

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY DURING THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION**



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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY DURING
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

An Abstract
Presented to the
Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Shirley Brubaker Naylor

August, 1977

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the writings of French women during the period of the French Revolution in an attempt to determine their feelings and activities in regard to women's rights, politics, philosophy, and society in general. It is hoped that an examination of the literature of this period will enable us to come to some conclusions regarding the customs, traditions, and yearnings of the advanced women of this period.

In a society in a state of flux, such as the French society was at this time, nearly every tradition and concept was under philosophical examination. Not only was the "Ancient Regime" under criticism, but the old habits and traditions as well. It is our purpose to see in what ways women were dissatisfied not only with their own lot, but the state of society generally. We are interested in bringing to light whatever opinions of French women deviated from the prevalent male view of that period.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Shirley Brubaker Naylor entitled "The Role of Women in Society during the French Revolution." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.


Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:


Second Committee Member


Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Graduate
Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

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PREFACE

The principal question to be answered in this paper is, what influence did the women have on the French Revolution? Other questions to be answered are, was this influence political, social, or was there no influence at all?

Effectively to answer these questions we must look at the education of women, the role of women in society, and that venerable old French institution, the salon.

The women to be considered in this paper will be Madame Roland and Madame de Stael who are representative of the intellectual women; Charlotte de Corday and Madame de Lafayette, the angels; Marie Antoinette, Countess de LaMotte, Countess Cagliostro, and Madame Tallien, representative of the indiscreet women of the period, and finally the common women of the period. Through a look at the lives of these women, we will be able to answer the previously mentioned questions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At this time, I would like to extend my appreciation to those who helped me prepare this thesis. I wish to thank Dr. Morris for his helpful suggestions in finding sources for the paper. I also would like to thank him for his suggestions on the organization of this paper and also for his constructive criticism.

I would like to thank Dr. Henry for his help, moral support, and his guidance while working on this paper. Also, I would like to thank Mr. Akerman for his early help and Dr. Hyatt for serving on my committee.

I would also like to thank my husband for his love, patience, and understanding during the last year. Again, I wish to thank these men for their time and assistance.

Chapter I

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

The French women were a delightful group. They were humorous, clever, unprincipled, loyal at times, and powerful. They were rulers of their house or salon. They were rulers of society and some held definite opinions concerning politics.¹

There was a definite code by which women were expected to live. They were to give the appearance of perfection and sincere politeness. The code also dictated that women should have a delicate touch in dealing with people's feelings; they also needed the ability to perceive what would cause offense. Women were to avoid unnecessary friction with others; they were supposed to learn how to praise without flattery. Added to this was a distinctive speech, manner, and wit. This was the way women were expected to act.²

Another facet of a woman's makeup was her education. Female children of wealthy families were educated in convent schools.

¹Mary E. Ponsonby, "The Role of Women in Society," The Nineteenth Century, 48: 941-54, December, 1900, p. 941.

²Ibid., p. 945.

The program for young ladies between the ages of seven and ten was somewhat rigorous. The girls were up at seven o'clock, in class by eight at which time they said catechism. Breakfast was served at nine. Music lessons were given at 9:30. Reading was from ten o'clock to eleven o'clock. Lunch was at one. After lunch was recreation. At three the girls returned to class for writing and arithmetic. At four o'clock the girls were given dancing lessons and at six the girls were to practice either the harp or the spinet. Supper was at seven and they had to be in bed by 9:30.³

As the girls became older their subjects were changed. They were instructed in recitation, history, botany, and natural history. In addition to their academic courses, they were trained in the running of the household. They were shown how to fold towels and linens; how to set a table, how to keep household accounts, how to sew and mend, how to cook, to clean, and how to serve the community in which they lived.⁴ Thus the convent gave the women an adequate education.

Those who were not quite so wealthy were educated at home by their mothers as was the case with Adrienne Lafayette. Those of the poorer class had little if any education at all.

³Ibid., p. 950.

⁴Ibid., p. 950.

Another aspect of women's life was found in marriage. Most marriages of this period were for convenience only. Happiness in marriage was considered to be ridiculous or even plebian in nature. Also happiness in love was supposedly unknown. It was not unusual in a marriage of this type for either the husband or the wife to take a lover.⁵ This was considered to be the typical type of marriage situation, but this was not always the case. One such case was the Lafayettes which will be discussed in a later chapter.

A discussion of the role of women in the eighteenth century France would not be complete without a look at the salon. As the word salon suggests, it was a regular informal gathering of men and women of intelligence and breeding. The gatherings were for the purpose of good conversation and entertainment.⁶

The woman who was in charge of the salon selected her company very carefully. She selected her group much like a conductor selects his orchestra. No single person overshadowed any other person. Each person was considered an artist in his own way.⁷ The women of these salons had the ability to converse well and lead others in good conversation. The men in the salons found compan-

⁵Ibid., p. 953.

⁶Amelia Gere Mason, "The Women of the French Salons," Century Magazine, 40 (ns 18): 356-67, etc., May-October, 1890, p. 360.

⁷Ibid., p. 358.

ions and advisers in these women. They sought the criticism and patronage of these women. This established between them an intellectual comradeship. This intellectualizing between the two sexes probably aided the cleverness of the Frenchwomen, and promoted their role in politics and society.⁸

The salons had one distinctive characteristic, and that was that they were the rallying points for the most famous women and men of the time. It was here that new plays and poems were approved or disapproved of; ministers were appointed or removed; authors and artists were brought to life; positions in the "Academie Francaise" were given here, and new philosophies were discussed.⁹

The salons were a motivating force in causing the French Revolution. The part which they played was that they acted much like the modern day newspaper except they added a more personal touch. From the salon they directed the intelligence of the age which in itself was stimulating.¹⁰

In the next chapter two famous women of the salon will be discussed, Madame Roland and Madame de Stael. Through a look at their lives we will be able to see their views on politics and society.

⁸Ibid., p. 360.

⁹Ibid., p. 597.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 891.

Chapter II

THE INTELLECTUALS

Madame Roland's early interests in politics reflected how they would affect her husband's interests, and it was to this end that she always worked. She began her first salon in Paris in 1791. The members of her salon met at her residence four evenings a week.¹¹ Petion, Buzot, the rebels of 1793, together with Madame's several friends and lovers, Bosc, Lanthenas, and Bancal formed the nucleus of her first salon.¹² Other members involved in the early party were Guadet, Gensonne, Ducos, Grangeneuve, Vergniaud, and Brissot.¹³ The political aspirations of this group were republican in nature, but they were not ready to overthrow the throne. It was to this that Manon as her friends called her, added her energy to help them pursue their plans.¹⁴

¹¹J. Mills Whitham, Men and Women of the French Revolution (New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1933), p. 127.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

¹³Louis Madelin, Figures of the Revolution (New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1968), p. 136.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 144.

The first of their plans was to make themselves known in the Assembly. One way they felt that they could make their presence known was to declare war. The Girondins felt that if war was declared against all tyrants that the whole country would rally to the defense of France, and a successful war would bring about many new converts to the Revolution. They also felt that the war would reveal the King's true feelings about the Revolution. The Girondins also felt that the war would keep the assignats from depreciating and keep the cost of living down.¹⁵ It was hoped that after this war Louis XVI would accept the ministry from the Assembly.

Finally Louis XVI was ready to accept the ministry from the Assembly. The task of reforming the government was entrusted to the Girondins. It was intended that positions go to people with varying shades of opinions such as Robespierre and Danton. It was then decided that positions would go only to those that favored Girondin policy. Posts were given to Dumouriez as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Claviere, Brissot's brother-in-law, Minister of Finance, and Ruranton, Vergniaud's friend, Minister of Justice.¹⁶

It was the duty of Dumouriez to find a Minister of Interior. A Mme. Dodun had a place at five Place Vendome. It was here at her

¹⁵Louis R. Gottschalk, The Era of the French Revolution (1715-1815) (Massachusetts: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1929), p. 198

¹⁶Madelin, pp. 146-147.

salon that politicians would gather for lunch. Roland had been invited to attend these luncheons, but he rarely came. It was here that Roland's name was suggested to be named as Minister of Interior. Brissot approved the idea at Madame Roland's suggestion. On March 21, 1792 he was given the post. On March 22, 1792 he accepted and took the oath.¹⁷ Roland felt that he had gained this job on his own merit, but in reality these men were entrusting the occupation to his wife. Roland was his wife's puppet.

After his appointment to the ministry, he and his wife moved to the fashionable Hotel de l'Interieur. She became responsible for all of Roland's official writings, edicts, reports, and decrees; she also dictated his speeches, fashioning his and the Girondin policy.¹⁸ One example of this could be seen in advice given by her to Bosc for use in the Assembly. She felt that the members' responsibilities should be clear. She told him that a national guard should be organized. She also warned that our money was being spent by princes and fugitives to buy guns to enslave the people. These were the statements he used in the Assembly.¹⁹ Another example of Mme. Roland's influence in the Convention was through Buzot. He took her ideas of federalizing France. "His voice

¹⁷Madeline Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, The Life of Madame Roland (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1930), pp. 170-171.

¹⁸Whitham, p. 133.

¹⁹Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, pp. 132-133.

in the convention was hers, his admonition of Paris hers, his angers, antipathies, and political enmities hers, his plan of war on the Montagnards, hers."²⁰

The reports that Mme. Roland investigated for her husband were numerous. She "examined provisions and supplies, the hospitals and the foundling homes; the roads, the bridges and causeways, the charitable workshops, agriculture, manufactures, arts, commerce, the public mind, and ended with eloquent patriotic exhortations."²¹ From the examples given in the last two paragraphs, it can be shown that Mme. Roland had much influence on the Girondins and her husband.

At once she took up residence in the office of the Minister of Interior. When visitors would call at the office Mme. Roland would remain. Roland would always respond that she was well aware of the affairs of the ministry. She was more at home here than Roland. She presided over the formal meetings of the ministry with the aid of deputies. She dismissed from office persons having anti-revolutionary sentiments and appointed friends that were loyal. She also inspired the semi-official press through Louvet's writings.²² Louvet was introduced to Mme. Roland by Lanthenas, a member of the Gironde. She asked him to publish a propaganda newspaper against Robespierre and in support of the administration and the constitution. The paper was called La Sentinelle. Pub-

²⁰Whitham, p. 138.

²¹Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, p. 183.

²²Madelin, pp. 148-149.

lication began May 16, 1792. The paper was financed through the Minister of the Interior for a cost of 500 francs.²³ Again she had found another outlet to express her political views.

As any politician does, she made enemies. The Girondin Party began to split. The King, watching the events closely, dismissed the Rolandist ministers (June 10, 1792). The salon became the enter of revolutionary activities--the goal was to get the Girondins back into power.²⁴

The plan to regain control of the Assembly was organized by Danton and the Gironde. The plan involved the attack on the Tuileries and the flight of the royal family to the safety of the legislative assembly chambers. It was Manon that inspired Lanthenas' movements in the suburbs of Paris. She also encouraged enthusiasm in the Marseilles troops of Barbaroux, even though she said that she had no knowledge of the riots which led to the overthrow of the King.²⁵

After the bloodshed had subsided, it was Petion who asked that the King be deposed. The royal family was imprisoned in the Temple Tower.²⁶ It was Isnard who asked the Assembly to return the ministers Servan, Claviere, and Roland to their posts. The ministers were reinstated, and Danton became Minister of Justice.²⁷ She now

²³Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, pp. 182-183.

²⁴Madelin, pp. 149-150.

²⁵Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, p. 203.

²⁶Ibid., p. 204.

²⁷Ibid., p. 205.

thought she was going to rule again, but the idea was to be short lived.

After much debate it was agreed that the King should be tried for treason. The trial began on December 11, 1792. Members of the Girondins were divided on what to do with the King; the Jacobins favored the death of the King because it would mean death to the counter-revolutionary elements in France. The trial finally came to a head on January 18, 1793. The Girondins voted for life imprisonment but were outvoted by a small majority who favored the death penalty.²⁸ Roland and his wife only wanted the King to be overthrown so that a republic could established. Roland stated that anyone in his office who voted for the King's death would be removed. In an attempt to save the King, Buzot, echoing Manon's thoughts, asked that the death of Louis XVI be ratified by the people. The resolution failed and on January 21, 1793 Louis XVI was executed.²⁹ The following day he received a letter from his wife confessing her love for Buzot. This was also the same day he resigned his post.³⁰

As a result of the death of Louis, the Girondin power began to decline. As a result of the new government, various committees were

²⁸Gottschalk, pp. 220-221.

²⁹Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, pp. 247-248.

³⁰Ibid., p. 249.

set up to control the French populace as well as the people in the government. One of these was the Committee of Public Safety which arrested the Girondins as conspirators. Twenty-five were arrested (May, 1793). Twenty-two were guillotined, among those, Mme. Roland whose death will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.³¹

Although Mme. Roland's political interlude lasted only thirty-two months and eighteen days, it brought her peace and an outlet for freeing her own identity as a woman.³² In essence it was Manon who was the power behind the Girondins, and it was her salon that wielded considerable political influence.

Another woman who had considerable political influence was Madame de Stael. Mme. de Stael's "main political goad was a bicameral constitution, a representative government based on property qualifications and a guarantee of civil liberties."³³

The members of Germaine's (Mme. de Stael) salon were Brissot and Condorcet on the leftist extreme and Barnave, Lameth, and Malouet on the other end, and her own special group, Talleyrand, Narbonne, and Montmorency. Another member of her salon was Sieyes who collaborated with Lafayette on the Constitution.³⁴

³¹Gottschalk, pp. 244-245.

³²Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, p. 135.

³³J. Christopher Herold, Mistress to an Age (New York, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), pp. 99-100.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 105-106.

Her salon was also a center for political intrigues. These intrigues were successful at the time they were instigated, but had no lasting effect. Her first plan was to gain the nomination for Narbonne as Minister of War.³⁵

At this time there were two political parties to contend with, the Girondins and the Fayettists. It was Germaine's idea to unite the two parties behind Narbonne. There were several reasons for wanting the Revolution. "Brissot and the Girondins wanted the War to consolidate and extend the Revolution. The Queen wanted war which would cause her to be saved by her brother, Emperor Leopold, from the Revolution. Lafayette and the other "Americans," Rochambeau, Custine, Luckner, the Lameths--wanted war to acquire more glory, to restore military discipline, and to strengthen the Constitution against the extremists of either side. Mme. de Stael wanted war for the same reasons, and to offer Narbonne the opportunity to play the roles of the elder and the younger Pitt combined. The emigres in the meantime were inciting the reluctant princes of Europe to crusade against the Revolution."³⁶

At first the royal family was opposed to the nomination of Narbonne as Minister of War. Had it not been for the influence of Barnave, he would not have received the nomination. With his help Du Portail was forced to resign his post. Barnave convinced Marie

³⁵Ibid., p. 106

³⁶Ibid., p. 108.

Antoinette that Narbonne was the monarch's last chance of salvation. On December 6, 1791 Narbonne was installed as Minister of War.³⁷ This was a glorious moment for Germaine.

Another plan of Germaine's was to make Narbonne prime minister. Germaine and Narbonne attempted various maneuvers to gain him the position of prime minister. This could not be done so they tried for a foreign minister. He tried to get the Minister of Marine post away from Bertrand de Molleville. On March 3, 1792, he said that he or Molleville must resign. Molleville did not resign. Narbonne and Germaine played their trump card. Lafayette, Rochambeau, and Luckner were persuaded to draft identical letters saying that if Narbonne resigned, they would resign from their commands. The contents of these letters had been written by Germaine. The letters were then published in the "Journal de Paris" on March 9, 1792. Louis XVI was forced to act. Monsieur de Grave was appointed to head the Department of War.³⁸

As a result of Narbonne's dismissal, the leaders of the Gironde and the Fayettists came together at Mme. de Stael's salon to call for a council of war. The brunt of the attack was aimed at the foreign minister, de Lessart. Brissot led the attack against him. De Lessart was accused of high treason. The Assembly voted for his arrest. The rest of the

³⁷Ibid., p. 108.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 110-111.

cabinet resigned. Even after all of this grandstanding, Narbonne was not reappointed.³⁹

Because of her many political escapades, Mme. de Stael was forced to leave Paris several times. One such time she travelled to England in 1793 to join Narbonne. It was here that they had their falling out. He blamed her for guiding him into a political cause against the King. He felt that he should have died with the King.⁴⁰

After leaving England, Germaine returned to Paris and planned to reenter politics. Her plan was to join the moderate right and left to establish the Republic. The second part of her plan was to bring peace between revolutionary France and the European Coalition. To open this campaign, she wrote a pamphlet called the "Reflection on Peace, Addressed to Mr. Pitt and the French."⁴¹ Her pamphlet pointed out that no matter how divided France was she was determined to resist any outside invasions. She also said if France fell Europe would fall. The remainder of the pamphlet was devoted to a protest against the severe policies of the allies against France. In conclusion her pamphlet wanted bygones to be bygones. Peace was the answer. She felt that through peace, revolution in the lower class would be united on the basis of

³⁹Ibid., p. 111.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 111.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 154.

private ownership and social order would be restored.⁴² Again Germaine demonstrated her ability to perceive political ideas.

Probably one of the more important of political involvements that Mme. de Stael was associated with was the Constitution of 1795. The Constitution was in agreement with her wishes. It had been constructed in the convention and in Germaine's salon. "It provided for a five man directorate, a cabinet, a bicameral legislature, and a suffrage limited to the rich."⁴³

The part of the Constitution which worried the group most was the holding of elections when there was sure to be a royalist majority. To make sure this did not happen they wanted two-thirds of the deputies of the new legislature to be elected from the outgoing Convention. Of this Mme. de Stael did not approve. She wanted to see people of her own camp elected. She was even attacked in the Convention because of her friendships with former noblemen. At the suggestion of the Committee of Public Safety, she was asked to leave Paris.⁴⁴ This "two-thirds" decree was responsible for the Vendemiaire uprising (October 4, 1795). Again Germaine was asked to leave Paris.⁴⁵

Even with the "two-thirds" decree, a royalist majority was elected in both houses. To counteract the royalist Club de Clichy,

⁴²Ibid., p. 158.

⁴³Ibid., p. 162.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 162-163.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 164.

Benjamin Constant, Germaine's lover, organized the Club de Solm, and she became the hostess for its leaders. While involved with this club she succeeded in getting her old friend Talleyrand elected to the office of foreign affairs.⁴⁶

Mme. de Stael maintained her salon even after Napoleon's coup d'etat in 1799. This salon was feared by Napoleon because her members were taken not from his enemies, but from his ministers, officials, generals, and his family. It was at her salon that they learned to be disrespectful of their master, they no longer believed in the fear that his power rested on, and they learned ideas to undermine his discipline. At his every attempt to stop her, his ministers, brothers, etc. would intervene on her behalf. Napoleon felt that to allow her to be the public conscience was dangerous. From this time on, Napoleon became obsessed wherever Germaine was concerned.⁴⁷

Napoleon's obsession with Mme. de Stael can be seen through various meetings they had. At one meeting Germaine presented Napoleon with a laurel branch. She hoped for something formidable in return. She asked, "Who is the woman you respect most?" Napoleon replied, "The one who runs her house best." She then asked him who he thought would be the greatest woman? He retorted, "The one who had the most

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 176-177.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 218-219.

children, Madame."⁴⁸

At another time Napoleon and Germaine met at the house of General Berthier. At this meeting Napoleon remarked rather brusquely, "No doubt you have nursed your children yourself." Mme. de Stael was petrified. "You see," said the First Consul to his brother, "she doesn't even want to say yes or no."⁴⁹

Even with their feelings of animosity, Mme. de Stael took every opportunity to be near Napoleon. She wanted him at her side; she wanted to influence his plans, his actions, in short she wanted to rule the state from her salon. She also wanted to show him how much power a woman could exercise over a man.⁵⁰

Having shown how Napoleon felt about Germaine, it might be beneficial at this time to show how Napoleon felt about women in general. Napoleon liked women who were soft, gentle, beautiful, and charming. He found none of these qualities in Mme. de Stael. According to Napoleon, her femininity was squelched by her keen intelligence. Mme. de Stael's pen, salon, and her involvements in politics repelled Napoleon.⁵¹ Napoleon felt Germaine was too much of a man; she was

⁴⁸Vincent Cronin, Napoleon Bonaparte, An Intimate Biography (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1972), p. 285.

⁴⁹Herold, p. 228.

⁵⁰Gertrude Aretz, Napoleon and his Women Friends (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott Company, 1927), p. 321.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, pp. 321-322.

too liberated, even in her flirting. For her to play a part on the world's stage was positively indecent as a woman.⁵² The writer feels that Napoleon's feelings concerning women were indicative of the views of most men in this time period.

Even with their intense dislike for each other, Napoleon said of her: "She was a woman of great talent and great genius; nor would it be fair to say that she was a bad woman, but she was a disturbing element and had much influence."⁵³

From the material given, it can be seen how Mme. Roland's and Mme. de Stael's salons were effective political weapons. The men would gather at these women's homes and discuss the politics of the day. The women would listen, and each in her own way would guide these men to one goal, and that was to establish a republic in France.

We have shown how these two women expressed their political ideas. Now we will see how these women felt about their role in society. It would be beneficial at this time to reiterate what society was like in eighteenth century France.

"Refinement and politeness were the rule in the aristocratic society that developed the art of living as a fine art. Rules and conventions were established, recognized, and practiced. The art of conver-

⁵²Ibid., p. 317.

⁵³Ibid., p. 327.

sation, of repartee, and gallant speech characterized all the social gatherings, where the influence of beautiful women was prominent."⁵⁴ French society of the eighteenth century gave way to the indulgence of deep feeling. It was not unusual for fashionable men and women to weep openly in public; they declared their love and friendship for each other. It was not unusual for ladies to entertain gentlemen in their bedrooms. It was not unusual for a man to keep a mistress. Education for the wealthier sons and daughters involved dancing and etiquette. Seduction was studied and practiced seriously.⁵⁵ Society was characterized by luxurious balls, the ladies wearing ornate gowns and striking head-dresses. Fashion was part of society.⁵⁶ This introduction gives a brief summary of upper class society in eighteenth century France.

As previously stated the salons were centers of conversation. Politics, literature, art, and current events were discussed. It was through these outlets that both of these ladies functioned. During the meetings of her salon, Mme. Roland would sew or write letters. Often she would clench her lips to keep from interrupting. She knew the "proper" role of her sex.⁵⁷ During the meetings, she never spoke, but she remembered everything and no one addressed her until the

⁵⁴Helen B. Posgate, Madame de Stael (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 15.

⁵⁵Gottschalk, p. 54.

⁵⁶Posgate, p. 17.

⁵⁷Catherine Young, A Lady who Loved Herself (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), p. 256.

session was over. It was after these formal meetings that she put forth her own ideas.⁵⁸ Germaine was just the opposite, she participated actively in her meetings.

Mme. Roland had certain feelings concerning the position of man. She believed in the superiority of man. She felt that a man should be proud, fierce, skillful, erudite, a master of women; yet without woman, man would not be virtuous, affectionate, generous, or happy; women had one duty--to influence the manners of men and to be constant in their hearts.⁵⁹

Mme. de Stael's feelings on men and society can be summed up in eight basic points.

1. Germaine is an extraordinary woman.
2. Society hates everything that is extraordinary, but while extraordinary men can impose themselves on society, society is absolutely intolerant of extraordinary women.
3. Men are less capable of love than women, because men always remain under the influence of society.
4. If a man loves an extraordinary woman, he enters into conflict with society.
5. In this conflict, instead of sacrificing the demands of society to his love, he will ask his beloved to sacrifice her extraordinary qualities to the demands of society.
6. The extraordinary woman, though ready to defy society, is unwilling and unable to sacrifice these qualities; after all, if the man loves her, he should love her for her qualities, not for being like any other woman.
7. With the poison of society working in him the man loses faith in the woman, misconstrues the motives,

⁵⁸ Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, p. 137.

⁵⁹ Whitham, p. 150.

listens to insinuations, yields to public opinions, and kills their love. 8. Extraordinary women are fated to be unhappy.⁶⁰

These ideas concerning women in society were put into two novels, Delphine published in December of 1802 and Corinne. Delphine reiterates the fact that men have more freedom outside of their homelife. For women the only happiness is marriage and children.⁶¹ The theme of Corinne was that of a highly intellectual woman being abandoned by her "conventional" husband.⁶²

In the end her most unforgivable sins were her independence, defiance of public opinion, unquenchable pursuit of happiness, and her feelings of superiority. In a woman these sins were unpardonable and could only be forgiven by exceptional minds.⁶³

Through these two women we have seen the traditional role of the woman, a good wife and mother (Madame Roland), and the frustrations of a woman who knew her own mind (Madame de Stael).

Thus far, we have seen the role of women in the traditional view and in the more liberated view, and the final view would be to see how their sexual interaction affected the Revolution. Both of these two

⁶⁰Herold, p. 226.

⁶¹Posgate, p. 95.

⁶²Ibid., p. 109.

⁶³Herold, p. 69.

women had several affairs; Madame Roland's affairs were mainly a meeting of intellectual minds, whereas, Madame de Stael's affairs were of the heart. These liaisons had one end--to get political leaders into positions of power so as to carry out these women's political plans.

Foremost among Mme. Roland's lovers was Leonard Buzot. She was immediately attracted to him. To her he was the incarnation of the Saint Preut in the "La Nouvelle Heloise." She fell madly in love with him. She vowed at this time she would never betray her husband and remain faithful to her duty. She was then to address her husband as "my worthy friend."⁶⁴ It was Buzot's motion of October 23, 1792 that banished the emigres from France, and if they returned they died.⁶⁵ Before her death it was Buzot's picture that she carried.⁶⁶

Germaine had a succession of lovers, none of whom brought her much happiness. Her first lover was Talleyrand. She first met him in the 1780's. She was attracted to him because of his manner and his conversation. He possessed a sweetness and delicate charm which joined together feminine sensibility and a virile intelligence and strength which appealed to Germaine. There was little passion in their relationship. Of him she required the innermost qualities of his soul and the

⁶⁴Madelin, p. 143.

⁶⁵Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, p. 230.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 296.

softness of his conversation which seemed to make her troubles vanish.

After losing him as a lover, she depended on him for happiness and started his career.⁶⁷ With her help, as previously stated, he was made a foreign affairs minister.

Her next lover was Louis, Vicomte de Narbonne. At first he was not in tune with her liberal attitudes, but after meeting Germaine he was willing to let her guide him for the next three years. When Germaine's husband heard of this liaison, he tried to forbid Narbonne to enter his house.⁶⁸ It was Narbonne who fathered Auguste. It has already been shown how Germaine helped to further his career.

Her next love was Benjamin Constant. She assisted Benjamin's political career by having him nominated as a candidate for the Tribune. She persuaded Joseph Bonaparte to promote it. He was presented to Bonaparte by a politician, Charles-Latour, another friend of Germaine's. Benjamin received his nomination on December 24, 1799. He gave his first speech in the Tribune on January 5, 1800. It was a violent attack against the government. It had been drafted under Germaine's watchful eye.⁶⁹

After Benjamin's attack on the government, Mme. de Stael received much persecution. Benjamin's speech received reviews in many French newspapers, and the brunt of the attacks were aimed at Germaine, not

⁶⁷Herold, p. 93.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 94-95.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 220-222.

Benjamin. One such attack was found in the pro-Jacobin paper, Journal de Hommes Libre. It stated, "It is not your fault that you are ugly, but it is your fault that you are an intriguer.... You know the road to Switzerland.... Take your Benjamin with you. Let him try his talents in the Swiss Senate." The royalist L'Ange Gabriel published, "She writes on metaphysics, which she does not understand, on morality, which she does not practice; on virtues of her sex, which she lacks." The journalist continued, "Benjamin will be Consul, I'll give the Treasury to papa; my uncle will be Minister of Justice and my husband will be given a distant embassy. As for me, I shall have the supervision of everything, and of course I shall rule the Institute."⁷⁰ Again these attacks showed the attitudes of men toward women who dared to get involved in affairs that were considered to be mainly men's concerns.

This chapter has given an insight into French society of the eighteenth century and the politics of this period. It has tried to show the role which French women were expected to fulfill. It has demonstrated that the French women had to endure the same inequalities as women had to endure throughout the centuries. These women used their minds as well as their seductive powers to persuade men to meet their sexual as well as their intellectual and political needs.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 221.

CHAPTER III

THE ANGELS

The two women that will be discussed in this section will be Charlotte de Corday and Adrienne Lafayette. These two women are representative of women that were good, noble, and loyal. Charlotte de Corday was representative of a woman who wanted to rid France of its diseased elements, and Mme. Lafayette was representative of the perfect wife and mother.

Charlotte de Corday influenced French politics in her own unique way. It was Charlotte de Corday who was destined to kill Jean Paul Marat. Marat began his career as an eye specialist. After the Bastille fell in 1789, Marat established a newspaper, "The Friend of the People." In this paper he attacked Louis XVI and the Assembly. Marat was elected to the Paris Commune and later to the National Convention. He was later responsible for the September Massacres in which over a thousand prisoners were killed by the Paris mob.⁷¹

It was after the September Massacres that Charlotte followed the activities of the Girondin party more closely.⁷² From then on she read

⁷¹"Jean Paul Marat, " New Standard Encyclopedia, (1973), VIII, 130.

⁷²Joseph Shearing, The Angel of the Assassination (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, Inc., 1935), p. 79.

everything that pertained to the Girondins. She was ecstatic when Roland was made minister. She felt they were true Republicans, and she desperately wanted to do this party a service.⁷³

On April 10, 1793 Marat accused the Girondins of being traitors because they attempted to save the King by leaving it up to the people of France.⁷⁴ Charlotte was convinced that Marat was an atrocious monster who dared to ask for the blood of the Girondins.⁷⁵ It was now apparent that Marat had to be dealt with. She felt that she must die for France, and that she must kill Marat at the Convention. She felt that she must die in anonymity. She felt that she was an avenging angel to free the land from a devil. With both their deaths civil war would cease at once.⁷⁶

Upon her arrival in Paris, she found that Marat was ill and keeping to his house. Her dream to be killed in front of the Paris convention vanished and the passion to kill Marat anywhere became apparent.⁷⁷

She awoke on the morning of July 13, 1793 at six o'clock in the morning. She walked to a cutlery shop and purchased a kitchen knife with a six inch blade and a black handle for two francs.⁷⁸ She proceeded to Marat's house and arrived at approximately nine o'clock that same morning. Upon

⁷³Ibid., p. 88.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 115.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 146.

⁷⁶Whitham, p. 166.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 171.

⁷⁸Shearing, p. 194.

arriving, she was denied admittance. Upset she returned to her hotel. Her next plan of attack was to write a letter to Marat. In hoping to see him, she played on his vanity. She hoped her letter would arrive before her appointment that evening.⁷⁹ She returned to Marat's between seven and eight that evening. Again the women of the household refused to allow her in but when Marat heard her voice she was granted admittance. She conversed with him as he sat in his tub; she drew out her knife, and she stabbed him through the ribs, heart, and lung.⁸⁰

It has been stated that Charlotte visited Marat while he was in his bath tub. His body was infested with diseased boils, and he took nightly soaks to ease the pain. Seeing Marat in this condition, probably made it easier to kill him. By killing the boil infested body of Marat, she felt that she was getting rid of "boils" that infested France.

The second woman to be discussed in this chapter is the wife of Lafayette, Adrienne Lafayette. She is representative of the faithful and virtuous wife. Lafayette was away from home for months, sometimes years at a time. It was during these long absences, she had time to assess her marriage. She knew Lafayette was ambitious. She knew his career would always come first, and that she would do anything to help him.⁸¹

Like many men of his time, Lafayette had affairs with other women. His first mistress was Aglae de Hunolstein. Her husband found out her indiscretion and disowned her. On March 27, 1783 Lafayette wrote a

⁷⁹Whitham, p. 173.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 174-176.

⁸¹Constance Wright, Madame de Lafayette (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1959), p. 17.

letter to Aglae ending their relationship. Aglae attempted to reconcile with her husband but failed. She then went to a convent. Even with his involvement with other women, Lafayette could always count on Adrienne being there.⁸²

She assisted Lafayette in any way she could. His charitable projects were put under Adrienne's management because he found that she had a good head for business. Other projects that she looked after were his antislavery movement, the visiting of the prisons, and prison reform.⁸³

After Lafayette resigned his post as commander of the National Guard, he returned to his boyhood home of Chavaniac in Auvergne. Here Adrienne thought at last Lafayette would be hers alone.⁸⁴ This belief was short lived because Lafayette was recalled to command an army unit. He left before the Christmas of 1791.⁸⁵

While in command he suffered serious setbacks, and he was forced to flee to Austria where he was put in prison. Shortly after this Adrienne was imprisoned in Plessis. She would probably have been guillotined had it not been for the efforts of Gouverneur Morris. He pointed out that relations would be strained between France and the United States if any harm came to Mme. Lafayette.⁸⁶ She was transferred to the Rue des Amandiers and then to the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. She was released on January 21, 1795 by the aid of James Monroe.⁸⁷

⁸²Ibid., pp. 22-24.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 27-28.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 44.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 54.

⁸⁶Andre Maurois, The Life of the Marquise de LaFayette (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), p. 258.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 286-287.

After being released from prison, Adrienne was determined to join Lafayette in the Olmutz prison. She embarked for Hamburg on September 5, 1795. She kept track of all her expenses. She left France with 1920 livres. Horses, inns, and tolls amounted to 252 livres, carriage repair and other expenses came to about 100 per day totalling 1066 livres. She arrived in Vienna with a balance of 854 livres.⁸⁸ Adrienne and her daughters reached Olmutz on October 15, 1795.

Life at Olmutz was not easy for them. A typical day began with breakfast at 8 o'clock. Adrienne and her daughters would remain in their cell until noon. The whole family would meet for lunch. Supper was at 8 o'clock and the children were returned to their cell. A doctor was brought in when necessary.⁸⁹

While incarcerated there several people tried to get the Lafayettes freed. Among these were Gouverneur Morris and Mme. de Stael. Mme. de Stael enlisted the aid of General Pichegru to gain Lafayette's release but to no avail because he was intriguing for Louis XVIII. She then persuaded Barras to convince the members of the Directory. The Directory was convinced and the negotiations were put into Bonaparte's hands. Talleyrand and Benjamin Constant accepted the conditions for Lafayette's release. Lafayette was to stay away from France for at least six months.⁹⁰ Lafayette was released on September 19, 1797 from Olmutz, in conformity with a provision

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 81.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 286-287.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 304-305.

of the Treaty of Camp Formio between France and Austria of the same year.

After Adrienne's death, December 24, 1807, Lafayette returned to her bedroom and communed with her each Christmas Eve. Every morning he would take Adrienne's Locket and look at the inscription, I AM YOURS ALONE, for a few moments.⁹¹

Mme. de Lafayette was truly a marvelous wife. She put up with his mistresses, his debts, and his politics. She basked in his glory; joined him in jail; attempted to save his fortune; but yet she waited until her dying day to tell of her great passion for him.⁹²

⁹¹Wright, pp. 264-265.

⁹²Claude Anne Lopez, Mon Cher Papa: Franklin and the Ladies of Paris (Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 198-199.

CHAPTER IV

THE VAMPS

The women to be included in this chapter are Marie Antoinette, Louis XVI's wife, Countess de LaMotte, a thief, Countess Cagliostro, mistress of the Egyptian Rite, and Madame Tallien, a seductress of men. Three of these women's lives would become interwoven with each other.

In dealing with Marie Antoinette, it would be beneficial to begin with the trial of Marie Antoinette. Her trial began on October 6, 1793. The charges against her were read on October 12, 1793. Her crimes were (1) her political relations with the King of Bohemia and Hungary; (2) she put the finances in disarray; (3) her intrigues with ministers; (4) she was accused of sending money to the emperor; (5) her negotiations with foreign powers; (6) influenced her husband to use his veto power; (7) taught the Dauphin to masturbate.⁹³ These were the charges and now we will attempt to see which were true and which were false.

Of the above charges one, three, four, five, and six, were probably more or less true. She was constantly drawn into Austria's affairs. For example, Joseph II wanted control of the River Scheldt which was controlled by the Dutch. The Dutch fired on Joseph's army. Louis XVI offered to mediate. The Dutch had to pay an indemnity to Austria. Part of this

⁹³Stefan Zweig, Marie Antoinette. The Portrait of an Average Woman (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1933), p. 428.

indemnity was paid by France.⁹⁴

It was true that she was involved with the ministers. For example, Calonne was replaced by Lomenie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, at Marie Antoinette's suggestion. She also persuaded Necker to become the minister of finance.⁹⁵ She meddled into the appointments of generals, ambassadors, and ministers. These men all were incompetent and for this reason the Queen was blamed, even though any minister would probably have failed under the circumstances.⁹⁶

Marie Antoinette was a target because the King was not capable of making a decision and her influences were stronger. Had Marie Antoinette wanted to, she could have become a very strong ruler, but she had neither the time nor the temperament for it. Her political doings were on impulse.⁹⁷

Probably the charge which received the most notoriety was the fact that she put the finances of France in disarray. Her one lavish expenditure was the Petit Trianon which was a miniature palace just for the Queen. Here she had her own dairy farm. Here she entertained her many friends. The King visited here only by request. After the King left, the gambling and other forms of revelry began again because the King did not approve of such things.

The Queen's love of amusement was a constant source of dismay for her mother, Maria Theresa. She often warned Marie against making

⁹⁴John E. N. Hearsey, Marie Antoinette (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1973), p. 67.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

⁹⁶Zweig, p. 148.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

fun of people, and making jokes with the young ladies at the court. Another source of anxiety to Maria Theresa was when Marie decided to learn how to ride. Maria Theresa remarked, "The donkeys and horses will have occupied the time for reading. Her carelessness, her lack of pleasure in any serious concentration and her indiscretion provide me with many occasions of anxiety."⁹⁸

In other letters to her daughter, she constantly urged her daughter to read good books. She said, "You need it more than other girls, because you are not accomplished in music or drawing."⁹⁹ Her reading consisted of Sullz's Memoirs, L'Etoile's novel about King Philippe Auguste, and Hume's History of England.¹⁰⁰

In other letters to Marie Antoinette, Maria Theresa advised her daughter on her marriage. She advised her daughter to become loved by the people of France and keep out of politics. Above all, she told her daughter, to make a success of her marriage. "The only true happiness in this world is a happy marriage. And that depends on the woman being obliging, gentle, and amusing."¹⁰¹ She also advised that "domestic happiness consists in mutual trust and kindness. Passionate love soon disappears!"¹⁰² Again from this advice that Maria Theresa gave her daughter, one can see that the woman's duty was to her husband and her family.

⁹⁸Andre Castlelot, Queen of France (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957) pp. 47-49.

⁹⁹Vincent Cronin, Louis and Antoinette (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1975), p. 52.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁰²Castlelot, p. 10.

The Queen was most remembered for the "Diamond Necklace Affair." The jewelers for the necklace were Bohmer and Bassenge. It was originally made for Madame du Barry, mistress to Louis XV, but he died before he could make the purchase.¹⁰³ The necklace totalled 2,800 carats. The price of the necklace was to be one million, six hundred thousand francs.

The necklace was first offered to Louis XVI at the birth of their daughter Madame Royale. The Queen refused the offer because of the expense. In 1782 he again proposed the necklace to the King. The King wanted to purchase it on the installment plan, but again the Queen refused. She said that she would not wear it.

Bohmer who was becoming anxious offered a commission of 1,000 louis to sell the necklace. This is where Countess de LaMotte enters. She was supposedly descended from the illegitimate son of Henri II who legitimized him as Henri de Valois, Baron de Saint-Remy.

After years of roaming about France with her husband, the pair went to Paris. They were always in debt. It was for this reason that she came into contact with Cardinal de Rohan. She received a series of small loans from him.

It was under a false title as Countess de LaMotte that she persuaded Rohan that the Queen wanted to buy the necklace. He was to sign the agreement and the Queen would reimburse him out of her own private funds. The Cardinal readily agreed because he wanted to regain the Queen's favor. The necklace was delivered on February 1, 1785. After obtaining the

¹⁰³Frances Mossiker, The Queen's Necklace (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), pp. 35-36.

Note: All references pertaining to the "Diamond Necklace Affair" are taken from this reference.

necklace, the Countess broke up the necklace, put some in her own jewelry, and she arranged for her husband to sell the rest in London.

The Queen received a letter from the jeweler saying he was pleased about her purchase. After she read his note, she did not know what he was talking about so she burned it.

Cardinal Rohan began to become a little apprehensive when the time to pay the first installment came, and he had not received word from the Queen. Mme. de LaMotte wrote a letter to Rohan, signing the Queen's name, saying she could not pay the first installment but would pay two installments at a later date, and she sent along 30,000 lire to pay as interest. A messenger was sent to Rohan saying that he had been deceived about the necklace. The messenger was sent by the Countess de LaMotte.

On August 8, 1785 the Queen had been informed about the deception. Rohan was arrested on the Feast of the Assumption and was put in the Bastille. On August 20 Jeanne LaMotte was arrested. Rohan was acquitted. Jeanne LaMotte was branded with a V(voleuse, meaning thief) and was put in prison. She escaped two years later. Instead of Rohan receiving punishment, it was Marie Antoinette who was belittled.

The last of her crimes with which she was charged was that she taught her son to masturbate. This charge was untrue. The crux of the matter was that the young Dauphin had injured his testicle. A doctor was brought in to examine the child, and his mother told him never to mention it to anyone.

The jury deliberated from midnight to four o'clock in the morning. She was found guilty of all charges. She was guillotined.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Zweig, p. 442.

The next coquette to be studied is the Countess Cagliostro. Born Lorenza Feliciani, she was the daughter of Giuseppe Feliciani, a tin founder living in Rome. It was here that Count Cagliostro met her, although he was Giuseppe Balsamo then, and did not claim to be a count until later.

When married, Cagliostro was twenty-five and she was fourteen. Her people were well-to-do, and she brought him one hundred fifty scudos worth of costumes, jewels, money, and linen. This dowry was matched by the future (and pretended) count.

The marriage was performed on April 20, 1768.¹⁰⁵ The future charlatan, grand master of the Egyptian rite of free-masonry, and husband of the future "countess" advised her to be pleasing to men in order to lure them. According to him, "adultery is not a sin if a woman commits it for gain, rather than out of simple love for another man."¹⁰⁶ In other words, the relationship between the two was of an exploitative nature, with the woman being the victim.

Giuseppe then met a man named Alliata, and they set up a crude print shop. They forged money, bonds, etc. Lorenza then would take the money and put it in her bosom and this would give it the look of use.¹⁰⁷

From Spain they went to London. Lorenza had a Quaker gentleman up to her room. Her husband breaks in and collects 100 pounds to protect

¹⁰⁵Robert Gervaso, Cagliostro (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1974), pp. 32-33.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 35.

the gentleman's reputation.¹⁰⁸ They used "badger" games similar to this all over Europe to pay their expenses.

The Balsamos finally came to Paris. It was here that he was admitted to the freemasons--"Hope" Lodge Number 289. After being admitted to the Masons he became Count Cagliostro and his wife became Countess Serafina.¹⁰⁹ Shortly after this Cagliostro originated the Egyptian Rite. This was an unusual branch of the freemasons. The women's sector was ruled by Serafina, the Queen of Sheba.¹¹⁰

Having developed an unusual knack for healing illnesses, he was summoned to Cardinal de Rohan's in 1781. His Uncle, Prince de Soubise, was dying of scarlet fever. Cagliostro cured him. Rohan became Cagliostro's patron.¹¹¹ While he was with the Cardinal, he became involved in the "Diamond Necklace Affair." Rohan asked Cagliostro to predict how the affair would go. He predicted that all would go well even though he did not believe it. He said this to stay in good graces with Rohan.¹¹² Cagliostro was acquitted. He was ordered to leave Paris within eight days and be out of France in three weeks. He left the next morning.¹¹³

After this the Count's prestige began to decline. Serafina being used

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 67.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 75.

¹¹¹Ibid., pp. 99-100.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 142.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 158.

to luxury did not stay with him very long. He died in prison on August 27, 1795.¹¹⁴ She remained loyal to him as long as he had money, prestige, and power.

Mme. Tallien is the last in the series of foolish women, or "vamps" to be considered. Tallien and his future wife, Theresia Cabarrus, met while she was in prison at Bordeaux. He was acting as a representative of the Convention, and proceeding with the punishment and execution of opponents in the area of Bordeaux. They became lovers at this time.¹¹⁵

Tallien returned to Paris. While there Tallien apparently became aware that Robespierre, "the Incorruptible," had become aware of Tallien's being bribed by Bordeaux residents who desired to save their relatives' lives. Fearing execution, Tallien and others sprang the trap on Robespierre in the Convention which resulted in the end of the Terror and of the Jacobin rule. The Thermidorians came to power, of whom Tallien was one of the chief men.

But the traditional story was different. The French press told the delightful story of Theresia, facing execution, smuggling a letter asking for help to her lover, Tallien. To save her, he stirred up the convention against Robespierre.¹¹⁶

The newspapers found out that Tallien's overthrow of Robespierre was due to love for Theresia, and made a great love-story out of it. He was

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 240.

¹¹⁵L. Gastine, Madame Tallien, Notre Dame de Thermidor (London: The Ballatine Press, 1913), p. 4.

¹¹⁶Ibid., pp. 2-3.

portrayed as rushing to the prison to release her and they emerged from the incident not only as the overthrowers of the Reign of Terror as personified in Robespierre, but as romantic lovers. Romance, freedom, success, the end of the Terror--all combined to make the newly married couple social lions. Certainly marriage was expected of them. They had money, Tallien was a Thermidorian official, and yet this marriage was a marriage of convenience forced on them by circumstances and by what was expected of them by the press and public. Increasingly it became a loveless union.¹¹⁷

The greatest contribution of Theresia Cabarrus was in the salon she maintained for her husband. At this time he had great possibilities for advancement, and the salon was important. When his incapacity became evident, the importance of her salon declined markedly.¹¹⁸ To combat his waning popularity, Tallien decided to become a traitor of the Republic. Theresia was too ignorant, too hedonistic, and too vain to use her charms to gain a position in the government for her husband.¹¹⁹

Tallien was sent to La Vendee to observe the executions of two hundred emigre soldiers. These executions were responsible for unmasking the legend of Madame Tallien because in the legend Madame Tallien had been responsible for saving lives. Since Tallien had been responsible for these executions, it was more than she could bear. She then became the mistress of Barras.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 77.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 111.

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 124-125.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 107.

Theresia never gave her husband any effective support and there seems to be no evidence to show her involvement in politics. Instead she chose to be dazzling and beautiful, and expensive.¹²¹

We have briefly gone through the lives of four women. They had two things in common; they were all very beautiful and seductive, and they remained loyal to their men as long as they were rich and powerful.

But they were not intellectuals. They were not widely read. They were not educated. In effect, two were exploited by their husbands for material gain, and seemed satisfied with the arrangement as long as crumbs fell from the table for them.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 112.

CHAPTER V

THE COMMON WOMEN

Probably the best known incident involving the common woman was the march on Versailles. On October 5, the women of Paris marched. Many of the so called women were men disguised as women. They marched to the Hotel de Ville, and they took all the pikes and muskets. They knew the National Guard would not fire on women. Maillard persuaded the crowd to go on to Versailles and demand bread and bring the King back to Paris. Between 6,000 and 7,000 women, along with the disguised men marched on Versailles. Among the group were fish-wives, peddlers, vagrants, hookers, and market women. While marching it began to rain, and they pulled their skirts above their heads. They planned to cut Marie Antoinette's throat. Many went to the National Assembly to demand a search of the houses for bread and flour. Louis ordered that the women be given their bread. Louis was returned to Paris with his family.¹²²

Benjamin Franklin was in France during the bread shortage. Franklin commented on the waste of flour on the coiffures of the aristocratic ladies. His remarks were directed toward Turgot. "You have,

¹²²Hearsey, pp. 115-117.

in France, an excellent way of waging war without spending any money. All you have to do is to agree not to get your hair curled and not to use powder as long as it will last. Your hairdressers will make up the army; their pay will come from your savings, and their food from the grain you usually devote to hair powder."¹²³

Another example of women's involvement in the Revolution was the formation of women's battalions in 1792. The men felt that this was challenging their sole right to patriotism and glory in the Revolution. Although the battalions were not allowed, the women would go with their husbands or lovers and would often join in the fighting. For example Louise Michel, a school teacher cared for the wounded and then participated in the battle.¹²⁴

The men of the revolutionary 1790's did not want to admit that women could be responsible to themselves. Women should remain unbiased and passive and under their husbands' guidance. By taking the revolution seriously, these women were forced to fight the prejudices of even the men who were on their side. The results of their attempt to be more liberated were unfortunate. Louise Noel, concierge, Jeanne Layment, parsol-maker, Eugenie Lhilly, cook, Eulalie Papavoine, seamstress, Elizabeth Retiffe, cardboard maker, and Marie Wolf, rag-picker were given hard labor and then executed.¹²⁵

The common woman, during the French Revolution, shared their men's hatred of privilege. They yearned for equality and brotherhood.

¹²³Lopez, pp. 202-203.

¹²⁴Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), pp. 104-105.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 105-106.

Although they realized that equality between the sexes was a long way off, they hoped that the destruction of privilege and the economic restrictions of mercantilism would bring a better world. They realized that to this dream opposition came not only from the aristocracy of France but the aristocracy of Europe, and that sacrifice was necessary to overcome this opposition. They were ready to support the Revolution by moral support and even armed despite opposition from home and abroad.

Yet the common woman was a woman interested in security, finances, and politics. She was primarily interested in her family and its welfare. To her the Revolution was a means of securing these objectives, not an end in itself.

The everyday tasks of cooking, cleaning, taking care of her children, and providing for her family took precedence over all other considerations. It was small wonder, then, that in a man's world, the contributions she made were mainly of a supportive nature. They could not be compared with those of Mme. de Stael or Mme. Roland. But to thousands of Frenchmen who lived and died for a new world--for liberty, equality, and fraternity--her contributions must have been real indeed.

CHAPTER VI

THE GUILLOTINE

Of the women that have been discussed, Madame Roland, Charlotte de Corday, Marie Antoinette and many of the common women fell to the guillotine; Madame de Stael escaped this fate. During this period numerous women and men were guillotined. A following of the Jacobin calendar can show how more and more people were sentenced to death. The executions were as follows: "Vendemiaire, 3 women (including Marie Antoinette) and 7 men; Brumaire, 3 women (including Madame Roland) and 62 men; Frimaire, 10 women (including Madame Dubarry) and 57 men; Nivose, 10 women, 51 men; Pluviose, 8 women, 60 men; Ventose, 11 women (including Princess Elizabeth), 327 men; Prairial, 33 women, 476 men; Messidor, 93 women, 703 men; Thermidor, first to ninth, 59 women, 283 men. If Robespierre had not been overturned, and Thermidor had continued as it had begun, the monthly number of women would have risen to 177."¹²⁶

There are several cases which can be studied to show why these women met their deaths. One such case is the "Virgins of Verdun." The town of Verdun was invaded by the Prussians in August, 1792. The town surrendered peacefully. Shortly thereafter a Prussian army officer was killed, and the town feared that the surrender would be

¹²⁶J. C. Alger, "Women in the Reign of Terror," Living Age, 192: 606-12, March 5, 1892, p. 607.

undone. To appease the Prussians, some of the young girls of the town went to the Prussian camp, bearing gifts and food. These young women were later brought to trial because it was felt that it was the women who were responsible for the anti-revolutionary faction of the town. It was also felt that these women would teach their children anti-liberty sentiments. The women were executed on March 10, 1793.¹²⁷

Madame Roland was arrested in June, 1793. This time the arrest was illegal. She was then set free only to be arrested legally and was imprisoned at Sainte-Pelagie.¹²⁸ On November 8 or the 18th Brumaire, Mme. Roland was brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The Tribunal brought in a verdict of guilty. She was to be executed.¹²⁹ While awaiting her execution, she remarked, "we (women) are more useful to society by virtues than by our intelligence."¹³⁰ She was executed at five o'clock that afternoon. As she was about to be decapitated she proclaimed, "Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name."¹³¹

Another lady guillotined in the name of Liberty was Charlotte de Corday. Her trial began at eight o'clock in the morning. The jury took an hour and a half to decide her fate. Many thought she would be freed because the jury took so long. The verdict returned was guilty. She was guillotined July 17, 1793 at five o'clock in the afternoon.¹³²

¹²⁷Ibid., pp. 607-609.

¹²⁸Clemenceau-Jacquemaire, pp. 282-284.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 317.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 323.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 324.

¹³²Shearing, pp. 254-255.

The guillotine made no distinction in social class. Women of high class, middle class, and the low class were all subject to the guillotine. If these women chose to mix into politics, then they must accept the risks and consequences. Women increasingly were subject to political reprisals if they participated in politics. This was an advance toward sexual equality, although probably the victims did not appreciate it much.

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding chapters, we have seen the role of women in several social classes during the Revolution. Their political philosophy aspired to see a Republic established in France modelled after the Republic in the United States of America. To achieve this goal they used their minds and their powers of seduction.

We must remember that in the eighteenth century French society demanded certain requirements of their women. Women were taught to be cunning, soft of temper, obedient, and proper. Women were taught to please and their main goal in life was to please. This was supposed to bring them the protection of a man. If women dared to be different, then society ostracized them. It was the duty of a woman to be a good wife to her husband and a good mother to her children.

In the introduction, it was stated that the main question to be answered was what influence did women have on the French Revolution? In the writer's opinion, the influence was minimal. They tried to influence the political scene but to no lasting end. There are reasons why the women were not as effective as they would like to have been.

Women had a responsibility to their families. They had to see to the education of their family. They had to run the household (cooking, cleaning, preparing menus, keeping of the household accounts, etc.). One also must take into consideration the fact that these women did not have the labor saving devices that we have today.

In effect had the women of this period had more leisure time, they could have had a more effective influence on politics and society. The goal that these women had was admirable. They were interested in restoring man's dignity and developing his own goodness. This would result in better development of society. The end product would be a better understanding of Fraternity, Equality, and Liberty.

That they did not achieve this goal was not the fault of the more advanced and intellectual of the sisterhood. They probably never regretted having made the attempt. Working, as they must, through other men, they used the influence God gave them as well as they knew how. The world is in their debt, and two centuries later the influence of women was notably better partly because of their efforts, and yet the words of Mme. Roland still echo in our ears--that the best influence of woman lies in their virtuous influence on man.

Certainly this influence was absent in many women of the Revolution. At a time when morality and honesty was "for the birds," women like Mme. Tallien provided little that was moral and good and idealistic. They lived for the moment, and little of importance survived them.

Perhaps women's greatest achievement during the Revolution was precisely what it is today. Perhaps it consisted of love of husband, love of family, service to the home, security for the husband and family, and providing men, sons, and daughters for the succeeding generations.

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