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Salon, family, and patrie: The memoirs and novels of Eléonore-Adèle d'Osmond, comtesse de Boigne (1781–1866)

Vanderboegh, David Scott, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1993
SALON, FAMILY, AND PATRIE:
THE MEMOIRS AND NOVELS OF
ELÉONORE-ADELE D'OSMOND,
COMTESSE DE BOIGNE (1781-1866)

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

David S. Vanderboegh, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1993

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Une étude générale sur Madame de Boigne me paraîtrait seule pouvoir répondre à tout. Il y faudrait user...la correspondance,... l'ensemble de ses *Souvenirs*, les romans...

Sainte-Beuve, à Madame Lenormant

10 février 1867
Charlotte Louise Eléonore Adélaïde d'Osmond, comtesse de Boigne (1781-1866), is the author of two published novels as well as her memoirs. All of her works were published posthumously. The first to appear was the novel *Une Passion dans le grand monde*, in 1866, the very year of her death. The second novel, *La Maréchale d'Aubemer*, was published the following year. Her memoirs, *Récits d'une tante*, would not be published for another four decades, the first volumes appearing in 1907. Before describing the publication history of her works, it would be helpful for the reader to know more about the life of this relatively unknown writer. More than anything else, it is her own experiences and impressions that the author describes in her works.

The comtesse de Boigne was very much a product of her environment, or rather her environments: by the time she reached adulthood she had already spent years abroad, becoming fluent in Italian and English and learning much about English customs. Her father spared no expense for her education, and even as a child she showed great
promise. Not many children can read and recite Racine, as she claims to have done, at the age of three!

The opening pages of her memoirs focus on the remarkable history of her family. Born the daughter of the marquis d'Osmond and raised around the court at Versailles until the Revolution of 1789, de Boigne would remain profoundly marked for the rest of her life by her sense of honor for the name and subsequent "station" that she had inherited from her father, as well as her intimate childhood contact with the royal family and the trauma resulting from the Revolution. She had been a playmate of the ailing Dauphin, and Marie-Antoinette occasionally took part in her games.

Her father would be the central figure of her life. Adèle d'Osmond felt a deep attachment to him, and was very much influenced by his political outlook. The marquis d'Osmond was one of that rare, special group of nobles who welcomed the Revolution of 1789, and advised the king to make many concessions in order to keep up with the rapidly changing times. His "liberal" views would be reflected in his daughter.

The young Adèle d'Osmond, deeply affected by what her family had lost in the Revolution, followed her family into exile. Their first destination was Italy, where queen Caroline, sister of Marie-Antoinette, assisted her family
and provided the young Adèle with a pension that would last until she completed her education. It was in Naples that the youthful Adèle met and befriended the princesse Marie-Amélie, future Queen of the French. This friendship was to last a lifetime, and is described in great detail in her memoirs.

From Naples the d'Osmond family made its way to England. Adèle continued her education there, observing her fellow émigrés, and taking music lessons from Sappio, the former "maître de musique" of Marie-Antoinette. She was a striking young woman. Chateaubriand describes her at this period in his memoirs: "Parmi les Françaises de l'ouest on nommait madame de Boignes [sic], aimable, spirituelle, remplie de talents, extrêmement jolie, et la plus jeune de toutes..." (Mémoires d'outre-tombe, I, 387). It was, in fact, at one of her recitals with Sappio, which became popular among many of the émigrés, that a military man fell in love with this beautiful woman upon hearing her voice.

It was the financial plight of her family which drove her, so she writes in her memoirs, to a "mariage de raison" with the general de Boigne. This "mercenary," veteran of years of service to an Indian potentate, had returned to Europe having spent his health in the harsh climate of India. He brought back with him, however, an immense fortune, and a reputation bordering on legend in military
circles. One might question the character of the general if one were to base one's judgement solely on the memoirs of his wife, which present a very different view of him from that of several biographers. But, certainly, the general was to find it easier to lead thousands of soldiers in combat than to win the affection of his wife and to integrate himself into the elite circle that she inhabited.

It was an unlikely marriage from the start. In addition to the disparity in age (the general was forty-seven, and his young bride only seventeen), there was an insurmountable, for Adèle, gap in breeding. The comtesse would never forgive her husband for hiding his true heritage (he was born Benoît Leborgne, to bourgeois parents in Savoy), or for what she describes as his lack of social skills. She claims to have made no secret of her lack of affection for him, and in fact negotiated the terms of the marriage entirely on her own, without the participation of her parents. Before accepting the general's hand, she insisted on a pension for her parents and a sizeable sum for her own use. The general agreed to these terms, and the marriage took place within two weeks of the contract. Both were very unhappy in marriage and spent most of their wedded life apart, de Boigne having moved back to his native Savoy in 1802. But the general did provide his wife and her family with a comfortable living for the rest of
her life, and helped the family return from exile in 1804. It is due to his fortune that the young comtesse de Boigne, who adopted this title despite her general disapproval of "recent" titles of nobility, was able to establish in Paris a "véritable salon d'ancien régime," as the duc de Broglie describes it in his memoirs, during the Empire. Her salon continued to attract many well-known political and literary figures well into the Second Empire. Madame de Boigne developed a close friendship with another "dame de salon," Madame Récamier, and frequently visited Germaine de Staël in Coppet.

After witnessing the fall of Paris to the allies in 1814, an event which occupies several colorful pages of the memoirs, Adèle de Boigne joined her father in Turin, where he had been named ambassador by the government of Louis XVIII. After Turin, the marquis was sent to London where he again served as ambassador for two years. Madame de Boigne accompanied him there as well. This experience surely contributed to her interest in politics and diplomacy, which is most evident in her memoirs. She returned to Paris definitively in 1819, where her salon was one of the most popular until the fall of the Restoration.

The year 1830 was an eventful one for Adèle de Boigne. On June 21, just as the government of Charles X was breathing its last desperate gasps, M. le comte de Boigne
passed away. He died just as he had lived most of his married life, far from his wife's side. His death was the cause of three days of public mourning in Chambéry, but Madame de Boigne did not attend the funeral. In spite of his frustration with the marriage, the general's final testament proved to be most generous to his wife, providing the comtesse with far more than was agreed upon in their original marriage contract. The death of the general is barely mentioned in the memoirs, and the events of the following month seemed to quickly erase the last traces of his physical existence from the narrative.

For the comtesse de Boigne, the fall of the Restoration came as no great surprise. She was quick to lend her support to the new monarchy, and even played a minor role in its formation through her long-standing friendship with the Queen of the French, Marie-Amélie. It was during the early days of the government of Louis-Philippe that the newly widowed Adèle de Boigne began to form a particularly close relationship with Etienne-Denis Pasquier, a friend of many years. Pasquier would become the focal point of her salon during the July Monarchy, and their relationship was regarded by most observers with respect and admiration. Both had reached an age which placed them above the taint of scandal. Certain contemporaries, however, the duc de Broglie among them,
believed in a secret marriage. Whatever the case, this touching relationship lasted until the chancellor's death in 1862. According to Amélie Lenormant, his passing left in Madame de Boigne's life "un vide que rien ne pouvait plus combler" ("Madame de Boigne," Le Correspondant, 746).

The final years of the comtesse were sad ones, as she witnessed the deaths of many friends and family members. Her only brother died just a few months after Pasquier, and it was in that year that she wrote the last lines of her memoirs. And yet she continued to receive friends, even when confined to her bed by illness and infirmity, until her last days. When she learned of the death of her friend and confidante Marie-Amélie, former Queen of the French, she wrote: "C'est l'adieu de ma plus noble amie, et le coup de cloche de mon départ." Less than two months later, on May 10, 1866, Madame de Boigne died after requesting and receiving the last rites, summoning the Church only at the very end of a life of what some contemporaries considered to be religious indifference. Posterity had another form for the comtesse, as two of her novels were with the publisher at the time of her death, and the first would be published that very year.

Although the novels appeared forty years earlier, Adèle de Boigne is best known for her memoirs. These were first published in 1907-1908 by Charles Nicoullaud under
the title: *Récits d'une Tante. Mémoires de la Comtesse de Boigne, née d'Osmond, publiés d'après le manuscrit original* (4 volumes. Paris: Plon-Nourrit). The first volume includes an informative introduction to the life and writings of the comtesse de Boigne, with special emphasis on the circumstances of the publication of the original manuscript, which had been entrusted to Nicoulaud by Rainulphe d'Osmond, grand nephew of the comtesse de Boigne.

In his introduction, Nicoulaud describes the comtesse de Boigne as representing the transition between the Ancien Régime and the new one. He describes her education, offers some biographical information on the comtesse, and explains in detail the importance of her salon over a span of nearly five decades of turbulent French history. Letters from prominent friends of the comtesse such as Lamartine, Guizot, and Madame Récamier are cited to illustrate the importance of her social contacts. Nicoulaud ends his introduction with an explanation of his role in the publishing of the memoirs. He altered the manuscript only slightly, omitting a few names which he considered still too sensitive to publish, and deleting portions of certain passages which he judged too lengthy, using footnotes to indicate each omission. He corrected certain misspellings, and added historical annotations to the text. At the end of each volume, he added the "pièces justificatives," or
letters and official papers, which serve to document the authenticity of the memoirs.

Excerpts from the third and fourth volumes of the memoirs had appeared in *La Revue des deux-mondes* just prior to the 1907-1908 edition. In an excerpt entitled *Les Journées de juillet 1830* (tome 41, 1907, 554-599), the editor describes Madame de Boigne's account of what she had seen and done during these turbulent days as "un des plus vivans qui aient été écrits sur la révolution de 1830". Similarly, the two excerpts published from the memoirs in 1908, the *Expédition de la Duchesse de Berry en 1832* (tome 44, 241-275), and *La Captivité de la Duchesse de Berry* (tome 44, 808-838), were introduced by the editors as "interesting accounts," and contributed significantly to the success of the soon-to-be-released complete text of the memoirs.

The original manuscript of the memoirs was presented by Madame de Boigne as a bequest after her death to her nephew, Rainulphe d'Osmond. A copy was also bequeathed to the duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier. Both judged it inappropriate to publish the memoirs at the time, since so many individuals described in detail were still living.

It was after the death of Rainulphe d'Osmond in 1904, last of the d'Osmond line, that the memoirs were finally published. Charles Nicoullaud indicates in the
introduction to the 1907 edition that his friend, the late marquis d'Osmond, had instructed him to publish the memoirs as soon as he judged it appropriate.\footnote{Prior to publishing the memoirs, Nicoulaud had published two excerpts from them in \textit{Le Gaulois} with the titles "Le 13 juillet 1842," an account of the death of the duc d'Orléans (edition of 12 juillet, 1890), and "Le Mariage du matelot," the comtesse de Boigne's description of the marriage of the prince de Joinville (28 avril, 1893). Nicoulaud copied textually these passages from the memoirs, and made no mention of his source in either article.} By 1907, Nicoulaud decided that the political and personal considerations that had prevented publication twenty-five years earlier, when he and Rainulphe d'Osmond had first considered this possibility, were now sufficiently altered by the passage of time to allow the work to be made public. This account is contested in Jean-Claude Berchet's introduction to the 1971 edition. Berchet writes that Rainulphe d'Osmond had simply offered the manuscript of the memoirs for a simple consultation, and that after the death of d'Osmond, Nicoulaud "se jugea autorisé à publier le texte qu'il possédait" (I, 17). The heirs of Madame de Boigne filed a law suit, which resulted in the removal of the memoirs from public sale, and the restitution of the manuscript, which was then turned over to the Editions Emile-Paul.

An English translation of the memoirs in three volumes appeared simultaneously with the French in 1907 under the title \textit{Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne, 1781-1819. Edited from the original ms. by M. Charles Nicoulaud.} (New York:
C. Scribner's Sons, 1907-08). A fourth volume entitled *Recollections of a Great Lady; being more memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne* was also published by C. Scribner's Sons in 1912. These volumes retained Nicoullaud's introduction and annotations, as well as the index of the French edition. Yet another English version was published in London by William Heinemann in 1907, entitled *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne, 1781-1830.* Translations of the memoirs of the comtesse de Boigne were thus published in Great Britain and the United States in the same year as the French edition.

A second edition of the memoirs appeared in 1921-1923 (Editions Emile-Paul), without the modifications and corrections of the first editor. This integral edition, first reprinted in 1924-1925, has served as the basis for a number of reprintings. But it is the two-volume *Mémoires de la comtesse de Boigne,* edited by Jean-Claude Berchet, and published by Mercure de France in 1971 as a part of its "Le Temps Retrouvé" collection, last reprinted in 1986, that offers the integral text of the original memoirs along with historical annotations. (All references to the memoirs will be from the 1986 edition unless otherwise specified). Berchet's introduction encourages the reader to re-evaluate these memoirs, which are "toujours cités, quoique rarement lus" (I, 9). He offers biographical
information on the comtesse and her family, and writes of her caustic literary reputation, which, he feels, has overshadowed the richness of these memoirs. Berchet closes his introduction by mentioning Proust's familiarity with the memoirs. An article by Proust in the Figaro of March 20, 1907 acknowledges the publication of these memoirs which, Berchet writes, must have fascinated him. The comtesse de Boigne, he feels, doubtless served as a model for Proust's marquise de Villeparisis. Berchet concludes that it is worth the trouble to refer to several passages of A la Recherche du temps perdu, because "ils nous offrent, malgré leur discontinuité, le meilleur portrait qu'on ait fait (mutatis mutandis) de la comtesse de Boigne" (I, 16).

Another English translation of Adèle de Boigne's memoirs, by Sylvia de Morsier-Kotthaus, was published in London by the Museum Press in 1956. Her introduction, which focuses almost entirely on biographical details about the author, presents Madame de Boigne's memoirs as "perhaps the most interesting" among the many fascinating memoirs which appeared in France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This abridged translation reduces the original four volumes to a single-volume anthology of 255 pages.

Most criticism concerning the memoirs appeared shortly after the initial publication of the first volumes. The
academician Henry Bordeaux\textsuperscript{2} was among the first to write on the comtesse de Boigne's memoirs, and was certainly the most prolific. In 1907 he published an article entitled "La comtesse de Boigne" in \textit{Le Correspondant} (tome 226, 443-74). In that same year \textit{Le Figaro} printed "Le Quart d'heure de Chateaubriand" (9 octobre, 1907), an article in which Bordeaux describes the comtesse de Boigne's unflattering opinions on the great writer. Six years later Bordeaux included two chapters on the comtesse in his \textit{Portraits de femmes et d'enfants} (Paris: Plon, 1913).

In his articles, Bordeaux describes the circumstances behind the publication of the memoirs, apparently using Nicoullaud's introduction as his primary source. He contests Madame de Boigne's claim, found in her preface, that she doesn't take her memoirs that seriously ("Je n'y mets pas plus d'importance qu'à un ouvrage de tapisserie"). According to Bordeaux, "elle se trahit en nous livrant les jeux de physionomie qu'elle surprit sur les visages des autres, et c'est un portrait de femme, le sien, que j'écrirai spécialement d'après ses Mémoires qui se font volontiers ceux d'autrui" (\textit{Le Correspondant}, 449). He then goes on to comment on the memoirs, the first parts of which

\textsuperscript{2}Prolific author of numerous novels, short stories, plays, as well as his memoirs (\textit{Le Pays sans ombre} and \textit{Histoire d'une vie}), Bordeaux took a special interest in the comtesse de Boigne in part because of her husband. Both Bordeaux and the comte de Boigne were Savoyards, and Bordeaux's sympathy with his compatriot is evident in his writing.
are, he feels, "un peu trop enjolivés". The only pages that Bordeaux describes as "touching" are the anecdotes about the queen (Marie-Antoinette), as they are personal in nature. Most of the writing that deals with the pre-Empire period is simply a retelling of second-hand information. Her account of the Varennes affair, for example, offers nothing new. It is only after this that her memoirs, in the words of Bordeaux, "se personnalisent enfin". The future comtesse begins to think for herself during her years in exile with her family.

Bordeaux praises Madame de Boigne's talent in observing and relating various events in her memoirs, demonstrating the vivacity which is her trademark. "Ses jugements sont des jugements de salons, prompts et pointus comme des flèches" (Le Correspondant, 463). He especially admires Adèle's accounts of the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, which he regards as "les pages les plus neuves et les plus captivantes de ses longs Mémoires" (Le Correspondant, 472). Not all of Madame de Boigne's writing meets with such favor, however. Bordeaux is highly critical of the way in which she portrays her husband, the général comte de Boigne. The general's remarkable career is described in detail in this article, and then compared to Madame de Boigne's own account. After listing several examples of Madame de Boigne's scathing assertions about the general's
character and countering them with glowing quotations by an English officer who knew him well, Bordeaux writes: "Tel est l'homme supérieur, jugé par un Anglais, qu'une peronnelle de dix-sept ans déclare mal élevé et insupportable, incapable d'inspirer le moindre attachement, fût-ce à prix d'or" (Le Correspondant, 457). The contrast is striking, and it isn't difficult to see where Bordeaux's sympathies lie. A Savoyard himself, Bordeaux was well aware of the legendary reputation of the general-comte de Boigne.Overall, however, Bordeaux's opinion of the memoirs is quite favorable. It is unfortunate, he writes, that she wrote only episodes regarding the period after 1830, and not continuously, as she would have related much of interest--consciously or not--regarding the fall of the July monarchy. Bordeaux appears to be warning the reader who may be seeking information of strictly historical interest, however, when he describes the memoirs as a "longue chronique mondaine plutôt qu'historique" (Portraits de femmes et d'enfants, 134).

If Madame de Boigne is lacking in strict historical accuracy, she excels at the "portrait," Bordeaux feels, offering several examples taken from the memoirs, and adding comments that may have contributed to Madame de Boigne's reputation as an observer with a sharp pen:

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3Bordeaux published a biography on the comte de Boigne in 1956, and incorporated in it excerpts of his writings on the comtesse.
"Impitoyablement elle détruit les légendes, rapetisse les réputations, restreint les admirations et les gloires" (Portraits..., 139). The most famous "victim" of the comtesse is Chateaubriand. Bordeaux relates Madame de Boigne's account of one of his readings before a group of admirers: "Il lisait de la voix la plus touchante et la plus émue, avec cette foi qu'il a pour tout ce qui émane de lui" (Portraits..., 144). The comtesse was not overwhelmed by reputations or legends, and is not shy about expressing her opinions. Her "lutte" with Chateaubriand, as Bordeaux calls it, forms a separate chapter in his book Portraits de femmes et d'enfants, and was reprinted decades later with only a few minor changes as "Une Ennemie de Chateaubriand" in the Revue des deux-mondes (Juillet-Août, 1956). The portraits are fascinating, but they demonstrate, according to Bordeaux, that Madame de Boigne was more adept at describing appearances than in penetrating the motives for human behavior. Her portraits are brilliant on the surface, and although they may lack depth, they do tend to reveal a concealed side of certain individuals, such as one might overhear in a conversation at a salon. She may be compared, Bordeaux states, to the "grandes dames" of the eighteenth century. Her writing does not reflect the literary currents of the early nineteenth-century, in spite of its content. "Ses Mémoires peuvent prendre place,"
writes Bordeaux, "dans les bibliothèques, à côté de la correspondance de Mme du Deffant et des Mémoires de Mme d'Epinay" (Portraits..., 139).

One of Madame de Boigne's harshest critics is Costa de Beauregard, whose "Mariage secret de Mme la Duchesse de Berry" was published in volume 45 of the Revue des deux-mondes (1908). This article was written in response to Madame de Boigne's account of the circumstances surrounding the duchesse de Berry's marriage to the comte Lucchesi, found in the fourth volume of her memoirs. De Beauregard finds Madame de Boigne's description of this highly publicized event as nothing short of scandalous. He accuses her of a strong bias, of intentionally misleading the reader: "Entre le bien possible et le mal incertain, Mme de Boigne n'hésite jamais; pour vous amener à partager son opinion sur les gens, elle fait parler ceux qui ne disent rien et n'écoute pas ceux qui parlent" (RDM, 870). De Beauregard then builds his case against the comtesse de Boigne by presenting a lengthy explanation of events, using various letters and documents in an attempt to justify in full the marriage of the duchesse de Berry. The truth of the matter, he claims, is very simple: "plus simple à coup sûr que le picaresque roman imaginé par le 'juste milieu'!..." (RDM, 884). He concludes his article with a parting shot at the comtesse, the fervor of which makes the
reader wonder if the author isn't guilty of the same sort of bias that he is attacking in de Boigne's memoirs:

Mme de Boigne, qui a longuement vécu en Angleterre, s'est sans doute souvenue, quand elle s'est mise à écrire, et de Sheridan et de son Ecole de la médiscance. Elle avait fait provision de bons mots et de vilaines choses; il fallait qu'elle les employât.... Ah! Je comprends "les colères d'Alceste" du vieux chancelier Pasquier devant le débridé de son amie. Ne les partagez-vous pas en prenant congé d'elle? (RDM, 907)

The memoirs of the comtesse de Boigne did not go unnoticed in Germany. An article by Lady Blennerhassett appeared in 1908 in volume 135 of Deutsche Rundschau ("Die Memoiren von Madame de Boigne"). A brief overview of the "überproduktion" of memoirs in France begins the article. Many of these memoirs, according to Lady Blennerhassett, are worthless, and in some cases nothing less than falsehoods. The latter are often "pikanter" than true memoirs, but one must look for good, reliable texts. For Blennerhassett, the memoirs of the comtesse de Boigne fit that description: "Sie bieten den Reiz, von einer sehr klugen Frau niedergeschrieben worden zu sein, die sich berechtigt glaubte, zu denken, was sie wollte, und zu sagen, was sie dachte" (DR, 333). Madame de Boigne's proximity to many historical events combined with experience gained abroad, as well as insulation from

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"parteileidenschaften" make of her an excellent observer. Lady Blennerhassett describes some of the content of the memoirs, and finds much of interest. In contrast to Costa de Beauregard, she finds the account of the marriage of the duchesse de Berry "besonders zu empfehlen" (DR, 355). Unlike de Beauregard, Blennerhassett points out that Madame de Boigne herself had labelled this description as "chronique," but believes that it is nonetheless of historical value, and is among the "pikantersten" of her writings. The late publication date of the memoirs makes them of lesser value, Blennerhassett feels, as many better reports had appeared in the years between the writing of the memoirs and their actual publication. Many now-forgotten characters mentioned in the memoirs are of little interest to the contemporary reader. Madame de Boigne's writing, however, finds high praise with Blennerhassett: "Auch wo sie nichts Neues zu berichten hat, fesselt sie durch die natürliche, gewandte Art, es zu erzählen" (DR, 336). Like Bordeaux, Blennerhassett feels that Madame de Boigne belongs more to the eighteenth century than to the nineteenth. "Gesellschaftliche Interessen, reger Anteil an der Politik, Verkehr mit bedeutenden Männern," writes Blennerhassett, "wohl auch ein gewisses Vergnügen an Klatschgeschichten genügten der Frau, die mehr mit dem Kopf wie mit dem Herzen lebte und die kalten Überlieferungen des
In her conclusion, Blennerhassett sees the memoirs of Madame de Boigne as valuable for their portrayal of the old generation, and the coming of a new order which the author witnessed during her long lifetime. They serve as a bridge between the old regime and modern France, spanning the Empire, the Restoration, and the July Monarchy.

One of the articles most favorable to Madame de Boigne's memoirs appeared in the Quarterly Review (volume 210, 1909), and is entitled simply "Madame de Boigne." The article begins with a quotation from the preface of the memoirs in which Madame de Boigne claims to attach no more importance to her memoirs "than to a piece of embroidery." Paul F. Willert then asserts that Madame de Boigne was not quite so free from literary pretension as she would have us believe, pointing out that she was the author of "several" novels, only two of which were actually published. Of these novels, Willert writes only that they were "wanting in originality, ill-constructed, and conventional in sentiment" (QR, 628). Her Tales of an Aunt, on the other hand, delight us with a "lightness of touch," and "the quick, lively, and accurate observation of men and manners." For literary style, Willert considers the memoirs to be far superior to the novels, but claims that
their veracity may at times be less than certain. Willert dismisses Costa de Beauregard's claim that the author was of malicious intent in the memoirs, asserting that most of the inaccuracies are due merely to the "art of the telling." It is the "rounding off and polishing" of events that creates such pleasant reading as one finds in de Boigne's memoirs. Much of what the comtesse describes is in substance the truth, explains Willert, but the truth "dramatized." As for Madame de Boigne's reputation for lacking generosity and having a sharply critical pen, Willert explains that the strongest feelings of the comtesse were negative. She disliked despotism, dreaded democracy, and was irritated by intolerance, superstition, and folly. "Perhaps she would appear more amiable if she were a little less reasonable" (QR, 631), writes Willert, pointing out that unlike the great majority of her contemporaries, she never caught the Rousseau fever. In agreement with several other critics before him, Willert states that Madame de Boigne belongs more to the eighteenth century than her own, in part because of what he refers to as her "unemotional temperament" and the events that she experienced as a child, and also to her education and her father's influence: "During their exile he superintended his daughter's education, reading Adam Smith and philosophy with her, such philosophy of common sense as may be found
in Voltaire" (QR, 631). All of this contributed to a woman who was "in politics what we suspect she was in religion, a sceptic." Willert does not find every aspect of the memoirs pleasing, however. He contests her self-described "shyness" and naïveté (as a young woman) which she offers as an explanation for her marriage with the general de Boigne: "...it is difficult to believe her statement that she suffered from excessive shyness, after reading of the business-like way in which she sold these charms in the matrimonial market, concluding by herself a bargain from which her parents shrank..." (QR, 633). Madame de Boigne's treatment of her husband in the memoirs "shows some want of taste as well as of feeling" (QR, 634). As for Costa de Beauregard's violent attacks on de Boigne for her portrayal of Louis XVI and several members of his court, Willert claims that Madame de Boigne tells us nothing that we cannot read in a hundred other books about the court of Louis XVI. In fact, the comtesse's writing is of some historical importance: "She enables us to see how the elaborate system of etiquette, originally devised to emphasize the sacred attributes of royalty, failed to impress a generation more prone to ridicule than to reverence" (QR, 648). Willert does agree to some extent with Costa de Beauregard's criticism of Madame de Boigne's account of the adventures of the duchesse de Berry, yet he
states that the general impression left upon us as to her character agrees well enough with what we gather from other sources, and Adèle's skepticism was shared by many of her contemporaries, including Charles X and his advisers. The article concludes with a strong recommendation for the memoirs, as well as a caution that not everything the author says is to be accepted as historical fact. And yet in the same closing paragraph, Willert observes that "the personal causes, the follies and faults of the rulers, which had so much to do with the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 are placed vividly before us" (QR, 653). Willert's article makes it clear that the memoirs are as interesting for their form as for their content.

In his Belles du vieux temps (Emile-Paul, Paris, 1909), the vicomte de Reiset dedicates two chapters to the comtesse de Boigne and her memoirs, the second chapter focusing on Madame de Boigne's account of the marriage of the duchesse de Berry. The most prominent characteristic of the comtesse de Boigne is, for Reiset, "la sécheresse de cœur qu'elle montra depuis son enfance" (Belles..., 257). She judges her contemporaries with "peu d'indulgence," proving to be very stingy with praise but prodigious with criticism. Reiset summarizes what he sees as the two sides of the comtesse as follows:

Dans ses pérégrinations à travers l'Europe, à Versailles ou à Paris, en Angleterre ou à Rome,
on la retrouve toujours la même, spirituelle et parée d'une grâce séduisante en même temps que douée d'une vivacité d'observation merveilleuse qu'on ne voit jamais se ralentir, mais en toute occasion, en revanche, elle donnera, sans scrupule aucun, libre cours à sa verve ou à ses mordantes critiques, et n'hésitera jamais, lorsqu'elle y trouve avantage, à ternir les mémoires ou à rapetisser les réputations. (Belles..., 258)

Reiset's observations are at this point in keeping with those of other critics, but as the chapter progresses one has the impression that one is reading de Beauregard. In fact, Reiset and de Beauregard were friends and, as the author himself states, exchanged information on the subject of Madame de Boigne. It should come as no surprise, then, that Reiset has no shortage of griefs to record as concerns the memoirs. He is not without words of praise, describing some of de Boigne's prose portraits as "saisissants," and noting her ability to "deviner les défauts et à découvrir les points faibles des caractères" (Belles..., 260). She is not, however, impartial. Reiset accuses her of injustice and even of an absolute lack of good faith:

C'est une "peste," sciemment et volontairement méchante, car elle est trop intelligente pour croire à la vérité des histoires qu'elle raconte, et elle sait mieux que personne que c'est la calomnie qui lui fournit la plupart des traits de sa chronique scandaleuse. (Belles..., 261)

After summarizing Adèle's account of the marriage of the duchesse de Berry, Reiset writes: "Tel est le sensationnel roman rapporté par Mme de Boigne" (273). Not
only are Madame de Boigne's memoirs often false, they are also, according to Reiset, self-serving. In conclusion, Reiset admits that there is a certain charm in many pages of the memoirs, and certainly no lack of "esprit," "mais 'ses barbouillages,' comme elle les nomme elle-même, 'écrits sans suite,' restent sans valeur pour l'histoire future; aucune de ses assertions ne peut être acceptée sans contrôle et ses calomnies comme ses médisances ne résistent pas à l'examen" (267). Reiset would no doubt be surprised to learn that Madame de Boigne's memoirs continue to be utilized as a source for historians and biographers interested in the early and middle nineteenth century.

Several critics have brought attention to the manner in which the général comte de Boigne is portrayed in the memoirs of his wife. Ethel Colquhoun makes this the subject of an article published in the journal *Nineteenth Century* (volume 67, 1910). "The Husband of Madame de Boigne" begins with an account of the role of husbands in the salons of their wives, which Colquhoun describes as seldom a very distinguished one. She writes of de Boigne's memoirs as "a revelation of life and character apart from their great historic interest" (699). Why focus so much attention on the portrayal of the comte de Boigne in the memoirs? Colquhoun notes that the harsh comments by the comtesse about her husband offer a rare personal glimpse of
the woman who did not normally admit her domestic difficulties to the world. Colquhoun also finds it difficult to believe that the comtesse could be so ignorant of her spouse's accomplishments, which are detailed in this article, and of his professed love for her: "Had she, however, brought to bear on her husband that lively curiosity and quick perception which make her memoirs so delightful when dealing with other people, much unhappiness might have been spared" (703). Adèle de Boigne apparently suffered from the same prejudice concerning the lower classes as the rest of her caste. She refused to see the merits of her own husband, and failed to see that he really did love her. The comtesse de Boigne claims that he had married her only to "pique" another girl, "but everything points to the fact that he was madly in love" (708). It was this "unbridled emotion," Colquhoun suggests, which Adèle despised. The general simply did not fit into Adèle's world: "In this society, where everyone was related, and where conversation was as elusive as allusive, and emotions and passions were considered ill-bred, de Boigne was an outsider" (703). It is quite possible, according to Colquhoun, that "the one who suffered most was not the highly strung, exquisite, sensitive girl who describes her pangs so vividly, but the big, rough, strong
man who could only explode with rage at the time, and has remained dumb to all eternity" (710).

In the most comprehensive study of Madame de Boigne's memoirs yet written, Eleonore Matuschek examines the author and her work from an historian's perspective in Die Gräfin von Boigne und ihre Memoiren (Inaugural-Dissertation, Wien, 1932). Matuschek's foreword urges caution when dealing with memoirs in general, as they are often unreliable texts for historical documentation. She then proceeds with her study, listing biographical details. Adèle represents, for Matuschek, the finest of old aristocratic France. She was quite unlike most of her class, however, in her seriousness and her point of view in matters of customs: "Sie kannte nicht nur die Rechte sondern auch die Pflichten ihrer Klasse und ihres Geschlechts" (12). This difference, according to Matuschek, is due primarily to her upbringing. "Sie wußte dem Schicksal Dank, sie in der Kindheit und Jugend in eine Umgebung hineingestellt zu haben, wo sie die Prinzipien einer gesunden Moral ununterbrochen gehört und verwirklicht gesehen hatte" (12). Bored by the intrigues of the court, the comtesse de Boigne was too independent to be a "dame de cour," and this same independence kept her from siding too strongly with many polarizing issues. Matuschek describes the comtesse as "Eine ungewöhnliche Intelligenz" who knew people and had a good sense of
proportion. In a period that saw the full flowering of Romanticism, Madame de Boigne remained a product of the Enlightenment: "Die Vernunft führte die unumschränkte Herrschaft in ihren Anschauungen wie in ihrem Handeln—darin ganz Frau des aufgeklärten Zeitalters" (13). Conversation was more than a fine art for Madame de Boigne, it was life itself. In this way also Madame de Boigne belongs more to earlier times than her own: "Die Gräfin von Boigne verkörperte noch einmal die geborene Salonherrin Altfrankreichs" (16). Matuschek describes Madame de Boigne's salon as independent, using it as the best confirmation of Guizot's description of de Boigne's "intelligence impartiale." Leading figures of all political leanings met there. The memoirs reflect the comtesse de Boigne's experience as a "dame de salon." They are described as being more of a "salonchronik" than historical document, but Matuschek finds their major value for historians as a way of better understanding the events and people of the period.

The conversational tone of memoirs, which is often the greatest source of pleasure for the reader, must be approached with caution by the historian. Matuschek develops this idea even further in her study, asserting that Madame de Boigne's memoirs are excellent when it comes to offering intimate glimpses of court and society, but are
often lacking in historical accuracy. The events depicted are out of order, and sometimes disparate dates are brought together. These "lapses," however, often add to the narration. Matuschek even describes some passages as "novel-like" in construction: "Wie Romane muten manche erzählten Geschichten an und wecken den Verdacht dichterischer Gestaltung" (28).

Perhaps it was this "dichterischer Gestaltung" which so inspired Proust (Matuschek was apparently unaware of Proust's interest in de Boigne's memoirs), but as a document for verifying historical events, Matuschek does not consider them very reliable. On the other hand, they are excellent for their personal accounts of the comtesse's own experiences, which Matuschek finds to be depicted accurately and in fascinating detail. In this manner, the memoirs are useful as a way of "bringing to life" certain aspects of the period, and her observations on many well-known figures of her day make the memoirs valuable to biographers. Matuschek finds the negative tone of the memoirs displeasing, and suggests that the unfavorable portrayal of many of the people who appear in the memoirs may be one of the reasons that they were published so long after the death of the comtesse. The publication history of the memoirs is also described by Matuschek, who prefers the Nicoullaud edition with its critical commentary and
"pièces justificatives" over the later Emile-Paul edition, which she considers suitable only for the general reading public and not serious scholars. Many errors in the original manuscript which were corrected by Nicoullaud, such as the misspellings of names, are maintained in the Emile-Paul edition. Matuschek mentions de Boigne's novels only briefly, basing her comments on Guizot's observations since she was unable to obtain copies of the novels for her study.

Matuschek devotes considerable energy to uncovering chronological errors in the memoirs, treating this text as if it had been written by an historian. The comtesse de Boigne, however, makes no such claim to strict historical accuracy, and even points out that she consulted no documents in her writing. It was never her intention to write pure history, at least not history as defined by Matuschek. The principal weakness of this thesis is its narrow approach to the memoirs; its failure to address why memoirs are written, and what motivates the public to read them.

The comtesse de Boigne's novels were not as popular as her memoirs, and were largely forgotten by the turn of the century. Unlike the memoirs, however, they were published at the author's request. Both were at the printer's at the time of her death. Une Passion dans le grand monde was published in two volumes by Lévy in 1866. The second
novel, *La Maréchale d'Aubemer, nouvelle du dix-huitième siècle*, also published by Lévy, appeared in two volumes the following year, with a second printing that same year. Charles Nicoullaud writes of a third, unpublished "œuvre de l'imagination" by the comtesse, although few other independent references can be found to confirm this. Both of the published works have been described as autobiographical novels, and although neither seemed to have enjoyed a great success at the time of publication, they are surely valuable as a means of better understanding the memoirs, as well as the woman who wrote them, and should now be reevaluated as writing in the light of the information about their author offered by the critical edition of the memoirs. (It is worth mentioning here that in spite of Berchet's considerable interest in the comtesse de Boigne's influence on Proust, he makes no mention of her novels in his introduction to the memoirs).

Comparatively little has been written on Madame de Boigne's novels. Shortly after the death of the comtesse in 1866, an article by Amélie Lenormant, niece of Madame Récamier, appeared in *Le Correspondant* (t. 69, 1866, 738-47). These pages were borrowed from the preface of de Boigne's novel *Une Passion dans le grand monde*, which was then about to appear, and the title is simply "Madame de Boigne." Lenormant describes the intentions of the
comtesse de Boigne to publish her two novels. Both had been written years before, Lenormant asserts, and few of the friends and acquaintances of the comtesse had seen the manuscripts. The author had requested that they be published, but her death interrupted her own completion of this task.

Lenormant begins the article with biographical details. She feels that the novels will not be well received without an appreciation for their author, "charmant et dernier type d'une société disparue" (Le Correspondant, 738). She explains that much has changed in French society in recent years, and that the new generations may not understand the "world" of which the comtesse was one of the last survivors. In this way, she attempts to provide the context in which the novels should be read, and sets the kind of reader's response to them that may be open to various questions. In her novels, de Boigne traces "avec une parfaite vérité le tableau du monde où elle était née et où elle avait vécu" (739), Lenormant observes, praising a fine sense of observation and pointing out that "la plupart des scènes de ses romans ne sont que des réminiscences, elle en convient; elle s'y est peinte elle-même, elle a animé de ses sentiments, ou si l'on veut des préjugés qui la dominaient, certains de ses héros"
The autobiographical nature of the novels is thus foregrounded.

Politics were more than a passing interest for the comtesse de Boigne, and Lenormant also describes in her article de Boigne's salon, and its political leanings during the Empire, the Restoration, and the July Monarchy. Lenormant notes that it is surprising that a woman who was so deeply involved with politics would have the idea of writing novels. Memoirs would seem more appropriate perhaps, but the author of this article seems unsure as to the existence of the memoirs: "Personne n'est tenté de mettre en doute l'intérêt que présenteront ses Mémoires, si elle en a écrit, mais personne ne la soupçonnait de laisser une œuvre d'imagination" (746). Sainte-Beuve agreed. In his letter responding to Lenormant concerning this very article on *Une Passion dans le grand monde* he writes: "Le côté supérieur de Mme de Boigne étant la politique, j'eusse préféré que ce fût la politique qui passât la première, et que les Souvenirs passent avant les romans..." (*Correspondance générale*, t. XV, 388-389).

Biographical details comprise the larger part of Lenormant's article, and the image that she constructs of Adèle de Boigne is that of a woman who, "tout en participant au mouvement d'idées et aux tendances du dix-neuvième siècle, avait conservé la grâce et l'élegance de
mœurs du dix-huitième" (739). It is in that bygone era that one finds the value of de Boigne's novels. She provides a bridge linking the final days of the Ancien Régime to democratic France. Closing her article with a prose portrait of the comtesse de Boigne, Lenormant comments: "C'est ainsi qu'a disparu la dernière existence qui rappelait à notre siècle démocratique l'ancien régime par ses plus nobles côtés" (747).

Writing on the same novel later that year (1866), Xavier Doudan finds both strengths and weaknesses in the comtesse de Boigne's work. (Xavier Doudan, Lettres... nouv. éd. C. Lévy 1879, t. IV. Also cited in the Correspondance Générale of Sainte Beuve, t. 15, 369.) Une Passion dans le grand monde, according to Doudan, "a bien la marque d'un esprit juste, élégant, sensé; les peintures de ce pinceau mesuré, nuancé, sont éclairées par une lampe d'albâtre, d'un jour très doux...". But he also finds, in spite of the title, a lack of passion. He refers to Madame de Boigne's work as a "machine qu'on nomme un roman," and this being a novel, Doudan expects more invention, more novelty in the characters: "Il n'y a ni feu ni lieu, c'est à dire ni passions, ni personnes qui restent dans l'imagination." Public reaction to the novel is also described: "Le jugement du public est assez partagé. Quelques-uns sont frappés de la hardiesse des opinions, de
The sales described by Doudan may, of course, be a result of the publicity surrounding the death of the comtesse. Doudan's comments do seem, however, to confirm Madame Lenormant's fears concerning de Boigne's novel, which are revealed in a letter addressed to Sainte-Beuve immediately following publication: "Vous comprenez l'anxiété avec laquelle je me préocupe de l'accueil que fera le public à une œuvre dont le mérite a besoin de juges délicats," she writes, "et vous direz quelque chose au public et du roman et de l'auteur et de la société dont elle a été le dernier représentant" (Ms. Coll. Lov. D. 605, fol. 223, cited in the Correspondance générale of Sainte-Beuve, t. 15, 389).

In 1867, François Guizot published in the Revue des deux-mondes (t. 71, 755-773) an article mainly biographical in scope, but containing some references to the writing of the comtesse. Guizot writes that he was aware of the existence of the memoirs, but claims to know nothing about
them. He describes de Boigne's failure to publish her novels during her lifetime as a result of her desire to run no risks. More than anything else in her life, she had sought security. In fact, Guizot doubts that she would have been satisfied with the publicity: "ses deux romans n'ont pas frappé le public, pas autant, selon moi, qu'ils le méritent comme portraits de la société qu'ils retracent et de la personne qui les a écrits" (RDM, 765). In writing about de Boigne's first novel, Guizot points out that "c'est la politique et l'influence de la politique sur la société et jusque dans les familles qui est le trait saillant d'Une Passion dans le grand monde" (766). One should not, however, expect a "roman historique," but rather an "histoire de salon." (This last statement is taken directly from de Boigne's own avant-propos to the novel). The author's introduction makes no claim to historical truth, "quoique la plupart des scènes de cet ouvrage soient des réminiscences" (766). Although it may not be considered a strictly historical document, Guizot finds that it is as a portrait of the society in which the author lived that the novel is most valuable. (Une Passion dans le grand monde is set in the period between 1813 and 1820, a period in which Madame de Boigne was already taking an active role in society.) Guizot admired de Boigne's ability to "voir clair dans son temps et dans son monde et
d'avoir parlé comme elle pensait" (768), and it is this fine sense of observation, according to Guizot, that is apparent in her novel: "Mme de Boigne avait acquis, dans son observation du monde et de la vie politique, cette intelligence impartiale, et elle l'a portée dans son roman comme elle la pratiquait dans son salon" (769). The author of Une Passion dans le grand monde and La Maréchale d'Aubemer never completely left her caste, but accepted many of the changes that came about in the governing of France, such as the Empire and the July monarchy. In Guizot's view de Boigne is very open-minded, making her observations all the more valuable.

As for La Maréchale d'Aubemer, Guizot writes that it is not a contemporary novel and observes that the author was correct to add the subtitle nouvelle du dix-huitième siècle, because it is indeed to that century that Madame de Boigne belongs. La Maréchale d'Aubemer paints a true image of "la société mondaine et domestique du XVIIe siècle" (769), but unlike the first novel it is void of actual historical and political observations, since Madame de Boigne was still a child at the time of the Revolution of 1789. He feels that it is more harmonious and interesting than Une Passion dans le grand monde, which is overcharged with characters and lacks imagination. Both novels reveal much about their author and her life. Guizot describes
several episodes in the novels and draws a parallel between them and the real life of Adèle de Boigne. Recognizing the shortcomings of the two novels, he observes that they are inferior when considered by literary standards of his time. They seemingly lack originality, verve, animated and clear movement, and are lacking in passion. *Une Passion dans le grand monde* he describes paradoxically as "compliqué et froid," but again draws the reader's attention to what he believes to be the true merit of both novels (especially *Une Passion dans le grand monde*): "la physionomie historique du temps et dans l'histoire la disposition politique des âmes y apparaissent seules sous de vraies et vives couleurs" (767).

Henry Bordeaux, in his previously mentioned articles concerning the memoirs, also writes of de Boigne's novels. He is in agreement with Guizot when commenting on Madame de Boigne's narrative fiction, calling the novels "illisibles" by contemporary literary standards, but worth consulting for other reasons. Of the two, Bordeaux prefers *La Maréchale d'Aubemer*, which is of a "psychologie rudimentaire, d'un romanesque fade," but is of value for its "observation des mœurs et la connaissance parfaite de la vie d'autrefois" (*Le Correspondant*, 445). *Une Passion dans le grand monde* shares the same qualities and faults as the other novel, but suffers in part, according to
Bordeaux, because of its two-volume length. Bordeaux criticizes the "puérilité sentimentale" of the novel, but is quick to point out its strong points: "...dès que Mme de Boigne quitte l'analyse du cœur humain pour nous peindre un coin de société, elle reprend pied et on la retrouve avec plaisir informée et vivante au beau milieu d'une fiction dont l'ennui était mortel" (445). Adèle de Boigne's portrayal of the conflict between those who choose to serve the Empire and those who remained faithful to the Ancien Régime, and the resulting hostility, is, for Bordeaux, one of the interesting aspects of Une Passion dans le grand monde: "C'est le choc de ces deux mondes, observé sur des rencontres de salon, qui fournit à Mme de Boigne l'occasion de rendre avec assez de bonheur la physionomie historique d'une époque disparue," he writes. "A ce titre, Une Passion dans le grand monde mérite d'être consulté. C'est un document dont l'importance n'est pas négligeable" (445). Bordeaux's comments are thus in keeping with earlier critics, who found Une Passion dans le grand monde and La Maréchale d'Aubemer more interesting as documents of historical interest rather than novels. This is further reinforced by Bordeaux's assertion that Madame de Boigne represented herself in Une Passion dans le grand monde "sous les traits d'une Gertrude de Beaureal." This novel
has appeal then both as an historical and autobiographical document.

In a letter addressed to Madame Arbouville (dated 25 juillet, 1847), Sainte-Beuve writes enthusiastically of *Une Passion dans le grand monde*: "Cette lecture m'a charmé: je vis avec ces personnages et m'intéresse à eux comme s'ils vivaient, ce qui est le triomphe pour un roman" (*Correspondance générale*, ed. Jean Bonnerot, t. 7, 103).

This letter confirms the fact that this novel was written before the fall of the July Monarchy. Twenty years later, Sainte-Beuve addresses a letter to Amélie Lenormant in which he responds to the latter's concern over the strong criticism of the novels of the comtesse:

> Je n'avais pas lu l'article de M. de Pontmartin\(^5\) ni n'en avais entendu parler. Je l'ai fait chercher et je vois en effet que le monde légitimiste a tenu à prendre sa revanche. Je vous avoue que le terrain n'est pas très solide pour livrer bataille. Une Etude générale sur Mme de Boigne me paraîtrait seule pouvoir répondre à tout. Il y faudrait user de diverses branches de la correspondance si l'on en avait, revenir sur ses qualités politiques et connaître pour cela l'ensemble de ses Souvenirs dont je n'ai vu que quelques parties: les romans, ainsi encadrés, n'auraient que leur degré d'importance et retrouveraient leur point d'appui. (*Correspondance*, t. 16, 94)

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I will examine the different ways the salon is represented

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\(^5\)L'article, daté 12 janvier 1817, se présente comme une lettre à M. l'abbé Feletz; il a été recueilli in Nouveaux Samedis, 4e série, pp. 211 à 224 (editor's note).
textually both in Madame de Boigne's memoirs and her two published novels. Using contemporary observations, as well as Madame de Boigne's own presentation of her salon, I shall trace the changing political role of the comtesse de Boigne's salon through three consecutive governments. Political and literary aspects of the salon that enact potentially conflicting aristocratic and liberal principles will be of special interest, as will be the question of Madame de Boigne's esprit de parti and her continuing presence. If Madame de Boigne's salon was indeed a salon of opposition during the Empire, as certain critics claim, why wasn't she exiled as were better-known contemporaries and friends such as Madame Récamier and Madame de Staël?

The place that the salon occupies in Adèle de Boigne's writing, and its effect on the shaping of her narrative will be a major concern and focus of this chapter. In *Women and the Public Sphere*, Joan Landes describes the strong relationship fostered between speech and writing in salons like Madame de Boigne's. In her prefatory remarks Madame de Boigne foregrounds this interaction of discourses, referring to her memoirs as "ravaudages de salon." The reader in fact feels the effect of the salon in the writing of the comtesse de Boigne, as many conversations unfold in the memoirs and provide a sense of dramatic stagings for the reader's benefit. The salon
serves as well as the background for her novels, which also enact the life of the salon. I will therefore carefully examine the salon as a special place of articulation, as a constitutive privileged space of Madame de Boigne's narrative texts. The persona of Adèle de Boigne and the textual voices that articulate this discourse will be analyzed as significant features.

The second chapter will examine the concept and role of the family in the writing of the comtesse de Boigne. Juliette Récamier's boutade that Madame de Boigne "ne reconnaît que deux familles, celle du Bon Dieu et les Osmond" is often quoted. The memoirs were of course written at least in part as a way of passing down the heritage of the Osmond name, and the first chapter opens with a family genealogy. But the concept of family is a more complex problematic in the writing of the comtesse de Boigne.

There are two families in her life: her father's, a close-knit unit that even after the comtesse's marriage remained her true family, and that formed by her marriage with the comte de Boigne, which seemed to bring her nothing but unhappiness. The marquis d'Osmond had always been the center of Adèle's life, and their bond seems to have been so strong that no potential suitor could possibly have de-centered the father figure, least of all an aging warrior.
from the wrong social stratum. In this chapter I shall analyze the manner in which the father figure is represented in the memoirs, as well as the less substantial role of the mother figure, and examine the dramatic tensions of familial discourse that structure the text.

The concept of marriage as it is represented both in the memoirs and the novels merits close attention. According to critics such as Willert, the young Adèle d'Osmond regarded this marriage as nothing more than a business arrangement, a way of extracting her family from financial oblivion. Joan B. Landes generalizes that salonnières in fact existed primarily as public women outside the institution of marriage, which for them was primarily a situation of convenience, even a game of strategy. Sociability was more important to them than domesticity. Viewed in this light, Madame de Boigne's marriage was in keeping with a well-established "tradition." It is indeed true that Adèle d'Osmond negotiated the terms of the marriage agreement with the general in a most emancipated fashion, but she was negotiating not just in her own right, but in the name of her entire family as well. Did she really "sacrifice" her own happiness in the selfless pursuit of her family's well-being, as several critics suggest? Did youthful naïveté have anything to do with this arrangement, as the comtesse
herself suggests in the memoirs? The comtesse de Boigne writes that she had made no effort to mislead the general as to her intentions, explaining to him that she didn't love him but would be grateful if he would help her family, but can the portrayal of the general in the memoirs really be called gratitude? Nearly every critic who has written about the memoirs has remarked the harshness with which the comtesse portrays her husband. This severe treatment is all the more surprising in that the comtesse did not begin writing her memoirs until several years after her husband's death, leading more than one critic to comment on the comtesse's heartlessness.

What emerges indubitably from the reading of Adèle de Boigne's memoirs and the extensive commentaries by other writers on their representation of her marriage is a major discrepancy between the image of the general that the reader gleans from the pages of the memoirs and his portrayal elsewhere. Comparisons of the portrait of the général de Boigne emerging from the memoirs with others will be finally focused in this chapter in regard to the comtesse's prefatory remark that "on est vrai quand on dit ce qu'on croit." In what ways may Adèle de Boigne's "truth" be no less valid than those of the biographers and public opinion? And does her portrayal of the general de Boigne detract from her credibility as an historical
witness? This final question offers a transition to the next chapter in which I shall return to the memoirs as an historical text.

In the third chapter I shall examine the memoirs of the comtesse de Boigne as an historical text, in relationship to others constituting "French History." I shall discuss the advantages of her position and historical perspective, as well as the problematic of recording the past. How does Adèle de Boigne interpret certain historical events? Her interpretation is further complicated by the delay between the event as she experienced it and the time she actually recorded it, resulting in what Susanna Egan calls in Patterns of Experience in Autobiography "the inevitability of fiction."

The activity of writing interferes with memory and the thought process, making the writer something of an interpreter. It is in this translation of life or events into a narrative that the danger and the interest of difference lies. Given these considerations, what values are to be given to her representations?

Many historians have used the memoirs as a reference in their writings on topics in the nineteenth century, especially biographers in search of historical "depth" for their subject matter. A brief review of some of the historical works for which the comtesse de Boigne's memoirs
have served substantially as a source of reference, and analysis of the way in which they are utilized, will be pursued not with the intention of evaluating here the accuracy of the memoirs as an historical document, but rather as a means of determining their specificity as historical text. Madame de Boigne obviously takes great pleasure in describing the historical events that she has witnessed, and seems to exemplify Elizabeth Goldsmith's definition in *Exclusive Conversations* of one who has the aristocratic notion of history, which takes the position that the greatness of an event can only be communicated by a writer who has been born to share in the grandeur he or she is describing. But to what extent do the political preferences of the comtesse interfere with her observations? Is she really as impartial as she claims to be in the memoirs? In what ways do they merit a place alongside historical and biographical texts dealing with the same period of French history? Through these questions, this final chapter will examine the textual and discursive limits of the comtesse de Boigne's memoirs, as well as the important role of writing in her life.
In his memoirs, the duc de Broglie evokes with special attention the historical reality of political salons, among which Madame de Boigne's surely figured: "On ne sait déjà plus aujourd'hui, et demain on ne saura plus du tout ce que c'était alors qu'un salon politique," he writes. "Cette espèce d'institution sociale supposait,—ce que notre état démocratique ne comporte plus,—que le jeu des affaires publiques se passait dans un cercle appartenant à un monde élevé et même élégant, et où l'influence des femmes distinguées, nées dans ce qu'on appelle la bonne compagnie, pouvait se faire sentir" (Revue des deux-mondes, t. 25, 338). The comtesse de Boigne's salon may be said on the one hand to represent the last of the Ancien Régime salons, while on the other it was, after its especially prominent position during the July Monarchy, at the forefront of historical developments for nearly five decades. Guizot records Adèle de Boigne's passing as the end of an era:

Je la regrette comme l'un des derniers, presque le dernier débris de cette société élégante et aristocratique libérale, dans laquelle je suis entré il y a soixante ans. Société charmante, facile avec dignité et indépendante sans raideur,
The Revolution of 1789 may have done away with the Ancien Régime, but the salon continued to be a focus of Parisian life during the Empire as well as the Restoration and the July Monarchy. It was still a place where people could gather for refined and often open conversation. The salon provided a forum for writers and politicians, an opportunity for the free exchange of ideas. Emile Bourgeois discusses the still crucial role of these salons at the end of the reign of Louis XVIII:

Paris in 1824 was still, as in the 18th century, the home of "salons," in which feasts of reason were celebrated under the direction of amiable and cultivated women, in which politicians, writers, and artists could meet, where all sorts of reputations were made—salons of the Faubourg St Germain frequented by émigrés, and presided over by the Duchesse de Duras, the Comtesse de Boigne, or the Princesse de la Tremoille, the "queen of the Ultras"; salons of the Faubourg St Honoré, also of royalist colour, but of more varied tints; salons of the Chaussée D'Antin, thrown open by great bankers like Laffitte and Rothschild, or great manufacturers like Ternaux, Benjamin Delessert, Davillier, Perier; salons of the great ladies of the foreign colony; literary salons, such as that of the Arsenal, where Nodier received the young royalist writers, Victor Hugo and Alfred de Vigny. There it was that intrigues began, and oppositions were organised. Despotic Ministers might fancy that they met with nothing but agreement and obedience everywhere. The metropolis combated them by every weapon at its disposal, the only weapons then at the disposal of the nation. (History of Modern France, vol. 1, 73)

Germaine de Staël, Madame de Duras, and Madame Récamier are among the best known of the post-Revolution
salonnieres, and an abundance of material is available concerning their markedly different salons. Also of prominence beginning in the Paris of the Empire was the salon of Madame de Boigne. The four were well acquainted with each other but, unlike de Staël, Duras, and Récamier, the name de Boigne is not a familiar one to most scholars of the period. Little has been written about Adèle de Boigne and her salon.

The role of the salon cannot be overestimated in the works as well as the life of the comtesse de Boigne, and the author herself acknowledges this. In her prefatory remarks to her memoirs, de Boigne refers to the Récits d'une tante as "ravaudages de salon." In the Avant-Propos of her novel Une Passion dans le grand monde, she explains that her intention was not to write a historical novel, "mais seulement une histoire de salon." The plot of La Maréchale d'Aubemer, de Boigne's second published novel, revolves entirely around the Maréchale's salon, and is especially rich in its elaborate description of the form and function of the salon as Madame de Boigne saw it. It is evident from her published work that the salon occupied a major place in the life of Adèle de Boigne. Before examining the different ways the salon is represented textually in her memoirs and novels, contemporary
observations and commentaries on the salon of the comtesse de Boigne will be explored.

One of the most detailed sources on her salon is found in the form of an introduction to the first published edition of her memoirs by Charles Nicoullaud. He describes Madame de Boigne's salon as follows, immediately after a reference to a description by Taine of the importance of salons during the period:

Mme de Boigne a tenu ce rôle charmant dès son retour d'émigration; et pendant près de soixante ans, nous voyons la plupart des personnages marquants passer, ou s'arrêter dans le cénacle auquel elle présidait avec tant de tact et de gracieuse intelligence. Beaucoup de talents naissants, soit dans la politique, les arts, ou la littérature, durent à son bienveillant appui de franchir les premiers étapes, souvent si pénibles, de la renommée. Les célébrités arrivées elles-mêmes se montraient heureuses d'obtenir les suffrages d'un esprit très instruit, au jugement toujours averti et sûr. (I, vii)

Nicoullaud, in order to affirm the validity of his observations, follows this description with two letters to the comtesse, one of them penned by Sainte-Beuve. At the end of each of the four volumes of the memoirs, Nicoullaud includes "pièces justificatives" in the form of letters from a number of well-known writers and political figures; Chateaubriand, Thiers, Guizot, Sainte-Beuve, and Queen Marie-Amélie to name just a few. These letters alone show that Madame de Boigne's salon was indeed literary as well
as political, and was open, Nicoullaud claims, to a variety
of opinions:

Le Cénacle de Mme de Boigne accueillit toutes les
opinions, le talent et la bonne éducation
suffisent pour en ouvrir la porte. Lamartine,
dont les poésies furent certainement plus goûtées
dans ce milieu intelligent que les idées
politiques, y fréquenta; et les célèbres
lévriers, avant de figurer aux pieds de la statue
du grand poète, envoyèrent un des leurs dans
cette hospitalière maison. (I, xiii)

Nicoullaud includes a letter from Lamartine which
accompanied the gift of the dog to the comtesse de Boigne,
illustrating well the familiarity the two had with each
other:

M. de Lamartine a l'honneur d'envoyer à Mme la
comtesse de Boigne l'ami qu'elle a désiré et
qu'il a élevé pour elle, il le recommande avec un
sentiment tout paternel. C'est l'animal le plus
sensible et le plus intelligent qu'il ait jamais
connu; il s'en sépare avec un véritable chagrin,
plus qu'il n'ose l'avouer....

The letter continues with careful instructions on the care
and feeding of this delicate breed, which Lamartine
describes not as dogs, but rather "des oiseaux à quatre
pattes" (I, xiii-xiv).

Madame de Boigne's dining room was as well known as
her salon, according to Nicoullaud:

...le bon renom de la salle à manger ne nuisait
en rien à celui du salon, et pour la plus grande
satisfaction des invités, les dîners de la rue
d'Anjou, de Châteenay ou de Trouville préludaient
agréablement aux causeries de la soirée. En
maîtresse de maison avertie et connaissant les
hommes, Mme de Boigne s'évertuait même à leur
procurer de rares douceurs. (I, xvi)
In order to document the importance of fine cuisine to the comtesse, the following letter, addressed to the comtesse de Boigne and dated February 10, 1838, is included in Nicoulaud's edition.

Ainsi que j'ai déjà eu l'honneur de vous l'annoncer, je prends la liberté de vous envoyer tout ce qui m'est parvenu de miel du mont Hymette. Je l'avais demandé pour vous, Madame la Comtesse, si peu qu'il y en ait il vous sera un témoignage de mon respect et de mon admiration, autant que de ma gratitude pour la sympathie que je sais que vous donnez à ce pays des abeilles qui ont composé le miel, et ce pays est ma bien-aimée Patrie. (I, xvi)

The letter is signed J. Colettis, Greek statesman and representative of Greece in Paris. The presence of foreign dignitaries in Adèle de Boigne's salon was quite commonplace.

The comtesse de Boigne began her career as salonnière during the Empire in Autumn of 1804, upon her return from exile with her family in England. The atmosphere in Paris at the time was not conducive to free thought and speech, at least not in political matters, as the exile of Germaine de Staël well demonstrated. A few "Ancien Régime" salons, such as that of the princesse de Poix, did exist, however, at the time of Adèle de Boigne's arrival in Parisian society in 1804.

The most popular salon in Paris after the exile of Germaine de Staël was that of Madame Récamier. The tone set in Récamier's salon was quite different from that of de
Staël's. Although she had already established her own salon not long after her arrival in Paris, Adèle de Boigne frequented the house of her "rival," Mme Récamier, and the two became intimate friends, especially after the failure of M. Récamier's bank in 1806. Only three years apart in age, the two women had much in common and spent a considerable amount of time together, right up to Madame Récamier's death. Their salons, however, were quite different. Paul F. Willert brings to our attention Sainte-Beuve's commentary that there was in the salon of Madame Récamier "too much charity, too fixed a determination to see only the fair side of everything, too much complaisance even at the expense of sincerity, an enervating atmosphere dangerous to originality and independence" (Quarterly Review, 637).

The same could certainly not be said of Adèle de Boigne's salon, which by 1806 had become, according to Madame Récamier's niece, one of the more popular salons of Paris: "...dès le second hiver son salon est compté parmi les plus agréables de la société de l'opposition (Une Passion, x)." The duc de Broglie described it as a "véritable salon d'ancien régime" (RDM, 341). The atmosphere at the comtesse de Boigne's gatherings allowed for more open discussion. Like many of the salons of the Ancien Régime, her residence provided an open arena for
discourse for *habitués* of diverse political leanings. One could speak more freely there than outside her walls, where a politically inappropriate statement could have serious repercussions.

To be a salon of the opposition was a risky affair under Napoleon's rule. In describing the stifling situation of the salon during the Empire, Gilbert Stenger writes:

> Le faubourg Saint-Germain, sous l'Empire, avait vécu dix ans, avec l'obsession de la peur. Dans les salons de la bonne compagnie, personne ne laissait voir le fond de sa pensée. On craignait une délation; on redoutait la police et le malheur d'être en débat avec elle. On ne connaissait donc point ce que, plus tard, on appella l'opinion, car elle ne se forme que s'il y a échange d'observations, de convictions, ou de savoir. Publiquement, parmi les royalistes, personne n'osait élever la voix. On ne se comprenait que par un sourire ou un regard. (*Grandes Dames du XIXe siècle*, 159)

Madame de Boigne claims in her memoirs that "en effet, ma maison était une de celles où on parlait le plus librement; je voyais beaucoup de monde de toutes les couleurs, j'étais polie pour tous" (I, 185). In spite of this apparent openness, Adèle de Boigne managed to avoid the fate of Germaine de Staël and later of Juliette Récamier -- the Emperor tolerated her presence and did not force her into exile. Willert attributes this unusual exception to her exercise of caution: "...in truth she was prudent as well as independent; her salon was never a
center of opposition; nor was she what the emperor detested, a political woman" (Quarterly Review, 637). This is not to say that Adèle was ignorant of politics. She took, in my view, an intelligent interest in public events, but it was a personal interest, and she shared Napoléon's dislike of idéologues and doctrinaires. Adèle de Boigne nevertheless tempted the Emperor's wrath by visiting Germaine de Staël at Coppet, even inviting de Staël to her husband's residence near Chambéry. She also maintained regular correspondence with Madame Récamier during her years in exile.

Willert's view of Adèle de Boigne's political prudence is supported by that of a contemporary of the comtesse who knew her well. In his Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps, François Guizot describes Adèle as follows: "Sans être le moins du monde ce qu'on appelle une femme politique, elle prenait aux conversations politiques un intérêt aussi intelligent que discret; on venait causer de toutes choses avec elle et autour d'elle sans gêne et sans bruit" (II, 242). Adèle de Boigne herself later protested this description, stating that she was "un peu plus mêlée à la politique de mon temps, et quelquefois avec un peu plus d'influence que ne le croit M. Guizot" (RDM, 755). In fact, Guizot acknowledges that the comtesse de Boigne made
many friends who were a part of the Empire, that she was
able, without affectation, to maintain diverse friendships:

Mme de Boigne ne se donna point au régime
nouveau, elle ne se détache point de son origine,
de ses souvenirs, de ses premières et naturelles
relations; mais elle n'avait nul éloignement pour
des relations nouvelles, nulle prévention
exclusive et dédaigneuse envers les personnes de
grandeur récente et inaccoutumée; quoiqu'elle ne
manquât point de fierté ni même de hauteur et de
malice aristocratique, son esprit ouvert et
impartial comprenait sans peine les changements
accomplis dans la société et dans les moeurs, et
son caractère indépendant sans passion ni raideur
accueillait de bonne grâce ce que son bon sens
jugeait inévitable. (RDM, 759)

Perhaps it was indeed her discretion and good sense, and
perhaps a few appropriately-placed defenders as well, that
saved her the pain of exile.

The advent of the Restoration marked a change of
fortune for the marquis d'Osmond, Adèle's father, who was
named ambassador of France, first to Turin (in 1815) and
then to London in 1816. Although married since 1798 to the
comte de Boigne, Adèle followed her father to Italy and
then to England. During these years of absence from Paris,
the young comtesse de Boigne exchanged her position as
salonnière for that of "ambassadrice," assisting her aging
father in a role that her mother seemed unsuited to
fulfill:

Médiocre et insignifiante sans être exigeante ni
incommode, ce qui est rare, la marquise d'Osmond,
sa femme, tenait peu de place dans la maison; à
côté de son père, qu'elle aimait tendrement, la
comtesse de Boigne fut la véritable ambassadrice,
et elle rentra avec les biens du rang et de la fortune dans cette société anglaise où naguère elle avait vécu exilée, isolée, presque pauvre, obligée de puiser dans ses mérites personnels toute la sûreté et tout l'agrément de sa vie. (Guizot, RDM, 760)

Henry Bordeaux contests this statement, claiming that Madame de Boigne exaggerated her role in her father's affairs during this period: "...elle n'eut, en somme, ni le temps, ni le goût de jouer à l'ambassadrice régnante" (Le Correspondant, 448). It is important to note at this point that Bordeaux, a Savoyard like the general de Boigne whose biography he wrote, is generally negative regarding the comtesse de Boigne, while Guizot, who was unfamiliar with the memoirs, nonetheless knew the comtesse well personally and is more to be believed on her active role.

Upon her return to Paris in 1819 following her father's retirement from diplomatic service, Adèle de Boigne's salon once again opened its doors to the best of Parisian society. She was in good company. The restoration of the monarchy had breathed new life into Parisian salon society, long fettered by the ominous unpredictability of the Revolution and the repressive government of Napoleon. This flourishing of the salon under Louis XVIII is described by G. Pailhès:

Sous le régime libéral de la Restauration, et dès les premiers jours, les réunions mondaines re prirent de plus belle. Quelque chose se retrouva de cette douceur de vivre qu'avait connue le XVIIe siècle, avant la fièvre révolutionnaire. Faire partie d'un ou de
plusieurs salons, être libre d'y aller selon son attrait et d'y parler selon son opinion ou son caprice, ce fut comme une renaissance dans une plénièrude de sécurité qui doublait le prix de la vie,--comme le réveil soudain de facultés comprimées ou refoulées,--comme un jaillissement de paroles et de pensées,--comme un épanouissement plein de promesses et de sourires, après les rigueurs d'un long hiver. On avait besoin de se voir, de se revoir, de se souvenir en commun, de causer comme autrefois, et plus que jadis, après un si long jeûne, après de si cruelles épreuves. (La Duchesse de Duras et Chateaubriand, 387)

Some critics, such as Costa de Beauregard, have suggested that Adèle de Boigne's salon during the Restoration was one of opposition. This attribute is most likely the result of de Boigne's full support of the July Monarchy from the very first days in 1830, as well as her frequent and often harsh criticism of the governments of Louis XVIII and Charles X in her memoirs. Guizot, who frequented de Boigne's salon, is unequivocal in his denial of such assertions: "Son salon n'était nullement un salon d'opposition, ce n'était pas non plus un salon de cour ou de ministère; elle aimait la restauration, mais elle l'observait et elle la jugeait, comme elle avait observé et jugé l'Empire, avec une impartialité clairvoyante" (RDM, 761).

The salon of Adèle de Boigne took a sudden turn with the Revolution of 1830. She was quick to support the new government of Louis Philippe, alienating many of her royalist friends in the process. Her role in
helping to establish the new regime made of her salon a popular gathering place of considerable influence, as I shall show, during the July Monarchy. This pivotal year, the year of her husband's death in Chambéry, also marked the beginning of Adèle's decades-long intimate relationship with French statesman Etienne Denis Pasquier, who began his long political career as a counsellor of the Paris parliament during the Ancien Régime. Named prefect of police by Napoleon in 1810, he served in various ministerial offices during the Restoration, and was president of the Chamber of Peers throughout the reign of Louis Philippe, at which time he was duke. Charles de Rémusat offers the best description of the changes that were occuring in the salon of the comtesse of Boigne after 1830. He described it as "le seul salon peut-être qui eût gagné à réfléchir les couleurs du temps" in his Mémoires de ma vie:

Son sage esprit, son éducation anglaise l'avaient préservée des exagérations du parti royaliste; elle s'était attachée à la nuance du ministère Richelieu. Elle vivait beaucoup avec Mme de Montcalm, sœur de ce ministre et qui passait pour bonne et distinguée. Après sa mort, elle hérita de son salon et y reçut beaucoup Pasquier. C'est pour elle qu'il avait achevé de se détacher de ma tante, cherchant dans cette nouvelle affection plus d'esprit, au moins un meilleur esprit, plus d'égalité, plus d'intelligence politique. Attachée à Madame la duchesse d'Orléans, Mme de Boigne n'avait pas été fâchée de la voir reine et, rompant nettement avec son parti, elle avait embrassé la cause du gouvernement de 1830, sans doute avec les idées et les craintes du centre
droit, mais cependant avec plus de goût et
d'inclination que M. Pasquier lui-même, qui lui a
rendu sans l'aider de si utiles services. Elle
ouvrit donc son salon à tout ce qui marqua un peu
dans le parti de la nouvelle monarchie. Broglie,
Guizot, Thiers, Duchâtel, moi, bien d'autres,
nous y fûmes successivement introduits. J'y fus
à l'aise d'assez bonne heure. (96-97)

It was Adèle de Boigne's early allegiance to the
government of Louis-Philippe that made her salon one of the
most prominent of Paris throughout the July monarchy. The
duchesse de Dino, after her first visit to the salon of the
comtesse de Boigne, writes in her notebook on December 12,
1834: "C'est le salon important du moment; la seule maison
comme il faut... on s'occupe avant tout de politique, on
en parle toujours..." (Chronique, t. 1, 299). This does
not mean that Adèle was an Orléaniste, any more than her
friend the Queen Amélie herself, who could never completely
free herself from the idea that her husband's reign was a
usurpation, however inevitable (due to the shortsightedness
of Charles X) it may have seemed to the comtesse. Adèle de
Boigne evidently continued to demonstrate the same sort of
"esprit ouvert" that had been the rule in her salon since
the Empire.

The duc de Broglie confirms the role of Madame de
Boigne's salon as "le centre d'une société politique,"
illustrating the central role of Pasquier: "On la trouvait
chez elle tous les soirs, entourée d'un petit groupe de nos
amis communs, et où le chancelier, bien qu'il ne demeurât
pas sous le même toit que sa vieille amie, jouait absolument et sans détours le rôle de maître du logis" (RDM, 342).

Beginning under the July Monarchy, the salon of Madame de Boigne then had its "star," very much as Juliette Récamier's had its Chateaubriand, or the princesse de Lieven's its Guizot. Because of Adèle de Boigne's close relationship with Pasquier and Queen Marie-Amélie, her salon changed tone. During the Empire, while not militant, it had been among those of the opposition. With the advent of the Restoration, it was sympathetic with Louis XVIII's government without being a "salon de cour." It was even less so with the reign of Charles X, whom she admired for his noble bearing but disliked for his political shortsightedness. Under the July Monarchy, her salon became more openly political. Many came to solicit advice from Pasquier, and so many government officials attended that some commentators have called her salon during that period a "salon ministériel." It was even, according to Gabriel de Broglie in his recent biography of Guizot, "désespérément bourgeois" (Guizot, 175). Adèle would have been horrified at such a statement.

With Pasquier's entrance in the French Academy on February 17, 1842, the academy also became a focal point in her salon. It is clear that her salon had adapted itself
well to the changing political climate of Paris for forty years. But Adèle de Boigne, known from her earliest days for her wit, good taste, and fine sense of judgement, did not change much during these decades. Her salon was still just as exclusive, and to be granted entrance was just as desirable. Louis Régis contrasts her salon with other Parisian salons of the period:

Si Mme de Boigne était une aimable et accueillante maîtresse de maison, les personnes qui lui étaient récemment présentées ne laissaient pas que d' éprouver chez elle une certaine gêne, qui provenait surtout de ce qu' elles se sentaient observées et jugées avec une certaine finesse. Cette légère contrainte ne pesait pas, dit-on, au même degré dans l' atmosphère plus libre du salon rival et plus brillant, peut- être, auquel présidait alors madame de Castellane. Pour celle- ci, le soin de plaire était sa principale étude, et avec une sorte d' art délicat, elle y mettait toutes les grâces de son esprit.... Chez Mme de Récamier, il ne s'agissait, au contraire, que de faire adroitement servir à l' agrément de M. de Chateaubriand le mouvement intellectuel de ceux que ses charmes et sa bonté attiraient à l' Abbaye- aux- Bois.... On comprend, d' après cette légère esquisse, quel était l' agrément particulier de la société de M. Pasquier et de Mme de Boigne. C' était presque un brevet de capacité ou d' esprit que d' être admis à en faire partie. (Le Correspondant, t. 92, 675-77)

There is considerable evidence that the comtesse de Boigne suffered from the effects of her "breakup" with the royalists. She had adapted well to the new regime, but could never entirely abandon her past. Many in the aristocratic society of Paris regarded her allegiance to the July Monarchy as a kind of defection, and she was in a
sense banished from her old society. The duc de Broglie writes that Adèle was not always able to hide her regret at being cut off from this society:

Bien que restée fidèle jusqu'à son dernier jour à ses nouvelles relations, Mme de Boigne ne pouvait se défendre de quelque regret pour la société plus aristocratique où elle était née, et qui, ayant pris sa défection en mauvaise part, lui tenait rigueur et ne la visitait plus guère. Il lui arrivait quelquefois de laisser voir, par un geste d'impatience et une petite moue dédaigneuse, qu'elle ne trouvait pas chez les intrus que la politique la forçait de recevoir, l'élegance et la délicatesse de manières dont elle avait connu les modèles. Pour elle-même, elle n'avait rien perdu à changer de milieu: c'était toujours la perfection exquise et tout le charme de l'ancienne société française. (RDM t. 25, 342)

I have already shown that Adèle's salon had not been a center of opposition during the Restoration, and that the ultras misinterpreted her intentions when they "banished" her from their social circle. Adèle de Boigne did openly criticize the ultras and their excesses, and she was sympathetic to the Orléans branch, but was certainly not against the Bourbons. Louis Favre\(^1\) writes of Adèle's position as follows:

A la rentée de Louis XVIII, elle salua avec bonheur ce retour à une monarchie qui avait toutes ses sympathies; mais elle resta constamment séparée de ceux qu'on appelait les

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\(^1\)Last personal secretary to Etienne Pasquier. Louis Régis describes his role as follows: "N'ayant pas un instant quitté, pendant dix années, le poste de confiance où l'avait appelé M. Pasquier, admis à recueillir ses confidences, écrivant chaque jour sous sa dictée, M. Favre a pu mieux que personne nous représenter les traits variés de cette intéressante figure historique" (Etienne-Denis Pasquier, 667).
ultras et ne se gêna jamais dans ses causeries, dans ses correspondances, pour bien caractériser les fautes où ils poussaient le gouvernement.... Le salon de madame de Boigne n'était pas cependant un salon d'opposition; il était un salon indépendant, et, surtout, un salon de conciliation. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, Chancelier de France, Souvenirs de son dernier secrétaire, 325)

Among the many well-known figures who frequented Adèle de Boigne's salon was Sainte-Beuve, who began to visit it in 1838. The comtesse had considerable influence on Sainte-Beuve, and her name appears often in his writing. According to Pailhès: "Pour le sceptique Sainte-Beuve, Mme de Boigne fut une manière d'oracle. Il l'interrogeait au cours de ses enquêtes psychologiques et morales; et ce qu'elle disait, il le recueillait dans ses 'petits cahiers' comme oracle infaillible" (La Duchesse de Duras et Chateaubriand, 19). To cite an example, here is a quotation from Sainte-Beuve's Cahier vert: "Un beau froid, une belle grossesse, une belle vieillesse, ce sont, dit Mme de Boigne, trois beautés qui mentent" (#793).

For several years, Sainte-Beuve frequented the salons of Mme Rauzan, Mme d'Arbouville, and M. de Broglie, as well as that of Madame de Boigne. He was very much interested by this society which maintained links with pre-Revolution France while accepting the new government of Louis-Philippe:

Il [Sainte-Beuve] est entré dans un petit cercle aristocratique moins légitimiste, moins fermé, chez certains personnages de grande famille qui
n'avaient pas craint d'accepter le gouvernement de Juillet et qui, dans la société nouvelle, continuait, en plus d'un point, l'exquise société d'autrefois. (SB avant les Lundis, 470)

Toward the end of the July Monarchy, Sainte-Beuve's visits became rare, but he maintained correspondence with the comtesse. Adèle de Boigne's letters show that she was less than happy with this distance, but she never lost her affection for Sainte-Beuve. The following letter, written in 1845, demonstrates the relationship that the comtesse had with him, as well as a glimpse at the way in which she viewed her salon:

Vous n'êtes pas de ces gens, Monsieur, contre lesquels on néglige de s'offenser. On peut vous en vouloir, mais vous oublier, non. Vous me connaissez assez, je crois, pour savoir que je ne suis ni exigeante ni susceptible dans mes relations purement sociales. Mais je reconnais l'être, en revanche, lorsque j'ai compté sur un peu d'amitié et à ce titre, je me suis trouvé le droit d'être fâchée contre vous. Vous me dites que votre abandon n'est pas aussi complet qu'il me paraît et je vous en remercie. Or, cela me faisait une véritable peine. Vous craignez le monde et ses délices et ses pompes et ses vanités. Eh bon Dieu! est-ce donc ce monde qu'un intérieur aussi étroit que le mien, que chaque année tend encore à restreindre. C'est une mauvaise excuse que les phrases les plus spirituelles ne rendent pas meilleure. Savez-vous ce qui vaut mieux? Venez me voir, donnons-nous une bonne poignée de mains de sincère affection et ne parlons plus du passé. Voilà ce qui sera simple et vrai et je vous attends.... (cited in SB's Correspondance générale, ed. Jean Bonnerot, t. 6, 275)

Even during the final years of her life, the comtesse de Boigne, in spite of her occasional complaints concerning Sainte-Beuve, continued to keep up with his writing and
appreciated his work. Louis Favre describes this ongoing interest in Sainte-Beuve:

"Marmier est mon ami...mais M. Mérimée est mon bijou, quant à S.-B. je ne le vois plus, je le lis. Il m'a si bien délaissée qu'il mériterait d'être sevré de mes amitiés, mais je ne puis me résoudre à un parti si extrême et je l'aime toujours malgré lui." Quand elle recevait une de ses lettres elle l'envoyait vite à M. Pasquier, elle la montrait avec bonheur, mais elle la redemandait aussitôt, elle tenait à la conserver. Si les lectures lui faisaient défaut...elle écrivait à M. Pasquier: envoyez-moi du Sainte-Beuve trois ou quatre volumes des Causeries du Lundi. C'est le meilleur compagnon pour un vieil esprit comme le mien; c'est le bréviaire de ma solitude. (Estienne Denis Pasquier..., 322)

It was in the salon of Madame Récamier that Adèle de Boigne met Prosper Mérimée. Like Sainte-Beuve, Mérimée was elected to the French Academy (both in 1844), but, unlike his colleague, Mérimée maintained close contact with the comtesse until the day she died. When he was unable to visit her salon or make the trip to her summer residence at Châtenay or (later) Trouville, they maintained a regular correspondence. When Mérimée was named Senator of the Empire in 1853 many of his friends broke off contact with him, but not Adèle. This remarkable relationship lasted more than thirty years.

Not long after meeting Adèle, Mérimée decided to no longer frequent Madame Récamier's salon, in part because of his dislike for Chateaubriand and the "culte presque idolâtre" (as he described it in a letter to the comtesse)
of which Juliette Récamier was the leading follower.

Maurice Parturier, author of an article on Mérimée and his relationship with the comtesse de Boigne, describes the attraction that Mérimée felt for Adèle:

Ce n'est donc pas par calcul d'ambitieux que Mérimée s'attacha à Mme de Boigne plutôt qu'à la toute-puissante Mme Récamier. Ici, comme toujours, il suivait son goût.... Madame de Boigne avait conquis Mérimée par le charme de sa personne, par la vivacité et le bon sens de son esprit, par son goût de l'ironie et par ce scepticisme aimable qu'elle tenait du siècle où elle était née. Elle représentait pour lui cette société qu'il aimait, société charmante, facile avec dignité, indépendante sans raideur, gaillarde sans mauvais goût, aristocratiquement libérale, qui allait céder la place à cette bourgeoisie solennelle et grave qui commença le règne des "gens sérieux." (Le Figaro, 6 mai 1933)

The feelings of the comtesse de Boigne for the author of Carmen was mutual, as the two shared similar interests. "Un goût commun du libre langage, de l'indépendance un peu frondeuse, des petits incidents du monde, des bruits confidentiels, le mépris du fade et du convenu, expliquent la prédilection de l'ancienne demoiselle d'Osmond pour le conteur de Mosaïque," writes Parturier. "La conformité de leurs caractères devait les unir" (Le Figaro, 6 mai 1933).

Mérimée had confidence in Adèle's judgement, consulting her on occasion with questions regarding his writings. In a letter dated just one year before Adèle's death, her old friend writes:

Je suis arrivé ici il y a quelques jours et mon premier soin a été de lire au Journal des Savants
un article en faveur de mon gouvernement.\textsuperscript{2} On a bien voulu l'accepter et on l'imprime. Je me proposals de vous en apporter l'épreuve et de vous soumettre quelques points délicats qui me troubent, mais on m'appelle par le télégraphe à Biarritz et je pars.... (Lettres de Mérimée à la comtesse de Boigne, ed. Sercey, 265-66)

The salon of the comtesse de Boigne is mentioned in Mérimée's well-known nouvelle, L'Enlèvement de la redoute, first published in the Revue française of September, 1829. The narrator in this tale, a young lieutenant who has just arrived at the front, is describing his first exposure to enemy fire.

Aussitôt que l'ordre de marcher en avant nous eut été donné, mon capitaine me regarda avec une attention qui m'obligea à passer deux ou trois fois la main sur ma jeune moustache d'un air aussi dégagé qu'il me fut possible. Au reste, je n'avais pas peur, et la seule crainte que j'éprouvasse, c'était que l'on ne s'imaginât que j'avais peur. Ces boulets inoffensifs contribuèrent encore à me maintenir dans mon calme héroïque. Mon amour-propre me disait que je courais un danger réel, puisque enfin j'étais sous le feu d'une batterie. J'étais enchanté d'être si à mon aise, et je songeai au plaisir de raconter la prise de la redoute de Cheverino, dans le salon de Mme de B***, rue de Provence.

Adèle de Boigne, continuing a long salon tradition of encouraging writers and artists, even played a role in the publication of Arsène Guillot (RDM, 15 mars, 1844), a short story which Mérimée had hesitated to publish. "Il avait offert sa nouvelle à Mme Delessert, sans songer, à ce qu'il l'affirme du moins, à la publier. A l'instigation de Mme

\textsuperscript{2}Mérimée refers here to an article on L'Histoire de César, written in England by Mérimée.
de Boigne, lecture en avait été faite chez Mme Lenormant, 'entre huit et dix yeux' (Mérimée, Robert Baschet, 129).

It seems incredible that such a relationship as that shared by Adèle and Mérimée would go unmentioned in Récits d'une tante, but that is the case. The name Prosper Mérimée does not appear. Fortunately, the comtesse kept many of his letters, and they were published in 1933 by Laurent de Sercey (Lettres de Mérimée à la comtesse de Boigne, Paris: Plon, 1933). There are three hundred pages in this volume, and it comprises only the letters written by Mérimée and addressed to Madame de Boigne. His letters are filled with political and social details, as well as personal reflections on his travels and various issues of the period. The tone of these letters is never condescending. They are witty and well written. It is clear that Mérimée considered her to be quite knowledgeable in several domains (literature, history, politics, botany, etc.), and fully capable of engaging in a meaningful dialogue. Their friendship truly did last until the end; his last letter to her is dated March 30, 1866, just six weeks before her death.

The Revolution of 1848 had a terrible effect on Madame de Boigne. Her concerns went well beyond her fear for the safety of the family of her friend, the Queen of the French. At sixty-seven years of age, she had already seen
considerable political and social turmoil. More than anything else, Adèle de Boigne desired security and stability. ("Elle avait peur de tout," writes Amélie Lenormant in her preface to Une Passion dans le grand monde.) Guizot writes that, although she resumed her role in society after the revolution, Madame de Boigne never fully recovered from the events of February, 1848. He hints that it was indeed her need for security, in the form of social stability, that led her to accept with resignation the Second Empire:

L'alarme devint promptement sa préoccupation dominante. ...La peur aussi peut devenir une passion, et elle n'est pas la moins puissante. Comme un très grand nombre d'honnêtes gens et de gens d'esprit, Mme de Boigne en fut vivement atteinte en 1848, et elle accueillit avec empressement tout ce qui pouvait la rassurer, n'importe à quel prix. Quand elle fut en effet un peu rassurée, quand elle eut retrouvé les habitudes de sa vie, quand la société de Paris et son salon dans la société de Paris furent redevenus à peu près ce qu'ils étaient auparavant, il fut aisé de voir qu'elle n'en jouissait qu'avec une timidité agitée et comme toujours à la veille de les perdre. Sa situation était douce; elle avait des amis fidèles, des visiteurs spirituels qui se plaisaient à se rencontrer chez elle; elle s'était arrangé à Trouville, au bord de la mer, une jolie petite maison, une vraie corbeille de fleurs en face de l'Océan, et un peu plus loin, sur le flanc de la falaise, elle avait une autre petite maison où un jardinier habile cultivait pour elle les fleurs dont sa maison de la plage était couverte pour ses amis. Elle les recevait là en été et dans sa maison de Paris en hiver avec une bonne grâce point banale et une élégance d'esprit et de mœurs à la fois naturelle et traditionnelle, qui donnait à sa conversation un attrait original, bien qu'un peu froid; mais une inquiétude
permanente troublait évidemment sa pensée et l'agrément de sa vie: on raconte que Louis XV, dans son égoïsme royal et en prévoyant des révolutions prochaines, disait souvent: "Ceci durera bien autant que moi"; Mme de Boigne avait toujours l'air de dire avec un doute triste: "Pourvu que ceci dure autant que moi!" (RDM, 763-64)

As the above passage by Guizot illustrates, the comtesse de Boigne continued to maintain an active role in society. She no longer enjoyed the influence and popularity that had been hers during the July Monarchy, but neither did she close her door or her mind to newcomers and new ideas.

Adèle's summer residence at Trouville, the "vraie corbeille de fleurs" described by Guizot, merits special attention, although there is little mention of it in the memoirs. The comtesse purchased the property in 1843 and had the buildings remodeled. After the sale of her country villa in Châtenay (1848), it became her only summer residence. Pasquier, then president of the Chambre des Pairs, already in the habit of spending the time between sessions with the comtesse at Châtenay, came to spend most of his summers with her in Trouville. It became a popular gathering place for Adèle's friends and acquaintances. Somewhat like Voltaire's Ferney on a smaller scale, the comtesse de Boigne established her own little community at Trouville.

Madame de Boigne s'était attachée à ce charmant pays. Elle l'avait vu naître et grandir. Elle
avait, ainsi que M. Pasquier, coopéré à sa prospérité en la protégeant par son crédit, en y faisant chaque année une longue résidence. Elle y avait établi sa petite royauté. Comme Louis XIV à Versailles, elle avait créé ses jardins, ses habitations; comme lui elle avait sa petite cour. Des fonctionnaires aux petits pieds la tenaient au courant des départs, des arrivées, des aventures gaies ou fâcheuses; elle avait des courtisans, des solliciteurs. La plus haute société, les hommes les plus distingués, les femmes du meilleur monde, venaient s'incliner devant son fauteuil et baiser le bout de ses doigts; et de plus que Louis XIV elle avait beaucoup d'amis sincères. Elle les recevait avec bonheur à sa table, dans son salon; elle leur accordait parfois l'hospitalité. Madame la comtesse Mortier, M. Dumont, M. le général de la Rue, M. Mérimée, étaient au nombre de ces privilégiés.... (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 365-66)

The comtesse de Boigne even became a part of local lore. Maurice Parturier cites a poem written by a local bard of Trouville:

Quel beau cottage où Madame de Boigne
Parmi les fleurs montre ses cheveux blancs,
Charmant contraste où j'aime qu'elle joigne
A ses hivers l'aspect de ses printemps. (Le Figaro, le 6 mai 1933)

It is at Trouville that we have another image of the comtesse de Boigne not revealed in her memoirs or in her novels. Adèle de Boigne, salonnière for whom Paris was life itself, appeared to conceal what some might term a romantic side. According to the chancelier's personal secretary, the comtesse de Boigne was fascinated by the sea. Her "cabane," as she refers to it in her memoirs, overlooked the English Channel at one of its widest points,
and she was not, it seems, eager to return to Paris at the end of the season:

Madame de Boigne ne revenait à Paris que chassée par les premiers froids. Elle attendait patiemment le dernier rayon de soleil. Elle se complaisait aux mugissements de la tempête; elle avait une joie d'enfant à braver ses fureurs.

L'automne venu, quand la mer en furie venait frapper à vingt pas de son logis, quand le vent d'équinoxe faisait crier ses girouettes, ravageait son jardin, sifflait sous ses portes, hurlait dans sa cheminée, elle se faisait toute petite, se pelotonnait dans le fond de son lit, mais elle ne songeait pas à fuir. Le lendemain, si l'orage avait cessé, si le soleil reparaissait dans l'azur d'un ciel tranquille, appuyée sur sa petite canne, elle se risquait jusqu'au seuil de la porte, jetait comme un regard de défi à cette mer qu'elle appelait sa bruyante voisine, et semblait dire à tous: Vous voyez, toute faible que je suis, elle ne me fait pas peur, je brave sa furie, et je l'aime malgré tout! (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 367)

This is not the first time that there has been a mention of Adèle's admiration for nature. Fernand Baldensperger in his Mouvement des idées dans l'immigration française (1789-1815) writes: "La future Madame de Boigne, installée d'abord dans le Yorkshire, puis dans le Westmoreland, admire comme un poète lakist les coucher de soleil sur les eaux" (51). This does not mean, however, that Adèle succumbs to the temptation of romanticism:

Madame de Boigne, dans son séjour en Westmoreland, chez le chevalier Legard, s'initie à la littérature anglaise: mais c'est sans doute celle du passé, et rien n'indique que cette Française, qui admirait les coucher de soleil sur le lac de Windermere, se soit intéressée au groupe de poètes qui, là, demandaient à la nature
Even late in her life, nature was not something that she had "internalized," as had so many of the pre-romantic and romantic writers that she had known. She does not, as Favre describes, venture out into the storm, but rather contemplates the majesty of the sea from the safety of her doorway. Her approach toward nature reflected her eighteenth-century education. Nature was to be domesticated, as in her well-ordered garden. "Sous sa direction, avec l'aide d'un habile jardinier," writes Louis Favre, "la pauvre maison devint une jolie habitation tapissée de lierre et de plantes grimpantes, et la dune brûlée du soleil couverte en un ravissant jardin tout fleuri" (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 314).

Thus it should come as no surprise that the comtesse de Boigne's memoirs and novels do not reflect the lyrical imprint of romanticism. Like Lamartine, Adèle took pleasure in observing sunsets over a scenic lake, but unlike her poet friend, she does not feel in harmony with it. Nature, even at its most beautiful, is an external feature of her life and her writing. Her depiction of nature in the narrative of her novels, when it appears at all, is flat and decidedly non-lyrical. The same goes for her memoirs. The romantic moi, omnipresent in the writing and poetry of Chateaubriand, is not to be found in Adèle's
texts. Although she is writing of her own life and experiences, she nearly always maintains a certain distance between the narrator and the narrative.

Sainte-Beuve describes Adèle de Boigne's final years in an obituary that he published in *Le Constitutionnel* on Friday, May 18, 1866. In it he portrays a comtesse de Boigne quite different from the description offered by Guizot and Favre. Here she appears not so much fearful as resigned, in a dignified way, to change. Sainte-Beuve imagines her as enjoying the kind of inner peace and tranquility that come with age and wisdom:

Les dernières années si remplies pour elle de vicissitudes, les dernières révolutions auxquelles elle assista, la laissèrent calme, tranquille, non étonnée, raisonnable toujours. Malgré sa santé très-affaiblie, elle avait conservé son goût de la société, sa curiosité du spectacle politique, son entière rectitude et fermeté d'esprit. Elle eut la sagesse de comprendre qu'il fallait concéder quelque chose au temps; elle garda tous ses anciens amis, ses préférences intimes, mais elle renouvela peu à peu son salon. De nouveaux arrivants s'y plurent et apprirent à la connaître. Sa maison de Trouville, où elle allait passer chaque été, était agréable encore pour d'autres que pour elle, lorsque sa santé lui permettait de recevoir. (*Nouveaux Lundis*, 458-9)

The death of her distinguished companion the duc Pasquier in 1862 was an irreplaceable loss for Adèle de Boigne, as was the passing of her younger brother, the marquis d'Osmond. Her grief did not result in solitude, however, as she continued to receive guests until just days
before her death. The salon was her life, and she abhored solitude. In spite of illness, age, and infirmity, the comtesse de Boigne relished the role of salonnière until the end, as illustrated by the duc de Broglie in his memoirs:

[L'âge même n'avait rien enlevé à la finesse et à l'agrément de ses traits. J'ai connu plusieurs vieilles femmes qui avaient gardé leur beauté: Mme de Boigne est la seule jolie vieille que j'aie jamais connue. Quand on la trouvait assise dans son grand fauteuil, vêtue d'une robe blanche, coiffée d'un délicieux petit bonnet, on aurait pu en devenir épris. Telle elle est restée jusqu'à la veille de sa mort. Ne pouvant plus se lever la dernière année, elle recevait dans sa chambre à coucher. Mais c'était toujours la même grâce, et aussi la même toilette. Un jour, je vis que le ruban qui surmontait son bonnet avait été mis de travers. Je compris que tout était dit et que je ne la reverrais pas. Effectivement, deux jours après, elle n'était plus. (RDM, t. 25, 342)]

Sixty years of tending to her salon would certainly leave their mark on the writing of Adèle de Boigne and, in fact, her memoirs as well as her novels reveal much about their author's experience as a salonnière. The memoirs, however, offer little in the way of a concrete view of the comtesse de Boigne's salon, with the exception of a few political details. The reader who seeks to learn more about the way in which the comtesse viewed the salon and its role in society, as well as a more intimate glimpse of the ways in which she may have conducted her own salon and
how it gave meaning to her life, can do no better than to read her novels.

*La Maréchale d'Aubemer*, published in 1867, is a salon novel from the first page to the last. This novel does not portray de Boigne's salon directly, as the plot is situated in the eighteenth century. The subtitle *nouvelle du dix-huitième siècle* alerts the reader to this fact even before beginning the novel. There are no specific time references in the text that allow the reader to identify a specific date, however, and the action portrayed could just as well be taking place in the early nineteenth century.

Unlike de Boigne's other writing, this novel is free from political references and observations, and since the action takes place entirely within a salon setting, it provides an ideal opportunity for the study of the life of a salon—its etiquette and discourse, "une histoire," as the comtesse put it in her preface.

Those who were familiar with the comtesse would easily recognize many similarities between the author in her later years and the aging maréchale d'Aubemer. The first chapter, "Les plaisirs d'une maîtresse de maison," opens with the preparations for a ball at the maréchale's residence. Acquaintances of Adèle de Boigne would immediately note the parallels between the author and her subject, which are evident from the very first pages. The
maréchale, although weak and in poor health, has been reading the last discourse pronounced at the Académie. She then places the text on a shelf "déjà chargée à ses diverses tablettes d'un livre d'histoire, d'un roman nouveau, de plusieurs brochures, d'un ouvrage à l'aiguille et d'un volumineux tricot" (1, 2). It is certainly not difficult to imagine the author herself in the Maréchale's armchair, as this is precisely the image of Adèle de Boigne as portrayed by several of those who frequented her salon. Louis Favre's description of the comtesse in her final years is surprisingly close to Adèle's description of the Maréchale: "Il nous est arrivé bien des fois, même durant ses maladies, de la surprendre dans ces heures de lassitude et de découragement," he writes. "Autour d'elle, pourtant, tout témoignait de ses occupations actives. La broderie était jetée sur une chaise, les journaux étaient épars sur son lit; des livres, des revues, se trouvaient sur une table à portée de sa main" (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 327).

The salon of the maréchale is very much "à la mode," and everyone who is anyone is seeking an invitation to a ball for which extensive preparations are underway. The maréchale is tired of such efforts, and declares that this will be her last ball. A friend rebukes her for her "façon amère d'envisager une existence aussi douce que la vôtre, aussi libre" (14). Again, a description which could well
be applied to de Boigne in the years after 1830--free from material wants and, as a childless widow, free from family obligations. The maréchale, also a widow, complains however of being too old, and of having no one, which is the bitter price of the aforementioned freedom. *La Maréchale d'Aubemer* can therefore be described to some extent as an autobiographic novel, and be easily analyzed as such. But rather than seek out additional references which would link the text to the author, the role of the salon in the novel will now be examined, with a justified assumption that any observations on the salon found in the text may be linked to the author's personal experience, imaginative representations of course, but not simply her imagination.

Rich in detail, *La Maréchale d'Aubemer* describes the day-to-day life of a veteran *salonnière* in intimate fashion. The private life of the maréchale is carefully described, and contrasted with her public existence. The disparities are striking. The elegance and grace of a ball is a commonplace theme in many novels, but the preparations for a ball, which are not so glamorous, are not often portrayed. The attention which goes into these preparations will ultimately determine the success or failure of the event. Although ill and tired of the effort and inconvenience of the preparations, described here as
the ceaseless hammering of the tapestry makers and the coming and going of workers, the maréchale insists on personally overseeing every aspect of the work. Her illness worsens, but the maréchale insists that it be kept quiet, for fear of frightening off "les élus de la mode." She spends the day of the ball in bed, again without sending for her doctor. At the appropriate time, "à l'aide d'eau de fleurs d'oranger, d'éther, et surtout d'une forte volonté," she manages to get up and dress for her ball. As the festivities begin, her illness seems forgotten, and the guests would find no sign of it during the long evening:

...vers dix heures (elle) entra dans ses salons splendidement éclairés. Elle y avait été précédée par quelques mères de filles laides ou peu riches qui avaient voulu leur ménager de bonnes places, bien assurées que les danseurs ne viendraient pas les rechercher dans la foule.--La maréchale jeta un coup d'œil savant autour de ses appartements, et, voyant qu'il n'y avait rien à reprendre, semblait s'occuper exclusivement d'une compagnie dont elle ne se souciait guère, et point du tout du matériel dont elle se souciait fort. Bientôt les véritables élégants arrivèrent et la fête s'anima.--Après avoir dit trés-sincèrement à la duchesse de Montford qui se retirait vers minuit: 'Vous êtes bien heureuse de vous en aller, je voudrais pouvoir en faire autant,' la maréchale n'épargna aucun soin pour prolonger son bal.--Le bruit, habilement répandu, d'un déjeuner à la polonaise devant être servi à six heures, retint beaucoup de monde; toute nouveauté séduisait à Paris; on voulait pouvoir raconter le lendemain le déjeuner à la polonaise. Il fut très-bon, très-recherché, comme l'avait été le souper. Tout avait pleinement réussi, madame d'Aubemer eut entière satisfaction. A huit heures du matin elle rentrait dans sa chambre exténuée de fatigue; ses femmes la déshabillèrent presque sans connaissance. Il n'y
avait plus d'obstacle à faire appeler son médecin. Il lui trouva une forte fièvre; le soir, elle était dangereusement malade. (28-30)

This passage illustrates the importance of such social events in the life of a salonnierè. The maréchale is well aware that her public image is defined by these occasions, and in order to maintain her distinction she is willing to sacrifice her own comfort and even her health. Also remarkable in this passage is the dramatic contrast between the maréchale's outward appearance and gestures, such as paying lavish attention to guests she would rather not deal with, and her actual feelings and desires, as in this case, when she would rather leave the ball and rest. An accomplished salonnierè must be something of an actress, it is shown here, expert at hiding her real emotions while tending to her guests with all the grace of an outward appearance of good cheer she can muster.

The public image of a "grande dame," then, is not always compatible with the private person. The maréchale had recently lost her cherished nephew, the chevalier d'Aubemer, and since that time she has not been happy, but to profess one's true feelings would not be "good form":

Depuis lors, elle avait emietté sa vie dans les petites affections, dans les petites affaires, dans les petites tracasseries, dans les petites agitations de la société factice du grand monde, s'occupant avec anxiété de choses dont elle ne se souciait guère et n'y attachant aucun prix lorsqu'elles avaient réussi, mais où elle ne voulait pas échouer, souffrant enfin de ce désœuvrement de cœur, de cette solitude qui ne
laisse ni but, ni récompense aux actions de la vie. Reconnue toutefois, par le monde, pour une femme parfaitement heureuse, elle aurait eu très-mauvaise grâce à se plaindre; ses meilleurs amis se seraient moqués d'elle. (51-52)

The triviality and artificial nature of the "grand monde" is here brought to the forefront in the text, and it is a theme which will continue throughout the novel. The salon is portrayed in a seemingly contradictory dual light, in which one finds both grandeur and pettiness, insults veiled as compliments, and egotism disguised as generosity. One's reputation may have little to do with merit or reality, but it is a façade which a salonnière such as the maréchale will defend at any cost.

The emptiness of the maréchale's life is soon dissipated by the arrival of her niece, the newly married Gudule de Saveuse. A naïve young woman from the provinces, Gudule has been entrusted by her mother to the maréchale, who will introduce her to Parisian society while preserving her from the risk of compromising her virtue. With a renewed sense of purpose in her life, the maréchale sets out to give a social education to her beautiful young niece, who is already endowed with a natural grace.

Gudule is introduced to the fine art of conversation, and it is in these "lessons" offered by the maréchale that the reader discerns the voice of the consummate salonnière, Adèle de Boigne:
...la conversation est comme toutes les autres jouissances, il ne faut pas l'user; elle doit arriver par hasard, imprévue, naturellement, quand les circonstances se trouvent propices et que les causeurs se rencontrent sans dessein, car alors ils portent des paroles attachantes comme les arbres portent des fruits et elles arrivent à leur temps. (91-92)

In the salon, "causer" has a meaning that is not found outside of this circle. It is not easy to define. To converse is far more than simply to discuss a given topic, as the maréchale explains to madame de Saveuse:

Croyez-en mon expérience, la conversation est alternativement la chose la plus tenace et la plus fugitive du monde; quelquefois elle s'établit obstinément, en dépit de toutes les interruptions; surmontant tous les obstacles; plus souvent le vol d'une mouche, un fauteuil déplacé la dérangent; faut-il s'en affliger démesurément? Non, du tout; elle reprendra à son temps, demain, tout à l'heure, et le vol de cette mouche, ce fauteuil déplacé lui auront peut-être fourni un autre texte qui la rajeunira et lui procura de nouvelles grâces. (93)

Moreover, a certain balance among the speakers and auditors present is required to achieve the proper effect:

Ce qui est nécessaire à la conversation, ce sont des gens distingués, qui s'y plaisent, mêlés à quelques savants et à une certaine proportion de femmes et de personnes un peu futilles, mais intelligents; après cela, laissez faire, moins on la conduira, plus elle trouvera son chemin. (93-94)

The comtesse de Boigne seems to be describing a recipe for the ideal conversation, which, once one is initiated, is almost an art form. It must be studied and carefully cultivated, while not being forced. As the young Gudule de
Saveuse is about to learn, however, it takes more than intelligent conversation to succeed in a salon. She observes the "habitues" of the maréchale's salon, and begins to perceive the unwritten codes that direct the conduct of these gatherings. The art of communication extends well beyond the realm of the verbal. Often, the slightest of gestures or expressions can communicate a great deal. An involuntary expression or reaction to an event may reveal volumes of information to the trained eye, as is illustrated when Gudule's well-concealed affection for Henri d'Estouteville suddenly becomes a matter of public knowledge when the latter is involved in an accident on his horse, causing the young woman to faint in the presence of a number of spectators. Not a word is exchanged about it at the time, but everyone knows:

Madame d'Aubemer, remise la première, tâcha d'occuper l'attention des détails de la chute pour l'éloigner de l'accident survenu à Gudule; mais la malice publique s'arrangeait trop bien de réunir les deux faits pour consentir à les séparer, et déjà les noms de M. d'Estouteville et de madame de Saveuse circulaient ensemble" (247).

Gudule's "accident" is just the confirmation that d'Estouteville had been waiting for, and he is hardly able to contain his joy. Only slightly injured in his fall, d'Estouteville approaches to check on the condition of Gudule. Although surrounded by a number of spectators, the
pair is able to communicate their mutual affection with a minimum of vocabulary:

...avant de se placer dans la calèche, madame de Saveuse adressa son compliment à M. d'Estouteville en ajoutant du ton le plus simple que l'effroi de sa chute avait causé son saisissement. Henri ne répondit que par un profond salut et un coup d'œil de reproche d'atténuer ainsi son bonheur. Gudule ne comprit que trop, elle baissa les yeux et ne put s'empêcher de les relever plus tendrement; un éclair de joie la remercia. La correspondance d'un amour passionné venait de s'établir. (248-49)

Among the greatest obstacles to the social success of madame de Saveuse is her own husband, Lionel. Fresh from the provinces, Lionel ridicules his wife for her interest in Parisian society, but he himself is also drawn to it and is somewhat intimidated by it. As Gudule becomes more popular in this exclusive society, her husband begins to earn an entirely different reputation: "La grande terreur de Lionel était de paraître un provincial, et les soins qu'il prenait contre ce malheur le rendaient inévitable" (100). Lionel is not as adept at discerning the various signals, and is often the only one in a room who is not aware of what is really going on around him. His clumsy efforts to impress others often fall flat. The grace and the wit required to excel in the salon cannot be forced.

The maréchale is preparing Gudule for her débüt in Parisian high society, and chooses for this important moment, which is, as Gudule soon discovers, a rite of
passage, a "fête" organized by the wife of the ambassador of England: "Ce devait être la plus splendide de la saison et les belles dames se mettaient sous les armes pour y briller" (105). The word "armes" is used here in a deliberate fashion by de Boigne, for underneath all of the dazzling apparel, a war is being fought. Gudule's early successes in the maréchale's salon have already caused considerable jealousy, and on the day of the fête her dress and apparel are scrutinized with as much care as a knight would exercise in donning armor for battle. Her dress, the latest fashion, is adjusted in a way that would "défier toute espèce de critique féminine," but it is the maréchale who arms her niece with a secret weapon. Knowing that to obtain a truly brilliant début, "il fallait montrer une légère teinte d'originalité" (107), the maréchale decides that Gudule should wear her customary hairstyle: "Cette coiffure, composée de nattes lâches, de grosses boucles et ne pouvant s'imiter qu'avec d'aussi magnifiques cheveux, devait rester à peu près individuelle à Mme de Saveuse et lui assurer un effet durable" (108). The only alteration that the maréchale allows is the substitution of a diamond comb for her usual hairpiece.

Her beauty, stunning apparel, intelligence, and graceful conversation would still not be enough, however, for madame de Saveuse to succeed in the highest circles of
society. For this, one must first have a title, and Gudule was, in fact, a comtesse. Finally, one needs the proper connections. The maréchale's reputation in this elite society and her blood relationship to Gudule open the door for the young comtesse: "Son nom et son titre de nièce de la maréchale d'Aubemer circulèrent dans la salle avant même qu'elle y pût pénétrer" (115). Once within the circle, the simple grace and natural beauty of Gudule, combined with the exquisite taste of her aunt so apparent in her dress, caused a sensation. Her modest and somewhat timid reaction to her success only added to her charm. The marquise de Rieux takes an interest in the young débutante, and her success is complete:

Madame de Saveuse, appuyée sur son bras, fit sur-le-champ partie d'un de ces groupes, si éminemment exclusifs, qui composent ce qu'on appelle le grand monde à Paris, et s'y sentit tout de suite parfaitement à l'aise; car, une fois admise dans son sein, la plus grande simplicité y régnait. Sans avoir été nominalement présentée à personne, madame de Saveuse, patronisée sur le pied d'égalité par madame de Rieux, se trouva incorporée dans la coterie la plus élégante, accueillie sans affectation et comme à son droit; dès lors sa beauté ne fut pas seulement regardée, mais admirée; elle ne fut plus discutée, on s'en fit gloire, et ses boissons de boucles captivèrent les suffrages sans contestations. (124-25)

In just one evening, Madame de Saveuse had crossed a barrier "qui résiste parfois toute la vie à celles qui désiraient le plus y pénétrer" (125).
The author of *La Maréchale d'Aubemer* does not paint the salon society as a paradise on earth. If some members of this group are good, others are quite the opposite. Gudule's antithesis in this novel is the princesse Simon de Monfort, "une femme d'esprit profondément immorale" (144). The narrator even expresses regret at the position that the princesse is able to maintain: "...je le dis à regret, la princesse Simon tenait le haut du pavé dans la société la plus distinguée; avec un grand nom, une extrême élégance, une rare impudence, une famille qui la soutenait pour éviter les esclandres, un mari plus qu'indifférent à sa conduite, elle avait tout d'abord affiché une sorte de hauteur dans ses déréglements que le monde acceptait" (144-45). Thus, morality does not appear to play an important role in gaining favor in this society. An immoral person can succeed just as well as a person who takes pride in the strictest of moral standards. They coexist in the salon environment, and are subject to the same code of outward conduct.

Henri d'Estouteville's interest in Gudule has not been lost on the princesse Simon, long d'Estouteville's mistress. The princesse decides to take revenge by seducing Mme de Saveuse's husband, Lionel. Several pages are devoted to the complicated ritual of seduction and the description of the complications of courtship in the
closely scrutinized space of the salon. A novice such as Lionel may feel that he is enjoying great success, without realizing that he is in fact the fable of all present. He is unable to penetrate the casual façade which masks the real emotions. The narrator does not offer a flattering portrayal, and seems to decry the total lack of sincerity found there. Gudule, however, goes against the grain of this society, and her sincerity confounds the efforts of d'Estouteville, a man of some experience, who is accustomed to easy conquests:

Il avait compté sur des froideurs simulées, sur une scène, une explication, un raccommodement, enfin sur tout ce qui compose les petits drames, notés d'avance, d'une société corrompue. Henri connaissait si bien les femmes! ...c'était sa prétention!...Oui, en effet, il devinait intuitivement toutes les pensées des êtres factices qui peuplent les salons, mais la nature simple, franche, candide de Gudule, non-seulement il ne la prévoyait pas, mais il ne pouvait même se l'expliquer. Sa froideur n'était nullement simulée, elle la ressentait réellement; ce n'était point de la colère, de la jalousie, encore bien moins un jeu de coquetterie; l'impression était sincère. (249)

All of Henri d'Estouteville's careful planning has failed, and at this point in the text one arrives at a critical moment in the plot of the novel: d'Estouteville falls in love with the virtuous Gudule. The master of cold seduction ceases to consider the young comtesse as a mere conquest, and feels what may be the first genuine emotion of his life: "Le calcul au reste s'était éloigné de son
coeur à mesure que la passion s'en emparait" (223). The virtuous innocence of Madame de Saveuse triumphs over "le factice." The seductive ruses of the princesse Simon collapse before the unstudied charm of her rival.

Gudule de Saveuse enjoys great success in the salons of Paris, and in spite of the dangerous undercurrents, she arrives within the most exclusive circles without the taint of corruption. Her stay in the capital has given her what no other experience could achieve, a benefit that is difficult to define and even more difficult to obtain, and that is a refinement which can be found nowhere else in the world: "Le séjour de Saveuse avait rendu à ses vingt-deux ans la fraîcheur de dix-neuf, et celui qu'elle avait fait dans la meilleure compagnie de Paris lui avait donné cette fleur d'élégance qu'elle avait en partie devinée, mais qu'on ne récolte complètement que sur ce sol privilégié" (282-83).

Throughout the text, the reader is introduced to the fine points of salon etiquette. The nuances of verbal as well as non-verbal communication are portrayed, and through the experiences of the two provincial novices, the reader is able to discern the unstated but rigid code which governs salon behavior. As such, La Maréchale d'Aubemel may be considered a "roman d'éducation," but its principal
merit is as a "roman de moeurs," a portrait of a society which no longer exists.

Adèle de Boigne was too young to have retained any clear memories of social life during the Ancien Régime, and yet many of her contemporaries have written that she belongs more to the eighteenth century than to the nineteenth. Her salon was often described, as I have shown, as a "salon d'ancien régime." François Guizot, who sees in the character of the maréchale d'Aubemer a strong reflection of the author, leaves little room for doubt:

Dans *La Maréchale d'Aubemer*, c'est à une autre époque, au milieu de l'ancien régime seul, et de l'ancien régime aristocratique, que Mme de Boigne place sa principale figure; mais là aussi c'est elle-même qui apparaît sous un autre aspect. Elle était bien en effet du temps et de la société qu'elle met en scène; elle en avait toutes les élégances, tous les dédaïns, toutes les complaisances pour ses propres désirs et ses propres fantaisies, tout le laisser-aller moral au sein de toutes les facilités et de tous les agréments de la vie. En même temps elle sentait l'insuffisance et le vide de cet état de ses entours et d'elle-même; il y avait du doute et de l'ennui dans son âme; elle était plus sérieuse et plus sensible que le monde où elle plaçait la personne dont elle faisait son image. Et pourtant, si la maréchale d'Aubemer sort de ce monde superficiel, factice et brillant, elle le regrettera: grâce à son bon sens, à sa liberté et à sa fermeté d'esprit, elle s'adaptera très convenablement au monde nouveau, plus naturel et plus fort, où la jetteront les événemens. Elle en tirera habilement parti pour la sûreté et l'agrément de sa vie; mais elle ne s'y assimilera point, elle n'adoptera pas effectivement les idées, les sentiments, les instincts, les goûts, les espérances et les confiances de la société nouvelle qui se développe et s'étend partout autour d'elle. Dans le secret de son âme, elle
Guizot's description offers a potential explanation for Adèle de Boigne's purpose in writing this novel, a work that was outdated well before it was written. Nostalgia certainly played a role, as the comtesse was raised on tales of life during the Ancien Régime, and was part of a generation just old enough to remember it, but too young to have played a role in it or taken advantage of the privileges available to individuals who were born into families with the status of the d'Osmond. But there was also a practical advantage to placing the action of her novel in Ancien Régime Paris. By doing so, de Boigne was able to avoid the political divisions and disputes which were the rule in post-Revolution salons, and focus on the salon in its ideal form: its language, rituals, and its role as a focal point for fashion as well as the exchange of ideas.

Many salons sought to emulate the Ancien Régime models during the Empire, and especially during the Restoration years, but there could be no turning back. The revolution had brought about too much change in society, and even the royalist salons had become too ideological, thus losing,
for Adèle de Boigne, much of their charm. As if to echo the sentiments of the comtesse, the baronne du Montet writes in her Souvenirs:

La conversation, la spirituelle causerie j'entends, est morte en France depuis la Révolution. La Terreur l'a interrompue dans le sang; le bruit du canon l'a assourdie sous Napoléon; l'hypocrisie politique et religieuse l'a affaiblie sous la Restauration; les clubs et les spéculations l'ont éteinte sous Louis-Philippe. (p. 410)

Une Passion dans le grand monde, by far the longer and more complicated of de Boigne's two novels, is situated during the Empire and the early years of the Restoration. Unlike La Maréchale d'Aubemer, which takes place outside of any time reference other than the broad frame of "eighteenth century," Une Passion dans le grand monde is an epistolary novel in which each letter is dated, allowing easy reference to the actual historical time frame (1813-1820). De Boigne even insists on this in her introduction, asking the reader to take note of these dates: "Je lui demanderais bien humblement, et dans son intérêt personnel, d'accorder une attention toute spéciale aux dates de lieu et de quatrième..." (i). Une Passion reflects the conflict of ideology between the salons of the Empire, and the royalist salons. References to real names and events are found in the text, such as Napoleon and the Russian campaign of 1812, and the reader is offered a glimpse of what life was like for certain elements of society during
that period. In spite of the care that she has taken to recreate the mood of that era, Adèle de Boigne is careful to point out that her intent was not to write an historical novel:

...je n'ai pas eu l'ambition d'écrire un roman historique, mais seulement une histoire de salon: il m'a fallu montrer l'influence exercée par la politique sur la société et jusque dans les familles; je l'ai considérée comme peinture de mœurs pour les temps dont je parle, en cherchant à conserver aux différentes nuances du parti royaliste leurs physionomies particulières, telles que je les ai connues: je n'ai point essayé de peindre les autres partis dont les habitudes intérieures m'auraient été étrangères.

(ii)

In writing *Une Passion dans le grand monde*, Madame de Boigne is on familiar ground. During the time period that she portrays in this novel, Adèle was already an experienced *salonnière*. And as with *la Maréchale d'Aubemer*, the author clearly puts herself in the role of at least one of the characters, in this case Madame Romignère. The latter's role closely approximates the author's real-life situation in the years following 1830. François Guizot points out the contrast between the "ideal" salonnière, the maréchale d'Aubemer, and the more "vraisemblable" Madame Romignère: "...dans les deux personnes dont Mme de Boigne a fait les personnages originaux de ses deux romans, je retrouve les traits caractéristiques de ce qu'elle était elle-même par sa
nature ou par sa volonté et de ce qu'elle avait envie d'être" (RDM, 772).

In her preface to *Une Passion dans le grand monde*, Amélie Lenormant, niece of Madame Récamier and herself a *salonnière*, agrees with Guizot's observations. Fully aware that these two novels might not be well received by the reading public of 1866, a public already familiar with the novels of Balzac, Stendhal, and Flaubert, Lenormant attempts to place the novels of Adèle de Boigne in an appropriate context by presenting a brief biography of their author, explaining the familiarity of the comtesse de Boigne with the subject matter of her works:

...nous avons même pensé qu'une connaissance plus approfondie de l'auteur de ces romans les ferait mieux apprécier du lecteur. En effet, lorsqu'elle écrivait *Une Passion dans le grand monde* et *la Maréchale d'Aubemer*, Mme de Boigne ne peignait pas une société de fantaisie, elle traitait avec une exactitude parfaite le tableau du monde où elle était née et où elle avait vécu.

(iii)

The various salons during the Empire were sharply divided by political ideology, and this fact is illustrated from the very first page of *Une Passion dans le grand monde*. Romuald de Bauréal is an officer in Napoléon's army, and this military service has put him at odds with his family and social class. Even the general admiration for his brilliant career (like Napoleon, he was named general at the age of twenty-five because of his merit, not
by political favor or privilege), and sympathy for the Grande Armée because of its misfortune in Russia, could not break down these barriers:

Je craignais surtout de trouver dans les salons de nos familles une grande joie des revers de la fatale campagne de Russie; elle a développé au contraire, une impression de tristesse et de sympathie si sincère, qu'on est tout prêt à s'y réjouir de nos derniers succès de Lutzen: on me les fait raconter; on les écoute avec intérêt. Je suis heureux de retrouver ce sentiment de la patrie parmi ceux auxquels j'appartiens par tant de liens indissolubles, malgré le triste isolement de cœur et de position où les circonstances m'ont condamné, et qui me paraît encore plus poignant lorsque je me retrouve à Paris sans avoir droit à l'entrée d'aucun intérieur. (5-6)

In spite of his successes, Romuald is in effect exiled from his own milieu. Even after the fall of the Empire and his refusal to participate with the Bonapartistes during the Hundred Days, he is denied access to all royalist salons. This political aspect of Parisian salons plays a substantial role in the early chapters of the novel, and sets a markedly different tone from that found in La Maréchale d'Aubemer. But a closer examination of the way in which the salon is portrayed in Une Passion dans le grand monde reveals many similarities between the two novels.

Romuald de Beauréal's aunt, Madame Romignère, is well known for her salon. Romuald's fear of being introduced to
his aunt's salon because of his involvement with the Empire turns out to be unfounded:

...je m'attendais à n'entendre parler que noblesse, prétentions et généalogie à Beauréal, je craignais de tomber dans la disgrâce de ma tante par mon ignorance de la science du blason; mais je n'ai rien trouvé de semblable: on y cause de tout, et très-libéralement: ma tante et mon oncle sont fort au courant de ce qui se passe dans le monde social et politique, de la littérature moderne, et même des nouveaux progrès faits dans les arts.--Tout ce qu'il y a de gens distingués à vingt lieues à la ronde abonde au château où l'hospitalité est aussi large que facile.... (33-34)

This enthusiastic description could just as well describe the comtesse de Boigne's own salon throughout the early and middle nineteenth century, if one is to believe the evaluations of Guizot and Sainte-Beuve. As with La Maréchale d'Aubemer, such autobiographical details are not uncommon, and the two novels also share some of the same themes dealing with the salon in general. The most obvious similarity is the way in which the space of the salon is portrayed, the play of public versus private.

The princesse de Lispona, a principal character in Une Passion dans le grand monde, also bears many of the marks of her creator. A "femme à la mode," her salon is the most popular gathering place in Paris for the social elite. She is young, beautiful, wealthy, bears a title of great prestige, and her husband is out of the picture (he disappeared during the Russian campaign of 1812). In spite
of the pleasure that she experiences because of her spectacular social success, she admits that she is not entirely happy. Like the maréchale d'Aubemer, she portrays the salon as a stage where a series of actors and actresses appear, each wearing a mask, and all of them with a jealous eye on the leading lady. The elegant surface is misleading and at times the princesse would gladly trade the splendor of society for a casual "tête-à-tête" with a sincere friend. The princesse de Lispona has no illusions as to her situation, as is evident in this "confession" to her distant friend Odille:

Tu te moques bien doucement, bien amicalement, mais enfin tu te moques un peu de la brillante princesse de Lispona: tu m'ordonnes de te dire si tout ce clinquant me suffit: je me garderai bien de m'en adresser la question: pourquoi m'interrogerais-je lorsque je n'ai rien de plus solide à mettre à la place? Si par hasard j'allais me répondre: non...ou en serais-je?--mais dussé-je encore mieux encourir tes tendres sarcasmes, je suis réduite à avouer que ces succès de femme me plaisent assez: j'aime à être entourée dès que je parais; à voir l'habitue du parterre pousser son voisin du coude en disant: La voilà! lorsque j'arrive au spectacle; à être remarquée en tout lieu; j'aime que mes équipages soient admirés, mes chiffons imités, et je me divertis parfois dans l'invention de recherches capricieuses qui prennent mon nom, et font ce qu'on appelle fureur: tout cela est fort pitoyable, j'en conviens, mais c'est le résultat d'une vie oisive et d'une existence manquée. Au milieu de ces petitesses, il en est une seule dont je te défends de m'accuser; c'est de m'en faire accroire sur mes perfections: J'apprécie tout ce que je dois à ma situation et à ma grande fortune; si l'hôtel de Lispona n'était pas un des plus beaux de Paris, si les fêtes que j'y donne étaient moins magnifiques, tout mon mérite
personnel ne rendrait pas mon commerce aussi recherché, et ce ne serait pas un succès d'être invité chez moi; aussi je t'assure que je me fais ma part dans une juste proportion, et bien souvent, en rentrant d'un bal où j'ai été accablée d'adulations, je n'en rapporte pour moi-même qu'un sourire de pitié: et pourtant je recommence le lendemain à faire de nouveaux frais pour obtenir de pareils succès; car, je le reconnais dans l'humble de mon cœur, chère Odille, je suis amusée ou plutôt désennuyée d'être reconnue par tous les oisifs de Paris pour la femme la plus à la mode: cela me compose un petit empire qu'il faut sans cesse combattre pour conserver, ce qui lui donne du prix et du piquant. Veux-tu me demander si je ne préférerais pas une heure de causerie avec toi à la plus belle fête du monde, si une caresse de ta Juana ne l'emporterait pas mille fois sur les hommages de mes soi-disant adorateurs? (195-97)

As the plot progresses, the lack of sincerity and the constant backbiting that are apparent in the salon become more and more of a burden to the princesse de Lispona, who, although a part of this society, does not feel that she is defined by it. Her observations, shared with her friend Odille, one of her only contacts of genuine affection, become progressively harsher; as in this passage, which describes a brief stay at her family's country chateau during which she entertains a number of guests:

On s'est fait de petites tracasseries, de perfides méchancetés, et enfin tous mes hôtes sont retournés à Paris, joyeux d'être venus, plus joyeux de partir et d'avoir à critiquer le château de Kérinthie, sa maîtresse et les convives qu'elle y avait rassemblés. Les choses, tu le vois se sont très-bien passées et selon l'usage d'une société où l'on aime surtout à se réunir pour avoir ensuite occasion de se mieux déchirer en connaissance de cause. J'ai été bien

Odille's infant child.
frappée ces temps-ci de la place que tient la médiasance dans nos conversations parisiennes. Le mauvais temps nous ayant retenus plusieurs matinées de suite dans le salon, j'y ai vu successivement trainer devant nous, par les uns ou par les autres, les noms de tous nos soi-disant amis. On débutait par un faible éloge suivi de restrictions semi-obligantes, mais bientôt quelqu'un s'emparait du scalpel, et Dieu sait comme on en sortait déchiqueté; chacun se coupant la parole pour assener une blessure plus profonde. (279-80)

The central plot of *Une Passion dans le grand monde* is the difficulty of beginning and maintaining an honest relationship in the artificial environment of the salon. Romuald de Bauréal has fallen in love with a young woman whom he encountered while hiking in the countryside of Switzerland. He saw her only briefly, observing her discreetly from the cover of some foliage. Although he didn't even learn her name, he becomes obsessed with this vision of purity, simple innocence, and grace, referring to her as "l'enchanteresse du vallon." Romuald is conscious of how ridiculous his emotions are, but they are nonetheless sincere. He relates all of his feelings to his trusted friend, Bliane:

> Je te donne toute licence pour te moquer de moi, ami; oui, je l'admets, cette enchanteresse m'apparaissant toujours sur l'eau ou au bord des torrents ressemble fort à la gracieuse création de la féerie, c'est une sœur d'Ondine, une fantasmagorie, une vision, un rêve.... (147)

In the private, closed space of a letter, Romuald is free to expose his innermost thoughts. To do so in the salon, however, would be unthinkable.
It isn't difficult to imagine Romuald's disappointment at discovering during a ball in Paris that his "enchanteresse" is really the princesse de Lispona, who, after experiencing a moment of surprise upon first seeing him, treats him with such affectation and apparent indifference that his heart is left cold. He isn't aware of the fact that she, too, fell in love with the image of a man that she encountered in the Swiss countryside, a man whom her sister-in-law, who was present at the time, jokingly dubbed "l'amoureux du vallon," and that she must feign indifference in order to avoid a scandal. Interpreting her detached air as arrogance, he laments the shattered image of purity that he had held so dear. Romuald writes of his bitter disappointment to Bliane, describing the reaction of Lispona to his presence:

"Vous me feriez plaisir ... de ne point rappeler cette ridicule promenade de pensionnaire devant ma belle-sœur." Ainsi, Bliane, ce trouble éprouvé en me voyant c'était l'embarras d'avoir été un jour, une heure, la plus charmante, la plus naïve, la plus ensorcelante créature sortie des mains de Dieu! Ah! combien les vains sophismes du monde peuvent gâter les plus admirables natures! car, je le crois encore, Mme de Lispona n'a point été créée l'être factice qu'elle est devenue. (233)

It is no coincidence that the profound and sincere emotions felt by the pair begin not within the confines of the salon, but in a pastoral setting. The princesse de Lispona, unaware at the time that she is being observed,
laughs and enjoys herself, free from the gaze which normally restricts her behavior. Adèle de Boigne seems to be contrasting the two extremes, establishing the salon as the opposite of nature. The conflict of Une Passion dans le grand monde involves the struggle of Romuald and Lispona to penetrate the façade of the other in order to discover the true individual. They are hindered in their efforts not only by salon etiquette, but also by the jealousy and "médisance" of others.

It is likely that Adèle de Boigne, salonnière, was herself quite adept at wearing a mask, and the reputation of coldness that she gained among some members of her society, as well as that established later by her memoirs, actually disguised the individual behind the façade. Louis Favre, who knew her well outside of the salon setting, writes the following of the author of Récits d'une tante:

Elle était froide et peu expansive; mais cette froideur était la conséquence de sa situation bien plus que son penchant naturel. Nous avons lu en effet des lettres d'elle, datées de la fin du dernier siècle, et qui sont écrites avec une chaleur de cœur, une sorte de coquetterie d'affection témoignant de l'âme la plus aimante. Au moment de la mort de M. le chancelier, et près de sa fin à elle-même, elle nous adressait les lettres les plus affectueuses, les plus simples, les plus touchantes. Dans sa jeunesse, elle avait dû s'imposer l'obligation de porter, pour jouer son rôle dans le monde, une sorte de masque de convention; plus tard, malgré les amitiés sincères qu'elle avait rencontrées dans sa famille, dans le monde, elle s'était encore trouvée isolée, et elle avait continué à le garder. Mais tous les amis de madame de Boigne,
tous ceux qui ont vécu auprès d'elle dans une
confiante intimité, ne nous démentiront pas quand
nous dirons que, sous le voile de cette apparente
froideur, se cachait une âme pétrie de trésors de
dévouement, tout cœur, toute affection. (Estienne
Denis Pasquier, 323-24)

The sentiments of Pasquier's personal secretary are
confirmed in a remark concerning Adèle by her old friend
Prosper Mérimée, related by Maurice Parturier in his
article Madame de Boigne et Mérimée:

Il y a en elle deux personnes, disait Mérimée: la
femme du monde qui veut avoir un salon et qui en
fait le programme et la police; puis une personne
de cœur et d'esprit qui, dans l'intimité a une
foule de qualités qu'on s'étonne de rencontrer
dans le monde. (Le Figaro, 6 mai 1933)

As in La Maréchale d'Aubemer, de Boigne offers her
reader a behind-the-scenes view of various salons, their
orientation, and their habitués. Une Passion dans le grand
monde offers a broader spectrum of discourse due to its
epistolary format. The reader is able to view each
color character from two or more angles simultaneously, from both
sides of the mask. Sincere emotions, which must be kept
hidden in the salon, may be versed freely in the private
sphere of epistolary commerce. The true feelings of the
princesse de Lispona and Romuald de Beauréal are revealed
in their letters to confidants. Tension is thus
established in the narrative, as the reader is able to
discern their shared passion while also being aware of the
obstacles of etiquette that keep them apart.
Just as the letters exchanged between the principal characters and their confidants in *Une Passion dans le grand monde* reveal a private side unseen by the public, Adèle de Boigne's epistolary commerce with Etienne Pasquier reveals a side to the comtesse that is not evident in the memoirs. Most of the letters, never intended for the public eye, were destroyed. Some of them, however, were conserved by Louis Favre and will be examined in a later chapter.

As a woman novelist in the first half of the nineteenth century, Adèle de Boigne was certainly not unique, and in writing her novels, she was still well within her role of salonnière. She was familiar with, among others, the writing of Germaine de Staël and Madame de Duras, including in her memoirs words of praise for the latter's work, as well as a comment which may help to explain the reader's response:

> Elle s'occupait dès lors à écrire des romans qui ont depuis été imprimés et auxquels il me semble impossible de refuser de la grâce, du talent et une véritable connaissance des mœurs de nos salons. Peut-être faut-il les avoir habités pour en apprécier tout le mérite. (II, 11)

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4 Adèle de Boigne took a special interest in *Ourika*, stating in her memoirs that this novel "retrace les sentiments intimes de madame de Duras" (II, 11). G. Pailhès, in his *La Duchesse de Duras et Chateaubriand* even suggests that the comtesse de Boigne may have served as the model for one of the principal characters in *Ourika*, that of the marquise de X***.
The comtesse seems to be implying here that the salon novel was written for a specific audience, and that anyone outside of this sphere is not fully capable of passing judgement on them. In writing her novels, then, Adèle was simply continuing a tradition dating to the seventeenth century, writing for an exclusive audience that was simply an extension of her own salon. The novels were written at least twenty years before they were published; only a few of her closest friends were aware of their existence until the year of her death. It seems safe to assume that the comtesse de Boigne did not originally intend for the novels to be released for the general public.

As a salonnière and novelist, Madame de Duras was, then, a rare exception—not in writing novels but in publishing them while still very much in the public eye: "Sous la Restauration, le roman est souvent un ouvrage de dame: on compte plus de cent cinquante romancières," writes Denise Virieux in her introduction to *Olivier*. "Cependant de grandes dames comme madame de Rémusat gardent secrets leurs romans. Si Mme de Duras choisit au contraire de faire connaître ce qu'elle appelait ses 'petits ouvrages,' c'est pour trouver par ce moyen à la mode la compréhension d'esprits 'congénial' au sien" (*Olivier*, 31).

While Madame de Duras' novels enjoyed some success, there was a price to be paid. In publishing *Ourika*,
Olivier, and Edouard, she made herself vulnerable to the form of attack most feared by a salonnière: ridicule. "Mme de Duras était trop en vue pour ne pas être critiquée plus que d'autres romancières, et en butte aux moqueries de la bonne société. On s'amuse à l'appeler Ourika, et ses deux filles Bourgeonika (Félicie) et Bourika (Clara)" (Olivier ou le secret, 34). Such "médisance" may well explain Adèle de Boigne's hesitation, along with that of many other "grandes dames," to display her novels outside of her own circle of "habitués," where reader response could be safely gauged.

The decision to publish La Maréchale d'Aubemer and Une Passion dans le grand monde was, in fact, one of the last acts of the comtesse de Boigne's life. In this manner, she could still communicate with like-minded souls, without much concern for any negative public reaction. The behavior of Adèle de Boigne the writer may have been influenced by the same fear of ridicule that restricts the behavior of the salonnière.

In writing her memoirs, the comtesse de Boigne was following another well established trend, for memoir writing was quite commonplace among the women of her social circle. She was, of course, well aware of this, as is indicated in her preface. Having dedicated these memoirs to her nephew Rainulphe d'Osmond, she hadn't yet thought of a title when the time came for the work to be bound: "Je
n'avais jamais pensé à donner un nom à ces pages décousues lorsque le relieur auquel je venais de les confier s'informa de ce qu'il devait inscrire sur le dos du volume. Je ne sus que répondre. Mémoires, cela est bien solennel; Souvenirs, madame de Caylus a rendu ce titre difficile à soutenir et de récentes publications l'ont grandement souillé..." (I, 21). The comtesse finally opted for the much more casual, and perhaps revealing, Récits d'une tante. The very title portrays an image not of a woman alone in a study, perched over a writing desk, but rather of a woman comfortably seated in a chair, recounting tales of her past to a receptive audience.

The suggestive details of the life of the salon, which the novels as I have shown offer the reader, are scarcely to be found in the surface chronology of the narrative of the memoirs, which offer little more than a bare outline of her salon through the decades between 1804 and 1866; a sentence or two scattered here and there, dispersed throughout the text, from which one may construct little more than a rough chronology.

Upon her return to France from England after nearly a decade of exile, de Boigne describes in her memoirs the difficulty of penetrating into the inner circles of Parisian society: "Nous allâmes à la fin de décembre nous établir à Paris; j'y passai trois mois, les plus ennuyés de
ma vie. La société de Paris est tellement exclusive qu'il n'y a nulle place pour ceux qui y débutent, et, avant de s'être formé une coterie, on y est complètement isolé" (II, 152). She describes her astonishment at the splendor of Parisian high society on the occasion of the first ball to which she was invited:

La première fois que j'allai au bal à Paris, ce fut à l'hôtel de Luynes; je crus entrer dans la grotte de Calypso. Toutes les femmes me parurent des nymphes. L'élegance de leurs costumes et de leurs tournures me frappa tellement qu'il me fallut plusieurs soirées pour découvrir qu'au fond j'étais accoutumée à voir à Londres un beaucoup plus grand nombre de belles personnes.... (I, 157)

Once she became more familiar with Parisian society, especially that of the opposition, she became an integral part of that group from which she had felt so isolated two years earlier: "Une fois que j'eus fait mon noviciat et me fus entourée d'une coterie, je m'y plus extrêmement" (I, 162).

The most extensive description of de Boigne's salon to be found in the memoirs is an account of the way in which it was organized in the years beginning with 1820:

J'avais arrangé ma vie d'une façon qui me plaisait fort. Je sortais peu et, lorsque cela m'arrivait, ma mère tenait le salon, de sorte qu'il était ouvert tous les soirs. Quelques habitués s'y rendaient quotidiennement, et, lorsque l'heure des visites était passée, celle de la conversation sonnait et se prolongeait souvent très tard.
De temps en temps, je priais du monde à des soirées devenues assez à la mode. Mes invitations étaient verbales et censées adressées aux personnes que le hasard me faisait rencontrer. Toutefois, j'avais grand soin qu'il plaçat sur mon chemin celles que je voulais réunir et que je savais se convenir. J'évitais par ce moyen une trop grande foule et la nécessité de recevoir cette masse d'ennuyeux que la bienséance force à inviter et qui ne manquent jamais d'accourir au premier signe. Je les passais en revue, dans le courant de l'hiver, par assez petite portion, pour ne pas en écraser mon salon. L'incertitude d'y être prié donnait quelque prix à ces soirées et contribuait plus que tout autre chose à les faire rechercher. (II, 7-8)

Aside from revealing the very exclusive nature of de Boigne's salon, the above description offers little that would help the reader to have a clear idea of what it was like. Those seeking descriptions of other Parisian salons and their hostesses will have better luck, however. De Boigne's memoirs are filled with vivid descriptions of many of the most famous salonnieres of the period: Germaine de Staël, Juliette Récamier, Madame de Krüdener, Madame de Duras, and the princesse de Poix, to name just a few. Her accounts often go well beyond a superficial description of the woman and her salon. Adèle's portrayal of Juliette Récamier, for example, reveals something of the person behind the beauty, offering a glimpse beyond the passive figure reclining on her couch, surrounded by admirers:

On a fait bien des portraits de madame Récamier, sans qu'aucun, selon moi, ait rendu les véritables traits de son caractère; cela est d'autant plus excusable qu'elle est très
mobile.... Madame Récamier est la coquetterie personnifiée; elle la pousse jusqu'au génie, et se trouve un admirable chef d'une détestable école. Toutes les femmes qui ont voulu l'imiter sont tombées dans l'intrigue et dans le désordre, tandis qu'elle est toujours sortie pure de la fournaise où elle s'amusait à se précipiter. Cela ne tient pas à la froideur de son cœur; sa coquetterie est fille de la bienveillance et non de la vanité. (I, 166)

The beauty and coquetterie of Madame Récamier were well-known, but Juliette's merit went well beyond the ability to flirt and seduce those around her, according to the comtesse de Boigne. Beauty alone was not enough to succeed in the more exclusive salons. Adèle credits exposure to the company of such individuals as Germaine de Staël for lifting Récamier out of the shallow environment she had inhabited to a new level of refinement, allowing her to take part in what was, for Adèle, the most eximious society anywhere:

Tout le monde a fait des hymnes sur son incomparable beauté, son active bienfaisance, sa douce urbanité; beaucoup de gens l'ont vantée comme très spirituelle. Mais peu de personnes ont su découvrir, à travers la facilité de son commerce habituel, la hauteur de son cœur, l'indépendance de son caractère, l'impartialité de son jugement, la justesse de son esprit. Quelquefois je l'ai vue dominée, je ne l'ai jamais connue influencée. Dans sa première jeunesse, madame Récamier avait pris de la société où elle vivait une façon de minauderie affectée qui nuisait même à sa beauté, mais surtout à son esprit. Elle y renonça bien vite en voyant un autre monde qu'elle était faite pour apprécier. Elle se lia intimement avec madame de Staël, et acquit auprès d'elle l'habitude des conversations fortes et spirituelles où elle tient toute la part qui convient à une femme, c'est-à-dire la curiosité intelligente et qu'elle
sait exciter autour d'elle par l'intérêt qu'elle y porte. Ce genre de récréation, le seul que rien ne remplace, quand une fois on y a pris goût, ne se trouve qu'en France, et qu'à Paris. Madame de Staël le disait bien, dans les amères douleurs que lui causait son exil. (I, 166-67)

Madame Récamier would also know the isolation of exile. The comtesse de Boigne wrote her immediately upon hearing the news, asking if there was any way the sentence could be mitigated. She also offered to keep Juliette informed about Parisian society. When Juliette considered traveling to Italy as a way of escaping the boredom of exile, Adèle suggested instead that she take up residence in Vienna, where society was more to her taste: "You must not deceive yourself," writes the comtesse, "the true need of your life is society and conversation" (Madame Récamier and her Friends, 85-86).

Juliette Récamier's name is found throughout the memoirs, and the comtesse de Boigne occasionally cites her in the text as the source of certain accounts that she relates. It is Adèle's familiarity with Récamier which allowed her to write such a detailed narrative portrait. The two remained close friends, visiting each other frequently, even during Juliette's exil, and maintaining regular correspondence until her death.

For the comtesse de Boigne, the consummate salonnière was Germaine de Staël. Her admiration for the author of Corinne is most striking in the memoirs, where compliments
are few but sincere. Their first meeting took place in Lyon, at the hotel where the comtesse de Boigne was staying while en route to her husband's residence in Chambéry. Madame de Staël, unannounced, visited Adèle in her hotel. In spite of the risk (de Staël had defied her exile to visit Lyon), Adèle readily agreed to meet the woman who was such a celebrity in Paris. Germaine de Staël entered the room, accompanied by Camille Jordan, Benjamin Constant, Mathieu de Montmorency, Schlegel, Elzéar de Sabran, and Talma. "Elle resta toute la matinée dans ma chambre y recevant ses visites, m'enchantant par sa brillante conversation," writes the comtesse. "J'oubliai préfet et préfecture" (I, 171). Adèle accompanied Germaine and her entourage to see a performance of Manlius, and draws in her memoirs a remarkable portrait of Germaine de Staël on that evening, relating her initial impressions, and the charm for which this rather ordinary-looking woman was famous:

Au premier abord, elle m'avait semblé laide et ridicule. Une grosse figure rouge, sans fraîcheur, coiffée de cheveux qu'elle appelait pittoresquement arrangés, c'est-à-dire mal peignés; point de fichu, une tunique de mousseline blanche fort décolletée, les bras et les épaules nus, ni châle, ni écharpe, ni voile d'aucune espèce: tout cela faisait une singulière apparition dans une chambre d'auberge à midi. Elle tenait un petit rameau de feuillage qu'elle tournait constamment entre ses doigts. Il était destiné, je crois, à faire remarquer une très belle main, mais il achevait l'étrangeté de son costume. Au bout d'une heure, j'étais sous le charme et, pendant son intelligente jouissance du débit de Talma, en examinant le jeu de sa
physionomie, je me surpris à la trouver presque belle. Je ne sais si elle devina mes impressions, mais elle a toujours été parfaitement bonne, aimable et charmante pour moi. (I, 172)

The comtesse continues her narration with a detailed description of the stormy relationship between Germaine and Benjamin Constant, relating some of the scenes she had witnessed. Her account of what many would consider de Staël's impertinent behavior is noteworthy, as she makes an effort to see beyond the surface and analyze the motives behind the occasionally bizarre, as Adèle describes it, behavior. Adèle relates an example of Germaine de Staël's "arrogance," in which one of de Staël's remarks had offended the prefect, one of the local dignitaries invited to a dinner organized by the comte de Boigne at his residence in Chambéry. Madame de Staël did not realize that this official had strict orders to have Germaine immediately escorted out of the area by the gendarmerie but was graciously allowing her to complete the dinner. Adèle explains that de Staël's intentions were not as they may have appeared:

J'ai cité cette circonstance pour avoir l'occasion de remarquer une bizarre anomalie de cet esprit si éminemment sociable, c'est qu'il manquait complètement de tact. Jamais madame de Staël ne faisait entrer la nature de son auditoire pour quelque chose dans son discours et, sans la moindre intention d'embarrasser, encore moins de blesser, elle choisissait fréquemment les sujets de conversation et les expressions les plus hostiles aux personnes auxquelles elle les adressait. (I, 174)
The comtesse de Boigne visited Coppet several times and offers an interesting "insider's" account of the salon of Madame de Staël during her years spent in exile. Despite her problems—banishment from Paris was a terrible blow—the focus of Germaine's life remained the spiritual atmosphere of the salon:

La vie de Coppet était étrange. Elle paraissait aussi oisive que décousue; rien n'y était réglé; personne ne savait où on devait se trouver, se tenir, se réunir. Il n'y avait de lieu attribué spécialement à aucune heure de la journée. Toutes les chambres des uns et des autres étaient ouvertes. Là où la conversation prenait, on plantait ses tentes et on y restait des heures, des journées, sans qu'aucune des habitudes ordinaires de la vie intervint pour l'interrompre. Causer semblait la première affaire de chacun. Cependant, presque toutes les personnes composant cette société avaient des occupations sérieuses, et le grand nombre d'ouvrages sortis de leurs plumes le prouve. Madame de Staël travaillait beaucoup, mais lorsqu'elle n'avait rien de mieux à faire; le plaisir social le plus futile l'emportait toujours. Elle aimait à jouer la comédie, à faire des courses, des promenades, à réunir du monde, à en aller chercher et, avant tout, à causer. (I, 176)

*Causer* is indeed the central theme around which the life of a *salonnière* turns, and to illustrate the mastery of Germaine de Staël in this domain, Adèle provides a memorable account of a particular conversation which took place in a berline (carriage) on the way to Aix:

Nous montâmes, pour retourner à Aix, dans la berline de madame de Staël, elle, madame Récamier, Benjamin Constant, Adrien de Montmorency, Albertine de Staël et moi. Il survint un orage épouvantable: la nuit était
noire, les postillons perdaient leur chemin; nous fûmes cinq heures à faire la route au lieu d'une heure et demie. Lorsque nous arrivâmes, nous trouvâmes tout le monde dans l'inquiétude; une partie de notre bande, revenue dans ma calèche, était arrivée depuis trois heures. Nous fûmes confondus et de l'heure qu'il était et de l'émotion que nous causions; personne dans la berline n'y avait songé. La conversation avait commencé, il m'en souvient, dans l'avenue de Buissonrond, sur les lettres de mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, qui venait de paraître, et l'enchanteresse, assistée de Benjamin Constant, nous avait tenus si complètement sous le charme que nous n'avions pas eu une pensée à donner aux circonstances extérieures. (I, 175)

The atmosphere in de Staël's salon at Coppet, as portrayed in the memoirs, was unconventional. So was, according to the comtesse, the language. She relates a number of specific examples to illustrate the type of vocabulary which Adèle felt was typical, including an incident where Albertine, Madame de Staël's favorite daughter, was found crying:

"Qu'avez-vous donc, Albertine?"
"Hélas! on me croit heureuse, et j'ai des abîmes dans le cœur."
Elle avait onze ans, mais elle parlait ce que j'appelais Coppet. Ces exagérations y étaient tellement la langue du pays que, lorsqu'on s'y trouvait, on l'adoptait. (I, 177)

The language of Germaine de Staël's salon receives considerable attention in the memoirs. It is obvious that Adèle was favorably impressed, and like so many individuals who knew de Staël on friendly terms, she quickly saw past the plain physical features to see the true beauty of this remarkable woman. Germaine was quite aware of her own
uninspiring features, and according to the comtesse,
adapted her behavior as well as her language to accomodate
for this one gift which she did not possess:

...sa laideur lui avait toujours été une cause de
vif chagrin. Elle avait pour cette faiblesse un
singulier ménagement; jamais elle n'a dit qu'une
femme était laide ou jolie. Elle était selon
elle, privée ou douée d'avantages extérieurs .
C'était la locution qu'elle avait adoptée, et on
ne pouvait dire, devant elle, qu'une personne
était laide sans lui causer une impression
désagréable. (I, 179)

One of the reasons that the comtesse de Boigne offers
such a detailed description of Germaine de Staël is perhaps
that de Staël had attained a level of near perfection in
the elusive art of conversation. Anyone not familiar with
de Staël could not possibly appreciate her talents. Even
the written works of de Staël are, for Adèle, pale
substitutes for something which cannot be captured or
preserved, the genius of her spoken discourse:

Il est impossible de l'avoir rencontrée et
d'oublier le charme de sa société. Elle était, à
mon sens, bien plus remarquable dans ses discours
que dans ses écrits. On se tromperait fort si on
parlait chiffon avec autant d'intérêt que
constitution et si, comme on le dit, elle avait
fait un art de la conversation, elle en avait
atteint la perfection, car le naturel semblait
seul y dominer. (I, 180)

Adèle de Boigne's salon may be nearly absent in her
memoirs, but the influence of the salon is, however, most
apparent in her writing. Her narration is generally
graceful and witty without appearing overly studied. The
discursive nature of the memoirs at times seems to belie any underlying structure, and yet the text is organized chronologically and there are a number of recurring themes which lend a certain cohesiveness to the narration. The single most unifying factor is the narrative voice of Adèle de Boigne.

A good conversation, as defined in *La Maréchale d'Aubemer*, is not rigidly structured. There is a flow which cannot be forced or organized in advance. Madame de Boigne foregrounds this interaction of discourses in her prefatory remarks, referring to her memoirs as "ravaudages de salon." She makes no claim to the title of writer: "...je ne sais pas écrire; à mon âge je n'apprendrai pas le métier et, si je voulais essayer de rédiger des phrases, je perdrais le seul mérite auquel ces pages puissent aspirer, celui d'être écrites sans aucune espèce de prétention et tout à fait de premier jet" (I, 22).

Throughout the text, there are a number of elements which serve to establish a clear relationship between speech and writing. The author of *Récits d'une tante* makes every effort to impart a casual textual voice within the narrative. Occasional interjections such as "j'ai oublié de dire..." and "je ne puis m'empêcher de raconter..." lend a spontaneous feel to the text. De Boigne on a few rare occasions addresses the reader in the second person, a
narrative tactic which offers the illusion of involving the reader directly in her discourse. To cite just one example, she inserts the following interjection after a brief account of how she and her father were offended by the strong language used at a dinner in Paris after the fall of the Empire: "Ne riez pas, mes neveux, c'est l'expression textuelle de fort grandes dames, et elles la distribuaient largement" (I, 359).

Other elements of salon discourse which have been translated into the memoirs include the extensive use of anecdotes. The author usually makes use of anecdotes to enhance the physical description of individuals or groups, or to illustrate an event. Occasionally, these anecdotes are entirely unrelated to anything previously mentioned in the text, and appear to be there simply for the pleasure of the telling:

Je ne veux pas oublier de noter une singularité à laquelle je suis forcée de croire parce que je l'ai vue. En 1828, ou peut-être 27, on m'amena une petite fille de deux ans dont les yeux brillants, d'un bleu azuré, ne présentaient rien de remarquable au premier aperçu; mais, en l'examinant, avec plus de soin, on voyait que la prunelle était composée de petits filaments, formant des lettres blanches, sur un fond bleu, placées en exergue autour de la pupille. On y lisait: Napoléon Empereur. (II, 132-33)

De Boigne continues with a detailed description of this curious episode. Because of its novelty, such an account
would attract considerable attention in a salon, and it is indeed one of the more memorable passages in the memoirs.

To earn the admiration of the habitués and win success in the salon, a speaker must be adept at gaining and holding the attention of the group. An intriguing novelty such as the story of the girl with the unusual eyes mentioned above would guarantee success, at least for a moment, if properly delivered. The tale alone might not be enough, however. In order to briller, a salon goer must have a consummate mastery of language. Creativity and wit in discourse are essential. If forced, the effect may be spoiled. To succeed, a description or account must appear effortless, and yet be "piquant" enough to excite the audience. For this reason, a well-turned criticism, veiled sarcasm, or even witty "médisance" offer a rich source of material. Adèle de Boigne is particularly skilled in this domain. In describing a new governmental cabinet, for example, she inserts a clever barb designed to diminish the esteem of the new minister of war:

Monsieur de Richelieu devint président du conseil sans portefeuille; monsieur Pasquier resta aux affaires étrangères; monsieur Siméon eut l'intérieur; monsieur Portal la marine; monsieur de Serre les sceaux; monsieur Roy les finances. La guerre était entre les mains peu habiles du marquis de La Tour Maubourg, mais il représentait bien; son loyal caractère et sa jambe de bois imposaient; et monsieur de Caux conduisait l'armée. (II, 33)
The comtesse de Boigne is often more direct, and does not shrink from portraying people in power in a ridiculous light, such as the queen of England: "On lui avait fabriqué une espèce de fauteuil où, montée sur un marchepied et appuyée sur des coussins, elle paraissait être debout. Avec son étrange figure, elle avait tout l'air d'une petite pagode de Chine" (I, 403). Even the mighty conqueror Napoléon shrinks under Adèle's scrutiny: "Ce costume pouvait être beau dessiné, mais, pour lui qui était petit, gros et emprunté dans ses mouvements, il était disgracieux. Peut-être y avait-il prévention; l'Empereur me parut affreux, il avait l'air du roi de carreau" (I, 188).

At times, her sarcasm could be very sharp indeed, and Madame de Boigne's reputation for médisance seems to be well founded. To cite just one example, the following description of Louise de Condé demonstrates just how biting the pen of the comtesse could be:

J'avais une grande vénération spéculative pour cette jeune Louise de Condé, pleurant au pied des autels les crimes de son pays et offrant en sacrifice un si pur holocauste pour les expier.

Je m'en étais fait un roman; mais il fallait éviter d'en apercevoir l'héroïne, commune, vulgaire, ignorante, banale dans ses pensées, dans ses sentiments, dans ses actions, dans ses paroles, dans sa personne. On était tenté de plaindre le bon Dieu d'être si constamment importuné par elle; elle l'appelait en aide dans toutes les circonstances les plus futilies de sa puérile existence. Je lui ai vu dire oraison pour retrouver un peloton de laine tombé sous sa
chaise: c'était la caricature d'une religieuse de comédie. (I, 398)

Language and its representation thus play an important role in the memoirs. De Boigne is very careful in her narration to adapt her writing to achieve a desired effect. In order to impart a "vocal presence" in her writing, for example, she will even alter her narration to imitate variations in spoken discourse such as dialects or individual traits, as in the following observation of local Italian customs:

La conduite des dames piémontaises est généralement assez peu régulière. Peut-être, au surplus, les étrangers s'exagèrent-ils leurs torts, car elles affichent leurs liaisons avec cette effronterie naïve des mœurs italiennes qui nous choque tant. Quant aux maris, ils n'y apportent point d'obstacle et n'en prennent aucun souci. Cette philosophie conjugale est commune à toutes les classes au delà des Alpes. Je me rappelle à ce propos avoir entendu raconter à Ménageot (le peintre), que, dans le temps où il était directeur des costumes à l'Opéra de Paris, il était arrivé un jour chez le vieux Vestris et l'avait trouvé occupé à consoler un jeune danseur, son compatriote, dont la femme, vive et jolie figurante, lui donnait de noires inquiétudes. Après toutes les phrases banales appropriées à calmer les fureurs de l'Othello de coulisse, Vestris ajouta dans son baragouin semi italien:

"Et pouis, vois-tou, ami, dans noutre état les cournes c'est coumme les dents: quand elles poussent, cela fait oun mal dou diavolo... pou à pou on s'accoutoume , et pouis...et pouis...on finit par manger avec."

Ménageot prétendait que le conseil avait prospéré assez promptement. (I, 295)
Another element of salon discourse employed by de Boigne is the use of dialogues. Instead of merely describing an event in the third person, de Boigne will often narrate it in the form of a conversation. This tactic adds a realistic effect, the reader has the impression of participating directly in the account instead of merely having it described in the third person, as this brief dialogue between the prince de Poix and the duc de Maillé regarding the political leanings of the duchesse de Berry well illustrates:

"Savez-vous, messieurs, que notre nouvelle princesse a un œil plus petit que l'autre.

--Je n'ai pas du tout vu cela," reprit vivement le prince de Poix.

Mais après avoir réfléchi, il ajouta:

"Peut-être madame la duchesse de Berry a-t-elle l'œil gauche un peu plus grand."

Cette réponse est trop classique en son genre pour négliger de la rapporter. (I, 393)

Dialogues such as this clearly reflect the theatrical nature of de Boigne's memoirs. This is not to say that the conversation she relates never occurred, but it is unlikely that the author's memory of that exchange is clear enough for her to reconstruct it word-for-word. As a result, she re-creates the dialogue, perhaps even enhancing it to attain the desired effect. These dialogues, and there are many of considerably greater length, are the strongest
evidence of a deliberate staging by the author for the benefit of her reader. The anecdotes, descriptions, and witty "put-downs" demonstrate careful attention to detail that make one question de Boigne's sincerity when she tries to downplay the effort that she has put into the text, referring to it as a "causerie de vieille femme" and saying that she attaches no more importance to it than to a work of tapestry. In fact, a good tapestry is recognized by its complexity and requires considerable attention to detail. As for the expression "causerie de vieille femme," the more sophisticated salon definition of the verb "causer" has already been discussed in this chapter. As additional evidence that Madame de Boigne is following an established convention in preceding her text with a disclaimer, consider this excerpt taken from the introduction of a work of one of de Boigne's contemporaries, the baronne du Montet (1785-1866):

Si vous imaginez donner à mes pauvres petites feuilles détachées d'autre intention que celle d'une causerie intime de famille, d'une conversation sans conséquence, sans préméditation, de bons petits radotages même, si vous voulez, vous serez dans l'erreur. (Souvenirs de la Baronne du Montet, vii)

De Boigne's novels, which enact the life of the salon, provide an opportunity to examine the salon as a special place of articulation. While the memoirs seem to place less emphasis on the salon itself, a comparison of the
novels with the memoirs reveals the salon to be the privileged space of all three of de Boigne's narrative texts. The textual voice which articulates the memoirs complies with many of the parameters that the comtesse de Boigne establishes in her novels. Discourse, whether oral or written, must be graceful without appearing forced or overly studied.

The relaxed, conversational tone of the memoirs is no accident. Although Adèle de Boigne did not specify that her memoirs be published, she begins her introduction with a form of address: "Au lecteur, s'il y en a." This line is separate from the dedication, and suggests that the writer was conscious of an audience at the time she wrote it. There are also a few rare outside references to the fact that she read her memoirs, or at least excerpts of them, to a select group of her habitués. Thus, the performatory aspect of the memoirs cannot be ignored. Adèle de Boigne wrote these pages as she conducted her salon, expressing her opinions and retelling her anecdotes without ever losing sight of her readers, who have been granted access to this exclusive space.

Dedicating her memoirs to her nephew, Adèle de Boigne set out to leave a written record of her family history, as well as a description of a bygone way of life. In writing the memoirs, she is fully aware that she is leaving a
record for posterity. In an introduction very similar to that of Madame de Boigne's, the baronne du Montet expresses this awareness as follows:

Si dans un moment d'ennui ou de souffrance, un de mes petits-neveux ou arrière-petites-nièces trouve ce livre dans l'ombre et la poussière où on l'aura relégué; s'il distrait ou console un instant un cœur fatigué, une imagination malade, j'aurai survécu à la mort. En vérité, ce pauvre livre parlera après moi, comme je parle de mon vivant, sans étude, sans fiel et avec l'abandon d'une bonne jaserie. (vii, viii)

The comtesse de Boigne's textual voice has in fact provided her with a kind of immortality, but the theatrical aspect of the memoirs does not easily allow the reader to perceive the private person, and may raise questions as to the historical accuracy of her observations. Only rarely does the author leave the public space she inhabits in the memoirs to offer a few rare glimpses behind the curtain of her private life.
CHAPTER II
FAMILY

"Madame de Boigne ne reconnaît que deux familles, celle du Bon Dieu et les Osmond."\(^1\) This amusing quip by one of the comtesse de Boigne's closest friends, Juliette Récamier, illustrates the importance to the comtesse of the name that she proudly bears. Fully aware of the changing times in which she lived, de Boigne wrote her memoirs in part as a way of recording and passing on disappearing family and social traditions to her nephew, Rainulphe d'Osmond, last surviving male of the Osmond line. In the dedication, she writes: "De si grands événements ont occupé la vie de la génération qui vous a précédé et l'ont tellement absorbée que les traditions de famille seraient perdues dans ce vaste océan si quelque vieille femme comme moi ne recherchait dans ses souvenirs d'enfance à les reproduire" (I, 24).

At the time she was writing, the past was secure for the comtesse, but the future quite uncertain. With the Revolution of 1789, the very concept of birthright had come

\(^1\)Quoted in several texts, including the introduction to the Jean-Claude Berchet edition of the memoirs (I, 11).
under attack. Although a title and an illustrious name were still given consideration during the Restoration and the July Monarchy, Madame de Boigne was well aware that the tide was turning. Adèle de Boigne's generation is the last to remember pre-Revolution French society. She sets out to preserve for her nephew her recollections of this era which is passing into history, conscious of the fact that such terms as "noblesse" and "tradition" were losing their value for the younger generations: "Si, à l'époque où vous entrerez dans le monde, vous attachez quelque prix à ces souvenirs nobiliaires, vous retrouverez plus facilement des traces de ces temps éloignés que des détails intimes de ce qui s'est passé depuis une centaine d'années" (I, 25-26). Thus, Madame de Boigne establishes herself as an heiress to an old family tradition, and sets out to preserve her own recollections for the benefit of future generations of Osmonds. In so doing, Adèle is following the classic methods of a memorialist, recording her role in history and protecting her family name.

The opening lines of the memoirs offer a brief overview of the past glory of the family whose name Adèle and Rainulphe had inherited. The comtesse writes that she has no need to elaborate on this, as the exploits of their ancestors are well documented:

Gianoni, dans son Histoire de Naples, vous apprendra la plus brillante des prétentions de
votre famille; Moreri vous expliquera les droits que vous avez à vous croire descendant de ces heureux aventuriers normands, conquérants de la Pouille, droits aussi bien fondues que sont la plupart de ces antiques prétentions de famille. (I, 24)

The comtesse de Boigne begins her personal recollections with an anecdote that she had undoubtedly heard as a child about her grandfather, who was commander of a corvette in 1746 and eventually settled in Santo Domingo. She recounts the fate of the six sons sent by her grandfather to France, several of whom enjoyed distinguished careers. The distance between Santo Domingo and France made it nearly impossible for the family to gather, but Adèle's father overcame this obstacle and established an especially strong relationship with the man who had sent him over the sea so many years earlier:

Ayant atteint l'âge de dix-neuf ans, son père lui envoya de Saint-Domingue un cadeau de deux mille écus, en dehors de sa pension, pour s'amuser pendant le premier semestre qu'il devait passer à son goût et, par conséquent, à Paris. Le jeune homme employa cet argent à se rendre à Nantes et à y prendre son passage sur le premier bâtiment qu'il trouva pour donner ses moments de liberté à son père et faire connaissance avec lui, car il avait quitté Saint-Domingue depuis l'âge de trois ans. Cet aimable empressément acheva de le mettre en plein possession du cœur paternel, et le père et le fils se sont toujours adorés. (I, 30)

The strong paternal bond described by the comtesse in the above passage would be reflected in Adèle's relationship with her own father.
After describing her father's youth, Adèle turns her attention to her maternal grandparents, and her mother. An Irish catholic "gentilhomme," Robert Dillon married a Miss Dicconson, who had been raised at Saint-Germain in France. Upon the untimely death of her husband, Madame Dillon found herself with twelve children (she was awaiting the thirteenth), and very little capital. As a result, she could offer very little in the way of a dowry for her daughters. Adèle's mother, Eléonore (1753-1831), had little more than her beauty and charm to offer a suitor.

René-Eustache d'Osmond fell in love with Eléonore, and decided to marry her in spite of her situation. This was not an easy affair, as the Norman branch of the Osmond family was somewhat impoverished after generations of equal divisions of inheritance, and the revenue from the colonies was precarious. In spite of his father's approval from Santo Domingo, his uncles, the comte d'Osmond and the bishop of Comminges (the latter had at first agreed to the union) were strongly opposed to the marriage, insisting instead that he use his name and position to make a "mariage d'argent." Adèle describes the actions which followed:

Mon père informa le sien de ce changement survenu dans les dispositions de son oncle, et écrivit à mademoiselle Dillon la situation où il se trouvait. Elle prit sur elle de rompre entièrement toute relation, lui rendit sa parole, retira la sienne, et puis se prit à vouloir en
mourir de chagrin, en véritable héroïne de roman. Mon père avait été un peu blessé d'une décision contre laquelle il n'osait guère s'élever, les avantages qu'il avait à offrir étant fort diminués par la mauvaise humeur de l'évêque. Mais, ayant appris par hasard l'état de désespoir de mademoiselle Dillon qu'on croyait mourante, il rendit plus de justice à la noblesse des sentiments qui avaient dirigé sa conduite. Il reçut la réponse de son père: elle était aussi tendre qu'il pouvait la désirer; il lui confirmait son approbation, lui disait d'accomplir son mariage puisque son bonheur y était attaché, et lui promettait de fournir aux besoins de son ménage, dût-il être obligé de faire les plus grands sacrifices. Il lui annonçait l'expédition de barriques de sucre estimées vingt mille francs pour les premiers frais d'établissement.

Armé de cette lettre, mon père partit à franc étier, força toutes les consignes, arriva jusqu'à mademoiselle Dillon, et, huit jours après, elle était sa femme. (I, 32-33)

_Adèle de Boigne's parents broke with tradition and enjoyed a "mariage d'amour." The romanesque nature of their marriage made them popular at court, where the young Madame d'Osmond was named Lady in waiting of Madame Adélaïde, daughter of Louis XV:

_Ma mère y eut les plus grands succès; elle était extrêmement belle, avait très grand air, même un peu dédaigneux et elle savait se laisser adorer à perfection; au reste, toutes ces adorations, elle les rapportait à mon père, objet d'une passion qui l'a accompagné dans toute sa vivacité jusqu'au tombeau. (I, 33-34)

In addition to a deep affection for her father, Adèle probably inherited her taste for elegance and sociability from her mother as well. Although the marquise d'Osmond is rarely mentioned in detail in the text after the
description of her marriage to the marquis, Adèle writes: "Ma mère était le modèle non seulement des vertus, mais des convenances et des bonnes manières (I, 439). The marquise d'Osmond is a background figure through much of the memoirs, so much so that her death is not even mentioned in the text. The dominant figure is her father.

The marquis d'Osmond took great interest in his daughter, and she remained with her parents at Versailles instead of being sent off with a wet nurse or to a convent, as most children of those at court were at that time. Adèle, an adorable child with abundant blond hair, as she describes herself then, was quite a novelty at court. Her father personally began Adèle's education at an early age:

Mon père s'était amusé à développer mon intelligence, et l'on me trouvait très sincèrement un petit prodige. J'avais appris à lire avec une si grande facilité qu'à trois ans je lisais et débitais pour mon plaisir et même, dit-on, pour celui des autres, les tragédies de Racine.

Mon père se plaisait à me mener au spectacle à Versailles. On m'emménait après la première pièce pour ne pas me faire veiller, et je me rappelle que le Roi m'appelait quelquefois dans sa loge pour me faire raconter la pièce que je venais de voir. J'ajoutais mes réflexions qui avaient ordinairement grand succès. (I, 66)

D'Osmond's efforts continued well into his daughter's adolescence, focusing his attention on his daughter's studies during their period in exile:

Mon père, dans le temps de cette retraite, s'était exclusivement occupé de mon éducation.
Je travaillais régulièrement huit heures par jour aux choses les plus graves. J'étudiais l'histoire, je m'étais passionnée pour les ouvrages de métaphysique. Mon père ne me les laissait pas lire seule, mais il me les permettait sous ses yeux. Il aurait craint de voir germer des idées fausses dans ma jeune cervelle si ses sages réflexions ne les avaient pas arrêtées. Par compensation peut-être, mon père, dont, au reste, c'était le goût, ajoutait à mes études quelques livres sur l'économie politique qui m'amusaient beaucoup. Je me rappelle que les rires de monsieur de Calonne, lorsque l'année suivante, à Londres, il me trouvait lisant un volume de Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, dont je faisais ma récréation, furent pour moi le premier avertissement que ce goût n'était pas général aux filles de quinze ans. (I, 99-100)

The bond between Adèle de Boigne and her father was strong and unusually close considering the customs of the day among those of their social status, when most children were sent away until marriage. Her father's leisure during their years in exile permitted their relationship to grow even closer.

The comtesse de Boigne portrays the years between her birth in 1781 and her marriage in 1798 as a period of general warmth and security. The account of her childhood at Versailles reads like a fairy tale, with the royal family appearing as nearly an extension of her own. She describes her games with the Dauphin, dancing with the young duc de Berry at balls, and extravagant gifts, such as a magnificent doll that she received in 1788:

Madame Adélaïde me fit faire à grands frais une magnifique poupée, avec un trousseau, une corbeille, des bijoux, entre autres une montre de Lépine que j'ai encore, et un lit à la
duchesse où j'ai couché à l'âge de sept ans, ce qui donne la proportion de la taille.
L'inauguration de la poupée fut une fête pour la famille royale. Elle vint dîner à Bellevue. En sortant de table, on m'envoya chercher. Les deux battants s'ouvrirent, et la poupée arriva traînée sur son lit et escortée de tous ses accessoires. Le Roi me tenait par la main: "Pour qui est tout cela, Adèle?
--Je crois bien que c'est pour moi, Sire."
Tout le monde se mit à jouer avec ma nouvelle propriété. On voulut me faire remplacer la poupée dans le lit, et la Reine et madame Élisabeth, à genoux des deux côtés, s'amusèrent à le faire, avec des éclats de joie de leur habileté à tourner les matelas. (I, 67-68)

Louis XVI is portrayed as an indulgent, fatherly figure. Adèle recounts a number of episodes in which the King demonstrated kindness to her, such as the following anecdote about a royal decree regarding her dog at Versailles:

Je rencontrais souvent le Roi dans les jardins de Versailles et, du plus loin que je l'apercevais, je courais toujours à lui. Un jour, je manquai à cette habitude; il me fit appeler. J'arrivai tout en larmes.
"Qu'avez-vous, ma petite Adèle?
--Ce sont vos vilains gardes, Sire, qui veulent tuer mon chien parce qu'il court après vos poules.
--Je vous promets que cela n'arrivera plus."
Et, en effet, il y eut une consigne donnée avec ordre de laisser courir le chien de mademoiselle d'Osmond après le gibier. (I, 68)

The first jolt in her idyllic childhood was in the form of the events of the Revolution of 1789. The trauma of the period left its mark on the comtesse, who describes the events of those days through the eyes of an eight-year-old girl. She was at one time without warning sent off
with her maid to a small room in a distant neighborhood, and then taken to the country, isolated from her family. Too young to fully understand the reasons for these moves, she was "assez âgée pour souffrir beaucoup de cet exil" (I, 70). She was reunited with her mother, but her father was often absent. Then came an evening which had a profound effect on the young Adèle:

A minuit, mon père arriva. Je fus réveillée par le bruit et par la joie de le revoir, mais elle ne fut pas longue. Il venait nous dire adieu et prendre quelque argent. Il donna l'ordre de seller ses chevaux et de les mener par un détour gagner Saint-Cyr. Son frère, l'abbé d'Osmont, qui l'accompagnait, devait aller avec eux l'y attendre.

Ces messieurs s'occupèrent de changer leur costume de Cour pour en prendre un de voyage. Mon père chargea des pistolets. Pendant ce temps, ma mère cousait tout ce qu'on avait pu trouver d'or dans la maison dans deux ceintures qu'elle leur fit mettre. Tout cela fut l'affaire d'une demi-heure et ils partirent. Je voulus me jeter au cou de mon père; ma mère m'en arracha avec une brusquerie à laquelle je n'étais pas accoutumée, je restai confondue. La porte se ferma, et alors je la vis tomber à genoux dans une explosion de douleur qui absorba toute mon attention; je compris qu'elle avait voulu épargner à mon père la souffrance inutile d'être témoin de notre affliction. Cette leçon pratique m'a fait un grand effet et, dans aucune occasion de ma vie depuis, je ne me suis laissée aller à des démonstrations qui pussent aggraver le chagrin ou l'anxiété des autres. (I, 71)

For a child who had been raised among the splendors of Versailles and pampered by the royal family, the Revolution was both frightening and incomprehensible. The warmth and security of her world had been shattered, and the reader of
the memoirs has the impression that for the young Adèle, the fall of the Ancien Régime was in a sense "paradise lost."

In 1790, Adèle d'Osmond returned to France from Brighton for a brief period with her family. For the then nine-year-old Adèle, it was clear that those idyllic days of her childhood at Versailles and Brighton were gone forever.

J'ai parfaitement présenté une scène de cet été. Je n'avais pas vu la Reine depuis bien des mois. Elle vint à Bellevue sous l'escorte de la garde nationale; j'étais élevée dans l'horreur de cet habit. La Reine, je crois, était déjà à peu près prisonnière, car ce monde ne la quittait jamais. Toujours est-il que, lorsqu'elle m'envoyait chercher, je la trouvais sur la terrasse entourée de gardes nationaux. Mon petit cœur se gonfla à cet aspect et je me mis à sangloter. La Reine s'agenouilla, appuya son visage contre le mien et les voilà tous deux de mes longs cheveux blonds, en me sollicitant de cacher mes larmes. Je sentis couler les siennes. J'entends encore son "paix, paix, mon Adèle"; elle resta longtemps dans cette attitude. (I, 76)

After her family was reunited in Naples and finally in England the security of the family unit was restored. She basked in the undivided attention and affections of her parents. The years of exile in England are portrayed in a very favorable light by the comtesse, clouded only by occasional news of atrocities in faraway France. Her education was quite advanced for a young woman of the period, and she displayed remarkable musical talents. At a
certain point in her young life, she writes, she realized that she was pretty:

Je ne sais quand je m'avisai de découvrir que j'étais jolie, mais ce ne fut que quelque temps après mon arrivée à Londres et très vaguement. Les exclamations des dernières classes du peuple, dans la rue, m'avertirent les premières: "Vous êtes trop jolie pour attendre," me disait un charretier en rangeant ses chevaux.—"Vous ne serez jamais comme cette jolie dame si vous pleurez," assurait une marchande de pommes à sa petite fille.—"Que Dieu bénisse votre joli visage, il repose à voir," s'écriait un portefaix, en passant à côté de moi, etc. (I, 103)

The author seems to take great pleasure in describing her recollections of this period so full of promise. In spite of events in France, the future seemed bright to the pretty, talented, and well-born young woman. Many of her hopes and expectations were not to be realized, however, and the bitterness of many of the passages that follow are in stark contrast to the idyllic youth so warmly portrayed. According to Carolyn Hielbrun, "Nostalgia, particularly for childhood, is likely to be a mask for unrecognized anger" (Writing a Woman's Life, 15). The nostalgia apparent in these pages may indeed be a mask, but the anger felt by the comtesse de Boigne is anything but unrecognized. If the fall of the Ancien Régime appears as paradise lost for the public life of Adèle d'Osmond, her marriage is portrayed as a disaster in her private life. An enchanted childhood such as that portrayed by the comtesse in the memoirs
should be followed by the account of a story-book marriage, but like her mother before her, Adèle had little more than her beauty and her talents to offer a potential suitor. There was to be no dashing young nobleman for Adèle, however.

There is no mention of suitors in the memoirs until an aging general, recently returned from India with an immense fortune, requests her hand in marriage. Adèle de Boigne's description of this episode resembles more a financial transaction than a courtship, and is in stark contrast with the romantic account of her parents' marriage offered earlier:

J'avais seize ans. Je n'avais jamais reçu le plus léger hommage, du moins je ne m'en étais pas aperçue. Je n'avais qu'une passion dans le cœur, c'était l'amour filial. Ma mère se désolait dans la crainte de voir s'épuiser les ressources précaires qui soutenaient notre existence. La reine de Naples, chassée de ses Etats, lui mandait qu'elle ne savait pas si elle pourrait continuer la pension qu'elle lui faisait. Ses lamentations me touchaient encore moins que le silence de mon père et les insomnies gravées sur son visage.

J'étais sous ces impressions lorsque monsieur O'Connell arriva chargé de me proposer la main d'un homme qui annonçait vingt mille louis de rente, offrait trois mille louis de douaire et insinuait que, n'ayant pas un parent, ni un lien dans le monde, il n'aurait rien de plus cher que sa jeune femme et sa famille. On me fit part de ces propositions. (I, 113)

Adèle de Boigne did indeed have a "mariage d'amour," in that she married out of love for her parents. When the
general included her family in the bargain, he was not aware to what extent he would have to keep his word. The young Adèle did not even consult her parents in her decision, requesting instead a tête-à-tête interview with the general in which she detailed her demands. If the general de Boigne would agree to provide her parents with sufficient revenue to assure henceforth their financial security, she would agree to accept his hand in marriage. Adèle insists that she was honest with her suitor, stating that she didn't love him and probably never would, but that he would earn her respect by assuring her family's future. This seemed to be enough for the general, who readily assented.

And so it was that Adèle d'Osmond committed herself to an arranged marriage, which is not at all unusual for her social stratum. The fact that she had made the arrangements herself at such a young age is quite another matter, however. Both bride and groom made impulse decisions, as the marriage was performed at the French Chapel in London on June 11, 1798, just twelve days after Adèle and the general had their first meeting.

It wasn't long before the reality of the situation began to set in, and the discord and temporary separations began. The young bride places the blame for these problems squarely on her husband. She insists that he never loved
her in the first place, that he had married her only to
gain revenge after another young woman had spurned his
advances. To her millionaire husband, she writes, she was
little more than another possession:

Nous avions un assez grand état, des dîners très
bons et fréquents, de magnifiques concerts où je
chantais. Monsieur de Boigne était, de temps en
temps, bien aisé de montrer qu'il avait fait
l'acquisition d'une jolie machine bien
harmonisée. Puis, la jalousie orientale le
reprenant, il était furieux que j'eusse été
regardée, écoutée, surtout admirée ou applaudie,
et il me le disait en termes de corps de garde.
(I, 116)

The comtesse de Boigne painted herself at that period
as an innocent child caught up in the machinations of an
old soldier, referring to herself repeatedly as an "enfant"
and a "petite fille." She insists that she did not marry
him for her own financial gain. Had this been the case,
she states, she could have easily fleeced him in a more
efficient manner:

Je crois qu'une femme plus âgée, plus habile, un
peu artificieuse, mettant un grand prix aux
jouissances que donne l'argent et ayant en vue ce
testament dont il parlait perpétuellement et que
je lui ai vu faire et refaire cinq ou six fois,
aurait pu tirer beaucoup meilleur parti pour elle
et pour lui de la situation où j'étais. Mais que
pouvait faire la petite fille la plus candide et
la plus fière qui puisse exister! (I, 115-16)

After only ten months of marriage, the general
proposed that she return to her parents, an offer she
happily accepted. Unfortunately, others in her family were
not so eager to see the pair separate; M. de Boigne's
wealth was coveted. Her parents received her with joy,
"Mais ce n'était pas le compte du reste de ma famille, ni
de ma société, qui voulaient exploiter le millionnaire et
se souciaient fort peu que je payasse les frais" (I, 117).

Under pressure from both her family and her husband,
the young bride was not happy with what she saw, and
learned some bitter lessons about the society in which she
lived in the process: "Ce fut alors que je me trouvai
victime et témoin de la plus odieuse persécution. Je lui
reproche surtout de m'avoir, avant l'âge de dix-sept ans,
arraché toutes les illusions avec lesquelles j'étais si
bénévolement entrée dans le monde dix mois avant." Her
husband, disgusted by such behavior, "ferma sa bourse et sa
maison" (I, 117).

According to Madame de Boigne, this marriage was not
only the end of a happy childhood, it was the ruin of her
youth. Although she does not elaborate on her domestic
life, the bitterness of the narrator is glaringly exposed:

Je n'entrerai plus dans aucun détail sur mon
ménage. Il suffit de savoir que, désespéré et
croyant m'adorer lorsque nous étions séparés,
ennuyé de moi et me prenant en haine lorsque nous
étions réunis, il m'a quittée pour toujours cinq
ou six fois. Toutes ces séparations étaient
accompagnées de scènes qui ont empoisonné ma
jeunesse, si mal employée que je l'ai traversée
sans m'en douter et l'ai trouvée derrière moi
sans en avoir joui. (I, 118)

A kind of "tug of war" emerges from these pages. A
conflict is evident between her husband and her parents.
Adèle views her husband as an obstacle to her family happiness, as if he were intentionally trying to make her unhappy: "Bientôt après mon retour à Londres, monsieur de Boigne m'emmena en Ecosse. Il aimait à m'éloigner de ma famille" (I, 124).

The comte de Boigne was seen as an obstacle not just to her family, but also to her society. "Depuis [mon mariage], la vaste jalousie de monsieur de Boigne, qui embrassait la nature entière, y compris mon père et mon chien, m'avait séquestrée de toutes relations sociales, et je n'avais vu le monde que comme une lanterne magique" (I, 138).

In 1801, the general left London for his native Chambéry, again turning over his young wife to her parents and leaving her with sufficient revenue to maintain her accustomed lifestyle. This brief period of her existence before her return to France is warmly portrayed, a time of peaceful harmony in stark contrast to the discord of her stormy life with the general:

Cette phase de ma vie dura deux années qui ont été les plus tranquilles dont je conserve le souvenir. Je menais modérément la vie du monde; j'avais un intérieur doux où j'étais adorée. Mon père était dans toute la force de son intelligence et de sa santé, et s'occupait continuellement de mon frère et de moi. Nous avions repris nos lectures et nos études et menions une vie très rationnelle. Mon frère avait une très belle voix. Nous faisions beaucoup de musique (I, 128).
The general would make a few additional efforts to resume a conjugal lifestyle with his wife, but they were short-lived and doomed to failure. In 1804 she returned to France at his request. He had purchased a new property for her near Paris (Beauregard), but by 1805 Adèle's parents had moved in with her, and the general was back in Chambéry. Until his death in 1830, Adèle de Boigne travelled to Chambéry an average of once each year to spend a week or two with her husband. Even then, her visits were usually timed to coincide with the baths that Adèle took with Juliette Récamier at nearby Aix.

Much of the general's considerable fortune went to his young bride. He had indeed rescued her family from financial oblivion, all were free from financial worries for life. The groom, however, received very little in return for his investment. The bride had promised him her respect for helping her family, but respect is hardly the word that comes to mind when the reader considers the image of the general de Boigne which emerges from the memoirs. The narrator describes the general as trying to present a false image of himself at the time of the wedding:

Le général de Boigne avait quarante-neuf ans. Il rapportait de l'Inde, avec une immense fortune faite au service des princes mahrattes, une réputation honorable. Sa vie était peu connue, et il me trompa sur tous ses antécédents: sur son nom, sur sa famille, sur son existence passée. Je crois qu'à cette époque, son projet était de rester tel qu'il se montrait alors. (I, 114)
The comtesse admits to knowing little about his military career, although she must have been conscious of the admiration for the general expressed by others in military circles. This awareness is apparent in the following passage:

Monsieur de Boigne n'était ni si mauvais ni si bon que ses actions, prises séparément, devaient le faire juger. Né dans la plus petite bourgeoisie, il avait été longtemps soldat. J'ignore encore par quelle route il avait cheminé de la légion irlandaise au service de France jusque sur l'éléphant d'où il commandait une armée de trente mille cipayes, formée par ses soins pour le service de Sindiah, chef des princes mahrattes auxquels cette force, organisée à l'europeenne, avait assuré la domination du nord de l'Inde. (I, 115)

Instead of admiring his accomplishments, the comtesse couldn't help but see something suspicious in his actions: "Monsieur de Boigne avait dû employer beaucoup d'habileté et de ruses pour quitter le pays en emportant une faible partie des richesses qu'il y possédait et qui pourtant s'élevait à dix millions" (I, 115).

According to the comtesse, his long stay in India had added all of the "jalousies orientales" to that which would have naturally formed in a man of his age. In addition, she claims that he suffered from the ravages of a prolonged use of opium: "La maladie dont il sortait l'avait forcé à un usage immodéré de l'opium qui avait paralysé en lui les facultés morales et physiques (I, 115). As for his character, Adèle does not mince words:
...mais par-dessus tout, il était doué du caractère le plus complètement désobligeant que Dieu ait jamais accordé à un mortel. Il avait le besoin de déplaire comme d'autres ont celui de plaire. Il voulait faire sentir la suprématie qu'il attachait à sa grande fortune et il ne pensait jamais l'exercer que lorsqu'il trouvait le moyen de blesser quelqu'un. Il insultait ses valets; il offensait ses convives; à plus forte raison sa femme était-elle victime de cette triste disposition. Et, quoiqu'il fût honnête homme, loyal en affaires, qu'il eût même dans ses formes grossières une certaine apparence de bonhomie, cependant cette disposition à la désobligeance, exploitée avec toute l'aristocratie de l'argent, la plus hostile de toutes, rendait son commerce si odieux qu'il n'a jamais pu s'attacher un individu quelconque, dans aucune classe de la société, quoiqu'il ait répandu de nombreux bienfaits. (I, 115)

Here Adèle reveals some of her class prejudice, and perhaps her rage at her situation is wrongly directed at her husband and his wealth. Does a person of such lowly station merit such wealth and the influence it entails? Such is the impression that the reader of the memoirs may glean from the text.

The general de Boigne was not of noble birth, as the comtesse is quick to point out, but rather came from a middle class background and was unfamiliar with the "monde" in which his wife lived. In spite of his humble origins, he was able to own rich properties and live a life of luxury, while Adèle's family, bearing a name which dates to the crusades, lost nearly everything in the Revolution of 1789. It wounded Adèle's aristocratic pride to be forced to accept financial salvation for herself and her family
from a man of such "common" origins, a man who could never be a part of her world. In fact, her only concern during their initial separations seems to be over public reaction to her predicament, as when the general announced his departure for England, again leaving her with her parents:

Au fond, cela me convenait, mais pourtant j'étais désolée de devenir une troisième fois la fable du public. Il était parti l'hiver précédent un jour de concert où nous avions cinq cents personnes invitées; cela avait été raconté et commenté dans toutes les gazettes aussi bien que dans tous les salons. (I, 127)

Adèle offers only a few miserly compliments to her husband in the memoirs. During a journey to Scotland in 1799, she describes him as "moins maussade que de coutume" (I, 124). The visit of the King's brother to Chambéry and the honor he bestowed on the comte de Boigne at Buisson Rond earns a grudging compliment from the comtesse: "A Chambéry, il [Monsieur] logea chez monsieur de Boigne et le traita avec bonté" (I, 331). The only point in the memoirs in which the reader may find a certain degree of admiration for the general is where the comtesse travels to Chambéry to assist him in the inauguration of the "refuge de Saint-Benoit," which was destined to serve as a home for middle class citizens over the age of sixty who are without other resource. This is just one of the many establishments founded or aided by the comte de Boigne. These rare lines
of praise even contain a tinge of good humor, the only trace of positive feelings toward the general to be found in the memoirs:

Je m'identifiai fort à cette noble pensée et je fis, avec satisfaction, les honneurs du premier repas donné aux réfugiés (c'est le nom qu'on assigna aux habitants de la maison Saint-Benoît) et aux autorités du pays invitées à cette occasion. Je passai la journée, et presque la totalité du lendemain, avec les nouveaux installés dont le contentement faisait bonheur à voir. Monsieur de Boigne n'avait rien négligé pour rendre [le séjour] confortable.

De tous les nombreux bienfaits dont il a doté Chambéry, la maison du refuge m'a toujours paru la plus utile et la plus satisfaissante pour son cœur. Il a construit une aile à l'hôpital, un hospice pour les aliénés, un pour les voyageurs, un autre pour les maladies cutanées. Il a bâti des casernes, un théâtre, ouvert des rues, planté des boulevards, construit des maisons; et, pour couronner l'œuvre, rétabli un couvent de capucins et un collège de Jésuites lorsque, dans les dernières années, il devint très dévot, à sa façon pourtant car, avec l'autorisation du directeur jésuite, les capucins faisaient le carême, jeûnaient et mangeaient maigre pour le général de Boigne, moyennant des bons de deux mille livres de viande qu'il donnait au couvent, à prendre sur les bouchers de Chambéry.

Je ne sais pas trop comment cela s'arrangeait. Il est avec le ciel des accommodements. Cette façon de faire maigre m'a toujours extrêmement réjouie, et monsieur de Boigne ne se faisait faute d'en plaisanter lui-même les capucins ses bons amis. (II, 38-39)

Henry Bordeaux contests this passage, however, stating that "Mme de Boigne présida le premier repas des réfugiés et se hâta de repartir" (Le Comte de Boigne, 185).
Hearing that her husband was gravely ill, Adèle wrote to ask if she could come to Chambéry to visit him ("Je le connaissais trop bien pour hasarder à l'aller trouver sans sa permission" II, 169). He responded that he was better, and that she could visit in late July. When she learned of his death not long thereafter, there is no indication of grief or regret. She appears to be more concerned about the breach of etiquette committed by not being at his side, and attempts to justify her absence, even implying that in a way it was really his fault!

Rassurée par cette lettre et celles qui suivirent, mais ne voulant pas aller dans le monde, je m'établis à la campagne dans le commencement de juin. Ce fut là que j'appris que monsieur de Boigne, qu'on disait en pleine convalescence, avait succombé le 21 à une nouvelle attaque d'une maladie dont il était atteint depuis bien des années. Cette dernière crise n'ayant duré que peu d'heures, on assurait qu'il avait été impossible de m'en prévenir. Je dus le croire. Cependant je regrettais de n'avoir pas insisté plus fortement pour me rendre à Chambéry au mois de mai, malgré sa résistance. (II, 170)

These are the final lines in the memoirs dealing with her husband. The lack of emotion in these lines is rendered more stark in that her husband entirely disappears from the text after this point, and without transition, she begins the next paragraph by describing the unusual fires that were plaguing the northern provinces of France. This abrupt abandonment in the text of the man who provided her a lifetime of financial security is shocking. There is no
mention of the funeral which she did not attend, no eulogy of any kind, no words of gratitude for all that he left her in his testament.

Sources with a more objective point of view than the memoirs describe the magnificence of the general de Boigne's funeral, and the days of mourning observed by the city of Chambéry. The most recent of de Boigne's biographers, Desmond Young, describes the public reaction to de Boigne's death in 1830:

Chambery went into mourning. For two days the shops were closed and the bells tolled. When de Boigne was buried with full military and civic honors in the sixteenth-century church of Lemenc, the streets were filled as the whole town turned out to pay respect to its benefactor. It was to do so again in 1930, when the centenary of his death was celebrated. (*Fountain of the Elephants*, 288-89)

Young also offers the details of the comte de Boigne's generous testament to his wife, and does not hide his opinion of the comtesse's treatment of her late spouse in the memoirs:

She does not mention that in his will de Boigne treated her with great generosity, making over to her her dowry of £2,500 a year absolutely, without any of the deductions provided for should she remarry, together with all her jewels, silver and furniture and the enjoyment for life of Chatenay and the considerable revenue from the estate, though he had paid for the property and it stood in his name. Indeed, she does not ever mention him again. It was, however, at Chatenay that she wrote her *Memoirs*, with the story of her marriage. (*Fountain...,* 290-91)
The general de Boigne, whose name is so sullied by the comtesse in her memoirs, is the object of lavish praise from several biographers. His exploits in India were already legendary when he arrived in England in 1797. Herbert Compton, in his *A Particular Account of the European Military Adventurers of Hindustan from 1784-1803* published in 1892, sums up the general's role in India in the following paragraph:

De Boigne's genius in war and his abilities in diplomacy more than quadrupled the extent of Madhoji Sindhia's dominions and influence. The unbroken successes of his "invincible Army"--as it came to be called--inspired that prince with a belief in the European methods of warfare, and weaned him from his racial prejudices in favour of cavalry to an appreciation of infantry for heroic defence and irresistible attack. His conversion was not without fruit, for "the military talent of De Boigne and the valour of his battalions were the grand instruments which made Madhoji Sindhia the most powerful prince in India." (107)

The four major biographies of the comte de Boigne, *Le Général de Boigne* by Victor de Saint-Génis (1873), *Le Général comte de Boigne* by Maurice Besson (1930), *Le Comte de Boigne* by Henry Bordeaux of the French Academy (1956), and Desmond Young's *Fountain of the Elephants* (1959) offer fascinating accounts of the life and accomplishments of the comte de Boigne. The figure that emerges from these biographies easily rivals any fictional character. To what extent does the portrait of the general drawn by Adèle concur with that of his biographers?
To begin with, the comtesse de Boigne describes her husband as being issued from "la plus petite bourgeoisie." De Boigne's parents were in fact middle class, but his father, a furrier, was well enough off to send his sons to college and give them professions. The comte de Boigne did, as Adèle claims, change his name. He was born Benoit Leborgne (also recorded as Le Borgne), a name which certainly must have repulsed his young aristocratic bride. The exact reason for his adapting his new name is not clear, but Ethel Colquhoun offers a credible explanation in her article "The Husband of Madame de Boigne":

Such changes of name were by no means uncommon at the time. The Leborgnes were Savoyards, and it is possible that in enlisting under the banner of France rather than that of Savoy (which offered few inducements to ambitious youth) Benoit chose a more euphonious and Gallic form of his name by which to be known in the French army. (704)

There is, then, some truth to the comtesse de Boigne's claim that her husband had not been altogether frank about his background. More serious perhaps was what Adèle seems to imply as the general's failure to inform her about his first wife, a Hindu-Persian woman whom he had brought with him from India under the name of Mrs (Helen) Bennett. The couple was accompanied by their two children, a son and a daughter:

Le général de Boigne...avait eu deux [enfants] d'une union contractée dans les Indes en 1788, suivant les usages du pays, avec la fille d'un colonel persan. La fille, appelée Bunoo, fut
baptisée sous le nom d'Anna et mourut en 1810, à Paris, chez Mme de Boigne. Le fils, Aly-Bux, reçut au baptême les noms de Charles-Alexandre-Benoît. (Le Général de Boigne, 303)

De Boigne was not breaking any laws by proposing marriage to another woman, as his union with Helen was not a Christian marriage and was not recognized in England. It should come as no surprise, then, that the general would keep the existence of his family secret, for he set out to win Adèle's hand with the same vigor that he orchestrated military campaigns.² A good officer never reveals any weaknesses.

The comtesse makes no direct mention of the general's Indian family in the memoirs, but other sources reveal that she was well aware of it. According to Henry Bordeaux, the general's transplanted family was actually written into the marriage contract:

Elle ne s'attendait pas à ce qu'il répudiât aussi ses deux enfants qu'il avait reconnus par la voie légale: Sa fille aînée avait échangé le nom indien de Banoo pour Mary-Ann et son fils Ally-Bux s'appelait maintenant Charles-Alexandre. Le général exigea que, lorsque ses enfants seraient plus âgés, la future Mme de Boigne les prît auprès d'elle et s'occupât d'eux. Mlle d'Osmond s'engagea à les élever comme les enfants qu'elle aurait elle-même de son mari. (Le comte de Boigne, 150-51)

If this was indeed stipulated in the contract as Bordeaux suggests, Madame de Boigne was faithful to her

²Henry Bordeaux writes: "Benoit de Boigne assiégeait Mlle d'Osmond comme une place forte de l'Inde" (Le Comte de Boigne, 150).
obligations. She even demonstrated a concern that one would hardly expect from a woman so thoroughly displeased with her husband. When Monsieur de Boigne called for his daughter to join him in Chambéry from her convent in England, she obeyed in spite of an illness. A stormy passage by ship which lasted several days aggravated her condition. After she arrived, Madame de Boigne demonstrated a surprising devotion to this previously unseen stepdaughter:

La jeune fille arriva à Paris, épuisée et très malade, chez Mme de Boigne qui, atterrée, la fit transporter à Beauregard, où l'air serait meilleur et où elle l'accompagna elle-même, attentive et dévouée. C'est là que Mary-Ann mourut sans avoir revu son père qui l'attendait en Savoie. Il en fut désespéré et écrivit des lettres déchirantes sur les circonstances de cette mort dont il s'accusait lui-même. (Bordeaux, Le Comte de Boigne, 160)

Independant confirmation of this event is found in Saint-Génis' work as well as in Le Général comte de Boigne by Maurice Besson:

La comtesse de Boigne, avec beaucoup de noblesse d'âme, il faut le reconnaître, s'occupa de ces deux enfants, dont la fille, "Banoo," mourut chez elle, à Paris, en 1810, et dont le fils, Charles-Alexandre de Boigne, savant distingué, vécut à Chambéry entouré d'une famille qui ne cessa de servir avec honneur la Savoie et la France. (64)

Adèle d'Osmond's family was also aware of the general de Boigne's Indian wife and family. The marquis d'Osmond was apparently satisfied that everything was in order, for
he became, according to Desmond Young, the godfather of
Benoit de Boigne's son:

The self-possessed little boy...had been baptised
Charles Alexander Bennet de Boigne in London on
October 22nd, 1799. He was then, according to
the register, nine years old. His godfather was
the Marquis d'Osmond, himself, his godmother Mary
Angelo, wife of Anthony Angelo. If, then, his
existence was concealed from Adèle at the time of
de Boigne's proposal, it was soon disclosed to
d'Osmond and condoned by him. (Fountain..., 256)

The general de Boigne had provided for Charles'
education in England, and arranged for his son to succeed
him after he himself was ennobled by the king of Sardinia.
In 1816 Charles married at Chambéry a sixteen-year-old girl
of noble birth, Marie-Louise Césarine Violet de Montbel.
Six months after the marriage, Charles returned to England
for a business trip. His father sent with him letters to
Adèle and the marquis d'Osmond, urging him to deliver them
in person. Charles was also to visit his mother, and was
apprehensive about the reaction of his stepmother to his
presence. He needn't have been so concerned:

In the event, it was Adèle who provided the
surprise. Having inspected her stepson, approved
of him and approved also of his eminently
suitable marriage (the Baron de Montbel, his
father-in-law, was later to hold office in the
Polignac ministry), she took a liking to Charles
which developed, on her side at any rate, into a
lifelong attachment. She was delighted to
entertain his young wife in Paris; she showed
herself much more cordial to him than ever she
had been to his father; she was content to leave
her business affairs in his hands. Thirty years
later we find her writing him affectionate
letters and she seems to have become as fond of
him as she was capable of being of anyone not by birth an Osmond. (Fountain... , 263)

These lines are an almost touching tribute to the fact that Adèle de Boigne was indeed capable of affection and trust for someone other than her father, and the fact that Charles was the son of her often-scorned husband makes it all the more remarkable. One cannot help but wonder why this pleasant account, as well as the touching details of Mary Ann's death, are not echoed in the memoirs.

The comtesse de Boigne claims in her memoirs that her husband was incapable of inspiring loyalty, even with his great wealth. Each of the general's biographers, however, present a number of examples which prove the contrary. The general inspired fierce devotion in his men, and enjoyed the complete confidence of his commander: "Sindhia himself, the ablest and best educated of the Mahratta princes," writes Ethel Colquhoun, "learned to place implicit trust in him, and loaded him with rewards until he was virtually the ruler of Hindustan" ("Husband of Madame de Boigne," 707). Even the general's major domo, who accompanied him from India, continued to serve de Boigne until the latter's death in 1830.

As for the general's military accomplishments, Adèle is content to mention that Monsieur de Boigne started as a simple soldier and finished his military career as head of a large force that he had organized à l'européenne for an
Indian potentate which assured the domination of Northern India. The comtesse underestimates her husband's accomplishments, but her statement is true for the most part. The general never actually served as an enlisted man, but began his military career with the commission of ensign in the service of the French crown with the famous (in military circles) Irish Brigades. Compton's lines, quoted earlier, describe the magnitude of de Boigne's career in India, but one may perhaps pardon Adèle for downplaying the significance of her husband's exploits, and appearing suspicious about the general's allegiances during his stay in India. Saint-Génis offers a plausible explanation for such a reaction, insisting on European ignorance of Indian affairs:

Le tumulte des grandes guerres d'Europe avait empêché qu'on prit garde aux événements de l'extrême Orient; il n'y avait plus de relations régulières entre l'Inde et la France, les nouvelles et les voyageurs de ce pays empruntaient la voie d'Angleterre, et la surexcitation de l'esprit public contre tout ce qui, de près ou de loin, pouvait paraître suspect d'attaches britanniques était telle, le général de Boigne, devenu riche pendant cette lamentable période de notre histoire où chacun s'était ruiné, apparaissant au milieu des émigrés, arrivant d'un pays où les Anglais avaient détruit nos colonies, et fortement soupçonné de les y avoir aidés, devint la victime d'une curiosité hostile et d'un dénigrement systématique. *Le Général de Boigne*, 307-308

Although the general de Boigne was admitted to England and even naturalized under the name Bennet de Boigne, this
does not mean that he served the crown in a way which might necessarily be viewed as devious or treacherous by the French. Although he was always on good terms with English authorities, the only concession that he is known to have made regarding the English was his refusal to fight their forces in India. One of his stipulations with Sindhia was that he would never engage English forces. This does not imply sympathy for the English and their expanding presence in India as much as a realistic assessment of English military potential. An extract from a letter addressed to Victor de Saint Génis by the comte de Boigne's grandson in 1892 offers proof of what history has demonstrated to be general de Boigne's prudence:

As to his connection with the English and the advice he gave to Sindhia, the General felt that, in spite of the splendid army he had created for him, the prince would be beaten if he waged war against the English. When he left him, he told him that, notwithstanding the pride he felt in the Brigades, he advised the Prince to disband them rather than to go to war with the English. (European Military Adventurers..., 98-99)

The émigré suspicions of de Boigne's being secretly in the pocket of the English colonial forces are thus unfounded. As for the way in which de Boigne amassed his wealth, a fortune that Adèle implies he acquired by questionable means (Amélie Lenormant, in agreement, describes the general as "un de ces hardis aventuriers qui, en mettant au service de la Compagnie leurs talents..."
militaires et une audace sans frein et sans scrupule, amassaient de fabuleuses richesses" *Le Correspondant*, 741), Benoît de Boigne is portrayed differently elsewhere. Others in similar positions, such as his successor Perron, acquired considerably more wealth in less time. Ethel Colquhoun writes that, upon resigning his command in India, the general de Boigne retired to Lucknow, where he demonstrated considerable talent in the world of finance:

...by the advice of his friend Claude Martin, he began to speculate with the money he had saved, and soon collected the nucleus of a considerable fortune, which he carefully invested. Had he not been a soldier and an administrator, de Boigne could have made his mark as a financier, for his business capacity was very high, and even his wife acknowledges that in business relations he preserved a high standard of honour. There is no ground for supposing that his vast fortune was not legitimately acquired by business skill and application. ("Husband of Madame de Boigne," 706)

As to the way in which the general de Boigne employed much of his wealth to endow the city of Chambéry with a number of charitable establishments, the comtesse, although she admires his actions, hints elsewhere in the memoirs that the general was simply dazzling his fellow countrymen with his riches: "Enfin, séduit par l'immense importance que sa fortune hors de pair lui donnait dans sa patrie, il y fixa son séjour et il en est devenu le bienfaiteur" (I, 169).

Amélie Lenormant, who paints an otherwise unflattering image of the general, offers this concession: "La
générosité était un des traits saillants de son caractère, et, quelle qu'ait été l'origine de sa fortune, il en usa noblement" (Le Correspondant, 742).

The general de Boigne's humanitarian spirit in his home town of Chambéry was not new. Adèle de Boigne barely mentions her husband's activities in India, and as a result the reader of her memoirs is not informed of other examples of M. de Boigne's humanity. "He spent his latter years and a large fortune in the service of the poor," writes Ethel Colquhoun, "not because of the 'importance' it gave him, but because he had, consistently throughout life, striven to do his duty to his fellow-men" (Husband of Mme de Boigne, 709). These sentiments are reflected in the general's constant efforts to improve the condition and treatment of his men while in India. A mercenary, acting only out of self-interest and a profit motive, would not go to such lengths. Compton describes the efforts of the general to improve the lot of the men under his command:

A noble trait in De Boigne's character was his earnest endeavour to mitigate the horrors of war and minimise its evils. His humanity evoked blessings from the battlefield, where only despair had moaned before. Officers and soldiers who were wounded in his service received pecuniary compensations commensurate with the severity of their sufferings, and men permanently disabled were awarded grants of land, which passed to their heirs, whilst special provision was made for the relatives of those who were killed in action. The tortures of the battlefield were ameliorated by the establishment of a medical department, to which an ambulance
corps was attached. These reforms were half a century in advance of the times, and were benign innovations such as no native powers had ever dreamt before. (European Military Adventurers..., 106)

Among military men in Europe, de Boigne's name and accomplishments were quite well known. Among other examples, Compton describes French efforts to defeat British interests in India during the Consulate, and the name de Boigne loomed large in the minds of the participants. General Perron, a Frenchman and de Boigne's successor in India, had more sympathy for his native country than for England, making certain proposals "which commended themselves to the first Consul" (94). Compton continues:

The great want that existed in Perron's army was that of trained officers. To supply this deficiency Bonaparte, under the colourable pretext of colonial defence, despatched to Pondicherry a fleet of six men-of-war, which sailed from France under Monsieur Lenois, a distinguished naval officer. It transported 1,400 picked troops commanded by General Decaen. Amongst these were 200 young Frenchmen, who, although they shipped in the guise of private soldiers, were gentlemen by birth, thoroughly trained in the duties of officers, and provided with a proper equipment. They were, in addition, one and all fired with a determination to follow in the footsteps of De Boigne, and carve out for themselves kingdoms and principalities. (European Military Adventurers..., 95)

De Boigne's military exploits were so well known in Europe that Napoleon himself, apparently unaware of the Savoyard's pro-British sentiments, recognized his genius by offering him command of a force which was to invade India
and unseat the British. Desmond Young insists that there is strong evidence to back up the existence of this offer:

It was contained in a letter written to him by Napoleon in his own hand. De Boigne was offered the command of a combined Franco-Russian force which should invade India from Russia by the overland route. The letter has disappeared (there is one witness, living at Nogent-sur-Marne and now over eighty, who has seen the letter. It was shown to him in July, 1914, by a great-grandson of de Boigne from whom he had bought a property) but it is known that such an expedition had been suggested to Napoleon by the Prince of Nassau-Siegen, diplomatic courier between the Czar Alexander I and Talleyrand, and that Napoleon had written to the Czar, approving the proposal. (Fountain..., 238)

Madame de Boigne is not entirely ignorant of military affairs. In her memoirs, she describes aspects of certain campaigns and their leaders with great interest, and yet, judging from the content of the memoirs, she seems to ignore the feats of her own husband, a man singled out by the military leader Adèle admired the most, Napoleon Bonaparte. She does mention in her text a conversation that she had with the emperor, in which Bonaparte speaks of her husband in a way that suggests that he is familiar with him:

Selon son usage, il me demanda aussi mon nom; je le lui dis:
"Vous habitez à Beauregard?
--Oui, Sire.
--C'est un beau lieu, votre mari y fait beaucoup travailler, c'est un service qu'il rend au pays et je lui en sais gré; j'ai de la reconnaissance pour tous les gens qui emploient les ouvriers. Il a été au service anglais?"
Je trouvai plus court de répondre que oui, mais il reprit: "C'est-à-dire pas tout à fait. Il est savoyard, n'est-ce pas?" (I, 188)

Although the general de Boigne never led troops for Napoleon, the Emperor did name him president of the conseil général of the Mont-blanc district.

There is evidence to prove that, although she chose to omit portraying this in her memoirs, Adèle was quite well aware of her husband's military and political merit. She may have been instrumental, according to Desmond Young, in obtaining for him several distinguished orders in the early days of the Restoration. Her efforts may not have been entirely selfless, however:

When Waterloo was lost and won, Adèle set out for Paris, spending some time at Chambéry, where she observed that, while the old nobility earnestly desired the restoration of the dynasty of Savoy, the middle and commercial classes preferred to remain French.

De Boigne, who had no wish to be French, was perforce on the side of the nobility and was soon to be ennobled himself. It must have been due to Adèle that he was made a Maréchal de Camp by Louis XVIII in October, 1814, a Chevalier of the military order of St. Louis in December, a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in January. It was because of his good works in Savoy and his "attachment to Our Person" that King Victor Emmanuel conferred on him the hereditary title of "Count" in 1816. But her father had been ambassador in Turin and the King of Sardinia was Louis XVIII's brother-in-law, so it may be assumed that Adèle had a hand in this also. At any rate, though she never ceased to despise her husband's bourgeois birth and to ridicule the pretensions of newly-created aristocrats, she did not hesitate to take his title and to become
If one is to believe the description offered by his wife in the memoirs, the general de Boigne was uncultured, crude, boorish, and displayed the mannerisms of a common recruit. He was, according to Adèle, dazzled and intimidated by the beau monde: "l'aristocratie, lorsqu'elle était accompagnée de la fortune et de l'entourage d'une grande existence, lui imposait un peu, et il me ménageait parce qu'il me voyait accueillie par elle" (I, 124).

The image which emerges from the biographies is entirely different. All attest to the fact that his education was well above average. He was fluent in French, Italian, English, Hindi, and Persian, with a passing knowledge of Latin. Accustomed to a life of opulence during his years of service to Sindhia, it is unlikely that he was overly intimidated by French aristocracy:

Living in sovereign magnificence, and wielding quasi-sovereign power, De Boigne was called upon to exercise the most important duties of State. For this he was fitted, for he was a consummate diplomatist, skilled in directing the most complicated affairs, and he added to a complete mastery of Oriental intrigue the political subtlety of the Italian school. His knowledge of the world was profound, and he understood the art of moulding to his purpose the minds of those he had to deal with. He was an acute observer of the dispositions of men, a rapid judge of character, and gifted in remarkable degree with the power of gaining the confidence of others. (Compton, European Military Adventurers..., 103)
Desmond Young, unlike Compton and Saint-Génis, was familiar with Adèle de Boigne's memoirs, responds directly to the comtesse's unflattering description of her husband:

De Boigne was not a courtier and he came of bourgeois stock. But he was an educated man and he had been accepted as a gentleman, not only by his brother officers in four armies (he had never served in the ranks), but by men of birth and high position, of great worldly experience and of many different nationalities, from Count Orlov to Lord Macartney, from the Marquis d'Aigueblanche to Sindhia. And to realise how fantastic it is to picture him as a mere boor from a barrack-room, one has only to turn back and consider again the impression which he has made upon Thomas Twining. (Fountain... 220)

Despite the glowing references by the general's biographers, there may be some element of truth to Adèle's claims, as evidenced by the comte de Boigne himself in a letter to his friend and fellow nabob Perron:

Je ne vous souhaitez pas de rentrer dans vos foyers de sitôt, car à parler par expérience, je ne trouve pas d'état plus malheureux pour quelqu'un qui a mené une vie tumultueuse et active, que celui de la retraite et de l'oisiveté. Aussi je n'ai trainé que des jours bien malheureux depuis mon retour en Europe; trop âgé pour jouir des dissipations qui font les délices de la jeunesse, trop âgé aussi pour des amis nouveaux et pas assez d'instruction pour jouir de la conversation des gens d'esprit et d'érudition, à quoi, joignant beaucoup de gaucherie, privé pendant vingt-six ans des usages du monde, je ne me trouve rien moins qu'heureux. (Besson, Le Général comte de Boigne, 61-62)

How does one reconcile these two images? The explanation may be found in the difference between British and French society. The general de Boigne was at home
among British elite, where his military prowess was well known, and India was a shared interest. "Les Anglais lui attribuaient une haute distinction de manières," writes Bordeaux, "mais ce n'étaient pas ces manières dont un code spécial fixait les gestes et les formules, et dont Mme d'Osmond et sa fille, pour en avoir compris l'élégance, demeuraient entichées" (Le Correspondant, 459).

In the memoirs, Adèle de Boigne's dissatisfaction with her marriage is evident, although she does not enter into great detail regarding her emotional situation at the time. Some references may be found in her correspondence, however. "To me it is only heart sorrows which can make one so weary of life," writes Adèle to her friend Juliette Récamier in 1811 (Mme Récamier and her Friends, 48). And yet, in that very same letter, she writes: "So the marriage of Mlle de Catellan is settled; I am very glad of it; it seems to me in every way wise and free from objections, which is all that can be attained in a marriage de convenance" (47).

Adèle de Boigne had never regarded her marriage to the general as anything but a mariage de convenance, but what of the general? Was he really so naive as to expect the beautiful young woman with whom he was so enamored to develop an affection for him? Did he really regard her as simply another conquest or acquisition?
All four of the comte de Boigne's biographers attest to the fact that the hero of Hindustan was prepared to return to India to resume a position of great importance. Letters exist to attest to the fact that his presence was earnestly solicited by Daulat Rao, Sindhia's successor. The general, however, abruptly changed the course of his life upon hearing Adèle's charming voice, and there is considerable evidence to demonstrate that he was very much in love with her. In what Desmond Young qualifies as "what must surely be amongst the silliest and most self-deceiving love-letters in history," the general de Boigne writes:

Now, my dear Adèle, in abiding to my promises towards you can I expect in return, and can you promise me; your affections and attachment? The possession of your person alone could never satisfy me without that of your heart; in the latter alone can depend our mutual happiness. Venus herself with all her charms would not make mine should I not possess her heart. (Fountain... 211)

The general concludes his rather lengthy letter as follows:

Without my being thought egoist I may say so much of me and I will assure you that did I not foresee all the happiness I propose myself in a matrimonial state, God forbid that I should ever think of contracting such a union. My reason will never abandon me so far and particularly so as the life of a Bachelor has nothing desagréable to me; and why should I change it but in the hope of meeting a friend and a companion ready to partake my griefs as my pleasures?

With my love, my dear and lovely Adèle,
Your most sincere and affectionate friend,

Bt. de Boigne
Although this letter may indeed be silly and self-deceiving, the general's intentions are not too difficult to discern. He seeks a "companion," a friend that his Indian begums could never be. If the general were searching for the joys of the foyer, he was to be disappointed. The duc de Broglie writes in his memoirs:

Le mariage ainsi conclu fut-il un véritable mariage? J'ai entendu raconter à cet égard les anecdotes les plus étranges et qui faisaient croire que le pauvre général, véritablement pris au piège par cette innocente, n'avait pas même un jour été payé de ses sacrifices. (RDM, t. 25, 341)

Not only was the general denied his bride's heart, something of which he had been forewarned, he may also, as Broglie suggests, have been denied other marital privileges. In a personal note penned by the general with the heading "The expressions of friendship and affection employed by a young wife towards her husband in the first eleven months of their marriage," Adèle is reported as saying:

I thought a man of your age, marrying me as young as I was, and with my birth and talents, would not have demanded from me more than Regard and not even Liking and that, had you been prudent and sensible, you would have been content to be my Husband and very satisfied to sleep near me....

Had I been able to foresee or to imagine that you would require more from me than I could give you or had ever thought of giving you, I would never have married you. A man of your age, marrying a woman of mine, could and should have waited... I detest and abhor you and, what is
more, I always shall detest and abhor you and I
shall never be reconciled to you! (Fountain..., 224-25)

The fact that there were no children issued from this
union does not of itself prove that the marriage was never
consummated, as the duc de Broglie hints, but there would
be no family resulting from it. The general's own
description of his wife's anger suggests that he may have
enforced his "conjugal rights" early—and perhaps clumsily,
if not brutally, and was thereafter banished from the bed.
Whether or not this is the case, the couple remained
childless, and Adèle remained firmly attached to her
parents.

The comtesse de Boigne had accused her husband of
taking pleasure in keeping her from her family, and yet the
general complains of excessive paternal affection driving a
wedge between himself and his wife. As long as he was with
her, he was in the shadow of the marquis d'Osmond. In the
same list of "expressions of friendship" cited earlier, the
comte records her words as he recalled them: "Understand
that my father is everything to me! Don't imagine that I
could ever love you as I love my father. My father will
always be my only confidant" (Fountain..., 225).

The comte de Boigne's comments concerning the passion
of his wife for her father are seconded in an observation
by Louis Favre: "Il y avait deux passions dominantes, qu'il
est important de ne pas confondre, pour bien la comprendre:
le culte de son père, M. le marquis d'Osmond; l'amour de son nom; - et la seconde n'était qu'une conséquence de la première" (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 316-17).

The comtesse de Boigne herself, in a remarkable paragraph from her memoirs which completely passes over the existence of her husband and their marriage, confirms the central role of her father in her life. She offers to him the devotion that most women reserve for their husbands:

J'ai toujours pensé que, pour conserver de la dignité à son existence, il fallait la diriger dans le sens d'une principale et persévérante affection et que le dévouement était le seul lien de la vie des femmes. N'ayant été, de fait, ni épouse ni mère, je m'étais entièrement donnée à l'amour filial. Quelque répugnance que j'eusse à la carrière que mon père venait de reprendre, à la résidence où on l'envoyait, et malgré ma complète indépendance de position, je ne me rappelle pas avoir éprouvé un instant d'hésitation à le suivre. (I, 285)

From this point of view, it is easy to see why the domestic life of the couple could be so complicated, and this difficulty is communicated, in broad outline, in the comtesse de Boigne's memoirs. Is Adèle intentionally trying to defame her husband? It seems clear that she affixes all of the blame for this troubled marriage on his character. Through exaggeration of some personality traits and the omission of others, she creates the image of a totally disagreeable individual. Is her depiction a true, accurate portrayal of the general? The comtesse de Boigne makes no claim to impartiality, writing in her
introduction: "Je professe peu de confiance dans une impartialité absolue, mais je pense qu'on peut prétendre à une parfaite sincérité: on est vrai quand on dit ce qu'on croit" (I, 22).

Whether intentionally or not, the comtesse overlooks in her text her husband's merits, and is quick to point out what she sees as his flaws. The most serious flaw, from Adèle d'Osmond's point of view, is the general de Boigne's social position. They are separated, or rather, her husband is separated from her, by an insurmountable gap in breeding. No matter how astonishing his accomplishments or how great his wealth, Benoit Leborgne could never hope to be her equal. Their marriage, although an economic necessity to Adèle, was a social humiliation. She was probably not repulsed by the difference in age as much as by the difference in social class. It is difficult to imagine Adèle d'Osmond displaying the same emotions if she had married a forty-seven year old nobleman of high social standing. Such unions were quite commonplace.

Birth and social standing were of paramount importance to Adèle de Boigne. There are many passages in the memoirs that show that she is capable of admiration for the lower classes. If someone of lesser status should try to overstep his or her boundaries, however, the comtesse could be merciless. The memoirs abound with examples of her
ridicule of the social pretensions of those who should know their place. A number of outside observers confirm this condescending attitude. Among them was the son of the United States ambassador in Paris from 1816-1823, James Gallatin, who had many occasions to observe Adèle de Boigne at various social functions, and labeled her in his diary as "nothing but pretension." A series of entries in his diary make it clear that his father, who represented an "upstart" nation, was regarded by the comtesse as "not of the stuff" to be granted entry into the rarified air of aristocratic society. The young man, though new to the world of diplomacy, is not intimidated by the pomp surrounding him.

August 23rd, 1816

On Thursday father and mother were commanded to dine with the King—a very great honour it seems, and one reserved for princes and ambassadors. A rather amusing incident happened. After dinner a small reception was held. Amongst the ladies received was a Comtesse de Boigne. She is the daughter of the Marquis d'Osmond, ambassador in England. In a loud tone she expressed her astonishment at the presence of Monsieur Gallatin and his wife to the Prince de Condé. His answer to her was: "His Majesty cannot too highly honour Monsieur Gallatin, as, although representing a new country, his ancestors served France for generations and one was a most honoured and intimate friend of Henri IV." It seems this got to the King's ears, who was much annoyed, and when Madame de Boigne made her curtsey he turned his back on her. She called on mamma the next day, was most gracious and asked too many questions. (Fountain..., 278)
February 10th, 1823

That comtesse de Boigne is irrepressible; she had the audacity to ask mamma at the Spanish embassy last night if her jewels were real. I cannot understand a woman of her birth and education being so absolutely tactless. I think mamma must have given her a decided answer. (Ibid, 281)

The examples above illustrate the firmly entrenched aristocratic spirit of the comtesse. What the young Gallatin interprets as a lack of tact is really just another reminder by the comtesse that the American does not belong to the same level of society. Even after seven years of encountering Mrs. Gallatin at important social functions, Adèle does not accept her as a social equal.

The general de Boigne appears to have been the victim of a similar sort of harassment. According to the general Thiébault, Adèle and her mother never allowed the general to forget that he was out of his element:

Il ne pouvait en effet faire le moindre mouvement, que ces dames ne le mortifiasent de la manière la plus cruelle. Toussait-il? "Mais, Monsieur de Boigne, en bonne compagnie, on ne tousse pas ainsi." Se mouchait-il? "Mais, Monsieur de Boigne, de la vie on ne s'est mouché comme cela, si ce n'est dans un corps de garde." S'asseyait-il? "Mais, Monsieur de Boigne, vous vous tenez à faire horreur... Vous prenez une place que vous ne devriez pas prendre." Enfin, ouvrait-il la bouche, il parlait mal à propos, ou bien il parlait trop haut ou trop bas. Bref, la persécution était atroce, de tous les jours, de tous les instants; elle s'exerçait surtout dans l'intimité comme devant témoins.3 (Mémoires du

3The severe tone of this passage appears to reflect a pronounced social bias on the part of Thiébault. In the avant propos of the Mémoires du Général B. Thiébault, Fernand Calmettes makes the
The general Thiebault is very harsh on the comtesse in his memoirs, but his comments are not without a strong bias. In the same passage as that cited above, Thiebault makes an unsubstantiated claim: "Débarrassée de son mari, dont le nom même cessa d'être prononcé, Mme de Boigne devint la maîtresse du duc de Fitz-James, et les cent mille livres servies par le mari n'eurent d'autre fin que de couvrir d'un vernis d'or les désordres de sa femme (Mémoires du général Thiebault, 539). Despite the exaggeration, there may be an element of truth to some of his claims. It was perhaps in part because of this ceaseless persecution that the general finally sought refuge in the quiet countryside of his native Savoy. He had engaged in unfamiliar territory, and was forced to retreat. His efforts to win the affection, if not simply the admiration of his wife ended in failure. He wrote in a letter to a Mrs. Standish: "Erroneously did I believe that a well-acquired fame, reputation, fortune, health, honesty, and a good heart would be, to a generous mind, an equivalent of a deficiency in the refined and polished manners of a Courtier and the elegant, artful addresses of a Petit Maître (Fountain..., 223)."
Although there may be more truth behind Adèle's harsh comments than critics such as Henry Bordeaux admit, the contrast between the portrayal of the general de Boigne in the memoirs and in the biographies is nevertheless striking, and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that what emerges from the memoirs is a serious misrepresentation of a remarkable historical figure. And yet, the comtesse seems to have sinned against his memory not so much in what she has described, as in what she has omitted from her text.

The general's military career was behind him when he attended that fateful concert which would change his life, and one could not expect a well-bred seventeen-year-old French girl with her eye on society to be interested in a man who could be little more in her eyes than an aging mercenary. Years of exposure to the harsh Indian climate as well as an illness which did indeed require the use of opium, although Adèle appears to have exaggerated its extent, had had their effect on the general. He was by nature and by habit autocratic, making clashes with his proud and strong-willed wife inevitable. Occasional references in the biographies, such as the following statement by the comte de Favergnes, tend to lend credence to Adèle's claims: "Il a toujours aimé les femmes, mais en despote. Il a avec elles un mélange de galanterie et de
Adèle's husband did not withdraw to a life of seclusion after the initial separations, as his wife, by omission, seems to imply in the text. It would seem that he took their marriage very seriously, making an effort to please his wife by taking part in her busy social life. The following lines, penned by the general himself, illustrate his frustration:

Here I am, once again launched into the Brouhaha of a tumultuous life—boxes at the Opera, boxes at the Théâtre Français, dinners, suppers, etc., etc. It all seems strange to me and I don't know how I shall be able to put up with it. It won't be easy but to preserve peace in the family I must submit and contribute as much as I can. It could all become a pleasure if only I could expect a little gratitude in return.... I won't speak about Buisson Rond except to say that in a few years it will be a charming place to live in. But I must not think about it for Madame de Boigne loves the pleasures of the capital too much even to think of settling there. So all the money I have spent on it is wasted.... I am not happy. (Fountain..., 246-47)

It would appear that on the surface, the couple maintained a civil, if cold, air. That Adèle was publicly sensitive about this relationship is reflected by a statement in her memoirs attributed to Germaine de Staël:

Je me rappelle qu'une fois, devant beaucoup de monde et en présence de monsieur de Boigne, elle m'interella pour me demander si je croyais possible qu'une femme pût se bien conduire lorsqu'elle n'avait aucun rapport de goût, aucune sympathie avec son mari, insistant sur cette
The bitterness regarding the comte de Boigne that is found in the text of the memoirs is all the more amplified in that Adèle de Boigne, it seems, did not air her matrimonial difficulties publicly. The general Thiébault's memoirs aside, it is difficult to find many other references to Adèle de Boigne having publicly aired her griefs regarding her husband and their difficult marriage. According to Amélie Lenormant, the comtesse "n'a jamais prononcé le nom du général qu'avec le respect qu'on doit à un bienfaiteur" (Le Correspondant, 742). Herbert Compton, a staunch admirer of the general who was unfamiliar with the memoirs of the comtesse, also has nothing to report of Adèle's cruelty to her husband:

Once every year she visited her husband at Chambéry for a few weeks, assuming her position as mistress of his home and entertaining his numerous friends. She always expressed the highest respect for his character, and it is said that the honours which were subsequently conferred upon him by Louis XVIII were due to her solicitation as much as to De Boigne's well-known royalist principles. (European Military Adventurers..., 93)

Victor de Saint-Génis writes that "Les personnes qui ont vécu dans l'intimité de Mme de Boigne déclarent que toujours elle parlait de son mari avec le plus grand respect, mais qu'elle en parlait rarement..." (Le Général de Boigne, 297).
Under the bright lights of society, the comtesse maintained a degree of decorum when the subject of her husband was treated. In the private domain of the drawing room, however, Adèle could give free course to her anger and frustration. The attacks on her husband in the memoirs are personal, and not related to the institution of marriage. While she is remarkably caustic in her description of her relationship with the general de Boigne in the memoirs, she portrays marriage in general as a highly desirable state elsewhere in the memoirs, even suggesting that it is preferable in some ways to a brilliant social existence. According to Adèle, Juliette Récamier, one of the most brilliant and best known of the nineteenth century salonnières, would have had a happier life as a family woman:

Madame Récamier est le véritable type de la femme telle qu'elle est sortie de la main du Créateur pour le bonheur de l'homme. Elle en a tous les charmes, toutes les vertus, toutes les inconcessances, toutes les faiblesses. Si elle avait été épouse et mère, sa destinée aurait été complète, le monde aurait moins parlé d'elle et elle aurait été plus heureuse. Ayant manqué cette vocation de la nature, il lui a fallu chercher des compensations dans la société.4 (I, 166)

Although the comtesse de Boigne seems to imply that Juliette Récamier was unwed, she was in fact married to a banker. Adèle describes herself in a similar fashion in a passage already cited in this chapter: "N'ayant été, de fait, ni épouse ni mère... (I, 285). Both women had married wealthy men, both eventually lived separate lives from their spouses, neither had children, and both downplayed their marriages for the benefit of their social existence.
The above passage is revealing of Adèle de Boigne. A social existence as compensation for a lack in one's personal life, in this case a lack of family, is a concept that could easily be applied to the author of the above lines. It is, in fact, a central theme of her novels. In *La Maréchale d'Aubemer*, for example, the maréchale, who entertains in her salon but rarely leaves her home, is urged by her friend Madame de Montcalm to go out more often:

--Alors sortez, et allez porter chez les autres une distinction qui est partout recherchée.
--Je suis trop vieille, les années me pèsent.
--Mais je suis votre ainée, et je porte les miennes fort légèrement.
--Ah! vous, c'est différent, vous avez de l'ambition pour votre mari, des devoirs de cour, des enfants.
--Une belle fille, n'est-ce pas?
--Mais cela même porte avec soi une sorte d'intérêt... moi, je n'ai à m'occuper que de moi-même; et cet égoïsme forcé, que vous qualifiez de liberté, m'est insupportable; il me fait prendre à dégoût cette maréchale d'Aubemer à laquelle je dois exclusivement penser (15).

From the first pages of *La Maréchale d'Aubemer*, it is clear, as I have shown in the chapter on the salon, that the author has put much of herself in the character of the maréchale. The description of the marriage of the maréchale, for example, is remarkably similar (if one strikes the reference to revenue) to Adèle's own marriage:

Peu de semaines après elle épousa M. Dermonville, au grand mécontentement de sa famille, qui n'avait pas été consultée. Le public en général blâma ce mariage; on trouvait que mademoiselle
Adèle may in fact have written more about her personal feelings regarding marriage into her novels, reflecting both what she experienced personally, as in the above quotations, and what could have been. The maréchale, now old, had not experienced a great passion, "les circonstances de sa vie lui eussent évité le tourment des passions," but the young and beautiful Gudule de Saveuse falls passionately in love with Henri d'Estouteville. It is perhaps no coincidence that Gudule resembles strongly by her looks and by her talents the young Adèle de Boigne. Many passages about Gudule in the novel make one think of the author; in particular a passage in which Gudule turns down an advantageous marriage proposal in order to please her father. The marquis feels obligated to express to his daughter just what she is losing by refusing such a proposition, but she simply responds: "La plus belle des situations, c'est de rester à Saveuse entre maman et vous, bon papa" (58). Gudule had no real affection for Lionel, a young man who had abandoned her years ago, and Gudule's mother has noticed the element of sacrifice in her daughter's resolution:

5Gudule's hand had been offered to Lionel, the son of a friend of her father, when she was only a child.
Elle avait remarqué combien Lionel tenait peu de place dans la décision de la jeune fille, il arrivait bien après maman, bon papa, et même le séjour de Saveuse; ce sentiment si calme suffirait-il à remplir une vie destinée à la solitude, et compenserait-il le sacrifice que peut-être on regretterait un jour?" (59)

Gudule's cheerful act of self-sacrifice strongly resembles that portrayed in the memoirs by and about Adèle de Boigne.

Louis Favre is clearly sympathetic with the comtesse de Boigne in offering his account of her marriage with the general. He emphasizes the gravity of the sacrifice made by Adèle:

Si un reproche peut lui être adressé en cette circonstance, c'est bien celui, nous le pensons, de n'avoir pas assez songé à elle, d'avoir cédé à un mouvement de générosité, dont l'isolement de son âge mûr et celui de sa vieillesse devaient lui faire porter la peine. Qu'on y songe bien, madame de Boigne avait à peine dix-sept ans, de grands partis sans doute s'offraient à elle; elle aurait pu y trouver des satisfactions de cœur et de convenance, et pourtant elle n'hésitait pas. Ne songeant qu'aux siens, elle marchait vers l'avenir avec la joie du sacrifice accompli! (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 318)

It would be easy to dismiss Favre's comments on the grounds that he never heard the general de Boigne's version of that marriage, and would naturally be influenced by his relationship with the comtesse de Boigne. (Favre does demonstrate some ignorance of Benoît de Boigne in writing that the general was fifty-eight years old when he proposed marriage to mademoiselle d'Osmond, when in fact he was only forty-seven.) An independent source exists, however, to
demonstrate that there was indeed an awareness of a spirit of sacrifice in Adèle's marriage. The comte de Seufft, former minister of Saxony, includes the marquis d'Osmond among the French friends and acquaintances he describes in his memoirs. He includes a remark on the daughter of the marquis:

Sa fille, madame de Boigne, élevée par lui, joignait à une rare pénétration et à un goût exquis, la vivacité et le piquant qui font le charme de l'esprit d'une femme. Douée en même temps de tous les talents et de toutes les grâces, il ne restait à désirer pour elle que le bonheur dont le ciel n'a pas voulu récompenser le dévouement filial le plus héroïque. (Mémoires du comte de Seufft, 101-102)

Unlike Adèle's story, the novel has a happy ending. Gudule and Henri manage to navigate, with the guidance of the maréchale, through the perils of society to a "mariage d'amour." Perhaps Adèle de Boigne, unable to marry for love, was writing out a scenario that she would have liked to experience. Lionel conveniently dies while Gudule is still quite young, clearing the way for a more romanesque relationship. Adèle did not enjoy such good fortune.

In Une Passion dans le grand monde, as we have already seen, autobiographical references are even more evident. Madame Romignère, one of the key characters in the novel, shares many traits with her creator, the comtesse de Boigne: "elle s'appelait la comtesse de Bauréal et avait pour son nom une passion qui n'est plus de ce siècle: son
seul chagrin était que la fortune de sa maison ne fût plus à la hauteur de son illustration" (I, 14). Like the comtesse de Boigne, Madame Romignère sacrifices personal happiness, marrying to save her family from their financial predicament. After the death of her husband, a financier, she states: "Il aurait été par trop dur de s'appeler Romignère pendant quarante ans pour ne rien laisser à la maison de Bauréal." (Adèle, like her fictitious character, left her wealth to her grand-nephews.)

The princesse de Lispona, who, like Gudule in *La Maréchale d'Aubemer* resembles the author in her youth, writes to her friend and confidante the comtesse d'Amézaga, "Lorsqu'une femme ne peut être ni épouse ni mère, elle n'a de choix qu'entre les fausses joies. J'ai cherché les miennes dans les succès de la mode; gronde-m'en si tu veux, mais du moins vois-moi telle que je suis" (I, 242). These lines are very similar to passages from the memoirs already cited in this chapter.

The comtesse d'Amézaga, although herself trapped in an unhappy union, writes: "L'amour dans le mariage est une pensée où je me réfugie pour me reposer de toutes mes propres infortunes" (I, 269).

The princesse de Lispona's admirer and one of the principal figures in the novel, Romuald de Bauréal, writes to his friend the vicomte de Bliane that "le bonheur
véritable se trouve uniquement au foyer domestique; personne n'est plus convaincu que ceux qui en sont exclus" (I, 133).

The marriage of the vicomte de Bliane was arranged by the parents of the couple, and the pair has since learned to love and respect one another. The vicomte is constantly promoting the comforts and advantages of an arranged marriage to his friend Romuald de Bauréal. After a visit to the Bliane's, the former writes:

Je faisais reflexion en sortant de l'hôtel de Bliane qu'en dépit des déclamations de la philosophie du dix-huitième siècle, et des actes des législateurs de la révolution, qui, pour les mettre en pratique, ont proclamé le divorce et déclaré le lien conjugal contraire à la raison et aux droits imprescriptibles de la volonté naturelle, le mariage chrétien était pourtant la plus belle institution des temps modernes, le véritable fondement de la société: la jeunesse y trouve souvent son bonheur, la vieillesse y puise presque toujours sa consolation. (I, 292)

Marriage and family are thus portrayed in a very favorable light in the novels of the comtesse de Boigne, and in fact are the focus in each of them. It is the situation sought after and discussed by most of the characters in the novels. Why, then, did the comtesse shun her husband and not have children of her own? Putting aside the possibility that the comte de Boigne may have forced conjugal relations before his young wife was ready, it is probable that the marriage of Adèle d'Osmond and Benoît Leborgne failed as a result of totally incompatible
lives and lifestyles. The general, who had everything money could buy, may have been attempting one last conquest: entry into European high society through his young bride. He learned the difficult lesson that true aristocracy, as personified in the form of Adèle d'Osmond, simply cannot be bought.

The general de Boigne had difficulty accepting the fact that his wife, as a salonnière, did have an important role to fulfill outside of their marriage. He was unable to reconcile his bourgeois view of matrimony with that of Adèle d'Osmond, who, in turn, could not accept his concept of domesticity. The image of an adoring wife, busy with her knitting by the hearth as the children play at her feet, would warm a bourgeois heart. To a woman of Adèle's social standing, however, it would be repulsive. Joan Landes offers an explanation:

The salonnières existed as public women outside the institution of marriage. Marriage for them was primarily a situation of convenience, even a game of strategy. In the privatized bonds among family members, the salonnières authorized purely social activities—happiness, friendship, social polish, and pleasure. She subscribed to an ethos of sociability, not domesticity. (Women and the Public Sphere, 30)

A mixed marriage between individuals from aristocratic and bourgeois backgrounds is difficult at best. It is interesting to note that, among the books, articles, and correspondence that deal with the d'Osmond-de Boigne
marriage, the defenders of the general de Boigne's point of view are nearly all members of bourgeois society. Guizot, who was familiar with the comtesse de Boigne and yet not of her social milieu, describes his displeasure with her marriage as follows:

Non seulement parmi les indifférents, mais parmi les connaissances et même les amis de Mme de Boigne, plusieurs sont restés surpris, je dirais presque choqués du caractère primitif de cette union. Je serais volontiers aussi sévère, plus sévère qu'eux, car je tiens les convenances morales et l'inclination mutuelle pour la première loi du mariage. Si c'était là en effet sa loi commune, la société en général, comme la dignité et l'état intérieur des familles, s'en trouveraient infiniment mieux; mais, par les idées et les pratiques du monde où elle avait vécu, Mlle d'Osmond n'avait pas été accoutumée à considérer le mariage sous cet aspect; elle l'avait vu déterminé le plus souvent par des motifs et des arrangements extérieurs et mondains. En épousant M. de Boigne, elle ne fit que suivre la routine de sa société et de son temps; la plupart des parens auraient décidé pour elle comme elle décida elle-même. (RDM, 757-58)

This social difference may also explain in part the great interest in the general's career by twentieth century historians and biographers. A twentieth-century reader is likely to find the life of the comte de Boigne more interesting in many ways than that of his wife. Adèle was one of the last representatives of a dying tradition, while the general de Boigne was in many ways a thoroughly modern figure. His biography reads like an adventure novel. Choosing a course in his life in which birth would not be a factor, he relied on his own skills, judgement, and
industry. His great wealth and the position that he had attained at the time he left India had nothing to do with social status. The following passage illustrates the industriousness that brought fame and fortune to the general:

De Boigne was active and persevering to a degree which can only be conceived or believed by those who were spectators of his indefatigable labours. I have seen him daily and monthly rise with the sun, survey his arsenal, view his troops, enlist recruits, direct the vast movements of three brigades, raise resources, and encourage manufactures for their arms, ammunition, and stores; harangue in his durbar, give audience to ambassadors, administer justice, regulate the civil and revenue affairs of a Jaidad of twenty lakhs of rupees, listen to a multitude of letters from various parts, on various important matters, dictate replies, carry on an intricate system of intrigue in different courts, superintend a private trade of lakhs of rupees, keep his accounts, his private and public correspondence, and direct and move forward a most complex political machine. Such was his laborious occupation from sunrise till past midnight, and this was not the fortuitous avocations of a day, but the unremitting employment of nine or ten years. To this exhausting and unceasing toil he sacrificed one of the firmest and most robust constitutions ever formed by nature. (Lewis Ferdinand Smith, quoted in Fountain... 103)

Benoit Leborgne was in every sense of the term a "self-made man." Such individuals are cited as models of the bourgeois democratic ethic of social advancement through industry and initiative. It should come as no surprise, then, that he would not find happiness in his wife's world. He was annoyed at a society where birth and mannerisms were considered more important than actions and
accomplishments. He could not have been comfortable in his wife's salon, nor would he be happy accepting a secondary role in the family. The general was accustomed to being a master and decision maker, but nothing short of total submission to his wife could avoid a collision of wills. "His seventeen years in India made him autocratic," writes Ethel Colquhoun, "this seemed ridiculous to Adèle, because he belonged to the lower-middle class, whose obvious duty it is to obey and pay homage to their superiors" ("Husband of Madame de Boigne", 703).

The comtesse de Boigne's quote that "on est vrai quand on dit ce qu'on croit" must be kept in mind when considering her treatment of her husband in the memoirs. What the reader may interpret as distortion, the comtesse sincerely views as truth. She was incapable of fully appreciating her husband's accomplishments, because they had nothing to do with her social milieu. Adèle adopted those aspects of the general's life which could serve her purpose, such as his wealth and his title (Guizot recalls that the comtesse once remarked "C'est si court, Madame de Boigne"), but was incapable of giving him what he most desired, her devotion and companionship. In the true

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6The comtesse de Boigne did not change her views as the years passed. Favre relates a note that she wrote to Pasquier: "L'esprit a tué le dix-huitième siècle, le talent tuera le dix-neuvième; on lui sacrifie tout!" (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 351)

7"La comtesse de Boigne," RDM, 772.
spirit of the nobility of the eighteenth century, she negotiated a "mariage de convenance," and then became angry when her husband demonstrated an ignorance of the rules. After all, in the eyes of Adèle d'Osmond, she was not selling her person. The general was paying for the privilege of marrying into a noble family. That neither could fully understand or accept the position of the other on marriage and family brought about intense friction, and resulted in their leading separate lives. They lived the last eighteen years of their married existence in a state of peaceful, distant coexistence.

The death of the general receives little attention in the memoirs, in part because little had changed in the life of the comtesse as a result of it. Her correspondence shows that she did observe a period of mourning as demanded by etiquette, but this is mentioned only in passing in the memoirs.

It becomes clear upon close examination of the novels and the memoirs that marriage and the family are of primary importance to Adèle de Boigne. Her narration of the courtship and mariage d'amour of Gudule de Saveuse and Henri d'Estouteville in La Maréchale d'Aubemer is reflected in the memoirs, not just in the account of her parents' struggle to marry despite the complications they
faced but also in her description of the marriage of her brother.

Rainulphe d'Osmond and his wife, like the d'Osmond parents, had the good fortune to have such a marriage. Adèle writes in her memoirs that the former mademoiselle Destillières, her sister-in-law, was pleased to have "un mari qu'elle aimait et qui la chérissait" (I, 460). The birth of their first child, Jeanne, is described in the text as "une grande joie de famille" (II, 111), but the arrival of Jeanne's brother is described as the answer to her prayers: "Deux ans et demi après (le 24 juin 1829), nos vœux furent comblés par la naissance de son frère, Rainulphe d'Osmond, à qui ces récits de la vieille tante sont destinés. S'il tient ce qu'il promet à huit ans, il y a espoir qu'il deviendra un homme distingue" (II, 112). The aspirations of an entire family were riding on those frail shoulders.

Louis Favre describes the almost maternal affection of the comtesse for her grand-nephew, who became her primary concern during the final years of her life:

L'affection, les sollicitudes de madame de Boigne pour son frère se reportèrent fort naturellement du père aux enfants. Elle eut une joie très-vive en assistant au mariage de sa nièce avec l'héritier d'une des plus anciennes et plus honorables familles de l'aristocratie française. Elle fut heureuse et fière en voyant son neveu, M. le comte d'Osmond, s'avancer dans la vie en y recueillant les succès que peuvent donner le nom, la fortune, la situation et tous les avantages
personnels de la distinction et de l'intelligence la mieux douée.

Plus tard, après le mariage de son neveu, elle concentra sur l'enfant issu de ce mariage toutes ses préoccupations, tous ses rêves.

Elle aurait voulu redevenir jeune pour surveiller l'éducation de ce jeune garçon. Elle regrettait de ne pouvoir l'instruire, le guider, le former suivant ses désirs. Rien ne lui allait plus au cœur qu'un compliment sur la grâce et l'esprit précoce de cet héritier du nom d'Osmond. Elle montrait bien le fond de ses vieux attachements au passé quand elle disait doucement avec une inflexion de voix que j'entends encore: "il est de race!"

Ce petit-neveu fut désormais, demeura le point fixe de ses inquiétudes, de ses projets d'avenir. C'est sous l'impression des sentiments trop absolus, trop exclusifs peut-être, qu'elle lui avait voués, que furent tracées ses volontés dernières. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 320-21)

The maternal affection lavished on her grand-nephew, as described by a man who had frequent and close contact with the comtesse, shows more than a concern for the survival of the d'Osmond name. The lines cited above indicate that this grand-nephew may also represent for Adèle the child that she never had. Although the comtesse appears to have enjoyed her complete independence after the

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8Louis Favre does not elaborate on what he means by sentiments trop exclusifs, but an explanation may be found in a letter written by Prosper Mérimée to A. Panizzi on May 23, 1866. Mérimée is quite harsh in his description of the behavior of Adèle's surviving relatives: "Elle [la comtesse de Boigne] laisse à ses petits-neveux sa fortune qui était assez considérable. Son neveu le marquis d'Osmond et le duc de Maillé, le mari de sa nièce vont, dit-on, attaquer son testament, pour avoir l'argent. Ils ne veulent rien donner à ses vieux domestiques, pas même leur payer leur voyage pour accompagner le corps de leur maîtresse en Normandie. Voilà les façons de faire de notre aristocratie, et ces gens-là sont fort riches" (Prosper Mérimée: Correspondance générale, t. 7, 113).
death of her husband, it was too late for her to have
children of her own. She had devoted years to raising a
child that she had "adopted" at the age of two, and it was
the tragic death of this girl that was the catalyst for
writing the memoirs, as Adèle writes in her introduction:

Au commencement de 1835, j'ai éprouvé un malheur
affreux; une enfant de quatorze ans que j'élevais
depuis douze années, que j'aimais maternellement,
a péri victime d'un horrible accident. La
moindre précaution l'aurait évité; les plus
tendres soins n'ont pas su le prévenir. Je ne me
relèverai jamais d'un coup si cruel. À la suite
de cette catastrophe, les plus tristes heures de
mes tristes journées étaient celles que j'avais
été accoutumée à employer au développement d'une
intelligence précoce dont j'espérais bientôt
soutenir l'affaiblissement de la mienne.

Quelques mois après l'événement, en devisant
avec un ami dont la bonté et l'esprit
s'occupaient à panser les plaies de mon cœur, je
lui racontai un détail sur les anciennes
étiquettes de Versailles: "Vous devriez écrire
ces choses-là, me dit-il; les traditions se
perdent, et je vous assure qu'elles acquièrent
déjà un intérêt de curiosité." Le besoin de
vivre dans le passé, quand le présent est sans
joie et l'avenir sans espérance, donna du poids à
cette conseil. J'essayai, pour tromper mes regrets,
de me donner cette tâche pendant les pénibles
moments naufrage si doucement employés; parfois il
m'a fallu piocher contre ma douleur sans la
pouvoir soulever; parfois aussi j'y ai trouvé
quelque distraction. Les cahiers qui suivent
sont le résultat de ces efforts: ils ont eu pour
but de donner le change à des pensées que je
pouvais mal supporter. (1, 21)

The extent of Adèle's grief at the loss of this girl,
about which very little has been written, is illustrated in
the letters of condolences that she received. Thus the act
of writing the memoirs was, for the comtesse, truly a
displacement of maternal affection from the very beginning.

This displacement is more apparent in the text of The
Maréchale d'Aubemer, in which a key element in the plot
involves the aging maréchale who, animated by a sincere
maternal affection, is in the process of lovingly molding
the young Gudule de Saveuse in her image. At the
conclusion of the novel, the reader finds the maréchale
cherished by the young woman and her husband. Their
affection and gratitude will bring warmth to the maréchale
in her old age, banishing her solitude with the new family
that they had formed. It is no stretch of the imagination
to see in the fictional Gudule an imaginary representation
of the girl that the author lost.

There is additional evidence within the text of the
memoirs that the comtesse de Boigne was unhappy at being
childless. She relates a comment made to her at a ball by
Napoleon Bonaparte, in which the then-First Consul advises
her to have children:

...il s'éloigna d'un demi-pas, puis revenant à
moi, parlant plus bas et d'un ton de confidence:

"Vous n'avez pas d'enfants? Je sais bien que ce
n'est pas votre faute, mais arrangez-vous pour en
avoir, croyez-moi, pensez-y, je vous donne un bon
conseil!"

Je restai confondue; il me regarda un instant, en
souriant assez gracieusement, et passa à ma
voisine (I, 188, 89).
The reader can only wonder if Napoleon did indeed state that the fact that no children were issued from the marriage wasn't Adèle's fault, a remark which places the blame, once again, squarely on her husband. But the general had fathered two children, and seems to have at least attempted, as I have shown earlier in this chapter, to consummate the marriage. If she could not tolerate living with the general de Boigne, she would tolerate even less bearing his children. The choice not to have children would seem to have been Adèle's. Thus her social prejudices resulted in her failure at that "vocation de nature," as she herself describes it, and her writing was an effort to fill the void that she felt.

Perhaps it was this feeling of unfulfillment which led to Adèle's change of heart regarding the publication of her novels. For decades she had kept them to herself, allowing only a few individuals access to them. Her decision to publish the novels surprised her friends. Louis Favre was of the opinion that "privée des grandes affections de sa

9According to Louis Favre, Pasquier himself did not read the novels until 1860, and he did so "malgré les remontrances de madame de Boigne." Favre includes a letter written by the comtesse to Pasquier a few days after he had read the two novels: "J'ai bien envie de vous faire une querelle? Pourquoi avez-vous dit à M... que vous aviez entre vos mains des barbouillages de moi? Il me persécute pour les lire et je ne veux les montrer à personne. Il y a vingt-cinq ans que je n'ai lu une ligne de tout cela. Je ne sais plus ce qui s'y trouve, probablement des choses qui ne plairaient pas ou qui plairaient trop. Tirez-moi de ce mauvais pas, il le faut, et surtout ne prenez rien" (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 328).
vie, isolée du monde par la maladie, dominée un peu par l'ennui, elle voulut s'offrir la distraction de surveiller elle-même l'impression de ces volumes" (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 329). But the novels were also a way of assuring that something of her would survive after her death. These novels, her own creations, would bear her name into the future. It is interesting to note that she published her novels under her maiden name, Eléonore-Adèle d'Osmond, with the title "comtesse de Boigne" following in a separate line in considerably smaller print.

In conclusion, the harsh rendering of the general de Boigne in the memoirs, cited by some critics as proof that the Récits d'une tante are not to be trusted as an historical reference is not, from the point of view of the author, a distortion. She was guided in her description by the same class prejudice that permeates the text of the memoirs. Henry Bordeaux points out that, in spite of her frequent lampooning of the émigré society for their pretensions, "Elle-même montra vis-à-vis de son mari tous les partis-pris mesquins et bornés du dix-huitième siècle" (458).

It is an interesting paradox that Adèle de Boigne, who proved to be so politically flexible in adapting to all of the changes in government from the Empire of Napoleon to the Second Empire of Louis-Napoleon, never changed her
aristocratic tendencies. She implies throughout her memoirs that she cannot tolerate snobbery, and yet, as Desmond Young writes, "the key to her character is that she never ceased to be a social snob, even when she became an intellectual one" (Fountain..., 222).

Viewed in this context, the comtesse's harsh rendering of her husband and their marriage is not out of step with the rest of the memoirs. It certainly reflects a deep personal resentment and is more subjective than most of her writing. One might question the appropriateness or the tact of Adèle de Boigne's remarks, written years after the death of her benefactor, but to deny any sense of historical accuracy in the memoirs based solely on these observations would be an error. Her account, although occasionally sharp, is well in keeping with "le vrai" of her rigid social point of view. This unchanging perspective provides a steady point of reference for a critical historical reading of the comtesse de Boigne's memoirs.
CHAPTER III

PATRIE

Adèle de Boigne, in her preface to the memoirs, describes the difficulty she experienced in giving a generic title to her "pages décousues," as she describes them. Mémoires seemed too "solennel". She opted for the much less pretentious title Récits d'une tante, warning her nephews--to whom the Récits are dedicated, not to expect a livre, "mais seulement une causerie de vieille femme, un ravaudage de salon...". In spite of these disclaimers, Madame de Boigne is evidently quite conscious of her position as a privileged witness to decades of turmoil and change in France, and her narrative style betrays considerable attention to detail. The comtesse does not make herself the subject of her writing, but rather the people and events around her. Many of the events described in the memoirs go well beyond the scope of a personal history (which is the basis for lexical definitions of memoirs). The reader learns far more about the events and personnages of the period described than about the author and her life. She is in many ways more a chronicler than a memorialist.
In his obituary of the comtesse de Boigne published in *Le Constitutionnel* (18 mai, 1866), Sainte-Beuve writes:

Pour tous ceux qui l'ont connue, on peut dire que c'est une personne unique qui meurt, quelqu'un à qui nulle autre ne ressemblera plus. Elle représentait une longue série et un choix parfait de souvenirs. Elle en avait retracé quelques-uns dans un écrit assez court, qu'un très-petit nombre seulement de ses amis particuliers ont pu lire et qui, nous l'espérons, ne sera point perdu pour l'histoire contemporaine. Elle savait d'original bien des choses, et son esprit exact et vrai n'altérerait rien. (also cited in *Nouveaux Lundis*, t. 10, 459)

These lines were written more than forty years before the publication of the memoirs, and Sainte-Beuve could not know that this "écrit assez court" would be published in no fewer than four volumes. Fortunately, they were not lost for contemporary history, and, as the noted critic indicates, they do indeed represent a long series of recollections of considerable historical value. The first English publishers of de Boigne's memoirs write that they "form an extraordinary record of events, political, social and artistic, spread over three quarters of a century" (Wm. Heinemann, 1907). And Desmond Young, English historian and author of the most recent and thorough of biographies on the general comte de Boigne, writes of Adèle's memoirs that "No one who is interested in the long period from the Revolution of 1789, through the Restoration, to the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 can afford to ignore them" (*Fountain*, 276).
Critical reviews of the memoirs at the time of their publication were generally favorable, and often described the historical value of the popular volumes: "La grâce de son langage, sans aucune trace d'effort, son bon sens alerte où s'affirme une belle santé intellectuelle et morale, outre les piquants ou poignants souvenirs qu'elle a gardés, expliquent suffisamment le grand succès de cette publication" (Revue historique, t. 100, Janvier-avril 1909, 116).

"Le volume est indispensable à qui veut connaître Louis XVIII, sa cour et l'état d'esprit de la première Restauration," writes Arthur Chuquet of the second volume of the memoirs in the Revue Critique d'histoire et de littérature (t. LXIV, Paris 1907, 155).

"Ce volume est une de nos sources les plus importantes pour le règne de Louis-Philippe," writes Chuquet in describing the contents of the fourth volume of de Boigne's memoirs, "Tout cela est à lire et à consulter, parce que l'auteur a vu les choses de près, parce qu'il assiste, comme il dit, à certains événements comme acteur ou spectateur et qu'il peut aussi donner quelques coups de pinceau qui les font mieux apprécier" (Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature, t. LXV, 453, 1908).

"Les récits qu'elle donne des révolutions de 1830 et de 1848 seront, à coup sûr, regardés comme les pages les
plus neuves et les plus captivantes de ses longs Mémoires," writes Henry Bordeaux. "Elle y accumule les détails, les petits faits, les choses vues, et nous donne le reflet des événements à la fois dans les rues et dans les salons" (Le Correspondant, t. 226, 472-73, also cited in Portraits de femmes et d'enfants, 137).

Lucien Maury, symbolically addressing the author of Récits d'une tante, writes: "vous êtes un témoin imperturbable, votre amitié est presque aussi redoutable que vos antipathies; vous êtes une mémorialiste parfaite..." (Revue bleue, t. VIII, 794).

The value of the memoirs for readers seeking new information on historic personalities is great according to Eleonore Matuschek, author of a critical study of the Récits d'une tante:


That the comtesse de Boigne's memoirs would be of interest to historians should come as no surprise, given the decades of French history that the author witnessed.
"Her long life gave her plenty of opportunity to study the different causes which led to the downfall of the various governments," writes de Morsier-Kotthaus, translator of Adèle's memoirs in 1956 (5). "Without any doubt the Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne give an excellent account, rich in valuable and picturesque detail, of the manners and customs of the society in an era which was one of the most interesting, eventful and brilliant in the history of Europe" (9).

Even one of the comtesse de Boigne's harshest critics, the vicomte de Reiset, is impressed with the panorama of French society on display in the memoirs:

C'est une curieuse figure que celle de la comtesse de Boigne qui, née sous le règne de Louis XVI, mourut seulement sous le second Empire, après avoir vu les dynasties se succéder les unes aux autres et les Gouvernements s'effondrer tour à tour. Cette femme, qui avait connu le temps des paniers et qui vécut assez pour voir les crinolines, n'était dépourvue ni d'intelligence ni d'esprit, et c'est avec une curiosité aisee et inlassable qu'elle se divertit pendant près d'un siècle à étudier la société dans laquelle elle tenait une place prépondérante et à observer les personnages au milieu desquels elle vivait. (Belles du vieux temps, 257)

The memoirs of the comtesse de Boigne serve as a narrative bridge between the Ancien Régime and the governments which rose and fell through the early and middle nineteenth century. "In den Memoiren der Gräfin von Boigne kann man die ganze Tiefe des Gegensatzes zwischen dem alten und neuen Frankreich," writes Eleonore Matuschek,
"die schwierigen gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen der Menschen verschiedener Zeiten und Regierungsformen, den unaufhörlichen Mißklang ihrer Tendenzen, Wünschen, Ansprüche und ihr gegenseitiges Mißtrauen anschaulich erfassen" (26).

It is this same contrast between the old and the new societies that Henry Bordeaux finds interesting in the novel *Une Passion dans le grand monde*. In the text, Adèle is careful to bring into focus—even asking in the Avant-Propos that the reader pay attention to the time and date of the letters ("...je lui demanderais bien humblement, et dans son intérêt personnel, d'accorder une attention toute spéciale aux dates de lieu et de quantième..." i)--the historical period which forms the background for the plot, demonstrating her interest in historical reconstruction even in her narrative fiction. The Academician Henry Bordeaux recognizes the confrontation of two societies in Adèle's novel in his book *Portraits de femmes et d'enfants*:

C'est le choc de ces deux mondes, observé sur des rencontres de salon, qui fournit à Mme de Boigne l'occasion de rendre avec assez de bonheur la physionomie d'une époque disparue. À ce titre, *Une Passion dans le grand monde* mérite d'être consulté: C'est un document dont l'importance n'est pas négligeable. (94)

There was, then, considerable interest in the memoirs of the comtesse de Boigne at the time of their publication, and recognition for the historical value of her writing.
Had her novels been published at the time of the memoirs, they might have enjoyed greater success with a reading public that was then most curious about the unusual woman behind the *Récits d'une tante*, as the articles published between 1907 and 1911 already cited testify.

The influences which made of the comtesse a privileged witness of French history are many. Her education and upbringing and the influence of her father in this area are described in detail in the previous chapter. Introduced to the fashion and etiquette of courtly life by her mother, Adèle is often referred to by her contemporaries as an excellent judge in matters of taste. Initiated into the highest levels of French society and, as *salonnière*, often a trendsetter herself, she is an eminently qualified observer of manners. "Für Hof und Gesellschaft sind die Memoiren eine Quelle ersten Range," writes Matuschek (25).

The intrusion of external political events into her family circle made her more aware of the world outside of her family and social sphere at an early age. Exposure to foreign culture as a result of the family's exile added to her heightened awareness of her surroundings. Fluent in Italian and English, Adèle was introduced to new social and cultural perspectives while still in her youth.

In Naples, the young Adèle de Boigne caught the eye of Marie-Antoinette's sister, queen Caroline, who provided the
funds which would assure Adèle's education. Even at this young age, she was learning lessons which would allow her to develop a keen eye for political and domestic situations. François Guizot describes the young Adèle in Naples and her reaction to the predicament of her family:

Elle continua ainsi à voir de près les splendeurs royales, en même temps que dans l'intérieur de sa famille elle assistait aux tristesses et aux détresses de la vie domestique. Ce double spectacle simultané fit sur elle une impression profonde; elle apprit de bonne heure à connaître les bouleversements des destinées humaines, hautes ou modestes, et à en entrevoir les causes en en ressentant les effets; sa jeune intelligence prit ses premiers élan et reçut ses premières lumières sous le coup des révolutions sans sortir de la société des rois. Elle contracta dès lors avec la princesse de Naples, Marie-Amélie, ces liens de vraie et intime amitié qui devaient tant influer un jour sur leur mutuelle destinée. (RDM 756)

She spent the majority of her most impressionable years, from the age of eight to twenty-three, in England, and unlike many émigrés, who remained largely closed to English influences and maintained a transplanted Ancien Régime culture while waiting to return to France, had many close contacts with the English. The marquis d'Osmond worked hard to give his daughter a solid education, and encouraged her to observe and learn from her surroundings. The lessons went beyond book learning, and whether he was conscious of it or not, the marquis also taught by example. He had earned the wrath of many émigrés when he signed a lease for a house in Brompton not for a week or a month, in
anticipation of a rapid return to France, but for three years! ("Toute personne qui louait un appartement pour plus d'un mois était mal notée;" writes Adèle in her memoirs, "il était mieux de ne l'avoir qu'à la semaine, car il ne fallait pas douter qu'on ne fût toujours à la veille d'être rappelé en France par la contre-révolution," I, 106.) Adèle's political outlook was affected in a profound manner by these years in England as well as her father's influence, at a time in her life when her identity was in full formation. After a fairy-tale childhood at Versailles, she was thrust into an entirely new and inevitably stimulating environment, described as follows by Guizot:

Adèle d'Osmond fut jetée alors dans la société à la fois la plus aristocratique et la plus libre de l'Europe, au milieu des plus puissans adversaires de la révolution française et de ses plus éloquens défenseurs. Là Pitt gouvernait, Burke écrivait, Fox parlait. Malgré la diversité des opinions et des partis, les émigrés français étaient accueillis de tous, par les uns avec une sérieuse sympathie, par les autres avec un généreux intérêt, et ce grand spectacle de la lutte soutenue par la monarchie contre la révolution, avec les forces et sous les conditions du gouvernement libre, frappait vivement les esprits que l'âge et les habitudes n'avaient pas fermés à la lumière des faits. (RDM, 756-57)

Raised in an atmosphere that was free from the rigid political views of many of the émigrés, Adèle was later able to accept the reign of Napoleon and succeeding governments, although she remained in her heart loyal to
the Bourbons. She describes the influence of her English education in the following passage from the memoirs:

Malgré cette velléité d'admiration pour l'Empereur, je tenais par mille préjugés à ce qu'on appelait l'ancien régime; et mon éducation toute anglaise me rendait, par intuition, de la secte qui, depuis, a été appelée libérale. Voilà, autant que je puis le démêler à présent, le point où j'en étais à mon arrivée en France. (I, 152)

While en route to France from her long exile in England, Adèle makes it clear that she didn't consider herself French, and in effect was seeing her native land through the eyes of a foreigner: "Quant à moi, je ne sais trop ce que j'étais, anglaise je crois, mais certainement pas française" (I, 146).

Upon her arrival at the chateau de Beauregard, the new home prepared for her by her husband, she describes her feeling of "dépaysement." Adèle was not eager to be reunited with her husband, so this impression has less to do with his absence than with her being "homesick" for England, and her reaction to post-revolution French society. The changes were shocking to her:

J'arrivai sans autre incident au château de Beauregard, ayant tourné Paris. Monsieur de Boigne n'était pas encore de retour de Savoie; je m'y installai comme seule maîtresse de ce beau lieu. J'y pleurai bien à mon aise pour en prendre possession, le 2 novembre 1804, jour des Morts, par un brouillard froid et pénétrant qui ne permettait pas de voir à trois pieds devant soi. Je me trouvais le soir enfermée dans une pièce dont mes mains, accoutumées aux serrures anglaises, ne savaient pas ouvrir les portes, et
sans sonnettes. Elles avaient été proscrites comme aristocrates pendant la Révolution, et monsieur de Boigne n'avait pas songé à en faire remettre. J'éprouvai un sentiment d'abandon et de désolation qui me glaça jusqu'au fond de l'âme, et je ne pense pas que je me fusse crue dans un pays plus sauvage sur les bords de la Colombia. (I, 151)

The clash of her eden-like recollections of pre-Revolution France with the political and social realities of the consulate is depicted as a chilling "douche écossaise" for the comtesse, but it was this period of sharp contrasts and these experiences which made of Adèle de Boigne a sharp observer. By the age of twenty-three, she had lived in three different lands, spoke three languages, arranged her own marriage, and had seen both directly and indirectly the effects of political and social upheaval. Guizot recognizes the formative effect of all of these experiences on the young Adèle, who seemed to pass all too quickly from childhood to maturity:

...elle acquit de très bonne heure, non pas l'expérience réfléchie que le temps seul donne aux plus rares esprits, mais cet instinct juste et rapide des intérêts de la vie et des convenances sociales qui apprend à voir clair et à se conduire habilement au milieu des difficultés et des épreuves. A peine sortie de l'enfance, elle était déjà sensée, mesurée, pénétrante et prudente avec une fermeté tranquille et presque froide qui était l'une des plus originales dispositions de sa nature. (RDM, 757)

Her experience and political tact helped her to avoid any outward appearance of extremism, allowing her to remain in France throughout the Empire, avoiding exil in spite of
her royalist leanings. The fact that she had learned to keep an open mind is demonstrated by her admiration for the Emperor in spite of her position among the opposition. She was able to recognize his better qualities in spite of her bias, although she was not blind to the negative aspects of the Empire. Her political tolerance made her an excellent observer of events during this period. Louis Favre writes of the comtesse during the early days of Emperor Napoleon's rule:

"Revenue en France, sous le consulat, elle avait assisté à l'avènement si brillant de l'empire, et, sans abandonner ses traditions, ses principes, elle s'était mêlée de fort bonne grâce à la société nouvelle; elle y avait établi des relations. Son esprit, tout à la fois indépendant et modéré, fort impressionné par les souvenirs de son séjour en Angleterre, lui avait montré pourtant, dès ce moment, les dissemblances qui devaient exister entre cette société et celle de l'ancien régime. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 324)"

The comtesse de Boigne accompanied her father to Turin in 1814, where he served as ambassador until after the Hundred Days. She then returned to England with her father, who was named ambassador there in 1815. Adèle de Boigne, relates Amélie Lenormant, participated in her father's career: "Inséparable de son père, initiée à toutes ses pensées, madame de Boigne l'accompagna dans ses deux ambassades, et contribua à lui assurer la position importante qu'il avait acquise en Angleterre" (Le Correspondant, 744).
More mature on this second stay in England, the comtesse de Boigne's social and political development was complete. In a sense, returning to England was like coming home, but the second time she had the advantage of a new perspective, having lived in France during the Empire for over ten years in the interim. Amélie Lenormant describes the way in which Adèle's political perspectives had been influenced as a result of her stay in England:

Un très long séjour en Angleterre, dont elle parlait la langue comme sa langue maternelle, l'avait familiarisée avec les allures et le mécanisme d'un gouvernement de discussion et de liberté; mais aussi le spectacle que lui avait offert l'Angleterre de la prépondérance d'une puissante aristocratie, avait confirmé ses plus chères convictions et accru, s'il était possible, ses antipathies. Elle représentait bien une grande dame wigh. (Le Correspondant, 744)

Exposure to a myriad of different political environments had made of her a perceptive observer of political and social events. Guizot confirms the overall effect of emigration and her role in her father's mission: "Elle avait acquis, dans les épreuves de l'émigration et dans les soins de la diplomatie, un tact politique qui lui faisait reconnaître les fautes et pressentir les péris des gouvernements comme des partis" (RDM, 761).

According to Lucien Maury, Adèle de Boigne's foreign experience, and most notably her stays in England helped her to develop a keen interest in customs as well as politics:
En Angleterre où la comtesse de Boigne rejoint son père au commencement de l'année 1816, les mœurs ne l'intéressent guère moins que la politique: de tout temps les moralistes français durent à l'observation des mœurs anglaises de profitables surprises: la comtesse de Boigne observe, s'étonne, raisonne: elle est tout près d'être un moraliste, un moraliste indulgent.... Cependant, cette Française ne se hâte point d'affirmer que la haute société en Angleterre manque de délicatesse: très prompte à censurer ses compatriotes, la comtesse de Boigne ne se hâte point de juger les Anglais: elle étudie avec une vive curiosité les mœurs anglaises, elle les étudie à Londres, à Paris; elle ne se hâte point de juger, elle est indulgente; elle serait un fort aimable moraliste si elle ambitionnait d'être quelque chose; il faut bien le dire, pour qu'on ne soit point tenté de ne voir en ses mémoires qu'un spirituel recueil d'anecdotes, de traits et de menus souvenirs.... (Revue bleue, t. 8, 222)

This fine sense of observation adds a strong appeal to the memoirs. Adèle de Boigne's frequent insertion into her narrative of small, seemingly unimportant details of human behavior often catch our attention more effectively than her description of major events, while at the same time lending the memoirs an aura of realism. These anecdotes make her text more accessible to the average reader, making historical events seem less distant and bringing them to a more human level.

Lucien Maury is not the only one to recognize the "côté moraliste" of the comtesse de Boigne. Guizot, who was unfamiliar with Adèle's memoirs, recognized the same qualities in her novels. Her diverse political and social
background allows her to observe the events around her from a well-informed viewpoint:

Comme moraliste, elle avait en elle-même et elle a mis dans son roman contemporain un autre mérite, celui de comprendre et d’apprécier avec équité des idées, des dispositions, des conduites très diverses, souvent même contraires. Notre temps est plein de fluctuations, de perplexités et d’incohérences; tous les systèmes, tous les instincts, tous les désirs, tous les partis, s’y sont déployés les uns en face des autres et les uns contre les autres; nous avons assisté aux emportements de la licence et aux excès du pouvoir absolu, non-seulement en fait, mais en principe, et dans les esprits comme dans les événements. Nous avons eu à considérer ainsi les choses sous leurs aspects les plus différents, et ces différences se sont empreintes dans l’état intérieur des âmes comme dans les destinées du pays: des esprits très distingués et très sincères ont soutenu les théories de l’absolutisme, tandis que d’autres professaient celles de la liberté démocratique; des cœurs très généreux se sont adonnés à la passion de la grandeur nationale par la guerre, tandis que d’autres invoquaient la paix par l’accord mutuel des nations et la justice cosmopolite. La nature humaine est merveilleusement riche et flexible; elle se prête aux ambitions, aux activités les plus dissemblables, et il suffit souvent d’une bien petite dose de vérité ou de vertu pour satisfaire des esprits rares ou des consciences honnêtes et pour leur faire oublier tout ce qui leur manque. C’est une grande preuve de pénétration et de bon sens que de bien comprendre un tel état de la société et des âmes, et, au milieu de ce chaos, de rendre à chacun, partie ou individu, ce qui lui revient légitimement en fait d’estime et de sympathie. Mme de Boigne avait acquis, dans son observation du monde et de la vie politique, cette intelligence impartiale, et elle l’a portée dans son roman comme elle la pratiquait dans son salon. (RDM, 768-69)

Her salon, unlike some other, more exclusive houses, remained open to individuals of all parties, all opinions,
and although she disliked excess of any sort, from the ultras to the radical republicans, all were welcome and heard in her salon, provided that they adhered to the proper decorum. Guizot describes her salon upon her return to Paris from London in 1819:

Elle en retrouva sans peine les agréments: des femmes du monde élégant, des hommes d'esprit et de rang, diplomates, militaires, administrateurs, lettrés, se réunissaient dans son salon, divers d'opinion comme de situation, mais acceptant mutuellement leur libre langage sur les événemens, les questions, les discours, les écrits qui occupaient vivement alors la société française, délivrée des fardeaux du pouvoir absolu et de la guerre, et empressée à jouir de sa propre activité et de ses féconds loisirs. Mme de Boigne était ainsi, et on était chez elle au courant de toutes choses, des petits incidents du monde comme des bruits confidentiels, du mouvement intellectuel comme des affaires publiques, et on s'entretenait de toutes choses avec cette liberté intelligente et polie qui fait le charme de la vie sociale. (RDM, 760-61)

The comtesse de Boigne makes few direct references to her salon in the memoirs, but testimony from other sources who frequented her salon such as Guizot and Sainte-Beuve, confirm that the discussion of politics was a major focus. The duchesse de Dino\(^1\) was offended by the central role of political issues in Adèle de Boigne's salon, and was surprised at what she interpreted as the lack of tact of the comtesse. On the twelfth of December 1834 she writes:

A neuf heures, j'ai été avec Mme Mollien chez la comtesse de Boigne. Elle était venue la première chez moi et m'avait fait dire, par Mme Mollien,

\(^1\)Comtesse Edmond de Périgord, duchesse de Talleyrand et de Sagan.
qu'elle serait très flattée si je voulais venir quelquefois chez elle le soir. C'est le salon important du moment; la seule maison comme il faut, qui appartienne, je ne dirais pas à la Cour, mais au Ministère, comme celle de Mme de Flahaut appartient à M. le duc d'Orléans et celle de Mme de Massa à la Cour proprement dite. Il n'y en a pas une quatrième. Chez Mme de Boigne, qui reçoit tous les soirs, on s'occupe avant tout de politique, on en parle toujours; la conversation m'a paru tendue, assez incommode par les questions directes poussées jusqu'à l'indiscrétion, qu'on se jette à la tête: "Le duc de Wellington se maintiendra-t-il? Croyez-vous que M. Stanley se joindra à sir Robert Peel? S'ils croulent, cela tournera-t-il au profit des whigs ou des radicaux? Pensez-vous que lord Grey veuille se réconcilier avec lord Brougham?" Voilà par quelles questions j'ai été naïvement assaillie. Je me suis tirée d'affaire en plaissant ignorance complète, et en finissant par dire, en riant, que je ne m'attendais pas, dans une belle soirée, à répondre à des questions de conscience. Cela a fini là, mais je n'en avais pas moins reçu une impression désagréable, malgré les excessives gracieusetés de la maîtresse de maison, et j'ai été bien aise de m'en aller. (Chronique de 1831-1862, 299-300)

The comtesse de Boigne occasionally mentions her dislike of journalists in her memoirs, and yet she appears more a journalist than a salonnière in the preceding passage. Such questions as those attributed to the comtesse clearly indicate however that Adèle was interested in first-hand information from those in a position to know the facts. In her memoirs, Adèle indicates frequently that she is relating only what she has seen and heard herself, and the Duchesse de Dino's comments indicate that she was not shy about soliciting information.
Other acquaintances were not so reluctant as the duchesse to communicate their political impressions to Adèle. The comtesse de Boigne had frequent contact with a number of important personnages throughout her career as salonnière, and through them was often in a position to know of current events first hand.

The comte de Nesselrode, Russian minister of foreign affairs, was a close friend of Adèle de Boigne and frequented her salon during the Empire. Through such friends, she was able to keep abreast of current events, and often had a more direct and objective source than most others in her society. The following letter, addressed to the comtesse who was at that time in Turin, was written by the comte de Nesselrode, who was then representing Russia at the Congress of Vienna:

Si Vous aviez jamais essayé d'un congrès Vous me pardonneriez surement le retard que j'ai mis à répondre à la lettre que Vous m'avez adressée par notre ami Pozzo. Mais soyez assurée Madame que je n'en ai pas été moins sensible à cette marque de souvenir et à toute l'amitié que Vous voulez bien me conserver. Pozzo Vous écrit aujourd'hui une longue épître. Il Vous aura divulgué tous nos secrets. Pour moi Vous sentez que la circonstance est trop grave pour que je ne sois pas aussi mystérieux que par le passé, et j'hésite presque à Vous assurer que le congrès finira, non d'une manière ou de l'autre, mais d'une manière très pacifique pour tout le monde. Le besoin de la paix est trop vivement senti mais (sic) par ceux à qui on le suppose le moins pour qu'elle ne soit pas aussi durable que les choses humaines peuvent l'être.
Pozzo nous quitte aujourd'hui; je ne sais pas comment je ferais pour vivre sans lui, et lui ne se fait pas d'idée de son existence à Paris sous le coin du feu de la rue des Mathurins. Il n'y aurait d'heureux dans tout cela que Koslovsky, si je n'avais quelque lieu de croire que Vous ne ferez pas une longue résidence à Turin. Vous voyez que malgré mon silence, je ne néglige rien pour épier chaque circonstance qui peut avoir rapport à Vous.

Veuillez presenter mes hommages à Madame d'Osmond, et parler souvent à M. d'Osmond de toute l'estime et l'amitié que je lui porte. Permettez qu'en même temps je vous offre une collection de petites cartes de Vienne pour ne pas perdre nos anciennes habitudes

Nesselrode.

Vienne le 1 mars 1815.

Her many acquaintances afforded her an insider's view of events, even those at which she was not present, making her sources more credible than the inevitable rumors that circulate during times of crisis. During the turbulent days of the July 1830 Revolution the comtesse had, in addition to her own personal observations, the testimony of many other friends and acquaintances, some of them key figures, such as Chateaubriand, presenting a side often unreported by other sources. The following letter, penned by Chateaubriand, confirms that Adèle de Boigne's impressions of this turbulent period were not limited to the view from her windows:

______________________________

2Russian minister in Turin.
Paris, 31 juillet 1830.

Sorti hier pour aller vous voir, j'ai été reconnu dans les rues trainé et porté en triomphe, bien malgré moi, et ramené à la chambre des pairs où il y avait réunion. Aujourd'hui je suis si découragé par ma gloire que je n'ose plus sortir - je vais entrer dans une carrière périlleuse où je me trouverai presque seul, mais où je me ferai tuer, s'il le faut. Je veux rester fidèle à mes serments, même envers des parjures. Quel malheur d'être si loin de Vous! Point de voiture, aucun moyen de communication.

Mille hommages, Madame, je tâcherai de saisir quelque occasion pour aller jusques dans la rue d'Anjou; La nuit seroit le bon moment, mais je ne puis à cause des frayeurs de Mde de Ch., des malades, et des réfugiés qui m'ont demandé l'hospitalité. Mde R. n'est pas revenue, je m'attends à la voir arriver à chaque instant. (Nicoullaud, III, 439)

The comtesse did more than just keep herself informed of current political events. She occasionally used her position to exert political influence in various ways. "Ses relations avec tous les hommes d'Etat de l'Europe, et l'amitié très-étroite qui la liait à l'un des plus importants personnages de l'époque, Pozzo di Borgo," writes Amélie Lenormant, "lui fournirent les occasions et le moyen d'exercer une influence qu'elle n'afficha jamais, n'a jamais niée et qui s'éleva toujours au-dessus des comméragés de la diplomatie" (Le Correspondant, 744).

Louis Favre describes the renewal of a childhood friendship between the comtesse and the duchesse d'Orléans, a relationship that would put Adèle in a prominent position during the July Monarchy:
Elle [Adèle de Boigne] avait renoué de prime abord avec madame le duchesse d'Orléans, avec celle qui fut plus tard la plus digne des reines, les liens d'une amitié fort intime contractée à Naples dans ses jeunes années. Aucun calcul, aucune idée politique ne se mêlaient à cette relation; elle ne désirait en aucune façon le renversement de la branche ainée de la maison de Bourbon, à laquelle l'unissait toutes ses sympathies. Elle craignait seulement les conséquences que pouvaient entraîner des fautes qu'elle jugea toujours avec la plus grande perspicacité. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 325)

Adèle de Boigne's close friendship with Queen Marie-Amélie did, however, allow her direct access to the royal palace, and even endowed her with a special influence in that government. Well aware of the events virtually as they happened, Adèle was one of the first to declare her support for the July monarchy, and even played an important role in the difficult early days:

Elle n'hésita pas à s'associer au parti qui en appelant Louis-Philippe au trône, espéra fonder le gouvernement constitutionnel sur une quasi-légitimité. Il est incontestable que son crédit sur le comte Pozzo di Borgo eut à ce moment une influence prépondérante dans les conseils de la politique européenne, en tempérant la répulsion que l'empereur Nicolas éprouvait pour la royauté issue de la révolution de Juillet, et en obtenant que le cabinet de Saint-Pétersbourg ne montât pas ouvertement son hostilité. (Lenormant, Le Correspondant, 745)

In her memoirs, the comtesse de Boigne offers her version of the events of 1830, describing her "petit rôle," as she calls it. She writes of it reluctantly, explaining that it is only in response to criticism by the carlistes (légitimistes). She introduces this section as follows:
Ici a commencé l'espèce de petit rôle politique que j'ai pu jouer dans ces grands événements. Il n'était ni prévu, ni préparé, et il n'a duré qu'un jour. Le parti carliste en a eu révélation et m'en a su plus mauvais gré qu'il n'était juste. J'y ai été entraînée, sans préméditation, par la force des choses, mais peut-être ai-je, en effet, facilité, dans les premiers moments, l'établissement de la nouvelle royauté, pour laquelle l'ambassadeur de Russie s'est déclaré ouvertement. J'aurais gardé un silence éternel sur tout cette transaction, si lui-même n'en avait parlé le premier (II, 217).

Some critics, in particular Reiset, have claimed that Adèle de Boigne exaggerated the importance of her role during those crucial days. Lenormant's glowing account may be partially discredited by the fact that she was a close friend of the comtesse and very sympathetic to her beliefs. Guizot, however, was not prone to these leanings. He was unfamiliar with the memoirs, and as an historian he may be expected to be more guarded in his comments. His account is, however, no less favorable than Lenormant's:

Ses relations avec la reine Marie-Amélie étaient aussi désintéressées qu'intimes; par amitié comme par bon sens, elle embrassa sans hésiter la cause de la monarchie nouvelle. Dès le premier moment, elle eut l'occasion de lui rendre un signalé service. La prompte adhésion du corps diplomatique importait beaucoup au régime naissant, et dans le corps diplomatique l'ambassadeur de Russie, le comte Pozzo di Borgo, était l'un des plus considérables. Mme de Boigne était fort liée avec lui, et il avait en elle grande confiance; elle aperçut en lui un peu d'humeur, et avec une finesse de femme et d'amie elle en démêla la cause. Pozzo di Borgo craignait que le général Sébastiani, son ennemi de race et de parti en Corse, ne fût ministre des affaires étrangères. Mme de Boigne en avertit la reine, et avant la formation du cabinet du 11
août 1830 elle put dire à Pozzo di Borgo que le général Sébastiani serait ministre de la marine. L'amour-propre du Corse fut rassuré, et l'ambassadeur de Russie prêta de bonne grâce au régime nouveau son habile appui. Trois mois plus tard, le général Sébastiani devint ministre des affaires étrangères; mais la crise était passée et le gouvernement du roi Louis-Philippe établi: le comte Pozzo di Borgo se resigna alors à un déplaisir qui ne pouvait plus avoir pour le régime de 1830 aucun grave résultat. (RDM, 762)

Although she does not elaborate much on her political role in the July monarchy in the memoirs (apart from the Sebastiani incident mentioned above, but her chronicle of events stops after the 1830 Revolution), her correspondence confirms that she was indeed active, making recommendations and suggestions to government officials, many of whom were personal acquaintances, such as Louis Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877), French statesman and historian. Like Adèle, he supported the new dynasty. The following letter demonstrates that the comtesse de Boigne did indeed attempt to use her political influence during the reign of Louis-Philippe:

Madame,

Vous auriez grand tort de croire que je vous ai oubliée, car ce serait me supposer ingrat. Je ne le suis pas, je vous assure, et je songe toujours avec une reconnaissance bien sentie à la bienveillance que vous m'avez témoignée. Ce n'est pas chose si commune que la bienveillance pour la si mal accueillir. Mille affaires, mille soucis m'ont toujours empêché d'aller vous présenter mes hommages. Je n'ose même plus en former le projet, tant j'acquiers l'expérience de l'instabilité de nos pauvres projets à nous gens tourmentés. Je saisirai la première occasion de votre passage à Paris pour aller vous demander ma
grace. En attendant je ne manquerai pas d'attacher un grand prix à votre recommandation en faveur de M. de Chateaugiron. Je le sais homme de mérite et d'expérience et propre à bien administrer. J'ai beaucoup et beaucoup de candidats, mais je vous promets de placer celui-ci en bon rang.

Croyez, Madame, à mon respectueux et sincère attachement.

A. THIERS

11 septembre 1834.
(Nicoullaud, IV, 458)

Another letter by Louis Mathieu Molé, then prime minister and foreign minister under the July Monarchy, and friend of Adèle, again shows the active role that Madame de Boigne took in recommending various individuals for posts in the July Monarchy:

J'ai oublié de dire hier à Madame de Boigne que je venais de parler aussi de l'abbé Berleze au Roi qui m'a répondu très favorablement et même à peu près promis de faire ce que Madame de Boigne désirait.

Je la prie d'agréer mon respectueux hommage.

Molé

Lundi 26 (Nicoullaud, IV, 469).

The importance of these many personal contacts with French as well as foreign officials should not be underestimated in the reading of the memoirs. They afforded the comtesse a broad view of historical events, and provided her with a political awareness that few individuals of her era possessed. Sainte-Beuve admired Adèle de Boigne's political sagesse so much that he
implies that only the fact that she was a woman kept her from playing an even more open and vital role in politics: "Si elle avait été homme," he writes: "la comtesse de Boigne eût certainement marqué parmi les politiques les plus éminents et les plus utiles du régime d'alors: ce régime aurait compté un ministre de plus" (NL, 458).

Of all the relationships the comtesse de Boigne had formed during her life, the most profound and long-lasting was with another whose beginnings reach back to the Ancien Régime, and who, like Adèle, was able to adapt to the rapid changes in French society and maintain a leading role in French government. The chancelier Pasquier (1767-1862) had known the comtesse de Boigne for some years before, but it was at the beginning of the July Monarchy that the two became close, enjoying three decades of the most intimate of friendships.

Counsellor in the Paris parliament in 1787, Etienne Pasquier favored reform but stood firmly behind the monarchy once the uprisings began in 1789. He weathered the storms of the Revolution to become Prefect of police under Napoleon in 1810. Under Louis XVIII he held various ministerial offices, and demonstrated political foresight by refusing to join the reactionary cabinets at the close of the reign of Charles X. President of the Chamber of Peers throughout the July Monarchy, he retired from his
active political career in 1848. The description of Etienne Pasquier offered by his own personal secretary is remarkably similar to that of Adèle de Boigne written by Sainte Beuve and others:

M. le chancelier Pasquier représente pour nous une personnalité dont le type n'existe plus. Il a été le dernier représentant d'une génération aujourd'hui éteinte, une sorte de trait d'union entre la société monarchique qui a précédé la Révolution de 1789 et l'ère de liberté égalitaire qui est à la base de l'ordre social actuel. ([Etienne Denis Pasquier], 11)

In his 1870 article on the chancelier Pasquier, Louis Régis inserts the following notice about Adèle de Boigne, illustrating some of the points that the two held in common:

Il est difficile d'aller plus avant sans dire quelques mots de la femme distinguée qui a tenu une place si considérable dans l'existence du chancelier. Madame de Boigne avait plus d'un rapport avec M. Pasquier; un peu de froideur plus apparente, peut-être, que réelle, la rectitude et la netteté de son jugement, une grande expérience de la vie, acquise au contact des épreuves, la rendaient très capable de vivre en communication intime avec un esprit aussi bien fait que celui du chancelier pour goûter chez elle de semblables qualités. ([Le Correspondant], 674)

Robert Lacour Gayet also writes of the relationship between the comtesse and the chancelier in his introduction to the Souvenirs du Chancelier Pasquier:

En elle, le chancelier trouva vraiment son âme sœur qui éclaira les dernières années de sa vie. Il la voyait, s'il le pouvait, quotidiennement ou lui écrivait deux fois par jour. Vingt-deux années les séparaient, mais il se sentaient proches l'un de l'autre par leur sociabilité,
leur art de la conversation, leur goût de l'information, peut-être aussi par une certaine confraternité de rédacteurs de Mémoires.... (279)

Le Chancelier Pasquier began his Mémoires in 1822, thirteen years before Adèle began her own. Robert Lacour Gayet suggests that Adèle de Boigne may have been the one who encouraged him to begin writing memoirs. *L'Histoire de mon temps* covers the period from 1767-1830 and was completed during the July Monarchy, although it was not published until 1894.³

If the general comte de Boigne had indeed ruined Adèle's youth as she claims in her memoirs, then the duc de Pasquier made her later days as happy as they could have been under the circumstances. Unlike the general, Pasquier was accustomed to circulating in the highest levels of society; he was a member of Adèle's world and a master of its conventions. The general de Boigne had voluntarily removed himself from his wife's salon, while Pasquier became the focal point of Adèle's salon during and after the July Monarchy, although the two retained separate households and salons. Politically, the chancelier and the comtesse were an excellent match, but then again, the comtesse grudgingly admits, so was the general de Boigne.⁴

³Pasquier also wrote a volume of *Souvenirs*, and a *Sommaire de ma vie* (which was not published) in 1843. A brief text entitled *La Révolution de 1848* was also written by the chancelier, and was published in 1944.
⁴"Monsieur de Boigne, ce que je ne conçois guère, n'était pas du tout révolutionnaire et, sur ce seul point de la politique, nous étions à peu près d'accord" (I, 152).
What made her relationship with Pasquier truly close were his social graces, and more specifically his perfect understanding of the term "conversation." The comtesse herself writes in her memoirs:

Il est impossible de trouver un commerce plus facile et plus charmant que celui de monsieur Pasquier. À un esprit toujours inventif, à une conversation des plus variées, il joignait un incomparable bon sens et une bienveillance naturelle qui, sans être jamais banale, lui faisait constamment tirer le meilleur parti possible des hommes et des choses.

Il s'intéressait à tout, depuis les idées les plus élevées de l'homme d'État jusqu'aux détails les plus intimes de la vie privée. Rien n'était au-dessus ni au-dessous de lui, et l'occupation où il était de ses amis se manifestait pour les plus petites comme pour les plus grandes choses.

Lorsqu'il m'avait raconté quelque secret politique bien important, je n'éprouvais aucun embarras à l'entretenir de la moindre niaiserie de son ménage, et il y prenait part avec autant de bonhomie que de sérieux (II, 435-36).

In his salon, Pasquier could hold his own with anyone in the "beau monde." The gatherings that he arranged were rarely large—he preferred more intimate gatherings numbering from eight to twelve guests. Like the comtesse, Pasquier was fond of good cuisine, and he also had a fine reputation for entertaining. Louis Favre describes the dinners organized by the chancelier:

Son cuisinier avait une réputation européenne; il était de race. Le père avait été cuisinier de M. le duc de Penthievre et de Grimod de la Reynière; lui-même s'intitulait élève de l'hôtel Talleyrand et il avait travaillé chez les plus hauts personnages.
On peut deviner, avec un opérateur ayant aussi haute opinion de son art, quels soins devaient être apportés par lui à la préparation des menus. Le service d'ailleurs avait cette allure de bon ton qui ne s'improvise pas et qui révèle la distinction de l'hôte. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 370-71).

The Académie Française was the focal point of Pasquier's salon, which became, according to Louis Favre, a place where free thinking was encouraged. Pasquier's salon became an even greater occupation when he retired from public life after the fall of the July Monarchy. Like Adèle, his door as well as his mind was open to diversity:

L'esprit de tolérance de M. Pasquier, le respect dont il était entouré, permettaient, du reste, aux hommes de toutes les nuances d'opinion de se rencontrer autour de lui. On voyait dans son salon les anciens ministres du roi Louis-Philippe: M. le comte Duchâtel, M. Guizot, M. de Rémusat, parfois M. Thiers; et certains jours, des ministres ou fonctionnaires du nouvel empire: M. Drouyn de Lhuys, M. Fould, M. Vuitry, M. Dumas, M. le général de la Rue, un des amis les plus chers de madame de Boigne, un des plus fidèles à M. Pasquier. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 391)

Adèle, who was intolerant of what she viewed as the social ineptness of her husband the comte de Boigne, could only be pleased at the refinement and tact demonstrated by Pasquier. The shared role of host allowed each to appreciate and admire the taste of the other. They had a number of friends in common, and their correspondence even illustrates that they enjoyed a playful rivalry, as the
following exchange of letters presented by Louis Favre demonstrates:

M. Lebrun, l'auteur de Marie Stuart, était plus qu'un habitué, plus qu'un visiteur, il était un ami particulièrement estimé. M. Pasquier ne citait jamais son nom sans y ajouter l'épithète d'excellent. Comme il était aussi fort apprécié par madame de Boigne, des deux parts on se disputait souvent sa présence et sa société.

"Vous voulez donc me prendre mon Lebrun pour votre dîner ce jeudi;" écrivait un jour madame de Boigne,--et M. Pasquier, fort entier dans ses amitiés, répliquait vivement: "Je le prends et je le garde!--Tenez pour certain que Lebrun n'est pas plus à vous qu'à moi!" (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 395)

The shared interests of the comtesse and the chancelier extended beyond the walls of their salons, however. Their political views were remarkably similar. Both were sympathetic to the monarchy, to the elder branch more specifically, yet both were flexible enough in their political views to adapt to frequent changes in French government. The major role that Pasquier played in several of those governments enabled him as well to satisfy his companion's insatiable need to know about the inner workings of government.

Their relationship was so comfortable that neither party was afraid to open up to the other. Adèle regarded Pasquier highly enough to value his opinions, political and otherwise. It is through Pasquier that we have a rare example of self-criticism by the author in the memoirs, and
in the words of the chancelier which she relates, one can even catch a glimpse of the traits which made life with her intolerable for her husband:

Une seule chose l'irritait, c'était la déraison. Il avait alors des colères dignes d'Alceste. Je me rappelle une scène qu'il me fit un jour. La tirade commençait par: "Vous vous croyez très impartiale, et personne ne l'est moins," puis suivaient mes préjugés de caste, mon esprit de parti, mes intolérances sociales, etc.

Il y avait pas mal d'exagérations dans ces reproches, mais il y avait bien aussi un peu de vérité, et j'en faisais mon profit. Il était très honteux lorsqu'il s'était laissé aller à ces boutades. Elles n'étaient pourtant pas sans charme pour ses amis, car il y montrait le fond de sa belle âme, par ses haines vigoureuses pour le mal.

L'esprit de parti surtout était sa bête noire, et il est bien remarquable qu'ayant toute sa vie frayé à travers les partis il n'en ait jamais été atteint. (II, 436)

Despite her admiration for Pasquier and their well-known intimacy, even the chancelier is not immune from Adèle's snobbery. Pasquier is not of the same cloth as a d'Osmond. Henry Bordeaux relates the following anecdote:

Sainte-Beuve nous raconte qu'un jour où l'on opposait au sien l'avis du chancelier au sujet d'un petit fait sans importance qui se serait passé à la cour de Versailles, elle réplique vertement: "Pasquier? qu'est-ce qu'il en sait? Il n'était pas du tout de ce monde-là." (Portraits de femmes et d'enfants, 151-52)

The comtesse affords few personal glimpses of her private life in her memoirs. Her narrative shifts tone dramatically, as I have shown, when she describes her
marriage with the comte de Boigne. It does so again when she describes her shared experiences with the chancelier. This time, however, the tone is positive. In the following passage from the memoirs, she portrays herself and the chancelier as a couple at the time of her purchase of a property in Trouville:

C'est en 1843 que le chancelier Pasquier et moi nous primes tous deux de goût pour la plage de Trouville. J'y fis l'acquisition d'une cabane et, dès lors, nous allions de temps en temps y passer quelques semaines. Je l'ai ensuite rendue plus commode et, depuis 1848, elle est devenue ma seule habitation de campagne. Monsieur le chancelier y résidait presque tout l'été.

Il avait depuis longtemps pris l'habitude de venir se reposer dans ma maison de Châtenay, pendant l'intervalle des sessions de la Chambre des pairs, des fatigues de la présidence et surtout du travail ardu et pénible que lui imposaient les nombreux procès politiques dont il s'est tiré avec tant de talent et de bonheur. (II, 435)

The general lack of personal accounts of passion and tenderness in the text (in reference to her own life) make these lines stand out. The account of her actions during and following the revolution of 1848 are even more remarkable in this light. To escape the chaos that reigned in Paris at the time, she decides to join Pasquier in Tours, making a commitment to him that she never made to her late husband: "Mes affaires se trouvant à peu près réglées, je partis le 14 mars pour Tours. Aucun devoir positif ne me retenait en France. J'allai rejoindre le
chancelier, bien décidée à lui consacrer le reste de mon existence et à le suivre dans l'exil, s'il était force à le subir" (II, 480).

The pair remained in Tours, prepared to flee abroad if necessary, observing together the political events of the day. The use of the pronoun "nous" is remarkable in this passage, and the reader has the impression that for the first time (with the exception of her father), the comtesse is not only sharing her life with another, but dedicating it to him. The fact that she and the chancelier are observing the unfolding of history together is emphasized in the narrative:

Nous hésitions entre Pau, pour lequel son doux climat et le voisinage de l'Espagne militaient, et Jersey donnant une sécurité plus positive. Je ne pensais pas à l'Angleterre, malgré mes relations intimes et de famille. J'étais trop persuadée que le chancelier ne pourrait vivre dans un pays où on ne parlait pas français.

Les jours et les semaines se succédant ainsi, sans que notre tranquillité se trouvât troublée, je louai un fort grand appartement, situé sur un beau jardin rejoignant la campagne, et nous pûmes nous établir tous les deux assez commodément.

Nous avons passé ainsi huit mois dans cette bonne ville de Tours, évitant l'effrayante tentative du 15 mai et les journées bien plus cruelles encore du mois de juin où les habitants de Paris se sont trouvés pendant quatre-vingt-seize heures acteurs et spectateurs de la plus sanglante bataille livrée dans aucune ville.

Nous y prenions grande part assurément: toutefois nos inquiétudes ne pouvaient être comparables à celles ressenties dans la capitale.
Nous vîmes fonctionner le suffrage universel pour la première fois. On s'attendait à des difficultés matérielles presque insurmontables; il ne s'en présenta aucune. (II, 480-81)

Two survivors of a bygone era witness together the dawn of a new age, fully conscious of the magnitude of the changes they were observing. Perhaps the comtesse took comfort in the fact that in the midst of all the turmoil which surrounded her, she had a companion who shared her views and had come from the same extinct society as she. Although unrelated by blood or marriage, they were in a sense family.

Louis Régis confirms in his article on Pasquier that the affection felt by the comtesse for the chancelier was mutual. Like the comtesse, Pasquier had a reputation for appearing somewhat cold on the surface. This façade certainly does not do justice to the chancelier's capacity for affection, according to Régis:

Sa façon particulière de comprendre et de pratiquer les devoirs du cœur nous semble surtout mise en relief par l'attachement inaltérable qu'il n'a jamais cessé de ressentir pour madame de Boigne. Cette amitié, commencée au milieu des distractions du monde, si soigneusement cultivée pendant le cours de la vie la plus active, et qui s'est prolongée intacte jusqu'au dernier soupir, est un exemple frappant de la profondeur des sentiments qui reposent sur la base solide d'une parfaite et réciproque estime. (Le Correspondant, 687-88)

The relationship of the Chancelier and Adèle de Boigne may have gone well beyond that of friendship. The
closeness of this couple receives its most detailed
description from the comte de Montalivet, who mentions a
possible secret wedding between the two:

Mme de Boigne était devenue, dans une intimité
dont on n'a jamais bien connu le secret, une
partie même de la vie de M. Pasquier. C'était
une croyance assez répandue aux Tuileries et au
Luxembourg qu'après la mort de Mme Pasquier le
chancelier avait épousé en Angleterre Mme de
Boigne; M. de Sainte Aulaire aurait été l'un des
témoins.... Je suis de ceux qui ont cru au
mariage secret. Quoi qu'il en soit pendant la
dernière partie de sa vie, le duc Pasquier vécut
avec la comtesse de Boigne dans la plus douce et
la plus constante intimité. (Fragments, II, 18)

Victor Hugo also mentions the possibility of marriage
in his Choses Vues, although it is in a satirical passage
and cannot be accepted as a confirmation:

Philémon et Baucis ne sont plus une rareté. Le
vieux couple se multiplie parmi nous à beaucoup
d'exemplaires, au mariage près. Il y a la
duchesse de Vienne et le baron de Vitrolles, Mme
de Castellane et M. Molé, M. de Chateaubriand et
Mme Récamier, M. Guizot et la princesse de
Liéven, le chancelier Pasquier et Mme de Boigne.
M. Pasquier et Mme de Boigne vont se marier, dit-
on. A eux deux ils ont cent quarante-quatre ans.
M. Pasquier est veuf cette année. (1844, t. I,
105)

Whatever the extent of Adèle's relationship with
Pasquier, it afforded her an inside view of the workings of
the July monarchy, and expanded her network of contacts.
As a witness to history, few can claim to have had this
perspective.

The last entry in her memoirs mentions the sad events
of 1862, the year in which both Pasquier and her brother
died. It was these events which caused her to write the last "fragments" of her memoirs:

La cessation forcée de commerces si chers et si doux et de correspondances quotidiennes, qui donnaient un certain intérêt aux événements du jour, m'a rejetée dans les souvenirs du temps jadis, et, afin de tromper l'oisiveté du présent, j'ai repris ma plume, abandonnée depuis bien des années, pour retracer les derniers moments de madame Adélaïde et ceux de la monarchie de Juillet. Je la pose aujourd'hui et pour toujours. (II, 488)

As Louis Favre describes it, the death of Pasquier was, for all practical purposes, her own:

La mort de M. Pasquier fut pour madame de Boigne un chagrin immense; la perte de ce vieil ami amenait une rupture de presque toutes ses habitudes. Elle supporta cependant courageusement cette douleur; mais, dès ce moment, elle fit son sacrifice de la vie; elle ne songea plus qu'à mettre ses affaires en ordre et à se préparer au grand voyage. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 363)

The gloom of these last lines follows an eleven-year gap in the text, however. The years between 1851 and 1862 are absent in the memoirs, and she wrote only fragments concerning the period from 1830-1848. The titles of these fragments, some written as late as 1862, reflect what was happening around the comtesse during these years: death.

The last five fragments have the following titles:

Mort de monsieur de Talleyrand en 1838
Mort de son Altesse Royale la princesse Marie d'Orléans, duchesse de Wurtemberg (1839)
Mort de monseigneur le duc d'Orléans (1842)
Mort de madame Adélaïde (1847)
Chute de la monarchie d'Orléans
Although the narrative is lively and full of details at times, after the fall of the Bourbons, death and desolation seem to permeate the text of the comtesse de Boigne like a steady drumbeat until the final fall of the monarchy in France. The events which followed the 1848 revolution are passed over in virtual silence in the memoirs. Only a few paragraphs mark the period that follows the fall of the July Monarchy, and they describe Adèle's own sorrows and final observations.

Louis Favre, who knew the comtesse well during this period, describes Adèle's mood. His remarks regarding her fear resemble Guizot's comments cited earlier, but Favre's comments show that the aging salonnière, although fatalistic, was not entirely devoid of hope for the future. The d'Osmond name would live on!

Plus tard, après la révolution de 1848 et jusqu'à l'heure de sa fin, le sentiment qui la domina fut celui de la crainte. Elle se sentait seule, isolée, elle voyait chaque jour s'éteindre ses anciennes amitiés, et elle ne trouvait plus en elle-même assez d'énergie pour braver de nouveaux orages. Depuis quelques années, la mort avait fait de cruels vides autour d'elle; elle avait perdu d'abord sa belle-sœur madame la marquise d'Osmond, un esprit charmant, une vive intelligence; après elle son frère le marquis d'Osmond; puis enfin la comtesse de Chastenay, une amie des premiers jours; et combien d'autres!... Ces chagrins, ces incertitudes, la jetaient dans une défiance de tout et d'elle-même; elle bâtissait des projets pour l'avenir et elle croyait à peine au lendemain; elle vivait au jour le jour, conservant son amérité pour ses amis, sa bonté vis-à-vis des personnes de son entourage, son incessante sollicitude pour son
petit-neveu d'Osmond. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 326)

In spite of her difficulties, the comtesse was unable, Favre continues, to detach herself from the world around her even when she wanted to do so:

Dans les dernières années de sa vie, elle fit de constants efforts pour se désintéresser de tout; mais elle ne put jamais y parvenir. Elle avait beau faire, elle était obligée de poursuivre ce qu j'appellerais sa vie intelligente: recevoir des visites, correspondre avec ses amis, lire les livres nouveaux, tracer même parfois ses réflexions sur le passé. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 326-7)

Over a decade is passed over in silence in the memoirs, and yet the comtesse had hardly retired from the world during this period, as Favre has shown. She led as active a life as her age and health would allow. Her salon remained open, and during the summer months her residence by the sea in Trouville, as described in chapter I, was often a popular gathering place for friends and acquaintances. The fact that Adèle chooses not to mention her house in Trouville beyond the few lines already cited is most curious. Several of her closest friends during these years, such as the duchesse de Galiéra and the marquise de Salvo, do not appear or are barely mentioned in the memoirs. The reader may have the impression from the memoirs that the decade beginning after the fall of the July Monarchy was a dark, dreary, and cheerless period for the comtesse. This is, as we have seen, not the case.
Although the comtesse de Boigne was certainly more active than the long omissions in her memoirs might indicate, it is also true that she was not as actively engaged in public life as she had been in years past. She was aware of the risks of isolation and age, however, and was determined to maintain an open mind, as her correspondence with the chancelier indicates:

Il y a longtemps que vous ne m'avez parlé de M.X...? ses rapports avec M. de Cavour vous auraient-ils refroidi pour lui? vous auriez tort, mon ami; à nos âges il ne faut pas être absolutiste. Il faut frayer avec tout le monde, et, loin de restreindre ses relations, chercher à les élargir. Hélas! trop d'événements imprévus, inévitables, les brisent et les écarent. Je sais bien que plus on vit dans la solitude, plus on devient intolérant; mais il faut combattre cette disposition, et vous qui êtes entouré de tant de personnes intelligentes, si en mesure d'apprécier le pour et le contre, vous devez vous maintenir plus impartial qu'un autre. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 339)

Even in her final years, Adèle was able to adapt to yet another government, the second Empire. The relative security offered by Napoleon III (she never mentions the Emperor or his government by name in the memoirs), was a welcome respite from the turbulence of the 1848 revolution and the confusion of the republic that followed: "Bientôt après, d'ailleurs," she writes at the end of her memoirs in reference to the end of the second Republic, "le pays passa entre des mains qui semblaient assez puissantes pour pouvoir et pour vouloir lui assurer la tranquillité, une
A lifetime of observation had taught her that no political system is perfect, and that opposition simply for the sake of opposition is foolish. After witnessing so many political and social upheavals, she sought only the security provided by a strong government, regardless of its origins. In the following passage, from the last page of her memoirs, it is interesting to note that her final observations are political ones, and in this passage she demonstrates once again the flexibility of her political views and reveals the full extent of the importance of Pasquier in her life:

Japper dans le vide m'a toujours semblé oiseux, et, lorsque, dans les temps révolutionnaires où nous vivons, un gouvernement paraît décidé à maintenir l'ordre, je trouve coupable de chercher à abréger le temps que la Providence veut bien lui accorder.

J'en ai blâmé les légitimistes pendant dix-huit années; ce n'est pas pour les imiter à la première occasion.

Je n'entends pas que l'obéissance doive aller jusqu'à la servilité; à Dieu ne plaise. On peut conserver l'indépendance de ses opinions et de son caractère, en retranchant l'opposition hostile. Quand, pour attaquer les gouvernements, il n'y a plus d'autres ressources que les intrigues ou les conspirations, les unes et les autres m'inspirent une égale répugnance.

C'était, au reste, la doctrine de mon père et du chancelier Pasquier, et j'agis en cela, comme je voudrais faire toujours, d'après les enseignements que j'ai reçus d'eux. (II, 488)
In this, one of the closing paragraphs of the memoirs, Adèle has listed side by side her two political mentors. Etienne Pasquier is a logical successor to the marquis d'Osmond in Adèle's life. Both were reform-minded monarchists at the time of the revolution of 1789, both continued to serve the throne during the Restoration. Adèle de Boigne, a great admirer of both men, chose to dedicate her own existence to each in turn. Her devotion to her father is clearly portrayed in the early chapters of the memoirs, when she follows him to Turin and London, and she shows the same devotion to Pasquier in the Fragments. It is Louis Favre, however, who explains the full extent of this devotion, a side barely revealed by Adèle in her memoirs:

> En dehors de sa famille, le dévouement demeura encore le mobile des amitiés de madame de Boigne. Il était, on peut le dire, le grand intérêt de sa liaison avec M. Pasquier.

> Elle me disait un jour: "Je me suis sacrifiée toute ma vie pour les autres et je ne sais si quelqu'un l'a jamais compris; mais j'aurais voulu agir autrement que je ne l'aurais pas pu; le dévouement pour autrui était pour moi plus qu'un entraînement, c'était une fatalité!" (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 321)

In spite of the comtesse de Boigne's final lines in her memoirs, written four years before her death, Adèle continued to be preoccupied, Louis Favre explains, with politics:
Le 10 mai 1866, madame de Boigne s'éteignait avec pleine connaissance d'elle-même, accomplissant tous les actes de cette crise finale avec le calme, la dignité dont elle ne s'était jamais écartée durant sa vie; et comme la politique devait malgré elle et jusqu'au bout la préoccuper, deux jours avant sa fin, en nous tendant pour la dernière fois sa main déjà défaillante, elle nous dit cette dernière parole: "Il est bien temps que je m'en aille, mon cher ami, car je commence à ne plus rien comprendre à ce qui se passe!" (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 364)

The memoirs of Adèle de Boigne come to a halt in 1848, but her life, as Louis Favre and others have illustrated, continued to be a relatively active one for nearly two decades beyond that date. There is no doubt that the comtesse could have penned countless fascinating pages based on her experiences and observations during this period, and her correspondence demonstrates amply that she was quite capable of maintaining a reader's interest during that period. She continued to reflect on society, as this fragment of a letter addressed to M. Pasquier and written between 1858-62 attests:

L'Eponge révolutionnaire de 89, toute gonflée qu'elle était d'idées britanniques, a oublié d'y puiser le respect pour le passé et pour les précédents. C'est que les Anglais ont plus d'orgueil et nous plus de vanité! Il n'y a plus en France ni esprit de corps, ni esprit de caste; on ne sait plus ce qu'ont été les ancêtres! L'egoïsme individuel a rompu la chaîne des temps et mis le monde entier en combustion; il faudrait un chimiste bien habile pour deviner ce qui sortira de tout cela! (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 352)
Her sense of observation and mordant wit were also undulled by the passage of time, as this letter addressed to Marmier (1854) illustrates:

Quoi, mon cher Marmier, vous iriez en Suède au lieu de venir à Trouville? quoi! vous partiriez sans dire gare à vos amis? Je ne saurais le croire! Et pourtant cela m'arrive d'un lieu où l'on doit être au courant de vos actions. Si vous ne cherchez que du nouveau et de l'imprévu, il n'est pas besoin pourtant d'aller jusqu'en Scandinavie. Venez ici, notre plage est peuplée d'animaux non descript qui peuvent donner prise aux imaginations les plus bizarres. Vous verrez de plus une ville de palais sortir du sable avec la plus belle chance d'y rentrer incessamment, et préparer ainsi aux archéologues futurs des conjectures sur son ensevelissement. Si vous refusez de venir faire les études que ce lieu-ci pourrait vous inspirer, écrivez au moins ce que vous faites, où vous allez, combien durera votre absence. Comme tout chemin mène à Rome, je ne veux pas désespérer que de Reikiavik vous n'arrivez à Trouville; et si ce n'est que de la guerre à travers les Belt qu'il vous faut, l'animosité me paraît assez bien établie d'une rive à l'autre de la Touques pour que, dans le désir de vous plaire, on ne puisse trouver encore des motifs pour la fomenter. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 354,55)

Why, then, did the comtesse set aside her memoirs so early in her life, at a time when many other memoir writers would only be starting out? Why did she decide not to write about a period in which she was very much involved at the highest levels, in a position to know in depth the issues facing her contemporaries?

To begin with, the comtesse had apparently fulfilled at least part of her original purpose in writing her memoirs within two years of beginning the text. If her
introduction (dated 1843) is to be believed, her purpose in writing this text was more than just a desire to record her recollections of a fading past. She began the memoirs, as I have already indicated in chapter two, after the death of a fourteen year old child she had been raising. That the comtesse de Boigne would pick up a pen following a tragedy in her personal life is not unusual. Starobinski believed that "one would hardly have sufficient motive to write an autobiography had not some radical change occurred in his life" (Pilling, *Autobiography and Imagination*, 117).

Deprived of her usual routine, Adèle focused her attention on writing.

The friend who encouraged her to write is never named, but may well have been Etienne Pasquier, who himself had begun writing his memoirs in 1822. Adèle de Boigne soon completed her chapter on her childhood at Versailles, and continued to write about what she had observed during her years in exile with her parents. Her desire to record her recollections of the customs and characters of pre-revolution Versailles had thus been fulfilled.

As for her terrible loss, the pain of which her writing was to help alleviate, the passage of time brought about some relief. Adèle's nephews, followed by her grand-nephew, the last marquis d'Osmond (born in 1856), became the focus of her maternal devotion, perhaps serving as a
substitute for the adopted girl she had lost some years earlier. The memoirs are, in fact, dedicated to him.

The constant companionship of Etienne Pasquier filled another void in her personal life. Since the death of her father, whom she had accompanied until his final day, no one had spent as much time with the comtesse or could relate to her as well as the chancelier. The stability and sense of "routine" that the pair established together must have provided her with a comfortable sense of well-being, and her daily correspondence with him occupied her pen, providing a more immediate destination for her reflections. Sadly, most of these letters, never intended for the public eye, were thrown into the fire after they were read. A magnificent chronicle of inestimable value could have been constructed from these letters, but the writers were only communicating with each other, not posterity. The few letters that were salvaged and published by Louis Favre are the best source existing on the comtesse during these years. They reveal much about the author that is hidden in her published texts.

Her summer retreat at Trouville was another source of satisfaction for the comtesse. She oversaw its growth, and indulged her taste for flowers.

The stated purpose of the comtesse in her introduction is to be as impartial as possible, and this is the
principal reason, she claims, why she writes comparatively little regarding the July Monarchy. In the avant-propos to the huitième partie, dated March 1837, Adèle explains why she chose to stop the steady chronological pace of her text with the account of the July 1830 revolution:

Jusqu'ici, j'ai raconté ce que j'ai aperçu du parterre. Depuis 1830 je me suis trouvée placée dans les coulisses; et la multitude des fils qui se sont remués devant moi me permettrait difficilement de faire un choix, plus difficilement de conserver l'impartialité à laquelle je prétends.

La sincérité prendrait parfois le caractère de la révélation. On peut raconter ce qu'on a vu ou deviné, voire même ce qu'on vous a dit, jamais ce qu'on vous a confié. Je m'arrête donc à l'époque de juillet 1830.

Peut-être l'habitude que j'ai prise de griffonner me portera-t-elle à jeter sur le papier quelques notes sur des faits particuliers; mais ce n'est pas mon intention en ce moment.

This gap in her writing is regretted by Bordeaux, who claims that much could be learned from one so much a part of the "inner sanctum" of the July Monarchy:

Il est à regretter—point pour tout le monde—qu'elle n'ait pas écrit, à partir de 1830, que des épisodes et non plus une suite. Mêlée à la politique plus étroitement sous la monarchie de Juillet, elle n'eût pas manqué de nous montrer, même sans y prendre garde, le revers du gouvernement de son choix. (Portrait de femmes et d'enfants, 137)

The majority of the text of the memoirs was thus finished in a two year period.
The *Récits d'une tante* are not an autobiography in the modern sense. As we have seen, many elements of the personal life of the comtesse are entirely missing. Her personal life remains private, and little is learned of her sentimental existence. Adèle de Boigne set out not to write of her own life story, that is her own emotions and experiences on a purely personal level, but rather establishes herself (the narrator) as a witness to events, a witness who claims impartiality. Unlike Chateaubriand, who often made of himself the subject and center of his texts, she even goes so far as to apologize for her presence in her 1843 introduction to the first seven parts of her memoirs, explaining that she is using her life as a framework for the events she describes: "J'ai parlé de moi, trop peut-être, certainement plus que je n'aurais voulu; mais il a fallu que ma vie servit comme de fil à mes discours et montrât comment j'ai pu savoir ce que je raconte" (I, 22).

Although she claims to have used no documentation in her writing, Adèle seems to approach her work with the scrutiny of an historian. She states in the avant-propos to the eighth part of her memoirs that she has not altered text that she had already written, out of fear of altering the perception that she wishes to impart of these events:

Cette huitième partie a été écrite avant les sept précédentes, et lorsque je ne pensais nullement à
me créer une distraction de ce genre. Ayant
conduit mon récit jusqu'à l'époque de la
révolution de 1830, j'ai voulu lire ces cahiers
afin d'en tirer le sujet d'un dernier chapitre;
mais, après réflexion, je me suis décidée à les
laisser tels qu'ils sont.

Je ne m'aveugle pas sur leurs défauts. Si je
n'ai pas suffisamment de talent pour les éviter,
j'ai assez d'intelligence pour les sentir. Le
style est lâche; il y a des longueurs infinies.

Mais je ne réussirais probablement pas à
corriger ce qui tient à l'ignorance du métier
d'écrire et je craindrais de faire perdre à cette
narration un mérite (qu'on me passe ce mot
ambitieux) que je ne puis m'empêcher de lui
reconnaître, c'est de m'avoir reportée aux
evénements et si vivement rappelé mes impressions
du moment que j'ai pour ainsi dire revécu les
journées de Juillet avec toutes leurs craintes,
toutes leurs anxiétés, mais aussi toutes leurs
espérances, toutes leurs illusions.

La relation d'aussi grandes scènes doit, je
crois, porter principalement le caractère de la
sincérité, et souvent un futile détail
d'intérieur donne ce cachet d'actualité qu'il me
semble y reconnaître.

En cherchant à émonder cette narration de ce
qui me paraît maintenant inutile, je ne serais
pas sûre d'avoir la main assez habile pour ne pas
retrancher précisément ce qui lui donne le
coloris de la vérité. D'ailleurs, les événements
sont trop importants par eux-mêmes pour laisser
le loisir de chercher autre chose qu'un historien
fidèle.

D'autre part, je craindrais, en remaniant ces
pages, de ne plus montrer les journées de Juillet
sous l'aspect où elles se présentaient à l'époque
même. Nous éprouvons aujourd'hui les difficultés
inherentes à une révolution dirigée contre l'état
social tout entier. Nous sommes assourdis par
les sifflements des serpents qui en sont nés.
J'aurais peine à ne pas chercher sous les pavés
de Paris la fange dans laquelle ils sont éclos,
et je ne serais pas alors le chroniqueur exact
des impressions fournies par ces premiers
moments. Dans tout le cours de ces récits, j'ai
cherche à me gérer de présenter les événements tels que la suite les a fait juger et à les montrer sous l'aspect où on les envisageait dans le moment même. (II, 177-78)

In the memoirs, then, she clearly states that her personal life is secondary to her role as a witness to political and social events. She was fully conscious of the significance of the historical period of which she writes at the time she wrote of it, and aware of the difficulties involved in writing of historical events from too great a chronological distance. Leaving a record of these events long past was part of her original purpose, as she describes in her introduction.

As time passed, she became even more aware of her special status as a living "relic" of a bygone age. In 1855, she addresses an interesting letter to her friend Madame de Galiéra, demonstrating her consciousness of her position:

Avez-vous rencontré dans votre monde le comte et la comtesse de X..., un immense ménage d'outre-Rhin, taillé à coups de serpe dans le tuf le plus grossier? Il était établi dans la maison voisine de la mienne depuis le mois de juin; tout d'un coup, il y a quinze jours, il lui a pris fantaisie de voir comment était fabriquée une vieille femme de l'autre siècle.

Madame D..., une autre dame étrangère (que, par parenthèse, je n'ai vue que trois fois), est venue me demander de les recevoir; et, le soir même, par un ouragan qui méritait le nom de tempête, par une nuit noire, une voiture de louage est entrée avec fracas dans ma cour, écrasant toutes mes fleurs, et les a amenés chez moi! Le comte m'a fait subir l'interrogatoire de madame de Staal chez la princesse de Conti; -il
m'a questionnée sur Voltaire, sur Rousseau, sur Balzac, sur About, sur l'agrément de la société de Michelet et de Renan; -puis passant à la politique, sur M. Guizot, sur M. Thiers, sur le duc de Richelieu, sur M. de Martignac..., que sais-je! Tout cela a duré une heure et demie, la femme ne disant pas grand'chose, et moi fatiguée à mort. L'examen apparemment ne les a pas satisfaits, car ils sont repartis hier sans me faire la moindre visite de politesse. Cette fantaisie a véritablement quelque chose de très-primitif. Sauf la disproportion des personnages, elle m'a rappelé la visite de Pierre le Grand à Saint-Cyr. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 356-57)

In her memoirs, Adèle portrays herself as a woman with an open mind, sympathetic to the Bourbons but flexible enough to adapt to several governments. In her correspondence with Pasquier, however, she reveals her true self-image. After reading a text describing some of the extensive construction directed by Haussmann and Napoleon III during the Second Empire, which necessitated the demolition of many structures dating from the Ancien Régime, Adèle writes:

J'ai lu l'article de M. de B., et j'avoue ne pouvoir partager sa joie à voir tomber un à un les derniers débris de l'ancienne société. C'est peut-être parce que j'y tiens par une longue suite d'années! et puis, je n'ai encore rien vu d'utile pousser parmi les décombres; et ce ne sont pas les caravansérails à sept étages qui me consoleront de la perte des palais et des hôtels, soit au positif, soit au figuré.

Il me semble qu'il aurait été possible d'amender le système de privilèges qu'il décrit assez bien, de l'étendre à un plus grand nombre sans dissoudre une société qui marchait depuis si longtemps et dont j'aurais beaucoup aimé à conserver les petits restes que la révolution avait laissé échapper. Mais je suis au fond une vieille aristocrate, aussi usée que la monarchie,
et qui ne trouve d'écho nulle part, car je suis loin d'en aller chercher où on pousse des soupirs si ridicules et des regrets si absurdes!

(Estienne Denis Pasquier, 332-33)

The contents of this letter are reinforced in yet another fragment from a letter addressed to Pasquier, published by Louis Favre:

Les Mémoires du duc de Luynes ne sont pas pour moi dénués d'intérêt. Cela m'amuse de voir l'importance que des gens sérieux mettaient à ce qu'on portât la queue de leur manteau jusqu'au milieu ou jusqu'au tiers de la chambre et qu'ensuite on passât ensemble par la porte, le prince prenant l'épaule sur le duc. Tout cela paraît assurément pitoyable dans le siècle de progrès où nous vivons; et pourtant les gens qui s'occupaient de ces vétailles valaient tout autant que les gros messieurs du temps présent. Eux-mêmes tiennent probablement beaucoup à de fort petits détails. La différence en faveur du passé est que les gens qui maintenaient leurs droits pour des niaiseries étaient des courtisans qui savaient à l'occasion résister aux volontés du maître, et non pas des serviteurs toujours prêts à tout faire. Enfin je découvre qu'après avoir passé pour abominablement libérale toute ma vie, je ne suis au fond qu'une vieille aristocrate.

(Estienne Denis Pasquier, 339-40)

The comtesse de Boigne, although firmly attached to the past, is wise enough to realize that times have changed, and is not one to fantasize about a return to old ways. Her flexibility and political tolerance was not based on a joyful embracing of new forms of government and doctrine, but rather on a sense of political realism. Age, it seems, had not hardened her views:

j'ai mangé dans mon enfance de la bouillie légitimiste et j'y trouve encore de temps en temps un goût assez agréable. Je ne dis pas que ce principe ne puisse un jour revenir; mais j'ai
peur que ce ne soit à travers des mers de boue et de sang et des révolutions qu'il ne faut pas désirer à notre malheureux pays. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 351)

For a "vieille aristocrate," Adèle de Boigne could sometimes be surprisingly liberal in her views. Her Bourbon leanings do not overshadow her judgement or her writing. In a letter addressed to Henry Bordeaux, Marcel Proust scolds his friend from the Academy for not seeing this aspect of Adèle de Boigne's writing:

Vous êtes bien sévère pour Mme de Boigne. Préjugé aristocratique, mon Dieu, puisqu'elle l'avoue dans son roman, je ne peux le nier, mais il ne lui a guère servi d'ailleurs. Un libéral d'aujourd'hui ne jugerait pas les événements d'alors d'un esprit plus libéral, en effet plus libéré, que cette dame qui fut élevée avant la Révolution sur les genoux de la reine. (Histoire d'une vie, t, III, p. 80)

Adèle did more than simply reminisce about earlier times, she enjoyed reading and commenting on historical works and memoirs dealing with a past which for her as well as for Pasquier was still quite alive. In the following passage intended for the chancelier, she comments on Vieil-Castel's Histoire de la Restauration:

Je continue M. de Vieil-Castel. Je m'accuse d'avoir été plus libérale qu'il n'était peut-être raisonnable en 1814, et peut-être toujours un peu plus sévère qu'il ne fallait pour la Restauration; mais cependant je me suis bien vite retirée de toute coterie. Hélas! cette pauvre grande maison de Bourbon se perdra en dépit de tous ses précédents et de tous nos efforts; et en vérité on ose à peine s'avouer à soi-même combien elle exerce encore de prestige sur nous autres vieux.
--Quant aux fautes faites dans les premiers moments, je ne trouve pas que M. Vieil-Castel les exagère. En me reportant au temps, il me semble bien avoir envisagé les choses telles à peu près qu'il les représente. N'était-ce pas une erreur dont tous les maux pouvaient découler que de faire rédiger la constitution par des hommes qui disaient hautement n'y attacher aucune importance? M... disait quelques mois plus tard à mon père, qui regrettaient que la loi d'élection et sur la presse n'eussent pas été faites en même temps: "Mais, mon cher marquis, cette charte n'a été faite que pour satisfaire aux exigences de l'empereur Alexandre et sans l'idée qu'elle pût marcher. Au fond, ce n'est qu'une transition pour arriver à un état de choses raisonnable." Vous qui étiez dans des idées plus pratiques, vous avez dû voir les événements sous un tout autre jour; mais je vous avoue que les impressions relatées par M. de Vieil-Castel sont assez celles que je me rappelle. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 342-43)

Several notes by the comtesse deal with Thiers' work (History of the Consulate and the Empire), and she maintains a written dialogue about the work with Pasquier, "comparing notes" about a shared historical period:

Je lis M. Thiers avec le plus grand plaisir; je suis sa très-humble servante, mais je ne saurais admettre ses regrets de ce que la ville de Paris n'a pas été mise à même de jouer le rôle d'une nouvelle Saragosse. Je puis lui protester que peu d'habitants désiraient ce sort. C'est bien assez que les pauvres villages soient saccagés et les villes dites de guerre exposées à ces horreurs! Je proteste aussi que toutes les belles dames qui se promenaient sur le boulevard pendant la bataille de Paris, au risque de recevoir quelque éclat d'obus, n'avaient aucunement l'idée de rentrer chez elles pour jeter de la poix bouillante sur la tête des assaillants.

--Permettez-moi de relever une erreur de M. Thiers. Ce n'est pas à Fontainebleau, mais au quartier général du maréchal Marmont que la
conversation entre l'empereur et lui a eu lieu. L'empereur était venu visiter les postes le surlendemain de la bataille de Paris, et c'est alors qu'en indiquant les plans à Marmont, il lui dit qu'il fallait aller la nuit suivante reprendre de vive force les hauteurs de Romainville. Marmont lui répondit: "Mais, Sire, où passerai-je la Marne?--Ah! oui, c'est vrai, la Marne est là!" Et quittant brusquement Marmont, l'empereur monta à cheval en lui disant: "Attendez de nouveaux ordres." Le maréchal m'a souvent conté que c'était cette conversation et le trouble, la fureur, qu'il avait remarqués dans l'esprit de l'empereur qui, plus que toute autre chose, l'avaient disposé à écouter les conseils qui, dans la matinée, lui étaient arrivés de Paris. Cette scène, se passant à Essone, explique encore mieux l'arrivée des aides de camp du maréchal que vous signalez. Vous peignez la situation de Paris et l'emportement de ses habitants tels que je me les rappelle. Quant à l'extravagance de notre parti, je vous prie de croire qu'elle n'était pas entièrement. Je me rappelle avoir vu mon père revenir consterné de cette assemblée dont les députés furent expédiés rue Saint-Florentin. La seule chose dont mon père se soit occupé activement avait été de réunir cette petite escouade de jeunes gens à panaches blancs, envoyés à Livry pour que M. le comte d'Artois n'entraîne pas à Paris avec l'escorte d'uniformes étrangers. (Estienne Denis Pasquier, 333-35)

From her correspondence with Pasquier, it is clear that the comtesse de Boigne considers herself a competent critic of texts dealing with the history of post-revolution France. Her own memoirs she claims to have left unaltered, and despite her disclaimers in the introduction, it is apparent that she intended a broader audience for her text than just her immediate family. The second person address in the early pages disappears, and few interjections exist to remind the reader that the text was intended for the
young marquis d'Osmond. The author claims in 1843 that she
did not revise or edit any of the text originally written,
thus indicating that she was satisfied with the general
historical accuracy of the *Récits d'une tante*. Is she
really as impartial when writing of historical figures and
events as she repeatedly claims to be in her text? In
order to respond to this question, I will examine the way
in which she portrays two leaders--Napoleon Bonaparte,
whose government she claims to have opposed, and Charles X,
who, as a Bourbon, should have her sympathy.

Adèle de Boigne was in England when Bonaparte declared
himself Emperor. She was attending a dinner at her uncle's
residence when the news arrived. She does not mention her
personal reaction, but chooses rather to portray the
reaction of the *émigrés* present, demonstrating the
absurdity of their views. They were, Adèle implies,
desperately out of touch with the reality of the situation
across the channel:

Bonaparte venait de se déclarer empereur,
trompant ainsi les espérances que les émigrés
avaient voulu se forger de ses projets
bourbonnistes. Chacun devisait de toutes les
chances qu'il perdait par cette imprudence. Les
uns pensaient qu'il aurait pu être maréchal de
France, d'autres, chevalier des ordres, quelques-
uns allaient même jusqu'à dire connétable!
Enfin, monsieur de Vaudreuil, se levant et se
tournant le dos au cheminée, en retroussant les
basques de son habit, nous dit d'un ton doctoral:
"Savez-vous ce que tout cela me prouve? C'est
que, malgré la réputation que nous travaillions à
faire à ce Bonaparte, c'est au fond un gredin très maladroit!"

Je me dispense des commentaires (I, 141).

The familiarity of the comtesse de Boigne with the émigrés and the exiled royal family seemed to instill in her a sympathy for the Emperor. Her impressions of Napoleon were often favorable, a fact that alarmed her mother: "A Londres, ma pauvre mère avait souvent pleuré de chagrin en me voyant si mal penser; elle prétendait que je montais la tête de mon frère pour Bonaparte. Il est certain que, voyant nos princes de près et le Premier Consul de loin, tous mes vœux étaient pour lui..." (I, 152). Unlike many royalists, Adèle de Boigne was able to see beyond the confines of her class, and felt a sincere admiration for Bonaparte:

"En dépit de mes préjugés, je n'avais pu me défendre d'une exaltation très sincère pour le Premier Consul. J'admirais en lui le conquérant et le faiseur de bulletins. Personne ne m'avait expliqué son immense mérite de législateur et de tranquillisateur des passions; je n'étais pas en état de l'apprécier à moi seule. Je me serais, je crois, volontiers enthousiasmée pour lui si j'avais vécu dans une autre atmosphère. (I, 151-52)

In her description of the imperial ball already cited in chapter one, Adèle describes the tone of disdain that the Emperor could adopt, as well as his "aristocratic" airs. She was not impressed by this behavior: "J'avais vu d'autres monarques," she writes, "mais aucun traitant aussi cavalièrement le public" (I, 189). For the comtesse,
Napoleon was out of his element while imitating the behavior of kings. He was at his best when he put his own mark on social gatherings. The comtesse describes a ball that she attended in honor of the baptism of Napoleon's son, one of the last imperial fêtes. Here, the Emperor is portrayed in what the narrator interprets to be his natural element. Where some members of her class might see only the ridiculous, Adèle discerns an element of grandeur, a difference which made Bonaparte stand out from the crowd:

L'Empereur, suivi de son cortège, traversa la salle en arrivant, pour se rendre à l'estrade qui occupe le fond. Il marchait le premier et tellement vite que tout le monde, sans excepter l'Impératrice, était obligée de courir presque pour le suivre. Cela nuisait à la dignité et à la grâce, mais ce frou-frou, ce pas de course, avaient quelque chose de conquérant qui lui seyait. Cela avait grande façon dans un autre genre.

Il paraissait bien le maître de toutes ces magnificences. Il n'était plus affublé de son costume impérial; un simple uniforme, que lui seul portait au milieu des habits habillés, le rendait encore plus remarquable et parlait plus à l'imagination que ne l'auraient pu faire toutes les broderies du monde. Il voulut être gracieux et obligeant, et me parut infiniment mieux qu'à l'autre bal. (I, 189)

The Emperor had, according to Adèle, a flair for the spectacular. She admires the innovative genius of Napoleon. An example described by the comtesse concerns the full scale mock-up of the Arc de Triomphe ordered by Napoleon before the actual construction began:

"L'Empereur, auquel les grandes idées ne manquait guère,
eut celle de faire construire en toile le grand arc de l'Etoile tel qu'il existe aujourd'hui," she writes, "et ce monument improvisé fit un effet surprenant. Je crois que c'est le premier exemple de cette sage pensée, adopté maintenant, d'essayer l'effet des constructions avant de les établir définitivement. L'arc de l'Etoile obtint les suffrages qu'il méritait (I, 193).

There is no shortage of passages expressing admiration for the Emperor in the memoirs, but there are a number of criticisms as well. What is interesting about Adèle's evaluation of the Emperor is the way in which she tones down each critical comment with a note of explanation or justification. An example of this is her account of the reaction of the French to Napoleon's victories in the later years of the Empire: "Lorsque le canon nous annonçait le gain de quelque brillante bataille...la population y restait presque insensible. Elle était rassasiée de gloire et elle savait que de nouveaux succès entraîneraient de nouveaux efforts" (I, 198). She immediately follows this observation, however, with the following account of the announcement of the birth of Napoleon's son:

Pour rendre hommage à la vérité, je dois dire cependant que, le jour où le vingt-sixième coup de canon annonça que l'Impératrice était accouchée d'un garçon, il y eut dans toute la ville un long cri de joie qui partit comme par un mouvement électrique. Tout le monde s'était mis aux fenêtres ou sur les portes; pour compter les vingt-cinq premiers, le silence était grand, le
vingt-sixième amena une explosion. C'était le complément du bonheur de l'Empereur, et on aime toujours ce qui est complet. Je ne voudrais pas répondre que les plus opposants n'avaient pas ressenti en ce moment un peu d'émotion. (I, 198)

Adèle illustrates well the profound lassitude felt by the majority of the French, and she also points out that the Emperor had become obsessed with his own power. But even this observation is accompanied by a qualifying remark: "La toute-puissance l'avait enivré et aveuglé; peut-être n'est-il pas donné à un homme d'en supporter le poids" (I, 228). The ultimate failure of the Emperor, Adèle explains, was that he ceased representing the interests of the nation ("L'Empereur avait tant travaillé à établir que c'était ses affaires et non les nôtres qu'on avait fini par le prendre au mot"). And yet, even in the middle of her strongest criticism of Bonaparte, the comtesse de Boigne surprisingly defends the Emperor:

Eh bien! la France en était là; elle ne trouvait plus qu'il représentât ses intérêts; et, comme tous les peuples, encore plus que les individus, sont ingrats, elle oubliait les immenses bienfaits dont elle lui était redevable et l'accablait de ses reproches. À son tour, la postérité oubliera les aberrations de ce sublime génie et ses petitesses. Elle poétisera le séjour de Fontainebleau; elle négligera de le montrer, après ses adieux si héroïques aux aigles de ses vieux bataillons, discutant avec la plus vive insistance pour obtenir quelque mobilier de plus à emporter dans son exil, et elle aura raison. Quand une figure comme celle de Bonaparte surgit dans les siècles, il ne faut pas conserver les petites obscurités qui pourrait ternir quelques-uns de ses rayons; mais il faut bien expliquer comment les contemporains, tout en étant éblouis, avaient cessé de trouver ces rayons vivifiants et
n'en éprouvaient plus qu'un sentiment de souffrance. (I, 229)

Adèle writes of being embarrassed at the behavior of many royalists after the fall of Napoleon, describing certain incidents in great detail. She makes it clear that the Emperor's rule had become intolerable, but blames the shortsightedness of many of her compatriots in their excess of glee at his fall. There is a profound respect for Bonaparte in her writing. Even the account of the arrival of Louis XVIII in Paris is overshadowed by the unseen presence of the emperor in the narrative:

Le cortège avait pour escorte la vieille garde impériale. D'autres raconteront les maladresses commises à son égard avant et depuis ce moment, tout ce que je veux dire c'est que son aspect était imposant mais glaçant. Elle s'avançait au grand pas, silencieuse et morne, pleine du souvenir du passé. Elle arrêtait du regard l'élan des cœurs envers ceux qui arrivaient. Les cris de Vive le Roi! se taisaient à son passage; on poussait de loin en loin ceux de Vive la garde, la vieille garde! mais elle ne les accueillait pas mieux et semblait les prendre en dérision. À mesure qu'elle défilait, le silence s'accroissait; bientôt on n'entendit plus que le bruit monotone de son pas accéléré, frappant sur le cœur. La consternation gagnait et la tristesse contagieuse de ces vieux guerriers donnait à cette cérémonie l'apparence des funérailles de l'Empereur bien plus que l'avènement du Roi. (I, 256)

Adèle de Boigne's account of Napoleon's escape from Elba and of the Hundred Days is remarkable as well. She was among the first to learn of the Emperor's flight. Her father, ambassador in Turin at the time, had been assigned the duty of keeping an eye on the Bonapartistes in his
region, and monitoring their communications with the island. The comtesse and her father were in Genoa when news of the Emperor's escape reached them. She describes the confusion and panic that resulted, and her father's efforts to dispatch communications to Paris, Vienna, and local authorities along the coast. These dispatchs were, according to Adèle, intercepted by Napoleon's agents. Despite the alarm, the comtesse de Boigne again expresses admiration for the audacity of the emperor:

Il était impossible de n'être pas frappé de la grandeur, de la décision, de l'audace dans la marche et de l'habileté prodigieuse déployées par l'Empereur, de Cannes jusqu'à Paris. Il est peu étonnant que ses partisans en aient été électrisés et aient retrempé leur zèle à ce foyer du génie. C'est peut-être le plus grand fait personnel accompli par le plus grand homme des temps modernes; et ce n'était pas, j'en suis persuadée, un plan combiné d'avance. Personne n'en avait le secret complet en France; peut-être était-on un peu plus instruit en Italie. Mais l'Empereur avait beaucoup livré au hasard ou plutôt à son génie. La preuve en est que le commandant d'Antibes, sommé le premier, avait refusé d'admettre les aigles impériales. Leur vol était donc tout à fait soumis à la conduite des hommes qu'elles rencontrereraient sur leur route, et la belle expression du vol de clocher en clocher, quoique justifiée par le succès, était bien hasardée. L'Empereur s'était encore une fois confié à son étoile et elle lui avait été fidèle, comme pour servir de flambeau à de plus immenses funérailles. (I, 319)

The reaction of the public to the death of the Emperor on his far-away island is well described in the memoirs. Adèle was shocked at the public reaction to his death in
Paris, writing that posterity would judge the Emperor in a better light than her contemporaries:

Le 5 mai 1821, Napoléon Bonaparte exhalait son dernier soupir sur un rocher au milieu de l'Atlantique. La destinée lui avait ainsi préparé le plus poétique des tombeaux. Placée à l'extrémité des deux mondes, et n'appartenant qu'au nom de Bonaparte, Sainte-Hélène est devenue le colossal mausolée de cette colossale gloire; mais l'ère de sa popularité posthume n'avait pas encore commencé pour la France.

J'ai entendu crier par les colporteurs des rues: La mort de Napoléon Bonaparte, pour deux sols; son discours au général Bertrand, pour deux sols; les désespoirs de madame Bertrand, pour deux sols, pour deux sols, sans que cela fit plus d'effet dans les rues que l'annonce d'un chien perdu.

Je me rappelle encore combien nous fûmes frappées, quelques personnes un peu plus réfléchissantes, de cette singulière indifférence; combien nous répétâmes: "Vanité des vanités et tout est vanité!" Et pourtant la gloire est quelque chose, car elle a repris son niveau, et des siècles d'admiration vengeront l'empereur Napoléon de ce moment d'oubli. (II, 48)

If the reader of Adèle de Boigne's memoirs is surprised at the unveiled enthusiasm of the comtesse for Napoleon Bonaparte, then the same will certainly hold true for her highly critical, one could even say acrid portrayal of Charles X in the text. "Ce pauvre prince a toujours été le fléau de sa famille et de son pays," she writes, summing up her opinion of the last of the Bourbons to occupy the throne of France (I, 247). One might not expect such an account coming from the pen of an aristocrat with such
pronounced royalist leanings. This is in the case of Adèle less of a contradiction than it might seem on the surface, however, as I will demonstrate after an examination of the portrait of Charles X in the memoirs.

The comte d'Artois, future Charles X, is first portrayed in the memoirs as a frivolous but likeable character at Versailles. (The reader must remember that the comtesse was only a child at that time, and these observations are doubtless accounts that she heard from others). Louis XVI would always cover for his brother, she writes, when the gambling debts began mounting too high: "Il était par son heureux caractère, par ses grâces, peut-être même par sa légèreté le benjamin de toute la famille; il faisait sottise sur sottise; le Roi le tançait, lui pardonnait, et payait ses dettes" (I, 41).

While in England, Adèle de Boigne had many opportunities to see the comte d'Artois, describing the difficulties brought about by his debts, as well as his relationship with madame de Polastron. The comtesse attributes the "rôle peu honorable que le prince a joué pendant le cours de la Révolution" to his relationship with the latter. Little is revealed in her account thus far that is not common knowledge among historians of the period. For Adèle, however, this relationship was of great importance because as a result of it, Charles X became very
religious, and fell under the influence of the Church. During her long illness, writes the comtesse, madame de Polastraon became dévote, and was not hesitant to preach her faith to the comte d'Artois. It was as she was dying, according to Adèle, that a change occurred in the prince: "Il entrait dans tous ses sentiments," she writes, and immediately fell under the influence of Madame de Polastraon's confessor. After her death, Adèle continues:

L'abbé ne perdit pas un instant, il entraîna monsieur le comte d'Artois à l'église de King-Street, l'y retint plusieurs heures, le fit confesser et, le lendemain, lui donna la communion. Depuis ce moment, il le domina au point qu'en le regardant seulement, il le faisait changer de conversation. (I, 132)

This was the beginning, for the comtesse de Boigne, of what would later become the total submission of Charles X to that mysterious entity, the Congrégation: "Charles X, agrégé à la société et sous sa domination directe, ne se permettait pas une pensée sans la soumettre à sa décision" (II, 97). Adèle saw the congregation as having an enormous influence on the government of Charles X. Her account of his sacre at Reims, an event which she did not attend but does not hesitate to describe, reveals the sense of

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5The comtesse de Boigne offers her own definition of the Congrégation: "On va me dire, vous parlez sans cesse de la Congrégation; qu'était-ce donc? Je pourrais répondre: le mauvais génie de la Restauration, mais cela ne satisferait pas. Pour nous, qui l'avons vue à l'œuvre, nous ne pouvons douter de son existence, et pourtant je ne saurais dire, à l'heure qu'il est, quels étaient les chefs réels de cette association qui réglait le destin du pays... (II, 55).
ridicule that the comtesse feels for this event, and serves in her mind as a confirmation for her belief that Charles X was in the grip of le parti prêtre:

Suivant mes habitudes de paresse, je n'eus pas même la tentation d'aller à Reims. Si j'avais cru que c'était, comme il est très probable, la dernière apparition de la sainte Ampoule pour les Rois très chrétiens, peut-être cela aurait-il stimulé ma curiosité. Malgré la magnificence sous laquelle on avait cherché à masquer les mœmories, cléricales et féodales, de la cérémonie, elles excitèrent la critique.

Charles X, en chemise de satin blanc, couché par terre pour recevoir par sept ouvertures, ménagées dans ce vêtement, les attouchements de l'huile sainte, ne se releva pas, pour la multitude, sanctifié comme l'oint du Seigneur, mais bien un personnage ridiculisé par cette cérémonie et amoindri aux yeux de la foule.... Je sais bien que les princes, en s'y soumettant, pensent ne s'humilier que devant le Seigneur; mais le prêtre paraît trop en évidence pour pouvoir être complètement mis de côté dans des cérémonies où le sens mystique reste caché sous des formes toutes matérielles. (II, 103, 104)

Adèle's account of the sacre of Charles X accurately reflects the opinion of many of her contemporaries, that such an event in the nineteenth century inspired not awe, but rather ridicule. It was symbolic of the king's being out of touch with the times in which he lived. Her emphasis on the influence of the congrégation, however, seems exaggerated. This indicates that the comtesse de Boigne may have believed that a conspiracy was at work, as did many who were suspicious of the more conservative elements of the government at that time.
The principal advantage of Charles X, according to Adèle, was his physical appearance: "Monsieur le comte d'Artois était l'idéal du prince," she writes. The comtesse had several opportunities to see him, and offers a flattering description of the heir to the throne, describing him as gracious, noble, and polite. His physical presence was quite imposing. It was this noble bearing, according to Adèle, that impressed those around him, and despite her lack of esteem for him, even she was emotionally moved as the prince entered Paris in 1814, in advance of his brother, after the fall of Napoleon:

Je n'ai pas cherché à dissimuler le peu de considération que tout ce que j'avais vu et su de Monsieur m'avait donné pour son caractère; cependant, l'enthousiasme est tellement contagieux que, le jour de son entrée à Paris, j'en éprouvai toute l'influence. Mon cœur battait, mes larmes coulaient, et je ressentais la joie la plus vive, l'émotion la plus profonde.

Monsieur possédait à perfection l'extérieur et les paroles propres à inspirer de l'exaltation; gracieux, élégant, débonnaire, obligeant, désireux de plaire, il savait joindre la bonhomie à la dignité. Je n'ai vu personne avoir plus complètement l'attitude, les formes, le maintien, le langage de Cour désirables pour un prince. Ajoutez à cela une grande urbanité de mœurs qui le rendait charmant dans son intérieur et le faisait aimer par ceux qui l'approchaient. (I, 247)

This captivating façade was misleading, however. Those more familiar with the prince, according to the comtesse, did not share the enthousiasm of the crowds:

"Pendant tous ces premiers moments, il était le plus
populaire de ces princes, aux yeux du public. Les personnes initiées aux affaires le voyaient sous un autre aspect" (I, 258).

The comtesse de Boigne describes the role of the comte d'Artois, now Monsieur, during the reign of Louis XVIII in less than flattering terms. She illustrates a number of examples, such as the immediate (and, for Adèle, insensitive) adoption of the cocarde blanche by the prince upon his triumphal entry in Paris, to arrive at the following evaluation of the future king during these years:

L'histoire ne racontera que trop les fautes commises par Monsieur dans ces jours où, lieutenant général du royaume, il envenima toutes les haines, excita tous les mécontentements, et surtout, montra un manque de patriotisme qui scandalisa même les étrangers. (I, 249)

The greatest error committed by the Bourbons, according to the comtesse, was the absolute ignorance of the royal family regarding the many changes that had taken place during their long absence: "Ils ne se donnaient pas la peine de les apprendre ni de s'en informer, bien persuadés qu'ils se tenaient d'être rentrés dans leur patrimoine" (I, 331).

For Adèle, the ignorance of Charles X was shared by many of the émigrés. Their return to France under the circumstances which existed in 1815 presented them, she writes, with a golden opportunity to consolidate the power of the nobility. They were, however, unreasonable in their
demands and destructive to their own cause. The frustration of the comtesse over the blindness of her compatriots is evident in the memoirs, surfacing again and again in the narration. The following passage is typical of her criticism, and also establishes her as a partisan of the constitutional monarchy:

Les élections de 1815 se firent dans un sens purement royaliste; la noblesse y siégeait en immense majorité. C'est la meilleure chance qu'elle ait eue, depuis quarante ans, de reprendre quelque supériorité en France. Si elle s'était montrée calme, raisonnable, généreuse, éclairée, occupée des affaires du pays, protectrice de ses libertés, en un mot, si elle avait joué le rôle qui appartenait à l'aristocratie d'un gouvernement représentatif, dans ce moment où elle était toute-puissante, on lui en aurait tenu compte et le trône aurait trouvé un appui réel dans l'influence qu'elle pouvait exercer. Mais cette Chambre, que dans les premiers temps le Roi qualifia d'‘introuvable, se montra folle, exagérée, ignorante, passionnée, réactionnaire, dominée par des intérêts de caste. On la vit hurlant des vengeances et applaudissant les scènes sanglantes du Midi. La gentilhommerie réussit à se faire détester à cette occasion, comme dix ans plus tard elle a achevé sa déconsidération dans la honteuse discussion sur l'indemnité des émigrés. (I, 351)

Adèle divides the royalists during the reign of Louis XVIII into two factions, putting herself into the group that she labels the *juste milieu*: "Nous étions les royalistes du Roi et non pas les royalistes de Monsieur, les royalistes de la Restauration et non pas les royalistes de l'Emigration, les royalistes enfin qui, je crois, auraient sauvé le trône si on les avait écoutés" (II, 8).
Another aspect of Charles X that Adèle found intolerable, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, is what she interpreted to be his lack of patriotism. The comtesse relates a statement allegedly made by then-Monsieur to the duke of Wellington regarding the departure of the allied armies of occupation: "Si vous vous en allez, je veux m'en aller aussi" (II, 472). Adèle then describes the circulation of an anonymous document professing the convenance of prolonging the occupation, which was, Adèle writes, the precursor to the famous note secrète. Adèle writes of her anger concerning this letter:

Jules de Polignac arriva le dernier en Angleterre; il était porteur de la fameuse note secrète, œuvre avouée et reconnue de Monsieur, quoique monsieur de Vitrolles l'eût rédigée.

Jamais action plus antipatriotique n'a été conseillé à un prince; jamais prince héritier d'une couronne n'en a fait une plus coupable. Les cabinets étrangers l'accueillèrent avec mépris, et le roi Louis XVIII en conçut une telle fureur contre son frère que cela lui donna du courage pour lui ôter le commandement des gardes nationales du royaume. (I, 483)

The comtesse leaves no room for doubt regarding her opinion of the patriotism of Charles X, suggesting that had he demonstrated more concern for and pride in the Patrie, he would have been more popular. To cite a rare example of such sentiment in the king, Adèle describes her pride in

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6Jean-Claude Berchet describes this letter as follows: "Elle était destinée à être communiquée à toutes les puissances alliées et avait pour but de leur démontrer les dangers qu'il y avait à retirer trop vite leurs forces d'occupation (I, 528)."
the comments of Charles X, after she had related to him her account of a ship that had run aground during a crossing of the English Channel:

Je me rappelle particulièrement ce jour-là parce que c'est le seul mouvement patriotique que j'aie vu à Monsieur et que j'aime à lui en faire honneur. On conçoit qu'un naufrage est un argument trop commode pour que les princes ne l'exploitent pas à fond. J'avais fait ma cour à ses dépens chez le Roi, chez Madame, et même chez monsieur le duc d'Angoulême.

Arrivée chez Monsieur, après quelques questions préliminaires, il me dit d'un ton assez triste:

"C'était un paquebot français.

--Non, monseigneur, c'était un anglais.

--Oh! que j'en suis aise!"

Il se retourna à son service qui le suivait, et répéta aux dames qui m'environnaient: "Ce n'était pas un capitaine français" avec un air de satisfaction dont je lui sus un gré infini. S'il avait souvent exprimé de pareils sentiments, il aurait été bien autrement populaire. (I, 467)

There was, the comtesse writes, a brief period of hope after the death of Louis XVIII, when the new king issued a déclaration de principe with surprisingly liberal tones. Adèle reports that Parisians, believing that Charles X had embraced the constitution, welcomed their monarch with

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7In February of 1818, a ship carrying many passengers, among them the comtesse de Boigne, ran aground near the coast at Dover. As daughter of the ambassador and carrying important documents, Adèle could have boarded the only lifeboat available, but gave her place instead to a mother and her five children. Her example, she claims, restored calm to a panic-stricken group of passengers. (The account is found on page 466 of the first volume of the memoirs.)
great joy: "sa popularité était au comble le jour où il fit son entrée dans Paris, par une pluie battante qui ne réussit, ni à diminuer l'affluence des spectateurs, ni à calmer la chaleur de leurs acclamations" (II, 95). Any animosity against Monsieur seemed to vanish with the adoption of the new title of Charles X. The comtesse de Boigne, however, claims to have known him too well to believe that the prince had changed his ways.

The detailed account of the events that led to the fall of Charles X from power reveal again the frustration of the narrator, who states that it was possible to see the throne slipping away from the king, even as he occupied it: "Jamais catastrophe n'a été plus annoncé," she writes (II, 151). The throne was entirely to blame for all of the errors of those fateful days, the comtesse claims. It was still, however, not so much the king as the ministry that was despised: "Je suis bien persuadée qu'électeurs et députés, personne ne pensait à renverser le trône, mais, oui bien, le ministère" (II, 166).

As if to counter critics who would accuse her of being so harsh in her account of the ill-fated government of Charles X as a result of her orléaniste leanings, Adèle writes of a fête she attended at the Palais Royal in honor of the king and the visiting court of Naples. She was
unhappy with the apparent satisfaction of the future King of the French, given the circumstances:

Cette manière de remplir ses salons, fort au delà de ce qu'ils pouvaient contencer, de tous les gens les plus désagréables au Roi pendant qu'il était censé lui donner une fête, et, plus encore, cette illumination de tous les jardins, ce soin de les tenir tous grands ouverts à la multitude, dans un temps où l'impopularité du souverain n'était un secret pour personne, cette affectation à se présenter perpétuellement sur la terrasse pour faire crier: "Vive monsieur le duc d'Orléans," tout cela avait quelque chose de plus que populaire, de populacier, si j'ose le dire, qui me blessait d'autant plus que la circonstance le comportait moins. (II, 169)

These are strong words for a woman many believed had been a staunch supporter of the Orléans, too quick to abandon the dying government of Charles X. Adèle de Boigne goes so far as to describe that evening as the first uprising of 1830:

Cette nuit peut être considérée comme la première émeute de l'année 1830, si fertile en ce genre. La foule, admise sans aucune surveillance dans les jardins et les galeries, finit par s'exalter, sous les conseils de quelques prédicateurs de désordre, et devint tellement turbulente qu'il fallut la faire expulser par la force armée (II, 169).

The confusion following the publication of the ordonnances in the Moniteur is described in the memoirs in considerable detail. On the twenty-sixth of July, the duc de Raguse⁸ arrived, in a state of agitation, to inform the comtesse of the four fatal ordinances. Adèle relates his

⁸Auguste Viesse de Marmont (1774-1852)
comments regarding Charles X and his government in the memoirs to illustrate the mood she wishes to project:

"Ils sont perdus. Ils ne connaissent ni le pays, ni le temps. Ils vivent en dehors du monde et du siècle. Partout ils portent leur atmosphère avec eux, on ne peut les éclairer, ni même le tenter; c'est sans ressource!"

(ii, 180)

It is apparent that the comtesse de Boigne was not overjoyed to see the fall of the Bourbons from the throne. She makes it quite clear in the memoirs that Charles X, for reasons beyond those listed in this chapter, brought the Revolution of 1830 upon himself. Even the workers employed in remodeling her residence at the time of the July revolution were conscious, according to Adèle, of the consequences of the ordinances. The government, unfortunately, was not. Charles X and his advisors had not taken into account the changes in the population since the Revolution, and this ignorance was their undoing. Had the king worked in the interest of the nation instead of his own self-interest, the outcome could have been quite different:

Sans doute une population ainsi faite était impossible à exploiter au profit d'une caste privilégiée; mais, si on avait voulu entrer dans le véritable intérêt du pays, elle se serait montrée facile autant que sage; et on aurait trouvé secours et assistance dans le bon sens des masses contre l'effervescence de quelques brouillons. Malheureusement, le Roi et la nation
The Revolution which chased Charles X from the throne is described in terms of great admiration and pride in the memoirs, in a separate chapter entitled "Une semaine de juillet 1830." The comtesse de Boigne observed these events from her windows and from her carriage, and relates many tales of heroism and patriotism on the part of the participants during this "noble semaine," as she calls it. She was especially impressed at the sense of unity of most Parisians, and at the lack of bitterness against those fighting against them, once they had been disarmed. At the conclusion of this chapter, she sums up the July Revolution in the following epic terms: "Alors la France s'est levée comme un seul homme et, s'étant faite géante par l'unité de sa volonté, elle a secoué les pygmées qui prétendaient l'asservir (II, 244).

Of great interest in this chapter of the memoirs is the comparison that Adèle makes between Charles X and Napoleon. The latter had a firm grasp, for a time, at least, of the spirit of his era, while Charles X was completely out of touch. The last of the Bourbons had reverted to an ancient tradition for his coronation, a ceremony which was out of place, even ridiculous in 1825. Napoleon, according to the comtesse, had a better sense of how to use such ceremonies to his advantage:
Il y a toujours, dans les vieilles cérémonies, des usages pour qui le temps a formé prescription, et d'autres qui répondent constamment aux impressions générales. Le tact consiste à les discerner et l'esprit à les choisir.

C'est ce que l'Empereur avait su distinguer. Son couronnement, très solennel et très religieux, n'avait pourtant été accompagné d'aucune de ces prostrations que les prétentions de l'Eglise réclament et que l'esprit du siècle repousse. (II, 103-104)

Another area in which Adèle contrasts the two leaders is in the way they dealt with advice and criticism. "Charles X n'était pas de ces gens qui se contraignent," writes Adèle. "Il avait beaucoup d'entêtement parce qu'il était inéclairable, mais nulle force de caractère" (II, 99). Such was not the case with Napoleon, who "non seulement trouvait bon mais exigeait qu'on lui dit la vérité toute entière et même qu'on insistât pour faire prévaloir son opinion vis-à-vis de lui" (II, 141-42).

It is clear, then, that Adèle de Boigne's pronounced political leanings are secondary in her analysis of the Emperor Napoleon and Charles X. If this were not the case, the tone found in the text regarding these two figures would be reversed. The comtesse de Boigne writes of Charles X in such a negative manner because this king was acting in a way that was detrimental to the interests of the nation, while Napoleon, at least in the early years of his rule, worked toward the glory of France. The Emperor
fell, Adèle relates, in part because he, too, had lost sight of the well-being of his nation. The comtesse de Boigne, then, puts la patrie before any political affiliation.

I have already described Adèle de Boigne's stated effort to be as impartial as possible in her memoirs, and her awareness of her writing as being of some historical significance, although the memoirs are full of disclaimers: "Je n'écris pas l'histoire, je le répète. Tout au plus, puis-je me flatter, en retraçant les événements où j'ai assisté, comme acteur ou comme spectateur, de donner quelques coups de pinceau qui fassent mieux apprécier les choses et les personnes" (II, 464). There is certainly no lack of interesting material in the memoirs, but does the text have any historical value? To what extent do contemporary historians accept the work of this memorialist?

Contemporary works published as recently as 1990 continue to cite the memoirs of the comtesse de Boigne, and for many historians and biographers her memoirs serve as a major source of reference.

In the years immediately following the publication of Adèle de Boigne's memoirs, a number of histories incorporating the memoirs in their text as a reference began to appear. To name just a few, Pierre Rain cites
them in his *L'Europe et la Restauration des Bourbons 1814-1818* (Perrin, 1908), and Major John R. Hall utilizes numerous passages from the memoirs in his study *The Bourbon Restauration* (Boston, Haughton Mifflin, 1909). Neither writer offers any qualifying remarks concerning the quotations used; excerpts from the memoirs are employed simply as a way of supporting certain statements or illustrating events or historical personages.

Jean-Louis Bory's *La Révolution de Juillet* (Gallimard, 1972) integrates passages from the memoirs into his text, often without quoting the source, writing in the comtesse as an active participant in the events, not simply as a spectator. David H. Pinkney, distinguished author of several works dealing with early and middle nineteenth century France, also consults the memoirs in his book *The French Revolution of 1830* (Princeton University Press, 1972).

Mary F. Sandars describes the comtesse de Boigne as "caustic" but makes extensive use of her memoirs to illustrate various events in her biography *Louis XVIII* (James Pott & Co., 1910). In fact, a number of biographies of Louis XVIII and Charles X cite de Boigne's text. Evelyne Lever's *Louis XVIII* is the most recent (Fayard, 1988). Lever uses the memoirs freely to present eyewitness accounts of various events during the reign of Louis XVIII,
as well as anecdotes which help her reader to develop a feel for the period described. Unlike some other historians, Lever sees de Boigne's wit in a positive light, and sees in the comtesse a skillful observer of events who was aware of the significance of even seemingly trivial events. Lever describes the comtesse as "bien informée, douée d'un remarquable sens psychologique" (506). Of the many sources consulted by Lever for her work, Adèle de Boigne's memoirs is one of the most frequently cited.

André Castelot's Charles X la fin d'un monde (Perrin, 1988) and Vincent Beach's Charles X of France, his Life and Times (Pruett, 1971) both cite the memoirs frequently. Beach describes Adèle as "always a close (and biased) observer of political events," but also describes her on one occasion as "gossipy." Many of her comments he finds relevant, however, and allows the text of Adèle de Boigne to describe certain key events, such as the crowning of Charles X. Beach is unable to resist inserting a few of the comtesse de Boigne's anecdotes in his text, and in one case he feels the need to defend the accuracy of her statements. During the brief revolution which toppled the throne of Charles X, Beach makes use of one of de Boigne's fascinating descriptions:

On Wednesday afternoon, the comte de Broglie, greatly disturbed by the commotion at Versailles, visited the king and voiced his fears. Charles went to considerable trouble to reassure him, but
when he noted the count's anxiety was not lessened by these assurances, the king took him by the arm and said: "Comte de Broglie, you, at any rate, are a man of faith. Therefore, have confidence; Jules [Polignac] saw the Holy Virgin again last night. She ordered him to persevere and promised that all would end well." It may be true, as friends of Polignac have insisted, that the comtesse de Boigne, from whose Mémoires this last bit of information is taken, was no unbiased observer, and she may have invented this tale. However, the past records of Charles X and Polignac and their unusual conduct during the July days indicated that this story could have been true. (374)

Beach might have added that the comte de Broglie himself writes of his friendship with Adèle de Boigne in his memoirs, and that she may have heard this account from the comte himself. In any case, the episode described by the narrator of the Récits d'une tante provides depth to Beach's text, breathing life into his portrayal of the last days of the court of Charles X.

Several biographers of Louis-Philippe have taken advantage of the memoirs in their texts. Agnès de Stoeckl's King of the French, a Portrait of Louis-Philippe 1773-1850 (London: John Murray, 1957), Citizen King, the Life of Louis-Philippe King of the French by T.E.B. Howarth (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961), and Marguerite Castillon du Perron's Louis-Philippe et la Révolution Francaise (Paris: Perrin, 1963) all cite Adèle de Boigne's memoirs. Perron writes that de Boigne is "peu indulgente à l'égard de ses contemporains" (383). Stoeckle borrows entire pages from the memoirs, writing of her: "Adèle de
Boigne was a brilliantly intellectual and clever woman; she was the chief visitor to the Orléans family, keeping them informed of the different way they were to approach society. Although very attached to the family, she did not ignore the Duc's ambitions, and the hidden activities of Adélaïde" (96).

Talleyrand's biographers also recognize the value of Adèle de Boigne's memoirs. A friend of Madame de Talleyrand, the comtesse was in a position to know a considerable amount about the Talleyrand household and its inner workings. Although labeling some of de Boigne's comments "caustic," Anna Bowman Dodd acknowledges Adèle's fine sense of observation in *Talleyrand, the Training of a Statesman (1754-1838)* (Putnam's Sons, 1927). J.F. Bernard quotes freely from the memoirs in his *Talleyrand, a Biography* (Putnam's Sons, 1973), but cautions the reader with an occasional footnote, as after a comment cited by the comtesse regarding Dorothea, Talleyrand's niece, with whom he had a remarkable and sometimes scandalous relationship. "Madame de Boigne, in addition to being the most malicious and the most amusing gossip in Paris," writes Bernard, "was an admirer of Talleyrand's wife and, consequently, one of Dorothea's bitterest enemies" (503). Bernard also states that Adèle was "as naïve politically as
she was socially perceptive" (516). More than one historian might take Bernard to task for such a statement.

Two more recent works on Talleyrand, Michel Poniatowski's *Talleyrand et le Consulat* (Perrin, 1986) and Duff Cooper's *Talleyrand* (Cassell, London, 1987) also make use of the memoirs to illustrate certain events in the life of the controversial statesman.

Gabriel de Broglie, in his recent biography *Guizot* (Perrin, 1990), acknowledges the role of Adèle de Boigne in the life of his subject. The two enjoyed a long friendship. It was, in fact, at Madame de Boigne's residence at Châtenay that Guizot and Madame de Lieven first began their famous relationship. Even after Guizot had arrived in a position of power, de Broglie writes, he maintained his relationship with Adèle. The passages that de Broglie quotes from the memoirs are for the most part critical, if not outright negative toward Guizot.

The popularity of the *Récits d'une tante* among biographers is great in part because of Adèle's remarkable talent in writing narrative portraits of those she knew. Bordeaux describes her ability as follows:

...une certaine sécheresse de cœur permet à la comtesse de Boigne, dans ses Mémoires, de conter sans gêne, de peindre sans flatterie, et même en diminuant les traits qui se permettent de dépasser la commune mesure, et surtout d'aiguiser tout son esprit.
Ainsi douée, Mme de Boigne devait exceller dans le portrait, et surtout dans le portrait de femme. Elle dessine par petits traits vivants, comme si elle se tournait à chaque coup pour regarder le modèle et fixer la ressemblance, puis elle signe d'une épigramme rapide comme un paraphe. (Femmes et enfants, 139)

Not only biographers of kings and statesmen were drawn to Adèle de Boigne's memoirs, so were biographers of literary figures such as Benjamin Constant (Harold Nicolson), Germaine de Staël (Ghislain de Diesbach), and Chateaubriand (le duc de Castries), to name just a few. Biographers of the famous salonnière Madame Récamier found Adèle's memoirs to be invaluable. This comes as no surprise, considering the close friendship that the two shared. Henry Dwight Sedgwick in his Madame Récamier: The Biography of a Flirt (Bobbs-Merrill, New York, 1940) finds Adèle's lack of affection for Chateaubriand a disappointment, implying that it was somehow abnormal for a woman not to succumb to his charms, and feels that it is the only flaw in her analysis of the needs of Juliette Récamier.

A recent biography of Mme Récamier by Françoise Wagener, Madame Récamier (1777-1849) (Jean-Claude Lattès, 1986), uses the Récits d'une tante as a primary source of reference. "La très fine Madame de Boigne...la comprit le mieux," writes Wagener in her introduction. A detailed description of the comtesse de Boigne is presented in the
chapter entitled "La voie étroite de l'opposition."
Wagener describes Adèle's birth and childhood, and then
describes with admiration her quick adaptation to social
affairs upon her return to Paris in 1804, and her political
intelligence. In fact, Adèle's experiences such as the
loss of her family's fortune, her unhappy marriage, and her
position as salonnière, made of her a friend who could
relate very well to Juliette Récamier's situation: "Mme de
Boigne, précisément, voilà de toutes ses amies celle qui la
réconforte le mieux," writes Wagener. "Ses paroles sont
egalement sensées et pénétrantes.... La fine mouche la
comprend si bien! Elle seule peut saisir ce que le
mariage, la célébrité, l'image de Mme Récamier ont de
particulièrement incomplet..." (159).

Wagener is more sympathetic than Sedgewick regarding
de Boigne's harshness toward Chateaubriand. Adèle is too
much a "femme de tête," as Wagener describes her, to be
seduced by Chateaubriand, regardless of his talent.
Wagener sees Adèle de Boigne as a credible witness to
events of the day, and uses fully her comments on Juliette
Récamier, her salon and acquaintances.

Cynthia Cox's book on the duc de Richelieu,
Talleyrand's Successor, (Vanguard Press, 1961) makes
frequent use of de Boigne's memoirs, citing entire pages to
illustrate the passion of the queen of Sweden, who fell in
love with the duke and pursued him doggedly for years. Another biography of the duc de Richelieu, Emmanuel de Warequiel's *Le duc de Richelieu (1766-1822)*, frequently consults Adèle's text. De Waresquiel writes of Adèle's "ton malicieux et quelque peu excessif qui la caractérise" (43), and the fact that she was "un peu mauvaise langue" (319). De Waresquiel nonetheless appreciates the memoirs, and frequently resorts to Adèle's text, as in the following description of Richelieu and Decazes:

L'association des deux hommes, parfaite à cette époque, plus complexe par la suite, est pourtant assez curieuse. Les mémorialistes ont fait de l'opposition du "parvenu" et du grand seigneur, de leurs caractères, de ce qu'ils représentent respectivement une sorte de caricature. D'un côté, "la popularité, l'intrigue et le favoritisme". De l'autre, "l'honneur, la droiture, et la vertu." Ou, pour utiliser une autre expression sortie tout droit de l'imagination de Mme de Boigne, qui compare elle aussi les deux hommes: "le beau manteau de cristal pur dont la présidence de Monsieur de Richelieu couvrait [le] favoritisme de Monsieur Decazes était nécessaire à la durée de son crédit." En fait, Richelieu et Decazes se complètent merveilleusement. (293-94)

Philip Ziegler labels the comtesse de Boigne as an "insatiable gossip" in his biography *The Duchess of Dino* (John Day, N.Y., 1963). Ziegler uses several of Adèle's comments to illustrate a different side of certain issues or events; as in the friendship of Talleyrand and Dorothea for Royer Collard:

"He was at once original and witty, serious and vivacious, showed much affection for me and made
himself very pleasant to Monsieur de Talleyrand," wrote Dorothea. Madame de Boigne, as usual, saw things in a rather different light. "Monsieur Royer Collard is possessed by one of those mysterious ambitions which seek to gain everything while pretending to desire nothing.... He has made himself a great career with little talent but a great deal of grandiloquence. One can credit him with two or three outstanding speeches and an immense quantity of words--more hollow than profound--which nevertheless had a great vogue for a time. (160)

Ziegler is not being fair in this contrast, which juxtaposes comments which are entirely unrelated to the context he establishes. In another quotation from the memoirs of de Boigne, he seeks to illustrate how the gossip of Paris misinterpreted Dorothea's actions:

Court life was an additional burden in this long-drawn-out campaign though Dorothea found the ritual there less intolerably stuffy than it would have been in any other house. Madame de Boigne, indeed, considered that she positively relished the pomposity and artificiality, "When, having put on a lot of diamonds, she can sit for an hour or two on one of the principal sofas in a room brilliant with candles and in the company of several other highnesses of the same rank, then she considers her evening very well spent." This does Dorothea less than justice, insipid conversation and pointless protocol held no charm for her, but it is true that never for a moment did she forget that she was an aristocrat with royal blood in her veins. Still less would she ever have challenged the conventions which ruled the society in which it was her lot to move: that way, she would have felt, revolution lay. (157)

The Duchesse de Dino's biographer may have misinterpreted the comtesse de Boigne's intentions in the above passage. The comtesse herself writes, immediately following the lines quoted by Ziegler, "...ce qu'on appelle
la conversation, l'échange des idées sans un but intéressé et direct, ne l'amuse pas. Elle devrait pourtant y obtenir des succès; monsieur de Talleyrand lui en donnant l'exemple" (II, 362). Adèle was simply using this example to illustrate a point she had made about the duchesse de Dino appearing at important social functions. In the paragraph preceding the one quoted by Ziegler, Adèle writes that Dino was not bored in London with Talleyrand (who was ambassador there): "L'état d'ambassadrice lui convient parfaitement. Avec prodigieusement d'esprit, on pourrait aller jusqu'à dire de talent, si cette expression s'appliquait à une femme, madame de Dino s'accomode merveilleusement de la vie de représentation" (II, 362).

The **Récits d'une tante** are indeed harsh on the duchesse de Dino at times, but her account is not entirely negative. Taken out of the textual context, such statements as those employed by Ziegler may be misleading.

It is interesting that, at least in the sampling of texts presented here, male biographers and historians are more likely to question the veracity of de Boigne's memoirs, disregarding much of the content as "gossip," while female writers generally attribute greater importance to the memoirs in their writing. Could it be that Adèle de Boigne's harshest critics regard her as an outsider in the political arena of the day, as most women necessarily were,
and therefore not competent to comment in such a detailed manner on political events of interest? Could it be the critical and often unflattering approach of the comtesse toward such literary and political icons as Chateaubriand and Thiers that causes some writers to underestimate the potential value of Adèle's text?

The texts from histories and biographies cited here are but a sampling of the many such works which incorporate the memoirs of Adèle de Boigne. All of this attention to her writing effectively negates Reiset's statement that the memoirs "restent sans valeur pour l'histoire future" (Belles du vieux temps, 267).

Adèle de Boigne is indeed writing history, as she perceived it, when she writes her memoirs. She was fully aware of the privileged view of events she enjoyed throughout her life. The comtesse knew that she was leaving a document for posterity. If this were not the case, she would not have taken such pains to express her efforts to remain as objective as her situation would allow, and to recount only what she has witnessed or heard from a reliable source. Her efforts to provide a faithful account of historical events and personages appear to be sincere. Despite her efforts, however, Adèle's memoirs face the same fate as any other form of life writing: what Susanna Egan refers to as "the inevitability of fiction."
The comtesse de Boigne, like all memorialists, is in fact interpreting rather than recording past events. She is giving form to a series of events that did not necessarily occur in the ordered fashion in which she records them. The time lapse from the event itself to its portrayal on the page, the perception and memory of the writer, and the act of writing itself come between the writer and finished product. Actual events are converted to "virtual" or "literary" events. The very act of lending order to the narrative, necessary in order to render it comprehensible to the reader, is an interpretation of sorts; an ordering of the unordered. "Fiction ensnares reality from the beginning," writes Egan (Patterns of Experience in Autobiography, 12).

Are memoirs then to be dismissed as useless for understanding history because of the writer's bias, or a faulty reconstruction of events? If this is the case, then any written record of events or individual actions must be painstakingly scrutinized. Journalists, for example, may write their angle—subconsciously or not—on a story. Official records are certainly not beyond reproach in terms of narrative neutrality. In addition to these potential shortcomings, a gathering of such records is likely to be devoid of life, impersonal, even so far removed in tone from the actual event being described as to render it
incomprehensible to anyone who may have witnessed or participated in the event.

Another memoir writer of the period, Madame de Chastenay, is well aware of this dilemma. In her preface she writes of the difficulty she faces in writing of past events and relating them to future generations. "J'écris pour être lue un jour," she writes, and then clearly states her intentions:

Je n'ai d'autre plan arrêté que celui de présenter les événements dans leur ordre, et de chercher l'histoire du cœur humain dans celle de la Révolution. Le texte des décrets m'échappera souvent, les détails des plus glorieuses campagnes me seront souvent interdits, les plus éloquents orateurs ne reviendront pas dans mon ouvrage. Je m'étendrai, sans proportions peut-être, sur certains événements que j'aurai mieux connus; je traiterai brièvement ceux qui m'auront été les plus étrangers. En un mot, je n'écris pas l'Histoire; mais si je remplis mes intentions, j'aurai peut-être écrit pour l'Histoire. (t. II, 386)

Adèle de Boigne's concept of history in the memoirs is that of lived experience. Her social status and proximity to major political and social figures provide her with a unique vantage point. She was not simply buffeted about by events, she was often a participant, or at the very least a lucid observer. Like Madame de Chastenay, she does not attempt to present a comprehensive view of the period described in the text, but rather concentrates on aspects of it which she felt personally competent to portray. Late in her life, Adèle enjoyed reading and commenting on texts
written by historians who were describing events during the Empire, the Restoration, and the July Monarchy. As the examples of some of the notes written to Pasquier cited earlier in this chapter attest, the comtesse was not afraid to disagree with them. How could someone who was not present claim to write in an authoritative manner of major historical events? Such would appear to be Adèle's opinion. In Exclusive Conversations, Elizabeth Goldsmith contrasts what she describes as the bourgeois and the aristocratic notions of writing history. Her definition describes well Adèle de Boigne's perspective as a writer:

The bourgeois claim to the privilege of writing history is based precisely on the fact that the historian need only be a humble compiler, a collector of records who lays no personal, authorial claim to the body of his writing. The aristocratic notion of history, on the other hand, takes the position that the greatness of an event can only be communicated by a writer who has been born to a share in the grandeur he is describing (99).

Although Goldsmith is describing a seventeenth century historiographer in the above-cited passage, the example fits the comtesse de Boigne well. Adèle's descriptions are first-hand accounts, written by one who felt that she was an integral part of the highest levels of the society of her day, and well-qualified to comment on it. It is her world, and her reactions to the changes within it that she relates in her text. Her writing does not encompass every aspect of the historical events she describes, but her
perception of these events is brought to life in the narrative, and provides a valuable perspective for anyone interested in learning more about the political, social, and intellectual history of the period. In writing her memoirs, she is leaving a document that will become a part of a larger ensemble of material that will ultimately constitute the history of her time.

The recording of history represents only one aspect of the memoirs, however. "Madame de Boigne se consola dans l'écriture." It was in fact as consolation, for the loss of her adopted child, that Adèle began writing her memoirs. This text, as I have already shown, provided the comtesse with a way of filling the void that she felt in her life. The pleasures of writing that emanate from the early chapters of the Récits d'une tante reflect the dedication and enthusiasm with which the comtesse embraced her project of fulfillment and transcendence through writing. After her depiction of the 1830 revolution, however, her chronological récit is abandoned. She continues henceforth to divide her narrative into event-specific fragments. And finally there is a singular lack of closure to her memoirs. Adèle's own account of the reasons for her abrupt break in the narrative have been analyzed. But these explanations—among others, that she could not maintain impartiality

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because of her closer contacts with the government of Louis-Philippe—do not seem a fully adequate explanation of her relationship to writing. The fact that her relationship with Pasquier and her new property in Trouville provide her with greater satisfaction and fulfillment in her personal life may offer a part of this explanation. But again they would not be reason enough for Adèle to lock her memoirs away for over a decade, only to take them out again after the other great crisis in her life, brought on by the deaths of Pasquier and her brother. It would seem rather that her relationship with writing—as memoirs—no longer gave her the fulfillment and sense of transcendence it had after the first crisis, since the revealing fact remains that she continued to write during the years when her memoirs were filed away. The comtesse, it appears, was seeking something that writing in the form of memoirs could not provide.

It seems reasonable to assume that having "relived" her past through the memoirs, the comtesse could not be content merely to maintain an account of current events (which is more the role of a journalist than a memorialist). Narrative fiction, on the other hand, enabled her to create and direct situations rather than simply to report them. As I have shown, at a moment of dissatisfaction with her personal life, novel writing
allowed her to "live out" scenarios, to displace herself through fantasizing what could have been her own life. She did indeed put herself into her novels, and it is not an overstatement to suggest that the central love relationship in each novel (Henri-Gudule, Romuald-Lispona) was a form of compensation for the lack of such relationships in her own life. Her enthusiasm for the novels at the time she wrote them is apparent, as she allowed at least some personal friends access to the texts.

After a time, the novels, too, apparently failed to satisfy her needs fully and were in their turn displaced as well. Did Adèle de Boigne consider herself a failure as a writer? Her memoirs and novels did not seem to compensate fully for the emptiness in her private life. She did consider herself, as I have demonstrated, a failure as a mother, and her redirection of these emotions did not seem to find a satisfactory outlet in her writing. Adèle writes of events that she has witnessed with a sense of history that is other than that usually found in traditional history writing, and this other sense—more than just the aristocratic relation to it—is the feminine. There is indeed a maternal aspect to the memoirs that cannot be overlooked.

The comtesse de Boigne shows a considerable preoccupation with France. She is a patriot, proudly
vaunting the past glory of her nation, and worrying over its present problems. The Ancien Régime represented for her a sense of national unity that ceased to exist after the Revolution of 1789. She is concerned about the forces that would tear at the very fabric of the nation. This would explain her nearly obsessive need to keep herself informed about current events and their potential consequences for the nation, even on her deathbed. Unable to hold office herself, she nonetheless cultivated a strong interest in politics, and as I have shown through a variety of secondary sources, she was not afraid to exercise what influence she did have whenever she felt it appropriate. "Ah! mon Dieu," she once wrote to Pasquier, "comme il me prend envie souvent d'être sénateur pour voir tout en beau et dormir en plein sécurité!" There is little doubt that the comtesse would have gladly played a more important role in government had she been able to do so.

Adèle's political souplesse reflects a sincere desire to preserve the integrity of the nation, and her devotion to men who are like-minded, men who have shaped and strengthened these beliefs--first of all her father, and Etienne Pasquier as well, reflect this desire. They were the statesmen that Adèle would have liked to have been. She agrees with their beliefs: her father's, that the

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10Excerpt of an undated letter written between 1858 and 1862, cited by Louis Favre in *Estienne Denis Pasquier*, 336.
Revolution of 1789 was as an opportunity to seek reform, changes in the government that would reconcile opposing groups in the common interest of the nation; then Pasquier's: the offices he held in several governments from the Ancien Régime to the July Monarchy, Adèle believed, were always conducted with the well-being of his country in mind. Like them, she seeks conciliation rather than confrontation. Although an admitted liberal aristocrat, Adèle de Boigne is not so much concerned with the preservation of the monarchy as with the preservation of France as a whole organism. Just as a mother seeks to keep her family safe and free of internal strife, dissonance within the "family" that is the nation is of great concern to the comtesse. Her impulse to protect the "body" of France, to shelter it, is a recurring theme in her text. Perhaps this is the reason why she is so harsh in her judgement of those members of her national family that she felt were sowing discord or seeking only personal gain at the expense of the nation. "Patrie" is for Adèle de Boigne more than an empty slogan. It is something internal, something cherished. The Patrie is her ultimate family.
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