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▶ To cite this version:

Véronique Léonard-Roques. Collective and individual emotions in Revolutionary Paris through the optic of Helen Maria Williams, Félicité de Genlis, Germaine de Staël, and Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun. Brian Cowan; Pascal Bastien. Emotions and the City: Urban Sociability in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France, Routledge, In press, Routledge Studies in Eighteenth-Century Cultures and Societies. hal-04800914

HAL Id: hal-04800914

https://hal.univ-brest.fr/hal-04800914v1

Submitted on 24 Nov 2024

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Collective and individual emotions in Revolutionary Paris through the optic of Helen Maria Williams, Félicité de Genlis, Germaine de Staël, and Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun

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Social historians have clearly demonstrated the extent to which emotions came to the fore during the French Revolution.[1] The rapid collapse of a centuries-old regime brought powerful affective issues in its wake, and no one was left untouched by the series of face-paced events which followed. Furthermore, the immediate realisation of the seriousness and exceptional nature of the situation heightened contemporary sensibilities.

In Paris, the theatre of decisive episodes, certain insurrectionary movements were to some extent the fruit of spontaneous emotion. Political leaders were, however, keen to channel passionate reactions into their social regeneration projects. In order to frame the nature of these emotional responses and issues – and the turnarounds which occurred as events became more radical – we shall refer to eye-witness accounts[2] by four female authors who followed different trajectories. Although they did not share the same backgrounds or political opinions, British-born Helen Maria Williams and French women Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, Germaine de Staël and Félicité de Genlis, knew each other and even met on occasion as they belonged to the intellectual and artistic élites of the day. They described the exacerbation of feelings of love and hate and the repercussions of these feelings on gender and class relationships in these extremely turbulent times.

Firstly, their texts will be used to examine the extent to which sociability was affected by extreme emotions, both collective and individual. We shall then explore through these authors' writings how certain places in the capital, which were spatially

organised or repurposed to foster a new revolutionary sociability, became powerful focal points for collective emotion.

I- Extreme emotions and a new social contract

Collective emotions were sometimes spontaneously generated by an unexpected turn of revolutionary events (the constitution of the Assemblée Nationale,[3] the Tennis Court Oath,[4] the storming of the Bastille,[5] the women's march on Versailles[6]). Other emotional manifestations stemmed rather from the channelling and instrumentalisation of emotional resources by political leaders. The many civic festivals which punctuated the revolutionary years offer examples as "they play a key role in maintaining collective cohesion and orchestrating political support."[7]

One of these festivals, the Festival of the Federation in 1790, quickly became established in people's memories as the preeminent and even iconic model of "unanimity of feeling, which was the aim of this festive policy, whose cracks became apparent as political radicalisation intensified."[8] Just like British traveller Helen Maria Williams, Germaine de Staël, the daughter of Jacques Necker, a very popular minister from Geneva, described the "patriotic enthusiasm"[9] which accompanied the three-week long preparations required for this gathering on 14 July 1790.[10] According to their accounts, the outpourings of joy and demonstrations of emotional cohesion were extreme. "Spectators were exhilarated," wrote Staël, who championed the idea rooted in the empirical philosophy of Locke and Condillac that "In fact, if truths of a certain description are self-evident instead of requiring to be taught, it is enough to exhibit them to mankind in order to gain their attachment".[11] The senses (notably sight) and sensibility are a source of knowledge. This idea of continuity between body and mind, the individual and the community[12] also underpins the Williams's writing about the Festival of the Federation. The author draws in particular on the lexicon of the heart to describe the emotional contagion during this ceremony: "I acknowledge that my heart caught with enthusiasm the general

sympathy; my eyes were filled with tears."[13] The intensity of the joy experienced on the Champ-de-Mars by the 500,000 participants was prompted in part by the feeling of entering into spontaneous communion with perfect strangers. This new phenomenon was amplified in the late 18th century, when city implied anonymity. Furthermore, the collective support expressed during this festival seemed to transcend differences of sex, class and even nationality in a general consensus around a new social contract designed to be universal and symbolised by the taking of oaths. According to Williams, "this was not a time in which the distinctions of the country were remembered. It was the triumph of human kind […] and it required but the common feelings of humanity to become in this moment a citizen of the world."[14]

This feeling of closeness to and emotional reciprocity with total strangers can also be found in the enthusiastic description of the early days of the Revolution penned by Félicité de Genlis, even though she published her *Mémoires* in 1824-1825, under the Restoration. She had close connections with the Orléans dynasty as governess responsible for the education of the Duc d'Orléan's children, and relates how as someone in favour "of the reform of certain abuses", she went to watch the spectacle of the Bastille being demolished, which inspired "the deepest emotion and joy".[15] She added that she was also overjoyed at the "vengeful" act directed at "this terrible monument to despotism" carried out by participants no longer separated by distinctions of age, sex or class:

> This redoutable fort was swarming with men, women, and children working with unprecedented ardour, even on the highest parts of the building and its towers. This surprising number of willing workers, their activity and enthusiasm […] these vengeful hands which seemed to be those of Providence, and which annihilated with such speed the work of several centuries, this whole sight also spoke both to the imagination and the heart.[16]

In the light of the exceptional scenes verging on the sublime, and the intensity of the emotion they experienced, both Genlis and Williams preface their descriptions with apophasis, underscoring the limitations of language and their accounts. For Genlis, "It is impossible to imagine this sight, you have to have seen it to describe it as it was"[17]; and Williams claims: "I promised to send you a description of the federation: but it is

not to be described!"[18] The use of apophasis appears to be not only a rhetorical technique, but also the expression of a sincere awareness of the inadequacy of language to convey the unprecedented event, and an assertion that there is no substitute for direct observation.

However, in the event of complete ideological opposition, or when the reciprocity initially felt disappears following a radical turn of events, then fear and violence take the upper hand. With the onset of the first revolutionary events in 1789, this "unparalleled year",[19] people began to flee abroad. Vigée Le Brun, portrait artist to Queen Marie-Antoinette and a loyal monarchist, felt that Paris was populated with "outlaws" hostile to "honest people"[20] and that "society" was in "in a state of total collapse".[21] Because of the threat she faced due to her connection with the court, she hid in the homes of various friends. Such was her terror, that she claimed to have fallen so seriously ill as to be unrecognisable. She left France on 6 October 1789, stating "Fear affected everybody"[22] in an ideologically-focused text in which her general aversion for the revolutionary process is apparent.

By breaking ranks with this ongoing process of social reconstruction, émigrés became enemies. They could be the target of individual or collective manifestations of violence and compensations on the grounds of class or sex. During this unruly and unstable period, emotions prompted a "relaxation of social and moral control mechanisms"[23] which was accompanied by a heightened sense of virility. When she fled, Vigée Le Brun was in the grip of extreme fear and experienced a strong sense of isolation, exacerbated by the dense urban environment and her own prejudices about the lower classes, whom she perceived to be unruly. In her account of events, the use of "us" and "we" is no longer indicative of a community including the narrator. This explains why the fugitive's carriage had to be escorted by several male riders: "My brother, dear Robert, [the painter Hubert Robert] and my husband accompanied me to this barrier without leaving the door of the stagecoach for a second,"[24] states Vigée Le Brun. The "barrier" in question is the Barrière du Trône tollbooth, reached by crossing the very populist faubourg Saint-Antoine. Germaine de Staël and Félicité de Genlis

depict this experience in similar terms, although they emigrated or re-emigrated at a later date, in the last months of 1792, when social tensions had increased due to civil war and foreign conflict.

"Monsieur de Sillery, Monsieur le duc de Chartres and my nephew accompanied us [i.e. Genlis and the daughter of the Duc d'Orléans] as far as the border; I was very relieved as the populace had become frightening in their tone and manners,"[25] wrote Genlis in the description of her departure, on 2 December 1792.[26] The Other, be they male or female, was no longer that stranger with whom there was an affinity based on a feeling of fraternity and the abolition of differences experienced during moments of collective euphoria (such as the dismantling of the stones of the Bastille or the Festival of the Federation). They had metamorphosed into an "implacable"[27] savage enemy and class differences and stereotypes re-emerged with a vengeance. However, in the eyes of these people (who included members of the National Guard[28], sans-culottes[29], and *poissardes*[30]) whom our authors from higher social strata believed to pose a threat, flight represented a fear of a return to what Roland Mousnier terms a "society of orders". This was active counter-revolution within and beyond the borders of France.

The departures of Genlis and Staël occurred at a time when the radical project for a new form of social and political organization was beginning to take shape with the abolition of the monarchy and the institution of the First Republic.[31] Against the backdrop of the introduction of this new sociability, sans-culotte aspirations to a regime based on direct democracy (as was already being practised in some district sections) were growing stronger. Staël describes in particular the aggression directed at the upper classes: "I was being driven at walking pace through a huge crowd who were hurling death threats at me; it was not me they were abusing, hardly anyone knew me at the time, but the large coach and braided coats represented in the eyes of the people those they should slaughter".[32] For an author steeped like so many of her contemporaries in Rousseauist thinking,[33] the people had ceased to be perceived as just, good and magnanimous, probably because Staël believed that they were now

being manipulated by the Jacobins[34]. The "early days of the national coming together"[35] when "ideas reigned, not individuals"[36] were long gone.

II- Social projects and emotional investment in the public space: spontaneity versus manipulation

Certain sites in Paris which had been transformed by the effects of riots and uprisings were cleverly redeveloped to serve the social regeneration project. Spatial organisation or repurposing also involved places which the leaders themselves elected to transform because of their symbolic significance. The public space (streets, squares, tribunes of the Assemblée or clubs, revolutionary sections, etc.) was characterised by a strong emotional current which the authorities were keen to exploit in order to channel or orchestrate to create unity.

After the dismissal of Minister Jacques Necker on 11 July 1789, Paris rose up and superseded Versailles, where the Assemblée Nationale, now a Constituent Assembly, still sat. The people took up arms by forcing their way into the underground areas of the Hôtel des Invalides. Lacking gunpowder, they made their way to the Bastille and seized supplies there with the help of troops of *gardes-françaises*, who were infected by this collective energy and changed sides. Although it was a site of bloodshed during the attack, the former state prison, a symbol of the arbitrary nature of royal power, became a locus for scenes of jubilation. Thus, "the silence of a country governed by a court was exchanged for the sound of the spontaneous acclamations of all the citizens. The minds of the people were exalted; but as yet there was nothing but goodness in their souls,"[37] declared Staël nostalgically, referring to this episode which she believed to be an iconic example of general unanimity. While observing the demolition of the fortress on the basis of an immediate decision by the Commune de Paris,[38] Genlis and her pupils remained at a discreet distance, possibly because the "governor" of the Duc d'Orléans' children was keen to ensure that his illustrious

charges were not caught up in any potential excesses or incidents caused by the collective outpouring of joy.[39] A year later, on the evening of 14 July 1790, a *bal populaire* was organized, which Williams describes with enthusiasm as it was held on the ruins of the fortress which were now covered in greenery, as if to symbolise more effectively renewal and the re-establishment of the social contract:

> The ground was covered with fresh clods of grass, upon which young trees were placed in rows [...] Here the minds of the people took a higher tone of exultation than in the other scenes of festivity. Their mutual congratulations, their reflections on the horror of the past, their sense of present felicity, their cries of 'Vive la Nation', still ring in my ear![40]

The celebration of the first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille also led to huge works in another location described by Staël and Williams. The Champ-de-Mars, a space located on the outskirts of the city, was organised with references to an imagined Antiquity (with an amphitheatre and triumphal arches) and was chosen to host the huge crowd whose affects had to be channelled and focused on the project to regenerate the nation.[41] These preparations prompted a crowd of Parisians from every milieu (including "women of the highest rank" according to Staël [42]) to come forward, eager to be involved in the project. The festival itself appeared to spontaneously inspire collective support, but it was actually carefully planned and orchestrated. Even Williams[43] who, carried away by her enthusiasm for revolutionary ideals, crossed the Channel to observe the progress of events as they unfurled, observed in the course of in her account: "Such was the admirable order with which this august spectacle was conducted."[44] She emphasises that the leaders of the Revolution had a finely-honed understanding of the human heart:

> The leaders of the French Revolution are men well acquainted with the human heart. They have [...] studied to interest in their cause the most powerful passions of human nature, by the appointment of solemnities perfectly calculated to awaken that general sympathy which is caught from heart to heart with irresistible energy, fills every eye with tears, and throbs in every bosom.[45]

The day after the storming of the Bastille, the Hôtel de Ville became the seat of the Paris Commune, a fully-fledged component of revolutionary power with administrative and political authority. Général de Lafayette was appointed head of the

Paris militia, renamed the *garde nationale*, and Bailly became the city's first mayor. The popular uprising of 10 August 1792, which marked the suspension of the monarchy, led to the dictatorship of the Commune, which favoured Jacobins and sans-culottes. The Commune took precedence over the Assemblée and had a significant impact on the Revolution against the backdrop of war with Austria and Prussia. Emigré departures came under even closer surveillance. Madame de Staël was therefore taken to the Hôtel de Ville on 2 September 1792 by sans-culottes when she attempted to flee Paris. Her status as Swedish ambassadress afforded her no immunity from arrest, especially as she was travelling in particularly ostentatious style, accompanied by servants in full livery:

> Scarcely had my carriage advanced three steps when, at the noise of the whips of the postilions, a swarm of old women, who seemed to issue from the infernal regions, rushed on my horses, crying that I ought to be stopped, that I was running away with the gold of the nation, that I was going to join the enemy […] These women gathered a crowd instantly, and some of the common people, with ferocious countenances, seized my postilions.[46]

When she stepped out of her carriage, Staël was confronted by an "armed multitude"[47] unmoved by her pregnant condition. Keen to hide her terror, she describes passing under an "arch of pikes (metonymy referring to the arming of the sans-culottes) and climbing the steps of the Hôtel de Ville, the very spot where she observes that "several people had been slaughtered on 10 August".[48] She adds that "No woman had yet perished; but the next day the Princess of Lamballe was murdered by the people, whose fury was already such that every eye seemed to demand blood."[49] The fact that the seat of the Commune was located on the place de Grève, where executions were carried out and where the guillotine was first used on 25 April 1792, would certainly have reinforced Staël's fear that she too would be killed.

Her imprisonment at the Hôtel de Ville, from which she was discreetly removed at nightfall, meant that she was the appalled spectator of horrific scenes, as from her window she described seeing "the assassins returning from the prisons with their arms bare and bloody, and uttering horrible cries."[50] On 2 September, massacres in prisons began which brought he revolutionary process into disrepute in the eyes of Europe.

These massacres marked a turning point in collective public sensitivity vis-à-vis violence.[51] The Revolution was now on the increasingly bloody slope to the Terror, which would be symbolised by another Parisian site.

Significantly, after the abolition of the monarchy, place Louis XV (the modern-day place de la Concorde) was renamed "place de la Révolution". In the darkest days when executions were being held in such rapid succession, sometimes without trial, that the blood shed by victims barely had time to dry, the decision was made to install the guillotine on this open square with an unimpeded view which was a thoroughfare and could accommodate far larger crowds than the place de Grève or the place du Carrousel. This method of execution which initially sought "equality at the scaffold" and the "end of the social hierarchy in and through capital punishment"[52] became a "political instrument" introducing "theatricality and an emotionally complex dimension".[53] As observed by Daniel Arasse, "the execution is the occasion of a perfectly regulated staging, involving at the same time a stage location, actors and an audience […] The singular quality of the theater of the guillotine is due to the fact that one really dies there and that, for each actor, the play can only be performed once".[54] By eliminating alleged enemies of the nation and the people, the spectacle of the guillotine inspired collective emotion which blended joy and horror with the aim of uniting the community to end the Revolution and bring about the new social programme for a perfectly egalitarian and virtuous society. Insofar as "each execution was to be a commemoration",[55] the spectacle of the guillotine which brought men and women of all ages and social classes together, represented the dark side of civic festivals. In the eyes of the Jacobins, this spectacle is sublime, as is the revolutionary enterprise itself: "faced with the execution of those who pass for their enemies, the people witness a spectacle where, like the Kantian spectator of a raging storm, he shudders at the terrible nature of what he sees while enjoying the fact that he is protected from it".[56] The fact remains, that for many people, even those who supported the fall of the Ancien Régime, the guillotine was the symbol of revolutionary horror. Moreover, the acceleration of executions and "the frightening regularity of the machine" limit the expression of the sublime to the extent that the latter feeds on the

rarity of a phenomenon or a spectacle: chain executions "have much more the appearance of a neutral serialization, of a regular production of death where the reliability of the machine is put at the service of an industrialization of capital execution, indefinitely and identically repeatable".[57]

Williams was the only one of the authors studied here to have seen it in action. She compared the atmosphere on the place de la Révolution in April 1794 to her experience on the place Louis XV shortly after her arrival in Paris:

> We were obliged to pass the square of the revolution, where we saw the guillotine erected, the crowd assembled for the bloody tragedy, and the gens d'armes on horseback, followed by victims who were to be sacrificed, entering the square. Such was the daily spectacle which had succeeded the painted shows, the itinerant theaters, the mountebank, the dance, the song, the shifting scenes of harmless gaiety which used to attract the cheerful crowd as they passed from the Tuileries to the Champs Elysées.[58]

The vocabulary employed refers explicitly to the world of the theatre. Williams associates the use of the place de la Révolution with the genre of tragedy in which victims are an expiatory sacrifice to bring an end to chaos and heal fractures in the community. By contrast, she recalls how the same square was a locus for heart-warming popular spectacles when she arrived in France. The woman whom we recall shed tears of joy at the Festival of the Federation in 1790, could not cry in this atmosphere. She was only able to weep freely once she had left the city corrupted by violence and crimes which she calls "the polluted city of Paris"[59] far behind. On observing the sight of benevolent and harmonious nature: "The tears which the spectacle of the guillotine had petrified with horror now flowed again […]."[60] After the Festival of the Supreme Being on 9 June 1794, the guillotine was moved from the former place Louis XV and erected on the outskirts of the city in order to limit its visibility and all executions were carried out there, with the occasional exception.[61] Under the French Directory, the place de la Révolution was significantly renamed the place de la Concorde.

Conclusion

The French Revolution was an extreme moment which was partly the product of spontaneous emotions valorised by the Rousseauist notions which influenced many revolutionaries: unanimous surges of anger and hatred vis-à-vis social injustices, and emotional outpourings of communion and fraternity expressed as a deep aspiration to transform society. This unstable and tumultuous decade was also the source of a large range of powerful emotions, fabricated in part by leaders, notably through federative festivals and a rolling programme of executions. In the words of our eye-witness authors, certain scenes in Paris, a city which was viewed as huge and heavily populated, verged on the experience of the sublime as described by Edmund Burke[62] since on the one hand the subject felt overcome and lifted to a higher plane by the grandiose nature of what they were experiencing, yet on the other hand these scenes could produce a feeling of terror mingled with joy.

However, in a politically unstable period, characterised by shifts in the balance of power, affects themselves were equally unstable. The radicalisation of the Revolution and deviations from its original course revealed the original heterogeneity of those who believed themselves to be “patriots” and who had been united by transports of joy in the early days. Thus, Genlis took refuge temporarily in England on 11 October 1791 on the pretext of taking the waters in Bath, before emigrating, like Staël, in the last months of 1792.[63] By contrast, Williams, who retained her belief in revolutionary ideals even when she was imprisoned from October to December of 1793, lived in Paris util June 1794, and returned after the fall of Robespierre.

Although an aristocrat such as Genlis, a *grande bourgeoise* like Staël, and even the more modest middle-class Williams, were deeply moved by the demonstrations of collective cohesion which occurred during the collapse of the Ancien Régime, this was not sufficient to bridge the social divide they felt vis-à-vis the people, even in the most powerful moments of general euphoria. Two examples demonstrate this. In order to observe the demolition of the Bastille, Genlis and her pupils did not stand in the public space, but watched from a private space (the garden belonging to the playwright Beaumarchais). They did not therefore mingle with the lower orders dismantling the

former state prison stone by stone. This spatial distance, mixed with a sense of intellectual superiority, can be identified in the episode of a festive event narrated by Williams: the ceremony in Paris organised on 15 April 1792 in honour of the soldiers from Château-Vieux. The narrator observed the procession making its joyous way towards the Champs-de-Mars from the balconies of the Palais-Bourbon. She and her friends were initially booed because they had been mistaken for aristocrats, and she wrote: "The people do not always reason very logically; and therefore, instead of concluding, as they ought to have done, that since the aristocrates of the Palais de Bourbon were fled, those who remained behind were probably good patriots, their conclusions took quite another turn".[64] Once they had been disabused, the populace began shouting "Long live the Englishwomen!" to these spectators looking down on them.[65]

Staël and Williams did not display any solidarity or empathy with the women of the lower orders who filled the public space (streets, public galleries of political assemblies[66]) and generally supported the Jacobins. They refer to them in pejorative terms (reminiscent of James Gillray's caricatures), using some of the cliched expressions current at the time such as comparisons with the Furies of antiquity. Williams writes of "old women who seemed to issue from infernal regions" or "serviceable auxiliaries to the conspirators" who "held deliberative assemblies, and afterwards presented their views to the convention, while they influenced its debates by their vociferations in the tribunes".[67] In October 1793, Williams acquiesced to the closure of women's clubs, which put an end to the political emancipation of women, and their right to suffrage in particular.[68] In the case of Williams and Staël, a blend of class prejudice and attachment to an order that could be described as "bourgeois" prevailed over the expression of any potential sisterhood.

In conclusion, it is not surprising that our four authors all expressed their fear of being victims of sexual violence in the city of Paris, which was in a state of turmoil. Two of them mention the specifically female experience of pregnancy. Staël highlights the coarseness of the sans-culottes at the Hôtel de Ville who made no concessions for

her condition, and Vigée Le Brun symbolically stresses the weakness of this generation and the next: “I felt sorry for the pregnant women I saw walking past; fear seemed to cast a yellow pallor over them; I noticed that the generation born during the Revolution is much less robust than the previous one; how many sickly and ill children must have been brought into the world during that sad time”.[69] As a construct pursued by the strongly unifying work of the revolutionaries, the Nation,[70] in terms of organic solidarity and a community of perfect reciprocity, remained a utopian dream.

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[1] See Guillaume Mazeau, "Emotions politiques: la Révolution française", in Alain Corbin (éd.), *Histoire des émotions*, t.2, Paris, Seuil, 2016, p.129-188.

[2] These are non-fictional writings: an essay for Germaine de Staël (*Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française*, 1818), an epistolary viatic relationship for Helen Maria Williams (*Letters from France*, 1790-1796) and memoirs for Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun (*Souvenirs*, 1835-1837) and Félicité de Genlis (*Mémoires*, 1825). The works of Staël, Genlis and Vigée Le Brun were written after the events described.

[3] 17 June 1789.

[4] 20 June 1789.

[5] 14 July 1789.

[6] 5 October 1789.

[7] All the quotations from Guillaume Mazeau have been translated in English by the author. G. Mazeau, “Emotions politiques : la Révolution française”, *op. cit.*, p.178.

[8] *Ibid.*, p.177.

[9] G. de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française* [1818], in *La passion de la liberté*, Paris, Laffont, 2017, p.453.

[10] All the quotations from F. de Genlis, G. de Staël and E. Vigée Le Brun have been translated in English by the author. “Women in the front row joined the crowd of volunteer workers who had come to help prepare for the festivities”: G. de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française* [1818], *op. cit.*, p.453.

[11] *Ibid.*, p.453.

[12] See Michel Delon, “L’éveil de l’âme sensible”, in A. Corbin (éd.), *Histoire des émotions, op. cit.*, p.16.

[13] Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Written in France in the Summer 1790 to a Friend in England*, London, T. Cadell, 1790, p.69.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Mémoires de Mme la comtesse de Genlis sur le XVIIIe siècle et la Révolution françoise*, vol. 3, Paris, Ladvocat, 1825, p.262.

[16] *Ibid.*, p.261-262.

[17] *Ibid.*, p.261.

[18] H. M. Williams, *Letters Written in France in the Summer 1790, op. cit.*, p.64.

[19] Michel Winock, *1789, l’année sans pareille*, Paris, Perrin, 2004.

[20] Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, *Souvenirs* [1835-1837], Paris, Classiques Champion, 2015, p.255.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] G. Mazeau, “Emotions politiques: la Révolution française », *op. cit.*, p.160.

[24] E. Vigée Le Brun, *Souvenirs, op. cit.*, p. 258.

[25] F. de Genlis, *Mémoires*, Paris, Mercure de France, 2004, p.336.

[26] This was the second time she had left France. Mme de Genlis had already left for England escorted by a Jacobin, Pétion, on 11 October 1791. On 20 November 1792, she was forced to bring the daughter of the Duc d'Orléans back to Paris.

[27] F. de Genlis, *Mémoires, op. cit.*, p.345.

[28] “the national guard was so singularly composed that it offered a mixture as bizarre as it was frightening” : E. Vigée Le Brun, *Souvenirs, op. cit.*, p.255.

[29] “the common people, with their fierce faces […]” : G. de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française, op. cit.,* p.506.

[30] “a swarm of old women, out of Hell, throws itself on my horses”, *ibid.*

[31] 21 September 1792.

[32] G. de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française, op. cit.,* p.507.

[33] As Bernard Manin explains, “Rousseau exercised a ‘magisterium of opinion’ over the Revolution: his influence was exerted above all through a certain number of ideas and very general principles: regeneration, the autonomy and unity of the people, equality, the goodness of the people, the ideal of virtue [...] Their relative indeterminacy contributed in a decisive way to their appeal. [...] Their relative indeterminacy contributes decisively to their appeal” [our translation]. See B. Manin, “Rousseau”, in François Furet et Mona Ozouf (éd.), *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française* [1992], t.4, Paris, Flammarion, 2017, p.473-479.

[34] In line with the Revolution of 1789 and the Constitution of 1791, Staël defends private property. *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française* emphazises this point.

[35] G. de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française, op. cit.*, p.404.

[36] *Ibid.*, p.454.

[37] *Ibid.*, p.398.

[38] The decision was taken on 16 July 1789.

[39] Similarly, on 15 April 1792, Williams observed from a balcony the jubilant crowds at the festivities organised in honour of the soldiers of Château-Vieux. See *Letters from France*, vol. 2, London, G. G. and J. Robinson, 1792.

[40] H. M. Williams, *Letters Written in France in the Summer 1790*, *op. cit.*, p.72-73.

[41] See Mona Ozouf, *La Fête révolutionnaire. 1789-1799*, Paris, Gallimard, 1976.

[42] G. de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française, op. cit.,*p.453.

[43] On Williams's writing of the Fête, see Kimberley Page-Jones and Véronique Léonard-Roques, “Festive Spaces and Patriotic Sympathies in the Letters of Rachel Charlotte Biggs and Helen Maria Williams”, *Sociable Spaces in Eighteenth-Century Britain : A Material and Visual Experience*, *Etudes Anglaises. Revue du monde anglophone*, 74/3, 2021, p.353-372.

[44] H. M. Williams, *Letters Written in France in the Summer 1790, op. cit*., p.70.

[45] *Ibid*., p.90.

[46] G. de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française, op. cit.,* p.506.

[47] *Ibid*., p.507.

[48] *Ibid*.

[49] *Ibid*.

[50] *Ibid*., p.508.

[51] See G. Mazeau, “Emotions politiques: la Révolution française”, *op. cit*., p.183.

[52] Pascal Bastien, *Une histoire de la peine de mort. Bourreaux et supplices. Paris, Londres, 1500-1800*, Paris, Seuil, 2011, p.289.

[53] Anne Carol, “Devant l’échafaud: du spectacle de la douleur au théâtre pédagogique”, in A. Corbin (éd.), *Histoire des émotions*, t.2, *op. cit*., p.207.

[54] Didier Arasse, *La guillotine et l’imaginaire de la Terreur* [1987]. Paris: Flammarion, 2010, p.144-145. All the quotations from Didier Arasse have been translated in English by the author.

[55] P. Bastien, *Une histoire de la peine de mort, op. cit.*, p.293.

[56] D. Arasse, *La guillotine et l’imaginaire de la Terreur*, *op. cit*., p.148.

[57] *Ibid*., p. 176.

[58] H. M. Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France* [1795], vol. 2, in *An Eye-Witness Account of the French Revolution by Helen Maria Williams. Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France*, Jack Fruchtman, Jr. (ed.), New York, Peter Lang, 1997, p.140.

[59] H. M. Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France* [1795], vol. 1, in *An Eye-Witness Account of the French Revolution by Helen Maria Williams*, *op. cit.,* p.108.

[60] H. M. Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France* [1795], vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p.141.

[61] See P. Bastien, *Histoire de la peine de mort, op. cit*., p.295.

[62] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1757.

[63] "[...] Reflecting on the horror and strangeness of a situation that forced two children and a woman, who cherished their homeland, to take refuge in a nation united against ours [Belgium], and to flee from the French, their compatriots, with the fear that we would fall into the hands of implacable enemies, my heart clenched and my eyes filled with tears", F. de Genlis, *Mémoires,* vol. 4, *op. cit.*, p.183. Vigée Le Brun, loyal to the Bourbons, emigrated in October 1789, accompanied only by her ten-year-old daughter and her daughter's governess. Of her arrival in Italy, she wrote: "I cannot tell you what I felt as I crossed the Pont de Beauvoisin. Only there did I begin to breathe, I was outside France, which was nevertheless my homeland, and which I reproached myself for leaving with joy", *Souvenirs*, *op. cit.*, p.260.

[64] H. M. Williams, *Letters from France containing many new anecdotes relative to the French Revolution, and the Present State of French Manners*, London, G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1792, p.145-146.

[65] *Ibid.* Anglophobia was used politically in 1793-1794. Williams was imprisoned for several months. See Diana Cooper-Richet, *La France anglaise. De la Révolution à nos jours*, Paris, Fayard, 2018, p.33-44.

[66] See Dominique Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses. Les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française* [1988], Paris, Perrin, 2004, p.263-284, and E. Melzer et Leslie W. Rabine, *Rebel Daughters. Women and the French Revolution*, Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

[67] H. M. Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France* [1795], vol. 1, *op. cit.,* p.95.

[68] When women tried to take on traditionally masculine social functions (taking up arms, fighting, acquiring civil rights, helping to make the law), Williams showed distrust and disapproval.

[69] E. Vigée-Le Brun, *Souvenirs, op. cit*., p.255.

[70] See Pierre Nora, "Nation", in F. Furet and M. Ozouf (éds.), *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, *op. cit*., p.339-358.