

French television and women politicians

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Introduction

My research is in the field of political programmes on French television to which I give a narrow definition: studio debates or interviews involving politicians as contributors to the discussion on a more or less regular basis.¹ This is a study based on research in progress, a factor I wish to emphasise as it has implications for both methodology and results. The paper is presented in two parts: first a statistical study of the participation of women politicians in French television programmes; the second part, shorter and more incomplete, considers some specific examples of women's television appearances. First, however, I would like to set this study in context.

Context

French television, like any other professional sphere, has had to learn to accept women, and vestiges of ingrained misogyny remain. Catherine Rambert and Sylvie Maquelle, journalists in the written press, have recounted the story of women's access to television as employees, in their book *Des Femmes d'influence*.² The job of *speakerine* was the first to be assigned systematically to women, seen as akin to that of the perfect *maîtresse de maison* as it called upon the powers of improvisation and charisma of the incumbent, due to the frequent and long interruptions to programmes through technical failure at the time. The first two *speakerines* were Jacqueline Joubert and Arlette Accart in May 1949. They were 'recrutées sur concours', chosen from 200 candidates, the qualities which gave them success being 'leur diction, leur beauté et leur blondeur.'³ The attention to physical beauty will come as no surprise and is perhaps even to be expected in these early days of the new visual medium, but

1 The exception to this is *Questions à domicile*, which does not actually take place in the studio, but is included in the corpus as it fits the other criteria. *Sept sur sept* meets with the criteria, but has been excluded due to insufficient information at this stage. For further details on the constitution of the corpus, please see Appendix 1.

2 Paris, 1991. Catherine Rambert writes for *France Soir* and Sylvie Maquelle for *Télé-Loisirs*. *Des Femmes d'influence*, 172.

neither, unfortunately, will the emphasis on 'blondeur', described by Catherine Rambert and Sylvie Maquelle as 'la couleur des cheveux la plus seyante, pensait-on alors, aux images en noir et blanc',⁴ but not, apparently, for men, as all the male journalists of the time had brown hair (for example, Pierre Sabbagh, Léon Zitrone and Georges de Caunes). The authors even suggest that part of Christine Ockrent's success in obtaining 'un rôle sacré, un rôle noble',⁵ that is, in gaining access to news reporting, was due to her 'beauté asexuée, charmeuse, cérébrale et dominatrice' which was in vogue in the 80s:⁶ in other words, the requirement for physical beauty was still there, but to escape the female ghetto of the *speakerine* (for which there is no masculine equivalent: *speakerin*?) it was necessary to appear as little like a woman as possible. Although Anne Sinclair has broken with this latter requirement, the former still exists. The journalist and television critic Françoise Giroud has commented that the ugliness of certain male journalists would never, even today, be seen as acceptable in a woman.⁷

Women politicians have likewise had to pay particular attention to their physical appearance. As Prime Minister, Edith Cresson, in the end, after many months of resistance, succumbed to the pressure and removed most of the outward signs of her femininity: rings, large earrings, light-coloured suits, light stockings—changing the latter in order to hide a scar on her knee which journalists persisted in reporting as a 'bas filé'. 'Les photographes ont été ignobles', she told her biographer, Elisabeth Schemla:

Chaque fois que je descendais de ma voiture, ils traquaient mes genoux ou mes cuisses—je finissais par en être obsédée—et à l'Assemblée, ils prenaient des gros plans de mes bagues ou de mes boucles d'oreilles comme si c'étaient des signes d'une légèreté ou d'une incompétence. Tout ça avait quelque chose de profondément scandaleux et désespérant.⁸

As is well known, Edith Cresson was also severely criticised for her language, often described as a 'parler cru' although she used familiar, collo-

4 *Idem*.

5 The words are Anne Sinclair's.

6 *Des Femmes d'influence*, 137.

7 In a recent interview with the author (05.02.94).

8 Elisabeth Schemla, *Edith Cresson, la femme piégée*, Paris, 1993, 130.

quial expressions rather than genuinely crude language, the point being that such language is less easily tolerated in a woman than in a man. The same is true of certain tones of voice, as she herself testified: 'Quand un homme gueule à l'Assemblée, on dit: «Quel merveilleux tribun!» Si c'est une femme, ça devient: «Non mais écoutez-moi cette femelle hystérique, cette poissonnière».⁹ These are familiar, widespread discrepancies which have been thoroughly documented by researchers in language usage and tolerance.¹⁰ It was not only the media of course which used this type of sexual discrimination against Edith Cresson, but also members of the Opposition, and even her own colleagues. When as *ministre du Commerce extérieur* she wore a close-fitting black dress to answer questions in the *Assemblée nationale*, one politician was heard loudly shouting: 'Est-ce qu'elle a une culotte dessous?'¹¹ That is because, like television, perhaps even more so, as it is, in the words of Françoise Giroud the 'dernier lieu du pouvoir', the world of politics is profoundly misogynous: 'C'est absolument comme si on entrait aux vestiaires pendant un match de football. Ah! ils ne supportent pas!'¹²

As someone who attained the highest office yet held by a woman, Edith Cresson naturally incurred the strongest backlash. Without having to 'take sides' with Edith Cresson and approve of all she did as Prime Minister¹³ it is, nevertheless, shocking to see the scorn with which her womanhood was abused, and the sexual images through which the satire and criticism were expressed. It is generally recognised that the *Bébête Show* set the tone: taking their cue from the rumours that Edith Cresson was a former mistress of François Mitterrand, they created a puppet which was totally incapable of anything other than rubbing herself against Kermitt-errand, murmuring sweet nothings: 'mon roudoudou d'amour', 'mon bichon de Solutré'. It is not simply that she was clearly portrayed as Mitterrand's mistress and therefore

9 Schemla, *Edith Cresson*, 176.

10 For example: Verena Aebischer, *Les Femmes et le langage. Représentations sociales d'une différence*, Paris, 1985 and Marina Yaguello, *Les mots et les femmes, essai d'approche sociolinguistique de la condition féminine*, Paris, 1978.

11 Schemla, *Edith Cresson*, 118.

12 On *Apostrophes*, 18.02.87.

13 One of the interesting aspects of Schemla's study is that, while subscribing to the conspiracy theory indicated in her title, she is at pains also to point out Edith Cresson's own mistakes, not least of which was a total mis-management of her communication policy.

in power only as a return for favours rendered, hence intellectually inadequate for the high office she held, but that this necessarily implied a power relationship in which she was prostrate before her dominant partner. The puppet's name, Amabotte, supposedly inspired by the politician's name (as for the others, for instance, Pasqua/Pas-de-quoi or Jack Lang/Langue de chèvre) suggesting a 'botte de cresson', found an echo in a much more prevalent image, that of dominant male and submissive female in a sexual relationship.

It is the stuff of satire to draw upon the collectively shared images, true or false, of the target public, and it is for this reason that the case of Edith Cresson is interesting. To speak in linguistic terms, this image is the *langue* of which the *Bébête Show* is the *parole*. The stock of sexual images relating to men is not denigrating for the simple reason that men's sexuality is not degraded, but vaunted. In this context, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing could proudly claim that when he was president he was in love with seventeen million French women, and imply, with reference to 'les regards échangés', that the feeling was mutual, without this undermining his legitimacy in the role—the echoes of the harem are all too evident.¹⁴ Similarly the stock of political images, with 'la France' and 'la République' possessing the feminine gender form, give male politicians an honourable role in service of their country: on De Gaulle's death Georges Pompidou announced 'Françaises, Français, le Général de Gaulle est mort, la France est veuve'.¹⁵ Where does this leave women politicians, but in a potentially illegitimate, because homosexual, relationship, and replaced therefore by real or imagined liaisons with male politicians in the service of their career? Or, at best, as 'la mère Courage' (Simone Veil).¹⁶

In this context, it is hardly surprising to find that women, television and politics do not mix easily. Politics is not only a bastion of male power, it is one which today perpetuates itself through communication via the mass media;

¹⁴ *Le Monde en face*, 25.02.88.

¹⁵ 10.11.70.

¹⁶ See Jean-Marie Cotteret and Gérard Mermet, *La Bataille des images*, Paris, 1986. Marina Yaguello (op.cit) gives more details on the way in which grammatical gender influences the gender of models and symbols in myths. See also Diana Holmes, 'The Madonna and the dragon: the representation of women politicians in the French press', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 1988, 10-16, illustrating the way in which the written press portrayed Arlette Laguiller as 'the austere and militant virgin', a modern-day, asexual Jeanne la Pucelle, married to the Revolution.

women have traditionally been denied both power and the right to self-expression, and thus have to surmount a double obstacle. This is even more true because of the way in which television producers use one obstacle as the excuse for the other: few women politicians appear on television, they say, because there are few women politicians, full stop. Seen in context (by which I mean not only the satire of the *Bébête Show* referred to above, but the prevalence of sexy half-clad young women in other programmes) I thought this was too convenient an excuse to be true and merited closer scrutiny. In fact I had something of a surprise.

Part 1: Statistical survey

The first question I wanted to ask was whether the representation of women on television did indeed match their representation in political institutions. In order to answer this question I compiled a list showing the relative number of female to male participants in a series of political programmes from the 1960s to the present day. The list (in Appendix 1) is by no means exhaustive, but it is more complete than any which has been drawn up so far: covering nearly 30 years of television, 27 different titles, and just under a thousand television appearances, it is the most extensive and accurate to date. From this list, the overall percentage participation of women politicians in French television is 8.13%.

The first point to be made is that this compares quite favourably with the number of women in parliament, currently at just under 6%, and even more favourably if we compare it with women's participation in parliament for the whole period covered by the television programmes, during which there were only 3.5% of *députées* because of even poorer representation of women in the early years of the Fifth Republic. It was clear, however, that simple additions were distorting the figures, and that in order to compare like with like, it was necessary to match periods of television with the appropriate periods in parliament. This I did: and still the picture looks comparatively favourable for television. Female representation in parliament took a turn for the better in the legislative elections of March 1978, and so I divided the television appearances into two matching periods, before and after this date (see Appendix 2). Prior to March 1978, there were between 1.5 and 2% of women *députées* in the

Assemblée nationale (i.e. 8–9 women in absolute terms), and few television appearances (7 in total). After March 1978 the number of television appearances by women increased, as did their proportion in parliament, which has varied between 4 and 6%.

In other words, taking the ratio **television: parliament**, women politicians were marginally under-represented on television in the 60s and 70s (though the figures are really too small for the difference between the two to be statistically significant), and once their number increased in parliament they had 9.68% representation on television compared to 4–6% (5.6% average) in parliament. And so, television's case holds water: as more women have gone into politics so more have appeared on television. What is more, the increase on-television has been even greater than that in parliament.¹⁷

The explanation may be, of course, that it is often not sufficient to be a *député* to appear on television. There are currently 577 *députés* per parliament, many of whom are relatively unknown, and not therefore likely to attract a large enough audience to satisfy the television channels in their ratings war. The process of legitimisation via television is complex and to secure frequent appearances the more roles one can accumulate the better. The following are roles which commonly attract television interest:

1. Presidential candidate
2. Member of the government
3. Leader of a party or movement, or parliamentary group
4. Local representative
5. European representative
6. Senator.

Ideally, one should compare women's television appearances with proportions of women in all these potential pools from which they may be drawn to appear on television, as they could perhaps explain the difference highlighted above; indeed, some of these higher figures (ranging from 12 to 30%: see Appendix 3) are such that they might even imply that women are grossly over-represented on television. Closer examination inspires caution, however.

17 The gap between television and parliament in the second period is statistically significant according to the χ^2 test, which shows that these figures would only be achieved at random 1 in 1000 times: i.e. we need to seek an explanation, other than pure chance, for the difference.

For example, women presidential candidates, though very few in number, and in some cases totally absent, average a relatively high proportion of the total (between 0 and 30%, making an average of 11.4%) because of the exceedingly small numbers involved. Women representatives in the European parliament reach a grand total of 21%, but in fact Simone Veil is virtually the only European representative to feature on television (though frequently, as we shall see). Between 1983 and 1992 there was an average of 16% of *conseillères municipales* and 12.3% of *conseillères régionales*, but if we take local representatives as a whole, with only 4% of *maires* and 5.3% of *conseillères générales* at most, these figures are hardly likely to make the difference, and like European representatives, these roles are not major doorways to television except for specific programmes. The number of women *sénateurs* is even lower, with 3% maximum. This leaves us with leaders; but, as we might expect, higher up the hierarchy there are fewer women (Arlette Laguiller being the notable exception) so this can hardly be the reason. I expected a similar problem with government as with leaders: proportionately few women in positions of power. In fact, again because of small numbers, the percentage of women in government is as high as 14%. This could explain the gap between the proportion of women politicians appearing on television and those in public life, especially since, when we consider the capacity in which women participate in television debates, being a government minister (at whatever level) is by far the highest on the list (see Appendix 4).

Therefore we may be tempted to compare television and government (Appendix 5) but this is a wholly inappropriate comparison and statistically unreliable. It therefore seemed reasonable to take women in parliament and government together: the result was 9.4% for television, 6.7% for politicians, that is, still a significant gap in favour of television (the χ^2 test shows that this would have occurred at random 1 in 20 times).

According to these comparisons, women are, at worst, proportionally represented on television, and one might even argue that they are slightly over-represented. Does this mean that television has a strong defence? Not if one considers that women make up 52% of the electorate, of course, but producers can say that women on television are in proportion to the number

of women in French political institutions, and that television is perhaps even a little generous in its allocation of air time to women.

Part II: Specific examples of TV appearances by women

The fact still remains, however, that appearances by women politicians are few in number. If we were to look more closely at the nature of those appearances, it becomes clear that it is false to say that external constraints are solely responsible for these low figures, because television producers have not availed themselves of every opportunity to invite women, and where they have, there are some incriminating case studies. Two aspects will be considered here: women's access to air time, and the types of discussions in which they have participated.

Access to air time

In three different programme series, *Cartes sur table*, *Le Grand Débat* and *L'Heure de vérité*, each of which normally only invited one guest at a time, the few occasions on which two politicians were asked to share the air time invariably involved women. These were as follows:

<i>Cartes sur table</i> :	26.01.81	Marie-France Garaud with Michel Crépeau.
<i>Le Grand Débat</i> :	07.04.81	Huguette Bouchardeau followed by Jean-Marie Le Pen
<i>L'Heure de vérité</i> :	21.05.83	Simone Veil and Lionel Jospin

In the case of *L'Heure de vérité*, this was the only case of sharing in over 200 programmes, from 20.05.82 to 24.04.94.¹⁸ In the run-up to the 1981 presidential elections, the organisers of *Cartes sur table* had asked for one programme with all these women candidates (whereas the men were offered one each), but Huguette Bouchardeau and Arlette Laguiller refused, and Marie-France Garaud therefore shared with Michel Crépeau. Women were clearly seen as 'concurrentes entre elles', as Huguette Bouchardeau pointed out when she objected to the question 'Est-ce que les autres femmes vous gênent dans cette élection?' (*Le Grand Débat*, 07.04.81). In all of these

¹⁸ This study was conducted before the 1994 European elections, for which *L'Heure de vérité* introduced a series of dual debates.

examples a man is also having to share of course, but for the women each programme is one of very few opportunities to appear. One has only to compare the number of appearances of Jean-Marie Le Pen with Huguette Bouchardeau—in spite of the fact that she has been a government minister.¹⁹

Appendix 6 shows the frequency of appearances by specific individuals. It is of note that the two women enjoying the highest television profile are Simone Veil and Marie-France Garaud, neither of whom has ever been a *deputée*.²⁰ Edith Cresson complained (in *Face à la Trois*, 14.06.85): 'C'est la première fois qu'on m'invite en 4 ans'. Françoise Giroud was never invited while in government, although she was the first ever to occupy the newly-created post of *secrétaire d'Etat à la Condition féminine* (1974–76): was this not considered news-worthy by a television notoriously hungry for news?²¹ The following list shows those women ministers in post since 1983 who do not figure on the list in Appendix 6:

Marie-Noëlle Lienemann, ministre déléguée au logement, chargée du cadre de la vie

Catherine Tasca, ministre déléguée puis secrétaire d'Etat à la francophonie, chargée des relations culturelles extérieures

Edvige Avice, ministre déléguée aux Affaires étrangères, ministre de la Coopération et Développement

Véronique Néiertz, secrétaire d'Etat aux Droits des Femmes, chargée de la vie quotidienne

Hélène Dorlhac, secrétaire d'Etat à la Famille

Nicole Catala, secrétaire d'Etat à la Formation professionnelle

Catherine Lalumière, secrétaire d'Etat à la Consommation (twice)

Add to this the fact that those who have appeared on television, have by no means done so in every post occupied, and it becomes clear that had television

19 Huguette Bouchardeau has two appearances in the whole of the corpus, whereas Jean-Marie Le Pen has eight appearances in *L'Heure de vérité* alone.

20 Simone Veil's higher profile is due at least in part to her longevity in the field. Marie-France Garaud has never been elected to a political post, and figures in the list only because of her frequent attempts to be elected. As Siân Reynolds commented in discussion, the role of male patronage cannot be ignored here. This would merit a study in itself.

21 It has to be said, however, that Françoise Giroud herself refuses to see this as significant (interview with the author, 05.02.94).

producers wished to increase the representation of women politicians, there was no shortage of available candidates.²²

Women's involvement in discussion areas

Programmes such as *L'Heure de vérité*, *Le Grand Débat* and *Cartes sur table*, with a single guest per programme, present a particular personality, whereas others, in which there are more participants, debate a particular theme. Appendix 7 shows those thematic programmes in which women have appeared and lists the themes covered. All but one of the first seven appearances by women in such programmes (1970–1982) are for issues which may be considered to relate specifically to women, either discussion of aspects of women's nascent liberation (such as abortion) or of women's traditional role (such as issues involving children). The one exception is *L'Huile sur le feu* in July 1977, on consumerism. The next two (*Droit de réponse*: 'Vive M. le maire', and *Dossiers de l'écran*: 'Profession: homme politique') are on politics in general but phrased in masculine terms in line with French traditional grammar in which 'le masculin englobe le féminin'. Specifically female or feminist issues disappeared from the television agenda in the 80s, except for two in 1989 (*Médiations*: 'La République des machos' and 'Femmes battues, tous complices'). There is a further programme in this period which is not in the corpus because it rarely involved politicians, but which had one debate on 'Les Femmes maires': *Du côté de chez Fred*, with five women mayors, including Edith Cresson (10.10.88). The 90s have seen a resurgence of such 'one-off' programmes on women in power: *Bas les masques* on 'Femmes de pouvoir', with Ségolène Royal, and *Zone interdite* on women in politics ('Candidates au pouvoir', 13.03.94). The eighties and nineties have

22 This raises the whole question of modes of access to television: implicit in the term *invité* is the idea that television is the host, and as such issues invitations, even though it is well known that many politicians solicit television appearances. The short series *Ça nous intéresse, Monsieur le Président* was initiated by François Mitterrand, and yet Yves Mourousi spoke on the first programme as though the reverse had been true (28.04.85). Do men solicit more appearances than women? Certainly women politicians claim that women are more interested in concrete action than vain words (see Régine Saint-Criq and Nathalie Prévost, *Vol au-dessus d'un nid de machos*, Paris, 1993, and Laure Adler, *Les Femmes politiques*, Paris, 1993) and television can all too often be equated with the latter. If women are more reticent, Marie-France Garaud is the notable exception.

seen increasing involvement of women in traditionally 'male' domains, but of all the programmes considered, in only one is there an equal number of women to men on a subject which is not perceived as traditionally female: *La Marche du siècle* (13.05.92) on 'L'Europe de Maastricht', in which there were four women and four men. However, the four women include Marie-France Garaud and Marie-France Stirbois, not noted for their moderation, and contrasting in this with the men (Jean-Pierre Chevènement, Jean-François Poncet, Brice Lalonde, and Francis Wurtz).

This shift in themes can be read in several ways, of course. Women have the right to expect to participate in programmes which deal with subjects of direct concern to them more than men, and it is failure to allow this which shocks; for instance, on the theme of abortion, there are three examples in which women were not included. *Actuel 2* (13.10.72) had two main guests, le professeur Albert Netter, and Lucien Neuwirth, with the actress Delphine Seyrig as an *invitée surprise* towards the end. One of the journalists pointed out that there were eight women in the *Assemblée nationale*, including a well-known midwife, Mme Toisier, and so it was 'indécent' that only men were expressing their opinion on this subject. Delphine Seyrig rounded off her intervention with the cry:

Vous êtes des hommes en train de discuter si on doit donner la liberté aux femmes. En somme, nous sommes de petites personnes intelligentes, de petits chiens qu'on doit promener de telle heure à telle heure. Vous êtes en train de vous demander si nous sommes suffisamment raisonnables pour qu'on nous donne la liberté. Notre liberté, nous la prenons, aussi, en nous faisant avorter au risque de notre vie!

The second example is also *Actuel 2* (10.12.73): here the only guest was Dr Claude Peyret, responsible for drawing up abortion legislation. The journalist Claudine Escoffier-Lambotte of *Le Monde* (there were two male and two female journalists) could not resist the temptation to answer questions in his place, and Irène Allier of *Le Point* exclaimed: 'il faut bien être un homme pour parler avec une telle légèreté' in answer to Noël Bayon of *L'Aurore*. The presenter Jacques Idier had to intervene to bring the politician back into the discussion. The third case was an edition of *Les Trois vérités* (27.03.74). The discussion featured Lucien Neuwirth (again), Michel Rocard and Pierre Bas (though the programme did also show a film on mothers, and the presenter

apologised for the absence of women in the debate). These are blatant examples of opportunities missed, as women ought to have been on such programmes as a matter of right. Not that women should only participate in this kind of programme, imprisoned in a ghetto and excluded from issues of more general concern. The perceived shift in emphasis in the themes women were invited to discuss is to be welcomed to some extent as it implies that producers more readily accepted the involvement of women in a wider range of domains (in line with their widening occupation of ministries), but it is not a positive development insofar as it means that women's equality is now off the agenda. Note also that in *Le Point sur la table* (16.05.91) on the theme 'Edith Cresson arrive, qu'est-ce qui va changer?' no women politicians (or indeed journalists) were there to comment. *La Marche du siècle* (17.04.91) on 'La Décennie Mitterrand' had no women politicians in spite of having 18 guests. There were two women present (Edith Cresson and Michèle André) in *La Marche du siècle* on 'Etre PS en 1990' (27.03.90) but they were outnumbered by 21 men.

On the question of subjects broached within programmes, I have not yet done a full study, but it appears that the question of 'vie privée/vie publique' often arises. In *Du côté de chez Fred* on 'Les Femmes maires', Frédéric Mitterrand announced the number of children of each woman. Edith Cresson said: 'Une question que vous allez poser, je vais vous devancer, comment concilier vie publique et vie privée? Question jamais posée aux hommes et je crois qu'on devrait la poser aux hommes'. Carmen Leroux, mayor of Gentilly (Val-de-Marne) responded to Frédéric Mitterrand's sympathetic question about how they coped with the demands of work and the home with the comment: 'Et puis aux femmes qui travaillent aux PTT, qui nettoient par terre dans les hôpitaux, personne ne leur demande si ce n'est pas trop dur'. The participants were not suggesting that journalists should avoid these questions with women politicians, because it is true that the public/private dilemma is part of their situation, but that they should start asking men and working-class women as well. The tendency of television to treat certain subjects as typically male or female would merit further exploration.²³

23 For example, after the broadcast of *Dossiers de l'écran* on violence the critic Jean Barenat

Conclusion

On the one hand, television has a relatively honourable record: it has increased the participation of women over the years, and possibly even at a faster rate than women's participation in political institutions. Yet, on the negative side there are missed opportunities for involving women: some progress has been made in including women in debates on subjects of direct concern to them, but not always, and not sufficiently to include them in discussions on issues of a more general nature. The question of balance between male and female participants simply does not seem to arise; except where there is an issue such as *femmes maires*, women are interviewed if they happen to be in the right place at the right time, but not because they are women and organisers wish to raise their profile. There was an interesting moment in *Questions à domicile* in which Pierre-Luc Séguillon thanked Michèle Barzach for giving the journalists the opportunity to interview a woman—it is, after all, difficult to see what else she could have done. In saying this the journalists show themselves to be politically correct in their attitude but without assuming responsibility for their actions; effectively they are saying, 'we want to interview more women but there just aren't enough in politics' (a classic case of *mauvaise foi*). It is clear that had the minister of health been a man, they would have interviewed him.²⁴

We know that the cultural and political environment within which programmes are created is still strongly misogynous; the fact that programme producers draw upon this anti-egalitarian environment for justification tells us not that it exists—we knew that already—but that the producers do not see it as their role to counteract it. Producers of the *Bébête Show* have made it perfectly clear, in their response to criticism, that while society is misogynous, it is perfectly acceptable for them to reflect that. The subtext is that getting the laughs is more important than showing respect for women. They are not averse to using such an argument because irrespective of whether or not it is

of *L'Humanité* commented: '...on pouvait aussi s'étonner à bon droit qu'on ait fait de la violence juvénile un «probleme d'hommes» puisqu'aucune femme, mère de famille, assistante sociale, médecin ou enseignante n'avait été conviée à ce débat' (*L'Humanité*, 6.1.72).

24 *Questions à domicile*, 23.04.87.

true, they would not lay any claim to shaping public opinion. In the case of 'serious' political programmes, however, no producer would wish to make such a disclaimer. They claim to inform and to educate, to contribute to democracy, and so, of necessity, to shape public opinion.

Yet, when it comes to inequality between men and women, television producers argue that they should follow, rather than lead public opinion on this. The corollary of that argument is that women have to get into politics first so as to appear on television, which, given the role of television in shaping politics, is a classic 'Catch 22' situation. Producers are not prepared to assume any responsibility. This lack of responsibility is borne out by the legislation governing television. Although the 'lois du service public' include 'égalité',²⁵ and although since the inception of the *Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel* in 1982 all regulatory bodies have to 'garantir l'égalité entre femmes et hommes', in political terms equality has always been seen as reflecting the groupings in the *Assemblée nationale*.²⁶ It is this which has allowed a programme such as *L'Heure de vérité* to interview the extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen no less than eight times, on the grounds that he is a former candidate for the presidential elections and leader of a party represented in parliament, but never invite Edith Cresson once, in spite of her having been a minister several times and Prime Minister once. Besides the fact that the programme's producer, François-Henri de Virieu, and Edith Cresson are personal enemies, she represents no party or political grouping, has never been a presidential candidate, and can therefore be replaced by other members of the Majority, and the programme remains within the guidelines laid down by the government and overseen by the regulatory body the *Conseil supérieur de l'Audiovisuel*.²⁷ Edith Cresson is,

25 Text of Footnote

26 This means either giving equal air-time to representatives of the Opposition and the Majority, or application of the unofficial 'règle des trois tiers' (a third of air-time for the Government, a third for the Majority, and a third for the Opposition), or apportioning air-time on the basis of the officially constructed parliamentary groups, or, in the case of Presidential elections, each individual candidate. These interpretations have not been without criticism, for example, in the 1970s the Radicaux complained that they were under-represented, and in some cases it is not clear whether parties—the Centrists under a Right-wing government or the Communists under the Left—are in the Majority or the Opposition. But these are criticisms of detail of application, whereas there is no attempt to represent women equally, or indeed any other social grouping in proportion to their presence in French society.

27 To my knowledge, the CSA (and likewise, its predecessors), whose job it is to ensure that

however, the only Prime Minister never to have been on the programme before, during or following her mandate (though it is reasonable to assume that if an invitation had been forthcoming after her premiership she would have turned it down); other Prime Ministers have appeared frequently: Raymond Barre (10 times), Jacques Chirac (8), Pierre Mauroy (7), Laurent Fabius (7), Edouard Balladur (7), Michel Rocard (6).²⁸

Television has statistics and the law on its side. If one wishes to raise the profile of women politicians on television, then the argument has to be not for a fairer television, one which better reflects society (opponents can always argue we have that already: the point of disagreement then becomes whether television appearances should reflect the fact that women make up 52% of the electorate or 6% of parliament), but for a more radical television, one which acts on society and seeks to change attitudes. This has in fact been seen with other social/moral issues, as for example in the fund-raising *Téléthon* and the recent *Grande Soirée Sida* in which all the terrestrial channels cooperated. This latter example in particular shows television's proactive role, as it openly sought to cultivate a more compassionate attitude towards AIDS sufferers. When will there be a *Soirée égalité entre hommes et femmes*, engaging all channels in a massive movement of solidarity with women?

these government-imposed responsibilities are met in practice, has never once sanctioned a television channel for the lack of equal access for women.

28 One can also add to this other 'high scorers': Lionel Jospin (8), Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (7), Jacques Delors (6), Charles Pasqua (6), François Léotard (5), Simone Veil (5) and Marie-France Garaud (3). The figures are for programmes up until 10.04.94.

TV appearances by women politicians in France: Appendix 1

The corpus

The list below is not exhaustive, as information is not available for all programmes.

For programmes where political guests are in a minority, only the number of these is given. Foreign politicians have also been excluded in these programmes. In the case of *L'Avenir du futur*, a scientific programme, the politicians were among guests from other fields (literature, philosophy) playing the role of the 'candide'. The figures supplied for *L'Heure de vérité* are for programmes up until 10.04.94. *Face à la Trois* frequently had an *invité surprise* towards the end, but the figure given here represents only the main guests. *Médiations* also had a programme with 5 party militants, all women, not included in the total figures as they are not 'politicians' according to the strict definition given for this exercise (someone who has held an elected office or has stood for election).

Programme Title	No. Guests	No. Men	No. Women	% Women
<i>Face à face</i> (Jan 66–Jun 66)	9	9	0	0
<i>En direct avec</i> (Oct 66–Apr 68)	12	12	0	0
<i>Dossiers de l'écran</i> (Apr 67–Sep 91)	26	25	1	3.8
<i>Face à face</i> (Feb 69–Dec 69)	5	5	0	0
<i>A armes égales</i> (Feb 70–Mar 73)	66	65	1	1.5
<i>Hexagone</i> (Mar 70–Sep 72)	7	7	0	0
<i>L'Actualité en question</i> (Jan 71–Jul 72)	8	8	0	0
<i>Actuel 2</i> (Sep 72–Nov 74)	50	49	1	2.0
<i>Les Trois vérités</i> (May 73–Jul 74)	27	25	2	7.4
<i>L'Avenir du futur</i> (Mar 75–87)	8	7	1	12.5
<i>L'Huile sur le feu</i> (Sep 76–Jul 77)	17	14	3	17.6
<i>L'Homme en question</i> (Oct 76–Sep 78)	9	9	0	0
<i>Cartes sur table</i> (Apr 77–Mar 81)	53	49	4	7.5
<i>Le Grand Débat</i> (Sep 80–Nov 81)	31	28	3	9.7
<i>Droit de réponse</i> (Dec 81–Sep 87)	43	36	7	16.3
<i>L'Heure de vérité</i> (May 82 to date)	246	229	17	6.9
<i>Politiques</i> (Feb 84–May 84)	9	8	1	11.1
<i>Face à la Trois</i> (Jan 85–Apr 86)	23	20	3	13.0
<i>Questions à domicile</i> (Mar 85–May 89)	50	47	3	6.0
<i>Le Monde en face</i> (Sep 87–Mar 88)	11	9	2	18.2

<i>Médiations</i> (Sep 87–Jun 92)	37	29	8	21.6
<i>La Marche du siècle</i> (Sep 87 to date)	102	94	8	7.8
<i>Aparté</i> (Oct 89–Dec 90)	12	11	1	8.3
<i>Le Point sur la table</i> (Oct 90–Jan 93)	50	49	1	2.0
<i>Direct</i> (Sep 91–Jun 92)	19	15	4	21.0
<i>Durand la nuit</i> (Sep 92–Jun 93)	39	36	3	7.7
<i>Repères</i> (Oct 92–Dec 93)	15	9	6	40.0
Totals	984	904	80	8.13%

Appendix 2

Division of the corpus according to parliamentary elections

Programme Title	No. Guests	No. Men	No. Women	% Women
BEFORE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, 12 & 19 March 1978				
<i>Face à face</i> (Jan 66–Jun 66)	9	9	0	0
<i>En direct avec</i> (Oct 66–Apr 68)	12	12	0	0
<i>Dossiers de l'écran</i> (Apr 67–Sep 91)	9	9	0	0
<i>Face à face</i> (Feb 69–Dec 69)	5	5	0	0
<i>A armes égales</i> (Feb 70–Mar 73)	66	65	1	1.5
<i>Hexagone</i> (Mar 70–Sep 72)	7	7	0	0
<i>L'Actualité en question</i> (Jan 71–Jul 72)	8	8	0	0
<i>Actuel 2</i> (Sep 72–Nov 74)	50	49	1	2.0
<i>Les Trois vérités</i> (May 73–Jul 74)	27	25	2	7.4
<i>L'Avenir du futur</i> (Mar 75–87)	1	1	0	0
<i>L'Huile sur le feu</i> (Sep 76–Jul 77)	17	14	3	17.6
<i>L'Homme en question</i> (Oct 76–Sep 78)	7	7	0	0
<i>Cartes sur table</i> (Apr 77–Mar 81)	12	12	0	0
Totals	230	223	7	3%
AFTER LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, 12 & 19 March 1978				
<i>Dossiers de l'écran</i> (Apr 67–Sep 91)	17	16	1	5.9
<i>L'Avenir du futur</i> (Mar 75–87)	7	6	1	14.3

<i>L'Homme en question</i> (Oct 76–Sep 78)	2	2	0	0
<i>Cartes sur table</i> (Apr 77–Mar 81)	41	37	4	9.8
<i>Le Grand Débat</i> (Sep 80–Nov 81)	31	28	3	9.7
<i>Droit de réponse</i> (Dec 81–Sep 87)	43	36	7	16.3
<i>L'Heure de vérité</i> (May 82 to date)	246	229	17	6.9
<i>Politiques</i> (Feb 84–May 84)	9	8	1	11.1
<i>Face à la Trois</i> (Jan 85–Apr 86)	23	20	3	13.0
<i>Questions à domicile</i> (Mar 85–May 89)	50	47	3	6.0
<i>Le Monde en face</i> (Sep 87–Mar 88)	11	9	2	18.2
<i>Médiations</i> (Sep 87–Jun 92)	37	29	8	21.6
<i>La Marche du siècle</i> (Sep 87 to date)	102	94	8	7.8
<i>Aparté</i> (Oct 89–Dec 90)	12	11	1	8.3
<i>Le Point sur la table</i> (Oct 90–Jan 93)	50	49	1	2.0
<i>Direct</i> (Sep 91–Jun 92)	19	15	4	21.0
<i>Durand la nuit</i> (Sep 92–Jun 93)	39	36	3	7.7
<i>Repères</i> (Oct 92–Dec 93)	15	9	6	40.0
Totals	754	681	73	9.68%

Appendix 3

Proportion of women in various political roles

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES (FIRST ROUND)

1965: 0 out of 6:	0%	1969: 0 out of 7:	0%
1974: 1 out of 12:	8.3%	1981: 3 out of 10:	30%
1988: 1 out of 9:	11.0%		

i.e. range from 0–30%, giving an average of 11.4%

GOVERNMENT

1983 Gouvernement Mauroy:	6 out of 43:	14.0%
1986 Gouvernement Chirac:	3 out of 38:	7.9%

LEADER OF PARTY OR PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

Arlette Laguiller

LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE

Conseils généraux:	1958–1981	between 0.8 and 2.7%
	1982–1992	between 3.8 and 9.3%
Maires:	1959–1981	between 1.0 and 2.8%
	1982–1992	between 3.1 and 5.6%
Conseils municipaux:	1959–1981	between 2.3 and 8.4%
	1983–1992	between 14.08 and 17.1%
Conseils régionaux:	1992	12.3%

EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE

1984:	17 out of 81 French MEPs:	21%
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SENATE

1960–1971: 1.7%

1974–1989: 2.6%

Appendix 4**Capacity in which women politicians appear on TV (1966–1994)**

Role	No. of Appearances
Government member	30
European Parliament member	11
National Parliament member	7
Presidential candidate	6
Party/movement leader	5
Municipal Council member	4
Head of organisation	4
Mayor	3
Parliamentary candidate	2
Assistant mayor	1
Senate member	1

Appendix 5

Division of the corpus according to government change

Programme	No. Guests	No. Men	No. Women	% Women
BEFORE NEW GOVERNMENT 22-24 March 1983				
<i>Face à face</i> (Jan 66-Jun 66)	9	0	0	0
<i>En direct avec</i> (Oct 66-Apr 68)	12	12	0	0
<i>Dossiers de l'écran</i> (Apr 67-Sep 91)	26	25	1	3.8
<i>Face à face</i> (Feb 69-Dec 69)	5	5	0	0
<i>A armes égales</i> (Feb 70-Mar 73)	66	65	1	1.5
<i>Hexagone</i> (Mar 70-Sep 72)	7	7	0	0
<i>L'Actualité en question</i> (Jan 71-Jul 72)	8	8	0	0
<i>Actuel 2</i> (Sep 72-Nov 74)	50	49	1	2.0
<i>Les Trois vérités</i> (May 73-Jul 74)	27	25	2	7.4
<i>L'Avenir du futur</i> (Mar 75-87)	8	7	1	12.5
<i>L'Huile sur le feu</i> (Sep 76-Jul 77)	17	14	3	17.6
<i>L'Homme en question</i> (Oct 76-Sep 78)	9	9	0	0
<i>Cartes sur table</i> (Apr 77-Mar 81)	53	49	4	7.5
<i>Le Grand Débat</i> (Sep 80-Nov 81)	31	28	3	9.7
<i>Droit de réponse</i> (Dec 81-Sep 87)	8	4	4	50.0
<i>L'Heure de vérité</i> (May 82 to date)	9	9	0	0
Totals	345	325	20	5.8%
AFTER NEW GOVERNMENT 22-24 March 1983				
<i>Droit de réponse</i> (Dec 81-Sep 87)	35	32	3	8.6
<i>L'Heure de vérité</i> (May 82 to date)	237	220	17	7.2
<i>Politiques</i> (Feb 84-May 84)	9	8	1	11.1
<i>Face à la Trois</i> (Jan 85-Apr 86)	23	20	3	13.0
<i>Questions à domicile</i> (Mar 85-May 89)	50	47	3	6.0
<i>Le Monde en face</i> (Sep 87-Mar 88)	11	9	2	18.2
<i>Médiations</i> (Sep 87-Jun 92)	37	29	8	21.6
<i>La Marche du siècle</i> (Sep 87 to date)	102	94	8	7.8
<i>Aparté</i> (Oct 89-Dec 90)	12	11	1	8.3
<i>Le Point sur la table</i> (Oct 90-Jan 93)	50	49	1	2.0
<i>Direct</i> (Sep 91-Jun 92)	19	15	4	21.0

<i>Durand la nuit</i> (Sep 92–Jun 93)	39	36	3	7.7
<i>Repères</i> (Oct 92–Dec 93)	15	9	6	40.0
Totals	639	579	60	9.4%

RATIO TV: GOVERNMENT (MARCH 1993 TO PRESENT)

TV: 60 Women = 9.4% of total Government: 39 Women = 12.42%

Appendix 6

Women politicians appearing more than once in corpus
(1966–1994)

Politician	No. of Appearances
Simone Veil	12
Marie-France Garaud	9
Michèle Barzach	5
Arlette Laguiller	5
Michèle André	3
Martine Aubry	3
Edith Cresson	3
Elisabeth Guigou	3
Huguette Bouchardeau	2
Monique Pelletier	2
Yvette Roudy	2
Françoise Giroud (as journalist)	2

Appendix 7

Themes of programmes involving women

Date	Prog.	Theme
17.11.70	AAE	Faut-il décoloniser la femme?
25.07.73	TV	La Famille en question

18.11.74	A2	L'Avortement
19.12.76	HF	Les Femmes et la politique
04.07.77	HF	La Consommation
28.05.79	AF	Comment seront conçus les bébés de l'an 2000
11.12.82	DR	Allez les femmes dans la politique
15.09.84	DR	Vive Monsieur le Maire [sic]
01.10.85	DE	Profession: homme politique [sic]
21.02.86	FT	Quelle France, Madame?
20.09.86	DR	La Corruption
01.10.87	MF	L'Immigration, code de la nationalité
29.10.87	MF	La Santé, le SIDA
19.12.88	MS	France, société, misère
30.01.89	Méd	La République des machos
25.09.89	Méd	Les Naufrages du crédit
23.10.89	Méd	Femmes battues, tous complices
27.03.90	MS	Etre PS en 1990
17.01.91	PT	La Situation militaire
03.04.91	MS	Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber
10.06.91	Méd	Chômage des jeunes, de la galère au colère
09.10.91	Dir	La Santé, qui va payer?
23.10.91	Dir	L'Europe de la haine
28.10.91	Dir	Proche Orient, la paix à Madrid?
13.11.91	Dir	Vie privée, vie publique
05.02.92	MS	La France malade de sa démocratie
13.05.92	MS	L'Europe de Maastricht
19.10.92	DN	Où sont passés les hommes?
19.01.93	DN	La Monarchie
16.02.93	DN	L'Ecologie

Please note: abbreviations for programme titles are based on the first letters of main words (eg. MS = *La Marche du siècle*) and can easily be identified by reference to Appendix 1.