Marguerite Durand Library (Paris)
Online transcription of Marguerite Durand’s manuscripts

General presentation

The transcription of the original manuscripts by Marguerite Durand, bound and kept in the library bearing the name of its founder, was established by Professor Michèle Magnin from the University of San Diego, California, Director of the French Section of the Languages and Literatures Department. She is owed a debt of gratitude for her important work with these texts, the deciphering of which was a daunting task despite Marguerite Durand’s large and usually legible handwriting. Many passages were crossed-out, reinserted or repeated. Pages were at times bound out of order or randomly, all of which made some often rather complex choices necessary.

This important transcription work, realized in collaboration with the curator of the Marguerite Durand Library, finally makes available to a large readership close to one thousand pages of heretofore unpublished material. These are texts written for speeches, conferences and classes. Some are rough drafts of articles, written at various periods of Marguerite Durand’s life from the time of La Fronde (1897-1905) until just before her death, on March 16, 1936.

Several texts (cf. presentation of each separate Tome below) were not suitable for transcription because they were too fragmented and/or confusing; very elliptical notes, random elements, visibly incomplete, could neither yield a reliable transcription or interpretation, nor afford a coherent reading experience.

As far as the transcribed texts are concerned, some unclear passages were also omitted; these cuts are signaled by brackets [ ] and do not abrade the general meaning. Conversely we restored some passages crossed out by Marguerite Durand with a blue pencil, because the passages conveyed interesting information. The restored sections are marked as such.

When the style is very abbreviated, the words within brackets [ ] are words added for a better comprehension of the sentences and smoother reading.

Similarly, obvious errors (spelling or punctuation mistakes, etc.) were corrected without any mention.

A digital version of the original manuscripts will soon be available. When completed, we hope to publish both versions (manuscript / transcription) side by side so readers can feel the emotions provoked by the original text, while enjoying an effortless reading of the transcription.

Annie Metz, Curator and Director of the Marguerite Durand Library
Marguerite Durand’s Manuscripts

TOME 1 Synopses

The transcription of the first tome comprises the nearly complete set of texts included in this volume.

Reflections on Love

A very brief and personal text wherein Marguerite Durand mentions aspects of her physical and moral concepts of love.

Anti-Semitism; The Dreyfus Affair; Séverine interviews Pope Leon XIII

Marguerite Durand discusses Edouard Drumond’s anti-Semitic newspaper, *La Libre Parole (Free Speech)*, causes of anti-Semitism at the end of the 19th century, and the Dreyfus Affair, particularly from the viewpoint of Séverine, a journalist who attended, with the Director of *La Fronde*, the lengthy and controversial second Dreyfus trial in Rennes in 1899. This text also alludes to the interview of Pope Leon XIII by Séverine in 1892, which is said to remain famous in the history of journalism.

Commemorative Speeches for Severine – in Memoriam, 1930

Speeches given by Marguerite Durand in April 1930 for the first anniversary of Séverine’s death - her friend and colleague. Durand describes the tributes paid to the great journalist (monuments, streets named after her, etc.), the Association of Séverine’s Friends, as well as the career and human and professional qualities of Séverine, who was one of La Fronde’s most renowned contributors.

Protection of Children

When pro-birth supporters demanded more children for France, Marguerite Durand confronted them and advocated instead for such measures as improved hygiene and pediatric nursing (puériculture) to reduce infant mortality. She denounced the absurdity of the measures in place to protect small children.

Exploitation of Children

A brief text, with two different versions, on “paternal powers” and their abuse.
Feminism –Women's Politics

A long series of texts – assembled in this first Volume, but written under varying circumstances and at different times – dedicated to the place of women in history and to their necessary access to all professions and to political life.

Work

A compilation of several texts dedicated to the issue of women's labor, one of Marguerite Durand's major themes. The first text, dated in 1907, the year when Marguerite Durand founded her Office du travail féminin (Office of Women's Work), discusses conditions affecting women factory workers of the Compagnie Générale d'Électricité (General Electric Company) in Ivry-sur-Seine, and illustrates the issues dear to the journalist: questioning the laws supposed to protect women, salary equality, etc.

Lay Schools

Written in 1931, a year of celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of lay school laws, this long text retraces landmarks in the history of education in France. It is a plea in favor of the schools of the Republic.

The Financial World: this text was not transcribed.

Empress Eugenia and Empress Augusta-Victoria

A text dedicated to the last French empress and the last German empress, wife of Wilhelm II. Both women died in 1921. Marguerite Durand disproves the “legends” that gave false impressions of them. The journalist was very attached to Empress Eugenia, a historical figure she considered to be one of the first feminists and for whom she launched the initiative for the Musée de l’impératrice (Museum of the Empress) in Pierrefonds.

Speech on “Les Eclaireuses” (1913), a play by Maurice Donnay

There are two versions of this text in the original manuscript. Only the first version appears in the transcription. Marguerite Durand makes a detailed analysis of and commentary on this feminist play in which the female characters – a lawyer, a writer, a physician, a journalist – represent various aspects of women’s emancipation. The play was a great success in 1913.
TOME 2 Synopses

The transcription of the second tome comprises four of the six texts included in this volume.

Courses at the school for girls, rue des Vinaigriers: 1921 - Dense but random notes, not transcribed here.

Municipal elections (1925) - Very elliptical text, comprised mostly of random notes. This text was not transcribed.

Humility no longer behooves women, Soroptimist Club, 1925

In this speech given in 1925 before members of the Soroptimist Club – an international network of professional women, founded in 1921 in the United States and in 1924 in France by Doctor Suzanne Noël – Marguerite Durand, who was herself a “Soroptimist,” refutes the distorted notion that women are incapable of professional life, notion born from the ignorance of women’s history and the role of women in all areas of professional activity. She also calls for women’s suffrage, denouncing the specious arguments put forth by its opposition.

Equality first, Liberal College of Social Sciences, November 12, 1927

The text of this speech (unfortunately incomplete) recalls the pretended excuses used to opposed women’s right to vote, and suggests that women first be granted eligibility. Marguerite Durand cites the many countries in which women’s electoral rights have been long established.

Feminism: what it has obtained, what it is still waiting for. Besançon, Friday, January 13, 1928

In this speech, Marguerite Durand retraces with broad strokes the history of feminism, going back to the crusades, to explain its distant origins.

Speech about the House of Women Journalists and on La Fronde, at the Society for the Improvement of the Fate of Women on January 22, 1933

This talk is about the summer Residence for Women Journalists founded by Marguerite Durand in Pierrefonds in 1932 in Séverine’s former home, “Les Trois Marches” (The Three Steps); the founder of La Fronde had bought this house upon her friend’s death in 1929.
TOME 3 Synopses

The transcription of the third tome comprises five of the six texts included in this volume.

Speech about certain famous women of the fifth arrondissement... 1934

A brief text, probably incomplete, of the speech delivered before the Society of the Montagne Sainte Geneviève; it recalls the Trinitarian nuns who taught Marguerite Durand, on rue Henner. She also recalls personal memories, going back to the days when she was a young boarder at the Comédie-Française.

The Art of Oratory

These are texts from the classes taught by Marguerite Durand at the École des Conférencières she founded in 1921 in Paris. This school was created to teach women how to speak in public in defense of their ideas. It is not known how long the school existed, but the concept was reinstated in 1932 by the Union française pour le suffrage des femmes (French Union for Women’s Suffrage); feminist advocate Marcelle Kraemer-Bach founded a school for speakers within the Social Museum.

Speeches on the vote for women

Compilation of undated texts for speeches on the above mentioned theme. However, from its context, the first text can be dated to 1927. There, Marguerite Durand condemns again, often vehemently, the timorous if not reactionary positions of senators and republicans alike.

Women in journalism

In this long and very interesting 1930 speech, Marguerite Durand develops a theme dear to her heart: women’s access to modern journalism. It is, according to her, “one of the conquests feminism can be proud of and whose merit cannot be disputed. Feminism has encouraged and must always drive women to embrace journalism as a career because it is among those professions that force women to get out of their homes, to see, to listen, to observe, to understand and to judge outside the limited circles of their family, friends, social class where customs and mores more than laws – one must concede – have constrained French women, restricting their intellectual horizon and curbing their fields of activity”. After retracing with bold strokes the
history of women’s journalism, she recalls the birth of her own vocation as a journalist, her “conversion” to feminism and the history of La Fronde.

**Speech delivered when honoring the memory of Hubertine Auclert with a commemorative plaque**

In this speech delivered on December 28, 1924, Marguerite Durand, in her name and in the name of the Union fraternelle des femmes (Fraternal Union of Women), pays homage to the actions and the methods employed by Hubertine Auclert (1848-1914), founder of La Citoyenne (a newspaper entitled “Women Citizens”) (1881-1891), and pioneer of the women's suffrage movement. Durand stresses the importance of transmitting the history of women’s struggles.

**Notes, reflections... on various topics:** *this text was not transcribed.*