cet écrit, on se souviendra que ce n'est pas une histoire, mais un journal. C'est le récit des faits publics, c'est aussi celui de mes sentiments et de mes pensées' (*Mémoires de Bailly, M.R.R.F.*, 6: 2).

79 *Les Confessions de J.-J. Rousseau*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1995), 1: 5.

80 *Vie de Henry Brulard*, p. 93.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

82 As was the case for Mme de Maillé: 'C'est à vous, mes enfants, que j'adresse ces pages. C'est pour vous que je les ai conservées, mais ce n'est pas pour vous qu'elles furent commencées'. In a prime position to judge the political scene during the Restoration, but condemned to inactivity as a woman and unable to express her trenchant criticisms for fear of jeopardising the career prospects of her husband and sons, Mme de Maillé turned to putting her thoughts down in writing (*op. cit.*, pp. 1-2).

83 In addition to the two manuscript volumes in Mme de La Tour du Pin's handwriting, there is also an undated, annotated 'Copie' of the 'Journal', written on loose sheets of paper, which seems to have been made with a view to the publication of the memoirs. The description of these pages as a 'copie' is slightly misleading, however, as much of the text has been recast. The opening paragraph of the 'Copie' (of which there are two versions), for example, is more explicit than the actual manuscript about the readership envisaged for the 'Journal': '[...] ce récit ne pourrait guère intéresser que mon fils, à qui surtout j'adresse ces souvenirs'/'[...] ce récit assez peu intéressant pour pour tout autre que mon fils auquel je l'adresse' (Archives du comte de Liedekerke-Beaufort, Vêves, Box 303).

84 Mme Roland begins her *Mémoires particuliers* by explaining why she has decided 'à retracer ce qui [lui] est personnel': 'c'est vivre une seconde fois que de revenir ainsi sur tous les pas de sa carrière; et qu'a-t-on de mieux à faire en prison que de transporter ailleurs son existence par une heureuse fiction ou par des souvenirs intéressants' [*M.R.R.F.*, 19 (2 vols.), 1: 2]. Mme de Boigne, depressed after the loss of a child whom she had reared for twelve years, lists among her reasons for writing 'le besoin de vivre dans le passé quand le présent est sans joie et l'avenir sans espérance' (*Mémoires*, 1: xxxii); and the duchesse de Dino claims that she was advised to write by a friend who believed that a return to the past would remedy her melancholia by freeing her from 'la déplaisance du présent' and 'l'inquiétude de l'avenir' [*Souvenirs de la duchesse de Dino*, (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1908), p. 91].

85 *Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 2-3.

86 The 'Notice' accompanying Chateaubriand's *Essai sur les révolutions* (1797) offers a close parallel to the preliminary paragraphs of the *Journal*: 'On y voit [dans cet ouvrage] presque partout un malheureux qui cause avec lui-même, dont l'esprit erre de sujets en sujets, de souvenirs en souvenirs; qui n'a point l'intention de faire un livre, mais qui tient une espèce de journal régulier de ses excursions mentales, un registre de ses sentiments, de ses idées' [(Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 37]. Moreover, the *Essai* appears in the *Journal* as an object of contestation, in an anecdote which concludes with the memoirist's gleeful triumph (directly) over Mme de Duras, who begged her to hand over a copy of the *Essai* which she was reading in the winter of 1810-1811, and (indirectly) over the vicomte himself, in that her reading signifies the failure of his efforts to eradicate a particular image of himself (*Journal*, 2: 304).

87 The association of the male with the pen and the female with the needle occurs, for example, in Rousseau's *Emile* (*Oeuvres complètes*, 4: 707, 708-09) and in Sylvain Maréchal's *Projet de loi*. Article 5 of the *Projet* states: 'La Raison veut que les sexes diffèrent de talents comme d'habits. Il est aussi révoltant et scandaleux de voir un homme coudre, que de voir une femme écrire; de voir un homme tresser des cheveux que de voir une femme tourner des phrases'. For a discussion of the *Projet*, see G. Fraisse, *Muse*, ch. 1 (the quotation is from p. 25).

88 11th March 1822; MF, p. 384.

89 25th November 1839; MF, p. 424.

90 11th September 1843; 10th-11th August 1841 (unpublished).

91 Rousseau's ideas on marriage and motherhood, according to Cissie Fairchilds, had a particularly strong hold on the women of the bourgeoisie and upper-classes ['Women and Family,' in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. S. I. Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 97-110]. Following *Emile*, childrearing in general and maternal breast-feeding in particular became increasingly popular; and Mme de Staël, in her *Lettres sur [...] J.-J. Rousseau*, waxed lyrical on his achievement in reviving 'le sentiment maternel dans une certaine classe de la société' (*Oeuvres*

complètes, 1:52).

92 Elisabeth Badinter aptly described *Emile* as 'une véritable pédagogie de la soumission féminine'; *Emilie, Emilie: l'ambition féminine au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), p. 396.

93 *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (edition cited), 5: 80. Original spelling.

94 On the anxiety aroused by the apparently imminent disappearance of clearly marked sexual identities during the Revolution and the effect that such fears had on post-revolutionary political thinking, see G. Fraisse, *Muse* and L. Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1992), chs. 4 and 6.

95 *Emile* (edition cited), p. 698. Subsequent references to *Emile* are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the text in the form *Em* + page number.

96 Genlis, *Maison rustique pour servir à l'éducation de la jeunesse, ou Retour d'une famille émigrée*, *Mémoire en marge* (Mayenne: L'imprimerie Floch, 1994), p. 61. The first edition, in 3 volumes, was published by Maradan in 1810.

97 Article 3; quoted by G. Fraisse, *Muse*, p. 36.

98 Caillot, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des moeurs et usages des Français* (Genève: Slatkine-Megarlotis Reprints, 1976), p. 27.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

100 Gusdorf makes individualism a condition for autobiography ['Conditions and Limits of Autobiography,' in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. J. Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 34; and 'De l'autobiographie initiatique au genre littéraire,' *R.H.L.F.*, 75 (1975), pp. 967, 978]; Pascal describes autobiography as an unravelling of one's uniqueness [*Design and Truth in Autobiography* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 50]; Coe states that 'all autobiography is an assertion of uniqueness' [*When the Grass was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 41]; and John Sturrock defines autobiography as 'the story of a singularisation, or of how the autobiographer came to acquire the conviction of uniqueness that has impelled him to write' [*The Language of Autobiography: Studies in the First-Person Singular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 14].

101 *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 12.

102 The notion that selfhood is perceived and constituted in different ways by males and females owes much to the psychoanalytic theory set out by Nancy Chodorow in the seminal essay 'Family Structure and Feminine Personality' [*Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 43-66] and the socio-political theories of Sheila Rowbothom, who relies heavily on Simone de Beauvoir [*Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), esp. ch. 3]. For a discussion of these theories in relation to women's autobiographical writing, see S. Smith, *Poetics*, esp. pp. 12-14; and S. S. Friedman, 'Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice,' in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. S. Benstock (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 34-62. Working empirically, without explicit reference to psychoanalytical theories, Mary Mason identified four apparently paradigmatic autobiographical texts by women, in which self-discovery and self-creation in writing occur via relationship to a more fully rendered Other, either a particular individual, or a collectivity, or a transcendent Being. This strategy of using others in order to write one's own life, she argues, distinguishes women's autobiographies absolutely from those written by men; 'The Other Voice: The Autobiographies of Women Writers,' in

Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical, ed. J. Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 207-35. While Chodorow's theory that women are socialised to see themselves as creatures who are related to others, and Rowbotham's theories that a woman develops dual consciousness (consciousness of her group identity as a woman and consciousness of herself as different from the other members of the group) are helpful in the present context, the extent to which women define themselves in their autobiographical works in terms of their uniqueness and forge their identity through conflict and separation from others should not be underestimated.

103 In the section of the *Journal* recalling the period before her marriage, she lays great emphasis on her unhappiness as a child, on the baffling coldness of her mother towards her (1: 26), and on the cruelty of her grand-mother - all of which serves as a foil for the subsequent presentation of herself as an embodiment of the Rousseauist version of the good mother. In the construction of this, she draws attention to the precocious development of her maternal instinct (1: 23); to her despair when it was feared that she would be unable to have children after her first miscarriage; and to her heroic devotion to the children which she later bore, particularly Aymar. She notes, for instance, that she persisted in feeding Aymar herself, despite the fact that her health remained fragile for a long time after his birth (2: 239-40). One of Mme de La Tour du Pin's principal aims in the memoirs, it should be recalled, was to create for the benefit of this son an image of herself that would counter the impression that she was merely a burden. One of the ways in which she does this, is by portraying herself as the epitome of maternal devotion, thereby placing her son emotionally in her debt.

104 This pattern of assertion and retreat whereby writers counter gestures of defiance and claims to superiority with demonstrations or protestations of humility and balance anecdotes which reveal their strengths with those which reveal their weaknesses has been recognised as a characteristic of women's autobiographical writing, particularly before the twentieth century. It can be found, for example, in the memoirs of the duchesse d'Abrantès who recalls a conversation in which she discussed political assassins and spoke admiringly of Charlotte Corday but adds that she was, at the time, one of the greatest cowards of her sex and, in the following chapter, recounts how a visit from a gang of thieves at her home terrified her (*Mémoires*, 3: 186-87 and 3: ch. 10). Similarly, la reine Hortense denounces as false the public's perception of her as '[une femme] remplie d'énergie, d'esprit et de caractère' (3: 314), but repeatedly depicts herself as just such a woman. In her account of her sons' involvement in the uprisings in Italy in 1831, for instance, she plays down her competence as a military strategist when General Sercognani tells her of his plans, but then records the advice which she offered him and notes with satisfaction: 'Il approuvait mon plan de campagne, à moi'; *Mémoires de la reine Hortense*, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1927), 3: 236-37. Further examples will be found in the following chapters. The reason for such a pattern - whether it reflects a conflict in the writer between her desire to affirm her uniqueness and value and her internalisation of contemporary demands for female self-subordination, or whether it is a deliberate strategy employed by women in order to make their writing acceptable to readers who will judge them according to their conformity to the prevailing notions of female propriety - is difficult to determine and will inevitably vary from woman to woman. For a discussion of this question, see Patricia Meyer Spacks' essay 'Female Rhetorics' in *The Private Self*, ed. S. Benstock, pp. 177-91.

105 In volume one of the manuscript, the significance of this episode is underlined by the fact that it occurs at the start of what the author labels the 'Seconde Partie', a heading which has been omitted from published editions of the *Journal*.

106 The allusion here is not directly to Mme Roland, who recorded in her memoirs her involvement in her husband's work when he was *ministre de l'Intérieur*. Referring to the

period when her father-in-law was Minister of War, Mme de La Tour du Pin stresses her skill as a hostess, but adds: 'D'ailleurs, je ne me mêlais de rien que de faire les honneurs' - the implication being that she did not impinge in any way on the masculine world of ministerial affairs.

107 *Journal*, 2: 348, 369, 375. Although her son and Félicie de La Rochejaquelein were both staunch adherents to the cause of Charles X and the comte de Chambord, Mme de La Tour du Pin reveals little real sympathy for the Bourbons in her *Journal*. Recalling the lack of tact which was exhibited by the duchesse d'Angoulême during her visit to Amiens in 1814, the author even goes as far as to declare 'lorsque, après trente ans, j'en évoque le souvenir, il me semble que tout ce qui est arrivé depuis est justifié' (2: 348). In this respect, therefore, she does not appear to have shaped her account in order to accommodate the opinions of her prospective readers. On the contrary, she seems to have used it in order to give vent to the frustration and disillusionment which is evident in her letters of the 1840s. In addition, Mme de La Tour du Pin, in stark contrast to other royalist memoirists, such as Mme de Rémusat or Mme Vigée-Lebrun, does not dwell on Napoleon's 'crimes' and failures. She says nothing, for example, about the execution of the duc d'Enghien, an episode which was usually highlighted by those who wished to blacken the emperor's reputation; and there is only a brief reference to the disastrous campaign of 1812, which is made from the perspective of 1813 and appears in the context of a claim that confidence in the emperor had not been shattered (2: 333).

108 It was not uncommon for a female memoir-writer to use dress as a form of self-expression or as a way of marking herself out from others. The duchesse d'Abrantès, for example, draws attention to her insistence on wearing white gloves in the presence of the queen of Spain when it was officially forbidden for ladies to do so (*Mémoires*, 8: 36-39). Dress, it should be noted, was one of the few means whereby women of the period could display their personality and signal their individuality. It was also one of the ways in which they could demonstrate their political affiliations. Isabelle Bricard notes that that it was fashionable during the Restoration for royalist women to wear white dresses (sometimes with eighteen pleats at the waist, in reference to Louis XVIII) and green shoes in order to signify that the Empire (the green) had been crushed under foot by the Bourbons (the white); *Saintes ou pouliches: l'éducation des jeunes filles au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1985), p. 204.

Chapter 3

Madame de Chastenay: *Mémoires*

1 *Mémoires inédits de madame la comtesse de Genlis pour servir à l'histoire des dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles*, 8 vols. (Paris, London: Colburn, 1825-26), 8: 52.

2 *Mémoires de madame de Chastenay, 1771-1815*, ed. A. Roserot, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1896-1897). References given parenthetically in the text are taken from this edition of the memoirs, unless otherwise stated.

3 Mme de Chastenay puts particular emphasis on the devastating effects of the measures taken by the Directory after 18 fructidor 1797. 'La banqueroute, ou le remboursement en papier des deux tiers de la dette publique, eut lieu,' she writes. 'Cette mesure nous raya 12 000 livres de rente, d'un trait de plume; jamais, après la ruine récente des assignats, qui nous avait réduits à l'absence totale de revenus, notre fortune ne s'est remise de ce terrible échec' (1: 316). In the manuscript of the 'Mémoires particuliers' (p. 718), Victorine notes that after their return to Burgundy at the end of 1815, '[ses] parents firent aller leur forge avec leurs propres fonds' for the first time in their lives. Subsequent references to the manuscripts are given parenthetically in the text in the form: MH [*Mémoires historiques*]/MP [*Mémoires particuliers*] + page number. These two volumes can be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des

manuscripts, N.A.F. 22891 ('Mémoires historiques') and N.A.F. 22892 ('Mémoires particuliers').

4 Genlis, *Mémoires*, 8: 51; see also 6: 176.

5 G. Lapérouse, *Madame la comtesse Victorine de Chastenay* (n.p., 1855), pp. 10-12.

6 'Moi, je n'ai plus de famille,' she wrote, for example, in a fragment dated 4th February 1835, for with the passing of '[son] Henri', there was no longer anyone from her youth still alive who could recall with her 'les charmes de ces antiques années'. Dijon, Archives départementales de la Côte d'Or, Fonds de Chastenay-Lanty, E378 (11).

7 The Bibliothèque Nationale possesses a manuscript volume of memoir fragments which Mme de Chastenay dictated during her last years, between 1848 and 1854 (Département des manuscrits, N.A.F. 11772).

8 *Blood Sisters: The French Revolution in Women's Memory* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p. 273; on the October Days see pp. 28-29.

9 *Bibliographie critique des Mémoires sur le Consulat et l'Empire, écrits ou traduits en français* (Genève: Droz, 1971), pp. 35-36. Among the historians and biographers who have drawn on the memoirs are Jean Robiquet in *La vie quotidienne au temps de Napoléon* (Paris: Hachette, 1942) and Henry Buisson in *Fouché, duc d'Otrante* (Paris: Editions du Panorama, 1968).

10 This was the subtitle of the lecture given by Lagrange in 1989, which was published by the Association des Amis du Châtillonnais ('Madame de Chastenay, témoin de son temps,' *Les Cahiers du Châtillonnais*, No. 47, 1989) and used by Maurice Chabeuf as the point of departure for his essay 'La Chanoinesse (Victorine de Chastenay, 1771-1855),' *Les Cahiers du Châtillonnais*, No. 81, 1995.

11 *Mémoires de madame de Chastenay, 1771-1815* (Paris: Perrin, 1987), pp. 2, 14, 11.

12 Mme de Chastenay testifies to the power of words during the Revolution in the manuscript of the 'Mémoires historiques', noting both the avidity with which the public read newspapers and the opportunities that journalism offered 'une jeunesse sans moyens d'existence' (pp. 163-64).

13 One indication of this obsession during the Revolution was the dramatic escalation in the number of newspapers; see R. Darnton, quoted by M. Yalom, *Le temps des orages. Aristocrates, bourgeois et paysannes racontent* (Paris: Maren Sell & Cie, 1989), p. 45.

14 Arch. départ. de la Côte d'Or, Fonds de Chastenay-Lanty, E378.bis-E378 (8).

15 21 August 1813; Arch. départ. de la Côte d'Or, Fonds de Chastenay-Lanty, E378 (6).

16 25 January 1814; Arch. départ. de la Côte d'Or, Fonds de Chastenay-Lanty, E378 (7).

17 Arch. départ. de la Côte d'Or, Fonds de Chastenay-Lanty, E378 (4).

18 For a discussion of Erard-Louis-Guy's writings, from which she quotes abundantly, see Suzanne Girod's unpublished thesis, 'Un noble du Châtillonnais, témoin d'une époque troublée. Erard-Louis-Guy comte de Chastenay, seigneur d'Essarois, 1748-1830' (Université de Dijon, 1981).

19 Roserot's decision to slot fragments of a manuscript composed in 1810 and 1816 into a work composed in 1817-1818 means that the temporal markers present in the published text do not follow a logical sequence, in which the earliest dates would appear in the first part of the work and the latest ones in the last part.

20 That the Restoration was the intended focus for the second section of the 'Mémoires historiques' is confirmed by the author in the 'Mémoires particuliers' where she writes that, after returning to Burgundy, she composed 'l'histoire de la double restauration' (MP, p. 741) and that 'la période des cent jours [lui] a fourni le meilleur

morceau de [ses] mémoires historiques sur la restauration' (MP, p. 663).

21 Quoted by S. Girod, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-63.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 161-66.

23 Putting flesh on the dry bones of history was the memoir-writer's primary task, according to the duchesse d'Abrantès. "Mettez des faits et des noms," me répètent quelques personnes, de manière à m'impatiser. [...] il est difficile de faire des Mémoires sans écrire beaucoup de noms et de faits,' she writes. Good memoirs, however, go beyond this: *Le Moniteur* is there 'pour les gens qui veulent savoir que le premier consul a reçu le corps diplomatique à deux heures moins cinq minutes, le 5 floréal an IX; et puis arrivent alors les Mémoires vraiment contemporains pour vous faire connaissance avec les personnages dont parle le *Moniteur*'; *Mémoires de madame la duchesse d'Abrantès, ou souvenirs historiques sur Napoléon, la Révolution, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration*, 18 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-1835), 5: 208-09.

24 'Madame de Krüdener et ce qu'en aurait dit Saint-Evremond,' *Portraits littéraires*, 3 vols. (Paris: Garnier frères, 1862-1864), 3: 307.

25 In the letter to his niece which serves as a preface to his memoirs, Bernis writes: 'Mon dessein, en vous faisant l'histoire de ma vie, est de vous instruire et de me corriger [...] et de puiser dans ma vie passée des instructions utiles pour l'avenir'; *Mémoires et lettres de François-Joachim de Pierre, cardinal de Bernis*, ed. F. Masson, 2 vols. (Paris: Plon et Cie, 1878), 1: cxxii. In the first 'promenade' of the *Réveries du promeneur solitaire*, Rousseau speaks of the pleasure of recalling his life and the pleasure he anticipates in reading his recollections at a later date: '[...] je vivrai decrepit avec moi dans un autre âge, comme je vivrais avec un moins vieux ami' (original spelling); in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1995), 1: 1001.

26 The manuscript of the 'Mémoires particuliers' suggests that Mme de Chastenay felt isolated after her return to Burgundy. Her circumstances appear to have been difficult, and there are hints that she was criticized in some quarters for having 'collaborated' with a non-royalist regime (MP, p. 723).

27 A possible parallel would be Mme de Boigne who claimed that she abandoned her memoirs in a bout of depression after the deaths of her brother and old friend, Pasquier. 'Mon existence est devenue trop terne,' she wrote, 'et je suis trop désintéressée de ce qui se passe dans le monde pour avoir rien à raconter désormais'; *Mémoires de la comtesse de Boigne*, 6th ed., 4 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1907-1908), 4: 443.

28 At several points in the *Vie de Henry Brulard*, Stendhal declares that he will leave others to decide how they will present the work to the public; *Vie de Henry Brulard*, ed. H. Martineau (Paris: Garnier, 1953), pp. 8, 69, 263.

29 Mme de Boigne, *Mémoires*, 1: xxxii.

30 Genlis, *Mémoires*, 1: vi-vii.

31 That the 'Mémoires particuliers' were destined for family and friends would fit in with the contemporary notion that these were the only circumstances in which it was permissible to speak about oneself and one's private life. L'abbé Morellet, for example, begins his memoirs with the observation that his decision to write about his life 'sera peut-être, aux yeux de quelques personnes, un tort et un ridicule. [...] Mais je dirai que cet écrit devant, après moi, tomber entre les mains de ma famille, ce n'est qu'à moi et aux miens que je parle de moi, ce qui est assurément bien loisible'; *Mémoires sur le dix-huitième siècle et la Révolution*, M.R.R.F., 35 (2 vols.), 1: 2.

32 That Mme de Chastenay reread the manuscript of the 'Mémoires particuliers' is evident from the small stylistic changes in her hand-writing which are visible on the manuscript. It is impossible, however, to date these changes. Undated marginal notes show that the work was also read by at least two others: Victorine's sister-in-law Henriette

and 'GL' (probably Gustave Lapérouse).

33 Mme de Boigne, *Mémoires*, 1: 280; 4: 109.

34 The description of History as it was understood in the late eighteenth century that Mme de Chastenay gives in her memoirs reveals her lack of enthusiasm. Speaking of the education given to Louis XVI, she writes: 'il savait de l'histoire ce qu'on apprenait alors, des dates, quelques détails militaires, la suite des rois de France; tous ces faits, mal présentés, soutenus de réflexions communes, formait alors ce qu'on nommait l'histoire' (1: 84).

35 *Mémoires de madame de Motteville, M.R.H.F.*, 2^e série (vols. 36-40), 36: 315-16.

36 *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine, ses contemporains, la cour de Navarre et de la Malmaison*, 3 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1828-1829), 2: 134-37.

37 Frédéric Briot has drawn attention to the memoir's importance as a way for 'outsiders' - those who have been ejected from positions of power or those who are prevented from obtaining such positions (such as women) - to enter history and put their story on record; *Usage du monde, usage de soi. Enquête sur les mémorialistes d'ancien régime* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994), p. 73.

38 Both these observations belong to the 'Mémoires particuliers'.

39 For example, it maintained religious tolerance, confirmed in their rights the purchasers of 'biens nationaux', and permitted those who had been ennobled during the Empire to retain their titles.

40 All subsequent references to 'La Charte' occur in the 'Mémoires historiques'.

41 Mme de Boigne, *Mémoires*, 1: 408.

42 Victorine's presentation of the Charter of 1814 is undeniably simplistic; it is, nevertheless, internally coherent. For details of the Charter's contents and the process of its formulation, as well as a discussion of the difficulties of interpretation to which it gave rise, see P. Rosanvallon, *La Monarchie impossible: les Chartes de 1814 et de 1830* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), Part 1.

43 *The Political Use of History. A Study of Historians in the French Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), chs. 2 and 3.

44 According to Marilyn Yalom, Mme de Chastenay lost her 'ferveur révolutionnaire' after the bloodshed of 5th-6th October 1789 (*Temps des orages*, p. 33; *Blood Sisters*, p. 29). On the contrary, I would argue that she never abandoned her liberal sentiments, that she remained true in her memoirs to what she identifies as the Revolution's 'idée primitive' (1: 156), and that the major turning-point in the Revolution, in her eyes, was the summer of 1792, not the autumn of 1789.

45 Similar scenes of confrontation with the revolutionary authorities, in which women reverse the balance of power by reacting with defiance or in which they manipulate language in order to give them unusual control over the situation, occur in the memoirs of other women, including those of Elisabeth Le Bas (*Souvenirs d'Elisabeth Le Bas*, in M. Yalom, *Temps des orages*, pp. 242-3); and Mme de Bonchamps [*Mémoires de madame la marquise de Bonchamps* (Janzé: Yves Salmon, 1981), p. 89]. Women's use of the memoir in order to reveal retrospectively or demonstrate in the writing present their skill in manipulating language can be traced back at least as far as Marguerite de Valois, who recorded in her memoirs a conversation with her mother in which she gained the upper hand through her careful choice of words. 'Je composay tellement mon visage et mes paroles,' she writes, 'qu'elle ne peust rien congnoistre que ce que je voulois, et que je n'offensoy mon ame ni ma conscience par aucun faulx serment'; *Mémoires et lettres de Marguerite de Valois*, ed. M. F. Guessard, *Société de l'histoire de France* (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1842), p. 151.

46 Erard-Louis-Guy was denounced by Arnoult for a letter he had written in April 1792, in which he advocated 'tolérance et justice'. According to Arnoult, the letter displayed

signs of 'modérantisme' and 'aristocratie'. See S. Girod, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

47 As Michèle Bordeaux points out, the *Code civil* did not allow spinsters to act as guardians, adopt children or form part of a 'conseil de famille'; 'Droits et femmes seules: les pièges de la discrimination,' in *Madame ou mademoiselle? Itinéraires de la solitude féminine: XVIII^e-XX^e siècle*, ed. A. Farge and C. Klapisch-Zuber (Paris: Montalba, 1984), pp. 30-31.

48 *De l'Éducation publique et privée des Français*, quoted by G. Fraisse, *Muse de la raison: la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes* (Aix-en-Provence: Editions Alinéa, 1989), p. 101. The notion that women were destined for maternity by nature and should follow an educational programme which accorded with nature and their destiny remained prevalent in medical and educational works from the time of Rousseau to the mid-nineteenth century; G. Py, *Rousseau et les éducateurs, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 356 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1997), esp. pp. 342-58. Such theory was put into practice when Napoleon established the Maison impériale de la légion d'honneur at Ecoen in 1806-1807. He made clear to Lacépède and to Mme Campan, the *surintendante* of the school, that the education of its female pupils was to be directed towards producing girls who would fulfil 'leur destination dans l'ordre social' by becoming good wives and mothers; I. Bricard, *Saintes ou pouliches: l'éducation des jeunes filles au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1985), pp. 57-63.

49 *Le curé de Tours* (1832), in *La Comédie humaine*, ed. G. Castex et al., 12 vols. (Paris, Gallimard, 1976), 4: 207. All subsequent references are to this edition of the novel. Similarly unflattering portraits of spinsters and of their empty, unfulfilled lives can be found in other Balzacian novels, such as *La Cousine Bette*, *Eugénie Grandet* and *La Vieille fille*.

50 C. Dauphin, 'Histoire d'un stéréotype: la vieille fille,' in *Madame ou Mademoiselle?* pp. 207-34.

51 *Le curé de Tours*, p. 209.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

53 *Mémoires de mademoiselle Avrillion, première femme de chambre de l'impératrice, sur la vie privée de Joséphine, sa famille et sa cour*, ed. M. Dernelle (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986), p. 317.

54 *Histoire morale des femmes* (1847), quoted by K. Wingård, *Les problèmes des couples mariés dans La Comédie humaine d'Honoré de Balzac* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1978), p. 23. Although the examples cited above have been drawn from works of the 1830s and 1840s, they seem to reflect attitudes to spinsterhood that were already prevalent earlier in the century. In her essay on the legal position of women in early nineteenth century France, Michèle Bordeaux points out that the tax system which penalised unmarried males (taxing them at a higher rate than their married counterparts) did not penalise spinsters in this way on the grounds that spinsterhood was not an attractive situation and thus women would not voluntarily embrace it as an alternative to marriage. She also stresses that the spinster who had come of age, although she enjoyed greater rights than a married woman, never became equal to a man in the exercise of her civil rights; Bordeaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-57.

55 *Le curé de Tours*, p. 220.

56 Quoted by G. Fraisse, *Muse*, p. 59. This echoes Rousseau's remarks on the 'femme bel esprit' in Book V of *Emile*: 'Toute fille lettrée restera fille toute sa vie, quand il n'y aura que des hommes sensés sur la terre' (*Oeuvres complètes*, 4: 768).

57 According to Sylvain Maréchal (*Projet de loi...*), female authorship was directly related to infertility ('Il est prouvé que les Femmes-Auteurs sont moins fécondes que les

autres') - a belief also found in medical texts of the period - and 'l'étude des lettres' could be severely debilitating, even fatal (Considérant no. 36). As an illustration of this, he refers to 'la mort précoce de plusieurs jeunes filles que leurs mères avaient condamnées à l'étude des langues et à d'autres sciences tout aussi peu compatibles aux forces et aux goûts naturels d'une jeune personne'. The principal source of Maréchal's anxiety, however, was not that education weakened women's health, but rather that it led to moral depravity: 'une femme qui tient une plume pense être en droit de se permettre plus de choses que toute autre femme qui ne connaît que son aiguille'. That a woman should begin to establish her own rules for living ('se permettre'), rather than passively accept those established for her by (a male-dominated) society, was profoundly unsettling. G. Fraise, *Muse*, pp. 29, 28, 26.

58 Quoted by G. Fraise, *Muse*, p. 97. Achille de Malvaux, in Balzac's unfinished work *La Femme Auteur* (1847/1848?), uses similar terms, mocking the intellectual pretensions of his aunt and declaring that '[une femme] se met dehors de son sexe en devenant un écrivain' (*La Comédie humaine*, edition cited, 12: 612).

59 P. Jimack, 'The Paradox of Sophie and Julie: Contemporary Responses to Rousseau's Ideal Wife and Ideal Mother,' in *Women and Society in Eighteenth Century France*, ed. E. Jacobs et al. (London: Athlone Press, 1979), 158; E. Badinter, *Emilie, Emilie: l'ambition féminine au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), pp. 71-72. On the contents of a girl's 'trousseau de connaissances', see I. Bricard, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-127.

60 Laclos, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. L. Versini (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p. 443. A similar position was taken in the nineteenth century by Monseigneur Dupanloup who wrote in his *Femmes savantes et femmes studieuses* (1867): 'On permet à une femme de lire à condition qu'elle n'amasse que pour enfouir [...] c'est ce qu'on appelle se faire pardonner son savoir' (quoted by I. Bricard, *op. cit.*, p. 94).

61 Quoted by S. Balayé, 'Comment peut-on être Madame de Staël? Une femme dans l'institution littéraire,' *Romantisme*, 77 (1992), p. 19.

62 Recording her activities on behalf of the vicomte Dauvet, for example, Victorine points out that she did not exploit the situation in order to secure a wealthy husband for herself (1: 422).

63 Mme de Chastenay's remarks, however, should not be interpreted as an indictment of the intellectual capacity of her sex in general. A better interpretation would come from reading this passage in the memoirs alongside Virginia Woolf's discussion of the 'creative force of femininity' which, for centuries, fortified men like Dr Johnson and Voltaire; *Room of One's Own* [1929] (London: Penguin, 1949), pp. 85-87.

64 In Mme de Chastenay's case, however, the decision to publish her work anonymously is an ambiguous gesture. It may reflect the desire of a woman who prided herself on her aristocratic origins to distance herself from the world of commerce by preventing her name from entering circulation in conjunction with a product (a book) which could be bought and sold. It may also be that she chose anonymity out of a sense of modesty, desiring to avoid exposing herself to public scrutiny because she believed that 'publicity in women is detestable' and 'toute femme qui se montre se déshonore' (Woolf, *Room of One's Own*, pp. 51-52; Rousseau, *Lettre à d'Alembert* in *Oeuvres complètes*, 5: 76). And yet, although I would not go so far as to argue that Mme de Chastenay opted for anonymity as a gesture of defiance, distancing herself from her family name in what Carla Hesse describes as 'a declaration of independence from the patriarchal signifier' ['Reading Signatures: Female Authorship and Revolutionary Law in France, 1750-1850,' *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 22 (1989), p. 485], it should be noted that she made no effort to deny that she was the author of the works which she had published anonymously. On the contrary, she appears to have encouraged others to identify her as an author, both at the time and subsequently: she presented copies of her

work to Grétry and Napoleon, for example; and reveals, in her memoirs, that criticism and plagiarism of her works annoyed her greatly.

65 At no point in her memoirs does Mme de Chastenay ever depict herself as anything other than a passively adored object when she discusses her relationship with men such as General Eblé (1: 383), M. de Sade (1: 401-02) or Florent Bouguet (MP, p. 218).

66 *Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 35-76; the quotation is taken from p. 58.

67 For a discussion of 'l'état passif' to which women were apparently destined by nature, see Y. Knibiehler, 'Les médecins et la "nature féminine" au temps du *Code civil*,' *Annales: E.S.C.*, 31 (1976), p. 820. On the precepts governing girls' speech, see I. Bricard, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-19. The pleasure that was to be derived from speech is a recurrent theme in women's memoirs. The duchesse de Dino, for example, looking back on her childhood, declared: 'mon plus grand plaisir était, ce qu'il est encore, de causer'; *Souvenirs de la duchesse de Dino*, ed. comtesse Jean de Castellane (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1908), p. 138.

68 That Mme de Chastenay appears to have preferred male company (Turlot, Réal, Carteret, Prony, Fouché...) and relished the possibility of avoiding female visitors, should not be interpreted automatically as a lack of female solidarity. The memoirs also reveal that Victorine formed strong relationships with Alexandrine de Guenichon and her sister-in-law, Henriette; that she had great respect for women of intelligence and courage, such as Mme de La Villirouët and Mme de Lavalette; and that she was quick to defend those whom she believed had been unjustly criticised or ridiculed by the public, such as Mme Tallien, Mme de Talleyrand and the duchesse de Bourbon. Furthermore, it is this side of Mme de Chastenay which is dominant in the unpublished 'Journal' (Dijon, Archives départementales de la Côte d'Or, Fonds de Chastenay-Lanty). She laments the general wretchedness of the female condition: after reading a book on Botany Bay, for instance, she wrote that 'la condition des femmes paraît assez malheureuse, dans ce pays, comme partout' (an VI; E378 bis). She also takes issue with those who deny that women are capable of great artistic and intellectual achievements [10 June 1811; E378 (6)]; and shows compassion for other women, particularly those who had suffered at the hands of men, such as Mme d'Épinay, in whose memoirs she saw '[une] femme faible mais malheureuse, mais pleine d'esprit et de qualités', a victim of the cold and calculating Grimm [15 May 1818; E378 supp. (8)].

69 In spite of the constraints which were placed on married women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the notion that marriage was a form of liberation for women was one to which a substantial number of women subscribed; I. Bricard, *op. cit.*, ch. 5 (esp. pp. 286-88).

70 Rousseau's belief that 'la première et la plus importante qualité des femmes est la douceur' because they have to learn to submit to the will of others (*Oeuvres complètes*, 4: 710) was echoed in other influential works, such as Mme de Genlis' *Adèle et Théodore* (1782), and in the writings of female pedagogues of the early nineteenth century, such as Mme Guizot and Mme Campan (see K. Wingård, *op. cit.*, p. 16).

71 Mme de Boigne, *Mémoires*, 4: 193; see also 1: 75, 224-25.

72 *Opinion d'une femme sur les femmes* (1801), in *Opinions de femmes de la veille au lendemain de la Révolution française*, ed. G. Fraisse (Paris: Côté-femmes éditions, 1989), pp. 131-33.

73 Ed. G. Gengembre and J. Goldzink (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), p. 339. The dangers facing a woman who wrote for publication in this period are set out clearly by Mme Roland. She was never tempted to become an author, she claims, because she recognised that 'une femme qui gagnait ce titre perdait beaucoup plus qu'elle n'avait acquis. Les hommes ne l'aiment point, et son sexe la critique: si ses ouvrages sont

mauvais, on se moque d'elle, et l'on fait bien; s'ils sont bons, on les lui ôte. Si l'on est forcé de reconnaître qu'elle en a produit la meilleure partie, on épluche tellement son caractère, ses moeurs, sa conduite et ses talents, que l'on balance la réputation de son esprit par l'éclat que l'on donne à ses défauts'; *Mémoires de madame Roland*, M.R.R.F., 19 (2 vols.), 1: 195-96.

74 That men feared 'les femmes d'esprit' and regarded them as dangerous rivals who challenged prevailing notions of relations between the sexes is a theme to which Mme de Staël returned in 1814, in the second preface to her *Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes de madame la baronne de Staël*, 17 vols. (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1820), 1: 8-9. It is also a theme in the works of other women, such as Fanny Raoul (*Opinion*, pp. 148-50, 154-56).

75 V. Woolf, *Room of One's Own*, p. 37.

76 *Épître aux femmes* (1797), in *Opinions de femmes*, p. 67.

77 *The Land of Lost Content: Children and Childhood in Nineteenth Century French Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 178.

78 I. Bricard, *op. cit.*, p. 106. The suitability of botany as an interest for women was remarked upon by Georgette Ducrest in her memoirs. Botany, she wrote, 'est une science qui sied particulièrement aux femmes, puisqu'elle leur fait trouver un charme extrême dans l'habitation de la campagne, et les éloigne ainsi du monde où tant de dangers les entourent' (*Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine*, 2: 346-47).

79 Maths and astronomy, as the duchesse de Dino observed, are 'des études si inutiles dans la vie quand on ne les continue pas, et si fatigantes pour les autres, dans une femme, quand on les pousse trop loin' (*Souvenirs*, p. 136). As well as recording Mme de Chastenay's passion for science, the memoirs also testify to the difficulties which women faced in seeking to pursue scientific studies. She notes, for example, that her mother opposed her visits to the Observatory in the evenings because 'le quartier [était] trop isolé' (2: 181); and that she had to make inquiries about the content of Cuvier's lectures on natural history at the Collège de France before attending in order to ensure that they did not touch on the indelicate subject of human anatomy (2: 189). She also reveals that she had to rely on personal contacts (which were usually established through male intermediaries), rather than formal institutions, in order to acquire instruction in astronomy (from Arago), natural history (from Desfontaines) and chemistry (from Chevreul). Such experiences were typical; see, L. Gardiner, 'Women in Science,' *French Women in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. S. I. Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 181-93.

80 Mme de Chastenay recalls visiting Sotin at the time when Boethius' *De consolatione* 'était [...] le compagnon de [ses] courses' (1: 331) and waiting to see Fouché, 'suivant [son] habitude, un livre à la main' (2: 48). Even among writers who place great emphasis on their intellectual formation (such as Mme Roland, the duchesse de Dino or the English autobiographer Harriet Martineau), Victorine is unusual in that she makes no reference at all to needlework, an occupation which is usually mentioned in order to testify to the essential femininity of the writer and prevent her readers from regarding her with contempt as a woman who had 'quit her sex'.

81 Similarly, in the last pages of the manuscript, Mme de Chastenay laments the unfairness of the reception given to her history of the Normans when it appeared in 1816. 'Je ne crois pas que mon livre a bien été apprécié,' she writes. Only Féletz, in the *Journal des Débats*, gave the work a favourable review. She continues: 'Une femme dans la *Gazette de France* m'a dit des injures, en se parant de mes phrases, copiées avec soin pour composer avec une sorte d'art un extrait de cette histoire normande. Le reste s'est tu, à ce que je crois' (MP, p. 735). The depth of her disappointment at this reception is thrown into sharp relief when the critics' lack of interest is set against

Victorine's earlier remark that the incentive to write this history was 'l'idée d'un succès de vogue' (2: 183-84).

82 There is nothing to compare with the following passage, in which Martineau declares: '[...] through it all, I have ever been thankful to be alone. My strong will, combined with anxiety of conscience, makes me fit only to live alone; and my taste and liking are for living alone. The older I have grown, the more serious and irremediable have seemed to me the disadvantages of married life, as it exists among us at this time [...]'; *Autobiography*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1877), 1: 133. A more appropriate parallel for the unresolved tensions of Mme de Chastenay's memoirs can be found in the letters of the eighteenth century spinster 'Henriette', which date from 1764-1765. Dissatisfied with the limited options open to the unmarried women, she writes to consult Rousseau on the appropriateness of turning to study and writing in order to fill the void in her life. Stressing that she is not a 'femme savante', she lays out at great length the importance of intellectual pursuits for her mental and physical well-being. Like the image of herself which Mme de Chastenay projects in her memoirs, that projected by 'Henriette' in her letters is unstable and full of contradictions, as her letters oscillate between attachment to convention (the notion of woman as carer, as a creature who lives to serve others) and assertion of her right to ignore the rules set down by a society in which she feels she has no place. In her letter of 26th March 1764, for instance, she writes: 'la société m'ayant annulée pour elle, et me rendant un hors d'oeuvre qui ne rime et ne cadre à rien, pourquoi m'obstinerai-je à cadrer à quelque chose? Pourquoi ne l'annulerai-je pas aussi à mon égard, au moins quand à ses jugements sur moi? Elle n'a rien à faire à mon bonheur, pourquoi me rendrai-je esclave de ses opinions?' *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. R. A. Leigh, 51 vols. (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1965-1995), 19: 247. For a discussion of the letters which passed between Rousseau and 'Henriette' and the light which they shed on the position of the spinster in eighteenth century French society, see M. Trouille, 'The Failings of Rousseau's Ideals of Domesticity and Sensibility,' *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 24 (1991), pp. 451-83.

Chapter 4

Madame Vigée-Lebrun: *Souvenirs*

- 1 J. Baillio [*Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun, 1755-1842*, (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1982), p. 15] and B. W. Jasinski [*Correspondance générale de madame de Staël*, (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993), 6: 330-31, n. 1] show that Vigée-Lebrun was in Switzerland in 1807 and 1808, not in 1808 and 1809, as was stated by earlier biographers and by Inès de Kertanguy in *Madame Vigée-Lebrun* (Paris: Perrin, 1994). It should be noted that in ascribing the artist's visits to 1808 and 1809, biographers are following the dates given in the *Souvenirs* themselves.
- 2 *Causeries sur les artistes de mon temps* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1885), pp. 99-100.
- 3 H. Bouchot, 'Une artiste française pendant l'émigration: Mme Vigée-Lebrun,' *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, III (jan.-juin 1898), p. 51.
- 4 P. de Nolhac, *Madame Vigée-Lebrun, peintre de la Reine Marie-Antoinette, 1755-1842* (Paris: Goupil et Cie, 1908), p. 2.
- 5 A. Blum, *Madame Vigée-Lebrun, peintre des grandes dames du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Edition d'Art, 1914), p. 6.
- 6 L. Hautecoeur, *Madame Vigée-Lebrun: étude critique* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, n.d.), pp. 6, 36, 40-47, 62.
- 7 W. H. Helm, *Vigée-Lebrun: Her Life, Works and Friendships* (London: Hutchinson, 1908), pp. 106, 105.

8 J. Baillio, *Vigée Lebrun*, p. 6. G. Greer describes Vigée-Lebrun as 'a serious and committed painter' (p. 271), but states that the *Souvenirs* are an unreliable source of information and give a distorted view of both events and Vigée-Lebrun's character [*The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and their Work* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1979)]. Inès de Kertanguy's biography of Vigée-Lebrun, which relies heavily on the *Souvenirs*, contains numerous elementary errors (including the date of the artist's death) and fails completely to penetrate beneath the surface of the text.

9 J. O. Schaefer, 'The *Souvenirs* of Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun: The Self-Imaging of the Woman and the Artist,' *The International Journal of Women's Studies*, 4 (1981), pp. 35-49; P. R. Radisich, 'Que peut définir les femmes? Vigée-Lebrun's Portraits of an Artist,' *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 25 (Summer 1992), pp. 441-67; M. D. Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Sheriff offers an insightful analysis of certain sections of the *Souvenirs*, but her primary interest is in Vigée-Lebrun the artist as a case study of the relationship between gender, authority and artistic identity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, not in Vigée-Lebrun the woman artist who wrote memoirs. She does not concern herself therefore with the question of genre, nor with the question of their actual authorship, accepting them as 'the authorised version of [Vigée-Lebrun's] life, the one she chose and recognised' (p. 8).

10 All quotations cited parenthetically are taken from E. Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs*, ed. C. Herrmann, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Editions des femmes, 1986).

11 Among those omitted from the list are the portraits of the royal children which were exhibited in the Salon of 1785, the ambassadors of Tipoo Saïb, the children of the Neapolitan royal family (1: 217), Schouvaloff (1: 37, n. 1) and princess Dolgorouki (1: 345, n. 1).

12 The annotated copy of the *Souvenirs* has the classification reference 8^oD1201. These changes are followed in all but a few cases. Among the Tripier-Lefranc papers in the Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie there are also several pages - covering the first eight letters to Princess Kourakine - headed 'Souvenirs de Mme Vigée-Lebrun: Recherches à faire' (Carton 51, Dossier II, 28370). The material sought is primarily biographical details and the work appears to have been undertaken in 1868/69 with a view to a new edition of the work.

13 A. Molinier, 'A propos des *Souvenirs* de Mme Vigée-Lebrun,' *L'Art*, LXIV (1905), p. 131.

14 L. Hauteceur (*op. cit.*, p. 123), and W. H. Helm (*op. cit.*, p. 182), for example, maintained that the *Souvenirs* were essentially - if not entirely - the work of others who had drawn on notes of Vigée-Lebrun's conversation.

15 I have been unable to consult the manuscript in Rochester, which would undoubtedly shed more light on Mme Vigée-Lebrun's style and composing methods.

16 For example, the manuscript relates how the comte de Brie attempted to seduce her with a gift of 19 000 livres in 'titres de rente'. See A. Molinier, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 133-35.

18 In the draft of a letter which is preserved along with the manuscript in Rochester, Vigée-Lebrun wrote to Aimé Martin: 'j'ai commencé ce que vous m'aviez tant recommandé depuis plusieurs années'; quoted by J. Baillio, *Vigée Lebrun*, p. 129.

19 'Madame Vigée Lebrun, l'illustre peintre, recevait quelques débris de la société du temps de Louis XVI, entre autres le comte de Sabran, auxquels se joignaient, Gros, Desaugiers, Charles Brifaut, et aussi des femmes, parmi lesquelles se [distinguaient] la baronne de Bawr [...]'. Jal, however, goes on to say that he did not have first-hand knowledge of the artist's salon; A. Jal, *Souvenirs d'un homme de lettres* (Paris: Léon

- Techener, 1877), pp. 525-26. The familiarity which existed between the artist and these writers is indicated by letters referring to informal gatherings to which they were invited.
- 20 The autobiographical pact rests on the identity of name between the author mentioned on the cover of the work, the narrator and a character in the work; *Le pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975), esp. pp. 23-26.
- 21 On Bordereau, see M. Yalom, *Blood Sisters: The French Revolution in Women's Memory* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p. 198.
- 22 *Souvenirs d'une actrice*, ed. P. Ginisty (Paris: Charles Schmid, n.d.), p. 4.
- 23 *Mémoires inédits de mademoiselle George*, ed. P.-A. Chéramy (Paris: Plon, 1908).
- 24 For a reassessment of Balzac's part in the composition of the duchess's memoirs, see H. Rousseau, 'Quelques précisions sur la duchesse d'Abrantès et Balzac,' *L'Année balzacienne* (1968), pp. 47-58. A more traditional description of Balzac's contribution is given by J. Bertaut, 'Balzac et la duchesse d'Abrantès,' *Revue de Paris* (jan., 1949), pp. 134-35.
- 25 *Mémoires de madame la marquise de Bonchamps* (Janzé: Yves Salmon, 1981), pp. 17-18.
- 26 *Mémoires de madame la marquise de La Rochejaquelein*, 6th ed. (Paris: Dentu, 1848), pp. 1-11.
- 27 For discussion of the piece entitled 'Enoncé de différents bruits importuns que j'ai eu à supporter jusqu'à ce moment' see below, n. 116. Letters by Vigée-Lebrun are preserved in the Archives Nationales ('Dossier d'émigrée de madame Vigée-Lebrun', F⁷56519) and in the Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie (Papiers Tripier-Lefranc, Carton 51, Dossier I and II; and Carton 52, Dossier II).
- 28 Quoted by J. Baillio, *Vigée Lebrun*, p. 130. The original spelling is used in all quotations from this letter.
- 29 26th February 1842; Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie, Papiers Tripier-Lefranc, Carton 51, Dossier I, 27495.
- 30 *Ibid.* Although the exact extent of her fortune is unknown, Hauteceur estimated it to be at least 250 000 francs, to which should be added her house at Louveciennes (worth 60 000 francs), furniture, paintings, jewellery, etc. (*op. cit.*, pp. 123-24).
- 31 In her will of 1829, Vigée-Lebrun wrote that she was leaving to the Musée royal her portrait of herself holding her daughter, along with her portraits of Paësiello and Hubert Robert; to the Académie de Rouen, her portrait of Mme Catalini; and to the Académie de Vaucluse, her portrait of Mme Grassini 'en buste'. In her will of 29th January 1842, which favoured Eugénie Tripier-Lefranc, the latter was left six paintings 'à son choix', but was to promise to donate these particular works to the Musée de Paris (Papiers Tripier-Lefranc, Carton 52, Dossier II, Liasse 5). Letters of August and September 1837, indicate that the artist, through her nieces, was attempting to track down 'le grand tableau de la reine'. Later that September, the painting, which had been sent to the Gobelins, was returned to Versailles. J. Baillio, 'Le dossier d'une oeuvre d'actualité politique: *Marie-Antoinette et ses enfants* par Mme Vigée Lebrun,' *L'Oeil*, 310 (1981), p. 59.
- 32 *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1995), 1: 1001. In borrowing from Rousseau in this way, according to Mary Sheriff, Vigée-Lebrun was putting herself 'under the sign of *l'ami Jean-Jacques*'. Since the *Souvenirs* present her as the sort of woman Rousseau criticized, Sheriff explains, Vigée-Lebrun's choice may now seem to be ironic and 'it is not clear that she would have recognised [...] the deeply misogynist streak in Rousseau's thinking' (*op. cit.*, p. 8). I will argue throughout this chapter that Vigée-Lebrun's attitude towards Rousseau was ambivalent: she took from him what suited her and challenged (obliquely but effectively) what did not. Sheriff's caution here is somewhat surprising,

given that the rest of her book emphasizes both the strength of Rousseau's influence in shaping the political and medical discourse of the period, and Vigée-Lebrun's efforts to call into question the ideological basis of this discourse.

33 During his friend's last illness, according to Vigée-Lebrun, the comte d'Artois was a paragon of devotion, and after her death was inconsolable (2: 136).

34 *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine, ses contemporains, la cour de Navarre et de la Malmaison*, 3 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1828-29), 3: 9-10.

35 J. Gigoux, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

36 Quoted by J. Baillio, *Vigée Lebrun*, p. 130.

37 *Vie de Henry Brulard*, ed. H. Martineau (Paris: Garnier, 1953), p. 11.

38 *Mémoires de Mme Roland, M.R.R.F.*, 19 (2 vols.), 1: 217.

39 It is not clear whether the decision to publish the first part of the *Souvenirs* as a series of letters was taken by the artist herself or by those who helped her to prepare the work for publication. The manuscript 'cahiers' in Rochester are not in epistolary form.

40 *Mémoires du marquis d'Argenson, M.R.R.F.*, 1: 413-14.

41 V. Sanders, *The Private Lives of Victorian Women* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), pp. 13-14; A. R. Larsen, 'Un honneste passetemps: Strategies of Legitimation in French Renaissance Women's Prefaces,' *L'Esprit créateur*, XXX (hiver 1990), pp. 11-22 (esp. pp. 12, 17-18).

42 *Mémoires de madame de Rémusat, 1802-1808*, 8th ed. 3 vols. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1880), 1: 76.

43 *Souvenirs de Mme de Caylus, M.R.H.F.*, 2^e série, 66: 136. Similarly, the baronne d'Oberkirch, in a work written about the beginning of the Revolution, declared: 'Les pages qu'on va lire ne sont pas des mémoires, ce sont plutôt des souvenirs; je n'eus jamais la prétention d'être un bel esprit ni d'occuper la renommée' [quoted by F. Briot, *Usage du monde, usage de soi. Enquête sur les mémorialistes d'ancien régime* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994), p. 29]; and Louise Fusil wrote in the 1840s: 'Ce ne sont point des Mémoires que je veux publier, mais seulement des Souvenirs écrits à différentes époques' (*Souvenirs*, p. 75).

44 Drawing on l'abbé Gély's memoir on the subject in order to define 'l'urbanité', Sainte-Beuve provided the following summary: 'il y a un fonds de joie et d'engouement dans toute urbanité, il y a du sourire. [...] facilité, discrétion, finesse, ne pas trop appuyer, ne rien pousser à bout, ce sont là certes des conditions de l'urbanité, mais tout cela n'est rien sans un certain esprit de joie et de bonté qui anime l'ensemble: c'est proprement un charme, a dit La Fontaine. 'Madame de Caylus et de ce qu'on appelle urbanité' (28 octobre 1850), *Causeries du lundi*, 15 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1852-1862), 3: 55, 57.

45 *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse, Oeuvres complètes*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1995), 2: 404 (IV, Letter 1). Subsequent references are to this edition, which is hereafter cited as *NH*.

46 *Emile, Oeuvres complètes*, 4: 706, 713-14; *NH*, p. 545 (V, Letter 2); *NH*, pp. 265-68 (II, Letter 21).

47 'On eut grand soin de répandre que cette chambre était un salon immense orné de lambris dorés et des meubles les plus précieux,' recorded Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun in the work which he published in defence of his wife in 1793 [*Précis historique de la vie de la citoyenne Lebrun, peintre, par le citoyen J. B. P. Lebrun* (Paris: chez le citoyen Lebrun, 1793), pp. 10-11]. Among the works in which such rumours of extravagance circulated was the fictitious correspondence between Elisabeth and Calonne which appeared in the spring of 1789. According to these 'letters', the artist burnt rosewood in her fireplace, lit her candles with bank notes and seduced the former Finance Minister on a black satin sofa; *Lettre de Madame Le Brun à M. de Calonne* and *Réponse de M. de Calonne à la*

dernière lettre de Madame Le Brun, quoted by J. Baillio, *Vigée Lebrun*, pp. 132-33.

48 When a carriage and six horses were put at her disposal to take her from Versailles to Paris, she claims to have been amused to see the respect that was paid to 'six chevaux et au piqueur qui courait devant', and to have been quite content to settle for a simple 'fiacre' (1: 79). This detail may have been inserted as a direct reply to a story in the *Correspondance secrète inédite sur Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, la cour et la ville, de 1777 à 1792*, according to which one of Calonne's gifts to the artist was a coach and horses. Other alleged gifts included pistachio nuts wrapped in banknotes; a gold box encrusted with diamonds and containing coins wrapped in three hundred franc notes; and the estate of Moulin-Joli. Attempts to quash these rumours were unsuccessful. The belief that she had been given Moulin-Joli, for example, persisted in spite of the publication of a formal denial by the artist. The gifts and the *Correspondance secrète* are discussed by W. H. Helm (*op. cit.*, pp. 68-69) and I. de Kertanguy (*op. cit.*, pp. 111-12). Mme Vigée-Lebrun's letter 'Aux Auteurs du *Journal de Paris*' (dated 20th August 1786), is preserved among the Tripier-Lefranc papers (Carton 51, Dossier II, 28316). Her 'indifférence pour la fortune' (1: 93) is a recurrent theme: she notes that she once sketched on a bill of exchange (1: 187), left banknotes lying around in her studio in Saint-Petersburg (1: 337) and refused to accept the offer of a large sum for making a few minor adjustments to a portrait of Beaujon (2: 238-39). Significantly, these episodes are also evidence of substantial wealth and of the high esteem in which she was held as an artist.

49 *NH*, p. 697 (VI, Letter 8).

50 *NH*, p. 466 (IV, Letter 10).

51 *Emile* (edition cited), p. 751.

52 *NH*, pp. 274-78 (II, Letter 21).

53 *Emile*, p. 745.

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 256-59.

55 See, for example, Y. Knibiehler, 'Les médecins et la "nature féminine" au temps du Code civil,' *Annales E.S.C.*, 31, (1976), pp. 824-45.

56 On the importance given to the family in late eighteenth century paintings and the new emphasis that was placed on motherhood as a source of female contentment, see C. Duncan, 'Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art,' *Art Bulletin*, 55 (1973), pp. 570-83.

57 M. Legates, 'The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth Century Thought,' *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 10 (1976), pp. 21-39.

58 'The Fate of French Feminism: Boudier de Villemert's *Ami des Femmes*,' *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 14, (1980), pp. 37-55. Williams suggests that Boudier's *Ami*, a text which historians have tended to neglect but which went through numerous editions between 1758 and 1791, probably played a greater role in shaping men's attitudes towards women, and women's conception of themselves, than has been acknowledged. Although Boudier encouraged women to improve their minds and argued that an educated woman was an asset to society, not a danger; like his contemporary Rousseau, he nevertheless preached that a woman's natural role - and her finest - was as a wife and mother: 'Femmes, connaissez mieux la source de vos plaisirs et le fondement de votre gloire. Vous êtes mères et maîtresses de famille ou destinées à l'être; c'est là votre empire. [...] La plus noble occupation d'une mère est de former de bonne heure le coeur et l'esprit de ses enfants [...]'; quoted by Williams, p. 53.

59 *NH*, p. 257 (II, Letter 18).

60 *Emile*, pp. 702-03. See also: pp. 698, 780.

61 *De la littérature*, ed. G. Gengembre and J. Goldzink (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), p.

340. In her *Souvenirs des deux Restaurations*, the duchesse de Maillé, too, noted the existence of a double standard which worked to the disadvantage of women. For a man, she wrote, 's'il a de grands défauts ou de grandes erreurs, il suffit pour être pardonné que ses torts soient compensés par une seule belle qualité qui puisse le rendre utile à ses semblables; chez une femme, au contraire, les défauts de caractère ne peuvent être excusés par rien. L'excès du bien même est un tort ou une disgrâce'; Paris: Perrin, 1984, p. 113.

62 See J. Baillio, 'Quelques peintures réattribuées à Vigée Le Brun,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 99 (janvier 1982), pp. 14-15.

63 L. H. Peterson, 'Female Autobiographer, Narrative Duplicity,' *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 23 (Fall 1990), pp. 165-76.

64 Lebrun, in his *Précis*, states that all contact between Calonne and his wife ceased once the minister's portrait was finished (pp. 12-13); and Mme Vigée-Lebrun herself claimed that she scarcely knew Calonne (*Souvenirs*, I, 94). The existence of a letter from Calonne to the painter dated 1st March 1789, however, reveals that such assertions are inaccurate (Papiers Tripier-Lefranc, Carton 51, Dossier I, 27490-27491). In this, he calls her his 'cher petit confrère', refers to the 'sentiments purs et honnêtes qui ont formés notre amitié' and offers reassurance: 'il faut laisser dire ceux qui n'ont de ressource que de mal dire, et continuer d'être ce qu'on a été, et se reposer sur la certitude de n'avoir pas de reproche à se faire'. Most of this letter, however, concerns the artist's husband in his professional capacity as connoisseur and art dealer.

65 There is little doubt about the accuracy of Mme Vigée-Lebrun's description of her husband as a philanderer and a wastrel. According to Eugénie Tripier-Lefranc, the sensuality of her uncle was visible in his features; and she goes on to say that he died in poverty because he dissipated his earnings providing for his mistresses (Papiers Tripier-Lefranc, Carton 51, Dossier II, 27853-27855). The papers relating to the succession of Lebrun confirm that he died heavily in debt (Carton 51, Dossier I, 27474-27483). In a letter of 29th October 1842, Mme de Joinville described him as 'un mari dissipateur' (Carton 51, Dossier I, 27509); and an undated paper shows that at some point before the Revolution, Mme Vigée-Lebrun considered requesting 'la séparation de biens' on the grounds that her husband's debts put her in danger of being 'réduite à la dernière misère' (Carton 51, Dossier I, 27247). In an article on Lebrun, Gilberte Emile-Mâle suggests that his notorious debts and fears that he could not be trusted in financial matters help to explain why his ambitions were frequently frustrated; 'Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun (1748-1813): son rôle dans l'histoire de la restauration des tableaux du Louvre,' *Mémoires publiés par la Fédération des Sociétés historiques et archéologiques de Paris et de l'Ile de France*, 8 (1956), pp. 371-417.

66 Reproaching his ingratitude after she had tried to sell some paintings for him in Russia, she wrote: '[...] vous m'assassiné de propos dont vous devriez rougir car enfin je suis bien la maîtresse de faire ce que j'ai gagné par tant de peine tout ce que je voudrais depuis plus de 12 années, vous ne m'avez donné que mille ecus que vous me reprochez encor. Je vous avois tout laissé, il m'a fallu travailler comme un forçat pour entretenir moi ma fille faire son éducation. [...] Si j'avois été malade vous m'auriez laissé mourir de faim; car vous avez au lieu économisé entretenue des filles qui vous trompoit, vous avez joué et perdu énormément [...]'. Papiers Tripier-Lefranc, Carton 52, Dossier II, Liasse I, 28643-28650; quoted by J. Baillio, *Vigée Lebrun*, pp. 137-38 (original spelling and emphasis).

67 This phrase is applied to Vigée-Lebrun in a letter signed 'l'abbé de Géraldi[?] ancien secrétaire de M^r de Calonne' which was written soon after the publication of the *Souvenirs*; Papiers Tripier-Lefranc, Carton 51, Dossier I, 27511-27512.

68 Papiers Tripier-Lefranc, Carton 51, Dossier I.

- 69 Happiness for these women is found in moments when nothing comes between them and their husbands. For Mme de La Tour du Pin, it is the time at Forges, in America and at le Bouilh after the family's return from emigration; for Mme de Bonchamps, it is the two months spent at the château de la Baronnière after her marriage; for Mme Le Bas, it is the periods when Philippe is not serving in the army; and for Mme de La Rochejaquelein, the period before the uprising in the Vendée.
- 70 *Mémoires de madame de Bonchamps*, pp. 66, 71.
- 71 Rochejaquelein, *Mémoires*, p. 489.
- 72 *Mémoires de madame la duchesse d'Abrantès, ou souvenirs historiques sur Napoléon, la Révolution, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration*, 18 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-35), 9: 319
- 73 *Souvenirs d'Elisabeth Le Bas*, reprinted in M. Yalom, *Le temps des orages. Aristocrates, bourgeoises et paysannes racontent* (Paris: Maren Sell & Cie, 1989), pp. 242, 244.
- 74 *Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau*, in *Oeuvres complètes de madame la baronne de Staël*, 17 vols. (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1820), 1: 5-10.
- 75 'De l'amour dans le mariage,' *Oeuvres complètes*, 11: 383.
- 76 *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 99.
- 77 The verses by d'Agincourt which were attached to the engraving of this work reinforce the impression that Vigée-Lebrun regarded it as a symbol of the unification of artistic creation and motherhood: 'Viens ma fille, viens cher enfant, viens dans mes bras, offrons l'image la plus pure/Que jamais mon art bien faisant ait su montrer à la Nature' (Papiers Tripier-Lefranc, Carton 51, Dossier II, 28075).
- 78 *Old Mistresses*, p. 96.
- 79 P. R. Radisich, *op. cit.*, pp. 454-62.
- 80 E. Jelinek, 'Women's Autobiography and the Male Tradition,' in *Women's Autobiography*, ed. E. Jelinek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 7-8; V. Sanders, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11; H. Blodgett, *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen's Private Diaries* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1988), p. 32; J. Marcus, 'Invincible Mediocrity: the Private Selves of Public Women,' in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. S. Benstock (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 122; P. M. Spacks, 'Selves in Hiding,' in *Women's Autobiography*, ed. E. Jelinek, pp. 113-14.
- 81 A. Molinier, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-35.
- 82 Quoted by K. Waliszewski, *Autour d'un trône: Catherine II de Russie, ses collaborateurs, ses amis, ses favoris*, 10th ed. (Paris: Plon, 1913), p. 263.
- 83 On Golovine, see W. Helm, *op. cit.*, p. 130. Rostopchine's remarks are quoted by L. Hauteceur, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
- 84 Quoted by J. Baillio, 'Le dossier d'une oeuvre d'actualité politique: Marie-Antoinette et ses enfants par Mme Vigée Lebrun,' *L'Oeil*, 308 (1981), p. 74, n. 11. It should be noted, however, that the *Correspondance secrète* is not an entirely reliable source.
- 85 In *The Obstacle Race*, Greer contests Jean Cailleux's assertion in the article 'Royal Portraits of Madame Vigée-Lebrun and Madame Labille-Guiard' in the *Burlington Magazine* [22 (March 1969), supp., v] that the two women hated each other. According to Greer, 'the opposition did not so much declare itself as find itself declared and provoked by others' (p. 98). While she may be right in saying that there is no reliable evidence to suggest that Labille-Guiard detested Vigée-Lebrun (p. 99), there is little to suggest that their relationship was amicable.
- 86 A.-M. Passez, *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, 1749-1803: biographie et catalogue*

raisonné de son oeuvre (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1973), p. 31. Passez notes that there is nothing to confirm the official nature of this second title.

87 In August 1793, Labille-Guiard was ordered by the revolutionary authorities to hand over the still incomplete painting and all sketches relating to it so that they could be destroyed; *ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

88 *A Room of One's Own* [1929] (London: Penguin, 1945), p. 65.

89 *Emile*, p. 707.

90 These are the words used by Mme Necker de Saussure in *L'Education progressive ou Etude du cours de la vie*; quoted by C. Yeldham, *Women Artists in Nineteenth Century France and England*, 2 vols. (New York, London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1984), 1: 41.

91 On the quality of art instruction for women, see C. Yeldham, esp. 1: 40-62; and I. Bricard, *Saintes ou pouliches: l'éducation des jeunes filles au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1985), pp. 107-16.

92 Quoted by C. Yeldham, *op. cit.*, 1: 42.

93 *Emile*, p. 737. Rousseau was not alone in regarding the phrase 'woman history painter' as an oxymoron. 'Dès qu'une femme de goût s'échappe au pays de l'histoire,' declared the author of *Le Frondeur au Salon* in 1785, for example, 'on s'aperçoit que la carte lui manque' (quoted by P. de Nolhac, *op. cit.*, p. 57). The belief that women were constitutionally incapable of producing history paintings was prevalent in both the pre- and post-revolutionary period (M. D. Sheriff, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-97; C. Yeldham, *op. cit.*, esp. 1: 174-210). It was thus an audacious move for Vigée-Lebrun to seek recognition as a history painter. Throughout her career, she produced allegorical and religious works (her reception piece for the Académie royale, for example, was an allegorical work in oils: *La Paix ramenant l'Abondance*); and several of her portraits go beyond the bounds of portraiture, including her *Sibylle*, her portrait of Mme de Staël (Sheriff, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-61) and that of *Marie-Antoinette avec ses enfants* [J. Baillio, 'Le Dossier d'une oeuvre d'actualité politique,' *L'Oeil*, 308 (1981), pp. 34-41, 74-75; 310 (1981), pp. 52-61, 90-91].

94 *Ibid.*, p. 768.

95 Such rumours also circulated, for example, about Labille-Guiard and François-André Vincent, Marguerite Gérard and Fragonard, Constance Mayer and Prudhon, and Angélique Mongez and David. See G. Greer, *op. cit.*, p. 100 and C. Yeldham, *op. cit.*, pp. 177, 188.

96 The 'procès-verbal' of the Académie for the session of 31st March 1783, quoted by P. de Nolhac, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39. Given the role that he is frequently said to have played in the composition of the *Souvenirs*, it is interesting to compare the account of the artist's admission which they contain with that given by Justin Tripiier Lefranc in his 1828 biography of Mme Vigée-Lebrun. The latter work does not obscure the part played by the queen; it does, however, give the misleading impression that entry into the Académie was unprecedented for a woman: 'il fallait qu'un honneur, qui jusqu'alors n'avait point été décerné, devînt son partage, et que des portes, que ne devaient jamais s'ouvrir à son sexe, s'ouvrissent devant elle [...]'. At the bidding of Marie-Antoinette, the king, as a conscientious protector of the arts, 'voulut, par une ordonnance, ouvrir à quelques femmes célèbres ces portes de l'Académie qui jusqu'alors leur avaient été injustement fermées. L'ordonnance du roi parut, et Mme Lebrun fut nommée académicienne'; 'Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Mme Lebrun,' in *Le Journal-Dictionnaire de biographie moderne*, pp. 181-82.

97 Quoted by A.-M. Passez, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

98 *Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 20.

- 99 The influence of a wide range of artists has been recognised in Vigée-Lebrun's works, sometimes taking the form of visual quotations. These include Rubens, Raphael, Chardin, Ribera, Orazio Gentileschi, Rosalba Carriera, Batoni, and Nattier. See J. Baillio, *Vigée Lebrun*, passim; and P. Rosenberg, 'A Drawing by Madame Vigée-Lebrun,' *Burlington Magazine*, 123 (Dec. 1981), pp. 739-41.
- 100 The anecdote about the autodidact who acknowledged only Nature as a model can be traced back to the story of Lysippus as told by Pliny the Elder and Duris of Samos; see E. Kris and O. Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* [1934] (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 14-16. According to Vasari, in the sixteenth century, art consists first and foremost in the imitation of nature, and then in the imitation of the most accomplished artists.
- 101 Kris and Kurz, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.
- 102 'The Self-Imaging of the Woman and the Artist,' pp. 41-42. Other incidents which recall the lives of venerable male artists also appear in a feminised form in the *Souvenirs*. For example, Baldinucci's story about 'the Bernini modification' - the sculptor's parting of Louis XIV's hair that set a new fashion at the French court - appears in Vigée-Lebrun's memoirs with the author, the duchesse de Grammont-Caderousse and Marie-Antoinette in the title roles (1: 56-57).
- 103 *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists. A Documentary History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), p. 293.
- 104 *Ibid.*, p. 294.
- 105 *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56; Kris and Kurz, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
- 106 There is a clear analogy between this passage in the *Souvenirs* and Voltaire's accounts (there are six versions) of Mme du Châtelet giving birth to her daughter while absorbed in her translation of Newton from Latin into French. On 4th September 1749, he wrote to Mme de Staal: 'Elle était à son secrétaire à deux heures après minuit, selon sa louable coutume. Elle dit en griffonnant du Newton: Mais je sens quelque chose. Ce quelque chose était une petite fille [...]. On la reçut dans une serviette; on la déposa sur un grand in quarto, et on fit coucher la mère pour la forme, et pour la forme aussi elle ne vous écrit point'. Quoted by E. Badinter, *Emilie, Emilie: l'ambition féminine au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), pp. 163-64. In alluding to Mme du Châtelet, Vigée-Lebrun was tying herself to another woman who had ventured successfully into traditionally male territory and shown that reproduction and intellectual activity were not incompatible. See M. D. Sheriff, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-43.
- 107 *The Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1818); quoted by Wittkower, *op. cit.*, p. 279.
- 108 G. Greer, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- 109 *Confessions*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 1: 638.
- 110 Water as a source of pleasure and as the principal stimulus to 'une douce rêverie' marks both the *Souvenirs* (1: 186, 218, 257, 279; 2: 7-8, 163, 164, 178) and the works of Rousseau, for example, *Confessions* (edition cited), p. 642; *Rêveries, Oeuvres complètes*, 1: 1044, 1045; and *NH*, p. 520 (IV, Letter 17).
- 111 Vigée-Lebrun's 'goût pour les voyages' (2: 160) and her repeated claims that movement had a therapeutic value and was essential to her mental and physical well-being (2: 55, 95, 116, 224) form a counterpart to Rousseau's 'manie ambulante' (*Oeuvres complètes*, 1: 54).
- 112 In his *Confessions*, Rousseau speaks of his 'goût pour les lieux escarpés' (edition cited, p. 173).
- 113 *Ibid.*, pp. 172-73.
- 114 For example, M. B. Ross, 'Romantic Quest and Conquest: Troping Masculine

Power in the Crisis of Poetic Identity,' in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. A. Mellor (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 26-51 (esp., p. 44).

115 *Lettres sur [...] J. J. Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes*, 1: 83.

116 This episode also occurs in the manuscript sent to Natalie Kourakine (pp. 476-77). The 'Enoncé de différents bruits importuns que j'ai eu à supporter jusqu'à ce moment' is a short autobiographical work in which incidents in the writer's life are recalled uniquely in terms of their effect on her senses, with particular emphasis on smells and sounds. This passage, which links her hypersensitivity to her artistic vocation, provides the key to what might otherwise be dismissed as a strange collection of anecdotes. The 'Enoncé' is published in the *Souvenirs des voyages de la princesse N. Kourakine, 1816-1830*, ed. T. Kourakine (Moscou, 1903), 471-83. Mary Sheriff points out that the Fontana episode in the *Souvenirs* may have been deliberately shaped by the author so that Fontana's authority could be deployed against those philosophers and doctors who claimed that women were physiologically incapable of great intellectual or artistic endeavour; Sheriff, *op. cit.*, ch. 1, esp. p. 28.

117 Y. Knibiehler, *op. cit.*, pp. 836-39.

118 Quoted by R. and M. Wittkower, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

119 In the letter which she addressed to Hoppner during her time in England, she claimed that she had never been entirely satisfied with any of her paintings (*Souvenirs*, 2: 133); and surveying her career from the vantage-point of the early 1830s, she wrote: 'je puis à peine compter quatre ouvrages (portraits compris) dont je sois réellement contente' (1: 231).

120 *Temps des orages*, p. 35.

121 G. Greer, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

122 In her own case, her husband had financial control over her work and forced her to accept pupils; in that of Rosalie Boquet, the effects of marriage were apparently more damaging for, despite her 'talent remarquable pour la peinture, [...] elle l'abandonna presque entièrement après avoir épousé M. Filleul' (1: 41).

123 She mentions by name only Angelica Kauffman (1: 160, 166-67); Rosalba Carriera (1: 247, 295); her pupil, Marie-Guilhemine (Emilie) Laville Leroux, the future Mme Benoist (1: 55); and her niece, Eugénie Tripiet-Lefranc (2: 232). Adélaïde Labille-Guiard is mentioned only indirectly, and she says nothing about the work of well-known women artists of the early nineteenth century, such as Angélique Mongez, Constance Mayer or Mme Haudebourt-Lescot.

124 Rousseau presents a Julie who fed and protected birds (*NH*, pp. 476-77) and a Saint-Preux who was inclined to regard shooting them as an enjoyable recreation (*NH*, pp. 514-15).

125 For Mme de Staël, too, Catherine II was a woman who transcended her sex yet also retained her femininity. She refers to Peter I and Catherine II as 'deux grands hommes [qui] ont élevé très haut la fierté russe' (p. 284); and writes of the latter: 'Le charme d'une femme tempérait l'action du pouvoir [...]. Catherine II avait au suprême degré le bon sens du gouvernement; un esprit plus brillant que le sien aurait moins ressemblé à du génie, et sa haute raison inspirait un profond respect à ces Russes qui se défient de leur propre imagination, et souhaitent qu'on la dirige avec sagesse' (p. 300); *Dix années d'exil. Edition critique par Simone Balayé et Mariella Vianello Bonifacio* (Paris: Fayard, 1996).

126 'Madame Vigée-Lebrun,' *Le Courier de la presse* (Conférence prononcée à la Société des Conférences, 6 décembre 1912), p. 435.

127 The expression is used by Mme de Staël in a passage where she ponders how a woman can respond to slander without incurring further criticism for bringing herself to the attention of the public; *De la littérature* (edition cited), p. 340.

Conclusion

1 The unseemliness of a woman engaging in political debate by writing and openly publishing political pamphlets, and women's consequent reluctance to do so, is a subject touched on by the duchesse d'Abrantès. In a footnote in her memoirs, she recalls that there appeared in 1831 'une brochure de moi [...] intitulée: "De la liberté, avant, pendant et après la restauration, réponse à M. de Chateaubriand". Cette brochure sans nom d'auteur, fut faite et publiée par moi en réponse à la première que fit paraître M. de Chateaubriand en avril 1831. [...] Comme mes Mémoires n'avaient pas encore paru, je ne voulais pas mettre mon nom à un ouvrage politique, surtout pour mon entrée dans le monde littéraire'; the work was subsequently withdrawn for 'des motifs personnels'. *Mémoires de madame la duchesse d'Abrantès, ou souvenirs historiques sur Napoléon, la Révolution, le Directoire, le Consulat, l'Empire et la Restauration*, 18 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-1835), 16: 36-37 note.

2 Estelle Jelinek's suggestion that men's autobiographical works are essentially linear in structure while women's are fragmentary and diffuse is difficult to substantiate; 'Women's Autobiography and the Male Tradition,' in *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, ed. E. Jelinek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 17-19. It has been contested, for example, by Sidonie Smith [*The Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 17-18] and Felicity Nussbaum [*The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth Century England* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 152].

3 See above, ch. 2, n. 101.

4 Marmontel, *Elémens de littérature*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Marmontel*, 18 vols. (Paris: Amable Coste et Cie, 1819), 14: 204.

5 See, for example, *Mémoires de la reine Hortense*, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1927), 3: 96-97; *Mémoires de madame la duchesse d'Abrantès*, 4: 76; 11: 130; and *Mémoires de la comtesse de Boigne*, 6th ed., 4 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1907-1908), 2: 1.

6 'Female lives,' writes Blodgett, 'have customarily hinged on relationships rather than achievements' [*Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen's Private Diaries* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1988), p. 32] and not surprisingly, therefore, as Yalom notes, their family and those who frequented their social circle were the subjects about which women were best informed and most passionate [*Blood Sisters: The French Revolution in Women's Memory* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 240-41].

7 As Frédéric Briot demonstrates, using others in the construction of one's own identity - '[le] déchiffrement de soi à travers les autres' (p. 141) - is an integral part of memoir-writing for both sexes; *Usage du monde, usage de soi. Enquête sur les mémorialistes d'ancien régime* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994), esp. pp. 134-47.

8 In establishing these categories, I have drawn on the classification of memoirs proposed by Marie-Thérèse Hipp in *Mythes et réalités: enquête sur le roman et les mémoires (1660-1700)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976), pp. 24-28.

9 The concept of 'accent' in marking out those memoirs which tend towards autobiography as it is understood in the late twentieth century from those which do not is borrowed from Yves Coirault, 'Autobiographie et mémoires (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles), ou existence et naissance de l'autobiographie,' *R.H.L.F.*, 75 (1975), pp. 937-56 (esp., pp. 948-50).

10 N. Miller, *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 58.

11 G. Gusdorf, 'De l'autobiographie initiatique au genre littéraire,' *R.H.L.F.*, 75 (1975), pp. 971-72; J. Sturrock, *The Language of Autobiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 30. In 'Simone de Beauvoir: Aging and Its Discontents' [in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. S. Benstock (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 90-113], Woodward identifies as memoirs (as opposed to autobiographies) works in which the writer remains emotionally detached from his/her past, chronicling events meticulously, but failing to evoke the past (pp. 100-101).

12 In the introduction to the section of her memoirs entitled 'Portraits et Anecdotes', Claire de Rémusat writes: 'Je commencerai par Bonaparte lui-même. Je suis loin de l'avoir toujours vu sous le même aspect où il m'apparaît aujourd'hui: mes opinions ont fait route avec lui [...]'; *Mémoires de madame de Rémusat, 1802-1808*, 3 vols. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1889), 1: 99. Original emphasis.

13 Elisabeth concludes her memoirs by noting her refusal of a friend's financial help: 'Il paraît heureux de cette réponse et s'aperçut bien que j'étais fière et que j'avais du caractère, et que je ne voulais dépendre que de moi'; *Souvenirs d'Elisabeth Le Bas*, reprinted in M. Yalom, *Le temps des orages. Aristocrates, bourgeoises et paysannes racontent* (Paris: Maren Sell et Cie, 1989), p. 244.

14 This point is made forcefully by F. Briot in *Usage* and in his earlier article, 'De l'usage privé de l'histoire (Etude d'un passage des Mémoires d'Henri de Campion),' *XVII^e siècle*, 154, 4 (1986), p. 328. Although crucial to the interpretation of memoirs, it is a point which literary critics intent on raising the status of 'true autobiography' have been slow to concede.

15 F. Briot, *Usage*, p. 241.

16 This phrase is taken from Virginia Woolf's essay 'Women and Fiction'; Virginia Woolf, *Women and Writing*, ed. M. Barrett (London: The Women's Press, 1979), p. 44.

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