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Combattre la Terreur: Emplois de l'apostrophe dans les Mémoires de madame Roland

Abstract: During the French Revolution's Reign of Terror, Madame Roland wrote her Memoirs in prison while awaiting execution. They are divided into several sections and fragments, which were smuggled out of prison by her friends. One series of texts highlights the role played by Madame Roland and her husband during the early years of the Revolution, up to and including her arrest. The other part of her memoirs constitute recollections of her childhood and youth. Despite their obvious differences, both parts of her memoirs rely heavily on the rhetorical figure of apostrophe, which allows the memoirist to interrupt her narrative in order to address various individuals, dead or absent, and abstract concepts. Many examples of apostrophe analysed in this study are inscribed within a rhetoric of indignation which enacts a kind of civic virtue. They dramatize the conflict between Madame Roland and her political allies, on the one hand, and their shared enemies, on the other. Although apostrophes create frequent disruptions in the text, they also play an important role in the narrative structure of the Memoirs. Even more importantly, in spite of their disruptive appearance, they establish a stable connection between the memoirist and her readers, or posterity.

Key words: *Mme Roland – French Revolution – Memoirs – Rhetoric – Apostrophe*

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