To paraphrase Suzanne Desan, there was a potent force unleashed by the laws passed by the National Legislative Assembly in its attempt to reshape the family. The most obvious impact of these laws was their blurring of the much-discussed boundary between the public and private spheres of the French family and household, boundaries which Olwen Hufton and Joan Landes originally claimed to have been so important in French republican politics and a way of thinking which was articulated and reinforced by pre-revolutionary political discourse. Desan claims that as this occurred, every aspect of life suddenly became highly politicised with far reaching consequences, not only for gender relations, but also for many French provinces' traditions of property management, family obligation and indeed masculine control of politics. There is a general concord among recent historians of gender and political culture that such politicisation vastly expanded the potential areas in which power could be exercised by certain female members of society, even if treating 'women' as a general demographic without differentiation is obviously anathema in modern historiography. Moreover, the legislation pushed certain women towards the boundaries of their 'sphere', encouraging expeditions into proto-feminist politics. However, Desan's insistence on political culture being informed by social events is partly overturned by Lindsay Parker's new evidence on Rosalie Ducrollay Jullien, a well-educated middling woman from Paris. Ducrollay Jullien's correspondence not only indicates a strong current of Rousseauist thought, but also that she herself felt constrained and in the end comforted by the gendered ideals articulated within cultural discourse after the fall of the women's clubs in 1793. For

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1 Henceforth referred to as the 'Legislative Assembly'.
2 Suzanne Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France (California, 2004) p.1-3
Joan B. Landes, Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution (New York, 1988) pp.31-36
4 Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France, p.12
a number of women at least, it is clear that publicity was all very well, as long as a woman did not forget her propriety.

The Assembly’s tinkering with family custom may have seemed trivial in comparison to the glaring hole in the franchise. Reform to the family seems an almost cosmetic gesture following the undisputed passage of a standard of law which excluded women from politics. Indeed, the 1791 Constitution may have been a step backward in feminist terms, ironing out the idiosyncrasies of regional voting and completely obliterating any female vote without exception. Many have emphasised the power of the 'Women’s Empire' under the ancien régime, claiming that from the outset, the Revolution had actually curtailed female power, especially for elite women and salonnières, who had occasionally influenced politics and policy at court and voted for National Assembly representatives. Certainly among contemporaries, Edmund Burke most rapidly interpreted the style of the Revolution as contemptuous towards women, famously proclaiming the death of chivalry and denouncing the treatment of women as 'animal[s] not of the highest order'.

However, as Desan has pointed out, the redefinition of marriage was hardly trivial. In fact, it created serious problems for the ideal of the masculine dominated republic. Under the ancien régime, traditional marriage had sustained heavy attacks by the philosophers, who maintained that the Church powerfully manipulated family affairs and that marital indissolubility encouraged loveless matches designed only to further family ambitions. Adjusting its legal status would have reaching consequences on legally determined nationality, inheritance, taxation, conscription and property rights. The immediate effects for gender relations are clear however.

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6 Landes, Women and the Public Sphere, pp.93-6
7 Hufton, Women and the Limits of Citizenship pp. 3-5
Huf ton stresses that three categories of people were excluded from voting rights; the poor, who did not contribute to the tax revenue, servants, who could not be relied upon for independent judgement and all women. The first two categories were disputed but the third went unchallenged. Constitution of 1791, 'Title III. Of The Public Powers', 'Chapter 1 Of the National Legislative Assembly', section II, line 2, (September 3rd, 1791) <http://ic.ucsc.edu/~traugott/hist171/readings/1791-09ConstitutionOf1791> [last accessed 02/01/13]
The wording here is implicit in modern standards, but nevertheless decrees that 'In order to be an active citizen it is necessary to be born or to become a Frenchman.'
8 Landes, Women and the Public Sphere, p.122
9 Elizabeth Colwill, 'Women’s Empire and the Sovereignty of Man in La Décade Philosophique 1794-1807', Eighteenth Century Studies, vol.29, no.3 (1996) pp.269-70
10 Landes, Women and the Public Sphere, p.24
12 Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France, p.15
13 Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France, p.16
By making marriage a civil contract and eliminating the taboo around divorce, women in loveless marriages were granted a considerable amount of autonomy from their husbands before the law in family courts. Moreover, those wishing to marry against their fathers’ wishes also had the courts’ blessing as long as they had reached majority age (reduced to twenty one). The power balance here clearly shifted in favour of the daughter or wife. Extended logically, unmarried daughters and wives could, through the power to dismiss unsuitable matches, have an influence over the plans of the corporate family, ordinarily controlled almost exclusively by the father.

Unsurprisingly, divorce became an especial site of politicisation between men and women, often delving publicly into intimate affairs. Some 38,000 to 50,000 divorces took place between 1792 and 1803, although Desan has qualified this stringently, pointing out that they were concentrated in urban areas, more likely to be female initiators than male and were more likely to come from couples hailing from (intriguingly) artisan or commercial backgrounds. Despite this, it did very little to effect women who were actually happily married, for their property was not legally recognised as their own. Nevertheless, the marriage question further fuelled ongoing discussions regarding the nature of women's supposed inferiority.

Another immensely controversial area of legislation, or at least one which invited a huge number of petitions against it, was that regarding inheritance. Indeed, family courts generally dealt with more inheritance disputes than any other. Specifically designed to end already-maimed primogeniture traditions, these laws left younger and, importantly, female siblings with far more power than previously, themselves having now an equal right to property with the eldest inheritor. Previously, in certain regions (such as Caen, in Normandy, which Desan specifically emphasises), laws under the ancien régime had an explicit gender bias. Some deliberately prevented any more than a third of the total of parents’ property being granted to all female offspring within the family, no matter how numerous they were. The effect of new laws on female inheritors obviously depended on both where they lived and their position within the family, but in general the legal permission for daughters to

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14 Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France, pp.49-50
15 Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France, pp.4-5
16 Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France, p.94
17 Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France, p.50
18 Suzanne Desan, "'War Between Brothers and Sisters': Inheritance Law and Gender Politics in Revolutionary France', French Historical Studies, vol.20, no.4 (1997) p. 598
19 Desan, 'War Between Brothers and Sisters', p. 608
20 Desan, 'War Between Brothers and Sisters', p. 600
demand a larger share of inheritance implicitly raised their status within families and wider society, especially in areas like Caen. Indeed, the rules imply that female inheritors, at least until they married, could live on a somewhat independent basis, even if the law did not explicitly say so. Desan clarifies the social scope in her study of Caen, pointing out that the average claim was for (modest) annual payments of between 50 and 300 livres and flat sums of between 300 and 2000 livres. She mentions even one case where one widow Betourné repeatedly attended court to protect her ‘pathetic paraphernalia of a few handkerchiefs and other odds and ends.’

Remarkably, it would seem that inheritance was an issue with resonance in all but the poorest communities and indeed empowered all but the poorest women.

To a large extent, it is possible to surmise that the creation of family courts for these disputes of divorce, marriage and indeed inheritance (which will be later discussed) was a product of this ongoing shaping of the ‘individual’ before the law and the Legislative Assembly’s apparent obsession with destroying privilege. As such, there was no deliberate effort to empower women with public citizens’ rights; any such occurrence appears to have happened by accident as a by-product of the ‘men’s work’ of demolishing aristocratic, despotic fatherhood. It is a testament to Desan’s analysis of how revolutionary lawmakers reacted to social events alongside their ideals in political discourse that each of these new cultural ideas, if not laws, were fine-tuned up to the beginning of 1793. For Edmund Burke (who claimed democracy to be ‘shameless’ and that the people were willing to break moral codes due to the dilution of public guilt) and conservative contemporaries, both at home and abroad, this may have seemed like cynical manoeuvring in the face of public opinion. Even so, Hufton’s presumption that the Assembly was preoccupied with ‘bureaucracy’ and demonstrated a ‘lack of commitment to popular interests’ appears significantly diminished in weight. Admittedly, family law adjustment would hardly alter the price of bread for the poorest, but, from Desan’s statistics, the

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21 Desan, ‘War Between Brothers and Sisters’, pp. 608-9
23 Landes, Women and the Public Sphere, pp.122-3
25 Hufton, Women and the Limits of Citizenship p.15
28 Hufton, Women and the Limits of Citizenship p.19
Assembly's family measures both in divorce and inheritance clearly improved the lot of artisan and modestly-propertied working class women as well as those of the bourgeoisie.

In this vein, historiography challenges older interpretations which presume a deliberate contrivance by a bourgeois male elite to domesticate women in the aftermath of the king’s death. While Lynn Hunt’s psychological analysis clearly still bears some resemblance to how events unfolded, the idea that the revolutionary ‘brothers’ sought to contain and protect their ‘sisters’ following the death of the ‘father’ implies that women’s political destiny was already pre-determined from the outset. 29 Similarly, Joan Landes finds this insistence on domesticity rooted in classical republicanism, that a ‘public woman’ (in latin, implying a prostitute) was simply incompatible with respectable society. 30 Recent historiography contrasts this, providing an alternative theory that lawmakers and citizens were in ‘constant dialogue’, emphasising pragmatic approach to legislation based on the grievances by petitioners. 31 This seems more plausible when it is remembered that pre-revolutionary discourse was itself a product of prevailing opinions of gender.

However, Lindsay Parker has in this last year published startling new evidence interpreting the correspondence of one Rosalie Ducrollay Jullien that places elements of older historiography alongside the new. Intriguingly, Parker’s article provides a significant insight into the ‘ordinary’ bourgeois woman’s life and her perspective on the controversies of this period. However, Parker also re-emphasises Timothy Tackett’s point concerning the individuality of revolutionary experience, that actually there really is no standard by which to measure a generalised (female) revolutionary experience. 32 Nevertheless, this article is primarily fascinating because it appears to combine two formerly opposed strands of historiography, cementing the interpretation that Desan put forward, that revolutionary ideas and identity were in constant flux throughout that early period from 1791 to 1793, 33 together with theories that claimed the dominance in public mentality of gendered ideas present in Rousseau and Montesquieu. 34

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29 Hunt, *The Family Romance*, pp.5-9
30 Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, pp.2-7
31 Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France*, p.8
33 Desan, ‘The Social Revolution in French Revolutionary Families’, pp.996-7
34 Hunt, *The Family Romance*, p.4
Hunt cites Emile as vitally important in stereotyping the view of the perfect wife.
Parker indicates that Jullien herself has a turbulent relationship with pre-revolutionary discourse. Rousseau is mentioned abundantly by Parker as Jullien’s reference for both motherhood, parenting style and her companionable (Republic of) marriage. Jullien even names her husband (in a letter) as 'Charles Grandison', a model of the virtuous man inspired by a novel. Clearly Jullien's identity and behaviour is influenced deeply by such texts. However, Parker also emphasises Jullien’s frustration with the limits of that identity, drawing in Desan’s theory of continuous dialogue over gender. Jullien embraced the concept of public letter writing, discussing women’s roles in politics, and saw the meetings she attended with female activists as legitimate. Indeed, Parker indicates that her reserve in such debates decreased rapidly as state progress toward gender equality appeared to accelerate up to the summer of 1793. Clearly Jullien relished the additional opportunities for involvement in wider society, but conversely (and perhaps confusingly), on the collapse of the women’s movement and closure of clubs and societies, Parker stresses that Jullien felt 'no disappointment'.

Jullien's case then appears contradictory and confused. However, one might argue that it actually demonstrates that for this individual, political participation was an option as long as it appeared to be sanctioned by the ebb and flow of public opinion. New family-related laws are mentioned with amusement by Jullien, but hers is a family they barely affect. She already wields considerable influence over the men in her life, notably advising her son and husband who to vote for as well as exerting pressure on them to behave 'virtuously'. She also wields power over her audience via her public letter writing. These instances are of course where the ever-popular idea of the separate public and private spheres seems to dissolve and is subject to the kind of desperate attempts at reconstruction common in periodicals such as *La Décade Philosophique* and indeed legislation of late 1793. In theory, Jullien's power in the family *is* in the private sphere, as is her letter writing (which just happens to be published 'against her intentions') and meetings of exclusively female politicians in their homes. This point may seem laboured, but it is clear the Revolution's family

35 Parker, 'Family and Feminism in the French Revolution', p.45
36 Parker, 'Family and Feminism in the French Revolution,' p.43
37 Parker, 'Family and Feminism in the French Revolution,' p.45
38 Desan, 'The Social Revolution in French Revolutionary Families', pp.996-7
39 Parker, 'Family and Feminism in the French Revolution,' p.54
40 Parker, 'Family and Feminism in the French Revolution,' pp.56-7
41 Parker, 'Family and Feminism in the French Revolution,' pp.55-7
42 Colwill, 'Women’s Empire', pp.274-7
43 Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, pp.93-7
legislation merely formalised the power of certain types of women whose families already operated as a miniature 'republic'.

However, the key element in Jullien's story is the role political discourse played in both shaping her ideas and in being reshaped by political events. Her boundaries of what was respectable for a woman in terms of political activism changed with the times, but always seemed to have a semi-fixed idea of what was appropriate as her frame of reference. This correlates with the analyses of a number of other historians including Elizabeth Colwill, Robin Ikekami, and Vivien Jones, betraying an immense amount of paranoia on the part of male members of society towards gender boundaries. According to Elizabeth Colwill, the constant reconstruction of the idea of womanhood and masculinity was fundamental to the way politics played out in the new French Republic. Enlightenment ideals based in 'reason' persistently criticised women under the ancien régime, stereotyping affluent and influential salonnières as the very epitome of corruption. Such ladies were, moreover, cited as the inevitable product of a state in which male authority had been surrendered. The queen, the ultimate in excess indulgence and horrific licentiousness, was famously rumoured to control France 'from her boudoir'. In contrast, contemporary discourses such as Rousseau's Emile generally or implicitly state that women's power ought to be confined under the thumb of men's, in other words in a so-called 'private sphere'. The obvious 'lesson' for aspiring revolutionaries was that the ancien régime had been the inevitable outcome of unrestrained women's power in the world or, as La Décade Philosophique put it, a 'Women's Empire'.

To clarify, La Décade Philosophique was an influential scholarly publication of Girondin sympathies, regularly publishing papers in the most controversial of contemporary debates. La Décade and periodicals like it later firmly entrenched gender boundaries with 'scientific evidence' claiming women's natural physiology made them overtly maternal and dependent on men for qualifying their sexuality. Explicit details aside, eighteenth century science in general propagated an image of women as, if not dangerously unstable, then at least incapable of acting as

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44 Colwill, 'Women's Empire', pp.266-7
45 Colwill, 'Women's Empire', p.266
46 Colwill, 'Women's Empire, p.265
50 Colwill, 'Women's Empire', pp.260, 270-1
independent citizens.\textsuperscript{50} \textit{La Décade} was first published after the period in question and is never mentioned by Rosalie Ducrollay Jullien, but still gives an indication of a general cultural mentality. Indeed, Ikegami finds this to be the case, citing the general concern of both French conservatives and radicals alike that the collapse of moral gender boundaries would result in the catastrophic fall of social order.\textsuperscript{51} Jones’ comments indicate that a similar mentality existed among men on the other side of the channel in England too.\textsuperscript{52}

In such historians writings, an important pattern emerges which cannot be ignored for French gender politics. For women to influence power within their family was acceptable to some extent, hence the much idealised ‘private sphere’.\textsuperscript{53} Plus, that explains why the family legislation was not more strongly contested by men given the attitude in general towards female members of society. Family affairs were no longer the domain of a feudal father - they encompassed love and affection and thence women had to be empowered in a small way to realise the ideal. Lawmakers seem to have seen this as fair. In contrast however, public politics was clearly unacceptable. Women being projected as symbols of French patriotism or women’s clubs supporting male issues was apparently fine, indeed encouraged, as a way of ‘decorating or animating’ a male-initiated political message.\textsuperscript{54} However, as soon as women began to take action independently, their male counterparts for the large part turned against them. Indeed, reasoning for female activists was almost pointless since it was invariably personal insult (usually along the lines of being monstrous beings who possessed both or neither genders) which informed male responses to their political writing.\textsuperscript{55} The contempt shown by male politicians towards women exercising power is embodied in the poem exhibited in Jones’ text, amounting to, again, a near-hysterical accusation of some kind of bizarre, but of course hideous, cross-gender enterprise.\textsuperscript{56} Women exercising political power were seen as essentially trying to be men and were logically therefore anarchic. Jullien then, and women like

\textsuperscript{50} Colwill, ‘Women’s Empire’, p.267
\textsuperscript{51} Landes, \textit{Women and the Public Sphere}, p.79
\textsuperscript{54} Colwill, ‘Women’s Empire’, p.279-81
\textsuperscript{55} Colwill emphasises some extremely tenuous (and amusing) logical reasoning on the part of \textit{La Décade’s} contributors that never convincingly explains how men’s power can reign supreme if mothers are solely responsible for young boys’ education.
\textsuperscript{56} Ikegami, ‘Femmes-hommes, She-bishops’, pp.229
her were clearly eager to have political influence in this new type of government, but cautiously trod a fine line between the public and the respectable. With Desan's analysis, one can claim that this line shifted with the family legislation of the period which went some way towards undermining beliefs in female dependency.57 Inevitably, with this new confidence, some women decided to experiment, but it appears clear that even they were aware how shaky their bridge into the public sphere was. Mary Wollstonecraft's texts for example are full of deferential remarks, as if she herself feels she must act, yet is simultaneously disapproving of the way she is acting.58 Even the Marquis de Condorcet, defender of women's rights in the Assembly, feared women may gain ambitions above their station if exposed to full representation.59 The rhetoric of the prerevolutionary discourse and prevalent cultures of sexuality seem always to be in the background of such debates.

In conclusion, one can argue that revolutionary family legislation empowered certain women in family affairs, in their acceptable 'private sphere'. Those with property, older brothers or living within loveless marriages suddenly had the ability to protect their individuality. Moreover, it also encouraged women to petition for education or representation and appeared to contribute to a (unfortunately temporary) dispersal of the prevailing opinion that women were incapable of functioning as independent citizens. However, it is clear that even so, most, even those who petitioned and defended women's public interest, seem to have floundered in a state of contradiction, knowing that to raise a political voice was to act beyond their perceived gender boundaries and invite accusations of anarchy and subversion. By October 30th 1793, further official public participation by women was abruptly curtailed. All women's political clubs were declared illegal and an example set (execution) to a number of 'public' women including that epitome of the 'bad public woman', Marie-Antoinette.60 This apparent crackdown on disorder came at a time of general tumult, but it is clear that the tolerance of the government had become tired of the 'political woman' (which it itself had contributed to creating) and sought to enforce its gender boundaries more strongly.

57 Parker, 'Family and Feminism in the French Revolution,' pp.51-2
59 Landes, Women and the Public Sphere, pp.116-118
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