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**“LE CORPS PETIT, MAIS L’ÂME GRANDE”:
VOICING A WOMAN’S AMBITION IN LOUISE DE KERALIO**

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“Moi je n’ai que la voix.” *Mercur national*, 1790

Historian, translator, publisher, novelist, and journalist, polemicist and political activist during the French Revolution, Louise de Keralio (1756–1822) challenged prevailing gender roles by her ambitious incursion into areas considered the sole province of men. For these achievements and the feminist conviction they seem to embody, she has in recent years attracted attention from a wide spectrum of critics, including historians Annie Geffroy, Carla Hesse, Nicole Pellegrin, and Christine Fauré, philosopher Karen Green and literary critics Joan DeJean, Eliane Viennot, and Margarete Zimmermann. Yet, with respect to feminism,¹ she presents something of a conundrum: her repeated endorsement of gender stereotypes and her antifeminist pronouncements simply do not jibe with the message spoken by her bold actions and writing projects. In an oft-quoted remark, she defends, for instance, “la continuation de la Loi Salique chez un peuple trop mâle pour exposer vingt-quatre millions d’hommes à confier jamais aux mains d’une femme ce pouvoir exécutif, qui émane d’eux seuls” (*Journal d’État et du citoyen* 1 Oct. 1789, 157). As a result, one critic finds herself forced to admit: “Pour moi, l’antiféminisme de Louise, incontestable, reste une énigme, car sa pensée duelle-sexiste est en contradiction avec sa pratique, pionnière, de journaliste politique et de militante” (Geffroy, “Républicanisme sexiste” 122).² To shed light on this apparent contradiction between her “masculine” endeavors and authoritative voice, on the one hand, and her espousal of normative femininity, on the other, I will examine the discursive strategies she adopts to express her gender-nonconforming ambitions at key moments in her writing.

Dilemma: corps petit, âme grande

From the beginning, we find Keralio chafing under gender constraints. In the wake of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his followers, she perceives insurmountable boundaries put up by nature and society between the roles of women and men and between their differing expressions of gender. “Le grand Rousseau,” as she calls him (*Collection* I: 173; V: 59, 463), had sharply delineated gender roles in his *Émile* (1762), famously proclaiming “toute l’éducation des femmes doit être relative aux hommes” (455; book V). Women could contribute to the regeneration of society only by being virtuous wives and mothers. Yet, in a 1777 letter to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, a disciple of Rousseau, the young Keralio reveals her greater ambition: “j’ai le corps petit, mais l’âme grande, je me crois née pour la société et non pour moi” (Robert, letter 3).³ In light of her entire corpus, this avowal begs to be read metaphorically as a conflict between body and mind, between the restrictions imposed in her view by nature and culture on her female body, her “corps petit,” and the aspiration,

coded masculine, of her “*âme grande*” for something bigger than herself, a grand project that benefits the whole of society and not just the circumscribed domestic circle to which her female body consigns her. The problem for Keralio is that she views herself through a model of femininity that disallows her intellectual ambitions. Influenced by Rousseau, she sees progressive thinking as inextricably intertwined with restrictive gender norms. This double bind will haunt her for her entire career, informing a lifelong trajectory of audacity and accommodation. How could she express herself *as a woman*, with the modesty and reserve attendant upon her “*corps petit*,” and at the same time satisfy the exigencies of her “*âme grande*”?

Her first publication, *Essai sur les moyens de rendre les facultés de l'homme plus utiles à son bonheur* (1775), an anonymous translation—signed simply Mademoiselle***—of an essay by the English medical doctor John Gregory could hardly solve this dilemma. Gregory's *A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man, with Those of the Animal World*⁴ reflected the latest in medical and philosophical thinking about gender. Echoing Rousseau, he argues that men and women, though equal, have irreconcilably different natures, hence different personal traits and radically different roles to play in society.

Si nos procédés à leur égard étaient plus généreux et plus honorables; une fierté décente, une dignité intérieure, et le sentiment de leur propre mérite les engageraient à s'efforcer d'être telles en effet qu'elles voudraient qu'on les crût, et que la nature les a faites, nos compagnes et nos amies. C'est toutefois ce qu'elles ne seront jamais en abandonnant le caractère qui leur est propre pour adopter le nôtre. Les deux sexes étant destinés à des rôles très différents sur la scène humaine, naissent avec des caractères très différents; ce qui les rend plus capables de remplir dans la société leurs devoirs respectifs. [. . .] La plus grande gloire des femmes consiste à vivre retirées dans leurs familles, à être amies, femmes et mères. (177–79)

In venturing to express herself in the public arena for the first time and in keeping with scientific progress, Keralio finds herself obliged to repeat, through the act of translation itself, the restrictive norm of femininity that is sustained by the new discourse of sexual difference in the eighteenth century.⁵ This powerful male-inspired discourse of incommensurable difference would preclude the realization of the ambition Keralio voices in the translator's foreword to offer readers in the future something more than “*ce faible essai*” (vi), something more than a mere translation. From the beginning, the manifestation of her ambition as a writer is both enabled and undercut by the necessary repetition of a gender norm that denies her that ambition. For Keralio, publishing seems to entail espousing the point of view of a masculine *nous* and reiterating the prevailing *doxa* about womanhood.

A Utopian Dream

In *Collection des meilleurs ouvrages français composés par des femmes* (1786–1789), Keralio personifies the contradiction between the vastness of her ambitions and the limits of her gender by contrasting Héloïse and Christine de Pizan. Although she extolls them both for their enormous erudition, she presents Héloïse as superior to Christine: “Christine, toute supérieure qu'elle ait été aux femmes de son siècle, fut très inférieure à Héloïse, qui ne l'était pas même aux hommes les plus célèbres du sien” (I: x). Keralio's version of Héloïse downplays her femininity in favor of her intellectual prowess, her virtual equality with Abélard, and most importantly her “*éloquence mâle*” (II: 127). She casts her as an intellectual in dialogue with the most brilliant man of her era and as superior to all other

men. For Keralio, Héloïse is proof of women's "facilité à entreprendre la vaste carrière des sciences" (I: 298). "C'est le sentiment propre du génie de se transporter toujours au-delà des bornes qui lui sont prescrites," she observes (I: 337). Héloïse acquires the status of role model in that she was able to transgress the prescribed boundaries of her "corps petit," without being vilified as unfeminine, in order to realize the intellectual aspirations of her "âme grande," all the while earning the esteem of her male contemporaries for her accomplishments.

Keralio lavishes nearly five hundred pages on Christine de Pizan. She prides herself in making available to her readers Christine's works in unpublished manuscripts, including *La Cité des Dames* and the letters on *Le Roman de la Rose*, both written in defense of women against misogynist texts. She lovingly reproduces miniatures from the manuscripts. In the frontispiece she commissioned for volume one, Christine appears as a precursor who likewise composed a compilation proving women's contributions to civilization. The allegorical figure of History in the engraving singles out a medallion of Christine on a commemorative column and her *Cité des Dames* is the only title given among the many books and scrolls on display. In other respects, Christine mirrors Keralio: they both owed their education chiefly to their fathers; they both undertook pioneering projects that defied the codes of normative femininity. Yet, in the *Collection*, she turns out to be an ambiguous reflection of Keralio's ambitions. For, unlike Héloïse, Christine de Pizan remains anchored in and hampered by her indomitable femininity.

Or rather it is Keralio who is hampered by her intransigently binary notion of gender, as the prevalence of words such as "bornes" and "franchir" and related spatial metaphors whenever she is referring to sexual difference attests. When Christine discusses astronomy in *Le Chemin de longue étude*, Keralio notes her confusion, explaining that such fields are "fort au-dessus de sa capacité, et pour dire vrai, fort au-dessus des lumières de son sexe [. . .]. La force et la hardiesse du génie de l'homme lui rendent propre[s] à lui seul de pareilles connaissances" (II: 322–23). Keralio reserves her harshest criticism of Christine for those works which cross over into so-called "masculine" disciplines, such as the military arts ("ce que l'éducation, comme la nature, a refusé aux femmes"; III: 107) and history (which requires "la dignité noble et mâle" of the historian; II: 212). So locked is she in this stereotyped binary thinking that she proffers it herself, admonishing women to remain "par un jugement sain dans les bornes qui leur sont prescrites" (II: 323; emphasis mine).

Yet Keralio obviously found such limitations personally intolerable and we see this as well in her discussion of Christine. In these self-revelatory instances, she puts into play two strategies that allow her to say what she believes her gender requires her to hide. One of these is the "between men" tactic she had used in her first signed work, the translation of Henry Swinburne's *Voyages dans les deux Siciles*, which she presented to the public with requisite humility for her "faibles lumières" (*Voyages* iii) under the auspices of her father, the dedicatee, and Swinburne, who had reviewed her translation. Another is recourse to a convoluted, ambiguous style. We find both in an important passage for understanding her position on gender. It is sandwiched between two pioneering scholarly articles on Christine de Pizan that had been published in *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*.⁶ Keralio's father was a member of that academy. As in the Swinburne translation, she writes under the protection of two male authorities, in the limited space of a mere two pages shielded by their lengthy articles, and under the implicit tutelage of her father. She uses this narrow opening to both camouflage and express a utopian dream.

La douceur de l'âme et des expressions de Christine de Pisan, donne à ses ouvrages un degré d'intérêt, dont le style de son siècle semblerait peu susceptible aujourd'hui. Qu'on ne s'attende pas à trouver en elle ce degré d'éloquence mâle et sublime que l'énergie d'une violente passion avait fait atteindre à Héloïse. Christine n'avait pas comme elle reçu de la nature ce génie supérieur qui lui avait fait pénétrer les secrets des plus hautes sciences, et qui, dans les siècles les plus éclairés, aurait fait d'elle un prodige parmi les hommes. Christine nous présente partout une femme douce, paisible [. . .]; une personne instruite, éclairée, mais simple et modeste. C'est vraiment l'image de ce caractère heureux que semblent toujours annoncer et que malheureusement ne réalisent pas toujours, les traits délicats d'un sexe timide, en qui les passions, soumises aux lois invariables de la décence et de la pudeur, doivent être modérées par l'habitude. Mais s'il existait un pays où quelques femmes, dépouillant la timidité que la nature imprima dans leur âme avec le sentiment de leur faiblesse; déguisant sous des ornements étrangers à leur sexe, la douceur de leurs traits et la modestie de leur maintien; contractant les habitudes, prenant le ton, l'extérieur, le son de voix, et même peut-être le langage d'un sexe hardi, dont la force et la témérité sont le partage; franchissant ainsi les barrières qui doivent les séparer, invitassent elles-mêmes les hommes à les franchir; Christine de Pisan, et sa douce morale, ne feraient pas fortune auprès d'elles. [. . .] elle serait regardée comme un être fantasque, inventé par des philosophes chagrins, et réalisé par la faible imagination d'esprits sans énergie. Mais aussi, où sont les femmes capables de penser et d'agir ainsi. On les blâmerait sans doute, on les plaindrait plus encore. Et s'il en est peut-être qui, séduites par le bruit, l'éclat, la flatterie et les applaudissements, sont devenues assez insensées pour se croire heureuses, elles font pitié! Laissons cette image idéale, sans doute, on se plaît à le croire, et retournons à Christine de Pisan, vraiment femme, femme aimable, qui malgré ses idées de la vertu et de la religion, [. . .] ne bannissait de la société, ni l'enjouement, ni les plaisirs, ni même l'amour. (II: 127–29)

The epitome of femininity, Christine—"vraiment femme," "douce, paisible," "éclairée, mais simple et modeste"—lacks the successful combination of masculine and feminine traits that Héloïse embodies. She lacks both the "éloquence mâle et sublime"⁷ of her medieval predecessor and the superior genius that put Héloïse on an equal intellectual footing with men and allowed her to become, what Christine in Keralio's view was not: "un prodige parmi les hommes." But Christine realizes an ideal of femininity that women, subject centuries later to the same inflexible laws of decency and modesty, rarely achieve. It becomes clear that, despite all her praise for Christine's extraordinary erudition, Keralio thinks of her more as a social and moral model than an intellectual one.⁸ For a woman intellectual like Keralio, that is not enough. Hence the tortuous, run-on sentence expressing her utopian dream of a country where a few women (a few exceptional women like herself?) might set aside their innate timidity, disguise their socially prescribed feminine modesty and assume a bold and powerful male voice, where they could lead both men and women across the rigid barriers of incommensurable difference. For such women, Christine would hardly represent an ideal. Keralio will adopt precisely the virile tone and the demeanor she attributes to these utopian women in her revolutionary writing just two years later. But here she remains apprehensive or simply prudent and the text veers ambiguously in another direction; for the pivotal sentence "Mais aussi, où sont les femmes capables de penser et d'agir ainsi" could refer positively either to the utopian women or to Christine since the passage is about her. The next sentence makes the new focus clear. The disapproving gaze of society reasserts itself and the *cri du cœur* must be repressed: for, even if women capable of acting and thinking like those utopian women could be found, they would surely be blamed and pitied. In an abrupt about-face, Keralio concurs with society's condemnation of such happily ambitious women: "elles font pitié!" Yet, in

another twist that betrays her inner struggle, she leaves behind with apparent regret “cette image idéale, sans doute” of women, but also men, partaking freely in the qualities of both sexes unimpeded by the barriers of gender. She barely conceals this personal regret behind the pronominally ambiguous “on se plaît à le croire” and the repetition of “sans doute.” The final image of Christine may seem more balanced and positive than the earlier prudish one, but it doesn’t really resolve the issue originally raised of the regrettable limitations of gender. Ambiguity continues to cloud the *both/and* rather than *either/or* position on gender Keralio seems to embrace in her utopian vision, so as to ensure her the ongoing esteem of her readers.

Revolutionary Rhetoric

The Revolution gave her a chance to deploy her own “éloquence mâle et sublime” when, in August 1789, she became the first woman in France to publish a political newspaper, *Journal d’État et du citoyen*. To understand how she could speak in it so boldly and authoritatively as a woman, yet rail against women’s public activity—“Des femmes! toujours des femmes dans tout ce qui menace la France! [. . .] partout où l’on a vu des femmes dans ce qui tient à la chose publique en France, partout on les a vues dans l’ivresse!” (*Mercur national*, 22 Aug. 1790, 445)—we must flash forward to two letters written three days apart in October 1789.

On October 7, she writes to her publisher Maradan, telling him how busy she is: “J’ai mon journal à faire, et de plus, un très grand ouvrage dont je suis chargée par l’assemblée nationale. Vous pouvez imaginer que comme ce n’est pas un petit honneur surtout pour une femme, je tâche à y mettre tout ce que j’ai de facultés.” This is the ambitious enterprising Keralio who is proud *as a woman* of having been chosen to produce an important work for the all-male National Assembly. Even if the “très grand ouvrage” cannot be identified,⁹ it is obvious that she revels in this public recognition of her talents and her status as an active member of the body politic, and she wants to shine. She wants to be seen as “un prodige parmi les hommes.”

Three days later, she pens a letter to Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville, a family friend, a prominent supporter of the Revolution whom she admired, an acolyte of Rousseau and, like herself, a publisher of a political newspaper, *Le Patriote français*. The tone, the content and the rhetoric are astonishingly different. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the letter is that it is written in the third person. It is in her own handwriting, so the third-person usage cannot simply be ascribed to a secretary writing in her name.

Mlle De Keralio [. . .] est bien satisfaite de ce [que M. Brissot de Warville] a dit aujourd’hui sur [l’affluence?] des femmes; il est fort dans les principes de Mlle de Keralio qu’elles doivent peu se donner en spectacle [. . .]. Le grand amour de la publicité nuit à la modestie; de la perte de ce grand bien, naît le dégoût pour les occupations domestiques; de la désœuvrance [sic] naît l’oubli des principes, et de la perte des mœurs naissent tous les désordres publics. [. . .] elle voudrait qu’on fût obligé de les chercher dans l’intérieur de leur maison, et qu’elle fissent désirer leur présence, en la rendant plus rare, en l’accordant, pour ainsi dire comme une faveur.

C’est une des régénérations de la France et surtout de Paris [. . .]; les hommes seront occupés désormais, et par conséquent moins attentifs à l’apparition fréquente des objets inutiles ou frivoles. Les femmes [. . .] auront recours aux occupations paisibles et utiles que la nature leur assigne; l’éducation changera, et dans la génération prochaine, nous aurons moins de ces petits êtres amphibies dont l’aspect gênait si cruellement Mlle de Keralio qu’on a souvent traité de prude et de bigote (quoi qu’elle ne soit ni l’un ni l’autre) [. . .]

lorsqu'elle [. . .] cherchait en vain, la douceur, la modestie, la pudeur, qu'elle imaginait gothiquement qui devaient être le partage d'un sexe faible et timide.

Elle est vraiment enchantée que M. Brissot de Warville lui ait fait une petite leçon, et ce ne sera certainement pas elle qui lui en fera un crime. (Letter to Brissot)

What prompted Brissot's "petite leçon" and her obsequious echo of it? The answer, it seems, is the women's march on Versailles on October 5 to protest the shortage of bread in Paris. It resulted not only in the king's acquiescence to their demands and his acceptance of the National Assembly's declaration of rights and articles of the constitution, but also his return to the capital the next day, escorted by the women and the men who had joined them. Power had shifted to the common people. On October 8, Keralio and Brissot had each published an article about these momentous events in their respective newspapers. On October 10, Brissot made a speech about them to the National Assembly on behalf of the Paris Commune (Lacroix 245; *Archives parlementaires* 405).

In his accounts, Brissot essentially edits out the women's agency, even avoiding the word "femmes" as much as possible. He describes the women's raiding of the coffers at the Hôtel-de-Ville before they marched on Versailles as "revolting" (*Patriote français* 8 Oct. 1789, 2). He portrays their entry into the National Assembly as a religious transgression committed by a genderless "on" and their speech as indecent: "Les bons citoyens [. . .] regretteront sans doute qu'on ait violé la sainteté d'une Assemblée nationale, par des clameurs indécentes" (ibid. 3).¹⁰ His preoccupation throughout is to assure that order has been restored, that one should cast a veil over the riots (address to National Assembly, *Archives parlementaires* 405), a "moment de délire" that will not be repeated (ibid. 406), but rejoice over the positive outcome, the king's return to the capital. Brissot's account reaffirms patriarchy. He portrays the king as a benevolent father who treats the women with kindness and returns to Paris, not under duress, but to be close to his "children." And he charges the all-male National Assembly to provide its "lumières" to the uneducated and childlike "people [. . .] égaré" (ibid. 406, 405).

In Brissot, women embody a disorder and indecency that must be quelled; in Keralio, they are hailed as heroines, who rose above the limits of courage of their sex (*Journal d'État et du citoyen* 176). For her, they are "ces courageuses Citoyennes" who accompanied members of the National Assembly to the king, "malgré les avis imprudents de quelques membres qui voulaient les en faire retirer" (ibid. 177). Unlike Brissot, she concludes with a positive assessment of the common people's intellectual faculties and the women's part in that historic day: "Le succès de cette superbe journée est dû à la combinaison singulière des idées d'un peuple spirituel et ferme dans ses résolutions; au courage des femmes, qui ont été vraiment des héroïnes" (ibid. 180; italics mine).

Given the timing, Brissot's "petite leçon" was likely a reprimand for her approval of the women marchers' unruly activism. Rather than maintain her ground, Keralio retreats into a stance of normative femininity. This alone will guarantee her Brissot's continued esteem. This alone will allow her to continue writing her newspaper and speaking out on political matters *like a man*.¹¹ This alone will enable her to continue following the dictates of her "âme grande" for the betterment of society. As in the translation of Gregory, she must echo the Rousseau-inspired gender norm in order to maintain a public voice. But she no longer has to do it in the guise of a "faible femme." From her work on the life of Queen Elizabeth (*Histoire d'Élisabeth, reine d'Angleterre, 1786–1788*), she has learned that, if she proclaims the norm of incommensurable difference a requisite for *other* women rather than advocate a feminist *both/and* ideal—note her rejection here of "ces petits êtres amphibies"—she does not have to perform femininity herself. Hence the strident sexist

proclamations in her revolutionary writing that contradict her own behavior and strong, authoritative voice, and that have so puzzled the critics.

Here she is projecting a persona, which explains her curious recourse to the third person, linguistically a “non-person” and, unlike “je” and “tu,” devoid of subjectivity. With this third-person echo of Brissot, she creates a mask that hides her subjectivity and an alibi for her personal ambition to transcend the limitations of gender in her hard-hitting journalism. In this, she goes much further than other women writers who similarly repeated the gender *doxa* in order to pursue their own ambitions. This third-person endorsement of normative femininity entails an alienation or splitting of the self that will ultimately deny her a voice.

The public voice she invented for herself gave her political agency without denying her gender: “Tous les fils [. . .] ont la force pour dérober leurs pères à la mort, *moi je n’ai que la voix*” (*Mercure national* 12 Apr. 1790, 1079; italics mine). But by the end of 1792, this tenuous accommodation between her “corps petit” and the male-coded commitment of her “âme grande” has broken down and her advocacy of normative femininity in its new republican guise has finally caught up with her. It applies to her too and it requires her silence. In an open letter to Louvet, she protests: “qu’y a-t-il pour que tu oses me tirer de ma retraite où je remplis *en silence* les devoirs *d’épouse et de mère*, où je me borne *modestement* à la place que m’assignent les lois de la nature, et les lois locales” (2; italics mine). Although the tone is as fierce as the one she had adopted to castigate the enemies of the republic in her now defunct newspaper,¹² it cannot hide her disappointment over the loss of her public voice to advance the cause of the revolution: “Tu me prêtes ton langage, tu me fais parler comme une idiote, *moi qui comptais déjà parler dans le développement des principes qui mènent aux révolutions*” (2; italics mine). With this suppression of the bold voice of a woman in the political arena and the substitution of a man’s language for her own, Louise de Keralio comes to epitomize masculinity’s triumph (Viennot, *Modernité*), the Revolution’s move to silence women in the name of incommensurable difference and to exclude them from the body politic.

But she does not go quietly. She *publishes* this letter proclaiming her silence, and she speaks here with a strong voice in defense of her political views.¹³ She continues to project a contradictory image of herself. The tension between her conformism and her ambition endures and the muted longing for a gender logic of *both/and* survives.

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Notes

¹ This term does not come into currency until the nineteenth century. I use it nonetheless as a convenient way of referring to Keralio's personal quest for liberty and autonomy, her expressions of solidarity with other women writers and intellectuals, and her interrogation of the very notion of what it means to be a woman engaged in the public sphere in a society dominated by men.

² See also Geffroy, "Ce sexisme politique, je peux bien l'enregistrer. Mais je ne sais comment le comprendre, quand il est assumé par une femme qui sait, écrit, publie et prouve que des femmes peuvent être, et ont été reines, écrivaines . . . et journalistes politiques" ("Louise de Keralio, traductrice, éditrice, historienne et journaliste" 110–11).

³ Undated letter. Most sources, including the editor Simon Davies (*Electronic Enlightenment*) and Mazel (169–70), propose the date of 1777 for her letters to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Another letter from Keralio to Bernardin, quoted by Gaëtan Sanvoisin in the *Journal des Débats*, appears to mark the end of the relationship and is dated 1 October 1777. The quotation is taken from the *Electronic Enlightenment* transcriptions of originals held in the Bernardin de Saint-Pierre manuscript collection at the Bibliothèque municipale Armand Salacrou, Le Havre. I have modernized eighteenth-century spelling throughout.

⁴ Gregory's book, first published in 1765, went through many editions. Keralio was working from the sixth which had come out in London only a year before, in 1774. Already a savvy businesswoman, she was capitalizing on the success of this work. She uses the same format as the French edition of his best-seller *Legs d'un père à ses filles* (*A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, 1774) to make her translation even more attractive to buyers, for, as she points out, this meant they could then have the two books bound together in a single volume ("Avertissement du traducteur" iv–v). Gregory's views on women's education in *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* would later come under attack by Mary Wollstonecraft.

⁵ On the new paradigm enshrined in the medical discourse of the Enlightenment, see Thomas Laqueur: "une anatomie et une physiologie de l'incommensurabilité remplacèrent une métaphysique de la hiérarchie dans la représentation de la femme par rapport à l'homme" (*La Fabrique du sexe. Essai sur le corps et le genre en Occident*, trans. of *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, 1990, Gallimard, 1992, qtd. in Viennot, *La France, les femmes et le pouvoir* 272.) Viennot demonstrates how this new paradigm of incommensurable difference, predicated on the supposed laws of nature, was used to buttress the patriarchal order by rationalizing women's subordination and their relegation to the role of wife and mother (272–85). Using a metaphor that recurs almost obsessively in Keralio's own discussions of gender, she observes that this paradigm traces "une ligne infranchissable entre les deux groupes" (277).

⁶ Boivin le cadet [Jean Boivin de Villeneuve], "Vie de Christine de Pisan et de Thomas de Pisan son père," *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, t. II, 1736, pp. 704–14; Claude Sallier, "Notice de deux ouvrages manuscrits de Christine de Pisan, dans lesquels il se trouve quelques particularités de l'histoire de Louis duc d'Orléans, fils de Charles V," *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, t. XVII, 1751, pp. 515–25.

⁷ By her choice of modifiers, Keralio underscores the cultural norm that codes—and valorizes—eloquence as masculine. See also Hesse: "correct speech, linked with eloquent style, was figured as a masculine norm" (14).

⁸ In "Remembering Christine de Pisan," Karen Green also concludes that for Keralio, Christine represents an "ideal feminine exemplar" (349). "It is Christine's morality," she notes accurately, "rather than her defence of women, which seems important to Louise" (351). Green traces Keralio's vision of Christine to the model of femininity proposed a century earlier in the novels of Madeleine de Scudéry, a combination of "considerable erudition" and "exemplary modesty" (349), and argues that Keralio subscribes to this ideal. Considering her ambition and her belief in progress, it seems clear that, while she may profess it throughout her writing, Keralio finds this model confining.

⁹ Given the knowledge of British constitutional law she had demonstrated in her acclaimed *Histoire d'Élisabeth, reine d'Angleterre* (1786–1788) and the National Assembly's charge to write a

new constitution, it could have concerned British law.

¹⁰ Similarly, in his speech before the National Assembly, Brissot evokes “la violation faite au sanctuaire de la législation,” erasing the women’s agency and qualifying their action as a religious offense against the “ministres des autels, que la sainteté de [leurs] caractères rendait inviolables” (*Archives parlementaires* 406). The fact that these were *femmes du peuple* only intensifies the transgression. On the fear and discrediting of such women’s powerful speech in the public sphere and the eventual silencing of the public voice of all women by revolutionary authorities, much has been written: see, for example, Viennot (*Modernité*), and especially Arlette Farge: “Les clameurs forcenées des furies’ ont paraît-il encombré et terrorisé la période révolutionnaire. [. . .] Or, les auteurs de l’époque ont préféré n’y entendre que des ‘borborygmes hallucinés,’ ce qui leur a évité d’y chercher du sens et des paroles politiques. [. . .] Il existe une exaspération suscitée par les appels vocaux féminins [. . .]. Tenues à l’écart de l’espace politique, il ne fait pas de doute que leur volonté fut de s’y intégrer, donc de se manifester vocalement. La signification politique est là tout entière” (144–45).

¹¹ “Une demoiselle, mademoiselle de Keralio, se mit à la tête de la rédaction d’un journal ayant pour titre: *Journal d’État et du citoyen*, et elle traita de politique comme un homme” (Buche 53). At the same time as the exchange with Brissot, the misogynist journalist Louis Prudhomme heaps sarcasm on her newspaper: “un vrai phénomène politique, [. . .] un journal sur les affaires publiques, composé par une femme” (*Révolutions de Paris*, no. 14, 10 Oct. 1789, 33).

¹² The last article signed Louise Robert in the *Mercur national* had appeared on 17 June 1791. The newspaper ceased publication in early July.

¹³ Accused by Louvet of hosting Marat and Robespierre in her home, she boldly puts her politics on display: “Marat n’y est jamais venu, *il n’y viendra jamais*. Robespierre n’y est jamais venu, *il y viendra quand il voudra*” (letter to Louvet 2).

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