

# The Invisibility of French Women's contributions to Science in the 18<sup>th</sup> century :

## A Gendered Question?

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1. Introduction : Context of the study

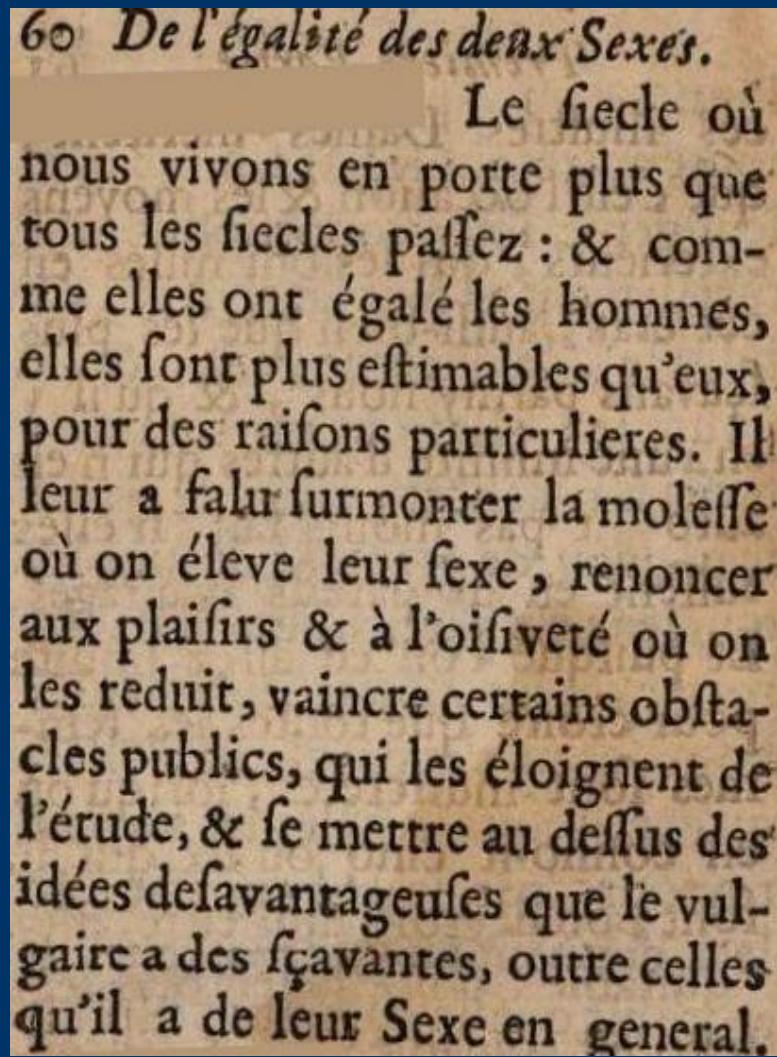
2. An Invisibility « brought to light »

3. The Invisible Networks

4. Conclusion

# 1. Introduction : context of the study

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*De l'Égalité des deux sexes, discours physique et moral où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des préjugés*

Poullain de la Barre, 1673 (BNF)

« The century we are living carries more of them than the past centuries : and as they equaled men, they are more likely to be respected than them, for some peculiar reasons. They had to overcome the indolence their gender is raised in, to renounce to the pleasures and idleness they are reduced to, to defeat some public obstacles that take them away from learning, and to get over disadvantageous ideas that the « vulgat » has about learned women, besides the idea he has of her gender in general »

## 1. Introduction : context of the study

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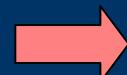
- The Invisible Economy of Science, Monika Mommertz, in *Men, Women, and the birthing of Modern Science* , Ed J.P Zinsser, 2005     Domestic Science (no salons)
- No translator
- Astronomy, Mathematics, Physics, (Chemistry)
- Aims at building a primary sources corpus

## ***2. An Invisibility brought to light***

### 2.1. Published sources as author

#### **Madame Du Châtelet (1706 – 1749)**

Institutions de Physique, 1740 - Réponse à la lettre de Mairan sur la question des forces vives, Bruxelles, 1741 - Dissertation sur la nature et la propagation du feu, Paris, 1744 - Principes mathématiques de la philosophie naturelle, translation from Newton and a comment, Paris, 1759



~ 4 books



Quentin de la Tour, 18th c  
Wikipedia

#### **Madame Lepaute (1723 – 1788)**

Description de l'éclipse de 1764, Paris, 1762



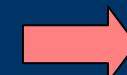
1 brochure of 4 pages + 2 maps



Voiriot, 18th c  
Wikipedia

#### **Madame Dupiéry (1746 – 1830)**

Explication des tables de la durée du jour et de la nuit, Paris, 1782



3 pages



## 2. An Invisibility brought to light

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### 2.2. Manuscripts and Lost but quoted work as author

**Madame du Châtelet (1706 – 1749)**

→ dozens of Manuscripts

**Madame Lepaute (1723 – 1788)**

- calculation on Halley's comet's return (1758)

→ Lost

**Madame Dupiéry (1746 – 1830)**

- Astronomical tables for Bourg en Bresse and Béziers

- Work about « Annales célestes du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle » by  
G. Pingré (1791)

- Astronomical dictionary

→ Lost

**Madame Lefrançois (1760 – 1832)**

- Calculation on catalog of stars

→ Lost

## **2. An Invisibility brought to light**

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### 2.3. Published sources under another author's name (quoted)

#### **Madame Lepaute (1723 – 1788)**

- Traité d'Horlogerie, **J.A.Lepaute**, 1755 3 pages of mathematical tables
- Connaissance des Temps (CdT), **J.Lalande**, 1759 to 1774
- Ephémérides des Mouvements célestes, **J.Lalande**, 1774 to 1785 460 pages of astronomical tables

#### **Madame Dupiéry (1746 -1830)**

- Ephémérides, **J.Lalande**, 1785 to 1793 10 pages of astronomical tables
- CdT, **J.Lalande**, 1791
- Eléments d'histoire naturelle, **A.F.Fourcroy**, 1791 250 pages of chemical tables
- Système des Connaissances chimiques, **A.F.Fourcroy**, 1801

#### **Madame Lefrançois (1760 – 1832)**

- Abrégé de navigation historique, théorique et pratique, **J.Lalande**, 1793 450 pages of astronomical tables
- Histoire céleste française, **J.Lalande**, 1801



~ 5 books published under a male author's name

TABLE VII.

*De la longueur que doit avoir un Pendule simple pour faire en une heure un nombre de vibrations quelconque, depuis 1 jusqu'à 18000.*

Calculée par Madame L E P A U T E.

Nombres de vibrations par heure.	pieds.	pouces.	lignes.	Déclina- les , ou centi- mes de lignes.	Nombres de vibrations par heure.	pieds.	pouces.	lignes.	Déclina- les , ou centi- mes de lignes.
18000	0	I	5	62	15100	0	2	I	04
17900	0	I	5	82	15000	0	2	I	38
17800	0	I	6	02	14900	0	2	I	72
17700	0	I	6	22	14800	0	2	2	07
17600	0	I	6	43	14700	0	2	2	42
17500	0	I	6	64	14600	0	2	2	78
17400	0	I	6	80	14500	0	2	3	16
17300	0	I	7	08	14400	0	2	3	53
17200	0	I	7	30	14300	0	2	3	92
17100	0	I	7	52	14200	0	2	4	32
17000	0	I	7	70	14100	0	2	4	72
16900	0	I	7	99	14000	0	2	5	13
16800	0	I	8	24	13900	0	2	5	55
16700	0	I	8	47	13800	0	2	5	98
16600	0	I	8	72	13700	0	2	6	42
16500	0	I	8	97	13600	0	2	6	87
16400	0	I	9	23	13500	0	2	7	33
16300	0	I	9	49	13400	0	2	7	80
16200	0	I	9	75	13300	0	2	8	28
16100	0	I	10	02	13200	0	2	8	77
16000	0	I	10	30	13100	0	2	9	27
15900	0	I	10	59	13000	0	2	9	79
15800	0	I	10	87	12900	0	2	10	31
15700	0	I	11	16	12800	0	2	10	85
15600	0	I	11	46	12700	0	2	11	40
15500	0	I	11	76	12600	0	2	11	96
15400	0	2	0	07	12500	0	3	0	54
15300	0	2	0	39	12400	0	3	I	13
15200	0	2	0	71	12300	0	3	I	74

TABLE VI.

*Lepaute Jean-André, Traité d'horlogerie, 1755, BNF*

# Mme Lepaute

## O B S E R V A T I O N S

DE QUARANTE MILLE ÉTOILES, FAITES A L'ÉCOLE MILITAIRE,  
AVEC UN MURAL DE SEPT PIÉDS ET DEMI.

Latitude  $48^{\circ} 51' 7''$  ou  $52''$  au nord de l'Observatoire.

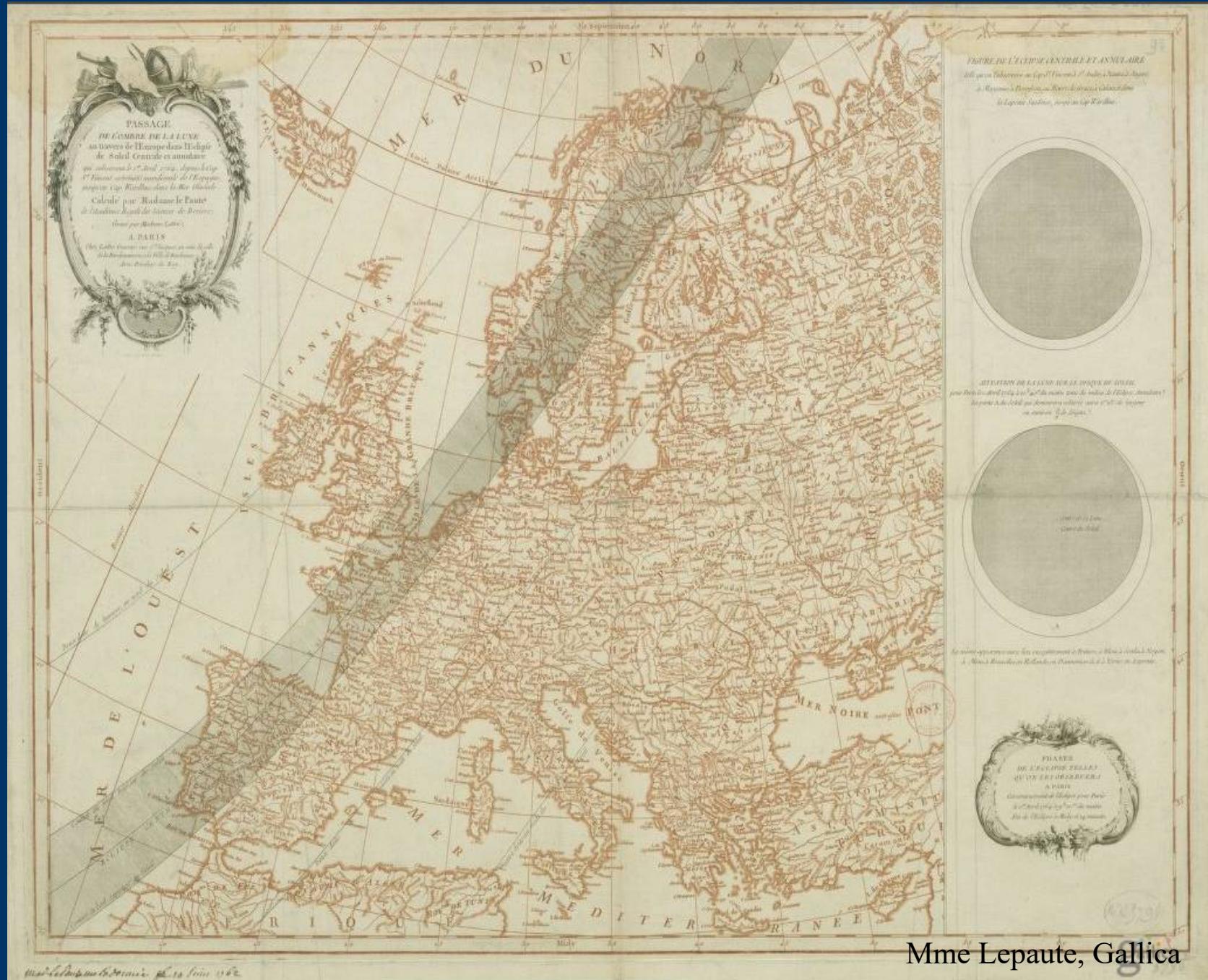
N O M S des É T O I L E S .	G r a n d e u r s .	P A S S A G E S .			D I S T A N C E S Z E N I T.	N O M S des É T O I L E S .	P A S S A G E S .			D I S T A N C E S Z E N I T.
		P r e m i èr f l .	M i l i e u .	T r o i s i èm e f l .			P r e m i èr f l .	M i l i eu .	T r o i s i èm e f l .	
		H. M. S.	M. S.	D. M. S.			H. M. S.	M. S.	D. M. S.	
Le 27 sept. 1791. Cygne.		8 10	8j0. 3° 6'	4 13.0	+ 1° 20"	Le 27 sept. 1791.	7 11	8j0. 3° 6'	2 28.3	Le 27 sept. 1791.
		6. 7 10	5 50.5	6 24.0	5 37.5		2 11	2 28.3	4 9.36	
		7. 8 10	6 6.0	6 39.5	6 34.9		3 21	3 45.5	3 59.33	
		7. 8 10	8 24.5	5 27.0	8 21	4 19.5		4 10.34		
		7. 8 10	8 28.5	5 18.4	8 21	4 36.0		3 58.0		
		6 10	9 13.3	3 57.9	8 21	6 9.0		4 3 54		
		9 10	11 14.0	4 23.4	8 21	6 10.0		4 7.21		
		8 10	12 34.0	4 15.6	6 21	7 57.0		4 43.37		
		8 10	12 57.5	4 6.19	6 21	8 33.5		5 26.45		
		8 10		13 59.0	5 37.5	5 21 10 5.5;	10 40.0	5 44.39		
		9 10		14 42.5	5 53.4	7. 8 21 14 58.3	15 33.0	5 11.18		
		6 10		15 50.5	3 41.5	9 21	16 49.0	5 25.13		
		9 10	19 14.5	4 5.0	8 21	18 10.3	5 19.14			
		9 10	20 0.5	5 25.18	8 21		19 26.0	5 54.17		
		10	22 47.5	5 1.7	7 21		21 15.5	4 48.8		
		8. 9 10	23 17.5	6 2.53	7 21		21 55.0	5 23.17		
		7. 8 10	23 28.0	5 11.55	7 21	22 33.3		4 51.20		
		7 10	25 36.0	6 19.53	7 21	25 48.5		3 28.45		
		9 10	26 36.0	4 24.22	7 21	26 8.0		3 53.8		
		7 10	27 6.5	4 21.6	7. 8 21 27 31.5	28 6.5		4 3.42		
		7. 8 10	30 1.7	6 32.56	7 21	29 38.0		4 22.23		
		7. 8 10	30 34.5	6 42.33	9. 0	31 35		5 3.13		
		7 10		31 38.0	5 12.45	7. 8 18	31 50.5	5 18.58		
		7. 8 10	32 19.5	3 52.57		21 33.35	34 10.0	5 19.37		
		9. 0 10	33 12.5	3 58.54	9 21	35 11.0		5 25.36		
		12 10	34 17.7	34 53.3	4 21	39 52.5		5 26.15		
		20	36 15.0	4 16.54	21	40 3		5 46.48		
		9 10	36 46.3	4 20.58	21 41.22	41 55.5		5 53.54		
		6 10	40 17.0	40 45.7	4 21	42 57.3		5 21.4		
		8 10	41 14.0	4 8.0	21	43 54.5		6 0.36		
		5 10 43	5.0	42 39.0	5 15.45	9 21	46 4.0		4 15.22	
		6 10 45	25.5	46 0.5	4 25.15	9 21	46 38.3		4 0.33	
		9 20	46 13.0	4 26.50	8. 9		47 48.7			
		8 10	46 46.5	4 29.47	8 21 49 26	50 0.8				
		8 10	47 25.5	4 28.19	8. 9 21	51 32.5				
		7 10	48 55.5	5 14.20	8. 9 21	51 42.5				
		6 10	49 12.8	4 41.24	8					
		10	50 50.5	5 9.10	21	53 3.8				
		6 10	51 25.0	5 33.47	6 21	54 32				
		7. 8 10	52 5.0	5 23.55	9 21	55 24				
		7. 8 10		53 2.0	4 21	55 3.5				
		6. 7 10	54 15.5	4 37.47	9 21	55 35.5				
		6. 7 10	54 56.5	5 26.30	6 21	55 39.0				
		21	55 8.5	4 50.44	6 21	57 24.7				
		4 10	56 45.5	5 1.40	6 21	57 35.7				
		3 10	57 19.7	57 54.5	5 43.0	6 21	57 46.2			
		2 10	58 35.5	4 50.27	6. 7 21	58 4.54				
		2 10	59 41.5	4 58.47	6. 7 21	58 57				
		21	0 16.0	4 41.30	6. 7 21	59 33.3				
		21	2 6.5	3 55.21	6 21	5 50.3				

Histoire céleste. Tome I,

Digitized by Google

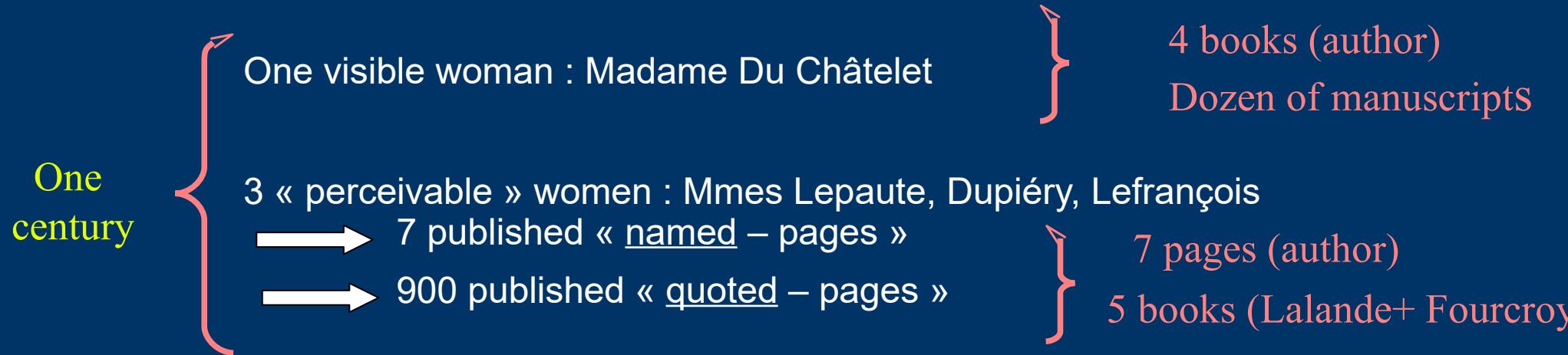
Lalande, Jérôme, *Histoire céleste*,  
1801, BNF

# Mme Lefrançois



## 2. An Invisibility brought to light

### 2.4. Conclusion



Invisibility through publications

One exception : Mme Du Châtelet

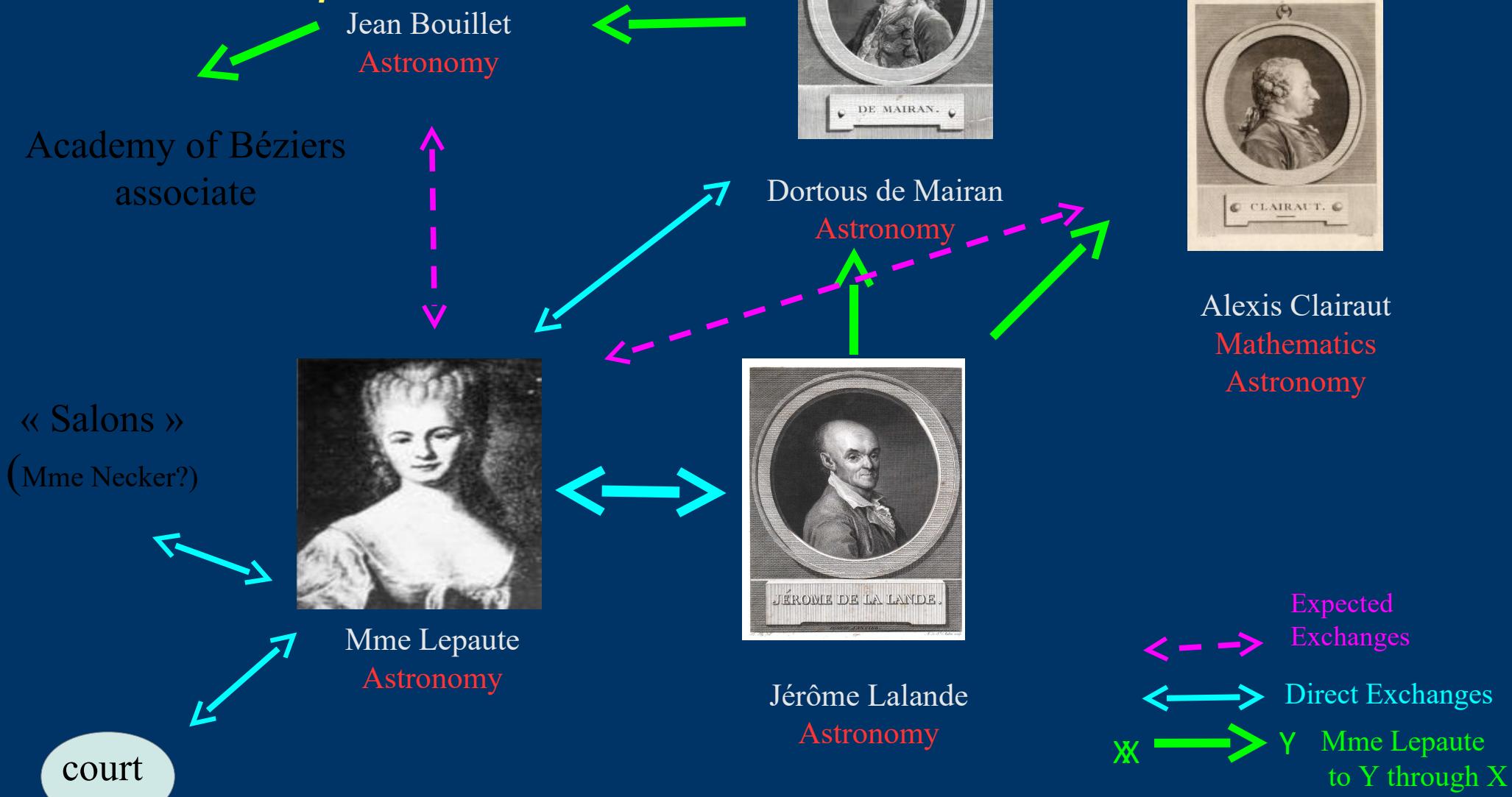
- Mlle Delisle (sister of J.N. Delisle), astronomy
- Mme Delambre (wife of J.B. Delambre), astronomy
- Mme Grandchamp, astronomy
- Mlle Gouilly (friend of A.C. Clairaut), astronomy
- Mlle de Thil (friend of Mme Du Châtelet), geometry
- Mme d'Aiguillon, geometry
- Mlle La Hire (daughter of P. La Hire), astronomy

Invisible women (quoted once  
in correspondence)

### 3. The Invisible Networks

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#### 3.1. Mme Lepaute's Network



### ***3. The Invisible Networks***

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#### 3.1. Mme Lepaute's Network

- « Professional » Network built through J. Lalande : dependence (work / financial?)
- « Professional » Network specialized in astronomy
- Court Network : personal and Lalande's
- Direct exchanges only with french savants

➡ Lalande's « reduced » Network

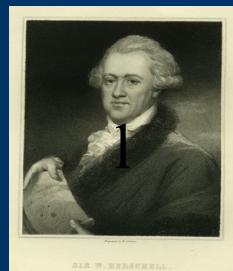
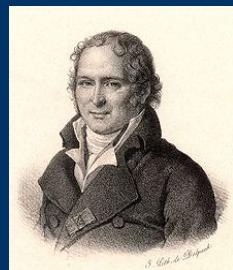
➡ Personal one Invisible

#### 3.2. Mme Dupiéry's Network

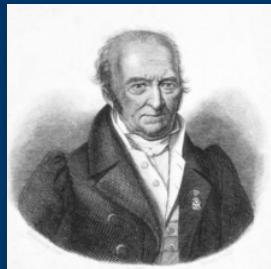
### 3. The Invisible Networks

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#### 3.2. Mme Dupiéry's



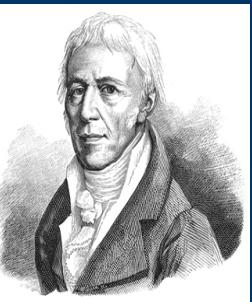
freemason ?



Antoine François Fourcroy  
Chemistry

« ma collaboratrice.. »  
« ma consoeur en chimie... »

Pierre André Latreille  
Entomology  
Encyclopedia



Jean-Baptiste Lamarck  
Botany  
Herbarium

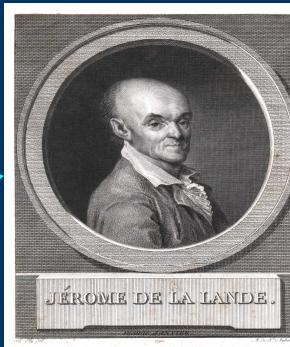


Mme Dupiéry

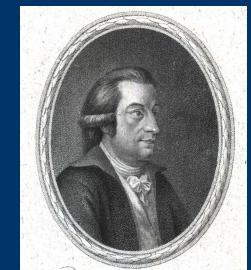
Baudoin  
Printeur

Institut National de France

William / Caroline Herschel  
Astronomy



Jérôme Lalande  
Astronomy



Franz Xaver von Zach  
Astronomy



Jean-Baptiste Delambre  
Astronomy  
Help / « corrector »



C.A . Coulomb  
Ingeneer  
Neighbour



### *3. The Invisible Networks*

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#### 3.2. Mme Dupiéry's Network

- First « Professional » Network built through J. Lalande (?) : dependence (work / financial?) (1779)
- First « Professional » Network specialized in astronomy
- Diversification of her « professional » network as soon as 1788 (Botany and entomology, chemistry)
- « Professional » Independence around 1790 : (financial?)
- Direct exchanges only with french savants

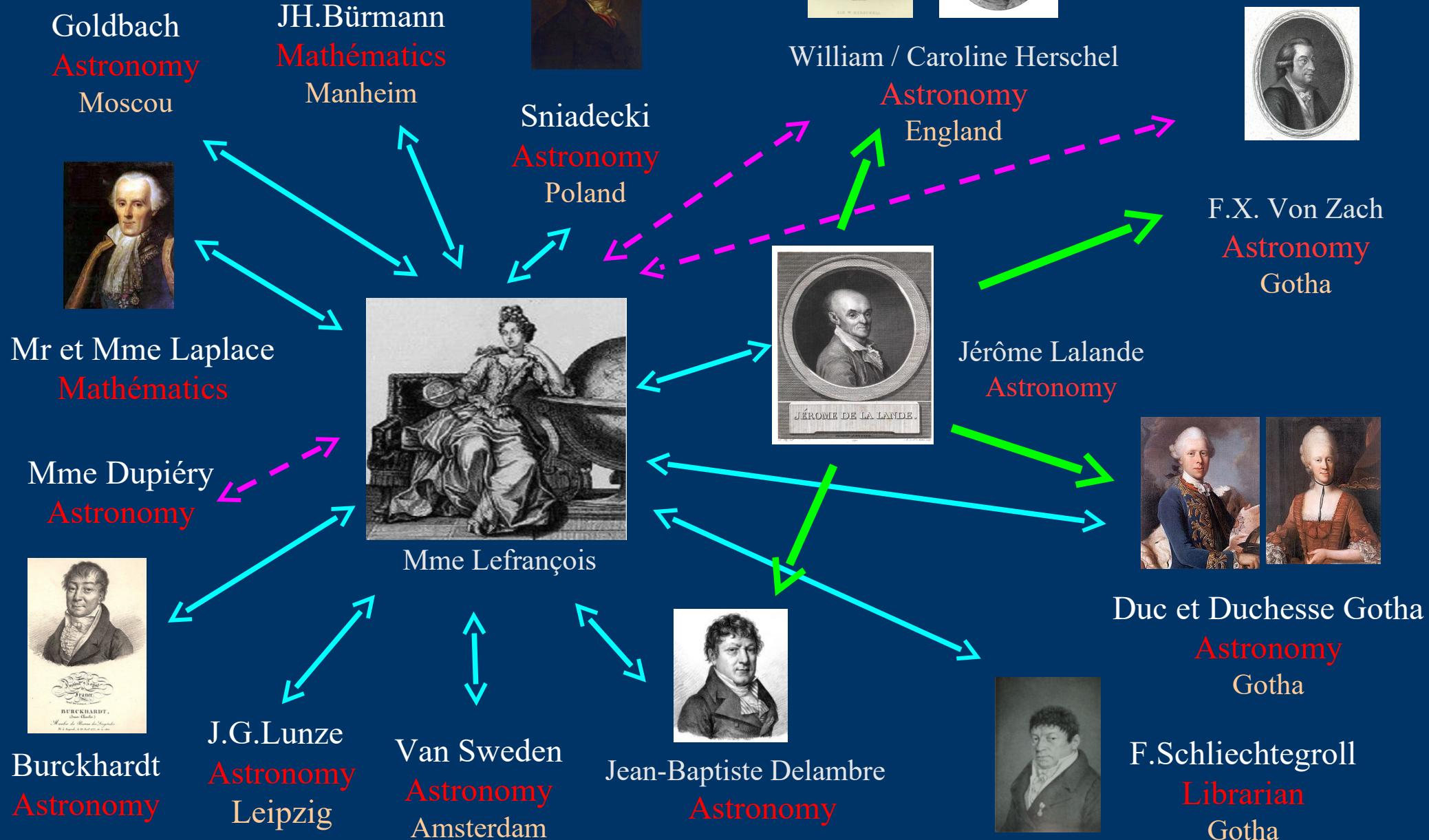
#### 3.3. Mme Lalande's Network

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### 3. The Invisible Networks

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#### 3.3. Mme Lalande's



### 3. The Invisible Networks

#### 3.3. Mme Lefrançois's Network

- « Professional » Network built through J. Lalande : dependence (family / work / financial)
- « Professional » Network specialized in astronomy
- Direct exchanges with french and foreign savants
- Personal Network = Lalande's one (?)

### 4. Conclusion

#### 4.1. Women's roles in the scientific household

- Secretary
- Assistant (calculation, observation)
- Teacher
- Manager of calculators...

...and more !

## **4. Conclusion**

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### 4.2. « Very Bright » Invisibility

- Members of academies (Paris, England, Germany)
- Famous scientists (Paris, Germany, Poland, Russia, Nederlands)
- Courts and salons

### 4.3. Women's invisibility : a gendered question ?

- No institutional position
  - Very few publication
  - Their Manuscripts and correspondence not kept
- 
- Gender Question

### 4.3. Women's invisibility : a gendered question ?

Social image of « la femme savante »

Gender or Social Question ?

« En Allemagne, une femme savante c'est dire qu'elle est mauvaise épouse, mauvaise mère, mauvaise ménagère, mauvaise citoyenne, enfin tout ce qu'il y a de mauvais et de ridicule par dessus le marché...donc il ne faut jamais faire l'éloge littéraire de votre auguste Nièce. »

*Baron von Zach, Correspondance inédite, 1799*

« In Germany, a « savante » woman is said to be a bad wife, a bad mother, a bad homekeeper, a bad citizen, then everything bad and ridiculous...so you shall never praise in literature your noble niece. »

### 4.3. Women's invisibility : a gendered question ?

- Well accepted by the « savants » of the 18<sup>th</sup> century
- Well-known in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

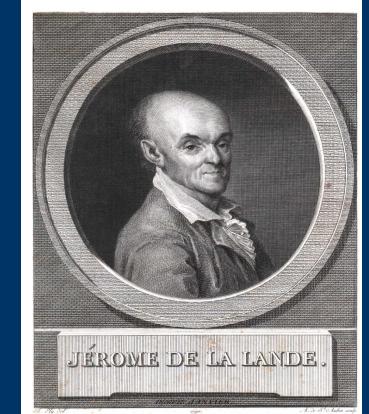


Historical  
Reconstruction ?

« Je crois qu'il ne manque aux femmes que les occasions de s'instruire et de prendre de l'émulation ; on en voit assez qui se distinguent, malgré les obstacles de l'éducation et du préjugé, pour croire qu'elles ont autant d'esprit que la plupart des hommes qui acquièrent de la célébrité dans les sciences. »

Jérôme Lalande, *L'astronomie des Dames*, 1786

« I think that there is a lack of opportunities for women to learn and grow in emulation ; one sees quite a bit that distinguished themselves despite the obstacles of education and prejudice, to believe they have as much mind that most men who get fame in science. »



THANK YOU !

