Shame and Memory: The Construction of Selfhood in the French Novel from 1760-1830

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the roles of shame and memory in the representation of individual identity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France, focusing on four character types: the sensitive character, the ingénue, the émigré and the mournful character. Its corpus spans 1760 to 1830 and features works by Pierre de Marivaux, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Isabelle de Charrière, Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan, François-René de Chateaubriand, and Claire de Duras. It employs methodological approaches from the field of emotions history to view shame as a historical and cultural concept. It aims to show the impact of theories of *sensibilité* on the understanding of memory as a mental faculty underpinning selfhood, and the associations some authors made between shame, memory, and melancholy.

Chapter 1 illuminates the moralizing function shame and memory perform for the sensitive character in Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Chapter 2 focuses on the ingénue character's struggle to avoid social shame and illustrates memory's role in her acquisition of social knowledge in Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne* (1731-1742), Charrière's *Trois femmes* (1797) and Claire de Duras's *Ourika* (1824). Chapter 3 examines the traumatic nature memory sometimes gained during the Revolutionary period, and the social humiliation encountered by displaced nobles in Charrière's *Trois femmes* (1797) and Sénac de Meilhan's *L'Émigré* (1797). The final chapter considers the melancholy character type depicted in Chateaubriand's *René* (1802), and how melancholy, shame, and memory become more closely linked for individuals with unstable identities.

Viewing the construction of individual identity from the angle of shame and memory adds nuance to existing scholarship on the construction of selfhood. It also illuminates the ways in which questions of sex, social class, and race were addressed (or elided) in the literary works examined in this study.

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Introduction

This dissertation seeks to nuance existing scholarship on the evolution of individual identity in pre- and post-Revolutionary French culture by exploring what role shame, as a remembered emotion and experience, played in the construction of selfhood. It examines the role of shame in representations of the personal past in the works of selected French writers from 1760 to 1830, focusing on the active self-reflection available in prose fiction and autobiographical writing. It aims to explore how authors conceived of the role of memory in constituting selfhood, and how that was articulated in different ways in fiction. Memory is a faculty that records and recalls; it is a receptacle for human experience that is both observable – characters can recall memories and relive past experiences – and opaque – its workings cannot be viewed or dissected. It received attention from Enlightenment thinkers like Denis Diderot and Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, among others. Texts dealing with memory were often meeting places for literature and theory. Memory is also a form of narrative. Like literature, it weaves or glues together otherwise disparate moments or scenes into a linear sequence, a narrative whole. The quality of that narrative, whether complete or incomplete, chronological or serial, reveals the character of the individual who creates it, and who may be susceptible to bias, influence, disease, and emotion.

This last element, emotion, is essential to the idea of a subjective self. Emotions, positive or negative, can determine what is remembered, or forgotten, and what effect the act of remembering has in the present. Examining memory in conjunction with an emotion provides access to the subjective nature of selfhood as well as its mechanisms. Shame is an emotion that lends itself particularly well to such a study because it has an observable relationship with memory (characters remember shame and narrate it). It can also be found in religious as well as

secular contexts, individual as well as group settings. Because experiencing shame implies a kind of existential crisis that results from a feeling that the self has done something or become something that is incompatible with the character's idealized view of him or herself. Shame reveals how the individual conceives of right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and can characterize the relationship an individual has with him or herself, or with others.

While this is not the first study to examine memory or shame during this time period, existing scholarship has yet to study them in relation to one another, and no current study has performed a systematic analysis of this conceptual pair in narrative prose. The pre- to post-Revolutionary period is particularly significant for the cultural history of shame in the European context. Over the past two decades, historians of emotions have explored the relationship between particular historical and cultural contexts and the kinds of emotions they produce or valorize. In this view, context plays a central role in shaping the ways in which emotions are represented and experienced: new social systems and cultural events can produce new emotions and change conceptions of existing emotions and their prominence in daily life. In *The Navigation of Feeling*, for example, William Reddy depicts sentimentalism as an "emotional regimen" specific to pre-Revolutionary France and argues that it was replaced by a more self-contained (and, arguably, more shame-driven) mode of affective expression after the Revolution.[1] Other examples of this approach include Patrick Coleman's study of anger and gratitude, and Jan Miernowski's work on hatred.[2] More recently, Deborah Cohen has examined guilty family secrets and what was considered "shameful" in modern England, basing her

[1] William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[2] Patrick Coleman, *Anger, Gratitude, and the Enlightenment Writer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Jan Miernowski, *La Beauté de la haine: Essais de misologie littéraire* (Geneva: Droz, 2014).

research on private correspondence.[3] While some of these studies examined specific emotions, their focus is either historical rather than literary, or they do not consider how contemporary views of operations of the mind informed representations of an emotion's impact on the individual. Nor do they examine memory in conjunction with the specific emotion studied.

Because shame implies failure to respect rules or dictums, it reveals moments when social norms (like *bienséance*, sexual conduct, or codes of honor) or moral, ethical, or religious expectations have been violated or left unfulfilled. Therefore, studying shame in conjunction with memory will allow me to target the relationship between the individual and their social, cultural, and historical context. Examining how shameful experiences are retold or reimagined by literary characters reveals important evolutions in the two concepts and their respective roles in constructing the self, as well as what they reveal about the individual's place in society. Shame and its traces in memory were potent "actants" for the protagonists of this era's most popular narrative genres, like the memoir-novel, the epistolary novel, and autobiography. Examining the literary representation of shameful memories during a period of political and social metamorphosis can illuminate changes occurring in France's cultural landscape.

Libertine works and philosophy are not included in the present study or methodology because of the complexity and variety of ways shame was depicted in such works. The focus of this dissertation is narrative prose, both fictional and autobiographical, to the exclusion of theater. This is for reasons of cohesion, and because narrative prose tends to contain more overt reflections of the process of memory and the experience of emotions.[4] At first, my corpus may

[3] Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain* (London: Viking Penguin, 2013).

[4] Theater's representation of these elements occurs through dialogue, monologue, movement, and gesture, and therefore merits a separate study.

appear heterogeneous, featuring works that vary in date of publication, plot, and style. However, when viewed together, they tell a particular story of shame as a recollected emotion. The introspective focus of their narrative styles, and the interest of their authors in representing how remembering individual experience informs identity, provide a window into the psyches and imaginations of the characters these works present. The novel is a genre anchored in the representation and exploration of subjective, emotional experience. Its earliest critics regarded this as a flaw, a potentially dangerous and communicable inflammation of the passions and imagination.[5] That, however, makes it particularly well suited for this study.

The rise of the memoir-novel in the 1730s illustrates certain aspects of contemporary philosophical interest in memory as a mental faculty. The fiction of a discovered manuscript or the transcription of a character's life story told from memory became a standard fictional structure (Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, 1731 and Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne*, 1731-1745 come to mind). Memory was invoked as a kind of proof of authenticity. As it evolved, this genre's focus shifted away from an individual's relation of specific events, emphasizing instead self-reflection and analysis of reactions, motives, and sentiment. The prevalence of the memoir-novel beginning in the first half of the eighteenth century suggests that authors of this period viewed the individual as the sum of his or her memories, not merely memories of recorded events, but the recollection of recorded emotions.[6]

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[5] Rousseau, among others, was critical of the novelistic genre for this reason. On eighteenth century suspicions toward the novelistic genre, see Georges May, *Le dilemme du roman au XVIIIe siècle. Étude sur les rapports du roman et de la critique, 1715-1761* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

[6] Christophe Martin gives a solid overview of the history and evolution of the memoir novel genre in *Mémoires d'une inconnue: étude de la Vie de Marianne de Marivaux* (Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2014) 14-15.

The operations of memory are also important to the epistolary novel. Characters in such novels report past events to their correspondents, but also engage in a good deal of introspection, reaction, and reflection. Epistolary novels provide a distinct kind of literary laboratory for depicting and musing about shame. The nature of letter-writing between individuals implies a unique intended recipient, which provides the writer with at least the illusion of intimacy and safety. However, letters can be physical proof of an indiscretion, which is another potential source of shame should the correspondence be discovered. Such works as Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Laclos' *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782), Isabelle de Charrière's *Lettres écrites de Lausanne* (1784) and Sénac de Meilhan's *L'Émigré* (1797) have the additional advantage of presenting reflections and experiences of multiple and diverse characters. The polyvocal quality of the epistolary novel exposes the reflections of many characters, sometimes about the same event. This will allow me to explore how shame experienced by men and women differs, as well as that experienced by different kinds of characters (devoted wives, lovelorn youths, and exiles, to name the most prominent).

Finally, autobiographical works such as Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782) and *les Rêveries* (written from 1776-1778, published in 1782) are important as part of my dissertation's framework. Autobiography is perhaps the frankest and most public form of relating past experiences. It is both personal and exposed, particularly when it is written with the intent of publication. Rousseau presents his sometimes shameful past with a lift of his chin, daring the reader to find fault with him. In a word, though he records in detail the lingering shame he feels while retelling certain events even decades after they happen (the episode of the ribbon in the *Confessions*, for example), he represents himself as blameless by offering complex justifications

for his actions. Rousseau's bold presentation of shame is anticipated by other works of the time, but it also ushered in a shift in how shame was perceived and represented in French literature.

To frame how shame factored into the shifting construction of the self from 1760 to 1830, it is necessary to consider this emotion as a historically specific, culturally informed concept. This introduction begins therefore with a brief overview of the field of emotions history, which partly informs my methodology. The influence of the philosophical current known as sensationalism, and the larger movement known as *sensibilité*, on literary representations of shame from the second half of the eighteenth century to the first part of the nineteenth century. Sensibility underpinned various types of shame in the works in my corpus, from *fausse honte* (an idea particularly important for Jean-Jacques Rousseau) to gendered notions of honor. Finally, this introduction will provide a survey of social, cultural, and historical factors that modified the understanding of shame during my period of study, placing particular emphasis on the revival of melancholy in the post-Revolutionary period.

Methodology

This study combines close-text reading with a contextualizing approach borrowed from the field of history of emotions. The first focuses on formal stylistic and lexical elements of the texts of my corpus. The second entails viewing the emotion of shame as a concept that is culturally, socially, and historically specific. Analyzing shame's context, in conjunction with an examination of contemporary models of memory and emotion, will uncover both consistent and shifting forces that delimit the self as it was conceived during my period of study. Another aim of this dissertation is to determine the nature and function of particular instances of shame in the works in my corpus with the goal of revealing patterns, tendencies, or evolutions within and

across them. For example, factors that produce shame can be social or moral/religious, immediate or retrospective, public or private.

Passages of self-reflection available in prose fiction and autobiography give clues to how memory and shame impact the individual. Such passages reflect that the tradition of analyzing the passions, including shame, was multi-faceted and included literary and sociological aspects, as well as psychological, physiological, and philosophical components. The goal of examining these texts is to establish how shame was conceptualized as an element of the operations of the mind, of social commerce, and of morality. This background will provide a springboard for determining what evolutions occur in pre- and post-Revolution literary representations of shame. Another important angle of this study is the emerging importance of shame in French medical discourse, which tended increasingly to describe shame and memory as sources or symptoms of illness.

Finally, this study concentrates on memory in an individual, rather than collective, sense. Collective memory, especially in the case of trauma experienced during the Revolution and afterwards in the Napoleonic wars, has received a lot of attention and is a well-established field.[7] However, the present objective is to focus on individual identity through the memories and emotions of individuals in order to offer a clearer picture of how shame, as a moral or social experience, and memory as a faculty, function in the construction of individual identity.

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[7] On collective memory, see Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard) vol. 1 *La République* (1984), vol. 2 *La Nation* (1986) and vol. 3 *Les France* (1992). See also Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

History of Emotions and Sensibility

In keeping with Lucien Febvre's famous call in 1941 for a more rigorous study of emotions in history, scholars have been interested in uncovering how emotional life has evolved and changed over time.[8] The landscape of the history of emotions has shifted past the hydraulic conception of emotion, reminiscent of theories of the humors, which viewed emotions as pressurized liquid threatening to boil over at any moment. This view of emotion supported the "civilizing" model, associated largely with Norbert Elias, who described the Middle Ages as an overly emotional, violent period that gradually gave way to a civilized, restrained modernity.[9] According to that model, emotions were in need of strict moderation, and only modernity had cultivated the strategies and systems necessary to do so. Over recent decades, interpretations of emotional life throughout history have evolved beyond this oversimplification.

Of course, raw emotional experience is difficult to access in documents from the past. Historians of emotions agree that emotions are influenced by general history: individual identity, motivation, and culture all impact the ways in which emotional experience is described and presented.[10] However, they propose different, sometimes conflicting interpretations regarding the extent to which cultural and social influences, on one hand, or biology, on the other, alter the ways in which individuals and communities define and perceive emotions. In other words, they

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[8] Lucien Febvre, "La Sensibilité et l'histoire: comment reconstruire la vie affective d'autrefois ?" *Annales d'histoire sociale* 3, no. 1–2 (1941): 5–20.

[9] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (1939; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). Regarding this trend reflected in other work, see Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 821-45. For an overview of recent evolutions in the history of emotions, see Ute Frevert's chapter, "Topographies of Emotion" in *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000*, eds. Monique Scheer et al. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[10] Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," 839.

disagree on the question of the extent to which emotion is a universal human experience, and the extent to which emotion is shaped by social and historical context.

Walter G. Andrews identifies two prominent methodological approaches in the history of emotions. The first, an intellectual history approach, explores how people of the past understood emotions theoretically or scientifically.[11] This approach examines how emotions are represented or described in the philosophical, scientific, or medical texts of a given period. Dictionaries and encyclopedias can provide evidence of the evolution of accepted, official definitions of emotions as lexical items, and theoretical texts can shed light on how popular models of the mind and body conceived of the cause, function, and process of emotion. Contemporary definitions of relevant terms such as *honte, honteux/euse, pudeur, dignité, coupable,* and *responsable* are important starting points for grounding narratological readings of texts from my corpus.

The second approach, which he calls a literary/cultural approach, traces the emotional lives of people of the past by examining and interpreting the many and varied artifacts of their cultures and actions, such as juridical texts, diaries, and self-help or advice publications.[12] This second approach to emotions history (examining cultural production) provides additional social and personal contexts to period-specific emotions, showing nuances in the evolution of specific emotions unavailable in dictionaries. In an influential 1985 article, Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns proposed the neologism "emotionology" to describe such studies that focused on the "collective emotional standards of a society" extrapolated through analysis of historiography. This latter, bottom-up approach focuses on examining primary texts like personal

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[11] Walter Andrews, "Ottoman Love: Preface to a Theory of Emotional Ecology," *A History of Emotions 1200-1800* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012) 21.

[12] Ibid.

correspondence, advice literature, diaries, and medical and juridical publications.[13] My analysis will apply this approach to literature rather than non-literary historical documents and reveal how the literary depiction of shame reflected changing emotional regimes in French culture.[14]

In "Worrying about Emotions," Barbara Rosenwein expands the notion of emotionology to propose the concept of "emotional communities," or identifiable subsets of society that share values of behavior and emotion.[15] The character types around which my analysis is structured (the sensitive character, the ingénue, the émigré, and the melancholy character) are, in a sense, representative of such emotional communities in that these types embody repeated, and therefore identifiable, sets of traits reflective of specific social, historical, and cultural identities. For example, the sensitive character's sense of identity comes under fire when he or she cedes to social pressure. The ingénue struggles to reconcile her upbringing as a chaste, rigidly moral, and innocent individual with the often morally ambiguous demands of social hierarchy. The émigré struggles to maintain his or her elite identity even as the aristocracy's legitimacy is questioned, and he or she must flee the country to survive. Finally, the melancholy character experiences the effects of the Revolution on the structure of linear history and the morality of society as a crisis of identity that leads to moral corruption. As fictional reconstructions and representations of real-world social structures, these character types' experiences of shame show how this emotion was

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[13] Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (October 1985): 813–36, 813.

[14] More recently, Bob Boddice's *A History of Feelings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019) examines classical literature (the works of Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen, for instance) and discusses the opposition between reason and emotion that emerged during the Age of Reason.

[15] This combines the cognitive view of emotions (that emotions are part of a process of perception and appraisal, resulting from judgments of whether something is pleasurable or painful) with the often-conflicting social constructionist perspective, which views emotions and their display as purely social constructions.

triggered, remedied, or avoided in specific contexts, while also illuminating its potential impact on reputation and identity.

William Reddy's concept of "emotives" offers a way of conceiving emotional experience as a constantly revised, motive-driven process.[16] Emotives are "first-person, present-tense emotion claims" that are both descriptive (they name emotional states), and performative (they can confirm, intensify, or hide emotional states of the speaker). They constantly reflect back on the subject, who can revise them to reflect shifting motivation.[17] For example, a quickly blurted "I love you," may confirm the subject's affection for a partner, but can become, "That is, I greatly value your friendship," if the speaker recognizes discomfort, embarrassment or even revulsion in the expression of his or her interlocutor. Reddy employs the term "emotives" as part of a larger historical project in which he depicts sentimentalism as an overemotional foil for the more restrained "emotional regimen" that, he posits, followed the French Revolution. On the one hand, this concept offers something new when applied to the study of fiction. Specifically, in the novels of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, emotives gain new importance as tools employed by the author to achieve a specific representation of a character's identity or emotional struggle to the reader. For my purposes, statements that include emotion words linked to shame fall into the category of emotives and will help me focus my study. On the other hand, this concept also provides a useful model for mapping how changes in "emotional regimes," or the dominant emotional system in a given time and place, reflect, inform, and parallel social and

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[16] William M. Reddy, *The Invisible Code: Honor and Sentiment in Postrevolutionary France, 1814-1848* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[17] William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 105.

political change (although his historical account may overstate the role of emotional suffering in the events of the Revolution).

Rosenwein's *Emotional Communities* offers a second model, also tied to notions of political power, for understanding shifts in dominant emotional systems.[18] She explores how the coming to power of three different emotional communities in the Early Middle Ages affected dominant emotional styles. She places more emphasis than Reddy on the diversity and coexistence of various emotional communities within a specific historical moment, noting that an individual could belong to or pass between many emotional communities in a single day: cafés, meetings, family gatherings, appearances at court, for instance, all imply differing codes of emotional behavior. Rosenwein proposes another explanation for change: new emotional systems and modes of expressivity gain prominence when changing circumstances favor their values, goals, and expressive repertoires.[19]

What kind of changing circumstances favored one emotional system over another in France from the mid eighteenth to mid nineteenth centuries? The Revolution, certainly, brought social and political upheaval, and marked a rupture with the past. Prior to the Revolution, however, the new value given to *sensibilité* in the mid eighteenth century had already changed popular understanding of emotional experience and the ways in which emotion was described and perceived.[20]

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[18] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[19] Barbara Rosenwein, "Theories of Change in the History of Emotions," in *A History of Emotions*, 7-20, 19.

[20] In *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, trans. Keith Tribe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Jan Plamper suggests that the emergence of new theories of emotions can influence how emotional experience is perceived, evaluated, and described. *Sensibilité* was one such current of thought.

One expression of the larger paradigm of sensibility was the philosophical theory of sensationalism which posited that ideas, abilities, and consciousness arise through sensory impressions made on the body by its environment.[21] This heavily influenced way in which emotion was understood as a cognitive function, as a phenomenon shaped by external factors, and as a factor in the development of the mental faculties. One of the most prominent proponents of sensationalism, the abbé Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, combined John Locke's conviction that the source of knowledge is found in the senses with Newton's empirical method, which was based on observation rather than logical deduction. Condillac's philosophical model of the progressive development of the thinking self would influence contemporary thinkers and writers alike in their understanding of mental faculties like memory and imagination, and the role of the senses in their functioning.[22] Memory as a faculty of the mind, and as a constituent element of identity, received considerable attention from writers and thinkers in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, growing interest in memory in an individual and collective sense contributed to the birth of psychology and psychopathology, which included interest in *maladies de mémoire*.

Presented as a philosophical thought experiment, Condillac's *Traité des sensations* (1754) employs the fiction of a statue which is gradually granted use of each of the five senses in order to illustrate the successive development of each mental faculty and of consciousness in

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[21] On the theory of sensibility, see Tili Boon Cuillé, *Staël's Philosophy of the Passions : Sensibility, Society, and the Sister Arts* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013); Lucien Febvre, "La Sensibilité et l'histoire: comment reconstruire la vie affective d'autrefois ?" *Annales d'histoire sociale* 3, no. 1-2 (1941): 5-20; Anne Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[22] Annie Becq examines Condillac's model of the development of language, a complex activity involving memory and the senses. *Genèse de l'esthétique française moderne: de la raison classique à l'imagination créatrice 1680-1814* (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 1984).

general. Condillac posited that the perception of pleasure or pain triggered by a given sensation was the driving force behind the statue's progressive acquisition of knowledge and development of the higher thinking faculties. Condillac granted a central role to memory, which he defined as the faculty responsible for representing past sensations to the mind through the imagination. Therefore memory, according to Condillac's model, shapes selfhood. The statue initially experiences sensations as *manières d'être*: its sensations are modifications of its being.[23]

This carries implications for selfhood and for conceptions of the mind/body dynamic because according to this model, sensibility is the force, whether physiological or psychological, responsible for communication between mind and body. Sensory and emotional experiences were recognized as integral to the operation of memory, as factors that influenced the quality and tone of what memory recorded and how it was later recalled. The sense of self, according to some sensationalist theorists like Helvétius (*De l'esprit,* 1758, and the posthumously published *De l'homme*, 1773) was the result of the experiences an individual had in his or her social and physical environments. That view of the self was not universally embraced, but sense-based models were nonetheless prominent in this period's theories of mind and personal identity. Moreover, sensationalism remained an influential philosophical and scientific model for conceptualizing both the formation of thought and the body's relationship with its environment, social and physical, into the nineteenth century.[24]

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[23] Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Traité des sensations* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1984) 15. See also Falkenstein, Lorne and Giovanni Grandi, "Étienne Bonnot de Condillac," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/condillac/.

[24] For an examination of the lingering influence of sensationalism on the French psyche in the early nineteenth century, see Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987) esp. pp 90-95, and Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2005) esp. pp 104-8 and 141-48.

Sensationalism introduced a new way of describing emotions and of understanding their relationship to the body and its physical and moral health. Emotions were still linked to classical understanding of the passions in that they required close monitoring and moderation and could easily become excited. Rousseau's *Émile* (1762) illustrates the relationship that theorists of sensibility typically posited between external influences conveyed via the senses and the development of the mind. Applying this theory to the education of children, he created a fictional pupil, Émile, whose physical setting, diet, readings, interactions with others, and idea formation are strictly controlled by his tutor to produce a young man who is as virtuous and clear-headed as "nature" intended humanity to be. This was possible, Rousseau believed, because Émile is shielded from the denaturing influence of civil society.[25] Another of Rousseau's projects was creating a "morale sensitive" by which ethical behavior could be guaranteed by controlling the ways in which physical sensations affect the body. This project, sketched in Book 9 of the *Confessions*, was unpursued but remained an underlying element in works like *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.[26]

Sense-based theories of the mind also linked emotion to the physical body in new ways. Self-observation and self-analysis gained both physical and moral dimensions. Of course, reflection and introspection were popular long before sensibility gained momentum (Montaigne, Descartes, and La Fayette come to mind, for instance). Sensationalism granted new significance to this practice by supporting the belief that observed symptoms or mental activity could be

[25] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *l'Émile, ou de l'éducation* dans *Œuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* vol. IV (Gallimard: Paris, 1961). For more on the role of the senses in Rousseau's theories of education, see Geraint Parry, "Emile: Learning to Be Men, Women, and Citizens" in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[26] On *la morale sensitive,* see Anne Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology,* Chapter 7, and Rudy Le Menthéour, *La Manufacure des maladies: la dissidence hygiénique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011).

analyzed to reveal external causes. That is, a person's moral health could manifest itself in the physical body as well as his or her words and actions. Physiognomy, the practice of "reading" the body as an indicator of moral, spiritual, and intellectual qualities, was popular in eighteenth century moralist writing as well as in the novel.[27] Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne* (published from 1731-1745) for instance, overlaps descriptions of young Marianne's physical reactions to situations, like a blush or shiver of revulsion, with interpretations of their social and moral significance by an older, more experienced Marianne. Often, these works bore the title of the character whose story they told, suggesting that an individual's psyche could be accessed through the record of their memories and experiences, including their experiences of shame in certain social contexts.

Historical Notions of Shame and Related Concepts

One example of how theories of sensibility impacted described experiences of shame in imaginative literature lies with the sensitive character. The type on which Chapter 1 focuses was associated in the eighteenth century with an innate nobility and also considered essential to "genius, artistic creativity, and aesthetic discernment," as Anne Vila notes.[28] Many fictional characters were endowed with this trait as a mark of intellectual and social refinement (Prévost's Chevalier des Grieux comes to mind as one example). In certain cases, the sensitive character is isolated by his or her sensitivity and is misunderstood. Jaucourt's *Encyclopédie* article on moral

[27] See Peter Brooks, *The Novel of Worldliness* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1969) and Christopher Rivers, *Face Value: Physiognomical Thought and the Legible Body in Marivaux, Lavater, Balzac, Gautier, and Zola* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

[28] Anne C. Vila, ed. *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Age of Enlightenment, 1650-1800* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014) 6-7. For a thorough summary of the influence of theories of sensibility in the eighteenth century, see Tili Boon Cuillé, "Introduction: Setting the Stage" in *Staël's Philosophy of the Passionslity,* 10-19.

sensibilité explains that sensations are magnified in an *âme sensible*, intensifying sensory and emotional experience and making external impressions more difficult to attenuate: “Les ames sensibles peuvent par vivacité tomber dans des fautes que les hommes à procédés ne commettroient pas.”[29] These extremely sensitive individuals are therefore vulnerable to the influences of their environment. The sensitive character grappled with *fausse honte*, a kind of shame that was specifically tied to his or her unique vulnerability to external sensation, usually in the form of emotional influence or social pressure induced by others around them. In order to avoid shame, the sensitive character must therefore cultivate unshakable self-control to resist potentially dangerous external influences.

Morality and social norms tended to intertwine for many of the characters depicted in eighteenth-century French literature, especially with regard to shame. In order to better understand the importance placed on avoiding shame, it is useful to examine shame’s opposite, honor, and analyze the behaviors required to maintain this social ideal.[30] Ute Frevert defines honor as a “lost” emotion in the twenty-first century, pointing out that by 1970 honor had become outdated and unrelatable. However, it was “alive and well” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[31] At a time when the roles of men and women were distinctly different, it is unsurprising that the experience of shame and definitions of honor are gendered. For instance, men could take action to gain satisfaction for an insult or lost honor; women, by contrast, could

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[29] Jaucourt, Louis de. “Sensibilité (morale)” in ENCYC. Vol 15, p. 52.

[30] Although Descartes grouped shame and glory together in his *Passions de l’âme* (1649), this dissertation will not be examining glory. Glory as a secular concept is the result of an active, often military pursuit, and is limited to men, while honor has a broader definition and scope. Therefore, including it would not add any significant nuance to the present study of shame.

[31] Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History: Lost and Found*, The Natalie Zemon Davis Annual Lecture Series at Central European University, Budapest (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2011) 68.

lose honor, but could never restore it by themselves.[32] The words *honte* and *honteux* developed from the same root as *honneur*, meaning "modest" or "chaste," and applied to women for the first time as individuals in the sixteenth century.[33] We will see that for women, especially for the *ingénue* character type (the young aristocratic woman entering society for the first time after receiving a conservative education in relative isolation) notions of honor, and especially the related notion of virtue, represented a meeting point of social and moral concerns. This overlap resulted in a binary code of acceptable versus unacceptable behavior for women, as well as severe moral and social consequences in the event of a transgression.

For men in pre-Revolutionary France, honor usually lacked the religious and sexual implications that characterized female honor. It was a quality more than a sentiment.[34] Moreover, men had greater agency to restore or defend their honor through the public demonstration of qualities associated with masculine honorability like strength, courage, loyalty, or military prowess. Timothy Tackett points out the importance of a military ethos to the noble order that groomed its sons to participate in the army or navy: "most noblemen embraced a value system based on hierarchy and a strong sense of personal honor, which they were always ready to defend if necessary."[35]

One means of asserting or repairing honor was through the act of the duel. Duels were a uniquely violent means of staging the nobility's sensitivity to honor and insult and were

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 16-17.

[34] Nye, *Masculinity*, 17.

[35] Timothy Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015) 21.

extremely common despite being illegal. Tackett notes that over 800 duels have been documented in the eighteenth century alone, though he adds that this figure underrepresents reality since duelists attempted to hide their encounters from authorities.[36] Outlawed repeatedly during the *Ancien Régime* and punishable by death or imprisonment, duels also became an act of defiance and assertion of the independence of the nobility against absolutism. As a practice it was therefore representative of how the nobility viewed itself as a unique class.[37] The purpose of these physical disputes, whose rules were codified and ritualized in dueling manuals, was not necessarily to kill the opponent (most deaths resulted from succumbing to wounds or infection after the event), but, rather, to gain "satisfaction" by demonstrating one's willingness to die, or kill, in defense of honor.[38] Duels sought to undo or reverse the experience of humiliation through the symbolism of spilled noble blood, which equated to a cleansing or baptism.[39]

The experience of humiliation is related to and dependent on shame. While the experience of shame, social or moral, is an internal emotional event, humiliation is dependent on an external or public event or trigger such as an insult, physical offense, or accusation, and of a public audience (direct or indirect) of that event. Humiliation results in a lowering, either moral

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[36] Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror*, 22. Tackett notes that according to Count Tilly, an authority of court mores at the end of the Old Regime, "France is the country of dueling... Nowhere else have I encountered this disastrous sensitivity, this unfortunate predisposition to believe oneself insulted and demand redress for affronts that are in fact imaginary." Cited in *The Coming of the Terror*, 22.

[37] Some writers like Diderot, Rousseau and Voltaire saw the duel as an illustration of the decadence of a corrupt nobility that completely flouted concerns of morality as a direct opposition between "natural" or universal notions of virtue, and "man-made" concerns for reputation and bienséance. This violent tradition also illustrated the tension that existed between some forms of social behavior and their moral consequences, since dueling could result in the death of another.

[38] Nye, *Masculinity*, 16. For more on the history of the duel in France, see pp. 15-36. Anne-Pierre Coustard de Massi, "The History of Duelling. In Two Parts. Containing the Origin, Progress, Revolutions, and Present State of Duelling in France and England. Including Many Curious Historical Anecdotes" (1770), Eighteenth Century Collections: Range 14750 (Microfilm), British Library, Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

[39] Nye, *Masculinity*, 26.

or social, of the individual. Often in religious contexts, this lowering was literal: the penitent individual prostrated themselves before God to beg for absolution.[40] Socially, this lowering was purely symbolic but no less damaging. The *Encyclopédie* definition of *humiliation* illuminates this meaning: "se dit des reproches, des réprimandes, & généralement de tout ce qui abaisse, qui avilit devant les hommes, & qui mortifie l'orgueil" (*Encyclopédie* 8:352). This experience was to be avoided at all costs by the ingénue who hoped to safely preserve her reputation from such shameful contamination. The figure of the émigré, however, experiences almost unavoidable humiliation that resulted from poverty and the need to work for a living, as Chapter 3 illustrates.

If honor is predominantly a social construction, how could it serve as a moral injunction? This happened through the internalization of strategies of inheritance, reproduction, and power by noble families, which had a moralizing effect for men as well as for women. This process imbued honor with an ethical dimension that James Casey has compared to a pre-modern "civic responsibility" that characterized the noble caste.[41]

The eighteenth century marked a shift in the role of women in the social sphere. Joan DeJean's examination of the culture wars of the late seventeenth century (otherwise known as the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns) shows that in the late seventeenth century, literature became a more public phenomenon and included a "variety of previously silent groups," women among them.[42] As Anthony La Vopa put it in his examination of the term *labor*, women were the "emblems and guardians of a social aesthetic of play that scorned utility, and

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[40] "Humiliation se dit aussi des exercices de pénitence, par lesquels on s'abaisse devant Dieu, pour fléchir sa justice, & expier les fautes par lesquelles on l'a irrité." "Humiliation, s.f. (*Théologie, morale*)" in ENCYC. vol 8, p. 352.

[41] James Casey, *The History of the Family* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 38.

[42] Joan DeJean, *Ancients Against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) x, xi.

that required that the performance of intelligence appear to be effortless, untainted by the concentrated and sustained effort that the term 'labor' evoked."[43] Elena Russo explores the reversal of this trend of worldliness in the middle of the eighteenth century, when "social aesthetic play" in which women engaged began to be seen as artifice, affectation, and *préciosité*.[44] Writers and philosophes like Montesquieu, d'Alembert and Rousseau questioned worldly sociability as a cultural practice, code of manners, and language. They rejected not only a certain conception of gender but also the language that conveyed it.[45] Concerns over the perceived effeminization and therefore emasculation of thinkers and writers, and over literary production that engaged in or promoted worldly sociability, reflected a larger concern for the moral corruption created by artifice and decadence and a lack of social utility. Contemporary notions of feminine honor would reflect this concern and offer an alternative femininity that was associated with chastity, *pudeur*, and modesty, the opposite of the precious affectations of the *salon*.

Women, especially of the nobility, were therefore held to a model of passivity and chastity under the Ancien Régime. For them, honor was inextricable from sexuality. Robert Nye argues that concerns for female chastity in the noble classes related directly to the regulation of paternity and inheritance.[46] Families therefore sought to prevent the division and loss of wealth among multiple and potentially illegitimate (read: unsanctioned) heirs; thus, chastity became associated with proper feminine behavior, virtue, and purity. A young woman's honor was, in

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[43] Anthony LaVopa, *The Labor of the Mind: Intellect and Gender in Enlightenment Cultures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017) 21.

[44] Elena Russo, *Styles of Enlightenment: Taste, Politics and Authorship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) 109.

[45] Ibid., 11.

[46] Nye, Masculinity, 34.

many ways, that of her family, since anything she did to damage her reputation had direct social consequences for their social standing. Accordingly, the honor embodied by her chastity was a quality her family had to protect until her marriage. A young woman could hope to add to her family's honor by securing an advantageous marriage to someone of higher social status or of greater wealth, and then by providing her husband with healthy heirs. A woman who had lost the purity of body and soul was deemed "fallen" and could never reclaim her honor. Seduction could only be resolved through the legitimizing contract of marriage to the seducer.[47]

For this reason, educational treatises, legal texts, and religious sermons all highlighted the intimate connection between a woman's "moral existence" and her chastity.[48] Such texts framed that association as something that arose from the "natural" order of things, universalizing and legitimizing a moral code that was essentially social, invented to protect man-made concerns and interests.[49] The *ingénue* character type of Chapter 2 is educated according to these principles and therefore has difficulty in dissociating moral consequences from certain kinds of social behavior. Her assumptions about society, and about her own honor (or loss of it), are tied to her belief in morality as a universal and absolute dictum.

La pudeur was an important way of expressing a woman's devotion to virtue or feminine honor, as it manifested as a reluctance to reveal intimate thoughts or feelings (or parts of the body) in favor of carefully moderated, controlled presentations of the self to others. Defined by the *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française* (1762) as "Honnête honte, mouvement excité par l'appréhension de ce qui blesse ou peut blesser l'honnêteté & la modestie," it was also linked to

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[47] For a discussion on the distinction between rape and seduction in juridical terms, as well as their consequences, see Jillian Slaight, "Resisting Seduction & Seductive Resistance: Courtroom Conflicts Over Consent in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 42 (2014): 54-64.

[48] Frevert, *Emotions in History*, 71.

[49] Ibid., 72.

timidity.[50] *La pudeur* should not be confused with shame itself, however, since it is an emotional experience that, as Anne Vincent-Buffault puts it, "anticipe la honte pour mieux l'éviter."[51] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *la pudeur* was often expressed through involuntary corporeal movements. For instance, a blush, a lowered gaze, a trembling voice or the inability to speak indicate that a character senses or perceives a situation or behavior that could produce shame or humiliation, or reveal more of the character's inner thoughts or feelings than was seemly. In some circumstances there was ambivalence surrounding the sincerity of visual or corporeal signs associated with *pudeur*, which could be interpreted as a pure act of coquetterie (a superficial display of rehearsed but insincere expressions or gestures associated with modesty).[52] In contrast, true *pudeur* could attribute charm to the clumsiness of the *femme honnête* who sought to veil intimate thoughts for fear of inspiring too much admiration in an onlooker.[53] Authors employed *pudeur* in various ways during the 18th century, for instance, in Montesiqueue's *Lettres persanes* (1721), *pudeur* is "orientalized;" in Diderot's *La Religieuse* (1780) *la pudeur* is essential to maintain Suzanne's innocence in the eyes of her reader, Croismare; and in Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788), it is pushed to such extremes that Virginie dies from it. *La pudeur* will play an important role for the *ingénue* character type's ability to assert her honorability and avoid shame.[54]

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[50] J. Rossard, *Une Clef du Romantisme: La pudeur* (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1974) 12-3. "*La pudeur,* s.f.," in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie francaise*, 4th ed, 1762.

[51] Anne Vincent-Buffault, "La domestication des apparences" in *La Pudeur : la réserve et le trouble*, ed. Claude Habib (Paris: Autrement, 1992) 126-135, 126.

[52] Rossard, *Une Clef du Romantisme*, 12-13.

[53] Vincent-Buffault, "La domestication des apparences," 127.

[54] It is interesting to note the *Dictionnaire de la langue vivante*'s record of occurrences of the word *pudeur*, which increased to 63 occurrences per million words in 1750, declined slightly to 52 per million words from 1800 to 1850, before steadily declining throughout the twentieth century.

Sensibility plays an important part for the latter character type as well, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century: it is the perceived root of sociability and is often portrayed as a kind of social sixth sense that informs the noblewoman's intuition about appropriate or inappropriate modes of behavior. This facet of sensibility forms another part of the argument for a "natural" basis to the relationship between a woman's chastity, her morality, and her social behavior. Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne* illustrates this kind of sensibility in action, since his heroine succeeds in navigating the subtle waters of the French social elite – and avoiding inappropriate sexual advances – on the strength of her social instincts alone. For the young Marianne, these social instincts arise from an innate "nobility" since she is not initially raised in the manner typical of a *fille de condition*.[55] In the elite culture that provides the backdrop to Marivaux's novel, dress, speech, gesture, comportment, and toilette all informed a young female aristocrat's reputation with family and peers.

However, some authors questioned the strict codes of honorable conduct associated with the nobility, as well as the idea that noble blood imparted any kind of innate social knowledge. Such critiques should not be confused with a trend of criticizing social mores and supercilious courtly behavior that had existed since the seventeenth century (Molière, for instance, makes such a critique through the character Alceste in *Le Misanthrope*).[56] By contrast, during and after the Revolution, some authors questioned the practicality of the strict moral educations associated with traditional expectations of female behavior. In the aftermath of the Revolution, some authors like Isabelle de Charrière and Claire de Duras problematize this model of virtue and

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[55] Marianne is adopted by a curé and his sister after a tragic accident that leaves her an orphan : "je n'appartins plus qu'à la charité de tout le monde" (6). Pierre de Marivaux, *La Vie de Marianne suivie du Paysan Parvenu*, vol. I, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1865).

[56] On literature's representation of worldliness, see Emmanuel Bury, *Littérature et Politesse: l'invention de l'honnête homme 1580-1750* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996) 105-111.

honor by confronting it with practical matters of survival.[57] They also raise questions of equality and intolerance during and after the Terror. In these novels, universal, religious-based codes of moral behavior conflicted with situations encountered by their heroines in reality. Concerns for the individual's survival (access to food and shelter, and financial and social stability) take precedence over social and theoretical codes of conduct.

In this troubled period, shame remains tied to sexuality for the *ingénue*, but the emergence of more clearly delineated public and private spaces arguably allows the *ingénue* greater agency in her struggle for self-preservation. Secrecy and intimacy, especially in the form of relationships of complicity and solidarity with other women, were spaces for self-exploration where moral transgressions could be tolerated so long as they were not disclosed to the public sphere. The public arena, by contrast, required a more practical approach. In other words, the skills required to successfully preserve public reputation were gained through extensive real-world experience and were not inspired by social instinct alone. In these new post-revolutionary settings, possessing noble blood (and a noble education) was often not an advantage. This idea is illustrated, in different ways, by Charrière's *Trois femmes* and by Duras's *Ourika* (published in 1824 but set during the Revolutionary period).

The need to adapt to the new circumstances created by the Revolution plagues another character type, the male émigré, a French noble forced to flee the country. For the émigré as represented in literature, the "civic responsibility" of his class meant he was honor-bound to act in defense of his king and to protect the social order against attack and destruction. The decision to emigrate for many noblemen was therefore inextricable from their sense of duty to defend the

[57] On women writers during the Enlightenment, and the social pressures and legal restrictions they faced, see Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

monarchy and to illustrate their honorability. In fact, the path of emigration that took noblemen to the émigré armies in Brussels and Koblenz was referred to as the *Chemin de l'honneur*.[58]

The émigré's internalization of notions of honor complicated his sense of purpose and belonging once he found himself abroad. For some Ancien Régime men, a loss of honor branded one a coward. The *Encyclopédie* article "*Poltron, Lâche*," framed these nouns in military terms as one who retreats in battle or fails to defend oneself. This kind of individual is useless to comrades or family who might otherwise depend on him: "Il ne faut pas compter sur la résistance d'un *lâche*, ni sur le secours d'un *poltron*. [...] *Quiconque pour l'empire eut la gloire de naître, Est un* lâche *s'il n'ose ou se perdre ou régner*."[59] The notion of utility to others – to one's king, vassals, or family – becomes particularly important for some male émigré characters who face the challenging decision of defending their country from without by force, or of sacrificing traditional notions of honor to provide for loved ones. The latter implies accepting work for pay, a humiliation that reflects both the loss of elements that once scaffolded the noble identity, and an acceptance of that loss, sometimes in a paradoxical attempt to illustrate the individual's honorability through self-sacrifice. Some characters like the duchesse de Montjustin of *L'Émigré* accept this shameful social demotion. Just as dueling allowed the nobility to demonstrate their dedication to honor by illustrating their willingness to risk life and limb, accepting work was often represented by authors of emigration novels as a noble sacrifice, a voluntary act of humility that lent a veil of honorability to an act otherwise shrouded in shame.

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[58] Kirsty Carpenter, *The Novels of Madame de Souza in Social and Political Perspective* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2007) 62. See also Suzanne Desan, "The Family as Cultural Battleground: Religion versus Republic under the Terror" in K. M Baker, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of the Modern Political Culture* Vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[59] "Poltron, Lâche, (*Synon.*)" in ENCYC. vol 12, p. 935. Original emphasis.

During the period of the Consulate, Empire, and Restoration (1800-1830), the question of the individual's relationship with the past and events of the Revolution was raised by many writers and thinkers, among them Germaine de Staël and François René de Chateaubriand. Literary writers associated with the nascent Romantic movement depicted characters who struggled to situate themselves with respect to family and tradition on one hand, and emerging modernity on the other. The medical sphere reflected this question as well, as is evident in the growing attention given to *maladies de la mémoire* at the turn of the century. Melancholy in particular became an important illness associated with the trauma of the Revolution. For some authors, the experience of melancholy (featured especially in Chapter 4) became a way of representing the singularity of the individual and in his or her search for moral regeneration and comfort.

Chapter 1

Shame, Memory, and Virtue: Rousseau's Sensitive Character

This chapter explores the social and moral implications of shame and memory for the sensitive character so popular in this period's literature. Analysis focuses particularly on Rousseau's autobiographical *Confessions* (published posthumously in 1782 and 1789) and his novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) because these works feature protagonists imbued with the trait of sensibility: the Jean-Jacques character of the *Confessions* and the lovers, Julie and Saint-Preux, are uniquely sensitive individuals. Through these characters, Rousseau illustrates the relationship between the trait of sensibility, the function of memory, and the experience of shame. As was mentioned in the introduction, the *âme sensible* is more susceptible than the average individual to the influence of external sensory experience. The sensitive character is therefore particularly vulnerable to a specific brand of socially-driven shame called *fausse honte*.

First, this chapter begins with a close reading of the episode of the stolen ribbon from Rousseau's *Confessions* in order to define *fausse honte* and distinguish it from what I will call moral shame.[1] In Rousseau's oeuvre, the experience of *fausse honte* highlights the sensitive character's uniqueness. It can also negatively impact the sensitive character's trajectory in his or her struggle for virtue. Together with the social/moral dichotomy established by Rousseau in his political writing, his use of the term *fausse honte* in his autobiographical works reflects larger concerns for the growing influence, in his view, of civilization on humanity. Had mankind lost its morality? How could one combat or reverse the effects of post-lapsarian corruption? This became a central challenge for his fictional characters Julie and Saint-Preux. *La Nouvelle Héloïse* stages conflict between social forces, which are invariably viewed as corruptive, and moral

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[1] For purposes of clarity, I will refer to the author as Rousseau, and the fictionalized version of himself that he presents in his autobiographical works as Jean-Jacques.

precepts like filial duty and chastity, in an invitation of self-improvement and introspection for its readers. Memory can aid or hinder that process and presents another challenge to the sensitive individual, who is strongly affected by remembered events and emotions.

Fausse honte *and the Sensitive Character*

Madeleine Therrien identifies a psychological form of shame in Rousseau's autobiographical works that comes from an older form of *honte*, namely *fausse ou mauvaise honte*.[2] Although this term was rarely used in the eighteenth century, it appears frequently in Rousseau's autobiographical works. It is defined by the *Robert* dictionary as a "sentiment pénible de son infériorité, de sa bassesse, de son indignité devant sa propre conscience, ou de son humiliation devant autrui, de son abaissement dans l'opinion des autres."[3] Littré's dictionary adds, "honte de ce qui n'est pas blâmable" and "timidité mal placée."[4] *Fausse honte* is a sense of embarrassment caused by public opinion, and is a feeling associated with timidity or a lack of confidence.[5] The negative qualifiers "fausse" or "mauvaise" exclude this term from the realm of morality, or behaviors that are "blâmable."

The term also appears in the 1694 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, and in the fourth edition (1762) gains a defining parable: "Il ne faut pas avoir honte de bien faire.

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[2] Madeleine B. Therrien, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Réflexions sur la notion de honte," *Enlightenment studies in honor of Lester G. Crocker*, eds. Alfred J. Bingham and Virgil W. Topazio (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1979) 329-335, esp. 329-330.

[3] Quoted in Madeleine B. Therrien, "Réflexions sur la notion de honte," 330. My emphasis.

[4] "honte," in Émile Littré's *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, https://www.littre.org/definition/honte. This entry also gives the following example from Voltaire's *Charles XII*, 8: "Il [Charles XII] avait conservé, dans l'inflexibilité de son caractère, cette timidité qu'on nomme mauvaise honte."

[5] "Je n'étois plus cet homme timide et plustôt honteux que modeste, qui n'osoit ni se présenter ni parler." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions* in *Œuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, vol. I (Paris: Gallimard, 1961) 417. Subsequent references will be to this edition and will take the form of (OC, 1:page number).

C'est une *mauvaise honte*, une *fausse honte*. […] Il ne faut pas qu'une *mauvaise honte* empêche de faire une chose qui n'est point blâmable d'elle-même."[6] The latter example underscores the concern that a feeling of *fausse honte* can discourage moral behavior or muddy an individual's ability to determine the correct course of action in social situations. Similar to today's notion of peer pressure, *fausse honte* is an emotional experience produced by an individual's concern for their social reputation.

A pertinent and useful example of *fausse honte* and its importance to the Jean-Jacques character's conception of himself can be found in the case of the stolen ribbon in the *Confessions*. This episode shows how Rousseau represents his sensibility through his experience of false shame and the ways in which he mobilizes the emotion to gain his reader's sympathy. After the young Jean-Jacques is caught stealing a ribbon from his benefactress, the Comtesse de Vercellis (who has just passed away), he blames the theft instead on the innocent servant Marion. This lie, as well as his subsequent inability to retract it, is triggered by his feelings of *fausse honte* and timidity in front of an assembly of important figures: "Je craignois peu la punition, je ne craignois que la honte; mais je la craignois plus que la mort, plus que le crime [...] la honte seule fit mon impudence [...] Je ne voyois que l'horreur d'être reconnu, déclaré publiquement, moi présent, voleur, menteur, calomniateur" (OC 1:86). The threat of punishment and the gravity of the theft itself do not trouble him. He thinks only of the embarrassment of being labeled a thief, of being incorrectly defined by one impulsive and regrettable action. His honesty would have been possible, he assures the reader, if only he had been interviewed alone, away from the gaze of the household (now overseen by the Comte de la Roque): "la présence de tout le monde fut plus forte que mon repentir" (86). The tense atmosphere overwhelms his sense of what is right.

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[6] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st edition (1694), s.v. "honte."

Rousseau owes much of his conception of *fausse honte* to Plutarch.[7] An avid reader of Plutarch, Rousseau was likely aware of the essay "*fausse honte*" in his *Moralia*.[8] Plutarch qualified *fausse honte* as a passion, which in his view must therefore be carefully moderated. The emotion exposes the individual to potential exploitation by others, among other possible negative consequences. The remedy Plutarch prescribes can only be achieved if one has already succumbed to false shame. Since the influence of *fausse honte* typically leads to regret of a moral nature, remembering past humiliation and remorse should allow the individual to consider the long-term, moral consequences of any action, escaping the influence of immediate emotional pressure. Therefore, those who have experienced *fausse honte* are better equipped to recognize it and mitigate its effects in the future. In this way, the habit of recalling the memory of past experiences and their consequences can transform an instance of moral weakness into an opportunity to cultivate moral strength. In fact, Plutarch casts this remedy of experience-based reason as a generalizable solution "qui sert contre toutes les passions."[9]

Why is this borrowing from Plutarch significant? One way of interpreting it is in light of Lucien Febvre's observation that authors who employ obscure, antiquated, or foreign emotional terminology indicate a linguistic and conceptual need to expand existing lexicon to account for

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[7] Keller points out that Rousseau began reading at Plutarch at 6 and by 8, "knew it by heart". Abraham C. Keller, "Plutarch and Rousseau's First Discours," in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 54, vol. 1 (1939): 212-22, 214. Rousseau often mentions his enjoyment of Plutarch, for instance, in the *Dialogues* he writes, "Les hommes illustres de Plutarque furent sa première lecture dans un âge où rarement les enfants savent lire. Les traces de ces hommes antiques firent en lui des impressions qui jamais n'ont pu s'effacer" (OC 1: 819). On Italian influence in the *Nouvelle Héloïse* see Bernard Guyon, *Œuvres Complètes,* vol. 2, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1961) 1338-1341.

[8] Plutarch, "De la fausse honte (De Vitioso Pudore)," *Œuvres morales*, vol. VII, partie 2, trans. Robert Klaerr and Yvonne Vernière (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974) 26-44.

[9] Ibid., 44.

new experience: “S’il y a emprunt, c’est qu’il y a besoin.”[10] Rousseau reaches for a rare term that is at once useful to him, and of great personal significance, because he needs to describe his unique relationship (unique because of his sensitivity) with the world around him. Rousseau integrates this notion of *fausse honte* into his portrayal of himself in order to present a heretofore unexplained but essential element of his identity: the disparity between his public appearance and his *identité intérieure* (as he feels it to be) is rooted in his unique *sensibilité*.[11] On the one hand, *la fausse honte* is a means of exposing his wrongdoing without allowing these events to define him. On the other, his experience provides a kind of inoculation or preventive remedy against repeating the same mistake in the future. Rousseau emphasizes that his intense feelings of remorse over his lie persisted into adulthood and even worsened, causing him physical pain when he recalls the events: “J’en emportai les longs souvenirs du crime et l’insupportable poids des remords dont au bout de quarante ans ma conscience est encore chargée, et dont l’amer sentiment, loin de s’affaiblir, s’irrite à mesure que je vieillis” (OC 1:84). The 1762 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* defines *remords* simply as “Reproche que fait la conscience.”[12] Rousseau employs *remords* in this sense to refer to the feeling of regret and pain he experiences as moral consequences of actions caused by his succumbing to *fausse honte*. In other words, it indicates moral shame, and speaks of the persistence of a memory of an immutable past event that continues to haunt the Jean-Jacques character in the present.

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[10] Lucien Febvre, “La Sensibilité et l’histoire: Comment reconstruire la vie affective d’autrefois ?” *Annales d’histoire sociale* 3, no. 1-2 (1941): 5-20, 14.

[11] For an analysis of Rousseau’s struggle with his public image versus his private identity, see Antoine Lilti, “The Writing of Paranoia: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Paradoxes of Celebrity,” *Representations* 103 (Summer 2008): 53–83.

[12] *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 4th edition (1762), s.v. “remords.”

Rousseau seems to live out the very remedy prescribed by Plutarch. The duration and intensity of Rousseau's shame suggests that the actions he committed under the influence of *fausse honte* led to a lasting feeling of moral shame different from the initial social pressure that prompted him to lie. Moral shame is a sense of failing to meet an ideal model of virtue or conduct separate from, and often in opposition to, social convention. Shame exerts a powerful and lasting influence on Rousseau's identity as he describes it in the *Confessions* and later inspired the fourth *Promenade* in his *Rêveries* (written between 1776-1778 but published in 1782), which is dedicated to the evils of lying. His character Julie also serves as a mouthpiece for this hard-learned lesson: "c'est la fausse honte qui mène à la véritable, et la vertu ne sait rougir que de ce qui est mal" (NH V, 13, 632).[13]

Therefore, the character Jean-Jacques' *sensibilité* is deeply linked to his conception of shame, and to shame's relation to memory as he describes it. His *sensibilité* is expressed here as a heightened capacity to be equally affected by remembered emotions and experiences as those he experiences in the present. In other words, experiences charged with strong emotions or passions, like shame, are re-lived vividly each time they are remembered. This is perhaps an advantage in the context of Plutarchian *fausse ou mauvaise honte* in that the intensity of Rousseau's remembered shame and remorse helps to shield him against such passions in the future.

La sensibilité morale that Rousseau attributes to the Jean-Jacques character in the *Dialogues* can shed some light on the split the author establishes between the social and the moral. Moral sensibility, as he defines it, is "la faculté d'attacher nos affections à des êtres qui

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[13] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in *Œuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, vol. 2, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1961) 632. All subsequent references to this work refer to this edition and appear in-text in the format (NH Book, Letter, Page).

nous sont étrangers" (OC 1: 805).[14] He experiences it as a total eclipse of reason by the passions he feels for and from those around him, the opposite of the reason-based cure Plutarch proposes against an excess of the passions. The Rousseau character writes (of Rousseau, the author, referred to in the *Dialogues* as Jean-Jacques), "jamais il n'exista d'être plus sensible à l'émotion" (OC 1: 812) and, "Enfin l'espèce de sensibilité que j'ai trouvée en lui peut rendre peu sages et très malheureux ceux qu'elle gouverne [...] ils commencent par ne suivre que leurs penchans et finissent par vouloir rétrograder, mais trop tard, quand leur raison plus tardive les avertit enfin qu'ils s'égarent" (811). The emotions with which his sensibilité swamp his mind make it impossible for him to judge any situation rationally until the passions leave him and he is once again able to reason. Of course, for Rousseau society is far from an inherently moral system. Quite the contrary: society produces "passions factices," like *fausse honte*, that threaten an individual's ability to behave morally or ethically.[15]

Better to Have Loved and Lost: Shame and Memory in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*

Rousseau attributes the characteristic of sensibility, which is so important to his own sense of identity, to the protagonists of his novel as a mark of their exceptionality.[16] He writes of Saint-Preux in Book IX of the *Confessions*, "Je m'identifiois avec l'amant et l'ami le plus qu'il

[14] In contrast, the *Dialogues* defines an opposing and more animalistic *sensibilité physique, organique et passive* as "n'avoir pour fin que la conservation de notre corps et celle de notre espéce par les directions du plaisir et de la douleur" (OC 1: 805).

[15] Rousseau describes these "passions factices" in his *Second Discourse*. He argues that society produces new passions that do not exist in nature, and which expose mankind to selfishness, pride, and hypocrisy: "la société n'offre plus aux yeux du sage qu'un assemblage d'hommes artificiels et de passions factices qui sont l'ouvrage de toutes ces nouvelles rélations [...] le citoyen toujours actif, suë, s'agite, se tourmente sans cesse pour chercher des occupations encore plus laborieuses [...] Il fait sa cour aux grands qu'il hait et aux riches qu'il méprise; il n'épargne rien pour obtenir l'honneur de les servir ; il se vante orgueilleusement de sa bassesse et de leur protection, et fier de son esclavage, il parle avec dédain de ceux qui n'ont pas l'honneur de le partager" (OC 3: 192).

[16] For an in-depth discussion of sensibility as a trait of distinction, see Anne Vila, "The Moral Hygiene of Sensibility: Rousseau and Tissot" in *Enlightenment and Pathology*, esp. 198-199.

m'étoit possible, mais je le fis aimable et jeune, lui donnant au surplus les vertus et les défauts que je me sentois" (OC 1: 430). Julie is no less imbued with this trait, which is essential to her magnetic personality, and earns her and Saint-Preux renown within their social universe. Like their creator, the characters experience struggles with *sensibilité*'s symptomatic *fausse honte*. Saint-Preux's embarrassed inaction when he finds himself in a brothel is one example. A second occurs when Julie yields sexually to Saint-Preux, triggering a crisis of identity she will later have to repair. Both of these episodes parallel the evolution from *fausse honte* to moral shame illustrated in the stolen ribbon episode.

In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, passionate love complicates the protagonists' struggle for virtue. Male and female characters also experience shame differently. Julie, the female protagonist, stands to lose far more as a young noblewoman than does Saint-Preux, the low-born tutor and male protagonist, should their liaison be exposed. Julie's dedication to virtue and her family's honor and reputation prevents even a secret marriage from sanctifying her union with Saint-Preux. However, the tension between the dictates of virtue and the desires of passionate love throws Julie into an irresolvable limbo, and she is seduced by Saint-Preux. Julie experiences the shame of her seduction as a silent, painful burden that threatens the fabric of her identity. Her sense of loyalty to her family prevents her from running away with Saint-Preux, and because of her concern for her family's reputation, confession is more risk than opportunity for forgiveness.

In contrast, Saint-Preux finds relief for shame in confession and absolution rather easily. Without family ties, he is able to flee shame in a literal sense by traveling, distancing himself from his crimes and those who would hold him accountable for his actions. He is not troubled by his actions, which he feels are justified by the powerful love he feels for Julie; he is only troubled that he cannot possess her. The love of a well-born and unique woman like Julie is an

achievement for Saint-Preux, while for Julie their relationship represents potential ruination. Ultimately, Julie trades her personal happiness for the more moderated sense of contentment found in self-sacrifice and conformity to traditional feminine roles: she marries the man her father has chosen for her, bears his children, and cultivates religious devotion.

My analysis will first focus on Saint-Preux in order to compare him with the Jean-Jacques character of the *Confessions* and demonstrate patterns associated with the experience of shame common across Rousseau's oeuvre. The majority of my analysis, however, concerns the shifting memory-shame dynamic in Julie's seduction, her marriage to Wolmar, and her death. For the sensitive characters who serve as protagonists in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, memory is sometimes a faculty that perpetuates shame because it is the receptacle of experience. At other times, however, memory offers a soothing balm to counter shame's bitterness in the form of recollections of an untainted past. Examining Julie's acceptance of Wolmar as her husband and his subsequent efforts to edit the lovers' memories exposes shifts in the location of shame and the role of memory in the novel. Locating where, in Julie's estimation, shame is or is not present illuminates the model of morality and virtue to which she adheres. It also provides a new way of interpreting the novel's ending and Julie's death.

Saint-Preux:* Fausse honte, Remords*, and Forgiveness

Like his creator, Saint-Preux experiences moral shame as the result of succumbing to *fausse honte*. In Part II of the novel, Saint-Preux guiltily confesses his liaison with a prostitute to Julie.[17] At this point in the novel, he has been exiled from Julie's family's estate after their

[17] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in *Œuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau,* Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, vol. II (Paris: Gallimard, 1961) 294. Subsequent references are to this edition and will appear parenthetically as (NH book, letter, page).

correspondence was discovered by her father. After spending some time in England with his friend Édouard, he decides to enter Parisian society, but is soon affected by the city's moral corruption, as he reveals in letter twenty-six. He describes a "cœur avili par la honte et brisé par le repentir" and of a "crime involontaire que ton absence m'a laissé commettre" (NH II, 26, 294). His use of passive constructions reflects his effort to remove responsibility from himself, depicting the crime as involuntary. This mirrors the Jean-Jacques character's repeated denial of agency in the theft of the ribbon where the presence of others robbed him of his authenticity. Once Saint-Preux realizes he has been led into a brothel, he immediately blames rules of politeness or *bienséance* for his failure to leave, giving the event a fatal tone: "Il étoit trop tard pour m'en dédire" (296). In her response, Julie succinctly invalidates Saint-Preux's excuses:

> Une seconde faute [...] est [...] de n'avoir pas fui dès le premier instant où vous avez connu dans quelle maison vous étiez. Vos excuses là-dessus sont pitoyables. *Il étoit trop tard pour s'en dédire !* comme s'il y avoit quelque espèce de bienséance en de pareils lieux, ou que la bienséance dût jamais l'emporter sur la vertu, qu'il fût jamais trop tard pour s'empêcher de mal faire ! (NH II, 27, 300, original emphasis)

Her geographic and emotional distance allow her to perform a logical analysis of Saint-Preux's actions and motivations, like the reason-based reflection Plutarch advocated to guard against *fausse honte*'s influence. Julie establishes a moral-social hierarchy according to which rules of morality and virtue must be considered above rules of *bienséance*, which are superficial social constructions (and, she notes, *bienséance* has no authority in a morally depraved setting like a brothel). She goes on to name *fausse* or *mauvaise honte* as the reason behind Saint-Preux's behavior: "c'est la honte qui vous retint. Vous craignîtes qu'on ne se moquât de vous en sortant ; un moment de huée vous fit peur, et vous aimâtes mieux vous exposer aux remords qu'à la

raillerie [...] cette *mauvaise honte* corrompt plus de cœurs honnêtes que les mauvaises inclinations" (300, my emphasis). According to Julie, having pure intentions is no guarantee against this passion, particularly for the sensitive Saint-Preux. Overcome by the situation, he voluntarily chose a lingering *remords*, or true moral shame, rather than a moment of mockery.

Just as Jean-Jacques becomes aware that his actions could have significant negative consequences for Marion, Saint-Preux grows concerned about the permanent moral consequences of his actions for his relationship with Julie: "ce qui m'humilie le plus encore, c'est de te voir, de te sentir au fond de mon cœur, dans un lieu désormais si peu digne de toi" (NH II, 26, 294). Saint-Preux describes conflicting desire to confess and never speak of the event, a troubled silence not unlike Jean-Jacques' inability to retract his lie after stealing his mistress's ribbon: "je ne puis ni me taire ni parler" (294). This suggests that Saint-Preux has followed the same path to moral shame as his creator. This line also echoes a letter in which Julie describes her state of mind following her seduction: "Je ne puis ni parler ni me taire. Que sert le silence quand le remords crie ?" (NH I, 29, 95). Catherine Ramond highlights that Julie's words recall Racine's Phaedre, who also uses similar phrasing to describe her situation, an idea to which I will return later.[18]

Memory as the receptacle for experience contributes to the construction of the self in this letter. Saint-Preux has learned about his own weakness and can therefore guard himself against it in the future. Memory also performs an idealizing function. Saint-Preux is a means for Rousseau to relive certain experiences from his own life through fiction, sometimes offering them a more

[18] Catherine Ramond, "L'Influence racinienne sur la *Nouvelle Héloïse*" in *L'Amour dans La Nouvelle Héloïse: texte et intertexte. Actes du colloque de Genève (9-10-11 juin 1999)*, (Geneva: Droz, 1999) 203-214.

consoling ending. Bernard Guyon writes in his introduction to the *Nouvelle Héloïse* that the novel is “une entreprise de synthèse idéalisante”[19]:

> Quant à Saint-Preux, l’idéalisation ne s’est pas accomplie exclusivement dans le sens de la beauté et de la jeunesse, mais aussi et surtout dans le sens de la victoire. Cet amant vainqueur est très différent de son ‘modèle réel’, du point de départ jusqu’à la dernière lettre. C’est Jean-Jacques non seulement *tel qu’il rêvait d’être*, mais *tel qu’il rêvait d’avoir été*. (xxxi)

Saint-Preux is not precisely another Jean-Jacques, but he certainly possesses his greatest qualities and flaws. Saint-Preux is victorious despite himself, winning the affections of a uniquely magnetic, sensitive woman above his station. Moreover, Saint-Preux’s confession frees him of the burden of secrecy and surprisingly results in Julie’s forgiveness, a validation never available to Jean-Jacques after he wronged Marion.[20]

Does Rousseau propose confession as an antidote for the memory of a shameful experience? Traditionally, confession involves the voluntary exposure of wrongdoing. The confessor makes him or herself vulnerable. In the case of the sensitive character, Rousseau’s use of confession reveals not only the emotions shame and remorse, but also circumstances the reader might not initially see, such as the invisible and subtle force of *fausse honte*. Viewed this way, the Jean-Jacques character confesses less to the act of theft than he does to having experienced shame. He is the victim of a shameful experience that prevented him from being his authentic self. His descriptions focus the reader’s attention on his emotions of shame and remorse, and the pain of recalling them, rather than the actual consequences of his actions. Saint-

[19] Guyon, “Introduction: La Nouvelle Héloïse,” in Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. I, xxx.

[20] Julie writes, “Rassurez-vous sur la crainte de m’avoir irritée. Votre lettre m’a donné plus de douleur que de colère. [...] le mal que vous vous faites est le seul que je ne puis vous pardonner” (NH II, 27, 297).

Preux's letter to Julie, and Julie's later confession of her seduction, are both similarly anchored in a rhetoric of *fausse honte* designed to undermine the protagonists' guilt.

Julie: Sensitive Character and Tragic Heroine

Julie's experience of shame is largely informed by her perception of her duty (*devoir*) as virtuous daughter and later, as wife and mother. Examining where shame occurs for her, and whether it takes the form of *fausse honte* or moral shame, can shed light on how Rousseau presents Julie as an admirable character in spite of her seduction.[21] First, it is important to note that her love for Saint-Preux is a source of moral shame for her (especially in the first half of the novel) only insofar as the existence and continuation of their liaison undermines her parents' wishes, and because it exposes her to carnal passion. As we saw above, Julie is very aware of the risks of *mauvaise* or *fausse honte*. However, she is not immune to its influence, as her seduction illustrates.[22] This section examines how Rousseau frames Julie's seduction as an experience of *fausse honte,* and how he uses Racinian references to undermine Julie's agency in her seduction.

Before her seduction, *pudeur* played a large role in regulating her relationship with Saint-Preux and defines her as a virtuous character. As the introduction illustrated, *la pudeur* is a feeling of modesty or a sense that the intimacy of the self is—or is about to be—compromised. This feeling anticipates shame and can lead characters to avoid shameful situations if correct preventative action is taken. In other words, *la pudeur* is a natural instinct rooted in morality that

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[21] The choice of having his heroine seduced, for instance, rather than raped, like Richardson's Clarissa, who inspired Rousseau to write this novel, is interesting. Whereas rape would imply a total lack of agency, seduction remains a gray area. On the historical significance of these two terms, see Jillian Slaight, "Resisting Seduction & Seductive Resistance: Courtroom Conflicts Over Consent in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 42 (2014): 54–64.

[22] In addition to her response to Saint-Preux's Parisian indiscretion, in Part VI, letters 6 and 8 she warns Saint-Preux against its dangers. She also dissuades Saint-Preux from a duel for the same reason: "quel mépris est le plus à craindre, celui des autres en faisant bien, ou le sien propre en faisant mal ?" (NH I, 50, 212).

allows the lovers to resist base, sexual desire. As J. Rossard points out, rather than confining or impeding love's development, in Rousseau's novel *la pudeur* catalyzes love in its purest form by making space for pure, sincere connection between two individuals.[23] Julie reflects on the early days of her relationship with Saint-Preux: "Rappellez-vous ces tems de bonheur et d'innocence où ce feu si vif et si doux dont nous étions animés épuroit tous nos sentimens, où sa sainte ardeur nous rendoit *la pudeur* plus chère et l'honnêteté plus aimable, où les désirs même ne sembloient naître que pour nous donner l'honneur de les vaincre et d'en être plus dignes l'un de l'autre" (NH III, 18, 352, my emphasis). Part of the joy the couple finds in their shared passion is their natural *pudeur*, which purifies and, in a sense, protects their relationship from the corruption of lust. Their regard for this part of their respective natures increases their individual merit.

Julie's sense of *pudeur* also illustrates her adherence to virtue and morality, since in Rousseau's works, *la pudeur* "est en accord avec la conception de la bonté naturelle de l'homme."[24] Julie exhibits behavior related to *la pudeur* such as blushing, lowering her gaze to avoid revealing compromising emotions, regulating her speech and thought, and ensuring that her cousin Claire was always present to chaperone the lovers. Julie is therefore very aware of the precariousness of her position. She knowingly flirts with the possibility of shame, either by risking her and her family's social reputation or her own moral integrity. Her *pudeur* is ultimately insufficient, however, to prevent her seduction.

Following Saint-Preux's departure, Julie grows increasingly ill until her family fears for her life. In this context, Claire, who understands that the cause of Julie's illness is her amorous passion, contacts Saint-Preux and arranges a secret meeting, hoping to end her cousin's torment. In reality, she facilitates Julie's seduction. The event is first anticipated, then related to her

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[23] J. Rossard, *Une Clef du romantisme: la pudeur* (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1974) 22, 24.

[24] Ibid., 23.

cousin Claire in Part I, letters 28 and 29. These two letters together describe Julie's horror and regret at what she considers a "crime," but through them Rousseau also attempts to remove blame from Julie herself.[25] He does so by using Racinian references, which appear in the letters describing Julie's seduction and her mother's discovery of her correspondence with Saint-Preux. These references gain two important functions. First, they attribute traits of a tragic heroine to Julie, a role that bears significant consequences for her (lack of) agency in her seduction. Second, they illuminate the dissolution of her reason and identity at the crucial moment of capitulation. Rousseau's strategy of deflecting blame from Julie is also evident in the importance he attributes to the absence of Julie's cousin, Claire, mirroring the absence of a sympathetic listener during the ribbon episode. In other words, Julie's seduction is redolent of *fausse honte*.

After her mother discovers her love letters, Julie is consumed with shame in her mother's presence, and evokes Phaedra's words: "Où fuir ? Comment soutenir ses regards ? Que ne puis je me cacher au sein de la terre !" (NH II, 28, 306). Letter 29, which she writes to Claire directly after her seduction, contains similar language: "Je ne dois plus te voir; comment soutienrois-je ta vue ?" (NH I, 29, 95). Both of these excerpts echo Verse 1277 of *Phaedra*, when the queen expresses her desire to disappear and hide her shame: "Où me cacher? Fuyons dans la nuit infernale."[26] This reference grants a fatal dimension to the events that Julie senses will unfold, since it establishes a parallel between her situation and Phaedra's struggle with destiny: Phaedra

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[25] Interestingly, the novel contains no letter from Saint-Preux offering his perspective on the seduction. In Letter 31 of Part I, he offers consolation to Julie, knowing that she is hiding her feelings from him. He argues that they are all but married, a justification that fails to comfort Julie.

[26] Jean Racine, *Œuvres complètes de Jean Racine*, ed. Georges Forestier, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, vol. I (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 864, act IV scene 6. References to this play are to this edition. In the same scene, Phaedra also has difficulty tolerating the "gaze" of the sun, Helios, her grandfather, in light of her guilt: "Misérable! Et je vis? Et je soutiens la vue / De ce sacré soleil dont je suis descendue ?" (lines 1273-74).

In the *Confessions*, Rousseau employs similar phrasing to describe his desire to hide where he could not be seen after the theft of the ribbon: "J'aurais voulu m'enfoncer, m'étouffer dans le centre de la terre" (OC, I, 86).

cannot escape the divine punishment that is her love for Hyppolitus.[27] In a similar fatal tone, the letter anticipating Julie's seduction reveals her certainty that a crime will take place and underscores her sense of powerlessness to stop it: "C'en est fait, c'en est fait, la crise est venue. Un jour, une heure, un moment, peut-être... qui est-ce qui sait éviter son sort?" (NH I, 28, 95). Viewed this way, Julie is a victim of destiny who could not have avoided her fate.

Racinian references also illuminate how Julie's reason and sense of self dissolve as she confronts the reality of her seduction. Letter 29 recounts the moment of her capitulation and is populated with fatal language: *coupable*, *passion funeste*, *ignominie*, *horreur*, *la mort*. Rather than naming joy or excitement at the sight of her lover, she dwells on the devastating consequences she knows will follow their reunion. She describes the moment as "un instant d'égarement" when "tout aliénait ma raison," that "Sans savoir ce que je faisois je choisis ma propre infortune" (NH I, 29, 96). These details undermine her agency and paint the "crise" of her seduction as a crime Julie unwillingly or unknowingly committed. They also underscore that she has lost touch with reason and is utterly overwhelmed by emotion to the point of being absent from herself.[28] Phaedra also loses touch with reason as she contemplates the fact that she is considering inspiring her husband to murder: "Où ma raison se va-t-elle égarer?" (864, Act IV scene VI, line 1264).[29] Julie certainly exhibits irrational thought in this scene through the way her opinions of other characters vacillate wildly. One moment, she describes her father as "barbarous and denatured," and the next he is "the best of fathers;" her mother has both "loved too well" and "lost" her daughter; even her lover is alternatively "cruel" or "barbarous" and "not

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[27] Ramond, "L'influence racinienne sur *La Nouvelle Héloïse*," 205.

[28] Similarly, Saint-Preux describes himself as drunk to the point of unconsciousness during his sexual encounter with the prostitute in II, 26.

[29] Julie's seduction appears all the more serious when it causes similar "égarement" to that experienced by a woman considering murder.

at all guilty." Julie's unsettled style, riddled with ellipses and halting sentences, indicates that she is writing at a moment when her sense of self is disintegrating because of the shame she anticipates.

Alisa Kay's analysis of shame as a self-splitting experience in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), a text that heavily influenced *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, sheds some light on this apparent loss of reason.[30] Kay argues that Clarissa's experience of shame following her rape forces her to see herself from outside the self, from the perspective of God or another third-person observer possessing the legitimate authority to cast judgment: "Shame marks the boundary between self and other; it is the feeling that accompanies the separation of the self from its community."[31] This perspective is applicable to Julie as well. When she confronts the impending reality of her seduction, Julie considers herself as others might. She faces a choice that risks destroying what or who she believes she truly is or should be. Two possible versions of herself emerge and coexist in parallel. Will she outrage her parents, or disappoint her lover? Will she marry her father's friend, to whom, as she just learned prior to writing letter 28, she has been promised, or run away with Saint-Preux? The difficulty of her situation lies in the fact that either is a betrayal. Rousseau thus paints Julie's impending seduction as a crisis not only of virtue, but of identity.

After the seduction, Julie does not have access to the outlet of confession like Saint-Preux since for a noblewoman, the social and moral stakes are much higher. Julie's unique sensibility and dedication to the duties that she feels govern her role destine her to suffer in silence: "Je ne puis parler ni me taire. Que sert le silence quand le remords crie ? L'univers entier ne me

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[30] Alisa Kay, "'A Reformation So Much Wanted': Clarissa's Glorious Shame," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 28, no. 4 (Summer 2016): 645-666.

[31] Ibid., 651, 662.

reproche-t-il pas ma faute ? ma honte n'est-elle pas écrite sur tous les objets ?" (NH I, 29, 95).[32] These rhetorical questions interrogate the utility of the silence to which she clings out of self-preservation. Is her crime not already known to God, after all? Her sense of shame has permeated the physical space that witnessed her seduction so that every object reminds her of what she has done. Similarly, in Racine's tragedy, Phaedra fears that the love she has confessed to Hippolytus will be revealed to her husband, either by her own guilty countenance or the very walls that witnessed her crime: "[J]e suis point de ces femmes hardies, / Qui goûtant dans le crime une tranquille paix/ Ont su se faire un front qui ne rougit jamais. [...] Il me semble déjà que ces murs, que ces voûtes, / Vont prendre la parole, et prêts à m'accuser / Attendent mon époux pour le désabuser (850, Act 3, Scene 3, lines 850-856).[33] Christophe Martin applies Roland Barthes' analysis of Phaedra to Julie, stating that Julie is the tragic incarnation of "un silence torturé par l'idée de sa propre destruction."[34] Julie's silence both protects her reputation and perpetuates her shame; she can neither confess nor find solace in secrecy. Importantly, Julie's concern is not for her own reputation, as she feels she deserves any punishment she might receive, but she hopes to spare her parents' shame, pain, and disappointment.[35] She views them as the victims of the consequences of her actions. Like Jean-Jacques, she is forced to be untrue to herself and her notions of virtue and thus is a victim of her inability to speak.

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[32] In this sense, her plight more closely resembles the young Jean-Jacques, who also felt constrained to suffer his shame and remorse in silence.

[33] Julie also blames Claire for arranging Saint-Preux's secret visit, which allowed the seduction to take place, just as Phaedra blames Oenone for encouraging her to see Hippolytus, which sparks her passion for him. I will elaborate my analysis of Claire's role shortly.

[34] Roland Barthes, *Sur Racine,* (Paris: Seuil, 1963) cited in Christophe Martin, "Logiques du secret: Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse" in *Éthique, poétique et esthétique du secret de l'Ancien Régime à l'époque contemporaine*, ed. Fr. Gevrey, A. Lévrier, and B. Teyssandier (Peeters, 2016) 407-424.

[35] Recall Jean-Jacques' words from the *Confessions*, referenced above: "Je craignois peu la punition, je ne craignois que la honte; mais je la craignois plus que la mort, plus que le crime [...] la honte seule fit mon impudence [...] Je ne voyois que l'horreur d'être reconnu, déclaré publiquement, moi présent, voleur, menteur, calomniateur" (OC 1:86).

The evaporation of Julie's reason is more than a mere rhetorical device designed to disculpate the heroine. When viewed in light of Rousseau's understanding of passions as volatile and communicable forces, in this scene Julie's feeling that she is absent from herself suggests that, because of her extreme sensibility, she is overwhelmed not only by her own emotions, but by those of her lover as well. Nicholas Paige's work on readerly identification in Rousseau's works provides helpful insight to this reading.[36] Julie writes in her description of the seduction, "je partageais ses tourments [de Saint-Preux] en ne pensant que les plaindre" (NH I, 29, 96). Paige argues that Julie loses her virginity "because she thought she was offering distanced commiseration [*plaindre ses tourments*] while in fact she was party to a contagious propagation [*les partager*]."[37] Paige contends that Julie is infected with Saint-Preux's emotions, exemplifying the kind of negative identification Rousseau condemned in the *Lettre à d'Alembert*.[38] Julie emphasizes that Saint-Preux's honesty and *pudeur* would have given him the strength to resist his passions, and that in fact "Cent fois mes yeux furent témoins de ses combats et de sa victoire" (NH I, 29, 96). However she admits, "J'osai trop contempler ce dangereux spectacle. Je me sentais troubler de ses transports, ses soupirs oppressaient mon cœur ; je partageais ses tourments en ne pensant qu'à les plaindre" (96).[39] Julie is a spectator whose passions are excited by those she sees represented in Saint-Preux, and her own sense of *pudeur* is not strong enough to overcome them.

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[36] Nicolas Paige, "Rousseau's Readers Revisited: The Aesthetics of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 131-154.

[37] Ibid., 143. Original emphasis.

[38] Ibid. Rousseau expresses concern in the *Lettre à d'Alembert* (1758) regarding the risk of contamination of the audience through theatrical representation of the passions.

[39] Earlier in their relationship, Saint-Preux uses almost the same words to describe his sense of the emotional danger into which he was plunged by Julie's kiss in the grove: "ta pitié me fait mourir" (I, 11, 63).

Julie therefore becomes one with Saint-Preux, not only in sexual union but by the infection of his passion. She is doubly seduced, first by her own passion, then by Saint-Preux's: "Il semblait que ma passion funeste voulût se couvrir, pour me séduire, du masque de toutes les vertus" (96). She anticipates his pain should she try to explain why she cannot run away with him, that she must marry someone else, after having "flatté son espoir." She admits, "c'est la pitié qui me perdit" (96). Here, "pitié" is a form of sympathy or identification, a fear of disappointing Saint-Preux in the immediate present that supersedes her consideration for long-term moral consequences. In other words, Julie feels *fausse honte* at the thought of disappointing Saint-Preux by refusing his advances.

Comparing Julie's capitulation in light of the notion of *fausse honte* as defined in the *Confessions* and Saint-Preux's weak defense of his one-time dalliance in Paris reveals the same trajectory: *fausse honte* exposes Julie to moral, lasting shame, which she names *remords*. This places Julie firmly within the rhetoric of blamelessness Rousseau has established in the two other cases. Julie's character and the intertextual references that link her to Racine's tragedies make her readers want to excuse her; beyond her romantic liaison with Saint-Preux (and even in spite of it), Julie is unfailingly virtuous.

When her cousin writes to comfort Julie, she attempts to reframe the situation to absolve Julie of responsibility. In a rather dramatic representation of Julie's illness, Claire insists on the inevitability of either Julie's seduction, or her death: "je jugeai que bientôt tu ne serois plus, ou qu'il seroit bientôt rappelé [...] N'accuse ni ton amant ni toi d'une faute dont je suis la plus coupable, puis que je l'ai prévue sans la prévenir" (NH I, 30, 97). Claire would have her cousin view her seduction as an alternative to the death that would have resulted from further separation from Saint-Preux: "Si rien ne peut te justifier, songe au moins à ce qui t'excuse" (NH I, 30, 98).

Seen this way, Julie's sense of shame is disproportionate to the actual crime committed. However, Julie takes very little comfort from her cousin's attempts to minimize the severity of her crime, and later the memory of her shame will haunt her.[40] Julie, as the Rousseauian ideal of virtue, must also be her own harshest critic, deaf to arguments of moral leniency.

Absence, Forgetting, and Localized Memory

If Claire's presence and participation are key in protecting the secret of Julie and Saint-Preux's relationship, her absence catalyzes the crisis of Julie's seduction. Earlier in the novel, Claire plays the role of chaperone for her cousin and Saint-Preux, a champion of their *puduer* who allows them to enjoy each other's company without fear of giving in to their passion. However, Claire is with her husband when Saint-Preux visits Julie's bedchamber, leaving them without such protection. Even before her seduction has taken place, Julie laments, "Que ton absence me rend amère la vie que tu m'as rendue! [...] Cruelle ! tu me quittes quand j'ai plus besoin de toi" (NH I, 28, 94). In letter 29 Julie writes, "Où étais-tu, ma douce amie, ma sauvegarde, mon ange tutélaire? Tu m'as abandonnée, et j'ai péri!" (NH I, 29, 95). Claire's absence contributes to Julie's moral fall.

Claire's absence is physical and symbolic. She is absent from Julie's mind and heart. Julie describes, along with her loss of reason, that, "J'oubliai tout, et ne me souvins que de l'amour" (NH I, 29, 96). Julie links forgetting Claire to a change in her heart: "Hélas; la misère et l'opprobre changent les cœurs....... Ah! si jamais le mien t'oublie, il aura beaucoup changé"

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[40] It is interesting that we do not have any admission of guilt from Saint-Preux. No letter expresses his remorse in the same way Julie expresses hers, even his response to the harsh reproaches Claire makes in letter III, 1 (310). He states merely, in a letter to Julie's mother, "je me jette à vos pieds, Madame, non pour vous marquer un repentir qui ne dépend pas de mon cœur, mais pour expier un *crime involontaire* en renonçant à tout ce qui pouvait faire la douceur de ma vie" (III, 2, 310-11, my emphasis). Saint-Preux categorizes their liaison as involuntary and does not consider their union a crime because he sees them as married ("la chaîne qui nous lie est légitime") and he calls Julie "mon épouse."

(NH I, 28, 95). The misery of moral shame could permanently distance Julie's heart from Claire's by forcing it to "forget" her in a sense, by rendering it undeserving of her cousin's love. This shift in Julie's heart, the core of her being and seat of her extraordinary *sensibilité*, offers another means of excusing, though not justifying, her crime.[41] Forgetting Claire, the person from whom she is, at other moments, described as "inséparable," leaves Julie vulnerable.[42] It is unsurprising, then, that Saint-Preux should also name Julie's absence as a key factor in his capitulation with the prostitute, just as Jean-Jacques names the absence of an intimate, sympathetic listener as the reason for his irretractable lie.[43]

The fear of being forgotten or absent from a loved one's thoughts is a recurring theme in Saint-Preux's and Julie's correspondence.[44] Remembrance is a sign of the continuation of their love and affection for one another. Physical separation tortures the lovers more often than not. [45]

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[41] It is important to recall that Saint-Preux also has concerns that his heart has become an unfit domicile for Julie after his sexual encounter with another woman.

[42] Examples are numerous. In Part I, letter 8 Saint-Preux writes in complaint of Claire's presence: "Votre inséparable cousine ne vous quitte plus" (48).

[43] Saint-Preux also claims that he was tricked into drinking un-watered wine prior to succumbing to the advances of the prostitute, adding another layer of "absence" to his confession.

[44] In letter 19 of part I (69) Saint-Preux worries that Julie has forgotten him. She reassures him in the following letter: "oublie-t-on jamais ce qu'on a une fois aimé ?" (72). Later in letter 23, Saint-Preux reassures Julie against the same fear: "étiez-vous oubliée de votre ami ? Julie oubliée ?" (83). During their separation, in letter 11 of Part II, Julie begs Saint-Preux not to forget her: "n'abandonne jamais la vertu, et n'oublie jamais ta Julie !" (221). Even Édouard accuses Saint-Preux of having forgotten him. His contemptuous tone in letter 8 of Part III shows his frustration with his friend's withdrawal: "Je suis oublié de toi; tu ne daignes plus m'écrire [...] sache en mourant que tu laisses dans l'âme d'un honnête homme à qui tu fus cher la douleur de n'avoir servi qu'un ingrat" (324).

[45] Julie and Saint-Preux experience several periods of separation in the novel. The first immediately follows their kiss in the grove (Part I, 14) and is meant to both throw off suspicion and allow their passion time to cool. During this absence Saint-Preux visits Meillerie for the first time (I, 26). They are able to see each other more freely while Julie's parents travel, and Claire secretly calls him back when Julie seems to be on her deathbed (I, 27), which precipitates Julie's seduction (I, 28-29). After her letters are discovered by Julie's father, Saint-Preux leaves again (I, 65) and travels to Paris where he is seduced by a prostitute (II, 26). Saint-Preux sees Julie in secret, without even Julie's realizing it, when she is stricken *la petite vérole* (III, 14). Saint-Preux leaves for England with Édouard and does not see her again until he is summoned by Wolmar, to whom their past has been revealed (IV, 4).

This absence finds metonymic compensation through letters, and later a secret portrait of Julie.[46] However, it is compensated most importantly through memory, which preserves an image of an absent loved one in a safe, private space, often with greater fidelity than other means. Saint-Preux criticizes the portrait Julie sends him of herself, for instance, because it has failed to capture her as he remembers her. It does not accurately represent her physical flaws her modesty, or the small details of her complexion that make her unique, and it cannot convey her sensibility or strength of character.[47]

Therefore, although memory sometimes serves as a receptacle for shame in *La Nouvelle Héloise*, it is also a faculty that preserves moments of happiness that can be conjured to comfort the lovers during periods of separation and loneliness, when Julie is tempted to dwell on shame. In some cases, this remembered past highlights the purer aspects of their love, as when Saint-Preux writes to Julie: “que le ciel [...] me laisse, avec ma misère, le souvenir du bonheur passé. J’aime mieux les plaisirs qui sont dans ma mémoire et les regrets qui déchirent mon âme, que d’être à jamais heureux sans ma Julie” (NH II, 1, 190). The earlier letters exchanged by the lovers extol a happiness untainted by shame: “nulle honte ne trouble notre félicité” and “au sein des vrais plaisirs de l’amour, nous pouvons parler de la vertu sans rougir” (I, 9, 51). Their memory captures the true nature of their love and the merits of their *pudeur* through these overt references to virtue and a lack of shame, a truth that persists to the very end of the novel. For instance, when Julie’s father discovers their correspondence in Letter 63 of Part I, he incorrectly

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[46] While Saint-Preux is in Paris, Julie has a portrait made of herself and sends it to him as a keepsake. See Part II, letters 22 (278-280) and 25 (290-3).

[47] Letter 25 of Part II describes his disappointment after his initial excitement in receivng the portrait has passed: “La premiere chose que je lui reproche est de te ressembler et de n’être pas toi, d’avoir ta figure et d’être insensible [...] pour pouvoir exprimer tous tes charmes, il faudroit te peindre dans tous les instans de ta vie [...] Passons au Peintre d’avoir omis quelques beautés ; mais en quoi il n’a pas fait moins de tort à ton visage, c’est d’avoir mos les défauts. Il n’a point fait cette tache presque imperceptible que tu as sous l’œil droit, ni celle qui est au cou du côté gauche” (291).

reads Julie's guilty countenance as proof that she is ashamed of their relationship: "S'il n'en tira pas la conséquence de ma faute, il en tira celle de mon amour" (174). Her father guesses correctly that Julie loves Saint-Preux, but this is not the source of her shame. Instead Julie names "ma faute" as her failure to respect "le devoir et la modestie."[48] What she regrets is both her crime (that is, having lost her virginity because she failed to fortify her sense of *pudeur*) and its potential social consequences for her family. Her love for Saint-Preux, on the other hand, has only ever been a source of happiness for her.

Saint-Preux's transformation of Julie's letters into a *recueil* to protect the precious memories of his lover again gives memory the power to effectively stop time. His memory of Julie proves more accurate in representing her to his mind's eye than her portrait: "Vainement le peintre a cru rendre exactement tes yeux et tes traits; il n'a point rendu ce doux sentiment qui les vivifie [...] il a placé la racine des cheveux trop loin des tempes, [...] il a oublié les rameaux de pourpre que font à cet endroit deux ou trois petites veines sous la peau," etc. (NH II, 25, 291). And, although the portrait is in Saint-Preux's eyes an imperfect rendering of his beloved, it still holds deep affective and preservative powers for him. He refuses to relinquish it to Claire during his visit with her years later: "je l'ai prié, pressé, conjuré, boudé, baisé [...] il a poussé l'humeur et l'opiniâtreté jusqu'à jurer qu'il consentirait plutôt à ne te plus voir qu'à te dessaisir de ton portrait" (NH IV, 9, 437). Saint-Preux adds, according to Claire (who relates the visit to Julie), "Soyez sûre qu'il ne me sera jamais arraché qu'avec la vie" (NH IV, 9, 437).

The preservative power of memory explains Julie's desperate request to Claire, just before her seduction, that her cousin remember her as she was before she was tainted by shame: "souviens-toi de ton amie…" (NH I, 28, 95). This request suggests that memory has the power to

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[48] Julie's inattention to her duty affects not only herself. Earlier in part I, letter 39, she describes how "l'oubli du premier de mes devoirs" made her servant, Fanchon, vulnerable to seduction (117).

preserve versions of the self. It certainly has the power to preserve the purity and intensity of Saint-Preux and Julie's passion for each other. As Guyon notes, it is "par la magie du souvenir" that Saint-Preux can transform the "réalité essentiellement éphémère" that is their love into "une réalité éternelle."[49] By conserving their love in his memory, Saint-Preux can protect it from the ravages of time and the danger of fulfilled pleasure. In the context of the novel, this is an advantage, since the latter, as Claire explains, is a trial no love has ever survived: "Vos feux [...] ont vaincu tous les obstacles hors le plus puissant de tous, qui est de n'en avoir plus à vaincre [...] vous serez toujours l'un pour l'autre à la fleur des ans ; vous vous verrez sans cesse tels que vous vous vites en vous quittant" (NH III, 7, 320-1).[50]

Interestingly, the last time Julie voices her concern over being forgotten by Saint-Preux is in the letter describing her marriage, where she names it the worst of all her fears: "la pire de toutes était la crainte d'être oubliée" (NH III, 18, 346). In this letter, Julie's fear of being forgotten also has direct consequences for Saint-Preux's identity, emphasizing memory's essential role in the construction of the self for both lovers. Julie fears that if Saint-Preux forgets her, notions of love and virtue will leave him, and he will stray into dishonor and ignominy: "j'aurais mieux aimé vous savoir malheureux que méprisable [...] votre déshonneur était la seule [peine] que je ne pouvais supporter" (346). This recalls her words from the first half of the novel in which she equates herself with the notion of virtue: "n'abandonne jamais la vertu, et n'oublie jamais ta Julie!" (NH II, 11, 221). She hopes to assure herself that the Saint-Preux as he exists in

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[49] Bernard Guyon, "La Mémoire et l'oubli," *Annales de la société J.-J. Rousseau,* ed. A. Jullien, vol. 35 (Geneva: 1959-1962) 49-71.

[50] Claire writes this to comfort Saint-Preux, whom Julie has just determined never to see again after her mother's death.

her memories, will survive her marriage to Wolmar.[51] At the same time, this letter suggests that she fears a similar change within herself should she somehow forget her love for Saint-Preux.

Just as memory has preservative properties to preserve a lost past, states of mind, and emotions associated with specific moments, in Rousseau's work, spaces also become imbued with memories of emotional states and events that transpired there. Jean-François Perrin calls this kind of memory (which is tied to both an emotional state and physical location) a "mémoire locale" or localized memory: "La mémoire locale est ainsi corrolée [...] à un spectacle intérieur total mobilisant toutes les composantes de la sensibilité."[52] This corresponds to a classical notion of the arts of memory, that is, the *composition de lieu*, or the construction of an imaginary *palais de mémoire* which are themselves comprised of *images agissantes* or mental images linked to ideas and strong emotions. Traditionally, the deliberate construction of this kind of "spectacle intérieur" was a strategy to improve recollection by strengthening associations between ideas, images, and sensory impressions. For example, Saint-Preux performs a *composition de lieu* on the shores of Meillerie, infusing the physical landscape with his unique sensibility, love, misery, the drafting of his letters to Julie, and the act of reading hers to him; he even inscribes her *signe* in the rocks themselves as a physical representation of the sentimental impressions he leaves behind. In the novel, identity is just as reliant upon environment as upon relationships so that when these spaces are visited or recalled, they conjure the version of the self that is associated with them. For instance, the natural surroundings of Meillerie mirror Saint-Preux's feelings of desolation during his separation from Julie: "On n'apperçoit plus de verdure, l'herbe est jaune et

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[51] Julie is also likely concerned for his immortal soul's ability to enter heaven after she is gone.

[52] Jean-François Perrin, "Toutes mes pensées sont en images: Scénographie mentale et arts mnémoniques chez Rousseau, in *Rousseau et le spectacle*, eds. Jacques Berchtold, Christophe Martin, and Yannic Seite (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014) 265-281. In Rousseau's work, *mémoire locale* works three ways. Memory and imagination can conjure past feelings and locations to the mind and body. A physical location can also inspire similar recollection of events or emotions.

flétrie, les arbres sont dépouillés, le séchard et la froide bise entassent la neige et les glaces, et toute la nature est morte à mes yeux, comme l'espérance au fond de mon cœur" (NH I, 27, 90).

Julie's personal, intimate space is also permeated by memories of the people and events that traverse them. Sometime before her seduction, Julie writes to Saint-Preux: "le poids de l'absence m'accable. [...] Tous les objets que j'aperçois me portent quelque idée de ta présence pour m'avertir que je t'ai perdu" (NH I, 25, 88). Following her seduction, the memory of the shameful event imbues the everyday objects that surround her with reminders of her guilt, as we saw above: "ma honte n'est-elle pas écrite sur tous les objets?" (NH I, 29, 95). Julie is haunted by the change she feels in her surroundings, a change visible only to her through her knowledge of her actions. This inscribes experience and memory with great power to inform and alter the subjective interpretation of ordinary objects.

Localized memory also plays a part in the identity crisis that occurs at Julie's wedding. Her emotional disposition and ultimately, her very identity, are influenced by her surroundings. First, her fear infects the objects around her: "[si mon trouble] me laissoit appercevoir les objets, c'étoit pour en être épouvantée" (NH III, 18, 353). The environment of the church and its solemnity overwhelm her initial emotional state and contribute to the reconciliation of the halves of her fractured identity.

Shame Relocated, Memory Transformed: A Rhetorical Endeavor

Julie describes her marriage as a "révolution subite" in letter 18 of part III. This letter marks not only a personal turning point for Julie's identity, but also a shift in her relationship with her past. Letter 18 represents Julie's attempt to modify the role of memory and the location of shame for herself and Saint-Preux in the second half of the novel. The willful exposure of both

the past and present, together with the aesthetics of moderation and renunciation of pleasure developed in the second half of the novel, turn secrecy and emotionally charged memory into new sources of shame. These sources seem to supersede previous notions of virtuous behavior in an experiment designed to purge shame from the past.

In letter 18 of Part III, Julie begins with an overview of the history of her relationship with Saint-Preux. Her motive is not to relive the past or express her regrets to her former lover. Rather, the letter's rhetoric is designed to present her experience of becoming Madame de Wolmar as a transformative event for herself and for Saint-Preux. She includes a few passages describing the virtuous nature of her love for Saint-Preux, but these descriptions are limited to the time before their erotic encounter. The sense of lingering shame Julie expresses as she describes her seduction, her mother's tragic death, and the crushing disappointment of her miscarriage serve to explain her agreement to marry Wolmar at her father's bidding.[53] That is, this letter is first and foremost an attempt to convince Saint-Preux that his liaison with Julie cannot continue as an adulterous affair after her marriage. While she tries to offer him comfort and insists on the perennity of her love for him, she also emphasizes the transforming effect of her wedding in a way that makes no room for him in her future as anything but a fond memory. This letter can be read as a narrative idealization of her wedding day that casts Julie in the role she aspires to occupy.

Her decision to marry Wolmar, as Julie explains in her comparison of past and present, parallels the decision she faced on the night of her seduction. She must choose between filial

[53] At the outset of Part III, Claire writes an angry letter to Saint-Preux meant to scold him for his participation in Julie's ruination, and attributes the death of Julie's mother to the woman's shame over keeping the secret of Julie's indiscretions: "sa plus cruelle peine est d'avoir pu trop estimer sa fille, et sa douleur est pour Julie un châtiment cent fois pire que ses reproches" (NH III, 1, 307). Julie sees her miscarriage as divine punishment: "je ne méritais pas l'honneur d'être mère" (NH III, 18, 345). In the same letter she states it felt as if "le ciel eût voulu m'accabler alors de tous les maux que j'avais mérités" (345).

obedience and passionate love. Letter 18 echoes the torn loyalty she had described in letter 29 of Part I: "je sentis qu'il fallait être coupable ; que je ne pouvais résister ni à mon père ni à mon amant, et que je n'accorderais jamais les droits de l'amour et du sang qu'aux dépens de l'honnêteté" (NH III, 18, 351). As before, no matter what she decides, she will disappoint either father or lover.[54] This time, however, she is armed with the memory of the terrible moral shame that results from succumbing to *fausse honte*. Once inoculated, Julie can "correct" her seduction by accepting marriage to Wolmar.

Is her decision to respect her father's wishes truly enough to restore Julie's virtue? Honesty, or its absence, seems to obsess her as she considers her situation. On the one hand, she fears the dishonesty of betraying Saint-Preux through marriage to another man. On the other, she fears being dishonest towards Wolmar by not revealing her past to him before promising to be his wife (she was willing to confess, but her father forbade it, worried that Wolmar would refuse the match). Julie thinks of her love for Saint-Preux even as she is about to pronounce her marriage vows, threatening to make her a hypocrite: "Dans l'instant même où j'étais prête à jurer à un autre une éternelle fidélité, mon cœur vous jurait encore un amour éternel" (NH III, 18, 353). Finally, the most fervent of all her fears is being dishonest towards God: "L'œil éternel qui voit tout, disais-je en moi-même, lit maintenant au fond de mon cœur ; il compare ma volonté cachée à la réponse de ma bouche" (354). As Julie realizes in the church, she must find a way to give truth to the promises she is about to make, to unify her duty and will.

Christophe Martin suggests that Julie suffers because of her Phaedra-like associations of secrecy with crime and interiority with guilt. He adds, however, that unlike Phaedra, "ce n'est

[54] It would seem Julie pities her father, or at the very least, sympathizes with him in this passage. The use of the pronoun "nous" shows a fusion of the two into one subject sharing the same emotions: "nous étions tous deux tellement agités que nous ne pûmes de longtemps nous remettre" (349).

pas la mort mais le mariage avec Wolmar qui pourra lui redonner accès à cette idéale transparence."[55] This certainly seems to be the case; from the moment she decides to obey her father and marry Wolmar, Julie's longing for an end to secrecy grows more urgent. In a sense Julie anticipates the transparency her husband later instantiates at Clarens.

In the moments before her wedding, transparency seems impossible. Julie initially describes her wedding as a ceremony of immolation, this time echoing Racine's Iphigenia.[56] Julie writes, "je fus menée au Temple comme une victime impure, qui souille le sacrifice où l'on va l'immoler" (NH III, 18, 353). What Julie initially experiences as a martyrdom for love soon becomes an opportunity for a different kind of happiness, namely the moderated, quieter pleasure of renunciation described by Nicholas Paige, modeled for Julie in her cousin's marriage.[57] Now, through her marriage, a public celebration of virginity which opposes and reverses her secret seduction, Julie hopes to reintegrate herself with the community of the virtuous, and with the will of God. She insists that entering into the bonds of marriage suddenly corrects her bifurcated feelings: "Une puissance inconnue sembla corriger tout à coup le désordre de mes affections et les rétablir selon la loi du devoir et de la nature" and "J'envisageai le saint nœud que j'allais former comme un nouvel état qui devait purifier mon âme et la rendre à tous ses devoirs. [...] ma bouche et mon cœur le promirent (*obéissance et fidélité parfaite*)" (354). She adds, "Je le

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[55] Martin, "Logiques du secret," 409.

[56] Ramond, *L'influence racinienne* 211. Iphigenia, loved by Achilles, is promised to him in marriage. However, her father Agamemnon believes she is the victim the Gods demand in sacrifice to assure his victory at Troy, and Iphigenia reluctantly resigns herself to accepting the fate of the Gods. Julie, also unable to marry her lover, depicts her obedience to her father as a sacrificial death. Ultimately, however, another victim appears at the last minute, saving Iphigenia from death, a fact which is overlooked by Ramond in her analysis, and which might suggest that in fact, Julie anticipates her own salvation.

[57] He argues that the second half of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* "thematizes not the sharing of passions but the aesthetic pleasure derived from the renunciation of that possibility" ("Rousseau's Readers," 143). Claire, as Mme d'Orbe, finds a contented companionship with her husband that lacks the fiery passion Julie and Saint-Preux share for one another, but which brings purpose and unity to their lives.

tiendrai jusqu'à la mort," reframing her vows as the positive acquisition of a new purpose: instead of tolerating a new role until death, she will actively strive to keep a promise until then (354).

Can the reader take Julie at her word? Another possible reading suggests that the promises Julie makes can be interpreted literally, and that in death she will be free once again to follow her heart. She tells Saint-Preux that after the ceremony, "je sentis que je vous aimais autant et plus peut-être que je n'avais jamais fait ; mais je le sentis sans rougir. Je vis que je n'avais pas besoin pour penser à vous d'oublier que j'étais la femme d'un autre [...] et je connus dès ce moment que j'étais réellement changée" (355). Read as an attempt to reassure both herself and her lover, Julie's transformation has changed the form, not the depth, of her love for Saint-Preux. As Mme de Wolmar, Julie can identify and acknowledge her feelings without shame, "sans rougir." Her transformation illuminates why the worst of all Julie's fears – being forgotten in the heart of her lover – seems to disappear after this letter. She learns to trust that her memory of Saint-Preux, as well as his memory of her, is preserved. According to Julie, her duty and will are now aligned and guide her towards God. Julie reveals that Wolmar remains present in her memory when she thinks of Saint-Preux, indicating that he can never again lay sole claim to her.

While it remains unclear whether Julie has, in fact, been transformed, what is clear is that from this point on, she behaves *as if it were so*. In her role as Mme de Wolmar, she describes God as the *oeil éternel*, as we saw above, linking Wolmar, the self-declared *oeil vivant*, with God, confirming Wolmar's future role as godlike overseer of their community at Clarens. The transparency advocated by Wolmar has important repercussions for Julie's perception of the location of shame and the role of memory for the rest of the novel.

Transparency: A Cure for Shameful Memory?

After her marriage, the secret of Julie's past with Saint-Preux continues to weigh on her. In part IV, letter 1 she writes to Claire, "je ne tourne point sans répugnance les yeux sur le passé: il m'humilie jusqu'au découragement et je suis trop sensible à la honte pour en supporter l'idée sans retomber dans une sorte de désespoir" (401). The memory of her shame is persistent. Julie's fear of the past reflects her fear of failing at the transformation she described to Saint-Preux in letter 18. Her desire for transparency indicates her longing for absolution more than it reflects an intrinsic change in Julie. Her desire to expose her secret also illuminates a shift in the location of shame in the second half of the novel. Her obsession with honesty at her wedding recalls another characteristic she shares with Racine's Phaedra, for whom "les choses ne sont pas cachées parce qu'elles sont coupables [...] les choses sont coupables du moment même où elles sont cachées."[58] At Clarens, virtue is predicated on transparency, making secrecy another obstacle between Julie and virtue: that which is hidden becomes shameful.

If secrecy is a source of shame, then is transparency a means of expunging shame? Starobinski underlines a moral aspect of the transition between the novel's first and second halves: in Parts 4, 5 and 6, the exposure of the love shared by Julie and Saint-Preux removes the shameful element from their past, a process tied to the fact that that love is temporally distanced from carnal satisfaction.[59] As Starobinski puts it,

> à mesure que l'amour de Saint-Preux se sublime, à mesure qu'il s'éloigne des satisfactions charnelles, il devient transparent au regard des autres : de caché qu'il était, il pourra se manifester sans honte. Le dépassement progressif par lequel cet amour se

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[58] Barthes, *Sur Racine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2011) 116 quoted in Martin, *Logiques du secret*, 410.

[59] Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La Transparence et l'obstacle* (Paris: Gallmiard, 1976) 104.

> purifie coïncide avec le mouvement qui le dévoile et le révèle à un plus grand nombre de témoins. (104)

Although Starobinski focuses on Saint-Preux in this observation, his remark pertains to Julie as well. Early in Julie's relationship with Saint-Preux, Claire is the only one who knows of their feelings; the circle gradually widens to include Julie's mother, Edouard, and finally Julie's father. Julie chooses voluntarily to reveal her past to her husband in the form of a confession, as Wolmar reveals to Saint-Preux in his letter of invitation (he asks his wife's former lover to join them at Clarens).[60] Like the confession of her author, hers is less an exposition of past sins than it is a confirmation of her innocence and *bonne volonté*, at least in the eyes of her husband, since Wolmar expresses a kind of fatherly pride at her honesty and reveals he has known her secret all along. There is a striking resemblance between Julie's admission and the sacrament of confession. God, after all, knows the sins of his creation before they are confessed. However, Wolmar is not God, and therefore does not have the power to absolve Julie. In fact, he lacks religious faith altogether. His actions can be seen as manipulation of Julie's desire for forgiveness, and later her gratitude for his compassion.

Wolmar's project of memory replacement reveals his perspective on his wife's former relationship. Wolmar recognizes that although the lovers' past has been completely exposed, it cannot and should not be erased entirely because of the exemplarity of the bond between Julie and Saint-Preux. He explains, "Dès lors je compris qu'il régnait entre vous des liens qu'il ne fallait point rompre [...] et qu'aucun des deux ne pouvait oublier l'autre sans perdre beaucoup de son prix" (IV, 12, 495). Prior to this remark, other characters within the novel, principally Claire and Edouard, noted the uniqueness of the couples' love: their attachment to each other was a

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[60] "La plus sage et la plus chérie des femmes vient d'ouvrir son cœur à son heureux époux" (NH IV, 4, 416).

mark of their unusual merit.[61] Thus Julie and Saint-Preux cannot forget each other without losing essential, valuable parts of themselves. Memory remains intrinsic to selfhood for these characters, and also retains its powers of preservation. As we have seen, in the context of this novel, forgetting implies an end to a relationship and potentially a change in the self. A balance must therefore be struck between preserving memory for the sake of maintaining the positive qualities it underpins and forgetting or neutralizing any emotionally charged memories that risk negatively impacting the present.

Cauterizing any potential for memory-inspired temptation requires a reversal of memory's association with shame. Wolmar and, under his tutelage, Julie, attempt this through imposed transparency. The first letter Julie writes to Saint-Preux after seven years of silence (she has just confessed her past to Wolmar) begins with a striking statement: "Voici la première fois de ma vie où j'ai pu vous écrire sans crainte et sans honte" (NH VI, 6, 664). This implies that every other letter or note Julie has ever written to Saint-Preux *has* been tainted, at least in a small measure, with shame and fear. The source of these emotions is not the relationship itself, as this letter would have the reader believe. Rather, once again, the Julie of the first half of the novel feels shame and fear because writing to Saint-Preux is an act of disobedience, of secrecy, and is a moral risk. In Part VI however, her confession to Wolmar grants her permission to write to her former lover. Her husband's approbation, perhaps more so than the transformation on which she insisted so heavily on her wedding day, is what allows her to communicate with her former lover in writing because it represents social and external approval from a God-like figure. What was

[61] For example, see Part I, letter 60 in which Saint-Preux relates Édouard's opinion of the nature of the lovers' souls: "Vos deux ames sont si extraordinaires qu'on n'en peut juger sur les regles communes; le bonheur n'est pour vous ni sur la même route ni de la même espece que celui des autres hommes [...] Il s'est joint à votre amour une émulation de vertu qui vous éleve, et vous vaudriez moins l'un et l'autre si vous ne vous étiez point aimés" (165), and Part II, letter 3 when Édouard describes Julie's uniqueness: "ce sentiment fut si vif [...] un caractere encore plus marqué de perfection que le cœur sent, même indépendamment de l'amour [...] beaucoup d'hommes peuvent lui ressembler, mais il n'y a qu'une Julie au monde" (198).

once a source of shame, she now presents as a source of honor: "y penser [à notre amour] sans remords, en parler sans rougir, et s'honorer à ses propres yeux du même attachement qu'on s'est si longtemps reproché ; voilà le point où nous en sommes" (NH VI, 6, 664).

If confessing her past to her husband grants Julie the emotional relief of confession and transparency, it does not remove the past's ability to affect the present. The past's power undermines Julie's claim to shamelessness. After all, memory preserves powerful emotions, as Julie writes to Claire: "Ce n'est point le présent que je crains, c'est le passé qui me tourmente. Il est des souvenirs aussi redoutables que le sentiment actuel" (NH IV, 1, 402). Although these memories are a source of merit, they are also *redoutables* because remembering past emotions means experiencing them again in the present, like Jean-Jacques's experience of physical pain in his gut when he recalls the ribbon episode. This is a danger especially for the two sensitive protagonists, since recalling and reliving these emotions permits access to a previous identity. This in turn reifies the temptation of past passions and desires that compromise honesty and virtue.

To minimize the risk of temptation and contagious influence of these powerful past emotions onto present emotions, Wolmar undertakes a project of memory replacement. A central aspect of that project is its context, the community at Clarens. Starobinski describes Clarens as founded upon a regime of transparency put into place to exorcise the ghosts of the past that threaten the community's ability to take pleasure in the immediate.[62] Much criticism has focused on the organization of Clarens and its hygienic regimen, designed in light of a single moral goal: to prevent vice by first preventing the excessive passions that lead to vice.[63] This is achieved by

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[62] Starobinski, *La Transparence et l'obstacle*.

[63] Though it is not the focus of the present study, much work has been done on Rousseau's "morale sensitive," a project Rousseau never completed during his lifetime, but which was meant to establish a moral and hygienic

submitting the physical body to specific conditions to facilitate moral improvement. Rather than establishing restrictions, the system aims to create situations that are "favorables à la vertu" and imposes itself as a form of *éducation négative*.[64]

In contrast, Wolmar's *guérison* is much more overt and is curative rather than preventative.[65] Existing criticism has examined both memory (as a receptacle for past experience) and imagination (as a general faculty of representation) as the specific faculties targeted by Wolmar's cure.[66] Wolmar's words to Claire attribute Saint-Preux's initial unease around Julie to memory specifically: "Ce n'est pas de Julie de Wolmar qu'il est amoureux, c'est de Julie d'Étange [...] Il l'aime dans le temps passé : voilà le vrai mot de l'énigme. Ôtez-lui la mémoire, il n'aura plus d'amour" (NH IV, 14, 509). Wolmar aims to replace or cover specific memories of the past with an image of the present. Perrin describes the images Wolmar seeks to replace as *images agissantes*, or memories that have been tied to a specific emotional state and to a physical location, making them potent gateways to the past. For example, in the famous "profanation du bosquet," Wolmar recreates the lovers' first kiss in the grove (NH IV, 12, 489). Wolmar seeks to exploit the dynamic of *mémoire locale* in his "cure." He revisits the same location, but substitutes a new emotional tone, and new identities for each of the former lovers: "À la place de sa maîtresse, je le force de voir toujours l'épouse d'un honnête homme et la mère

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regimen to control external influence on the human body to create ideal conditions to cultivate virtue. See Anne C. Vila's chapter on Rousseau and Tissot, "The Moral Hygiene of Sensibility" in *Enlightenment and Pathology*, 182-224; and Rudy Le Menthéour's *La Manufacture de maladies: La dissidence hygiénique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, (Classiques Garnier: Paris, 2011).

[64] Le Menthéour, *La Manufacture de maladies*, 253, 266. This hygiene relies in part on the aesthetic of renunciation developed in the second half of the novel. See Nicholas Paige, "Rousseau's Readers Revisited," 131-154, and Christophe Martin, *Éducations Négatives: Fictions d'expérimentation Pédagogique au XVIIIe siècle*, Littérature (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012).

[65] Le Menthéour, *La Manufacture de maladies*, 255.

[66] See Bernard Guyon, "La Mémoire et l'oubli," 49–71; Rudy Le Menthéour, *La Manufacture de Maladies*; and François Perrin, "Toutes mes pensées sont en images."

de mes enfants: j'efface un tableau par un autre, et couvre le passé du présent" (NH IV, 14, 511). The "cure" follows the logic of an inoculation: the disease itself, in this case, the lovers' passion, is actively cultivated in controlled circumstances to prevent a fatal outbreak; Wolmar uses this rather than the preventative cure, which would have been to send Saint-Preux away altogether.[67]

Environmental Impressions: Opacity and Resistance

Saint-Preux and Julie's resistance is tested almost immediately after Wolmar administers their *guérison*. Wolmar leaves Saint-Preux and Julie on their own. In a sense, this recreates the choice Julie has faced twice before. Will she take advantage of the time with her former lover to satisfy their remembered passion, or will she remain a faithful wife? In a letter to Milord Edouard (IV, 17), Saint-Preux describes the short boat trip they take together, which provides him an excuse to take Julie to Meillerie. This letter reveals a troubling opacity in Julie's feelings and state of mind that suggest her husband's mnemonic therapy is destined to fail.

To a degree, this letter is also an act of *fausse honte* on the part of Saint-Preux. He writes to Édouard out of a sense of embarrassment over his behavior in orchestrating the trip and attempts to minimize his agency. In reality, he needlessly exposes himself and Julie to a morally dangerous revival of their passion, a revival that nearly results in both their deaths. Saint-Preux writes: "Je veux, milord, vous rendre compte d'un danger que nous courûmes ces jours passés, et dont heureusement nous avons été quittes pour la peur et un peu de fatigue" (514). A strange choice of words! What kind of danger can be avoided through fear and fatigue, rather than strength and intelligence? The words *danger*, *péril* and *perilleux* appear throughout letter IV, 17 and its general tone is forboding and melancholic. The letter also contains references to weakness: *frêle, faible,* and *fatigue*, undermining Wolmar's confidence in the strength of his

[67] Le Menthéour, *La Manufacture de maladies*, 267-270.

inoculative cure as well as the ability of the former lovers to resist whatever they might encounter on the shores of their past.[68] These elements suggest that the visit to Meillerie is of great significance to the couple and has serious consequences for their relationship.

Saint-Preux feigns surprise when they reach the far shore of the lake and blames the strength of the wind for their inability to return the way they came: "un séchard [s'éleva] et, quand nous songeâmes à revirer, la résistance se trouva si forte qu'il ne fut plus possible à notre frêle bateau de la vaincre" (516). How convenient that Meillerie "est presque le seul lieu de cette côte où la grève offre un abord commode" (516)! Saint-Preux seems to hope that Julie, like the boat, will be too frail to overcome the waves of memory preventing her return to her husband. Eventually he confesses what Julie already suspects: their visit was perfectly premeditated.[69] Saint-Preux is the reason they are in danger in both a physical and moral sense.

On the shores of Meillerie, Saint-Preux rediscovers feelings and memories he had inscribed there during his first exile: "En les revoyant moi-même après si longtemps, j'éprouvai combien la présence des objets peut ranimer puissamment les sentiments violents dont on fut agité près d'eux" (519).[70] Visiting this remembered place has the power to revive events and feelings that occurred there previously through the force of *mémoire locale*. Indeed, the terrain is literally transformed during Saint-Preux's return visit. In the past, while he pined for Julie, "tout respirait ici les rigueurs de l'hiver et l'horreur des frimas" (519). At present, the site is verdant

[68] This also recalls Julie's sense of weakness that precipitates her seduction in I, 29: "tout abatoit mon courage, tout augmentoit ma foiblesse" (96).

[69] Saint-Preux writes, "J'avais mes vues" and "L'occasion de visiter ce lieu si chéri dans une saison plus agréable, et avec celle dont l'image l'habitait jadis avec moi, fut le motif secret de ma promenade" (517).

[70] Julie sends Saint-Preux away after their kiss in the grove both in an effort to cool their passion, which has been enflamed by the kiss, and to test Saint-Preux's loyalty.

and flowering: the reanimation of nature indicates the reanimation of the past.[71] Saint-Preux identifies objects and rocks, locations of the past in the physical present. The distinction between past and present disintegrates as the narration alternates between the two with increasing frequency. Traces of Julie which Saint-Preux recalls from his earlier visit to Meillerie are not merely metaphorical. He shows Julie "son chiffre gravé dans mille endroits, et plusieurs vers de Pétrarque ou du Tasse relatifs à la situation où j'étais en les traçant" (519). Julie's image as lover has been permanently inscribed here, undermining the present image of Mme de Wolmar with which her husband had intended to replace it.

Julie is not unaffected by this encounter. Her acknowledgement of the danger of past passion is evident in her feeble lamentation: "l'air n'est pas bon pour moi" (520). When Saint-Preux voices the observation that "nos cœurs n'ont jamais cessé de s'entendre," her response is at once direct and impenetrable: "Il est vrai, dit-elle d'une voix altérée; mais que ce soit la dernière fois qu'ils auront parlé sur ce ton" (583). Her voice is altered, suggesting that her response is coming from an emotional Julie, perhaps even a Julie from the past, Julie d'Étanges, not Mme de Wolmar, a Julie with greater access to part of herself which otherwise remains hidden. Moreover, this part of Julie remains inaccessible even to herself, as Wolmar – a consummate observer himself – remarks to Claire, "un voile de sagesse et d'honnêteté fait tant de replis autour de son cœur, qu'il n'est plus possible à l'œil humain d'y pénétrer, pas même au sien propre" (NH IV, 14, 509). Wisdom and honesty are typically associated with transparency, but for Julie they become impenetrable barriers between self and emotional truth. On the return trip from Meillerie, Julie clearly communicates her refusal to examine her feelings for Saint-

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[71] This recalls the beginning of Rousseau's second *Promenade*, where he describes reliving experience by remembering it: "En voulant me rappeller tant de douces rêveries, au lieu de les décrire j'y retombois. C'est un état que son souvenir ramène" (Rousseau OC 1:1003).

Preux, a truth that remains unarticulated until Julie's death. In this moment, Julie realizes just how futile her husband's project of memory replacement is: Julie d'Étanges still exists within Mme de Wolmar.

Martin shows that Julie's opacity is in fact a form of resistance to the imposed transparency of Clarens.[72] This implies that the transparency she finds at Clarens is superficial, contrived in a way that does not allow her access to her true self. Saint-Preux's torment during their return from Meillerie sheds some light on the nature of Julie's resistance. In the throes of despair of an unbearable paradox, stranded between past emotions and present circumstances, Saint-Preux considers death as the former lovers return across stormy waters that reflect their inner turmoil.[73] There is a strong sexual connotation to the death he contemplates: "dans un transport dont je frémis en y pensant, je fus violemment tenté de la précipiter avec moi dans les flots, et d'y finir dans ses bras ma vie et mes longs tourments" (521). The temptation is intensely physical, almost carnal; the satisfaction of death recalls the carnal satisfaction he once found in Julie's arms. This near murder-suicide underscores that their past love cannot be mourned because it has not died, but neither can it be satisfied. This tension describes the "impossibility of mourning" Martin sees in Julie's creation of the Elysée: "le texte de Rousseau invite à considérer l'élaboration du jardin comme le travail secret d'un impossible deuil," a secret supplement to a source of enjoyment that is now forbidden to her and which she cannot openly mourn.[74] The Élysée itself can therefore be seen as another form of resistance against Wolmar's regime of transparency. Conceived directly after the lovers' separation and before her marriage to Wolmar,

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[72] Christophe Martin, "Logiques du secret," 416. Jean Starobinski discusses Julie's opacity in depth but does not focus on this kind of resistance. See Starobinski, *La Transparence et l'obstacle*.

[73] Paige, "Rousseau's Readers," 144.

[74] Martin, "Logiques du secret," 415-417.

it is the work of Julie alone with no interference from her husband.[75] It represents Julie's exquisite and artful mastery of nature. Its wild appearance dissimulates the deliberate and precise control required to achieve it. Like Julie, it appears as an honest representation of nature that is in reality the fruit of painstaking labor.

Julie's first letter to Saint-Preux after seven years of silence presents another striking example of Julie's opacity, since it is ambiguous regarding her true feelings.[76] Julie initially lauds herself and Saint-Preux, who have successfully transformed an old flame into platonic friendship with Wolmar's help. Her tone does not remain congratulatory, however. She outlines the dangers they still face with respect to their past as if she were scolding Saint-Preux: "Croyez-vous que les monuments à craindre n'existent qu'à Meillerie? Ils existent partout où nous sommes; car nous les portons avec nous" (NH VI, 6, 667). Is her allusion to danger merely a rhetorical strategy, or does she have reason to fear after all?

The very composition of the second half of the novel confirms Martin's argument that Julie's opacity is a way of resisting the Clarens regime of transparency: Julie's letters become rare to the point of disappearing altogether (save the two in which she attempts to marry Saint-Preux and her now widowed cousin, VI, 6 & VI, 8).[77] He explains:

> Mme de Wolmar n'est que le masque d'une Julie amoureuse et comme absentée : elle est son secret révélé à qui saura le décrypter. Car la vérité secrète (*secernere*) du discours de l'amoureuse sans le savoir ne se laisse discerner (*dis-cernere*) que

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[75] Ibid.

[76] In VI, 6, Julie writes to convince Saint-Preux to become the *précepteur* to her children, and to become a permanent part of the Clarens community by marrying Claire, a "seconde Julie." She frames this persuasive letter as a moral challenge to air secrets and face temptation head-on, while simultaneously seeking the moral guarantee of marriage, a *combat* meant to perfect virtue and extinguish "passions mal-éteintes." This letter can also be read as a reaction to the crisis experienced during their recent visit to Meillerie in IV, 17.

[77] Martin, "Logiques du secret," 416.

> sur un mode oblique : c'est en son langage même, en ses lapsus, en ses euphémismes, en ses contradictions, en ses silences enfin (et non dans son for intérieur) que Rousseau invite à saisir sa vérité.[78]

Julie's death gives her access to a part of herself she had buried so deeply not even she was aware of it.[79] On her deathbed, she regains a transparency of self that Wolmar's memory replacement therapy and the Clarens system had paradoxically restricted to a sort of internal exile.[80] This internal exile is tied to Julie's attempts to prevent the shame of her seduction from contaminating her present or future.

Julie's Death: **Illusion Salutaire** *and Preservation*

Julie only sees clearly into her own heart at the end of the novel when, on the cusp of death, she enters into direct communion with God: "J'en dis trop, peut-être, en ce moment où le cœur ne déguise plus rien... Eh pourquoi craindrois-je d'exprimer tout ce que je sens ? [...] je suis déjà dans les bras de la mort" (NH VI, 12, 743). The opacity that lingers within Julie before her death is the first instance when Rousseau offers a positive representation of a secret, which suggests that, as Starobinski noted, "la connaissance totale est réservée au seul regard de Dieu."[81] Death is a departure from the terrestrial order and marks an end of Julie's marital contract. In this new context, her love for Saint-Preux is neither shameful nor adulterous.

I argue that transparency, or at least the version of transparency imposed by Wolmar, does not triumph. Instead, it provided Julie with what she calls on her deathbed an "illusion

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[78] Ibid., 419.

[79] After her son Marcelin falls into the lake, Julie jumps in to save him. She grows ill, however, from exposure to the water and dies soon after.

[80] Martin, "Logiques du secret," 416.

[81] Starobinski, *La Transparence*, 143.

salutaire" which "se détruit au moment que je n'en ai plus besoin. Vous m'avez crue guérie, et j'ai cru l'être" (NH VI, 12, 740). In this sense, the illusion of Wolmar's cure was, in fact, a positive force for Julie and for the community of Clarens since it governed Julie's sense of self and duty and allowed her to engage with virtue. If, as Le Menthéour argues, observation is central in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, then during her life at Clarens, Julie seems to do precisely the opposite of what the author of the *Encyclopédie* article "Observation" recommends.[82] That is, instead of forming a conclusion based on disinterested, empirical observation (as Wolmar does), she allows her imagination, or preconceived ideal of reality – her "illusion salutaire" – to inform the way she views and interacts with her environment. In accordance with sensualist doctrine, the physical and moral are inextricably intertwined, and so Julie's soul is exposed to ideal conditions for the cultivation of virtue while she functions under this illusion. This makes her a success story for Rousseau's "morale sensitive."[83]

Rousseau originally intended to drown his heroine with her lover upon their visit to Meillerie: remnants of this first plan remain in the text (IV, 17).[84] What does Rousseau accomplish by refusing this possibility, by allowing Julie the "literary luxury," as Marshall puts it, of "a protracted death in bed"?[85] Had the lovers died together, carnal passion and its destructive force would have had the last word, a dénouement that would have negated all that

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[82] Le Menthéour, *La Manufacture de maladies* 257. "Observation" in "The 11th Volume." University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Autumn 2017 Edition), Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe (eds.), http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/.

[83] For more on how the *Nouvelle Héloïse* illustrates Rousseau's *morale sensitive*, see Anne C. Vila's chapter on Rousseau in *Enlightenment and Pathology*.

[84] David Marshall, "Fatal Letters: Clarissa and the Death of Julie," in *Clarissa and Her Readers: New Essays for the Clarissa Project*, ed. Carol Houlihan Flynn and Edward Copeland (New York: AMS Press, 1999) 213-253, 213.

[85] Ibid.

preceded it. Instead, Julie's death is a sacrifice to motherhood, but also a loss because her death results in the destruction of the community she loved.

At the end of the novel, tension between the extremes of life and death, presence and absence, unity and separation, and loss and consolation, defies a tidy conclusion. We can, however, gain some insight to the implications of Julie's death by examining her last letter to Saint-Preux. At this moment, Julie is reconciled with the truth of her feelings, which no longer require the guise of an *illusion salutaire* because succumbing to temptation is no longer possible and her virtue is guaranteed: she writes that as death claims her, "mon honneur [est] à couvert" (NH VI, 12, 741). This recalls Rousseau's personal struggle (particularly evident in the *Dialogues*) with the opposition between his public image and his private, personal sense of identity. Julie succeeds in reuniting internal and external representations of herself even while she guarantees her sublimation and exaltation by posterity. The memory of her love for Saint-Preux is for her a source of spiritual strength: "il me soutient quand mes forces m'abandonnent; il me ranime quand je me meurs" (741). Moreover, shame is absent from the true feelings she exposes: "je fais cet aveu sans honte" (741). As she faces death, Julie focuses on the singularity and purity of her love for Saint-Preux. In this sense, her experience with *fausse honte* has better prepared her to make necessary sacrifices for the sake of virtue than did Wolmar's regime of transparency: "la vertu me reste sans tache, et l'amour m'est resté sans remords" (741). Julie becomes a model of virtue even in the act of dying, eschewing morbid, hypocritical traditions in favor of the simple, moderated pleasures of daily routines and the presence of her children.[86]

If Julie is absent, she is also present. Her image is reproduced in those she leaves behind (Claire and her children) and her continued presence is simulated. The Clarens community calls

[86] She refuses traditional last rites, saying that living well is the best preparation for death (rather than repenting in the last hour out of fear).

on Henriette (Claire's young daughter, who bears a striking physical resemblance to the deceased) to portray Julie at the dinner table. Her presence also persists in the form of her memory. Claire's words in letter 13 of Part VI recall Perrin's *mémoire locale*, since she describes Clarens as being imbued with Julie herself: "Non, elle n'a point quitté ces lieux qu'elle nous rendit si charmants; ils sont encore tout remplis d'elle. Je la vois sur chaque objet, je la sens à chaque pas, à chaque instant du jour j'entends les accents de sa voix" (745). Julie becomes the memory that haunts Clarens just as memories, happy and shameful alike, had permeated other locations such as Meillerie, Julie's bedroom, and the grove that witnessed her first kiss with Saint-Preux. Julie's presence is strongly tied to the love and affection she shared with the Clarens community. Her memory is therefore inextricably tied to the emotion of love and her example of tireless virtue. Claire expresses the wish that Julie's essence remain with them as an animating force, inviting Julie's memory to influence their actions: "que son esprit nous anime ... [et] se plait à ... retrouver ses amis pleins de sa mémoire, à les voir imiter ses vertus" (744-45). As Claire loses touch with reality in her grief, deprived of the *inséparable cousine* who had made her whole, she begins to converse with the memory of Julie that inhabits her surroundings until it is Julie's voice who speaks, haltingly, as if from deep within Claire: "Claire! ô ma Claire! où es-tu? que fais-tu loin de ton amie?" (NH VI, 13, 745). Claire's extreme grief inspires discomfort and pity, but the words she speaks here indicate the strength of her memory as an animating force.

The preservation of Julie through memory grants significance to the role of emotion, such as love, in the creation of an accurate and lasting memory.[87] As Claire's letter 7 to Saint-Preux in

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[87] This recalls how Saint-Preux's memory paints a more accurate portrait of Julie than an artist gazing directly at his subject.

Part III insists, memory can stop time.[88] At the end of the novel, Julie exists as a timeless, incorporeal, idealized version of herself not unlike a divine being. If there is consolation to be found in Julie's death, it is here: those she leaves behind must take comfort in the knowledge that she has found happiness and awaits her loved ones in the *séjour éternel*. This perspective allows us to view Julie's apotheosis not as a tragedy that separates the lovers for eternity, but as an end to the obstacles that had separated them on earth: "la vertu qui nous sépara sur la terre nous unira dans le séjour éternel" (VI, 13, 743). Julie's pursuit of virtue through marriage to Wolmar was necessary for her to achieve this divine communion at the end of her life.

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Rousseau was not the only author to explore where social and moral notions of shame overlap and conflict. His solution is a model of preventative education predicated on seclusion from society and a strict moral diet of moderation and transparency.[89] Other authors question the practicability of such an education in contemporary society. After all, Rousseau places exceptional, sensitive protagonists outside the corruptive sphere of influence of worldly society in the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Émile* (1762). How practical is such a model in a less insular setting? Pertinent to this question is another character type, the *ingénue*, an educated but naïve young woman whose interactions with society reveal detrimental lacunae in her preparedness to navigate the *monde*. Examining this character type in the period leading up to and immediately following the Revolution will illuminate the beginnings of a shift in the role of memory in self-construction, and in notions of shame and its social and moral consequences, specifically with respect to the education women did, and, according to some authors, should, receive.

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[88] In III, 7 Claire writes to Saint-Preux to console him during his separation from Julie, encouraging him to enjoy his memory of what they shared and to find happiness in Julie's happiness (319-322).

[89] Julie opposes "hommes savants," or men educated according to the standard of society, and "hommes de bien" in her last letter to Saint-Preux, suggesting the former does not necessarily lead to the latter (VI, 12).

Chapter 2

Avoiding Shame, Managing Memory, and Rethinking Education: The *Ingénue*

In the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, Julie's struggle against shame is waged in protected seclusion, and her interactions are limited to a small sphere of individuals. To discover the role of worldly French society in shaping shame, and the struggles that fictional characters situated in that setting encounter when attempting to avoid it, we must look elsewhere. Literary authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sometimes used another character type, the ingénue, a young girl raised in seclusion who is unprepared for the society she enters, as a vehicle for staging the raw experience of shame. The clash between the ingénue character type and worldly society reveals larger shifts in the conceptualization of shame as a socially situated experience and emotion. Memory remains essential in the formation of selfhood, but its influence can be modified or circumvented. The ingénue sometimes encounters situations that force her to adapt and evolve.

This chapter considers three texts: Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne* (1731-41), Isabelle de Charrière's *Trois femmes* (1797), and Claire de Duras' *Ourika* (1823).[1] These works will be examined in the order of their publication to trace both the temporal evolution of the ingénue as a novelistic character, and the changing nature of this character type's relation to memory and experience of shame. The majority of the analysis will focus on Duras's *Ourika* because that novel reverses many of the trends connected with the ingénue and illustrates the growing

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[1] Because of the length of Marivaux's unfinished novel, this chapter focuses on the first 8 *parties* of the first volume (*parties* 9 and 10 begin the story of the *religieuse* whom Marianne meets at the convent). Subsequent references will be to this edition: Pierre de Marivaux, *La Vie de Marianne suivi du Paysan parvenu*, (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1865).

association at the beginning of the nineteenth century between shame and the malady melancholy.

First, it is necessary to establish a working definition of the ingénue. Charles Mazouer's history of the *naïf* character type in theater provides a useful starting point. He considers the word's Latin origin, *nativus*, and defines the *naïf* as "l'être conforme à l'origine, a la nature, avant les apprentissages, la culture, les raffinements de la civilisation."[2] *Naïveté*, according to this definition, is linked to youthful inexperience, sincerity, transparency, surprise, and awkwardness. Generally, the *naïf* is "mal adapté à la réalité," and serves to elicit laughter and ridicule, an externalization of the spectator's feeling of superiority.[3] Over time, this stock character evolved into the theatrical ingénue, a type embodied (with some complexity) by Molière's Agnès of his *École des femmes* (1663). Laughter is still important to her function in the play, but she gains a new trait, the ability to mature: "l'ingénuité évolue [...] du silence à la parole, de l'ignorance à la connaissance, de la dépendance à la liberté, bref, de l'innocence vers la maturité."[4] The evolution of the character ends with Agnès gaining independence and the ability to reason for herself (developed thanks to the educational power of her love for Horace), rather than parroting Arnolphe's maxims.

In prose narration in seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Europe, the notions of youth, naïveté and transformation are essential elements of the ingénue's interaction with society.[5] Her initial ignorance facilitates the social awakening she will undergo, either gradually or abruptly,

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[2] Charles Mazouer, *Le Personnage du naïf dans le théâtre comique du Moyen Age à Marivaux* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1979) 10.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 214.

[5] Ibid., 10.

as her contact with society increases. Noble by birth and/or education, initially unobservant and protected, the ingénue is malleable and distinctly passive. Often a wiser, wealthy benefactress plays the role of social tutor, granting access to social knowledge gained through years of experience. Cécile de Volanges illustrates these traits in her first two letters in *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782). Fresh from the convent where she was educated in seclusion, Cécile is incapable of reading social cues that would otherwise, for instance, have alerted her to the fact that she was meeting a shoemaker, and not a prospective husband. She seems to echo Mazouer's description of the *naïf*: "ignorant ce qu'il faut savoir, s'étonnant de ce que chacun sait, ne voyant pas ce que tout le monde voit, disant ce qu'il devrait cacher."[6]

The ingénue reflects an idealized view of the world inculcated through a conservative moral education. As the introduction illustrated, notions of feminine honor equated to chastity and were imbued with a moral dimension. Christophe Martin has examined the "negative education" popularized in certain eighteenth-century literary and pedagogical writings: this mode of education sought, as Rousseau put it in the *Emile* (1762), to prevent "l'entrée au vice" by limiting (that is to say, preventing) a pupil's exposure to any sort of vice or morally questionable situation.[7] Education staged in secluded, rural settings was viewed as a means of protecting the moral integrity of the student, particularly in the case of young women. In this sense the literary ingénue shares some traits with the contemporary figure of the *pensionnaire*, a young girl raised

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Christophe Martin, *Éducations négatives: fictions d'expérimentation pédagogique au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012).

in a convent.[8] As a result, such a character had an abstract, theoretical understanding of the world, without any practical experience of it.

It should be noted that male versions of the ingénue exist. The heroes of Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) and the eponymous novel *l'Ingénu* (1767) come to mind as examples. The notable difference is that the male ingénu is rarely found outside of the *conte* or *roman philosophique*, whereas the ingénue figures prominently in memoire, epistolary and sentimental novels, as well as the *roman d'apprentissage*. It is arguable that Voltaire's Ingénu and Candide do evolve in their level of understanding in the world. Ingénu does so through personal experiences and conversations with his cell-mate, Gordon, the Jansenist responsible for the Ingénu's intellectual development. Candide, for his part, tours the world in search of meaning and ultimately resolves to cultivate his garden. However, these characters' main function is to serve as a vehicle for Voltaire's satire, sometimes through laughter. His male ingénu character displaces the target of ridicule from the character itself (as was traditional in theater) to societal rules or religious or philosophical dogmas. As Bakhtin remarks of the foolish and naïve characters of theater that transition to the novel, their function is to reflect the lives of others (they have no existence beyond this figurative purpose) in order to denounce false conventions, hypocrisy and lies.[9] The Voltarian male ingénu's ignorance is artificial, designed with specific critical targets in mind, a fact often reflected in the character's name, which reinforces his status as "type." By contrast, the female ingénue depicted in this period's literature functions in a more

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[8] It was common, particularly in noble families, to send young girls to be educated in convents as *pensionnaires*, although in the second half of the eighteenth century, this practice was criticized by writers such as Rousseau, Épinay and Genlis. Dena Goodman, "Le Rôle des mères dans l'éducation des pensionnaires au XVIIIe siècle," in *Femmes éducatrices au siècle des lumières*, eds. Isabelle Brouard-Arends and Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 33-44, 33.

[9] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Fonctions du frippon, du buffon et du sot dans le roman," in *Esthétique et théorie du roman*, trans. Daria Olivier (Paris: Gallimard, 1978) 305-312, 306 and 308.

limited social sphere, and her *ingénuité* is not prolonged artificially by the author. Instead, she embodies the condition of the young aristocratic woman of the day, who has much to fear about society, and much to learn if she is to navigate it successfully. Cécile of *Les Liaisons dangereuses* illustrates just how much a young woman stands to lose. Her *ingenuité* is thus invested with particular social stakes: the ability to read social situations and the motives of others correctly (or incorrectly) will determine the (in)security of her reputation and social status.

This chapter will examine a selection of literary portrayals of an ingénue's interaction in the social sphere in order to illuminate an evolution in the way French literature depicted the perceived obstacles that contemporary society presented to young women. It also considers what solutions, if any, authors offered to overcome them. In the fictional universes depicted in these works, a successful young aristocrat should, for instance, honor her family with a sterling reputation and add to its prestige through a desirable marriage, ideally to a wealthy nobleman of equal or greater social standing than her parents. Beauty and eloquence are means of attracting potential suitors, but the most important quality is virtue, both in the sense of chastity and of upstanding moral character. Failure to respect rigid social conventions of speech, dress, or comportment; the dangers of seduction, corruption, and debauchery; marriage to the wrong man: all have negative consequences on the ingénue's reputation.[10] Shame is the mark of failure for a young woman since it threatened her eligibility and security and is the impetus of a potentially downward social spiral. Shame therefore forms the boundaries of the social space in which the ingénue can safely function.

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[10] On the evolution of the view of public opinion in the eighteenth century, see Antoine Lilti, "Private Lives, Public Space: A New Social History of the Enlightenment," in *Cambridge Companion to the French Enlightenment*, ed. Dan Brewer (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 14–28.

Memory complicates the process of social learning and negotiation by endangering the ingénue's social success. This can happen in one of two ways. First, memory can bind an ingénue to a model of moral education that proves uselessly idealistic in the face of real-world tragedies and problems, encumbering her ability to do what is necessary for self-preservation. This is the case for Émilie of *Trois femmes*. Learning to let go of this memory, and the identity and worldview she has constructed upon it, is a necessary step. The second and perhaps more frightening possibility is that memory itself becomes problematic if it is inaccessible. That is, the ingénue's inability to remember key moments of her past can leave a void of identity that she must find a way to fill. This threatens to damage the ingénue's social standing, a potential risk for humiliation. While other faculties of mind like the imagination can provide means of satisfying such lacunae, as for Marivaux's Marianne, the artificial reconstruction of memory combined with the experience of shame can have irreparable negative consequences for the psyche. That is the dilemma of Duras's Ourika.

The Almost *Ingénue* Marianne: Intuition, Imagination, and Narration

Marivaux's Marianne reflects some traits typical of the ingénue as identified by Mazouer but diverges from this character type in other ways. She acquires a generous benefactress, Mme de Miran (who turns out to be the mother of her love interest, Valville). Like Molière's Agnès, Marianne is at times overly trusting of others. The episodes highlighting the dishonest intentions of M de Climal (a would-be benefactor who tries to seduce Marianne, who also turns out to be Valville's uncle), and the scene of her abduction from the convent, for instance, demonstrate her

youthful naïveté.[11] Marianne's social circumstances also evolve over the course of this unfinished novel, since at the outset of the tale we know she has somehow achieved the title of *comtesse* by the time she writes her story.

However, unlike the ingénue type, her moral-intellectual identity does not evolve because it is set from the beginning of the novel. Rather than gradually acquiring access to social awareness, Marianne is endowed with an innate knowledge of social structure and convention, even if this knowledge is initially submerged and obscured by the circumstances that make her an orphan.[12] This "aristocratic principle," or the natural social instinct attributed to nobility, is inherent in her character from the start.[13] The novel thus reads as the progressive mise-en-scène of this social intuition as proof of her honorability, or belonging to the nobility, despite the potentially shameful ambiguity of her origins. It is a "roman d'explication" rather than a "roman d'éducation."[14] That is, the novel's layered narration explains the social significance of young Marianne's reactions and behavior and their effect on those around her, as a kind of unique ongoing phenomenon, rather than presenting it as a gradual acquisition of social skill.

Marianne begins her story as an unprotected young orphan of unknown social provenance. She is discovered at the age of two in the wreckage of a robbery of which she is the only survivor: the other passengers, a woman dressed as a servant, and a couple dressed in noble

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[11] Young Marianne wrestles with her understanding of Climal's feelings and ultimately accepts his gifts of fine linens and clothing (33-37). Later, although she had no previous plans with Mme de Miran, Marianne follows an unknown servant into a carriage under the pretense that it is her benefactress who has summoned her. Instead, she is taken to another convent and given the option of marriage to the son of a servant, or life as a nun (277-327). This episode straddles the end of the sixth and beginning of the seventh parts of the narrative.

[12] Peter Brooks, *The Novel of Worldliness* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1969), 97.

[13] Ibid., 96.

[14] Leo Spitzer, "A Propos de *La Vie de Marianne*: Lettre à M. Georges Poulet," *Romantic Review* 44, no. 2 (1953): 102-26, 108.

finery, have been killed. No one can confirm to which of the two women Marianne is related. Adopted by a kind curé and his sister, she grows up the object of much interest and pity.[15] When she travels to Paris for the first time with the curé's sister, the woman's sudden illness and death leave her alone in the city and without resource. A priest secures M de Climal, wealthy aristocrat, as her benefactor, and Marianne is placed with a lingère to earn her keep. After she discovers that M de Climal's intentions are far from honorable, she runs away. Soon she acquires the attention of another noblewoman whom she meets in a church, Mme de Miran (who happens to be the sister of M de Climal). Complicating matters, she falls in love with a young man, Valville, who happens to be M de Climal's nephew and her new benefactress's son. The two wish to marry, but Valville's extended family objects because of Marianne's questionable origins.

Marivaux places Marianne in social situations in which she must navigate the potential for shame. Her adventures therefore provide a useful range of shameful experiences as defined by *Ancien Régime* values. Marianne's interaction with M. de Climal, the first wealthy noble who agrees to help her, puts her *pudeur* on display and tests her ability to detect and navigate shameful behavior in others. Though he later repents, M. de Climal initially sees Marianne's lack of concrete origins as an excuse and means by which to manipulate her, first when he gives her extravagant clothing, and later when he asks her to be his mistress.[16] The romantic attraction

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[15] Marianne describes the "goût romanesque" that wealthy ladies had for her (6). They sometimes visited and brought small presents.

[16] She says she is "honteuse de ses vues" as he admires her wearing his gifts of fine clothing (34). Only later when M. de Climal directly confesses his feelings will Marianne face the truth of them, first in the coach (34-36) and finally when he offers to send her to the countryside to be his mistress (105-106). She exposes M. de Climal's hypocrisy to the religieux who had initially introduced them. M. de Climal blushes at her accusation, a physiological manifestation of shame that helps Marianne prove his guilt (131).

Marianne feels for Valville, and he for her, is one of the main forces that triggers feelings of shame in the young heroine because it puts her background (or lack of it) on display to his family and social circle.

Because the sensationist models of mind that held sway at the time considered memory as the mind's record of sensory experience, it would significantly change Marianne's circumstances if she possessed a memory that concretely proved her nobility.[17] A memory of her mother's face, her father's voice, or the elegant cloth in her cradle, could be vital proof of her identity, and would end all objections to her marrying Valville, which is a main point of conflict in the story. However, she cannot remember. She attempts to hide the potential shame of her roots by engaging in a process of reimagination that allows her to anchor her identity in a new narrative that is self-consciously novelistic: she reinvents her memory as a narrative in which she is the noble heroine. As she writes to her friend at the outset of the novel, referring to her dramatic discovery at the site of the accident, "Ce début paroît annoncer un roman: ce n'en est pourtant pas un que je raconte; je dis la vérité comme je l'ai apprise de ceux qui m'ont élevée" (4). And yet, Marianne includes details she could not possibly have known herself: "un côté du visage de cette dame morte était sur le mien, et elle m'avoit baigné de son sang" (5) and "j'avois des grâces, de petites façons qui n'étoient point d'un enfant ordinaire" (8). While her memory is problematic, her physiognomy and manners encourage other characters (and Marianne herself, as well as the reader) to believe in her nobility. When she travels to Paris and encounters the "world" at the age of 15, Marianne quickly discovers that she possesses impressive rhetorical

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[17] This anticipates the model of memory as a faculty of selfhood presented by Condillac a few years following the publication of Marivaux's unfinished novel. As the receptacle of experience, memory records experience through sensation. For more on sensationist models of memory and other mental faculties, see the introduction.

skills and social instincts. Marianne's noble traits grant her a natural ability to avoid shame and maintain her dignity, an aptitude that emerges through her encounters with people from different social strata.

The young Marianne's "constructed memory" of her noble origins often gains her sympathy from important, powerful characters in key episodes of the novel. Her story is recounted in full to various characters no fewer than five times throughout the unfinished work. The act of recounting helps to save her from potentially compromising situations. Her mobilization of truth and vraisemblance, with the support of her physical beauty and charm as a storyteller, help her to represent herself as the real-life referent for her narration, when in reality her narrative has no referent and is invented.[18] Ultimately moments of narration read as confessions which take the form of oral tales delivered with skill and creativity, and often tears, to gain the sympathy of her audience.[19] Mme de Miran first finds Marianne crying in a convent church. She and the prieure listen to her story and Mme de Miran is moved to tears of her own by Marianne's weeping and air of dignity: "Je la vis qui s'essuyoit les yeux" (140). When Marianne finishes her story, Mme de Miran immediately pledges financial and emotional support to Marianne, whom she adopts as a daughter.

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[18] Jan Herman, "Variations sans thème: La Vie de Marianne et la question de l'origine," in *Pensées de Marivaux*, ed. Franck Salaün (Amsterdam; New York, 2002), 22.

[19] This shares some elements with the Rousseauvian confession. For instance, the transformation of the role of sociability and the public gaze into a mirror; individual traits, even flaws, can become universal and therefore transcendent. See Elena Russo's articles: "Marivaux et l'éthique féminine de la sociabilité," *French Forum* 20, no. 2 (May 1995): 165-182, and "The Self: Real and Imaginary: Social Sentiment in Marivaux and Hume," *Yale French Studies* no. 92, Exploring the Conversible World: Text and Sensibility from the Classical Age to the Enlightenment (1997): 126-148. See also Leo Spitzer, "À propos de *La Vie de Marianne*."

The doubling of the narrative voice, termed the *double registre* by Jean Rousset, adds an interesting complexity to Marianne's constructed memory.[20] Rousset contends that "la Marianne âgée qui raconte n'est pas la jeune Marianne [...] À la fois complice et détachée, elle est en mesure d'interpréter et de traduire en clair ce que son cœur vivait confusément."[21] On one hand, Marianne's lack of memory threatens the foundation of the identity constructed by the extra-diegetic narrator, the older Marianne. On the other hand, the older Marianne's explication of her younger self's emotions, instincts, and actions as evidence of her nobility, provides another layer of support for her claim to natural aristocracy.[22] A dialogic relationship forms within the narration between the immediacy of emotion and sensation felt by the young Marianne, and the reflection made possible by the wisdom and experience the older Marianne has acquired. This dynamic underscores the older Marianne's authority as interpretive author of her own story while also preserving young Marianne's naïveté. In other words, the dynamic of the "double registre" often serves to highlight the validity of her younger self's instinctive impressions. Intuition is a source of valuable knowledge for young Marianne. It informs her actions and allows her to maintain her dignity. That is a quality which the aristocratic characters of this fictional universe believe to be inherent in the nobility. Because Marianne possesses this quality, she can submit it as "proof" that she belongs to the social elite. For instance, when placed with the frank and sometimes crude lingère, Mme Dutour, she feels revolted and out of place: "Je sentois, dans la franchise de cette femme-là, quelque chose de grossier qui me rebutoit" (26), and wonders "Où

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[20] Jean Rousset, "Marivaux ou la structure du double registre" in *Forme et signification: Essais sur les structures littéraires de Corneille à Claudel* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1964), 45-64.

[21] Ibid., 52.

[22] Brooks, *The Novel of Worldliness*, 100.

est-ce que j'avois pris mes délicatesses ? Étoient-elles dans mon sang ?" (26-27). This rhetorical question encourages the reader to answer in the affirmative, that she naturally possesses such noble traits.

Another example of this function of the double register is when Marianne meets Valville for the first time. After his carriage knocks her over on a street of Paris and she injures her ankle in the fall, he brings her to his home and calls a doctor. During the visit, Valville expresses his interest in Marianne, and clearly assumes, based on her state of dress, that she is of the *beau monde*. Paralyzed with fear that he should learn that, in fact, she has no family and is living with and working for a *lingère*, she helplessly gives in to tears. Without knowing it, this reaction is the best possible course she could take. Her tears inspire a favorable reaction in her interlocutor. Marianne's sense of *pudeur*, or her unwillingness to reveal intimate details about herself that could compromise her, engages to protect her social appearance: "Notre âme sait bien ce qu'elle fait, ou du moins son instinct le sait pour elle" (70). An older Marianne explains that her young counterpart's tears grant her protection against the mediocrity of her *état* in the form of visible dignity and nobility of character:

> C'est que cet abattement et ces pleurs me donnèrent, aux yeux de ce jeune homme, je ne sais quel air de dignité romanesque qui lui en imposa, qui corrigea d'avance la médiocrité de mon état, qui disposa Valville à l'apprendre sans en être scandalisé [...] ils viennent d'ennoblir Marianne dans l'imagination de son amant ; ils font foi d'une fierté de cœur qui empêchera bien qu'il ne la dédaigne... (70)

Her body reacts to the potential shame of her situation independently of her consciousness; the tears form and fall of their own accord, and "correct in advance" the ambiguity of her social status. Female tears carried particular significance, as Anne Vincent-Buffault's work on the

history of tears illustrates.[23] Not only were they credited with granting a charming beauty to women, especially when they were honest and could not be restrained, tears suggest a theater of sensibility, conscience, and duty. In this sense, Marianne plays the role of a woman whose emotional turmoil is so great it cannot be restrained by her *pudeur*. In this scene Valville occupies a voyeuristic position with respect to the heroine, since her intimacy is exposed by this display of emotion: her tears seduce him.

Sometimes the sympathy the young Marianne inspires is accompanied by less noble sentiments, as is the case when she interacts with other male characters like M. de Climal. In these instances, her intuition informs her something is amiss, though her conscious mind cannot identify what is wrong. When M. de Climal takes her to buy gloves, Marianne reacts to his enthusiastic but inappropriate assistance: "je rougissois sans savoir pourquoi, seulement par un instinct qui me mettoit en peine de ce que cela pouvoit signifier" (25). This intimate scene has an obvious sexual overtone for the reader, but the naïve Marianne cannot name the reason for her reaction. As a young unmarried woman there are certain things that Marianne cannot know while still remaining *honnête*. Here, the double register plays an essential role of preserving her naïveté even as it illuminates M. de Climal's inappropriate sexual interest. The reader is meant to conclude that she possesses naturally refined instincts that cause her to blush – the physiological mark of shame – even when the reason for her reactions elude her consciousness.

Although the imagined elements and details that hold together the few verifiable facts of Marianne's story are fictional in provenance (for instance, her resemblance to the murdered noblewoman), her use of imagination serves to increase *vraisemblance* and anchors the story

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[23] Anne Vincent-Buffault, *The History of Tears: Sensibility and Sentimentality in France* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991), esp. 49-53.

more completely in credibility.[24] Moreover, Marianne is not alone in telling it. Her story is given voice and therefore authority by other noble characters like Valville and Mme de Miran. Her origin story becomes a kind of secret weapon or shield, deployed to surprise and move initially unsympathetic audiences at critical moments when she risks public humiliation. One example is when Valville confides Marianne's story to his cousin, Mlle de Fare, to gain her sympathy and silence with respect to his aunt, who would oppose their marriage.[25] Another important instance is when Marianne is kidnapped by members of Mme de Miran's family, of which a political minister who, fearful that Valville will marry beneath his rank, has arranged for Marianne to marry the son of his servant instead. Mme de Miran and Valville arrive at the minister's home to rescue Marianne and find a large group of people assembled there. In addition to the ministre and his wife, there were "cinq ou six dames et trois messieurs, dont deux me parurent gens de robes, et l'autre épée. M Villot [the intended husband] y étoit aussi" (301). Mme de Miran relates Marianne's tale herself, emphasizing the details that would support Marianne's nobility and testifying to her noble and admirable character. She combines Marianne's reimagined origin story with her own personal experience with the young woman. The story moves all those present (with the exception of the thin, *méchante* relative), confirming the power of Marianne's narrative, no matter who tells it.[26]

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[24] For more on the construction of vraisemblance in this context, see Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *Man and World* 12, no. 2 (1979): 123–41. The notion of narration as a representation of the self, a copy of a model existing in reality that is recorded in and by a text, rejoins the fundamental distinction made by Ricœur between narration as either "image as fiction" or "image as copy."

[25] Valville explains the situation to his cousin, Mlle de Fare, when Mme Dutour appears at their country house and reveals her acquaintance with Marianne. Valville begs his cousin to say nothing, to which she agrees, moved by the story and Marianne's tears (249-253).

[26] "j'aperçus plusieurs personnes de la compagnie qui détournaient la tête pour s'essuyer les yeux" (319).

Marianne alone, however, can move them to tears when she adds a poignant reiteration of her dedication to and love for Mme de Miran, punctuated by a moving display of gestures, sobs, and tender tone of voice, all of which imbue her with dignity despite her circumstances. These elements succeed in moving most members of her audience to sympathy (they "parurent s'attendrir sur moi," 316) and even tears. Thus Marianne illustrates the very qualities that make her suited for the role in which she has cast herself, and in which Mme de Miran has also cast her: that of dignified heroine.[27] Put another way, she manipulates shame and memory to consolidate her own identity. While Marianne does not necessarily gain full approval from this relative to marry Valville, the minister at least accords her his respect, and he admits having no trouble believing her to be truly noble. It is only the lack of concrete, undeniable proof that causes him to withhold consent.[28] The other women and men in the room communicate their compliments to Marianne as they leave.

It is important to note that not everyone is persuaded by the performance and narration Marianne offers them. The prieure, for instance, is skeptical, and Valville's aunt disapproves of her relationship with Valville. Mme de Miran's thin, unkind relative also remains unconvinced by any argument of Marianne's merit and assures the room as she exits that "je ne suis pas extrêmement sensible aux vertus romanesques. Adieu, petite aventurière" (326). What Marivaux offers as a remedy for social shame in the form of public humiliation is Marianne's refined social instinct, which shines through her gifts of imaginative narration and oration that seduce and inspire the sympathy of members of the nobility. However, this remedy only functions if society

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[27] It should be noted that in the case of Mlle de Fare, Marianne added a much shorter but similarly self-effacing speech following Valville's narration of her story. It achieved a similar effect on Mlle de Fare.

[28] "La noblesse de vos parents est incertaine, mais celle de votre cœur est incontestable, et je la préférerois, s'il fallait opter" (326). However, as he explains, society will not tolerate her story's uncertainty.

as a whole, including characters who resemble *la méchante* relative, possesses the capacity for sympathy. The role of imagination in forming Marianne's identity suggests that her innate gifts, whether tied to natural nobility or not, remain rooted in fiction. She makes an art of maintaining her dignity, even if she is unable to gain universal social approval, but her credibility also requires belief in her innate social instincts.

In the eighteenth century, some authors, especially women writers, questioned the long-held belief in the existence of such inherent social knowledge. Traits such as dignity, elegance, refined taste, and an instinct for polite social behavior long associated with the nobility, and once believed to guide social navigation, were tested against the realities of society. Novels like Charrière's *Trois femmes* offered a more individuated view of selfhood in which traits attributed to the nobility were learned rather than innate and did not guarantee social success.

***Trois Femmes*: Education and Evolution**

During and after the Revolution, novelistic representation of female nobility evolved from the *Ancien Régime* model put forth in *La Vie de Marianne*. The upheaval of the Revolution and its aftermath presented new difficulties as well as new, controversial models of morality, which significantly impacted the ways in which novelistic depictions of the *ingénue* encountered shame. Isabelle de Charrière's short novel *Trois femmes* (1797) is one example of how authors of the period began to question the pragmatism of traditional assumptions of worldly social mores, as well as traditional forms of women's education in the face of the real-world difficulties of emigration and poverty. Avoiding shame requires that new skills and social knowledge be *acquired*, a notion which carries moral implications. The *ingénue*'s struggles with a problematic

memory in the face of shame take a new form, requiring important shifts in definitions of morality.

The novel's plot is set within a frame narrative in which guests at a salon discuss the origin and merit of moral duty. The pseudonymous author/character, the abbé de la Tour, relates the story of three women as an illustration of a model of relative morality he advocates. In this context, Émilie, the ingénue heroine of the tale, must learn to forget, or at the very least, modify, her rigid understanding of moral precepts inherited from her formal education to save her servant, Joséphine, and herself, from social shame.

The novel's original publication in 1795 coincided with a philosophical debate on the nature of moral duty that followed the end of the Terror. The newly reformed government needed a way to establish moral legitimacy in the eyes of society at large following a violent period of state-sanctioned violence. Charrière's novel contributes to this debate by responding to Kant's notion of absolute moral duty (the idea that universal moral dictums are useful both in theory and practice), and consequentialist notions of the materialists, according to which small moral violations could be overlooked if they promoted the greater good. Carla Hesse puts it succinctly: "Moral rules were a posteriori findings – the result of investigation, just as would be any other generalization about the natural world."[29] In this perspective, which grounded knowledge in a framework of empirical observation, the debate of "moral duty" thus led to a consequential moral logic. Lying, for instance, could be tolerated if it resulted in a greater good.[30]

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[29] Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) 107. For an elaboration of the context and stakes of this debate, see the fifth chapter of this work (104-129).

[30] Ibid.

In this new social setting (Émilie has emigrated to Germany with her parents to escape persecution during the Revolution), shame gains new social dimensions: questionable or immoral behavior is only shameful if it becomes known to the public. Charrière therefore places great emphasis on the division of public and private knowledge. While avoiding shame remains essential for the social survival of a noblewoman, the means by which this is accomplished require a grounded, empirical understanding of reality, and detailed calculations of the motives, personalities, and desires of others.

Émilie, a French émigrée, begins the tale as naïve and passive, a perfectly unobservant young noblewoman of 16. Shortly after fleeing to Germany with her parents, Émilie is orphaned.[31] Only Joséphine, her loyal servant, remains with her. Their unmarried status grants them both relative autonomy and responsibility for their own survival. However, Joséphine soon begins an affair with the local baron's servant, Henri, in exchange for his help in household matters. For Joséphine, duty justifies the sacrifice for the sake of her mistress.[32]

Discovering this affair triggers a crisis in Émilie's conscience and she confronts Joséphine. Moral theory clashes with pragmatism as Joséphine explains that she has traded what Émilie calls her "honneur" for Henri's assistance with necessary chores and admits to enjoying the relationship. So long as the arrangement remains private, and Joséphine and Émilie benefit from it, Joséphine is content to confess her sin each week at mass and receive absolution. A little indignant at her mistress's horrified reaction, she points out the practical needs of their tiny household that had not crossed Émilie's mind: "Pensez-vous donc que je puisse tout faire,

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[31] Her parents die of despair after they lose their fortune, having refused to sell their remaining property in France.

[32] Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment*, 121.

Mademoiselle?"[33] Joséphine's pragmatism and hardworking nature are blatantly opposed to Émilie's more frivolous pursuits: "Joséphine cultivait toutes sortes de légumes, nourrissait une chèvre, filait du chanvre et du lin. Émilie arrosait quelques rosiers, caressait la chèvre, brodait de la mousseline et du linon" (44).

The young noblewoman's naïveté and blindness to what goes on around her are further underscored when Joséphine reveals that Henri is not her first lover. Charrière depicts a corrupt French aristocracy and higher-ranking clergy when Joséphine reveals that Émilie's own uncles, the *grand vicaire*, and a marquis all elicited sexual favors from her.[34] Such behavior is not limited to the French, or to the aristocracy, as Joséphine's relationship with Henri illustrates, but are shared by humanity in general. Joséphine also points out that, as mistress of their household, it was Émilie's duty to forbid any kind of behavior she felt distasteful. In this encounter, it is Émilie who learns valuable lessons in household management and human nature from Joséphine; the servant is more equipped for survival in the women's present circumstances, and as we will see, is a far more astute observer.

Ironically, it is Émilie's nobility and the traditional education associated with that social status that cause her blindness and therefore make her susceptible to bringing shame to herself and her household: she is ignorant of her duty and how to perform it. Émilie revisits her memories of her mother's recitation of moral precepts in a search for guidance, but these memories prove insufficient preparation for the duties that now define her role. Because of Émilie's inattention, Joséphine soon finds herself pregnant, and Henri refuses to marry her to

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[33] Isabelle de Charrière, *Œuvres complètes vol. 9: Romans, contes et nouvelles 2: 1798 - 1806*, eds. Jean-Daniel Candaux, Courtney C.P. et al (Amsterdam: G.A. van Oorschot), 9:45. Subsequent references are to this edition.

[34] Laurence Vanoflen, "Isabelle de Charrière et les vertus de l'émigration" in *Destins romanesques de l'émigration*, eds. Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie and Catriona Seth (Paris: Desjonquères, 2007), 129-157, 132.

save her reputation. This dilemma forms one of the principal plot lines of the novel by challenging Émilie to resolve it.

She can only learn to do this, however, with the help of Constance, the mysterious and wealthy widow who will become the benefactress and mentor Émilie so desperately needs. Émilie's encounters with the ethical nuances of reality trigger a gradual reimagination of herself and the moral precepts that govern her understanding of the world. This evolution is guided by her interactions with Joséphine and Constance and are framed in terms of sight and seeing. As Joséphine remarks, "A quoi sont bonnes toutes vos lectures, si elles ne vous apprennent pas à *prévoir* les choses mieux que nous, qui n'y pensons que quand elles sont faites ? J'oserais presque dire qu'une belle éducation est bien mauvaise si elle *ferme les yeux* sur ce qui se passe tous les jours dans le monde" (46, my emphasis).[35] Émilie's lack of *prévoyance* (a trait she shares with her parents, who were bankrupted when they failed to sell their lands in France before it was too late) is linked to her lack of pragmatism and social awareness.

The framing of Émilie's social awakening as the acquisition of sight is reminiscent of the evolution of understanding and development of selfhood in the abbé Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's *Traité des sensations* (1754). Considered one of Condillac's most important works, the traité illustrates his theory of sensationism through a thought experiment that depicts the gradual animation of a statue that progressively acquires each of the five senses.[36] His work

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[35] More examples of Émilie's blindness abound. Joséphine is obviously pregnant (her corset explodes from her body and she is sobbing) but Émilie cannot extrapolate for herself the source of her servant's distress. Joséphine responds: "Eh mon Dieu ! ne le voyez-vous pas ? [...] Est-ce à force d'indifférence ou à force de décence que vous ne voyez rien?" (67). Later, Constance points out to Émilie her effect on Théobald, the local baron's son: "Ne voyez-vous pas [...] qu'au château vous séduisez Théobald?" (50).

[36] Thought experiments were common in works of philosophical, scientific, political, or moral theory, even theater. Examples include Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749) and Marivaux's short play *La Dispute* (1744). Rousseau employed this rhetorical strategy in his first discourse, in which he created a fictional origin story for man from which he engineers a specific view of the evolution of society. On the prevalent use of fictional origin stories in the

constructs a systemic model for the development of an aware, thinking self through sensory experience. For Condillac's statue, surprise accompanies the experience of a new, pleasant sensation, but a transition to an unpleasant or painful sensation inspires worry (*inquiétude*), unease (*malaise*), and even torment.[37] Worry and suffering, together with the reflexes of memory (recalling a previous, more pleasant sensation) and comparison (preference for the previous sensation) inspire a desire to return to the past. These elements of transition and awareness are key in stimulating the statue's mental operations: "L'étonnement augmente, par conséquent, l'activité des opérations de son ame."[38]

Émilie's initial reaction to learning of Joséphine's sexual relationships follows this pattern. She initially feels shock and worry, then reflects on her memories of moral lessons repeated by her mother and begins to compare these precepts with Joséphine's behavior and the reality of her circumstances. Later, the process is repeated when Constance reaveals the dubious source of her fortune.[39] This time Émilie analyzes her own reaction by comparing it to previous manifestations of the same sensory input. She assesses what she has learned about each woman and tries to form a holistic moral judgment of each:

> Ce que Constance venait de faire éprouver à Émilie ressemblait si fort à ce que Joséphine lui avait fait éprouver il y avait environ trois mois, qu'elle se trouva dans la même

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eighteenth century, see Christophe Martin, ed., *Fictions de l'origine: 1650-1800* (Paris: Éditions Desjonquères, 2012).

[37] Jean Deprun, *La Philosophie de l'inquiétude en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1979), 200.

[38] Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Traité des sensations* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1984), 23.

[39] Constance's (now deceased) husband and his family acquired a large fortune by cheating and manipulating others. For this reason, she hides her real name to avoid being discovered by her husband's victims (63). She also explains to Émilie that trying to return what was stolen was pointless, since she makes far better use of the money: "Je donne partout où je vais, je fais donner partout où j'ai du bien" (64).

> souffrance, et que ses réflexions furent à peu près les mêmes. L'une avait des amants auxquels elle ne voulait pas renoncer, l'autre possédait un bien mal acquis qu'elle ne voulait pas rendre. L'une et l'autre lui étaient chères, l'une et l'autre lui étaient utiles, l'une et l'autre avaient mêlé le blâme aux aveux, le reproche à la justification. Aux yeux de l'une ni de l'autre elle n'était parfaitement innocente. (65)

Viewing Émilie's thought process in conjunction with Condillac's statue narrative puts the lexicon of sight and seeing used to describe Émilie's re-education into a new perspective. She is acquiring a sense of social awareness and knowledge. At the same time, she is learning to analyze the observations she gleans from this sense and to integrate these observations into a more complete understanding of the world around her.

This acquisition of social knowledge has other implications when viewed through a sensationalist lens. Because Émilie's initial understanding of reality is based on abstracted theories formed in her imagination (acquired rather than empirical) they are unstable and inaccurate because they are not tied to referents in reality. She must learn to observe and analyze the world in order to anchor her understanding of it to concrete experience. As Constance notes, "Votre éducation vous a donné des idées spéculatives extrêmement délicates sur quantité d'objets, que vous envisageriez un peu différemment si vous aviez plus vécu le monde" (64).[40] Émilie gains support and instruction from Constance, who offers the younger woman a strong example of successful social navigation and practical moral relativism. She realizes that the equation before her is far more complex than simple theoretical judgments of right or wrong.[41]

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[40] Émilie confirms: "en perdant mes parents j'ai vu qu'il ne me restait d'autre patrimoine que l'éducation qu'ils m'avaient donnée: elle était stricte et ne m'avait pas permis de croire qu'on pût dévier en rien du devoir" (69).

[41] As Constance tells Émilie, "Votre âme s'ouvre, dit-elle, aux intérêts, aux fautes, aux faiblesses des autres : oh combien vous en devenez plus aimable !" (66).

Neither Joséphine nor Constance is perfectly innocent in the strictest moral sense (nor is Émilie herself, since she has neglected her responsibilities to those dependent on her), and yet each possesses admirable qualities that seem to neutralize their faults, as we saw in the quote above. Finally, neither woman views Émilie as perfectly blameless, either.

Émilie warms to Constance's notion of moral relativism as she considers the larger impact of the decisions the widow advocates. The theories inculcated by her childhood education, for instance, would require Émilie to abandon Joséphine to shame and public humiliation. It is not easy for Émilie to let go of these ideals, which are firmly tied to her identity: "Abandonnerai-je en un instant des principes et des habitudes sur lesquelles je fonde tout ce que je puis avoir d'estime pour moi-même ..." (68). Constance puts the situation into blunt perspective: "C'est fort bien, Mademoiselle, abandonnez et trahissez Joséphine plutôt que des mots, des grands mots, la vérité, vos principes, vos habitudes, et […] estimez-vous encore si vous pouvez..." (68). Joséphine illustrates the gravity of her predicament when she contemplates suicide with a bird rifle as an alternative to suffering the shame of social condemnation: "il en est arrivé une telle honte, un tel malheur qu'il faut que je meure s'ils ne sont pas réparés" (67). Since her pregnancy has not yet become public knowledge, however, there is still time to save her from such a fate, though Émilie will have to bend her rigid principles to accomplish this. Surprising everyone, Émilie raises her voice and threatens to leave Altendorf altogether when Henri objects to her request to marry Joséphine. She adds a large bribe to his parents to encourage him to accept the match.[42] Constance remarks of this behavior, "L'esprit d'Émilie se forme, se

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[42] Henri refuses to be the reason for the unhappiness of three people, as he sees it: Émilie and Théobald will be miserable if they are separated, and he knows Joséphine's happiness depends on that of her mistress (71).

perfectionne extrêmement" (67). Émilie herself admits to Joséphine: "Je cède, Joséphine ; mes répugnances cèdent les unes après les autres à l'amitié, à la reconnaissance" (69).

Émilie also participates in Constance's somewhat convoluted plan to secure a marriage between herself and Théobald despite the fact that she is a penniless foreigner (and therefore a shameful choice of wife) and he is already engaged to his cousin.[43] Hopelessly in love with Émilie, Théobald attempts to kidnap Émilie to facilitate an elopement, and Constance must intervene to save their reputation as their chaperone: "il s'agit, dis-je, de leur sauver blâme, honte, chagrin, et de leur assurer la plus douce félicité qui existe" (90).[44] By aiding Joséphine, and participating in Constance's marriage plot, Émilie therefore conforms to the type of the ingénue who evolves, acquiring social knowledge and awareness through her contact with real-world situations. She serves as a model of education for a new class of displaced aristocrats who must learn to weigh the complexities of difficult circumstances and strategize to achieve the best possible outcome, often regardless of the dubious means by which the outcome is reached. She is responsible for the general happiness and well-being of those dependent on her, like Joséphine.[45]

It should be noted, however, that the community depicted in *Trois femmes* remakes a form of society that does not do away with the former Ancien Régime model altogether, but places pragmatism and collective outcome above concerns of theoretical morality. The self must

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[43] Émilie wonders to herself whether she will make a good match for Théobald: "était-il bien vrai qu'une fille sans fortune et sans patrie dût lier à elle l'héritier d'un nom et d'un bien considérables?" (65). Constance assures her that she is a much better match since she is kind and wants others' happiness, in opposition to Théobald's cousin, who is a selfish snob who will make him miserable.

[44] The situation is complicated. Theobald plans to elope with Émilie because his father initially refuses Émilie as a suitable option for his son. Constance's swift action to intercept the fleeing lovers saves them from the disaster she describes in this quote.

[45] Similarly, Théobald's ideas for reforming his role as baron, and project of free education to the children of his vassals, reflects this goal of harnessing the privilege of the aristocracy to improve the quality of life for dependents.

therefore be reimagined in the face of this new moral system, integrating new experiences and perspectives by way of memory. This qualification of selfhood as an aware and seeing self anticipates the ways in which Duras will stage selfhood in *Ourika.* Chapter 3 will return to *Trois femmes* to discuss the character of the *émigré* and its association with the nobility's literary efforts to redefine its social identity.

***Ourika*: Memory, Shame, and Malady**

Published in 1823, but set during and after the Revolution, *Ourika* describes the experience of shame from a new perspective that broaches the question of individuals who are marginalized by society. In this context, shame becomes associated with the emotional suffering of exclusion and the experience of difference as they manifest at the turn of the century. In Ourika's case, this suffering is in turn perpetuated by a problematic memory and is tied to melancholy. This perspective is entirely different from the model presented in Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne,* and also distinct from that of Revolutionary-era emigration literature like Charrière's *Trois femmes*. In Marivaux's novel, the experience of shame served to reinforce the rigid social hierarchy that defined it. However, *Ourika* expands and nuances the criticism of aristocratic education made in *Trois Femmes* by attaching shame more particularly to the class and racial prejudices inherent in the French nobility at the turn of the century. This shift reflects the emergence of new notions of social equality and changing views on the legitimacy of both Ancien Régime and Revolutionary values.

Ourika is the first novel written in French to portray a woman of color as an individual with a fully developed and complex psyche. It depicts the life of a young Senegalese girl, Ourika, who is rescued from a slave ship at the age of two and raised as a French aristocrat by

her benefactress, Mme de B.[46] At the age of 15, Ourika discovers what her black skin means within late eighteenth-century French society when she overhears Mme de B. speaking with her friend, Mme de .... . There is, these noblewomen agree, no place in polite society for her: "Pauvre Ourika! je la vois seule, pour toujours seule dans la vie!"[47] This overheard conversation triggers a profound identity crisis that results from social rejection and a newfound sense of shame of the color of her skin. After she retreats to a convent and her physical health begins to fail, a doctor comes to examine her and pronounces, "c'est le passé qu'il faut guérir" (4). Ourika's troubled recollection, both of the overheard conversation and of her own past, affects her ability to lead a healthy existence.

Ourika stands in stark contrast to the Ancien Régime example of societal navigation provided in *La Vie de Marianne* and in *Trois femmes*. While Ourika shares Marianne's *noblesse de cœur*, this trait is represented less as innate sociability and more as a natural capacity or predisposition to acquire, through environmental influences and education, noble traits. However, this quality cannot free her from the prejudices polite society holds against the color of her skin. Marianne never loses a chance to retell her story as a means of asserting her noble identity, and she immortalizes her narrative in her letters to her friend. In contrast, Ourika tells the story of her life only once to the doctor who comes to the convent to treat her in the final days of her life. It is his voice that frames Ourika's narration. Moreover, Ourika cannot reframe her shame by learning and adapting like Émilie since its source is inscribed, indelibly and

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[46] On the true story that inspired this novel see Pratima Prasad, "The Black Aristocrat in Ourika: Outliving an Idea," *Lingua Romana* 11, no. 1 (2012): 9–24.

[47] Claire Louise Rose Bonne de Duras, *Ourika*, ed. Roger Little, 2 ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 9. Subsequent references will be to this edition. The title page of *Ourika* also references the heroine's destiny to be alone in a quote from Byron: "This is to be alone, this, this is solitude!"

superficially, in her physical appearance (although, as we will see, she does resist it in private). In this sense, Ourika combines both the naïve and native qualities associated with the ingénue type. This novel illustrates in part the tragic consequences of divorcing shame from morality, since for Ourika shame is anchored in constructed social values. Duras thus associates shame with the condition of social exclusion and employs it as a vehicle for criticism.

Ourika's narrative reads as a negative model of the ingénue. Her story incorporates elements proper to the definition of the ingénue: she is noble (possessing a refined education, and *noblesse de cœur*), initially isolated from society's influence, naïve and passive; she also lives under the protection of a generous benefactress. However, the advent of self-awareness victimizes her rather than granting her access to greater agency and social agility (as is the case with both Marianne and Émilie). The social awakening that abruptly ends Ourika's ignorant but blissful childhood has significant emotional impact for the protagonist. This coming to consciousness, reminiscent of various philosophical fictions of the eighteenth century (like Condillac's statue fable) gradually erodes her sense of self by pushing her to evoke and reimagine the past she cannot remember, constantly and to the point of obsession. Finally, unrequited love and the shame that she has internalized complicate her search for meaning and become part of the pathogen that kills her.

Nobility and Social Shame

The first few pages of Ourika's framed narration sketch a portrait of her initial state of unawareness. She employs negative expressions to underscore her youthfulness, lack of reflection, and blind acceptance of the status quo: "je ne connaissais pas autre chose"; "Encore tout enfant" ; "j'écoutais, sans la comprendre encore," "j'étais pensive avant de penser," "je ne

désirais rien de plus," "je ne m'en doutais pas" (7). She also names this period of her life as one of *erreur* and *aveuglement* when she did not yet understand the significance of others' perception of the color of her skin (8). During this time, she lives as a passive, pampered child within the protected circle of Mme de B.'s intimate friends and receives the education of a young aristocrat: "j'y passais ma vie, aimée d'elle, caressée, gâtée par tous ses amis" (6).

The ball that Mme de B. organizes when Ourika is a young adolescent exemplifies the extent of Ourika's naïveté even as it brings to light the noble qualities that support her sense of belonging to the French aristocracy. Ostensibly in the honor of Mme de B.'s grandsons, the evening is truly meant to put Ourika's talents in the spotlight. The main event is a dance representing the four corners of the globe in which Ourika portrays Africa. The extensive preparation undertaken for this spectacle illustrates that Senegalese culture is unknown to Ourika (she confirms, "Mes plus anciens souvenirs ne me retracent que le salon de Mme de B.," 6): "On consulta les voyageurs, on feuilleta les livres de costumes, on lut des ouvrages savans sur la musique africaine, enfin on choisit une *Comba*, danse nationale de mon pays" (8). Ourika unwittingly participates in a reductive representation (the Senegalese dance is chosen to represent an entire continent) of a culture that is, despite her use of the possessive adjective, as foreign to her as it is to her audience.

The passage describing the ball calls into question the act of reading. First, Mme de B. and Ourika have obtained details regarding Senegalese music and dance from second-hand, likely inexpert sources, making the accuracy of the performance dubious. Second, Mme de B.'s guests perform an inaccurate reading of Ourika. They see the color of her skin and the exotic

costume and dance she performs as proof of her otherness.[48] Her partner's mask reinforces the illusory, theatrical aspect of this spectacle in which each actor assumes a role: "Mon danseur mit un crêpe sur son visage: hélas ! je n'eus pas besoin d'en mettre sur le mien ; mais je ne fis pas alors cette réflexion" (8). Ourika is unaware that she inspires such a reading: "je n'étais pas fâchée d'être une négresse [...] d'ailleurs rien ne m'avertissait que ce fût un désavantage" (7). She thus naïvely experiences the evening as a triumph and relates it as a joyful if unofficial coming-out ceremony.

This episode also foreshadows and contrasts with the harsh disappointment Ourika experiences the next day. The moment when Ourika overhears Mme de ....'s observation marks the end of her childhood, her ignorance, and of her happiness. Mme de .... asks Mme de B. what she intends to do with Ourika now that she is no longer a child, since no one would wish to marry her: "Qui voudra jamais épouser une négresse?" (10). She points out that according to dominant public opinion, Ourika's intrusion into the aristocratic sphere would be seen as a crime against the order of nature: "la philosophie [...] ne peut rien contre les maux qui viennent d'avoir brisé l'ordre de la nature. [...] elle s'est placée dans la société sans sa permission ; la société se vengera" (10). In this conversation, Mme de .... voices the theory of *noblesse de naissance*, or the belief that nobility is an inherited trait and cannot be acquired. According to that theory, nobles belong to a superior race to that of the *roturier* or the laborer, just as the physical differences of black and white skin reflect a natural hierarchy. In reality, this theory is purely social and has no basis in nature. Mme de ....'s voice also reflects the growing importance of

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[48] Kari Weil, "Romantic Exile and the Melancholia of Identification," *Differences* 7, no. 2 (1995): 111-126. "Duras thus offers an important corrective to the potential dangers of an identity politics that would assume that to be black, for instance, necessarily binds one to a particular subjectivity and to a particular past" (124-25).

public opinion as a legitimating force in French political life during the years leading up to the Revolution.[49] Public opinion will determine Ourika's place in society during and after the Revolution.[50]

Ourika herself disproves the notion of racial inferiority: she is intelligent, eloquent, and possesses natural graces and qualities that charm Mme de B.'s circle of friends. She exhibits what Michael Taormina terms "une élévation d'âme" associated with a specific conception of nobility he calls *noblesse de vertu*, the idea that nobility can be learned or cultivated.[51] Ourika's nobility is partly innate, as her benefactress points out: "Pour la rendre heureuse, il eût fallu en faire une personne commune: je crois sincèrement que cela était impossible" (10). Mme de .... acknowledges Ourika's uniqueness: "elle devient charmante, son esprit est tout-à-fait formé, elle causera comme vous, elle est pleine de talens, elle est piquante, naturelle" (9). Ourika's natural talents are refined by the education she receives through Mme de B.'s generosity, and within her salon, they are viewed as proof of her exceptionality.

Ourika's noble traits in addition to her African origins place her within the genealogy of the "noble Negro."[52] This literary figure, an African noble who possesses conventional European beauty and refinement of spirit, was common in abolitionist writing where he or she served to illustrate and support the existence of black intelligence (12). Prasad shows, however, that

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[49] James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 45-78.

[50] It should be noted that Mme de .... is not represented as a cruel character. Rather, she is expressing a genuine concern that Ourika has been destined for unhappiness because of the unfortunate circumstances she faces: the color of her skin makes her undesirable in polite society.

[51] Michael Taormina, "L'Ourika de Claire de Duras: Allégorie révolutionnaire, allégorie de la Révolution," in *L'Afrique du siècle des Lumières: Savoirs et représentations*, eds. Catherine Gallouët et al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2009), 141-53, 147. This recalls but does not perfectly mirror Marianne's inherent nobility.

[52] Prasad, "The Black Aristocrat in Ourika," 11, 12.

Ourika stands apart from the figures that precede her because she lacks a "pre-history" in Africa (she has no memory of her origins) and her exceptionality comes from her being a naturalized European aristocrat, rather than possessing noble blood.[53] Therefore, Ourika's exclusion from French society is purely the result of social context, not any biological or moral flaw, and stems from the aristocracy's inability to accept the fact that despite being black, Ourika is perfectly French.[54]

In order to understand the effect of social exclusion on Ourika's mental and physical health, and to uncover shame's role in this process, it is necessary to examine her immediate reaction after the moment of revelation. Duras draws heavily on a lexicon of sight and seeing to describe the struggle with self-image triggered by this moment. Like Émilie, who gains sight as social awareness, Ourika's eyes are opened to a harsh reality. After overhearing the conversation between the two ladies in the salon, she exclaims, "je vis tout, je me vis négresse, dépendante, méprisée, sans fortune, sans appui, sans un être de mon espèce à qui unir mon sort, jusqu'ici un jouet, un amusement pour ma bienfaitrice, bientôt rejetée d'un monde où je n'étais pas faite pour être admise" (9). Her turbulent exclamation reveals Ourika's sense of injustice and betrayal and reframes her sense of identity through a series of negations. She now defines herself in negative terms since essentially, she has lost her identity as an individual. Or, more accurately, her identity has been taken from her.

While the verb *voir* implies the acquisition of knowledge and perspective, it also refers in this passage to the sense of sight, both literal and figurative. Ourika does not see herself with her

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[53] Prasad adds that Duras does not provide a physical description of Ourika, unlike other authors who insist on black characters' physical attributes (12).

[54] Adeline Koh, "The Uses of Racial Melancholia in Colonial Education: Reading Ourika and Saleh: A Prince of Malaya as Cautionary Tales," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48, no. 4 (2012): 384-95, 390.

own eyes, but rather through the eyes of Mme de ...., and more broadly, the French public in general. This exemplifies what Frantz Fanon called the epidermalization of the racist gaze.[55] In the wake of this epiphany, Ourika repeatedly emphasizes the power of others' perceptions of her as the basis for confirming her existence.[56] She has no cohort to which she might adhere and no impetus for developing herself as anything other than a member of the group from which she is excluded: she occupies a negative space outside the definable world (102).[57] Her reaction therefore becomes dominated by self-hatred:

> Ma figure me faisait horreur, je n'osais plus me regarder dans une glace ; lorsque mes yeux se portaient sur mes mains noires, je croyais voir celles d'un singe ; je m'exagérais ma laideur, et cette couleur me paraissait comme le signe de ma réprobation ; c'est elle qui me séparait de tous les êtres de mon espèce, qui me condamnait à être seule, toujours seule ! jamais aimée ! (11)

In this passage, when Ourika learns that one of her most prominent physical traits is responsible for society's negative judgment of her, her self-image becomes monstrous and grotesque, distorted by the racist eyes through which she learns to see herself. Seeing herself is now as alienating as being seen and judged inferior by others. Ourika removes mirrors from her room and begins wearing long gloves, high-necked dresses, and a hat with a heavy veil: "Hélas! je me trompais ainsi moi-même: comme les enfants, je fermais les yeux, et je croyais qu'on ne me voyait pas" (27).

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[55] Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil, 1952).

[56] Deborah Jenson, "Mirror Insurrections: Haitian and French Revolutions in Ourika," in *Approaches to Teaching World Literature* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2009), 45.

[57] Carol L. Sherman, "Melancholy, and Therapeutic Narrative in 'Ourika,'" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2001): 102.

As Chapter 1 illustrated, shame is an emotion that can separate the individual from the group. Moral shame, for instance, isolates Julie from the virtuous and causes a rift within herself. Although Ourika's source of shame is social, she too is excluded from society and her sense of identity is threatened. Ourika does not name the word *honte* in this passage, and it is certainly not the only emotion she experiences. However, her impulse to deny her own image and her feelings of isolation suggest she experiences shame and humiliation. The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1798) defines *honte* as a "Confusion, trouble excité dans l'âme par l'idée de quelque déshonneur qu'on a reçu."[58] Ourika is certainly troubled. Has she been dishonored? The same dictionary offers "l'estime du monde, la réputation" as one definition of "honneur." Just the night before, Ourika was celebrated and admired at the ball, and now she faces the reality that her honorability and reputation are illusions. Her self-image has certainly been dishonored in this way, lowered from where she had believed it to be in a humiliating revelation of her own ignorance. It is a small consolation to her, therefore, that no one witnessed her reaction to learning the truth of her situation. Later, her strong sense of *pudeur* alone allows her to protect the secret of her pain and thereby maintain an illusion of dignity.

Duras presents a new category of social shame that is unlike other socially-based notions of shame found in other works examined in the previous chapter. In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, social shame takes the form of false shame, a *passion factice* that results from the corrupt nature of society. Rousseau depicts characters who are concerned with this social construction, rather than the moral health of their soul, as petty, vain, and otherwise unprincipled. Social shame has moral implications for his oeuvre. In *Trois femmes*, social reputation (and therefore livelihood) could be spoiled by shame if characters fail to contain potentially damaging information. However,

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[58] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 5th edition (1798), s.v. "honte."

public opinion is not an accurate measure of an individual's value. In both works, Julie and Émilie (the latter on Joséphine's behalf) have the chance to repair or redress shameful actions. Ourika, on the other hand, does nothing to deserve the shame she feels. Her existence is summarily dismissed by a faceless entity called public opinion, without evaluating her character or measuring her gifts. She does not have the chance to address any accusations or prepare a defense. As Mme de .... puts it, the blackness of Ourika's skin is "sans remède." She loses the power to define herself because society determines her identity can be no more than skin-deep.

Shame and the pain of rejection are two components of Ourika's reaction. Another important element is the injustice she feels with respect to her benefactress, which complicates her relationship with the only maternal figure she has ever known. The text represents Mme de B. as a genuinely kind woman who cares deeply for Ourika. The protagonist understands that her benefactress never meant to cause her pain, and she is reluctant to accuse Mme de B. of any unfair treatment of her, even in thought, because she fears being petty or ungracious. Ourika strives to confine her feelings of injustice to silence in an act of love for her benefactress, and an act of self-preservation. She never reveals to her benefactress that she has overheard her discussion with Mme de .... because she wishes to spare Mme de B. the pain of knowing the extent of her unhappiness. In fact, Ourika reflects often on whether she has a *right* to feel such misery over a fact of society that seems obvious to other characters, suggesting that Duras herself also doubts the appropriateness of Ourika's feelings of resentment and shame.[59]As Ourika states

[59] Duras's depiction of the Haitian revolution in this novel also hints at the author's feelings. Ourika is ashamed to be associated with the violence perpetrated against white slave owners who were murdered during the revolt rather than exhibiting pride or feelings of justice that those who resemble her succeeded in gaining their freedom: "Les massacres de Saint-Domingue me causèrent une douleur nouvelle et déchirante: jusqu'ici je m'étais affligée d'appartenir à une race proscrite; maintenant j'avais honte d'appartenir à une race de barbares et d'assassins" (14). Both the Haitian Revolution and the scenes in which Ourika struggles with her feelings about Mme de B. recall that Ourika's purpose is to move the reader, and that the protagonist remains tied to her creator's opinions.

at the beginning of her narrative, "je fus ingrate envers la Providence en n'étant point heureuse" (6). For this reason she is ashamed of her misery. At the same time, she cannot reconcile her feelings of betrayal with her love and gratitude for her benefactress. Shame has fractured her identity into two pieces, one that remains secret, the other that becomes a mask.

Her refusal to speak reflects the strong sense of *pudeur* and personal dignity that Ourika retains throughout her narrative, even when she encounters adversity directly. When members of polite society return to Mme de B.'s home after the end of the Terror, for instance, Ourika describes how "cette physionomie dédaigneuse [...] se plaçait devant moi comme ma propre image" (19) and that she becomes the topic of whispered conjecture. She allows Mme de B. to persist in her belief that Ourika remains untouched by or ignorant of such unkind behavior. Her *pudeur* and dignity underscore both her exceptional strength and the unfairness of society's exclusion of her.

Ourika's silent suffering forms another barrier between herself and those she once thought of as family. She can confide in no one, and therefore cannot be fully understood or known by anyone. She now knows that any role she might have hoped to occupy as an individual is inaccessible. She laments that she cannot call Mme de B., the woman who has raised her, *mère*, and she is denied the possibility of authentic family ties: "moi qui jamais ne devais être la sœur, la femme, la mère de personne!" (12). Her relationship with Charles, Mme de B.'s grandson, is troubled as well. Raised as brother and sister, Ourika and Charles share an intimate friendship throughout their childhood. His absences, first to school and later for the traditional period of travel meant to further cultivate him, leave Ourika depressed to the point of illness, demonstrating the unequal nature of their relationship: her existence is far more affected by his

presence than his by hers. Of course, she never confides her pain to him but is certain that "il m'aurait comprise" (13).

The Revolution brings a brief moment of hope for Ourika, first because in the *grand désordre* it causes, she imagines she can find her place:

> toutes les fortunes renversées, tous les rangs confondus, tous les préjugés évanouis, amèneraient peut-être un état de choses où je serais moins étrangère ; et que si j'avais quelque supériorité d'ame, quelque qualité cachée, on l'apprécierait lorsque ma couleur ne m'isolerait plus au milieu du monde (13).

While this illusion is short-lived, a second quickly takes its place when Mme de B. calls Charles back from his travels and the three of them retreat to the relative safety of a countryside house in Saint-Germain. Although they all endure terror and tragedy, the small family group, temporarily isolated from polite society, is united as a family. Ourika finds renewed purpose in Mme de B.'s need for her emotional support: "On aurait cru que tous les liens s'étaient resserrés par le malheur : j'avais senti que là, du moins, je n'étais pas étrangère" (16). This *resserrement des liens* brings with it a deepening of Ourika's feelings towards Charles. When Mme de B.'s salon regains popularity after the Terror, Ourika feels out of place among newcomers who whisper about why a black woman should find herself at Mme de B.'s home. She describes how her love for Charles sustains her: "À présent, c'était dans le cœur de Charles que je cherchais un abri" (19). Strangely, Ourika describes her amorous feelings for Charles in terms of maternal affection:

> "J'avais cru autrefois aimer Charles comme un frère; mais depuis que j'étais toujours souffrante, [...] ma tendresse pour lui ressemblait plutôt à celle d'une mère. Une mère, en

> effet, pouvait seule éprouver ce désir passionné de son bonheur, de ses succès ; j'aurais volontiers donné ma vie pour lui épargner un moment de peine" (19).

Just as she denies her own reflection, Ourika attempts to mask the nature of her feelings for Charles to avoid the psychological blow they might inflict. Framing her love for him in familial terms grant the illusion of reciprocal intimacy.

However, this illusion begins to unravel when Charles falls in love with a young aristocrat, Anaïs de Thémines. Charles names all the roles he and his new wife will occupy for each other, simultaneously echoing Ourika's earlier lamentation and underscoring their inaccessibility to her: "Je serai pour elle le père, la mère qu'elle a perdus: mais je serai aussi son mari, son amant ! [...] elle sera la mère de mes enfants" (21). His exclamations of joy and wonder at the extent of his happiness are juxtaposed to Ourika's earlier lamentations of injustice: "Qu'ai-je fait, ô Dieu! pour mériter tant de bonheur!" (21). Later, the birth of Charles' son prompts a conflict in Ourika, who is caught between joy for Charles and personal devastation. Ourika becomes deathly ill as a result of her disappointment and sense of isolation. It is Mme de .... who, upon visiting the invalid, correctly diagnoses Ourika's amorous passion for Charles as the cause of her suffering: "Oui, Ourika, tous vos regrets, toutes vos douleurs ne viennent que d'une passion malheureuse, d'une passion insensée" (27).

Ourika is shocked and horrified, just as she was following the first moment of revelation. She calls her newly illuminated love "cet affreux sentiment" and "passion criminelle," illustrating her anger and frustration with her own feelings (27). Two voices war within her at this moment. The first expresses the unfairness of her situation and questions why it should be wrong to long for "natural affection." The second condemns her feelings: "Et cependant, je ne sais quelle voix crie au fond de moi-même qu'on a raison, et que je suis criminelle" (28). The

first voice reflects Ourika's legitimate desire, expressed in terms of nature. The second voice is slightly more ambiguous. It reflects social condemnation through the use of the impersonal "on," which is by definition, un-natural (in the sense that it does not derive from Nature), which makes it impossible for Ourika to see her love for Charles as innocent. It can be read as the result of her internalization of her social exclusion. Although this suggests that on some level, Ourika has come to believe that she is unworthy of harboring such feelings for a well-born white man, she retains a sense of injustice: "Qu'ai-je fait pour être condamnée à n'éprouver jamais les affections pour lesquelles seules mon cœur est créé !" (26). Ourika rebels against the negative categorization of "criminelle" within herself, but she is powerless to stop it. This voice can also be read as the result of the splitting of her identity, which has become a collection of paradoxes: she is excluded, but still longs for love and family; she both loves and resents her benefactress; she cannot feel the gratitude she owes to Mme de B. and to God.

Facing the reality of her love for Charles deals a fatal blow to Ourika's already fragile psyche, a blow delivered, for the second time, by Mme de ..... Ourika's experience reverses the joyful topos in which love awakens, teaches, and enriches the self (Sherman 110). Charles, for instance, speaks of meeting Anaïs as the beginning of his life: "Il me semble que je n'ai commencé à vivre que depuis deux mois" (21). For Ourika, by contrast, love brings self-condemnation and further exclusion. Just as she is unable to express her feelings of isolation, she feels that she does not even have the right to suffer from her unrequited passion because it is, according to societal opinion, criminal, because of her racial difference. Therefore, Ourika experiences love as another shattered illusion that triggers her descent into melancholy and her retreat to the convent. In a now desperate search for meaning and comfort, Ourika will turn her compromised gaze on a past she cannot remember.

Statue Myths: Memory and Imagination

As we have seen, Ourika's nobility is a unique blend of nature and nurture. She describes her bittersweet feelings regarding her childhood education in the very first page of her narration: "il faut payer le bienfait de savoir par le désir d'ignorer, et la fable ne nous dit pas si Galatée trouva le bonheur après avoir reçu la vie" (6). By mentioning Pygmalion's animated statue, Duras invites comparison, and also draws attention to the statue rather than the creator. She asks whether Mme de B. truly considers Ourika's happiness and best interests when she decides to raise her as a French aristocrat. Following the moment of revelation, Ourika is progressively un-animated. The ball she attends equates to her unveiling as a creative production and marks the peak of her vibrancy and Mme de B.'s success in shaping her young protégée. Ultimately, Ourika becomes the statue she mentions at the beginning of her story. When the doctor visits her, he finds her immobile on a bench of stone, surrounded by broken tombstones, draped in the black cloth of the *religieuse* like a shrouded sculpture. In other words, Ourika's narration can be read as the inversion of the Galatea myth. This idea has received critical attention, for instance Damon DiMauro's comparison between the novel and contemporary variations of the Pygmalion myth in prose and theater, and Linda Rouillard has examined Ourika as a "black Galatea."[60]

Galatea is not, however, the only statue myth evoked by Duras's novel. Ourika's gradual psychological petrification also recalls another famous eighteenth-century statue, that depicted

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[60] See Damon DiMauro's article for full analysis: "*Ourika,* or Galatea Reverts to Stone," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 28, no. 3 (Spring-Summer 2000): 187-122. DiMauro also discusses the popularity of the Pygmalion myth during the eighteenth century, and notes that Duras's friend Stéphanie Félicité de Genlis authored a play, *Pygmalion et Galatée, ou la statue animée depuis vingt-quatre heures* (composed in the 1790s) which was conceived as a sequel to Rousseau's short melodrama *Pygmalion* (1762, performed in 1770 in Lyon and 1775 in Paris) and which heavily influenced Ourika (104). Genlis's work focused on the emotions of the statue, however, rather than Pygmalion himself, as had been the trend in other works. See also Linda Marie Rouillard, "The Black Galatea: Claire de Duras's Ourika," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 32, no. 3 & 4 (Spring-Summer 2004): 207–22.

by Condillac in his *Traité des sensations* (1754). When put in dialogue with Duras' novel, parallels emerge between the stages of Ourika's devolution and the processes by which Condillac's statue achieves reflection and consciousness. For Condillac's statue, the experience of a new or painful sensation (for Ourika, the isolation, shame, and betrayal she feels at the moment of revelation), inspires worry (*inquiétude*), unease (*malaise*), and torment – a kind of unpleasant surprise (*étonnement*). Next, the reflex of memory is triggered (the statue recalls a more pleasant sensation from its past) and inspires a desire to return to the past. These processes stimulate the statue's mental operations and cause comparison, as Condillac explains: "Cet étonnement lui fait mieux sentir la différence de ses manières d'être" (23). This process corresponds to Ourika's social awakening. The new sensation of complete isolation overwhelms her. She has discovered suffering for the first time. Ourika compares this new state to a previous one, namely the ignorance and excitement she had enjoyed the night before: "La veille encore, que m'importait d'être seule ? je n'en savais rien ; je ne le sentais pas" (10). Her pain and *inquiétude* trigger reflection, comparison, and judgment of past and present sensations. She reflects on her new *peines*:

> Elles altéraient sensiblement ma santé; mais, chose étrange! elles perfectionnaient mon esprit. [...] Je vis que je ne savais rien avant mon malheur; mes impressions étaient toutes des sentimens ; je ne jugeais pas, j'aimais: les discours, les actions, les personnes plaisaient ou déplaisaient à mon cœur. A présent, mon esprit s'était séparé de ces mouvements involontaires: le chagrin est comme l'éloignement, il fait juger l'ensemble des objets. [...] j'examinais, en le critiquant, presque tout ce qui m'avait plu jusqu'alors (12).

Here she describes the pleasure/pain principle in action. Reflection had initially played no part in her preferences. Rather, she had based her desires on pure sensation. Now, pain, sharpened by the stark shock of *inquiétude* and torment, has led her to critical thought. Formerly a passive recipient of sensation and experience, she now begins to actively reorganize and evaluate her experiences, integrating them into a new definition of what it means to be Ourika. New emotions characterize her reactions: shame, embarrassment, disbelief, anger, despair. She is helpless to reverse this process and rediscover the ignorant bliss of her childhood.

How, then, are we to understand this awakening? Does she gain agency, or lose it? If her mental faculties seem to mirror the development of those of Condillac's fictional statue, is she truly becoming less animated? This awakening signifies the acquisition of a new, social awareness – a kind of social sixth sense – which will both clarify her understanding of the social reality she inhabits and disorientate Ourika's sense of place within that structure. The paralysis she experiences in the moment of awakening mirrors that experienced by Condillac's statue each time it gains a new sense:

> l'éclair n'est pas plus prompt: je vis tout, je me vis négresse, dépendante, méprisée, sans fortune, sans appui, sans un être de mon espèce à qui unir mon sort, jusqu'ici un jouet, [...] Une affreuse palpitation me saisit, mes yeux s'obscurcirent, le battement de mon cœur m'ôta un instant la faculté d'écouter encore ; enfin je me remis assez pour entendre la suite [...] (9)

In this passage, Ourika's senses of sight and hearing are temporarily suspended under the force of her anguished surprise and worry. A new perspective is opened to Ourika, who is completely overwhelmed by the new sensory input. Her very soul retreats, and for a moment she cannot perceive external sensation: "mon ame s'était comme resserrée en elle-même" (11). The

passage's hectic list of descriptions mirrors the sudden connections and reflection that follows the acquisition of this new sense of awareness: "négresse, dépendante, méprisée, sans fortune, sans appui," etc.

The negative portrait of herself and her situation reverses her understanding of the world and her place in it. Rather than clarifying or expanding her understanding of herself with respect to her surroundings, this revelation destroys what she believes she has known, in part by allowing her to deconstruct, through judgment and reflection, the precepts and principles that had, she thought, defined it. The moral truths she had held to be true, material objects and leisure activities that had instinctively pleased her and which she had never questioned before, are systematically dismantled as her world crumbles around the blackness of her skin: what is beautiful becomes ugly; generosity becomes selfishness; family become strangers; members of her "espèce" become alien to her; finally, self becomes other. Faced with this complete reversal of understanding, her very being disintegrates. She is struck by fever and bedridden for days.

The phrase "je vis tout," pronounced as Ourika begins to reevaluate her situation, insists on a change in Ourika's perspective. Rather than offering further illumination, light leaves Ourika's life following the moment of revelation, recalling the darkness of her skin, while also evoking the light of optimism or hope: "Il y a des illusions qui sont comme la lumière du jour ; quand on les perd, tout disparaît avec elles" (10). In this instance, Ourika is unable to separate her sense of self from the new sensations she experiences. Condillac similarly described new sensations experienced by his statue as "manières d'être" or ways of being in the citation above. Until the sense of touch allows the statue to localize the source of sensations as external, the statue cannot separate itself from its sensations. In this moment, Ourika becomes the sensations she experiences.

The sense of touch had particular significance for Condillac, who defined it as the sense solely responsible for awareness of external objects.[61] He titles his *Seconde Partie* "Du toucher, ou du seul sens qui juge par lui-même des objets extérieurs" (89). It is by touching itself that his statue gains awareness of its own subjectivity.[62] The importance of the haptic sense in Condillac's work reflects a larger trend: though the classical hierarchy of the senses remained dominant in the eighteenth century, it acquired new flexibility and could be modified to allow for new "multi- and inter-sensorial approaches."[63] William Molyneux's thought experiment regarding whether a man born blind could recognize familiar shapes upon his sudden acquisition of sight implied that touch and sight were directly comparable, and that together they offered a dual means of understanding the material world.[64] It follows that the truncation or suppression of the physical body's sensory perception should have grave consequences for Ourika's consciousness and sense of identity. The advent of social knowledge leads to a symbolic loss of her senses, those capacities that philosophers of the sensationist school (and later, the early nineteenth-century *idéologues*) held chiefly responsible for the development of human understanding and reason.

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[61] Julia Douthwaite recalls that Buffon also attached significance to the sense of touch. In his Chapter *De l'homme* in the *Histoire naturelle* (1750) he argues that touch is a sign of superior intelligence: only man and ape possess hands, which are the most effective communicators of touch, in Julia V. Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man, and the Monster: Dangerous Experiments in the Age of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) 74.

[62] Sarah Cohen and Downing A. Thomas, "Art and the Senses: Experiencing the Arts in the Age of Sensibility," in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Age of Enlightenment, 1650-1800*, ed. Anne C. Vila (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014) 185.

[63] Anne C. Vila, "Powers, Pleasures, and Perils of the Senses in the Enlightenment Era," in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Age of Enlightenment, 1650-1800* (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 1.

[64] Cohen and Thomas, "Art and the Senses," 185. Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749) and Johann Gottfried Herder's *Plastik* (1778) also gave dominance to touch, rather than sight, as a means of perceiving the external world.

Ourika's compulsion not to look at herself is a symbolic loss of sight. She cannot look at herself because the memory of realizing the significance of her blackness taints her view of herself. The compulsion to cover her skin and withdraw, as well as her inability to form intimate social relationships, represents the metaphorical loss of the sense of touch. Together, these elements result in an erasure of the self. Ourika can no longer feel or connect with the world around her, and therefore cannot determine the boundaries of self and other. Since self has essentially become other, she cannot tell, either, that the shame and rejection she feels are not synonymous with her existence. She cannot tell that in fact, they are the result of external forces or *corps*, to use Condillac's term, that are acting on her from without. Ourika has certainly discovered a new "manner of being," or rather of *not being any longer*, which can only destroy her. Any exploration of her own identity and existence from this moment on is limited to the confines of her own mind and therefore remains incomplete and abstracted (like Émilie's unhelpful theories of moral duty). She is free-floating, unable to place herself in the world, only able to define herself in the negative.

Can Ourika find comfort in the memory of a previous, more pleasant state, as does Condillac's statue? By returning to the memory of a pleasant sensation, the statue could experience the sensation again and distract itself from discomfort. However, memory proves an unsatisfactory source of consolation for Ourika. First, her memory of her happy childhood in Mme de B.'s salon has been tainted by her sense of betrayal and shame. Reaching farther into the past is fruitless, since she has no memory from before her time with Mme de B. However, Ourika does seek distraction by visualizing alternate states of being. She therefore has recourse to imagination, a faculty of mind Condillac related closely to memory, to fill in the gaps of a past she cannot access. This recalls the young Marianne's use of imagination to supplement memory

in the construction of a self-narrative. Ourika creates similar imaginative reconstructions of memory that explore alternative versions of the present. These narratives, unlike Marianne's, are never shared with other characters, but are a private psychological retreat for the protagonist. Ourika combines what she has heard about her story from others with what she can reasonably suppose, or even what she wants to believe, in order to imagine the fulfilment of her own desires. Only in these imagined narrative spaces can she explore what she feels is her heart's natural capacity for love and affection, or in darker moments, her secret longing for justice.

The first of these narratives occurs immediately after the moment of revelation. She briefly imagines being sent back to Senegal where she could be with those who physically resemble her. Her imaginings lead her to conclude, however, that her education would be an obstacle in such a setting. She has no knowledge of her native tongue, and her refined tastes would make her miserable: "là encore j'aurais été isolée: qui m'aurait entendue, qui m'aurait comprise ! Hélas ! je n'appartenais plus à personne; j'étais étrangère à la race humaine toute entière !" (11). This painful exclamation highlights her complete isolation from all of humanity since Ourika is incongruous both in her native country and her adoptive one.

She also entertains a brief hope at the outset of the Revolution at the promise of a creation of a society based on equality. This hope reflects a process of imagination through her use of the conditional, which underscores this possibility as an imagined future contingent on her inclusion in society: "si j'avais quelque supériorité d'ame, quelque qualité cachée, on l'apprécierait lorsque ma couleur ne m'isolerait plus au milieu du monde" (13). Ourika's attempt to reframe her feelings for Charles in familial terms can also be read as an attempt to reimagine the present. On the one hand, Ourika denies the painful reality of her condemned and unrequited love. On the other, by insisting on her sisterly affection for Charles, she constructs an alternate

version of herself in the present which is predicated on the persistence of the past intimacy of her sisterly relationship with Charles when they were young children.

When she feels most alone after the birth of Charles' son, Ourika pushes her imaginings further by supposing what her life would have been had she never been purchased from a slaver's ship. Thoughts of death and nonexistence accompany this maudlin image that paints physical suffering as preferable to social and emotional isolation:

> Qu'avais-je fait à ceux qui crurent me sauver en m'amenant sur cette terre d'exil ? Pourquoi ne me laissait-on pas suivre mon sort ? Eh bien ! je serais la négresse esclave de quelque riche colon ; brûlée par le soleil, je cultiverais la terre d'un autre : mais j'aurais mon humble cabane pour me retirer le soir ; j'aurais un compagnon de ma vie, et des enfans de ma couleur, qui m'appelleraient leur mère. Ils appuieraient sans dégoût leur petite bouche sur mon front ; ils reposeraient leur tête sur mon cou, et s'endormiraient dans mes bras ! (26)

This passage is not a memory, but a fantasy constructed with the hope of restoring a sense of belonging to Ourika. In the context of the novel, it hints again at Duras's disproval of her protagonist's emotional state. The contrast between the life of an aristocrat in France with that of a hungry slave in Senegal certainly illustrates the extent to which Ourika feels she is suffering and longs for a family of her own. However, it also questions the logic of her preference. This imagining is clearly a philosophical fiction not unlike Condillac's statue narrative which is designed to carry a theory to its end. While it is meant to facilitate empirical observation, its scope remains purely rhetorical. It takes place only in the imagination and can inspire no recourse for actively changing or reducing Ourika's suffering. Ourika's numerous attempts to reimagine or reframe her story are therefore paradoxical. She seeks consolation in her exercise of

imagination, but in fact only fuels her sense of injustice, as we see in the exclamations that frame the short description above and exposes herself to melancholy and thoughts of death. Like Émilie's theories of morality, Ourika's thoughts have no basis in reality. She has no way of attaching them to real-world referents, as Marianne did to increase her story's believability. That lack will gradually remove Ourika from existence.

Melancholy and Pathogenic Shame

Ourika names a feeling of "oppression continuelle," insomnia, and fever to the doctor. These symptoms are consistent with eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century descriptions of melancholy. Some critics have argued that unrequited love is the principal cause of Ourika's suffering and death. Alternatively they have identified her attachment to Charles as the source of a fatal case of monomania (an obsession with a single idea that leads to madness).[65] Although her feelings for Charles play a part in her illness, these interpretations do not fully consider the roles of marginalization (and its resultant shame) and imagination in her malady. Examining Ourika's symptoms in light of these factors can provide a new perspective on the nature of her obsession and shed new light on the novel's dénouement.

First, Charles represents more than a love object. A white male of the nobility, Charles is everything society denies Ourika: he is inaccessible as confidant, son, brother, lover, and husband. Her retreat to the convent is an effort to enact a metaphorical fulfilment of these roles by the only means society grants her: through seclusion. As Ourika notes, "La sœur de charité,

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[65] For studies that attribute Ourika's suffering primarily to her forbidden love, see Adeline Koh, "Marriage, 'Métissage', and Women's Citizenship: Revisiting Race and Gender in Claire de Duras's 'Ourika'" *French Forum* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 15-30.

me disais-je, n'est point seule dans la vie [...] elle est la mère de tous les orphelins, la fille de tous les pauvres vieillards, la sœur de tous les malheureux" (29). In an effort to override his objections to her taking the veil, she begs upon leaving her adopted family, "Laissez-moi aller, Charles, dans le seul lieu où il me soit permis de penser sans cesse à vous........" (30). This suggests that Ourika's true desire is not to seek consolation in prayer or service, but to retreat into herself, into her imagination.

Her desire for solitude and obsessive focus on Charles as an unreachable love object suggest that Ourika is suffering from severe melancholy. Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century definitions of melancholy identified both physical and moral (here "moral" refers to the non-material components of an individual) etiologies for the disease. For instance, melancholy was sometimes associated with dramatic alterations in mental state and self-perception.[66] Ourika's social awakening causes a dramatic (negative) shift in her self-perception and mental state, certainly. Ourika's overuse of imagination is another cause commonly associated with physical malady.[67] The *Encyclopédie* entry for "Imagination, maladies de l' " contains only references to other articles, of which are "Mélancholie" and "Délire," illustrating the contemporary association between imagination and mental and physical illness. Even in patients with moral etiologies (like Ourika; again, in the non-material sense) the malady was located "very concretely in the body as an organic condition of the nerves."[68] Sufferers of melancholy experienced physical symptoms

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[66] Anne Vila, *Suffering Scholars* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press: 2017) 125. Chapter 4 conducts a more thorough discussion of melancholy and its etiologies.

[67] Contemporary authors and physicians warned against the dangers of an overactive imagination like Rousseau, Condillac, and Pinel, to name a few. See Anne Vila's *Suffering Scholars* for a thorough study of physical ailments that afflicted intellectuals and those who overexerted their minds.

[68] Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007) 186* quoted in Anne Vila's *Suffering Scholars* 125.

as a result of the moral-material unity of the human being.[69] Ourika's mental health is directly related to her physical health. Her overuse of imagination leads to the overexcitement of her nerves and eventually, she will not be able to separate reality from the remembered or imagined.

Shame and social isolation, combined with the memory-imagination dynamic, contribute to Ourika's physical malady. Ourika insists on her present happiness at the time she speaks with the doctor (which is suspect, given her previous attempts to dissimulate her love for Charles even from herself), which causes the doctor to locate the source of her malady in the past and pronounce that "c'est le passé qu'il faut guérir" (4).[70] The physician promptly turns to what some critics have identified as the "talking cure," and which also resembles the "moral treatment" advocated by the alienist Philippe Pinel in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[71] The moral treatment involved listening to the patient attentively with the goal of sustaining his or her "moral energy" by promoting confidence and a positive outlook.[72] Ultimately, the act of retelling the tale of the origin of her suffering (as the doctor urges her to do) does not allow Ourika to expunge or heal the hurt that she has experienced, but rather causes her to relive and reinvigorate her wounds, her "plaie secrète" (13). By transforming her experiences and reflections, including those that result from her mixing of memory and imagination, into a spoken narrative, she brings thoughts and images into reality and relives them in the process.

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[69] Vila, *Suffering Scholars*, 125.

[70] Ourika tells him, "j'ai trouvé bien tard le repos de mon cœur, mais à présent je suis heureuse" (4).

[71] For more on the talking cure in this work, see Carol L. Sherman, "Melancholy and Therapeutic Narrative in 'Ourika,'" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies 1*, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2001): 88-116 and Doris Kadish's fourth chapter in *Fathers, Daughters, and Slaves: Women Writers and French Colonial Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 103-126, esp. pp. 108-10.

[72] Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987) 200.

Her contemplations of death in particular prove dangerous topics for Ourika and reveal how completely she has confused the two faculties of mind. After Charles expounds on his passion for Mlle de Thémines, Ourika's private lamentations flow seamlessly into an evocation of her death as an imagined (and preferable) alternative to her present suffering. Her language – the pluperfect subjunctive – blurs the line between what is real and what is imagined, desired, or doubted: "Un peu de sable d'Afrique eût recouvert son corps, et ce fardeau eût été bien léger !" (22). Memory, imagination, and emotion become conflated; past, present, and potential future are elided. Her imaginings manifest themselves as physical symptoms in the present as her narration brings her thoughts to life. By deconstructing the very circumstances that led to her present existence in the convent, Ourika systematically dismantles and reimagines herself as something else entirely in a new fantasy: the product of a different (or lack of) education, with a completely different set of experiences as a slave, with a husband and children who love her.[73]

She has removed any remaining real-world referents from the images constructed by her imagination, a danger against which Condillac warned, and which could lead to the confusion of dream and reality and the loss of sanity. Indeed, the layered narrative suggests that Ourika is succumbing to her fantasies. When she describes imagining her death to the doctor, she also tells how her physical body reacted to the images that formed in her mind: "Cette affreuse pensée me saisit avec plus de violence qu'elle n'avait encore fait. Je me sentis fléchir, je tombai sur les

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[73] "Eh bien ! je serais la négresse esclave de quelque riche colon ; brûlée par le soleil, je cultiverais la terre d'un autre : mais j'aurais mon humble cabane pour me retirer le soir ; j'aurais un compagnon de ma vie, et des enfans de ma couleur, qui m'appelleraient leur mère. Ils appuieraient sans dégoût leur petite bouche sur mon front ; ils reposeraient leur tête sur mon cou, et s'endormiraient dans mes bras !" (26)

Ourika does not directly engage with or question the practice of slavery, and indeed remains silent on many aspects of France's treatment of people of color at this time. Doris Kadish addresses these lacunae in the fourth chapter of her book *Fathers, Daughters, and Slaves: Women Writers and French Colonial Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 103-126.

genoux, mes yeux se fermèrent, et je crus que j'allais mourrir" (22). At this moment in her narration, the doctor interrupts (the only time he does so) to address the reader in astonishment. As she describes her body's past reaction, in the present her body seems equally affected: "En achevant ces paroles, l'oppression de la pauvre religieuse parut s'augmenter ; sa voix s'altéra, et quelques larmes coulèrent le long de ses joues flétries" (22). Her physical reaction recalls the sensitive character who relives the memories she revisits in her imagination.

This visit to the past has lasting consequences for Ourika. After this episode, she cannot prevent herself from thinking of death, especially after Charles and Mme de B. depart for Paris for Charles' wedding. They leave Ourika alone, feverish and ill: "je voyais se réaliser cette situation que mon imagination s'était peinte tant de fois ; je mourais loin de ce que j'aimais" (23). She even imagines her demise as revenge: "Je me créais des chimères pour satisfaire à ce nouveau sentiment ; je me représentais Charles arrivant à Saint-Germain ; on lui disait : Elle est morte. Eh bien ! le croiriez-vous ? je jouissais de sa douleur ; elle me vengeait ; et de quoi ? grand dieu ! de ce qu'il avait été l'ange protecteur de ma vie !" (24). These bitter thoughts bring a new wave of confusion, a paradoxical combination of fury and gratitude, of resentment and shame, and provoke another spiral into misery. The erratic nature of her thoughts mirrors the disintegration of Ourika's being. She describes herself as being devoured from the inside, calling her chagrin "le ver qui dévore le fruit" (22). When she finally recounts her experiences and the things she has imagined, her words become prophetic: the death she imagined for herself, far from those she loved, becomes reality. By confusing imagination for reality, imagination has become reality. Death is realized in her physical body.

* * *

The three works examined in this chapter illustrate new trends in the ingénue's relationship with shame and the role of memory in shaping her identity. Her experience with shame is no longer predictably tied to moral structures but has become complicated by social forces she cannot control or change. In the case of Émilie, we see that notions of shame are being untethered from absolute codes of moral conduct, and in many cases religious codes of conduct as well, in favor of a more consequential system of morality based on reason and sensibility. Put another way, the successful navigation of society now relies on skills that can and must be cultivated and acquired through real-world experience and are not linked to social status or bloodline. The ingénue must learn to exercise sound judgment outside moral systems in pursuit of the greater good, recognizing both the limits and advantages to her politically ambiguous position as a woman.

The ingénue has a troubled relationship with her memory, which proves unreliable in an unpredictable world that does not conform to her initial understanding of it. And yet, memory continues to ground her identity, and has gained an important association with imagination, though the latter remains a potentially dangerous faculty when overexcited. For Ourika, the process of self-reimagination goes further than embellishing a plausible narrative as was the case for Marianne; it completely reimagines the subject and her setting.

Shame has therefore gained a critical function. It is an emotion experienced in moments of powerlessness, and which draws attention to flaws in social and political structures or highlights how an individual experiences marginalization. The final chapter of this dissertation elaborates how other authors writing in the early nineteenth-century tightened the link between melancholy and shame for characters who struggle with their individuality. This function will

gain momentum for authors writing and publishing during and after the Revolution, an event that threatens Ancien Régime codes of honor and shame and changes the role and experience of memory.

Chapter 3

Remembering Hardship, Humiliation, and Honor: The Émigré Character

For the ingénue, shame was largely a question of avoiding dishonor, a notion that remained anchored in Ancien Régime definitions of shame tied to female sexuality. Those definitions evolved during the Revolutionary period when the dominant social and moral codes of French culture shifted in parallel with the restructuring of society. Some authors explored the changes and challenges facing their generation through the literary figure of the émigré, a former noble (man or woman) who leaves Revolutionary France and undergoes various hardships abroad. This character reflects historical reality. When titles and special privileges were abolished in July of 1790, including the tax benefits nobles had previously enjoyed and their ability to earn revenue from land holdings, their way of life and distinction from the working class were essentially eliminated. The nobility also became the victims of violence and persecution during the Terror, and many decided to leave France. Authors used the émigré character to raise questions such as these: How could the nobility maintain or redefine its unique, influential identity? How could or should literature do justice to the tragedy and suffering of certain segments of the French people? Or, perhaps, was History less equipped than fiction to represent the truth of experience?

This chapter argues that the émigré character's experiences abroad reflect both new definitions of shame and new functions given to memory in the wake of changes that the Revolution introduced in the social and literary landscape by examining two works, Charrière's *Trois femmes* (1797) and Sénac de Meilhan's *l'Émigré* (1797). These texts illuminate the émigré character's motivations, experiences, and emotions as they endure the hardships of emigration. Most often these experiences include living in a foreign country, finding communities of other

émigrés abroad, facing financial ruin, worrying over those who remained in France, and struggling to obtain accurate news. They also illustrate their authors' engagement in the effort to reshape literature during this period. These texts reflect an evolution from Ancien Régime notions of nobility, honor, and shame to a model of shame based on social utility. Memory as a faculty gains a new capacity to be marked by trauma, a term that did not enter the sphere of psychological medicine until the 1880s, but that is useful for describing the lingering and unpredictable negative effects of a violent or emotionally troubling memory.[1] These authors question how to remedy, record, or do justice to this kind of experience, and present literature as one means by which to do so. The reshaping of shame and the new roles granted to memory reflect changing poetic and literary models for writing the unspeakable or inexpressible traumatic experiences of the Revolution.

First, it is necessary to contextualize the émigré character type. The literary figure of the émigré appeared in the wake of historical emigration that followed the onset of revolutionary violence in 1789. Pierre Hartman points out that the noun "émigré" existed before the Revolution, but it was rarely used and its meaning was abstract and vague.[2] *Émigration* was more widely used in contemporary historical and literary descriptions of the crusades or the displacement of populations in the Americas, but this was a collective, general term.[3] It only

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[1] The adjective "traumatisme" first appeared in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* in 1835 and in Emile Littré's 1873 *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (vol. 4). The latter volume included both the adjective and the noun "traumatisme," and both sources defined the words in association with negative (fatal) effects of severe physical wounds.

[2] Pierre Hartmann, "De l'émigration inverse à l'exil intérieur," in *Destins Romanesques* (Paris: Éditions Desjonquères, 2007), 40-54, 40.

[3] François Rosset, "De Sénac à Kosciusko ou quand l'émigré prend refuge dans la fiction," in *Destins Romqnesques*, 29-39.

became a noun in the singular when it was linked to the social and juridical reality of nobles leaving France to protest or flee the Revolution. Sénac de Meilhan's novel was the first to use this as a substantive term to mean "one who has emigrated." Sénac's work would contribute to the widening of the term's meaning.[4] The term was nevertheless marked with "la réprobation, voire de l'opprobre," revealing the shame associated with losing legal and social status as well as one's home: shame is inherent in the condition of being an émigré.[5] The source of this shame (either the shame of abandoning one's country, from a Republican perspective, or the shame of being stripped of rank and privilege, from a monarchist perspective) depended on who employed the term.

Although emigration occurred throughout the Revolutionary period, historians generally agree that departures can be grouped into two main waves.[6] Before 1792, emigration was largely voluntary. Those who left during this first wave were mostly high-ranking aristocrats who wished to demonstrate their hostility towards the Revolution, especially in the wake of laws revoking feudalism and legal privileges that began in 1790.[7] These individuals were referred to as émigrés "de la première heure." Many accepted service in foreign armies or the armies of the princes in Coblenz or Worms.[8] Sénac de Meilhan's Saint Alban is a fictionalized representation of an émigré from this first wave.

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[4] Rosset, "De Sénac à Kosciusko," 30.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Massimo Boffa, "Émigrés," in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution,* Eds. Mona Ozouf and François Furet, Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) 324. See also William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution, 1789-1799,* 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Chapters 5 & 6.

[7] Boffa, "Émigrés," 326.

[8] Ibid., 324.

The second wave began in 1792 following the September massacres.[9] Donald Greer's extensive demographic study of emigration during this period reveals that nearly twice as many individuals left after 1792 as before, and that this second wave included members from all social strata (this was also the year in which the Catholic clergy was expelled), as well as some people who supported the Revolution.[10] Regional violence and foreign invasion made it unsafe for some to remain in France. Departure was no longer a voluntary means of asserting dissent, but rather a question of personal safety. However, public opinion tended to paint emigrants with the same, increasingly negative brush, and laws soon reflected such sentiments.[11]

Mme de Staël pushed back against such condemnation. The daughter of Jacques Necker, finance minister to Louis XVI, she had witnessed Revolutionary events first-hand. Like many other second-wave emigrants (including Mme de Genlis and Mme de Souza), she viewed 1792 as a moment when the definition of patriotism shifted radically. For her, those who left before 1792 were not "patriots" because they fled for selfish or traitorous reasons, chief among them inviting foreign powers to intervene and crush the Revolution: "il y a des devoirs inflexibles en politique comme en morale, et le premier de tous, c'est de ne jamais livrer son pays aux

[9] The September massacres were mass killings of almost 2,800 prisoners (priests, royalists, aristocrats, and former officials) in Paris and other cities between September 2-6, 1792. The Legislative Assembly called the Parisian people to arms on September 2 and the following day, many provincial cities did the same. This event frightened the French public, particularly the aristocracy, and convinced many to flee the country. See also the articles "Paris Commune" (Patrice Gueniffrey, 519-28) and "Terror" (François Furet, 137-50) in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. François Furet and Mona Ozouf (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989).

[10] Donald Greer, *The Incidence of the Emigration during the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951).

[11] Between March 28 and April 5, 1793, a comprehensive code was approved defining the "crime of emigration in time of war" and confirming the death penalty for any émigré who fell into the hands of the Republic (Boffa, "Émigrés," 327).

étrangers."[12] However, those who left after 1792 could still be considered "patriots" in her view since their chief concern was escaping violence and protecting their families. Her defense of what she called "involuntary" emigration (leaving for reasons of personal safety) reflected growing negative opinions of emigrants, and a tendency of the public to lump them together as traitors. Initially, the first wave's departure had been tolerated, but later emigrants were seen (often unfairly) as criminals and enemies of the Revolution. First, those who left posed a potential political threat in the eyes of those who remained because they could join the armies of the princes.[13] Second, the French nation had begun defining itself as a community "united by a general will."[14] Revolutionary France annexed territories and accepted foreigners into the nation if they swore a loyalty oath. Since one could *become* French through an act of loyalty, one could *unbecome* French by an act of disloyalty.[15] From 1792 on, émigrés were registered on the infamous *Liste générale des émigrés*, and while this document was notoriously unreliable, those listed could be arrested or executed.[16] The law of 1793 confiscated the goods and property of émigrés, ensuring they would have nothing to which to return.[17]

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[12] Mme de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française* (Paris: Librairie Delaunay, 1818) Part 3, Chapter 1, p. 3.

[13] Statistically, emigrants of the first wave were more likely to do so, but popular opinion nevertheless associated emigrants with foreign armies, a hyperbolic representation of their treasonous departure.

[14] Mary Ashburn Miller, "A Fiction of the French Nation: The Émigré Novel, Nostalgia, and National Identity, 1797-1815," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 48.

[15] Miller, "A Fiction," 46.

[16] This list contained the names of some who had left France legally, or who remained in France, or false identities. The list was also used politically to eliminate enemies. Nonetheless, émigrés had to petition to be removed from the list before they could return. For more details on this process, and how the émigré novel was employed to gain popular sympathy for returning emigrants, see Mary Ashburn Miller, "A Fiction."

[17] Emigration was also acceptable grounds for divorce as of 20 September 1792. For an overview of general laws on emigration see Colin Jones, *The Longman Companion to the French Revolution* (London: Longman, 1990), Chapter 4, 101.

Literature began to reflect this historical reality, first with subtle nods to emigration in novelistic plots, and later by incorporating specific events of the Revolution and its hardships into fiction.[18] Categorizing novels that focus on emigration specifically, or on the lives and experiences of émigrés, has proven challenging. Many critics have referred to such works as emigration novels ("romans d'émigration"), focusing on their subject matter as a unifying trait.[19] However, the notion of an emigration novel is misleading, since the theme of emigration indicates a historical topic rather than a specific constellation of stylistic elements. Authors thematized emigration and put it to the service of their broader poetic, socio-political and moral objectives; novels produced in this mode take diverse forms that include sentimental narratives, *récits de voyage*, and libertine adventures.[20] In other words, authors relied on literary genres associated with the Ancien Régime, such as sentimental, epistolary, and memoir novels, combining familiar forms with realistic, fictionalized personal experience to forge a new literary aesthetic better suited to the social and political changes taking place.[21] Those genres may not seem well suited to depict the new realities these writers sought to represent. The influence of Revolutionary events on novelistic form may therefore appear limited, at first glance.[22] On closer

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[18] Mme de Souza's *Adèle de Senange* (1794) provides an example of such an earlier text since its preface contains the only mention of its Revolutionary context.

[19] Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie, and Catriona Seth, eds., "Introduction," in *Destins Romanesques de l'émigration*, L'esprit des Lettres (Paris: Desjonquières, 2007), 11-12.

[20] Ibid. For a survey on fictional representations of the Revolution and emigration in such genres as pamphlets, satires, theater and novels, see Malcolm Cook, *Fictional France: Social Reality in the French novel, 1775-1800* (Berg Publishers: Oxford, 1993), Chapters 4 & 5 (80-127).

[21] Katherine Astbury, "Bearing Witness: The Émigré Novel" in *Narrative Responses to the French Revolution* (London: Maney Publishing, 2012) 143.

[22] Anne Brousteau remarks, for instance, that there is no "literary revolution" to accompany the French Revolution, in the sense that this period's literature remained esthetically conservative. See her "Esthétique littéraire" in *Destins Romanesques*, 204-211.

inspection, however, we can detect innovations. For example, the novelists' increasing use of pathos in order to move the reader by depicting scenes of great suffering, a preference for realistic plots, and the avoidance of improbable dramatic devices.[23] Events of the Revolution often resembled fiction because they were so incredible; readers were therefore no longer interested in contrived, implausible intrigues.[24] As the Président de Longeuil in Sénac de Meilhan's *l'Émigré* points out, "chacun dans ces temps affreux a son roman à raconter" (1598).[25]

These novels also reflect common characteristics in their representation of émigrés. First, although emigration affected all social classes, the émigré figure is almost invariably noble.[26] Male or female, such characters often illustrate the political views of their author, directly or through their behavior and its reception. Very often, such novels are epistolary, a form that lends verisimilitude to the narrative while allowing authors to take advantage of multiple perspectives and to present personal, first-person accounts of events and emotions. Other questions explored in these novels include the difficulty of travel, the precariousness of émigré finances, marginalization and separation, the need for disguise, contemplation of suicide, problems of adapting to a foreign country and language, and homesickness or nostalgia.[27]

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[23] On the use of sentimental and pathetic descriptions to both move the reader and represent the collective suffering through the plight of the individual, see David Denby, *The Sentimental Narrative and the Social Order in France, 1760-1820* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1994). "In the sentimental text, *this* weeping mother, *this* unfortunate child, *this* dying father all refer beyond themselves to the whole of humanity" (14).

[24] Jaquier, Lotterie, and Seth, "Introduction," 11.

[25] Sénac de Meilhan, *L'Émigré* in *Romanciers du XVIIIe siècle, tome II* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1965). All subsequent references are to this edition.

[26] Few examples of non-noble émigrés exist in this period's literature. Joséphine of Charrière's *Trois femmes* is one, and she plays an important role in the plot despite her servant status. Charrière also includes a sans-culotte officer in *Lettres trouvées dans des portefeuilles d'émigrés* (1793) in Isabelle de Charrière, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 8 (Amsterdam: G. A. van Oorschot, 1981) 409-472.

[27] Astbury, *Narrative Responses*, 135. Peter Fritzsche explains how émigrés became the archetypal subjects of nostalgia (7). Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004).

Regardless of their authors' political sympathies, many literary émigrés can be grouped into categories of "good" or "bad."[28] The émigré character was "à la fois regardant et regardé: il observe et apprécie sa nouvelle situation, fait l'expérience de l'alterité; par ailleurs il est jugé, selon sa capacité d'adaptation, son 'industrie.'"[29] In other words, authors sometimes depict émigrés who *work*. This represents a deliberate invitation to the reader to judge the behavior and adaptability of former nobles and feel pity for their circumstances. It also indicates an effort on the part of the authors to distance themselves from negative qualities associated with the nobility at the time (corruption, vice, arrogance, involvement in counterrevolutionary plots, etc.)[30] As we will see, this is an important strategy in authors' efforts to redefine both what it meant to be noble and what it meant to be French, efforts that reflect a broader restructuring of values.

The two novels on which this chapter focuses were published in the early years of the Revolutionary period, soon after 1789. Novels and memoirs published between 1789 and 1800 were more directly engaged in the ongoing plight of emigrants leaving France than those published in the early nineteenth century.[31] The fictional narratives of this era were set in the real time of the author, not a fictitious past or future, establishing a link between real time and novelistic diegetic time.[32] Such works also reflected the volatile upheaval they sought to

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[28] This dichotomy took many forms, from the tempered representations of *Trois femmes* to more extreme examples of arrogance in Mme de Souza's *Eugénie et Mathilde, ou mémoires de la famille du conte de Revel* (1811). The full range of admirable and contemptible traits are arrayed in Charrière's *Lettres trouvées dans des portefeuilles d'émigrés* and *Germaine*, as well as in Mme de Genlis' *Petits émigrés* (1798). See also Katherine Astbury, *Narrative Responses to the Trauma of the French Revolution* (Leeds: Legenda, 2012).

[29] Jaquier, Lotterie and Seth, "Introduction," 17.

[30] Miller, "A Fiction," 57.

[31] Ibid., 46.

[32] Valérie Cossy, "Des Romans pour un monde en mouvement: La Révolution et l'émigration dans l'œuvre d'Isabelle de Charrière," *Annales Benjamin Constant* 30 (2006): 156.

represent through their frequent lack of closure: characters' fates are unpredictable, like those of real émigrés, and are often tragic.

Émigrées of *Trois femmes*: The Good, the Bad, and the Useful

This chapter shifts focus from Émilie's educational reform to the émigré status of the three titular characters in *Trois femmes*. Charrière's depiction of their experiences as *émigrées* in the feminine reveals interesting facets of the period's evolving notions of shame and the individual's relationship to memory. *Trois femmes* exemplifies several common trends in the depiction of the *émigré* around 1795. It combines third person and epistolary narratives while employing simple prose and a realistic plot, reflecting Charrière's awareness that literary form and language needed to be renewed in the wake of the Revolution.[33] It also employs representations of "good" and "bad" émigrés in a strategic effort to reframe noble identity. These elements of Charrière's novel draw attention to new definitions of what is shameful and honorable. In order to avoid shame, her *émigrées* need to learn to exercise control over their memories: they must learn to shape the ways in which recollecting informs their identity and connection with the past.

Charrière innovates through her efforts to simplify language and accurately represent the hardships faced by émigrés without artifice or dramatic device. Like her character Constance, she rejects any use of oratory talent and the misuse of the ideologies of Enlightenment philosophers like Voltaire and Rousseau.[34] Especially in her writings after 1789, Charrière paid

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[33] The Abbé de la Tour narrates the majority of the novel, but its sequel is an exchange of letters between the Abbé de la Tour and the character Constance, who keeps him apprised of the lives of the small group who remains in Germany.

[34] "Rejetant toute forme de tutelle, Constance dénonce l'usage démagogique du talent oratoire et la récupération idéologique des philosophes des Lumières comme Voltaire et Rousseau, ces nouvelles divinités du Panthéon." Erik Leborgne, "Destins de femmes et Révolution dans l'œuvre romanesque d'Isabelle de Charrière," in *Le Second*

special attention to language and believed that it was beyond her purview as an author to determine the meaning of words outside of the small community of correspondents and friends depicted within a given novel.[35] Her reform of language reflects her larger goal of encouraging a critical reevaluation of social and moral values. It also reveals her belief that a new language must be grounded in reality rather than in lofty theoretical principles.

These concepts of practicality and social utility also inform Charrière's view of what is shameful, and what is not. For instance, Émilie initially refuses to help her pregnant servant escape shame and social humiliation because to do so would violate the moral principles she has been taught to respect. This brings a new dimension to the reproaches Constance makes to Émilie as they were highlighted in the previous chapter. Constance encourages Émilie to reconsider the importance of her principles with respect to the well-being of a living, breathing person: "C'est fort bien, Mademoiselle, abandonnez et trahissez Joséphine plutôt que des mots, des grands mots, la *vérité*, vos *principes*, vos *habitudes*, et quand je serai morte, estimez-vous encore si vous pouvez... " (57, original emphasis). Émilie learns to judge Joséphine based on her character, which she has demonstrated through years of loyal service and devotion, and through their mutual affection, rather than by theoretical ideals of behavior and her indiscretions that defy them. When Henri is reluctant to marry Joséphine, saying, "il y a des choses qu'on ne fait pas par complaisance," Émilie retorts, "Ne les fait-on pas plus par honneur, par pitié, M. Henri ?" (63).

Triomphe du roman du XVIIIe siècle, ed. Philip Stewart and Michel Delon. SVEC – 2 (Voltaire Foundation, 2009), 243-61, 257.

[35] Cossy, "Des romans pour un monde en mouvement," 159. One shining example of this is the dictionary project Théobald undertakes at the end of the novel. He outlines his project in part of a letter Constance writes to the Abbé, which extends his efforts to educate the sons of his tenants. He hopes to publish his *feuilles* in installments and circulate it for free to those who wish to improve themselves. He also includes sample entries, which he says are translated into French for the Abbé's benefit. Constance's commentary afterwards is critical of his choice of words, but praises the most useful of them: *âme*, *bâtir*, *pommes de terre* and *dimanche*. (see *Trois femmes*, pp. 152-163)

Émilie, having finally decided to champion her servant, grounds the definition of the word *honneur* solidly in an existing relationship, namely Henri's responsibility to Joséphine. She shames Henri, suggesting that abandoning Joséphine is a dishonorable act. Here, Charrière demonstrates that if theoretical principles and ideals govern society, individuals are relieved of their responsibility to each other, which undermines their relationships and collective security. Shame is associated with neglecting this responsibility. Charrière sees the individual as malleable, possessing the capacity – indeed, the responsibility – to adapt to circumstance, and to advocate others' security and well-being. In this sense, she encourages the elites to make themselves useful, rather than forgotten.[36]

In the avant-propos of another work, *Honorine d'Userche* (1795), Charrière refuses to overtly depict émigrés as a "peuple à part": she does not represent them as isolated, rancorous, or desperately enrolling in foreign armies. Instead, she recommends treating them as individuals and evaluating their merits or faults as such.[37] Charrière attempts to show the reader that social status guarantees neither corruption nor innocence (as we saw in the case of Joséphine's seduction, discussed in Chapter 2), and that a person's nationality should not inspire preference or condemnation in and of itself. Personal merit alone is praiseworthy because it is illustrated through voluntary, observable action. As the baron d'Altendorf says, "Qu'on soit française ou allemande, on est ce qu'on est. La beauté est toujours la beauté, et à Dieu ne plaise que je refuse, par un préjugé trop excessif pour mon pays, de trouver partout la beauté fort belle" (33). In the

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[36] Laurence Vanoflen, "Isabelle de Charrière et les vertus de l'émigration," in *Destins Romanesques de l'émigration*, eds. Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie, and Catriona Seth (Paris: Desjonquères, 2007), 129–57, 132.

[37] Leborgne, "Destins de femmes," 255. As we saw in the previous chapter, Charrière's criticism of amoral behavior is not a direct indictment of the French specifically, or of the nobility alone. Émilie's uncle and a high-ranking member of the clergy seduce Joséphine, illustrating the aristocracy's corruption, but Joséphine and Henri also enjoy a dalliance, suggesting that, if left unchecked, temptations of the flesh can get the better of all of humanity.

brand of cultural relativism practiced by Charrière's characters, partiality for one's country of origin should not blind one to the truth.[38]

Charrière's insistence on the individuality of émigrés does not exclude her from the trend of representing former nobles as "good" or "bad." Charrière employs positive and negative examples of noble characters' behavior to prompt the reader to reflect thoughtfully about them, and to distance her émigré characters from stigmas of a corrupt and arrogant aristocracy. Charrière also invites comparison between émigrés and individuals from the German aristocracy, highlighting the idea that all social elites have the ability to improve society, though some choose to ignore, abuse, or waste their potential. The examples of "good" émigrés Charrière offers to her reader rebuild a positive image of social elites. Charrière seems to suggest that if there is a silver lining to be found in the upheaval and violence of the Revolution, it is the chance to start again. Members of the aristocracy can renew their purpose, grounding their actions in the needs of those around them, especially at a time when need and hardship are widespread. Émilie, who is guided in a process of re-education by the worldly-wise Constance, exemplifies this process of redefinition as she learns to shed perspectives and practices that tie her to negative qualities associated with the nobility. Constance leads by example and is active in her efforts to adapt to new circumstances.[39] She establishes a home decorated *à l'allemande* and cautions Émilie, "Gardons-nous de vouloir établir ici la France, et de traiter des gens qui nous souffrent comme s'ils étaient étrangers chez eux, et que ce fût nous qui les tolérassions" (45).[40]

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[38] Chapter 2 discussed the relativistic morality espoused by the abbé de la Tour in the frame narrative to *Trois femmes*. Charrière's characters illustrate the *mis en pratique* of this perspective.

[39] Vanoflen, "Isabelle de Charrière et les vertus de l'émigration," 131. Other émigré characters in Charrière's oeuvre also adapt to local customs, like Des-Fossés in *Lettres trouvées dans des porte-feuilles d'émigrés* (1793).

[40] She also forbids her valet to arrange anything in what might resemble French style: "...elle défendait à Lacroix de mettre dans les choses qu'il arrangeait quoi que ce fût qui rappelât Paris et la France" (46).

Émilie's parents, who refused to sell the lands they still held in France and so lose their fortune when they are seized, are realistic examples of "bad" émigrés unwilling to relinquish the past and their desire to return to a pre-Revolutionary France. A persistent, inflexible memory of Ancien Régime France, and an exaltation of that memory as superior or ideal, is a distinct disadvantage for émigrés who seek refuge abroad. Such individuals live in denial and refuse to integrate into their host countries. Their stubbornness and arrogance become shameful to those whom they meet in the social universe of Charrière's novel. For instance, Émilie's uncompromising glorification of Paris almost ends her relationship with Théobald. She remarks, "c'est assez pour savoir que Paris est au-dessus de tout ; et je suis bien sûre que si la tranquillité y ramenoit l'ordre et les plaisirs décens, vous voudriez y passer votre vie" (56). Théobald, however, vehemently disagrees:

> je déclare que j'aimerais mieux ne sortir jamais d'Altendorf, y employer toute ma vie à servir de tuteur, d'arbitre, de consolateur à ses habitants, que de la passer sans utilité pour personne dans cette capitale fameuse, séjour brillant des grâces, du goût et de tous les plaisirs. (56)

Charrière highlights the contrast between these two opposing perspectives by placing them side by side in the text. Théobald calls for practicality and social utility, which are absent in Émilie's shining, pleasure-filled Paris. His preference for his homeland is also rooted in his sense of duty and responsibility to it. As baron, he hopes to take an active role educating his people and involving them in the process of governance. Émilie's attachment to Paris, however, is purely emotional, informed by abstract (and arguably frivolous) notions of elegance, pleasure, and beauty inherited from her upbringing. Moreover, Émilie does not recognize the absurdity of asking Théobald to prefer the capital of another nation to his own home. Ironically, she will find

it extremely difficult to learn to prefer Altendorf to the country of her birth. Both Joséphine and Constance push Émilie to distance herself from the decadent, pleasure-seeking *mondains* of Paris. In other words, she must not become a "bad" émigrée by refusing to widen her perspective and by remaining idle while others provide for her.

Initially, Émilie recoils at the very idea when Constance tells her she can no longer live as if she were in France: "Quoi ! dit Émilie, quand je suis exilée du plus beau pays du monde, il ne me sera pas permis de m'entourer, pour ainsi dire, de ses mœurs, des usages que le goût y avoit consacrés ! Non, dit Mme de Vaucourt, non, cela ne vous est pas permis" (62).[41] Émilie's struggle illustrates that cultural memory remains a powerful influence on identity, and that leaving the past behind is far from easy. Though she longs to ease her sense of nostalgia for France with familiar objects by filling her intimate space with reminders of what she has left behind, doing so would create a false physical reality, a reminder of a past to which she cannot return; nostalgia would prevent Émilie from evolving.[42] Constance warns Émilie, "Théobald mérite bien qu'on ne marchande pas avec lui, qu'on cesse d'être française, puisqu'il est allemand, comme aussi d'être fière quand il est passionné" (65).

The process of "ceasing to be French" is catalyzed by Émilie's love for Théobald. The young baron, as Émilie learns to recognize, is more important to her than French mores. In the context of this story, love removes cultural and linguistic barriers and unifies two individuals

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[41] Likewise, in order to marry the German Henri, Joséphine must demonstrate her preference for all things German, since Henri's main objection to their marriage are his suspicions that she prefers the French Lacroix (Constance's valet). Charrière's *Lettres trouvées dans des portefeuilles d'émigrés* (1793) contains other couples who must overcome obstacles: Alphonse and Germaine (political difference), Laurent and Pauline (social difference) and lady Caroline and the vicomte Des-Fossés (national difference).

[42] Chapter 4 briefly discusses the role of nostalgia as a medical diagnosis in the depiction of émigré characters. Authors often employ the malady as proof of the émigré's sense of national identity in an effort to dispel negative assumptions about their loyalties to other nations.

who learn to recognize that sacrifice and hard work are essential to guarantee the happiness of those around them. Together they can establish a nation of their own based on fellow-feeling and shared values, rather than geographical borders. Charrière thus offers the emotion of love, a love free of all prejudice, as one solution to overcoming the shame associated with the condition of being an émigré.[43]

In *Trois femmes*, the German aristocracy is not exempt from criticism. The baroness d'Altendorf (Théobald's mother) describes her sense of humiliation upon seeing German *mondains* make fools of themselves by obsessively imitating the French: "Quand je vois de jeunes Allemands se mouler sur la nation Françoise, dédaigner leur propre langue, leurs propres usages, contrefaire un accent qu'ils ne saisiront jamais bien, et s'affliger tout de bon de cette impuissance, j'avoue que je rougis pour eux" (55). Although in this example it is young Germans who trigger vicarious shame rather than French émigrés, such novelistic representations reflect historical reality. When transplanted outside of the French court and worldly society, the social practices cultivated in that context became ridiculous and inspired reactionary nationalist sentiments in the countries that hosted émigrés. The young Germans who behave like Frenchmen in *Trois femmes* are no less ridiculous than Frenchmen who insist on observing their own customs at a foreign court. Vanoflen points out that for some novelists at this time, including Mme de Charrière, to "déridiculiser" her characters meant to "défranciser" them, by distancing them from "l'égoïsme frivole et du gaspillage des émigrés riches."[44] Michel Delon describes an

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[43] Leborgne, "Destins de femmes," 254.

[44] Vanoflen, "Isabelle de Charrière et les vertus de l'émigration," 134. He cites Charrière's correspondance with Camille de Rousillon (who, with his brother, Pierre Malarmey, inspired the utopic community of friends of *Lettres trouvées*) uses *déridiculiser* in letter 1207, du 5 décembre 1793, IV, p. 283-4. Charrière, writing to Henriette L'Hardy, says of him, "Je tâche de rendre M. de Roussillon moins exclusivement français qu'il n'est car il ne faut pas être trop de son pays" (IV, p. 673) (cited in Jaquier, Lotterie and Seth, *Destins Romanesques*, 140n22).

"exil à second degré" experienced by some of Charrière's émigré characters who try to separate themselves from fellow émigrés because they are ashamed and disgusted by pompous behavior.[45]

One purpose of "bad" literary émigrés—and in *Trois femmes*, of "bad" nobles—seems to be to serve as foils to victims of the Revolution who tolerated their fate with dignity.[46] The comtesse de Horst, who appears in the second part of the novel, is one example of a "bad" noble.[47] Charrière invites direct comparison between the comtesse and an unnamed émigrée whom Josephine meets and invites to the chateau. Both the comtesse and the émigrée are pregnant and dependent on the hospitality of others because of their financial situations. However, each reacts to their circumstances very differently. The comtesse proves to be a disrespectful guest, "sans raison et sans tact," who complains bitterly "de son état, de son ennui" (95, 111). Charrière delivers poetic justice to the "bad" comtesse de Horst: she and the servant Joséphine give birth on the same day, and their infant sons are irrevocably mixed up. Charrière also invites direct comparison between the two mothers as they adjust to their new role. The comtesse de Horst rejects both children, claiming she cannot see anything noble or distinguished in their crying or expressions. Joséphine, despite her lowly social status, demonstrates boundless

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[45] Delon describes other characters from Charrière's *Lettres trouvées dans des portefeuilles d'émigrés* (1793) who distance themselves from fellow émigrés in their exile: "Alphonse a quittée l'armée des princes pour se retirer en Suisse, de même que Laurent reste à l'écart de l'armée républicaine. Germaine, lady Caroline et le vicomte Des-Fossés abandonnent Londres, ses coteries et ses artifices pour la campagne anglaise. Selon le mot de l'un d'eux, ils se sentent comme des Juifs, pleurant et chantant leur patrie." See his "Lettres trouvées dans des porte-feuilles d'émigrés ou l'éloge de l'amphibie," *Une Européenne: Isabelle de Charrière en son siècle: actes du colloque de Neuchâtel, 11-13 novembre 1993* (Éditions Gilles Attinger: Neuchâtel, 1994) 202.

[46] Istvan Cseppentö, "Les Romans d'émigration au féminin," in *Destins romanesques,* eds. Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie, and Catriona Seth (Paris: Desjonquères, 2007), 270-86, 272-3.

[47] Constance has agreed to support the comte and comtesse de Horst when the former writes to her to explain their families, who disapproved of their marriage, have disowned them. She grants them the use of the residence she once shared with Émilie (Constance now stays at the baron's chateau). During their first dinner with the baron and his family, the ungracious comtesse humiliates her husband and causes an argument between Théobald and Émilie.

love and affection for both babies. The reader is left to conclude, once again, that social status has no relation to an individual's character.

In contrast with the comtesse's thoughtless complaints and negative attitude, the widowed and homeless émigrée remarks, "Et moi, suis-je sur des roses?" (111). As Dennis Wood points out in a note, the émigrée is referencing a poem written about a famous Aztec emperor, Gatimosin, who spoke these words while he was being tortured, highlighting the émigrée's dignity and forebearance.[48] In this context, nostalgia for the past is a detrimental and shameful indulgence. This émigrée also reminds other characters, and the reader, that while Constance, Émilie and Joséphine have found a new home community, and new identities, many are not so lucky. Moreover, the reader is reminded that the Revolution continues, and the future remains uncertain. When, as Constance reports to the abbé de la Tour in Letter XII, the English army reaches the area, Émilie must retreat to a country house to hide. According to an explicative note to the modern edition, that army often assisted the French government in recapturing émigrés (163n52). The specter of the Revolution haunts the women's lives and memories.

In broader terms, the allusion to Gatimosin hints at a new kind of memory emerging at this time, a traumatic memory of the tragedy and violence of the Revolution.[49] This memory is shameful to humanity and unspeakable because of its emotional impact, so much so that

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[48] This litote was supposedly spoken by the last Aztec emperor, Gatimosin, who heroically resisted Cortez's army. The Spanish tortured him and his minister over hot coals, demanding the location of the emperor's treasures. When the minister begged permission to reveal the secret, the emperor replied, "Et moi, suis-je sur les roses?" See Isabelle de Charrière, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 9, *Romans, contes et nouvelles 2: 1798-1806,* ed. Jean-Daniel Candaux et C.P. Courtney (Amsterdam : G.A. von Oorschot, 1981) 769n44.

[49] For more on the effects of Revolutionary trauma and its representations in fiction, see Deborah Jenson, *Trauma and its Representations: The Social Life of Mimesis in Post-Revolutionary France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Constance and the unnamed émigrée only refer to it obliquely. These layers of avoidance underscore the traumatic effect of Revolutionary violence, while also illustrating that it was ubiquitous in contemporary culture.[50] Perhaps Charrière wants to suggest that even the honest, simple language she has her characters use in her novel could not do justice to such experiences, or that such experiences are so base and horrific that they should not be recounted in a literary work (a question with which Sénac de Meilhan will wrestle as well). Théobald admits to Émilie, "Je parle le moins que je puis [...] de cette longue suite d'horreurs qui dégradent l'humanité encore plus qu'elles ne déshonorent vos compatriotes" (56). The Révolution, then, has brought shame to the French people. Its influence extends through space and time, beyond national borders, and persists in memory, despite the efforts on the part of émigrés to move on.

Besides the traumatic memory of Revolutionary violence and loss, each character must live with the consequences of his or her own past actions and excesses. Constance remarks that, "Joséphine donnerait beaucoup pour avoir été plus sage, et moi, M. l'abbé, quoique j'aime ma fortune, à cause de l'usage que j'en fais, j'en donnerais les trois quarts pour qu'il me restât de moins facheux souvenirs de ceux à qui je la dois" (125). Charrière suggests that shameful acts cannot be entirely forgotten; the three women must learn not to dwell on their regrets.

Although the nobility as a class maintains an elevated social status in *Trois femmes*, Charrière emphasizes the responsibilities, rather than the privileges, that accompany this position.[51] There is perhaps no way for émigrés to truly escape shame and pity. However, these

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[50] Théobald, speaking with Émilie, communicates his opinion of Revolutionary events without stating his complaints directly: "Je parle le moins que je puis...de cette longue suite d'horreurs qui dégradent l'humanité encore plus qu'elles ne déshonorent vos compatriotes [...]" (36).

[51] In fact, Théobald plans to quietly relinquish his privileges once he inherits the title of baron from his father so that only his responsibility to them remains. "Son projet est de renoncer peu à peu et sans le déclarer, à la plupart de ses droits féodaux, et s'il survit d'un seul jour à son père, d'en brûler les titres. Là-dessus il fonde des espérances d'amour et de bonheur chez ses vassaux" (92).

individuals have the chance to rise to their new circumstances by mitigating the influence of their memories and by improving the lives of others in the present and future. Constance and Théobald's projects provide one example of how the nobility might go about fulfilling their responsibilities. In order to gain a more informed understanding of human nature, and of the impact of social forces and education on individual identity, Constance conducts several pseudo-scientific experiments on child-rearing. First, after the mixup of Joséphine and the comtesse de Horst's sons, she has them reared as equals to prove that noble birth does not influence aptitude or intelligence. Constance undertakes a similar experiment when she learns that a set of twins, a boy and a girl, have been orphaned in a nearby village. She pays two villagers to raise the children as members of the opposite sex to observe the impact of reversing traditional roles. She thereby hopes to study the natural mental capacities of men and women. Neither experiment is conclusive, however: Constance's letters to the Abbé de la Tour stop soon after she describes the beginnings of each experiment. Their purpose seems to serve merely as a point of departure for a discussion on the nature of equality, and the practicality and benefits of forming a literate working class. However, their inclusion in a novel on emigration invites reflection on societal structure. The way these experiments are framed suggests that natural equality could be achieved by dispensing with a social system that affords advantages to some and refuses them to others.[52]

Although Charrière seems to prefer that past events be forgotten in favor of present productivity, she admits that memory can be haunting. For her characters, past mistakes can serve as a safeguard against repeating them (like Rousseau's experience with *fausse honte*).

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[52] Within the context of Théobald's efforts to educate the sons and daughters of his own people, these experiments can be viewed as an attempt to improve society through equality of opportunity. Théobald certainly lives according to the principle of social utility: he invests personal time and financial support to improve his people's circumstances.

Should the same hold true of the events of the Revolution? Charrière does not directly address this trauma, but other authors writing at the time, like Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan, openly engaged with its violence and tragedy.

L'Émigré or Remembering the Nobility: Work and Honor, Violence and Shame

Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan's *L'Émigré* (1797) is considered not just the archetypal émigré novel, but also the first of its kind in that it focuses on the reality of individual émigrés in detail, anchoring the plot in specific historical events.[53] In this epistolary novel, Sénac depicts the marquis de Saint Alban, a monarchist émigré whose identity is deeply rooted in his noble heritage. He is representative of the plight of his class and exemplifies "le panorama emblématique de toute l'émigration."[54] Although the novel's principal plot follows the developing romance between Saint Alban and Victorine, comtesse de Loewenstein, other émigrés and their stories are frequently mentioned, and the specter of the Revolution looms large in characters' consciousness. Shame encountered by émigrés is social rather than moral and often takes the form of humiliation as a result of their poverty and need to work. Sénac posits that the fantastic nature of Revolutionary circumstances can soften the effects of shame. The notion of honorability is consequentially broadened to incorporate new understandings of concepts like utility and duty.

In this novel, noble characters believe fervently in the importance of the novelistic genre as a means of conveying truth in the face of Revolutionary extremism. Sénac attempts to do justice to the French nobility's suffering by recording the memory of its trauma and exposing a

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[53] Astbury, "Narrative responses," 135. In contrast, references to the Revolution remain oblique in Charrière's novel.

[54] Michel Delon, Préface to *L'Émigré*, Folio Classique (Paris: Gallimard, 2004) 7-28, 11.

larger narrative in which the Revolution is a missed opportunity for positive change. In this context, shame becomes an important measuring stick by which to assess the morality of the fledgling nation's actions. The novel is therefore designed as a literary monument to the memory of a venerable nobility.

The novel begins in Germany, where the marquis de Saint Alban, wounded and unconscious, is discovered by the commandeur de Loewenstein, a German aristocrat, near his home. Saint Alban had joined the Prussian army before the start of the plot and is taken in and cared for by Loewenstein and his family. He falls in love with the commandeur's beautiful niece Victorine, comtesse de Loewenstein, but she is married to the much older comte. Once fully recovered, Saint Alban secures a nearby residence so he can visit the Loewenstein family, with whom he has developed a strong friendship. He cultivates a close relationship with Victorine, and one night saves her and her mother from a sudden fire (letter 70). However, things grow tense when she discovers his love for her (she finds a portrait of herself, drawn by the marquis, which he accidentally drops as he is leaving). She fears revealing her own feelings during his frequent visits, since she cannot avoid him without being rude or arousing suspicion, but her husband is increasingly jealous of their friendship. She confides her feelings to her friend Émilie, who attempts to comfort her.

Towards the end of the novel, Victorine's husband dies suddenly of a heart attack. Once Victorine recovers from this shock, she is able to admit her feelings for the marquis. To the young lovers' joy, Victorine's family is thrilled by the match and preparations for their marriage are put in place. However, Saint Alban finally receives a response from the prince de Condé, to whom he had written after recovering his health. He must leave at once to support the counter-revolution. Tragically, this decision leads to his capture by a group of *patriotes*. He is taken to

Paris and sentenced to death. Before he is led away to the scaffold, however, he draws a pistol and takes his own life. After learning of his death (but not that it was a suicide), Victorine too perishes after suffering delirium, haunted by images of her lover's demise at the hands of revolutionaries.[55]

Saint Alban embodies the quintessential characteristics tied to the positive myth of his class while displaying none of the abuse of power or privilege for which it had been condemned. In this way he is representative of every noble who struggles to salvage the most useful, admirable qualities from his or her heritage in light of an uncertain future. For instance, letter 10 (1576-1597) attributes to Saint Alban the full range of experiences an émigré could expect to face on both individual and collective levels (I will return to it shortly): this letter describes his own experiences as well as those of the émigrés whom he has met along the way, beginning with the escalation of dissent in the capital and his shock when his mother essentially dies from the horror of Revolutionary violence.[56] He goes on to tell of leaving Paris, the culture shock of traveling abroad, losing of most of his fortune, joining the *armée des Princes*, and learning of the deaths of family members in the September massacres.[57] He has experienced personal loss and met those like him who have been mistreated. The title of the novel represents Saint Alban as a singular noun preceded by a definite article: "l'Émigré" – he is at once *the* émigré, worthy of imitation, and every émigré, reflecting the reality of the experience of emigration.

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[55] She learns of the marquis' death at the same moment that she learns his given name, Victor, in letter 165. In letter 170, she repeats this name: "Il s'appelait Victor aussi, s'est-elle écriée ; c'était son nom, nous avions le même nom..." (1908).

[56] "le hasard avait fait rencontrer à ma mère la troupe de cannibales qui promenait les têtes sanglantes de Berthier et Foulon [...] et sa santé déjà languissante ne résista pas à l'atteinte que lui porta ce hideux spectacle" (1594).

[57] He also gives a very franco-centric opinion of mores and social conventions of the English, Italians, and Germans compared to the French. For Sénac, it appears that a preference for *goût* and "la noblesse des manières" does not make his character less admirable, as it would for authors like Charrière.

He also reflects his author's monarchist leanings (Sénac was himself an émigré of the first wave).[58] The two paternal figures in his life, his biological father, the comte de Saint Alban, and his *père adoptif*, the Président de Longueil, indicate the author's efforts to highlight certain facets of the noble identity and political leanings at this time. The comte de Saint Alban is a libertine descended from a long line of *nobles d'épée* and of a famous maréchal, but he eschews this noble military heritage. He ignores the responsibility of his position, abandoning lands to a manager and leaving his wife and son at home to travel abroad. The Président de Longueil, in contrast, is an affectionate mentor, active political savant, and *noble de robe* who served as the young Saint Alban's tutor.[59] These two influences manifest themselves in Saint Alban's decision to fight in the Prince de Condé's army despite the fact that he does not agree with all their principles.[60] Saint Alban's complex identity also contradicts popular condemnation of émigrés. Like his author, the marquis is not blind to the excesses and failures of some members of his class (Saint Alban's father among them), but he remains loyal to the cause of the monarchy and his decisions are guided first and foremost by his sense of honor.[61] His strength of character is

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[58] For a detailed account of Sénac de Meilhan's counter-revolutionary activities, including his relationship with Catherine II of Russia, see François Rosset, "De Sénac à Kosciusko" and G. de Monsembernard, *Sénac de Meilhan* (Auch: Imprimerie Th. Bouquet, 1969). Michel Delon also describes Sénac's mixed feelings in his préface to the novel: "Le fils du médecin de Louis XV est trop attaché à une monarchie qui lui a permis de réusssir pour accepter sa brutale remise en cause ; il a trop observé les blocages d'une aristocratie crispée su ses privilèges pour croire à un possible retour en arrière, à une pure restauration du passé" (10-11).

[59] Delon, "Préface," 17. When telling the marquis of the death of his father, the Président de Longueil briefly summarizes the differences between himself and the deceased: "renonçant aussitôt qu'il le put aux emplois et à la fortune, il ne voulut avoir avec le monde que des rappors de plaisirs et de bienfaisance. Croyant devoir suivre une autre route, j'ai pris un rôle actif dans la société, pour être plus utile aux hommes, et j'ai eu la présomption de remplir avec plus de zèle qu'un autre les fonctions auxquelles je m'étois voué" (letter 122, 1835).

[60] Delon, "Préface," 10-11.

[61] In letter 10, for example, the marquis criticizes some high-ranking nobles for their blatant corruption and abuse of power. The Duc d'Orléans inspires a long description: "Enfoncé dans la fange de la débauche, il n'élevait pas alors ses vues par-delà une liberté indéfinie, favorable à ses vicieuses inclinations" (1584).

remarked upon by others of all classes regardless of their national origin.[62] This suggests that there are natural qualities that make effective leaders and inspire loyalty, and that reforming legal and social structures would not be necessary if the nobility could emulate these characteristics. Sénac's attempts to reconcile notions of equality with social class in this way recalls notions of *noblesse de cœur* that we have seen in earlier texts, like *La vie de Marianne*. Saint Alban's admirability has more to do with his dedication to honorability than with the chance of his birth.

Saint Alban is also a "good" émigré within this novelistic universe. He accepts the realities of his situation with dignity but struggles to have a positive impact on the world through whatever means remain to him. Like for Charrière's "good" émigrés, the notion of utility informs his understanding of personal honor and his role as a member of the social elite. For Saint Alban, however, utility is rooted in traditional chivalric values like military service to the monarchy and aid to those less fortunate than himself. He frames fighting against Revolutionary *patriotes* as a decision to be useful to the monarchy: "j'ai songé aux moyens d'employer utilement mon faible courage" (letter 10, 1597).[63] Saint Alban's concept of honor is linked to actively supporting a cause that, he hopes, will restore order. He is willing to sacrifice personal happiness to pursue that goal as he illustrates just before he departs to join the Prince de Condé. He writes to Victorine, "est-il vrai que je vous quitte ? est-il donc dans l'univers entier une force qui puisse m'y contraindre ? Malheureux que je suis ! elle existe cette force, c'est mon roi, c'est

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[62] Victorine's uncle insists, for instance, that social elites from different places are all "gens de bien" and should help each other (38). Victorine is also impressed by Bertrand's loyalty (Saint Alban's valet), stating that since in France all men are "equal" and no legal ties hold him to his master, the marquis must truly be unique (letter 4, 1560). Later in the novel, the marquis saves Victorine and her mother from a sudden fire (letter 70, 1718-19). He also receives an offer to marry the wealthy daughter of the illustrious comte d'Ermenstein (letters 111-112) because of his excellent character and merit.

[63] Saint Alban and the Président both mention *utilité* at different moments when they pledge their allegiance to the queen, or express interest in joining the army. See letters 10 (esp 1594-95), 19, 85, and 122.

l'honneur!" (letter 156, 1889). He also makes generous financial gifts to other struggling émigrés whom he meets (to the point of reducing himself to abject poverty), and often recruits aid from other members of the elites on their behalf.[64]

How is a "good" émigré to overcome the shameful stigma associated with the loss of legal status, wealth, and title? Or the traitorous shame associated with lifting arms against one's own country? Sénac emphasizes the tragic nature of emigration in order to highlight his protagonist's blamelessness. Saint Alban mentions his admiration for classic theater's ability to move him in an ironic exposition of his own plight: "La fatalité était la base des tragédies des anciens, c'était le moyen d'intéresser vivement en faveur de leurs personnages; ils étaient vertueux, ils détestaient le vice, mais l'ascendant invincible du destin les précipitait dans le crime" (letter 6, 1565-6). Sénac encourages the reader to view Saint Alban's situation (and the situation of other émigrés) as a real-world realization of that classic fatality: fate has cast Saint Alban in a role in which he must, despite his misgivings, battle his fellow Frenchmen in order to save them from themselves (or, as Saint Alban sees it, to save them from a few power-hungry members of the nobility and rising members of the merchant class). As the Président writes in defense of the nobility in letter 85, "elle est sortie de France pour servir son Roi et combattre pour lui" (1748). Saint Alban walks a thin line, then, between passivity and agency, shame and honor. On the one hand, he is a victim of Revolutionary violence and poverty (and he must sometimes endure the humiliation of accepting charity from others as a result), and of the laws that take away his title and noble heritage.[65] On the other, he actively asserts his honor whenever

[64] In letter 44, the comte de ***, Lieutenant-général des armées du roi de France begs the marquis to help his granddaughter, whom he will soon leave an orphan. The marquis recruits his cousin (the duchesse de Montjustin) as well as the comtesse de Loewenstein and her uncle to aid him in caring for the young girl once her grandfather dies.

[65] Saint Alban explains his position based on what he witnessed first-hand in Paris in the autobiographical text included in letter 10: "l'oppression du peuple n'a point été le principe des attentats auxquels il s'est livré ; que le désir de dominer et non le patriotisme a dirigé les premières entreprises contre l'autorité" (1581).

possible, exemplifying courage on the battlefield and giving generously to those less fortunate than himself. He tolerates his suffering with dignity.

The only instance in the novel when Saint Alban seems truly mortified by the possibility of shame is unrelated to his émigré status. When he discovers that he has accidentally dropped the secret portrait he made of Victorine, thereby revealing the truth of his feelings for a married woman, he is stricken with panic and writes to his cousin to help him retrieve the portrait (letter 38, 1648-50).[66] He fears for Victorine rather than for himself. His reaction reflects traditional Ancien Régime values of *pudeur* and honorability in love since, if it were to be found, the portrait could be interpreted as a token of love and sully Victorine's reputation despite her innocence. He succeeds, with his cousin's help, in protecting Victorine from scandal.

The distinction between shame and honor is complicated for other émigrés represented in the novel, especially for those who work. In 1796 and 1797 it was increasingly common (and necessary) for many émigrés to work. The need to earn a living was salt in the wounds of many because it marked the absolute end of the nobility's previous way of life and the loss of their honor. Working for money was, for the high born, tantamount to *déroger*. That is, it was considered a humiliating failure equal to being stripped of one's title by the king. The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1762) defines *déroger*:

> On dit, *Déroger à Noblesse*, ou simplement *Déroger*, pour dire, Faire quelque chose qui par les Loix du pays, fait décheoir de la noblesse. *Prendre des terres à ferme, tenir*

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[66] This portrait further underscores Saint Alban's role as a tragic hero. He has inscribed it with a verse from Phaedra to reflect his battle against his feelings: "Présente je vous fuis, absente je vous trouve" (Act II). Victorine also remarks after she finds it, "il semble que quelque chose de fatal soit attaché à cette peinture, elle m'a fait connaître les sentiments du Marquis, hélas !" (letter 47, 1666). The comte suddenly dies, removing the largest obstacle that faced the lovers. However, the circumstances of the Revolution soon intervene to prevent their happiness.

boutique, &c. c'est déroger à noblesse. *Il étoit de noble race, mais son aïeul, son père a dérogé*.[67]

For Sénac's émigrés, work is a source *humiliation,* a kind of social shame tied to a loss of reputation or public lowering, as the definition of *humiliation* offered in the *Encyclopédie* illustrates: "tout ce qui abaisse, qui avilit devant les hommes, et qui mortifie l'orgueil."[68]

Humiliation was not a permanent affliction for Sénac's characters, however. Letter 23 introduces the duchesse de Monjustin, who makes and sells artificial flowers (she is the marquis' cousin who arrives by chance to sell her wares at the Loewenstein home while he is visiting; they recognize each other). The duchess's pragmatic remark to Victorine identifies *humiliation* as the most painful part of the *malheur* suffered by émigrés. Humiliation can be repaired through action and the cultivation of humility, as the duchess shows. She finds dignity in her work, which she describes as a means of transforming talent into utility: "je ne suis pas la seule [...] que la Révolution ait réduite à un sort pareil ou plus fâcheux, et je me trouve heureuse d'avoir un petit talent qui écarte de moi la misère" (1625). Utility is the basis for honor for émigrés, and the duchesse shows how honorability underpins her work. By all accounts she considers herself more fortunate than many who do not have the talents or character necessary to adapt.[69] The duchess also specifies that what might be humiliating according to the old code of aristocratic

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[67] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 4th edition (1762), s. v. "déroger." Original emphasis.

[68] "Humiliation, s.f. (Théologie morale)" in ENCYC. vol 8, p. 352.

[69] In letter 19, Victorine mentions an officer friend of Sant-Alban's who describes other émigrés who have taken on various work: "Plusieurs, nous a-t-il dit, sont 'réduits à vivre du métier de garçon charpentier ou menuisier ; les plus heureux sont ceux qui enseignent à danser, qui montrent la géographie ou le Français, ceux-là sont des *Milords* ; ce fut son expression. Un des meilleurs gentilshommes de ma province, ajouta-t-il, vend dans une petite ville du ratafiat, je l'ai vu en tablier dans sa baraque, et ce qui vous surprendra, il a l'air content" (1614).

honor might not be within the context of life as an émigré/e. She reminds those present that what she has suffered is not unique, but common to many:

> Quand on ôte, Madame, au malheur, l'humiliation, il perd ce qu'il a peut-être de plus douloureux, et comment être humilié d'un malheur général ? Qui ne serait pas honteux de paraître en chemise dans la rue? ....Mais, supposé que le feu prenne à votre maison, aux maisons voisines, on ne songera pas en fuyant le danger, à la manière dont on est vêtu. (letter 23, 1626)[70]

The frightening example of a fire as a shared tragedy is an apt analogy for the émigré's situation which encourages reflection on the importance of social convention in the individual's experience of humiliation. In the face of physical danger, concern for appropriate dress evaporates. Those who continue to judge survivors of life-threatening events on "the way they are dressed" are uncharitable and petty. Circumstance thus makes humiliation an irrelevant consideration and transforms self-sufficiency (and the personal fortitude necessary to pursue it) into an admirable, honorable skill. In a laudatory comment on the national traits of the French, Victorine remarks in letter 19, "Le Français commence par être abattu, il reprend courage, et à la moindre ressource il passe à la gaieté" (1614).

Historically, émigrés found work as music, language, or drawing teachers. They sold their artistic productions, and many women wove or embroidered. Saint Alban himself is commissioned to paint a portrait of the comtesse and encourages his cousin to advertise his talents in Frankfort.[71] Michel Delon discusses the importance of the nature of the work chosen by

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[70] The example she gives is interesting, considering Saint Alban will later save Victorine and her mother from a fire in their house in letter 70, and their state of dress is given particular mention (their clothes are half burned). Does this suggest that the inhabitants of the household no longer regard his situation as shameful in light of the danger he helped them escape? An illustration of his courage and selflessness – traits associated with masculine codes of honor – is surely sufficient to dispel any shame destiny has dealt him.

[71] Letters 68 & 69 describe the portrait's completion from Saint Alban's and Victorine's respective perspectives.

émigrés and its impact on their identity: "Ils peuvent se faire rémunérer, sans trop déroger, sans remettre en cause l'idée qu'ils se font d'eux-mêmes, s'ils estiment transmettre un art de vivre aux élites étrangères."[72] Their role in transmitting culture through art, language, and music allows them to maintain their noble identities; the definition of honor is therefore widened by circumstance. It is noteworthy that once the duchess reconnects with the marquis, who agrees to support her financially, she no longer needs to work, but she continues selling flowers and donates the proceeds to other needy émigrés, further "ennobling" her efforts. In other words, she risks personal honor to serve others in a sacrifice that paradoxically illustrates her honorability.

If some émigrés attempt to mitigate the shame of accepting to work by recasting it as an exercise in humility and self-sufficiency, the sensitivity of others around them suggests that such shame cannot be entirely eliminated, even when it is met with compassion and understanding. Therefore the transaction remains awkward when Victorine purchases flowers from the duchess. She asks herself, "Comment dire à une Duchesse: cela est trop cher? Comment lui mettre de l'argent dans la main?" (1626). She also resists buying a large quantity of flowers so that the duchess does not feel she is giving out of pity: "je craignis d'avoir l'air, par pure générosité, d'augmenter ses profits" (1626). Here, Victorine fears belittling the courage the duchess has demonstrated by making her the recipient of charity. Victorine is not alone in her sensitivity to émigrés' honor. In fact, all members of the nobility who play major roles in this text, French or German, extend similar financial assistance and kindness to French émigrés at one point or another, although they do so with discretion.[73] In letters 62 and 63, for instance, Victorine and

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[72] Delon, "Préface," 20.

[73] A possible exception is Victorine's husband, who is a jealous but passive character designed to frustrate the young lovers. Illustrating this rule, the duchess takes in her ill friend and runs an émigré support network in Frankfort. Victorine and the duchess work together to support and educate the young Charlotte, the comte de ***'s granddaughter, after his death.

her close friend Émilie arrange a ruse to give the marquis the money he desperately needs to survive (he is ill and cannot even afford broth) without his knowing its true origin. They lead him to believe that someone has suddenly repaid an old debt to him, which allows him to accept the funds without shame.

In these instances, it would seem that the social elite continues to respect Ancien Régime notions of shame and honor. The émigrés and their German hosts are depicted as members of an international elite community who share values and a common culture of generosity, discretion, and *bienséance,* and the French language (in contrast with the more individuated characters of Charrière's novel). Members of the social elite are linked through their support of the monarchy, as the commandeur's interest in the marquis' loyalty to his king demonstrates.[74] They focus on the exceptional circumstances that produced the need for otherwise humiliating actions (as in the case of the duchess making flowers), or by inventing a fictional narrative in which shame is absent (like in the case of the marquis suddenly receiving repayment). In both cases, the novelistic genre aims to inspire sympathy and compassion in the reader to undermine the shameful and humiliating circumstances to which its noble characters are subjected.

If the nobility seems to be cut from the same cloth in this novel, their fates are diverse. Sénac exploits epistolarity to represent a range of tribulations and difficulties experienced by émigrés. Most often, established characters like Victorine, Émilie, or the marquis share descriptions of impoverished or suffering émigrés (either those they have met personally, or those others have brought to their attention through letters) to request aid on their behalf, or to

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[74] The first question the commandeur asks of Bertrand, since the marquis is unconscious and cannot speak for himself, is whether his master is a good servant of his king (letter 2, 1556). Bertrand assures him it is so.

relate a moving illustration of tragedy or courage.[75] This strategy serves several purposes: it maintains correspondence through the sharing of news; it demonstrates the large and diverse population of émigrés; it illustrates widespread interest in their situation; and it introduces new characters (like the marquis' cousin, the duchesse de Montjustin). The diversity of experience represented in the novel presents different facets of the same event, allowing dialogue between émigrés themselves, some of whom are nostalgic for the past, or lament the results of Revolutionary action. Still others are conscious that there is no going back. By recounting these secondary narratives through main characters rather than having these émigrés speak for themselves, Sénac avoids representing émigrés as complaining or demanding. In other words, there is no "bad" émigré like those depicted in Charrière's novel: in this universe, every émigré has a story and deserves to be treated with compassion and respect. Sénac distances his émigré characters from the shame of their circumstances and attempts to instill pity and compassion in the reader, often modeling an appropriate response in principal characters.

For instance, in letter 45, Sant Alban is moved to tears after receiving a letter from the elderly and gravely ill comte de ***. He writes to Victorine to ask for her help in aiding the comte and his soon-to-be orphaned granddaughter. He encloses the comte's missive in his letter. The comte's request is full of shameful self-effacement, since, as he puts it, he has lost his ability to be "useful": "je ne suis plus qu'un inutile fardeau sur la terre" (letter 44, 1660-61). In the marquis' letter, the distinction between reader *within* the novel, and reader *of* the novel, is elided, inviting the reader of the novel to share the emotions triggered by the narration.[76] This places

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[75] Letter 91 introduces, for instance, the Vicomtesse de Vassy, an ill and emotinally fragile émigrée and friend of the duchesse de Montjustin. Despite the duchess's efforts to protect her friend from the news that her husband has been deported to America, the poor émigrée succumbs to her consumption.

[76] This letter comes at a time when Victorine had asked Saint Alban not to contact her. He had recently revealed his love to her, so he is forbidden from writing to her. However, the situation of the comte de ***'s granddaughter is

great importance on the emotional reaction of those who encounter shameful émigrés within this novel. Sénac thus offers his text as a testimony of suffering to readers apt to identify with these émigré characters by recognizing their need to feel and receive compassion.

The novel is an effective medium for representing the novelistic reality of Revolutionary events, as Sénac writes in his *Préface*, because it is more than a collection of linear events: "On ne peut appeler roman, un ouvrage qui renferme des récits exacts de faits avérés [...] Tout est vraisemblable, et tout est romanesque dans la révolution de France" (1549). Sénac believed that the creation of an accurate record of the Revolution could not be entrusted to historians, since traditional means of recording official History amounted to summaries of battles won and lost, the glorification of corrupt men, and lists of dates and arbitrary lines drawn upon maps; such cold elements could never do justice to what was being experienced by the French people.[77] Mme de Staël echoed this argument in her *Essai sur les fictions*, "l'Histoire n'atteint pas à la vie des hommes privés, aux sentiments [... et] l'histoire n'agit point sur vous par un intérêt moral et soutenu ; le vrai est souvent incomplet dans ces effets."[78] For this reason, the Président de Longueil mentions replacing history books with novels to better instruct posterity:

> j'ai souvent souhaité qu'on brûlât tous les livres d'histoire, et qu'on les remplaçât par des romans ; la vérité y perdrait peu, et les récits d'actions vertueuses, la peinture des

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dire, which provides an excuse for continued communication between the lovers, as well as further illustration of Saint Alban's admirable character.

[77] In letter 21, Victorine suggests drawing a map of Europe to visually represent where and how émigrés were received to aid those who sought refuge: "il faut, a-t-elle dit, que cette carte serve d'indication du sort dont jouissent les émigrés dans les différens états de l'Europe, ils seront peints de diverses couleurs [...] ainsi les pays où ils auraient été mal accueillis seront en couleur noire et des montagnes arides, des torrens dévastateurs [...] ; dans ceux où ils auront été bien reçus, on verra des prairies émaillés de fleurs et des verts bocages" (1619).

[78] Germaine de Staël, *Essai sur les Fictions suivi de l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations* (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 1979) 42.

> sentiments humains et généreux, substitués aux tableaux des excès de l'ambition, des fureurs du fanatisme et des plus honteuses faiblesses, exciteraient dans les esprits un noble enthousiasme pour la vertu. (letter 86, 1757)

Guidelines for writing such a novel as the Président suggests appear in letter 10 when he and Victorine first ask Saint Alban for his story. Although the marquis insists he has little to tell, Victorine urges him to describe his emotions, which are far more representative of his experiences than a list of his battles. To this her uncle adds a request for the marquis' judgments on the Revolution.[79] This request attributes great importance to emotion in the relation of memory as lived experience, especially experience that is difficult to relate with exactness.[80] The strength of emotions offers a reassuring framework for rebuilding an identity that had been torn apart by the twists and turns of emigration.[81] Personal narrative thus becomes a means by which to recount historical events, blurring the line between real émigré experience and fictionalized re-creations of it. The shift of focus from the principal events of the Revolution towards individual

[79] "Ma vie, nous a-t-il répondu, a été celle des gens de mon âge, et de mon état, ainsi j'ai bien peu d'aventures à raconter ; mais, lui ai-je dit, on a toujours à parler de ses sentiments. Ah ! voilà comme sont les femmes, a dit mon oncle [...] ce qui m'intéressera dans vos récits, ce sera votre jugement sur ls personnes qui ont influé sur la Révolution, et qui vraisemblablement ont été connues de vous ; c'est la manière dont vous ont frappé les événemens" (letter 10, 1575).

[80] The recurrence of portraits in the novel achieves a similar effect as the inclusion of emotion. Saint Alban and Victorine engage in the playful creation of written portraits of one another and of mutual acquaintances, illustrating how an immutable reality – in this case, the complex nature of a person, their characteristics and flaws – might be captured in written form (letter 15). Victorine begins the novel, in fact, with a comment on portraiture: "lorsqu'on commence un roman on doit faire le portrait du héros, et je vais me conformer à cette invariable coutume" (letter 2, 1557). The tradition of portraits as a symbol of the progression of history for noble families is well-established and is referenced in the novel. In letter 9, Saint Alban describes the Président as a man descended from a line going back to the fifteenth century, as the portraits in his home illustrate.

[81] Anne Brousteau, "L'esthétique littéraire à l'épreuve de la Révolution : L'Émigré de Sénac de Meilhan," in *Destins Romanesques de la Révolution*, eds. Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie, and Catriona Seth (Paris: Desjonquères, 2007), 204-14, 223.

experience is a means of displacing personal experience onto fictional characters in order to assimilate traumatic memory.[82]

L'Émigré attempts to satisfy this goal by integrating personal narrative into the recounting of historical events, and by including the stories of a variety of émigrés. As Michel Delon observes, these embedded narratives "font passer du particulier au général et de l'abstrait au concret."[83] One example is the marquis' autobiographical account included in letter 10. Saint Alban describes the rejection, mistrust, and exploitation of other émigrés he met in his travels through Europe. He says, "Là, je les ai vu accueillir d'abord avec mépris et défiance, ensuite j'ai vu la plus barbare cupidité mettre à profit leur ignorance de la langue et l'urgence de leurs besoins ; [...] quelques-uns, après avoir ainsi exposé leur misère à tous les yeux, étaient reconduits aux portes de la ville" (1570). The repetition of "je les ai vu" and "j'ai vu" in this passage reinforces Saint Alban's status as eyewitness, and the importance and validity of his testimony. These émigrés, represented as a diaspora, are desperate victims of sudden poverty and mistreatment outside of France. The Président de Longueil's account of his departure from France (letter 18) depicts a mass, almost biblical exodus of diverse social composition marching down the road together to Turin, suffering eight days of rain. These émigrés do receive generous aid from those they encounter along the road, but the Président notes that such generosity is short-lived since hardship continues for months and even years, exhausting the patience and sympathy of host populations. Émigrés are often judged collectively, especially by Revolutionaries. Saint Alban clearly refers to laws permitting the arrest and execution of émigrés, as well as the trends of persecution and violence against nobles who remain in France:

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[82] Astbury, *Narrative Responses*, 136.

[83] Delon, "Préface," 15.

> La vie la plus retirée, la conduite la plus circonspecte ne peuvent faire échapper à la barbarie de la jurisprudence révolutionnaire. Hélas ! [...] Quelle affreuse époque pour l'humanité que celle où les avantages qui distinguent les hommes sont devenues des principes de ruine, et marquent du sceau de la réprobation ceux qui les possèdent. (1570)

The Revolution has reversed the order and meaning of the principles that once governed society: "avantage" has become "principes de ruine," and it seems even a policy of strict integration like that championed by Mme de Charrière would hold little sway with those who turn away French émigrés in this novel.

Incorporating such stories does raise concerns for Sénac. On the one hand, he refuses to make the Revolution the sole focus of his novel. Doing so would grant what he identified as a historical accident, a natural disaster, and a moral monstrosity the honor of being immortalized in literature.[84] On the other, Sénac also responded to the need of his generation to acknowledge the suffering of the nobility by recording it in literature. These seemingly paradoxical motivations resulted in an equally paradoxical novelistic construction: despite the fact that *l'Emigré* is a novel about the Revolution, it constantly expresses the impossibility of writing and representing the Revolution.[85]

Indeed, preterition, or speaking of something after expressly stating that it would not be mentioned, is a frequent technique in Saint Alban's descriptions of events. One example is the death of a widow he had known in France who was once beloved by her vassals. At the onset of the Revolution, her vassals attacked her without cause, burned her chateau, and subjected her to torture. He begins with, "J'abrège un récit affreux, qui ne pourrait exciter que l'horreur" before

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[84] Brousteau, "L'esthétique littéraire," 205.

[85] Ibid.

giving a detailed account of what happened, as if he cannot help relating the event once he brings it to mind (letter 10, 1593). The scene haunts his memory: "L'image de Mme de Granville expirante au milieu d'une multitude furieuse était sans cesse présente à mon esprit; ses cris douloureux retentissaient dans mes oreilles, et ce terrible souvenir pénètre encore en ce moment mon âme" (1593-94). In Sénac's novel, scenes that attempt to translate the haunting nature of a memory into writing tend to depict these moments as occurring out of time, as in this example. The use of the imperfect stresses the recurring nature of this scene and its effect on all of Saint Alban's senses. He insists he sees the dying woman's image "sans cesse" and that it penetrates his soul "encore en ce moment." These memories are therefore experienced in the present by the witness who recounts them. Like the sensitive character, the victim of trauma relives the lasting effects of sensory impressions so powerful they cannot be forgotten, despite the witness's desire to do so. The traumatic memory is untethered from the linear timeline in which it originally occurs because of the intensity of emotion with which it is imbued.

The gradual erosion of traditional historical conventions in this novel illustrates how emotion can impact memory's recording of experience and its place in a linear timeline. Initially, *L'Emigré* provides a start date of July 1793, and gives a reference to the capture of Mayence by the Prussians, reference points meant to orient the reader.[86] As the novel progresses, however, such reference points disappear.[87] The gazette that announces Saint Alban's death towards the end of the novel, for instance, deliberately elides the day and the last two digits of the year, in the same way that asterisks replace proper names elsewhere.[88] This rejection of traditional

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[86] Delon, "Préface," 18.

[87] The only other identifiable references are to the queen's execution in letter 154, which can thus be attributed to the 16th of October of the same year, and the marquis' will, dated the 25th of October, 1793, which required a date to be recognized as an official juridical document (Delon, "Préface," 18).

[88] Ibid.

chronology suggests that the tragedy of this event is experienced outside of time, in an emotional timeline where experience can contract or dilate, and memory can persist infinitely in the mind and the heart. It also suggests that Saint Alban's death – the symbolic death of the aristocratic hierarchy in France, and the culture and values it represented – does not need to be legitimized by a date, or tied to an official calendar, to be impactful or tragic.

How does one relate the emotional intensity of such scenes? In letter 19, Victorine addresses the practical concern of what kind of language to use. She judges that although Rousseau (her favorite author) was an astute observer, he would have been too emotionally affected by the horrors of the Revolution to write clearly about them. She concludes that language is not powerful enough to communicate the emotional impact of events: "Les mots atroces, affreux, terribles, monstrueux, mille et mille fois répétés, employés à chaque instant deviennent insignifians et il faudrait d'autres expressions pour exprimer un *crescendo* de crimes et d'infortunes qui va à l'infini" (1614, original emphasis). This difficulty does not prevent characters from trying. One strategy they employ to convey emotional events is through the description of visual or auditory elements. This represents an effort to mobilize the reader's imagination to immerse them in the description by involving all the senses. For instance, Saint Alban describes the cries of Mme de Granville as she is tortured to evoke a more complete representation of the experience.[89]

Although it might seem distasteful to include horrific details in his representation of events, the marquis defends this choice as a necessary evil. He refers to the English novelists he loves (Richardson chief among them) who are unafraid to depict all facets of reality: they

[89] Claire Jaquier, "Traitements et emplois d'un thème: L'émigration dans les romans suisses," in *Destins Romanesques de l'émigration*, eds. Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie and Catriona Seth (Paris: Desjonquères, 2007) 158-201, 195.

"cherchent la moralité de l'homme dans toutes les classes de la société ; rien n'est ignoble ou noble à leurs yeux" (letter 6, 1565).[90] The need to record truth and educate posterity make it acceptable to describe what otherwise might have been distasteful, just as the circumstances of emigration make work a less repugnant option for displaced nobility. Detail therefore becomes an important element to Sénac's narrative strategy for recording traumatic memories, and for representing the truth of human experience more generally. Eric Auerbach explains in *Mimésis* that during the eighteenth century, telling details of daily life was considered "du style bas," but that later in the century "détail" becomes a suggestion to the reader.[91]

There is also a didactic advantage to depicting shameful behavior. Emotion – specifically, shame – becomes a new lens for measuring change and justice. By combining individual experience with major events of the Revolution, Sénac personalizes the consequences of violent events. This is illustrated by the story that Saint Alban tells of a man and his family killed by incensed tenants, whose bodies are then mutilated. In his eyes, the disrespect shown to the dead bodies is a more shameful and regrettable action than the excesses of the nobility that partially prompted the Revolution: "À la honte éternelle de ce peuple, la postérité apprendra en frisonnant d'horreur les barbaries exercées sur leurs cadavres" (28). Thus the marquis encourages the reader to weigh the gravity of crimes attributed to members of his class – oppression, exploitation, and other causes cited for the Revolution – against the violent excesses the people now perpetrate against former nobles in retaliation.

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[90] Richardson's moral realism received widespread praise. *Clarissa* (1748) inspired Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. See also Denis Diderot's *Eloge de Richardson* in *Contes et Romans*, ed. Michel Delon, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 897-911.

[91] Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), esp. Chapter 16, pp. 347-381. Later, in Balzac's work, detail will be recognized as socially and historically revelatory. See also Jaquier, "Traitements et emplois d'un thème," esp. 159.

Saint Alban's death offers another illustration of this shameful behavior by the people, while also describing the marquis' final sacrifice to honor.[92] The excerpt from the Revolutionary gazette that announces his death (the only instance of a republican voice in the novel) describes a scene reminiscent of Christ's trial. Saint Alban, a man known by the reader to be innocent, is condemned by an excited, bloodthirsty crowd.[93] While Saint Alban does maintain a stoic, dignified demeaner before the crowd, he does not allow them to take his life from him. Instead, as he is led away to be executed, he pulls a small pistol from his coat and takes his own life. The gazette excerpt relates the contents of a bloodstained note that falls from the marquis' coat following his suicide: "je n'ai pas voulu qu'une main infâme s'approchât de moi, et la mienne achèvera seule le sacrifice de ma vie, que je fais à mon roi et à ma patrie" (1898). Saint Alban makes his final act a rejection of the shame a new, radical version of society attempted to inflict on his memory by subjecting him to the death of a criminal. His only chance to die honorably is by his own hand since he did not receive the death of a military hero on the battlefield. He makes the ultimate sacrifice for his own honor, setting himself apart from other victims.

His body, however, is "mis en pièces" by the bloodthirsty crowd, a symbolic dismemberment of the nobility by Revolutionary rage. The gazette's weak attempt at justification falls flat: "L'humanité se révolte de ces sanglans excès ; mais dans tous les pays les racines de l'arbre de la liberté ont été arrosées de sang, et comment pouvoir contenir un peuple

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[92] By saving his honor on earth, however, does Saint Alban condemn his immortal soul by an act of suicide? When she learns of his death, Victorine loses her sanity and grows ill. In an effort to console her, the marquis' cousin suggests telling her that he did not suffer the horror of execution. The doctor advises against revealing the truth, however, since he knows his patient would be happier imagining her lover in heaven, rather than condemned to eternal suffering. Saint Alban's death therefore represents his author's view that the nobility had been forced into an untenable position.

[93] The marquis de ***, a friend of Saint Alban, includes the gazette in his letter to the Président because he could not bear to write such tragic news in his own words.

qui voit outrager son gouvernement et des lois qui lui sont si chères?" (1898). For a readership all too familiar with personal loss, this defense offends more than it consoles. According to this novel, the French nation has sullied its own memory through this senseless, shameful violence. *L'Emigré* suggests that only those with cooler heads – other important characters of this novel, for instance – are able to see just how much has been lost and destroyed by the Revolution.[94] Sénac reminds readers that émigrés have become symbols of a past that the Revolution had hoped to eradicate: "their intrigues, their programs of restoration, their mere existence made them the very embodiment of nostalgia for the Ancien Régime."[95] 324).

There is no closure at the end of this novel, no effort to bring unity, formal or thematic, which had been characteristic of the Ancien Régime's most famous epistolary novels (such as those by Rousseau or Laclos). Rather, the novel is charged with representing a world in crisis and movement, which makes any vision of a coherent whole impossible.[96] Even as Sénac's protagonist embodies dedication to the monarchy, he also denounces the power-hungry individuals who justified the Revolution in the first place (letter 10). In a way, this novel is a monument to the values and exceptional individuals who were sacrificed to the Revolution, and to those who suffered needlessly. The last voice we hear is that of the doctor announcing Victorine's death. He confirms the tragedy of her passing without offering consolation (letter

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[94] The Président provides two long letters to the marquis detailing his opinion on the durability of the Revolution, which highlights his beliefs over its causes (letters 56 & 57). His analysis remains ambiguous, however, and suggests there is logic in its violence (Delon, "Préface," 18). Unfortunately, the novel received little attention at the time of its publication, so we cannot know the reactions of its readers: "le roman semble recouvert par l'agitation du temps et le bouleversement du continent" in that it virtually disappeared following its publication until it was rediscovered in the twentieth century (Delon, "Préface," 24).

[95] Boffa, "Émigré," 324.

[96] Brousteau, "L'esthétique littéraire," 211.

176).[97] In this context, nostalgia for the Ancien Régime is partly justified, and the way forward for the nobility remains unclear.

For Sénac, the loss of the nobility, its traditions, and values, is a tragedy. Memory and shame intersect in traumatic and inexpressible memories of Revolutionary violence. In *L'Émigré* the impact of these events is illustrated on the individual level. Early in the novel, Saint Alban says of his experiences during the first years of the Revolution, "je ne puis concevoir comment, dans un si court espace, des souvenirs gravés par la main du temps, pendant douze siècles, ont été effacés" (letter 10, 1579). Whereas Charrière's oeuvre aims to break with old political, social, and literary systems, Sénac's novel is a farewell to an old system that could no longer be appreciated by those who had seized power.[98]

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The émigré figure's experience of shame and relationship with memory reflect the social and political upheaval that produced this literary character. Despite differences in political leanings (Charrière supported the ideals of the Revolution but decried the new Republic's descent into extremism and violence; Sénac was a moderate constitutional monarchist), both of the authors examined in this chapter redefine shame by anchoring its opposite, honor, in utility. They emphasize the responsibility of social elites to actively exemplify, promote, and defend the ideals they felt were essential to a healthy society. As members of the former nobility confront the challenge of how to achieve distinction in a new society based on equality, shame is tied to

[97] For fear of troubling her with images of her lover's soul as lost to damnation, the doctor and her family have decided not to tell the religious Victorine that Saint Alban took his own life. The result is that Victorine loses her sanity and physical health to the horrors she imagines were inflicted on her lover by Revolutionaries. The impact of obsessive imagination and its relation to melancholy will be more fully explored in Chapter 4.

[98] Vanoflen, "Isabelle de Charrière et les vertus de l'émigration," 131.

individual efforts to cultivate useful traits or engage in actions that benefit others. They must refashion their understanding of themselves and their roles according to their new reality.

In this context, memory presents a challenge for the émigré. Entertaining nostalgic thoughts can impede acceptance of new responsibilities. However, remembering past mistakes can help society prevent future tragedy or hardship, for instance, such as perpetuating Revolutionary fanaticism. Memory also gains increased capacity to haunt survivors of hardship, violence, and loss. The melancholy character that is the focus of the following chapter will also struggle with persistent memory. For some examples of this character, shame becomes increasingly tied to melancholy.

In the new century, individual characters are less tethered to class identity than before. The émigrés of Charrière's and Sénac's novels were certainly exemplary, offered by their authors as models for the new social elite to follow, especially in terms of social utility. However, these characters' roles and limitations remain anchored in social hierarchies that are abolished by the Revolution: Constance and Émilie function within the still existent German nobility; Saint Alban and the comtesse de Loewenstein would have functioned within this sphere as well, had they lived. However, following the Revolution, the notion of individual identity is pushed further by authors in response to the restructuring of society.

Chapter 4

Melancholy Characters in *René*: Shame and Memory, Solitude and Damnation

The traumatic events of the Revolution left lasting impressions on the generation that survived it. In the new century some authors depicted characters who experienced sadness, shame, and anxiety with respect to their place in society and in history. This character type, which the present study calls the melancholy character, allowed some writers to explore the social and moral consequences of the Revolution, and to give voice to their concerns over the challenges and vulnerabilities facing the new generation they saw emerging from it. The modifier melancholy is appropriate to illustrate the relationship between this type's experience with shame and troubled relationship with memory, both because this character experiences the disease melancholy as it was defined at this time, and because this malady is tied to their position in history and the origins of their experience of shame. Some melancholy characters illustrate how the new generation struggles to form a morally grounded self. For this character type, memory is an uncertain foundation for selfhood.

This chapter explores how two examples of melancholy characters, the siblings René and Amélie of François-René de Chateaubriand's *René* (1802), illustrate an association between shame and the disease melancholy. Analysis will focus on the characters' melancholic yearning for solitude, what underpins it, and where it leads each of these characters, giving particular attention to the importance of religion in their respective trajectories. First, it is important to define the melancholy character with more precision, situate the novel with respect to pertinent historical trends, and provide a brief overview of the disease melancholy.

Pierre Naudin's epilogue explores a character type he observes in post-Revoutionary literature which he calls the *jeune homme triste*. He defines this type as an individual who

typically suffers from melancholy and feelings of malaise that coincide with a desire or search for various forms of solitude.[1] Naudin's analysis does not consider shame or the role of memory for the *jeune homme triste*, but this typology provides a helpful starting point because, like the melancholy character as he or she is defined in this chapter, the *jeune homme triste*'s existence is informed by existential sadness and longing related to his uncertain place in history. Considering shame and the role of memory in addition to the melancholy and solitary characteristics of Naudin's type will uncover additional anxieties Chateaubriand expressed through the melancholy character.

Generally, melancholy characters are members of the former nobility. Emotionally sensitive and predisposed to introspection, they are afflicted, as their name suggests, with the malady known at this time as melancholy. Some are male, although a few female melancholy characters exist.[2] Melancholy characters are preoccupied with their place in history, especially in terms of constructing a stable, coherent self, and experience shame rooted in moral corruption, which compounds feelings of melancholy. Melancholy characters are often marginalized because of their lack of sociability, a trait associated with their malady and contemplative natures. They therefore experience various forms of solitude such as social exile or self-imposed isolation. Religion plays a more important role for some examples of this character type than those

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[1] Pierre Naudin, "Épilogue: Voyages en solitude au temps des révolutions" in *L'Expérience et le sentiment de la solitude dans la littérature française de l'aube des Lumières à la Révolution: un modèle de vie à l'épreuve de l'histoire* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995) 454-496.

Chateaubriand also defines René as an example of what he saw as a new "type" of person that evolves in the post-Revolutionary period. He uses the term *solitaire* to describe this type, which shares traits with the melancholy character (he is melancholy, anti-social, and possesses the potential for moral corruption) but does not necessarily experience shame. The later portion of this chapter addresses Chateaubriand's characterization.

[2] This chapter examines one example, Amélie. Another is Corinne from Mme de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807). Some other examples of male melancholy characters include Oswald, also of *Corinne*, and Octave from Alfred de Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836).

featured in previous chapters, either as a force of redemption or as a moral framework for understanding their purpose and inevitable struggle to fulfill it. Authors writing in the early nineteenth century used the melancholy character type to expose the lingering effects of the Revolution in a new, "modern" society, and to illustrate the challenges faced by a generation whose past had been made partially inaccessible. The memory of what had been was no longer useful for navigating one's way in this new society, and the violent, traumatic memories of loss and death experienced by this generation were painful and damaging.[3]

For many thinkers, the Revolution up-ended notions of personal morality that were vital to the fashioning of a healthy, whole individual. At the turn of the century, virtue became associated with the constellation of policies that produced the Terror.[4] In her analysis of Germaine de Staël's writings, Karen de Bruin notes Staël's disappointment that during the Revolution, "the notion of virtue had been hijacked by a few dangerous men who manipulated their factions through fanaticism."[5] In addition, the fanatical nature of revolutionary fervor indicated to some writers that the Revolution had become its own religion, supplanting the salutary Christian faith in public consciousness as a form of idolatry.[6] Following Maximilien

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[3] Richard Terdiman identifies a "memory crisis" that occurred at this time, which he describes as a collective sense that the past had somehow evaded memory, and that recollection had ceased to integrate with consciousness on the individual level, creating a sense of disarticulation between time and subjectivity. Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1993) 3-4.

[4] Maximilien Robespierre, a central figure in the French Revolution (and architect of the Reign of Terror), possessing republican virtue meant being a loyal citizen who eschewed monarchism, and accepted and protected the political values of the new French Republic. Robespierre defined his notion of public virtue in two major speeches in the Convention, made on December 25, 1793, and February 5, 1794, where he employed the term in a political sense. See Timothy Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015) 325.

[5] Karen de Bruin, "Melancholy in the Pursuit of Happiness: Corinne and the Femme Supérieure," in *Staël's Philosophy of the Passions: Sensibility, Society and the Sister Arts*, ed. Tili Boon Cuillé and Karyna Szmurlo (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2013), 75–92, 76.

[6] For example, the editors of the November 8, 1795 issue of *la Chronique de Paris* published an essay by the recently deceased Nicolas de Condorcet in which he wrote of Robespierre's efforts to promote an ideology of republican values that "la Révolution française est une religion et que Robespierre y fait une secte."

Robespierre's death and the end of the Terror, numerous writers and thinkers sought to establish new means of defining the ideals of public morality. Germaine de Staël, for instance, felt that the Terror had proved that without fear of divine retribution, "people's essential wickedness" would "triumph over any possible benign moral pulses."[7] Chateaubriand, too, believed that the Revolution had rejected essential moral principles without replacing them, but he traced the source of the damage back to the *philosophes*. His *Essai sur les révolutions* (1797) condemned the Encyclopédistes in particular for their "fanatisme philosophique."[8] Chateaubriand concluded that reviving Christianity in the public consciousness was one way to improve the state of society.

Chateaubriand's emphasis on religion came at a time when religious sentiments in France were undergoing a period of growth and renewal following the anticlerical period of the Revolution.[9] *Le Génie du christianisme*, an extensive and poetic survey of the history of

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[7] Carla Alison Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001) 106.

[8] Arnold Ages explains Chateaubriand's use of this term in his *Essai* as a stratagem designed to depict the Encyclopédistes as intolerant hypocrites on the question of human liberty. See Arnold Ages, "Chateaubriand and the Philosophes" in *Chateaubriand Today: Proceedings of the Commemoration of the Bicentenary of the Birth of Chateaubriand* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970) 229-241, 232.

Chateaubriand felt that the *philosophes*' cult-like spirit risked creating a society in which everything was systematically questioned and torn down on principle. As he contended regarding Voltaire and other "impious" writers of the Ancien Régime, "Détruire, voilà leur but, détruire, leur argument. Que voulaient-ils mettre à la place des choses présentes ? Rien." François-René de Chateaubriand, *Essai historique, politique et moral sur les révolutions: Œuvres de Chateaubriand*, vol. 2 (Paris: Dufour, Mulat et Boulanger, 1858) 45. Chateaubriand was repeating a critique common among anti-philosophes in the eighteenth century. See also Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet, *Le fanatisme des philosophes* (Paris: De Vérité, 1764).

[9] The gradual separation of Church and State following the Revolution (1789-1802) removed the Catholic Church, to some degree, from the political arena in France. Of course, tensions remained, but religion was no longer viewed as necessarily antithetical to ideals of republicanism or liberty. This presented a new challenge for Christianity in France: whereas before, the Church had been supported by power structures (the divine right of kings, for instance) now it had to find a new means of supporting its appeal to the populace. Michel Despland, "To Interpose a Little Ease: Chateaubriand on Christianity and the Modern World," *Religion & Literature* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 19-44, 27.

Christianity, helped to renew popular interest in religion.[10] In this work, Chateaubriand focused on Christianity as a general faith structure rather than on the Catholic Church, creating a more moderate, aesthetic version of Christianity free of divisive dogma. The short novels *Atala* (1801) and *René* (1802) were meant to complement *le Génie du christianisme* by "proving" the importance of religion as a guiding, civilizing force in the post-Revolutionary age.[11] The siblings René and Amélie experience their difference from others as a negative trait and their trajectories illustrate the dangers to which the melancholy character is vulnerable, like moral corruption and the shame that results from it. Christianity emerges in this novel as a way of correcting such corruption and reconciling the melancholy character with their social and moral duty.

Melancholy: Etiologies and Treatment

At the end of the eighteenth century, melancholy gained renewed attention as a medical diagnosis.[12] The term melancholy comes from the Greek for black bile, since it was believed to result from an overabundance of black bile emanating from the liver which overwhelmed the brain. The bilous model gradually fell out of favor as physio-anatomical research drew more

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[10] Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron points to the publication of Chateaubriand's *Génie* as partially responsible for the rebirth of religious sentiments in France at the turn of the century. See "Phénoménologie de la Conscience Religieuse," *Dix-huitième siècle* 14 (1982): 167-90. On the reception of this work by the Catholic and Protestant faiths, and the secular community, see Despland, "To Interpose a Little Ease," esp. 19 & 27.

[11] Maurice Regard, ed., *Avant-propos* in *Chateaubriand: Essai sur les révolutions et Génie du christianisme* (Paris : Gallimard, 1978) xi.

Atala was published alone in 1801 to generate interest in the publication of *le Génie du christianisme*, and *René* was published the following year (1802) with the other two texts. In 1805, the two novelistic works appeared separate from the *Génie*. *Le Génie du christianisme* was also published a second time, by itself, in 1826. On the three works' publication history and reception, see Luke Bouvier, "How Not to Speak of Incest: Atala and the Secrets of Speech," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 30, no. 3 (Spring Summer 2012): 227-241.

[12] Melancholy was a prominent malady in the sixteenth century but fell somewhat out of fashion until the end of the eighteenth century. See Jennifer Radden's introduction in *The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) esp. 3-7.

attention to the nervous system, which was also given greater prominence by eighteenth-century philosophical sensualism.[13] Doctors viewed melancholy as the result of poor functioning of the nerves, which caused the mind to be dominated by a single "sad idea representing a[n ...] exaggerated judgment of the real situation."[14] The *Encyclopédie* entry *mélancholie (médecine)* states that this obession is "joint le plus souvent à une tristesse insurmontable, à une humeur sombre, à la misanthropie, à un penchant décidé pour la solitude."[15] Its symptoms according to eighteenth-century doctors were diverse, including weakness, insomnia, irritability, poor digestion, lethargy and listlessness, intermittent fever and feeling "jumbled and turbid."[16] Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century definitions of melancholy identified a variety of physical and moral etiologies for the disease, including climate, age, bad diet, suppressed evacuations, overstudy, idleness, celibacy, violent chagrin, religious or political terrors, unrequited love, and stormy social passions.[17] Melancholy was associated with dramatic changes in mental state and, in the most severe cases, a rupture between an individual's self-perception

[13] The nervous system was seen as a "vast, sensitive network through which a man becomes conscious of himself and the world around him and reacts to external stimuli." Jean Starobinski, *History of the Treatment of Melancholy from the Earliest Times to 1900* (Basel, Switzerland: J.R. Geigy, 1962) 50.

[14] Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 156. In 1814, Esquirol would invent the term *monomanie* to describe obsession with a single idea in the *Dictionnaires des sciences médicales*, vol. 8, p 283.

[15] "melancholie, s.f. (médecine)," in ENCYC, vol 10, p. 308. It should be noted that two other *Encyclopédie* articles describe this malady. In *mélancholie religieuse* (10:308) the Chevalier de Jaucourt condemns the pervasive sadness that results from a false, excessively penitent idea of religion. Saint-Lambert (a friend of Voltaire's) authored a third article in which he offers an opposing perspective, that of "les douces mélancolies du poète, du philosophe, de l'amoureux qui naissent du décalage entre notre imperfection et notre désir" ("mélancolie," ENCYC, vol. 10 p. 307-8).

[16] This definition comes from George Cheyne's 1733 treatise *The English Malady*, cited in Anne C. Vila, *Suffering Scholars: Pathologies of the Intellectual in Enlightenment France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) 125.

[17] Vila, "Suffering Scholars," 139.

and reality that manifested itself in the body.[18] It was therefore a condition held to alter an individual's sense of self.

There was a temporary belief that the trauma of the Revolution had abolished melancholy altogether through its "salutary shocks."[19] Physicians Philippe Pinel and Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis initially agreed the Revolution had acted as a beneficial jolt; however, within a decade, more people than ever were reported to be afflicted by this nervous/mental illness.[20] Fluctuating meanings of melancholy in the field of medicine coincide with an evolution of the eighteenth-century concept of sensibility in non-medical contexts. Sensibility was divorced from its previous associations with sentimentality and sociability.[21] Such characters, recalling Jean-Jacques of the *Confessions*, live their sensibility, melancholic perspective, and penchant for solitude as marks of distinction. Melancholy characters therefore establish their identity in their difference from others.

Some versions of the melancholy character share characteristics with the émigré who experienced the trauma of exile in spatial, material, and psychological terms. Both the émigré as he or she appeared after 1800 and the melancholy character could experience the malady of melancholy. However, it is important to note that melancholy differed for these two character types. Émigrés were more likely to experience melancholy in relation to their physical separation from and desire to return to their homeland. Their experience of melancholy was therefore

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[18] Ibid., 125.

[19] Dr. Marc-Antoine Petit of Lyon, 1796, quoted in Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, 101.

[20] Sabine Arnaud also discusses that some individuals refuted this interpretation in *On Hysteria, The Invention of a Medical Category Between 1670 and 1820* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2015), 37, in Anne Vila, *Suffering Scholars*, 129.

[21] David Denby, *Sentimental Narrative and the social Order in France, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

characterized by a desire to return to the scene of their memories.[22] In other words, they experienced the malady in relation to nostalgia, a condition sometimes tied to melancholy.[23]

For the melancholy character, melancholy has other implications. It *causes* self-exile, either as a prescribed medical treatment (like Mme de Staël's Oswald in *Corinne*) or a search for solace (as is the case for René and Amélie). Contemporary physicians often prescribed travel as a means of soothing the melancholic's nerves, believing that it distracted such individuals from their gloomy obsessions and interrupted their unhealthy thoughts through prolonged stimulation of all their external senses.[24] Representations of exile and solitude become thematized for the melancholy character and reflect the character's longing for peace and acceptance that contemporary historical circumstances denied them.[25]

The melancholy or feeling of ennui that the melancholy character experiences results in part from a troubled relationship with the past.[26] In historical terms, the past became blurred after the Revolution by new social and political structures that introduced new values, and by the desire on the part of some to discard, forget, or bury old ways. Émigrés who had endured hardship abroad returned to a France they did not recognize; family lands and possessions had

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[22] Michael S. Roth, "Remembering Forgetting: Maladies de la Mémoire in Nineteenth-Century France" in *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 49–68, 30.

[23] On the history of Nostalgia, see Thomas Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was: War, Empire, and the Time of a Deadly Emotion* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

[24] Starobinski, *History of the Treatment of Melancholy* (Basel: J. R. Geigy, 1962) 52.

[25] Mary Anne O'Neil, "Chateaubriand's *Atala*: A Study of the French Revolution," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 22, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 1993-1994): 1-14, 3.

[26] This sentiment is more thoroughly explored by Alfred de Musset, who called it "le mal du siècle" in *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836). However, in his *Avant-propos* to the Pléiade edition of Chateaubriand's *Essai* and *Génie*, Maurice Regard argues that the *Essai sur les révolutions* was the first text to identify the *mal du siècle*: "*L'Essai sur les révolutions*, œuvre de découragement, témoignage sur un monde absurde, contient la première analyse de ce qui sera le mal du siècle. Il apporte les premiers signes de ce mouvement contestataire surgi de la misère qui, tout au long du XIXe siècle, va s'interroger sur les institutions" (x-xi).

been confiscated and sold; the names of streets and familiar landmarks had been changed. Many authors writing at this time emphasized the lingering sense that nothing was permanent, and that previous points of reference had been destroyed without being systematically replaced.

The individual who sought to define him or herself in this vacuum of meaning was unanchored and drifting, circumstances that increased his or her vulnerability to maladies like melancholy. In some novels, the melancholy character's illness results from troubled memories that disorder the nerves; in others, melancholy characters have recourse to imagination (similarly to Ourika's overuse of the faculty) to imagine a more pleasant or satisfying reality. Melancholy can also have ethical components, indicating dissonance or conflict between the individual and his or her social context: Mme de Staël, for instance, saw melancholy as "the historical symptom by which a modern free society may examine the conditions of its own emergence."[27] Attributing symptoms of this illness to the melancholy character provided literary authors with a means of exploring the struggle of the individual at odds with society (and perhaps a society at odds with morality) at the opening of the nineteenth century.

René and Amélie: Divergent Examples of the Melancholy Character

Chateaubriand depicts René as a flawed character whose story illustrates the dangers to which the melancholy character, as a representative of a generation, is particularly vulnerable. Amélie, René's sister, possesses similar traits to her brother: they are both uniquely sensitive, unsociable, prone to introspection, seek solitude, and become obsessed with single ideas. Their difficulty in establishing stable identities illustrates Chateaubriand's belief in their generation's

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[27] Eric Gidal, "Melancholy, Trauma, and National Character: Mme de Staël's C*onsidérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française*," *Studies in Romanticism* 49 (Summer 2010): 261-292, 268.

need for religion.[28] Whereas her brother's story is a cautionary tale against cultivating moral shame and corruption, Amélie is a figure of redemption, albeit a tragic one. She is a secondary character who has received less attention from critics, however her story is important in the study of shame and memory. Amélie offers a model for expiating shame, even the morally and socially repugnant shame of incest. My analyses of the siblings' respective trajectories are intertwined because René and Amélie influence each other. Comparing and contrasting their experiences of melancholy and solitude reveals how these factors inform their shame. Chateaubriand anchors Amélie's experience and understanding of her relationship with her brother in biographical elements of his own life to link the siblings' malady and shame to their historical context. Imagination gains importance in René's construction and representation of himself. Ultimately, it partially supplants the traditional role of memory in these functions and contributes to his moral decay.

The novel consists of René's first-person account of his life, which occurs within a frame narrative. At the time he tells his story, the protagonist is living with the Natchez tribe in America. He is prompted to explain his obviously melancholic reaction to receiving a letter from France. His interlocutors, the missionary Père Souël and Chactas, the aged, blind leader of the Natchez tribe (who is also a practicing Christian), succeed in persuading the reluctant René to recount why he is so affected by the letter, and the reason he left France.

As the second son of a French noble family, René is denied the advantages of primogeniture and never forms a close relationship with his older brother or his father.[29] His

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[28] In his *Préface générale* to the *Génie du christianisme*, Chateaubriand explains that the two works of fiction, *Atala* and *René* included with his *Génie* are meant to illustrate humanity's need for Christianity. See also Mary Anne O'Neil, "Chateaubriand's Atala," 1-14.

[29] René states that he was always "timide et contraint devant mon père" (149).

mother dies bringing him into the world and René spends most of his childhood with relatives, except for short yearly visits each autumn to his ancestral home.[30] The only family member with whom René has a positive relationship is his sister, Amélie, "la seule personne au monde que j'eusse aimée" (162). After their father dies, however, she avoids his company. Their father's death also triggers the worsening of René's melancholy, causing him to wander across Europe in search of solace and meaning. He returns from abroad just after the Revolution and finds France radically changed. His feelings of sadness and longing worsen when Amélie refuses to see him, and he contemplates suicide. Amélie guesses his plans, intervenes, and decides to live with her brother for several months to ensure his recovery. Amélie's health begins to decline, and she leaves her brother abruptly to join a convent. René agrees to attend the ceremony of her vows, initially determined to interrupt the event by killing himself in the church. However, during this ceremony his violent impulses are tempered, and he learns of his sister's incestuous feelings, which explain her decision to find salvation and peace in monastic life. Distraught after that revelation and realizing his role in causing his sister's feelings, René exiles himself to Louisiana. He takes a wife out of respect for the Natchez tradition but spends most of his time wandering the forest in solitude. One day, he receives a letter that informs him of his sister's death. Regretful and ashamed, he is coerced into telling his story.

[30] Although Chateaubriand's inspiration for René often comes from his own life, here the parallel with Rousseau is obvious. René describes his birth: "J'ai coûté la vie à ma mère en venant au monde" (149). This echoes Rousseau's description of his own birth in Book I of the *Confessions*: "je naquis infirme et malade ; je coûtai la vie à ma mère" (7). Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions* in *Œuvres Complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, vol. I (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).

Melancholy Siblings

Although the text does not overtly identify René's or Amélie's emotional distress as melancholy, a strong case can be made for such a diagnosis. Critics such as Ronald Grimsley acknowledge the portrait that Chateaubriand paints of the disease in his protagonist.[31] Juan Rigoli notes that the nineteenth-century psychiatrist Bénédict Augustin Morel listed the novel among those he considered dangerous for sensitive readers who risked "infecting" themselves with the melancholy and suicidal thoughts of its protagonist.[32] René describes his turbulent emotional states and morbid reveries at length: he feels as if he is being consumed by his passions; his moods and emotions shift rapidly; he indulges in endless introspection and reverie, fixating on themes of memory, death, and eternity; he longs for solitude; and he experiences suicidal thoughts.[33] In other words, his symptoms fit the period's description of melancholy. Amélie does not describe her symptoms herself, but René relates his impressions of her sudden worsening health after the siblings live together for several months. She grows pale, thin, and weak, and her voice is troubled when she speaks. She cries often, cannot finish any task, and often retreats to pray. She, too, contemplates death, and begs God to end her life. Amélie clearly suffers from a form of the same affliction as her brother.

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[31] Ronald Grimsley, "Romantic Melancholy in Chateaubriand and Kierkegaard," *Comparative Literature* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1956): 227–44, 228.

[32] Morel reflects a commonplace medical belief that such disordered passions were contagious (even if one was only reading fictional depictions of them). Reading, he contended, could lead readers to imitatate characters' symptoms to the point of suicide: "Que de suicides n'a pas produits la personnoification de Werther, que de tendances mélancoliques la lecture d'Atala et de René n'a-t-elle pas développées !" B.-A. Morel, *Études cliniques. Traité théorique et pratique des maladies mentales considérées dans leur nature, leur traitement, et dans leur rapport avec la médecine légale des aliénés*, vol. I (Nancy: Grimblot et veuve Raybois ; Paris: Victor Masson, 1852-1853), 302-303. Quoted in Juan Rigoli, *Lire le délire* (Fayard: Paris, 2001) p. 436.

[33] In one moving scene René states dramatically that his existence and character can be represented in the tableau he found atop Mount Etna. There, moved to tears by the sight of the sleeping but deadly volcano beside the villages spread out below, he exclaims, "c'est ainsi que toute ma vie j'ai eu devant les yeux une création à la fois immense et imperceptible, et un abîme ouvert à mes côtés" (154-55).

Recognizing the illness is essential in understanding the characters' trajectories, their experience of shame, and their relationship with memory. Characterizing René and Amélie as pathologically melancholic also suggests the possibility of treatment and eventual cure. This implies that the characters have agency, and perhaps the responsibility, to improve their moral, mental, and physical health. However, to heal a malady one must first establish its etiology, a task at which Amélie proves adept and René stubbornly inept. René remarks early in his story that he and his sister are alike in temperament: "il est vrai qu'Amélie et moi nous jouissions plus que personne de ces idées graves et tendres, car nous avions tous les deux un peu de tristesse au fond du cœur: nous tenions cela de Dieu ou de notre mère" (150). Their malady is hereditary, perhaps a nod to the aristocracy's tradition of sexual insularity, but certainly hinting that past generations have left their children with little support or guidance for adapting to the changing social and cultural landscape. René has incomplete or broken relationships with both his mother and God, indicating that his melancholy originates in the absence of an accessible past and moral guidance. The melancholy that Chateaubriand attributes to René and Amélie is therefore tied to a need for God, and points to the author's larger goal of promoting Christianity. As Chateaubriand wrote in his *Préface* to the 1805 edition of *Atala* and *René,* "la religion embellit notre existence, corrige les passions sans les éteindre, [...] qu'elle est enfin la seule ressource dans les grands malheurs de la vie" (65). René and Amélie are both drawn to religious institutions throughout the narrative. René in particular finds a haunting, sad beauty in the churches and ruined monasteries he visits and is often moved to tears by the emotions they provoke in him. The siblings' cure, therefore, lies in pursuing religious faith. Self-awareness is an important component in their ability to correctly diagnose the factors underpinning their feelings of melancholy, a skill which

René does not seem to cultivate, but which Amélie possesses from the novel's beginning. René and Amélie's respective neglect and pursuit of religion will have vastly different consequences.

The opening of René's narrative illustrates the influence of his melancholy over his character and behavior, an influence that persists until the end of his life. It also speaks to the relationship between his melancholy, memory, and the shameful truth of his past:

> Un penchant mélancolique l'entraînait au fond des bois; il y passait seul des journées entières, et semblait sauvage parmi des sauvages.[…] Cependant Chactas et le missionnaire désiraient vivement connaître par quel malheur un Européen bien né avait été conduit à l'étrange résolution de s'ensevelir dans les déserts de la Louisiane. […] 'Quant à l'événement qui m'a déterminé à passer en Amérique, ajoutait-il, je le dois ensevelir dans un éternel oubli.' (147)

This passage describes the act of literal and figurative burial, of René's existence "dans les deserts de la Louisiane," and of the story of his life "dans un éternel oubli." Can either man or story be buried and forgotten if René remains alive, his tale incomplete?[34] The verb *ensevelir*, used reflexively at first, and then in reference to the event that René is intent on burying, does indeed suggest a confusion between the two that is also underscored by the novel's title: to know René's story is to know the man himself.[35] René, although he is a living man, acts like a corpse, burying himself in the forest and eschewing participation in any social activity, even the simple lifestyle of the Natchez.

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[34] This idea returns in Chateaubriand's autobiographical *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (written from 1809-1841, published posthumously in 1849) whose title implies that Chateaubriand is himself a speaking corpse. His desire that his memoir be published after his death explains his title.

[35] Katherine Wickhorst, "Overwriting Time with Space: Memory and Forgetting in Chateaubriand's René," *French Forum* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2019): 1-20, 3.

The opening of his narrative establishes a tension between remembering and forgetting that will characterize many of René's reflections. Read one way, this passage questions the conditions necessary for forgetting and whether those conditions can be deliberately manufactured. René's use of the present tense indicates that he has not yet been able to bury what he wishes to forget: "je le dois ensevelir." The persistence of his memories, specifically his role in his and his sister's misery, are what drive him into the forest alone. He is reluctant to retell the story of his shame because to do so would revive the memory for him and publicize a shameful family secret and his role in authoring it.[36]

Read another way, insisting on burial and forgetting is an act of preterition (speaking of something after expressly declaring it cannot or will not be spoken of). René seems to be commenting on the impossibility of narrating the source of his shame and his suffering. The taboo of incest is both socially and morally repugnant and is therefore unspeakable. The experience of shame is similarly tied to secrecy and silence, states that protect René's reputation but prolong his suffering.[37] Paradoxically, he cannot help but speak of what troubles him.[38] Here René employs preterition as a dramatic device to build suspense and gain the attention of the reader. It is also a means of inspiring sympathy in his listeners, since he makes it clear that the pain of his past is stronger than his burning desire to keep silent.

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[36] He begins his tale by acknowledging his shame: "je ne puis, en commençant mon récit, me défendre d'un mouvement de honte" (148-49). His shame affects his physical body in a shudder.

[37] This recalls Julie and Saint-Preux who suffer from their conflicting need to confess, and desire to keep silent. Saint-Preux says of his liaison with the prostitute, "je ne puis ni me taire ni parler" (NH II, 26, 294), and Julie remarks of her seduction: "Je ne puis ni parler ni me taire. Que sert le silence quand le remords crie ?" (NH I, 29, 95).

[38] Bouvier, "How Not To Speak of Incest," 228-9.

René's personal memories are persistent and haunting, especially those concerning his relationship with his sister. However, much of René's reflections elsewhere in the novel express his anxiety over the ephemeral nature of human existence. For instance, he considers how quickly his father's memory is erased just after his burial: "l'éternité et l'oubli le pressèrent de tout leur poids; le soir même l'indifférent passait sur sa tombe; hors pour sa fille et pour son fils, c'était déjà comme s'il n'avait jamais été" (151). The tomb his father's body enters simultaneously reflects the desire to memorialize him and the eventuality that he will be forgotten and fall into the silence of passing time.[39] His father's memory is preserved only for the children who survive him, who carry their father's memory within themselves. In this scene, memory is an act performed by the living (René and Amélie) who carry the stories of past lives (their father) into the future, temporarily resisting the inevitable weight of "eternity and oblivion," to use René's words. This representation of the act of remembrance focuses on the importance of individual memory as a collection of personal experiences. The episode of their father's burial vaguely gestures at collective memory (a consciousness of common history shared across a culture or social group) by mentioning indifferent passersby who do not know René's father, "l'indifférent" who walks past the cemetery. This faceless individual is representative of society in general, of others who are apathetic to loss that does not touch them personally. Chateaubriand draws the reader's attention to the individual grief his protagonist suffers upon realizing how isolated he is in his suffering. At the same time, the eventuality of death fills René with a kind of awe that grants a poignancy to what he can still remember of his father. René's reflections lead to troubling questions. How can his generation cherish the past and form a stable

[39] Wickhorst, "Overwriting Time with Space," 5.

collective history if the individual stories that comprise it are destined to vanish? And why, in contrast, should his own memories of Amélie and the shame they share persist?

Understanding why his memory of shame persists in the present is threefold. First, René interprets the pain he associates with remembering as divine justice. In his 1805 *Préface*, Chateaubriand describes René's suffering as "un grand malheur envoyé pour punir René, et pour effrayer les jeunes hommes qui, livrés à d'inutiles rêveries, se dérobent criminellement aux charges de la société" (64). René must carry the anguish of the shame he has caused both himself and his sister as punishment for his role in creating it.[40] Second, although René is troubled by the temporary nature of human existence in general, the memory of his shame is that of a personal, specific experience that he preserves within himself. While he remains alive, so do his memories, and they continue to torment him. The third facet of this question is the role of memory in constituting selfhood. When considering the fictitious Don Quixote's problematic memory, Chateaubriand wrote in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* that "en pesant le bien et le mal, on serait tenté de désirer tout accident qui porte à l'oubli, comme un moyen d'échapper à soi-même: un ivrogne joyeux est une créature heureuse. Religion à part, le bonheur est de s'ignorer et d'arriver à la mort sans avoir senti la vie."[41] For Chateaubriand, happiness is only possible in the absence of life experience, since he views selfhood – living – as perpetual suffering. (It is also religion that seems to counterbalance this suffering, since he makes this remark conditional on "Religion à part.") In contrast, forgetfulness is an escape from that pain. Remembering is therefore an

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[40] At the beginning of the narrative, René acknowledges his rôle in his own suffering: "que penserez-vous d'un jeune homme sans force et sans vertu, qui trouve en lui-même son tourment, et ne peut guère se plaindre que des maux qu'il se fait à lui-même?" (148-9).

[41] François René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe,* ed. M. Levaillant (Paris: Flammarion, 1948) Book V, p. 211. This recalls Ourika's words indicating the association she makes between ignorance and happiness, life and suffering: "il faut payer le bienfait de savoir par le désir d'ignorer, et la fable ne nous dit pas si Galatée trouva le bonheur après avoir reçu la vie." (Duras, *Ourika,* 6).

affliction synonymous with existence. René cannot forget unless he ceases to be himself altogether (he will later consider achieving this through suicide) although altered states like drunkenness offer temporary comfort by sinful means.

After their father's death, which compounds their troubled feelings, René and Amélie both recognize their need to ease their uncomfortable, enflamed passions.[42] René observes that "les Européens incessamment agités sont obligés de se bâtir des solitudes. Plus notre cœur est tumultueux et bruyant, plus le calme et le silence nous attirent" (151).[43] Both René and Amélie contemplate withdrawing from a world they find uncomfortable to pursue monastic life. Either because of his "inconstance naturelle, soit préjugé contre la vie monastique," René changes his plans (152).[44] He is aware of his need for moral guidance and structure but cannot commit to this because of his attachment to the world, and because of his "inconstance naturelle," a trait tied to his melancholy. Amélie resists her natural inclination as well but for a different reason: "Amélie m'entretenait souvent du bonheur de la vie religieuse ; elle me disait que j'étais le seul lien qui la retînt dans le monde, et ses yeux s'attachaient sur moi avec tristesse" (151). Here Amélie's sadness is associated with her love for her brother, which she claims is the only thing preventing her from giving herself to religious life at this moment in the novel. This is the first indication something is amiss between the siblings.

[42] "Amélie, acablée de douleur, était retirée au fond d'une tour" (151).

[43] Amélie will later make a similar comment regarding the necessity of religious institutions for some members of society: "c'est à présent, mon cher frère, que je sens bien la nécessité de ces asiles, contre lesquels je vous ai vu souvent vous élever. Il est des malheurs qui nous séparent pour toujours des hommes : que deviendraient alors de pauvres infortunées?" (165).

[44] This event parallels the author's life. Chateaubriand writes in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe that* during his youth, encouraged by his mother, he almost joins a religious order near his ancestral home. At the last minute, he changed his mind: "Je dis donc à ma mère que je n'étais pas assez fortement appelé à l'état ecclésiastique" (Book III, p. 135).

Solitude, Imagination, and Corruption

What begins to divide the siblings at this point in the narrative is that while they each seek the peace for which they long by pursuing solitude, they do so in very different ways and to different outcomes. René's pursuit of solitude will cause him to disconnect from reality through his imagination. This chapter illustrates the process by which René descends into moral depravity and shame by examining the increasingly isolated forms of solitude René seeks, his indulgence in the use of his imagination, how this faculty partially supplants memory and contributes this mental and moral instability.

Following their father's death, Amélie withdraws to live with relatives, sensing that spending time with René is inadvisable.[45] In contrast, René decides to go abroad, eager to find something to satisfy the aggravating desire and sense of longing he feels.[46] Although travel was often prescribed by the period's physicians as a means of distracting the patient from obsessive thoughts, René only falls more deeply under the influence of his malady and imagination during his trip. He spends his time alone, lost in reflection.[47] His imagination plays a significant role in the passages that describe his time in ancient cities and becomes a tool for envisioning the past: "tantôt la lune se levant dans un ciel pur, entre deux urnes cinéraires à moitiés brisées, me montrait les pâles tombeaux. Souvent aux rayons de cet astre qui alimente les rêveries, j'ai cru voir le Génie des souvenirs, assis tout pensif à mes côtés" (173).[48] This poetic passage is

[45] Their ancestral home has passed to their older brother, who sells it, another symbolic loss of connection with the past.

[46] He observes that his sister appears relieved at his departure, which leaves him feeling rejected.

[47] His descriptions contain little in the way of action. Like most of the novel, this section reads as a description of his mental and emotional state, more the memory of his reflections than of where he went or what he saw and did.

[48] Katherine Wickhorst discusses the process of imagination as triggered by the play of sun or moonlight over the ruins he visits in Rome, which inspires his imagination. "Overwriting Time with Space," 15.

representative of many of his reflections in which he pursues something he cannot clearly define. René attempts to locate meaning and place himself within a cohesive narrative. His habit of waxing poetic about lost civilizations is also representative of what he feels is his uniqueness; he hopes to illustrate to his listeners that he is well-read, erudite, uncommon, and legitimately sad. His reflections relate all of these qualities without revealing the truth. In fact, René creates images that are unreal despite their beauty, and that are dangerous because they become more appealing to him than reality. Like Ourika, he engages in a process of imagination to supplement his experience of a dissatisfying reality. He embroiders invented memories of imagined people, places, and nonexistent entities over memories of the locations he visits as they are in the present. This practice will negatively impact his mental and moral health.

Although René shares his author's fascination for symbols and places of death and remembrance, eventually he tires of his fruitless loitering among graves and forgotten monuments: "je me lassai de fouiller dans des cerceuils, où je ne remuais trop souvent qu'une poussière criminelle" (152). The hypallage "poussière criminelle" is ambiguous and invites closer inspection since it applies an emotional signifier to an inanimate object. Dust refers to the remains of those long dead, *criminelle* perhaps because they were pagan. Dust also conjures Christian images of both creation and death, although this reading questions the significance of *criminelle*. *Poussière* could refer to René's thoughts and reflections on the ghosts of the past; it is inert, evidence of past life, the absence of something once present but intangible. It cannot be reanimated and cannot reveal its former nature. Engaging with it is an activity that could be considered *criminelle* in its futility and wastefulness. This expression speaks to René's persistent feelings of guilt and incongruity and foreshadows his feelings of shame. It is not unreasonable to

read this expression as evidence of how that shame has colored his memories: it is René the narrator, not René the young wanderer, who speaks those words, after all. Finally, this phrasing could simply indicate another instance when René indulges in his penchant for creating poetic, evocative images that have no real-world referents. Such images move his listeners and communicate his sadness but are without clear meaningful substance. They enlighten no one and illustrate his malady rather than who he is. René ends his aimless wanderings in pagan territory no wiser than when he set out, and no more resolved as to his purpose moving forward.[49]

Eventually, René moves on to a modern city, bringing his existential search from past to present. There too he is isolated by his interest in markers of the past. During his time there, a statue of a man on a horse catches his attention because in contrast with the city around it, it is entirely still. Laborers at its feet seem indifferent; they carry on working and whistling. He asks them its meaning, but some can barely tell him and others know nothing at all. He is dismayed: "Rien ne m'a plus donné la juste mesure des événements de la vie, et du peu que nous sommes. […] Le temps a fait un pas, et la face de la terre a été renouvelée" (153). The statue is meaningless once it is disconnected from its past and its story because its significance depends on a living person who can retell its history. René reads great significance in the fact that these men do not make time for learning their history, even when it is reflected around them. His reaction shows how deeply he fears being forgotten himself. Forgetting lessons of the past is a

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[49] Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811) offers a contrast to his protagonist's travels that merits attention. Here, Chateaubriand describes his travels in 1806 and 1807 to Jerusalem and other sites in Greece, Turkey and Egypt. Chateaubriand's narrative opposes René's in style and content. He is direct and straightforward in his descriptions of the practical matters of travel rather than poetic, imaginative, and sad. His purpose is transparent. As he says, he travels out of curiosity and for religion: he longed to see the famous ruins of Greece (and gain inspiration for *Les Martyrs*, published in 1809) and to complete a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. If René had sought something concrete and edifying, like his author, perhaps he would have gleaned more satisfaction and wisdom from his travels. *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem et de Jérusalem à Paris, en passant par la Grèce, et en revenant par l'Égypte, la Barbarie et l'Espagne*, Paris: Le Normant, 3 vol. (1811).

danger against which Chateaubriand warns modern society. At the same time, René's preoccupation reveals a flaw within himself: focusing entirely on what is past and unknowable, as René does, is no more productive or beneficial than neglecting it altogether. Past and present must coexist and a balance must be struck.[50]

René's inability to connect with a meaningful past or present foreshadows the rupture caused by the Revolution.[51] He returns to France to find a nation radically changed. René tells the Père Souël, "jamais un changement plus étonnant et plus soudain ne s'est opéré chez un peuple. De la hauteur du génie, du respect pour la religion, de la gravité des mœurs, tout était subitement descendu à la souplesse de l'esprit, à l'impiété, à la corruption" (156). Just before René arrives in Paris, Amélie makes vague excuses to leave the city, and refuses to tell him where she will be staying, clearly wishing to avoid him. She possesses much greater self-awareness than her brother and fears the consequences of spending time with him. René, however, only sees her rejection: "je me trouvai bientôt plus isolé dans ma patrie, que je ne l'avais été sur une terre étrangère" (156). He is alone in his sadness and discomfort, a uniquely sensitive individual in a corrupt nation.

At this moment in the novel, René seeks the peace of anonymity in the city: "Je voulus me jeter pendant quelque temps dans un monde qui ne me disait rien et qui ne m'entendait pas" (156). Despite his initial enchantment at the newness of his setting, he soon feels unappreciated and rejected there, too – an unexpected solitude – disappointed by everyone around him:

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[50] Amélie will later point to the need for such balance in a letter to René when she tells him to find an "occupation" or "prendre un état" to distract himself from his suffering, and when she tells him, "Ne méprisez pas tant l'expérience et la sagesse de nos pères" (165).

[51] René says he has gleaned "Rien de certain parmi les anciens, rien de beau parmi les modernes. Le passé et le présent sont deux statues incomplètes: l'une a été retirée toute mutilée du débris des âges; l'autre n'a pas encore reçu sa perfection de l'avenir" (154).

"Ce n'était ni un langage élevé, ni un sentiment profond qu'on demandait de moi. Je n'étais occupé qu'à rapetisser ma vie, pour la mettre au niveau de la société. Traité partout d'esprit romanesque, *honteux* du rôle que je jouais, dégoûté de plus en plus des choses et des hommes, je pris le parti de me retirer dans un faubourg" (156-7, my emphasis).

This passage recalls the feelings of inauthenticity Jean-Jacques feels in the *Confessions*. The shame of which René speaks is a sense of social embarrassment and inauthenticity similar to *fausse honte*. He limits and constrains himself in the presence of others to achieve the "niveau de la société," a level that falls short of René's expectations. The shame to which he alludes in this passage is therefore partly a posture, a false modesty; René feels more intelligent and sophisticated than those around him. Like Jean-Jacques of the *Confessions*, he views his sensibility and melancholy as marks of distinction that become arrogance and disdain. Society mocks him for his "sentiment profond" and penchant for reflection by calling him an "esprit romanesque." He is different from the other individuals he encounters in the novel, who without exception seem secure in their purpose and interests and do not worry over the past or future.[52] His experience of this kind of social shame therefore forms another layer of isolation around René, imposing the solitude of social rejection.

Chateaubriand explains that his protagonist René represents a type, a "solitaire" that emerges at this time in history as the result of social change, namely the elimination of religious institutions. This type risks falling into the vices to which society exposes him or her, especially

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[52] For instance, René remarks partway through his narrative on the felicity of the Natchez way of life: "Heureux Sauvages! Oh! Que ne puis-je jouir de la paix qui vous accompagne toujours! Tandis qu'avec si peu de fruit je parcourais tant de contrées, vous, assis tranquillement sous vos chênes vous laissiez couler les jours sans les compter. Si cette mélancolie qui s'engendre de l'excès du bonheur atteignait quelquefois votre âme, bientôt vous sortiez de cette tristesse passagère, et votre regarde levé vers le Ciel, cherchait avec attendrissement ce je ne sais quoi inconnu qui prend pitié du pauvre Sauvage" (155-56).

misanthropy and arrogance that lead to either insanity (arguably a kind of death of the self) or death, as he explains in the *Préface* to the 1805 edition of the novel:

> "Mais depuis la destruction des monastères et les progrès de l'incrédulité, on doit s'attendre à voir se multiplier au milieu de la société (comme il est arrivé en Angleterre), des espèces de solitaires tout à la fois passionnés et philosophes, qui ne pouvant ni renoncer aux vices du siècle, ni aimer ce siècle, prendront la haine des hommes pour l'élévation du génie, renonceront à tout devoir divin et humain, se nourriront à l'écart des plus vaines chimères, et se plongeront de plus en plus dans une misanthropie orgueilleuse qui les conduira à la folie, ou à la mort."[53]

For Chateaubriand, cloisters were not the prisons some believed them to be. Rather, he saw them as insular, protected spaces that offered asylum to those too sensitive and undisciplined to survive the constant sensory onslaught and corruptive influences of the outside world. In other words, according to Chateaubriand, René feels rejected by society because he does not possess the strength of character necessary to resist the inevitable devolution of his moral and psychological health.

René continues to find and haunt religious institutions, illustrating an instinctive feeling of longing for such spaces. He describes spending entire days sitting, meditating in churches, weeping. There he often prays for God to renew him, revealing that he, like his sister, feels corruption within himself, although he has not yet been able to name its source: "Qui ne se trouve quelquefois accablé du fardeau de sa propre corruption, et incapable de rien faire de grand, de noble, de juste?" (158). The routines of the city become intolerable, and he resolves on impulse to leave for the countryside, enacting his sense of social exile in spatial and

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[53] François René de Chateaubriand, "Préface" (1805 edition) in *Atala et René*, Flammarion, 1962, 57-70, 66.

psychological terms. There, like the French nation, René begins his descent into moral corruption.

The form of solitude René pursues at this moment aggravates rather than soothes his passions, as Chateaubriand explains in his *Préface*: "par un effet bien remarquable, le vague même où la mélancolie plonge les sentiments, est ce qui la fait renaître ; car elle s'engendre au milieu des passions, lorsque ces passions, sans objet, se consument d'elles-mêmes dans un cœur solitaire."[54] This is consistent with the period's beliefs about the effects of solitude, especially for melancholics. In the entry for "solitude" the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* of 1821 confirms that "tempéramens mélancholiques" are especially given to solitude, and that "nos passions s'enflent et se fortifient bien plus dans la solitude que dans la société où tous les subdivise et les fait exhaler au dehors" (557).[55] In solitude, nothing distracts René from his obsessive thoughts of death and existential meaning, or from the empire of his imagination. René's mental and moral health decline as he wanders alone in the woods:

> La solitude absolue, le spectacle de la nature, me plongèrent bientôt dans un état presque impossible à décrire. Sans parents, sans amis, pour ainsi dire seul sur la terre, n'ayant point encore aimé, j'étais accablé d'une surabondance de vie. Quelquefois je rougissais subitement, et je sentais couler dans mon cœur comme des ruisseaux d'une lave ardente ; quelquefois je poussais des cris involontaires, et la nuit était également troublée de mes songes et de mes veilles. Il me manquait quelque chose pour remplir l'abîme de mon existence: je descendais dans la vallée, je m'élevais sur la montagne, appelant de toute la

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[54] Chateaubriand, "Préface," 64.

[55] "Solitude," *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales, par une société de médecins et de chirurgiens*. Vol. 51 (Vol. Sén-Sol) (Paris: C.L.F. Pancoucke, éditeur, 1821), 551-562. This entry describes the magnifying effects of solitude on any temperament, not merely those suffering from melancholy. Great men or poetic geniuses, for instance, can expect their talents to be magnified when they are removed from the distractions of society.

> force de mes désirs l'idéal objet d'une flamme future ; je l'embrassais dans les vents ; je croyais l'entendre dans les gémissements du fleuve ; tout était ce fantôme imaginaire. (158-9)

In keeping with Chateaubriand's prefatory description of this character, René occupies a mental space populated by desires and *chimères*, where the pure, spiritual, and filial love of God becomes confused with carnal desire. This passage is full of passionate tension. René descends and rises as he walks through valleys and hills; his blood feels as heated as lava; he longs to "remplir l'abîme de mon existence;" and he blushes, a bodily manifestation of shame or embarrassment, or of sexual arousal.[56] This passage also describes his contradictory feelings: he feels a "surabondance de vie" but also feels a deep "abîme" within himself.[57] These symptoms are consistent with those associated with melancholy-as-disease, but René mistakes the need for God that lies at the root of his illness for unfulfilled carnal passion. He longs for an object on which to spend the *flamme* of his passion, "l'idéal objet d'une flamme future," and openly mentions his virginal status ("n'ayant point aimé").

In a further illustration of this conflation of spiritual and carnal passions, René's retrospective analysis of this time of his life foreshadows the terrible revelation to come: "O Dieu! si tu m'avais donné une femme selon mes désirs ; si, comme à notre premier père, tu m'eusses amené par la main une Eve tirée de moi-même..." (160). Here René wonders if his relationship with Amélie might have remained untouched by incest if his attention had been diverted by amorous interest in another woman. His biblical reference to Eve evokes the

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[56] That René's body is manifesting a visual cue of either shame or arousal is significant. The state of his moral health is impacting his body's ability to distinguish between emotions.

[57] He describes further contradictions within himself shortly after this scene as he plans his suicide: "j'étais plein de religion, et je raisonnais en impie; mon cœur aimait Dieu, et mon esprit le méconnaissait; ma conduite, mes discours, mes sentiments, mes pensées, n'étaient que contradiction, ténèbres, mensonges" (161).

prelapsarian Christian paradise and the first sanctified carnal union that founded humanity according to Christian tradition. The scenario he proposes would require a woman like Eve who is formed from himself – "tirée de moi-même." This phrasing suggests that his desire for a love object is rooted at least partially in narcissism: he longs to love something that comes from himself. His relationship with Amélie becomes a perversion of the biblical story, a failed attempt to build a complete, satisfied self in the absence of God. Incestuous desire and destructive self-love are symptomatic of his generation's attempt to find a moral grounding for identity without taking into account religious faith.

As Chapter 2 illustrated, overindulgence in the imagination, especially without anchoring such images to real-world referents, can have serious negative consequences for the integrity of the self. Melancholy was closely related to maladies of the imagination. The end of the passage cited above relates that René's efforts to conjure the "idéal objet d'une flame future" consume his senses. He embraces this ambiguous object in the wind, hears it in the rushing water of the river until everything is eclipsed by this unrealizable but tantalizing chimaera: "tout était ce fantôme imaginaire" (159). René's physical body is affected: Like Condillac's statue that cannot separate itself from what it feels without the sense of touch, René's existence is consumed by his imagination and his senses are truncated. He laments the loss of feeling: "Une langueur secrète s'emparait de mon corps. […]. Bientôt mon cœur ne fournit plus d'aliment à ma pensée, et je ne m'apercevais de mon existence que par un profond sentiment d'ennui" (160).[58] His senses are no longer capable of discerning the varied stimuli to which the forest exposes him, recalling the similar degeneration Ourika experiences. His existence becomes a feeling of listlessness and

[58] The sixth edition (1835) of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* describes *ennui* as "lassitude, langueur, fatigue d'esprit, causée par une chose dépourvue d'intérêt" and does not give a definition for ennui associated with pain until the current ninth edition.

ennui. That life should be reduced to ennui rather than pain or sadness is significant, especially since the very next sentence announces his plans for suicide: “Enfin, ne pouvant trouver de remède à cette étrange blessure de mon cœur, qui n’était nulle part et qui était partout, je résolus de quitter la vie” (160-161). The ennui that results from his melancholy has overcome his will. His readiness to consider an act that would condemn his soul, and therefore exclude him from heaven, illustrates both the depth of his suffering and the extent of his moral corruption at this moment.

Imagination plays a vital but contradictory role in René’s narrative. On the one hand, it is a creative force that René employs to construct his narrative self. He uses it to illustrate his suffering and his exceptionality. On the other hand, imagination has destructive properties and drives René into moral corruption after he allows the faculty to overwhelm him and replace his experience of reality. This paradox illustrates the conflict within himself between his desire to create a meaningful existence and the forces working against that goal (symptoms of his melancholy and place in history).

Atoning for Incest: Christian Duty and Self-Knowledge

René describes his preparations for suicide with great calm and calculation, including writing a letter to Amélie to arrange his affairs.[59] He believes he has “bien dissimulé mon secret; mais ma sœur, accoutumée à lire dans les replis de mon âme, le devina sans peine” (161). Her ability to “read” her brother’s soul and mind demonstrate her awareness of her own feelings and the feelings of others. Amélie comes to him at once and forces him to promise not to give up on

[59] There are strong similarities between René’s plans to end his life and the suicide attempt Chateaubriand relates towards the end of Book 1 of his *Mémoires d’outre-tombe.* Both Chateaubriand and René are ashamed of their brushes with suicide.

existence. At first Amélie appears to be the antidote to René's melancholy. Their reunion is joyous and for a month the siblings learn to live together in apparent happiness. Suddenly, however, Amélie exhibits symptoms of extreme melancholy. René notes her troubled nerves. Everything "l'alarmait": "le monde, la solitude, ma présence, mon absence," and she becomes preoccupied and troubled by a secret correspondence (163). She manifests other physical symptoms like excessive weeping, a lack of appetite, and insomnia. When René asks what troubles her she prevaricates, saying "qu'elle était comme moi, qu'elle ne savait pas ce qu'elle avait" (163). How is the reader to understand this apparently sudden illness, which will persist for three more months until her abrupt departure?

Amélie's illness is not surprising, even if seems sudden, and she does indeed know what is wrong with her. She has repeatedly demonstrated reluctance to spend time with René, illustrating her awareness of her feelings. Being physically close to him in the solitude of his retreat has exposed her to his aggravated state of ennui and excited, confused passions.[60] As Chateaubriand explains in the novel's preface, Amélie's own sensitive nature, which she shares with her brother, makes it impossible for her to resist the influence of René's moral corruption: "les folles rêveries de René commencent le mal, et ses extravagances l'achèvent: par les premières, il égare l'imagination d'une faible femme ; par les dernières, en voulant attenter à ses jours, il oblige cette infortunée à se réunir à lui ; ainsi le malheur naît du sujet."[61] This highlights the traits the siblings share: in addition to the extreme sensitivity they inherit from "God or their mother," Amélie seems to exhibit the same narcissism as her brother. In this passage she

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[60] This recalls the way in which Julie is seduced via emotional identification with Saint-Preux's excited amorous passion.

[61] Chateaubriand, "Préface," 67.

underscores “qu’elle était comme moi.” Amélie is overwhelmed by her brother’s unregulated, unbalanced passions, and by a desire to find a love object in herself. Her body manifests her spiritual torment: “je m’aperçus qu’Amélie perdait le repos et la santé qu’elle commençait à me rendre. Elle maigrissait ; ses yeux se creusaient ; sa démarche était languissante, et sa voix troublée” (163). Just as her brother perverted the pure love of God, confusing it with carnal passion, Amélie’s passions follow the same path, perverting her relationship with her brother.

The letter Amélie leaves for her brother seeks to inform René of her decision to leave secular society in a kind of worldly death and attempts to dissimulate her true reasons for doing so. In this way it mirrors the letter he sent to her as he prepared his suicide. This time it is René who attempts to read the “replis” of her thoughts, and though he comes close (he eventually wonders if a lover she refuses to name has caused her to retreat so abruptly), he fails.[62] On the surface, Amélie’s letter expresses a reluctant farewell and her advice to him for finding happiness.[63] She begs him to choose a different path than the one he has followed so far, either in religious life like herself, or in marriage.[64] Her description of an imaginary wife, however, reveals her own thinly veiled feelings of desire for him. Her admiration of her brother is too intense for a sister and she is blind to his faults:

> L’ardeur de votre âme, la beauté de votre génie, votre air noble et passionné, ce regard fier et tendre, tout vous assurerait de son amour et de sa fidélité. Ah ! avec quels délices

[62] “je m’imaginai qu’Amélie avait peut-être conçu une passion pour un homme qu’elle n’osait avouer. Ce soupçon sembla m’expliquer sa mélancolie, sa correspondance mystérieuse, et le ton passionné qui respirait dans sa lettre” (166).

[63] “je sais que vous riez amèrement de cette nécessité où l’on est en France de prendre un état. Ne méprisez pas tant l’expérience et la sagesse de nos pères. Il vaut mieux, mon cher René, ressembler un peu plus au commun des hommes, et avoir un peu moins de malheur” (164).

[64] “Je suis persuadée que vous-même, mon frère, vous trouveriez le repos dans ces retraites de la religion: la terre n’offre rien qui soit digne de vous” (165).

> ne te presserait-elle pas dans ses bras et sur son cœur ! Comme tous ses regards, toutes ses pensées seraient attachés sur toi pour prévenir tes moindres peines ! Elle serait tout amour, toute innocence devant toi ; tu croirais retrouver une sœur (165).

The last sentence of this passage certainly conflates the roles of wife and sister. She attempts to reframe her feelings for him as sisterly or motherly by mentioning how she rocked him as a baby. In an image that combines death and reunion, perhaps the only time she could realistically imagine being united physically with René, she describes sharing a tomb with him as a consoling thought. However, she remembers that, as one of "ces filles qui n'ont point aimé," she will eventually lie beneath the icy marble of the convent, far from René. Her insistence on her virginal state in this passage echoes René's focus on that fact ("n'ayant point aimé") in the passage preceding his suicidal plans. Amélie's emotional state mirrors her brother's as he planned to end his life: she too conflates a filial love of God with passionate love, brother with lover. Significantly, she is aware of her moral corruption, knowledge that adds to her suffering and resolve.

Amélie's letter reveals that her experience of melancholy is anchored in Chateaubriand's historical reality. She makes a curious mention of the death of "le jeune M… qui fit naufrage à l'île de France," an acquaintance of the siblings whose death was communicated to René via a letter that only arrived months after his death when "sa dépouille terrestre n'existait même plus" (165). At first this mention seems odd, but upon closer inspection it recalls an event of great personal significance for Chateaubriand. In the *Préface* to the *Essai sur les revolutions* he describes receiving a letter from his sister Mme de Farcy announcing the death of their mother in prison. By the time the letter reached him, Mme de Farcy herself had also died. Chateaubriand describes this event in terms very similar to those Amélie uses in her letter: "quand la lettre me

parvint au-delà des mers, ma sœur elle-même n'existait plus" (9). Chateaubriand credits this letter, which contained his mother's dying wish that he return to the Christian faith, with his conversion: "Ces deux voix sorties du tombeau, cette mort qui servait d'interprète à la mort, m'ont frappé: je suis devenu chrétien" (9).[65] Amélie's letter, written when she, too, is about to turn to God, finds its inspiration in a pivotal moment in her author's life. This illustrates that her shame and melancholy are tied to a painful moment in not only Chateaubriand's personal life, but in History itself: the Revolution imprisoned Chateaubriand's family and caused the deaths of his mother and sister.

Above, René's melancholy causes him to overwrite reality with imagination. In her letter, Amélie performs a similar re-writing of her own reality by replacing space (the material world) with time (the afterlife), but this time in the context of Christian notions of mortality, eternity, and forgiveness. Unlike her brother, she attempts to find comfort in the beliefs of her faith regarding reunion in the afterlife: "o mon frère, si je m'arrache à vous dans le temps, c'est pour n'être pas séparée de vous dans l'éternité" (165).[66] She believes that sacrificing physical closeness with her brother in the present will allow them to be spiritually close in eternity. For Amélie, then, eternity does not signify oblivion and separation as it does for René, but rather forgiveness, purification, and the persistence of love.

René finally learns the reason for his sister's abrupt departure at the ceremony of her vows, where her whispered words reveal the truth. René describes the moment during the service when Amélie imitates the posture of death to mark her symbolic withdrawal from the outside

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[65] Chateaubriand received criticism for his conversion, whose authenticity or sincerity were sometimes questioned as emotional, or not resulting directly from God.

[66] This recalls Julie's words to Saint-Preux: "la vertu qui nous sépara sur la terre nous unira dans le séjour éternel" (VI, 13, 743). Of course, the difference is that neither René nor Amélie can claim to be virtuous. In fact, René opens his story admitting he is an "homme sans force et sans vertu" (148).

world: "pour mourir au monde il fallait qu'elle passât à travers le tombeau. Ma sœur se couche sur le marbre: on étend sur elle un drap mortuaire" (169). While in this posture, in a whisper that only René overhears, she prays for death and for her brother's soul: "Dieu de miséricorde, fais que je ne me relève jamais de cette couche funèbre, et comble de tes biens un frère qui n'a point partagé ma criminelle passion !" (169-170).[67] Her prayer coincides with her social death, granting death a clearer meaning.[68] It also further links her to Mme de Farcy and Chateaubriand's personal moment of confession: Amélie becomes another speaking corpse.

In this moment, Amélie seems to accept responsibility for her "criminelle passion." One could speak of the distinction between shame and guilt, *honte* and *culpabilité*, although the latter noun did not appear in the *Dictionnaire de l'académie française* until 1835, well after the initial publication of this text. Nevertheless, Amélie does not demonstrate shame here. The adjective *coupable*, in use at this time, or *remords*, are appropriate to describe the feelings Amélie acknowledges in her brief whispered prayer. She has moved beyond initial feelings of shame (the twinge of conscience that announces to consciousness that something is amiss) to atone for them in a Christ-like gesture of self-sacrifice. And yet, there is room in the narration to question Amélie's motivation in murmuring such a terrible secret, and to investigate a second explanation for why she might exhibit a lack of shame in this passage. René's narration provides his sister's **direct words**, but not insight into her reasoning. The text also explains that Amélie specifically requests that René stand in for their father in the ceremony, which requires him to walk her down the aisle of the church, putting him in close enough proximity to hear her prayer. It is reasonable

[67] This recalls Julie's fervent desire that God reunite her duty and her will during her wedding ceremony. Traditionally, a ceremony of vows implies that the young woman is married to God. Like Julie, Amélie hopes to expunge her sins through spiritual union. Unlike Rousseau's heroine, however, she asks for death.

[68] For instance, their father's death leaves René feeling unsettled and unresolved about concepts like eternity and the immortality of the soul.

to suppose that Amélie intends for René to hear her secret, and to feel guilt and shame for her suffering. Read this way, Amélie's withdrawal from society is partly motivated by a narcissistic desire to punish her brother for her feelings.

How does one reverse moral corruption of this kind? Incest, after all, is taboo in social and religious contexts. Does the possibility of narcissistic motivation negate the sacrifice Amélie makes of her life in pursuit of redemption? Although the text leaves the question of Amélie's motivation ambiguous in the ceremony of her vows, her author casts no further doubt on the sincerity of her sacrifice or the outcome of her decision. Amélie is therefore a complex character who is neither perfectly innocent, nor perfectly guilty. The solution Chateaubriand models through Amélie is not a happy or easy one. Hers is the story of a martyr. Pierre Naudin's study on solitude sheds light on why Amélie is able to find absolution in solitude, while her brother finds condemnation.[69] Naudin notes that the tradition of seeking solitude for religious purposes, as Amélie does, began with the imitation of biblical texts that depicted solitary figures, for instance the Israelites seeking refuge in the desert, Moses receiving God's law, or Jesus wandering the desert. For some Christians, these stories served as models for reaching divine truth and salvation by isolating themselves from the presence of others in order to make space for God's presence.[70] Religious communities like cloisters and monasteries perform such a function. For those seeking solitude in the name of religion, these spaces were not empty, however far removed they were from temptations of society. "Pour eux [les religieux] […] la solitude n'est

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[69] Naudin's study focuses on the eighteenth century but is pertinent to my analysis, since René and Amélie are part of a long line of varied characters that experience solitude. Naudin offers a thorough examination of the range of different forms of solitude found in eighteenth-century texts including cloisters and monasteries, refuges for lovers or broken-hearted protagonists, poets seeking the Muses, or marginalized and misanthropic hermits enacting their sense of rejection. *L'Expérience et le sentiment de la solitude dans la littérature française de l'aube des Lumières à la Révolution: un modèle de vie à l'épreuve de l'histoire* (Paris: Klinkcksieck, 1995).

[70] Naudin, *L'Expérience et le sentiment de la solitude*, 27-29.

pas cette terre anonyme où l'homme, orphelin de Dieu, s'abandonne au vertige de l'absence: le désert est habité, et, par-delà le silence des pierres, retentit la voix du Très-Haut."[71] The Père Souël draws René's attention to the absence of God in his life at the end of his narrative: "Jeune présomptueux qui avez cru que l'homme se peut suffire à lui-même! *La solitude est mauvaise à celui qui n'y vit pas avec Dieu*" (174, my emphasis). This explains why and how Amélie is able to find salvation in her pursuit of solitude, and why René fails to do so. Amélie seeks the company and service of God while in contrast, René seeks deserts – literal and figurative – that are indeed empty of divine presence. These vast and disorganized spaces, like the ruins of Rome, and later, the forests of America, mirror the disquiet and turmoil of the internal spaces of René's heart and mind.[72]

Amélie finds comfort and peace in her new life, highlighting Chateaubriand's belief in the redemptive power of religion. Just before René leaves for America, she writes to tell him that her pain is diminishing: "La simplicité de mes compagnes, la pureté de leurs vœux, la régularité de leur vie, tout répand du baume sur mes jours. […] c'est ici que la religion trompe doucement une âme sensible: aux plus violentes amours elle substitue une sorte de chasteté brûlante où l'amante et la vierge sont unies ; elle épure les soupirs ; elle change en une flamme incorruptible une flamme périssable" (172). Her description blends religious vocabulary with terms reminiscent of medical treatment: balm, purification, incorruptible, innocence. Her dedication to God has corrected and purified the confused passions her brother inspired in her, fulfilling Chateaubriand's prefatory description of the potential benefits of religion. The Père Souël assures René that "votre sœur a expié sa faute" (175).

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[71] Ibid*.*, 29.

[72] Despland, "To Interpose a Little Ease," 26.

When he learns the truth of Amélie's feelings, René has sudden insight into the role he has played in the shameful situation: "Mes passions, si longtemps indéterminées, se précipitèrent sur cette première proie avec fureur" (171). The knowledge makes everything fall into place for him and he determines that his suffering, past and future, is punishment for leading himself and his sister into moral corruption. However, René persists in his self-imposed exile and travels as far as the New World in an effort to bury himself and his story. Like Adam and Eve who have just eaten the forbidden fruit and discover their nakedness, he attempts to hide.

The ending of the novel is ambiguous in many ways. At the core of that ambiguity lies the question of René's shame and the related and more complex question of his responsibility. To what extent is René responsible for his suffering, and that of his sister, and the incestuous desire that has come to characterize their relationship? Chactas and the Père Souël offer opposing ways of interpreting and reacting to René's narrative: the first, empathy; the second, criticism. As René finishes his story, Chactas weeps openly and takes the younger man in his arms to comfort him, lamenting that another missionary he knew in his youth was not there to offer words of counsel: "Mon enfant, dit-il à son fils, je voudrais que le P. Aubry fût ici, il tirait du fond de son cœur je ne sais quelle paix qui, en les calmant, ne semblait cependant point étrangère aux tempêtes ; c'était la lune dans une nuit orageuse ; les nuages errants ne peuvent l'emporter dans leur course" (173). Chactas' words underscore the sympathy that exists between him and René. Each has suffered great personal loss. The metaphor of a moon that cannot be carried away by the clouds of a storm suggests that René's comfort and salvation lie in someone like the Père Aubry, a gentle and loving missionary from the novel *Atala*. Chactas embodies the compassionate, forgiving side of Christianity that makes salvation possible, and that allows Amélie to atone through sacrifice and repentance. At the same time, he highlights the fatal nature

of René's situation. Born into his melancholy, just as, according to Christian views on human nature, mankind is born into original sin, René cannot help being predisposed to err. He is in many ways a victim of the circumstances of his birth. Christ was no stranger to unwarranted humiliation, as Antoine Furetière's definition of *honte* reminds us: "Jesus-Christ fut couvert de honte et d'opprobre au temps de sa passion."[73] While René is not a Christ-like figure exactly, he is human, and his name, meaning "reborn," hints at the rebirth he seeks throughout the novel but never manages to find.

In contrast, the Père Souël scolds him: "Que faites-vous seul au fond des forêts où vous consumez vos jours, négligeant tous vos devoirs?" (174). The Père accuses René of wasting God's gifts and being so arrogant as to believe he does not need God. He emphasizes René's neglected responsibility to his *semblables,* a term that highlights what makes René similar to other beings of creation, rather than what separates him from them, as René has continually done. For the Père, René's solitude represents a continued rejection of society and of his "devoir divin et humain."[74] There is a link between neglecting one's duty (*devoir*) and the vices that led René to bring shame to himself and Amélie. Duty acquires a Christian significance and places René in a position of responsibility towards God and fellow men and women. For René the consequences of neglecting this duty therefore extend beyond social failure; they are moral. René has suffered, but he has sinned. He observes René's lack of perspective, which has been evident elsewhere in the novel:[75]

[73] "honte," in Antoine Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* (1690), https://www.furetière.eu/index.php/non-classifie/45572524-?tmpl=component.

[74] Chateaubriand, "Préface," 66.

[75] For instance, in his asocial nature, his inability to contextualize or understand his malady, and finally, his failure to read the truth in his sister's letter.

> 'rien ne mérite, dans cette histoire, la pitié qu'on vous montre ici. Je vois un jeune homme entêté de chimères, à qui tout déplaît et qui s'est soustrait aux charges de la société pour se livrer à d'inutiles rêveries. On n'est point, monsieur, un homme supérieur parce qu'on aperçoit le monde sous un jour odieux. On ne hait les hommes et la vie, que faute de voir assez loin. […] Mais quelle honte de ne pouvoir songer au seul malheur réel de votre vie, sans être forcé de rougir !' (175).

Again, the answer lies with God. Only by looking further, beyond the mortal realm that has obsessed René's reflections thus far, can he free himself from misanthropy and destructive idleness. The Père shames René for causing his own suffering in this passage.

The Père Souël's judgment also highlights the confessional nature of René's narrative. Terdiman posits that confession can be considered a subset of autobiography, "the autobiography of sin, of error, of transgression," whose aim is purification.[76] The ritual of confession and absolution performed by confessee and confessor rewrites the penitent's history in a way that frees the future from the past.[77] René's narrative resembles a confession insofar as he expresses his desire to bury the story of his shameful past. However, his narration contradicts the penitential objective of confession (to free the future from the past and find forgiveness) because his story will be repeated after his death, remembered and re-told by another generation: "on montre encore le rocher où il allait s'asseoir au soleil couchant" (167). René's narrative is also self-serving. In fact, his story might be read as motivated by *fausse honte* reminiscent of Rousseau's *Confessions* in which René hopes to sufficiently move his interlocutors with

[76] Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 76.

[77] Terdiman, *Present Past,* 76-77. He refers here to Musset's *Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, but his remarks are pertinent for René as well.

depictions of his suffering to gain their pity rather than their condemnation.[78] Read this way, René confesses his shame, but never moves beyond feelings of *honte* to repent.

The Père Souël is not immune to René's suffering. The omniscient narrator states that "Il portait en secret un cœur compatissant, mais il montrait au dehors un caractère inflexible" (174). Chactas admits to seeing wisdom in the Père Souël's words, lending symmetry to the two men's torn feelings: "il nous parle sévèrement; il corrige et le vieillard et le jeune homme, et il a raison" (175). Both men are conflicted over René's story. Although they take different approaches to counseling the protagonist, both advocate abandoning the solitude in which René has allowed himself to languish for so long.

The Père Souël also offers a frightening observation: "je crains que, par une épouvantable justice, un aveu sorti du sein de la tombe, n'ait troublé votre âme à son tour" (175). His words, "un aveu sorti du sein de la tombe," recall the link between Mme de Farcy's letter and Amélie's vows, and evokes Chateaubriand's real-life conversion. Chateaubriand illustrates how René falls short of the corrective potential of his sister's revelation. Instead of experiencing a true moment of conversion or repentance, René's reaction is limited to shock, pain, and paralysis.[79] Although René consistently refers to his feelings of shame throughout his narrative – a shame that haunts his present, a shame so intensely bound up in loss and melancholy that a reminder of it (the letter announcing his sister's death) overcame his wish to keep silent – what if René does not, in fact, feel it intensely enough?

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[78] Chactas certainly succumbs to the emotional rhetoric of René's melancholy reflections and tearful reminiscences and weeps openly, holding the young man in his arms to comfort him.

[79] Reflecting on the ceremony of Amélie's vows, René admits to a perverse kind of satisfaction, even joy, in the depth of his pain: "je trouvai même une sorte de satisfaction inattendue dans la plénitude de mon chagrin, et je m'aperçus, avec un secret mouvement de joie, que la douleur n'est pas une affection qu'on épuise comme le plaisir" (171).

Despite his extreme *sensibilité*, has he become so morally corrupt that his moral senses are dulled and insensitive to shame? Is he therefore impervious to its potential moral utility? As his moral body is corrupted, his moral senses become blighted just as a physical body might lose sight, taste, smell, or touch if one of its sensory organs were affected by disease. Chateaubriand hints at a frightening possibility consistent with his concerns for the moral health of modern society, and especially for the melancholy character: what can happen when shame, a damaging but morally useful emotion that stands between mankind on one side and depravity and eternal damnation on the other, no longer touches the soul of even the most sensitive individual? The siblings' trajectories illustrate that cultivating morality – or failing to do so – has a direct and significant impact on society as a whole.

* * *

René's fate is ambiguous but certainly suggests that the protagonist has missed his chance for salvation: "On dit que, pressé par les deux vieillards, il retourna chez son épouse, mais sans y trouver le bonheur. Il périt peu de temps après avec Chactas et le P. Souël, dans le massacre des Français et des Natchez à la Louisiane" (175-76). Ironically, René need not have feared being forgotten. If Rousseau's Julie becomes the memory of her efforts to emulate virtue after her death, René becomes the memory of his shameful and melancholy narrative. Just as René and Amélie are once living vessels for their father's memory, René's narrative is a monument to an extraordinary story that explores the dangers and responsibilities of entering a new age and invites readers to ask themselves if they are sufficiently touched by his story to reform their own lives.

Conclusion

The previous chapter examined two examples of the melancholy character depicted in Chateaubriand's novel, which granted religion a strong influence over the characters' experience of that emotional condition. However, religious faith is not the overriding issue in the experience of melancholy for characters in other early nineteenth-century French novels. For instance, Germaine de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807) depicts two melancholy characters whose experience of melancholy is shaped by other factors. The protagonist Oswald Nelvil experiences melancholy out of guilt, after failing to respect his father's wishes, especially that he find a suitable wife. Corinne, a gifted Italian/English poetess, experiences melancholy in relation to the problematic social status of the female genius, and because of the thwarted love she feels for Oswald. Oswald's filial guilt is an obstacle that prevents him from marrying Corinne, which contributes in turn to the melancholy that eventually ends Corinne's life. Oswald fears that Corinne would be an unsuitable wife in England where culture and custom would limit her to domestic activities once married; Corinne fears losing her freedom and the creative enterprise she enjoys in Rome should she marry him.[1] This novel provides a more secular example of how shame, melancholy, and memory are entwined in the depiction of the individual struggle for purpose and fulfillment in this period's literature.

Shame and memory were medicalized in many contexts by the early nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, memory disturbances became a problem of both recall and disease and had implications for the brain, the self, responsibility, and normality. As Michael Roth explains,

[1] Corinne's declining health begins in Book 18 after she learns of Oswald's relationship with her sister, Lucille, whom he eventually marries. Several days after her last performance in Book 20, Corinne dies: "Elle leva ses regards vers le ciel, et vit la lune, qui se couvrait du même nuage qu'elle avait fait remarquer à lord Nelvil, quand ils s'arrêtèrent sur le bord de la mer en allant à Naples. Alors elle le lui montra de sa main mourante ; et son dernier soupir fit retomber cette main." Germaine de Staël, *Corinne ou l'Italie* (New York : Leavitt et compagnie, 1851) 426.

the prevalence of memory disturbances was symptomatic of an acceleration of the disappearance of traditional society, and of a concern about what the normal or healthy relation of past and present might be.[2] While memory remained important in the construction of selfhood, as a faculty it sometimes became an insufficient source of cohesion when shame-provoking traumas, illness, and environmental influences disordered memory and pushed some emotionally charged experiences into the present and out of linear time. The melancholy character featured in this period's literature raises important questions of how the modern generation of the time related to the past. This concern is evident other works like Balzac's *Adieu* (1830) and Alfred de Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836) to which I will return shortly.

Authors of my corpus share the perspective that human existence is a constant struggle. For some, like Rousseau and Marivaux, the individual strives to cultivate or maintain a pure form of him or herself, a process made difficult by the disruptive and corruptive influence of worldly society. Struggle, particularly the struggle for virtue, is reflected in the romantic love stories that pervade the works I have studied in the preceding chapters. Authors certainly sought to entertain and capture the imagination of their readers by depicting such relatable emotions as love and longing for one's beloved. That characters can feel such noble emotions suggests that they have the capacity for virtue. It is noteworthy that few characters achieve happiness in love. Thwarted amorous desire highlights the painful challenge of finding love and acceptance. Thwarted desire can be another obstacle to remaining virtuous because it introduces the temptation of carnal passion or betrayal in the absence of a sanctified union. Notions of duty are strongly tied to the struggle some characters experience in their efforts to cultivate virtue and

[2] Michael S. Roth, *Memory, Trauma, and History: Essays on Living with the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) 4.

avoid shame. In many cases, especially for female characters, moral and social spheres of duty and honorability overlap: seduction is a constant source of moral and social shame for a young woman across my period of study.

Some authors of this period perceived of society as an inhospitable place for sensitive or unique individuals. Failure to find a safe haven either in imitation of Rousseau's Clarens, or the seclusion of a convent, brought grave moral risks for the individual that could impact the lives and moral states of others. Authors thus regarded diagnosing the individual as a method for finding insight into the malady afflicting society as a whole. They acknowledged that memory could neither be erased nor reinvented but believed it might be overcome with proper motivation and effort. In this context, self-awareness and a strong will became essential tools for self-fashioning. Imagination emerged as a powerful means of self-invention, either in the form of a narrative construction or as an internal mental retreat that offered some characters a more appealing or comforting existence than the real world. Of course, engaging in such activities could, in some of these literary works, involve great risk to one's mental health.

My corpus is also marked by a division between authors who favor religious morality (Chateaubriand, for instance) versus those who advocate a kind of secular, socially useful morality (like Mme de Charrière). In Ancien Régime texts, when the shame experienced by a character arises from a moral versus social conflict, the author implies that morality can save or redeem a character from shame. In other words, moral codes of virtue should be respected above all else, especially in situations when social expectations contradict religious or ethical ideals.

Secrecy and dissimulation accompany the experience of shame for many characters in my corpus. Secrecy is a means by which characters conceal shameful information from the public, and thereby prevent damage to social reputation. Confession offers a powerful reparative tool

that allows some characters the chance for rebirth and renewal. Such a narrative strategy requires the character's self-awareness and a willingness to accept responsibility for wrongdoing, and a commitment to change. However, when secrecy is tied to dissimulation and dishonesty, especially with oneself, shame persists indefinitely, potentially beyond the lifetime that produced it. The notion of secrecy is related to, and often accompanied by, a feeling that language is insufficient to express certain experiences, or that certain experiences should not be named. This is a topic that could be explored further: for example, there is a link to be established between the way the memory of Revolutionary trauma is addressed in nineteenth-century French literature, and the ways in which individual shameful events, either social or moral, are depicted. Emotional tension builds within the individual torn between the desire to make his or her suffering or shame known and thereby end the associated pain, and the desire for no one to know. Memory plays a powerful role in this tension since the retelling of an emotional experience can cause the narrator to relive the past. Silence, however, is not the same as forgetting, and implies a continued, secret presence. Shame changes the behavior and will of the characters who experience it, generating a paradox within the self that cannot be easily resolved.

Chapter 4 underscored some elements of the influence of Rousseau's works on Chateaubriand's conception of René and Amélie. When we compare Rousseau's *Confessions* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* with Chateaubriand's *René,* we see that both authors were considering the role religion could play in the redemption of an imperfect humanity, and the consequences for a sensitive individual who struggled against feelings of *fausse honte*. They share a concern and interest in human imperfection that is partly expressed through the roles of memory and shame in the fates of their characters. That Chateaubriand should find such inspiration in Rousseau's writing suggests that both authors saw value in representing the vulnerability some

individuals possess to others' overexcited passions. For both authors, and others in my corpus, shame is a socially useful (if painful and destructive) emotion that is indicative of a properly functioning conscience. The difficulty lies, perhaps, not in preventing shame, but in accepting its inevitability, and in learning to integrate it into a narrative of moral duty that diminishes the transgression from which shame springs. In other words, Rousseau and Chateaubriand wrestle with how best to remember shame.

Future research

The present study focuses upon the ways in which the shame/memory dynamic played out in French literature in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but it also presents fruitful avenues for future research. One is the ways in which the period's theater deals with shame. The *drame*, for instance, is the eighteenth century's most significant contribution to that genre, and it lends itself particularly well to the study of shame and memory because is more intimate than either comedy or tragedy and represents the individual as a moral self. Diderot's *Le Fils naturel* (1757) and the plays of Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, *La Mère coupable* (1792) in particular, depict moral characters who experience shame in relation to their pasts. Marivaux's *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* (1730) may present another analog, although it should be noted that generic constraints like the unity of dramatic time mean that theater does not lend itself to the study of memory as much as prose does.

The education (moral, social, or otherwise) that characters of my corpus receive informs their experience of shame. In a recent New York Times profile, author Leïla Slimani mentioned

an Arabic expression: "someone who is well educated is someone who feels shame."[3] During the period of my study, works outside of literature that focused on education, such as pedagogical treatises, were often aimed at young women and were concerned with cultivating *pudeur* and avoiding shame. An alternative form of education existed that produced a character who was without shame – a shameless individual.

The French language does not possess an equivalent translation of this concept (the psychologist Vincent de Gaulejac suggests *éhonté*, a term that originated in the fourteenth century, as one option, but this is not widely accepted).[4] Nevertheless, the shameless character – one without respect for moral shame – is ubiquitous in the period covered in this dissertation, as is evident in the literary tradition that produced, for example, the Vautrin character from Balzac's *Père Goriot* (1835).[5] This mentor figure possessing villainous qualities appears in the eighteenth century, and could provide a mean of establishing new links between shamelessness and loss of memory. Just as shame is integral to the education of young women, the shameless mentor figure assumes the role of initiating a young man into the unwritten rule of society. In *Les Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit* by Crébillon fils (1736), the mentor character Versac transforms M. de Melicour from an honest young man into a libertine – a character that inspired Laclos's Vicomte de Valmont of *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782). Balzac's later Vautrin character, however, is at

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[3] Laura Cappelle, "Leïla Slimani Has Written About a Sex Addict and a Murderous Nanny. Next Up: Her Own Family," *New York Times*. Aug. 8, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/08/books/leila-slimani-in-the-country-of-others.html

[4] Vincent de Gaulejac, *Les sources de la honte* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2008). The world *éhonté* also appears in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* since the fourth edition (1762) and in the *Littré dictionary* in 1873. Both entries cite this term as originating in the fourteenth century.

[5] Vautrin appears in the novels *Le Père Goriot* (1835), and in *Illusions perdues* (1837–1843) and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838–1847), the sequel of *Illusions perdues*, under the name of Abbé Carlos Herrera.

once sincerer in announcing his intentions, and more sinister in his behavior, than Valmont.[6] Vautrin finds his true precursor in Madame de Merteuil, who in the *Liaisons dangereuses* develops a project to seduce and educate the young Cécile, seeing in the ingénue a potential disciple and confidante. In Letter 81 Merteuil explains the systematic process of self-education that allowed her to perfect her skills of deception and dissimulation while cultivating a mask of respectability that insulated her from the consequences of her machinations.[7] The sexual relationship to which she alludes with Cécile in letter 54 anticipates Vautrin's love for his would-be pupil and partner in crime, Eugène.[8] Vautrin presents a new quality, however: he engages in increased contact between higher and lower social strata, crossing previously un-crossable lines. The notion of saving face is replaced by evading the law. Shamelessness liberates the character from moral constraints that dictate the behavior of the rest of society, making others' actions predictable, and allowing him to break societal rules even while he navigates within their constraints.

Another example of the shameless mentor can be found in Sade's *Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795) in which Eugénie receives theoretical and practical instruction in libertine sex and eroticism. In this context shame is viewed as a mechanism of control imposed by

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[6] This category of libertine shamelessness remained tied to notions of libertine honor; Valmont's continued shamelessness depends on not losing face as a libertine. This limits his conquests to projects of seduction and corruption in aristocratic circles.

[7] Merteuil states that "je puis dire que je suis mon ouvrage." Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, ed. Catriona Seth, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade 6 (Paris: Gallimard, 2011) 205. She adds that she employs humiliation as a tool to belittle and dominate others and to protect her own reputation: "j'ai su, prévoyant mes ruptures, étouffer d'avance, sous le ridicule ou la calomnie, la confiance que ces hommes dangereux auraient pu obtenir" (210).

[8] Merteuil tests Cécile's ability to defend herself against the advances of a lover to judge whether her pupil has effectively ended her relationship with Danceny: "il m'a pris fantaisie de savoir à quoi m'en tenir sur la défense dont elle était capable ; et moi, simple femme, de propos en propos, j'ai monté sa tête au point… Enfin, vous pouvez m'en croire, jamais personne ne fut plus susceptible à une surprise des sens. Elle est vraiment aimable, cette chère petite !" (135).

conventional society and religion, which can be abandoned in the pursuit of pleasure. Like Vautrin, Eugénie voluntarily decides to set aside forms of caring she once espoused in order to embrace a different moral philosophy that is self-interested and hedonistic. It is also arguable that the victims of the libertines' manipulations may have suffered less if they had felt less shame.[9]

Finally, the relationship between shamelessness and memory in works of this sort warrants close attention. Considering how memory acts upon selfhood for shameless characters could reveal, for instance, whether they rely on faculties other than memory to construct their identities, whether they have adapted more "selective" memories or altered perspectives through which to view events, and what their relationship might be with the past.

In another area of nineteenth-century French culture, shamelessness was associated with the loss of memory (and loss of self, consequentially) through trauma. This is a historically specific phenomenon linked to the rise of psychiatry, which, in its early stages, was very literary.[10] Balzac's *Adieu* (1830) is one example of a literary text that draws on contemporary medical notions of trauma to depict a woman who reverts to a savage, child-like state after surviving the Napoleonic wars. Traumatized by the crossing of the Beresina river when she believes her lover, Philippe de Sucy, has perished, the comtesse Stéphanie de Vandières has lost all sense of self-awareness, shame, and social convention.[11] She does not speak except to

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[9] Soon after her libertine conversion in the seventh and final dialogue of the novel, Eugénie's libertine mentors urge her to visit a "punishment" on her mother, who has just verbally disowned her daughter after learning of her disobedience and debauchery. This is seen as a practical application of the lessons Eugénie has learned. Marquis de Sade, *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, ed. Hepley (Le groupe des études sadistes: Vincennes, 1948) 235-250.

[10] See Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[11] Balzac attributes animal-like qualities to Stéphanie, emphasizing her innocence and that she is untouched by concern for social propriety. She jumps onto the branch of an apple tree "avec la légèreté d'un oiseau," then jumps down "avec la gracieuse mollesse qu'on admire chez les écureils" and stretches on the grass "avec l'abandon, la

murmur the last word she spoke to Philippe before they parted: "Adieu!" Her present existence is therefore defined by one terrible moment from her past, but she remains unable to access its significance, because she has forgotten everything.[12] Philippe does survive, however, and is determined to cure her lack of memory by recreating the moment they were parted. The experiment succeeds, but the shock kills Stéphanie moments later.[13] This is therefore a potentially significant text in the study of how shame and memory inform selfhood, and of the ways in which losing one or the other affect the integrity of personal identity.

Pursuing the groundwork this study has laid for understanding the dynamic between shame and memory in relation to melancholy would also shed new light on. Alfred de Musset's *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836). This novel explores the existential vacuum and melancholy that plagued some members of elite French society after the return of the monarchy, calling it the "mal du siècle." The principal character Octave struggles to overcome the humiliation of discovering his mistress's numerous lovers and indulges in a period of debauchery in an attempt to console himself. These events damage his sense of morality and impede his ability to moderate his emotions: he cannot free himself from the fear of the past repeating

grâce, le naturel d'une jeune chatte endormie au soleil" Honoré de Balzac, *Adieu, Étude de femme, Une Lutte, et Le Dome des invalides* (Petite collection Balzac. Geneva: A. Skira, 1946) 28. Later, Philippe develops a relationship with her not unlike a stable hand attempting to tame a timid horse: he brings her cubes of sugar to lure her to him (70-71).

[12] "Adieu! dit-elle d'une voix douce et harmonieuse, mais sans que cette mélodie, impatiemment attendue par les chasseurs, parût dévoiler le moindre sentiment ou la moindre idée" (29). Language – or the single word of it Stéphanie has retained – has been divorced from meaning.

[13] "Aidé par ses souvenirs, Philippe réussit à copier dans son parc la rive où le général Éblé avait construit ses ponts" (77). The desired effect is achieved: "elle contempla ce souvenir vivant, cette vie passée traduite devant elle, tourna vivement la têt evers Philippe, et *le vit*" (81, original emphasis). Her awareness does not last long, however : "Tout à coup ses pleurs se séchèrent, elle se cadavérisa comme si la foudre l'eût touchée, et dit d'un son de voix faible : 'Adieu, Philippe. Je t'aime, adieu !' –'Oh ! elle est morte !' s'écria le colonel en ouvrant les bras" (82).

itself.[14] His experience of melancholy is therefore related to the conflict between his obsession with self-preservation and desire to seek retribution on the one hand, and his love for the widow Brigitte Pierson on the other hand: self-interest wars with the selflessness demanded by unconditional love. His emotions heavily influence his actions. Suspicious that Brigitte has feelings for another man, he briefly considers ending her life before committing suicide in a jealous rage.[15] Religion retains some corrective power and influence in this novel, since it is the sight of the small ebony crucifix around Brigitte's neck that arrests his plan and inspires him to step back and allow her to marry the man she loves.[16] Although he seems to gain resolve and purpose in his decision to put Brigitte's happiness before his own, Octave's fate remains uncertain. He accepts a life of melancholy as a punishment for causing so much unhappiness in his relationships.

Viewing the construction of individual identity from the angle of shame and memory adds nuance to existing scholarship on the construction of selfhood.[17] It illuminates the ways in which questions of sex, social class, and race were addressed (or elided) in the literary works

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[14] Octave explains at numerous points that one major consequence of debauchery is inspiring an insatiable curiosity for all things, the most dangerous of which is his "curiosité du mal," which he calls "une maladie infaâme qui naît de tout contact impur" which is "une torture inexplicable dont Dieu punit ceux qui ont failli." Alfred de Musset, *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (Paris: Librairie Jules Tallandier, 1968) 302.

[15] Partie 5, Chapter 5. He first arrives at the idea of suicide to prevent himself from committing more evil in the world: "Le souvenir du bien t'envoie au mal, fais de toi un cadavre si tu ne veux être ton propre spectre" (344). Then, he wonders if Brigitte or anyone else will mourn him, and grows incensed imagining her seeking comfort from another man: "Ah! Dieu me préserve! Pendant qu'elle dort, à quoi tient-il que je ne la tue ?" (346).

[16] Octave describes the effect of seeing the crucifix, a gift from Brigitte's aunt on her deathbed, around her neck as she sleeps, in terms of a mystical if not religious experience that makes him question the faith he has lacked his whole life: "J'étais comme ivre et insensé quand je vis le Christ sur le sein de Brigitte" (Partie 5, Chapter 5, p. 351). He is not converted, he explains, but the symbol of Brigitte's faith proves that some unexplained force has interceded on her behalf, and his reason is restored. Later in Chapter 7, Octave will renounce his claim to Brigitte (she has promised to come away with him and feels honor-bound to respect that pact).

[17] See for example Michel Condé, *La genèse sociale de l'individualisme romantique: esquisse historique de l'évolution du roman en France du dix-huitième au dix-neuvième siècle* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1989).

examined in this study. It also poses questions about the nature of the influence of shame on identity for other the character types beyond those examined in this dissertation, as well as the limits, strengths, and pitfalls of memory in underpinning identity.

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