

***Les Amies des philosophes: The Making of Enlightenment Salons in Nineteenth-century France***

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In the standard narrative of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment, salon sociability is presented as an important vehicle in the dissemination of Enlightenment ideas. This view is sometimes stretched to the point where a handful of Parisian women who opened their homes for weekly meetings of literary men, socialites and foreign visitors are credited with governing the Republic of Letters and creating an environment crucial to debating Enlightenment ideas.<sup>1</sup> This narrative follows the trajectory of Jürgen Habermas's conception of the "bourgeois public sphere" – a new civic society that emerged and flourished in the eighteenth century, and eroded in the nineteenth.<sup>2</sup> Just as the public sphere eroded in the nineteenth century, according to Habermas, the salon culture, with women at its centre, disappeared in the 1780s because it was incompatible with the new, masculine, political culture that developed during and after the Revolution.

This narrative presents a basic problem for historians of nineteenth-century France in that it does not account for the proliferation of salon sociability that followed the French Revolution. As historians of nineteenth-century France observe, the salon as a form of sociability not only survived but actually flourished after the Revolution. In their view, it happened not only because some members of the Old Regime elite who survived the Revolution kept open houses, but also because salons represented an aristocratic sociability which became attractive to the post-Revolutionary upper and middle class in

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederic Lawrence (Boston, 1989).

France.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the salon “persisted” throughout the Revolution, along with other remnants of the Old Regime, and was embraced by post-Revolutionary French society.

However, this explanation is not free of problems either, for it obliterates the discontinuity between Old Regime and post-Revolutionary sociability and denies the originality of the latter. It also assumes, incorrectly, that salons existed only as long as Old Regime culture was attractive for nineteenth-century society.<sup>4</sup> In effect, the present historiography of French salons still makes contradictory claims regarding their role in public life: on the one hand salons are viewed as laboratories of Enlightenment; on the other, they are viewed as an embodiment of Old Regime culture.

Thus, just what happened to French sociability after the French Revolution and how to relate conceptually the pre- and post-Revolutionary salon historiography remain open questions. My research suggests that rather than being “restored” or “re-activated,” post-Revolutionary social life in France was constructed anew by both old and new elites and non-elite groups alike in a process which involved both appropriation of the forms and practices of social life within the living memory of French society and introducing new ones. The culture wars that the Revolution unleashed, and the lack of a centre of social life, contributed to a variety of forms of sociability referred to as “salons,” some of them claiming their lineage back to the Old Regime. The memory of the Old Regime was used both to legitimize the present and to create an Old Regime salon tradition. And this memory was an active shaping force in this process, changing in response to various, sometimes contradictory, current concerns. This paper presents a case study that shows the contingent nature of salon historiography and the importance of the early nineteenth-century culture wars in shaping this historiography.

Among the culture wars that were particularly relevant to the historiography of salon sociability was the heated debate over on the merits and fallacies of the eighteenth century that developed as an attempt to rationalize the outbreak and the course of the French Revolution. Beginning with the fall of Robespierre in July 1794, Enlightenment thought became an object of fierce attacks in France.<sup>5</sup> *Philosophie* – as Enlightenment ideas were collectively referred to – became an object of fierce attacks in journals such as *Année littéraire*, *Mercure* and *Journal des débats* (renamed in 1805 the *Journal de l'Empire*). Voltaire, Diderot, d’Alembert, Rousseau, Hélietius and other philosophes were viewed as responsible for the collapse of traditional authorities, religious skepticism, immorality and for having paved the way to the Revolution and eventually the Terror.

The attack on *philosophie* became all the more convincing when it came from its erstwhile supporters. The case of Jean-François de La Harpe was among the most spectacular. In his pamphlet *Du Fanatisme de la langue révolutionnaire*, published in

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Steven D. Kale, “Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,” *French Historical Studies* 25 (2002): 115–148; *ibid.*, “Women, Salons, and the State in the Aftermath of the French Revolution,” *Journal of Women’s History* 13 (2002): 54–80; and *ibid.*, *French Salons. High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore and London, 2004). A variation on this theme is Antoine Lilti’s *Le monde des salons* (Paris, 2006), which take for granted that salons existed both before and after the French Revolution linked by the idea of *mondanité*. See also Anne Martin-Fugier, *La vie élégante, ou la formation de Tout-Paris 1815–1848* (Paris, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Kale, *French Salons*.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion in Darrin McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment. The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York, 2001), 93ff.

1797 and followed by nineteen editions shortly thereafter, he not only denounced the Terror but also adopted a militant anti-philosophe position.<sup>6</sup> This 135-page long pamphlet was the culmination of La Harpe's gradual departure from the ideals of *philosophie*. Not only did he denounce the Terror and the Revolution, but he also adopted a militant anti-philosophe position. In 1801–1807, La Harpe published the first four volumes of his correspondence from Paris to Paul of Russia (he was Paul's correspondent in Paris), in which he criticized some of his still living contemporaries.<sup>7</sup> Attacks on La Harpe from sympathizers of the philosophes referred to his crimes of the past when he was still faithful to the philosophes.<sup>8</sup>

In 1804, the reaction against the attacks of anti-philosophes came from within the second section of the Institut de France, responsible for French literature and language. Among the members of this section were fellow travelers of the eighteenth-century philosophes: Morellet, Suard, and Garat. Along with a few younger sympathizers, they announced an essay contest on the subject "Tableau littéraire de la France au XVIIIe siècle" hoping to counterbalance the attacks and improve the image of *philosophie*. It did not proceed quite as planned. The essays submitted to the contest were so disappointing that no prize was awarded. Instead, the Institut decided to solicit more essays, and it took four consecutive annual contests before the prize was finally granted in 1810 to Antoine Jouy and Victor Fabre jointly.<sup>9</sup> Over the years, the contest inspired a large volume of anti-philosophe pamphlets and further unleashed anti-philosophe sentiments.

But 1810 was hardly a triumph for the supporters of *philosophie*. The publication of the correspondence of the marquise du Deffand with Horace Walpole, which appeared in London in 1810, dealt another heavy blow to the image of *philosophie* and added a new dimension to the debate on the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Du Deffand (1697–1780) was an eighteenth-century Parisian salon hostess whose intelligence and skeptical turn of mind made her the centre of a brilliant circle of writers, intellectuals and socialites. She conducted regular correspondence with Voltaire from 1736 and with Walpole from 1766 until her death in 1780. The four volumes of her letters with Walpole revealed her independent mind but also her harsh judgement of many philosophes' works.

The publication of du Deffand's letters was not a planned attack on the philosophes, nor was it meant to produce a scandal. The letters were edited and prepared for publication by Walpole's acquaintance, Mary Berry, who had other literary works to her credit. Carefully edited, with an impartial commentary, the publication was widely praised in British literary magazines. In France, it was a great success *and* a scandal. Although du Deffand did not belong to the eighteenth-century enemies of the philosophes,

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<sup>6</sup> See McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 115.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-François de La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire adressée ay grand-duc de Russie*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1801–1805).

<sup>8</sup> *Correspondance turque, pour servir de supplément à la Correspondance russe de J.F. Laharpe: contenant l'histoire lamentable des chutes et rechutes tragiques de ce grand homme*, 2e ed. enrichie d'anecdotes et d'épigrammes piquantes (Paris, 1801).

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed account of the Institute's essay contest, see Roland Mortier, *Le "Tableau littéraire de la France au XVIIIe siècle." Un épisode de la "guerre philosophique" à l'Académie Française sous l'Empire (1804–1810)* (Brussels, 1972); also McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 151.

<sup>10</sup> *Lettres of the Marquise du Deffand to the Hon. Horace Walpole, afterwards earl of Oxford, from the year 1766 to the year 1780. To which are added letters of Mme du Deffand to Voltaire from the year 1759 to the year 1775*, 4 vols. (London, 1810).

such as their Jesuit perpetrators, her criticism was strikingly similar in tone to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century enemies of the philosophes. Thus, the publication of du Deffand's correspondence with Walpole played right into the anti-philosophes' hands. *Journal de l'Empire* published an enthusiastic review which praised du Deffand's judgement of eighteenth-century literature.<sup>11</sup>

The defenders of *philosophie* found themselves in a difficult position to refute criticism from a prominent member of the eighteenth-century Parisian *monde* and an insider to the world of letters. Their response was rather desperate. In 1812, a book appeared in Paris entitled *Eloges de Mme Geoffrin*. It was a reprint of three eulogies originally published in 1777 by the philosophes d'Alembert, Morellet and Antoine-Léonard Thomas, after the death of Thérèse Geoffrin, a salon hostess in Paris and du Deffand's contemporary. The book also contained a few letters from and to Geoffrin and an essay on conversation by Morellet.

As stated in its "Avertissement," the purpose of the reprint was to offset the impact of du Deffand's criticism of the philosophes and *philosophie* in her newly published correspondence with Walpole.<sup>12</sup> But how could the eulogies of a salon hostess written by the philosophes counterbalance the criticism launched against these philosophes by another salon hostess?

The author of the Foreword, most likely Morellet, set himself up to play gender politics. Rather than refuting du Deffand's criticism, he refused her the right to criticize. "Mme du Deffand certainly had much more, than Mme Geoffrin, of what is called *esprit*," he admitted.<sup>13</sup> But instead of using her resources and position in society to patronize the men of letters, she used her *esprit* and all her means to criticize their works; indeed, to express her profound contempt for the literary production of her century.<sup>14</sup> But her judgement lacked legitimacy because she had no knowledge of the matters she judged. Her *esprit* was sufficient to judge poetry and literature but not academic discourse, the *Encyclopédie*, works on economics and what is called literature and *philosophie* of the eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> "On what authority can an opinion of an ignorant woman . . . condemn all distinguished men of this century?" asked Morellet. "Isn't it really ridiculous that such judgement is taken into account?"<sup>16</sup> Having denied du Deffand any authority to judge, Morellet dismissed her criticism as biased, incompetent and superficial. Worst of all, du Deffand not only used her *esprit* to disparage the works of the philosophes, but also made her opinions known to her correspondents. By criticizing French writers and

<sup>11</sup> *Journal de l'Empire* (20 January 1810), as quoted in [Andre Morellet], *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin* (Paris, 1812), xiv.

<sup>12</sup> "Quelques circonstances du moment m'ont paru devoir faire accueillir cette collection avec quelque faveur. Le principale est la publication récente des Lettres de madame du Deffand." *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin, contemporaine de Madame du Deffand, par MM. Morellet, Thomas et D'Alambert, suivis de lettres de Madame Geoffrin et à Madame Geoffrin et d'un Essay sur la Conversation, etc. etc., par M. Morellet* (Paris, 1812), Avertissement, i.

<sup>13</sup> "Madame du Deffand avait certainement beaucoup plus que madame Geoffrin de ce qu'on appelle esprit, et son esprit étoit plus cultivé par la lecture. . . ." *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, ii–iii.

<sup>14</sup> *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, vii.

<sup>15</sup> *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, xvii.

<sup>16</sup> "De quelle autorité peut donc être l'opinion d'une femme ignorante, condamnant ainsi en masse, comme en détail, tous les hommes distingués de son siècle? N'est-il pas vraiment ridicule qu'on tienne quelque compte d'un tel jugement?" *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, xvii.

philosophes, du Deffand demonstrated her indifference to her country (*patrie*) and to her literary friends. Making her views public through her letters, she undermined the prestige of France as the European cultural and intellectual center. Morellet's condemnation of du Deffand culminated in presenting her not only as an enemy of French men of letters but also as an enemy of the entire French nation.<sup>17</sup>

Geoffrin, in contrast, poorly educated and intellectually inferior to du Deffand, was entirely free of both malignancy and intellectual aspirations. According to Morellet, she neither judged literary works nor did she write about them in her letters. She did not participate in intellectual or literary debates; instead, with moderation and tact, she dedicated her resources to helping her literary friends and offered her home for their weekly meetings. Morellet made it clear what he considered an appropriate role for a female participant in the Republic of Letters: unlike du Deffand, usurping for herself the right to criticize, Geoffrin deserved to be fondly remembered for her goodness, generosity and charitable acts. "I do not need to tell which of the two women chose the best part," Morellet wrote at the end of his Foreword. It was Geoffrin, not du Deffand, who earned the positive judgement of posterity.

The eulogies of 1777 were supposed to substantiate the claims Morellet made about Geoffrin in his 1812 Foreword, even though he must have been well aware that the very nature of eulogy as a genre made it a dubious source. This was particularly true in the case of the eulogies of Geoffrin. Each of the three eulogists was generously endowed by Mme Geoffrin on various occasions and had good reasons to present an idealized picture of their benefactress. D'Alembert received a life annuity (*rente viagère*) of 600 livres from Mme Geoffrin in 1760 and then 1300 livres at her death; Thomas received a life annuity of 1200 livres and a sum of 6000 livres; and Morellet himself received 1200 livres after the publication of his book *Mémoire sur la situation actuelle de la Compagnie des Indes* (1768).<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, two of those three authors—d'Alembert and Thomas—were experienced eulogists. Having become the *secrétaire perpétuel* of the Académie Française in 1754, d'Alembert wrote over 60 eulogies as part of his plan to improve the image of the new philosophy by writing its history.<sup>19</sup> Some readers found his eulogies too frivolous and too satirical. In particular, critics deplored the use of the genre by d'Alembert and others for political ends, to score points off their adversaries: "the eulogy of the dead consists above all in the satire of the living," wrote one author in 1807.<sup>20</sup>

In 1758, the Académie Française set up an annual competition for the best eulogy of a famous figure of the past. For several decades after 1758 eulogies were extremely

<sup>17</sup> "Indifférente pour sa patrie, comme ses déclamations le prouvent; indifférente pour ses amis, comme ses médisances semblent l'attester." *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, xxiv.

<sup>18</sup> *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, 30; Jean-François de La Harpe, *Correspondance Littéraire*, 4 vols. (Geneva, 1968), I, 503–504; Frederick Melchior Grimm, *Les salons de Paris sous la Révolution* (Paris, 1890), 11–13. See also Antoine Lilti, "Le salon de Mme Geoffrin," in *Vie des salons et activités littéraires de Marguerite de Valois à Mme de Staël*. Actes du colloque international de Nancy (6–8 octobre 1999), ed. Roger Marchal (Nancy, 2001), 144 n. 31.

<sup>19</sup> Peter France "From Eulogy to Biography: The French Academic Éloge," in *Mapping Lives. The Uses of Biography*, ed. Peter France and William St Claire (Oxford, 2002), 88.

<sup>20</sup> Grimm, *Correspondance litteraire, philosophique et critique*, 16 vols., ed. Maurice Tourneux (Paris, 1877–1882), IX: 200.

popular, and the public flocked in to the sessions at which they were declaimed. Antoine-Léonard Thomas (1732–85) became the champion of this genre; he won the prize on two occasions, even though the contemporary public was far from unanimous in their admiration of him. In his theoretical essay on the *éloge* he argued that the genre is essentially moralizing and celebratory; the *éloge* is the equivalent of a monument erected to the great dead so as to inspire emulation in the living.<sup>21</sup>

Eighteenth-century readers found the eulogies of Mme Geoffrin unconvincing. According to La Harpe, Thomas's eulogy lacked naturalness.<sup>22</sup> Morellet's eulogy was not satisfactory, either. According to La Harpe, it lacked literary qualities and discretion.<sup>23</sup> Finally, d'Alembert's eulogy, in a form of a letter written to a friend to relieve one's sorrow, was half-hearted and dealt with two persons – de Deffand and Mlle de Lespinasse – who died within a year.<sup>24</sup> In sum, wrote La Harpe, “one can say that of the three eulogies the first contained too much eloquence, the second too many facts and the third too much pain.”<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the eulogies written after Geoffrin's death in 1777 were part of the philosophes' intrigue against Geoffrin's daughter, the marquise de La Ferté-Imbault, who used her mother's illness as a pretext to close the doors of her salon to the philosophes, to protect her from their bad moral influence and to ensure that she died a proper Catholic. The marquise succeeded in her plan, but having been cut off from Geoffrin during her final illness, the philosophes took revenge by appropriating her in the eulogies as entirely dedicated to the philosophes and their cause and her salon as a place of dissemination of Enlightenment ideas. The fiction they created in the process – for fiction it was – established the parameters for an ideal salon hostess and an interpretative framework for future writing about Enlightenment salon sociability.

The Geoffrin that emerges from eighteenth-century sources considerably differs from the Geoffrin in the eulogies. Friedrich Melchior Grimm described her in his *Correspondance littéraire* as a hostess who entirely eliminated potentially disruptive topics, such as politics and religion, from her salon. Grimm wrote:

Mother Geoffrin let it be known that she renewed the defences and prohibitive laws of former years, and that she would not permit, other than in passing, talk in her salon about internal or external affairs; about the affairs of the court or of the city; about the affairs of the north or the south, the east or the west; about politics

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<sup>21</sup> France, “From Eulogy to Biography,” 91.

<sup>22</sup> “Le travail et l'effort se font trop sentir, sur-tout dans cette espèce d'ouvrage qui semble ne devoir être ici que l'effusion du coeur et le tribut de l'amitié. Ses idées ne se présentent pas avec cette netteté, cette clarté qui frappe d'abord l'esprit, avec cette variété qui saisit l'ame . . .” La Harpe, *Correspondance*, I, 511.

<sup>23</sup> “L'abbé Morellet a eu le mérite de l'historien, il n'a guère eu celui de l'écrivain. Sa diction est médiocre, froide, négligée; il y a même des détails qu'un tact plus sûr des convenances aurait fait supprimer.” La Harpe, *Correspondance*, I, 512.

<sup>24</sup> “La lettre de M. d'Alembert ne paraît digne de lui que dans un seul morceau, ou il rapproche les deux pertes qu'il a faites dans l'espèce d'un an, de mademoiselle de l'Espinasse et de madame Geoffrin.” La Harpe, *Correspondance*, I, 512.

<sup>25</sup> “On pourrait résumer sur ces trois écrits, que dans le premier il y a plus d'éloquence, dans le seconde plus de faits, dans le troisième plus de douleur. L'un a pensé, l'autre a raconté, l'autre a pleuré.” La Harpe, *Correspondance*, I, 513.

or finances; about peace or war; about religion, government, theology, metaphysics, grammar and music; in a word, about any matter whatsoever . . .<sup>26</sup>

The litany of prohibited subjects was no doubt exaggerated, but Grimm made the point. In a similar vein, one of the authors of the *Eulogies*, Thomas, wrote that Geoffrin was incapable of tolerating the tone of conversation that was not *juste-milieu*.<sup>27</sup>

The painter Jean-Baptiste Greuze depicted Geoffrin as a cruel and obnoxious teacher surrounded by frightened pupils, apparently representing the guests of her salon.<sup>28</sup> The drawing was Greuze's revenge for Geoffrin's criticism of his painting *La Mère bien aimée* (Paris, Laborde's collection) presented in the 1761 Salon. According to an eighteenth-century author, Geoffrin excluded Diderot from her salon because she feared Diderot's impetuosity and the rashness of his opinions supported – when he was aroused – by a fiery and stirring eloquence.<sup>29</sup>

Morellet, the author of the Foreword to the 1812 *Eloges*, was himself quite critical of Geoffrin's salon. He wrote in his memoirs that the atmosphere there was suffocating because of the hostess's extreme precaution with which she treated topics of conversations in her salon. Geoffrin was meticulous and timid and obsequious toward the government, which could be understandable in her situation, wrote Morellet.<sup>30</sup> However, it had negative consequences for her salon: it lacked freedom of thought and her guests did not feel comfortable.<sup>31</sup> No wonder the philosophes sought unrestricted ways of socializing elsewhere. Morellet once wrote that after a dinner with Geoffrin, d'Alembert, Helvétius, Galiani, Marmontel, Thomas, and others used to go to the Tuileries garden to discuss freely the politics and to “philosophize” (*philosopher*) without restrictions.<sup>32</sup> But

<sup>26</sup> “Mère Geoffrin fait savoir qu'elle renouvelle les défenses et lois prohibitives des années précédantes, et qu'il ne sera pas plus permis que par le passé de parler chez elle ni d'affaires intérieures, ni d'affaires extérieures; ni d'affaires de la cour, ni d'affaires de la ville; ni d'affaires du nord, ni d'affaires du midi; ni d'affaires d'Orient, et d'Occident; ni de politique, ni de finances; ni de paix, ni de guerre; ni de religion, ni de gouvernement; ni de théologie, ni de métaphysique; ni de grammaire, ni de musique; ni d'aucune matière quelconque . . .” Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*, 16 vols., ed. Maurice Tourneux (Paris, 1877–1882), VIII: 438.

<sup>27</sup> “Tout ce qui était ardent autour d'elle l'exaspérait; elle craignait l'impétuosité des idées comme des sentiments et croyait que la raison même avait tort quand elle était passionnée.” Antoine-Léonard Thomas, “A la mémoire de Mme Geoffrin,” in *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, 83.

<sup>28</sup> Drawing in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

<sup>29</sup> François-Louis, comte d'Escherny, *Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire, de morale et de philosophie*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1811), III, 128.

<sup>30</sup> Geoffrin was “un peu méticuleuse et timide, obséquieuse envers le gouvernement, ménageant les gens en place et les gens de la cour: sentiments bien excusables et bien naturels dans une femme âgée, qui soignait avec raison sa vie, et ne voulait pas en compromettre la douceur et la tranquillité . . .” Morellet, *Mémoires inédits*, I, 87.

<sup>31</sup> “il manquoit à la société de Mme Geoffrin l'un des agréments dont je faisais le plus de cas, la liberté de la pensée. Avec son doux *voilà qui est bien*, elle ne laissoit pas de tenir nos esprits comme à la lisière; et j'avois ailleurs des diners où l'on étoit plus à son aise.” *Ibid.*, I, 170.

<sup>32</sup> “Après nos diners chez elle [Mme Geoffrin] nous nous rendions souvent aux Tuileries, d'Alembert, Helvétius, Galiani, Marmontel, Thomas, etc., pour y trouver d'autres amis, apprendre d'autres nouvelles, fronder le gouvernement et philosopher tout à notre aise. Nous faisons cercle, assis au pied d'un arbre de la grande allée, et nous abandonnant à une conversation animée et libre comme l'air que nous respirions.” André Morellet, *Mémoires inédits de l'Abbé Morellet. Sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la Révolution*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1822), I, 95–96.

this criticism was not published during Morellet's lifetime; it appeared in his *Mémoires* published posthumously in 1821.

The 1812 reprint of Geoffrin's eulogies following the publication of du Deffand's correspondence with Walpole not only presented an opportunity for the general public to take a position in the debate over the merits and fallacies of the eighteenth century, but also made eighteenth-century salons part of the debate and shaped the perception of their hostesses. In one of his satirical sketches of Parisian life, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*, dramatist and journalist Victor de Jouy commented on the publication of du Deffand's correspondence with Walpole, on Morellet's "Avertissement" and on the two salon hostesses. "It was already known," wrote de Jouy, "that this lady had a great deal of *esprit* but the flaws of her character were for the most part unknown... Having read Du Deffand's letters, one is very pleased to have avoided the misfortune of knowing her." As for Geoffrin, her excellent qualities were already well known, and "one can only share the feelings of her eulogists and those who regret her loss."<sup>33</sup>

In conclusion, the retroactive projection of Geoffrin's salon in the eulogies made a considerable impact on the authors who wrote on salons later in the nineteenth century, including Sainte-Beuve, in his widely circulated article on Mme Geoffrin published in *Causeries du Lundi*, and Pierre de Ségur, who sealed what had become a canonic image of Mme Geoffrin as a hostess of a celebrated salon in her biography published in 1897. Both Saint-Beuve and Segur quoted indiscriminately from the eulogies of Geoffrin, even though it was not defense of philosophy that was the purpose of these authors but rather perpetuating a model of an ideal salon hostess. During the Third Republic, eighteenth-century salons again became the object of historiographical attention, this time in the context of the origins of the French Revolution, and were interpreted as places for the diffusion of Enlightenment ideas.<sup>34</sup> In our own time, the historical fiction created by the philosophes has been perpetuated by the historiography based on Habermas's conception of the public sphere. Among eighteenth-century salon hostesses, Geoffrin is a champion of the Enlightenment cause; du Deffand is more of an *enfant terrible*.

We can summarize the story thus: the intrigue between a handful of philosophes and Geoffrin's daughter gave rise to a deliberate literary misrepresentation (in the form of the eulogies) that was perpetuated in the nineteenth century for a variety of political reasons and was later uncritically embraced by professional historians to become historiographical misrepresentation. Early nineteenth-century culture wars over the legacy of the eighteenth century may be the single most important development in the process of constructing the historiography of French salon sociability. It is this process of construction that needs to be explained if we are to establish the relationship between Old

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<sup>33</sup> "On savait déjà que cette dame avait eu beaucoup d'esprit; mais on ignorait, en grande partie du moins, les défauts de son caractère. Il n'en est pas de même du volume que vient de publier M Morellet sur Mme Geoffrin: il ajoute à l'opinion favorable qu'on avait déjà des excellentes qualités de cette femme célèbre. Après avoir lu les lettres de Mme Du Deffand, on se félicite d'avoir échappé au malheur de la connaître. Après avoir lu l'éloge de Mme Geoffrin, et les lettres qui l'accompagnent, on partage tous les sentimens de son panégyriste, et l'on s'associe aux regrets qu'a dû causer sa perte." Victor de Jouy, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin—1812* (Paris, 1815–1817), 156–157.

<sup>34</sup> Antoine Lilti, "Les salons d'autrefois au XIXe siècle: XVIIe ou XVIIIe siècle?" *Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques* 28–29 (April 2002): 166.



Regime and post-Revolutionary forms of sociability on grounds firmer than academic fashion or politics.