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FROM ROYAL BED TO BOUDOIR: The Dissolution of the Space of Appearance

Told Through the History of the French Salon

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ABSTRACT

The space of appearance emerges from the practice of speech and action in the presence of others. Although it predates the public sphere as a formal construction, it exists in the context of a particular place. With the transformation of the *ancien régime* and the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere, the meaning of public and private was obscured by the rise of the 'social.' The public realm was transformed from a space of disclosure to a realm defined by the necessities of survival - a process by which speech and action lost much of their former power. In the spectacular relations of the *ancien régime,* public ritual revolved around the royal bed. Through the analogy of language and architecture, seventeenth-century aristocratic women defined new patterns of social practice. In the convergence of the spectacular relations of the court and the world of letters, a space of appearance arose. At the turn of the century, Salon discourse moved from the daybed to the sofa of Rococo *salons.* Responding to emerging dichotomies, discourse, architecture and Salon practice took on gendered implications. In the Enlightenment Salon, women gave up their role as public performers and assumed the role of governance. The importance of social practice as an end in itself declined, as rational discourse became directed towards the aims of the Enlightenment. The role of architecture as a participating environment, and conversation as an expressive art was weakened by the detachment of rational discourse from its roots in Salon practice. The Salon as a public space ended when, rejecting female governance, men of letters took the Enlightenment discourse out of the Salon into new male venues. Its decline as a space of appearance coincided with the emergence of the boudoir. In the transposition of the space of the boudoir with the *salon,* eighteenth-century women were left without a public voice, their identities increasingly defined by the domestic environment and the male erotic imagination.

RÉSUMÉ

'L'Espace de l'apparaitre,' naît des habitudes de langage et d'activités en présence d'autrui. Bien qu'il précède le domaine publique en tant que constuction formelle, il existe dans le contexte d'un endroit particulier. Avec la transformation de l'Ancien régime et l'emergence de la sphère publique de la bourgeoisie, la signification de 'public' et 'privé' a été obscurcie par l'essor du 'social.' Le domaine public est passé d'un espace de divulgation àu domaine a défini par la nécessité de survivre, un processus qui a fait perdre au langage et aux activités humaines bequcoup de leur pouvoir antérieur. Dans les aspects sociaux spectaculaires de l'Ancien régime le lit royal était le centre des rituels de la cour. Grâce aux analogies entre le langage et l'architecture, les femmes de la noblesse du 17^{e} siècle ont défini nouvelle modes de la vie sociale.' 'L'espace de l'apparaitre' est né de la convergence des rapports spectaculaires de la cour et du discours litteraire. Au début du siècle suivant, les discussions du salon littéraire sont passées du lit d'apparat au sofa des *salons* rococo. A cette époque de dichotomies émergentes, le discours, l'espace architectural, les coutumes du Salon ont différé selon qu'ils était adoptés par les hommes ou par des femmes. Dans le Salon du Siècle des Lumières, les femmes abandonnèrent leur rôle de créatrices et d'interprètes et assumèent le rôle d'organisatrices. L'importance des rapports sociaux ayant une fin en soi a diminué grand le discours rationnel s'est orienté vers les objectifs du Siècle des Lumières. La rôle de l'architecture et de la conversation en tant que modes d'expression a perdu de son importance en raison de la rupture entre le discours rationnel et ses origines nées de la vie de salon. Ce dernier en tant qu'espace public a disparu lorsque les hommes de lettres rejetèrent la domination des femmes et transférènt le discours vers les enclaves masculines. De ce fait, le boudoir a éclipsé la *salon* et son espace de vie sociale. Dans cette transposition les femmes ont perdu la possibilité de s'exprimer en public et leur identité a été de plus en plus définie par leur environnement domestique et l'imagination érotique masculine.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE – FRENCH HÔTEL ARCHITECTURE AND THE SPACE OF APPEARANCE, 1600-1800.

The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constructions of the public realm...it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of man...but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

In the earliest known treatise on architecture, the Roman architect and engineer Vitruvius posits that language and architecture have a common origin in the purposeful gathering of men around a fire.[1] Beyond the obvious ability of the fire or hearth to shelter, its poignancy as an archetype lies in its ability to gather together, to create the space of human speech and action. As well, through the linking of the genesis of language and architecture Vituvius identified their origins in the plurality of the human condition. (fig. 1) In Latin, the language of the Romans, 'to live' and to 'be among men' (*inter homines esse*) was synonymous, as conversely was 'to die' and 'to cease to be among men' (*inter homines esse desinere).*[2] That human genesis is rooted in a plurality comprised of difference is also suggested by Jesus of Nazareth's version of the creation story: 'Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female.'[3] This version of the creation story stands in stark contrast to the singularity of human existence implicit in Paul's version in which God created Man (Adam), and woman was created 'of the man.'[4]

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[1] Viturius, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), 38-9. Vitruvius was a Roman architect and engineer living and practicing during the first century B.C.

[2] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1958), 7-8.

[3] Jesus in discussing the relationship between man and wife is referring to Genesis 1 : 27 ('Male and Female created Him *them*') (Matt. 19 : 4).

The ancient relationship between language and architecture is evident in the evolution of the Greek theater from the platform upon which was danced the Dithyramb.[5] (fig. 2) Through the leaping, inspired spring dance, all were participants in the *dromena* or actual 'things done.' In contrast to the all-encompassing dance platform, the introduction of the amphitheater signaled the stepping back from embodied action and the introduction of a contemplative distance in which the self is revealed through others. It is within this act of distancing that the theater is born, that *dromena* becomes drama - that the space of appearance 'appears.' In the theater, through the distant contemplation of the spectacle, the spectator can achieve the same cathartic effect as achieved through the embodied participation in the ritual. Within the space of contemplative distance, the spectator becomes participant - appearing through the appearance of others.[6]

Hannah Arendt suggests that the Greek public sphere, the *polis*, was defined by its character as a space of appearance. Its character was comprised of place, the *agora* and the amphitheater, but was not circumscribed by them. Beyond physical qualities, its essence lay in the manner in which its citizens came together through speech and action:

> It [the *polis*] is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between the people living together for this purpose...It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others and others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.[7]

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[4] Paul in a similar discussion argues that woman was 'created of the man' therefore 'for the man' (I Cor. 11, 8-9). Arandt argues that the generation of humanity from a single species in clone-like fashion, suggests a singularity of essence in the endless reproducibility derived from a single model. She suggests that 'Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live.' Arandt, 8.

[5] The Dithyramb was a leaping, inspired Spring ritual danced in honor of Dionysus, a 'calling up' which each year brought the earth back to life. Jane Ellen Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 75-118.

[6] Ibid., 124-149; See also Alberto Pérez-Gómez, 'Chora: The Space of Architectural representation,' *Chora*, 1 (1994), 10-16.

In this thesis the idea of the space of appearance and its dissolution during the late eighteenth century is explored through the history of the French Salon.[8] The story begins with the Royal bed and ends with the boudoir, and takes place for the most part in the aristocratic Parisian townhouse known as the French *hôtel*.[9] The evolution of the Salon and the French *hôtel* are coincident in that their histories as institutions begin in the first decade of the seventeenth century and come to closure during the last quarter of the eighteenth. As well, the social and intellectual forces shaping them gave rise to forms of representation through which each gave shape to the other. The interactive nature of their evolution was an expression of the epistemological changes occurring during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which affected *hôtel* architecture as well as the structure of intellectual institutions such as the Salon.

Public and Private

During the eighteenth century, the influence of Empiricism and Enlightenment validated individual experience and gave rise to the new notion of privacy and of private life. The evolution of the Salon as a space of appearance, and of the French *hôtel* revolved around the transformation of society into what is currently called the 'public' and 'private' spheres. As the notion of what is public and what is private extends back to

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[7] Arendt, 197-8.

[8] In this thesis, the use of the term 'Salon' signifies the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century institutions of intellectual sociability that came to called by called Salons by the nineteenth century, whereas '*salon*' signifies the architectural space where these gatherings took place.

[9] The French term '*hôtel*' came into usage during the sixteenth century. It most commonly signified the town-houses of the French nobility, although it was also used for certain public buildings such as the *Hôtel de ville* and the *Hôtel-Dieu*. The *hôtel* was described in D'Alembert and Diderot's *Encyclopédie* as the private dwelling of a nobleman. 'Dwellings take different names according to the different estates of those occupying them. We speak of a *maison* of a bourgeois, the *hôtel* of a noble, the *palais* of a prince or king....The *hôtel* is always a grand building, identified by the the taste of its exterior, its expanse, the number and diversity of its logings, and the richness of its interior decoration.' *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné de sciences, des arts, et des métiers, par un sociétie de gens de lettres mis en ordre et publié par M. Diderot; et quant à la partie mathématique, par M. D'Alembert,* compact edition in 5 vols (Paris: Pergamon Press, 1969).

the Greek city-state, and the usage of the words 'public' and 'private' have many concurrent meanings, some clarification is in order. In the thinking of the ancient Greeks, that aspect of the human condition which makes 'man' uniquely human and free (not subjected to the necessities of reproduction or productive labor) comprised public life. The public sphere of the *polis* encompassed the physical space of the *agora*, and was constituted in speech (*lexis*) and action (*praxis*). The *polis* was the source of 'publicness,' the means through which citizens could appear to others, and others to them.[10] In contrast to the *polis*, where everything and everyone was visible, the private sphere (*oikos)* was hidden. Before the invention of intimacy and privacy, the private realm represented the 'not fully human,' the realm where reproduction and the production of the life's necessities took place.[11]

Habermas suggests that previous to the formation of the private and the bourgeois public sphere during the eighteenth century, 'publicness' took the form of representation. The church, the sovereign and the nobility were the carriers of a representative 'publicness.' The sovereign, like the church, represented and displayed himself, not as an individual but as an embodiment of a higher power.[12] Representation functioned to make something invisible visible, in this case through public appearance in the person of the sovereign. In the court of Louis XIV, court etiquette became focused around the royal bed. The king's bed with its canopy came to be recognized as the seat of power around which royal ritual revolved. A courtier's degree of intimacy with the King was indicated by the proximity with which he or she was received in relation to the royal bed.[13]

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[10] Arendt points out that in the most general sense, to act means to initiate or to begin, 'to set something into motion (as the Greek *archein*, 'to begin'). Speech and action are uniquely human, in that only man can communicate himself and not simply something (hunger, thirst, fear). Physical identity requires no activity (action or speech) to reveal, 176-7.

[11] Ibid., 30-1; Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1989), 3-4.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Robin Middleton, introduction to *The Genius of Architecture* by Le Camus de Mézières, trans. David Britt, (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of the Arts and Humanities, 1992), 33.

'Embedded' with signification, the royal bed had assumed its ceremonial role as early as 1558, when it was the custom of Henri III to leave his royal robes on his bed before retiring to the queen's *chambre.*[14] The queen in bed was a public figure, a symbol of the King's virility, a sign of the monarch's fitness to rule. Maria de Medici gave birth to Louis XIII in full view of members of court society. Ministers and family members drew around her at the moment of parturition to make sure that it was a boy and the issue of the queen.[15] At Versailles, the royal bed raised on a platform like a stage and separated from the spectators by a balustrade, was space of representation, not only for the Sun King, but the space in which the courtiers could attain distinction within the hierarchy of the court. (fig.4)

Arendt argues that during the emergence of the modern state the distinction between public and private was obscured. She equates this change with the formation of society in which 'the fact of mutual dependence for the sake of life, and nothing else assumes public significance...and where activities concerned with sheer survival are permitted to appear.'[16] Through the inversion of what had been public and private, the rise of the 'social' signified the demise of the public sphere as a space of appearance. During this transformation, the capacity of speech and action, of art and architecture, lost much of their former power.[17]

As a space of appearance, the Salon was transitional and ephemeral - a bridge between the representative 'publicness' of the King and the bourgeois public sphere. Rooted in the world of letters as well as in aristocratic practice, the Salon as a new form

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[14] Ibid.; Michael Dennis suggests that the *chambre de parade* arose from the custom in *chateaux* of maintaining a regally adorned *chambre* ready in case of a visitation from the sovereign, *Court and Garden* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986) 69.

[15] Dorthy Anne Liot Becker, *Precious Women* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), 168.

[16] Arendt, 46.

[17] Excellence itself understood as *virtus* or male action, even virtue, Arendt can only be fully expressed in the presence of others in the public sphere. Ibid., 49.

of 'publicness' began to evolve. In contrast to the court, it was a public sphere comprised of 'private' individuals.[18] From its onset, the Salon conceived of itself as distinct from court social etiquette and ritual. Within its confines, the aristocrat and the educated bourgeoisie mingled as equals regardless of social status. Personal distinction was achieved in the presence of others, through the virtuosity of one's conversation and *esprit.* Comprised of conversation and reading aloud, Salon discourse required an audience, required seeing and being seen.

The early democratic space of the Salon, evolved within the aristocratic residence of the *hôtel.* While initiating new forms of a sociability, aristocratic Salon women remained part of the extended realm of the court. Paradoxically, as the public space of the Salon grew, the expression of social distinction required greater expression. Both became expressed and facilitated through the parallel evolution of the *salon* and the *appartement de parade* within the space of the *hôtel*, their distinctiveness as institutions increasing with time.

Salon society saw itself as a world apart. *Le monde* was constructed through and sustained by conversation. The term itself suggests a notion of exclusivity which is at the same time all-encompassing in that it encloses everything of value within its boundaries. Language and the communication of ideas were the center of life in *le monde*, just as they were in the Greek *polis* - 'everybody outside of the *polis* ...was *aneu logou* deprived, of course, not of the faculty of speech, but of the way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the concern of all citizens was to talk to each other.'[19] The sociability of the Salon, unlike the *polis*, was governed by a code of courtesy distinct from the agonistic intellectual and academic tradition reaching back to ancient Greece. Under the

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[18] Although initiated during the seventeenth-century, the disintegration of representative publicness, Habermas argues, did not take place until the eighteenth century when its polarization resulted in the splitting of the public sphere into the public sphere of public authority (court and the police), and a parallel public sphere made up of individuals. This sphere was comprised of the print world, institutions of intellectual sociability (Salons, coffeehouses, clubs, etc.), 29-30.

rules of polite conversation, which required reciprocity, Salon women and men of letters distinguished themselves through conversational virtuosity and skillful argument without disputation.[20]

The French Hôtel

> There is nothing original in the belief that people reciprocally interpret objects in terms of themselves --- their gender, family, station, fortune --- and themselves in terms of their objects --- skirts, castles, coats-of-arms and coronets.[21]

The French *hôtel* cannot be encompassed by its architectural features alone. It can best be understood as a complex milieu of participating architectural, cultural and social categories. Its evolution as an architectural type was linked to the transformation of the public sphere and the emergence of a private life during the eighteenth-century, as well as to the changes in modes of self representation that this entailed.

Although owned and financed by an individual, the *hôtel* was not, strictly speaking, private. The lives of the French aristocracy were effectively public, at least in their own understanding of the term. To live a life in *le monde* was to live within the public sphere of the *ancien régime* and the Salon, those who lived outside it lead a *vie particulière.*[22] Not solely a function of birth, status within the hierarchy of court society required a virtuosity in the art of social and cultural representation. To advance oneself in *le monde*, an individual not only had to 'be in the best conversation,' but had to create a space in which to represent him or herself in the presence of others. Through the

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[19] Arendt, 27.

[20] That in ancient Greece the word contest (*agonia*) and an assembly or an action of law (*agon*) had essentially the same meaning, suggests by implication the disputatious nature of the public sphere. Walter J. Ong, *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality and Consciouness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press) 125.

[21] Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Space in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 81.

[22] Norberg Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd, 1983),55; '*le monde*' was the seventeenth-century's designation for polite society.

architecture and decoration of their *hôtels*, French noble society was able to invest private space with public meaning.

Three distinct types evolved during the *hôtel's* evolution: the Baroque, the Rococo, and the Neoclassical *hôtel*.[23] These types are roughly equivalent to those described by Krafft and Ransonnette as *hôtels* of Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI, in their late eighteenth-century treatise, *Plans, coupes, élévations des plus belles...hôtels...à Paris*.[24] That the social structure and ritual of French noble society, and the spatial structure of the French *hôtel* were correlated has been noted by several authors.[25] The interplay between *hôtel* architecture, and cultural practice, especially language, is evident in the connection between manuals of conduct, architectural spaces and modes of polite conversation. Robin Middleton suggests that the treatise on French *hôtel* planning may have had its origins in the books of manners which date back to the fourteenth-century.[26]

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[23] For a thorough account of the history of the architectural evolution of the French *hôtel* see Michel Dennis, *Cour and Garden*.

[24] See introduction, J.-C Krafft and N Ransonette, *Plans, coupes, élévations de plus belles maisons et des hôtels consruits à Paris et dans les environs* (Paris, 1909). There is a recognized discrepancy between the styles described by Kraft and Ransonnette as Louise XVI, Louise XV and Louis XVI, and the monarchs for which they were named, for instance the style of Louis XV was already mature before his reign began. This is also true for Dennis' *hôtel* types. For example, he extends the term Baroque back in time to include the late sixteenth-century *hôtels*, which might otherwise be called Classical or Renaissance. Ibid. 3, 266; see also Michel Gallet, *Stately Mansions: Eighteenth Century Paris Architecture* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), xiv.

[25] For a comparison of the social structure of the *ancien régime* and *hôtel* planning see Elias, 41-65; For a discussion of the spatial articulation of aristocratic culture in the Rococo *hôtel* see Scott, 101-117.

[26] It was not until the late seventeenth century in Antoine de Courtin's *Neveau traite de la civilité qui se practique en France parmi les honnêttes gens*, 1671 (translated into English as *The Rules of Civility* the same year), that a tentative association of social behavior with architectural spaces was made, (Rules of behavior in the *antechambre* and the *chambre* were indicated; one should not wear a hat in either room; one must not sit on the bed in the *chambre*), Middleton, introduction to Le Camus de Mézières, *The Genius of Architecture*, 35-6.

The Baroque hôtel

The French *hôtel* originated as an urban infill-building. (fig. 5, 6) The early Baroque type consisted of a U-shaped building in which the principal living area, the *corps-de-logis,* connected two parallel wings and defined the central courtyard. The front facade faced into the forecourt, while the back facade looked out onto a formal garden. A wall containing a carriage passage connected the side wings, forming a barrier between the street and the forecourt.[27] Pierre Le Muet, Louis Savot, and the Marquise de Rambouillet are credited with introducing the notion of spatial planning into *hotel* architecture. Le Muet's *Manière de bastir pour toutes sortes de personnes*, and Savot's *Architecture Françoise* were both published in 1624, and summarized the principles of the *hôtel* during the first quarter of the century. The plans were simple and the room function not yet well defined. Le Muet listed the principal rooms as the *salle,* a general purpose room; the *chambre,* a formal reception space or a room for sleeping; the *guarderobe,* a cupboard / dressing room; and the *cabinet*, a small study or sitting room. The rudimentary apartments shown in his plans generally consisted of three room types; *chambre, guarderobe and cabinet* which, he suggested, must be adjoining according to use and convenience.[28] (fig. 7) The status of the bed as an architectural element is indicated when its position began to be included on architectural plans, (in contrast to the ubiquitous folding beds which could be set up anywhere). Le Muet's writes; 'In the framing of the *chambers*, one must fix the position of the bed.'[29] The head of the bed, he suggests, should be placed against a partition wall so as to form a 6' X 6' space called the

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[27] The prototype of the French *hôtel* can be found in various sixteenth century buildings. Dennis suggests that over the duration of two centuries the free-standing, fortified, medieval French chateau was transformed into a courtyard building with flat, unified walls and a strong horizontallity. The basic type was carried over to the seventeenth century from the sixteenth-century *hôtels*, Dennis, 29-30.

[28] An apartment was comprised of a suite of rooms. Each adult regardless of gender had their own apartments, a reflection of the status accorded to noble women; Ibid., 52; Middleton, 36; Antoine Picon, *French Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment,* trans. Martin Thom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 72.

[29] Pierre Le Muet, *Maneire de bien bastir por toutes sortes de personnes.* Second edition (Paris: Chez du Puis, 1663), 2.

ruelle. The *ruelle* was an important, though transitory, space in which women received visitors *en lit.* Its significance to this thesis lies in its role as the site of origin of the seventeenth-century Salon. Recognized as an architectural space by Le Muet and Savot, the *ruelle* had disappeared from architectural treatises by 1700.[30]

Mme. de Rambouillet is reputed to have designed and drawn up the plans for the 1619 and 1627 renovations of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Her contemporary Henri Sauval, wrote of her *hôtel* that it was 'the most celebrated in the kingdom ...we have been told that she actually made and provided the design, that she alone undertook, directed and brought about its execution.' These plans no longer exist, except in the form of a reconstruction done by Babelon.[31] (fig. 8) As the founder of the prototypical Salon, and a member of the nobility as well, Mme. Rambouillet introduced two innovations which contributed to the spatial articulation of two contrasting forms of public representation developing within the *hôtel.* In her plan, she moved the grand stair and entrance, traditionally centered within the front facade, to the left wing, creating the condition for the development of an *enfilade* across the garden facade. This dramatic sequence of reception spaces became a means through which aristocratic distinction was ritually enacted.[32] To enlarge the space of her *ruelle* she converted her *garderobe* into a space for the bed, freeing the main *chambre* for the space of the Salon. In this move she initiated a new kind of public space distinct from that of the state apartments.[33]

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[30] The space and function of the *ruelle* appear in both Le Muet, 2, *and* Savot, *L'architecture françoise des bâtiments particulères/ Composée par Louis Savot; avec des figures & des notes de M. Blondel* (Paris: Chez Françoise Clovzier [et] Pierre Aubouôin, 1673), 94-96, but does not appear in the architectural plans or glossary of terms included in D'Avillier's *Cours d'architecture* (1691).

[31] See J.P Babelon, *Demeurs parisiennes sous Henri IV et Louis XII* (Paris, 1965), 189-95.

[32] The French term *enfilade* means a row of rooms along an axis with their doors aligned. This configuration became favored for spaces of representation because it allowed the visitor to see the whole reception sequence in all its magnificence; it is not certain that Mme. Rambouillet was the first to place the grand stair to the side, or to create an *enfilade.* This spatial configuration may have been present in some sixteenth-century buildings.

[33] Peter Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England France and Holland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 7-10.

In 1691, Augustin D'Aviller's published the first edition of his treatise, *Cours d'Architecture.* A plan from *Cours* illustrates the growing practice of providing two separate types of apartments, *appartemnts de parade* for ceremonial purposes (G1-3 and H1-3 in fig. 9), and smaller apartments for private use (G4-9, H4-10 and K1-5 in fig. 9). A clearer articulation of the reception sequence in the ceremonial apartments is evident, which takes a characteristic sequence of grand stair, *salle, antichambre and chambre de parade.* The end point of Baroque *hôtel* planning, D'Avillier's plan demonstrates the simultaneous and contradictory emphasis on private life and aristocratic ritual and display - a dichotomy that would become fully expressed during the eighteenth century in the hybrid character of the Rococo *hôtel.*

The Rococo Hôtel

During the 1660's, Louis XIV had effected a shift in France's cultural center from Paris to Versailles, by attracting Salon culture to his court, and by founding the royal academies and other institutions capable of directing culture for the political ends of absolutism.[34] By the turn of the century, wearied of the oppressive ceremony of Versailles, and the intellectual constraints of the royal academies, the nobility began re-establishing itself in Paris, in anticipation of an Orléanist Regency.[35] After a thirty-year lull, *hôtel* building was renewed in response to the growing influx of nobles, as well as to the growing demands of a newly emerging class of bourgeois economic elite. For the best part of the next century, the Salon would flourish in the *salons* and dinning rooms of the Rococo *hôtel*, and would establish itself as the social center for the Republic of Letters.[36]

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[34] The monarchy's ongoing attempts to appropriate politeness, as a means of reinforcing hierarchy and subordination to royal authority, met with only partial success. In shifting to Versailles, Louis XIV had inadvertently created the means for Paris to develop as a world apart, Scott, 122.

[35] Goodman, 112, Scott., 147.

[36] The Republic of Letters was formally founded in the seventeenth century as an apolitical community of discourse, it became increasingly political as its Enlightenment ideas began to challenge the

It has been argued by Stafford that the eighteenth century was the first 'to systematize irrevocable animosities and fundamental antagonisms.'[37] In *hôtel* evolution, this was reflected in an interior planning that was progressively shaped by opposing notions of public/private, male/female, knowledge/pleasure, and nature/culture. A hybrid, the Rococo hôtel was characterized by opposing categories. Its proliferation of room types reflected the century's growing compulsion towards classification, as well as the Enlightenment notion of improvement and progress. The impulse to subject human activity to ever finer categorization gave rise in the Rococo *hôtel* to increasingly complex spatial and representational relationships. This condition necessitated an ongoing negotiation between private and ceremonial space, as well as the accommodation of the increasingly important space of sociability.

By the eighteenth century, French men of letters had come to identify French culture with sociability and sociability with the polite society of *le monde.* The clear separation in space and decoration required by the contradictory objectives of sociability and aristocratic distinction were commonly accomplished by placing the ceremonial apartments on the *belle étage,* above the ground floor society apartments - an arrangement that was advantageous for both. When positioned on the first floor, the ceremonial apartment was able to incorporate the grand stair in the spatial procession through which the 'gradation of personal encounters' was moderated.[38] Greater status could also be expressed through the Renaissance idea of the *piano noble*, in which 'above' conveyed superiority and 'below' inferiority. In placing the society apartments

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monarchy, Vigneul-Marville wrote in 1699: 'The Republic of Letters is of very ancient origin...Never has it been so great, so populous, so free or so glorious. It embraces the whole world and is composed of all nationalities, all social classes [*conditions*], all ages, and both sexes.' Quoted in Goodman, 51-2.

[37] For insight into the eighteenth-century's construction of oppositional categories see Barbara Maria Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 29, passim; On the Effect of empiricism and the Enlightenment on eighteenth-century architecture see Emile Kauffman, *Architecture in the Age of reason: Baroque and Post-Baroque in England, Italy, and France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 35; and Picon, 35-38.

below, the symbolic value of the Salon as a 'democratic space', coincided with the actual increased accessibility of a *salon* located on ground level.[39]

The cultivation of sociability required the absence of the social and spatial barriers required to create and sustain social distinction. If the *appartement de parade* provided a hierarchical milieu within which individuals played out their social differences, the society rooms offered an entirely different environment, the domain of sociability. Here, all effects were directed towards interaction, the essence of sociability, not merely as a means to an extrinsic end, but as a goal in itself.[40] A Comparison of two images: Antoine Trouvain's etching, *Quatrième Chambre des Appartements,* 1696, which depicts a space of aristocratic representation, (fig. 10) and Jean-François De Troy's painting, *Reading from Molière* a Salon space (fig. 11), clearly shows the difference.[41] Scott points out that Trouvain has placed his figures in an orderly line against the wall of an *antechambre* where they wait to be received in the *chambre de parade.* This pattern of spatial occupation was associated with the ceremonial apartments and with aristocratic representation. In contrast, De Troy portrays an informal Salon gathering. To evoke a sense of shared space he has used a 'conjunctional composition, so that his figures are led to encroach upon each other's space and create overlapping and intimately meshed identities.'[42]

Decoration was an essential part of *hôtel* architecture. Simultaneously participating in and reflecting changing epistemologies, decoration played a crucial role

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[38] Scott, 108-9

[39] The term 'democratic' is used in a qualified sense. In theory, no polite member of society, whatever their social station, could be denied access to the Salon. Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 105.

[41] Ibid., 103-109; For an examination of the Rococo Hôtel Soubise and its gendered spatial categories as a reflection of the transformation of the public sphere and the emergence of private life See Sherry McKay, 'The "Salon de la Princess": "Rococo" Design, Ornamented Bodies and the Public Sphere.' *RACAR* XXI, no. 1-2 (1994), 71-84.

[42] Scott, 107.

in representation and in the mediation of social relations. During the eighteenth-century, radical shifts in the style and content of representation (from the Rococo to the Neoclassical), paralleled significant paradigm shifts. An age bent on reform found in the Rococo a convenient symbol for France's social, cultural and political ills. With republicanism in the air, rising aspirations for a new social and moral order demanded a return to an 'ideal' art and architecture that could be put to the service of a new order. Seeking to reshape society, *philosphes*, theorists, artists and architects turned to nature and antiquity for a virile source of ideal forms and social models.[43] Though aesthetic theory reviled the Rococo, its association with pleasure and comfort meant that in practice many *hôtel* owners and even some critics abandoned its grace and charm only reluctantly.[44] As well, a general lack of *hôtel* construction and renovation during the Seven Year War (1756-1763) contributed to the Rococo's survival as an architectural style into 1760's and 70's.[45] When *hôtel* building resumed in the 1770's, a new *hôtel* type emerged in the suburbs of Paris, the new free standing Neoclassical *hôtel.*

The Neoclassical Hôtel

Overshadowed by the rise of the bourgeois public sphere during the last quarter of the century, the public realm of the *ancien régime* and the Salon as a public institution were in decline. Public expression was increasingly informed by private life. No longer a strictly aristocratic residence, the public character of the *hôtel* began to be informed by the private character of its owners. That private life began to take precedence over forms of aristocratic representation and public forms of self expression, is evident in the

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[43] Wend von Kalnein, *Architecture in France in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995 131-2; Robert Rosenblum, *Tansformations in Late Eighteenth-Century Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 119.

[44] In a letter to Soufflot, (March 18, 1760), regarding the commissioning of picture frames, Marigny, then the Director of the Batiment de Roi and advocate of neoclassicism, wrote 'I want something that is not chicorée nor strict antique, but half one, half the other.'

[45] Dennis, 128; Kalnien, 190, 208-9; Friske Kimball. *The Creation of the Rococo* (Philidelphia: Philidelphia Museum of Art, 1943), 207.

celebration of the private spaces of the boudoir and the *appartement des bains.* The rich bourgeoisie anxious to reinvent and express themselves, did so through the consumption of cultural artifacts and practices, a process in which *hôtel* ownership played an important part:

> 'The works of art render visible to all, the high degree of culture of their proprietor, his intelligence, his fortune, well used. They purify riches, transmitting money without honour into a means of prestige, consideration, and success.[46]

The French aristocracy were also conspicuous collectors of art and architecture. In the aristocratic culture, however, there existed an analogy between the objects of art and cultural practice (speech and action) investing the acquisition of art with a meaning beyond its consumption and display. With the loss of analogy, this meaning was lost through the instrumental consumption of art.

The accessibility of distant cultures, in conjunction with the erosion of absolute standards, allowed for unprecedented relativity and choice in matters of style and taste. The interpretive process was made more complex by the variety of formal vocabulary and emotional expression exhibited by eighteenth-century readings of Greco-Roman architecture. As a result, what is loosely called Neoclassical architecture was variously formed by romantic nostalgia, utopian purity, the reconstruction of ancient glories in the service of current practices, the display of encyclopedic learning, or simply the 'expression of antiquity as up-to-date fashion.'[47] Late-eighteenth century *hôtel* architecture varied greatly. Contrasting tendencies and interpretations of Neoclassical ideas were represented in different *hôtels,* or even in a single *hôtel.* Innovative architects like Nicolas Ledoux found complex, spatial and decorative interpretations of gender and character.[48]

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[46] Yves Durand, *Les Fermiers-généraux au XVIII e Siècle* (Paris, P.U.F., 1971), quoted in Remy Saisselin, 'Architecture and Language: the Sensationalism of Le Camus de Mézières,' *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 15, no.3, (Summer 1975), 16.

[47] Rosenblum, 109-112.

In Ledoux's plan for the Hôtel Guimard, which was designed for Mlle. Guimard the first dancer of the Paris opera, the blurring between what is public and what is private is evident. A clever inversion of spatial categories takes place within the plan. The whole of the ground floor is taken up with a single apartment with an accompanying *appartement des bains*. The central position of the niche in the porch suggests the location of the door. In place of the anticipated door, however, Ledoux has placed the window of the *cabinet des bains*. The main entrance itself is located off center to the right, locating the public reception sequence along a secondary axis, and sandwiching it between the court and garden. Normally less visible, the private is revealed in the form of the *appartement des bains* occupying the most public position along front facade, and the private space of the bedroom and the boudoir along the garden facade.[49] (fig.12) A correspondence exists between the spatial ambiguity of Mlle. Guimard's *hôtel* and the ambiguity of her public and private persona. Equally well known as a lover, Mlle. Guimard's *hotel* was financed by her admirers. One lover provided the site, a second her house, and a third provided her with support.[50] By giving priority to the private spaces of the *boudoir and the appartement des bains*, Ledoux has made 'public' Mlle. Guimard's private status as lover.[51] In Ledoux's

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[48] Ledoux's salt works project at Chaux, 1908, is famous for its *oikéma*. (the Greek word for 'little house,' commonly understood to signify a brothel). The character of the plan was informed by its erotic function as a brothel. Propriety was preserved in its external guise as a Greek temple. Only in the unmistakably phallic plan was it role in sexual initiation revealed. Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1985), 16.

[49] Dennis, 157; The boudoir was always associated with the garden, but the displacement of the reception sequence to a secondary axis by the boudoir and *chambre* represented an inversion of priorities.

[50] Whom an actress took as a lover may have enhanced her reputation, but the acquisition of wealthy patrons may also have been an economic and professional necessity as the bankruptcy of one of her lovers caused her to sell her house. Ibid., 154.

[51] Ledoux's inversion of public and private space is also reflective of the ambiguous status of women performers in pre-revolutionary France. Viewed with ambivalence, they were discussed, admired, and sought after, while simultaneously stigmatized. Aristocratic French women could afford to take lovers because their respectability was conferred on them by their status as married women. Women of the theater, however, were neither aristocratic nor married, and until the Revolution occupied the status of non-persons. They could not inherit, nor could they bequeath wealth or property. Since actresses were excommunicated by the Catholic Church they also could not legally marry. Their children were illegitimate and ineligible for baptism. Even at death church rites were denied them unless they had given up their profession in time, Barbara G. Mittman, 'Women and the Theatre Arts,' in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Samia I. Spencer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 160.

paradoxical solution for what is 'private' and what is 'public' can be seen the larger process of transposition which occurred as the original signification of public was subsumed in the rise of the 'social.'

CHAPTER 2

BODY LANGUAGE: THE BED AND THE *CABINET* AS SIGNIFIERS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY RATIONAL DISCOURSE

In the seventeenth century the verb 'converser' retained its Latin sense of 'to frequent' or 'live with,' and the noun 'conversation' conveyed a sense of place that it no longer has today. Conversation created its own space with carefully marked boundaries to 'be somebody' one had to be 'in the best conversation.' Conversation was an artifact as much as an activity, and it was through conversation that all other cultural forms were assigned or denied a place in 'le monde.'

Elizabeth Goldsmith, *Exclusive Conversations*

The Salon and the planning of the French *hôtel* sprang, in a manner of speaking, from the bed of Mme. de Rambouillet. Her *lit de repose* or daybed was the site from which Mme. de Rambouliet launched her prototypical Salon, the famous *Chambre Bleue.*[1] Her fondness for the bed, gives cause to speculate that it was from this same bed that, dissatisfied with the designs of her architect, Mme. De Rambouillet called for paper and pen and laid out the novel plan for the remodeling of her *hôtel.*

This chapter has the following objectives: 1) to identify women as the purveyors of the French notion of sociability, and the bed as the locus of its refinement and dissemination, 2) to examine the bed as a symbol of feminine resistance, 3) to demonstrate the development of the opposing patterns of rational discourse, bed-speech-female and *cabinet*(library)-writing-male, and their association with the gendered institutions of the Salon and the academy, and 4) to look at the salon and the academy in relation to gender and early modern discourse in light of the Cartesian notion 'the mind has no sex.'

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[1] Every point of origin has a precedence. What made Mme. de Rambouillet's *chambre bleue* a point of genesis was, that unlike her predecessors such as Margarite Valois, her Salon was conceived as an alternative to the court society of the Louvre, and as distinct from other royal residences, Elizabeth Goldsmith, *Exclusive Conversation: The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 6-7, 44.

It has been suggested by Ellery Schalk, that the 'civilizing' of France was initiated by the transformation of noble culture during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. At this time new codes of conduct influenced by the medieval notion of Christian piety, (considered a female virtue), were introduced.[2] The traditional belief that associated virtue with hereditary social position was superseded by the early seventeenth-century notion of acquired or cultivated virtue. By the eighteenth century, culture and sociability had replaced feats of physical valor as emblems of noble virtue.[3]

In France, the idea of sociability was informed by two distinct discourses which became merged during the eighteenth century: i) the seventeenth-century idea of conviviality which was rooted in the theory *la politesse mondaine*, (the theory of politeness appropriate to high society), and ii) the discourse on natural law which supported the idea of sociability as an inherent and defining human trait.[4] Sociability as a cultural practice was forged in Parisian Salons. The women who led them, played a central role in the integration of knowledge and sociability, a unity which Enlightenment philosophers such as Voltaire and Diderot believed to be essential to the formation of a civilized, enlightened society, and

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[2] The idea of virtue is more complex than is presented here. The term 'virtue' has classical origins and is derived from the Latin *virtus* which refers to male action and manly excellence. D.W. Hamlyn points out that Socarates linked virtue to knowledge and to self knowledge. 'In so far as knowledge is virtue, and knowledge implies self-knowledge, virtue must involve both a knowledge and care of oneself, for ones soul.' *The Penguin History of Western Phylosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 39.

[3] According to Schalk, this involved a process of reform, initiated in response to anti-noble sentiment caused by the excesses of the *nobelesse d'epée* (military nobles), and the social disruptions associated with the War of Religions. During this period the accepted social function and privilege of the French nobility which were based upon their military function and birth-right, were severely challenged from within its own ranks as well as from society at large. According to Ellery Schalk, a process of reinvention took place resulting in a new code of conduct based on courtly manners and conversational virtuosity. *From Valor to Pedigree; Ideas of Nobility in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), passim chap. 4, chap. 8; see also Goldsmith, 7-8; Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 111-112;

[4] Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the Enlightenment* (Ithica: Cornell University Press,1994), 4; Daniel Gordon, '"Public Opinion" and the Civilizing Process in France: The Example of Morellet,' *Eighteenth Century Studies* 22, no. 3 (1989), 307.

to French national identity.[5] Voltaire's history of Louis XIV located women at the center of the civilizing process during 'France's transformation from a barbaric to a civilized nation.'[6]

The process of redefining noble culture resulted in an inversion of social values. Noble society began to embrace a 'feminine' viewpoint, which was identified as a new epistemological principle and guide to behavior. The 'heroic ethic of masculinity' began to be seen as 'a mark of personal and social inferiority,' more characteristic of the lower classes than of *le monde.*[7] What had historically been perceived as female 'weakness,' began to be viewed as 'feminine goodness' and delicacy. The belief that women possessed a special means of knowing which allowed them to grasp meaning directly or intuitively, gave them authority as arbitrators of taste and behavior.[8] Under this guise, women's public role as *salonnières* was legitimized and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries women functioned as purveyors of sociability and culture.[9] 'It is for women to pronounce on fashions, to judge language, to discuss the well-bred air and good manners. They have more knowledge, skill and finesse than men in these matters. Everything dependent upon taste is their provenance.'[10]

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[5] J. Phillipe Minguet, *Esthetique Rococo* (Paris: Libraire Philosphique J. Vrin, 1966), p. 204.

[6] Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, 7-8; Carolyn Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons and Social Stratification in Seventeenth Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 33.

[7] Lougee, 31-2. This inversion would be summarily corrected during the late eighteenth century by Neoclassicism and the reassertion of a male ethos.

[8] 'They [women] acquire by birth what men acquire only by work and by years.' Gilbert Gabriel, *Panégyrique des dames. Dédié à Mademoiselle (Paris, 1650), 14.* quoted in Lougee, 31.

[9] Goodman summarizes the arguments made by Elias Norberg in *Power and Civility*, vol. 2 of *The Civilizing Process*, i) Women were central in the 'civilizing' process during the shift from feudal warrior society to the court society, and ii) The absolutist courts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries allowed for more equality between men and women than at any other time in European history, *The Republic of Letters*, 6.

[10] Nicolas de Melbranche, quoted in Wendy Gibson, *Women in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: Minton Balch & Co., 1989), 193.

Seventeenth-Century Discursive Spaces

The history of French noble women, the French *hôtel* as a building type, and the idea of intellectual sociability are integrally linked. Erica Harth in *Cartesian Women* has situated three distinct social sites of rational discourse within the architectural space of Parisian *hotels:* the Salon, the informal academy and the *conference.*[11] She suggests that two of these, the Salon and academy, had their antecedents in the sixteenth-century aristocratic and courtly circles of the French Renaissance in which humanists, poets, men and women participated in the pursuit of an encyclopedic, universal knowledge.[12]

The classical association among sociability, pleasure, and knowledge, which made Salons sites of rational discourse as well as of social interaction, continued in the seventeenth century. Intellectual unity, however, started to fragment as knowledge became progressively more specialized throughout the century. The informal academies began to separate into distinct branches of learning, taking on a more focused educational purpose, whereas the Salon, conceived of as a vehicle of sociability, continued to promote an integrated program of pleasure, leisure and knowledge.[13] Harth suggests that the functional distinction between the Salon and the academy becomes apparent with examination of the process of intellectual differentiation. She argues that Descartes' philosophy validated the idea of women as rational entities through its rejection of received wisdom and its belief in

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[11] The *conference* was larger in scale and less exclusive than either the academy or the Salon. It consisted of regularly scheduled public discussions, debates, and or lectures. Theophraste Renaudot set a precedence for this discursive place by holding weekly meetings in the *grande salle* of his Maison du Grand Coq, which held one hundred or more persons. That his *maison* also housed his center for job referrals, his newpaper the *Gazette*, as well as his living quarters, attests to both the size and the public nature of the *hotel* as an architetural type, Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse During the Old Regime* (Ithica: Cornell University Press), 21.

[12] Harth, 21; Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 20-21; The Palace Academy of Henri III, an offshoot of the Academy of Poetry and Music founded in 1570 under Charles IX, admitted select female members and allowed them to take part in disputation. Seventeenth-century provincial French academies granted a few women honorary or associate memberships of an inferior status. The official academies, with the exception of the Academy of Painting and Music refused to follow suit by not admitting women even in a limited capacity, Gibson, 191.

the separation of the rational mind from the sensate body. Cartesianism suggested by implication that 'the mind has no sex.' This notion validated women as intellectual beings and opened up the possibility of their access to official, early-modern, rational discourse. The presence of women as members in provincial academies as well as the application of the term 'academy' to certain Salons suggests that in seventeenth-century France, the 'assignation of gender to discursive space was not yet complete.'[14] (fig. 14). Harth goes on to posit a correlation between the marginalization of women during the seventeenth century and the fragmentation and gendering of knowledge - clearly expressed in the asymmetrical development of the academy and the Salon, and in the privileging of writing over speech.[15]

The presence or absence of the written word is a first indication of difference between the academy and the Salon. Furetiere's *Dictionaire universel* (1690) describes the term '*académie*' as: 'An assembly of people of letters where the Sciences and the Fine Arts are cultivated.' The word '*salon*' on the other hand, did not yet signify a social or intellectual gathering. Salon and its derivative *salonnière* are anachronisms given to gatherings of intellectual sociability, and the women who led them, by the nineteenth century.[16] *Furtière's dictionaire* (1690) defines the *salon* solely as an architectural space, a

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[13] Ibid., 21.

[14] Ibid., 33.

[15] Harth, passim; The entry of women into official rational discourse was also impeded by their lack of formal education, especially of classical languages. For a general discussion of the education of seventeenth-century women see Gibson, 17-30; Lougee points out that seventeenth-century advocates of women's education and feminine social influence did not articulate a formal program of study . She quotes a 1694 essay on jurisprudence which states that women possess 'all the talents requisite for great employments and lofty undertakings.' As women were expected to undertake the specific role as arbitrators and educators of social behavior, even those that championed women's education did not envision an education equivalent to that of a man, but rather a thoroughly social one, Harth, 27; Most women were self educated, some having access to the libraries of male family members. The writer, Stéphanie de Genlis whose memoirs provide a window into eighteenth-century salon culture, was fortunate in having a large library assembled by her late husband. About her haphazard education she wrote, 'I had a great desire to educate myself... As to history, I was so ignorant that I did not know where to begin...lacking a guide, I gave no order to my readings which, at this beginning of a course of studies, lost me a lot of time.' Quoted in Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, 77-8.

[16] Harth, 15; Dena Goodman, 'The Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosphic Ambitions,' *Eighteenth-Century* Studies 22 (Spring 1989), 33; Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, 78.

grand reception room in which ambassadors were received. This meaning also began to appear in *hôtel* treatises during the later part of the century.[17] Of the three institutions of intellectual discourse of the period, only the female-led *salon* was left unnamed by the seventeenth and eighteenth century.[18] During their heyday in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Salon-like gatherings were correspondingly referred to in terms of the architectural space in which they occurred, or in terms of the *salonnière* who led them and the day of the week on which they occurred, (for example, Mme. Goeffrin's Wednesdays).[19]

The synecdochical relationship between an event and the space that housed it is evident in seventeenth and eighteenth century meaning of words. The term '*conversation*' for example, conveyed a sense of place as well as an event, and *appartement* described both an assembly of rooms, and an assembly of persons.[20] The association of event and place could account for the permeability between the Salon gatherings and the architectural space with which they were associated. *Ruelle* or *alcôve,* for example, indicated both the space and the social event which took place within it. Unlike the academy, the Salon was not assigned a fixed name or address. The reluctance to do so reflects the ephemeral quality of its primary cultural product, conversation, as well as the eighteenth century's reluctance to assign the status of institution to a women-led gathering.

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[17] In the early Baroque *hôtel* the grand reception space *Salon* was called the *grande salle*, the term *salon* does not appear for instance in Le Muet, 1626. *Salon* begins to replace *grande salle* with increasing functional differentiation of rooms at the turn of the century. D'Avillier describes the *salon* as the most distinguished space in the apartment, along with the state apartment, where '*gens qualifier*' are received. *Cours d'architecture...* (Paris: Pierre-Jean Mariette, 1750), 216; Salon begins to appear in dictionaries near the end of the seventeenth century, but does not appear in architectural inventories before 1720, Anik Paradaihe-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris*, trans. Jocelyn Phelps (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 62.

[18] Harth, 15.

[19]Michel Gallet, *Stately Mansions: Eighteenth Century Paris Architecture*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 23; Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, 89; Henery C. Shelly, *Old Paris: Its Social, Historical and Literary Associations* (London: >s.n.<), 191.

[20] Goldsmith points out that in the seventeenth century the verb *converser* kept its Latin sense of 'to frequent' or 'to live with', and that '*conversation*' conveyed a sense of place that it no longer does today, 2; '*appartement*' according to eighteenth-century usage meant not only a suite of associated rooms,

The Bed

The nineteenth century model of separate public and private spheres was not yet in evidence. Notions of privacy were just beginning to stir, and privacy before the eighteenth-century can better be described as a gradient of publicness. The architecture of the *hôtel*, a noble residence, was comprised of a physical matrix in which social hierarchy was ritually enacted and reinforced. The bed and its adjacent spaces figured importantly within the architectural and social structure of the *hôtel.* That the bed was viewed as more than an object or piece of furniture, is indicated by its inclusion in architectural inventories taken during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[21] The bed also defined the transient but important space of the *ruelle,* the space of origin of the Salon.

The *ruelle* originated as a space in which women recovering from illness or childbirth could receive visitors from their beds. Backer points that it was acceptable for aristocratic women, having fulfilled their obligation to provide an heir, to stay in bed for a month or two after the birth of a child.[22] As the etching 'Une ruelle' by Chauveau implies, the *ruelle* by the seventeenth century was becoming an increasingly social and public space. (fig.15) The great bed continued to represent 'the house,' and as such, remained the symbol of masculine power. In contrast, the day bed, located in the women's apartments became both symbol and refuge as seventeenth-century noblewomen attempted to define their place in the shifting social and intellectual geographies of the times. The bed became, as well, emblematic of seventeenth-century women's resistance to the imposition of marriages of convenience.

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but also a social gathering, particularly of the royalty, Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Space in Early Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 104.

[21] Annik Pardailhe-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Private and domestic Life in Early Modern Paris*, trans. Jocelyn Phelps. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 73.

[22] Backer, 169; that the ruelle was in frequent use is indicated by the existence of the *ruelle* armchair, an armchair with narrow proportions suited to the diminutive reception space for which they were designed, Paradailhé-Galabrun, 94.

Several factors converged to determine the *ruelle* as the site of origin of the Salon. Traditionally, it was used as a reception space for women, though in the narrower context of child birth and the sick bed. From her bed, Mme. de Rambouillet transformed the *ruelle* into a public institution and a space of appearance. Born Catherine de Vivonne-Savelli, Mme Rambouillet spent her childhood in Italy. Her mother was a member of one of the oldest noble families in Rome and her father was a French diplomat serving in Rome as ambassador to the Pope. Brought to Paris in 1600, she was married to Charles d'Angennes a member of the French court who would inherit the family title of Marquis de Rambouillet.[23] Attuned to Italian taste and manners, Mme de Rambouillet found the French court lacking in culture and civility. In reaction, she set about organizing her own social and intellectual circle distinctly different from that of the Court.[24]

Along with changing epistemologies and social realities, several personal factors placed Mme. Rambouillet in a position to initiate a new architectural and discursive space. Suffering from an undiagnosed disorder which made her sensitive to heat, she could not tolerate direct sunlight or warmth from a fireplace, the *hôtel's* sole heating source.[25] Her interest in architecture, and 'mania' for building apparently served her well. To escape the cold, she converted a closet which adjoined her *chambre* into an *alcôve* to house her bed. In addition to the invention of the bed alcôve, which became a *hôtel* standard, she replaced the traditional brown of cordovan leather paneling, and introduced the idea of the colored wall surface, by re-paneling the walls with blue tapestries. While her circle as a whole met in the larger space of her *chambre*, small groups entered her *alcôve* where swaddled in furs Mme. de Rambouillet presided. The physical and conceptual expansion of her *ruelle* into a major discursive space resulted in the formation of her famous *Chambre Bleue*, the prototype of

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[23] Dorthy Anne Liot Backer, *Precious Women* (New York: Basic Books Publishers Inc., 1974), 25-30.

[24] Contemporary accounts delighted in reporting Mme. de Rambouillet's aversion to the court culture. Tellemant des Reaux suggests in *les Historiettes*, that Mme. Rambouillet amused herself by occasionally visiting 'the antechambres of the Louvre,' to see how different her own idea of entertainment was from that of the Court. Goldsmith, 6-7.

[25] Backer, 68; Harth 15, 19.

the Salon, as theater of life for the *prècieuse*, and a model for *hôtel* planning and interior design.[26]

Seeing and being seen were of serious concern and conferred a public dimension to Salon life as well as to the Court.[27] Spectacle, theatrics and the play on language also functioned in the new self definition that noblewomen were seeking. The Salon members dressed in costumes and took on, or were given, Arcadian or classical names, many taken from the pastoral novel *L'Astrée.* The poet François Malherbe, for instance, created Mme. Rambouillet's pseudonym 'Arthénice,' an anagram of Catherine.[28] (fig. 16) Aside from helping to create 'a world apart,' this custom had a practical function. A married woman could not be addressed in public by her Christian name, even by her equals. As well, the adoption of poetic pseudonyms helped create an air of informality and intimacy among Salon members, who were from different social strata.[29]

By the 1650s a women need not be sick or recovering from childbirth to receive in bed.[30] The bed became a symbol for both traditional notions of womanhood and for the new intellectual and cultural terrain claimed by women. The seventeenth century saw a hidden strength in their apparent weakness, and the bed as a symbol reinforced the association between female weakness and moral strength. The incompatibility of marriage and romantic love was convincingly argued by the court poets. Yet to be 'established' in society, a

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[26] Backer, 36, 63; Michael Dennis, *Court and Garden: From the French H53*; Peter Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France and Holland* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978), 7-10.

[27] Joan B. Landes argues that the absolute court functioned as a visual and theatrical spectacle, using public performances in the form of festivals, coronations, royal chambers, and rituals of entry and reception to reinforce and authorize the king's power. The association of the king with the ancient symbols of Hercules and Appolo was evoked to mythologize the king and to make the mystique of kingship tangible, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithica: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988), passim Chapt. 1.

[28] Backer, 58- 9.

[29] Ibid., 58-9.

[30] Ibid., 170.

woman needed a husband. Given that the convent was the most common alternative for women who did not marry, the case that women made against marriage was not solely about their lack of choice. They also argued against society's confinement of a woman's affection within her marriage.[31] Women made use of chivalrous notions of virtue re-emerging during this period. The poetic attitude of chivalry towards love and friendship allowed women to take refuge from 'marital responsibility.' France was the exception to a Catholic Europe where chastity was imposed on women from without, through isolation and confinement. Salon women gained power and respect by transforming chastity into abstinence, a product of their own will. In addition, abstinence and the privileging of platonic love over physical love provided a moral ground on which to question forced marriage and endless childbirth.[32]

Descartes' ideas had a particular attraction for seventeenth-century Salon-women. His philosophy was enthusiastically embraced by educated women and discussed in many of the Salons of the 1640s through the 1660's. Perhaps with women in mind, Descartes had set out to make his work accessible by writing his *Discourse on Method* in clear understandable French. At the same time, his mission to replace 'prejudice' with 'truth' gave women license to combat discrimination. By mid-century, the term *cartésienne*, a women who advocated the philosophy of Descartes, took on a broader signification, which included *salonnières*, in whose salon Cartesianism was discussed, as well as any woman who was intelligent and educated enough to understand Descartes philosophy.[33]

If equality between the sexes was based upon the disembodied mind, the attempt of seventeenth-century women to distance their minds from the historically problematic female-body can be seen as a response to the threat of embodied difference. Seventeenth-

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[31] Ibid., 177-182, Lougee, 25.

[32] Backer, 172-73.

[33] Harth points out the asymmetry hidden in the French pair '*cartésien/cartésienne.*' The emphasis on gender is revealed when *cartésienne* is translated into English and becomes woman cartesian, 4-5.

century Salon women's strategic abstinence can then be understood not only as a refuge from 'marital responsibilities,' and a means of establishing moral superiority, but in Cartesian terms, as an expression of their desire to suppress the awareness of their 'sexed bodies' in order to liberate their minds.

Body Language

> Perhaps you have not heard in your neighborhood about the *précieuse*. You think perhaps it is some rare object from the Orient or some miracle of the Indies and faraway lands... These stars [*précieuses*] have two kinds of heaven, which new philosophy called *Alcôve* and *Ruelle*. The one and the other comprise but one sphere, and are in one circle called conversation.[34]

The idea of disembodiment inverted the bed's traditional associations with female sensuality and fecundity. The daybed began to function as the 'sickbed,' a place where the female body became off limits to male transgression, 'If you want to know what the *précieues* consider as their greatest merit, I'll tell you, it's in loving their sighing suitors most tenderly, without physical pleasure, while solidly enjoying their husbands with aversion.'[35] Salon women were dubbed *précieuses* by the seventeenth century, but what actually constituted a *précieuse* is open to question. Much of what was written about them by their contemporaries, was in the form of parody or satire written by male authors. Recent criticism suggests that *préciosité*, as seen through the 'prism of comic degradation,' was more likely a male-constructed myth than a social reality.[36] It is generally agreed, however,

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[34] Abbé Michel de Puré, *La Précieuse, ou le mytère des ruelles* (1656-58), quoted in Backer, 158; Harth points out the difficulty in assessing seventeenth-century writing on the Salons. De Pure's satirical novel is one of the major sources on *préciocity*, but his intentions are obscured by the 'opacity' of his text which blurs the distinction between 'irony and disinterest', between 'satire and approbation,' 34-42.

[35] Charles de Saint Evremond , *Oeuvres en prose*, 1704 , in Backer, 177.

[36] The term *précieuse* came into usage around mid-century and was used variously. It first came into usage as a 'binary fiction,' in which the majority of rare 'true' *précieuses* were praised and the rest seen as ridiculous frauds. Veracity was apparently linked to birth. Mme. Rambouillet and her *chambre bleue* exemplify the authentic (aristocratic) phase of preciosity. Mid-century Salon women of bourgeois origin, such as Madelaine de Scudéry are identified as 'degenerate imitations.' Gradually the term came to

that the women called *précieuses* were educated; that they subscribed to a social-literary code that privileged platonic love and friendship over traditional marriages of convenience; and that the discourse of *préciosité*, which sought to purify and dignify relations between the sexes, involved a reformation of the language which metaphorically recast their everyday lives onto a pastoral, platonic plane.[37]

A superimposition occurred between *ruelle* and *converser*. Their shared ability to convey the sense of 'being in conversation,' spatially and discursively, underlines the centrality of spoken language to Salon culture, as well as its connection to the architectural environment. Through conversation, Salon women created a new social and psychological territory, a space of appearance, which 'in both physical space and ideological configuration, was thought of as simultaneously intimate and grand, apart from the world yet able to encompass what was best in it.'[38] The 'world apart' had a physical dimension as well. On the staging of Madelaine de Scudéry's conversations Goldsmith writes:

> The conversations always occur in a private enclosure—"chambre "appartement," or "pavillon" of one of the company...When a description of the architectural features of these spaces is included, it always describes two aspects: interior ornament and design (wall paintings, arrangement of furniture, the shape of the room) and the view afforded of the outside (through large windows or the open structure of a garden "pavillon").[39]

The language of the *précieuses* reflects several concerns and strategies. Their open-ended exploration can be interpreted as a Cartesian rejection of received knowledge as well as a rejection of Latin based academic pedantry. This was part of seventeenth-century

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be applied to all women in Parisian Salons. Domna A. Stanton, 'The Fiction of *Préciosité* and the Fear of Women,' Yale French Studies 62, (1981), 107-35; Harth, 42-43; Lougee, 7; Stanton, 111.

[37] Gibson, 180; Harth, 79-80.

[38] Goldsmith, 45.

[39] Ibid., 48; Madelaine de Scudéry wrote two ten-volume novels between 1649 and 1650. She also wrote several books on conversation. These contained conversations from her novels as well as new

linguistic reform which attempted to recapture the metaphorical quality of the French language that was becoming more standardized in response to the demands of increasing publication in print, and to a progressively rationalized discourse.[40] Their language also served as an exclusive form of communication which distinguished the initiated from the uninitiated, and created a bond between Salon members from the middle class and the nobility.[41] Cartesian concerns, reflected in the inversion of the symbolism of the bed, are also 'embedded' in the metaphors and similes invented by the *précieuses*. Pregnancy was referred to as the 'Ill effect of lawful love,' breasts as 'love cushions,' and ears as the 'doors of understanding.'[42] Whether the *précieuses* were fact or fiction, whether their language was of their own invention or was a distortion seen through the lens of male satiric fiction, the phenomenon undoubtedly existed. It not only reflected the desire of educated women to distance themselves from the material world, especially from the offending female body and its functions, but simultaneously reflected male anxiety over Salon women's forays into the masculine domain of language, and her appropriation of the God given right of men to assign words to things.[43] Abraham Bosse's poem and etching, which he titles 'The Foolish

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material. It was believed by her contemporaries, that in her Salon, conversation achieved its most perfect form. Her books served as guides to the art of polite conversation. Ibid., 42-46.

[40] Backer, 164-5; Claude Dulong, 'From Conversation to Creation,' in *A History of Women in the West*, vol. III, *Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, ed. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 408-9; Harth 37, no. 82, 41.

[41] Goldsmith, 45-48, Harth, 31-32; Lougee, 41-55.

[42] That Salon women were concerned with language and its relation to sociability is not in doubt, nor is their experimentation with language. Their playful paraphrasing in which nouns are replaced by metaphors or similes, (an insensitive man becomes 'a paralytic soul;' a mirror 'counselor of graces') are in keeping with the recreational quality of the seventeenth-century Salon. To the entertainment of all, Mme de Rambouillet herself, is reported to have carried out elaborate ruses on her friends. Backer, 165-69. What is in question is the degree to which the language attributed to the *précieuses* was actually in use by them. The above expressions were selected by Backer from Antoine Baudeau Somaize's *Le Dictionnaire des précieuses, ou la Clef de la langue des ruelles* (1660), which claimed as the title suggests, to provide a key to the 'language' as well as the identity of the so called *précieuses*, 164-167. Stanton points out that though the satirical intent is veiled, the Somaize's declared intent was 'to amuse the reader by the extravagant terms I've collected, and which [the *prétieuses*] invented.' 113; Gibson, 180.

[43] '...out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast in the field and every bird in the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name' (Genisis.2:19), quoted in Stanton, 107; Dulong points out that the criticism and

Virgins' after the biblical parable, gives some idea of the indignation aroused by the *précieuses*' preference for conversation and reading over domestic duty, their self imposed abstinence and, by implication, their rejection of motherhood (fig. 17). Bosse's image portrays five foolish virgins who having laid their unfilled oil lamps aside, are busy amusing themselves with worldly pursuits. Bosse's accompanying poem is a warning to women who indulge in such frivolous and useless acts of sociability as conversation, reading novels aloud, playing music or games. 'Their lives glitter with a false luster/ They love what does them harm/ While the world flatters them,/ It enchants and destroys them.'[44]

The Cabinet, the Academy and the Written Word

> The synecdoches *ruelle* and *cabinet* capture an essential distinction between the salon and academy. The *ruelle* was above all a conversational space. The hostess gathered around her bed an actual circle of ladies and gentlemen that formed so many links in a chain of talk. The library that dominated the cabinet was a constant invitation to read and to write.[45]

The *cabinet* can be said to have spawned two (in)famous French institutions, the *boudoir* and the academy. The importance of the cabinet in the formation and self-representation of the educated aristocracy was already established by the sixteenth century. Francis Bacon's compilation of the essential apparatus of the learned gentleman includes the following advice:

> First the collecting of a most perfect and general library..., next a spacious, wonderful garden... The third, a goodly, huge cabinet, wherein whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine has made rare in stuff, form or motion; whatever

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ridicule embedded in the male-authored satiric texts on the *prétieuse*, was based not on what women did to language but that they presumed to concern themselves with questions of language at all, 408.

[44] In the biblical parable the analogy is made between access to the kingdom of heaven and the ten virgins who went out with their oil lamps to meet the bridegroom [God]. Five of the virgins foolishly failed to fill their lamps before setting out. When night fell the bridegroom arrived. While the five prudent virgins lighted their lamps, the five foolish virgins had to go in search of oil, and were unable to enter the wedding feast [heaven], *The New Testament* (Gideon's International in Canada, 1977), Matthew 25, 1-13.

[45] Harth, 22.

> singularity, chance, and the shuffle of things hath produced; whatsoever Nature has wrought in things that want life and may be kept; shall be sorted and included.[46]

Bacon's description is of a curiosity cabinet, most likely in the form of a large cupboard or possibly a room. In sixteenth-century English the word cabinet also carried the sense of a 'summerhouse or bower in the garden.'[47] This sense is also present in the *cabinet de treillage*, an important element in the formal garden of the French *hôtel*.[48] As an interior architectural space, the *cabinet* appears in some of Le Muet's *hôtel* plans, although no description is given as to its use. Still resonating with Bacon's description, more than a century later D'Avillier outlines the *cabinets* function and describes it as the most private room of the apartment, used for writing and studying and as the place to keep one's most precious objects.[49] Though not immediately detectable in D'Avillier's description, the *cabinet*'s heteroclite identity, its association with books, the garden, art, and nature's curiosities had already begun to disassemble. The progressive separation of the sciences from the humanities and the arts, well under way by mid-seventeenth century, would be concretely formalized by the formation of the official academies.[50]

The *cabinet*, in the men's apartments was associated with the 'masculine' activities of reading and writing. Cabinets were not entirely masculine space, but those found in women's apartments were associated with the daybed and the *ruelle*, rather than books and the academy. There were notable exceptions. Harth reports that Maria le Jars de Gournay, Montaigne's 'adoptive daughter' hosted her Salon in the academy-like setting of her book

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[46] Quoted in the introduction to *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe* eds. Olive Impey and Arthor MacGreggor (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1991).

[47] John Dixon Hunt, 'Curiosities to Adorn Cabinets and Gardens,' in *The Origins of Museums*, 192.

[48] See '*cabinet*' in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné...*,eds. Denis Diderot and M. D'Alembert, compact edition in 5 vols. (Paris Pergamon Press, 1969), 489.

[49] C.A. D'Avillier, *Cour d'architecture*, nouvelle & third edition, V.2 (Amsterdam s.n., 1699), 34.

filled *cabinet,* and that her Salon was mentioned in the dispute as to which informal academy gave rise to the exclusively male Académie Française.[51] (fig. 18) Nonetheless, during the eighteenth century, when the Salon moved to more public spaces, the women's cabinet gave rise to the space of the boudoir, whereas masculine cabinet remained linked to the academy and the library.

Bed-Speech-Female vs. Cabinet-Writing-Male

Harth argues that the privileging of writing over speech, and the gendered association of these activities with the academy and the Salon, led to opposing patterns in which the Salon became associated with bed-speech-female and the academy with library(cabinet)-writing-male.[52] Although women authored books during the seventeenth century, writing was considered a male prerogative, and those who did write were in danger of breaching both the code of class and of feminine modesty.[53] Most women authors wrote anonymously or pseudonymously, which offered them the protection of invisibility, while denying them authority over their written ideas.[54] 'Salon writing' consisted primarily of narratives. Predominantly read by women, the novel was not only considered to be inferior to the academic writing of the academies, but pernicious, and potentially dangerous to social order. In Somaize's burlesque comedy, 'The Trial of the *Précieuses,*' women are

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[50] L'Académie Royale des Peinture et de Sculpture was founded in 1661, L'Académie Royale des Sciences in 1666, and L'Académie Royale d'Architecture in 1671.

[51] Harth, 19.

[52] Salons, Salon-like gatherings and women were so closely associated with conversation that they were sometimes called *conversations*, (*conversazione in Italian*) regardless of what other activities regularly took place. Montesquieue commented that a certain woman in Milan 'held a *conversation*,' remarking that 'what is noble about *conversations* in Milan is that they give you lots of chocolate and refreshments, and you do not pay for cards [gamble],' Dulong, 416.

[53] It was acceptable for noblemen to write and publish, but to do it as a means of support was not acceptable for either men or women. Harth, 5.

[54] This was not strictly true because both anominity and synonymity were in some cases 'transparant' as the reading public knew the identity of the writer. Harth, 26.

forbidden to read Madeleine de Scudéry's novels, or any other novel 'under the penalty of having their *ruelles* taken away.'[55]

At a time when rational discourse and an emerging print demanded that language become more standardized and academic, Salon women were experimenting with linguistic expression. Their objective was to create an ideal pattern of speech, embellished and free in association. Conversation, they believed, should be fluid so that one idea flowed effortlessly and magically into another, forming an ongoing verbal arabesque. Madeleine de Scudéry writes in *Conversations sur diverse sujets*: '...the conversation must nevertheless appear so free that it seems that no thought is rejected and that people say whatever comes into their heads, without having any formal plan to talk about one thing rather than another.'[56] As in the later Rococo style, one can read in the free flowing, ornate and metaphorical language of the *précieuse,* a critique of the classical tradition, as well as a move towards reform.

Seventeenth-century Salon women were accorded respect as long as they remained within their designated place outside of official discourse. When Salon women were seen to infringe upon the male preserve of authorship and criticism, they were viewed as provocateurs.[57] In an exchange of letters between two members of the Académie Française Jean Chapelain and Guez de Balzac, Chapelain denounces learned women, especially those who write:

> A longtime ago I declared myself against pedantry of the other sex and I said that I'd more gladly suffer a bearded woman than one who plays the learned lady

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[55] Antoine Baudeau sieur de Somaize, 'Le Procez ses Prétieuses,' in *Le dictionnaire des Préciuses,* quoted in Harth, 22; The important role that women and the Salon played in the development of the novel has been only recently recognized, see Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: The Politics of Female Authorship under the Late Ancien Régime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[56] quoted in Harth, 55.

[57] Harth, 33; Lougee, argues that Salons came under criticism for teaching upwardly mobile men civility, which extended polite society beyond the traditional elite. The degree of outrage that a *précieuse* inspired was in relation to the disproportion between their rank and their aspirations, 94-110.

> ....Seriously, if I were police chief I would send all those women packing who want to write books, those mental transvestites who have betrayed the world.[58]

That women were excluded from early modern critical discourse at a time when a number of favorable conditions existed for their integration requires some explanation.[59] The emerging dichotomies in gender, discursive space (bed-Salon and cabinet-academy), and forms of language (conversation and writing) can be traced to changes in the public sphere. By the end of Louis XIV's reign the great public sphere of the Court was in decline. While the public space of appearance provided by the Court became diminished, the Salon and the academy offered new parallel public venues. Though both academy and Salon were rooted in the world of letters, they differed in cultural style, and intellectual terrain.

In the Salon, conversation provided an aesthetic dimension to sociability, and each was pursued as an end in itself. Intellectual sociability and its cultural expression, conversation, required the presence of others, an ideal setting, a stage on which to present one's self. Although the academies had a social dimension, it was neither their focus nor their aim. The divergence of the two institutions is reflective of the breakdown in the universalizing notion of knowledge consistent with the *cabinet de curiosité* before its transformation into the *cabinet d'histoire naturelle*, and the formation of the Académie des Sciences in 1666.[60] In contrast to the academy, the Salon culture would continue until the mid-eighteenth century to combine intellectual activity with pleasure, believing, contrary to Pollain de la Barre, that it is possible to 'illuminate and amuse the mind by the same

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[58] Quoted in Harth, 29.

[59] Favorable conditions included: i)The evolution of the seventeenth-century academy from the mixed gender sixteenth-century Renaissance court academies, such as Henri III's Académie du Palais, an extension of the Académie de la Poésie et de la Musique founded in 1570; ii) the membership of a select number of French women in Italian académies and their inclusion in French provincial academies; and iii) The Cartesian notion that 'the mind has no sex,' and by implication that women's minds were, with education, as capable as men's.

[60] Pollain de la Barre, writing in the 1670's saw the institutionalization of the academies as a decisive step in excluding women from official discourse and dominant culture: 'They [men] founded Academies, to which women were not invited; and in this way [women] were excluded from learning the [des sciences], as they were from everything else.' Quoted in Harth, 135.

route.'[61] The asymmetry which resulted, in which Academy members belonged to Salons run by women, but women were excluded from academies, would appear to be rooted in the gendered configurations suggested by Harth of bed-female-speech, and cabinet-male-writing. The seventeenth-century inverted association of feminine 'weakness' with moral strength, did not extend to the feminine powers of reason. Despite the efforts of the *précieuses*, the Salon in its association with the bed, carried the indelible imprint of the 'female body,' while the academy via its association with the library, the imprint of the 'masculine mind.' Contrary to the Salon, the formal academies (especially the Academy of Sciences) represented the fusion of power and technology and functioned in part as a vehicle for the economic goals of the monarchy. This fusion represented an early manifestation of the eventual shift in perspective away from the universalizing meaning of knowledge towards its instrumental use. A shift that would bring about the transformation of the idea of sociability and Salon cultural practice during the following century.

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[61] Pollain wrote: 'Its impossible to illuminate and amuse the mind by the same route.' Quoted in Harth, 136.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE DISCURSIVE SPACE OF THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SALON

> Not all the social units or integrating forms of men are at the same time units of accommodation. But they can all be categorized by certain types of spatial arrangement. For they are always units of interrelated people; and even if the nature of those relations cannot be expressed solely by spatial categories, they are, at any rate, also expressible through spatial categories. For every kind of 'being together' of people has a corresponding arrangement of space.
>
> Norberg Elias, *Court Society*

During the transformation of the public sphere of the *ancien régime*, its nature and function as a space of appearance was radically altered. The French Monarchy's public performances - festivals, balls, banquets, and royal chambers, provided a drama and spectacle that reinforced and authenticated the superior and invisible power of the King through the participation and spectatorship of the men and women of the court. The allegorical system of truth favored by *le monde* made the synonymy of the King with the ancient symbol of Hercules credible, and gave rise to a Salon culture that united the verbal and visual arts by analogy. In early Salon culture, the spectacular relations of the court were joined with intellectual discourse. As the Enlightenment progressed, however, the belief in the world as it seems (a cultural construction), shifted increasingly to a view of the world as objective truth and transparent signification. The eighteenth century's equation of meaning with the idea of utility, and of representation of self with well being negated the original meaning of public, and with it the Salon as a space of appearance.

This chapter has the following objectives: 1) To demonstrate a momentary convergence between the Rococo impulse and Enlightenment ideas in the discursive space of the eighteenth-century Salon; 2) To look at mid-century changes in the idea of intellectual sociability and in Salon cultural practice in relation to the dissolution of the

space of appearance; and 3) To examine shifts in the decorative and discursive space of the Salon and their gendered implications.

Rococo Decoration and Enlightenment Ideas

The transition from the Court's space of aristocratic representation to that of the bourgeois public sphere, found architectural correspondence in the emergence of a new aesthetic, the Rococo.[1] Through the institution of the Salon, the French *hôtel* brought an increasingly 'feminized' decoration into conjunction with a progressively 'masculanized' discourse. Though seemingly contradictory, the Rococo impulse and the Enlightenment discourse shared a critical perspective. Both ran contrary to the rigidity and hierarchy of absolutism and, in different ways, were products of empiricist thinking.

The search for the origins of knowledge and thought, led Enlightenment thinkers to disregard Descartes' rationality, and look to the realm of physical sensation and experience for the explanation of phenomena. The opening up of the realm of feeling, and especially of individual sentiment, influenced a new aesthetic response, first expressed in the Rococo and later in the Neoclassical idea of character.[2] Scott suggests that the Rococo can be viewed, in part, as an aesthetic of resistance, reflective of both a nobility wishing to free itself from the narrow constraints of absolutism, and an aspiring bourgeoisie. As well, the Rococo's celebration of the particular and the intimate began to undermine the

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[1] Elias, *Court Society*, 79; Sherry McKay, 'The "Salon de la Princess": "Rococo" Design, Ornamented Bodies and the Public Sphere,' *RACAR* XXI, 1-2 (1994): 71.

[2] Robin Middleton, introduction to *The Genius of Architecture; or, The Analogy of That Art With Our Senses* by Nicholas Le Camus de Mézères (Santa Monica, California: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992), 39-45, 55.

authority and hierarchy of absolutist representation, while de-centering the monarchy itself.[3]

The tolerance of heterogeneity that the Enlightenment Salon shared with the Rococo ran counter to the eighteenth-century's emphasis on ordering and classifying. Classification involves isolating things from their original context and ordering them according to selected criteria. The classifying impulse was expressed in *hôtel* architecture through the increased rationalization of space and decoration based upon public and private function, and gender. During the first half of the century this tendency was countered by the Rococo impulse to breakdown and challenge boundaries of difference. Within the increasingly rationalized space of the *hôtel*, the Rococo *salon* took on the heteroclite character of the *cabinete de curiosité* in which nature, culture and categories of all kinds mingle indiscriminately.[4] By mid-century, the Rococo's disregard of visual, rational and structural hierarchies became increasingly out of step with new epistemologies, such as i) the rational and functionalist emphasis of the Enlightenment, ii) the empirical approach to science, and iii) with the rigidity of emerging Republican notions of public virtue. The ensuing backlash identified Salon women and the Rococo as a threat to reason and public order. Rousseau declares in his *Lettre à d'Alembert,* 'Never has a people perished from an excess of wine; all perish from the disorder of women.'[5] (Fig. 19).

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[3] Katie Scott *The Rococo Interior* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 263.

[4] Barbara Maria Stafford makes an analogy between the Rococo and the *cabinete de curiosité*, as 'egalitarian' and 'interdisciplinary hybrids.' 'According to unsympathetic critics, the equivocal ornamental grotesque embodied everything that was excessive, contaminated, and "monstrous" about the uncontrolled imagination...This catching perceptual promiscuity -- encouraged by the artist and permissively encouraging the spectator -- licentiously mingled the unlike, heterogeneous "matter" of the arts and sciences in the roving activity of sight.' *Body* Criticism (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 29; Giuseppe Olmi, has pointed out that the popularity of the cabinets of curiosity for some time had the effect of overcoming rigid social hierarchies by giving collectors the opportunity of attracting nobility to their home and guiding them through the collections, 'Italian Cabinets of Curiosity of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, in *The Origin of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe Museum,* eds. Oliver Impey and Arther MacGregor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985),

The Aristocratic Salon

With the primacy of feeling in ascendance, new theories of painting argued that painting must engage the senses independently of subject matter and genre.[6] This new approach changed patterns of collection and connoisseurship and validated the Rococo's emphasis on the spontaneous submission of the viewer to pleasure and emotion. The increasing interest in sensate experience also gave rise to a new awareness of sexuality, and women found that 'the suppressed awareness of their sexed bodies no longer worked to their advantage (if it ever had).'[7] *Salonnières* abandoned their daybeds and *ruelles* for new, more public spaces, the *salon de compagnie*, and the dinning room, situated within their Rococo *hôtels*.[8]

The Salon of the early eighteenth century covered a wide spectrum of activities and objectives. In *The Women of the Eighteenth century*, the Goncourts provide a very broad description of Salons that encompasses an assortment of gatherings convened for various social and intellectual purposes within the architectural space, the *salon*.[9] Their notion of the Salon fits Gutwirth's definition as 'a privileged space in which a hostess

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[5] Jean-Jaques Rousseau, *Lettre à d'Alembert*, quoted in Goodman, 106.

[6] A key work in this regard was Roger de Piles' *Cours de peinture par principes*, which was first published in 1708 and underwent several editions. In his text, de Piles challenged Le Brun and the system of evaluation devised by the Académie, which set up a hierarchy of genres, and priveleged design and line over color. De Piles believed that landscape painting was just as valid as history painting, and that painting like music was capable of evoking a particular passion and a spontaneous mood, Middleton, 30.

[7] Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1992), 9.

[8] Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1994), 84.

[9] Edmond and Jules de Concourt, *The Women of the Eighteenth Century*, tran. Jaques Le Clercq and Ralph Roeder (New York: Minton, Balch & Co, 1927), passim. First published in 1862, the Goncourts wrote the first comprehensive social and cultural interpretation of the role of women in eighteenth-century France.

invites company to game, eat, listen to music, and primarily to converse.'[10] The success of each Salon depended to a large extent on the *salonnière's* ability to draw illustrious participants into her circle.[11] *Philosophes*, men of letters and artists were there by invitation, and their presence both enhanced the quality of the gathering, and reflected the *salonnière's* tastes and interests. Through her conversation, and comportment, as well as, through the spatial and decorative environment of her Salon, the *salonnière* moderated patterns of speech and behavior of eighteenth-century polite society.[12]

Through Salon *praxis* (speech and action in an ideal architectural setting), early eighteenth-century *salonnières* created a space for their own appearance as well as that of men of letters. With a belief in its own powers of construction, Salon culture saw itself as apart from social hierarchy and authoritative control. In the same spirit, the Rococo through its pasquinade of absolutist classical aesthetics opened up a space of improvisation conducive to a re-interpretation of accepted hierarchies. Its architecture facilitated an extemporaneous fusion of space, decoration, and language. The Salon provided an arena in which disparate estates and ideas could come together on equal footing, outside of the existing social structures. The dissolution of boundaries necessary for these unnatural couplings had a material basis in the architectural space and decoration of the Rococo *salon*.

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[10] Madelyn Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddess: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 7-8.

[11] Goodman suggests that, while *philosophes* became associated with particular Salons, it was not male membership alone which contributed to the stability and continuity of the Salon as a social institution, but rather the informal apprenticeship system in which young women attended the Salons of their mentors, 'studying' their methods and educating themselves over a long period. Most did not open Salons of their own until their mentors death or incapacitation. A *salonnière* shaped her Salon to suit her own social, intellectual, and educational needs. Within its structure she was able to educate herself and have access to the same critical discourse and exchange of ideas as her male contemporaries, 76-82..

[12] Goodman, 5-7, Gutwirth, 88-9.

An examination of an early eighteenth-century Salon space provides insight into the rich interplay between Salon cultural practice and the Rococo interior of the first half of the century. Its structure also provides a basis for understanding mid-century paradigm shifts which permeated all aspects of pre-Revolutionary French cultural practice. The Salon de la Princesse, was a key space in the apartments of Marie-Sophie de Courcillon, the princesse de Soubise. It was designed by Germain Boffrand as part of the remodeling of the Hôtel de Soubise in 1732, in anticipation of her marriage to Mériadec de Rohan-Rohan, prince de Soubise. McKay suggests that the ambiguity of the Salon's nodal position between the *appartement de parade* and the private apartments is reflective of the tension created by the conflicting programmatic requirements of aristocratic display and sociability.[13] (fig. 20, 21 & 22) Marie-Sophie de Courcillon, is not mentioned amongst the known *salonnières*, so the nature and regularity of the *salon* gatherings held there is not known.[14] In his theoretical writings Boffrand suggests that the social character of the *salon* be communicated directly to our senses [hearts], by means of decoration and location within the plan:

> If you want to make a music room or a salon, where company assembles, it must be cheerful in its arrangement, its brightness and, the manner in which its is decorated...because nature forms our hearts so that it is sensible to these impressions, and it is always moved by harmony.[15]

Eight paintings located in connecting spandrels encircle the oval Salon de la Princesse. In conjunction with the alternating mirrors and windows, they create a sense of transparency and lightness. These panels painted by Charles Joseph Natoire depicting the story of Psyche and Cupid conspire with all the elements of the Salon de la Princesse to

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[13] Sherry McKay, 'The "Salon de la Princesse": "Rococo" Design, Ornamented Bodies and the Public Sphere.' *RACAR* XXI, no. 1-2 (1994), 75-6.

[14] McKay points out that Princesse de Soubise was listed among the regulars of the aristocratic Salon of Mme. Dupin., 76.

[15] Quoted in McKay, 73, (my own translation).

create a living spectacle.[16] The *courniches en voussure*, a style of arched cornices, dematerialize the tectonic structure of the wall and ceiling. Mariette, in the enlarged 1750 edition of D'Avillier's *Cours d'architecture* recommended using this device for the private apartments because of the sense of 'extreme lightness' they convey.[17] The quality of lightness sought after by Rococo architects and ornamentalists has correspondence in the lightness and wit characteristic of Salon conversation, in which its absence of obsessive interests and passions reveals a universalizing curiosity and knowledge. This quality manifests itself in an obscuring of the tectonic elements.[18] In the Salon de la Princesse the absence of a sharp delineation between the curved walls and the blue ceiling gives a sense of opening the *salon* to the sky. The lack of visual confinement is enhanced by the absence of corners in the oval room, and by Natoire's encircling scenes of Cupid and Psyche. The Rococo's frame-like ornament which mediates between the architectural and the illusionistic space, and the practice of painting directly on wall panels liberate the images by effectively converging the pictorial and architectural.[19] The mythological space

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[16] The *hôtel* de Soubise was the beginning of a fifteen year collaboration between Boffrand and Natoire. Part of Boffrand's success as an architect was the talent that he brought together. In the Hôtel de Soubise, Boffrand brought together the most gifted Rococo painters, Natoire, Bouchet Trémolières, Carle Van Loo and Restout. A. France-Lanord et al, *Germain Boffrand:* 1667-1754 (Paris: Herscher, 1986), 255; In the story of Psyche and cupid, Psyche's beauty is so great even Cupid falls in love with her, offending Venus. Young men are afraid to marry her, so her father abandons her on a barren rock. She is rescued by Zephir and taken to the palace of love, where Cupid awaits her in a darkened room. To obtin his love she must swear never to look upon him. She breaks her vow and illuminates his face with an oil lamp while he sleeps. He deserts her in anger. She despairs and tries to drown herself, but is rescued by nymphs who leave her in the care of shepherds. Cupid repents and brings Psyche before Venus to appeal for her clemency. Clemency is given and she rises to Olympus in the arms of her love. Natoire's paintings of the Psyche and cupid tale, are based upon two versions of *L'Ane d'Ore*, by de Apulée and by Fontaine. The tale is said to have combined galantry and romantic heroism, McKay, no. 45, 83; Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Space in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 207-211.

[17] D'Avelier, *Cours d'architecture*, enlarged edition by Pierre-Jean Mariette (Paris: Pierre-Jean Mariette, 1750, 372.

[18]Columns are no longer present, and pilasters are reduced to a relief, appearing as a strip without base or capital; Karsten Harries points out that in the late Rococo, especially in the Bavarian Rococo church [also in the work of Lajoue and Meissonnier in France] the ornament freed itself from the architecture, and 'approached the status of an autonomous abstract art.' *The Bavarian Rococo Church: Between Faith and Aestheticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 1-2.

of Natoire's paintings, reinforces the illusion of tectonic freedom, while the mirrored panels create a virtual space in which the imagined bodies of minor deities are brought into conjunction with the company gathered there.[20] Inhabiting the same virtual space, the images of the Princess and her guests would appear as artfully contrived as Natoire's creation - for like Psyche, the Rococo woman was a performance artist, a living work of art, designed to please her spectators.

> ...she must present herself as an art object, harmoniously attuned in color and shading to wall panels of Rococo cloud or bower, and she must speak with a tact, a grace, and a wit sufficient to bewitch her interlocutors...They are not seen as artist themselves, even when they are expert practitioners: their art is instead supposed to be imbedded in their persons, in their capacity to please....[21]

Language and Ornament

Through the juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements the Rococo style created a field in which contrasting images, metaphors, and ideas compose a harmonious world. Its decor constituted a 'worldly in-between' which bound individuals together in a world of their own construction. Its architecture was a physical expression of the less tangible matrix comprised of speech and action - of 'being in conversation.'[22] The sinuosity of Rococo decoration paralleled the arabesque structure of Salon conversation, reinforcing new patterns of interaction introduced by the social practice of polite society.

Salon conversation flowed like Rococo ornament, without a fixed polarity. Conversational ability and *esprit* were prerequisites of the successful *salonnière.*

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[19] Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting of the Ancien Régime* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 92, Harries, 33-40.

[20] McKay, 76.

[21] Gutwirth, 78.

[22] See Hannah Arendt's discussion on the meaning of speech and action in the 'web' of human relationships, *The Human Condition,* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), 183.

Claudine-Alexandrine Guérin de Tecin, and her successor Marie Du Deffand, two of the most renowned of the aristocratic *salonnières*, were reported to be gifted intellectual and verbal performers.[23] They were admired by their contemporaries for the improvisational quality of their language, described as 'free, vivacious, and full of unexpected turns of mood and ideas.'[24] In a letter to Mme du Deffand, praising her speech, M. du Chatel, a friend, wrote:

> What variegation, what contrasts of feeling of character, of modes of thinking you display! What simplicity, strength and aptness you have, even when you lose your train of thought! Nothing is lacking in it; it is enough to make one go mad with pleasure, impatience, and admiration. You are a priceless treasure to any *philosophic* [thoughtful] spectator.[25]

As the Enlightenment progressed, the demands of critical discourse began to alter patterns of polite conversation. Nonetheless, Salon discourse, however serious, was expected to be delivered in an interesting and light manner that encouraged reciprocity without rancor. Polite conversation was also shaped by an aesthetic component, derived not only from the construction of the argument, but from the intrinsic pleasure in its praxis.[26] The Salon's pleasure in verbal praxis finds a visual expression in what Marianne Roland Michel calls the calligraphic attitude of the Rococo, which she equates to the ornamentalist's facility, inexhaustible imaginations and the apparent pleasure with which they executed their ornamental thoughts[27] (fig. 23).

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[23] Goodman points out that during the first decades of the century, Salons held by Calaudine-Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin, Anne thérèse de Courselles, the marquise de Lambert and Marie Du Deffand served as models as well as the training ground for *salonnières* of the high Enlightenment, 74.

[24] Gutwirth, 99.

[25] M. du Cathel to Mme du Deffand, 1742, *Correspondence complete de la marquise de Deffand avec ses amis*, quoted in Gutwirth, 99.

[26] In the social theories of George Simmel, sociable conversation is defined as 'talking as an end in itself.' Discussed in Elizabeth Goldmith, *Exclussive Convesations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 47.

[27] Marianne Roland Michel, 'L'ornement rocaille: quelque questions,' *Revue de l'art*, 55 (1982), 51. Michel sees in the work of the Rococo ornametalists, a pleasure in the practice of their art analogous to that of calligraphers.

> Conversation is not for the French, only a means of communicating their feelings, their affairs, but an instrument we like to play and that reanimates the 'esprit.' Like music does for some people and liquor does for others.[28]

The Enlightenment Salon of Madame Geoffrin

Goodman suggests that a transformation in Salon culture began in the 1660's when Mme. Geoffrin, Julie Lespinasse, Suzanne Necker and Anne-Catherine Helvétius began to regularize and coordinate their Salons. This form of cooperation created a continuous discursive space, available seven days of the week, and transformed the Salon into a suitable social base for the Republic of Letters.[29] During the next two decades, Enlightenment discourse evolved along with its discursive space within the *salons* of the Rococo *hôtel.* Despite an anti-Rococo critique that was well underway, Salon culture was as reluctant to give up the Rococo, as it was anxious to embrace Enlightenment ideas. For some time Enlightenment sociability was of sufficient largesse to contain them both within the discursive space of the *salon.* Diderot's association of the sofa with enlightened thinking indicates the degree to which the Salon setting was linked to thought processes.[30] Diderot accuses Morellet of dogmatism, because he has publicly attacked Galiani's 'impartiality,' which he has misinterpreted as an 'indifference' to the truth. In his critique Diderot writes, 'It is because you [Morellet] are always on a school bench and he [Galiani] is always on a sofa.'[31] (fig. 24)

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[28] Mme. de Stael, quoted in Minguet, *Esthetique Rococo,* 25-6.

[29] Goodman, 74-5.

[30] Diderot's philosophical works tend to follow the pattern of conversation in which random or loosely associated thoughts or observations give rise to a chain of ideas. They are often dialogue-based. 'The theory of association was firmly based, however, on his theories of sensationalism and memory.' *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* vol. 1, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: MacMillan Pub. Co. & The Free Press, 1967) 399.

An examination of the discursive space and the cultural practice in the Salon of Marie-Terese Geoffrin reveals changes that reflect the accommodation of the Rococo interior to Enlightenment ideas, and of sociability to an increasingly masculine ethos. Mme. Geoffrin is credited with launching the Enlightenment Salon by replacing the late night supper, the sociable meal of the day, with the one-o'clock meal, thus opening up the afternoon for talk.[32] She was married at the age of 14 to Monsieur Geoffrin, a wealthy bourgeois widower 34 years her senior, who was the principal shareholder in the Royal Manufacture of Mirrors. Her husband had inherited from his first wife a substantial *hôtel.* 372 rue St. Honoré, which was close to the *hôtel* of Mme de Tencin, a prominent early eighteenth-century *salonnière.* In 1730, Mme. Geoffrin began to attend Mme. Tecin's Salon. Here she came into contact with such men of letters as Voltaire, Fontenelle, Marivaux, and Montesquieu, and in their company began her own education.[33] On Mme. Tecin's death in 1749, Mme. Geoffrin launched her own Salon, attracting many of the eminent men of letters from her predecessor's Salon. Each week, from 1749-1776, Mme. Geoffrin held two Salons; a Monday Salon for artists and a Wednesday one for men of letters.[34]

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[31] From Diderot's *Appologia de l'abbé Galiani*, quoted in Goodman, 220; Abbé Ferdinando Galiani was Italian living in Paris as the secretary to the Neapolitan ambassador to France. He was active in Salon circles fin the 1760's and when he returned to Italy remained engaged through his active correspondence with Mme. Épinay. Abbé André Morellet was a *philosophe*, a contributor to the *Encyclopédie* and a literary correspondent.

[32] Goodman, 74-5.

[33] Goodman points out that Geoffrin received no formal education. Raised by a grandmother who considered an education superfluous for women, she was taught by her to read but not to write. She was even denied the advantage of a convent education and tutors, the socially acceptable educational venues for the girls of noble, or upper bourgeoisie families. 'Geoffrin began her own course of studies with the men who gathered at the home of Tencin, a course continued for the rest of her life. For Geoffrin, and other salon women, the salon was an acceptable substitute for the formal education denied to her,' 77.

[34] Goodman, 53-54; Barbara Scott, 'Madame Geoffrin: a Patron and Friend of the Artists,' *Apollo* 85, (Jan.-Mar. 1967) 98-99. The philosphical Salons were attended at various times by; Marmontel, Baron d'Holbach, d'Alembert, Gibbom, Hume, Horace Walpole, Mme. Lespinasse, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, Algarotti, Lord Shelbourne, Stanislas Augustus King of Poland, d'Alembert, Grimm, Fontenelle, Marvaux, Turgot. see S.G. Tallentyre, *The Women of the Salons and Other french Portraits* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 43.

The *hôtel* de la 372 rue St. Honoré no longer exists, but its character was captured in a series of sketches by the painter Hubert Robert, and in the recorded impressions of her contemporaries. A description of the Geoffrin *hotel* compiled by Pierre de Ségur conveys its grandeur. Upon entering, a visitor ascended a grand stair decorated with marble statues, to the *salon* which occupied a full half of the first floor. The *salon* is described as follows:

> Nothing is left...of the Beauvais tapestries, the master paintings, the precious objects of all kinds that conveyed the dignity of the illustrious guests that gathered there in mass. Above the doors of the salon, four medallions painted by Van Loo, on the beautiful chimney a clock carved by Guyard...mirrors everywhere, and in that rich milieu, a perfect taste, nothing clashed, a harmonious ensemble.[35]

Mme. Geoffrin exemplified the Enlightenment *salonnière* art of preserving harmony amongst diverse elements.[36] The Enlightenment *salonnières*, relinquished their role as subjects and intellectual performers, to male *philosophes* and men of letters. The most successful became gifted facilitators who were admired, not for their own conversation, but for their ability to govern the conversation of others by harmonizing discordant opinions and egos.[37] Marmontel wrote of the *salonnière* Julie Lespinasse:

> She found [her guests] here and there in the world, but ... when they were [with her], they found themselves in harmony like the strings of an instrument played by an able hand. Following this comparison, I would like to say that she played this instrument with an art that resembled genius; she seemed to know which sound the

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[35] Pierre de Ségur, *La royaume de la rue Saint-Honoré, Madame Geoffrin et sa fille,* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1897), 105-07. Quoted in Henriette Tasse, *Les salons Français* (Avignon: Maison Aubanel Pére, 1938), 149-50.

[36] Tasse, 150.

[37] The rules of polite conversation were spelled out in terms of the vices to be avoided in an essay by the philosphe André Morellet, and described by Goodman. They include: 'inattention, interrupting or speaking all at once; over-eagerness; egoism; despotism or the spirit of domination; pedantry; illogic; the spirit of pleasantry; the spirit of contradiction; and personal conversation substituted for general conversation.' Goodman, 130. On female governance see Goodman, passim 51-89, 89-135.

> string she touched would make; I would say that she knew our minds and our characters so well that, to put them in play, she had only to say a word.[38]

The same ability to accommodate and harmonize difference is evident in the character of Mme. Geoffrin's Salons. A place of tolerance and dialogue, its plurality favored a plurality of intellectual currents. The marquis Henri Costa de Beauregard, a visitor to one of her Mondays, left an impression of the gatherings. He wrote:

> Everyone brought something with him. Vernet a painting, which had just arrived from Italy and was believed to be a Correggio; Monsieur de la Rochefoucauld a small work painted in enamel on marble, and inlaid by a secret process; Monsieur Mariette a small portfolio of drawings selected from the finest in his collection; Monsieur Cochin some of his portrait sketches in pen and ink.[39]

Mme. Geoffrin's salon functioned as both an exhibition space and sales room. The group who gathered for her Mondays was comprised of connoisseurs and collectors such as M. de La Live de Jully and M. Watelet, as well as artists.[40] A sketch by Hubert Robert of Mme Geoffrin's *salon* conveys the impression of an exhibition space. On a smaller scale, it shows a similarity to the official Salons held annually at the Louvre. (fig. 25, fig. 26) Though the Louvre Salon functioned for eleven months of the year as a hierarchical sequence in a royal château, it, like the Enlightenment Salons, operated as an early democratic space, in which people of different social standings came together on an equal footing. Scott writes: 'during the month of September it [the Louvre Salon] emerged as a democratic space to which all of Paris had an equal invitation.'[41]

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[38] Quoted in Goodman, 100.

[39] Pierre de Ségur, 61. Quoted in Barbara Scott, 100. Charles-Nicolas Cochin it should be noted was an early and virulent critic of the Rococo, Katie Scott, 258.

[40] Barbara Scott, 99.

[41] Katie Scott, 252.

Mme. Geoffrin was an avid collector and patron of the artists who attended her Salon. A list compiled by Mme. Geoffrin of her collection indicates the breadth of her interests.[42] The sixty-nine paintings listed represent a variety of artistic styles, and philosophical outlooks, including works by Boucher who epitomized the high Rococo, Jean-Baptiste Grueze, Charles-André Van Loo and Joseph-Marie Vien, painters whose works interfaced the Rococo and Neoclassical, and Hubert Robert whose Neoclassicism was expressed in his 'sublime' depiction of ancient ruins.[43] Robert's sketch of the Geoffrin *salon*, is dated c. 1770. Despite the anti-Rococo critique which was by then well underway, her *salon* displayed both Rococo and Neoclassical elements. The furnishings were mostly in the Rococo style, dating from the 1740's and 1750's. Two tables are distinctly classical in design, however, and the simple rectilinear frames of the paintings can also be distinguished from the panel painting and the ornate frames typical of the Rococo.[44]

The acquisition of both Neoclassical and Rococo works could be dismissed as simply a collectors interest in the 'latest style.' Given, however, that Mme. Geoffrin hosted a philosophical Salon, as well as a Salon for artists, she would have been familiar with aesthetic discourse of the time.[45] That Mme. Geoffrin could embrace the normative values represented by the Neoclassical, without rejecting the Rococo outright, is likely a

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[42] The list which was published in Ségur, (Estamps familiy papers) is as follows Boucher 9, Drouais 6, Greuze 1, Guérin 1, Lagrenée 5, Lefèvre 1, Leprince 2, Oudry 1, Robert 16, C. Van Loo 7, Vernet 8, Vien 10, Madame Vien 2; Scott, no.2.

[43] For a discussion of Neoclassical painting before David's *Death of the Horatii*, 1785 see Michael Levy, *Painting and Sculpture in France: 1700-1786*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972, 159-231; On Boucher, he writes that beginning with the Salon of 1761, no other artist was as vehemently or consistently attacked by Diderot, 160.

[44] Thornton, *Authentic Decor* (New York: Viking Press, 1984), 135.

[45] Thornton, *Authentic Decor*, 135; Mme. Geoffrin was a patron and collector of both Neoclassical and Rococo artists. In Tasse's description of Mme. Geoffrin's *salon*, she mentions Beauvais tapestries, 149; It is possible that these were the popular Beauvais series, *The Story of Psyche*, designed by Boucher.

function of the Salon culture she represented, which resisted reducing the world to fit within a narrow ideological framework.[46]

A pair of Van Loo paintings commissioned by Mme. Geoffrin are emblematic of both the dialogue between the Rococo style and Enlightenment ideas, and Salon-style intellectual sociability.[47] The subjects of the Van Loo pair, *La Lecture espagnole and La Conversation espagnole,* represent the two most dominant Salon activities, reading aloud and conversation, which indicates that Geoffrin may have suggested the subject of the paintings herself.[48] (fig. 27) Michael Fried suggests that Van Loo was one of a number of mid-century Rococo artists whose work began to take on new 'coherence' and 'seriousness.'[49] The work of this group was greatly admired by the *philosophes* for its persuasive representation of 'absorptive states and activities.' Fried contends that Enlightenment critics viewed absorption as a good in and of itself regardless of the activity that occasioned it. He writes that both paintings 'exemplify Van Loo's ability to infuse *sujects galantes* that remained popular with the *Encyclopédiste* society in which he

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[46] During the period spanned by Mme. Geoffrin's Salons, Goodman suggests '"a politics of soicability" was attempting to replace a traditional conception of political power with manners.'5.

[47] Barbara Scott, 101; These paintings have additional significance to Salon culture. In 1772, Mme. Geoffrin sold the paintings to Catherine the Great. The profit she realized was used to furnish lodgings for a younger *salonnière,* Julie Lespinasse, and to provide her with an annuity. Engravings were made of the Van Loo paintings for the walls of Julie Lespinasse's *salon,* which 'placed herself [Julie Lespinasse] and her friends under the sign of seriousness established by Geoffrin.' Goodman 86-89.

[48] That she took a particular interest in this pair of paintings is indicated by her suggestion that Van Loo should introduce portraits into the *fête gallent* scenes, and by Grimm's report in the *Correspondence Litteraire* that *La Conversation* was executed in her presence. The governess in *La Lecture* is Mme. Van Loo, and the woman holding the musical score in *La Conversation* is Mme. Geoffrin's daughter, see Barbara Scott, 101 and ; Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), no. 58, 31-2.[48]

[49] The figures in *La Lecture espagnole* are engaged in a number of different absorptive activities. The young man is absorbed in reading aloud to two young girls who listen with pleasure, rapt in the story which deals with love. The governess conveys both her pleasure in the story and a concern that it may contain something inappropriate for her young charges. While a small child, to whom this means nothing, is absorbed in her play with a bird tethered to a string, Fried, 7-70.

moved with a seriousness of purpose appropriate to that society, if nearly invisible to modern taste.'[50]

Fêtes galantes are described by Katie Scott as landscape-cum-genre paintings which represent the noble aspiration of a regenerated nature and social order seen through an aristocratic gaze. Their park-like setting further suggests that these scenes be understood as captured moments of idealized aristocratic leisure.[51] Van Loo's *fêtes galantes* undergo a telling transformation from their predecessors. The pleasure of the moment remains intact, but the entertainment or leisure aspect is dignified by the various absorptive concerns of the characters.[52] Although there seems to be some confusion as to exactly why the costumes were identified as Spanish, the choice to costume the characters, reputedly Mme. Geoffrin's, would have been consistent with a desire to evoke an idealized world of perfect sociability.[53] Barbara Scott places them within the time of Henry the III and IV. The novel the young man is reading aloud from is Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves.* The author's allusion through costume to the last of the Valois courts uses this historical period to evoke an idealized society. Her novel begins: 'Magnificence of spirit and princely manners had never been displayed so strikingly in France, as during the last years of the reign of Henry II.'[54]

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[50] Fried, 25; Goodman, 86-89.

[51] Katie Scott, 153-159.

[52] Fried, 27; Goodman, 86-89.

[53] It was not unusual to use costumes in painting during the eighteenth century in order to illuminate a particular set of values associated with a historical period, or merely to evoke a romantic mood. Historical accuracy was not of great concern. Barbara Scott, 101.

[54] Barbara Scott argues that the novel must be Madame de Lafayette's *La Princess de Clèves* because it was the only novel well known after her death, 101; Fried suggests the novel being read in *La Lecuture* is *Zayde* (1670), by the same author, no. 46, 27.

The Dissolution of the Space of Appearance

In early eighteenth-century Salon's knowledge and pleasure, the arts and the sciences, feminine and masculine mingled promiscuously in Rococo *salons.* As the century progressed and the Enlightenment Salons began to function predominantly as serious working spaces, segregation of these categories began to occur. In Mme. Geoffrin's Salons for example, the artists and men of letters met on different nights. The 'professionalization' of her Salons began to rule out the participation of women, few of whom were men of letters or artists. In addition to her 'serious' Salons, Mme. Geoffrin held a 'social' Salon. After the 'philosophical' Wednesday dinners she opened her *salon* to 'all the world.' Here men of letters, society women, aristocrats, bourgeois, foreigners, friends and family congregated.[55] In the juxtaposition of the philosophic to the social, can be seen the movement towards the identification of the Enlightenment project with serious masculine reason and the marginalization of women from rational discourse.

Elias suggests that 'for every kind of "being together" of people there is a corresponding arrangement of space.'[56] The space of the *salon* was neither neutral nor merely decorative. Salon architecture like the rules of polite conversation provided a coherent structure within which sociability, the basis for society and knowledge, could be fully expressed. In this light, Salon women, polite conversation and Diderot's 'sofa', must be seen as constituents of Enlightenment sociability rather than merely decorative accessories or window dressings. A comparison of three eighteenth-century reproductions of Salon gatherings: i) de Troy's *La Lecture de Molière* (1728) (fig. 11), ii) *Une soirée chez Madame Geoffrin, en* 1755 (fig. 28), and iii) *Le souper des philosphes* by Huber

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[55] S.G Tallentyre, 46.

[56] Norberg Elias, *Court Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 43.

(18th C) (fig. 29), indicate a correspondence between changing patterns of sociability, the discursive space in which they took place, and the dissolution of the space of appearance.

La Lecture de Molière, is thought to represent the *salon* in the bourgeois *hôtel* of an enlightened banker.[57] The intimacy of the interior suggests that it could be a *salon de compagnie*, a smaller and less formal space than the *salon*. *La Lecture de Molière* portrays a small group of men and women gathered in a circle around a central figure who is reading Molière aloud. The fireplace, tapestries, the chairs, the body posture and facial expressions announce a pleasure derived from the reading, as well as the pleasure found in each other's company. The overlapping of the figures, expressive of the Salon's social structure, occurs throughout the painting. A lack of distinction between the physical environment and the figures that inhabit it reinforces the analogical relationship between cultural practice and the decoration. Three of the low easy chairs are covered in the same damask silk that covers the walls. The folds of the silk curtain partially covers a *paravent,* (a screen), and come to rest on the back of the readers chair. The curtain mirrors the nonchalance of the male figure, who leans resting his elbows on the back of an armchair, from which a woman leans forward, perhaps to examine the Molière text. The curtain patterns resonate with the rich brocade and velvet skirts of the women's elegant dresses. The artist has created a world apart; a metaphor for Salon sociability in the form of a grand arabesque in which difference is brought into conjunction, through the network of gilded, ornate forms of the filets and moldings, the highlights of the stitched arabesques in gold and silk threads, and the Watteau arabesque painted on the *paravent*.

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[57] De Troy's attention to detail lends authenticity to the reproduction of the interior. Thornton was able to identify the source of the arabesque design of the *paravent* as part of a suite of engravings published by Antoine Watteau in 1728. Even the brocade patterns and styles of the dresses can be accurately dated, *Authentic Decor,* 116.

De Troy's painting has been viewed by some twentieth century historians, as evidence of the less-than-serious quality of the mixed company Salon.[58] Gallet writes:

> ...for reading aloud was one of the pastimes of these ladies 'who in the twilight of their beauty opened their minds upon a brilliant dawn'. A man of letters was generally 'minister of these little realms', whose lively atmosphere is adequately captured in J.-F. de Troy's painting *A reading from Molière.*[59]

In his legend to the painting Chartier interprets the lack of a single focus among the individuals in the group as a lack of seriousness. He writes: 'Salons gathered a select company but did not absorb everybody's attention as is evident from the glances exchanged or avoided, signs of desire and complicity.'[60] Another interpretation is possible. The early eighteenth-century Salon and, to some degree, the Enlightenment Salons were similar to the theater of that period. The drama (speech and action) was embedded in the spectacular relations of the theater (*salon*) in which the spectators made their own appearance through the ritual of seeing and being seen.[61] Similarly the figures in *La Lecture de Molière* seem aware of their own appearance in the spectacle, as well as, confident in their own manners and behavior as evidence of the civilized life they have constructed for themselves.

Eighteenth-century sociability was located in two discourses; *le politesse mondaine* (the theory of appropriate speech and behavior for polite society) and the Enlightenment ideas of natural law.[62] Their relative importance in defining sociability

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[58] Goodman, 67.

[59] Michel Gallet does not identify the source of the comments in quotation markes, *Stately Mansions: Eighteenth-Century Paris Architecture* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 86.

[60] Roger Chartier, ed. *History of Private Life* 3: 151. Quoted in Goodman, 67.

[61] The theater was of serious intellectual and social concern for *philosphes* and men of letters. The official state theater was not the only venue. Many Parisian *hôtels* had small theaters in which drama too controversial for official viewing were staged. These theaters were so popular that a law was passed to prevent actors from abandoning official productions to act in the private theaters. See Barbara G. Mittam, 'Women and the Theater Arts.' In *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Samia I. Spencer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

began to shift from an emphasis on conviviality which viewed sociability as a cultural accomplishment and a product of history, towards the explanation of human sociability based on natural law, or as a product of nature. Through the dialogue of natural law, the idea of utility was integrated into the practice of sociability.[63] The shift towards understanding culture and the exchange of ideas (the basis of human knowledge) in terms of its utility transformed the Salon's discursive space. As long as Enlightenment discourse remained within the mixed gendered Salon, sociability remained linked to polite conversation. However, as the Salon increasingly functioned as the social center for the Republic of Letters, as knowledge began to be viewed in terms of its utility, conversation too became more a means of communication than of creative expression, and the Salon, as a space of appearance, became diminished.

The second image *Une soirée chez Madame Geoffrin en 1755,* of an undetermined date, also depicts a Salon reading. (fig. 28) The immediate impression it gives is of a serious and purposeful meeting. Rommeru, in whose book the image appears, refers to Mme. Geoffrin's Salon in his legend as '*son Salon 'philosphique', par excellance.*' There are several obvious similarities between this image and the previous one. Both portray a favorite Salon pastime of reading aloud. The more academy-like setting of *Une Soirée chez Madame Geoffrin* reflects the changing notion of sociability. The company is overwhelmingly masculine, a sign of the Salon's increasing professionalization. Men of letters, and a few women, including Mme. Geoffrin, are gathered in a large circle around the reader, who is seated at a small podium-like table. Seating the reader at the table, as well as

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[62] *Le discours mondaine,* while not subjecting society to analysis, in its effort to imbue everyday life with spiritual meaning, did establish sociability as a rational process. Within the later natural law discourse, the French *philosophes* argued in contrast to Hobbes 'unsociable man,' for the inherent sociability of humans, and made 'natural sociability' the basis for their moral philosophy. Goodman, 4.

[63] In '*Discours préliminaire*' to the *Encyclopédie,* D'Alembert suggests that the origin of society can be traced to the recognition by humans of their mutual need, and the urge to communicate arose in order to facilitate the fulfillment of those needs. He writes: 'Whence we conclude that we should find it advantageous to join them in finding out what can be beneficial to us and what can be detrimental to us in Nature. The communication of ideas is the principle and support of this union, and necessarily requires the invention of signs – such is the source of the formation of societies, with which must have come the birth of language.' Quoted in Goodman, 26

his placement under the bust of Voltaire, places the assembly under the sign of seriousness and of masculine reason.[64] That the event still falls within the notion of Salon sociability is indicated by the circular pattern of the gathering (in contrast to a lecture hall setting with a podium in front), as well as, by the sense of animation and participation portrayed by the figures. Despite the overall sense of purpose conveyed, a number of conversations appear to be occurring at the same time as the reading. This image coincides with the portrayal by Galiani in his *Memoires* of the social aspect of the Salon and 'the ways in which conversation and discussion were elegantly intertwined, of how the unimportant (where one traveled and how one was doing) was treated with as much solemnity as the important (theater and politics) was treated *en passant.*'[65]

The artist of *Une Soirée chez Geoffrin* understood the contextual nature of Salon culture. Like De Troy, he also found the details of the *salon* environment necessary to fully convey the event, intellectual activity still rooted in sociability. In order to convey the seriousness of the occasion, it appears that the artist has purged the Mme. Geoffrin's *salon* of contaminating Rococo influence, an influence which from the Hubert Robert sketch of c. 1770, and from written descriptions of her *salon* is known to have been present after the date of the event, (given in the title as 1755). The fact that the *salon* in *Une soirée chez Geoffrin* is depicted at an earlier date than the Robert sketch should be indicated by more Rococo influence, rather than less. It appears likely that some editing in the form of a Neoclassical renovation, was introduced by the artist to evoke a more academy like setting, appropriate to the seriousness of the occasion. As the artist is not identified, it is difficult to date the painting, but an end-of-the-century, or early nineteenth-century execution date is

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[64] There does not appear to be any mention of a Voltaire bust in the descriptions of Mme. Geoffrin's *salon*. Its inclusion may be a reference to the 1770 project to erect a statue of Voltaire, as a living embodiment of the Republic of Letters. Initiated by Diderot, Grimm, Mme. Necker and fourteen others, it would have been paid for by public subscription, and was to be the first time in modern history that a living person, other than a monarch, would be so represented. Goodman, 226.

[65] Jurgen Habermas, remarking on the portrayal of eighteenth-century Salon culture in Abbé Galiani's *Dialogues on the Grain Trade*, in *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into the Category of the Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989) 34.

likely. In either case, it represents Mme. Geoffrin's Salon, revisited through a Neoclassical lens which now saw official intellectual discourse as a male prerogative.

The inability of the Salon as an institution to accommodate the expansion of the Republic of Letters into the bourgeois public sphere, the growing male ethos of the late eighteenth century as well as the closure of the Salons of Mlle. Lespinassse and Mme. Geoffrin (due to their death or illness), prompted the *philsophes* and men of letters to reject the female governance and polite conversation of the Salon in favor of new venues of masculine sociability.[66] In 1777 Suzanne Necker wrote to Grimm describing d'Alembert's assemblies after the death of Julie Lespinasse:

> ...he brings his friends together three days a week; but everyone in these assemblies is [now] convinced that women fill the intervals of conversation and of life, like padding that one inserts in cases of china; they are valued at nothing, and [yet] everything breaks without them.[67]

Félix Rocquain, the nineteenth-century royal historian, wrote: 'At the end of 1783, and especially in 1784 the *clubs* were formed...Throughout Paris there was nothing but Clubs, Societies, Lycées, Musées. These circles in which hardly anyone but men assembled, dethroned the salons, where until then women had reigned.'[68]

Le Souper des philosophes, an eighteenth-century etching by Huber, shows an evening of masculine sociability. *Philosophes* gather around a table suspended in neutral

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[66] Goodman, *Republic of Letters,* 233-34.

[67] Necker to Grimm, 16 January 1777, quoted in Goodman, 101. That things were starting to come apart in the Republic of Letters is made clear by Jaques-Henri Meister, editor of *Correspondence Litteraire* of July 1777: 'The disorder and anarchy that have reigned in this party since the death of Mlle. Lespinasse and the paralysis of Mme. Geoffrin prove how much the wisdom of their government had dissipated storms, and above all how it had rescued it [the Republic of Letters] from ridicule,' quoted in Goodman, 100.

[68] Félix Rocquain, *L'Esprit révolutionnaire avant la Révolution, 1715-1789* (Paris, 1879), 415. Quoted in Goodman, 240.

space, to dine and philosophize.[69] (fig. 29) All 'padding' has been removed from around the intellectual goods. Purged of feminine influence, masculine reason prevails. Its placement in a neutral space, isolates it from its context, deprives it of place. The decontextualization of the intellectual process liberates reason from its roots in the social world, in contrast to Salon gatherings which could not be fully described without their architectural setting. That the event is intellectual is indicated by the choice of title, *Le Souper des philosphes* instead of *Le Souper des amis* for example. Though the background is neutral, the modernist vision of a masculine reason freed of social practice and context is not.

The Salon represents a moment of transition between the public realm of the French absolutist court and the formation of the bourgeois public sphere. For a brief time it offered a discursive and architectural space of appearance. Within its context the emerging individual could distinguish himself or herself, not in relation to the public realm of the court, but as a participant in a new public arena comprised of the intertwined worlds of *le monde* and the world of letters. In the discursive space of the Rococo *salon,* intellectual sociability combined the spectacular relations of the court with the Enlightenment discourse of the world of letters. In France, the dissolution of the public sphere as a space of appearance can be traced through the evolution of the Salon, and to the transformation of sociability from a public practice to a means of facilitating the Enlightenment project. In the end, the Salon's defining characteristics; feminine governance, polite conversation, and architectural setting, proved to be impediments to the expansion of the Republic of Letters, and the Salon became progressively at odds with an increasingly disembodied rational discourse, and the republican values of the emerging bourgeois public sphere. What was at stake for women was a participating presence in the public sphere of official rational discourse which remained open to them under the auspices of sociability. With the replacement of sociability by masculine reason as the informing principle of intellectual activity and social conduct, and with the shift of the Enlightenment discourse from *hôtel*

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[69] The gathering is probably in a cafe, or possibly in the dinning room of baron d'Holbach, who hosted an all-male intellectual circle.

salons to the world of print, male-centered musées, clubs and lodges, eighteenth-century, women were left to a new domestic seclusion in the privacy of their Neoclassical *hôtels.*

With the rise of the bourgeois public sphere, the notion of the public realm as a space of appearance was reduced to small enclaves within the new public sphere now constituted by the realm of human necessity and the world of work and commerce. In the long term, the absence of a public sphere has diminished the peculiarly human potential to speak and act with individual uniqueness within the plurality of the human condition. The result has been the dissolution of a shared world in which to participate. In this process of dissolution, architectural meaning has been negated by a world increasingly defined in terms of its utility. The Rococo *hôtel* offers an example of the potential of architecture to participate in the public enterprise of human appearance. As a style, the Rococo takes on meaning beyond its formal characteristics through its analogy with Salon cultural practice, and its participating presence in the Salon's space of appearance.

EPILOGUE

THE BOUDOIR: THE BED AND THE CABINET REVISITED

> The boudoir is regarded as the abode of delight; here she seems to reflect on her designs and yield to her inclinations. With such thought in mind,...All is to be subordinated to luxury, comfort and taste:... this room is a lady of fashion to be adorned. The air of delicate gallantry from which there is no departing demands that the masses be light and rhythmical, the forms not pronounced.
>
> Le Camus de Mézières, *The Genius of Architecture*

In mapping the space of appearance's decline, the bed has appeared in several incarnations. First as the royal bed in the King's apartments - where at the symbolic center of France and focal point of palace and garden axes, Louis XIV held court.[1] The second incarnation occurred in the form of the day-bed. As a symbol of female weakness, the bed, by inversion, came to represent feminine moral strength - the base from which seventeenth-century women set in motion a new public sphere, the discursive space of the Salon. The association of day-bed with *politesse mondaine* was transferred to Diderot's 'sofa,' a symbol of Salon cultural practice. The last and best known eighteenth-century incarnation of the bed was in the form of the (in)famous boudoir. First existing in the early eighteenth-century literary imagination as a feminine space associated with social disorder, luxury, and licentiousness, its appearance in architectural plans coincides with the decline of the Salon during the last quarter of the century. It represents a private postscript marking the Salon's demise as a public space.

The epilogue has the following objectives: 1) To examine the boudoir's relation to the eighteenth-century discourse on nature; 2) To position it within the increasingly gendered and private architecture of the Neoclassical *hôtel*; 3) To examine the boudoir in relation to the eighteenth-century *cabinet* and to show that the boudoir, as the site of

sexual intrigue, may have been more literary conceit than reality; and 4) To speculate on the boudoir's relation to the public, feminine spaces of the *ruelle* and the *salon,* and its relationship to the space of appearance.

Gender as an Architectural Ordering Device

The increasing importance of private life and the larger republican concern with putting France's house into a sound masculine order, gave rise to a gender dichotomy. An increasing polarization is visible in the transformation of the heteroclite Rococo *hôtel* into the increasingly gendered and private Neoclassical *hôtel.* The boudoir can be understood in relation to these changes. The idea of gender difference so critical to the development of Neoclassicism and republican notions of public order, was expressed early in the century by the Earl of Shaftesbury, in his attempt to isolate the masculine character. He writes:

> Childish, womanish, bestial, brutal. -- Words! Words! Or are they anything more? But how then not a child? How least like a woman? How far from the beast? How removed and at a distance from anything of this kind? How properly a man?...["Consider, then, by what you are distinguished on reason -- from wild beasts -- from cattle." Epict. Bk. II, C. x, #2]. A man and not a woman; effeminate soft, delicate, supine; impotent in pleasure, in anger, in talk; pusillanimous, light, changeable, etc.; but the contrary to this in each particular. -- A man, not a beast:...A man, and not a child:...the contraries: Manhood, manliness, humanity -- manly, humane, masculine.[2]

During the first half of the century, a gendered spatial and decorative order was already beginning to manifest itself in *hôtel* architecture. This is evident, for instance, in the decoration of the *salons* for the Princess and the Prince in Boffrand's Hôtel de Soubise. In the Salon du Prince, the mythological love scenes of Psyche and Cupid which

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[1] Robin Middleton, introduction to *The Genius of Architecture* (Santa Monica: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992), 33.

[2] *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftsbury,* ed. Benjamin Rand (London: Swan Sonenschein, 1900), 216-217. Quoted in Gurtwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddess* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 4.

adorn the Salon de la Princesse, are replaced by allegories of Music and Justice, History and Fame, Politics and Prudence, Geometry and Astronomy, and Epic and Dramatic Poetry. The indistinct boundaries typical of the Salon de la Princesse are re-articulated in the prince's *salon*. Here masculine reason and order are visible in the pale and restrained decorative reliefs depicting 'heroic endeavors and abstract thought,' as well as in the relatively more austere and rectilinear forms[3] (fig. 30, 31).

Le Camus de Mézières' 1780 treatise, *The genius of Architecture; or, the Analogy of that Art with our Sensations* has provided the most complete and imaginative use of gender as an ordering device in *hôtel* architecture. As his subtitle suggests, Le Camus derived his principles of *hôtel* design from an epistemology of the senses based on the ideas of Condilac and others. Le Camus proposed that different forms and shapes could evoke a predictable and corresponding response in our senses, and that the manipulation of form and detail, along with their lighting conditions, could create a range of effect that corresponded to the full spectrum of human emotion. The expression of gender for Le Camus was informed by the idea of character in conjunction with *bienséance* and the evocative expression of emotional states through space, form and decoration. The use of gender as an architectural category is explored most expressively in the private apartments. Le Camus outlines five essential rooms for an apartment; anteroom, *salon,* bedroom, *cabinet* and closet. Through multiplications, additions and subtractions of room types and corresponding decoration, the appropriately gendered apartments for the Master and Mistress are defined from this basic set.[4]

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[3] Sherry McKay, 'The "Salon de la Princess": "Rococo" Design, Ornamental Bodies and the Public Sphere.' *RACAR* XXI, no. 1-2, 76.

[4] Le Camus, 104-108. For a description of the mistress's apartments see 104-128; for a descritption of the master's apartments see 128-136.

In the Mistress's apartment, Le Camus suggests that the *cabinet* be replaced by a boudoir, which he informs the reader, is the 'abode of delight.'[5] In his description of the boudoir, the character of the Mistress and the room are fused into an anthropomorphic entity. Le Camus writes 'here she seems to reflect on her designs and yield to her inclinations...this room is a lady of fashion to be adorned.'[6] The designs and inclinations to which she will yield are indicated by his reference to gallantry and the romantic *fêtes gallantes* atmosphere conjured up in his image of the bed in a grove of trees. He writes 'Orange trees and myrtles, planted in choice vessels, enchant the eye and nostrils....This is the retreat of Flora, she waits in secret for the caresses of Zephyrus'[7] (fig. 32). It is especially telling that Le Camus chose the boudoir from Jean-François Bastide's libertine novel cum critical commentary on architecture, for his model. The boudoir in *La Petite Maison* is part of an elaborate seduction ritual in which the marquis de Trémicour, having failed in his efforts to seduce the virtuous Mélite, challenges her to visit his *petite maison.*[8] She accepts, not knowing that the *petite maison* of all places is the most 'charming and artfully contrived for love.'[9] The architecture plays an active role in her seduction, awakening her sexual appetite as the marquis leads her from room to room until at last she loses the wager.[10] For Le Camus, as well as Bastide, the boudoir is 'a

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[5] Ibid., 105, 115.

[6] Ibid., 115.

[7] Ibid., 116.

[8] The *petite maison* was a architectural type that developed from the garden pavilion or *folies*, during the Regency. Functioning as suburban retreats, they becoming infamous as the site of erotic encounters, in literature as well as in the lives of the leisured class. Their existence is amply documented in the libertine novels, as well as hundreds of police reports from the period. The name was reflective of the size of the structure, but came about through a chain of slippages in popular linguistic usage of the time. Garden *folies* were so called because of the cover provided by the leaves. *Foilie* literally means madness. 'The Hôpital des Petites Maisons was the "*residence de choix*" for lunatics.' El-Khoury, 21; see Michel Gallet, *Stately Mansions* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 96.

[9] Bastide, Jean François de. *The Little House* (New York: Princeton University Press), 58.

[10] For an interesting discussion on the Bastide's text in relation to eighteenth-century cultural attitudes, tastes and 'modes of reception' see Rodolphe el-Khoury's introduction to his 1996 translation *The Little House.*

place that needs no introduction to the women who enters, her heart and soul recognizing it at once.'[11] Bastide describes the boudoir in the following terms:

> The walls of the boudoir were covered with mirrors whose joinery was concealed by carefully sculptured, leafy tree trunks. The trees, arranged to give the illusion of a quincunx, were heavy with flowers and laden with chandeliers. The light from their many candles receded into opposite mirrors which had been purposely veiled with hanging gauze. So magical was this optical effect that the boudoir could have been mistaken for a natural wood, lit with the help of art. In a niche was an *ottomane*, a sort of resting bed that lay on a parquet of checkered rose wood. It was hung with fringes of gold and green, and was strewn with pillows of various sizes.[12]

Le Camus has chosen to portray the character of Mistress's apartments as a single idealized feminine entity linked to nature through her body. The majority of the sections describing her apartments are devoted to the care, contemplation, and enjoyment of the female body. These include the boudoir itself, as well as sections devoted to mirrors, the baths and a cluster of other small, luxurious, private rooms. The baths like the boudoir are designed to 'resemble nature,' 'The entire room should be finished in the same marble [veined white marble]: it might also be painted with trellis work, so that in the bath one would see jasmine and honey-suckle all around; it would be an easy matter to contrive in the walls a few waterfalls, which would be reflected in the glasses and which, by their murmur, would make the room more agreeable.'[13] (fig. 33). Le Camus in the planning and decoration of the mistress's apartments mirrors the late eighteenth-century's association of women with nature and pleasure.

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[11] Bastide, 75.

[12] Ibid., 75-6; In *The Genius of Architecture*, Le Camus describes the boudoir in similar terms. 'The boudoir would be still more delightful if the recess in which the bed is placed were lined with looking glasses, their joints concealed by carved tree trunks artfully arranged and leafed and painted to resemble nature. This would repeat to form a quincunx, which would be multiplied by the glasses. Candles, their light softened by gauzes in various degrees of tautness, would improve the effect. One might believe oneself to be in a grove; statues painted and suitably placed would inhance the pleasure and the illusion.' 116.

[13] Le Camus, 124.

During the Enlightenment, nature was not encompassed by a single idea, but was comprised of a complex and often ambiguous set of meanings.[14] In Le Camus' treatise, nature remains an underlying theme throughout, appearing in various guises. The feminine nature he evokes is nature viewed through the aristocratic gaze, but with the late eighteenth-century's awareness of the sensate and tactile qualities of the female body. It is not the normative nature of Rousseau, which posits women outside the confines of domesticity as 'un-natural.' In his section on the art of pleasing in architecture, Le Camus writes, 'The lines of the contour, the profiles, the accessories, the ornaments: all have their own particular character. These beauties well considered and appropriately employed, produce a sensation analogous to the object in the hand, and it is this sensation that we seek to arouse.'[15] On the decoration of the boudoir Le Camus adds the following:

> One cannot devote too much care in the decoration of this kind; the masses may vary, but take care to keep a circular plan. This form is appropriate to the character of a beautiful woman. Her outlines are gentle and well rounded; the muscles are not pronounced; the whole is governed by a simple, natural sweetness, whose effect we recognize better than we can express it...[16]

That the apartments were portrayed as the picture of 'artless charm' and Nature's 'charming disorder,' is in keeping with the traditional view held by the *philosophes* which, 'accepted that woman was closer to nature than man because of her physiological role in sex and motherhood.'[17] This notion was reinforced during the Enlightenment, by

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[14] Maurice Bloch and Jean H. Bloch, 'Women and the Dialectics of Nature in Eighteenth-Century Thought,' in *Nature, Culture and Gender*, ed. Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 25-41.

[15] Le Camus, 88.

[16] Ibid., 117.

[17] Bloch and Bloch, 32; Jacques Davy Duperon wrote in *Discourse sur la peinture et sur l'architecture*, (1758), 'Is it a question of small apartments, places where love enjoys himself? It is there that the brush must exhaust all the seductions of sensual pleasure; myrtles, roses, groves, fields carpeted with green....There the agreeable spectacle and the pleasure of a garden that art has taken care to decorate

medical theorists such as German Stahl. Stahl posited that the ultimate purpose of man's soul was physical preservation in order to achieve mental activity. Women, he suggested, did not share the same purpose as men. In their case, mental activity as an ultimate objective was overtaken by women's purpose in motherhood. Stahl went on to conclude that women were governed by three corresponding 'affectations': (i) pleasure, which would facilitate impregnation; (2) fear, which guaranteed the preservation of the embryo; (iii) inconstancy, which was necessary to assure *all* the children a woman conceives receive equal affection.[18]

Similarly, in the architectural imaginations of Blondel and Le Camus, the idea of the boudoir embodies a set of beliefs that linked women to nature through their physiology, associating them with sensual pleasure and inconstancy. Le Camus writes, 'To lovely women, every moment is precious...and every one bears the hallmark of pleasure.'[19] Blondel, in *L 'Homme du monde é eclairé par les arts,* equates the style of the women's apartments with the sexual liaisons which may occur there. 'In the style of our manner, *salon,* boudoir, etc. are analogous to the lightness and frivolity of the gallant proposals distributed there.'[20]

'Sensual pleasure' and 'Nature's charming disorder,' while deemed appropriate representation for a woman's apartments, represented the antithesis of the masculine character. Le Camus explains, 'The whole of such an apartment is usually set aside for the mistress of the house. That of the master demands a different style and a different

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can offer itself, here the picture of Nature's artless charms and charming disorder.' Quoted in Mary D. Shariff, *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 69.

[18] Bloch and Bloch point out that Stahl's ideas were taught in French medical schools, and were further refined by the doctor P. Roussel in *Systéme physique et moral de la femme,* 1784, 33.

[19] Le Camus 119.

[20] J.-F. Blondel, quoted in MacKay, 77-8.

character; the profile must be more severe, and the forms must be square.'[21] In assigning a gendered identity to architectural elements, Le Camus drew the classical tradition which associated proportion and measure with the human body. Describing the difference in the origins of the Orders, Vitruvius wrote 'Thus in inventing the two different kinds of columns, they borrowed manly beauty, naked and unadorned, for the one [the Doric], and for the other [the Ionic] the delicacy, adornment, and proportions characteristic of women.'[22] Le Camus' architecture was, as well, informed by Neoclassicical ideas which adopted an aesthetics grounded in physiognomy, an aesthtics linked to social reform which associated the masculine right angle with rectitude and morality.[23] (fig. 34).

> The shape of the unseen soul or countenance of everything physical -- passionately -- sought after by the physiognomist -- was imagined in "immaculate" right angles, in the undeviating uprightness that was uninclined towards evil...The perpendicular was also "a symbol of directness, purity, undefiled unswerving force."[24]

In defining the Master's apartments, Le Camus replaces the *salon,* boudoir, the baths, and other personal spaces with the *grand cabinet* and a bevy of small *cabinets* associated with the library. He recommends that the character of the grand cabinet, which replaces the *salon* as a reception space, be determined by the social rank and the profession of its owner. For the *cabinet* of a magistrate, for example, Le Camus suggests a 'noble simplicity,' its character must convey the image of 'a man who can bring order out of a chaos of chicanery and reduce matters to their true principles. The purity of the

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[21] Le Camus, 128.

[22] Vitruvius, *The Ten Books of Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), 104.

[23] Eighteenth-century thinkers, finding in the science of physiognomics a means of identifying through surface contour and shape, unseen qualities of character, submitted architecture as well as human form to a physiognomic scrutiny. On physiognomy and aesthetics see Barbara Stafford, *Body Criticism* (Cambridge: MIT Press), 4-103.

[24] Stafford, 106-7.

molding contributes much to this impression....'[25] (fig. 35). The remaining *cabinets* are given a character according to their function and by association with the character of the Master.

The 'inconstancy' of the female body and, by implication, the female character made the feminine unsuitable as a norm.[26] The late eighteenth-century saw the masculine principle as emblematic of the constancy uncovered by Newton in a disorderly nature. Le Camus states, 'Let us make nature our study. It is by contemplating her, in all her parts, that we may trace in the general plan of our fabric the manifold series of relations that, like so many links in the chain, form a whole whose component masses generate harmony that is ever simple and ever magnificent.'[27] He is suggesting that the genius of the architect is not in copying nature but in discovering and applying the principles that govern it. In addition, he is identifying the masculine principle found in nature that is 'ever simple and ever magnificent.'

The masculine principle in relation to nature was viewed as an improving one. The natural history cabinet clearly distinguished itself from the earlier heterogeneous, even monstrous, curiosity cabinet. It is in the natural history *cabinet* that Le Camus most clearly associates the masculine with a Newtonian construct of nature. He writes, 'The riches of nature are collected here, but those riches are still raw and in their primitive state.'[28] In the natural history cabinet, nature's 'sublime disorder' is brought under control and a new 'scientized' image of nature is created. The *Encyclopédie's* article on the natural history cabinet offers two visions of nature analogous to Le Camus' gendered construct. With respect to organizing a collection of natural artifacts the author says that

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[25] Le Camus, 128.

[26] For a history of the gendered idea of in/constancy, from Aristotle through the eighteenth-century see Carolyn Williams, 'The Changing Face of Inconstancy: Fe/male In/constancy,' *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 12 (Spring 1989), 13-28.

[27] Le Camus, 100.

'the order of the *cabinet* cannot be that of nature; nature affects everywhere a sublime disorder,' a feminine disorder that 'man' must circumscribe and order. The article goes on to warn that, as the purpose of the *cabinet* is didactic, the order which best pleases the eye will not be that which pleases the mind. All heterogeneous material must be removed. Nature must be distilled and reconstructed so that her order can be grasped in a single glance. 'The most favorable arrangement for the study of natural history is that which methodically orders things into classes, genera and species...the resemblances indicate the genera, the differences mark the species...and all compared together, present to the mind and engrave in the memory the image of nature.'[29]

The Idea of the Boudoir: A Figment of the Erotic Imagination or 'A Room of One's Own'

The appearance of the boudoir in the literary imagination appears to predate its inclusion in architectural plans. Lilly suggests that despite its early association with sexual intrigue, the boudoir's origins are more complex than previously understood.[30] The eighteenth century gave the term 'boudoir' two distinct meanings; first an erotic site and second a *cabinet*. The boudoir's first literary appearance seems to have been in Mercier de Compagne's *Manual des boudoirs, ou essais erotiques sur les Demoiselles d'Athene,* 1727. Eighteenth-century dictionaries and architectural treatises, if they refer to it at all, defined the boudoir in terms of a woman's *cabinet.*[31] Briseaux, as early as 1743, suggests that in addition to the private study and usual *guarderobes* 'one may add a third closet which contains a day-bed, and to which one gives the name boudoir.'[32] Charles-François

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[28] Ibid, 135-6.

[29] *Encyclopédie,* v. 2, 380.

[30] Ed Lilly, 'The Name of the Boudoir,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural History* 53, (June, 1994), 193, 198.

[31] Thornton suggests that the *demoiselles d'Athene* were likely based on the indiscretions of contemporarary Parisian women, *Authentic Decor* (New York: Viking Press, 1984), 95-7.

Roland Le Virloy in volume one of his *Dictionnaire d'architecture, civile, militaire et navale,* 1770 writes: 'boudoir: in the planning of an apartment is a small room with a fireplace, alongside the bedroom and dressing room, from which there is a pleasant view and which is well lit. One calls it a boudoir, because here a woman may retire to think, or read, or work, or, in a word to be alone.' This usage is evidently continued throughout the century as it is consistent with Antoine-Chrystome Quatremère de Quincy's 1788 dictionary of architecture in the *Encycolpédie méthodique.*[33] There are, however, some notable omissions. It is significant that while Blondel included the boudoir as an erotic element in his two works done in collaboration with J.-F. de Bastide; *La petite maison,* 1758, and *l'Homme du Monde Eclairé par les arts,* 1774, he excluded it from his entries on architecture in the *Encyclopédie,* and from his four-volume, comprehensive work, *Architecture François,* 1752-56.[34]

An early *hôtel* plan by Francois Franque, which appeared in the *Encyclopédie's* plate volume published in 1762, includes a nascent boudoir.[35] Its constricted space precludes its identity as the commodious and sensuous boudoir of Bastide and Le Camus, but the fact that it is not connected to any of the primary spaces, its access being limited to the corridor and a secondary stair, attests to its use as a private space[36] (fig. 36). A plan of a *pavillion de la boissière* designed in 1751 by Mathieu le Carpentier shows a similarly

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[32] C.E. Briseaux, *L'Art de batir des maisons de campagne, où l'on trait de leur distribution, de leur constrcution, et de leur décoration...,* quoted in Thornton, *Authentic Interiors,* 95.

[33] David Britt in the translator's notes to *The Genius of Architecture,* no. 31, 191.

[34] Lilly, no. 11, 195; Both *La Petite Maison,* and *l'Homme du Monde Éclairé* fall within a hybrid genre in which architecture is explored through a literary form. Though neither are, strictly speaking, architectural treatises, they functioned to educate patrons and connoisseurs about taste and architecture. Their libertine narrative attracted readers, while the architecture worked as a conceit to hold 'eroticism within the bounds of propriety.' See Anthony Vidler, preface to *The Little House,* 10.

[35] An earlier date of circa 1740, has been suggested by Kalnein and Levy, *Art and Architecture of the Eighteenth Century in France,* 268; Lilly suggests that this date is unsubstantiated as well as unlikely. He argues that since Blondel did not include the boudoir in *Architecture français,* despite being an admirer of Franque's architecture, suggests that the boudoir was not yet in regular use in *hôtel* architecture, no. 11, 195.

[36] Lilly, 195.

shaped space also facing the garden (fig. 37). In this instance, the small room is labeled a *cabinet*. Given that the boudoir as a built space did not become a regular feature until the last quarter of the century, it would appear that the private *cabinet*, as distinct from the *grand cabinet*, which was a formal reception space for the Master, evolved along with the other private spaces in the apartments destined for women in the Rococo *hôtel*.[37] In its striking similarity to definitions of the boudoir, the *Encyclopédie*'s description of the *cabinet* supports the idea of the boudoir as a woman's *cabinet*. 'Under this name one understands rooms dedicated to study or in which one conducts private business, or which contains the finest examples of one's collections of paintings, sculptures, books, curios, etc. One also calls *cabinets* those rooms in which ladies get dressed, attend to their devotions or take an afternoon nap, or those which they reserve for other occupations which demand solitude and privacy.'[38]

The word boudoir derives from the French *bouder*, to pout.[39] The etymology of the word suggests that its origins were related to the need for a space in which to be alone, and does not support its primary use as a space for sexual encounters. It is apparent that the *cabinet* and its subspecies the boudoir was used for a variety of purposes, and that it served women as 'a room of ones own.' Le Virloy's description of its use as a space for contemplation in which a women could withdraw to think, read, work, or 'in a word be alone,' is reflective of eighteenth-century upper class women's desire to educate themselves and to put into practice Enlightenment ideas. Lilly and Goodman have pointed out that upper class women during the Enlightenment increasingly adopted

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[37] The *grand cabinet* had developed as an essential element of the master's apartments in the seventeenth-century, but was rarely present in a woman's apartments.

[38] *Encyclopédie*, v. 1, 380.

[39] The *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* 1752 describes the boudoir as a 'small closet, very confined *cabinet*, adjacent to the room one normally occupies, apparently thus named because of the habit of retiring there to sulk, sight unseen, when one is in a bad mood.' A couplet by the poet and play write Jean-Antoine Cerceau (1670-1730) was cited as a literary source, 'Becoming gloomy and dreamy, as if in your boudoir,/You deepened your dark mood until it turned to black.' Quoted in Lilly, 194, and Annik Paradailhe-Gallabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 63-4.

education oriented activities, as their participation in Salons would bear out.[40] Reading became a predominant leisure activity of women, and reading alone instead of reading aloud as a social activity, required quiet and some degree of solitude. The novel which developed in the seventeenth-century continued to flourish during the eighteenth century, and women were amongst its most avid readers as well as authors in their own right. In querying the need of women for a private space of their own, Lilly posits a correspondence between the increased priority for women of educational activities and the development of the boudoir.[41]

A series of images of the small private spaces which accompanied women's apartments portray both women and their *cabinets* cum boudoir in a progressively libertine light. The first image, 'A Young Man Conversing with a Young Lady on Scientific Matters' is attributed to François Guerin and dated in the late sixties (fig. 38). In Guerin's painting, an elegant woman is seated behind a writing table with her work spread out before her conversing with a gentleman who sits at the side of the table. The bookshelves and the writing table suggest that the room is a *cabinet*, and their relative positions identify the room as her own. The young woman's interest in science is revealed by the compass and the astrolabe on her table, and the image leaves little doubt that intellectual activity is the focus of both the encounter and the space. The second image by S. Freudeberg, is of a boudoir. It is simply titled 'A Parisian Boudoir,' and dated 1774 which would situate it in one of the Neoclassical *hôtels* of that period (fig. 39). Within the D-shaped plan of the small room, a young woman apparently dozes on a sofa with a novel in hand. A mandolin lies on a foot stool, next to an open book of musical scores. Both the open novel and musical score suggest that the young woman has recently succumbed to the drowsiness induced by the late afternoon sun filtering in through the garden doors. Beyond the glass door a couple can be seen in the garden. The

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[40] Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1994), 76-8; Lilly, 195.

[41] Lilly, 195-6.

open door would seem to link the boudoir with the amorous couple as well as to the erotic potential of the garden. In the last image, an elegantly dressed women seated on a sofa is being embraced by a gentleman under a painting of cupid. She holds in her hand what is probably a love letter. The engraving by Nicolas De Launy of Nicolas Lavreince's painting, 'The Happy Moment,' was executed ca.1778 (fig. 40). In this image the novel has been replaced by a love letter. An oversized image of cupid is suspended above a young woman on a daybed and her kneeling admirer. The ardent embrace of the young woman by her lover, the love letter, and the sign of cupid identify the boudoir as an erotic site. Lilly suggests that the boudoir of Lavreince's image becomes the signifier of 'an eighteenth-century in which handsome gentlemen dally with gorgeous ladies in sumptuous interiors, all the while hoping that their spouses do not come in and ruin everything.'[42] More specifically, Lavreince's portrayal of the boudoir as an erotic symbol, demonstrates how the boudoir has come to synecdochically define eighteenth-century women, obscuring their identity as major players in the evolution of French culture and intellectual history.

What then is to be made of the boudoir? How does one reconcile its erotic identity with its use by woman as 'a room of one's own'? Finally, what is its relation to the seventeenth-century daybed, from which literary Salons were launched, and to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment Salons?

The idea of the boudoir as an erotic site was part of the literary imagination long before the boudoir was physically present in architecture. Its erotic persona can be understood as part of a long literary tradition that has associated eroticism with gardens and certain architectural forms. The modern European precedence was set by the Renaissance, erotic-architectural epic *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, 1499. Attributed to Francesco Colonna, this classic explores the secrets of ancient architecture through the conceit of a dream in which discovered monuments and architectural mysteries evoke the

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[42] Ibid., 198.

memory and expectation of erotic fulfillment. Within this tradition, Bastide's *Petite Maison,* symbolically reenacts love's foreplay, as Trémicour leads Mélite in a dance of resistance and submission from room to room until the final act of coitus in the boudoir. It is clear that the boudoirs of Paris' *petite maisons* were not devised as private *cabinets* in which women could take refuge in solitude. They served a masculine purpose of their owner's, the seduction of women. That boudoirs in the *petite maisons* were in fact sites of sexual intrigue is born out by the police records of interventions, presumably to break up libertine activities.[43]

In the works of Blondel, Bastide and Le Camus the influence of 'empiricist epistemology translated into a theory of architecture based on sensation and affect.'[44] The affinity of sensationalism and architectural eroticism can be seen in Le Camus' scenographic spatial sequences: 'Each room must have its own particular character. The analogy, the relation of proportions, determines our sensations; each room makes us desire the next; and this agitation engages the mind, holding it in suspense, in a kind of satisfying bliss.'[45] When Le Camus suggests that architectural elements should 'produce a sensation analogous with the object in the hand,' he is voicing the eighteenth century's obsession not only with sight and touch, but with the permeability across different categories of sensory experience. The attraction of sensationalism's 'ideological carnality' to architects of the time, can partially explain why women who had previously been identified with the *salon,* a space of intellectual sociability, became increasingly circumscribed by the idea of the boudoir and the virtual tactility of their bodies.

The cult of domesticity launched by Rousseau replaced the public identity that women had enjoyed through their Salons, with a new feminine ideal that valorized self-effacement, modesty, and women's 'natural' place within the private domestic sphere.

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[43] el-Khoury, in the introduction to *The Little House*, 21

[44] el-Khoury, 31-2.

[45] Le Camus, 45.

That women continued to be objects of male desire, despite their new image as happy mothers and virtuous wives, is born out by the equal popularity enjoyed by works of art with libertine or moralizing subjects.[46] Nonetheless, the didactic and normative emphasis of the Enlightenment demanded a separation of private pleasure from public virtue.[47]

Finally, during the seventeenth and the greater part of the eighteenth century, the spectacular relations of the *ancien régime* and the discursive space of Salon had provided women along with men a space of public appearance. The appearance of the boudoir coincided with the decline of the Salon. As an erotic space it was the antithesis of the discursive space of the Salon. Through the boudoir's celebration as an erotic space in fiction and architecture, an inversion took place. What was 'private' (secret and hidden), was elevated to 'public,' (visible to all). Charles Pinot-Duclos on the Parisian *petite maison*, (home to the most infamous of the boudoirs), wrote; 'They [*petite maisons*] have become so common and so public that some parts of the suburbs are entirely given over to them.'[48] It is significant that the final space in the reception sequence of Bastide's *petite maison*, is not a space of public ritual or discourse, the *lit de parade* or the *salon*. If in Bastide's tale Trémicour endures in exasperation Mélite's 'stubborn chatter,' it is because he is confident that the multiplicity of discourses put into action by the other spaces will be silenced by the private purpose of the boudoir: 'She lingered in the boudoir

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[46] For a discussion on the adaptation of late eighteenth-century French artists and writers to changing notions of gender see Carol Duncan, 'Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in Eighteenth-Century French Art,' in *Aesthetics of Power: Essays in critical Art History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3-26.

[47] Diderot in his *Essai sur la peinture*, for example, attempts to rescue art from its category as a luxury object and to give it the social function of improving society and portraying virtue as admirable and vice as odious. See Sheriff for a discussion of Diderot's essay, 6; Fragonard's entry in the 1765 Salon was lauded by Diderot, and he was hailed as France's next leading history painter. Destined to disappoint, however, he elicited a similarly negative response when he exhibited in the 1767 Salon a sketch with 'naked putti gamboling in the clouds.'[47] This was Fragonard's last appearance in the official Salons, and his absence was noted the following year in the *Memoires secrets*, 'M. Fragonard, that young artist who for years had given us the greatest hope for the genre of history painting...has shown nothing at this one [Salon]....One suspects that...instead of working for glory and posterity he is content to shine today in the boudoirs and dressing rooms.' Sheriff, 7.

[48] Quoted in Gallet, 97.

for more than a quarter of an hour. Her tongue was mute, but her heart could not be silenced.'[49] In the invasive and all encompassing idea of the boudoir, speech is made mute in the face of private desire. The transposition of the feminine spaces of the *salon* and the boudoir is symbolic of the process by which eighteenth-century women were rendered *aneu logou*, without a public voice, their identities increasingly defined within the context of the domestic environment and the male erotic imagination.

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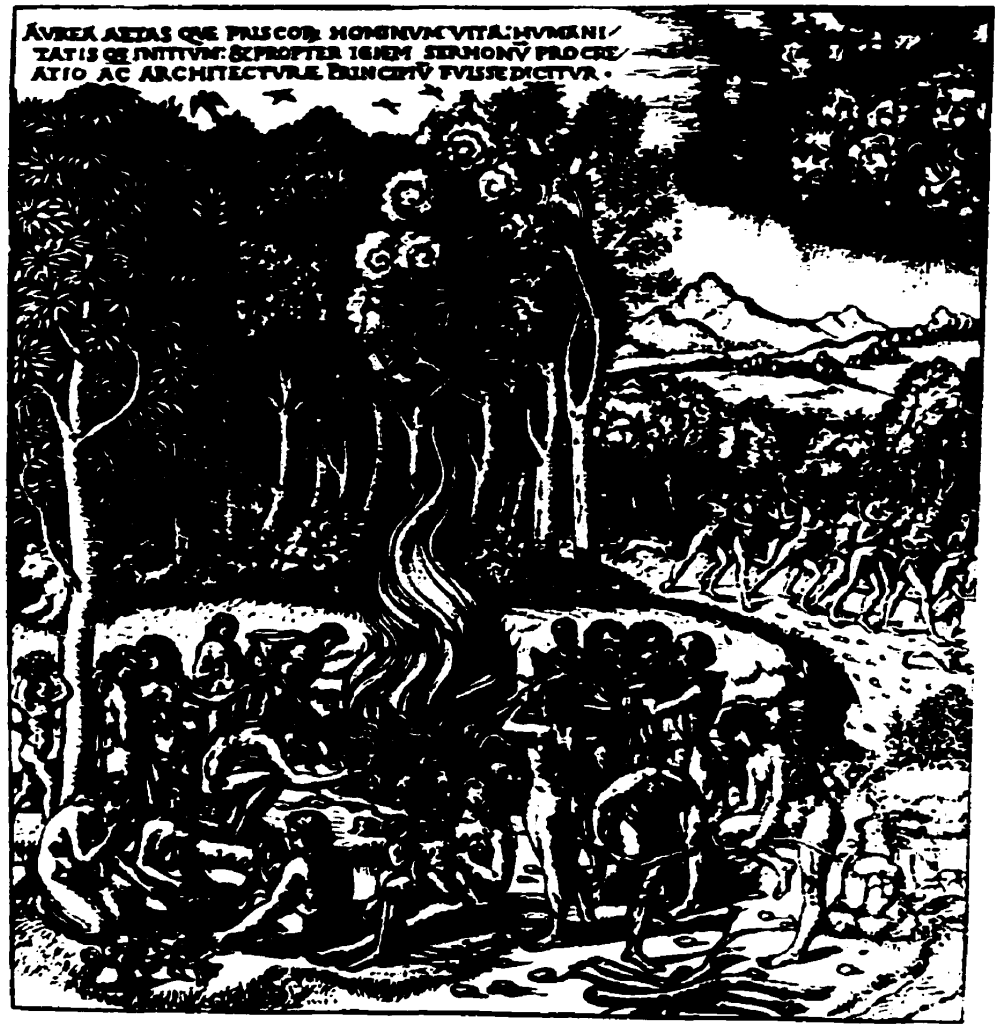
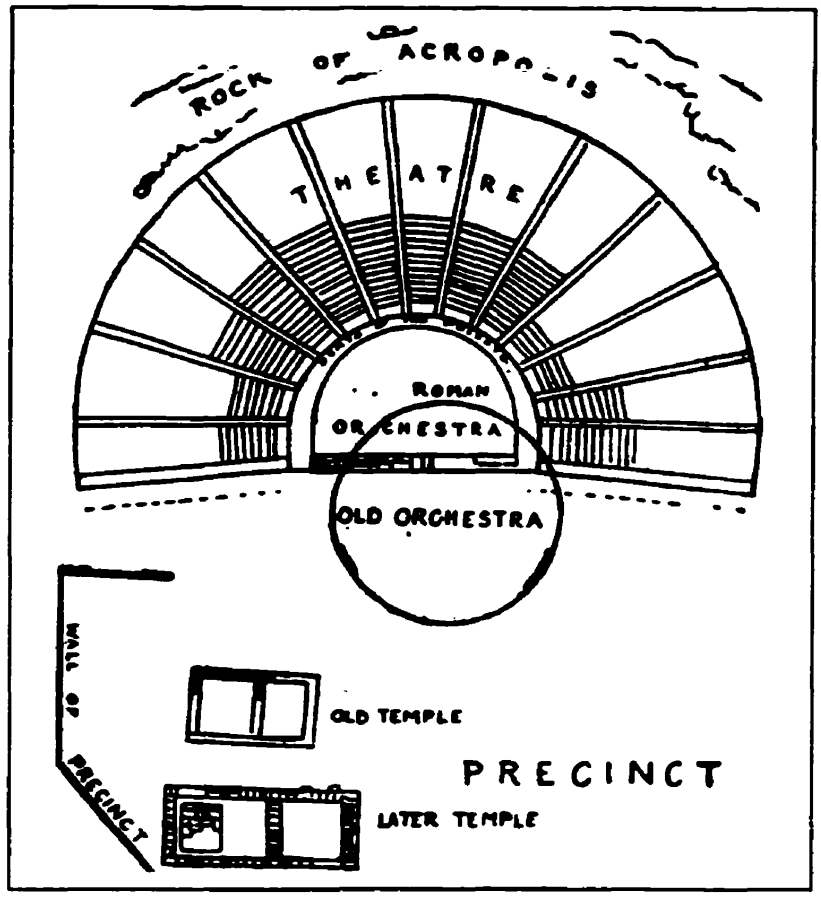
[49] Bastide, *The Little House*, 76.



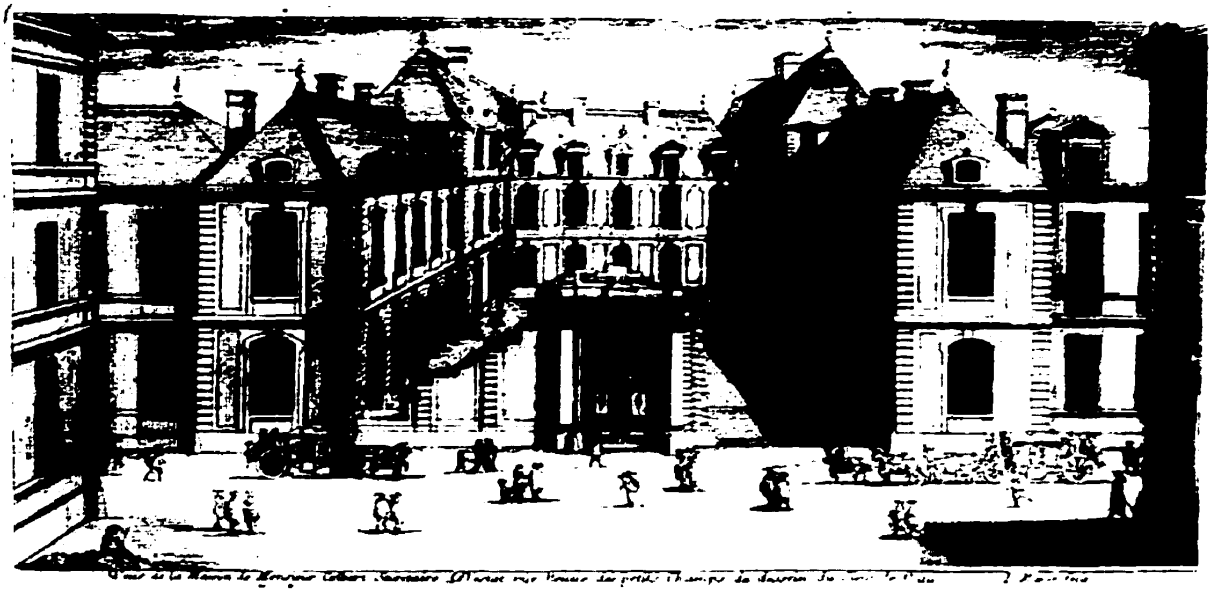
1
The Origin of Human Society: Language and the principles of architecture originated in man's appropration of fire, according to Vitruvius, (Cesariano edition, 1521)



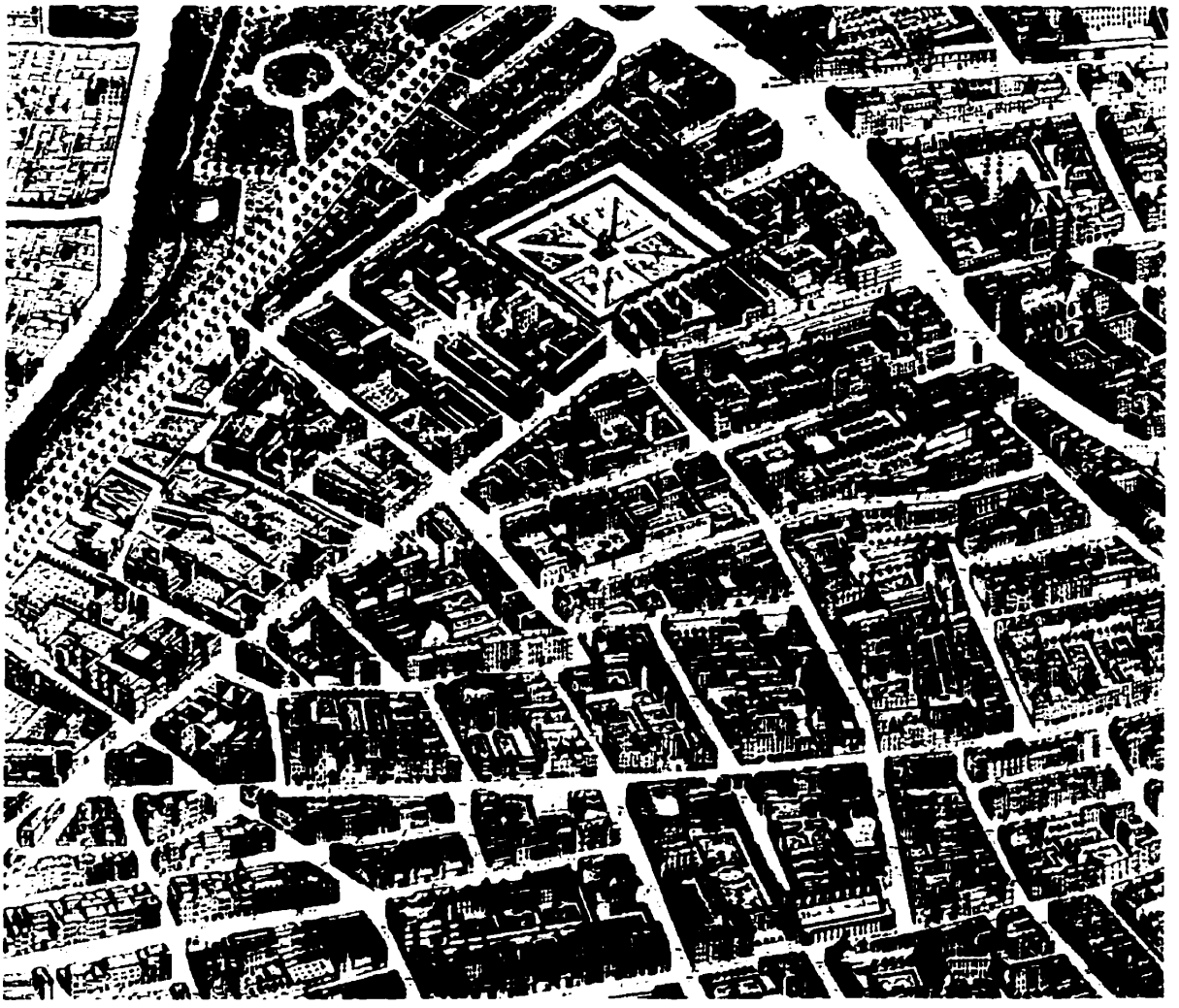
2
The shift in the relationship of the dancing platform and the stage is seen in the plan of the Dionysian theatre at Athens. The old circular orchestra shows the dominance of ritual; the new semicircular shape of the curtailed orchestra and the introduction of the amphitheatre indicate the dominance of spectacle

3
Louis XIV as the Sun in a court ballet

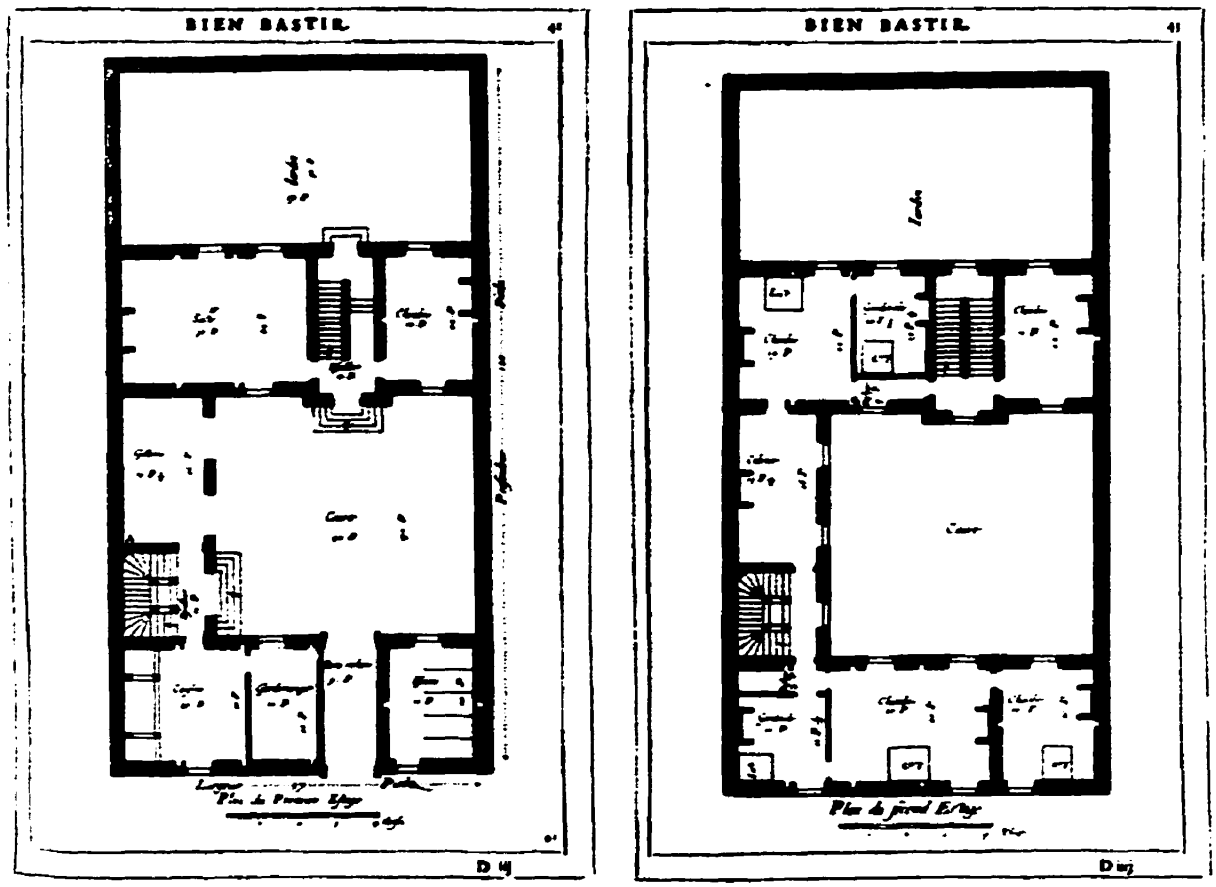
4
A scene depicting an audience given by Louis XIV from the royal bed in 1664, woven in tapestry at the Gobelins after a composition by Le Brun



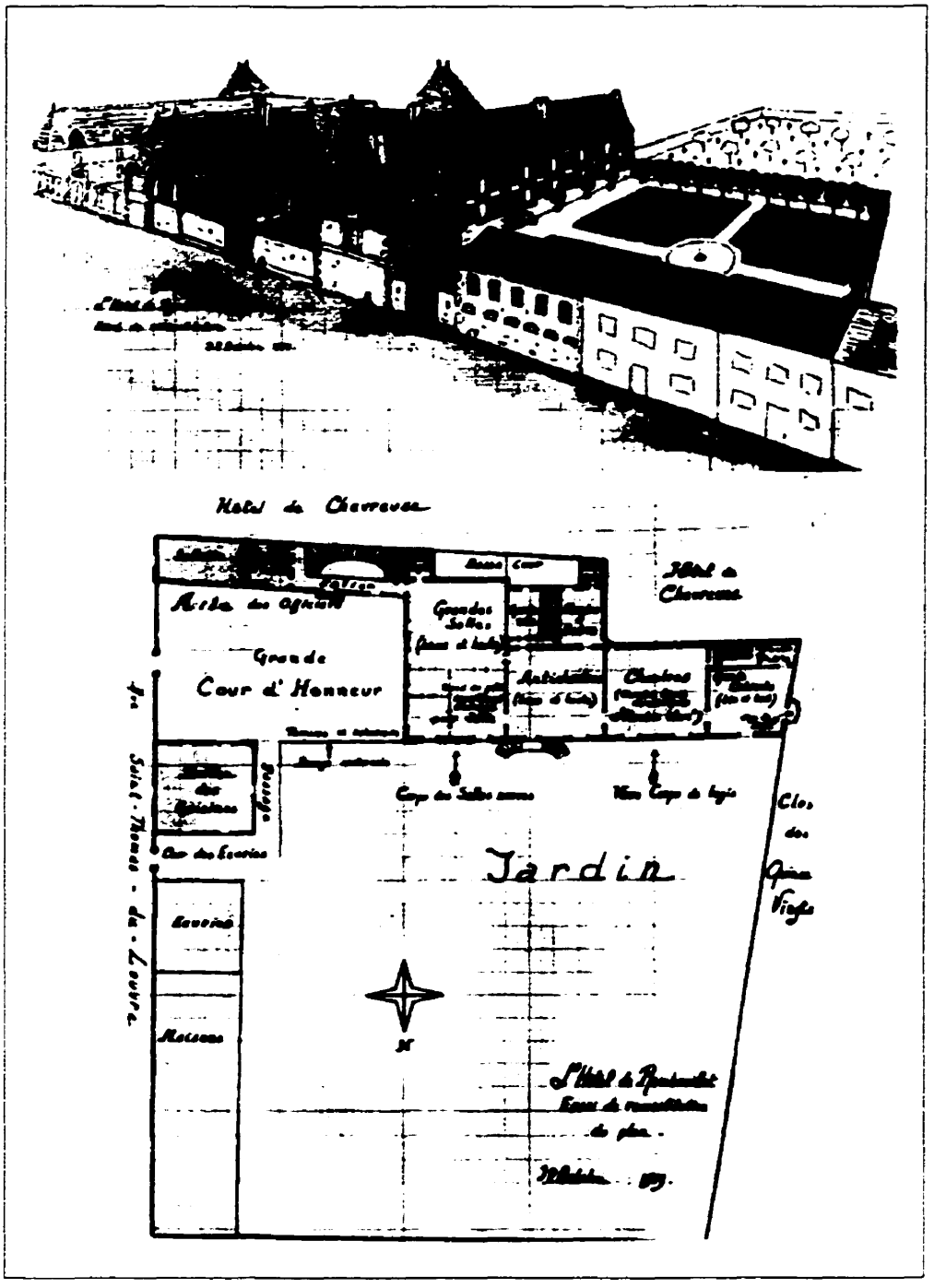
5
Hôtel de Bautru, c. 1660-70. Engraving. From Jean Marot, *Grand Marot*, 1660-70



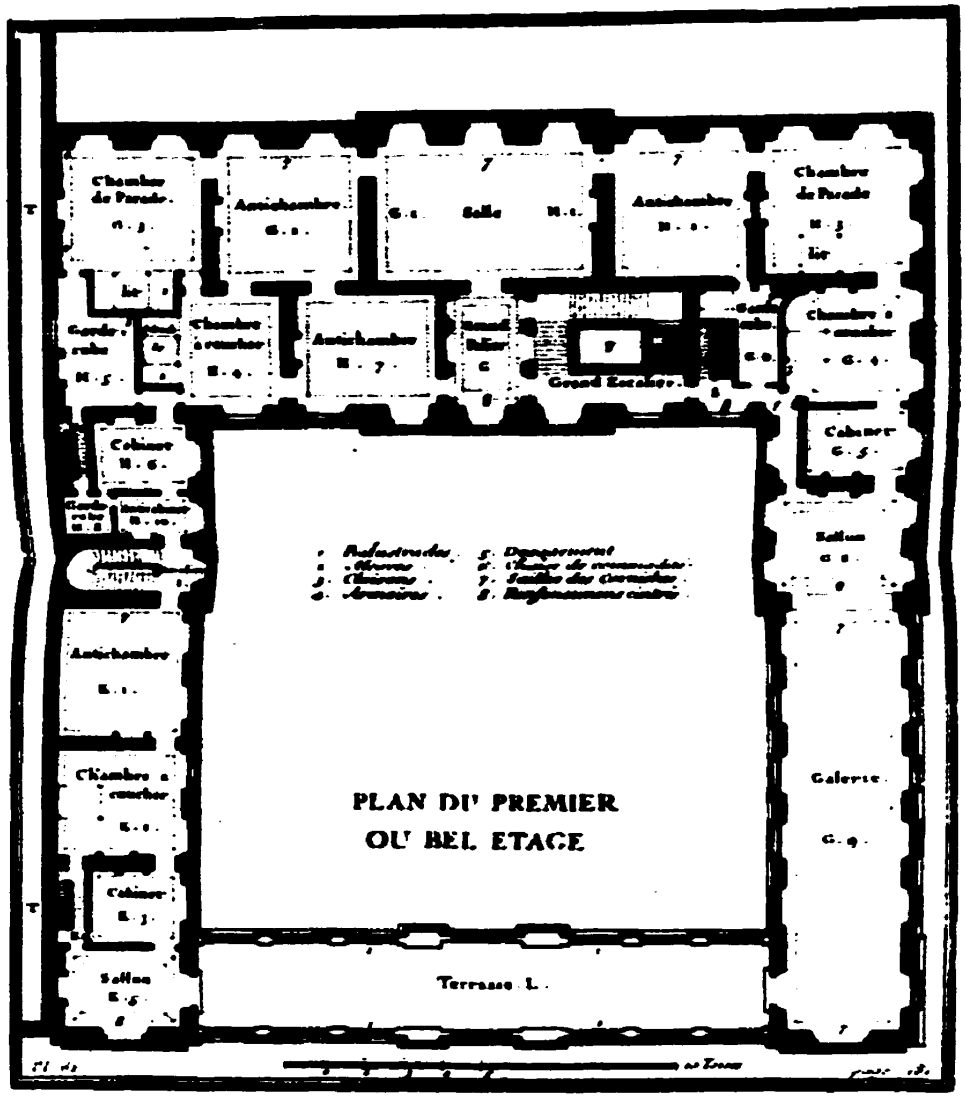
6
Detail of Turgot plan of Paris, 1734-39



7
Project for a hôtel (Distribution sit I. site 9), ground floor plan (left), upper floor plan (right), Pirre Le Muet, 1623.



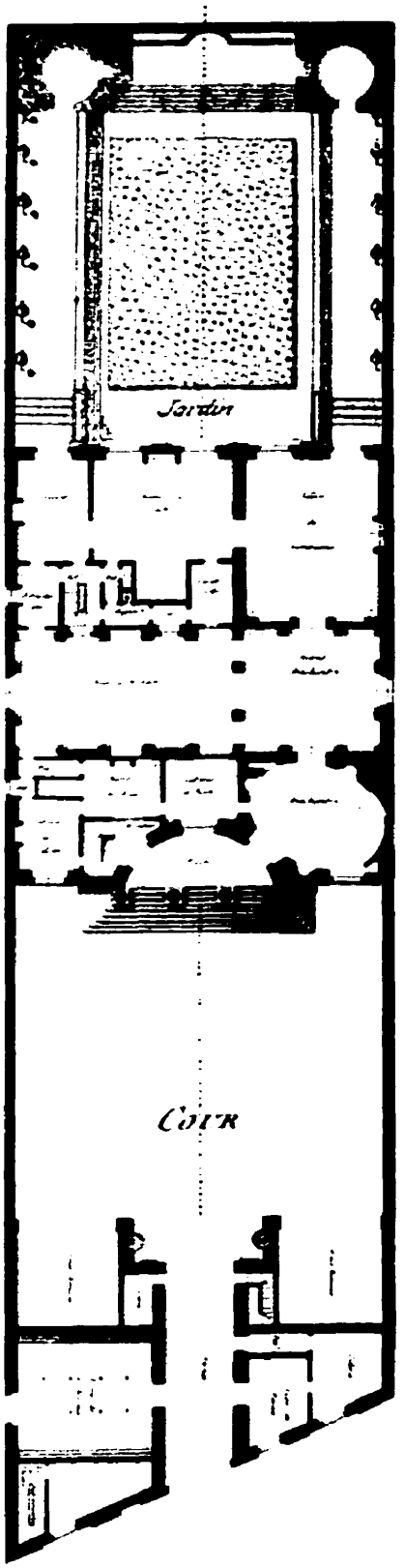
8
Hôtel Rambouillet, reconstruction by J.P. Babelon, Marquise de Rambouliet

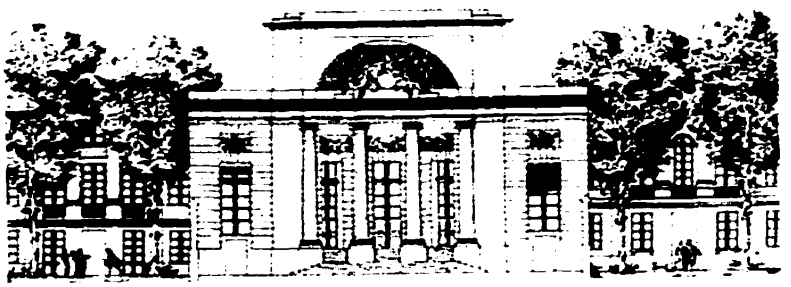


9
Design for a hôtel from D'Avelier *Cours d'architecture,* 1691. This plan of a main floor illustrates the state of hôtel planning at the turn of the century

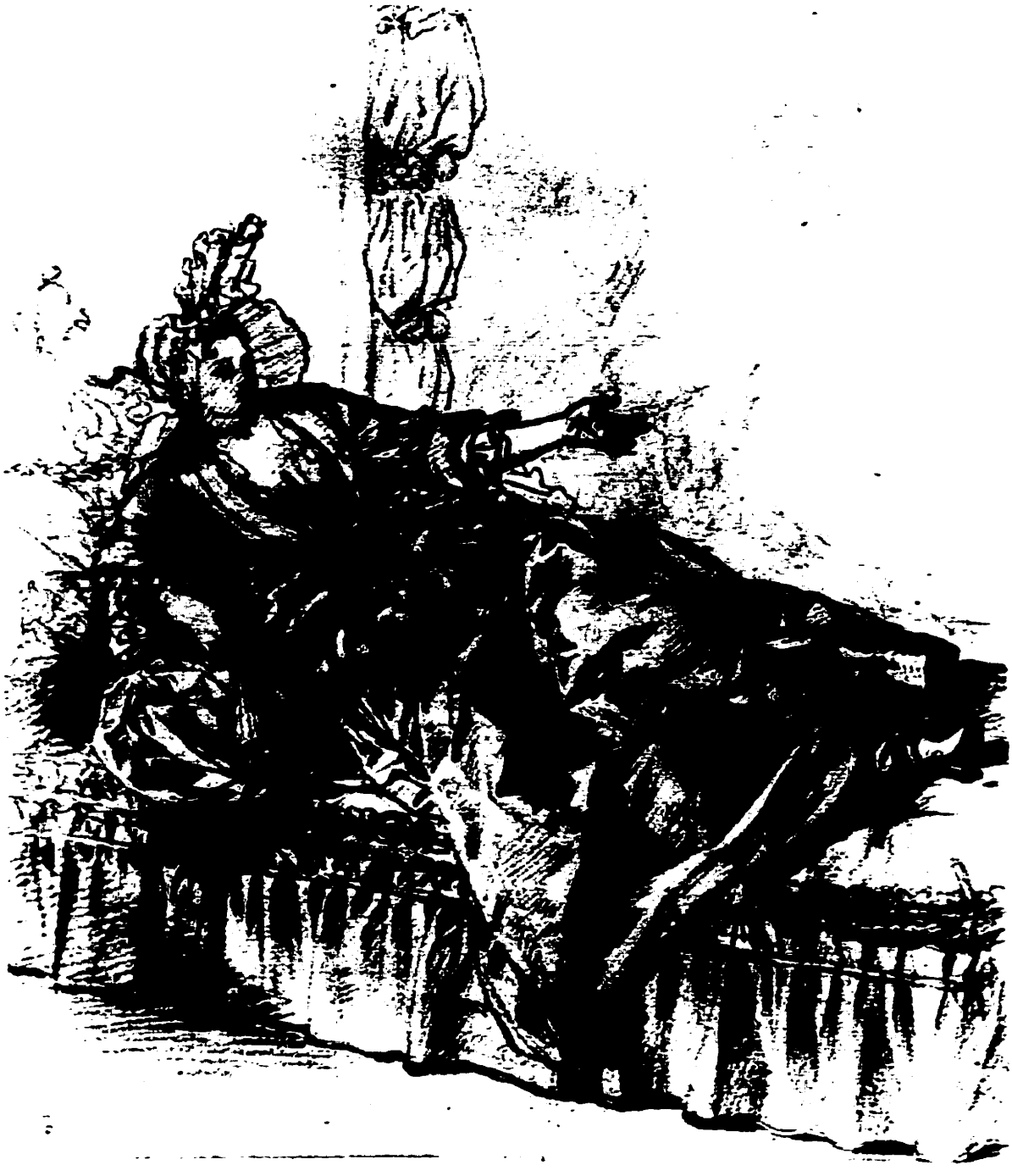
10
Antoine Touvain, *Quatrième Chambre des Apartements*, 1696. Etching

11
Jean Françcois De Troy, *Reading from Molière*, 1728





12
Hôtel Guimard, front elevation above, ground floor plan on right, Claude Nicholas Ledeaux, 1770-72



13
A French woman entertaining friends *en lit* (two friends are lightly sketchd in the background), Bernard Picard, 1703

14
A French scientific salon 1680's. Painted on a fan leaf

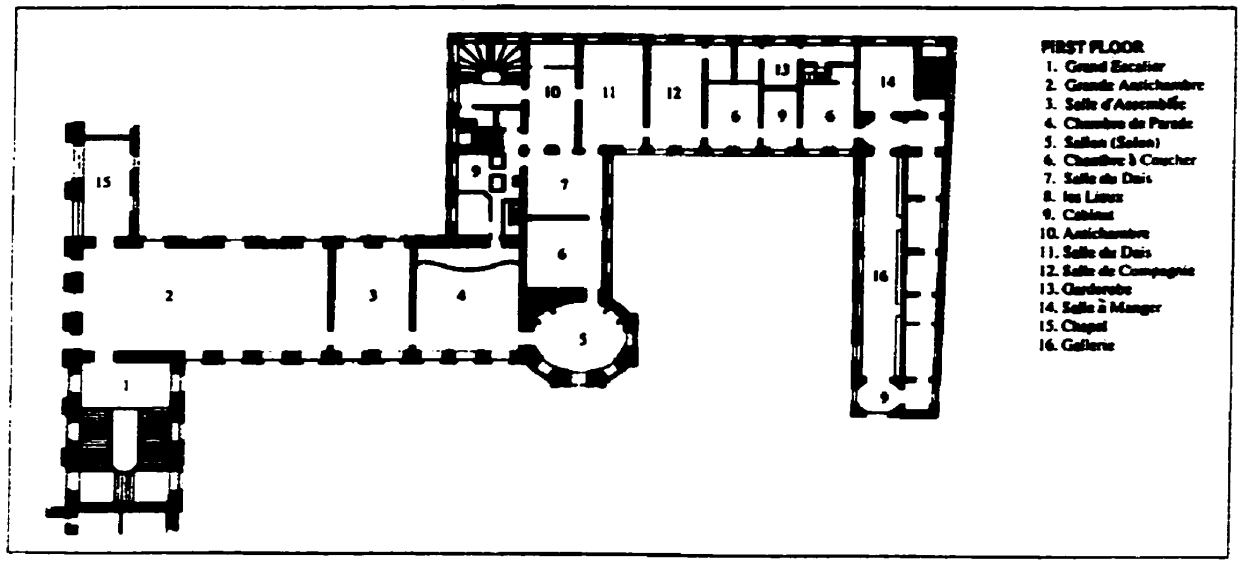
15
Une ruelle. Etching by Chauveau

16
Mme. de Rambouillet and her daughter Julie d'Angennes

17
The Foolish Virgins, engraving by Abraham Bosse, 1640's

18
The Duchess de Montfort in her Cabinet, Berey c. 1695

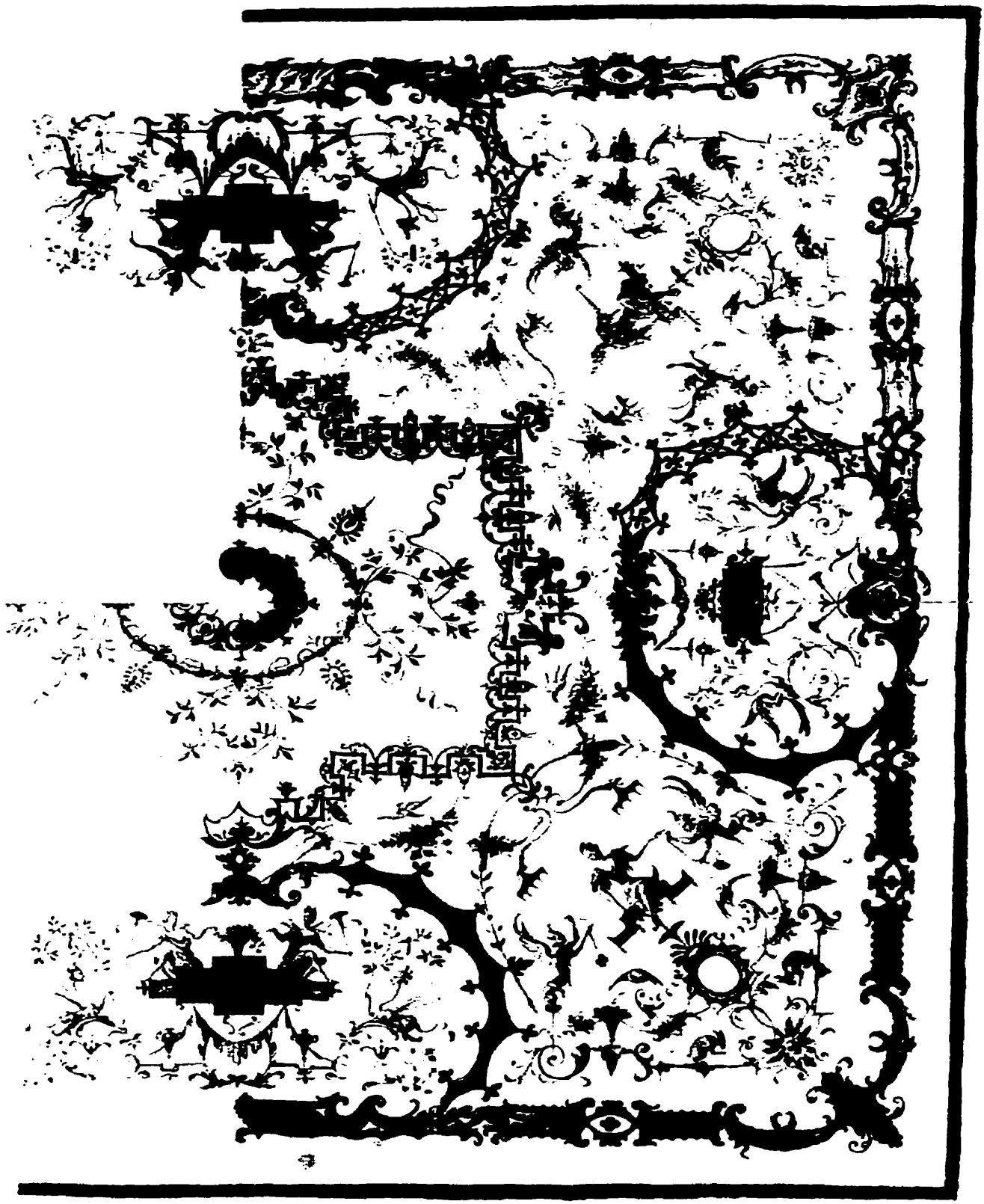
19
La Folie des hommes ou le monde à l'envers



20
First-floor plan, Hôtel de Soubise, Germain Boffrand, c. 1734

21
Psyche and Cupid, Charles Joseph Natoire, 1738, Salon de la Princesse, Hôtel de Soubise

22
Salon de la Princesse, c. 1737-8, Germain Boffrand, Hôtel de Soubise



23
Arabesque design for a ceiling, Claude III Audran, c. 1700

24
Grimm and Diderot, drawing by Carmontelle

25
The Salon of 1785, engraving, Pietro Antonio Martini, 1785

26
The *salon* of Mme. Geoffrin, 372 rue St. Honoré. Drawing by Hubert Robert, c. 1770

27
La Lecture espagnole, engraved by Jaques Firmin Beauvarlet after the painting

28

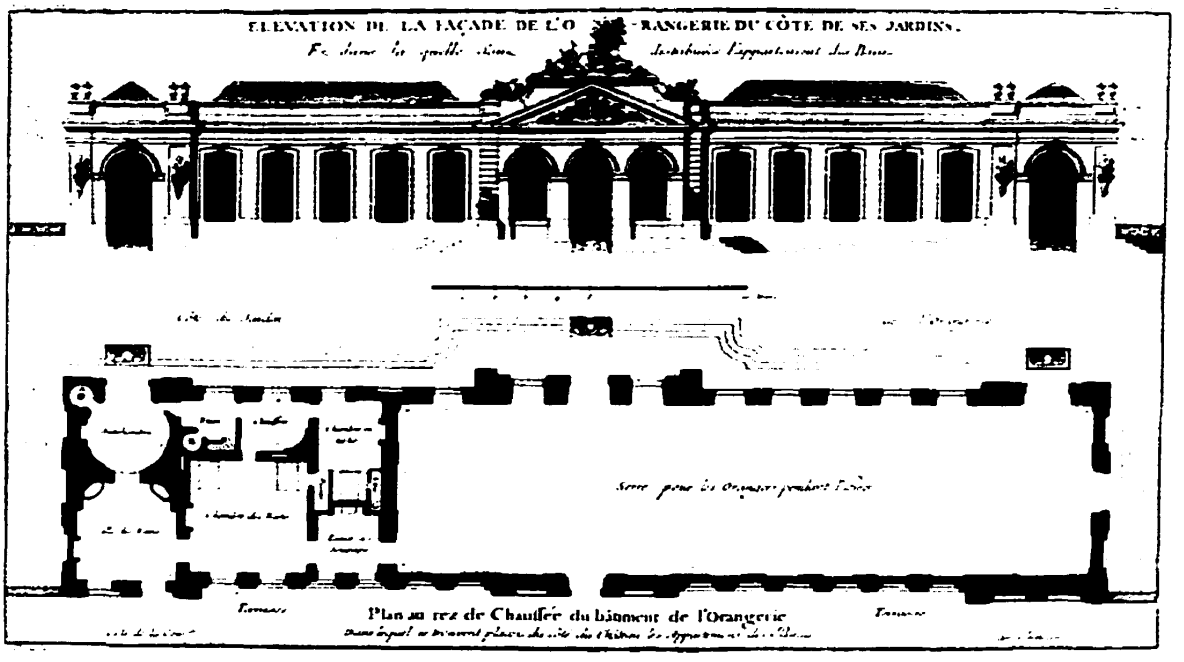
Une Soirée chez Geoffrin en 1755.L'acteur Le Kain lit l'Orphelin de la Chine, *sous le buste de Voltaire, et en présence de d'Alembert, d'Helvétius, de Diderot, de Buffon, etc. A doite, à coté de la maitresse de maison, Fontenelle, assoupi*

29
Le Souper des philospohes, Huber, 18th century. Seated from left to right, l'abbe Mauri, d'Alembert, La Harpe, Voltaire, Condorcet, le père Adam

30
Hôtel de Soubise, Salon du Prince, c. 1737

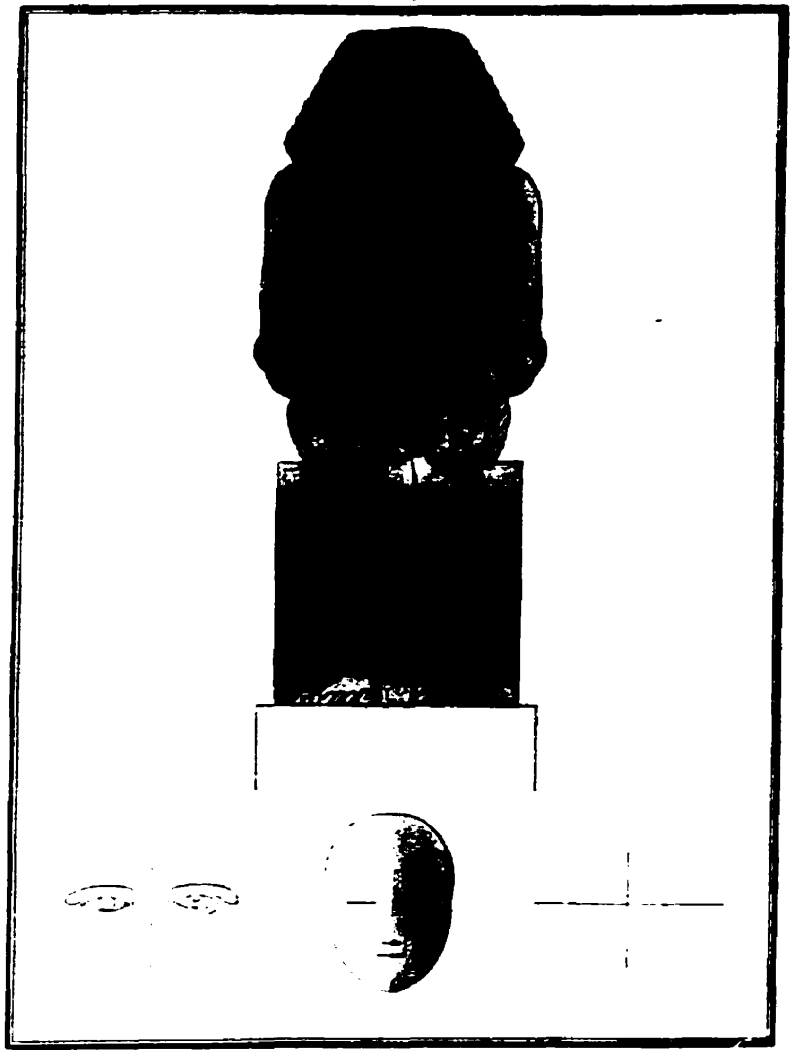
31
Hôtel de Soubise, Salon de la Princess, c. 1738-1740

32
The Sparrow's Nest, François Boucher after Antoine Watteau, 1727



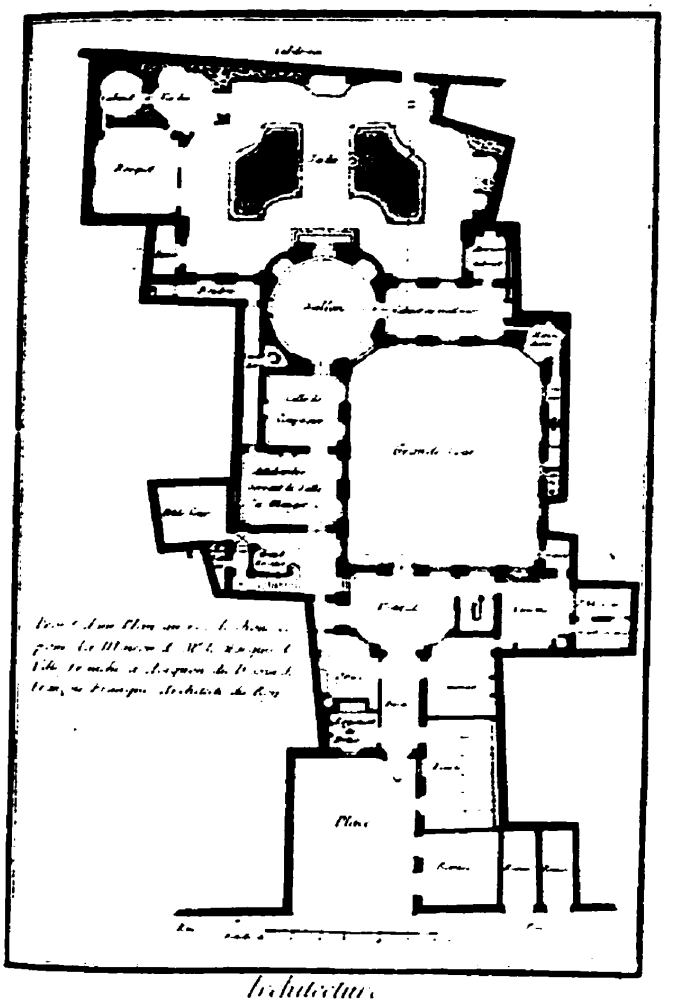
33

Plan for an *appartement des bains* contained within the plan of a winter green house for orange trees. The lacation of the *appartements* reflects its connection to nature and the garden. Jaques Blondel. From *De la distribution..., 1737 and 1738*

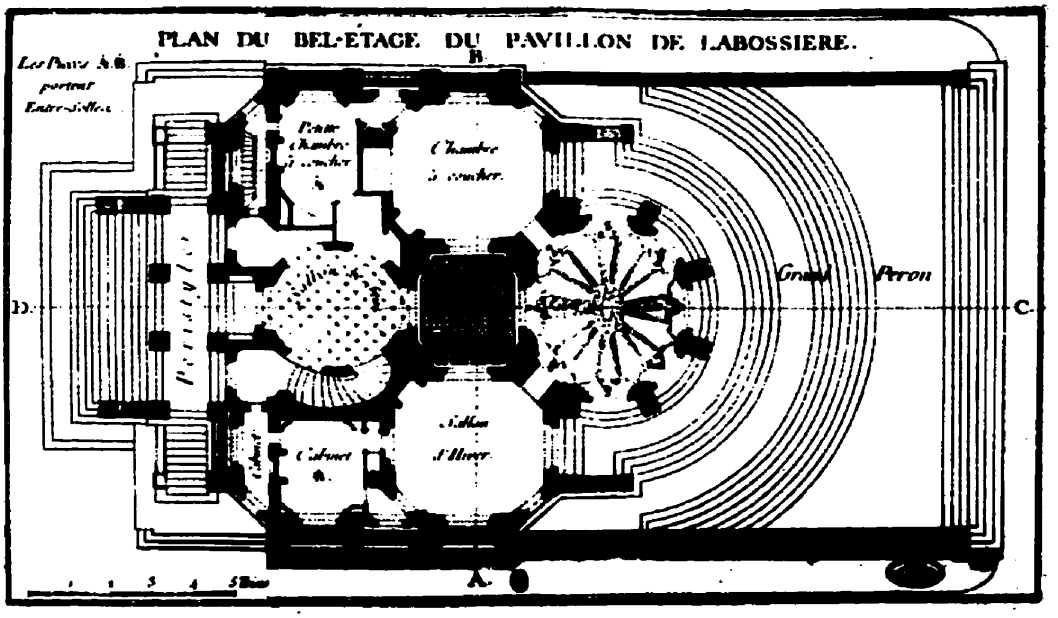


34
D.P.G. Humbert de Superville, *Collosus of Memmon*, from *Essai sur les signes inconditionnels dans l'art*, 1827-1832

35
Study for a fireplace, displaying the characteristic ambivalence of the mid-eighteenth century. The more austere Neoclassical side of the mantelpiece would be appropreiate for the master's apartments, while the 'feminine' Rococo side for the private apartments of the mistress



36
Hôtel Ville-fanche, ground floor plan, François Franque, c 1740



37
Ground floor plan for a garden pavillion, Mathieu Carpentier, 1751

38

A Young Man Conversing with a Young Woman on Scientific Matters, attributed to François Guerin, late 1760's

39

A Parisian Boudoir, S. Freudeberg, 1774

40
The Happy Moment, Nicolas Lavreince, c. 1778

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