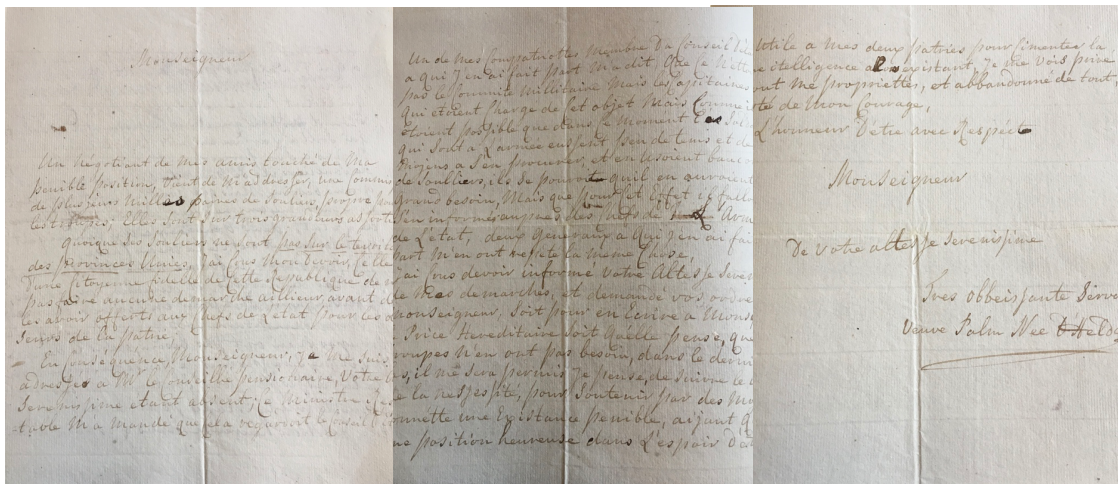


Letters from 'een Vriendinne van de Waarheid':
Etta Palm d'Aelders, citizenship and the public
sphere, 1788-1798.

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Word count: 18,349

2018

Abstract

The letters written by Etta Palm d'Aelders from Paris to the Stadtholder government in The Hague are a rich resource for exploring questions of the fluidity of revolution, the transfer of political culture, and the campaign to extend citizenship to women. Exceptional for her close connections to influential politicians in France and the Dutch Republic, d'Aelders not only stood as a channel of communication between two increasingly intertwined nations, but also as a concrete example of female engagement with the changing nature of what has been termed 'the public sphere' in this period. This thesis will explore the epistolary voice of Etta Palm d'Aelders, conceptualising her letters as a site for the convergence of several key historiographical debates, such as: the function of letters in relation to the public sphere; the performance of citizenship; the construction and articulation of a distinct citizeness-ship; and the repression of vocal femininity from the public sphere of politics.

Preface

The subject of this thesis came about when, while reading about Olympe de Gouges' *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*, a footnote reference to 'Dutch feminist, Etta Palm d'Aelders' prompted me to delve further into the scholarship available on her remarkable life. Whilst much of the scholarship notes her involvement with the *Cercle Social* in Paris, there is a clear gap in academic work on the influence of her time in Paris on her activism in the Dutch and Batavian Republics, with the majority of the scholarship using her letters only to study her diplomatic espionage. This thesis aims to bring Etta out of the margins of the scholarship on outspoken early modern women, and explore her letters as a conduit of information and activism between two increasingly entangled nation states.

I'd like to thank a number of people for their help and support throughout the writing process. Firstly, I'd like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Dirk van Miert, for his consistently swift and helpful feedback, as well as for the always engaging and thought-provoking conversations on the subject. I'd also like to thank Dr. Rachel Gillet for her enthusiasm and advice in the proposal stages of this work. Thanks are due also to my classmates for all the laughter and encouragement both in and outside of class, and to my parents, Hendri and Leo, for all their love and support.

Finally, I am indebted to the hard work of Edwige White, without whose translations I would not possibly have been able to understand the intricacies of Etta's letters. *Merci beaucoup* for all your effort, and your interest in Etta's life!

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Introduction

During the tumultuous years of revolution in France, the letters of Etta Palm d'Aelders functioned as one of the channels of news between Paris and the Dutch Stadthouderate in The Hague. Born Etta Lubбина Johanna Aelders in 1743 in Groningen, she emigrated to Paris around 1773. Styling herself as the widowed baroness Etta Palm d'Aelders, she became heavily involved in the salon culture of the *ancien régime* and sustained her Parisian lifestyle by means of political espionage. Commissioned by Louis XVI's first minister, d'Aelders undertook a trip to Amsterdam in 1778 in order to report back on the stance of the Dutch Republic towards the American War of Independence. Subsequently she became a secret correspondent, from 1788, in the service of Louis Van de Spiegel, the last Grand Pensionary of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, who served under Stadtholder Willem V. An Orangist by political sympathy, d'Aelders published a pamphlet in response to Mirabeau's *Aux Bataves, sur le Stathoudérat*, criticising the Dutch Patriots living in exile in France. Keenly interested in politics and the role of women in society, she was a founding member of the political society *Amies de la Vérité* and gave a speech in the French National Convention, now known as "Discourse on the Injustice of the Laws in Favour of Men, at the Expense of Women." D'Aelders' political network was impressive; she counted notable French revolutionaries such as the journalist Jean Louis Carra, journalist-politician Pierre Brissot and politician Claude Basire as close connections.¹

The source material surrounding Etta Palm d'Aelders is therefore a rich resource for exploring questions of the fluidity of revolution, the transnational transfer of political culture and the nature of 'equality' accorded to women. Unique for her close connections to influential politicians in France- many of whom went on to play key roles in the French Revolution- and the Dutch Republic, d'Aelders not only stood as a channel of communication between two increasingly intertwined nations, but also as a concrete example of female engagement with the changing nature of what has been termed 'the public sphere' in this period.² Etta Palm d'Aelders

¹ See Calogero Alberto Petix and Karen Green, 'Etta Palm D'Aelders and Louise Keralio-Robert: Feminist Controversy during the French Revolution,' in *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women: Virtue and Citizenship*, ed. Curtis-Wendlandt, Lisa, Paul Gibbard and Karen Green (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 63-78 for an outline: In 1778 d'Aelders opened her own salon; known for its discussion of foreign policy, she was visited by men such as Charles Alexandre de Calonne, Louis Auguste de Breteuil, and the French foreign minister Armand Mare Montmorin Saint Hérem. At the beginning of the French Revolution, frequent guests of the salon were Jacobins such as Jean-Paul Marat, François Chabot, and Claude Basire; See also Judith Vega, 'Feminist Republicanism. Etta Palm-Aelders on Justice, Virtue and Men,' *History of European Ideas*, 10 (1989): 3, pp. 333-35 for a condensed outline of WJ Koppius and H Hardenberg's biographies (1929 and 1962, respectively).

² Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1989);

deserves to be looked at, not simply as a leading voice in the early modern movement for women's rights, but also as a figure around whom key historiographical debates converge. What is striking about d'Aelders is that she has largely remained a footnote in the historiography of the Batavian Republic. Even in Simon Schama's *Patriots and Liberators*— considered the authoritative account of the Batavian Republic— her role is simplified to that of 'a double agent of consummate craft who until the war in February 1793 managed to keep herself paid by both Dutch and French governments to look after each of their respective interests at the expense of the other.'³ Similarly, within Dutch language surveys of the revolution she remains a marginal figure. Joost Rosendaal's more recent *De Nederlandse Revolutie* notes d'Aelders once: fleetingly, as '*een intrigante die voor de Oranjes in Frankrijk stemming had gemaakt tegen de patriotse vluchtelingen*'.⁴ This characterisation of d'Aelders as a disingenuous double agent, benefitting from the tense diplomatic situation for personal gain can be traced back to Herman Hardenberg's 1962 biography, in which d'Aelders' earlier 1927 depiction as '*Nederland's eerste feministe*' by Dr W.J. Koppius is brought into question. Hardenberg's biographical outline is heavily influenced by moral judgements on d'Aelders' promiscuity and permeated with remarks that attribute d'Aelders' political network to her assumed looks; yet Hardenberg's work remains the most in-depth account of d'Aelders' fascinating life.⁵ Though the work of Judith Vega has gone some way to restore d'Aelders' credibility by unravelling the complicated compatibility of French republicanism and Dutch Orangism, d'Aelders' continued absence from broader surveys of the Dutch revolutionary period merits further probing; it is in the life of Etta Palm d'Aelders that questions of gender equality, transnational political transfer and the nature of the public sphere meet.

The first chapter of this thesis explores the changing nature of what has been termed 'the public sphere' in this period. It will use Dena Goodman's discussion of the changes in French Enlightenment networking as a conceptual framework through which to explore the function of letters in the emergence of public opinion, and the agency which letter-writing accorded to women. Though the contemporary use of the term 'Republic of Letters' had diminished significantly in this period, d'Aelders stands within a wider history on the role of women in the

Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1988).

³ Simon Schama, *Patriots and liberators: revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813*, (London: Fontana Press, 1992), p.150.

⁴ Joost Rosendaal, *De Nederlandse Revolutie: Vrijheid Volk en Vaderland, 1783-1799*, (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2005).

⁵ Herman Hardenberg, *Etta Palm: Een Hollandse Parisienne, 1743-1799*, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1962), pp. 7, 18.

transfer of knowledge.⁶ Engaging with Enlightenment political thought in the salons of the *ancien régime*, d'Aelders' letters to Van de Spiegel often asked for clarification concerning the constitution of the Dutch Republic, and her pamphlets advocated democratic reforms in the Dutch Republic, as well as the inclusion of women in republican definitions of citizenship. D'Aelders was also involved in translation work, offering a Dutch translation of Condorcet's *Déclaration de l'Assemblée aux puissances de l'Europe* in 1792.⁷ D'Aelders' engagement with philosophical knowledge, translation and salon debate therefore demonstrated the hallmarks of the knowledge-sharing culture of the Republic of Letters, even in a period of increasing importance around ideas of national identity.

Though largely absent from larger overviews of the French and Batavian Revolutions, d'Aelders has received more attention by feminist scholar Joan Landes. For Landes, d'Aelders is part of a wider female struggle for inclusion within public discourse, yet remains one individual within a larger body of early feminists; Landes' focus is on how this particular transition period of European history resulted in the hegemonic 'gendering' of the public sphere, so that feminism came to stand in opposition with republicanism.⁸ In her book *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, Dena Goodman has attributed the transformation of the Republic of Letters as a parallel consequence of the diminishing legitimacy of the monarchy; as nascent national identities emerged, tensions between individuals' status as citizens of the Republic of Letters and as citizens of political and geographic states also surfaced.⁹ Drawing on the work of Reinhart Koselleck and Jürgen Habermas, Goodman has demonstrated the significance of the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters as inherent to the emerging public sphere in its direct opposition to the exclusive culture of the monarchy.¹⁰ For Goodman, as for Landes, a history of the public sphere in the time of the French Enlightenment and Revolution must necessarily be a feminist history. For Goodman, a feminist history of the Enlightenment challenges 'the conceptualization of intellectual activity as the product of masculine reason and male genius.'¹¹ As such, Goodman aims at demonstrating the pivotal role of women in the Enlightenment culture of the Republic of Letters, moving beyond a focus on texts as the

⁶ For an outline of the 'Republic of Letters' see: Dirk van Miert, 'What was the Republic of Letters? A brief introduction to a long history (1417-2008),' *Groniek* (Winter 2016): pp. 269-287; for an overview of the so-called 'women's republic of letters', see Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁷ See Vega, 'Feminist Republicanism', for an overview of d'Aelders' presence in French politics.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: a Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*. (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, pp.51-56; Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, pp. 110-116.

¹¹ Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, p. 3.

disseminators of knowledge to an analysis of less tangible practices and social relations. By exploring d'Aelders' letters as a way in which female authority is performed and claimed, it is hoped that further clarity can be brought to the transnational impact of such a movement towards a less tangible public sphere.

For Landes, as for many other feminist historians however, a feminist history of the public sphere goes one step further; Landes seeks to analyse 'the mechanisms of violence and seduction, indeed the entire ideological configuration, by means of which women in the past came to be politically silenced,' concluding that political discourse played a pivotal role in the construction of this gender inequality.¹² Here, the work of feminist historians intersects with the debate on French political discourse that has been dominated by the works of François Furet, Lynn Hunt and Keith Baker.¹³ Ultimately, however, this debate has remained largely confined to the national boundaries of France and, arguably, suffers from a lack of comparative aspect. As such, the second chapter will focus on the cultural and political discourse of 'citizenship,' in its exclusionary impact on women's access to the public sphere, exploring the ways in which Etta Palm d'Aelders engaged with both Dutch and French debates, adapting to and adopting the shifting language of citizenship in order to challenge the exclusion of women from within the parameters of the discourse itself.

More recently, steps towards such a transnational comparison of political culture have been explored in the compilation *The Political Culture of the Sister Republics, 1794-1806*, edited by Joris Oddens, Mart Rutjes and Erik Jacobs. Building on RR Palmer's *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, this work sought to challenge the limitations of national historiographies, which ignored the processes of political and cultural transfer between the French metropole and its 'Sister Republics.'¹⁴ Of central significance to Oddens et al.'s work is 'to show how the revolutionary political cultures took root in the different Sister Republics not only within their national context, but specifically how they were influenced by international contexts.'¹⁵ For all its focus on the 'reciprocal and unidirectional' transnational origins of concepts such as equality

¹² Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the age of the French Revolution*, (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 2.

¹³ Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1981); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); see also Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, p. 1 for an overview.

¹⁴ Joris Oddens and Mart Rutjes, 'The Political Culture of the Sister Republics,' in *The Political Culture of the Sister Republics, 1794-1806*, eds. Joris Oddens, Mart Rutjes and Erik Jacobs, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), p. 22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

and citizenship, however, the question of women's rights and gender equality is barely addressed.¹⁶

Another instructive example is the work of Annie Jourdan. Exploring political and cultural transfer between the Dutch and French Republics as well as America, Jourdan has demonstrated the importance of national contexts in understanding the adoption or alteration of revolutionary rhetoric by the different nations. This reactive and reciprocal nature of political culture is evident in the words of Dutch Patriot, Dumont Pigalle: 'We must borrow from America what is good in America; borrow from France what is good in France and not forget our own patriot revolution. In short, we must only borrow what gets on well with our national character.'¹⁷ Jourdan explores the ideology behind the term 'citizen' in the Batavian Republic, stressing the emerging importance of social values as a qualification for citizenship. For the Batavian Republic, Jourdan concludes, 'nobody is a good citizen, if he is not a good son, a good father, a good brother, a good friend, a good husband.'¹⁸ The blatant exclusion of women from these gendered definitions of 'citizenship,' however, is not explored further.

Jourdan's work clearly intersects with the work of Judith Vega on d'Aelders' understanding of gender equality, yet this connection remains as yet neglected. Jourdan's analysis of 'citizenship' in the Batavian Republic is clearly oriented on the social expectations of males to play a particular role within the national community. As such the comparisons to the role of the 'republican motherhood' ideology in shaping the role of women in revolutionary society are clear.¹⁹ For Vega, however, d'Aelders' public advocacy of gender equality was driven by her vision of 'a public sphere run exclusively by *citoyennes*'; her call for the establishment of a network of female political clubs across the Batavian Republic was one such practical example. For Vega therefore, d'Aelders' feminism 'cannot be subsumed under the idiom of republican motherhood' and forms a clear disjunct with Patriot definitions of 'citizenship.'²⁰ Tellingly, the most comprehensive analysis of women in the Dutch revolutions skims the stadtholderate period between the 1787 Patriot revolution and the 1795 Batavian Revolution, portraying the campaigning of revolutionary women after 1795 as 'merely complet[ing] the reform and

¹⁶ Oddens and Rutjes, 'The Political Culture of the Sister Republics,' p. 26.

¹⁷ Annie Jourdan, 'The Batavian Revolution: Typical Dutch, Typical French or just Atlantic,' *Dutch Crossing* 31 (2007): 2, p. 267.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

¹⁹ See: Linda K Kerber, 'Why Diamonds Really are a Girl's Best Friend: The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen,' in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, ed. Linda Kerber, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 117-126 for an overview of the term 'Republican Motherhood' in American discourse.

²⁰ Vega, 'Feminist Republicanism', p. 346.

transformation of popular politics that the Patriots had begun in the 1780s.²¹ The national boundaries of such a historiographical analysis are evident; figures such as Etta Palm d'Aelders who cannot be clearly delineated as 'Patriot' or 'Republican' are not explored and the nuances of a fiercely contested understanding of male and female 'citizenship' are therefore missed.

In 1792 d'Aelders was exiled to The Hague, where her correspondence with both France and with Van de Spiegel was halted in light of the French Republic's declaration of war on the Dutch Republic in February 1793. D'Aelders dissociated herself from public politics, hereafter only reappearing in order to call for the establishment of women's clubs (along the French example) in an anonymous letter published in the *Oprechte Nationaale Courant*, after the proclamation of the Batavian Republic in 1795. Shortly afterwards, d'Aelders was trialled for her Orangist sympathies and incarcerated in Woerden Castle.²² The final chapter of this work will pay close attention to the trial records, seeking to explore any gendered use of political discourse as a method of female political exclusion, and therefore working from the insights of Foucault's theory on the ability of discourse and institutions to shape society and introduce power hierarchies. The trial records, published and made available a few years later, demonstrate the institutionalisation of gendered ideals for male and female citizens, the violation of which was publicly condemned. Parallels will be drawn with the *Comité van Algemene Waakzaamheid's* French equivalent, the *Comité de sûreté générale*, their condemnation of Olympe de Gouges and the banning of women's political clubs in 1793.

These parallels prompt questions into the potential discursive and institutional uses of imprisonment as a measure through which to order unruly society- especially unruly women pushing beyond the boundaries of the liberal public sphere as envisioned by foundational thinkers such as Condorcet.²³ The study of gender has advanced our understanding of the socio-cultural construction and persistence of gendered power hierarchies significantly since its conception in the trailblazing first-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s. As a result, the contributions of women to the cultural and political development of society have, rightly, been restored to the foreground of historical research. As Natalie Zemon Davis outlined in her renowned essay however, the biographical nature of early women's history is 'still sometimes inattentive to how sex roles may shape a career.'²⁴ It is for this reason that this work will take

²¹ Rudolf Dekker, Lotte van de Pol and Wayne Te Brake. 'Women and political culture in the Dutch revolutions,' in *Women and Politics in the Age of the Democratic Revolution*, eds. Darline G. Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1990), p. 137.

²² Petix and Green, 'Etta Palm D'Aelders and Louise Keralio-Robert' give an overview of d'Aelders' activism upon her return to the Dutch Republic.

²³ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, pp. 117-129.

²⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, "'Women's History' in Transition: the European Case,' *Feminist Studies* 3 (1975): 3, p. 83.

care to place the case study of Etta Palm d'Aelders in its particular geographic and historical context: why was she so prominent in one revolutionary setting, yet marginal in the other? Not only will this strengthen the emerging body of literature on the transnational transfer of revolutionary political culture as a reciprocal process between the French Republic metropole and its 'Sister Republics', but it will also refocus on the debate surrounding gender relations in the public sphere as one of the key developments of the multifaceted debates on republican citizenship.

Chapter One.

Performing virtue: the self, the personal, and the public in early modern letter writing

The term 'Republic of Letters' is understood by many historians as referring to the transnational community of intellectuals who corresponded as citizens of an open and tolerant communicative republic during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Within the vast body of literature on the subject, the reciprocal nature of communication based on epistolary ties of friendship has been emphasised.²⁵ Scholars such as Dena Goodman have traced the emergence of this Republic of Letters from the religious wars of the sixteenth century, to its opposition of the dominant monarchical structures of authority, encapsulating much of what Goodman has termed 'the project of Enlightenment.'²⁶ With its emphasis on open knowledge-sharing, the Republic of Letters can be seen as a driving force behind much of early modern Europe's scientific and literary advances.

By the late eighteenth-century however, the autonomous nature of this transnational community was increasingly impacted and moulded by the nascent onset of nationalism; citizenship was progressively formulated as a socio-political concept that tied the individual to the territorial state, and thus challenged the open scholarly ideals of the transnational Republic of Letters. Benedict Anderson's renowned *Imagined Communities* has traced the origins of this emergent nationalism as evolving from the ability to 'think' the nation.²⁷ According to Anderson, the ability to 'think' the nation was fuelled by two key literary developments of the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper. These developments enabled the construction of the nation as an imagined community since they provided the medium through which the imagined community could be represented and made tangible; it was through the newspaper and the novel that two members of the national imagined community who had never met could perceive of themselves as belonging to that community.²⁸

Influenced by Anderson, scholars have extended this analysis by conceptualising the Republic of Letters as an 'imagined community.' Paul Dibon has argued that the Republic of Letters was already defined in the seventeenth century as: 'an intellectual community transcending space

²⁵ For an overview see Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet, *La République des lettres* (Paris: Belin, 1997) or Van Miert 'What was the Republic of Letters'.

²⁶ Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, p. 2.

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006), p. 22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5

and time, recognizing as such differences in respect to the diversity of languages, sects, and countries' thus demonstrating that the literary-scientific community of the Republic of Letters could already 'think' themselves a community.²⁹ Robert Mayhew has built on this, analysing the citation patterns in British geography books in order to map the imagined community of early modern geographers and analyse the community's self-image as belonging to both an idealised, and geographically located 'Republic of Letters.'³⁰

Yet, the rise of the nationalism Anderson outlines in the eighteenth century undeniably challenged the transnational community of the Republic of Letters. This is particularly evident in the French case: Goodman has demonstrated how, from the middle of the eighteenth century on, the 'project of Enlightenment' became increasingly linked with the French nation state by French men of letters since the particular French ideal of 'polite sociability' espoused by salon culture was seen as the crux of civilisation. 'Polite sociability' was favoured over pushing for civility in society, as civility remained linked to the monarchical court and was seen as a mere formality without social substance.³¹ Polite sociability, with its emphasis on egalitarianism and criticism at its core, challenged the monarchy's enforcement of civility through political hierarchy and policing power.³² In this way, the ideals of a nominally apolitical transnational community centred on the sharing of knowledge gradually gave way to a community in which rational knowledge formed the basis for political opposition to the monarchy, and a belief in the ability of the French nation to set an example for the rest of Europe.

Though much of the historiography has focused on the integral role of 'polite sociability' in transforming French *ancien régime* salon culture, a similar trend has been identified in the Dutch Republic. Dutch cultural historians Wijnand Mijnhardt and Joost Kloek have traced the significance of the discourse of '*gezelligheid*' in Dutch Republican understanding of civilisation; significantly, '*gezelligheid*' in the late eighteenth century is defined, according to Mijnhardt and Kloek, as 'first and foremost sociability, the need for company coupled with the ability to conduct oneself in company, and hence pre-eminently a social virtue.'³³ As such, it is clear that the phenomenon of sociability was not limited to France alone, despite the French men of letters' espousal of France as the most sociable and polite— and therefore most civilised— nation. Mijnhardt and Kloek argue that 'informal groups founded by private individuals with no

²⁹ Paul Dibon, cited in Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, p. 15.

³⁰ Robert Mayhew, "Mapping Science's Imagined Community: Geography as a Republic of Letters, 1600-1800," *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 38 (2005): 1, pp. 73–92.

³¹ Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, pp. 4-5.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³³ Willem Frijhoff, Marijke Spies, Joost Kloek, Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, Jan Bank, Maarten van Buuren, Kees Schuyt, Ed Taverne, Douwe Wessel Fokkema, and Frans Grijzenhout, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective. 1800: Blueprints for a National Community*, (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2004), p. 93.

attachment to either Church or State, appear to have been a Dutch invention' and became increasingly popular in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁴ For Mijnhardt and Kloek the 1770s stand out as a 'watershed' in these clubs' social compositions; where previously the majority of club members came from learned and regent circles, the expansion of new clubs in the 1770s witnessed the involvement of people who played no role in the politics of the Dutch Republic— instead they were predominantly members of the liberal professions, including merchants and craftsmen.³⁵ It was thought that through sociability, which was intrinsically linked to fostering the qualities of knowledge virtue and civilisation, that these clubs would achieve their goal— namely, 'the moral regeneration of the nation.'³⁶ The moral regeneration of the nation thus emerged across Europe as a key ideal in the conceptualisation of the individual's relation to society.

Central to understanding these shifts is the emergence of what Jürgen Habermas has now famously termed 'the public sphere.'³⁷ This 'public sphere' was formed of a 'public of private people making use of their reason.'³⁸ Though Habermas predominantly focuses on the birth of public opinion in England to illustrate his arguments, he emphasises that the 'public sphere' is both transnational— in that the development of the public sphere had parallels across Europe— and that it was a historically specific development, 'typical of an epoch.'³⁹ Significantly, as Keith Baker clarifies, Habermas' 'public sphere' is a dual concept: it functions both on the discursive level of 'the emergence of a normative ideal of rational public discussion', and tangibly 'as the realization, or rather the fleeting, partial realization of this ideal within that society.'⁴⁰ The institution of 'the letter'— referring here to the conventions of letter writing, the social links it established between individuals, and its focus on criticism and the exchange of information— has been likened by Habermas and others to the salon; both offered private individuals a way to form a collective in which 'intimate mutual relationships [were formed] between privatized individuals who were psychologically interested in what was 'human', in self-knowledge and

³⁴ Mijnhardt and Kloek, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p. 96.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

³⁷ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*; My understanding of Habermas' theory of the public sphere owes much to Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1990.

³⁸ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 51; Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 183 for explanation.

³⁹ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. xvii; Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 182 for explanation.

⁴⁰ See Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 183 for explanation.

empathy.⁴¹ As such, the Republic of Letters functioned on both the discursive and tangible levels defined by Habermas as the communal use of reason within 'the public sphere.'

At the same time, Habermas made a distinction between the 'inauthentic public sphere' and the 'authentic public sphere.' Whereas the 'inauthentic public sphere' referred to the closed and secretive public sphere of monarchical politics, it was the 'authentic public sphere' which was made up of the individuals gathered in their salons or bound by ties of epistolary communication; this 'authentic public sphere' emerged from, and remained part of the 'private realm.'⁴² Central to Habermas' analysis was the emergence of the coffee house in facilitating the discussions in which individuals could 'come together without hierarchy in an equality of voice,' yet the epistolary networks of the Republic of Letters should not be discredited as its prototype.⁴³ The Republic of Letters also demonstrates the hallmarks of this liminal 'authentic public sphere': its community was neither 'public', in the sense of the public as part of court politics, but rather an example of private individuals coming together to use their reason to pass judgement on the developments within the 'inauthentic' public sphere of political (and at this time monarchical) developments. Furthermore, many letters were read aloud in larger groups—in many ways foreshadowing the reading aloud of newspapers in coffee house debates—and thus stressing the importance of their role within the emerging community of private individuals together constituting the producers and consumers of 'public opinion.'

However, while the Republic of Letters demonstrates one way in which criticism of developments were communicated and debated, not all letter exchanges openly debated political, academic or religious developments. An element of trust was also built into the communicative conventions of the Republic of Letters, and instances of writers asking their correspondents to destroy letters upon having read the sensitive political or religious information contained in them have been identified as occurred multiple times throughout the seventeenth century.⁴⁴ As Dirk van Miert has demonstrated, control over circulation was a central concern for letter writers, yet authors' rights were not legally formalised in regard to letters.⁴⁵ These tensions were made explicit in classical scholar Isaac Casaubon's condemnation

⁴¹ Habermas, p. 50; Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 184 for explanation.

⁴² See Dena Goodman, "Public sphere and private life: Toward a synthesis of current historiographical approaches to the old regime," *History and theory* (1992) for explanation, especially pp. 2-8.

⁴³ Ellis Markman, "Coffee-women, *The Spectator* and the public sphere in the early eighteenth century" In *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, 27-52, ed. Elizabeth Eger, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 27.

⁴⁴ See Dirk van Miert, 'Confidentiality and Publicity in Early Modern Epistolography: Scaliger and Casaubon' in *For the Sake of Learning: Essays in Honor of Anthony Grafton*, eds. Ann Blair and Anja-Silvia Goeing, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2016), pp. 3-20.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

of Kaspar Schoppe. Schoppe published one of Causabon's letters to Joseph Scaliger without Causabon's approval, resulting in Causabon's complaint that Schoppe 'has laid hands on a letter that I once wrote to the great Scaliger, in accordance with our mutual bond. With the impudence of a prostitute, the idiot has published part of it without consulting me.'⁴⁶ The association of the impudence of publication with prostitution highlights the inherent tensions in the nature of epistolary communication; an awareness of the public purpose of letters for criticism and education coincided with an anxiety about a loss of control over one's own written words. It is also an inherently gendered association, suggesting that anxiety about women's respectability in the public sphere were not limited to the period immediately surrounding the French Revolution. This contestation between publication and privacy demonstrates the liminality and ambiguity of the Republic of Letters; the fault line between private and public which the personal letter sat astride neatly reflects the broader development of Habermas' 'bourgeois public sphere... [with]in the tension-charged field between state and society.'⁴⁷

It is in this liminal 'tension-charged field between state and society' that Etta Palm d'Aelders was corresponding, as a private individual, with a representative of the public, governmental order— grand pensionary Laurens van de Spiegel. The friction between (public) reasoned criticism and a desire for (private) confidentiality is evident, and explicitly discussed, in their letters. In a letter dated May 1790, Van de Spiegel shows an awareness of d'Aelders' influence in certain circles of the *Assemblée Nationale*. He writes that since 'it seems that you have talked about me and my minister, I feel that I have to send you information about my role, my job and my relation with the Stadhouderat' in order 'to make sure that your friends from the *Assemblée Nationale* are not misguided.'⁴⁸ Here Van de Spiegel demonstrates a clear awareness of the public nature of correspondence, as well as an awareness of the international interest, especially in France, in constitutional debates and the merits of various European constitutional styles. At the same time, there is an underlying defensive tone to Van de Spiegel's words; since d'Aelders is clearly conversing with contacts in the *Assemblée Nationale*, Van de Spiegel attempts to control the flow of information through d'Aelders in order to prevent any misconceptions.

Despite the open and philosophical nature of Van de Spiegel and d'Aelders' conversations on the merits of the Dutch Republic's constitution, a noticeable shift occurs when the conversation

⁴⁶ Van Miert, 'Confidentiality and Publicity in Early Modern Epistolography,' p. 16.

⁴⁷ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 140; Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 187.

⁴⁸ NL-HaNA, 3.01.26, Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, inventory number 50, letter dated May. 7, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris.

moves from political philosophy to current politics. In a letter dated 2nd September 1791, Van de Spiegel writes:

You are coming back on a subject that we have already discussed in your previous letter. I'm sorry but I can't say more. It would be extremely dangerous for me, as a minister, to reveal my thoughts on such a serious matter- in France ministers are held to account, it is the same here. All I can say is that up to now, we haven't received any proposition from any great powers regarding France.⁴⁹

The concern about control over circulation is again evident in Van de Spiegel's words; whether interception was a real concern for Van de Spiegel, or whether such a phrase provided a justification for not sharing sensitive information, the difference in attitude towards conceptual discussions of the merits of the law and the constitution, and a higher stakes conversation concerning foreign diplomacy is striking. In many ways, the hesitance of Van de Spiegel to write openly about the Dutch Republic's attitude to developments in France illustrates the opacity attributed by Habermas to the 'inauthentic public sphere' of politics under the monarchy. At the same time, Van de Spiegel's reluctance must be seen in context; a later letter, dated 26th January 1793, makes the sensitivity of the political context clear. Van de Spiegel writes that:

In your last letter, you talk a lot about the political relationship of France. I can see that you would appreciate a conspicuous letter from me about it. Let me remind you that it is quite dangerous for someone in office to write his views on such an important issue in a time when we need to be careful in what we write. Any thoughts on paper can be altered, shortened according to the intentions (good or bad) of the person who publishes what he has found.⁵⁰

By 1793, the political relationship between France and the Dutch Republic was increasingly hostile; indeed, this letter was written just one month before the French Republic declared war on Great Britain and the Dutch Republic. Here too then, we see the increasing impact of emergent nationalism on the transparency of the epistolary exchanges of the late eighteenth century. The exchanges between d'Aelders and Van de Spiegel simultaneously demonstrate the uses of sharing information across national borders, but also the increasing concern about confidentiality and the hardening of national boundaries.

⁴⁹ NL-HaNA, 3.01.26, Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, inventory number 50, letter dated Sep. 2, 1791, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris.

⁵⁰ NL-HaNA, 3.01.26, Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, inventory number 56, letter dated Jan. 26, 1793, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris.

The issue of gender further exacerbated these tensions between public and private, especially during this period of transformation in the early modern understanding of 'the public.' Whilst the bourgeois world of sociability, made up of political clubs, salons, and letters, was open to women, the bourgeois public sphere of male property owners discussing the creation of civil society was not.⁵¹ It is in the shift from the former to the latter that Landes situates the emergence of a gendered public sphere to exclude women. The world of the salon emanated from within the private domestic sphere, and, as Goodman has argued, even within salon culture women remained outside the political discourse of the men, mainly functioning as the governor, or overseer of polite sociability.⁵² Goodman summarises this distinction aptly when she states that 'the role of women in the Enlightenment and the attitude of male philosophes toward women... were founded on a tension between the *recognition* of a need for women in Enlightenment cultural practice, and discomfort with that recognition.'⁵³ As such, women remained subject to male authority, rendering the universality of the salon world an 'ideological fiction,' in the words of Habermas.⁵⁴ Baker, exploring this 'ideological fiction' has accordingly taken issue with Landes' distinction between the political power of women in *ancien régime* France, and women's access to the particular configuration of the public sphere that emerged during the course of the French Revolution, which was 'essentially, not just contingently, masculinist.'⁵⁵ Baker suggests that Landes buys into the 'ideological fiction' that in *ancien régime* political culture woman had egalitarian access to public speech and action.⁵⁶

That is not to deny, as Baker emphasises, that in the course of the Revolution the emphasis on a Rousseauian vision of the woman's virtue as intrinsically linked to the household was used in an increasingly explicit way to exclude women from public political life.⁵⁷ However, what Baker makes clear here is that the Rousseauian republican ideology which clearly distinguished between a male public (political) sphere and a female private (domestic) sphere does not adequately represent the entire spectrum of revolutionary thought; nor do these definitions of 'public' and 'private' map seamlessly onto Habermas' definitions of 'public' (split into 'the political' and 'the public within the private realm') and the 'private.' Baker's call for a more nuanced understanding of the spectrum of revolutionary thought is a subtle distinction but a significant one: rather than critique an apparently hegemonic public sphere for its exclusion of

⁵¹ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 186.

⁵² Goodman, *Republic of Letters* p. 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁴ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 198; also Ellis Markman, "Coffee-women, *The Spectator* and the public sphere," p. 28.

⁵⁵ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 199.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

women, we should analyse the manner in which a Rousseauian republican vision of the public sphere as ‘essentially masculinist’ emerged as dominant – in competition with the vision of the public sphere, as espoused by individuals like Mary Wollstonecraft and the Marquis of Condorcet. In the opinion of the latter, ‘the rights of men result simply from the fact that they are sentient beings, capable of acquiring moral ideas and of reasoning concerning these ideas... women, having these same qualities, must necessarily possess equal rights.’⁵⁸ These two positions constituted opposing sides of a battle for the new revolutionary society, demonstrating the contestation of not only who had access to the public sphere, but also what the public sphere precisely consisted of.

Susan Dalton’s *Engendering the Republic of Letters* argues against attempts to reconcile the Republic of Letters with Habermas’ categories. Though she acknowledges that Habermas’ definition of the public sphere does not unequivocally exclude women, she argues that Habermas’ understanding of what ‘the political’ entails is too restrictive; as such, Habermas’ public sphere of private individuals commenting on the political does not fully represent the extent of political and intellectual engagement accessible to women.⁵⁹ For Dalton, the insistence on distinguishing between the public and the private shapes our understanding of women’s historical agency since it defines women’s political and intellectual engagement in relation to those institutions that have been understood as the loci of power and agency.⁶⁰ For Dalton then, the ‘private’ culture of sociability and the ‘public’ criticism of the men of letters, as traced by Goodman, are not as easily separated from each other. Instead, Dalton argues that sending letters, news, or books all demonstrated a commitment to the wider intellectual community; the Republic of Letters as a community therefore need not be limited to those letter writers who explicitly expressed allegiance to the Republic of Letters, or engaged in overt criticism and reasoning.⁶¹ Here Dalton’s work converges with that of Dena Goodman who has argued that ‘institutions of sociability were the common ground upon which public and private met.’⁶² Dalton demonstrates the convergence of virtue and sociability by conceptualising the sending of a letter as an action that prompted the fulfilment of a social debt, namely a reply. The action of replying furthered the social bond between two correspondents and established the sender as a virtuous member of the Republic of Letters.⁶³ The act of receiving and writing letters thus

⁵⁸ Condorcet quoted in Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 201.

⁵⁹ Susan Dalton, *Engendering the Republic of Letters: Reconnecting Public and Private Spheres in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶² Goodman, “Public sphere and private life,” p. 1.

⁶³ Dalton, *Engendering the Republic of Letters*, p. 7.

created a space in which women could contribute to the wider intellectual community, and act as recipients and disseminators of the particular values attributed to that community.

Dalton's work meets with epistolary scholars' work on the function of letters in the socialisation and dissemination of cultural norms and values. Willemijn Ruberg's work, *Conventional Correspondence: Epistolary Culture of the Dutch Elite, 1770-1850*, has focused not just on what the contents of letters can reveal about 'ordinary' people, but rather on the function of letter-writing as a cultural practice, with this tension between public and private as central to her analysis.⁶⁴ In this analysis the importance of 'performativity' is emphasised. Through the medium of letters— the initiation and continuation of a conversation— social relationships which had not (yet) materialised in person were 'formed, acknowledged or confirmed.'⁶⁵ Ruberg builds on Peter Burke's hypothesis: that language plays a dual role both as a reflection and a shaper of culture in order to demonstrate how letters had an integrally 'socialising' function.⁶⁶ Here 'socialisation' refers to 'a dynamic process in which norms are transmitted, but are also either accepted or rejected.'⁶⁷

Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook's work has demonstrated the centrality of socialisation in the epistolary novels of the early eighteenth century. Using Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721) to illustrate her argument, Heckendorn Cook shows how a new space was created in the epistolary novels in which the literary and the political converged; it was through reading that readers became citizen-critics, encouraged to participate in a critique of society.⁶⁸ A citizen's virtue was therefore a quality that could be discussed, disseminated and learnt through epistolary exchange, and therefore the ultimate aim of socialisation. At the same time, virtue was a performative quality: it bound correspondents to the imagined community of the Republic of Letters and demanded the outward display of this quality among its inhabitants. As the collection of essays edited by Toon Van Houdt et al. has demonstrated, the use of letters 'as a means of self-presentation and social identification' was integral to the Republic of Letters' self-understanding, from humanist letter writers to the eighteenth-century men of letters. The act of writing letters was closely bound with personal identity; it was in the practice of letter-writing that one defined oneself as literator, scholar, or scientist, thus bringing the discourse of

⁶⁴ Willemijn Ruberg, *Conventional Correspondence: Epistolary Culture of the Dutch Elite, 1770-1850*, (Boston: Brill, 2011), pp. 1, 7-8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Peter Burke summarised in *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, *Epistolary Bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Letters*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 30.

knowledge-sharing into continuum with its realisation.⁶⁹ At the same time, Heckendorn Cook has written of the letter as becoming 'emblematic' of the private in the eighteenth century arguing that:

While keeping its actual function as an agent of the public exchange of knowledge, [the letter] took on the general connotations it still holds for us today, intimately identified with the body, especially a female body, and the somatic terrain of the emotions.⁷⁰

Again, the letter is thus conceptualised as sitting astride the boundary between public and private; it functioned as a disseminator of the knowledge and qualities which bound correspondents to the community, yet was also seen as an extension of the private body. The letter was:

Considered the most direct, sincere, and transparent form of written communication, since, being linked to the body and the private, it was seen as an extension of the heart; at the same time the letter was also seen 'as a stage for rhetorical trickery.'⁷¹

Scholars of salon culture in *ancien regime* France have demonstrated how duplicity and vice were increasingly linked with the public female body at the end of the eighteenth century.⁷² This will be treated with more depth in the third chapter of this thesis as it has particular relevance in the post-revolutionary repression and punishment of public female voices. However, central to this discussion of d'Aelders' letters, is the inherent tension between performing virtue and becoming increasingly suspected as disingenuous because of this continuous self-profession of virtue. The trope of written words as coming straight from the heart is noticeable in the manner in which d'Aelders chooses to address Willem V. In a letter dated 6th December 1793, d'Aelders writes:

⁶⁹ Toon Van Houdt et al., eds, *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), p. 3.

⁷⁰ Heckendorn Cook, *Epistolary Bodies*, p. 6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷² See Lynn Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution" In *The French Revolution: recent debates and new controversies*, ed. Gary Kates, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 291-313; Joan Landes, *Visualizing the nation: gender, representation, and revolution in eighteenth-century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Jennifer M Jones, "Repackaging Rousseau: Femininity and Fashion in Old Regime France," *French Historical Studies* (1994): pp. 939-967.

Please do forgive me if I express myself in a too familiar manner, it is difficult to maintain a distant etiquette, when forgotten by all, I'm left only with my love for my country and I will never make a distinction between the country and its head.⁷³

Here, d'Aelders presents herself as so full of zeal for her country that 'distant etiquette' could not sufficiently convey her loyalty. In the letters that follow from d'Aelders to Willem V, this zeal is used to qualify d'Aelders' merits in writing to the Stadtholder, and simultaneously plays a key role in d'Aelders' expectation of a return service, demonstrating the convergence of sociability and virtue identified in Dalton's work.

However, in the progression of d'Aelders' letters to the Stadtholder, an increasing desperation to realise the debt of help in exchange for her service and loyalty illustrates the tensions within the performance of virtue. In a letter dated 30th June 1794, d'Aelders writes:

Allow me, my dear Prince, to implore for your help as my situation is so painful, and I cry so much. I would have the feeling to slander your kind heart, My Lord, if I was in any doubt that you would come to the rescue of a woman who has, from 1788, used all her moral and physical abilities without revealing her identity, to work for the conservation of the Constitution of the Republic. Who hoped that her zeal would never be seen as of self-interest.⁷⁴

Here the expectation of aid in return for her services to the Stadtholder is made explicit; yet, d'Aelders also voices an awareness that her 'zeal' might have been interpreted 'as of self-interest', or as disingenuous. A letter from Van de Spiegel to Willem V on the 7th July 1794 makes clear that this was the case. Van de Spiegel warns Willem V that 'the lady who wrote to Your Lord is not as pure as she would like to appear.'⁷⁵ Van de Spiegel's letter does not discuss d'Aelders' letter further, only to inform Willem V that he would give her some money 'so that she does not become worse'; indeed, this is the final line of the letter, and reads more as an afterthought than concerning business of central importance.⁷⁶ Though d'Aelders' proximity to events in France, and her loyalty to the Stadtholder had made her correspondence an invaluable asset, the increased hostility of the international situation, as well as Van de Spiegel's increasing

⁷³ KHA, A31, Willem V Batavus, Prins van Oranje-Nassau (1748-1806), catalogue number 746, letter dated Dec. 6, 1793, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

⁷⁴ KHA, A31, Willem V Batavus, Prins van Oranje-Nassau (1748-1806), catalogue number 986, letter dated Jun. 30, 1794, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V.

⁷⁵ KHA, A31, Willem V Batavus, Prins van Oranje-Nassau (1748-1806), catalogue number 986, letter dated Jul. 7, 1794, from Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

distrust of her, progressively relegated d'Aelders to the margins of events. Her self-presentation as the Stadtholder's loyal subject was not convincing enough to restore her reputation.

Letters thus functioned as a site through which the performance of virtue could take place; letters functioned as both a material and conceptual site in which the discourse and practice of virtue came into a continuum. They were understood as the continuation of a conversation between acquaintances, yet simultaneously had a significant, and recognised, role in the socialisation of society. As such, the distinction of understanding the early modern letter as a 'personal,' rather than 'private,' form of communication is perhaps an obvious, yet useful one, even if we cannot separate the personal from the official. We see d'Aelders adopt a predominantly personal tone of voice in her letters; through her self-presentation as a loyal subject of the Stadtholder, an image of her words as being an extension of her heart permeates her letters, justifying any excesses of sentiment beyond the boundaries of etiquette. By claiming the conceptual discourse of virtue as characteristic of herself, and making it materially tangible by letting it drive her to write to the Stadtholder, d'Aelders' letters demonstrate how the Enlightenment discourse of virtue could be appropriated by women in order to carve out space for their own voice in the predominantly male world of political affairs.

For Goodman, as for many of the historians discussed above, understanding 'the ways in which human beings have shaped and been shaped by the social and discursive practices and institutions that constitute their lives and actions' is central to the work of the cultural historian.⁷⁷ Ultimately what is important to take from cultural historians' conceptualisations of the function of letter-writing is that the creation of letters not only reflects the individual and the society they moved in, but also in turn helped to shape the culture of that same individual and society; this is something that historians claim has been long overlooked by research into ego-documents which focus solely on the individual or the individuals' understanding of the society upon which they reflect in their letters.⁷⁸ This has been particularly significant for understanding the impact of gender within the Enlightenment Republic of Letters; moving beyond the literary output of the Republic of Letters, to an analysis of its networks of sociability highlights the centrality of women within the practices and institutions that made up the Republic of Letters, challenging the traditional view of the Republic of Letters as the product of enlightened male reason.⁷⁹ Through the act of letter writing itself, female individuals such as Etta Palm d'Aelders could claim the voice and authority that was attributed to males within the

⁷⁷ Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, p. 2.

⁷⁸ Ruberg, *Conventional Correspondence*, p. 6; and Toon van Houdt, *Self-Presentation and Social Identification*, p. 3.

⁷⁹ Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, p. 3.

enlightened Republic of Letters. However, as is evident from Van de Spiegel's increasingly cautious correspondence from 1793 onwards, this space— nominally conducive to female agency— became increasingly contested as it vied with the pressures of popular sovereignty, the emergence of nation states and the institutionalisation of popular politics at the turn of the eighteenth century. In the course of the 1790s the discourse of 'the public' hardened against women; as the next chapter will demonstrate, the debates surrounding the concept of 'citizenship' illuminate the contours of this discursive battlefield, with d'Aelders' letters constituting an attempt to perform citizenship in order to legitimise her voice.

Chapter Two.

A network of *citoyennes*: claiming and constructing female citizenship on the boundaries of the French and Dutch Republics, 1788 -1793

Writing to Stadtholder Willem V in 1793, with an opportunity to provide new boots for the Dutch Republic's troops, Etta Palm d'Aelders speaks simultaneously of her duty as *citoyenne*, or citizenship, to her homeland—the Dutch Republic— whilst also expressing a desire to be 'useful to both my homelands.'⁸⁰ Here d'Aelders clearly links her status as 'citizenship', or *citoyenne*, to the idea of a 'homeland', or *patrie*; yet by claiming to have two 'homelands' also implies that she considers herself to be a 'citizenship' of both nations. It is not entirely clear from the remainder of the letter where these boots are coming from, or how this proposal would benefit the French Republic, presumed to be the second 'homeland' which d'Aelders refers to. However, this is perhaps beside the point; what is instead remarkable about this sentence, is that by professing allegiance to both 'homelands,' d'Aelders clearly portrays herself as a bi-national citizenship. D'Aelders thus creates an identity for herself as transnational 'citizenship', with the unique ability to 'cement the understanding and intelligence' which previously existed between the two 'homelands'.⁸¹

Etta Palm d'Aelders' self-representation as a loyal 'citizenship' of two nations poses a problem to our traditional understanding of the emergence of the nation as an imagined community. As explored in the previous chapter, Benedict Anderson has demonstrated the importance of the novel and the newspaper in the ability to 'think' the nation in the eighteenth century.⁸² In light of this cultural shift towards the imagined national community over the imagined international community of the Republic of Letters, how then can we explain d'Aelders' self-proclaimed and self-recognised liminal position between two increasingly hardening national boundaries? Especially when, at the point of writing this letter in July 1793, the French Republic was at war with the Dutch Republic? The very definition of citizen was under intense scrutiny and debate in this period and therefore in constant flux, heavily influenced by the political factions and discussions at play. Though not the only practical limitation to the French Revolution's conceptual claims to universal equality, gender played an integral role in attempting to define and cement the political body of citizens; Joan Landes' well-known *Women*

⁸⁰ KHA, A31, Willem V Batavus, Prins van Oranje-Nassau (1748-1806), catalogue number 746, letter dated Jul. 9, 1793, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 22.

and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution has demonstrated how the debates over citizenship in this period functioned as one of the key discursive areas in which the 'gendering' of the public sphere as exclusively male is visible.⁸³

Neither the inconsistencies in d'Aelders' portrayal of herself as 'citizeness', nor her professed dual allegiance to both nations should prompt us to criticise her constructed epistolary voice as insincere, or as that of an '*intrigante*', as Hardenberg's biography would have us conclude.⁸⁴ Rather than projecting a coherent or stable concept of citizenship back onto the period, the inconsistencies signal the significance of the discursive construction of citizenship in this period, and should prompt us to delve deeper into the ways in which those very inconsistencies and debates influenced the emergence of a legally-institutionalized discourse of citizenship. These same inconsistencies also prompt us to consider how individuals such as d'Aelders engaged with these debates, using them to carve out a position of agency for women in a public sphere that became increasingly discursively constructed as a male space of political agency.

The trajectory of this socio-cultural construction process of the discourse of citizenship can be traced back across the chronological arc of d'Aelders' letters. In the first-known letter written by d'Aelders to Willem V in 1788, d'Aelders, when expressing her fidelity to the Dutch Republic, uses the terms '*sujette*' and '*concitoyenne*'.⁸⁵ Though *sujette* can be translated into 'citizen', it is perhaps more accurate to translate this term as 'subject,' which emphasises its passive nature and denotes deference to monarchical authority. For d'Aelders this is a status determined by blood; she writes that she was 'born a *sujette* of the Republic of which you are the head' and that despite her move to France, 'I have never forgotten that I am Dutch and that the blood in my veins belongs to this happy nation.'⁸⁶ D'Aelders' understanding of nationality is further illuminated by her use of the word *concitoyenne* within the same letter which stresses the communal aspect of nationality; nationality is thus dependent on blood, which in turn is interpreted as binding together all those born within the boundaries of the nation state as a part of that nation states' imagined community.

The term '*citoyenne*', as pointed out by Annie Smart, was not in widespread use until the introduction of '*citoyen*' and '*citoyenne*' as the universal terms of address to replace the aristocratic '*monsieur*', '*madame*' and '*mademoiselle*' in 1792, and even then it simply reflected

⁸³ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Hardenberg, *Etta Palm*, p.2.

⁸⁵ KHA, A31, Willem V Batavus, Prins van Oranje-Nassau (1748-1806), catalogue number 746, letter dated Oct. 3, 1788, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, Paris, to Willem V, The Hague.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

the distinction between male and female pronouns in the French language.⁸⁷ However, as Smart has also demonstrated, Olympe de Gouges was signing her letters as '*citoyenne, Olympe de Gouges*' as early as 1788 and thus invested the term of address with a particular political significance, made apparent in her '*Déclaration des Droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne*'.⁸⁸ De Gouges' *Déclaration* was published in September 1791, yet d'Aelders refers to herself as *citoyenne* in a letter to van de Spiegel as early as 24th May 1790. We cannot know if this is the first instance in which d'Aelders presents herself as *citoyenne* since, as already mentioned, the majority of d'Aelders' letters to van de Spiegel have neither been found in the Dutch archives, nor been published by Herman Colenbrander, despite his thorough search of French archives. Nevertheless, the context in which d'Aelders uses this term, switching from her use of *sujette* and *concitoyenne* just two years earlier, is revealing. D'Aelders writes to Van de Spiegel about an article, apparently written against her, published in the *Chronique* by Paul Henri Marron.⁸⁹ Marron, born into a Huguenot family exiled to Leiden, moved to Paris in 1782 to serve as chaplain to the Dutch Ambassador where he supported the Patriot movement and moved in the French political circles of Mirabeau and Cerisier.⁹⁰ D'Aelders reports the defense given by one Monsieur de Grandmaison in the *Gazette Universelle* in which Grandmaison claims that 'a woman who is the friend of Mademoiselle Pétion, Carra and Robespierre cannot be *une mauvaise citoyenne*.'⁹¹ Here in 1790 therefore, the debates on citizenship, as triggered by the need for a new constitution in France, already included a consideration of moral integrity and made a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' citizens; integral to d'Aelders being defended as a 'good' citizen in 1790 were her social contacts, each known for their zeal and involvement with the revolutionary cause.

These early letters exchanged between d'Aelders and van de Spiegel demonstrate that the debate on citizenship had not yet reached its apex in its repercussions for the political position of women. Instead, if we take d'Aelders and Van de Spiegel's discussion as representative of the wider European discussions, the debate on the relation between a nation's constitution and a nation's citizens remained more theoretical and abstract. The extant copies of the letters d'Aelders received from Van de Spiegel in the period between 1788 and 1793 imply a continued

⁸⁷ Annie K. Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2013), p. 1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115

⁸⁹ Letter dated May. 24, 1790, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, Paris, to Van de Spiegel, The Hague, printed in Herman Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken Der Algemeene Geschiedenis Van Nederland Van 1795 Tot 1840: 1*, ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1905), p. 166.

⁹⁰ Annie Jourdan, "The 'Alien Origins' of the French Revolution: American, Scottish, Genevan, and Dutch Influences," *Journal of the Western Society for French History*, 35 (2007), p. 192.

⁹¹ Etta Palm d'Aelders to Van de Spiegel, May.24, 1790.

discussion on the nature of the Dutch Republic's constitution and imply that d'Aelders demonstrated a keen interest in understanding the constitution's implications for the stadtholder's 'subjects.' In January 1790, in one of his first letters to d'Aelders, Van de Spiegel wrote of the status of the 'people in our provinces [who] are perfectly happy.' Van de Spiegel defines this happiness as originating from 'a freedom under the law.' These laws, he goes on to explain are made by the people's representatives, among which 'the most ordinary citizen can one day, as long as he deserves it, be among.'⁹² Within the same letter, van de Spiegel seems to suggest that the relationship between the people, their representatives, the Constitution and the Law in the Dutch Republic, could serve as a model and 'be extremely useful to the actual system in France,' indicating the transnational awareness of the debate about the nature of the constitution and the relationship between the constitution and the man, as accelerating in France at this moment. In a following letter to d'Aelders, dated 12th February 1790, van de Spiegel elaborates further on this relationship between the law and the people, writing that 'the advantages of the rights of the citizen' are extended to 'anyone who respects the law.' This law he adds 'is the same for the nobleman and for the commoner, for the member of the sovereign assembly for the representatives of the Nation and the most humble folk.'⁹³

The Patriots' principles of government by contrast, are condemned as 'against any civil society.'⁹⁴ Van de Spiegel argues that 'they were cunning enough to let us believe that the same principles were adopted by France but it is like saying that black and white are the same.'⁹⁵ At its very heart the French Revolution entailed a search for a new form of popular legitimacy based on the liberty originating in the will of the people; this fundamentally opposed the despotic power of the monarchy, whose arbitrary use of the law did not take the will of the people into account.⁹⁶ Van de Spiegel however, as the Dutch Republic's governmental representative, maintained the belief that civilized society could only be maintained and ensured by the absolute authority of the law over every individual, including the Stadtholder. The integral position of the government in upholding the law is emphasised by van de Spiegel in a letter

⁹² NL-HaNA, 3.01.26, Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, inventory number 49, letter dated Jan. 30, 1789, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris.

⁹³ NL-HaNA, 3.01.26, Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, inventory number 50, letter dated Feb. 12, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ See Baker, 'On the problem of the ideological origins of the French Revolution,' p. 26; For an analysis of the symbolism of the fall of the Bastille in relation to the ideals of the philosophes against arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, see H. A. L. Fisher, *A History of Europe. From the Beginning of the 18th Century to 1937 (volume II)*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957); see also Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, (London: Routledge, 2013) for the link between arbitrary law and the arbitrary power of the patriarchal king.

dated 4th November 1790, in which van de Spiegel responds to d'Aelders' request for information on the Belgian uprisings. Van de Spiegel assures d'Aelders that 'Belgians are not going to be put under a yolk: freedom is a gift for any wise man and support can only come from the government. Anarchy is for brutes.'⁹⁷ The French constitution of 3rd September 1791 ushered into Europe the very 'anarchy' which Van de Spiegel wanted to resist, by stripping the monarch of sovereignty and transferring it instead, ostensibly, to the people. The constitution of 1791 was radical in theory; by locating sovereignty among the people, it proclaimed the equality of man, and therefore citizen, in nature. In practice, however, it posed a fundamental problem in distinguishing between those 'active' citizens with full political rights, as guaranteed by nature, and those 'passive' citizens, excluded from political rights entirely.

The wave of feminist cultural historians of the 1980s, spearheaded by scholars such as Joan Landes, Joan Scott and Lynn Hunt have drawn attention to the tensions inherent within this conceptualization of equality as originating in nature. As Joan Landes put it: 'women would have to be subsumed within the universal (and therefore effaced) or treated as different by nature but therefore outside the universal (and its privileges).' Landes argues that this inherent tension resulted in the relegation of women to the family and the private sphere; a demotion which stripped women of the informal cultural and political power women had attained in the salon culture of the early eighteenth century, in favour of the formal political power of male citizens in a new definition of civil society.

This argument has given rise to a vast debate in the literature on the impact of the French Revolution on the position of women.⁹⁸ Many historians, such as Annie Smart, have located the *citoyenne* within the home, arguing that the family was neither a relegation zone for women's political power, nor a solely 'private sphere.' Smart argues for the expansion of the term 'citizenship' towards one which affirms the conceptual space within the concept of civic identity for *citoyennes* and argues that the home played a key role in promoting and ensuring the continuance of the values of the French Revolution. Smart defines citizenship as:

⁹⁷ NL-HaNA, 3.01.26, Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, inventory number 50, letter dated Nov. 4, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris.

⁹⁸ See Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*; Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their French Revolution*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Olwen Hufton, *Women and the limits of citizenship in the French Revolution*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Jane Abray, "Feminism in the French Revolution," *The American Historical Review*, 80 (1975): 1, pp. 43-62; Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Including all members of a nation who actively participate in civic life and who play a role in maintaining the life, morals, and values of the public and political arenas... many eighteenth-century French writers interpellated women as *citoyennes*, that is, as moral individuals devoted to the public good, with a vital role to play in ushering in the good society.⁹⁹

She thus presents her argument for the existence of a 'civic intimate sphere,' forming a clear dialogue with the well-known work of Linda Kerber on what she has termed 'Republican motherhood' within the American Revolution.¹⁰⁰

In the Dutch Republic too, the emphasis within debates on women's place in society lay overwhelmingly on women's role in mothering and raising children. Unlike in France however, as Wijnand Mijnhardt and Joost Kloek have argued, though the natural equality of men and women entered public debates, 'there was no question of a fierce polemic... and the question attracted only limited interest.'¹⁰¹ Though the work of mid eighteenth-century philosophers like Justus van Effen called on the importance of education for all women, the emphasis on education lay on its role in preparing women for their future role within the family. Van Effen considered a 'well-ordered family life to be one of the foundations underpinning the success of the Dutch Republic.'¹⁰² Mijnhardt and Kloek have therefore argued that whilst Rousseau's *Emile*— a seminal text on the ideal Republican education— had an incendiary effect in France, the importance of education in fostering Republican values in the home was already familiar in the Dutch Republic; *Emile* only served to confirm the status quo.¹⁰³

The most radical attitude towards the role of education in citizenship came from GCC Vatebender, headmaster of Gouda's Latin school, who said in 1790:

The Youth and its education under the auspices of any Nation are not a private resource, that each person may deal with according to his own caprices and squander through ignorance or malice: the Youth of every Country is the public property of the State, that is entitled not only to the Paternal protection, care and guidance of the Sovereign Power, but also to be shielded from destruction wrought by other, unwashed hands, and from appropriation by other persons.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ "Republican Motherhood" was a common 18th-century term for the role of women in society in the United States during the American Revolution; it was based on the belief that the patriots' daughters should be raised with the ideals of republicanism in order to pass on republican values to the next generation; See Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

¹⁰¹ Mijnhardt and Kloek, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p. 225.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 226.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Vatebender thus proposed removing the Republic's youth from the private sphere of the family and placing them instead into state institutions, so that the State might exert its authority over its 'public property.'

By contrast, Betje Wolff's *Proeve over de opvoeding*, written in 1779, was more in line with the Dutch Republic's Spectatorial commentators and thus more representative of the mainstream attitudes towards the role of women in education. The Spectators were a genre of weekly magazines written by the cultural elite of the Dutch Republic and 'were the medium through which the eighteenth-century cultural elite presented itself as the new moral citizens.'¹⁰⁵ For Wolff, the family was the only suitable environment in which children could be raised as 'competent citizens,' 'decent human beings,' and 'wise Christians.'¹⁰⁶ Wolff's work demonstrates how the debate on a woman's relationship to citizenship was an integral corollary of the debate on the education of future citizens. In Wolff's argument, women could only fulfil their familial duties if they had themselves been adequately educated and thus Wolff also agitated for women's wider participation in 'the cultural life of the nation.' According to Mijnhardt and Kloek this referred to 'the worlds of the written word, the literary evenings that served as the Dutch equivalents of salons, and informal gatherings, the twilight zone between public and private life- in such areas women could truly play an active and vital civilizing role.'¹⁰⁷

Important differences thus existed between the debates on the role of educating citizens, and its corollary: the duty of mothering citizens, in the French and Dutch Republics. Whereas Rousseau's *Emile* sought to establish a national system of education in which the innate goodness of 'natural' man could be protected against the corruptive influences of community, Wolff's *Proeve* aimed to guide families into bringing up 'wise Christians' and functioned within a wider cultural discourse in which the Dutch Republic sought a glorious return to the 'Golden Age.'¹⁰⁸ The focus on restoring the civil and republican virtues of the Dutch 'Golden Age' was influenced by John Locke's 1693 *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in which Locke argued that each human being was born a *tabula rasa* upon which upbringing imprinted knowledge and behavior.¹⁰⁹ Education, as in France, was thus upheld as a civic duty. However, in the Dutch Republic particular attention was devoted to warning against the popularity of French-style

¹⁰⁵ Mijnhardt and Kloek, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p. 151.

¹⁰⁶ Betje Wolff, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 228-9.

¹⁰⁸ Jean Bloch traces the reception of *Emile* in France, particularly amongst the revolutionaries, in his book *Rousseauism and Education in Eighteenth-century France*, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995); Stefan Dudink, "Mannelijk burgerschap en lafhartige verwijfdheid," *Groniek*, 158/159 (2002): pp. 114-5.

¹⁰⁹ Mijnhardt and Kloek, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p. 154.

boarding schools for girls; their emphasis on dancing, music and embroidery were seen as nurturing a reliance on an aristocratic milieu which could only lead to moral depravity.¹¹⁰

The association of the corruption of the *ancien régime* with aristocratic individualism touched on a longstanding tradition of *burgher* culture in the Dutch Republic. Johan Huizinga and Simon Schama have identified a bourgeois *burgher* culture in the seventeenth century with a strong emphasis on cleanliness, simplicity, courage and piety. For Schama and Huizinga this elite *burgher* culture functioned within a particular discourse of civilization, in which these bourgeois values were continuously targeted at the lower classes across the seventeenth century and even into the 1950s.¹¹¹ For Mijnhardt and Kloek however, this portrayal of moral citizenship as ‘an ahistorical constant’ is unconvincing and too generalized. Mijnhardt and Kloek do not deny the similarities between the moralizing drive of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation movements, and the early nineteenth-century emphasis on civic morality. However, they maintain that the ideal of the virtuous citizen was in constant flux and fundamentally moulded by historical context. For Mijnhardt and Kloek, ‘the most drastic redefinition of this ideal took place in the eighteenth century, when the phenomenon of society—as a conglomerate of citizens— was revised, and conceived as fundamentally changeable.’¹¹²

Here, Mijnhardt and Kloek point to the importance of Justus van Effen’s *Hollandsche Spectator* of the 1730s in which Van Effen writes of his concern for the Dutch Republic’s increasing decline as a result of the Republic’s elite to adopt and imitate French customs.¹¹³ Mijnhardt and Kloek stress Van Effen’s unique contribution to the Dutch Republic’s political culture, arguing that ‘with his concern about the Republic’s stagnation, his fear of the rise of a French aristocratic ideal of civilization, and above all his creative invention of an authentic Dutch *burgher* morality far superior to that of the French aristocracy, Van Effen is the founder of a specifically Dutch version of moral citizenship.’¹¹⁴ Exacerbated by the War of Austrian Succession of 1740-1748, in which the Dutch Republic’s economic and international political weaknesses became clear, and carried on in important periodicals like the *Vaderlandsche letter-oefeningen*, the debates which Van Effen’s work triggered on civil morality and citizenship continued well into the second half of the eighteenth century, and generated a new, modern ideal of citizenship which was disseminated by the Spectators.¹¹⁵ In the language of civil morality espoused by the

¹¹⁰ Mijnhardt and Kloek, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p. 155.

¹¹¹ Johan Huizinga, *Dutch civilisation in the seventeenth century and other essays*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1987).

¹¹² Mijnhardt and Kloek, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p. 148

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Spectators, the civil code of conduct which citizens of the Dutch Republic should aspire to were intimately linked to bodily control, with a particular emphasis on sexual conduct.¹¹⁶ In this discourse, as with its French compatriot, effeminate qualities such as loving the company of women, favouring superficial and ostentatious conversation, and being concerned with fashion, were regarded as the antithesis of civic morality. These effeminate qualities were explicitly linked by the Spectators to an obsession with, and pursuit of, a French aristocratic attitude to life.¹¹⁷

The link between morality and citizenship far preceded the turn of the nineteenth century. After the inauguration of the Dutch monarchy in 1815, the requirement for persons of political influence to be of high moral standard found formal expression in the establishment of the 'Society for the Promotion of the Public Good'; however this society had its roots in the works of Aristotle and, especially, Cicero, who argued that only the virtuous conduct of citizens could ensure the survival of the city-republic.¹¹⁸ Whereas Cicero's work addressed Rome's political elite, by the nineteenth century the expectations of moral citizenship were regarded as applicable across society and now concerned the well-being of the nation state, rather than individual cities.¹¹⁹ Citizenship had thus become a national socio-political status; one was no longer a *burgher* of just the city community where one lived, but of the national community now with a monarch at its head.

Civic education, or the education of future citizens, was therefore a crucial manifestation of citizenship, and it was a manifestation of citizenship that gave mothers a particularly meaningful sense of agency. In the words of Mijnhardt and Kloek:

No longer were the politically active seen as the sole custodians of the nation's prosperity; all cultivated citizens shared this responsibility. Moral upbringing, intellectual development, and emotional sensitivity would ultimately enable *burghers* to function as citizens in the widest sense of the word.¹²⁰

Theoretically then, the debate on citizenship and the desire to reform society along the blueprint of the Dutch Republic's 'Golden Age' created the space in which women could claim citizenship through mothering and education. In turn, the importance of this role would encourage women

¹¹⁶ Mijnhardt and Kloek, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p. 152.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 147.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 157.

to embrace ‘the twilight zone between public and private life’ which the cultural literary scene of the educated elites inhabited.¹²¹

In reality however, the majority of learned societies continued to be dominated by men, and though literary societies saw an increase in women’s participation after 1770, it was far from representative of the wider nation; between 1750 and 1800 women made up 37 of over 1500 members.¹²² By the formal establishment of the *Society for the Promotion of the Public Good* in 1815, women were officially excluded. Citizenship through motherhood lost much of its political capital and the woman as active citizen mother remained an abstract notion. This is demonstrated in the selective translation of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Originally published in 1792, a Dutch translation by IJsbrand van Hamelsveld appeared in 1797. Wollstonecraft’s tract was essentially censored by van Hamelsveld, whose version focused on Wollstonecraft’s description of women’s tasks within the home, but left out Wollstonecraft’s argument that specifically female virtues are public virtues and that accordingly women’s citizenship has the same underlying basis as that of men, necessitating that they have equal rights as citizens.¹²³ Nowhere quite as clearly do we see Landes’ indictment that ‘a public action is then one authored from or authorized by the masculine position’ ring true as in van Hamelsveld’s selective translation of Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication* in order to uphold the status quo of male moral public citizenship.¹²⁴

The importance of the increasing understanding of the moral duties linked to citizenship are again easily identifiable in d’Aelders’ letters. In March 1793, five years after her first letter to Willem V, d’Aelders wrote a second letter with the aim of proving her devotion to the Stadtholder throughout the period 1778-1788. This letter now included more personal accounts of her moral character. D’Aelders’ previous letter relied on her attempts to refute Mirabeau’s ‘appalling slander’ against the nation of the Dutch Republic in his pamphlet *Aux Bataves, sur le Stathoudérat* as proof of her patriotic devotion.¹²⁵ By contrast, her second letter centered on individual moral principles, recounting her rejection of a proposal, and its accompanying access to personal wealth, in 1787 and consequently claiming that she ‘acted according to the duty of a virtuous soul, by instinct not by method.’¹²⁶ Here again we see the importance of performing virtue, with external actions proving the internal virtuous heart.

¹²¹ Mijnhardt and Kloek, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, p. 229.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹²⁴ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 3.

¹²⁵ Etta Palm d’Aelders to Willem V, Oct. 3, 1788.

¹²⁶ KHA, A31, Willem V Batavus, Prins van Oranje-Nassau (1748-1806), catalogue number 746, letter dated May. 29, 1793, from Etta Palm d’Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague

Significantly d'Aelders ended this letter with the bold explanation that: 'I need to do this, not for me, but to show that the so-called weaker sex has sometimes more moral strength than those who are claiming to belong to the stronger sex and therefore to be superior by nature.'¹²⁷ By differentiating between the sexes here, d'Aelders invests the discursive difference between 'citoyen' and 'citoyenne' with a tangible socio-political distinction of higher morality. Here then we see a concrete instance of the discursive battlefield of citizenship. Acknowledging the prevalent discourse of male superiority, d'Aelder's constructs a specific 'citizenship' in which women have the ability to 'sometimes [demonstrate] more moral strength.'

These arguments have been overlooked as extensions of D'Aelders' better-known engagement with the *Cercle Social*, which has been well-documented elsewhere; these accounts have emphasised d'Aelders' vocal political role in advocating for women's access to education, divorce rights, and for taking the stand in a meeting of the *Cercle Social* to shush the room in order to allow a male speaker to discuss women's rights.¹²⁸ Landes' account of d'Aelders' activism offers the most extensive analysis, and emphasises d'Aelders' role in the proposal and establishment of a women's branch of the *Cercle Social*, the *Société patriotique et de bienfaisance des Amies de la Verité*, which was established to lobby for issues politically pertinent to French women: the elimination of primogeniture and measures against domestic abuse.¹²⁹

What has been less widely documented is that D'Aelders' experiences during her time with the *Cercle Social*, and their engagement with the debates on citizenship and women's rights, had a clear impact on her engagement with Batavian politics upon her return to the Dutch Republic. In the narrow window of time between the establishment of the Batavian Republic and her arrest, d'Aelders wrote two anonymous letters which were published in the *Nationaale Courant* and signed only by 'een Vriendinne van de Waarheid', or 'a friend of the truth.'¹³⁰ Though we cannot be completely sure that these letters were penned by d'Aelders, those historians who have mentioned these letters in passing seem convinced by the argument that 'a friend of the truth' is a subtle reference to d'Aelders' key role in the *Amies de la Verité*; this

¹²⁷ Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, May. 29, 1793.

¹²⁸ Abray 'Feminism in the French Revolution,' p. 48; Rudolf Dekker and Judith Vega, "Women and the Dutch Revolutions of the Late Eighteenth Century" in *Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women*, ed. Christine Fauré, (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 200; D. Weerd, *Uw sekse en de onze: vrouwen en genootschappen in Nederland in de ons omringende landen (1750- ca. 1810)*, (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009), p. 226; Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, pp. 117-121.

¹²⁹ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 119.

¹³⁰ *Oprechte Nationaale Courant*, 06-05-1795; *Oprechte Nationaale Courant*, 13-05-1795; In the first article d'Aelders called for the establishment of female political networks, in the second she proposed rules for the allocation of the highest political offices in Delft where she was now residing.

interpretation is further bolstered by a small postscript to the 6th May 1795 letter which asks the reader to pardon any grammar or stylistic errors that might arise from having spent more than twenty-five years abroad.¹³¹

On the 6th May 1795, d'Aelders responded to a previous article on the decision of an unnamed Parisian Society to ban men from their meetings, claiming that this society was not alone in banning men in Paris. According to d'Aelders, the necessity of such an approach arose from the tendency of men:

to dominate, and many women though gifted with understanding and judgement, but timid and fearful, would not dare to express her feelings about the proposed matters in the presence of that sex which from her youth she has been taught to see as her chief.¹³²

Here d'Aelders displays a keen awareness of the constructed nature of the power structures in society that constitute the relations between the sexes and, in full agreement with the letter she is responding to, writes that:

it would be very useful for our common interest, if our Dutch women also established such societies, not to handle political affairs, but to untangle true virtue, love of fatherland, and brotherhood from the ties of prejudice, superstition, hypocrisy and selfishness, and in order that the Aristocratic crust, which covers both sexes resident in the Netherlands, might be torn off and destroyed.¹³³

This proposal had clear overtures with d'Aelders' work with the *Amies de la Verité*; in a speech addressing the *Confédération* on the 23rd March 1791, d'Aelders proposes 'to form, in each Section of the capital, a patriotic society of *citoyennes*, female friends of the truth.'¹³⁴ In d'Aelders' outline of the duties of this network of societies, the potentially invaluable contribution of these *citoyennes* would be their ability to:

supervise efficiently the enemies harboured in the midst of the capital and... the directorate of the central circle, corresponding with patriotic societies in the Departments, would propagate

¹³¹ *Oprechte Nationaale Courant*, 06-05-1795; See Dekker and Vega, "Women and the Dutch Revolutions of the Late Eighteenth Century," p. 207.

¹³² *Oprechte Nationaale Courant*, 06-05-1795, p. 1.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³⁴ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 119.

enlightenment and would make it possible to break up more easily the plots hatched by malevolent persons.¹³⁵

Here d'Aelders clearly links the deployment of *citoyennes* with one of the key concerns of the French Republic at this point in 1791: security. The numbers of French *émigrés* were rising, many of whom funded counter-revolutionary movements in France and lobbied European monarchs to take military action against the revolution.¹³⁶ Citizenship, in the French context, was constructed on contributing to the security and longevity of the Revolution; in the Dutch context, social reform offered a more engaging concern with which d'Aelders could engage. Though d'Aelders takes care to emphasise that such clubs would not 'handle political affairs', it is clear that d'Aelders envisages these female-only societies as playing a key part in the moral regeneration of the nation from the vestiges of the aristocracy. By calling for a separate political sphere in which women could engage with politics on a public level, d'Aelders was directly involved in the construction of a distinct citizenship; in investing the gender-specific term *citoyenne* with a specific political function, women like d'Aelders took the established discourse of the sexes being 'equal but separate' in nature and challenged the restrictions, imposed upon them through this discourse, from within.

If we take feminist philosopher Marilyn Friedman's contemporary definition of citizenship, we see that:

Citizenship is multiple and various. It can be an identity; a set of rights, privileges and duties; an elevated and exclusionary political status; a relationship between individuals and their states; a set of practices that can unify- or divide- the members of a political community; and an ideal of political agency.¹³⁷

In Smart's analysis, as indeed in the work of other feminist theorists, the family is re-integrated into any analysis of civil society in order to acknowledge the multiple aspects of citizenship identified by Friedman, and prevent reinforcing a historically constructed division between a male public sphere and a female private sphere, based purely on understanding citizenship

¹³⁵ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 120; This address was printed as a pamphlet: see Darline G. Levy, Harriet B. Applewhite, and Mary D. Johnson, *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795: selected documents translated with notes and commentary*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980) pp. 68-71.

¹³⁶ Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution: From its Origins to 1793* (London: Routledge, 1962) pp. 187-88.

¹³⁷ Marilyn Friedman quoted in Bonnie G Smith, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 386.

through the lens of political enfranchisement.¹³⁸ However, if we look at women like d'Aelders, who pushed beyond the inclusion of women in civil society, by envisaging a separate sphere of citizenesses with a direct role in influencing public morality, this understanding of female agency in politics and society went far beyond the 'civic intimate sphere' of the home.

In the letter to Willem V dated 9th July 1793 already discussed, we see d'Aelders' ability to adapt her self-representation in her letters in line with the particular line of the Dutch Republic's debates on civic morality. Claiming the status of *citoyenne* of the Dutch Republic, d'Aelders' proposal to provide the Dutch Republic's army with new boots is couched in terms of her duty as citizeness to inform her sovereign.¹³⁹ D'Aelders' use of the term *citoyenne* cannot be seen as happenstance; it is clear from the outline of d'Aelders' engagement with the *Cercle Social* above that d'Aelders occupied a central position in the French debates on the rights of *citoyennes* and advocated eagerly for the extension of rights to women both within and outside the home with a view to enshrining these in the constitution. As such, this arguably incompatible association of the term *citoyenne* with a deference to Dutch authoritarian Stadtholderate power demonstrates the way in which d'Aelders maneuvered within the discourse of citizenship in order to present herself as 'useful' to both the French and Dutch Republics.

In a note attached to a letter dated 1794 we again see the importance of French influence and precedence in d'Aelders' political attempts to gain credibility with the Stadtholderate. Following the counter-revolutionary insurrections that destroyed Lyon, d'Aelders suggests to Willem V that the Dutch Republic could benefit significantly from establishing an embroidery industry as an emblematic occupation for women. Promoting embroidery as 'a source of income for thousands of people, women, children, the elderly and the disabled,' d'Aelders keenly emphasises it as 'a source of income for the poor and the start of a new trade for the country,' suggesting that orphanages might provide a suitable project and suggesting herself for the responsibility of training women in the orphanages.¹⁴⁰

This desire to be 'useful' is central to understanding how d'Aelders engaged with the discourse of citizenship of the time; defending her actions as being 'of use' to the Dutch Republic commonly recur across all twelve of the letters housed in the *Koninklijk Huisarchief*. Mart Rutjes has explored the links between civic morality and the discourse of citizenship from the height of the Dutch Republic to the end of the Batavian Republic and has advanced the concept of

¹³⁸ Smith, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*, p.402.

¹³⁹ Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Jul. 9, 1793.

¹⁴⁰ KHA, A31, Willem V Batavus, Prins van Oranje-Nassau (1748-1806), catalogue number 746, letter dated 1794, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

‘utilitarian citizenship’ as unique to the Batavian period. This ‘utilitarian citizenship’ emphasised the duty of any citizen of the Batavian Republic to contribute either economically, or to the social welfare of the Republic. Rutjes argues that this concept emerged during the French Revolution but was not hegemonic until after the establishment of the Batavian Republic.¹⁴¹ Though not hegemonic at the time d’Aelders is writing— and indeed perhaps indicative of her lack of success, it is nonetheless in the letters of d’Aelders that we first see the emergence of this ideal and d’Aelders’ personal application of this ideal to carve out agency for herself. By providing information through her correspondence with the idealism of ‘work[ing] on the good will and intelligence of both sides’, d’Aelders’ letters not only contributed to the literature and debate on the nature of citizenship, but also functioned as a tangible manner of claiming that citizenship for herself. By professing loyalty to two feuding nations, d’Aelders’ letters combined elements from both nations’ debates on the nature and responsibilities assigned to the status of ‘citizen’ and constructed her own definition of and claim to citizenship that was clearly influenced by her experience and involvement in the French debates on citizenship. D’Aelders engagement with the concept of ‘utilitarian citizenship’ to claim agency in the Dutch Republic demonstrates the absence of inflammatory debate on the position of women in the Dutch Republic, illustrating the key difference between French republicans, who were tasked with the creation of a new society, and the Dutch Patriots, whose primary aim was the restoration of a bygone glory.

In the final letter from the bundle of letters kept in the Koninklijk Bibliotheek in The Hague, d’Aelders expresses to van de Spiegel that ‘it is painful for me to see that I am still considered a foreigner to this land.’¹⁴² As with earlier letters she urgently requests a face to face meeting and on multiple times expresses her desire and ability to be ‘useful’ before concluding with the lines:

May I reiterate my complete faithfulness to my country and to its Constitution. And if anyone says to you that I am a *Jacobine*, please rest assured that all I wish for is to serve and die faithful to the principles you know of and which are at the centre of my heart.¹⁴³

Then, underlined for emphasis, she adds ‘And it is as a *Jacobine* that I have been the most useful to my country, I appeal to you Sir!’¹⁴⁴ The tragic irony of d’Aelders’ activism in the French and

¹⁴¹ Mart Rutjes, “Useful citizens. Citizenship and democracy in the Batavian Republic, 1795-1801,” in *The Political Culture of the Sister Republics, 1794-1806*, eds. Joris Oddens, Mart Rutjes, and Erik Jacobs, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), p. 73.

¹⁴² KHA, A31, Willem V Batavus, Prins van Oranje-Nassau (1748-1806), catalogue number 986, Letter dated Jul. 8, 1794, from Etta Palm d’Aelders, The Hague, to Van de Spiegel, The Hague.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Etta Palm d’Aelders to Van de Spiegel, Jul. 8, 1794.

Dutch Republics is that, having campaigned so vociferously in both Republics, her association with Jacobinism led to suspicion of her credibility in Orangist circles, whilst her association with Orangism and the Prussian monarchy contributed to her exile from France; the discourse of utility, central to her own self-presentation, was not enough to bridge the gap between the two national contexts with all the accompanying complexities of war.

D'Aelders' letters cannot be taken as representative of the complexities of the French debates on citizenship; nor do they adequately engage with, or summarise, the breadth of the related debates in the Dutch and Batavian Republics. For this, analyses such as Rutjes' are more useful for showing the long-term developments in the idea of citizenship on a national, or at least a community, level. What this chapter does demonstrate, however, is the manner in which d'Aelders attempted to engage with the debates, her own unique understanding of what citizenship entailed, the development of the discourse of citizenship, and that the idea of citizenship was not always bound by geographical boundaries. It also shows that the idea of citizenship, linked to the idea of civic duty, became increasingly gendered in this period as it moved from a passive connotation of being a subject under a particular ruler, towards a duty-laden and moral understanding of contributing to a particular community, with the duty of the woman increasingly restricted to the private sphere. What focusing on one particular set of letters allows us to see is the reactive manner– but also with incredible foresight– in which individual women such as d'Aelders could engage with the theoretical debates in a tangible way, drawing on the rhetoric of virtue and utility to carve out a space of agency for women that pushed beyond the boundaries of the Republican home. The discourse of citizenship served to define and cement the boundary between inclusion within or exclusion from the public sphere, yet at the same time it was a fundamentally unstable concept, the seismology of which was in constant flux in this crucial period at the turn of the nineteenth century. Understanding Etta Palm d'Aelders' unquenchable desire to be 'useful' demonstrates a way in which women in this period engaged with, challenged, claimed, and performed the discourse of citizenship for themselves.

Chapter Three.

'Madam Ambassadrice': punishing and repressing the female public voice post-1793

Whereas the norms and values associated with citizenship were in flux in the period of 1789-1792, with malleable boundaries which could be pushed by women like Etta Palm d'Aelders, citizenship as the preserve of the virtuous male Republican became an increasingly rigid designation from 1793 onwards. As discussed in the previous chapter, historians disagree over the extent to which Republican emphasis on the role of women within the family functioned as a suppressive mechanism, or whether the emphasis on family values and education elevated the Republican mother as the propagator of Enlightenment values to future Republican children. By 1793 however the lines of division between public and private had become increasingly solid and distinct, as the words of National Convention deputy Jean-Pierre-André Amar make abundantly clear. Amar explicitly stated in November 1793 that 'a woman's honour confines her to the private sphere and precludes her from a struggle with men.'¹⁴⁵ Access to the public sphere was therefore consciously contested, with many leading Jacobins such as Amar increasingly claiming the public sphere as that defined as belonging specifically to men. The implication of Amar's argument was that women who chose to 'struggle with men' for access were the antithesis of honourable women. Amar's choice of the verb 'confine' is also notable for its exclusionary tone. If women refused to embrace their 'honourable' calling to the private sphere, then they were, by Amar's definition, 'dishonourable.' In a political community obsessed with the rebirth of a virtuous, and therefore honourable, nation, these 'dishonourable' women would have to be excluded from the public sphere in another way. Amar's statement concluded a mounting campaign of political repression against women; on October 30, 1793, the National Convention had decreed that "clubs and popular societies of women, under whatever denomination, are forbidden."¹⁴⁶

The hardening of boundaries between male and female, and the corresponding connotations of public and private, can be traced in the shift in discourse surrounding the notion of Amazon warriors. The invocation of the classical image of the Amazon woman warrior initially functioned as a rallying call for many women across the revolutionary movement: Pauline Lèon presented a petition signed by three-hundred-and-nineteen women to the Legislative Assembly calling for a *garde nationale* feminine of armed women to defend Paris; the self-named 'Amazons of Creil'

¹⁴⁵ J.P. Amar, quoted in Hufton, *Women and the limits of Citizenship*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Godineau, *The Women of Paris and their Revolution*, p. 170.

made d'Aelders an honorary member of their society and presented her with a medallion; Theroigne de Mericourt called for the establishment of Amazonian legions to defend the revolution; and as late as May 1793, self-proclaimed 'Amazons' formed the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women and refused to admit men to the society.¹⁴⁷ The mythical ideal of the Amazon thus enabled women to challenge military service as the foundation for male citizenship, created a sense of community, and served as a tangible way to conceptualise a separate female-only space within the public sphere— a model that outlived the banning of women's political clubs in 1793 and inspired d'Aelders' calls in Dutch national newspapers for a similar movement in 1795. By 1793 however the 'Amazon', as a revolutionary image around which Republican women rallied, faced increasing opposition. David Hopkin's chapter on female soldiers in the French Revolutionary Armies traces the physical impact of this on the dwindling numbers of female soldiers in the revolutionary armies from spring 1793 onwards.¹⁴⁸ This trend was reflected, as Hopkin demonstrates, in the fictional theatre character of the disguised female soldier, who increasingly found her 'happily ever after' once her disguise had been outed, her problem had been solved, and she could return to her 'proper' place in the household— symbolically, in women's clothing once more.¹⁴⁹ The perceived stabilisation of gender norms can perhaps be linked to the increasing stabilisation, or desire for stabilisation, of the new Republican state. Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol's analysis of cross-dressing women in the French revolutionary armies concluded that 'when the survival of the community demands it, women are permitted to assume the tasks of men... [war] lowered the threshold of resistance and made it easier for women to make the decision to change gender.'¹⁵⁰ Conversely, as stability and order came to the French Revolution, the political, and by extension military, participation of women became increasingly curtailed in favour of the restoration of male prerogative over the task of defence. Though the French Republic was far from stable in November 1793— in fact, it was waging a war on two fronts, both internally and externally— the increasing domination of the Jacobins and the Committee of Public Safety has been typically read by historians as an imposition of control and top-down authority.¹⁵¹ As Dekker and van de Pol themselves put it:

¹⁴⁷ Olwen Hufton, "Voilà la citoyenne," *History Today*, 39 (1989): 26-32; David Hopkin, "The World Turned Upside Down: Female Soldiers in the French Armies of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars," in *Soldiers, citizens and civilians: experiences, and perceptions of the revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, eds. Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann, and Jane Rendall, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 78-9.

¹⁴⁸ Hopkin, "The World Turned Upside Down," p. 81.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-7.

¹⁵⁰ Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, "Republican Heroines: Cross-dressing women in the French revolutionary armies," *History of European Ideas*, 10 (1989): 3, p. 361.

¹⁵¹ See Howard G. Brown, *War, Revolution, and the Bureaucratic State: Politics and Army Administration in France, 1791-1799*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 71-2.

1793 marked a turning point in the fortunes of the revolutionary female soldier 'as the revolution was transferred from the streets to the borders, acquiring an increasingly military character, [so that] there was less and less room left for participation by women.'¹⁵²

Though the consolidation of the Batavian Republic naturally followed a delayed timeline, the parallels between the increasing influence of the French Committee for Public Safety and the establishment of an equivalent organisational structure in the Batavian Republic are worth highlighting. Political discussions in the Batavian Republic in 1795 were dominated by the conflict between federalist and unitarist thought, in which radical leaders proposed programs of extensive centralisation on a national level whilst the body of revolutionary supporters remained wedded to the defense of local autonomy against any authoritarian attempts at centralised control.¹⁵³ Political discussions on whether to adopt a unitary state on the French model or not also involved a discussion on the foundations of the right of citizens, the right to punishment and the right to due process. These discussions were integral to the early days of the Republic; as a result, the constitution of the Batavian Republic was not ratified until 1798, where the Republic's political foundations were formed of a centralized government explicitly modelled on the Directory in France and sworn in allegiance to France. In the interim, the Patriots continued the 1787 campaign of expulsion against Orangist regents, renaming the Dutch Republic's *Staten van Holland* as the *Provisioneerende Repraesentanten van het Volk van Holland* whilst essentially maintaining the constitutional basis of the former confederal republic.¹⁵⁴ Newly created in 1795, five revolutionary committees were appointed with whom executive power over the different departments lay. Formed in response to the uncertainty and instability of the early days of the Batavian Republic, the *Comité van Algemeene Waakzaamheid* was made up of eight members of the *Provisioneerende Repraesentanten*. In response to the ongoing peace negotiations with the French Republic, rumours of a Prussian invasion and the well-known Orangism of the army and navy, the *Comité van Algemeene Waakzaamheid* had responsibility over 'such suspect persons, who through their words, deeds or correspondence, could be deemed damaging, even dangerous, for the general interests of the fatherland.'¹⁵⁵

On the 27th January 1796 the *Comité van Algemeene Waakzaamheid* addressed the *Provisioneerende Repraesentanten van 't Volk van Holland* concerning such a 'suspect person.' Etta

¹⁵² Dekker and Pol, "Republican Heroines," p. 357.

¹⁵³ Pepijn Brandon and Karwan Fatah-Black, "'The supreme power of the people': Local autonomy and radical democracy in the Batavian Revolution (1795-1798)," *Atlantic Studies* 13 (2016): 3, p. 371.

¹⁵⁴ Martijn van der Burg, "Transforming the Dutch Republic into the Kingdom of Holland: the Netherlands between Republicanism and Monarchy (1795-1815)," *European Review of History*, 17 (2010):2, pp. 151-70.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Hardenberg, *Etta Palm*, p. 100.

Palm d'Aelders was held up for scrutiny before the *Provisioneele Repraesentanten* as 'a woman, who— while she could have been the jewel of her sex— recklessly gave herself to the wandering streams of political intrigue, has done harmful wrong, according to which her fate must be decided in a less than fortunate way.'¹⁵⁶ Following a synthesis of the most important evidence considered during her four trial sessions before the *Comité van Algemeene Waakzaamheid*, it was decided that she would be taken to a suitable location and confined until the attainment of 'a general peace, or until her freedom is no longer detrimental to the political condition of this country and of the French Republic.'¹⁵⁷ Though ostensibly motivated by d'Aelders' continued correspondence with exiled Orangists, the language used against d'Aelders throughout her trial was undeniably gendered.¹⁵⁸ Within its opening lines, the indictment stated that 'the cost of her crime' was her 'deviation from the enchanting meekness, subordination and hesitation which ought to be the characteristic of the female nature!'¹⁵⁹

The transgression of the boundaries of femininity, as used to condemn d'Aelders, resoundingly echoes the French revolutionary discourse against women. The comparative relation between incriminating language used against revolutionary women earlier in France should not be missed. In particular, parallels with the vilification of Olympe de Gouges come to mind. Radical politician, Pierre Gaspard Chaumette, scandalised de Gouges as '*cette femme-homme*, the impudent Olympe de Gouges, who abandoned all the cares of her household because she wanted to engage in politics and commit crimes.'¹⁶⁰ Both women are characterised as transgressing the socio-cultural construction of the ideal of the Republican female, wholly devoted to and occupied with her family. By collapsing male and female into *femme-homme*, Chaumette's words tie into the increasingly intolerant discourse surrounding self-styled Amazon warriors, demonstrating its extension as a metaphor for the unnatural qualities of a woman who wanted to suppress the feminine cares of the family in favour of a masculine preoccupation with war and violence. Similarly, Charlotte Corday, famous for assassinating politician-journalist Jean-Paul Marat, is reported to have asked 'am I therefore not of my sex?' in response to questions she faced during her trial.¹⁶¹ In a 1793 National Convention discussion of the participation of

¹⁵⁶ *Decreeten Van de Provisioneele Repraesentanten Van Het Volk Van Holland. 4 January 1796- 30 January 1796*, (Den Haag: 's Lands Drukkery, 1799), p.680, all translations my own from the original Dutch.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 689.

¹⁵⁸ For more detail on these contacts, see Hardenberg, *Etta Palm*, p. 101.

¹⁵⁹ *Decreeten*, p.680

¹⁶⁰ Joan Wallach Scott, "French Feminists and the Rights of 'Man': Olympe de Gouges' Declarations," *History Workshop*, (1989), p. 17.

¹⁶¹ Nina Corazzo and Catherine R. Montfort, "Charlotte Corday: Femme-Homme," In *Literate Women of the French Revolution of 1789*, 33-54, ed. Catherine R. Montfort, (Birmingham Alabama: Summa Publishers, 1994).

women in politics, Jacobin deputy Fabre d'Eglantine denounced 'these clubs [which] are not composed of mothers of families, daughters of families, sisters occupied with their younger brothers or sisters, but rather of adventuresses, knights-errant, emancipated women, amazons.'¹⁶² Women who rejected their virtuous place in the home thus, in the words of male contemporaries such as Amar and d'Eglantine, made a conscious choice to transgress the boundaries of gender, a superficiality picked up on, and contested by, women such as Charlotte Corday, whose question 'Am I therefore not of my sex?' stands almost in direct conversation with the now famous words of Pierre Gaspard Chaumette: 'It is contrary to all the laws of nature for a woman to want to make herself a man... Since when is it permitted to give up one's sex?'¹⁶³

The discourse of the dangerous woman, the *femme-homme* overstepping the boundaries of 'womanhood', was employed to discredit women across the political spectrum— from the former Queen, to the *sans-culottes* market women of Paris, and, as the trial of Etta Palm d'Aelders makes evident, even across national boundaries. At the root of this contestation over 'womanhood' lies the instability of gender norms in this period. If we embrace Joan Scott's complementary definitions of gender as both 'a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes' and as 'a primary way of signifying relationships of power', the debates surrounding the Amazonian warrior woman simultaneously demonstrate how some women engaged with and appropriated the discourse of military civic duty for themselves and, conversely, how some men discredited this movement as unnatural.¹⁶⁴ As demonstrated above with just a handful of names, women of the period did not speak with a coherently united voice; their views and demands ranged across the political spectrum, from support to outright rejection of the Republican project. Nor is 'this period' neatly demarcated, as the case of Maria Aletta Hulshoff demonstrates.¹⁶⁵ It is therefore crucial to note just how united and coherent the voices rejecting women's involvement in public politics were. The utility and malleability of the *femme-homme* trope, adapted in order to discredit women across the political spectrum, across nationalities and across the demarcations of 'the revolution', demonstrates how this contestation over gender was central to the political culture underpinning both the newly emergent societies of the French and Batavian Republics.

¹⁶² Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette," p. 295.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 42.

¹⁶⁵ Maria Aletta Hulshof published a pamphlet, '*Oproeping van het Bataafsche Volk*' in 1806 calling on anyone who called themselves 'republican' to resist 'the foreign oppressor'; see Dekker and Vega, "Women and the Dutch Revolutions," p. 208; Van der Burg "Transforming the Dutch Republic," p. 159.

Lynn Hunt has conceptualised the physical body of Marie Antoinette as symbolically representing the ‘problem of the feminine’ in the French Revolution. Using the prominence of pornographic literature directed against Marie Antoinette as a case study, Hunt examines revolutionary attitudes towards gender and sexuality, arguing that the pornographic backlash against the Queen represented the wider backlash against any woman who chose to enter politics and the public.¹⁶⁶ Vivian Cameron has also, in an analysis of the caricatures of Marie Antoinette set against the backdrop of the wider visual imagery of women in late eighteenth-century France, emphasised the link between political treachery and disloyalty to France with the personal vices of debauchery and bad motherhood. Cameron concludes that ‘by implication they might be considered the failings of any woman who chose to join the political sphere.’¹⁶⁷ Hunt builds on Robert Darnton’s work, which has demonstrated the mobilisation of the pornographic *libelles* of the *Ancien Régime* as a political weapon against the *Ancien Régime*’s establishment.¹⁶⁸ In her work Hunt demonstrates how political and sexual vices were increasingly collapsed; sexual perversions were presented as the external outworking of political perversions, thus alluding to internal moral corruption. The cultural manifestation of the collapse of these two vices can be seen in Hunt’s remarkable analysis on the focus of contemporary accounts of Marie Antoinette’s trial on the outer body’s betrayal of the inner soul’s corruption.¹⁶⁹ Personal vices were visibly inscribed on Marie Antoinette’s body and therefore publicly available for scrutiny.

Targeted by similar sexual slurs, Etta Palm d’Aelders made a cameo appearance in a satirical pamphlet anonymously published in the Dutch Republic. Very little is known about this pamphlet and it has remained absent from academic discussions. The by-line on the pamphlet’s cover reveals that it contains ‘Mercury’s thoughts on the splendour, wealth, lasciviousness, pride and wastefulness of the contemporary inhabitants of Amsterdam.’¹⁷⁰ Well-known early modern pamphlet historian André Hanou has noted that one remaining copy carries the French annotation ‘vicious pamphlet against the lawyer Mr. J. Munnik in Amsterdam circa. 1776.’¹⁷¹ D’Aelders is linked to Munnik during his time as a law student in Groningen and is mocked for

¹⁶⁶ Hunt, “The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette,” p.279.

¹⁶⁷ Vivian Cameron, “Gender and Power: Images of Women in Late 18th Century France,” *History of European Ideas*, 10 (1989):3, pp. 314-17.

¹⁶⁸ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-sellers of Pre-revolutionary France*. London: Fontana Press, 1997.

¹⁶⁹ Hunt, “The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette,” pp. 282-3.

¹⁷⁰ *Mercurius Klugtige Zoomer-Togt. Na, in, en door Amsteldam*, (n.p., n.d.), all translations my own from the original Dutch.

¹⁷¹ A. J. Hanou writes of one copy carrying the note, ‘*Pamflet méchant contre l’avocat Mr. J. Munnichs à Amsterdam environ 1776*’, A. J. Hanou, “Bibliografie Nicolaas Hoefnagel (1735-1784),” *Documentatieblad werkgroep Achttiende eeuw*, (1973), p. 28.

her sexual promiscuity, with ‘her unchecked life the reason that the majority of the students could call each other brother in law.’¹⁷² The author of the pamphlet condemns d’Aelders’ refusal to change her ways once married, writing that ‘one would have expected, that this Lady, being now crowned with a crown of PALM, and thereby carrying the name of ‘madame’, would have changed her behaviour and improved herself. But ah no: it differed as much as velvet by bed sheet... now she did it in public, and had as few scruples for her good name, as a street-nymph for her decency.’¹⁷³

Though little comment is made of d’Aelders’ internal characteristics, her entanglement with Munnik entails a subtle critique of Dutch aristocratic society. The pamphleteer writes of Munnik that ‘the principal reef upon which the lawyer sunk the ship of his marriage on, was one young lady Etta.’¹⁷⁴ Writing on the more well-known contemporary pamphleteer, Nicolaas Francois Hoefnagel, Tsila Rådecker has written of his prose as ‘a typical product of the Dutch eighteenth century... [it] functions as a mirror, exposing the shortcomings of Dutch society and its members.’¹⁷⁵ Eighteenth-century pamphleteers lamented what they saw as the deterioration of Dutch society with the moral decline of society often perceived as the cause of economic decline. By caricaturing certain norms and behaviours Rådecker argues that the ‘sought-after identity is modelled in opposition to the ridiculed other.’¹⁷⁶ Applying Rådeckers’ insights on Hoefnagel’s work to the anonymous pamphlet in which d’Aelders appears, it is clear that the pamphlet critiques sexual misconduct as a moral problem on a social scale, notably amongst the educated elite. Despite the pamphlet being published prior to the revolution, the radicalised dangerous woman trope of the revolutionary period is already latent in the chosen imagery—Etta is ‘the reef’ upon which Munnik runs his ship aground; she ensnares him and ensures his ruin. Though both are vilified as adulterers, the emphasis of the pamphlet is only on the destructive outcome to Munnik’s marriage.

The rising public vilification of women for sexual misconduct towards the end of the eighteenth century is clarified by the fundamental link between the outward female body and the increasingly threatening vice of dissimulation. Hunt defines dissimulation as ‘the ability to conceal one’s true emotions, to act one way in public and another in private, [which] was repeatedly denounced as the chief characteristic of court life and aristocratic manners in general. These relied above all on appearances- that is, on the disciplined and self-conscious use

¹⁷² *Mercurius Klugtige Zoomer-Togt*, p. 15.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁷⁵ Tsila Rådecker, “‘Her haggling nature never leaves her’. Dutch identity and Jewish stereotypes in the writings of Nicolaas François Hoefnagel (1735–1784),” *Jewish Culture and History*, 18 (2017):3, p. 303.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

of the body as a mask.' Hunt explains that dissimulation was explicitly linked to the wider notion of 'the feminine' rather than the more limited notion of the aristocratic; as such dissimulation was an explicitly gendered vice which found its roots in the works of Montesquieu and Rousseau, who argued that it was women who taught men how to dissimulate.¹⁷⁷ Hunt links the pervasive perception of dissimulation as a threat to the Republican community, with Rousseau's judgement of women in the public sphere; Rousseau argued that 'no longer wishing to tolerate separation, unable to make themselves into men, the women make us into women.'¹⁷⁸ At the root of calling out women for transgressing the gender norms of the period therefore, lay a masculine fear of emasculation which gained particularly notorious influence as revolutionary activists desperately sought to achieve the moral regeneration of society. For revolutionary societies concerned with eradicating the corruption and secrecy of effeminate *ancien régime* culture, the threat of dissimulation, apparently inherent to the female nature, could only be combatted by its restriction to the domestic sphere.

The opaque, and therefore threatening, nature of women's deceptive cunning is a motif that also resurfaces in d'Aelders' trial. Once in Paris, according to the committee she was 'without means of livelihood but for youth, spirit and charm... through which Madame Palm, secured herself an income of ten thousand livres.'¹⁷⁹ D'Aelders' seductive abilities are linked to the apparent corrupt culture of *ancien régime* France; a link the committee makes clear by commenting that 'it was not unnatural, that the former French government, which feared no means of attaining it's goals, made use of this woman's talents.'¹⁸⁰ Her seductiveness is also coupled with an 'ingenuity', or '*vernuft*,' which was described as ensuring her 'the easiest insurance, more than once', once 'her charms stopped being a valid currency... when men no longer admired her youth and beauty.'¹⁸¹ The language used depicts d'Aelders as having deceived the leaders of the revolutionary movement with her seductive powers; these powers ensured that she could profess loyalty to multiple causes, all with the interest of ultimately serving herself. The trial records quote extensively from letters to Lebrun and Van de Spiegel in order to demonstrate her duplicity; 'to her French friends she wrote in the flavour of a Republican, to the Grand Pensionary, his secretary, and other supporters of the Stadthouder, in the tone, to which their minds were attuned.'¹⁸² D'Aelders' seductive and manipulative qualities are therefore portrayed as highly calculated and deliberate; the purity and the incorruptibility

¹⁷⁷ Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette," pp.283-4.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

¹⁷⁹ *Decreeten*, p.681.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Decreeten*, p. 688.

of the *Provisioneele Repraesentanten* by contrast is held up as a moral example of masculine virtue. Accusing d'Aelders of once more 'wanting to prove her powers' by writing to the *Provisioneele Repraesentanten* to plead her cause, the 'pure intentions' of the *Provisioneele Repraesentanten* 'easily resisted the intrigues of an elderly woman.'¹⁸³

The politically-active-woman-as-anomalous trope not only had a clear impact on the reputations of prominent revolutionary women such as Etta Palm d'Aelders, Olympe de Gouges, Charlotte Corday and Theroigne de Mericourt, but also on the historiography dealing with these individuals. A 1904 study on women during the French Revolution by Dr Alfred Guillois characterised de Gouges as an example of revolutionary hysteria, an example of defective femininity, thus extending the politically-active-woman-as-anomalous trope into the twentieth century.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, the influence of the language of both the trial and the pamphlet on Herman Hardenberg's 1962 biography on d'Aelders is especially clear; Hardenberg makes multiple comments on d'Aelders' seductive charms throughout his work. The most blatant example is when Hardenberg, hypothesising about the way in which Etta came to French prime minister Maurepas' attention in 1778, describes her as a 'well-formed, finely-dressed woman... with an enticing mouth, and big expressive eyes' before concluding that 'Etta knew, from experience, how to handle elderly gentlemen, who were eternally aware of the feminine.'¹⁸⁵ Elsewhere, extending the ethereally-dangerous-woman image back to antiquity, Hardenberg refers to Madame de Cassini, also notorious for her many love affairs, as 'that Circe.'¹⁸⁶ Further on, Hardenberg, seemingly echoing the words of the *Committé van Algemeene Waakzaamheid*, argues that Etta became involved in politics around the age of forty, with the intention of winning men over with her 'spirit', now that her aged looks could no longer compete with younger women around her.¹⁸⁷ Though Hardenberg claims to have used new archival evidence in his biography, and may well have found letters or other material praising d'Aelders' physique (though he makes no use of footnotes or endnotes), the failure to critically interrogate comments like these and discuss what they demonstrate about prevailing attitudes towards upper-class, politically-influential women, is fundamentally disappointing, and reflects an older generation of historiography, prior to the impact of feminist scholarship.

The failure to interrogate the discourse against political women in the context of political culture on a broader social level also overlooks the question as to what extent the *vernuft* or

¹⁸³ *Decreeten*, p. 688.

¹⁸⁴ Scott, "French Feminists and the Rights of 'Man'", p. 17.

¹⁸⁵ Hardenberg, *Etta Palm*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

dissimulation of women was considered to be innate. The tone of the trial expressly condemns d'Aelders for her duplicitous behaviour, yet there is also a sense of tension with the current of more paternalistic language running throughout. Recounting her 'unfortunate' acquaintance with Munnik, later also trialled, the committee claims that Munnik 'knew how to persuade her to accompany him on a trip to Messina.'¹⁸⁸ Prevented from travelling further than the south of France due to sickness, Munnik 'had in the meantime given her enough of a taste of the French way of life' and the pair abandoned their plans to head for Messina, heading instead to Paris.¹⁸⁹ Here d'Aelders is portrayed as a naïve young woman— having fallen prey to Munnik she was wantonly lured to Paris by the 'French way of life' and there is a degree to which this description strips d'Aelders of her own agency.

Mary Bosworth, building on the work of Michel Foucault, has analysed the long-term trends in the relationship between gender and imprisonment.¹⁹⁰ Writing of the infamous *lettres de cachet*, used to enforce judicial measures on direct order of the King, Foucault analysed them as the tool of the aristocratic elites, used 'to protect and control the intimate sphere'; Bosworth demonstrates that this practice traversed the symbolic storming of the Bastille and played a role in judicial procedures, well into the nineteenth century.¹⁹¹ In Bosworth's analysis, though the Revolution called into question the legitimacy of the *lettres de cachet*, the primarily underlying aim of enforcing patriarchal authority remained, and was instead legitimised and consolidated through the apparatus of the state. The institutionalisation of moral citizenship in the Batavian Republic and the removal of those 'suspect persons' who threatened the 'general interests' of the nation from the public sphere demonstrates the integral nature of morality and virtue to the political culture of both the French and Batavian Republics.¹⁹² D'Aelders, once again adapting to the dominant discourse of the moment, attempted to appeal to the newly institutionalised patriarchal authority of the Batavian Republic, writing to 'the dignified fathers of the homeland' capable of dispensing 'not only justice, but even remission and grace for some slight faults' in order to plead her case.¹⁹³ Her own words on why she was targeted say enough about the interplay of gender and power in the emergent moral culture of the Batavian Republic:

¹⁸⁸ *Decreeten*, p. 680.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Mary Bosworth, "Confining Femininity: A History of Gender, Power and Imprisonment," *Theoretical Criminology*, 4 (2000): 3, pp. 265-284.

¹⁹¹ Michel Foucault quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 271-2.

¹⁹² See footnote 154.

¹⁹³ Etta Palm d'Aelders to a representative of the *Comité van Algemeen Welzijn*, letter dated May. 9, 1798, printed in Willemien Schenkeveld, "'Abandonné de tout excepté de mon courage.' Enkele ongepubliceerde brieven van Etta Palm (1743-1799)," *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman*, 34 (2011): 1, p. 43, translation my own from the original French.

Finally after being held captive in the castle for 9 months, I have not been aware of any accusations against me, other than that one of the members of the *comité* told me he has been my enemy for eight years and that it is not permitted in this Republic, that a woman had more extensive knowledge than necessary to run her house, attend to her husband and take of her children; that, if indeed a woman had understanding, she was dangerous, especially in political affairs.¹⁹⁴

D'Aelders was released as part of a general amnesty for political prisoners on the 20th December 1798 but died three months later, on the 28th March in The Hague from a lung infection. She was buried in Rijswijk, and her neighbour paid the funeral costs.

¹⁹⁴ Etta Palm d'Aelders to a representative of the *Comité van Algemeen Welzijn*, letter dated 1796, quoted in Hardenberg, *Etta Palm*, p. 113, translation my own from Hardenberg's Dutch.

Conclusion

Etta Palm d'Aelders' letters reveal the many layers to her constructed epistolary voice; it is clear that through the medium of letters, d'Aelders was able to perform virtue and citizenship in a manner that could be altered according to the specific context she was writing in. This has led an earlier generation of scholars to perpetuate the view of some of her male contemporaries: that she was a disingenuous and above all self-interested woman who became increasingly desperate to cling onto any semblance of political influence as the Revolution ran its course. As this thesis has hopefully demonstrated, this characterisation is too simplistic, and simply unfair. As the debates on the constitution and the rights of citizenship intensified in the French Republic and resulted in the exclusion of women from the public sphere, letters offered a way in which d'Aelders— as a woman with strong opinions on the role of women in society— could traverse the increasingly hardening boundaries between public and private, as well as between nation states.

In the words of Natalie Zemon Davis, across the centuries women have functioned at the 'margins'; the centre of power has remained inaccessible to them because of their gender.¹⁹⁵ It is in response to this marginalisation that we find individuals such as Etta Palm d'Aelders arguing for the need to establish a sphere for citizenesses that is entirely removed from the male sphere of the citizen in order to ensure its success. By claiming citizenship through action- in the case of d'Aelders' vision, a society of female political clubs that implement the ideology of virtue in society- discourse and action came into continuum. As demonstrated, citizenship in the Batavian Republic was contingent on being economically and socially useful; it was assumed that women, without property-owning rights, could best fulfil this condition within the family. As a woman who could not claim citizenship through marriage or motherhood, Etta Palm d'Aelders campaigned to increase the space in which female authority was accepted. By conveying information and making proposals to benefit the economy and army, d'Aelders performed utilitarian citizenship through the very act of writing letters, whilst simultaneously pushing the accepted boundaries of female social and economic contribution.

Feminist redefinitions of citizenship are therefore not well-suited to an analysis of this particular period. Feminist theorists such as Marilyn Friedman and Annie Smart draw our attention to important limitations when we couch citizenship only in terms of political enfranchisement, namely that we risk reinforcing an historically constructed division between a

¹⁹⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the margins: three seventeenth-century lives*, (Stanford: Harvard University Press, 1995).

male public sphere and a female private sphere. Yet, as Landes has argued, it is in this particular crucible— in which public opinion met popular sovereignty in the catalyst of war— that the ‘hegemonic gendering of the public sphere’ took place.¹⁹⁶ As such, extending our definition of citizenship to include the ‘Republican mother’ conflates the full and active citizenship of enfranchised males with the limited area in which women’s influence was encouraged. Transgression beyond the boundaries of this area was not tolerated, as the language used in Etta Palm d’Aelders’ trial records clearly demonstrates. This language went beyond condemning d’Aelders’ for diplomatic espionage and is indicative of the wider attitude of the directory of the Batavian Republic towards women having a public voice. The words of her final letter illustrate the sought-after distinction between public and private with supreme clarity: ‘one of the members of the *comité* told me he has been my enemy for eight years and that it is *not permitted* in this Republic, that a woman had more extensive knowledge than necessary to run her house.’¹⁹⁷ Again, Landes’ statement, that ‘a public action is then one authored from or authorized by the masculine position’ rings true with damning indictment of the moral regime of citizenship upheld by the directory of the Batavian Republic.¹⁹⁸

This thesis has aimed to put the letters of Etta Palm d’Aelders in their historiographical and geographic context, demonstrating the importance of liminal figures functioning at the ‘margins’ in the transmission of political culture across national borders. The letters demonstrate the increasing entanglement of French and Dutch debates on the nation, citizenship, and access to the public sphere whilst also reflecting the increasingly rigid delineations of the discourse across the period 1788- 1796. As chapter one demonstrated, the early letters exchanged between Van de Spiegel and d’Aelders are characterised by an openness and philosophical interest in debating the merits of the Dutch constitution in light of the debates in France. Chapter two by contrast highlighted the increasingly hardening boundaries of the debate on citizenship and its repercussions for women’s access to the public sphere, arguing that whereas the French Republic sought the birth of a new virtuous nation, the Patriot movement chased virtue as a vehicle back to the glory of the Dutch Golden Age; both, however, located the virtuous woman in the sphere of the domestic home. Finally, the third chapter drew attention to the remarkable similarities of discourse used to punish women who transgressed the boundaries of citizenship as propagated by political elites in both Republics; both Republics used the trope of the dangerous *femme-homme* to justify the forcible removal of society of those women who claimed a public voice.

¹⁹⁶ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Etta Palm d’Aelders, quoted in Hardenberg, *Etta Palm*, p. 113, emphasis my own.

¹⁹⁸ Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 3.

I am aware that d'Aelders' letters cannot be taken as representative of the full extent of the complexities of the debate on citizenship and the public sphere in the Dutch and Batavian Republics. Due to limits on the scope of this thesis, a deliberate choice was made to focus on d'Aelders' interaction with the politics of the Dutch, and later Batavian, Republic. As such another body of letters, between d'Aelders and French Minister of Defence Pierre Lebrun-Tondu, remains as yet neglected. Studying these letters for further insights into French hopes regarding the spread of revolution to the Dutch Republic could be fruitful. Similarly, further research could be taken into the experiences of Dutch Patriots, notably into their engagement with the French Revolution and its impact on their activism during their exile and upon their return to the Batavian Republic. Finally, though the analysis of d'Aelders' trial and imprisonment illuminates clear parallels with the French Republic's repression of female activists such as Olympe de Gouges and Charlotte Corday, the use of imprisonment in the Batavian Republic to silence its female opponents could benefit from more extensive research, particularly with regard to whether this was common practice, as well as the potential similarity of language used across the trials.

One central conviction emerges from the collection of letters explored in this thesis: Etta Palm d'Aelders was a woman of great tenacity, with a passion for according women a central space within the discourse of citizenship, even as that discourse was turned against her in order to silence her. It is high time that her label as an *'intrigante'* is discarded.

Bibliography

List of Abbreviations:

KHA Koninklijk Huisarchief, The Hague

NL-HaNA Nationaal Archief, The Hague

Archival Sources:

NL-HaNA, 3.01.26, Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, inventory number 49

Letter dated Dec. 5, 1788, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Jan. 30, 1789, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Jul. 5, 1789, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

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Letter dated Jan. 18, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Feb. 12, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Mar. 11, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Mar. 23, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Mar. 30, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Apr. 16, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated May. 7, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Jul. 9, 1790, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

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Letter dated Jan. 28, 1791, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Sep. 2, 1791, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Jul. 14, 1792, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Aug. 21, 1792, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Aug. 24, 1792, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Aug. 24, 1792, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

NL-HaNA, 3.01.26, Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, inventory number 56

Letter dated Sep. 8, 1792, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

Letter dated Jan. 26, 1793, from Raadpensionaris Van de Spiegel, The Hague, to Etta Palm d'Aelders in Paris

KHA, A31, Willem V Batavus, Prins van Oranje-Nassau (1748-1806), catalogue number 746

Letter dated Oct. 3, 1788, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, Paris, to Willem V, The Hague.

Letter dated May. 29, 1793, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

Letter dated Jul. 5, 1793, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

Letter dated Jul. 9, 1793, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

Letter dated Jul.22, 1793, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

Letter dated Jul. 29, 1793, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

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Letter dated Mar. 8, 1794, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

Letter dated Mar. 24, 1794, from Etta Palm d'Aelders, The Hague, to Willem V, The Hague.

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Appendix: Translated copies of archival letters consulted

Translations provided by Edwige White

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Dec. 5, 1788

Madam,

I was very flattered to receive your 2 letters, dated from October 30 and November 23, which arrived 3 days apart. Yours thoughts really touched me; the task to defend such a noble cause could not be entrusted to a better person. I beg you to continue to serve such a cause with all your talents and your patriotic zeal! I thank you for all the anecdotes you are informing me of in your last letter, the personality of the character who is employed by a certain commission must be quite hard after the nice feelings that he pretended to have elsewhere, and I think it is important to discover who this Tartuffe is and to obtain a copy of his report.

I'm very grateful to Mr L. for proving to me how beneficial your letters are and, if it is fine with you, I would appreciate if you could continue to write to me. You can safely write by post addressing your letters to my secretary, who you already know or to his brother-in-law: Mr Richmulder, clerk post office, The Hague, making sure that, from time to time, you change the seal and the handwriting.

I realise that for you to continue implies some expenses and it would be unfair if you had to pay for these, that is why I would be grateful if you would accept a bank note of 500 and use this money as necessary.

I have the honour of being perfectly,

X

PS: Even if I haven't signed with my name, the content of this letter will tell you enough about who is writing to you, I advise you to do the same when you write to me.

I wish to add, Madam, that LL and R are very pleased with your book and I am sure that very soon they are going to show you their gracious gratitude.

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Jan. 30, 1789.

Madam,

I have in my possession 4 of your letters, for which I am humbly grateful. Please accept my apology for not having replied to you earlier, but please rest assured that each of them brought

me great joy: you know how to write about serious matter in a lightening manner. You know how to embellish the subject while giving it deep thought. I realise how much work and effort you have put into these letters and I give you thanks from the bottom of my heart.

The only reason you have not heard from me is that I am waiting to hear, any time now, about Mr L.'s return so I can ask him about the key. I don't know where he is but I hope that my letter will find him at home. In my letter, I ask him to send me the key and to keep you inform.

If you can, one day or another, have a conversation with a certain lord about the people, who weigh on him, and let him know that he can quit from them when he wishes, and that only a very small number of people have been prosecuted, as would be done in any other country with a police force, for being leaders or authors: no political "coup" has happened and everything is in the hands of the most scrupulous and upright justice system you can imagine. And that, with the exception of a small number of people, anyone can go home without worrying about being badly treated, as long as one respects the Paris constitution.

It must seem quite strange that in France we are accused of being harsh, severe and even unjust towards these people to the rescue of whom we come with financial support. These are the same people, who publicly joke about our kindness towards them that they see as weakness and laugh about it with songs and satirical tracts from St Omer. The reason why is simple and I think that, with some money, J could attract all the lazy ones and all the narrators from around Europe.

The inflammable piece of writing that you are mentioning is not in my possession yet, but I should receive it any time now, thanks to you. A man, who dares to write so many horrors and lies, should be delivered to public execution. In my opinion, it would give him too much honour if we were to refuse for it to be done.

Regards,

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Jul. 5, 1789

Madam,

I take the opportunity that I have at the moment to thank you for your charming letters and to assure you of the great pleasure I have in reading them. You are standing in the middle of a major play and each day you witness the unfolding of a new scene. Being well-informed, you keep me up-to-date with precision and simplicity.

Thanks to your prior to last letter, I now know about the success of Mr Necker: I have the feeling that you are happy about it. In my opinion, if there was any risk of France becoming an enemy

of our country, my wish would be for the minister to be sent back, as he is very well-informed about the resources of this powerful empire, and no one would put them forward as well as him.

Otherwise, I like the French nation enough to wish for the conservation of this great man and the success of all his wise and beneficial ideas.

I have read and thought over the works of Mr Necker many times, and I never cease to admire the depths of his research and the soundness of his results: cursed be the administration which one would try to found on other principles.

I had the honour to be,

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Jan. 18 1790

Madame,

It was only on the 15th of this month, that I had the honour of receiving the specific letter which you sent me on Dec 29th. I'm touched by the honesty with which you tell me of the matters which make up this letter and I strongly agree with you that to be truly useful one must be aware of the ins and outs of what we are keen to do. But please allow me, Madame, to tell you that I am unable to inform you in advance of all the absurdities which are being spread abroad about us. I think I wrote to you or had someone write to you on my behalf that the Republique is not responsible for the revolution in the Netherlands... our only interest is to have a good and peaceful neighbour. We are the victims of a lot of accusations which are too ridiculous for us to take seriously.

For example, we are accused of being in favour of the insurrection with the aim of a unification of the Netherlands without Republic. But to appreciate this point, let us have a look at the complicated structure of our government, to realise that we cannot have the wish to complicate it further.

Another accusation is of the wish to create a state for one of the young princes of Orange. This is without thinking about the fact that the Dutch are very attached to Rome, and the difference of religion would be an eternal obstacle against a prince who is Protestant.

A third accusation is to accuse the Republic of wishing to retake the fortified cities, and I know that this is one of the matters on which you would like, Madam, to receive more information. Even if the Republic would like to do this it would be impossible because the walls of these cities do not exist anymore. Furthermore their maintenance is expensive and even dangerous. So you

can honestly reply to any curious person that the Republic has no regret at all in having lost the fortified cities and that she has no interest in trying to retake them.

There is another matter of yours: you are wondering if it wouldn't be better for Holland if the Prince Stadtholder, while giving the people a say on the matter, would enter into an "alliance of guarantee" with France and Brabant, so that Holland would not have to worry any more about troubles inside the country, nor about an enemy outside the country. I do not really have a point of view but what do you mean by giving the people a say, and what good would come from this guarantee?

The people in our provinces are perfectly happy: they have all the advantages of a freedom under the law and the complete security of the most gentle government. It is true that in some provinces people cannot take part directly into the government, but people govern thanks to their representatives. The most ordinary citizen can one day, as long as he deserves it, be among these representatives, the same way the son of a powerful lord can.

Laws are not made by the people but by their representatives, whereas legislators are under the same laws that guide the behaviour of the entire nation: and this is the best guarantee to ensure the smoothness and the equity of the legislation.

People or shall I say "*les Corps de Sentier*", in different towns used to, in the past, have the possibility to elect their own representatives but because of chaos, conspiracy and corruption, which go together with public elections, these same people on their own have decided to hand over the nomination to regents and to those who are part of the Stadtholder family, reasonably considered, as the road to freedom of the people and the restart of the aristocracy.

I do not say that, if we had a new Republic to create, it would be unjust or impossible to give more power to the people, but I maintain that the nature of our Constitution does not accept it and that it is dangerous, especially in a Republic, to change the base of the Constitution: very quickly a change leads to another and soon everything is up-side-down.

It is another matter in a great Empire, whose resources are inexhaustible, and whom even the most violent shocks would not shake: if unfortunately on such a state the excesses end up awakening ordinary solutions, one should bring it quickly to a close. But I trust that if your legislators-philosophers, whose ideas I respect infinitely, knew our Constitution thoroughly, the rights, intensity and freedoms of our citizens, they would give thanks to the Heavens if only they could offer the same benefits to their fellow countrymen.

And regarding the threat of an enemy, what do we have to fear for our Constitution, for who is the enemy who would dare to rob us of it? Could it be France who would try to harm us? And for what reason? Apparently with the aim of achieving the work of an intriguing minister, who

was spreading rumours, discord and animosity and has inspired a loathing on our peaceful citizens against the advantages which they could enjoy in their country. I am well aware that certain people are moving Heaven and earth to drive on the French nation against the House of Orange and the restored government; but I can't imagine this nation, which clearly knows its best interests now, would risk a war against three allied powers and this, only with the aim to put back into work some grumpy ones in the magistracy, and to knock over the Constitution of a Republique, which doesn't wish to harm anyone and which, if used properly, can be extremely useful to the actual system in France.

Regarding the possibility of an alliance between France and Brabant, I don't think it can happen as the situation is at the moment: the political interests of Europe are so muddled up that no one really understands and no one dares moving forward. Furthermore our Republique, by allying itself to the Netherlands, should start by acknowledging its independence, which is still a little premature.

Finally you told me that you were considering visiting us in the near future, to which I replied that I would prefer for you to stay in France: the only reason I wrote this was my concern of unnecessary tiredness and unnecessary expenses for a journey which is not essential. I still think that our written way of communication is the best but if you had to come for private matters I would be delighted to meet up.

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Feb. 12, 1790

I was quite surprised, Madam, when I read the P. (Post) S.(Script?) of your letter from January 31st. You mentioned that important correspondences are taking place, even among our *troups* and that we are closer to a revolution than we were in 1987. You also mentioned that the Prince of Orange should give in a little.

Regarding the first point, it would be very important to know if it is based on serious notions: if really such things exist, and if so, what the means are for it to be a success.

Exalted imagination likes to build castles in Spain and among the men we are talking about, we know a few who, with their fanciful plans, delude others and also themselves.

The second point deserves some clarification: why would the Prince of Orange give up? He is where his right has put him, there is only one party that swears for his ruin, and if he was to give up to them wouldn't it be against his duty and his honour?

The principals that these men have put forward are against any civil society, and it is not on this example that we are planning to build ours. They were cunning enough to let us believe that the same principals were adopted by France but it like saying that black and white are the same.

I have studied the principles of your legislators-philosophers. I admire the truth, strength and clarity of their writing but the same can't be said of the "others" if one takes time to think about their motivation and the substance of their ideas.

In our Republique, anyone who respects the law, benefits fully from the advantages of the rights of the citizen and the legislation has defined this concept properly. And this law, which we are all obliged to comply with, is the same for the nobleman and for the commoner, for the member of the sovereign assembly for the representatives of the Nation and the most humble folk - and this, Madam, you are fully aware of.

Regarding the absurd and ridiculous news of the coming of the Princess of Orange in the *Etats Généraux*, this is completely false: this princess has never come and will never be admitted. Furthermore, Brabant has never been discussed at the Assembly, only a letter has been received from the Brabant and it has been put aside. Let your friend know that if he wishes to know real facts and not be confused by dangerous gossips, he should read papers like "*Les Annales politiques et littéraires*" or "*Le Journal libre*" which are better sources. In fact I would like to subscribe to such newspapers if anyone wouldn't mind sending them to me by regular post.

One more thing regarding your work. I gave it to someone I know, who is better than me to judge the quality of your work. He knows the Constitution thoroughly and also the views of those who dismantled it. He has had a role to play in all this - before and after the Revolution. Unfortunately he is quite busy at the moment so he hasn't finished to read it but he has promised to me to get on with it.

Yours,

Furthermore £600 sent

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Mar. 11, 1790

Madam,

I owe you a big thank you for all your letters which always arrive to me in the best condition. In your last letter, dated from May 4th, you seemed quite worried about the state of your manuscript. I must admit that the person who is in charge of checking the historical accuracy of it, should be a little quicker, but he deserves your pardon if you look at how carefully and precisely he worked on your manuscript and how he praises you. I have just had it back with

hardly any corrections on the historical facts which can be amended very easily. I am now going to do as you wish and give everything to Monsieur le Comte de Meuron so it can go to printing. You are mentioning the arrival of someone who is well known in our country, and it is going to be easy to spy on him. We are all aware of such a man whose aims and works are obscure. Otherwise there is nothing new here that deserves your attention, everything is quiet in the country.

Despite the comments of one of your journalists influenced by our patriots, trade is increasing every day with no consequence from emigrations, which are not as bad as some like to believe: anyone who wishes to come back home is welcome with open arms as long as he respects the Constitution and swears not to work again on any conspiracy.

Regarding foreign affairs, if all the great countries in our hemisphere are in the same peaceful frame of mind as those from the allied courts, it is to be believed that the vital interests that shake Europe normally should be resolved without a drop of blood.

Please let them know that it is a false belief to assume that the Republic is trying to interfere in the Dutch political life, and that the Republic is against any government chosen by the Dutch provinces.

The only interest of these great countries which are allied is to make sure that Holland does not become the centre of the new war which would have catastrophic impact on the surrounding states.

Would you mind telling me if you have received the note of 600 francs which I included in my letter of February 12th to cover the extra expenses you have had.

Yours,

I had just finished writing to you when I received a letter from you. You are again telling me off regarding the manuscript. You are suspecting me of personal interest when all it was too much zeal from me. Also you are complaining about not being kept informed enough to be able to refute the absurdities published in the papers.

Please be kind to me. Regarding the manuscript, everything has already been said. You know how I like your noble and generous way of thinking. Also how could I inform you more and in advance about facts which only exist in the heads of the journalists who invent them? I swear to you that none of the information you have read in the "*Gazette Universelle*" published on March 4th is correct regarding:

- . the *Compagnie des Indes*
- . the pretended trade between the Cour Hadeh... together with Fiscal van der Hoop.

. an extraordinary meeting between the states of the Provinces and the subjects to be discussed (false information published in their paper of March 5th).

. insults supposedly against Mrs de Spaan.

You really replied well in the Spectator. The way you write is so full of energy and precision that it is enough to destabilise any critics. But it is tiring to constantly talk about these awful gossips which are spread only to try and weaken the people who are defending a good cause.

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Mar. 23, 1790

I was really impressed by your letter dated 19th. You are right to give a positive point of view regarding M. N and I assure you that he, nor anyone else, doesn't receive a commission from us nor from the allied states.

I would like to reassure you also about all the foreigners, who we see entering in the country every day.

If we were to have again such an interesting conversation, remember that we are well aware of critics but that we want to avoid entering into their game.

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Mar. 30, 1790

The famous person to whom you sent your book has asked me to write to you to let you know that she very rarely writes her name at the front of books but that she would consider making an exception with yours.

Then she thought about the sensitive subject of your book and decided that it would be better for her name not to appear in the frontispiece because of your impartiality which you are proud of and for which you deserve a lot of praises but for which also you could receive severe criticisms, this person doesn't want her name to appear in the front pages of your book. I think it is better to see where she comes from and to leave it.

For a long time, this person has been trying to show you her support but until now it has not been possible. To show you that she agrees with what you write, she wants to offer you 100 Ducats from Holland, which I am supposed to send you by cash, notes or with a jewel, of your choice and of the same value.

Yours,

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Apr. 16, 1790

The letter that you asked me to give to J/S. D. R. has been given and welcome. You can have 525 from Holland as a bill of exchange from Mr Tinne or from another way if you prefer.

You are telling me, and I heard the same from other sources, that Mr M. and Mr d'Y are accused of being emissaries for Madame the Princess of Orange in *Bruxelles*. I can assure you that, this princess is not into politics and above all not interested by Brabant despite what journalists like to write.

She doesn't pay emissary and hates political spying.

Mr M. is an adviser to the Prince regarding the grounds located in the Netherlands and that's why he has to go there often but I'm sure that he doesn't play a diplomatic role.

Regarding the other man, I must admit that he regularly asks me about the news in the country, but again I'm sure that he isn't into any correspondence with the Prince or the Princess.

Would you mind finding more information regarding the serious story about Mr de M.. He has spent a few days in Breda for personal reasons but he hasn't taken command. From there he travelled to Mr.de St Simon's country house near Utrecht. After a few days with us de Beaune travelled to see the General.

Yours,

P.S. As I'm about to send you this letter, I'm told that Ch. de Beaune is back to Anvers.

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, May. 7, 1790

Thanks to your letter dated April 29, I've realised how badly informed the people, who are trying to censure our government, are.

I'm quite surprise as there are so many books written in different languages, especially French, which give a clear explanation about our Constitution and the role and responsibility of everyone.

Your plan, Madam, to work on those rebellious spirits, to transform them so they become your friends and defenders of our Constitution, is remarkable and admirable.

As long as this is only between you and your friends, there is no harm and no consequence. So I don't need to comment on the arguments you use to convince them. Although there would be a lot to say about the 2 people you are describing in your last letter.

Because it seems that you have talked about me and my minister, I feel that I have to send you information about my role, my job and my relation with Stadhouderat. All that to make sure that your friends from the *Assemblée Nationale* are not misguided.

You will understand that I can't and should not talk too much about my thoughts to these men. All I need to do is: to know them, to watch them and to give information to the person above me.

If your friends had known me, they wouldn't have thought that I could be someone who betrays his duties for a reason or another - but if you are someone who is less attached to his job than serving the homeland, someone who is only looking for the bliss of the citizens around him and the satisfaction of his own consciousness - this person is not a despot, how can we use the word despot or despotism when talking about the kindest Republique where the rights of the citizens are nearly too many.

Regarding the local news, Mr M. has resigned as head of the government and it is the oldest of the Princes of Orange who is replacing him. Just 18 years old, the Prince is going to be extremely happy to be at the head of the government of a border town which has been in his family for three or four centuries.

Yours,

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Jul. 9, 1790

Madam,

When you receive this letter the celebration of Bastille Day will have started and I know how you enjoy to take part in it. To make sure you fully enjoy this time of celebration, I need to reassure you about some facts concerning your homeland, which is so dear to you and whose cause you support with such courage and assurance.

I don't know what are the last absurdities and calumnies that the *Gazette Universelle* has published regarding our Republique.

They write about a treaty with England by which we wouldn't be allowed to send to France any mature wood or building wood, or regarding England and its disagreement with Spain, our wish to double the number of vessels we want to provide to England.

Regarding the trade treaty between England and us, there has been no discussion which would favour France more than another country. Even if there was a mutual agreement regarding the transportation of wood for building by sea (which doesn't happen at the moment), France won't

gain any advantage from it because as we have seen, especially with the last war, it is less expensive and safer for France to use rivers rather than sea for such trade.

Regarding what some national and even international gazettes write about our relationship with England or our squadron, I can assure you that until now, England hasn't officially asked for our help. However if a nation we are linked with because of some treaties, was to ask for some help, the Republique, faithful to its values, would consider carefully the reason for this request and, if needed, wouldn't delay in providing help. That is why some of our vessels are at sea training at the moment, which is a wise decision when you see that all the great sea powers are making armaments. Our squadron is going to be strengthened not particularly for someone nor against someone, but only for the defence of our land and the defence of our allies, who might ask for our help.

I hope, Madam, that I have brought peace to your mind. Thank you for letting me know about your worries based on false information spread by some journalists influenced by the enemy of the Republique.

Please find enclosed a note of 600, thank you to send me a receipt for it and for the one you have received last February.

Yours,

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Nov. 4, 1790

Thank you for trusting me enough to ask me to give you news about the Belgians. Please find enclosed a special edition of the Gazette of Leiden and a copy of the Emperor's manifesto. These two documents may be a better source of information than any of my letters.

All I have to add is that the Belgians just have to listen to the salutary advice from those who are genuine friends. It would be the best way to have a free and happy Constitution, which a wise nation who likes order should desire. Belgians are not going to be put under a yolk: freedom is a gift for any wise man and support can only come from the government. Anarchy is for brutes. Regarding your personal matter I am going to do all that I can but you know that in our country when a case becomes a justice matter, no appeal nor authority can help.

I am going to make sure you will be refunded for the expenses you had regarding the leaflets but please don't send me any more of them. Just keep a copy of Mr Camille des Moulins and one of your friends, Cara and I will stop reading the others when the subscription is over.

Yours,

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Jan. 28, 1791

I have just been informed, Madam, that Rhinegrave de Salm has received confirmation from the *Assemblée Nationale* that he has got his title of brigadier and a pension of 30,000. Thanks to his new title, he was able to help out his sister, Madame la Comtesse de Linange, who was about to lose her own pension of 6,000. It is said that he is protected by some deputies from the old system of government. Because of some letters in his possession about the problems of the *Republique*, he is apparently a danger for these men. It is said that Mr de la Fayette is his friend and that they write to one another. He is supposed to show himself in Paris very soon. Would you mind checking if it is true? I must admit, I don't believe it. As usual, gossips are spread where you are. Absurdities such as saying that the *Republique* wishes to work with the House of A(*nglettere*).or with another great power against France and against her new constitution. I assure you that it is not correct. The talks, which are happening between the 4 great powers at the Hague, are about the Netherlands and the agreement made hasn't been ratified yet by the Emperor. And if the so-called patriots talk about a possible war against France, wise people know how to ignore them. Once more I need to talk about the absurdities that the *Gazette Universelle* writes about us. Most of the time the vast majority of their say is denied by the man in the street. They talk about the weakening of our trade and impoverishment of our inhabitants. Never in the last 20 years has trade been flourishing so well! The number of vessels coming out of Texel harbour is 500 more than the best year over the last 20 years. Regarding the business of the Bank of Holland. People talk about it a lot. The problem is not about a lack of credit or a lack of confidence from the people but because of some circumstances in Europe which have made cash less available and this has disrupted all the system. But this should be solved very soon and even if it was not, it should not affect trade. And yes our trade with *La Compagnie des Indes* has been weakened by the last war against England but its resources are huge, all it needs is more money and it has already received from the State. The agreement with *La Compagnie des Indes Occidentales* expires at the end of the year. This Company hasn't been a good business for the last 25 years. It is going to be dissolved. Their colonies and the administration are going to be under the *Etats Généraux* control. Everyone think that it is the best solution for the traders and for the settlers.

You see that everything is fine and that you should stop worrying about your dear country. Please let your friends know that we have nothing against them nor against their work. All we are looking for is a happy and peaceful life. We are not envious, we have the same desire as everybody else.

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Sep. 2, 1791

The letter from Mr Tinne was ready for you when I received your letter dated August 29. Thank you for the little book written by you, that I am going to enjoy reading as usual.

Regarding the other letter that you have enclosed, I will keep it until the return of the person it is addressed to.

You are coming back on a subject that we have already discussed in your previous letter. I'm sorry but I can't say more. It would be extremely dangerous for me, as a minister, to reveal my thoughts on such a serious matter - in France ministers are taken for account, it is the same here.

All I can say is that up to now, we haven't received any proposition from any great powers regarding France. Our country doesn't want to interfere with a matter which has nothing to do with its domestic politics nor the Constitution of his kingdom.

Unless appearances are misleading me, I think England is going to agree with us.

Please be careful! you are so full of zeal regarding *La Cause du Peuple*, your friends worry about you. I'm a Republican like you, but would the people be grateful if anything was to happen to you?

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Jul. 14, 1792

Many thanks for your letter dated July 9th. I knew about the King's suggestion for creating a Legion *Batave* to serve France.

I knew also about the speech that the war minister made about it. There would be a lot to say about his talk but I should restrain myself from saying anything. I couldn't agree more with what Mr Brissot said. I'm sure it is one of these malevolent groups' plans from the two countries to get the Republique out of its supreme neutral status.

They don't care if it means that France has more enemies, their only goal is to spread out confusion so they can "fish in troubled water". I had had a good laugh when I read in the *Moniteur* newspaper (J88) an article from The Hague regarding the actions of Mr de M. Of course nothing is correct: nothing regarding Mr de Mld, nothing regarding the Republique and its views about the belligerent powers, nothing regarding a talk that the "resident of Holland" is supposed to have given.

I wonder if Mr de Mide is well-known in France. He isn't here as he has never stayed very long. He is not really in demand as one has noticed that he spends most of his time with the patriotic Dutch. He likes to spend his time in a village inn preaching equality to peasants and servants. We could do without the help of such representative. All we wish is to stay neutral.

The country has no plan to argue with France as long as the French, even if they make mistakes that please the unhappy ones in our country, don't push us to take action to defend ourselves. Your plan of mediation is so typical of you. You are such a humanist! How can a peaceful country have the dangerous privilege to become an arbitrary in the quarrels among kings? How can a princess, who doesn't take part in public matter although it is attributed to her falsely and cunningly.

Does she really want to take part in something which is out of her competence? different from her usual activity?

The letters are about to be sent, I couldn't resist but to write a few lines to reiterate my deep consideration to you...

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Aug. 21, 1792

Many thanks for your letters dated August 17. The mail is about to leave so I have just the time to say again that our Republique has no wish at all to interfere with the domestic affairs of France.

Our Republique has declared to the united powers that it is not going to take part in any alliance nor in any military operation. But here, the real question is: are the relationship between the ministers on both sides going to stay the same? Even if the situation has changed?- the Amb(assador) of the Republique needs to be back up by the king - the minister of France has his credences with the King - the royal authority has been suspended. For all these reasons these relationships need to be put on hold.

I think that Mr de Berkenrood will soon know what to do.

Would you mind sending me the paper signed by Brissot?

Yours,

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Aug. 24, 1792

Madam,

I need to tell you that the *Etats Généraux* Ambassador needs to be backed up by the king whose authority is on hold. This person can't continue his role as a minister. Consequently, he has been asked to leave Paris and even France. Making sure, each time he has the opportunity, to remind people around him that the Republic will maintain a very strict neutrality and will never ever interfere in the interior politics of France.

Equally, Mr S. de Maulle has just received a note that, because he hasn't been recognised as Minister Plenipotentiary of France and because of his credence with the King, ministerial communication needs to cease for the moment.

I suppose that these are the rules and that England is going to do the same and stay strictly neutral.

Yours,

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Aug. 24, 1792

Madam,

I've just had time to write a few lines when I received your letter dated August 20. You are mentioning the extradition of a few men, jailed on Mr de Maulle's request.

I don't see how you could find it strange that before the extradition of anyone, the State of Holland asked for some evidence of their offence. All this is based on the common law and above all on the fundamental privilege of freedom and security that any citizen deserves. Justice is above any other authority, above any political influence. Even the king can't be above the law and the personal freedom. So he can't impose anything on another country. We know that the offence of these people has been committed in Holland so it needs to be judged and punished in this country.

Here is the story: a man named Belloy, who has been leaving here for a while, was suspected of making false assignats. He has been denounced by Mr de Maulle. The *Etats Généraux* agreed that there were enough proofs against him. Then Mr de Maulle travelled to Amsterdam himself to ask the officer of Amsterdam for this man's arrest. Belloy was arrested and gave the names of his accomplices. I don't know how but Mr de Maulle managed to get hold of these men

personal belongings and private papers and discovered that these people were in fact employed by the Princes to do finance business and in no way guilty of making false assignats.

At the same time, these people, who have lost everything, any documents that could prove their innocence, are being chased by their creditors (who live in Holland). That's why these creditors have asked for a decree of arrest against these men. They don't want their debtors to be extradited in another country.

At the same time, Mr de Maulle wants them to be condemned as forgers anyway, he is asked to show some evidence but he refuses to show anything. The tribunals de A and Rott show again to the *Etats Généraux* that the law of our country doesn't allow to keep in prison someone against whom there is no evidence of accusation. Furthermore nothing is going to change as the creditors, who want their money back, have asked and obtained a civil custody.

The *Etas Généraux*, admitting the fairness of these arguments, have asked Mr de M. to provide the necessary papers on which he based his accusation. As Mr de Maulle has done nothing for the last 3 weeks but only admitted that he was unable to show these proofs, the H.P. have taken the decision to give up on the case and to leave it in the hands of the ordinary court.

As you can see, Madam, with my explanation, the case is finished. And with these new circumstances, nothing can be changed - if these people are proven guilty, and it looks as if some of them are, they will be punished to ensure the security of the nations. Please could you help in making sure that an extradition is not requested again as it could only happen with a violation of our laws. Of course it would be different if the person had committed an offence in France and then flew to our country to take refuge. In that case I'm sure that our country wouldn't be against the person being put under arrest and his extradition... as it had already happened on several occasions.

Yours,

PS: As I'm sure you're aware this letter is very private and can't be share with anyone from the government.

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Sep. 8, 1792

I've been asked by the person, to whom you regularly write to, to keep all the letters that you have sent to him (to the 63rd one). He can't thank you enough for all the hard work you put in to keep him well informed about all the events which are happening in France and all the interesting thoughts you add in.

The Brabant people are among all the subjects you are mentioning and it is clear that you are taking their case to your heart.

Brabant is a difficult subject and one's opinion should not be taken as an oracle. I think that if they were to become independent under the actual circumstances (the war in the East and the North has just ended), it would be a calamity. It would be wiser to try to reconcile the different sides with advantageous deals - we are far from wanting to put Brabant back under the heavy yolk of the old regime of the late emperor - but at the same time giving them independence at the moment when they have so many problems with their interior affairs and their government, would put them in a very precarious political situation. This independence would bring about the ruin if this beautiful country and have bloody consequences. What is best? This ordeal (or even worse) or a peaceful negotiation which makes sure that the happiness of the people is maintained thanks to strong guarantees and advantageous convictions?

I think that it is the point of view of those who are going to have to make a decision regarding the future of these provinces. I'm sure you will agree as the entire peace of Europe depends on it and that the humanity is already into so much suffering because of the actual troubles and dissension.

You included in your letter some money for me to send you one of our most reliable gazettes as you want to be kept inform of what is going on in Holland and in our Republique so you can contradict the scandalous critics published in your local newspapers about us. I'm shocked but I must admit that not everything is incorrect. Even our gazettes don't really write about our country as it is so peaceful at the moment for us here.

Please feel free to contradict as much as possible all those who dare criticising our country with the only aim to trouble our peace.

If there is any important news, please rest assure that I will let you know as soon as possible.

Van de Spiegel to Etta Palm d'Aelders, Jan. 26, 1793

Madam,

I always try to answer to all the letters you so rigorously send to me. Let me re-affirm how I like to read them and how I value your friendship. That is why I like to acknowledge receipt of your letters as much as I can.

I have noticed that one of your letters is missing, it should have arrived last Friday. At the moment the numbers 104, 105 and 106 are missing from the logograph/ Would you mind finding out what happened so the logograph can be completed.

In your last letter, you talk a lot about the political relationship of France. I can see that you would appreciate a conspicuous letter from me about it. Let me remind you that it is quite dangerous for someone in office to write his views on such an important issue in a time when we need to be careful in what we write. Any thoughts on paper can be altered, shortened according to the intentions (good or bad) of the person who publishes what he has found.

I trust you, Madam, but we never know in which circumstances you can find yourself. So even if I wish to be as honest as possible with you, we need to stay prudent as long as the situation is that troubled in Europe, as long as even the greatest politicians don't know what the result of all this is going to be.

However you might have heard about an alliance between the Emperor and the Republique: this alliance is just a convention between the Emperor of the *Pays-Bas* and the *Etats-Généraux* of the united Provinces. The aim is for these great powers to watch one another, to make sure there is no gathering on the territory of one or the other. Otherwise the consequences would be disastrous: for the government in place and the legitimate Constitution could be overthrown. Regarding your own matters, let me tell you again how saddened I have been when I heard of the death of the old General, whose personal things have been found upside-down and who leaves his creditors with no hopes to be refunded. I have also been saddened by your business in Groningen where apparently your lawyer has not been seen working, at least I haven't heard from him in a while and Mr Archere is still in the Province...

Please let me know about your expenses to this day so you can be paid and for you to realise how grateful is the person for whom you do all this work.

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Oct. 3, 1788

I'm a subject of the Republic of which you are the head but, because of unfortunate circumstances, I was forced to flee the land of my youth.

Even if I am far from home, even if my family has been unjust to me, even if I have been warmly welcomed by another country, I've never forgotten that I am Dutch and that the blood in my veins belongs to this happy nation.

I hope that you can be convinced, my Lord, of my respectful attachment to the Constitution and to the famous family who, throughout the years, has supported and worked for its happiness.

Rest assure that I have been saddened to witness the development, at the heart of the country, of an odious conspiracy which tried to destroy the prosperity and happiness of our nation.

But, my Lord, this is nothing compare to the shock I received when I read about Mr Mirabeau and the appalling calumnies that he spreads throughout Europe.

I know it is dangerous to criticise someone who writes with such a pernicious poison but I was led by my zeal and my love for the truth.

Please accept with your natural kindness, my Lord, this proof of my little efforts: I've never asked for the gift of eloquence, all I tried to do was to fight with dignity for my country and for its head, of whom I am a proud fellow citizen and for whose maintenance I send my very best wishes.

With my deepest respect,

my Lord,

your humble and obedient subject.

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Jan. 26, 1793

My Lord,

Because of some money which has been swindled from me a while ago, I need to come to Amsterdam. If only this could be an opportunity for me to help you, My Lord.

The most difficult and perilous missions for the good of my country and the people at its head, this is what I am striving after.

For a while now, my aim has been to put in front of you, My Lord, proofs of my faithfulness, throughout the years, to this country, its Constitution and the renowned *Maison d'Orange*. And this cannot be shown with a few lines but throughout my political career from 1778 to 1788.

From the beginning my work has been overseen by Mr *Le Conseillier Pensionnaire*. Being full of zeal, my mission was to discover and frustrate the plans of the enemies of the Constitution of this Republic. I've never considered my personal interest but rather have laid down everything, yes My Lord, everything for my country. I am proud to be able to show you that in 1787 I declined a proposal, I said "No" to the possibility to share the rest of my life with the person who was the dearest to me, I said "No" to a large fortune and all this to stay faithful to my principles. Also I faced two *lettres de cachet* against me but succeeded partly in avoiding the execution of their contents.

I acted according to the duty of a virtuous soul, by instinct not by method.

I know that I did what I had to do even if you, My Lord, were not aware of me and my role, even if you were not aware of me spending 3 days in a specific Cabinet in Versailles trying to convince the Prime minister of the injustice in putting in place the camp of Givet against the Prussian troops in Holland.

But please allow me before I die or leave this country to show you, My Lord, the full picture...

I need to do this, not for me, but to show that the so-called weaker sex has sometimes more moral strength than those who are claiming to belong to the stronger sex and therefore to be superior by nature.

I know, My Lord, that there will always be people between the princes and the truth, people for whose interest I need to be kept away. These coward souls can rest assured that my soul is not envious and not an informer as long as the protection of the motherland is not compromised.

Widow Palm Née d'Aelders

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Jul. 5, 1793

My Lord,

Would it be possible, my Lord, for you to grant me an audience?

I have a very important news to communicate to Your Royal Highness regarding the army of the State.

I must admit that I would prefer to take a few minutes of your time and discuss the matter with you rather than having to write a long letter.

I am at your complete devotion,

Your Highness,

Your humble servant,

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Jul. 9, 1793

My Lord,

One of my friends, who is a merchant and has been touched by my difficult situation, has just sent to me more than one thousand pairs of shoes for our troops. They are of 3 different sizes.

Although the shoes are not in the *Provinces Unies* grounds at the moment, I thought it was my duty, the duty of a citizen faithful to the Republic, to inform first the people in charge of the State, who are the defenders of the motherland.

Consequently, My Lord, I got in touch with Mr *Le Conseiller Pensionnaire*, as Your Highness was absent, and he told me that this should be dealt with the *Conseil d'Etat*.

One of my compatriots, who is a member of the *Conseil d'Etat*, told me that it was not the military comity but the captains who were in charge of this matter.

The soldiers, who are at war at the moment, are wearing out their boots. I've been told that the Chiefs of the army of the State are responsible for this matter. I checked with two generals who told me the same thing.

I wanted to let, Your Highness, know about what I was doing and ask permission to write to the Prince heir, unless Your Highness think the troops do not need new boots.

If it is the case, I hope I will be allowed to continue and try to sustain my painful existence with some honest means I have left a very happy role with the hope to be useful to both my homelands and to work on the good will and intelligence of both sides.

Now I've been deprived from all my properties, I've been forgotten by all and all I have left is my courage.

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Jul. 22, 1793

My Lord,

May I remind to Your Royal Highness the reason of my letter dated July 5th.

My correspondent is hurrying me up but I can't take the liberty to move this matter, which can be so useful to the defenders of the homeland, until it has been refused by the chiefs of the State.

Abandoned by all, I must not miss out on an occasion which can save me from indigence, at least for the time being.

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Jul. 29, 1793

My Lord,

If it was only about me, I would not trouble you, Your Royal Highness, but I am tormented and I am not someone who would deceive anyone.

I beg you, Your Royal Highness, to let me know if I need to refuse the matter for which I wrote you a letter a month ago. It has been a month now and still I have to ask my correspondent to wait and be patient.

If only Your Royal Highness would reply and then I would make sure that nothing is done until your orders are given.

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Dec. 6, 1793

My Lord,

Dear Head of my beloved homeland, what a happy day! A young hero, a worthy heir of your virtues, of your rights and of your love, given back to us in good health, given back to your love, to the tenderness of a dear wife and of her alarmed mother.

Another son, as precious to his parents as he is to his country, who has shed his blood so generously. This son is back thanks to our prayers, our wishes and he has been recognised by the genuine Bataves.

The birthday of a grand-son, object of your tenderness, he is the link of the indissoluble bonds between this Republic and the renowned *Maison d'Orange*.

May God keep this precious child. May he, one day, be to the people what his immortal ancestors have been to our fathers: worthy heads of our country, cornerstone of our Constitution, freedom, prosperity and independence of the Bataves.

Dear and respectable head of the Batave nation, may I congratulate you and your royal wife on this happy day.

Let me tell you, My Dear Prince, that I share your joy today in my humble retreat, as I have shared your worries and fears in the path.

Regardless what I heard about you through your enemies, I always hold you and your virtuous wife dearly in my heart. When those, who were supposed to fight for you against atrocious calumnies, were arguing, I was the one fighting against the fiercest....

You had hardly heard about me when I addressed ... de Bentink, le Verrière to ... in Maastricht the awful plot against you and the Duke of Brunswyk who was in Aix la Chappelle then.

Maybe you were never told that it was me. I hope you can see what my feelings and attachments are since I witnessed your social plans, virtues, your humanity, your natural goodness, your struggles and your care for this homeland so dear to my heart.

Please do forgive me if I express myself in a too familiar manner, it is difficult to maintain a distant etiquette, when forgotten by all, I'm left with my love for my country and I will never make a distinction between my country and its head.

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Mar. 8, 1794

My Lord,

May my voice join those of all the genuine friends of the homeland and of the Batave Constitution to bless the date when a chief, worthy of our respect, worthy of our love, was given to us.

May I pray that the Heavens protect our chief for many more years, may his precious life be blessed by the Heavens and may a prompt and happy peace bring him calm and serenity to his days.

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Mar. 24, 1794

My Lord,

The death of Mr Gosje means that there are vacancies for 2 gazettes. Would Your Highness allow me to take over the Gazette of the Court?

If Your Royal Highness was to allow me this favour, I could, thanks to diligent work, make it useful, funny and instructive. This would offer me an honest existence at the heart of my country, the country which I have served with so much zeal for 10 years.

My life is miserable since I warned about the cruel war which is overwhelming our country now. From 1786 to 1792 I never stopped working to defend my country, its Constitution, Your Royal Highness and Your Royal wife.

My Lord, despite the venomous hissing of some snakes of all colours, I can still prove my good work even if until now it was hidden from you.

The widow of Mr Gosje is asking for the privilege. If Your Highness prefers to give them to her, would you consider allowing me to become an associate? Mrs Gosje is going to have to find and pay some authors and writers. Wouldn't it be easier if I was to join her? It is not difficult to write better than what is produced nowadays.

Please Your Highness, do consider the difficult position of an old, faithful, female servant; the one who made you aware of a plot from some villains, who were about to steal some documents from late Duke of Brunswyk, the one who made the French minister change his mind regarding the march of Camp Givet against the Prussian troops in Holland, the one who said no to a large fortune, the one who now lives in poverty but stays faithful to her country. Could such person hope, Your Highness, that you would graciously allow her to come out of poverty by having an honest job.

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, 1794

My Lord,

I took the liberty, on the 17th of this month, to write to the Prince Heir to solicit a meeting with him or Prince Frederic.

The reason for this demand was that I was able to provide a prompt and worthwhile "exchange" for our prisoners of war. Furthermore there was another reason for my request which I thought would have been of interest for the commander-in-chief of the army of the Republic. Her Serene Highness hasn't permitted this to me; I give up but may I remind you, Your Highness, that if the ministers of the King of France haven't been so considerate towards me on August 16, 1787 I would not have been able to make vain the solicitations of M de Ternant, M Champenest and Brancas towards the indecisive minister *Confesjour* as they liked to call him and prevent that the order was given regarding the Marche du Camp de Givet against the Constitution of this Republic.

Ah! Would I ever have thought that the ones who became my enemies when I was serving during 10 years with zeal, fervour and faithfulness my country and its head, would one day be fairer to me than them.

Who would have thought that, after giving up a happy existence to testify again of my faithfulness towards one and the other, I would have been abandoned by them but also treated with a coldness that one would call scorn.

When I think of those, who tried to get rid of them but who now obtain easy favour.

I call on to your loyal and generous heart, Your Highness, what can be said against me as for the last 14 months I have been dragging here. I challenge anyone to find anything against me in my private or public life, in my actions or in my words.

May it be possible for me, Dearest Prince, to come and tell you and Her Serene Highness about what I have done for one and the other and also for his famous renowned brother before and since 1788, staying unknown and with no other reward but the evidence that some people can give for me.

For pity's sake, do not think, My Lord, that I want to extort you. My only ambition is to serve you again, Your Highness, you and my country. If only I was trusted as faithfully as I deserve after all the hardships I have suffered.

It is not hard to notice the frivolous people; vanity is the privilege of the foolish. When one lays great store by worldly goods, one doesn't have time for futility.

May Your Highness have a look at the attached note and see that I am not unworthy of the favour I am asking for, that each day is, for me, a New Year's day when one makes wishes; wishes of prosperity for the homeland, wishes of Heavenly blessings on it and on the renowned *Maison d'Orange*, which makes a whole with the homeland and can't be separated from it.

I am, with deepest respect, yours...

The town of Lyons and its precious factories are either destroyed or disused.

Wouldn't it be possible to establish in this Republic a part of this industry which was the wealth of Lyons?

For example, the embroidery was a source of income for thousands of people, women, children, the elderly and the disabled. They were all busy embroidering. Hospitals were full of weaving looms.

Wouldn't it be possible to do the same here, in the orphanages?

A young girl, who at the moment earns 6 Sols for making a shirt in 2 to 3 days would earn 12 to 15 Sols in a day if she was embroidering.

Embroidery is a luxury that makes a lot of money for a country. It would be a source of income for the poor and the start of a new trade for the country.

I'm happy to give 2 years or more (if God keeps me in good health) to train the young ladies from any orphanage. I can train them with all the different skills they need, from coloured, white embroideries to crochet. And I can prove that I am perfectly skilled to train others.

If you are approving of my ideas, Your Highness, would you give me your orders.

Widow Palm

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Willem V, Jun. 30, 1974

Be so good, My Lord, as to pay attention to the request of one of your most faithful female servants who is overwhelmed by her misfortune but a glorious misfortune as it is the result of an incorruptible love for a much loved homeland.

Your Highness is well aware that, because of my desire to be useful to the country, I have abandoned everything; I only took with me one or two old clothes, rushed up, defied the season, passed the army, only sustained by the hope to dissuade this bloody war which was overwhelming us.

I like to think that Your Serene Highness is also well aware that, since then I have refused the "generosity" of the enemy and that I have given away to their resentment all my properties, all

my savings which were for my old days to keep me out of poverty, 6000 livres and expensive furniture. And I scrupulously kept my words, given last year to Mr *Le Conseil*, and didn't maintain any correspondence with France. I even don't know if I have any property left in France. I had to sell a few jewels to keep me going as I had nothing in Holland but only 135 Fl per year, which are the result of a substitution that W de Sitters, my dishonest parents, had usurped for many years but thanks to Mr *Le Conseiller*, Wichers and the lawyer Bruyma I am receiving now.

It is true that Mr Van de Spiegel has been very good to me as he sent me 150 Fl when I was overwhelmed by a painful and cruel illness.

As I was so short of money, I tried to find a nanny job via the gazette. I did find a position in Amsterdam but as I had to give the names of my relative as reference, my second cousin, widow of the Professor Schultens, said that I had played the role of a spy for the Stadthouder in France - so I lost my job.

If you refuse to come to my help, Your Highness, what am I going to become? I am not asking for glory, not for splendour but just the possibility to work and to spend the days that I have left in an obscure mediocrity at the heart of the Republic which is so dear to me.

If I had the means to buy some furniture, I would rent a little house and, by renting out some of the bedrooms to honest people, I would have enough to survive on nearly nothing but bread.

Allow me, my dear Price, to implore for your help as my situation is so painful and I cry so much. I would have the feeling to slander your kind heart, My Lord, if I was in any doubt that you would come to the rescue of a woman who has, from 1788, used all her moral and physical abilities without revealing her identity, to work for the conservation of the Constitution of the Republic. Who hoped that her zeal would never be seen as of self-interest.

Who didn't hesitate, when she discovered the plot whose aim was to steal some documents from the Duke of Brunswyk from Aix-La-Chappelle, to try and win over one of the conspirators (the S. Verrie): I gave him 10 Louis for his travel expenses and a letter for the General Bentink concerning the attack in Maastricht to be stopped.

Who did the biggest sacrifice when she discovered what M Champsenets, M Montmorin and de Breteuil, the villain, were up to.

I stayed enclosed in the house of the Archbishop in Sens and then was able to stop their orders regarding the army, gathered at the Camp de Givet against the Prussian troops in Holland.

Forgive my daring, My Lord, but I prefer to implore your humanity and charity rather than being the subject of your scorn because of a wealthiness that I should be ashamed of.

Etta Palm d'Aelders to Van de Spiegel, Jul. 8, 1794

Sir,

The letter that you have written for me, has been given to me yesterday by Mr Tinne. It is painful for me to see that I am still consider a foreigner to this land, for which I would give some of my life. I do not whisper, my duty becomes a virtue.

Your illness, which has happened just a few days after my arrival, prevented me from proving to you that you could trust me. You thought I was a "creature of fire who hated and who was regarded as the incorruptible enemy of their deadly plans against this Republic.

Therefore I will obey and will explain in writing, as well as I can, how I thought I could be useful. As I was well aware of the spirit, the personality and the... of the French nation, as I always studied, but without any passion, the march of this surprising revolution... the consequences of the events. I realised that force wasn't the way to go if we want the French to subject and that war would not avoid the propagation of their ideas. Extremity seems wonderful to stubborn spirits and the wonderful captivates vulgar spirits.

As the dominant group in the *Convention Nationale* has always been against war against this Republic, I think that it is possible to make them realise that an unpredictable attack by the French army would be unjust and disloyal;

- Holland relies on the assurance, given by the Ministry of the time, to maintain peace between the 2 nations and to send someone to negotiate the recognition of the French Republic.

- Holland has been forced, for its own self-defence, to be part of the alliance of the allied powers and to have been rescued by them.

So a separate peace won't happen without the integrity of the Republic, without its power and without it being exposed.

Holland has never wished to interfere in the interior government of France.

Let it be added a few noisy sentences with which Mirabeau has been so marvelous and be brought confidentially by a trustworthy person to the *Comité du Salut* and to the commissioner of the army who I know, especially Frondin, as he doesn't agree with Brissot's principles. And so be able to prevent any devastation and try to bring peace. And if what you would suggest wasn't heard, Sir, you would disown the commissioner.

It is impossible for me to put in writing all my ideas but, as I am not allowed to meet with you, Sir, would it be possible to meet up with someone who you trust, someone full of reason and

wisdom? It would give me the opportunity to answer any objections to my plan. If you were to disagree with it, Sir, I could still be useful towards our homeland and a suffering humanity. Nothing scares me. I might be in the wrong because of ignorance or too much zeal but I am not a criminal.

If Mr Audibert had an illegal correspondence with me, I have been his victim. He assured me that it wasn't illegal. I can prove it. When he asked me to ask you, Sir, for a passport, he asked if you had any job for him to help with the relief of the victims of the war or to bring relief. I really think that this citizen would like to be useful to this Republic and its allies.

If you had trusted me, I could have obtain from him much more in a conversation than any paper could produce.

Please, Sir, rest assured that if I knew that someone like my brother or my father was in a plot, I would denounce him - I hate treason.

Please forgive me Sir if my letter is a bit gibberish but it is hard for me to explain properly something that I could explain so much better if I was face to face with someone who would trust me.

These notes are for you only Sir.

One of the commissioners in the French army, which is coming closer to our border, was a dear friend of mine, he used to have supper at home in Paris 3 to 4 times a week.

He was convinced by my ideas about Holland. Like me, he didn't like the migrants from Holland who were now in Paris. He wasn't happy with Brissot when he made me leave Paris. He was against the breaking off with Holland. I have had no news from him for a year now.

But Sir, I'm pretty sure that neither Mr Choudieux nor Mr Audibert are enemies of this Republic or of its government. They are both from honest families (the first used to work in the house of the king). Both of them could be useful and work for peace.

May I reiterate my complete faithfulness to my country and to its Constitution. And if anyone says to you that I am a *Jacobine*, please rest assured that all I wish for is to serve and die faithful to the principles you know of and which are at the centre of my heart.

And it is as a *Jacobine* that I have been the most useful to my country, I appeal to you Sir!

Please make sure you burn this letter after you have read it.