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Forms of Amusement: Rousseau's *Lettre à d'Alembert* and *Julie*

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Claremont Graduate University  
2022

Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been read and reviewed by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Trevor Shunk as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

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## Abstract

Forms of Amusement: Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert* and *Julie*

By

Trevor Shunk

Claremont Graduate University: 2022

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a philosopher who cared about nonphilosophers. He intervened in circumstances where he saw nonphilosophers in danger, such as with the *Lettre à d'Alembert*, and he wrote enchanting stories for them, such as *Julie*. His overarching concern in these books was what he perceived as a loss of virtue or virtue undermined by contemporary trends in the theater and in the literary world. His writings were radical in their originality: the *Lettre à d'Alembert* condemned popular spectacles and *Julie* departed from the norm for novels. Rousseau denounced other philosophers for irresponsibility among nonphilosophers in relation to forms of amusement and sought to exemplify appropriate action with his own pen.

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## Chapter 1

### “Making Virtue Loved”<sup>1</sup>: Rousseau’s Vision for the Arts in the *Lettre à d’Alembert*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau signed his name “J.-J. Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva” when necessity compelled him to take up his pen and “justice and truth” demanded his dutiful action.<sup>2</sup> Jean le Rond d’Alembert, a member of multiple academies, a royal society, and an institute, had recommended that Geneva, the homeland of the mere “Citizen,” build a theater within its walls. Along with Voltaire, d’Alembert thought that the introduction of theatrical performance would civilize Genevans, refining their taste, making them less like Spartans and more like Athenians.<sup>3</sup> The short passage by d’Alembert in *l’Encyclopédie* provokes a lengthy rebuttal by Rousseau, who describes the proposal as a “seductive picture” and “dangerous advice,” causing his alarm.<sup>4</sup> The *Lettre à d’Alembert* (1758), which followed the printing of the first and second discourses, is the first writing in which Rousseau speaks not to the few philosophers but rather to the public. It defends the Genevan way of life and places outside major cities against the charge of being dull. Rousseau indicates that virtue flourishes in communities untainted by urban vices and through powerful rhetoric challenges his readers, including artists, to love virtue and protect it too.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to d’Alembert on the Theatre*, translated Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> C.f. Allan Bloom, introduction to *Politics and the Arts: Letter to d’Alembert on the Theatre*, *Letter to d’Alembert on the Theatre* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), xv-xvi. Bloom discusses the pivotal involvement of Voltaire. Judith Shklar argues that Rousseau addressed the *Lettre à d’Alembert* to Voltaire in *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 117.

<sup>4</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, 5.

In what may seem like a strange beginning for a writing that mostly concerns the arts – a rebuke of d’Alembert for announcing that Genevan theologians quietly hold heterodox beliefs – Rousseau sets the stage for how he differs from d’Alembert and from the other *philosophes*. He makes distinctions – between what may be true or good for himself and what benefits others, philosophy and society, the thinker and the author, private conversation and publication, Geneva and Paris. In opposing the zeal of d’Alembert, whether to reveal secrets or multiply theaters, Rousseau casts doubt on the “universalism” of the Enlightenment.<sup>5</sup> He doubts its conception of progress. That Rousseau addresses this problem first indicates the preeminence of the theological issue. His epigraph reads: “Di meliora piis, erroremque hostibus illum.”<sup>6</sup> There is a tie between the piety of Genevans and their happiness which must be preserved.

The main sections of the open letter start with Rousseau contemplating the question of the theater in itself – what is it? – along with the certainty of d’Alembert regarding its goodness. He plants question marks in realms that his fellow philosopher considers not worth asking about. He classifies the theater as “a form of amusement.”<sup>7</sup> Rather than approving it for this reason, Rousseau commences his analysis by suggesting that unnecessary amusements do more harm than good to beings with such a short life and limited time. Is the theater a necessary amusement? He continues by considering pleasure. The best pleasures originate in nature. These pleasures – found in good work, the family and citizenship – suffice for a happy life. It is

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<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Meier, *On the Happiness of the Philosophic Life: Reflections on Rousseau’s Reveries in Two Books*, American edition, translated by Robert Berman (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 24.

<sup>6</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, v. “Heaven grant a better lot to the pious [or the good] and such madness to our enemies.” Translator’s Notes, 149.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

“discontent with one’s self, the burden of idleness, the neglect of simple and natural tastes that makes foreign amusement so necessary,” says Rousseau.<sup>8</sup> He quotes the barbarian who, upon seeing the magnificent Roman circus and games, asked if the Romans had wives or children. People who attend the theater isolate themselves and forget their own places, loved ones, and duties as they laugh or cry at the things they see, as if they wish to escape from everything but it.

Whether the theater is good or bad depends – first, on the players of the dramas on stage; and second, on the people who will visit it. If theatrical plays feature characters and actions with “agreeable and useful lessons for every station of life,” then they do not merit any objections.<sup>9</sup> Rousseau therefore does not preclude the potential for a variation of the theater that is good. But if plays contain a poor morality, if the characters lead licentious lives that corrupt, if they support “vanity, idleness, luxury, and lewdness,” then the entertainment descends into abuse.<sup>10</sup> Rousseau does wonder if the propensity to portray vice emerges out of the nature of the theater. But he also underscores the diversity of peoples. Given the many governments and ways of life, what is good for citizens in one time or place may differ from what is good for them in another. Plays by Menander for an Athenian theater might not fit well in Rome. What might undermine the heart of things in Geneva may indeed flourish in the city of Paris. It is d’Alembert, the Frenchman, who neglects fundamental differences, including of *moeurs* or “[morals; manners].”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 17. Rousseau quotes from *Instruction Chrétienne* (1752) by Jacob Vernet.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. *Instruction Chrétienne*, continued.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. “*Moeurs* are morals as they express themselves in the way of life or of the customs of men and nations; they are akin to what we would call character.” Translator’s Notes, 149.



The aim of entertainment like theater is to please audiences. What pleases also succeeds. While acknowledging this truth, Rousseau indicates what is most needful: moderation. But how can the author of a play give spectators what they want while moderating penchants in addition? They want the stage to flatter their passions, making instruction through theater a difficult task. So authors follow the sentiments of the public and reason fails to find a role to play on the stage. The philosopher, or the thinker “without passions or who always mastered them,” is an unattractive, intolerable figure in a tragedy and, at most, the source of laughter in a comedy.<sup>12</sup> Yet the thinker also enjoys an independence that this form of entertainment has never known. One reasons for himself, the others take their bearings by trends or write for an audience of none. But since popularity changes with time and place, even a play of Sophocles sees limited success. Philosophy is superior to drama, except perhaps in the rare case that a philosopher writes it.

How might defenders of the theater reply? Rousseau gives voice to two arguments. Rather than enflaming the passions, proponents of the theater assert that it purges them. Rousseau responds by considering the effects of tragedy that continue after the performance of plays. Having seen a tragedy, who feels an immediate inclination to master or regulate the passions? Only reason could accomplish this end; but reason, again, “has no effect” within the theater.<sup>13</sup> Should an author submit the passions to reason, no one would attend his play and he would fail. Therefore the theater lacks the perfection attributed to it. Next, Rousseau has been told that the theater “makes virtue loveable and vice odious,” a claim that leaves him puzzled – “What?”<sup>14</sup> He does not know how the theater could make virtue more loved or vice more hated

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 18. Rousseau refers to “a Stoic.” C.f. Bloom, introduction, xxiii.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 22.

than the world. Even if it does leave a good effect, a play is a fleeting thing that vanishes like an illusion. If virtue does appear on stage, it seems distant, like clothing that looks ridiculous everywhere else. Finally, Rousseau notes that theaters ultimately want applause.

‘Virtue’ had not appeared in the passage of d’Alembert written in *l’Encyclopédie* and quoted by Rousseau at the outset of the *Lettre à d’Alembert*. He had written instead about improved tact and sentiment that Genevans might gain through the introduction of the theater. Rousseau subtly alters the subject of the dialogue through his frequent references to virtue, which in one of its manifestations is moderation. A political community like Geneva cannot thrive without it and the proposed construction of a theater threatens it. Rousseau indirectly asks how artists could successfully encourage citizens to practice virtue through their artistry. He implicitly poses the question: is the union of virtue and the arts imaginable?

A “man of genius” could conceivably arise who invents a new kind of play that “makes virtue loveable and vice odious.”<sup>15</sup> In raising the possibility, Rousseau invites the birth of one. Yet such an occurrence of human excellence would be a rare and unrepeatable event in history. Successors would return to the familiar means of pleasing: “Celebrated actions, great names, great virtues, in tragedy; comic situations and the amusing in comedy; and always love in both.”<sup>16</sup> Rousseau distinguishes between “great virtues” that only actors and perhaps rare individuals could perfect and the version of virtue that contributes to the happiness of ordinary citizens – the “science of simple souls” introduced in his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 28. Would Shakespeare or Goethe qualify as one of these men of genius?

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 28.

(1750).<sup>17</sup> Even if plays always punished crime and rewarded virtue, which Rousseau argues they do not, their status as fables leaves a weak impression. And the punishments and rewards are unrealistic. Rousseau writes: “Virtue or vice? – what is the difference, provided that the public is overawed by an impression of greatness?”<sup>18</sup> On the French stage, villains triumph as much as heroes. The critique of the theater given by Rousseau points toward an entertainment that features relatable stories with sensible takeaways, that guides rather than pleases, and that profits *moeurs*.<sup>19</sup> Not until the publication of *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) will he make a case for the novel.<sup>20</sup>

For examples to prove the moral indifference of authors, Rousseau considers tragedies that portray Rome. He finds criminals cast in a light that inspires sympathy and heroes slandered. Cato and Cicero, truly great statesmen in their republic, appear as a pedant and a coward; whereas Catalina, covered in crimes and a traitor to his country, becomes a celebrated man. Such plays encourage the imitation of Catalina, even as the virtuous men deserve admiration. The result flatters tastes, so it rules. “And thou, modest Virtue,” Rousseau writes, “thou remain’st

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<sup>17</sup> “O virtue! sublime science of simple souls, are so many difficulties and preparations needed to know you? Are not your principles engraved in all hearts, and is it not enough in order to learn your laws to commune with oneself and listen to the voice of the conscience in the silence of the passions?” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 64.

<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, 28.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> C.f. “Preface of the New Heloise or Conversation about Novels Between the Editor and a Man of Letters; Second Preface.” *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 5-22.

ever unhonored!”<sup>21</sup> This is the way that things are in the Age of Enlightenment. The thunder of applause in response to tragedies like these deafens everyone to how the arts can hurt humankind. Rousseau takes the side of morality against artists who do anything to hear the roars.

To further his point, Rousseau spotlights two tragedies: *Atrée et Thyeste* (1707) and *Mahomet* (1736). A monster is a hero in both. They complete their crimes and reap benefits. How do plays like this profit an audience? Only Rousseau considers the moral teaching. He relates the “greatness of soul” that Voltaire gives to Mahomet which overshadows his crimes.<sup>22</sup> Voltaire makes Mahomet the character in the play whom spectators would wish to emulate. But Rousseau does emphasize one scene with Zopire and his “simple common sense and intrepid virtue” in dialogue with Mahomet, which partially redeems making Mahomet the victor.<sup>23</sup> At least Voltaire spares a moment for a virtuous man that, in the eyes of Rousseau, eclipses vice. Good art makes “the sacred character of virtue” triumph above “the elevation of genius.”<sup>24</sup> Tragedies like *Atrée* by Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon with Atreus, moreover, offer little of use. Atreus inspires horror and stands out only for his rage – and this makes him demand all of the attention. But just as in the case of Zopire in *Mahomet*, Rousseau does find value in the role of Thyeste. Though not a “model for virtue,” the weakness of Thyeste inspires sympathy.<sup>25</sup> Since Thyeste resembles an ordinary person more than a hero, he moves hearts and can instruct – namely, in humanity, which Rousseau thinks harmonizes with the taste of ancient authors.

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<sup>21</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

‘Sympathy,’ or ‘humanity,’ or ‘pity’ is not a virtue but rather a passion that is essential for a flourishing society.<sup>26</sup> By dwelling on it, Rousseau broadens where he sees the arts excelling.

Tragedians make their plays interesting while filling imaginations with thoughts of crime. They make their villains speak beautifully as they instruct audiences in their horrific ways. Rousseau wonders what one learns from all of this. His focus is the ethics of the entertainment. Tragedy provides amusement that harms rather than benefits, making it useless for moral improvement. But the scope of its deleterious effect is limited by its distance from everyday life.

Comedy differs from tragedy in this respect: the *moeurs* look more like those offstage and the characters resemble ordinary people. Every part of the plays strike home. Moreover, the more that comedy amuses, the more it is disastrous. Molière is the comic author *par excellence*. Though Rousseau admires his works, they are “a school of vices and bad morals [manners].”<sup>27</sup> He ridicules “goodness and simplicity” and makes “treachery and falsehood” inspire sympathy.<sup>28</sup> The goodness of sympathy depends on the recipient. A good play properly directs sympathies. The tendency of tragedy and comedy is to error by making bad characters the objects of them. This is simultaneous with excluding good characters from obtaining success.

Inviting comparison to Aristophanes, Molière executes his comedy by subjecting sacred institutions of political society to ridicule while producing laughter through his charm. He encourages vices and makes audiences applaud them without ever “making virtue loved.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> C.f. Allan Bloom, introduction to *Politics and the Arts*, xviii-xix. Bloom contrasts beneficence with the tradition founded by Hobbes, and followed by Rousseau, who juxtaposes “modern philosophy and ancient morals [manners]” (32).

<sup>27</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, 34.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 35.

Making virtue loved is the highest aim of the artist in the thought of Rousseau, even as tragedians and comedians decline to do it, most likely because it would fail to entertain a crowd. This does not stop Rousseau from challenging artists through his repeated discussion of virtue. But his harsh take on both tragedy and comedy suggests that the task belongs elsewhere. It remains an unspoken thesis that the novel might be able to accomplish what the theater cannot.<sup>30</sup>

In the *Misanthrope* (1666), the masterpiece of Molière, Rousseau identifies the comedy that above all others reveals the intentions of the author. Since he needed to please the public, Molière composed it by consulting the “general taste” and forming a model according to it.<sup>31</sup> The play presents two leading characters: a worldly man and one whose virtue makes him ridiculous. Molière makes the good man, Alceste, a subject of mockery, which Rousseau finds inexcusable. He is the misanthrope for detesting the *moeurs* of his time and the vices of contemporaries. It is as if Rousseau introduces himself into the text while describing this so-called misanthrope, who hates the evils that he notices among his fellow human beings precisely because he loves them.<sup>32</sup> The real misanthrope befriends anyone, praises viciousness, and flatters the vices which give

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<sup>30</sup> In *Rousseau as Author: Consecrating One’s Life to the Truth*, Christopher Kelly notes the vast array of literary forms tried by Rousseau in a most prolific window of his career as a writer: “academic discourses, polemical pamphlets, plays, an opera, a fairy tale, open letters, novels, a dictionary, and treatises.” (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 2. One can speculate that he transitioned from plays to novels for reasons elaborated here.

<sup>31</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, 36.

<sup>32</sup> In this section, Rousseau writes: “The name, misanthrope, must not give the false impression that the one who bears it is the enemy of humankind. Such a hatred would not be a failing but a perversion of nature, and the greatest of all vices. Since all the social virtues relate back to beneficence, nothing is so contrary to them as inhumanity” (37). Beneficence, or sympathy, or pity – Rousseau seems to use the terms interchangeably and might have also employed the word ‘compassion’ – is central to virtue in the eyes of Rousseau, if not a virtue itself.

birth to all of the disorders in society. Even as Molière portrays him as ridiculous, the virtue of Alceste inspires sympathy and pleases. The character achieves more than the author intended.

Opposite Alceste in the *Misanthrope* is Philinte. Molière tries to make him wise but the selfishness of Philinte dims his wisdom. His apathy toward mankind provokes Alceste, activating his “dominant passion ... a violent hatred of vice, born from an ardent love of virtue.”<sup>33</sup> In a comic manner, this anger of Alceste makes him contemplate the whole of the human race. These qualities make him the object of laughter – which is what Molière wants from his play. Yet it seems that Rousseau thinks that he understands the *Misanthrope* better than its author. He finds the “great and noble soul” of Alceste not silly but rather serious and worth learning from.<sup>34</sup> His judgment of the *Misanthrope*, itself a work of literary criticism, concerns more than humor. Through referring to the easy-going Philinte as a philosopher, Rousseau dares his fellow philosophers to consider whether they resemble the philosopher or the misanthrope in the play. He also wonders how an author could make an audience laugh without debasing virtue.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> “The subject of comedy is something Rousseau has given serious consideration. In *The Letter to d’Alembert*, he takes issue with Molière. He criticizes Molière for adopting the prejudices of polite society in order to succeed with it. Molière ridicules the authority and simplicity of fathers and celebrates the victory of sophisticated young lovers who have enlisted the help of servants. Furthermore, not only does Molière ridicule fathers and the pieties connected with the family, but he ridicules virtue itself. In the *Misanthrope*, he goes so far as to distort the character of real misanthropy in order to make virtue look ridiculous, but he never ridicules the fashionable or worldly man, because he is unwilling to show his audience to itself. Philinte emerges unscathed, while Alceste, the man of integrity, is made to fall in love with a coquette. Rousseau, on the other hand, like Montesquieu in *The Persian Letters* and like Muralt, himself, brings the eyes of an outsider to show Paris itself [in *Julie*]. For all of Molière’s genius and talent, he has neither an edifying surface, nor a philosophic core, because he adopted the prejudices of society as his model. The letters on Paris ridicule Molière’s model.” Mark Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization: Love, Marriage, and Family in Rousseau’s Julie* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 16.

The successors of Molière lack his genius but portray the same vices. They follow him by flattering youthful audiences without morals. The crimes portrayed win applause. Rousseau asks: How does one view these comedies without imitating the defective morality of the actors? Furthermore, as soon as authors remove the criminal dimension they lose the comic aspect. When they are only instructive, they become boring – and one may as well attend a sermon. Unlike the pulpit, the theater must entertain to stay in business, at whatever cost. This is the problem that Rousseau faces as he tries to conceive of a way to pair virtue with comedy.

After discussing tragedians and comedians, Rousseau examines the role of love in plays. He continues his case against the theater with an argument against this “dangerous passion.”<sup>36</sup> Since love is the sphere of women, or “the fair sex,” plays that present it empower them, granting the same control over audiences as over lovers.<sup>37</sup> Is this ascendancy beneficial for men? Rousseau sees the woman of virtue as the best way to the good but he does not see her on stage. He cites the Spartans who, for the modesty of women, honored them by speaking little of them.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, the contemporaries of Rousseau esteem the women most who say the most and about whom others say the most; the ones who go out the most and whom others see the most. Learned men beg for the favor of these women. In the theater, authors make women crush the men with their learning from philosophers and audiences learn from the women on stage. These remarks of Rousseau, surely disconcerting on their own to some readers, become puzzling when

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Joel Schwartz discusses the treatment of modesty in the *Lettre à d’Alembert* in *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 33-36. He argues that, in the teaching of Rousseau, “women rule by the weapon of their modesty” (36).



considering his book of letters, *Julie*, wherein a younger woman leads an older man. His introduction of modesty into the *Lettre à d'Alembert* raises the question of whether or not modesty is a virtue; and if it is, whether the virtue only belongs to women and not to men.<sup>39</sup>

The dominance of love in the theater also affects the relation between the young and old, a “perversion of natural relations” by authors that Rousseau finds reprehensible.<sup>40</sup> With lovers as the central concern, older characters play subordinate roles. They either present obstacles to lovers, making themselves detestable, or fall in love themselves, thereby becoming ridiculous. Old people do not receive the honor that they deserve, affecting their treatment in the rest of society. In Paris, the young display impudence while the old remain quiet; whereas outside of major cities, where the theater has not been established, advanced years command respect. Can the theater portray older generations without disrespecting them when love dominates? Rousseau does not think so and includes this problem among his reasons for doubting it.

Continuing his discussion of the influence of love on the theater, Rousseau considers it absurd to assume that reason necessarily governs the feelings of the heart awakened by love. Instead this experience of love can cause a loss of virtue. It depends on the character of the affected individual. Rather than supposing a universal capacity for self-government, Rousseau identifies a danger: experiences that leave lasting marks on the heart. The lover often faces a conflict between interest and duties, exemplified by the drifting, uncertain emperor in *Bérénice* (1670) by Racine. It leaves an audience grumbling at his sacrifice and wishing that passions

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<sup>39</sup> “The modesty of the female differentiates the sexes and regulates sexual desire because it is accompanied by an awareness of both love and morality. It is informed by the desire for an exclusive and permanent attachment, and is, therefore, inconsistent with the pleasures of a hedonist and the indifference of a scientist.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 6.

<sup>40</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, 50.

would overcome him. What does a play like this teach if not to go for it, or “to surmount the weaknesses of love”?<sup>41</sup> Neither does *Zaire* (1732) affect audiences by “showing the fatal consequences of immoderate passions,” teaching them to protect themselves from them, and arming them against love.<sup>42</sup> Even as the two lovers lose their lives, Voltaire still makes love attractive, seducing his spectators. There is so much power in love that the experience of it outweighs the losses that it produces. Given its power, Rousseau thinks that authors should instruct the young in particular to distrust it. They should be told to guard their virtuous hearts against objects unworthy of their attention. But the theater only makes audiences less able to resist their passions, not to restrain them.<sup>43</sup>

The effects of the theater extend beyond passions enflamed by the portrayal of lovers. First among them is the encouragement of luxury by actors whose costumes spark the taste. What is more, the habit of “going every day to the same place to forget oneself” forms *moeurs*.<sup>44</sup> The benefit or harm of the changes depends on the sort of occupation interrupted by the theater. It is good for those involved in bad occupations and bad for those involved in good ones. Rousseau suggests that a citizenry like the Genevans need no more amusements because of the pleasures already given to them by their occupations. He contrasts large cities, where a theater can distract citizens from vice, with small ones which do not need the luxurious distraction.

Through his memory of seeing the place in childhood, Rousseau revisits Neufchatel, where inhabitants live in homes on a mountain. Amidst constructing an image, he writes of the

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>43</sup> *Julie* demonstrates the dangers of love through the story of Julie and Saint-Preux.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

“tranquility of retreat and sweetness of society” enjoyed by the inhabitants – happy because of their self-sufficiency and creativity that shines in leisure, with needs kept small by moderation.<sup>45</sup> They never experience boredom because of the work that keeps them inventive and productive. They read books and display brilliance. They draw, paint, calculate, and play instruments. They do not need luxury for their happiness, dwelling instead in a charming, rustic simplicity. Rousseau could never tire of wandering among these mountain dwellers in all their uniqueness. The mountaineers symbolize the uncorrupted goodness tucked away in hidden places.<sup>46</sup>

With this sketch of Neufchatel in mind, Rousseau imagines the introduction of a theater, accompanied by five disadvantages. Labors would cease to be amusements in themselves as the new amusement undermines the taste for old ones, occupying thoughts and causing less creation; expenses for both the theater and new attire; less work that would increase the cost of goods and decrease trade as buyers turn to the nearby Swiss; the construction of roads for transportation; and the development of luxury that begins with competition among the women in fashion. Neufchatel, similar to Geneva, illustrates where virtue thrives and where a theater would ruin it. Through the artistry of his pen, Rousseau shares his love of the beauty of quaint communities, contrasting with *philosophes* who see in them a need for sophistication brought by the arts.

In *l'Encyclopédie*, d'Alembert suggested that Geneva impose laws to govern the behavior of actors, to prevent them from setting a bad example. He argues that theater and morals can coincide through legislation. Rousseau doubts whether this unprecedented union is possible. The science of the legislator concerns these questions. What would harmonize best with Genevans?

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>46</sup> “‘Neufchatel perhaps unique on earth,’ and an occasional village in the Alps, remind us what might have been. However, these outposts of uncivilized happiness are doomed by history.” Shklar, *Men And Citizens*, 22. The inhabitants of the upper Valais in *Julie* bear resemblance.

He considers Sparta to be the archetype of uniting laws and morals as well as unrepeatable. Public opinion should matter more to a government that wishes to shape good *moeurs*.

Actors and actresses receive a harsh review from Rousseau, who judges them as not “models of virtue” but rather as having bad morals, prone to disorder or living scandalous lives.<sup>47</sup> They are immoderate in their spending and slow to provide the means for their dissipation. The acting profession dishonors and receives more contempt in accord with where *moeurs* are purer. It nearly horrifies in “innocent and simple countries.”<sup>48</sup> Rousseau understands acting as intrinsically flawed, noting the low view of actors among the Romans, where Cicero pitied them. In many places, actors have been slaves or treated as such when they did not appease the public. The talent of an actor is to be what he is not, or of forgetting himself to play the role of another. The profession entails that he put himself on sale, trafficking his person in a servile manner; then, while playing a role, expose himself to the jeers of a crowd, a plaything of audiences.

Following actors, actresses are dissolute, making them another bad source for *moeurs*. Rousseau elaborates on his prior remarks about women, sharing a traditional perspective that he says comes from “the voice of reason” and nature.<sup>49</sup> He says that women only flourish in domesticity; that their dignity consists in their modesty; and that chasteness means their decency. He anticipates attacks for his opinion from the sort of philosophy that dominates in large cities, where chasteness is held to be “ignoble and base.”<sup>50</sup> Whereas in the mountains, women blush at a

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 81. “Rousseau openly addresses himself to the free and equal relations between the sexes in several places, but nowhere does he address himself to it more single-mindedly than in *The Letter to d’Alembert* and the beginning of Book V of *Emile*, where he introduces the education of Sophie.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 86.

word spoken to them, do not elevate their eyes to greet men, and keep silent before others. Rousseau wonders: “Is there a sight in the world so touching, so respectable, as that of a mother surrounded by her children, directing the work of her domestics, procuring a happy life for her husband and prudently governing the home?”<sup>51</sup> A household without its mother becomes corrupt. If a woman has married, then what does she seek among men? If not, can she protect herself? “Whatever she may do, one feels that in public she is not in her place,” continues Rousseau.<sup>52</sup> When women take on the masculine assurance of men, they abase themselves with the imitation. Ancient examples, as well as studies of inhabitants of the countryside, buttress the arguments, as has often been the case for Rousseau in the *Lettre à d’Alembert*.

Late in his discussion of the theater and its effects, Rousseau focuses on Geneva. Until this turn, he had replied to d’Alembert almost without considering the place in question. Now he views the situation of his country in relation to the founding of a theater as necessary to examine. He begins with a discussion of the happiness of Genevans, which originates in “hard work, economy, and moderation,” not wealth.<sup>53</sup> With no land to subsist by, they engage in industry. They support themselves through labor. Rousseau writes, “It seems to me that what ought first to strike every foreigner coming to Geneva is the air of life and activity which prevails there. Everyone is busy, everyone is moving, everyone is about his work and his affairs.”<sup>54</sup> While leading active lives in a vibrant economy, the citizens guard their time and hesitate to spend.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 87, 88.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 93

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Geneva contains a population of some twenty-four thousand inhabitants. Lyons, much richer and five or six times more populous, can barely find the means to support their theater. Paris is home to over six hundred thousand inhabitants and four theaters during certain seasons, yet “this meeting place of opulence and idleness” sees about one thousand spectators daily.<sup>55</sup> Areas like Bordeaux, Rouen, Lille, and Strasbourg need taxes to support a theater, while other cities much larger than Geneva fail to fund one. Rousseau encourages his readers to consider the financial obstacle along with the little size, that d’Alembert did not address in his article. Geneva is too industrious and small to attract enough spectators to support the proposed venture. The qualities that make the place unfit for a theater also account for its exceptional existence. This is the scene upon which d’Alembert and Voltaire want to bring an amusement made for the idle – an expensive spectacle that could not be financed except by the rich or through the state.

Even if Genevans overcame the practical difficulties, bringing a theater to Geneva would cause a revolution in their practices that would devastate beautiful traditions and change *moeurs*. Rousseau has in mind the circles, associations beloved for the friendships they form in leisure. They are groups of twelve to fifteen that meet often for amusements like reading and walking. Rousseau perceives “something simple and innocent” in circles that suits republican *moeurs* and thinks that they would be lost with a theater, a “great object” which would “absorb everything.”<sup>56</sup> Circles preserve ancient *moeurs* among Genevans. Members engage in serious discourse and speak about their country and virtue. They dare to be authentic, being themselves among friends. “In a word,” writes Rousseau, “these decent and innocent institutions combine everything which can contribute to making friends, citizens, and soldiers out of the same men, and, in

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 100.

consequence, everything which is most appropriate to a free people.”<sup>57</sup> He urges Genevans to save circles. They could not divide themselves between amusements like a circle and a theater.

According to Rousseau, the theater is like a tax that imposes irresistible expenditures. It burdens the poor beyond what they can afford and relieves the rich from costlier amusements. The poor throw away most of what they make while the rich hardly notice the new expense. Rousseau does not know how this is just. The poor work constantly and need relaxation. They gravitate toward the recreations of the idle, increasing expenses and lessening their zeal for work. Since the theater requires payment, it promotes and increases “the inequality of fortunes.”<sup>58</sup> Inequality must have its limits in any political community but especially a republic like Geneva.

A theater would direct the tastes of Genevans toward unsuitable things. How does tragedy, which portrays “tyrants and heroes,” relate to Genevans?<sup>59</sup> Should they become them? Tragedies portray greatness and power. What end does this serve? Does it make Genevans great or powerful? What does one gain from studying the responsibilities of kings on stage while neglecting duties offstage? How will the virtues portrayed in the theater affect the way Genevans perceive “the simple and modest virtues which make the good citizen”?<sup>60</sup> Will the theater make them more virtuous? Comedy brings the ridiculousness of others to the stage instead of curing audiences of it. It suggests that they should not despise vices. How is this good for Genevans?

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Rousseau writes, “What! Plato banished Homer from his republic and we will tolerate Molière in ours!”<sup>61</sup> His call for censorship originates at least in part in the political philosophy of Plato.<sup>62</sup>

Focusing on the heroes of Racine, Rousseau deepens his critique of the theater: it gives men over to softness and love, which make them effeminate and lessens their taste for duties. The theater elevates tenderness about all. It is the “great virtue” that becomes dearest.<sup>63</sup> Dangerous in its excesses, love takes on a mask of virtue and men become seduced by it. They descend from lovers into corrupters without morals, all while pretending to pursue virtue. Rousseau thus pairs his praise of female modesty with an argument for male masculinity while continuing a persistent condemnation of love and its portrayal by the leading artists of the stage.

In the concluding section of the *Lettre à d’Alembert*, a work explicitly addressed to d’Alembert but also written for “the public,” Rousseau contends that all innovations carry with them danger for Genevans.<sup>64</sup> Therefore their consideration deserves extreme care. Has the republic of Geneva transformed so much that it simply could not survive without a theater? Rousseau sees it as a much different, more serious, form of entertainment than most in Geneva. While other amusements divert audiences then become forgotten the next day, the establishment of a theater is of such consequence that the government should give its attention to it. He sees the effects of the theater as irremediable; they alter *moeurs*, change tastes, and corrupt civic health.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> C.f. Bloom, introduction, xxi: “The only preparation for the writing of this book which we know Rousseau to have done is that he made a paraphrase of Book X of Plato’s *Republic*, and its influence on the text is evident.”

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 123.



The pleasures of Genevans, their “innocent pleasures,” would lose their charm to it forever.<sup>65</sup>  
The people would become bored in the absence of the actors until the shows resumed again.

It is not that there should be no entertainments in a republic. There should be many. Rousseau writes: “It is in republics that they were born, it is in their bosom that they are seen to flourish with a truly festive air. To what peoples is it more fitting to assemble often and form among themselves sweet bonds of pleasure and joy...?”<sup>66</sup> He would like to see more festivals. Rather than closing themselves in, happy citizens should celebrate in the open air, under the sky. Rousseau contrasts the “innocent entertainments” beneath the sun and the darkness of the theater.<sup>67</sup> The prospering of festivals makes the citizens more likely to love their obligations. Within the summer festivals, he writes of bodily exercises like running as well as boat racing. In the winter, absent festivals, he endorses balls: “I have never understood why people are so worried about dancing and the gatherings it occasions, as if there were something worse about dancing than singing, as if these amusements were not both equally amusements of nature....”<sup>68</sup> Rousseau celebrates the amusements that already flourish in Geneva without a theater. He also presents the festivals of the Spartans as a model to imitate because of their patriotism. Rousseau seeks to protect the “solid happiness” of Genevans which “vain pleasures” destroy.<sup>69</sup> He wishes for the perpetuation of “the virtues, the liberty, and the peace” of their republic.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 127, 128.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Out of a sense of duty to his homeland, Rousseau confronts questions of leisure. How should republican citizens spend free time? What spectacles merit attention? Rousseau thinks that the choice of activity matters. Some amusements drag citizens away from their lives in way that harms them, while others lend support. Rousseau dares artists to consider the effects of their artistry on audiences and to rise above the temptation to adorn vice. A few locations across space and time appear like flowers to him in the desert of modernity, worthy of artistic representation. Protecting those rare places that still live means distrusting change. The *Lettre à d'Alembert* succeeded in the purpose of preventing Geneva from constructing a theater. For readers far removed from there, it is a great reflection on the relation between politics and the arts.

## Chapter 2

### “[S]weet liquor”<sup>71</sup>: The Poetic Presentation of Rousseau’s *Julie*

Since philosophy usually assumes the form of a treatise, it is unusual to encounter a novel that has been written by a philosopher. Such an occurrence invites the investigation of possible reasons for the undertaking, especially if they have been given. After primarily penning discourses and letters, Rousseau adopted the creation of characters in literature.<sup>72</sup> “Conversation about Novels” is the title of the second preface to the first novel by Rousseau: *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse: Lettres de Deux Amans, Habitans d’une petite Ville au pied des Alpes* (1761). It is a fictional dialogue between a character who represents Rousseau, R., and an interlocutor by the name of N. that aims to illuminate the strategy of the book. Even before the beginning of *Julie* and its world of imagination, Rousseau chooses a dialogic method to communicate his thought. He makes his distinctiveness as a stylist serve as a gateway at every turn, while understanding himself as a physician bringing sweetened medicine to modernity.

Before the fiction of the “Conversation,” Rousseau includes a first preface with *Julie*.<sup>73</sup> The opening passage indicates, or pretends to indicate, his reluctance with publishing the novel: “Great cities must have theaters; and corrupt peoples, Novels. I have seen the morals of my times, and I have published these letters. Would I had lived in an age when I should have thrown

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<sup>71</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>72</sup> C.f. Christopher Kelly, “Taking Readers as They Are: Rousseau’s Turn from Discourses to Novels,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, no. 1 (Fall 1999): [85-101]. Kelly argues that Rousseau’s knowledge of the dominance of human passions led him to fuse philosophy with the novel.

<sup>73</sup> Elizabeth Rose Wingrove refers to the opening prefaces as “factual ‘imaginings.’” *Rousseau’s Republican Romance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 102.

them into the fire!”<sup>74</sup> *Julie* is a response to what Rousseau perceives as corruption in his time. It may not have been necessary in other times or places beyond his eighteenth century Europe – a century of the Enlightenment and the enlightener’s hopes of transformation. Rousseau continues his counter-Enlightenment enterprise initiated by the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750) and characterized by the rebirth and revision of ancient ideals of virtue and a virtuous citizenry. By writing that the novel “will be unnatural to those who do not believe in virtue,” he signals his major concern.<sup>75</sup> He chooses love letters – *Lettres de Deux Amans* – for his grand ambition. There is something unique about novels that makes them most effective for changing minds or moving hearts among the audience that Rousseau wishes to sway with his pen. Their composition, beginning with *Julie*, becomes part of the duties of his philosophic life.

The self-understanding of Rousseau as a philosopher who doubles as an artist out of a sense of responsibility does not mean that other philosophers will understand his efforts. Rousseau predicts, or pretends to predict, that his style will not appeal to many readers, including “the philosophers.”<sup>76</sup> His project differs from his peers in its aims and in its poetic presentation. He is speaking a common language, not the language commonly employed by academicians. He is painting a picture of “solitary youths” with “romantic imaginations,” not one of philosophers.<sup>77</sup> A new path has been forged with *Julie*, one that the author expects will mystify contemporaries. But should Rousseau be taken seriously with his downplaying? Or is he being

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<sup>74</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 3.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

ironic? Perhaps, within the preface, he is speaking directly to his fellow philosophers precisely through his irony. Its contents suggest that its aim is to make readers think, not to be entirely truthful. It is a novel but it also philosophy. The editor of the preface unconvincingly denies its philosophic dimension. On the contrary, he thinks that the letters are more suited to women in particular – apparently his central focus – than “books of philosophy.”<sup>78</sup>

Whereas one editor speaks in the first preface, two characters speak in the second.<sup>79</sup> Whereas Rousseau anticipates doubts about his book in the first preface, he articulates doubt through one of his characters to begin the second. A Notice attached to the “Conversation About Novels Between the Editor and a Man of Letters” promises that it will give “the purpose” of the writing.<sup>80</sup> It prepares the way for understanding an underappreciated book by Rousseau.

In the “Conversation,” N. is a skeptic for whom R. attempts to elucidate *Julie*.<sup>81</sup> N. hesitates to judge the letters after reading the manuscript without knowing if they are fiction. They might be portraits, in which case they would appeal to few readers; or they might be an imaginative tableaux, in which case the characters fail to share qualities common to mankind. N. assumes that a work of fiction cannot portray admirable characters who may not be ordinary but

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> The “language mistakes” and other faults emphasized by the editor to make *Julie* seem less serious than it is resembles the act played by Socrates in the *Apology* of Plato to intimate that his defense speech before the jury had been haphazardly thrown together (3; 17a-d).

<sup>80</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 5.

<sup>81</sup> “In *Julie*’s second preface he is scripting a dialogue, featuring himself not as the novel’s author but as the letters’ editor, who wants to believe that [the characters] are authentic but has his doubts, and yet who is quite sure they speak the truth.” Wingrove, *Republican Romance*, 170.

whose image inspires virtue; they can only present familiar kinds of people.<sup>82</sup> Supposing that it is indeed fiction, and not a portrait, N. calls it a bad piece of work because “the characters are people from the other world,” to which R. replies he is “sorry for this one.”<sup>83</sup> N. does not recognize the authors of the letters in *Julie*, as if they come from an alien world. His disagreement with R. concerns nothing less than the kinds of people that there are on earth. It illustrates contrary opinions held by R. and N. about human nature.

How much does humanity vary? How often do *moeurs* bend with different times or places? What limits does nature exact on human beings? Who can say how far they can go? R. poses these questions about human possibilities for N., daring him to consider new heights. Where R. sees potential, N. only sees monsters or giants – a fantasy world, not nature. N. conveys a lowered view of human life shared by Enlightenment philosophers or *philosophes*, repeating that in a tableaux, everyone must recognize the characters as being like themselves. But N. only sees human figures with veils when he reads *Julie*, not recognizable faces. Meanwhile, R. has not made his characters appear perfect, even as he has been accused of this. He notes the imperfections of his characters, spotlighting one after another. It is the character of Monsieur de Wolmar who seems to especially bother N. Where R. sees beautiful souls, as in Wolmar, N. sees impossible beings. So R. cries, “O Philosophy! what trouble thou dost take to

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<sup>82</sup> Judith Shklar underscores the ordinariness of the characters in *Julie* rather than their virtue: “Rousseau made it very clear that the absence of any startling events and the very unexceptional simplicity of the characters in his novel were of utmost importance to him. Its whole force rests on their normalcy and the typical character of their victimhood.” *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 89, 90.

<sup>83</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 7.

shrink hearts, to make men little!”<sup>84</sup> Modern philosophy has created N. Rousseau brings a new philosophy, first articulated in his prior writings, through the least expected genre.

N. renders his leading critique of *Julie* to R. in a word: it is boring. There is no wickedness to loom as threatening to the good. Everything is simple and nothing surprises. He questions the value of portraying events that anyone could see in their own home or a neighbor’s. R. identifies this fundamental difference: he would prefer extraordinary characters and ordinary events in literature, while N. prefers ordinary characters and extraordinary events. N. deepens his criticism of *Julie*: it is stilted, profuse, too affectionate, bombastic, senseless, inaccurate, indiscriminate, forceless and shallow, with “[d]iction that is always in the clouds, and thoughts that forever crawl on the ground.”<sup>85</sup> It fails to portray nature because it seems unnatural. Given that Rousseau sets these remarks in the pen of his character N., he must wish for his readers to encounter the arguments that could conceivably be delivered against him. R. admits that, from a certain perspective, he understands how things would seem to someone like N. There may be some truth in the things that N. says. It may also be true that Rousseau writes not for N. or someone like him but rather for another kind of reader whom he alone knows how to reach. He chooses his style for reasons that become increasingly apparent.

*Julie* receives more disapproval in the “Conversation” because of what is supposedly absent from the text. It displays “no knowledge of the world” or life in cities, claims N.<sup>86</sup> Rousseau does not flatter this portion of the population, focusing on countryside regions instead. He seems to believe that citizens of a place like Paris could learn from life in a place like Vevey.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

It could be that Parisians would only begin to think seriously about or even admire places beyond the ones they inhabit by reading a novel by a celebrated author like Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Through getting to know the characters, they could gain respect for their different way of living.

And a careful reading would reveal that *Julie* does in fact feature cities and knowledge of urban life with thoughts written between the lines. Yet N. can only ask R., “What does one learn in the small sphere of two or three Lovers or Friends constantly wrapped up in themselves?”<sup>87</sup> R.

replies, “One learns to love mankind. In large circles one learns only to hate mankind.”<sup>88</sup>

Rousseau therein reveals an aim of his novel: to make his readers love humanity. He shows places where natural goodness still lives, if only skeptics would have the sight to see.<sup>89</sup>

After the harsh review by N., R. shares how he sees the letters that he has composed. He starts by saying that his characters live in seclusion, giving them a different way of seeing and feeling than if they lived within a city. Solitude affects the passions, modifying their expression; the imagination, because it encounters the same objects, so those objects become more vivid; and language, by making conversation repetitious. The speech of *solitaires* is extraordinary because it is sincere, without the need to speak better than others as is the case in the world. Moreover, while love may be depicted more vividly in cities, it is better felt in the country. R. compares the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> “[*Julie*] was born of love and emotion; the characters and the setting came before the plot, which gradually took shape as they wrote to each other. Their purity of soul was of a piece with the idyllic nature of the Swiss landscape. Virtue itself is not a gift of nature: it requires will, it is a kind of heroism that overcomes obstacles; but one can be *unspoiled* in places where city vice has not yet penetrated, and thus be made to love virtue.” Philip Stewart, introduction to *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), ix-x.



letter that has been written by a typical author in his study with a true lover: the former tries to impress but leaves no lasting mark, the latter melts the soul of the reader. Rousseau understands his letters as authentic and moving because they imitate true passion. They convey beauty in a way that “fancy jargon” that feels nothing does not comprehend.<sup>90</sup>

R. maintains a distance from the experience of love, even as he writes elegantly about it. His characters are lovers because bewitchment charms. The love story is a passageway to the philosophy of Rousseau. His own views convey sober skepticism: “Love is but illusion; it fashions for itself, so to speak, another Universe; it surrounds itself with objects that do not exist, or to which it alone has given being ....”<sup>91</sup> R. continues: “When passion is at the full, it perceives its object as perfect; makes it into its idol; places it in Heaven; and just as the enthusiasm of devoutness borrows the language of love, so does the enthusiasm of love borrow also the language of devoutness.”<sup>92</sup> Love is like religion; or religion is like love. They seem to arise out of the same longings so that they can be grasped together. They speak to the same hopes. This comparison made by R. indicates the power of the rhetoric of Rousseau. The words that he employs in *Julie* could be mistaken for hymns. This is one way in which they are beautiful.

The letters that comprise *Julie* are also powerful on account of their authors’ authenticity. They write for one another without trying to impress. “They live in solitude,” so who can expect them to know the affairs of “the world and society”?<sup>93</sup> One sentiment occupies their simple lives.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 11.

Through opening up, or by making their inner lives known, the characters become endearing. R. finds more worth in the errors of authentic individuals than in the learning of sages. He understands virtue as sincerity: revealing oneself as one truly is. Knowing one another intimately, the characters detach themselves from everything else. The novel is like a new world.

When N. considers the whole of *Julie*, he likes the latter half, with its stable domesticity, while wondering why the beginning and its “childish games” – the love affair – is necessary.<sup>94</sup> He sees evil first then good second and asks R. why he could not have made a subtraction. It is here that Rousseau, through the mouthpiece of his interlocutor, unveils his rhetorical strategy. “To make what you have to say useful, first you have to get the attention of those who ought to put it to use,” R. says.<sup>95</sup> The letters of two lovers and their friends serve as an inviting instrument that shines for the eyes of readers. Rousseau can only be useful if he is appealing. His means have changed but not his purpose. They have shifted only after evaluating what is necessary, i.e., adapting to the style that would earn the concentration of the most readers. R. understands himself as giving medicine (“naked reason”) to children (the majority of mankind).<sup>96</sup> His is a popular ambition, not one only for philosophers; so he writes in accord with the style in vogue among the likes of Pierre Marivaux, Charles Duclos, Claude Crébillon, and Samuel Richardson. R. quotes from *Jerusalem Delivered* by Tasso to set forth his approach:

Cosí a l'egro fanciul porgiamo aspers  
Di soavi licor gl'orli del vaso:  
Succhi amari ingannato intanto ei beve

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 12. Wingrove notes that readers of *Julie* have seen it as “two distinct stories”: the “love story, told in terms of youthful excess” precedes a story about “the virtues of domesticity” ... “the charm and transports of erotic love” precede “the moral rectitude of conjugal piety.” *Republican Romance*, 110.

<sup>95</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 12.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

E da l'inganno suo vita riceve.

Just so, in order to get a sick child to take medicine  
are we accustomed to rubbing the edge of the vessel  
with some sweet liquor.  
He nonetheless swallows that bitter liquid,  
and obtains his cure from the deception we have perpetrated.<sup>97</sup>

R. does not go so far as to use the word “evil” to summarize the first parts of his novel. Instead, with a view to Tasso, he refers to a “sweet liquor” that deceptively covers over the teaching.

What if readers taste the edge of the vessel without swallowing the bitter liquid? In other words: what if they read the beginning but do not make their way forward until the very end? When N. raises this objection, R. revises his understanding of the effects of reading *Julie*. The letters may not immediately engage; they take time to win readers over toward loving them. But where they lack in reason, wit, and elegance – so he says – they abound in sentiment. The novel gradually affects “the heart.”<sup>98</sup> It gathers momentum with the succession of the letters. Enough sweetness has been applied to seduce readers to drink. Once they do, they will not stop.

In the tranquil solitude of Montmorency, Rousseau undertook his composition of *Julie*. He was a *solitaire* writing about other *solitaires*. “N.” sees this solitary status as a disadvantage, because “a man living in the world” could not accustom himself to “the extravagant ideas.”<sup>99</sup> What originated in some forest could not succeed in the city, where N. finds “the public.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.; C.f. Lucretius, *De rerum natura* (I, 926-950; IV, 10-26).

<sup>98</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 12.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 13.

Unless R. wrote like Cervantes, N. says his “six volumes of visions” would not be read.<sup>101</sup> What is fitting in the country may not be fitting for a place like Paris.

The possibility of affecting readers in cities through the distribution of books does face obstacles from the point of view of R. He concedes the argument to N. with more reasons. City dwellers leaf through an abundance of books, so adding another one hardly makes a difference. And the books “find readers linked to social vices by chains that they cannot break.”<sup>102</sup> No matter what journey they take, every reading experience finds readers back at their first position. R. adds: “The further one gets from the bustle, from great cities, from large gatherings, the smaller the obstacles become. There is a point where these obstacles cease to be insurmountable, and that is where books can be of some use.”<sup>103</sup> Liberated from obstacles, deep meditation that facilitates careful and sustained reading occurs far from cities, where Rousseau sets his sights.

Books leave a lasting impression in the countryside. To combat the problem of boredom, more novels are read in provinces than in Paris. But for these reasons they can be dangerous for provincial inhabitants who come into contact with ways of life in books that seem designed to make them despise their less exciting lives. Exposure to luxury makes them less enthusiastic about simplicity. When novels show “false virtues” instead of “genuine ones,” they undermine certain ways of life.<sup>104</sup> “R.” has written for the country more so than the city. He asserts the futility of changing thinking or living in cities with shocking forthrightness.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Rousseau uses similar language in the opening passage of *Du contrat social* (1762).

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 14.

Considering all that R. says in this “Conversation about Novels” to denounce large cities and their praise by “Authors, Men of Letters, [and] Philosophers,” the defense of both solitude and rural life are part of his teaching that the novel aims to bring forward.<sup>105</sup> Within this defense given in the dialogue, R. makes a challenging claim about where human beings flourish most. Nothing less than “[h]uman happiness” is at stake.<sup>106</sup> The place where one resides affects the ability to be virtuous. Place determines how one reads and how one lives.

The teaching that Rousseau offers in *Julie* receives a fuller elaboration through N. instead of R. It shows that N. has absorbed the thinking of R. and is able to synthesize what he has heard. R. has been effective in articulating the authorial vision. N. describes the aim of the work, or what R. wishes to encourage: “set aside everything artificial; bring everything back to nature; give men the love of a regular and simple life; cure them of the whims of opinion; restore their taste for true pleasures; make them love solitude and peace....”<sup>107</sup> N. also includes the observation of geography: R. wishes for readers to spread across territories instead of always moving to cities, so that they may know the pleasures of rusticity. Men and women can lead lives as fulfilling in the country as they would find in cities. Finally, sincerity creates “a more agreeable society” in the former, whereas the latter can be inauthentic.<sup>108</sup> This dialogue is an introduction to the message that Rousseau communicates through the imagery and discourse of his romantic novel. He lets the whole of it unfold as he tells a story that illustrates as it entertains.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid. “Rousseau’s declared message in the *Nouvelle Héloïse* was to encourage those who were capable of it to flee from the society of fantasies and opinion, and to regain a taste for the pleasures of simple rural life.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 87.

<sup>106</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 15.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

It has been said that novels trouble the minds of readers because they only portray “pretended charms,” not things in ordinary surroundings.<sup>109</sup> This tendency in literature makes readers despise their own lives while they wish for others that they encounter in their stories. The consequence among the ones who try to be what they are not is a drift toward madness. Novels can therefore be quite dangerous. They are not always a merely innocent form of amusement. They can hold a power over the human imagination that transforms how readers think about life. After articulating these characteristics of novels, R. declares, “If Novels offered their Readers only tableaux of objects that surround them, only duties they can fulfill, only pleasures of their own station, Novels would not make them mad, they would make them wise.”<sup>110</sup> R. evaluates the purpose of the novel. *Julie* could be useful if it differs from the standard model, beginning with speaking the language of *solitaires* to please them and engage them, then combating and destroying the maxims of large cities. But this kind of novel would only receive scorn from the most sophisticated corners. Critics would regard such a book as ridiculous. The author would need to rise above the pressures of public opinion to write what is truly good.

The difficulty with writing literature that makes provincials love their own places is that cities judge things first and determine what everyone else will most likely read, N. contends. *Julie*, with its primary location in Vevey and Clarens, would not pass through Parisian judges. R. disagrees: there is a greater separation between Paris and provinces than N. understands. The majority of France does not even know that Parisian intellectuals like N. exist. Books that fail in Paris can indeed succeed elsewhere. Furthermore, R. has an aim N. might not realize: “When

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

one aspires to glory, it is essential to be read in Paris; when one only wants to be useful, it is essential to be read in the provinces.”<sup>111</sup> It is his professed preference for utility over glory that makes R. confident in his novel.<sup>112</sup> It will do well by appealing to a broader landscape.

Many people in the “distant countryside” spend evenings without company and with books by the fire for their entertainment.<sup>113</sup> According to R., “In their coarse simplicity, they have pretensions neither to literature nor to wit; they read to fight boredom and not to learn; books of morality and philosophy are for them as if they did not exist: it would be futile to make any such books for them; they would never get them.”<sup>114</sup> R. has these readers in mind for *Julie*. By writing a treatise, or even an overly didactic novel, he would lose the audience that he wishes to attract. By writing entertaining fiction, he meets readers where they are. But R. does not only wish to entertain. He wants to do more than distract readers for a few hours with words that make them bitter toward their situation or cause them to spend months longing for another life that they have seen in books. By showing them the pleasures of an estate like theirs, R. wishes to lend support to the lives of “Inhabitants of the fields.”<sup>115</sup> Continuing with his vision, R. says, “I like to picture a husband and wife reading this collection together, finding in it a source of renewed courage to bear their common labors, and perhaps new perspectives to make them

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>112</sup> It is reasonable to doubt Rousseau here. In the *Premier Discourse*, he writes of philosophers who “raise monuments to the glory of the human intellect,” surely referring to himself as much as anyone. (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *First Discourse*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 63.

<sup>113</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 16.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

useful.”<sup>116</sup> By reading *Julie*, R. hopes that this husband and wife will feel not dispirited but rather encouraged, for “everything around them will take on a more cheerful outlook.”<sup>117</sup> They will learn to see their happiness with new vision, as it were, fulfilling the same functions with changed souls.

How can one judge *Julie*? What determines whether it is good literature? R. refers to the standard for judgment held by Julie herself: “I for one have no other manner of judging my Readings than to sound the dispositions in which they leave my soul, and I scarcely imagine what sort of goodness a book can possess when it does not lead its readers to do good.”<sup>118</sup> *Julie* is more than a fictional story. Through the indirection of its poetry, it attempts to produce a certain moral outcome. Making readers do good is the objective and the test of its efficacy. Rousseau understands himself as a philosopher with an interest in the welfare of mankind. He wants to achieve a sweeping influence, helping a great number of readers. The publishing success of *Julie* thus serves as another measure for judging it.<sup>119</sup>

R. seems to narrow the intended audience of *Julie*: he claims that it is not for children. Girls in particular play no role in societal disorders so they do not require a healing education. The exception is youth who have experienced the “despotism of fathers,” causing vices to

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid. Wingrove refers to the effect on husbands and wives as “a model of transgendered impressionability whose benefits include the invigoration of virtue and the ‘rebirth’ of nature’s ‘true sentiments’ in both their hearts....” *Republican Romance*, 104.

<sup>117</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 17.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>119</sup> “*Julie* became one of the greatest international publishing successes in the eighteenth century, with scores of editions, and the English translation itself went through fifteen editions before it withered on the vine in 1812.” Stewart, introduction to *Julie*, x.



arise.<sup>120</sup> “If there is some reform to attempt in public morals,” says R., “it must begin with domestic morals, and that depends absolutely on fathers and mothers.”<sup>121</sup> R. primarily writes for parents. But he modifies his view: “In times of epidemics and contagion, when everyone is infected from infancy, should one prevent the sale of drugs beneficial to the sick, under the pretext that they could harm the healthy?”<sup>122</sup> Because he lives in the midst of a poisoned civilization, everyone, including some children, could benefit from reading *Julie*. It is a book for all of humanity.

At least one shift by Rousseau transpires in between the *Lettre à d’Alembert* and *Julie*. After he suggested a subdued role for women, he empowers his heroine, Julie, within the novel. He makes her seem like an equal if not a superior to her older and more educated lover and tutor. N. observes this change and applauds R. for causing it since she is “an excellent Preacher.”<sup>123</sup> “I am delighted to see you reconciled with women,” N. tells R. with a hint of humor.<sup>124</sup> Both the mind and heart of Julie shine in the letters. Her writings reveal an exemplary person. R. leaves it to critics to decipher his meaning, as if he welcomes the spark of controversy. Because he makes N. broach the issue with R., he indicates that he does want readers to consider it. He essentially encourages them to ask: What is the view of the author toward the place of women in society?

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<sup>120</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 17.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

It is the opinion of N. that some of the more erotic scenes in *Julie*, which he refers to as “the lively situations and impassioned sentiments,” would not pass the censors of the theater.<sup>125</sup> He wonders how R. can justify this aspect of his novel. First R. refers N. to the *Lettre à d’Alembert* and the preface to *Narcissus* (1753). In that preface, Rousseau argues that some amusements can distract people from wickedness, turning them from more dangerous things. They must be kept busy and they must be entertained.<sup>126</sup> Romantic novels can serve this function if they succeed in capturing the attention of readers. They must appeal if they hope to distract.

R. then repeats a sentiment that Rousseau had written in the first preface of *Julie*: “Oh! Would I had been born in an age when I ought rather have thrown this collection into the fire.”<sup>127</sup> He writes as he does out of sheer necessity. N. comes to understand that if Julie “had always been virtuous, she would have been less instructive; for to whom would she serve as a model?”<sup>128</sup> He adds: “It is in the most depraved ages that people like lessons of the most perfect morality. That allows them not to practice them; and one satisfies at little cost, with some idle reading, a remnant of taste for virtue.”<sup>129</sup> Authors who wish to seriously engage readers must bring their characters down to earth if they want anyone to imitate them, replies R. In the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Preface to *Narcissus*,” translated by Victor Gourevitch, in *The First and Second Discourses together with the Replies to Critics* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1986), 109.

<sup>127</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 19.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

formulation of N., they must show what people do to show “what they ought to do.”<sup>130</sup> This is a way in which Rousseau sweetens the story: by unfolding his teaching in the midst of a romance.

At the moment of the “Conversation,” the speakers live in a unique time, according to R. It is one “when it isn’t possible for anyone to be good.”<sup>131</sup> Nature has made men but institutions have spoiled them. The characters in *Julie*, however, share a goodness rarely beheld on earth. They are luminaries for contemporaries who have been created by the imagination of Rousseau. They are not perfect; but their imperfection make them more real and likely to be useful. Through the “Conversation” and the preface that precedes it, Rousseau introduces *Julie*. He does so more effectively with a dialogue – an imagined conversation that introduces the drama of the philosophic novel. As he concludes, “it is better than what I would have said on my own.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 22.

### Chapter 3

#### “[T]he flames of love”<sup>133</sup>: Two Lovers Seek Happiness in Part I of *Julie*

*Julie* is a novel about romantic love; but it is not necessarily an endorsement of it. In Part I, the two lovers who live in a small town at the foot of the Alps – Saint-Preux and Julie – struggle with combining the dominating experience of love with the duties of political society. Julie is forbidden from satisfying her feelings by a father concerned with the protection of honor; and Saint-Preux, since he is not a noble, offends the father’s honor and the honor of his daughter. While portraying “[t]he flames of love” throughout the opening of the text, Rousseau casts doubt on whether love like this is good, given the storms of emotion that consume the lovers. Ecstasy and despair fill their prose; it is often gushy and even comical.<sup>134</sup> But Part I is not only a critique of romance. Rousseau employs the letters as a vehicle to explore the deepest questions, such as the nature of a good education, the existence of divinity, and most prominently, the meaning of happiness. A careful reading of *Julie* – which requires long and patient engagement, unlike the theater, criticized in the *Lettre à d’Alembert* – reveals a book of political philosophy.

Letter I opens the first part of the novel with a sense of regret and admission of confusion as Saint-Preux seeks the counsel of Julie. Her mother had invited him to become her tutor; and Saint-Preux accepted the offer without foreseeing the danger that would present itself to him. Happiness has been stripped from him. He desires that the happiness of Julie not suffer as well.

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<sup>133</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 59.

<sup>134</sup> Is the sincerity of the love letters of *Julie* charming or ridiculous? In the Second Preface R. or Rousseau indicates that he tried to appeal to a certain kind of reader who would feel charmed by the letters and who needed the teaching that he waits to provide them until the latter parts. Without the beginning, they would not keep reading. N. represents a different kind of reader who ridicules the start and would likely not have the patience to read or benefit from the finish.

From the outset of *Julie*, within the discussion of romance, happiness appears as a major theme.<sup>135</sup> What kind of human relations make a person happy? Romantic love is not an end in itself but rather a means for experiencing a happy life; so when it causes unhappiness, its value becomes suspect. Rousseau immediately throws the affair into question.

Seeing Julie on a daily basis makes Saint-Preux hurt more, he admits to her in Letter I. But how could he abandon his duties to her? How could he share his feelings with her mother? His “station and fortune” forbid him from aspiring toward Julie but he feels unable to forget her.<sup>136</sup> He asks her to show his letter to her parents, which would surely lead to his dismissal from her, since he feels unable to leave her by himself. He describes the charms that attract him: not the physical attributes of Julie but rather her moral virtues:

It is that touching combination of such lively sensibility and unfailing gentleness, it is that tender pity for all the sufferings of others, it is that sound judgment and exquisite taste that draw their purity from the soul’s own, it is, in a word, the attractions of the sentiments far more than those of the person that I worship in you.<sup>137</sup>

Saint-Preux even suggests that Julie lacks beauty, which does not stop her from being loveable. His love for her extends beyond superficial appearances to her character or soul.

Saint-Preux wonders if Heaven has given him similar characteristics to Julie in Letter I. He therefore questions whether or not a higher Being orchestrates certain human circumstances. He continues that he and Julie enjoy a natural goodness: “Still so young, we possess all of nature’s penchants undistorted, and all our inclinations seem to coincide. Not having yet

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<sup>135</sup> “On the centrality of happiness to his thought, see Arthur Melzer’s *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau’s Thought* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), ix.

<sup>136</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 25.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

acquired the uniform prejudices of the world, we have uniform ways of feeling and seeing, and why should I not dare imagine in our hearts the same accord I perceive in our opinions?”<sup>138</sup>

Because they have not been immersed in “the world,” but rather live in Vevey, Switzerland, they have been protected from dangerous prejudices. Saint-Preux thus intimates that living away from too much activity protects a human being from harm – an early position in favor of the village. He repeats the suspicion that Heaven has destined them to be together, or reveals his hope. He writes, “the intensity of my desires lend to their object the possibility it is wanting,” indicating the challenge of clear sight posed by the passions.<sup>139</sup>

Comparing his love to poison, Saint-Preux wants to “mend or die,” he writes in Letter I.<sup>140</sup> He cannot continue living in his current situation, just as a person cannot survive taking poison. He darkens the picture of his desires. This is not an innocent situation but rather a lethal one. Moreover, he has lost his reason, which has been replaced by a disorder caused by his love. He presents himself as a player in games with treacherous consequences. He depicts himself as

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. “*La Nouvelle Héloïse* begins with a confession of love from a twenty-year-old boy to an eighteen-year-old girl. It is a classic case of love at first sight. He has been tutoring her for ten months, and, although they have kept silent, their hearts have understood something of each other’s. But he must finally speak because he finds his condition intolerable. He wishes to be cured of his love, or, to die.” Mark Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization: Love, Marriage, and Family in Rousseau’s Julie* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 74.

consumed by a delirium and in a position of alienation.<sup>141</sup> He suffers as an “unhappy man.”<sup>142</sup> Romantic love appears in this opening letter not as a joy for the lover but rather as a tragedy, setting a harrowing tone for the whole novel and its focus on matters of the heart.

Silence from Julie haunts Saint-Preux in Letter II. It seems cruel and like coldness to him. He conveys desperation, a glaring neediness that prevents him from being happy without her. Employing political language, he says that Julie reigns over his heart like a ruler over a subject. He accepts his unhappiness as the price to pay for his boldness, for telling the truth with courage. Whatever Julie dictates – whether it be silence, banishment from her, or death – he will obey. Saint-Preux writes, “There is no command to which I will not agree, except to love you no more: and even in this I would obey you, if there was a way to do so.”<sup>143</sup> He has lost his freedom in his subservience to Julie. She controls him, he concedes to her. In his portrait of this young lover, Rousseau provokes questions. Is such a sacrifice worth it? Does Saint-Preux have a choice?

When he began to love Julie, he could not foresee the afflictions he would cause himself, Saint-Preux writes in Letter III, after the two vulnerable and unanswered letters that preceded it. He perceives that Julie has not liked the message of the letters, judging by her recent behavior. This troubles Saint-Preux, since her abiding happiness matters more to him than his own. Reflection on himself causes him to realize his fate: “And yet when I think back on myself, I

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<sup>141</sup> “This term (*aliénation*) has very strong connotations both for the psychology of love and for the preceptor’s mentality; for while it captures the obsession of first love, another of its meanings is insanity.” Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part I,” in *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, vol. 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), Note 4, 659. Rousseau, *Julie*, 27.

<sup>142</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 27.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

begin to discover how greatly I had misjudged my own heart, and to see too late that what I had first taken for a transient delirium will determine my lifelong destiny.”<sup>144</sup> His quest for self-knowledge makes him realize the permanent dependence on Julie that he will always experience. He refers to his beloved as “divine Julie.”<sup>145</sup> She is not only his ruler but also his goddess. This religious language suggests that falling in love and worshipping God arise out of a similar need, perhaps out of a longing for eternity and the comforts that this hope or belief brings with it. Saint-Preux suggests that “he who cannot achieve happiness can at least be deserving of it,” indicating that he hopes that someday he might be worthy of consideration by Julie.<sup>146</sup> He expresses a concern for justice in the context of not wishing Julie to suffer a loss of peace, a concern that adds a further political dimension to his letters.

After a brief correspondence of notes, Julie replies to Saint-Preux with Letter IV. Confessing her love for Saint-Preux, she fears a loss of honor. She writes, “Alas! I have been too true to my word; is there a death more cruel than outliving honor?”<sup>147</sup> Honor is what Julie values, whereas Saint-Preux is more concerned about the suffering that the budding romance has caused. Julie has lost the ability of self-government, “Drawn by degrees into the snares of a vile seducer, I see the horrible precipice into which I am hurtling without being able to stop myself.”<sup>148</sup> As she

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 31. “... in crucial respects – namely, those that pertain to the social-sexual order that St. Preux and Julie represent – he is in control of this affair from its inception: because he can safely assume Julie’s desire, he can fairly assume her consent, and what she stands to lose is not the integrity of her will but the mark of her honor.” Elizabeth Rose Wingrove, *Rousseau’s Republican Romance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 116, 117.

<sup>148</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 31.



falls, she blames Saint-Preux for dishonoring her. She did not wish for this development to arise: “I valued modesty and honesty; I was happy cultivating them in a simple and laborious life. What good to me were efforts which Heaven rejected?”<sup>149</sup> Saint-Preux sees Heaven as bringing him together with Julie, while she sees it as keeping them apart. Her purity has been poisoned and she suffers from a “fatal passion.”<sup>150</sup> Despite the virtues of character of Julie that Saint-Preux praises, she says he has defeated her prudence. Her situation is more complicated than that of Saint-Preux, especially because of her father, Baron d’Étange, who would oppose the union.<sup>151</sup> She fears dishonoring her family. Heaven has not answered her prayers, causing her sadness. Her piety at the outset of the novel is limited by whether she receives a response. Meanwhile, she says that nature seems to be the accomplice of Saint-Preux, as if nature possesses intentionality. Whatever the cause, the affair has made her unhappy, yet she neither sees nor wants a way out.

Crying out to powers of heaven, Saint-Preux considers the virtue of Julie in Letter V. After suggesting that all humanity worship her, he writes of her divinity, “Think better, pure and celestial beauty, of the nature of your empire. Oh! if I worship the charms of your person, is it not above all for the imprint of that spotless soul that animates it, of which all your features bear

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. “She, like St. Preux, wants to be cured of her love, or die. Love’s pains are unendurable without the hope of relief. They are not like the pains of the body that can be endured for the sake of living.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 79.

<sup>151</sup> “The romantic young man is an enemy of duty and despises the laws of hospitality in corrupting the daughter of the family that has welcomed and paid him. He is high-minded, which means that he deceives himself in the beginning about why he enjoys his teaching, and in the end about the sublime character of his erotic passion, which he is unable to overcome. Thus he is at war, and puts his Julie at war, with the rules of society and especially with the respect and obedience she owes to her father.” Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 144.

the divine stamp?”<sup>152</sup> Her purity attracts him. Theological undertones pervade his sentiments. Regarding her letter, with all of its honest enthusiasm for him, he writes, “I see with transport how in an honest soul the most lively passions still retain the holy character of virtue.”<sup>153</sup> Similarly, he adds to his sentiments, “when I cease to love virtue I will no longer love you.”<sup>154</sup> Saint-Preux questions the passion for honor shown by Julie, indicating that he has “all the right sentiments” deep in his heart, that he is not a vile seducer, and that he feels no sense of shame.<sup>155</sup> He looks inward to determine what is right. The question concerns whether their love is compatible with virtue, or if Saint-Preux is indeed a tempter who poses a threat to Julie.

In Letter VI, Julie comforts Claire for the loss of her governess and friend, Chaillot. While Chaillot instilled “principles of propriety and honor,” she also lacked prudence by sharing too much with the girls about, for example, “the adventures of her youth.”<sup>156</sup> A good education spares the young from details about the world that do not help them, such as how to deal with members of the opposite sex, rather than attempting total enlightenment. Julie therefore gives Chaillot a mixed review as a teacher, calling her lessons dangerous, and also reveals the first indication of what Rousseau may have thought about the purposes and boundaries of education, a topic that he will revisit much later in the novel. Namely, it is good to protect innocence. Julie believes that Heaven may have intervened by taking Chaillot away, a sign of her religiosity. She

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<sup>152</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 33, 34.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

indicates that she has fallen in love with her tutor and asks Claire to accompany her. She fears Saint-Preux because he is virtuous and virtue is what attracts her.

Claire provides a much more favorable opinion of Chaillot than Julie in Letter VII. What Julie considers too much information Claire sees as instructional: “She taught us much, and we have, it seems to me, done much thinking for our age.”<sup>157</sup> Claire contradicts the outlook of Julie, seeing the acquisition of various kinds of knowledge, which fosters critical thought, as more essential than the preservation of innocence. The girls have been enlightened about the passions. The conflicting views in the two letters produce the question of which position Rousseau takes: is it better to shield the young from the ways of the world or prepare them through exposure? Referring to the education of Chaillot once more, Claire writes, “If we have learned too much for our years, at least such study came at no cost to our morals. Do believe, my dear, that there are many simpler maidens, who are less honest than we...”<sup>158</sup> Since their morals have not been lost and they excel in honesty, Claire considers the girls well educated, thanks to the governess. But if Julie does not know how to govern her relations with Saint-Preux, can one consider her education successful? Given the entanglement of Julie, Claire promises her immediate return. Three times in the letter she refers to Saint-Preux as a philosopher – “your young philosopher” and “the philosopher” twice.<sup>159</sup> Is it true that Saint-Preux is a philosopher?

Love seems to Saint-Preux like the cause of infinite desires, not a source of fulfillment, he writes in Letter VIII. He cannot get enough, even as he tastes happiness: “What, fair Julie, are

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 36, 37.

the strange caprices of love! My heart has more than it hoped for, and is not content. You love me, you tell me so, and I sigh. This unfair heart dares desire still more, when it has nothing more to desire; it punishes me for its fantasies, and makes me uneasy in the bosom of happiness.”<sup>160</sup>

As an instance of his discontent, Saint-Preux feels displeased with the composure that Julie shows, when he would rather see her struggling as he struggles. To him, true love is not tranquility. Claire never leaves the side of Julie, indicating why Julie has been content without Saint-Preux. He wants a reward to accompany the sacrifice that he has made to her through his devotion, concluding his letter: “you owe me the price of two centuries of torment.”<sup>161</sup> Saint-Preux brings a passionate sense of justice into the romance. He wants what he thinks he deserves: to see Julie drop everything and lament the laws that prohibit them from uniting.

Julie may love Saint-Preux; but unlike him, she can be happy in love, Letter IX shows. The letter indicates a change of heart from Letter IV, characterized by a more positive outlook. She urges Saint-Preux to “[t]hink better” on his life and to be “more attuned” with himself.<sup>162</sup> She savors the restrained love that she has found. It contributes to the happiness of her life. She cannot conceive of greater bliss, since the harmony of love with innocence seems like paradise. Her wish is that Saint-Preux could join her in enjoying in tranquility this delightful circumstance. Tranquility, or *ataraxia*, is “life’s most delightful state” and a key to experiencing

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 38. “Saint-Preux is the archetype of the Romantic hero with his stormy passions and his wild alternations between despair and exultation....” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 144

<sup>161</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 40. “St. Preux knows that he ought to be happy, but he is not. He is not willing to call virtue an illusion, but he makes it clear that suffering virtue’s restraints needs some kind of compensation. Without compensation, virtue seems unjust.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 80.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 40.

contentment.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, in their secrecy and distance, they do not need to fear becoming dishonorable. She senses that that their love has peaked, however, and that there will be only tempests in the future. Any change would worsen things. The desires of Saint-Preux seem to her like intoxication. She wants him to join her in enjoying the present moment which they may someday long to relive. She writes, “We adorn our minds, enlighten our reason, strengthen our souls, our hearts exult: what more could we want to be happy?”<sup>164</sup> Her peace differs from his devastating dissatisfaction.

The soul of Julie is like an endless reservoir of treasures, says Saint-Preux in Letter X. She joins “tenderness with virtue,” making both more enchanting.<sup>165</sup> Nothing compares to being loved by her. He rejects the notion that they should keep a distance, appealing to “what nature meant to join.”<sup>166</sup> He speaks of nature like it has a mind of its own that consciously orchestrates the affairs of humanity. Disagreeing with Julie, he writes, “To take advantage of a pleasant state, must we renounce a better one, and prefer tranquility to supreme felicity? Is not all time wasted which one could better employ?”<sup>167</sup> He dismisses her taste for *ataraxia*, arguing that there is a greater happiness. Julie may be happy but he is not. He writes, “Though wisdom speak through

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 41. “Everything is finished for me on earth. People can no longer do good or evil to me here. I have nothing more to hope for or to fear in this world; and here I am, tranquil at the bottom of the abyss, a poor unfortunate mortal, but unperturbed, like God Himself.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, translated by Charles E. Butterworth (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, Inc., 1992),

<sup>164</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 42.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. “... [Rousseau] had a sense of nature mysticism, into which God’s name did not even enter directly.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 108.

<sup>167</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 42.

your mouth, nature's voice is stronger. How can I resist it when it accords with the heart's?"<sup>168</sup>

Nature is the standard for what is right for Saint-Preux. Julie resists nature, which he considers to be wrong. Nevertheless, Saint-Preux refers to Julie with more religious language, calling her "celestial Julie" and declaring that she possesses "the beauty of Angels" in addition to their purity as she shines in "the Heavens."<sup>169</sup> It is as if she comes from another world; and because she stays away from him, she deprives him of fully living in this one.

Whatever self-sufficiency Julie expressed is lost by the composition of Letter XI.

Whereas Saint-Preux conveys a consistent unhappiness without Julie, she wavers back and forth. Now she feels more attached, can no longer keep herself separate, and finds absence unbearable. She recognizes the sacrifices that Saint-Preux has made and argues for their intrinsic sweetness. She writes, "While my heart is overflowing I must tell you a truth it feels strongly, and of which yours must persuade you: it is that in spite of fortune, parents, and ourselves, our destinies are forever united, and we can no longer be either happy or unhappy if not together."<sup>170</sup> Their love seems beyond their control, as if it has been arranged by a higher power, either nature or God. She compares them to similar magnets pulling toward one another on opposite ends of the earth. She continues, "Rid yourself therefore of the hope, if you ever entertained it, of finding individual happiness...."<sup>171</sup> Julie could enjoy no felicity that Saint-Preux would not also share. She wants to take control of their future because she surpasses him in reason despite her youth.

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

Rousseau raises the question of whether lovers can experience independence, or if on the contrary love destines them for dependence. If there is no independence, can there be happiness?

After agreeing to let Julie take control of their relations, Saint-Preux gives a sketch of his educational program for her in Letter XII.<sup>172</sup> But first, he indicates the importance that he receive compensation or a reward for his obedience to Julie, repeating the desire for justice expressed in Letter VIII.<sup>173</sup> Saint-Preux is concerned with what he deserves, while Julie thinks of her family. He grants her custody of their “common happiness” – but have they conveyed knowledge of how to become happy, rather than demonstrating confusion throughout the letters?<sup>174</sup> The lovers have not proven themselves to be authorities on the question of happiness as they search for it; although Julie has discovered a great truth in her emphasis on tranquility or *ataraxia*.

Saint-Preux proceeds with his system of learning, in Letter XII. He and Julie will pursue knowledge for its own sake, unlike those public intellectuals who seek it only to show off. They will read but also stop to reflect on readings. The objective is to cultivate “the habit of reflection” that will persist after the readings discontinue.<sup>175</sup> He says, “The great mistake of those who study is, as I have just said, to place too much trust in their books and not draw enough on their own resources; without considering that of all Sophists, our own reason is almost always the one that deceives us the least. As soon as we are willing to search within ourselves, we all sense what is

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<sup>172</sup> “[S]ince she is more prudent than the passionate St. Preux, it follows that she should rule.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 81.

<sup>173</sup> “But the ‘voluntary abstinence’ to which St. Preux commits himself always anticipates a reward.” Wingrove, *Rousseau’s Republican Romance*, 118. “St. Preux’s sacrifices are always accompanied by claims to desert, as well as the hope for recognition and reward, if not in this life, certainly in the afterlife.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 98, 99.

<sup>174</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 46.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

right, we all discern what is beautiful....”<sup>176</sup> Cultivation of the intellect allows for a person to make good judgments apart from books, which provide use but are not ends in themselves. However, “examples of the very good and the very beautiful are rarer and less familiar; they must be sought far from ourselves,” presumably within the pages of the greatest books.<sup>177</sup> The *very* good and *very* beautiful exist beyond the ordinary person. Therefore, Saint-Preux proposes a balance between becoming an independent thinker and developing an admiration for greatness. “The soul soars, the heart catches fire in the contemplation of these divine models,” according to Saint-Preux.<sup>178</sup> He continues, “by meditating on them at length we try to become like them, and no longer suffer anything mediocre without utter disgust.”<sup>179</sup> Saint-Preux would rather see examples of “happiness and virtue” than discourses about them.<sup>180</sup> While not naming most of the authors whom they will read, he excludes books of love except for the best: “Petrarch, Tasso, Metastasio, and the masters of the French theater.”<sup>181</sup> Would *Julie* rise to their level? Is it not a novel that inspires critical reflection or portrays the very good or very beautiful?

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. Perhaps Saint-Preux underestimates the usefulness of treatises on happiness and virtue, such as the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle, which could help Saint-Preux or Julie on their challenging quests to become happy.

<sup>181</sup> “Rousseau’s lovers ... are educated without being sophisticates. Their study of philosophy and of poetry, unlike their counterparts in the city, are animated by a genuine need for self-understanding that seeks to both honor and justify their love.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, xix.



Julie replies with Letter XIII by saying that she and Saint-Preux enjoy true happiness. They are neither too close nor too far from one another. She seems to think one thing in her head but feel another thing in her heart as she wrestles with her happiness. She travels to the country and writes that she finds the absence of Saint-Preux unbearable and suffers from a restlessness. She admires Saint-Preux because he can “make sacrifices to virtue.”<sup>182</sup> Through refraining from trying to corrupt Julie by reading too many romantic novels with her, Saint-Preux has exhibited a willingness to sacrifice for virtue. She does not say why it is good to make sacrifices to virtue; she only argues that sacrificing is worthwhile. Julie continues, “From the moment the thirst for love swept my heart away and I felt it being filled with the need for an eternal attachment, I asked Heaven to unite me not with a likeable man, but rather with a man with a beautiful soul....”<sup>183</sup> She prompts one to wonder where a longing for “an eternal attachment” comes from. Is it related to a deeper longing to overcome death through something that promises immortality? Moreover, she displays her piety as she prays that Heaven would satisfy her desires. Somehow love and prayer go together. She promises to make Saint-Preux as happy as he deserves to be, also showing a concern for justice, before indicating that she has prepared a surprise for him.

That surprise turns out to be a first kiss, Saint-Preux indicates in Letter XIV. Julie has abandoned her contentment with maintaining a separation from him. What she intended as a reward has made him “drunk, or rather insane.”<sup>184</sup> The kiss of love causes intoxication. Julie simultaneously tortures him and makes him happy. He had enjoyed a momentary tranquility

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<sup>182</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 50.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

when he had obeyed her command to keep away: “I was as content as I could be.”<sup>185</sup> Now his experience of physical contact makes romantic love even more dubious. The more things escalate, the worse they become. How is the alternation between “the weight of ecstasy” and despair preferable to solitude?<sup>186</sup> Saint-Preux may have been happier without knowing Julie.

Kissing Saint-Preux must have overwhelmed Julie, as she urges a break in Letter XV.<sup>187</sup> Neither of them can decide whether their passion for one another is good and worth entertaining. She sends him on a journey to the Valais, contending that she can conduct studies without him, and supplies him with funding.<sup>188</sup> In Letter XVI, Saint-Preux indicates that he would rather not travel but that he will obey. Given that Julie is younger, she holds considerable power over him. Saint-Preux frames the trip to the Valais as another sacrifice that he makes for his beloved, before declining the funding Julie has promised, saying that the gift offends his honor. Dismissing his sudden concern for honor as pathetic, Julie insists on assisting Saint-Preux in Letter XVII, doubling the amount that she sends to him. The letters raise the question of what honor is and how to preserve it. It is Julie who has been chiefly concerned with honor. She threatens to never see Saint-Preux again if he declines her generous offer.

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>187</sup> “Julie wanted to sweeten St. Preux’s condition of restraint by rewarding him; she gives him a kiss. This one kiss creates a crisis with which they will struggle for the rest of their lives. Julie did not know that kisses between lovers are never innocent, and that, if one is to remain virtuous, the senses must be denied entirely. Her inexperience, coupled with her pity and gratitude, lead her down the path from which there is no turning back. Just as the fall of man from God’s grace does not lead to Eden, but to law and virtue, so, too, Julie’s fall will lead to morality and romantic longing for a lost past.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 82.

<sup>188</sup> “The Valais is today a canton of Switzerland lying to the east of Lake Lemman (Lake Geneva).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part I,” Note 28, 660.

Employing more political language to describe his relations with Julie – of ruling and being ruled – Saint-Preux refers to her tyranny over him that he obeys after receiving her gifts in Letter XVIII. He alternates between political and religious language throughout his letters to her. Every step away from Julie in Vevey separates the body from the soul of Saint-Preux, so that in a way he never left Vevey, and it all felt like death to him.<sup>189</sup> He anticipated describing scenery to her on his way to Sion but only saw her.<sup>190</sup> He transports himself to where she is with his imagination. He is not an independent being; rather, his consciousness revolves around Julie. According to Saint-Preux, “all that is living in me remains still by your side. It wanders with impunity over your eyes, your lips, your breast, over all your charms; it penetrates everywhere like a subtle vapor, and I am happier in spite of you, than I ever was with your consent.”<sup>191</sup> Despite her tyranny over him, he has acted without her consent by dwelling on her while traveling, which he perceives as an act of rebellion. In solitude, Saint-Preux can take himself to the company of Julie, so he prefers it to “[t]he active life.”<sup>192</sup> He writes, “I am going to act carelessly and quickly, so as to be the more promptly at liberty, and free to roam at will through the wild places which to my eyes constitute the charm of this country.”<sup>193</sup> Even as he feels confined by the rule of Julie, he longs to exercise his liberty, or to become a free man.

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<sup>189</sup> “For the first time, the ‘small town at the foot of the Alps’ in the book’s title is named: Vevey, in the Pays de Vaud, is on the north shore and near the eastern end of Lake Lemman.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part I,” Note 33, 661.

<sup>190</sup> The capital of the Valais.

<sup>191</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 56. “Consent is an ambiguous thing. What guarantees the absence of coercion? When must consent be expressed directly, and when can it be assumed? And what constitutes a direct expression?” Wingrove, *Rousseau’s Republican Romance*, 3.

<sup>192</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 56, 57.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

Following five days apart from her, in accord with her orders, Saint-Preux observes that Julie has not replied to his latest letter and worries that she no longer loves him in Letter XIX. He writes, “I shudder when I remind myself that for me there is only one way to be happy, and millions of ways to be miserable.”<sup>194</sup> But has he not proven that Julie makes him miserable? He believes that only Julie will make him happy without seeing how she makes him unhappy. It is like a drug addiction. Saint-Preux has not been able to clearly see the nature of his struggle. His study of novels has not succeeded in helping him sort through his own experience of love. He writes, “A hundred times have I when reading Novels laughed at lovers’ cold moanings over absence. Ah, I did not know then how unbearable yours would be one day!”<sup>195</sup> Saint-Preux is not laughing now. Here Rousseau invites consideration of the lessons that he intends for his own novel to share. Perhaps he hopes that his readers will become more attuned to the dangers surrounding love, or that they will moderate their expectations of the good that love can do for them. The letters make romantic love seem not attractive but rather ridiculous.

Due to the anxiety of his letter, Julie accuses Saint-Preux of letting his imagination run ahead, leaving behind his reason, in Letter XX. His passion for her prevents him from making accurate assessments. Since the world does not revolve around the letters that he writes for her, he should not expect instantaneous delivery. It has simply taken time for her to receive them. Julie rejoices in the arrival of her father, who had been gone for eight months. She wonders why Saint-Preux must cause her sadness during a time when she would rather celebrate this event. She does suspect that Saint-Preux would wish for her to continually occupy her heart with him.

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 57, 58.

“No, my worthy friend,” she writes, “do not poison with unjust reproaches the innocent joy such a sweet sentiment inspires in me.”<sup>196</sup> Julie appeals to a sense of justice that Saint-Preux offends. Love of the family takes priority over romantic love in the eyes of Julie, if not Saint-Preux, whose impatience suggests that he thinks he deserves attention first.

The love that Julie expresses for her father makes Saint-Preux remember his own late father in Letter XXI. Her letter moves him to tears as he shares her emotions. Even as he is the tutor of Julie, and despite his thoughtful method of instruction, he insists on her superiority, “And what did you hope to learn, incomparable daughter, from my vain and sorry knowledge? Ah, it is from you one must learn everything good and honest that can enter a human soul, and above all that divine accord of virtue, love, and nature never was found except in you!”<sup>197</sup> Through her letters alone, Julie teaches Saint-Preux. He learns from her patience and reverence. He indicates why he feels attached to Julie. While a loving family and vibrant community surround her, he is alone: “But I, Julie, alas! wandering, without family, and almost without fatherland, I have no one on earth but you, and love alone stands me in stead of everything.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. “I am now alone on earth, no longer having any brother, neighbor, friend, or society other than myself.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, translated by Charles E. Butterworth (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, Inc., 1992), 1. “Thus reads the thought-provoking start of [*Les rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*]. Do we hear the voice of a man who, with an opening that is unforgettable, wants to draw attention to the wretchedness of his fate? Or does a philosopher speak who with the first sentence identifies the starting point of an enterprise that distinguishes itself from everything he has begun up to that point, if not in society then nevertheless for society? Does the author from the very beginning pursue the intention of moving his readers to think for themselves? Or does he ask straight out for their pity? In other words: this work, whose alpha and omega is solitude, to whom is it directed and to what end was it written?” Heinrich Meier, *On the Happiness of the Philosophic Life: Reflections on Rousseau’s*

He cannot bear solitude so he turns to Julie. He is not the *Promeneur Solitaire* of the *Rêveries*, who delights in being alone; he is a lover and dependent on his beloved for his happiness. He tells Julie that he plans to visit the mountains of the upper Valais which deserve admiration. There he will find “a happy and simple people.”<sup>199</sup>

Julie tells her father about Saint-Preux after he had admired her learning in Letter XXII. Her father wants to know the social status and earnings of Saint-Preux – what matters to him. That Saint-Preux receives no stipend offends the pride of Baron d’Étange and he insists on it. He does not know about their secret romance and Julie intends for it to remain hidden. Considering her innocence, the decision of Julie to not tell the truth to her father is surprising. How long will the secret last before his pride, so easily offended, encounters reality? Is such a secret unjust? What does a daughter owe her father?

Letter XXIII is an example of the romanticism of Rousseau. He does not just make lovers and families the primary subjects of his novel, although this contributes to his romanticism too.<sup>200</sup> He inspires a longing for and admiration of nature – natural beauty – and rustic ways of life.<sup>201</sup> The image that he fashions in the letter, through the pen of Saint-Preux on his trip, is

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*Reveries in Two Books*, American edition, translated by Robert Berman (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 3.

<sup>199</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 61.

<sup>200</sup> “Romanticism means there is no going forward, but only a longing for the past, whether it be the ancient city, savage man, and, of course, the most attractive and realistic possibility for modern man – the romantic longing for love, marriage, and the family.” Mark Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, vii.

<sup>201</sup> “The lyrical praise of wilderness and isolation in the *Reveries* and other works, and in a different way Rousseau’s botanical writings, helped to foster the new romantic cult of rustic retreat, of solitude and reverie, of communing with ‘nature’ defined as the nonhuman world.” Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man*, 280.

beautiful. Led by a guide who soon became his friend, striking scenery prevented him from daydreaming, as Saint-Preux beheld vistas, cliffs, waterfalls, mountain streams, woods, and meadows. Throughout the letters, he has been distracted by his complicated feelings for Julie. Immersion in nature, far away from advanced civilization, finally commands his attention. He writes, “I wondered at the empire that the most insensible beings hold over our most intense passions, and I scorned philosophy for its inability to exert as much power over the soul as a succession of inanimate objects.”<sup>202</sup> Philosophy seems to “the philosopher” less powerful for moving human beings than nature. His studies in philosophy and poetry, to say nothing of the other disciplines, have seemingly not affected him as much as this short tour. The air of the mountains returns an internal peace that he had lost. Nature gives him a healing education. The upper Valais seems to Saint-Preux like “a new world.”<sup>203</sup> He writes, “all in all, the spectacle has something indescribably magical, supernatural about it that ravishes the spirit and the senses; you forget everything, even yourself, and do not even know where you are.”<sup>204</sup> This other world

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<sup>202</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 63, 64.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. Rousseau describes a similar world populated by superlunary beings in the *Dialogues*, “Picture an ideal world similar to ours, yet altogether different. Nature is the same there as on our earth, but its economy is more easily felt, its order more marked, its aspect more admirable. Forms are more elegant, colors more vivid, odors sweeter, all objects more interesting. All nature is so beautiful there that its contemplation, inflaming souls with love for such a touching tableau, inspires in them both the desire to contribute to this beautiful system and the fear of troubling its harmony; and from this comes an exquisite sensitivity which gives those endowed with it immediate enjoyment unknown to hearts that the same contemplations have not aroused.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, Christopher Kelly, and Roger D. Masters, vol. 1, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1990), 9. Jean Starobinski also compares the “mountain scenery” of the upper Valais with the “enchanted world” described in the first part of the *Dialogues*: “In this ideal realm we find the same liveliness of color, the same clarity of air.” *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 81.

<sup>204</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 65.

magically causes Saint-Preux to lose track of himself in his solitude, a kind of meditation or reverie.

While he finds this landscape enchanting, Saint-Preux sees an even “sweeter enchantment” in the inhabitants of the upper Valais, he writes in Letter XXIII.<sup>205</sup> He comments on “their simplicity, their equanimity, and that peaceful tranquility that makes them happy through freedom from pain rather than taste for pleasures.”<sup>206</sup> He thus gives a formula for happiness even in his unhappiness. The Valaisans convey a zeal for the hospitality of strangers. They use little money and do not trade beyond their borders. Travelers are rare and disinterested. They live simply and joyfully in the mountains.<sup>207</sup> The way of life of the Valaisans may not be good for everyone; but it gives a glimpse of the peace available to those who live close to nature. Saint-Preux clarifies that he never forgot Julie during his journey. He took her with him in his imagination, never taking a step of the trip without her by his side, never admiring a view without pointing it out to her. Saint-Preux drew near to a happiness apart from Julie through time in the mountains but emerged just as in love with her. He wants to live with her before he dies.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> “The people of the Upper Valais live in the remotest regions of the Alps. They have no commerce, poetry, or philosophy; they are described as a people almost out of the hands of nature. It is not difficult to see that their society is the closest one to nature in the novel, and that they accord most with *The Second Discourse*, where Rousseau takes man in search of his origins. . . . The Upper Valais is an example of a rustic republic. . . . they have the charm of innocence.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 12, 35, 36.

<sup>208</sup> “This particular sense of ‘living’ is underscored in *Emile*: ‘The man who has lived the most is not he who has counted the most years, but he who has most felt life. Men have been buried at one hundred who died at their birth. They would have gained from dying young; at least they would have lived up to that time’ (Book I, Pléiade, IV, 253; Bloom, 42).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part I,” Note 51, 662.



Honor reemerges again in Letter XXIV as Saint-Preux remarks about it. What is honor? Saint-Preux answers, “I distinguish in what is called honor, that which is drawn from public opinion, and that which derives from self-esteem. The former consists in vain prejudices more tossed than a windblown wave; the latter has its basis in the eternal truths of morality.”<sup>209</sup> Considering their concern for what society thinks, Julie and her father adhere to the former, while Saint-Preux agrees with the latter. He continues, “Worldly honor can be advantageous to fortune, but it does not penetrate into the soul and has no influence on true happiness. Genuine honor on the contrary constitutes its very essence, because only in it can that permanent sentiment of inner satisfaction be found which alone can make a thinking being happy.”<sup>210</sup> It is ironic that Saint-Preux discusses what contributes to “true happiness” given his unhappiness. The notion of receiving a stipend from the father of Julie repels the sense of honor of Saint-Preux. He makes the first reference to Heloise and Abelard in the novel named after Heloise, arguing that he and Julie enjoy a freedom, with no prohibiting laws, that Heloise and Abelard did not enjoy. Saint-Preux is like a lawyer making a case with forensic rhetoric for why he deserves Julie. The leading opposition comes from her father, with his aristocratic concerns.

The portrait of the Valais shared by Saint-Preux enchants Julie, she writes in Letter XXV. It would make her love anyone who wrote it. But she focuses her letter on their love. According to her, “If virtue ever forsakes us, it will not be, you can take my word for it, in instances that

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<sup>209</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 69.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. “A true sense of one’s honor comes from deep self-esteem, not from public opinion. Because it is so uncertain, those who pursue their fortune by depending on the opinion of others doom themselves to unhappiness and insecurity.... Why is Saint-Preux so utterly lacking in self-esteem? He knows that true self-esteem is the source of real honor and morality, unlike the false pride of Baron d’Etange which is based on mere opinion.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 111, 137.

call for courage or sacrifices.”<sup>211</sup> She observes the sacrifices that they have made, continuing her insistence begun in prior letters on the goodness of making sacrifices to virtue. But she shares a gloomy prediction for the future, “I had only too well foreseen it: the time for happiness has passed like a lightening flash; the time for trials is beginning, with nothing to help me tell when it will end.”<sup>212</sup> She predicts that their tension-ridden situation will only worsen. She feels diminishing hope as she compares their love to a tree that has been “felled at the base.”<sup>213</sup> Nevertheless, she confesses that his absence crushes her. She can no longer live without him, a loss of liberty that frightens her. She insists that her unhappiness is even worse than his. Julie has become dependent on Saint-Preux and disappointed by Baron d’Étange.

The state of Saint-Preux has transformed by Letter XXVI. He writes, “O Julie, what a fatal present from heaven is a sensible soul! He who has received it must expect to know nothing but pain and suffering in this world.”<sup>214</sup> His lamentation challenges the justice of the heavens. Why has heaven not spared him from sorrow?<sup>215</sup> His soul comes from above but faces nature alone. He continues, “Lowly plaything of the air and seasons, his destiny will be regulated by sun or fog, fair or overcast weather, and he will be satisfied or sad at the whim of the winds.”<sup>216</sup> Heaven may have created him but indifferent nature governs him. His “unbounded desires” will

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<sup>211</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 71.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>215</sup> “As for God, what has He done for man? If He exists, He says, do not blame me. ‘I have made you too weak to leave the abyss, because I made you strong enough not to fall into it.’ Nothing could express the divine indifference more perfectly.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 10.

<sup>216</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 73.

always torture him as he wrestles with his circumstances. He writes, “Such is the cruel situation into which I am plunged by the fate that crushes me . . . .”<sup>217</sup> Saint-Preux cannot control what has been determined. If it had not been for Julie, the “fatal Beauty,” he never would have noticed his rank on earth and would have lived a peaceful life.<sup>218</sup> The nature that made him cross paths with her causes his growing affliction. He can no longer immerse himself in the beautiful mountains of the Valais without contemplating the things that haunt him.

Unable to escape from his situation, Saint-Preux tries anyway, he writes in Letter XXVI. According to Saint-Preux, “With violent transports that stir me I am incapable of remaining still; I run, I climb avidly, I head toward the cliffs; I roam all about the region with great strides, and find in every object the same horror that reigns within me.”<sup>219</sup> Dead surroundings like withered grass and barren trees mirror the lost hope of his heart. He admits his desperation as he borrows a telescope to search for the house of Julie and imagines that he can see into her room. He has lost himself, writing, “Vain phantom of a troubled soul that loses itself in its own desires.”<sup>220</sup> Indeed, he has become delusional in the Valais, imagining that he beholds things that do not exist. Amidst his hallucinations, he imagines that destiny binds them together, “recognize it finally, my Julie, an eternal edict from heaven destined us for each other; that is the first law we must heed; the primary concern in life is to unite oneself with that person who can make it blissful for us.”<sup>221</sup> Heaven, in the view of Saint-Preux, does in fact intervene in the affairs of human beings. There

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 75.

is more to reality than blind acts of nature. However, they must act soon, considering that “the opportunity slips away.”<sup>222</sup> He conveys an awareness of the inevitable passage of time that causes youth and beauty to fade: “your beauty, even your beauty will have its end, it must decline and perish one day like a flower that falls without being picked; and I all the while, I lament, I suffer, my youth is being consumed in tears, and withers in sorrow.”<sup>223</sup> He reminds Julie that years have passed that they could have been together and that they can never get back. He urges her to awaken from the error of always looking ahead to the future and not acting in the present. There is still time for them to unite the “two halves” of their being “in the face of heaven.”<sup>224</sup> They need not depart from this life without having tasted happiness. Through this letter, Rousseau asks whether God or nature governs human life.

A distraught Claire tells Saint-Preux that Julie approaches death in Letter XXVII. She writes, “In this condition she calls your name at every moment, and speaks of you with a vehemence that reveals how possessed of you she is.”<sup>225</sup> Saint-Preux is like a demon to Julie. Claire urges him to return home from his travels. In Letter XXVIII, Julie refers to Saint-Preux as a madman, without admitting her obsession with him, before revealing with incredulity that her

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid. “... eros begins, sad but true, in preferences founded in the first place on what is seen with the eyes, founded on ideals of bodily beauty. Nobody serious ever suggested that this is where it ends, but if this essential beginning is suppressed, farewell eros.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 15.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid. C.f. the speech of Aristophanes in the *Symposium* of Plato: “So it is really from such early times that human beings have had, inborn in themselves, Eros for one another – Eros, the bringer-together of their ancient nature, who tries to make one out of two and heal their nature. Each of us, then, is a token of a human being, because we are sliced like fillets of sole, two out of one; and so each is always in search of his own token.” Plato, *Symposium*, translated by Allan Bloom (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 20 (191C-D).

<sup>225</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 77.

father has arranged for her to marry of one of his friends. She calls this a “moment of crisis.”<sup>226</sup> The scenario tests her obedience. In Letter XXIX Julie tells Claire, who has departed from her, that she has lost her innocence to Saint-Preux, who had returned to her upon her prior request. She takes responsibility for vice corrupting her soul, writing, “I forgot everything and remembered only love. So it is a moment’s distraction has undone me forever. I have fallen into the abyss of infamy from which a maiden can never return; and if I live, it is only to be more unhappy.”<sup>227</sup> She turns to her friendship with Claire for consolation. Her decision invites consideration of whether she indeed made a mistake by disobeying the will of her father, even as he remains ignorant; or rather if she did the right thing by exercising her freedom. Claire replies in Letter XXX by calling the situation a horror and reminding her that she had predicted it after being witness to a “sensible heart” that had been devoured by an unstoppable flame.<sup>228</sup> Comparing her action to an invisible spot on the sun, she also reminds Julie of her virtues that remain – her sweetness, sincerity, modesty, and generosity. She does not entertain the possibility that Julie made the right choice by rebelling and consummating her love with Saint-Preux.

Lacking any guilt, Saint-Preux appeals to a higher law for justification in Letter XXXI. Julie is a wonder who comes from Heaven. She makes Saint-Preux drunk with love and ecstasy. Yet her sadness makes Saint-Preux sad too, as he languishes in pain despite “supreme

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid. “The baron’s marriage was without tenderness. As a young husband and father he went into the army where he took mistresses. He returns home for support in his old age only to demand that his daughter marry his friend in order to pay a debt of gratitude. The baron is the closest thing in the novel to a tyrant and a villain.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 58.

<sup>227</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 79.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 80. Saint-Preux had described himself as having a “sensible soul” in Letter XXVI.

felicity.”<sup>229</sup> Her repentance humiliates him, so he writes, “Be more just to yourself, my Julie; look with less prejudice on the sacred bonds your heart has contracted. Have you not followed nature’s purest laws? Have you not entered freely into the holiest of engagements? What have you done that divine and human laws cannot and should not sanction?”<sup>230</sup> Laws of nature rule over all others. Saint-Preux and Julie have acted in accord with nature. Therefore she should not feel regret. Furthermore, since Julie has expressed so much concern with honor, Saint-Preux argues that only by taking another spouse can she offend her honor. He sees that she scorns him like a madman. Saint-Preux is skeptical of laws and customs and radical in his questioning like a philosopher. He refers again to his “sensible soul” which makes it difficult for him to “taste infinite joys in moderation” or without “losing control” – a philosopher who struggles with moderation.<sup>231</sup>

The “happy time” that once described the correspondence between Julie and Saint-Preux is no more according to Julie in Letter XXXII.<sup>232</sup> They no longer understand one another. She is not convinced by the argument of Saint-Preux for laws of nature, that “ineffectual talk,” as she laments what she has lost forever.<sup>233</sup> Julie writes, “That blissful enchantment of virtue has vanished away like a dream: our flame has lost that divine ardor which fed it while purifying it; we pursued pleasure, and happiness has fled far from us.”<sup>234</sup> The pursuit of virtue, not the

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 83. Is Saint-Preux like Rousseau in this respect?

<sup>232</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 83.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

enjoyment of pleasure, leads to genuine happiness; and Julie understands virtue as innocence. Happiness requires the strength to control the passions and the lovers have been immoderate. They have lost the “original sweetness” that they knew when virtue reigned over their hearts.<sup>235</sup> Julie compares whatever “insane happiness” they now experience with “fits of madness” as they seem like “vulgar lovers.”<sup>236</sup> Yet while she can no longer look into her own eyes, she gazes toward the eyes of her beloved. She follows the guidance of his prior letters: “What honor I have left lies entirely in you.”<sup>237</sup> She cannot abandon her love for Saint-Preux, mirroring his addiction. Julie asks Saint-Preux to invent an excuse that would bring to an end his tenure as her tutor. Through seeing each other less, then they can continue meeting, sometimes in secret places. The romance has darkened but Julie insists that it must go on. She is torn between virtue and love.

Letter XXXIII from Julie to Saint-Preux presents a defense of solitude. The lovers tried the constraint of public meetings but could not bear them. They did not act with authenticity. Julie declares that their “manner of living” in shared public places is “not good” for them.<sup>238</sup> Thus she writes, “Let us, do let us return to that solitary and peaceful life, from which I so inappropriately plucked you. It was there that our flame was born and fostered; it would perhaps fade under a more dissipated style of life.”<sup>239</sup> Solitude enables the love of Julie and Saint-Preux.

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 86. “Others had advocated withdrawal from public life, but no one prior to Rousseau recommended the avoidance of society as such.” Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man*, 57. Note also the description of his project for readers in the Second Preface of *Julie*, “... to make them love solitude and peace....” Rousseau, *Julie*, 15.

In it they can sincerely be themselves and love one another with real affection. She continues, “All great passions are born in solitude; their equal is not found in society, where nothing has time to make a deep impression, and the variety of tastes numbs the strength of sentiments.”<sup>240</sup> To be sure, all of the letters so far in Part I of *Julie* have been written by *solitaires* or solitaires; not by completely isolated authors but rather by those with adequate space from urban life.<sup>241</sup> The novel as a whole tries to defend solitude by making its brilliant characters dwell in it. However, would the lovers not be spared from their mutual obsession if they lived in a city? Perhaps the relative solitude they both live in makes Julie and Saint-Preux too focused on a romance that may not be good for them. Julie does raise the question ‘What is good?’ Saint-Preux replies with more religious language by addressing “divine Julie,” comparing the beauty of Julie among her peers to “the sun amidst the stars it eclipses,” and agreeing that they should return to “that solitary life” which he reluctantly relinquished in Letter XXXIV.<sup>242</sup>

A statement of Saint-Preux about the standing of Julie among other women whom he has seen in their public gathering causes Julie to focus Letter XXXV on jealousy. Is jealousy a necessary component of love? Or is it a vice that love can incite dependence on the lovers?<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 86.

<sup>241</sup> “**Solitary people/folk** (solitaires) – People who live far from centers of population, but not necessarily either alone or in isolation; the term does not imply avoidance of or distaste for all human contact, but it does stand in willful opposition to large and worldly aggregations.” “Glossary” in *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, edited by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, vol. 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 633.

<sup>242</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 88.

<sup>243</sup> Rousseau describes the dawn of jealousy in human life in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, “People grow accustomed to consider different objects and to make comparisons; imperceptibly they acquire ideas of merit and beauty which produce sentiments of preference. By dint of seeing one another, they can no longer do without seeing one another again. A tender and gentle sentiment is gradually introduced into the soul and at the least obstacle becomes an impetuous



Julie contends that love will be the leading business of her life as well as the life of Saint-Preux. It causes a consuming effect on all of the passions. They will not be able to live without loving. The effects of her love concerns nothing less than “the happiness or unhappiness” of her days.<sup>244</sup> Julie feels a “dangerous inclination” to jealousy because she sees love and jealousy as united. She demands that Saint-Preux pledge his loyalty, swearing by “the sacred name of honor.”<sup>245</sup> Throughout *Julie*, Saint-Preux has been the more desperate of the two. But Julie confirms her reliance on him through these reflections. She is a jealous lover; but so is Saint-Preux.<sup>246</sup>

The parents of Julie have made plans to take a trip, she announces in Letter XXXVI, leaving her to stay in the house of the father of Claire. Julie pretends to be sad about not going. She writes, “I had to feign sadness, and the false role I find myself forced to play makes me so authentically sad that remorse has all but relieved me of the need to feign.”<sup>247</sup> Rather than playing a role, or pretending to be someone who she is not, Julie longs for sincerity. Nevertheless, she shares her excitement with Saint-Preux for time that they can spend together. She recommends that they use discretion. She describes chalets on the d’Orbe property that can serve as hidden meeting places for them. She hopes to see him there almost every day. Yet in Letter XXXVII, Julie conveys a crisis of conscience for her activities with Saint-Preux. Of her

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fury. Jealousy awakens with love; discord triumphs, and the gentlest of the passions receives sacrifices of human blood.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 148, 149

<sup>244</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 89.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 90

<sup>246</sup> “... [Saint-Preux] exasperates [Julie] with his incessant jealousy, feebleness, and instability.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 139.

<sup>247</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 91.

parents, she writes, “Alas! what has become of the happy time when I constantly led under their eyes an innocent and pure life....”<sup>248</sup> She once enjoyed a happiness that has been abandoned. That happiness had been bound up with her innocence or purity which she sacrificed for love of Saint-Preux. She use political language by calling him a tyrant for subjugating her heart through his spells. She misses her lost virtue. Above all, she wants to be an authentic individual.<sup>249</sup>

After seeing Julie and Claire together, Saint-Preux cries out to the gods as he marvels at the beauty of their friendship in Letter XXXVIII. He sees an advantage in friendship over love. Claire can offer consolations to Julie in a way that he cannot amidst the turmoil of his transports. The intoxication and delirium that he feels from love makes him fear that he will lose his reason. Rousseau has made Claire a voice of reason throughout the letters in contrast to Saint-Preux, making the status of friendship in relation to romantic love a central question within the novel. Yet this letter also resumes comparisons by Saint-Preux between Julie and some kind of divinity, as he considers her “too perfect for a mortal,” or imagines her to belong to a “purer species.”<sup>250</sup> He writes, “My Julie! Ah, what homage would be denied you, were you merely worshipped! Ah! Were you merely an angel, how your worth would decline!”<sup>251</sup> The enthusiasm of Saint-Preux points to a connection between the effects of love and belief in otherworldly gods, as if the erotic and theological come from the same source in human beings. The letter concludes with the

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>249</sup> “Rousseau is the source of the tradition which replaces virtue and vice as the cause of man’s being good or bad, happy or miserable, with such pairs of opposites as sincere/insincere, authentic/inauthentic, inner-directed/other-directed, real self/alienated self.” Allan Bloom, introduction to *Emile, or On Education*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (USA: Basic Books, 1979), 4.

<sup>250</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 95.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

anticipation of Saint-Preux, “[d]runk with love,” meeting Julie in a d’Orbe chalet, indicating that love is a kind of drunkenness as opposed to the unclouded vision of sobriety.<sup>252</sup>

Stepping away from her own love for a moment, Julie seeks to help a family servant, Fanchon, marry a suitor, Claude Anet, beginning in Letter XXXIX.<sup>253</sup> She asks Saint-Preux to arrange a discharge of Anet from his active service with Monsieur de Merveilleux in Neuchâtel. She states the cause of her zeal: “virtue must be an empty name, or it must require sacrifices.”<sup>254</sup> She thus contends once more for the necessity of making sacrifices in order to practice virtue, without articulating the reason why this is good. However, it is crucial to her moral psychology. Julie continues, “woe to him who knows not how to sacrifice a day’s pleasure to the duties of humanity.”<sup>255</sup> The circumstances of Fanchon, which she shares in Letter XL, inspire compassion. Fanchon reveals that Anet only enlisted in order to support her; now she wants to discharge him. Julie replies to Fanchon in Letter XLI with assurance that she will try to offer support with Anet. Saint-Preux sets out for Anet in Letter XLII. He will do anything to earn the esteem of Julie. Merveilleux discharges Anet, reports Saint-Preux in Letter XLIII. While describing the influence of Julie, Saint-Preux employs more religious language to make another reference to divinity: “Ah, as I have said a hundred times, you are an angel from Heaven, my Julie! No doubt with such authority over my soul, yours is more divine than human. How could I not be everlastingly

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>253</sup> “In his novel the least attractive character, the worthless valet, is called Claude Anet.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 135. Shklar indicates that the character derived his name from a real person.

<sup>254</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 97.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid. “Rousseau evokes in Book VI of the *Confessions* ‘that internal satisfaction that I tasted for the first time in my life of saying to myself, I deserve my own esteem, I know how to prefer my duty to my pleasure.’” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part I,” Note 89, 664.

yours since your realm is celestial, and what good would it do to stop loving you if I must worship you?”<sup>256</sup> Her admirable capacity to make sacrifices seem like pleasures makes Julie appear even more like a divinity to Saint-Preux.

The mother of Julie returns home in Letter XLIV without Julie and Saint-Preux visiting a chalet; or, precisely because they did not visit one, fortune spared them from being caught. That Saint-Preux was away to help Fanchon kept him from visiting with Julie a suspicious amount. Given their attention to virtue, the ambition of these two lovers to conceal their affair is striking. Is honesty not a virtue? Julie seems to understand herself as honest despite the secretive behavior with her family. Regarding his efforts to arrange a marriage for Fanchon by reuniting her with Anet through his honorable discharge, Julie writes, “How much good you have procured for them and for us by your good will, not to mention the reward I owe you for it! Such, my friend, is the sure effect of the sacrifices one makes to virtue: though making them often has its cost, it is always sweet to have done so, and no one has ever been known to regret a good deed.”<sup>257</sup> Though sacrifices necessary for virtue must be hard in order to be sacrifices, they are sweet too. No one regrets sacrifices once they have been made. But they do deserve a reward in addition. Julie adds to her reasoning about sacrifices, admitting that her speeches sound like sermons.<sup>258</sup> She also announces the arrival of a visitor, Milord Edward Bomston.

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<sup>256</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 100.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>258</sup> “Rousseau always insisted that art must please, whereas sermons do not have to. It is for this reason that sermons are rarely effective. Even if you wish to improve people, you have to begin by flattering their dominant passion. *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which consists of letters to and from members of a small band of friends and lovers, contains a whole host of Rousseauan sermons that are palatable because they are sweetened by the dominant love theme of the book.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 142.

Having been so wrapped up in thinking about Julie, bringing another person, Bomston, into their dialogue seems strange to Saint-Preux in Letter XLV. They met on his visit to Sion. Both men immediately sensed an affinity between themselves and they commenced a friendship. Bomston loves art; his taste in the arts reveals to Saint-Preux a “sensible soul” like his own.<sup>259</sup> He is also an enthusiast for Italian music, making Saint-Preux listen to him perform with a cello. Amidst his many travels throughout Europe, Bomston visited Saint-Preux in Vevey. As for his character, Saint-Preux describes him as “impulsive and impetuous, but virtuous and staunch.”<sup>260</sup> He “has pretensions to philosophy.”<sup>261</sup> He pays little attention to rank and respects everyone. Through his first character assessment in *Julie* beyond Julie herself, Saint-Preux indicates what is important to him through the interests or qualities that he highlights. His description makes them seem like equals – they do share much in common – even though Bomston is an English lord.<sup>262</sup> Saint-Preux concludes his letter chiefly on Bomston by making a generalization about women: that they, including Julie, do not forgive the flaw of a “want of grace.”<sup>263</sup>

After confirming the pending wedding of Fanchon, under the supervision of her father, Julie expresses doubt with the quick defense of the character of Bomston in Letter XLVI. She indicates that Saint-Preux has demonstrated a tendency for impulsive judgments of individuals, raising the question of what is needed in order to make an accurate evaluation of a person.

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<sup>259</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 103.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> “At this point Lord Eduard Bomston, an immensely rich English peer and friend of Julie’s father, appears. He takes a great liking to Saint-Preux ....” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 232.

<sup>263</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 103.

Replying to his generalization, Julie confronts Saint-Preux for exhibiting “an air of masculine superiority” that is all too common among men.<sup>264</sup> His letter leads her to recall her study of the *Republic* of Plato with him and her conclusion about the vast differences between the sexes. “Attack and defense,” she writes, “men’s audacity and women’s modesty, are not conventions, as the philosophers think, but natural institutions the cause of which can be rationally explained, and from which are easily derived all other moral distinctions.”<sup>265</sup> She continues with a view of nature as purposeful, “Moreover, nature’s destination for them not being the same, the inclinations, manners of seeing, and feeling must be directed in each instance in accordance with her views; it does not at all require the same tastes nor the same constitution to till the land and to nurse children.”<sup>266</sup> Differences proclaim “the maker’s intention;” that is, nature has a maker.<sup>267</sup> She observes physical differences that align with the other tendencies. She proceeds to downplay praise that Saint-Preux has given her, since a lover cannot see with the clear eyes of a friend. Julie asks Claire to tell the truth about herself, indicating a superiority of friendship to romance. The next evening, Bomston will join them; one of “two philosophers,” along with Saint-Preux.<sup>268</sup> Her use of the term may cause curiosity once again regarding what a philosopher is and whether Saint-Preux, with his flaws, rises to the level of one – or if the term is ironic.

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid. “This theory is explained by Rousseau in Book V of *Emile*, Pléiade, IV, 692-693; Bloom, 357-358.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part I,” Note 98, 665.

<sup>266</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 105.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. “Here Julie assumes the role of teacher....” Wingrove, *Rousseau’s Republican Romance*, 124.

<sup>268</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 105.

At a gathering, Julie mesmerizes Saint-Preux and Bomston, Saint-Preux writes in Letter XLVII. Julie has displayed her *mezza voce*, the beauty of which impressed both of the men. Saint-Preux fears that his friend has been swept up too much by Julie so as to fall for her as well. Bomston has spoken about her and Saint-Preux does not like to hear anyone else speak of Julie: “In general, I confess that I do not like to hear anyone, except your Cousin, talk to me about you; it seems that every word robs me of part of my secret pleasures; and whatever they may say either it hints at an element of interest I find suspect, or it is so far from what I myself feel, that on that subject there is no one but myself I like to listen to.”<sup>269</sup> Despite his obvious display of it, Saint-Preux denies struggling with jealousy. He refuses to be honest with himself about himself; he lacks self-knowledge.<sup>270</sup> Furthermore, he perceives any change with Julie as an impossibility. His letter betrays a desperate desire to keep Julie to himself and not to give contact to others. There will be another event the next evening, with Bomston still present.

In Letter XLVIII, Saint-Preux reacts to Italian music with the same passion as with love. He writes, “Ah! My Julie, what have I heard? What stirring sounds! What music! What delightful source of sentiments and pleasures!”<sup>271</sup> He also writes of “the powerful and secret

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>270</sup> “Rousseau ... seems to hold that our consciousness is thoroughly constituted by the impurities, chief among them sexual desire, and that knowing the knower is the hardest of all intellectual enterprises. One has to know what is going on in oneself – all of it – seriously in order to attain self-knowledge. Reason is only one of many things working simultaneously in us, and not the most powerful at that. ... Rousseau can appear to be a lachrymose sentimentalist [in] the pages of the novel, but there is a fine irony at the lack of self-knowledge of his characters.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 42, 143.

<sup>271</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 107

connection of the passions with the sounds.”<sup>272</sup> As he portrays himself as moved by music, Rousseau encourages readers to contemplate the similarities between music and romantic love. Why does Saint-Preux become intoxicated with Julie and the sounds of music that he hears? Love and music both temporarily lift participants or hearers out of the mundane aspects of life. They promise escape from the limits of mortality through the beauty of lovers or of sounds. Saint-Preux continues, “I began to listen to that enchanting music, and I soon sensed from the emotions it provoked in me that this art had a power greater than I had imagined. Some unknown voluptuous sensation imperceptibly came over me. . . . At each phrase some image entered my brain or some sentiment my heart; the pleasure did not stop at the ear, but entered the soul. . . .”<sup>273</sup> Such an escape is a powerful pleasure. This is why he calls it divine.

Overlooking his theory of music, Julie assures Saint-Preux of her loyalty in Letter XLIX. She insists that she would never marry Bomston, even if he somehow imagines the possibility. But in Letter L, Julie chastises Saint-Preux for his bad behavior with wine the night before while wondering if he removed his disguise and revealed by drinking what he truly thinks while sober. Wine produces the willingness to speak without inhibition and question customs or conventions. It can help drinkers ascend from *nomos* to *physis* as in the *Symposium* of Plato; or as in this case, it can simply get someone into trouble.<sup>274</sup> Saint-Preux has demonstrated himself to be a person who enjoys the experience of being swept away, whether by love, music, or some substance. His

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 108. “For Rousseau, music, alone among the arts, had an enduring fascination, both in its emotional and technical aspects.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 83.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>274</sup> C.f. Allan Bloom, “The Ladder of Love,” in *Plato’s Symposium*, by Plato (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1993, 2001), 69.



speech under the influence has caused Julie to all but threaten to conclude their romance. Thinking about what she expects from Saint-Preux leads her to reflect on romantic love as such, “it seems to me that true love is the most chaste of all bonds. It alone with its divine flame knows the art of purifying our natural inclinations, by concentrating them on a single person; it alone spares us temptations, and makes it so that except for that one unique person, one sex ceases to be anything for the other.”<sup>275</sup> She indicates that Saint-Preux is the one person for her; but she sees love and debauchery as incompatible. Ashamed and addressing his “angel from Heaven,” Saint-Preux gives up wine entirely in accord with his typical excess in Letter LI.<sup>276</sup> Replying to this pledge, Julie does not see it as a heroic sacrifice worthy of praise. Instead she refers to the standing of Saint-Preux as a philosopher in Letter LII: “[C]ould philosophy be vain or cruel enough to offer no better way to make moderate use of things that please than to give them up entirely?”<sup>277</sup> She wonders how philosophy benefits the philosopher in everyday life. Wine is like love: a thing that must be treated as a potential poison with overindulgence.

An unexpected turn of events causes Julie to reflect on the nature of fortune or chance in Letter LIII. She writes, “Thus everything frustrates our schemes, belies our expectations, betrays passions that Heaven ought to have crowned! Wanton toys of a blind fortune, sorrowful victims of the mockery of hope, shall we forever touch a fleeting pleasure and never grasp it?”<sup>278</sup> Despite

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<sup>275</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 113.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 114, 115.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 116, 117.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 118. “... what remains, which Rousseau urgently calls to mind ... and from which he will not retreat, is the tranquil view of a world that is governed neither by intention nor by will, but that has its sufficiency in being the play of chance and necessity.” Meier, *On the Happiness of the Philosophic Life*, 72.

her piety, Julie thinks that human events transpire in accord with the twists and turns of nature, not providence. The situation is the wedding of Fanchon. Poor weather forced a change of location from Clarens. Julie and Saint-Preux would have been able to get together but not now. Rousseau takes this wedding and makes Julie fuse into it the highest questions. Does God or nature, divinity or necessity, ultimately rule? What is in control? She observes that happiness has eluded her and Saint-Preux even as she insists that they still try to attain it: “No, my sweet friend, no; we shall not depart this short life without having for an instant tasted of happiness.”<sup>279</sup> To experience this elusive happiness, she plots a tryst. She writes, “I hope a sweeter fate is reserved for us; I feel at least, that it is due us, and fortune will tire of being unjust to us. ... Come under the auspices of tender love, to receive the prize for your obedience and sacrifices.”<sup>280</sup> In the same letter that she senses the indifference of nature she wants it to respond to her view of merit. Julie hopes, if not prays, for a favorable outcome, and she promises Saint-Preux compensation for the sacrifices that he has made – what justice demands.

In Letter LIV, Saint-Preux writes with great emotion from within the wardrobe of Julie, the sanctuary of all that his heart worships. He thinks that his happiness in this closet surpasses the happiness of all of the happiest human beings. The flame of his desire expands in every direction while he becomes intoxicated. His “ardent imagination” makes him perceive an image of his beloved.<sup>281</sup> He cries, “Ye gods! ye gods!” as if the desire for love and for gods coexist.<sup>282</sup> He continues to portray himself as a sensible soul, easily moved by the slightest influences,

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<sup>279</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 119.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

raising the question of whether it is possible to feel this sensitivity and also be a philosopher. Moreover, is Rousseau portraying emotions that he felt through the character of Saint-Preux? Or is Saint-Preux a human type whom the author has created but does not mirror himself?

After a tryst, in Letter LV, Saint-Preux feels like he has lived so much that he could die. He thought that he had known happiness before but that had been “the happiness of a child.”<sup>283</sup> His happiness is an ecstasy that overwhelms him, not a serene and stable state. “Divine Julie” shared the pleasure with him, continuing the religious dimension of his longing.<sup>284</sup> As soon as Julie has escaped Saint-Preux, he wants her back to relive what he has experienced. For the first time, Saint-Preux glimpsed the spiritual self-sufficiency that lovers can enjoy together. He writes, “I was beside you, I worshipped you and desired nothing; I did not even imagine another felicity, than to feel your face near mine like that, your breath on my cheek, your arm around my neck. What calm in all my senses!”<sup>285</sup> Saint-Preux distinguishes between “the frenzies of love” and “such a peaceful situation.”<sup>286</sup> Furthermore, he writes, “this of all the hours of my life, the one dearest to me, and the only one I would have wished to prolong eternally.”<sup>287</sup> Although their

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid. “In the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Emile*, which appeared in 1761 and 1762, respectively, Rousseau complements the political existence of the citizen, who realizes his happiness as part of the *moi commun* in the unity of the republic, with the possibility of the successful existence of lovers who, in the best case, find an encompassing unity and kind of self-sufficiency.” Meier, *On the Happiness of the Philosophic Life*, 25.

<sup>286</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 121.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid. The lovers defy the usual tendency, “Everything is in continual flux on earth. Nothing on it retains a constant and static form, and our affections, which are attached to external things, necessarily pass away and change as they do. Always ahead of or behind us, they recall the past which is no longer or foretell the future which often is in no way to be: there is nothing solid there to which the heart might attach itself. Thus, here-below we have hardly anything but transitory pleasure. As for happiness which lasts, I doubt that it is known here. In our most

circumstances prevent them from satisfying their love, Rousseau seems to indicate here how romantic love can indeed bring genuine happiness. For a special moment in the novel, Julie and Saint-Preux want nothing more than what they have. Simultaneously, their love and happiness that it gives them appear like a fragile thing, here today then gone tomorrow.

Claire tells Julie about an altercation between Saint-Preux and Bomston in Letter LVI. It concerned Julie and almost led to a duel, prompting Claire to warn Julie about her affair, since the secret could not last long in a small town. Claire advises Julie to send Saint-Preux away before they have been discovered. Her father, especially, would not receive the news of this well. Julie tries to persuade Saint-Preux that he should refuse to duel with Bomston in Letter LVII. Since his honor as well as hers is dear to Saint-Preux, she reasons with him by discussing honor. She notes that he has been offended by a remark that relates to her alone, not to his honor; and that engaging in a duel with Bomston would do nothing to keep their affair hidden.<sup>288</sup> She reminds him of the distinction that he once made “between real and apparent honor,” encouraging him, in addition to the reader of *Julie*, to consider the nature of genuine honor.<sup>289</sup>

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intense enjoyments, there is hardly an instant when the heart can truly say to us: *I would like this instant to last forever*. And how can we call happiness a fleeting state which leaves our heart worried and empty, which makes us long for something beforehand or desire something else afterward?” Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 68.

<sup>288</sup> “An English lord, Edouard Bomston, who is also interested in Julie and is rebuffed by her, makes a drunken remark alluding to her preference for Saint-Preux, at which the latter takes offense. A duel is requested and about to be arranged. Calumny would make it impossible to keep the cause of the duel secret, and Julie’s reputation would be ruined. Adroit damage control by Julie’s friend Claire prevents the duel, and, of course, this leads to letters of many pages detailing Rousseau’s views about the practice of dueling and honor in general. We remember that reputation is important for a woman as it is not for a man. In this men are closer to nature. Thus, the impulsive love of the couple necessarily comes into conflict with social correctness.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 146.

<sup>289</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 125.

Dueling Bomston would concern apparent honor. Julie proceeds to contrast “the vain opinion of others” with “genuine honor, the roots of which lie deep in the heart.”<sup>290</sup> Since Saint-Preux challenges others to profit from their readings, Julie challenges him to profit from his as well. Neither the “most valiant men of antiquity,” nor “the most enlightened Peoples, the bravest, the most virtuous on earth,” participated in this “horrid and barbarous fashion.”<sup>291</sup> She treats virtue too, “If you sincerely love virtue, learn to serve her in her way, and not in men’s ways. I allow that some disadvantage may result from it: is this word virtue then but an empty name for you, and will you be virtuous only when it costs nothing to do so?”<sup>292</sup> She continues, “If the philosopher and the sage model themselves in the greatest affairs of life on the insane utterances of the multitude, what good is the whole parade of studying, only to end up a vulgar man?”<sup>293</sup> It would thus be wise for Saint-Preux to consider the wisdom found in his studies of history in order to know real honor and virtue and avoid a duel.

Confirming his intuition, Julie confesses her love for Saint-Preux to Bomston in Letter LVIII. She wants to help a restoration of the friendship between the two men through her letter. Moreover, she laments the difficulty of detaching Saint-Preux from “a false point of honor.”<sup>294</sup> She tells Bomston that if he wins his proposed duel with Saint-Preux, she will die as well. She

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 126. “In cases where social customs are involved the example of antiquity may have a greater part to play. When Saint-Preux is about to fight a duel, he is reminded that dueling was not practiced by the ancients. It cannot, therefore, be an honorable custom.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 67, 68

<sup>292</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 126.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 131.

also tells him that he has “a beautiful soul and a sensible heart” and seeks his compassion.<sup>295</sup> Monsieur d’Orbe, the lover of Claire who has seen Bomston read his letter from Julie, tells Julie that she has moved Bomston in Letter LIX. Bomston studied it and grasped her view of honor. Because of the effect of the letter of Julie upon him, Bomston retracted his remarks that offended Saint-Preux and, on his knees, sought forgiveness from Saint-Preux, desiring to restore the friendship, Saint-Preux tells Julie in Letter LX. The friends embraced, cancelling the duel.<sup>296</sup> When Bomston speaks about Julie, the words now please Saint-Preux without causing jealousy. Bomston feels admiration for Julie, not love. “He treats love as a philosopher who believes his soul is above passions” writes Saint-Preux.<sup>297</sup> He repeats a statement of Bomston: “[F]or you happiness neither lies along the same road nor is it of the same kind as that of other men; they seek only power and the admiration of others, you require only tenderness and peace.”<sup>298</sup> Yet it still remains doubtful that Julie and Saint-Preux enjoy happiness, as their tempestuous letters have consistently betrayed more dissatisfaction than true contentment. Julie displays gratitude for the change in Bomston in Letter LXI, calling Bomston a “precious friend.”<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> “The story of the duel leads inevitably, according to the conventions of Romanticism established by Rousseau in this novel, to Lord Edouard’s becoming Saint-Preux’s best friend. There are no evil persons in this book, only more or less enlightened or virtuous ones. The charm or the temptation of vice is absent, and Rousseau regards this as the superiority of the novel over tragedy. One might say that for him the interesting struggle is between natural goodness and the need, born of history, for virtue....” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 147.

<sup>297</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 135.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 137.

Lamenting that she must always play the role of sharing bad news in her friendship with Julie, Claire addresses Julie in Letter LXII. She has overheard Bomston suggest a marriage between Saint-Preux and Julie to her father. Saint-Preux is most likely of all to make Julie happy, argued Bomston. He may lack formal titles of nobility but he has inherited many natural gifts. Baron d'Étange lost his composure while rejecting the idea. He cared little about happiness, wondering instead how "a man of honor" could think that he would degrade his name like this.<sup>300</sup> The debate, at the core of the whole novel, concerns the conflict between nature and convention. Julie and Saint-Preux persist with entertaining their natural inclinations despite societal demands. What is right? The event of the quarrel between Bomston and Saint-Preux has become popular knowledge in Vevey, so Claire recommends that Julie send Saint-Preux away.

Julie tells Claire of the anger of her father expressed toward her mother for allowing Saint-Preux into their home in Letter LXIII.<sup>301</sup> He spoke of an offense to the honor of his household, his honor being most important to him. After becoming violent, he apologized. Nevertheless, he forbade Julie from seeing Saint-Preux, for the safety of her life and her honor. He blames Saint-Preux for his own wrath. Julie juxtaposes prejudices with nature: "Ah, my Cousin, what monsters from hell are these prejudices that deprave the best hearts, and at every instant reduce nature to silence?"<sup>302</sup> Yet Julie has experienced a "revolution" as she regretfully

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>301</sup> "The young man is not of their social class and he is poor. He possesses none of the kinds of things that attract narrow-minded fathers. Her father is indignant that the tutor who was welcomed into his home should court his daughter and seems to be shocked that such a person thinks he has the right to feel bodily attraction toward his treasure; moreover, her father has promised her to M. de Wolmar, a soldier friend who saved his life." Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 145.

<sup>302</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 145.

remembers the “happy time” when she had once lived peacefully with her family.<sup>303</sup> She turns to Claire to act on her behalf. “Do you not believe, dear friend,” Julie writes, “that despite all the prejudices, all the obstacles, all the setbacks, Heaven has made us for each other? Oh yes, I am sure of it; it has destined us to be united. It is impossible for me to forsake this thought; it is impossible to give up the hope that follows from it.”<sup>304</sup> She places her trust in divine providence, once again raising the question of who or what governs human events.

Letter LXIV, from Claire to Monsieur d’Orbe, concerns the relation of friendship to love. Claire declares that, for her, friendship reigns, and that she holds Julie dearer than her lover. She says that Julie and Saint-Preux will soon part. Claire then writes to Julie in Letter LXV, emphasizing that Julie enjoys a flawless reputation and great respect within her community. She wanted to spare the heart of Julie by avoiding her separation from Saint-Preux but could not. Bomston agrees with Claire that he will remove Saint-Preux. At stake is the honor of Julie. Claire tells Saint-Preux that he will never see Julie again, to prevent Julie from public dishonor. He protests, appealing to Heaven and dreaming of eternity, “No Julie ... we shall not long live apart; Heaven will join our destinies on earth, or our hearts in the eternal abode.”<sup>305</sup> Claire writes, “I simply told him that your expectation had again been disappointed, and there was nothing more to hope for. Thus, he said to me with a sigh, there will remain on earth no monument of my happiness; it has disappeared like a dream that never had any reality.”<sup>306</sup> The

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.. 152.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.



happiness that Saint-Preux thought he had experienced with Julie had only been an illusion.<sup>307</sup>

Bomston tries to comfort Saint-Preux by promising him his friendship before they depart.

Romantic love entertains hopes of an otherworldly bliss, much like promises of religion. But when things go wrong, it is a source of misery, such that one lover or another never recovers. On closer inspection, romance points beyond itself to the freedom of a solitary self-sufficiency, epitomized by the *Promeneur Solitaire*, or a tempered kind of love found in friendship. In the first part of *Julie*, Rousseau considers love through the fiction of his epistolary style, namely, in letters written by two lovers. With a town on Lake Lemman for his primary setting, he tacitly juxtaposes the tranquility that romantic love lacks with the tyranny of the heart it can cause.<sup>308</sup> This serves as his way of dealing with the aim of love: happiness. The lovers in the novel long for happiness but they do not know how to attain it. Rousseau explores happiness by portraying obstacles, such as unlimited desires or illusions, that obstruct access to genuine fulfillment.

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<sup>307</sup> “Love is but illusion; it fashions for itself, so to speak, another Universe; it surrounds itself with objects that do not exist, or to which it alone has given being ....” *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>308</sup> “The action of the novel takes place in Switzerland, one of the last outposts of virtue within corrupt modernity. The scene is domestic and rustic, far from the cities and politics as it is actually practiced. The personages of the novel construct a healthy and tasteful life for themselves, pretty much independent from the rest of the world. They furnish the gorgeous scenery around Lake Lemman with the fantasies to which their passions give birth, stormy or calm, dark or sunny, wintery or summery, despairing or content.” Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 143.

## Chapter 4

### “[A]midst the noise”: Saint-Preux Visits Paris in Part II of *Julie*

Departing from the charm of Vevey, Switzerland, the plot of *Julie* turns to Paris, France, as Saint-Preux joins Bomston on a long journey meant to separate him from his beloved Julie. The love letters that animate Part I – characterized by the tension between nature and convention or natural inclination and duty – become joined by a bold sort of cultural criticism within Part II. Like a physician giving a diagnosis, Saint-Preux gives his assessment of Parisian life from a perspective of innocence if not naiveté. Rousseau thereby contrasts the countryside with the city, indicating through his novel that virtue flourishes in the former while vice afflicts the latter. He draws a line of comparison between the inhabitants of Vevey or the Valais and those of Paris. The story, with its critical mirror held against high society, offers a vindication of rural life. Rousseau sees nothing less at stake than truly being oneself rather than merely copying trends.<sup>309</sup> He hopes that his novel will serve as a method of instruction for a diverse range of readers, making virtue attractive by adapting the text to popular literature in eighteenth century Europe.<sup>310</sup>

In Letter I, Saint-Preux expresses his consuming perplexity as he writes Julie d'Étange. He no longer knows what to tell her with the same pen that once shared a torrent of sentiments. He senses that they have both changed, so he is not certain to whom he now addresses himself. He longs for the past amidst misery. He says: “Alas! I was beginning to exist and I have fallen into nothingness; the hope of living quickened my heart; I have nothing left before me but the

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<sup>309</sup> “If our habits in retirement are born of our own sentiments, in society they are born of others’ opinions. When we do not live in ourselves but in others, it is their judgments which guide everything.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to d’Alembert on the Theatre*, translation by Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 67.

<sup>310</sup> C.f. “Sweet liquor: The Poetic Presentation of Rousseau’s *Julie*” for a treatment of Rousseau’s rhetorical strategy, which he repeats in brief in Letter XXI of Part Two.

image of death, and a span of three years has brought the felicitous circle of my days to a close.”<sup>311</sup> Saint-Preux had not existed prior to Julie. Without her, he sees nothing before him but demise. Unable to enjoy an independent existence for its own sake, he thinks that only Julie gives life.<sup>312</sup> He wonders why he did not put an end to his days before he had, as it were, outlived himself. After experiencing those first delightful moments, he no longer sees anything worth living for. Felicity has been lost and it would have been better for him to have never have tasted it at all. With a self-understanding as both a madman and a slave who trails his chain toward his despair, he laments desires that have only deceived him, leading him on the path of dark circumstances. He may be “dead to happiness” but not to the love that makes him worthy of enjoying happiness; and he encourages Julie to remember how to live as if one can only truly live while in love.<sup>313</sup> Repeated cries to Heaven still make his longing for love reveal a deeper desire for eternity.

Milord Edward Bomston delivers news to Claire regarding Saint-Preux in Letter II.

Having reached Besançon, Saint-Preux acts tranquil while he struggles with inner turmoil.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 155.

<sup>312</sup> Rousseau argued for the natural goodness of human beings at their origins. Arthur M. Melzer describes how this natural goodness would shape the fundamental experience of a person: “man is naturally good for himself, meaning well-ordered and self-sufficient, hence happy. None of his inclinations are bad, that is, harmful, illusory, impossible, or contradictory. His desires are all proportioned to his needs and his faculties to his desires. And on a still deeper level, prior to all desire, he has within himself a fundamental source of contentment, a joy in mere existence.” *The Natural Goodness of Man* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 16. Because Saint-Preux does not understand this joy, he has surely departed from natural goodness.

<sup>313</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 156.

<sup>314</sup> “Besançon, about 100 km northwest of Lake Lemman, was capital of Franche Comté, which had been part of France since 1678.” Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part II,” in *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the*

Without mentioning Julie, he talks at length with Bomston, who often finds him beginning to write letters before tearing them up within moments. Bomston indicates that the zeal directed by Saint-Preux toward Julie could find another destination in wisdom: “for sublime reason is maintained only by the same vigor of soul that makes for great passions, and philosophy is properly served only if it is practiced with the same ardor one feels for a mistress.”<sup>315</sup> He shows a concern for Saint-Preux and Julie “out of consideration for justice and order, which dictate that every person be placed in the most advantageous manner for himself and for society.”<sup>316</sup> Suggesting that their love came from “the hands of nature,” he wonders: “Why must an insane prejudice come to alter eternal directions, and upset the harmony of thinking beings?”<sup>317</sup> Specifically questioning the “the vanity of a heartless father,” his words concern the tension between nature (*physis*) and convention (*nomos*).<sup>318</sup> When they conflict, which one should rule? Nature must bow to convention but convention cannot always succeed with quieting nature.<sup>319</sup> Bomston and Saint-Preux share a passionate inclination against mere obedience to authorities. They stop and turn to ask ‘Why?’ to the answers given to them by their political society. Through their radical questioning in pursuit of truth, both friends come to sight as philosophic.

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*Alps*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, vol. 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), Note 2, 669.

<sup>315</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 158.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> “The distinction between nature and convention, between *physis* and *nomos*, is ... coeval with the discovery of nature and hence with philosophy.” Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 90.

Regarding matrimony, Bomston declares “all laws that constrict it are unjust; all fathers who dare create or break it are tyrants.”<sup>320</sup> He contrasts “opinion” with “nature” and writes of “the sacred law of nature which man has not the right to transgress” within his marital remarks.<sup>321</sup>

Bomston promises to stay with Saint-Preux. He is a good friend as well as a discerning judge.<sup>322</sup>

Even after experiencing much, like “the path of passion” that brought him to philosophy, Bomston has seen nothing as extraordinary as Julie and Saint-Preux, he tells Julie in Letter III.<sup>323</sup> He concerns himself with the “mutual happiness” of the lovers with an interest that will not die.<sup>324</sup> He urges Julie to probe her heart and consider whether the flame that consumes her could vanish. He is convinced that love has infiltrated itself too much into her soul for her to ever drive it out. It is too late to change the state of her heart. At this point she must make things legitimate. Bomston thus offers an estate in the Duchy of York where Julie and Saint-Preux can finally live together, a “sanctuary to love and innocence.”<sup>325</sup> He hopes they will inhabit it into old age. Stopping the lovers from living in this ideal estate is the seduction of “the path of honor.”<sup>326</sup> According to Bomston, “I foresee what will become of you if you reject my offers. The tyranny

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<sup>320</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 158.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>322</sup> “Lord Eduard and Saint-Preux are models of what human beings really owe each other.” Judith N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 145.

<sup>323</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 161.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

of an intractable father will draw you into the abyss you will measure only after falling in.”<sup>327</sup>  
Bomston takes the side of nature against convention while urging Julie to overcome timidity. Public opinion matters less than conscience. By following her heart, Julie chooses virtue. There is thus a disagreement about whether virtue involves following authorities or natural inclinations.

In Letters IV and V, Julie and Claire correspond about the generous offer of Bomston. Julie struggles to discern the prudent action. She desires to make the most honorable choice. Clear-sightedness has been lost to her, however, as she wavers between competing passions. Does she choose to side with faith or obedience, her heart or her head, her lover or father? Deciding any way will cause her to become unhappy. She requests that Claire think for her. Claire replies that only Julie can rescue herself and laments the consequences for either direction. There is no option that appears to lead Julie to “true happiness” so Claire hesitates to choose.<sup>328</sup> Julie must harken to her own intuition. Claire praises the attractive kindness of her friend. Their letters to one another further demonstrate the importance of friendship in a happy life.

Even as it would be delightful to enjoy the estate of Bomston with her lover, the conscience of Julie does not permit it in Letter VI.<sup>329</sup> She could not bear abandoning her parents. Her conscience would haunt her forever. A move there would leave her miserable in the place.

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>329</sup> “When Lord Eduard offers the lovers an opportunity to elope and settle on his estate in England, Julie refuses. Torn asunder by her love for Saint-Preux and her loving duty as an only child of elderly parents, she chooses the latter. Felicity would not flourish in York. Remorse would immediately torment her and she would find no inner peace there. Her decision is based entirely on psychological considerations.... “Once we are socialized our conscience cannot be ignored safely, even when it contradicts the most powerful of competing instincts. It is our guide to private goodness and a source of positive enjoyment.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 62

She factors in an element of happiness – family life– that Bomston had not fully considered. Rejecting the idea, she writes, “Go then, sweet fantasy of a sensible soul, felicity so enchanting and so desired, fade into the night of my dreams, thou shalt have no more reality for me.”<sup>330</sup> Julie sacrifices the possibility of sharing an estate with Saint-Preux. Along with the kindness praised by Claire, she shows a sense of justice: consideration of what she owes to those who love her.<sup>331</sup>

In Letter IX, Bomston reports to Julie an error that has been committed by Saint-Preux, although he does not specify what it is. He just says that Saint-Preux has been restored to reason and has been rendered docile in addition so that they may do whatever they wish with him. Bomston will thus travel with Saint-Preux from Paris to London. He praises British theater. Acknowledging the sadness of Saint-Preux, he writes, “Music will fill the voids of silence, allow him to dream, and little by little change his pain into melancholy.”<sup>332</sup> The enthusiasm of Bomston for music, first described by Saint-Preux in Letter XLV of Part I, continues into Part II. It joins the enthusiasm for music that Saint-Preux had displayed as well in Letter XLVIII of Part I. Why does Rousseau make his philosophic characters lovers of music? Perhaps he sees music as connected to the activity of philosophizing.

Instead of fall into abjection, Saint-Preux would have rather forever closed his eyes, according to Letter X addressed to Claire. He pours out his shame for her heart of compassion. He cannot find himself as he cries to Heaven with a “painful stupor” and an “insane despair.”<sup>333</sup> He has proven himself incapable of experiencing happiness with or without his beloved.

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<sup>330</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 171.

<sup>331</sup> Letters VII and VIII of Part Two reply to Letter II of Part One. I skip them for this reason.

<sup>332</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 177.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

Bomston made Saint-Preux suspicious as he thought that he “detected a premeditated design” to uncouple him from Julie.<sup>334</sup> Saint-Preux abandoned his theory after a confrontation with Bomston, who called Saint-Preux a madman. Characters in *Julie* sometimes equate romance with madness. They indicate how both phenomena entail a loss of rationality as a fierce force takes control. Saint-Preux articulates the peculiar nature of his love for Julie: “Alas! she has cruelly robbed me of everything, and I love her the more for it. The more unhappy she makes me, the more perfect I find her. It is as if all the torments she causes me were just another merit in my eyes.”<sup>335</sup> Happiness is not what Saint-Preux wants. He wants Julie even as she makes him unhappy. Desires that cannot find satisfaction confuse and torment him.<sup>336</sup>

In Letter XI, Julie showers praise upon Saint-Preux as he prepares to enter Paris, predicting that “the world and business will be continual distractions,” a diversion from her.<sup>337</sup> While fearing dangers that he will see, she warns him of the “unknown world” that he will enter.<sup>338</sup> Trusting that Bomston will advise him, she leaves him with primary words of counsel: “never forsake virtue and never forget your Julie.”<sup>339</sup> She recommends that he forget moralists

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>336</sup> “But only in nature or according to nature is man’s happiness to be found, for it is there that a perfect equilibrium exists between his desires and his capacity to satisfy them. The movement from nature to society destroys that equilibrium. New kinds of desires or modifications of old ones emerge, and imagination invents satisfactions or dreams of satisfactions that make desire infinite. Nature makes man whole, society divides him. The trouble with man comes from society, not from nature.” Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (Chicago, IL: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 43, 44.

<sup>337</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 183.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.



and look within his own soul, the source of the fire that has kindled in him a love of the virtues. She urges him to remember their shared study of biographies that “make vice inexcusable.”<sup>340</sup> The men of vice whom they studied had acquired riches but did not enjoy genuine happiness. Examples of men of virtue who had suffered nevertheless enjoyed a hidden, “real felicity.”<sup>341</sup> Their studies had made self-sacrifice for a noble cause seem attractive and worthy of emulation. Julie encourages Saint-Preux to be an honorable man. It is time for him to enact his own lessons. Although he may not practice virtues as a famous man like the examples that they have studied, “Private virtues are often all the more sublime for not aspiring to the approval of others but only to the good witness of the self, and the just man has his conscience instead of universal acclaim.”<sup>342</sup> What is admirable is not prestige but rather living in accordance with the conscience. Greatness can emerge in every station. The truest delights lie in contemplating the beautiful. Julie does not fear that “the senses and vulgar pleasures” will possibly corrupt Saint-Preux.<sup>343</sup> Instead she encourages him to hearken to his desires and follow his “natural inclinations,” choices which will always keep “the charm of the morally beautiful” within his soul.<sup>344</sup> She tells him to keep loving, since it may be better to not exist than to exist without feeling anything.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 185. She does not follow her own advice.

<sup>345</sup> This statement of educational goals by Julie invites comparison with Letter XII of Part I wherein Saint-Preux explicates his pedagogical philosophy. Both letters emphasize the importance of turning inward, to the heart or the conscience, for answers regarding right action;

Having arrived in Paris, Saint-Preux tells Julie that he feels unhappy in Letter XIII. The sun rises and sets without bringing the hope of seeing her; days devoid of joy turn into nights. Experiences with solitude have led him to conclude that human beings do not thrive alone: “Human souls need to be coupled to realize their full value, and the combined force of friends, like that of the blades of an artificial magnet, is incomparably greater than the sum of their individual forces.”<sup>346</sup> Friendship is sacred but love between two people is even more special. He defends it from “coarse men” who call it a “fever of the senses” or “desire of debased nature.”<sup>347</sup> But does the dependence of Saint-Preux on Julie for his happiness not validate these critics? Saint-Preux constantly rereads the letters from Julie whose hand alone can give him happiness. A collection of them will serve as his handbook for the unfamiliar world that he prepares to enter. He swears his loyalty to her. He thinks that no other woman could succeed in seducing him.

Surrounded in the city, Saint-Preux feels alone, as if in a desert, he tells Julie in Letter XIV.<sup>348</sup> In the chaos he says, “I am never less alone than when I am alone, said an Ancient, I on

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both discuss the utility of great examples for encouraging virtue; and both suggest that beauty or the beautiful, which includes sacrifice that commands awe, is the aim of education.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 188. This journey to Paris is the second immersion in solitude described by Saint-Preux, with the first being his time in the Valais in Part I. In neither one can he travel without directing most of his thoughts to the problem of his absence from Julie.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid. “The enthusiasm for the true, the good, and the beautiful, without which love becomes a kind of commerce between the sexes, is foreign to [the Parisians’] understanding and their way of speaking about it.” Mark Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization: Love, Marriage, and Family in Rousseau’s Julie* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 21.

<sup>348</sup> In a footnote, Rousseau says that he would say different things about Paris than Saint-Preux: “Without anticipating the Reader’s judgment and Julie’s about these narrations, I think I can say that if I had to make them and did not make them better, I would at least make them different. On several occasions I have been on the verge of removing them and substituting some of my own; ultimately I am leaving them in, and pride myself on my courage. I tell myself that a young man of twenty-four entering the world must not see it as does a man of fifty, whose experience has taught him to know it only too well” (190). Mark Kremer writes, “The footnote makes one think about how Rousseau would have differed in his account of Paris and whether he manages to

the other hand am alone only in the crowd, where I can be neither with you nor with the others.”<sup>349</sup> Wanting to speak, he senses that no one hears his voice. A language barrier silences him.<sup>350</sup> Insincerity characterizes the Parisians. They pretend to care about him with suspicious excess. What Saint-Preux calls “the ways of the world” makes him doubt the friendliness that he sees.<sup>351</sup> Rich Parisians seem generous by promising assistance; but in no city is there more inequality. Saint-Preux finds delight in the capacity for intelligent discussion in Paris among everyone. But to what end other than “to unsettle with much philosophy all the principles of virtue”?<sup>352</sup> Rather than desiring to know what is true, Parisians operate in accord with their own self-interest. They do not think independently, deferring to what they hear in the assemblies or from friends. They do not care for “the common good.”<sup>353</sup> There is therefore a perpetual clash of factions. Following Alcibiades, principles shift according to convenience, as they modify their speech. Saint-Preux develops a low view of “high society” through his observations.<sup>354</sup> He

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communicate those differences. After all, would he arouse our curiosity if he did not intend to satisfy it?” *Romanticism and Civilization*, 15.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 190. “Saint-Preux is never more alone than when he is in society, and his only consolation is to lock himself up alone so that he can occupy himself with images and thoughts of his beloved.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 17.

<sup>350</sup> “An echo, perhaps, of a phrase from Ovid’s *Tristia* that Rousseau had already cited as an epigraph to the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*: ‘Barbarus hic ego sum quia non intelligor illis’ (‘Here I am the barbarian, because no one understands me’).” Stewart and Vaché, “Notes,” Note 57, 673.

<sup>351</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 190.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 191. Here Saint-Preux indicates a negative consequence of philosophizing.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>354</sup> “When Saint-Preux arrives in Paris, the first thing he notices is the general aloneness of its inhabitants. Each one lives fearfully under the eyes of others, but no one really belongs to anyone else. There are no ties of loyalty underneath the general politeness. In order to survive in the crowd each one adopts the opinions of whatever group he finds himself in at any given moment.

writes: “So far I have seen many masks; when shall I see men’s faces?”<sup>355</sup> He misses the country authenticity. In this letter, Rousseau renders his deepest criticism of city life through the pen of Saint-Preux. Paris promotes inauthenticity, dissolution of virtue, and conformity of opinion.

Although Saint-Preux has gone away, Julie sees him everywhere, she says in Letter XV. She criticizes his latest letter for using words that she must consult a dictionary to understand. Generalizing about a city of people is what the French themselves have been accused of doing. Why does he speak ill of a place that treats him well? She wonders if he suffers from mania. Within his pretty style she sees pretentiousness. The city seems to have already affected him. Sincere passion is more attractive to Julie than contrived wit. She informs Saint-Preux of the impending wedding of Claire and worries how this union will affect their friendship.

His absence from Julie makes Saint-Preux share concerns about her in Letter XVI. Accidents play out in his mind as he fears for her life. What was true days ago may no longer be. He defends the style and substance of his letters. He wrote in the way that the Parisians speak.<sup>356</sup> His objective is to “get to know man” and he studies mankind “in his several relations.”<sup>357</sup>

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At the top there is a war between factions. Here a very few people do the thinking for the rest. To be ‘like everyone else’ is at all times the supreme law and adaptability is a necessity for survival. This ‘is done’ or ‘is not done’ are the rules one must follow. In fact, of course, ‘everyone’ is very few people indeed – the rich and powerful.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 98, 99.

<sup>355</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 194. “In the Swiss village the constraints imposed by civilization and inequality are so relaxed that there is no tension between masters and domestic servants. Consider the contrast presented by Paris, where Saint-Preux sees ‘many masks but no human faces!’ Here master and servant live in a state of mutual hostility and common corruption; ‘neither belongs to a family, but only to a class.’” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 25, 26.

<sup>356</sup> “St. Preux’s letters are dominated by a tone of ridicule, not because he is a fop, but because he adopts the dominant tone of Parisian society in order to teach Julie about it and in order to relieve himself from its oppression.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 15.

<sup>357</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 199. “*La Nouvelle Héloïse* is not simply a romance, but is part of the history of political philosophy. St. Preux is interested in the best form of human association, and his travels help him investigate this question. *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, in this aspect, resembles *The*

Previously he has only seen smaller societies; now he has embarked to observe multitudes. Immersing himself within the capital of France will show him “the true effects of Society.”<sup>358</sup> Saint-Preux is on a mission to understand human nature by comparing a variety of populations. He wants to know where morals flourish by studying places as different as Paris and the Valais. He compares his method to analyzing the differences between olive, willow, palm, and fir trees. Not until he has surveyed every tree in question would he render a final judgment on them all. He clarifies, “It is not Parisians I am studying, but the inhabitants of a large city, and for all I know what I see of it fits Rome and London just as well as Paris.”<sup>359</sup> The city of Paris provides him with a sample of a more populated place just as Vevey provided a sample of a small one. Letters of Julie make him lose his reason, sending him into a delirium and consuming fire. The charms of Julie make him dread being alone as he wants to always be with her.

By Letter XVII, Saint-Preux has become deeply immersed in activities of Parisian life. He writes, “I spend my entire day in society, I lend my eyes and ears to everything that strikes them, and perceiving nothing that is like you, I collect myself amidst the noise and converse

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*Odyssey and Gulliver's Travels*, where traveling is accompanied by philosophic reflection on a variety of societies.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 11.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid. “St. Preux says that his criticisms of Paris are not personal, but are criticisms of large cities in general. Paris does not differ from London in any essential way. The only differences St. Preux finds worthy of note are that, in London, talent is more respected, and morals are slightly better. This is attributed to the existence of a House of Commons. The people are part of the ruling public and, therefore, their character as a group influences the tone of society. Paris is part of St. Preux’s investigation into the best form of human association, whether it is better to live crowded together in a city of six hundred thousand people or whether it is better to live in the remotest regions on the earth. Paris is not singled out from mean spiritedness or narrow provincial prejudices, but is representative of a place on the spectrum of human societies.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 16.

secretly with you.”<sup>360</sup> He is far too much in love to feel moved by anything that is not Julie. Noting “the difficulties of studying the world,” he shares uncertainty with the best approach: “The philosopher is too far away, the man of the world too close. The one takes in too much to be able to reflect, the other too little to evaluate the overall tableau.”<sup>361</sup> Those who attempt to balance time between the world and solitude, or seeing and reflecting, find no place to be at ease. Saint-Preux challenges the idea of a philosopher who both studies theory and leads an active life. He tells Julie about the gossip that flows inside the exclusive dinner parties that he has attended. The Parisians “gather together to think as ill of their species as possible, ever philosophizing grimly, ever degrading human nature out of vanity, ever seeking in some vice the cause of everything good that is done, ever speaking ill of man’s heart, on the model of their own.”<sup>362</sup> Meanwhile, none of them dare to be themselves. “Here everyone does the same thing in the same circumstance: everyone moves in time like the marches of a regiment in battle order: you would say that they are so many marionettes nailed to the same plank, or pulled by the same string.”<sup>363</sup> As for the theater of Paris, it offers no instruction regarding manners to the people it entertains.

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 204. Saint-Preux continues to criticize the activity of philosophy as it appears in Paris. Perhaps *Julie* presents a contrasting philosophical method that Rousseau implicitly juxtaposes with the method of his contemporaries that he disagrees with.

<sup>363</sup> “Today, when subtler researches and a more refined taste have reduced the art of pleasing to set rules, a base and deceptive uniformity prevails in our customs, and all minds seem to have been cast in the same mould. Incessantly politeness requires, propriety demands; incessantly usage is followed, never one’s own inclinations. One no longer dares to appear as he is; and in this perpetual constraint, the men who form this herd called society, placed in the same circumstances, will all do the same things unless stronger motives deter them.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 37, 38. Saint-Preux echoes the criticism of the Citizen of Geneva.

Characters speak much but engage in little action. Spectators simply want good entertainment.<sup>364</sup> Saint-Preux admits that he has begun to feel the intoxication that Paris offers, leaving him dizzy. Only meditation on Julie allows him to recover his existence.<sup>365</sup>

Claire has married, Julie reports in Letter XVIII, which means that she will be less available. Friendship must yield to marriage. Claire will no longer be the confidante of Julie. Julie defends France after reading the criticism of Saint-Preux. Books they read come from there. And they have produced some great statesmen. Julie wishes that Saint-Preux would praise them. She also wonders about the suspicious silence of Saint-Preux concerning the women of the city. In Letter XIX, Saint-Preux replies that he will continue to apprise Julie of exactly what he thinks. What he has said to Julie about the Parisians is what he tells them to their own faces each day. They do not resent him for making his critiques but rather agree with him on many of the points. He writes, “[T]he truth that finds fault is more honorable than the truth that praises; for praise serves merely to corrupt those who have a taste for it and the most unworthy are always the most avid for it; but censure is useful and merit alone is able to tolerate it.”<sup>366</sup> His admiration for Paris causes him to focus on its imperfections. Julie responds in Letter XX by simply preparing Saint-Preux for the arrival of her portrait – a gift from her that he can study every morning.

Julie had asked about Parisian women, so Saint-Preux delivers a review in Letter XXI. He wishes that they were as charming as Julie. He gives a detailed account of their disposition, appearance, and fashion (the best in Europe). Among their manners, they look down on modesty.

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<sup>364</sup> “The theater is not a serious amusement, but a place where people go to see and be seen.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 22.

<sup>365</sup> Saint-Preux had also remarked about ceasing to exist in Letter I.

<sup>366</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 215.

The beautiful women tend to be more modest because they understand their unique advantages. Whereas women of the Valais spend their time together, women in Paris spend time with men. Regarding the men, he writes, “Paris is full of adventurers and bachelors who spend their lives running from house to house, and men like money seem to multiply by circulating.”<sup>367</sup> Saint-Preux suspects “a thousand secret liaisons” as “the fruit of their manner of living.”<sup>368</sup> Parisians seem more interested in fighting boredom with their liaisons than in finding true love. The picture of love presented by Rousseau in *Julie* differs dramatically from this description. However effusive he makes the letters of the two lovers, they have more beauty within them. Rousseau encourages the moderation of passions on one hand and faithful romance on the other. Saint-Preux notes “[t]he very words love and lover are banished from the inner circles of both sexes and relegated along with the likes of *chain* and *flame* to Novels that are no longer read.”<sup>369</sup> Parisian society had banished love, leaving nothing more than what is called a hookup culture. Rousseau wrote a book that Parisians would want to read wherein they could find a reflection of themselves that might also make them realize and appreciate what they have forgotten.

The discussion of Parisian women by Saint-Preux in Letter XXI continues with further concentration on their sex lives. Everything seems backward as hearts contract no bonds.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid. “The letter on the relations between the sexes (written to the more serious Julie) is the one letter on Paris whose tone is not predominantly one of ridicule. Those relations are so offensive to his sensibilities and pieties that he is amazed, indignant, disgusted, contemptuous, and full of pity. The lover cannot laugh when his god is insulted. The tragic response to Paris’ sexual relations confirms his belief in his god, just as laughter liberates him from their gods.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, 15, 16.

<sup>370</sup> “[S]ociety cannot do without the people reproducing themselves, and the general disorder caused by promiscuity among them is destructive to society as a whole.” Ibid., 7.



“Adultery causes no revulsion, nothing about it goes against propriety; the most proper of Novels, those which everyone reads for instruction are full of it, and license is no longer blameworthy, the minute it is combined with infidelity,” according to Saint-Preux.<sup>371</sup> Indeed, *Julie* offers an alternative kind of novel that addresses the errors Rousseau sees in the others. Saint-Preux indicates that the kind of woman he observes would look down upon him and Julie: “O Julie! A woman who has not feared to defile the marriage bed a hundred times would dare with her impure mouth to denounce our chaste embraces, and condemn the union of two sincere hearts that were never capable of breaking faith.”<sup>372</sup> Marriage is lax: a shared name and children. Opposition to infidelity is not taken seriously.<sup>373</sup> Along with marriage, love itself is “denatured.”<sup>374</sup> Lovers meet for amusement, to satisfy momentary needs, not for longings of their hearts.<sup>375</sup> Parisians show little concern for the individuality of partners because almost anyone will do.<sup>376</sup> This is foreign to Saint-Preux, “Inasmuch as I myself know nothing of this,

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> “This passage recalls ... Montesquieu’s satire of French morals in *Lettres persanes* (1721): ‘Here husbands accept their lot graciously and regard infidelities as the blows of an inevitable fate. A husband who wished to possess his wife all by himself would be regarded as a perturber of public joy and as a madman who wanted to enjoy the sun’s rays to the exclusion of all other men’ (letter LV). Julie’s lover places himself in the role of Montesquieu’s Persian, describing customs with humor and detachment.” Stewart and Vaché, “Notes,” Note 138, 679.

<sup>374</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 222.

<sup>375</sup> “He imitates here the style of the libertine novelists such as Claude Crébillon or Charles Duclos: ‘It is chance that forms these sorts of liaisons; people take lovers because they are pleasing or well-suited to each other, and they part company because they cease to be so, and because everything must have an end.’ (Duclos, *Les Confessions du comte de\*\*\**, in *Romanciers du XVIII siècle* [Paris: Pléiade, 1965], II, 224).” Stewart and Vaché, “Notes,” Note 139, 679.

<sup>376</sup> “By insisting on the complete *interchangeability* of love objects, Julie’s lover is characterizing in extremely schematic form a position that is the antithesis of the romantic notion of love, which admits of but a single, irreplaceable love one: ‘Love is not love / Which alters

the manner in which I was told about it was so extraordinary that I was unable to understand what I was being told.”<sup>377</sup> He continues, “What I could make out was that for most women the lover is like one of the house staff: if he does not perform his duty, he is fired and another is found; if he finds a better offer and gets bored with the job, he leaves and another is found.”<sup>378</sup> There is no notion of permanence and no illusion of eternity, or even a desire for it, among lovers.

After expressing astonishment at these Parisian customs, Saint-Preux gives a broader indictment of cities as such in Letter XXI: they do not promote authenticity of self-expression. He writes, “The main objection to large cities is that there men become other than what they are, and society imparts to them, as it were, a being other than their own.”<sup>379</sup> He adds that this especially pertains to the women of Paris, “who derive from the way others look at them the only existence that matters to them.”<sup>380</sup> These women feel that they exist when they gain approval.<sup>381</sup> They cannot find fulfillment as independent beings. Rather, they copy the surrounding trends.

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when it alteration finds’ (Shakespeare, Sonnet 116).” Stewart and Vaché, “Notes,” Note 140, 679.

<sup>377</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 223.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> Saint-Preux has written that he had not existed prior to beginning his affair with Julie and about recovering his existence through her. He conveys the same dependence on her for experiencing a full existence that he observes among Parisian women who depend on the city. The missing alternative, most philosophic in nature, is an inner-independence or self-sufficiency.

They cover over the “natural state” and “distort true beauty.”<sup>382</sup> Cities promote unnatural habits that distance people from their true selves.

To solve the problem of cities, Saint-Preux concludes Letter XXI by considering novels. He writes, “Novels are perhaps the ultimate kind of instruction remaining to be offered to a people so corrupt that any other is useless....”<sup>383</sup> Saint-Preux argues that the key is from the very start not to display “virtue in Heaven beyond the reach of men” but instead to induce readers to love virtue by first making it “less austere” and then “from the lap of vice” to lead them toward it.<sup>384</sup> Reading literature like *Julie* that juxtaposes city vice with the forgotten virtues of the countryside makes those virtues more attractive than if or when novelists present them by themselves. Readers must be met where they are, with words that they know, for a story to change hearts.<sup>385</sup> Novels like *Julie* can show them their “natural goodness” hidden beneath the layers of society.<sup>386</sup> *Julie* and Saint-Preux are far from perfect, as the first two parts of the novel

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<sup>382</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 223, 224.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>384</sup> “This programmatic passage, which is in effect a restatement of *Julie*’s own strategy, was reproduced word for word in Jaucourt’s article *Roman* (Novel) in the *Encyclopédie*. Many of Rousseau’s contemporary critics found morally reprehensible the idea of working toward virtue in literature by speaking from “the bosom of vice.” That was, of course, the basic schema of confessional literature (more common in England than France), to which tradition *Moll Flanders* for example is closely related.” Stewart and Vaché, “Notes,” Note 148, 680.

<sup>385</sup> “The *Nouvelle Héloïse* was ... meant for the young and for women, as were most novels at that time.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 222-223.

<sup>386</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 227. “And how will man manage to see himself as nature formed him, through all the changes that the sequence of time and things must have produced in his original constitution, and to separate what he gets from his own stock from what circumstances and his progress have added to or changed in his primitive state? Like the statue of Glaucus, which time, sea, and storms had so disfigured that it looked less like a god than a wild beast, the human soul, altered in the bosom of society by a thousand continually renewed causes, by the acquisition of a mass of knowledge and errors, by changes that occurred in the constitution of bodies, and by the

have demonstrated. Their seemingly infinite desires for one another make them unhappy. But when contrasted with what Saint-Preux sees in Paris, their virtues shine like a bright light in darkness. By way of their imagination, Parisians must go to Vevey to begin the process of uncovering.

The portrait of Julie that she sent Saint-Preux has arrived by Letter XXII when he describes it. He marvels at her “divine charms,” which he worships, as if she is a Being worthy of devotion.<sup>387</sup> Her features cause a “magical” effect on him.<sup>388</sup> But the portrait also leaves him feeling sadness because it reminds him of her absence from him. He recalls to mind his “former happiness.”<sup>389</sup> Even in Paris, he is unhappy without her. The portrait makes him nostalgic by haunting him with “times that are no more.”<sup>390</sup> Contemplating it makes him believe that he gazes upon Julie herself. It causes him to focus on the moments in his memory that now constitute the grief of his life, given and revoked by Heaven. He hurts when awakening from his dream. He

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continual impact of the passions, has, so to speak, changed its appearance to the point of being unrecognizable; and, instead of a being acting always by fixed and invariable principles, instead of that heavenly and majestic simplicity with which its author had endowed it, one no longer finds anything except the ugly contrast of passion which presumes to reason and understanding in delirium.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 91, 92.

<sup>387</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 229. Rousseau varies his delivery of different kinds of letters in *Julie*. Some letters, like those that concern city life, read like essays, while the most typical ones exude gushy emotions. It appears that he thought the latter kind would keep the attention of most readers, as they encourage moderation, while the former kind contained the leading teachings that he wished to share. Shklar argues that the most typical letters “moved readers most,” while the philosophic parts of the novel “were lost on” most of his readers. Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 223.

<sup>388</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 229.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*

cries: “Ye gods!”<sup>391</sup> Saint-Preux combines his alleged experience of God with the experience of being in love: another indication that Rousseau sees the erotic and theological originating in the same place.<sup>392</sup>

In Letter XXIV, Julie observes that a flame of affection still burns within Saint-Preux. She can sense it in his prose. In vain does fate try to separate them as writing keeps them close. She imagines that she can feel the touch that he gives to the portrait with “flattering illusions.”<sup>393</sup> Illusions and fantasies still represent something to her for whom “happiness no longer exists.”<sup>394</sup> Saint-Preux replies to Julie in Letter XXV. The portrait does not satisfy him as she satisfies him. “This is due, I admit, to the insufficiency of art,” he writes on the gap between real and replica.<sup>395</sup> He points out imperfections in the portrait, an analysis that reveals his expertise in her features. In order to express all her charms, an artist would need to paint her at every moment of her life. She is perfect just as she is and needs no alternations.

A trembling, crying, shameful, and broken Saint-Preux writes to Julie in Letter XXVI about an “involuntary crime” that her absence allowed him to commit.<sup>396</sup> He fears her scorn, though he feels more scorn himself. He is unworthy of her goodness, despicable but honest. After befriending officers who mocked his simplicity, he attended a dinner party with them.

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> C.f. “The Flames of Love: Two Lovers Seek Happiness in Part I of *Julie*,” Page 56. Saint-Preux gives an account of the Paris opera in Letter XXIII that I skip.

<sup>393</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 237.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 240.

Women tried hard to seduce him, at first unsuccessfully. Drunkenness soon overwhelmed him. He surprised himself by awaking in the arms of a woman and immediately felt tremendous guilt. It marks the first time in the novel that either lover has been disloyal to the other. But it is not the first time that Saint-Preux has exhibited drunken behavior.<sup>397</sup>

Julie forgives Saint-Preux in Letter XXVII. She merely blames the event on imprudence. Saint-Preux had been led into a trap in the city. Vice could not succeed in seducing him at first but “bad company” has started to dilute his reason which in turn has corrupted his virtue.<sup>398</sup> Virtue flourishes in the countryside, such as within Vevey, while vice pollutes cities like Paris. Julie expresses disapproval of the friends of Saint-Preux. She questions the strategy that he has employed in studying human beings, the main purpose that he had claimed for being in the city. What could surrounding himself in a few coteries possibly teach him about humanity as a whole? Julie expected to see a deeper interpretation: “Was it worth your while to collect with such care practices and etiquettes that will no longer exist ten years from now, whereas the timeless motives of the human heart, the secret and lasting play of the passions evade your inquiry?”<sup>399</sup> She challenges his writings about women, arguing that he provides no “solid information” regarding their “true character,” and noting that he leaves out domestic cares like education.<sup>400</sup> She chastises him for letting shame cause him to feel obligated to remain with the officers. Philosophy does less for him than if he simply “anticipated the future by a few minutes.”<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> See Part I, Letter L through LII.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

Indeed, learnedness in philosophy could do nothing to protect him from encountering temptation.

Overall, Saint-Preux had improved among peasants and regressed among the city inhabitants.

Through her study of him, Julie has become the one making observations about human nature.

In the letter that concludes the second part of the novel, Julie reveals to Saint-Preux that his letters to her have been lost. She fears that her parents will discover them and their romance.

The correspondence has been kept a secret – until now? Suspense builds leading into Part III.

## Chapter 5

### “[A] higher purpose”: Julie Finds Happiness in Part III of *Julie*

What is justice? When the private good of an individual conflicts with the good of political society, which takes priority? These abiding questions assume center stage in Part III of *Julie* as Saint-Preux wrestles with the question of the just action in his relationship with Julie. Does he let nature serve as his guide and obey his inclinations or does he follow societal duties? If he decides to sacrifice what is good for himself for others, then what reward does he deserve? Or is a sacrifice without a reward part of virtue? Is choosing virtue for its own sake the best way? Faced with similar questions for contemplation, Julie, who had always believed in eternal life, turns toward God to understand the essence of justice. She subordinates reason to revelation, Athens to Jerusalem, urging Saint-Preux to join her. But is her religious experience convincing? Or will Julie only temporarily find happiness in faith? Will her husband Wolmar share her piety? Or does he offer an alternative example of a just life?

Claire takes the married name of Madame d'Orbe in Letter I. She chastises Saint-Preux for the suffering that he has caused to Julie. She compares his love for Julie d'Étange to poison. Her friendship with Julie can no longer allow her to tolerate the romance with Saint-Preux, which “honor and reason condemn.”<sup>402</sup> It causes only unhappiness and conveys only stubbornness. She reveals that the mother of Julie has indeed discovered the correspondence between Julie and Saint-Preux and therein their secret flame. Julie has thus been struck with a deep despondency. She stays by the bed of Madame d'Étange, who has become unwell while

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<sup>402</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 252.



becoming enlightened. Saint-Preux has given little consideration to how his pursuit of Julie would affect her family. Instead he has dwelled on how it affects himself. Claire does not, like Milord Edward Bomston, philosophize about what is best by nature; she considers concrete effects.

Madame d'Étange wishes to keep the secret hidden from the father of Julie, Baron d'Étange, Claire reports to Saint-Preux in Letter I. The women fear his established irascibility. Julie no longer feels worthy of the love of her father as she hides her romance from him. Joining the other women, Claire insists that the affair between Julie and Saint-Preux be kept hidden. Saint-Preux can preserve the honor of the d'Étange house and his virtue by renouncing Julie. This, according to Claire, is his duty. Duty to society must prevail over his natural inclinations. What he does will determine whether he is “the most cowardly or most virtuous of men.”<sup>403</sup> Virtue means the sacrifice of a private good for a greater good: the happiness of the d'Étange family. There is an insuperable tension between the happiness of Saint-Preux and of this family. The recent actions of Saint-Preux have given Claire confidence that he will make the right decision: “the sacrifice you have made to Julie’s honor by leaving the country is a token to me of the one you will make to her peace of mind by breaking off a pointless relationship. The first acts of virtue are always the most painful, and you will not lose the reward for an exertion that has cost you so much....”<sup>404</sup> Claire indicates that one who makes a sacrifice wants a reward in return. Justice seems to demand that compensation must follow the loss of a valuable good. She thus presents a kind of moral psychology in the letter to try persuading Saint-Preux.

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 254.

No matter how Saint-Preux proceeds, fate opposes him, and he will never possess Julie, continues Claire in Letter I. He is just deciding whether he will make her miserable or honor her. Her happiness has been lost but she can still practice prudence and obtain peace and security.<sup>405</sup> Shame has caused the unhappiness of Julie. She deeply cares about the honor of her family. Claire laments the sadness that has consumed her friend and the loss of zeal that once guided her. A flame has dimmed, causing Claire to remark “what a soul you have stolen from virtue!”<sup>406</sup> Much depends on the choice that Saint-Preux will make as it has been specified by Claire. Rousseau encourages the reader of *Julie* to wonder what, in this ongoing case, justice is.

Consumed by grief, Saint-Preux writes Madame d’Étange to renounce Julie in Letter II. He forgoes all that would have made his life blissful. There has never been a sacrifice like that one that Saint-Preux gives to Madame d’Étange. To be sure, Julie has taught him, her instructor, “how happiness must be immolated to duty.”<sup>407</sup> The student has become the teacher of the tutor. He pledges to live far away from her, as well as to not see her nor to write her any more letters. He submits to whatever Madame d’Étange sees fit to command him. He goes further than this: “her happiness can console me for my misery, and I shall die content if you give her a husband

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<sup>405</sup> “In the world of inequality happy and enduring marriage becomes impossible, because it is so difficult to find a suitable mate. One may not find anyone to love in one’s own social class, and it is very difficult to live in lifelong harmony with someone who has been brought up in a different level of society. Even worse is the custom of forced conventional marriages which are arranged by fathers solely to satisfy their social ambitions and prejudices. Here the destruction of natural sentiment is at its worst. For here feeling is completely sacrificed to the idols of public opinion, rank and fortune.” Judith N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 85, 86.

<sup>406</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 254.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 255. Elizabeth Rose Wingrove encapsulates *Julie* as follows: “... the story of Julie, her lover St. Preux, and her husband Wolmar unfolds through a ménage à trois that enacts the tension between romantic passion and conjugal duty.” *Rousseau’s Republican Romance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 102.

worthy of her. Ah, just find him! And let him dare say to me, I shall love her better than you!”<sup>408</sup> He wonders if anyone holds the attributes of Julie dearer than himself. He begs her to “restore to the tenderest daughter that ever was the happiness she has forfeited for you.”<sup>409</sup> Saint-Preux has chosen the sacrifice that Claire encouraged him to choose, justifying his decision by appealing to the happiness of Julie.

In Letter III, Saint-Preux tells Claire that he has become as unhappy as he could be, and that no compensation, no reward for his sacrifice, could match what she has taken from him. Death sounds one hundred times more preferable to Saint-Preux than living apart from Julie. Doubting that this turn of events will make Julie happy, he asks, “Can there be happiness without contentment of the heart?”<sup>410</sup> He questions the goodness of virtue as he speaks directly to it: “Insane, fierce virtue, I obey thy voice without merit; in all I am doing for thee I abhor thee. What are thy vain comforts against the sharp pains of the soul?”<sup>411</sup> Saint-Preux doubts the possibility of compensation for his virtue that Claire promised for him. If this is justice, then it carries with it no recompense – only permanent separation from whom he loves the most. But how is this good for Saint-Preux? If it is not good for him, then why should he choose justice?<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 255.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> “Justice and truth are man’s first duties; humanity and country his first affections. Every time that private considerations cause him to change this order, he is culpable.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to d’Alembert on the Theatre*, translation by Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 3.

Whatever was dismaying or bitter in the letter of Saint-Preux to Claire has been cancelled by his love and virtue, Claire admits to him in Letter IV. He has never been so dear to her. Virtue, manifest in his sacrifice, has won over Madame d'Étange to an appreciation of his worth. She even intimates that, if it were up to her and not her husband, she would approve of his love. Claire too admires “the sacrifice honor and reason impose” – manifest virtue – on Saint-Preux.<sup>413</sup> She writes, “you have a hundred times proven to us that there is no surer path to happiness than that of virtue. If one reaches happiness, it is purer, more substantial, and sweet thanks to virtue; if one fails, virtue alone can provide consolation.”<sup>414</sup> It is as if Claire wants to prove to Saint-Preux that he is happy because of the sacrifice that he has made which displays his virtue. And if he is not happy, then virtue itself is his reward. Rousseau invites skepticism regarding whether this formulation – that sacrifices for virtue lead to happiness or justice – is correct.

In Letter V, Julie informs Saint-Preux that her mother has passed away. She finds comfort in the hope of an “immortal reward” for “patience and virtues” awaiting her in Heaven.<sup>415</sup> Madame d'Étange lives “in the abode of glory and felicity” while Julie is “dead to happiness.”<sup>416</sup> For the first time in the novel, Julie has indicated a promise of eternal bliss in return for virtue. Eternity in a good afterlife serves as the ultimate reward for sacrifices made in this life on earth. Her mother deserves compensation in the other world for living the right way in this one. Existence is nothing now to Julie but “sorrow and suffering,” until she too arrives in

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<sup>413</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 258. Claire wrote of what “honor and reason condemn” in Letter I.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*

paradise.<sup>417</sup> The promise of a heavenly home makes this world seem grim – more like death than death itself. Julie cries out to God in despair with a prayer, indicating who rules the invisible kingdom. She challenges Saint-Preux to join her in her suffering. She gives him her final farewell. Her letter raises the questions of whether virtue would still be worthy of choosing without Heaven and whether life would still be worth living if existence on earth is the only one for human beings.

The way of life that he had enjoyed with Julie had been just a “long illusion,” Saint-Preux confesses to Claire in Letter VI.<sup>418</sup> Now it has vanished along with hope. All that he has left to fuel his flame is a memory. Happiness is gone. He wonders if he can still live after his loss. “[S]weet ecstasy” had made him lose track of time.<sup>419</sup> Time has returned to normal in his despair. His remaining days appear to him long and unfortunate. But was Saint-Preux ever truly happy? Or is happiness a different kind of thing than he thinks? Perhaps his desperate dependence on Julie for fulfillment suggests that genuine happiness involves a spiritual independence. Saint-Preux would rather see Julie stop loving him and be happy than love him and be unhappy. He hopes that Julie can rediscover “her first virtues, her first happiness.”<sup>420</sup> He questions the justice

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<sup>417</sup> Ibid. Shklar comments on the centrality of Heaven to the psychology of Julie: “[Julie’s] greatest hope is to be reunited in heaven with Saint-Preux.” *Men and Citizens*, 233.

<sup>418</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 260. “And what is true love itself if it is not chimera, lie, and illusion? We love the image we make for ourselves far more than we love the object to which we apply it. If we saw what we love exactly as it is, there would be no more love on earth. When we stop loving, the person we loved remains the same as before, but we no longer see her in the same way. The magic veil drops, and love disappears.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, translated by Allan Bloom (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1979), 329. See also the “Conversation about Novels” that constitutes the Second Preface of Julie (“[S]weet liquor”: The Poetic Presentation of Rousseau’s *Julie*,” 28).

<sup>419</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 260.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., 261.

of Heaven – “could Heaven be unfair...?” – implicitly doubting the trust that Julie has demonstrated toward a celestial ruler.<sup>421</sup>

If Saint-Preux has taught Julie and Claire to think, then they have taught him sensibility; and “if it is reason that makes the man, it is sentiment that guides him,” Claire writes in Letter VII.<sup>422</sup> By noting the preference of Bomston, the “English Philosopher,” for reason, she raises the question of pedagogical aims.<sup>423</sup> Moreover, is *Julie* itself an education in thinking or sentiment? Claire had favored the flame of Saint-Preux for as long as hope remained; but once his pursuit could only make Julie unhappy, she changed positions. Since Saint-Preux cannot be happy with Julie he must find happiness in her individual happiness. Claire notes that he has done this well; his is “the most painful sacrifice a faithful lover ever made.”<sup>424</sup> Sacrifice is worthy of praise. Claire considers it good for human beings to sacrifice their own good for the good of another. However, she does not promise an additional reward for this sacrifice of Saint-Preux. Rather, she shares some “strange thoughts”: “I believe that genuine love fully as much as virtue has the advantage of compensating for whatever is sacrificed to it, and in a way one enjoys the self-imposed deprivations thanks to the very sentiment of their cost and of the motive that leads one to make them.”<sup>425</sup> Claire argues that there is no need for rewards for a sacrifice such as the one made by Saint-Preux because of the enjoyment that accompanies sacrificing for the

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 262. Claire indicates that she too has been a disciple of Saint-Preux.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

beloved. Love itself or virtue is the reward. The love that Saint-Preux gives to Julie is an “exquisite self-love.”<sup>426</sup> This self-love is a greater kind of love than mere possession.

Claire continues Letter VII by making a paradoxical contention about the nature of love. If it is true, as Julie and Saint-Preux have said, that love produces the most delightful sentiments, then whatever prolongs it – even suffering – is good. Claire argues that love flourishes more while unsatisfied than when it flickers out in satisfaction. The greatest obstacle for love emerges when no more obstacles to it remain. If Julie and Saint-Preux had been able to permanently unite, then time, with its effect of declining beauty, would have caused their love to diminish with it. Instead, separated from one another, they will always seem to each other young and beautiful. They will now take to the grave the “enchancing illusion” that they enjoy in their youth.<sup>427</sup> Therefore Claire considers the sacrifice made by Saint-Preux as giving him more pleasure through the power of his memory and “ardent imagination.”<sup>428</sup> The love is like drunkenness. Saint-Preux had already reached the “high point” with Julie; intoxication could only decline.<sup>429</sup> Fate preserved their love at its peak. Remembrance of past pleasures lives on.

In Letters VIII, IX, X, and XI, Saint-Preux clashes with Bomston and Baron d’Étange. Bothered by the absence of Saint-Preux from his life, Bomston writes him in Letter VIII. He

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid. “According to a note in the *Discourse on Inequality*, there is a great difference in nature between *amour-propre*, which is purely social, and self-love (*amour de soi-même*); but at times, as here, *amour-propre* appears also to have a positive sense: the stoical pleasure of mastering oneself (“self-imposed deprivations”). Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part III,” in *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, vol. 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), Note 3, 683.

<sup>427</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 263.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. Claire agrees with the statement on love made by “R.” in the Second Preface.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

wonders if Saint-Preux, who has become unsociable, has plotted to harm himself. Saint-Preux says that they will meet again in Letter IX. Baron d'Étange writes Saint-Preux in Letter X, questioning what Julie has learned from him: "I will not be greatly surprised should the same philosophy that taught her how to throw herself at the first passer-by also teach her to disobey her father."<sup>430</sup> He rightly asks if the education that Saint-Preux has given to Julie has corrupted her. In Letter XI, Saint-Preux questions why Baron d'Étange has caused him to make sacrifices. The justification for sacrifices provided by Claire has apparently not connected with his thought. He speaks of his rights and deems the baron the cause of his misery, deserving of all his hatred. Julie has spoken in favor of Saint-Preux, thereby providing the only consent that the men need.<sup>431</sup> If Julie had asked Saint-Preux about the authority of her father, he would have told her to resist. The baron has defied laws of nature. Saint-Preux urges the baron to "[r]espect Julie's choice."<sup>432</sup> Doing so would protect his sacred honor and cease to sacrifice the happiness of his daughter. Saint-Preux shows no sign of obedience to his superior.

Julie resigns herself to separation from Saint-Preux and bids him farewell in Letter XII. She writes, "Ah! If I must no longer live for you, have I not already ceased to live?"<sup>433</sup> Meaning

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<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 267. "The way in which life under the pseudo-contract and under conditions of radical inequality forms people can best be seen in the person of Julie's father in whom class prejudices kill natural feeling, not because he is a bad man, but because he is a nobleman. ... He makes himself and everyone around him miserable, all because he will not give up the prejudices of his class. This is not due to a want of feeling or affection. He is a decent and likeable man, but he cannot think of Saint-Preux in other than class terms. The young man is an inferior and that is an insuperable obstacle to everyone's happiness, including the Baron's. ... marriage is ruled by class conventions, and when these come into play Baron d'Étange's *amour-propre* is at once aroused, and his prejudices reign supreme." Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 88, 89.

<sup>432</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 268.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 269.



in her life has been bound up with Saint-Preux. She is ill and cannot imagine living without him. In Letter XIII she writes Claire with a sudden and disconcerting attraction toward her death. She notes her fading features that she thinks might repel Wolmar.<sup>434</sup> She compares him with the love of Saint-Preux that once transcended her mere face as their “whole being” united together.<sup>435</sup> Even after beauty fades that love would still remain.<sup>436</sup> It transcends bodies by connecting souls. She tells Claire about a dream of Saint-Preux in which he visited her bedside with pale features. The power of the dream does not allow her to erase it from her memory; rather, it haunts her. What remains of her mind serves only to torment her. She writes, “It does me no good to remember all those vain speeches with which philosophy amuses people who feel nothing; they no longer impress me, and it is clear to me that I despise them.”<sup>437</sup> Her encounter with such great emotion has made her skeptical about the value of philosophy. Her “deeply moved heart” makes her speculate about a mystical connection between lovers that philosophy could not grasp.<sup>438</sup> It does raise the question of its utility for a person in the situation of either Julie or Saint-Preux.<sup>439</sup>

It turns out that Julie had not been dreaming of Saint-Preux, writes Claire in Letter XIV. He visited her bedside during her illness. He had returned to Julie after receiving her last letter.

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<sup>434</sup> She does not mention him by name but only as the friend of her father who would marry her without her consent.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> She thus implicitly disagrees with the opinion of Claire in Letter VII.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>439</sup> Wingrove notes that Claire speaks of a “chattering philosophy” (*philosophie parlrière*) disliked by both her and Julie.” It implies that philosophy is useless in actual affairs of human life. Wingrove, *Rousseau’s Republican Romance*, 126.

Claire describes the scene of Saint-Preux crying by the side of Julie, kissing her extended hand. He left before Julie could recognize him in full consciousness and after contracting the illness. Claire believes that he wanted to share in the suffering of Julie; “the inoculation of love.”<sup>440</sup> However, he heals and returns with Bomston to Paris. Claire writes, “Cease finally to be the plaything of a vain hope and to feed on fantasies.”<sup>441</sup> The beauty of Julie remains. Claire predicts that Wolmar will still find her attractive. He has remained interested in her for three years.

After using all of her strength against him, Julie cannot resist promising herself to Saint-Preux in Letter XV. She loves him too much. Her heart belongs to him and no one else for life. She writes, “You have too well deserved it to lose it, and I am weary of serving an illusory virtue at the expense of justice.”<sup>442</sup> Julie questions what virtue is in the light of what seems to be justice. Why does virtue mean sacrificing oneself instead of fulfilling what has been given by nature? Or is there a distinction or between what is virtue or virtuous and what is good or goodness? Imitating the questioning of Saint-Preux, she refuses to simply obey what she has been told. Duty asks not that she reject him but that she restore to him the empire that love has given him. “Vain duties” dictated by her family pale in comparison to what Heaven has caused her to love.<sup>443</sup> She writes, “Ah! in the transport of love that restores me to you, my only regret is for having resisted sentiments so dear and so legitimate. Nature, O sweet nature, take back all thy rights!”<sup>444</sup> She thus appeals to Heaven and to nature as the standards by which she determines

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<sup>440</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 274.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

what is right. Rights trump rules given to her by Baron d'Étange, whom she associates with vanity, not justice.

Even after these remarks, Julie suddenly turns back toward obedience to her father in Letter XV. She writes, “Do not think that in order to follow you I shall ever abandon the paternal household. Do not hope that I shall resist the bonds that a sacred authority imposes on me.”<sup>445</sup> Rule by the father, too, comes from nature. Julie ultimately sees that obligation as preeminent. She continues that, especially after losing her mother, she does not want to afflict her father. While “[d]uty, honor, [and] virtue” no longer mean anything to her she respects him who gave her life.<sup>446</sup> Her decision has been made: she will not distress her only living parent. Whatever his fascination with vain titles, she will give him her hand to dispose as he sees fit. She only hopes for the happiness of her family and her friends, even as she seems destined for sadness.

Heaven has made his heart for her heart, Saint-Preux contends to Julie in Letter XVI. Death alone can sever their bond. He doubts that they hold the power to will a separation. Though they may never be spouses, they will always be lovers, consolation for their sad days. Indeed he wonders what has happened to their happiness. Love alone, without charms, remains. He blames Julie: “Daughter too submissive, mistress wanting courage: all our woes are the result of your errors.”<sup>447</sup> The obedience of Julie to the wishes of her father has led her into a mistake. The purity of her heart has paradoxically led to the banishment of wisdom. Saint-Preux

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid. “The once rebellious Julie yields, on one level, to social convention (she will speak at length of social order in letter III, XVIII), and on another to paternal authority. The word ‘sacred’ does not generally in this text express a specifically religious concept, but is rather the characters’ way of solemnizing a power founded in nature and thus ultimately irresistible.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part III,” Note 14, 684.

<sup>446</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 276.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

continues, “I am a lover, I know the art of love, that I can feel: but I am only a man, and it is beyond human strength to surrender supreme felicity.”<sup>448</sup> He simply cannot sacrifice her. Questioning the notion that the sacrifice is good, he writes, “Why should we alone wish to be better than all the rest of mankind, and subscribe with childlike simplicity to illusory virtues that everyone talks about and no one practices?”<sup>449</sup> He does not wish for anyone to tell him what virtue is. Instead he appeals to his own heart, his conscience, to determine the nature of virtue. He plans to follow Bomston to England, occasionally departing from there to visit Julie in secrecy. But Claire reports to Saint-Preux that Julie has married in Letter XVII. She only wants to see Saint-Preux pursue “a friendship that is pure and disinterested.”<sup>450</sup> He lost her to Wolmar.

Julie desires to pour her heart out to Saint-Preux in Letter XVIII. Before discussing her marriage, she wants to reflect on her first love. Six years earlier she first beheld Saint-Preux. Her heart belonged to him at the very first glance. She states her honest assessment of the romance: “As recently as two months ago I still believed I had not been mistaken; blind love, I said to myself, was right; we were made for each other; I would be his if man’s order had not perturbed nature’s affinities, and if anyone were allowed to be happy, we should have been so together.”<sup>451</sup> She therefore makes it clear that if she had been given the choice, at that point, she would choose Saint-Preux. Her father had not yet changed her feelings, which still belonged to her tutor.

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid. 279.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 280.

Mentioning “Monsieur de Wolmar” by name for the first time in Letter XVIII in the context of his joining Baron d’Étange after they had left the service, Julie indicates that Baron d’Étange owes Wolmar his life.<sup>452</sup> Wolmar comes from a high birth but had not found a wife. Julie concedes, “It was my fate to please Monsieur de Wolmar who had never loved anyone.”<sup>453</sup> In the presence of her mother, her father ordered her to marry Wolmar. Saint-Preux lacks a noble birth. Baron d’Étange thus decided that his friend would become the husband of Julie; and Julie, in turn, who considered her heart as “made for virtue,” connected her virtue with her happiness.<sup>454</sup> She writes, “But it is not as easy as people think to renounce virtue. It long persecutes those who relinquish it, and its charms, which are the delight of pure souls, are the first punishment of the wicked, who still love them and can no longer enjoy them.”<sup>455</sup> Virtue seems to mean obedience.<sup>456</sup> But Julie does not simply obey her father. She first defies him to his face, denying that Wolmar would mean anything to her. She thereby indicates her struggle with choosing virtue. Baron d’Étange appeals to her duty and his honor. A softened approach by him finally persuades her.

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>456</sup> H. Gaston Hall notes that the definition of virtue in *Julie* covers a broad range: “Gentleness (*douceur*), sincerity, beneficence, honor, humanity, friendship, and pure love are all proposed as virtues ... the characters of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* do not all agree about what constitutes virtue.” “The Concept of Virtue in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 28, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1961): 22.

According to Julie in Letter XVIII, her wedding day felt to her like the last of her life. Still swearing an everlasting fidelity to Saint-Preux, she went to the temple like a sacrifice.<sup>457</sup> She felt fear upon entering the church. The ceremony was solemn. She thought that God had spoken. Her heart changed: “The purity, the dignity, the holiness of marriage, so vividly set forth in the words of Scripture, those chaste and sublime duties so important to happiness ... made such an impression on me that I seemed to experience within me a sudden revolution.”<sup>458</sup> She continues, “It was as if an unknown power repaired all at once the disorder of my affections and re-established them in accordance with the law of duty and nature.”<sup>459</sup> She also references “[t]he eternal eye that sees all” which had begun to read the depths of her heart.<sup>460</sup> It appeared to her that God had essentially revealed himself to her and he had taken the side of her duties to her father. He had mysteriously intervened to make her heart see the interest of Heaven in her

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<sup>457</sup> “‘Temple’ suggests the metaphor of an Old Testament sacrifice ....” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part III,” Note 46, 686.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., 291, 292. “Etymological sense of *revolution*: a complete turn-around, actually a physiological term for a change in humors, implying her a miraculous cure.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part III,” Note 47, 686. “She is momentarily helped by a religious experience. She goes to the altar to marry M. de Wolmar with death in her heart. She loves Saint-Preux and has all the encouragement of nature’s superior authority. She is not a hypocrite and wonders how she can swear vows to a man who is not loved by her but has a rival in her affections. But once in the church, in the face of its mysteries and impressive ritual, [Julie] undergoes a reformation. She suddenly comes to believe that virtue is superior to all inclination and that love of order is superior to love of a man. At that moment she hopes and expects that the overcoming of the opposition between love and duty by the love of duty can make her happy.” Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 150.

<sup>459</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 292. The law of nature that Julie discovers differs from the one rooted in inclination that Saint-Preux has appealed to in Letter XI.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

faithfulness. Since God cares about humankind enough to study interior lives, Julie describes a personal deity.

Along with encountering God, Julie experiences an awakening through seeing Claire and her husband in the church, she writes in Letter XVIII. They are “[a]miable and virtuous,” bound together by “[d]uty and honesty,” making them “tender friends” as well as “faithful spouses.”<sup>461</sup> Imagining that she speaks to them directly, Julie writes: “... though you do not burn with that devouring flame that consumes the soul, you love each other with a pure and sweet sentiment that nurtures the soul, one that wisdom sanctions and reason directs; for that you are only the more dependently happy.”<sup>462</sup> Seeing them makes her wish that she could share the same bond. Her understanding of love begins to transform as she sees friendship as the firmest foundation. This differs from the frenzied emotions that she has experienced in her affair with Saint-Preux. She promises fidelity to the pastor of her wedding and marries Wolmar.<sup>463</sup> She has changed and experiences a new kind of joy, peace, and serenity. She feels that she has been reborn. With her husband, she will start a new life on earth, for the sake of “[s]weet and consoling virtue.”<sup>464</sup> She will not abandon virtue another time. A new person emerges with a propensity for propriety. However, the suddenness of this rebirth of Julie makes it seem questionable. Has she abandoned Saint-Preux, or will her love for him prevail? Is this revolution a permanent thing or momentary?

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Joel Schwartz refers to *Julie* as “Rousseau’s novel of romantic love and unromantic marriage....” *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 114.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid., 293.

Julie becomes a kind of evangelist in Letter XVIII. She tells the story of her conversion. “I felt I was born good, and followed my inclinations; I was fond of reflection and trusted my reason,” she writes of her former self.<sup>465</sup> She went to church but lived like a philosopher at home. She also followed “the false glow of wandering lanterns” which guided her to perdition.<sup>466</sup> Moving forward to her current state, she implores Saint-Preux: “Worship the Eternal Being, my wise and worthy friend; with a breath of air you will destroy those phantoms of reason, which have but a vain appearance and flee like a shadow in the face of immutable truth.”<sup>467</sup> She continues, “Nothing exists but through him who is. It is he who gives purpose to justice, a basis to virtue, a value to this short life spent pleasing him....”<sup>468</sup> It is through the worship of God that the soul “learns to despise its base inclinations and surmount its vile penchants.”<sup>469</sup> After her conversion, following inclinations seems wrong to her, not as a certain way to live in accordance with justice. In religion, Julie has a foundation which can encourage her in fulfilling her duties. Even if God does not exist, she contends, belief in him would still make one “stronger, happier, and wiser.”<sup>470</sup> She now condemns “the sophisms of a reason that relies on itself alone,” specifically identifying the philosophers, “worthy apologists of crime.”<sup>471</sup> They undermine the

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<sup>465</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 294. Julie seems to articulate what Rousseau would say about himself. What may be good for Rousseau may not be good for Julie.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.



foundations of society, including the bond of marriage: “Would you not say that by attacking directly the most sacred and most solemn of engagements, these dangerous reasoners have determined to obliterate all of human society in a single blow, which is founded only upon the faith of covenants?”<sup>472</sup> Religious faith, not reason, provides the best guide to a good life.

After encouraging Saint-Preux to follow the “same road” in Letter XVIII, by worshipping the “Supreme Being,” or “the author of all justice,” Julie calls him to undertake a moral reform.<sup>473</sup> She writes, “But he who recognizes and serves the common father of men believes he has a higher purpose; the desire to fulfill it inspires his zeal, and following a rule more sure than his inclinations he is able to do the good that costs him something and sacrifice his heart’s desires to the law of duty.”<sup>474</sup> She describes this as a “heroic sacrifice” to which God has called them both.<sup>475</sup> Sacrificial offerings to God is synonymous with virtue. Everything has changed between Julie and Saint-Preux. He must therefore change his heart because she is no longer Julie

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<sup>472</sup> Rousseau makes a similar argument in the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*: “Reconsider, then, the importance of your products; and if the works of the most enlightened of our learned men and our best citizens provide us with so little that is useful, tell us what we must think of that crowd of obscure writers and idle men of letters who uselessly consume the substance of the State. Did I say idle? Would God they really were. Morals would be healthier and society more peaceful. But these vain and futile declaimers go everywhere armed with their deadly paradoxes, undermining the foundations of faith, and annihilating virtue. They smile disdainfully at the old-fashioned words of fatherland and religion, and devote their talents and philosophy to destroying and debasing all that is sacred among men.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 50.

<sup>473</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 298.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*

d'Étange; she is Julie de Wolmar. Yet she still loves him, even as she listens to her conscience.<sup>476</sup> She thinks that the conscience never misleads a soul that consults it. This contributes to her tranquility. Saint-Preux has lost a lover but gained a “faithful friend.”<sup>477</sup> She asks him to “purify through Christian morals the lessons of philosophy.”<sup>478</sup> Philosophy must bow before Christian teachings.<sup>479</sup> Moreover, she writes, “I feel more than ever that there is no happiness without virtue.”<sup>480</sup> Finally, she requests the permission of Saint-Preux to tell Wolmar about their past.

Nothing will stop Saint-Preux from worshipping Julie, he tells her in Letter XIX. He treats her like a divinity at whose altar he kneels. She is a picture of “genuine beauty.”<sup>481</sup> However, virtue has dictated that they part. He ponders the sacrifice that he has made for virtue.

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<sup>476</sup> Julie gives a ‘sure rule’ for conduct: trust the conscience. But she does not say how to behave when what the conscience says, as in the case of Saint-Preux, conflicts with duties.

<sup>477</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 300.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>479</sup> “Men cannot live without light, guidance, knowledge; only through knowledge of the good can he find the good that he needs. The fundamental question, therefore, is whether men can acquire that knowledge of the good without which they cannot guide their lives individually or collectively by the unaided efforts of their natural powers, or whether they are dependent for that knowledge on Divine Revelation. No alternative is more fundamental than this: human guidance or divine guidance. The first possibility is characteristic of philosophy or science in the original sense of the term, the second is presented in the Bible. The dilemma cannot be evaded by any harmonization or synthesis. For both philosophy and the Bible proclaim something as the one thing needful, as the only thing that ultimately counts, and the one thing needful proclaimed by the Bible is the opposite of that proclaimed by philosophy: a life of obedient love versus a life of free insight. In every attempt at harmonization, in every synthesis however impressive, one of the two opposed elements is sacrificed, more or less subtly but in any event surely, to the other: philosophy, which means to be the queen, must be the handmaid of revelation or vice versa.” Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 74, 75.

<sup>480</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 300.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

The happiness of Julie is all that he cares about. He is willing to make a sacrifice as long as it makes Julie happy, because the knowledge of her happiness fulfills him even more than his own. The psychology of self-sacrifice – what makes giving up something of great value worth it – plays a key role in his acceptance of her marriage. Ultimately he must receive compensation. Saint-Preux writes, “Ah! as a reward for a sacrifice you surely appreciate, be so good as to spare me this unbearable doubt. Julie, are you happy? If you are, grant me in my despair the only consolation available to me....”<sup>482</sup> He urges her to keep their love a secret and warns her about the dangers of a confession. To the charm of his life he bids farewell as he is distraught.

Happy as a married woman, Julie wishes for the happiness of Saint-Preux in Letter XX. She writes about the characteristics of Wolmar. He speaks little but holds reason in high priority. He has a cold disposition and Julie is his first attachment. He is rarely happy or sad, only content. He does not speak of himself. He does not laugh. He is serene. He desires the happiness of Julie. He has no passions except that passion for her.<sup>483</sup> Julie writes, “Monsieur de Wolmar’s greatest predilection is for observation. He likes to make judgments on men’s characters and on the actions he observes. He makes them with profound wisdom and the most perfect impartiality.”<sup>484</sup> Julie may describe a philosopher in her portrait of Wolmar though she never uses the word. The sharp contrast with Saint-Preux, who has been referred to as one, puts the term in question.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>483</sup> “Wolmar is distinguished by a total absence of any passion. He needs no one, certainly not God.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 135. Julie is the exception to this rule: “I have been able to discover no passion of any kind in him except the one he has for me.” Rousseau, *Julie*, 305.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> See Part IV.402 and 403, in which Rousseau presents Wolmar as “the philosopher” and describes him in greater detail. Twice Rousseau draws attention to his love of observation. Wingrove notes that Claire makes “mocking references” to Saint-Preux as “the philosopher.” *Rousseau’s Republican Romance*, 114.

Could Saint-Preux and Wolmar, in addition to Bomston, all be philosophers? Or does the temperament of Wolmar suggest that he is the only true philosopher? Or are there different dimensions to philosophy – i.e., radical questioning and tranquil observation – for Rousseau?

Wolmar is a lover of order, Julie tells Saint-Preux in Letter XX. He has brought order into his house that reflects the order of his heart as well as the order within all of the earth.<sup>486</sup> Yet Julie is not in love with him. She writes, “The thing that long deluded me and perhaps still deludes you is the idea that love is essential to a happy marriage. My friend, this is an error....”<sup>487</sup> Marriage has made Julie happy, if not in love as she had been in love with Saint-Preux. The kind of sentiment that she feels for Wolmar is sweeter and more lasting than the romantic sort of love. She critiques love: “Love is accompanied by a continual anxiety of jealousy and deprivation, ill suited to marriage, which is a state of delectation and peace.”<sup>488</sup> Love is a passionate, fleeting thing, while marriage provides a firm foundation for running a household and raising children. Lovers only think of themselves while spouses have much to consider beyond themselves alone. Julie calls love the strongest of illusions among the passions. It fades with the beauty of youth. She continues, “Lovers must therefore assume that sooner or later they will cease to worship each other; then the idol they served being destroyed, they see

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<sup>486</sup> Wolmar discusses his love of order in depth in Part IV, 403 and 404.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 306. In the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, coupling among men and women and the birth of the family occurs at an earlier and different stage of development than the dawn of romantic love, which is rooted in jealousy. C.f. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 142 and 149.

<sup>488</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, Ibid.

each other as they are.”<sup>489</sup> Everything that she experienced with Saint-Preux had been an illusion, Julie now sees; whereas what she enjoys with Wolmar finds a stable footing in reality.

In the light of her altered assessment of love, Julie has transformed since her marriage, becoming a new kind of woman, she continues to tell her former lover Saint-Preux in Letter XX. The shift concerns her conception of happiness, a state of being that occurs beyond mere love.<sup>490</sup> She has found it not in the illusory passion for Saint-Preux but rather in her respect for Wolmar. A “felicitous revolution” has occurred.<sup>491</sup> With God who enlightens her as her witness, she declares that if given the choice between Saint-Preux and Wolmar, she would marry Wolmar. She promises Saint-Preux her silence regarding their romance and breaks things off with him, including the composition of letters. Saint-Preux may write to Claire but not at all for Julie. She encourages him to pursue felicity, which will require that he also seek “genuine virtue.”<sup>492</sup> There is strong connection between virtue and happiness. She considers the true meaning of virtue: “take care lest that word virtue, too abstract, be more glittering than solid, and an ostentatious name that serves more to dazzle others than content ourselves.”<sup>493</sup> She also writes, “choose a

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<sup>489</sup> Ibid. “Similarly, the preceptor in *Emile*, lengthily explaining to Sophie and Emile the difference between love and marriage, interrupts the former in order to prepare the latter: ‘I have often thought that if one could prolong the happiness of love in marriage, one would have paradise on earth. Up to now, that has never been seen’ (Book V, Pléiade, IV, 861; Bloom 476).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part III, Note 74, 688.

<sup>490</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 307.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid. “A harsh rationalist critic would say that her succumbing to the religious charms and the promise of happiness in another life is just an illusory easy way out.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 151.

<sup>492</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 309.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid. “... Rousseau has substituted for heroism and an austere sanctity a new concept of virtue in domestic tranquility and order. The admiration of beauty, kindness and beneficence replace great exploits and drastic sacrifices. Uprightness replaces obedience. His is a concept of virtue

surer route to happiness than the one that so long led us astray” – one that involves virtue.<sup>494</sup> She will not stop asking Heaven to grant them “pure felicity” or her improved view of happiness.<sup>495</sup>

Two years separate Letter XX from Julie to Saint-Preux and Letter XXI from Saint-Preux to Bomston. Saint-Preux feels oppressed by “the weight of life.”<sup>496</sup> He has lost everything that could endear him to living except for his sorrows. He intimates that he has contemplated suicide but friendship and duty chain him to earth. He has meditated on the subject for a long time. He writes, “to seek what is good and flee what is ill for oneself insofar as it offends no one else is the right of nature. When our life is an ill for us and a good for no one it is therefore permissible to deliver oneself of it.”<sup>497</sup> Since he believes in the immortal soul, he could sacrifice his body for his greater well-being. He considers the argument that God has placed him on earth in order to fulfill duties given to him. But he counters that he can leave as soon as his life has turned in a direction that is bad for him. Life has become unbearable to Saint-Preux, which he perceives as an order to give it up. He conveys a low view of life: “Our life is nothing in God’s eyes; it is nothing in the eyes of reason, it should be nothing in ours, and when we leave our body, we merely lay aside an inconvenient garment.”<sup>498</sup> If life is nothing, then why not end it whenever?

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which opposes sincerity both to the affected, treacherous manners of the *salons* and to the blind acceptance of dogma. Rousseau looks to heaven for fulfillment of desire, and for justice. But his characters find a large measure of happiness on earth in the practice of these virtues, in friendship and in a family circle the more exemplary as that of Julie’s parents was not. Such happiness is the reward for virtue. In another sense it is also its aim: happiness, thirst for which Rousseau says somewhere is inextinguishable in the human heart.” Hall, “Virtue,” 33.

<sup>494</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 310.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

Continuing his dim outlook, he writes, “Considering the throngs of errors, torments, and vices with which it is filled, one would be much more inclined to ask whether it was ever a good?”<sup>499</sup> Finally, giving his most detailed picture of what constitutes the philosophic life, he considers a “wise man” as detached from life – except for “sublime contemplations” – to bear its miseries.<sup>500</sup> The question concerns death: whether it is desirable or undesirable, and what makes it either one; whether one has a right to choose it, and from where this right comes; and what is just or unjust.

In Letter XXII, Bomston shares incredulity that Saint-Preux would try to justify suicide. He argues that work on earth remains for Saint-Preux, who has not done enough to satisfy God. He predicts that Saint-Preux will suddenly change from saying life is evil to saying life is good. Saint-Preux ought not burn his house down in order to avoid the challenge of giving it order. Incurable pain of the body may warrant that a man take his own life but not pains of the soul. Pain and pleasure come and go in a life that is short and the worth of which depends on use. Saint-Preux should say no more that life is an evil because it is in his power to make it good. Bomston writes, “Do not say ... that you are entitled to die; for it would be as good to say that you are entitled not to be a man, entitled to rebel against the author of your being, and betray your purpose.”<sup>501</sup> Central to his argument is that God has given Saint-Preux a purpose on earth.

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid. The active life of Wolmar demonstrates his disagreement with this reclusive perspective of Saint-Preux. “Saint-Preux defends his right to take his own life by pointing to the example of the ancients, to his commendable indifference to worldly things and to his right to please himself by ending his own suffering without causing pain to others. He is neither a father, nor a citizen, so there are for him no overriding duties. It is the voice of pure egocentricity. If life has become a useless burden, why not shed it?” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 68.

<sup>501</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 321.

His vantage point is teleological: Saint-Preux would be wise not to miss the design in his life. Furthermore, the death of Saint-Preux would harm Bomston and Julie, who wish him to live. Saint-Preux has failed to consider his duties to his friendships and Bomston scolds him for it.<sup>502</sup> Bomston wonders if Saint-Preux will always be preoccupied only with himself and his wishes. Saint-Preux owes his life to the society and country that has brought him up, for he is a citizen.<sup>503</sup> His departure would be an injustice to everyone who has known him. Life is his “sacred duty.”<sup>504</sup> “[E]very man is useful to humanity, by the very fact that he exists,” writes Bomston.<sup>505</sup> Lastly, he appeals to virtue. The exercise of virtue can cause him to love this life, he thinks.

A new idea has occurred to Bomston, which he relays to Saint-Preux within Letter XXIII. He writes to Saint-Preux, “What is needed for you to become yourself again is for you to turn yourself outward, and it is only in the bustle of an active life that you can hope to recover peace of mind.”<sup>506</sup> He will tell him about a grand spectacle. If he rejects the opportunity, still not fully

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<sup>502</sup> “... the attachment between Edouard [Bomston] and Saint-Preux raises the whole question of friendship in Rousseau and Romanticism altogether. The primary attachments and the central roles in the novel are always assigned to the lovers, who are driven, however ideally, by sexual desire. There is no way that friendship could be considered, as it is by Aristotle, to be the highest relationship, transcending ties of blood or bodily attraction.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 147.

<sup>503</sup> Shklar calls the potential suicide of Saint-Preux “an act of self-indulgence.” *Men and Citizens*, 68. She adds, “In any case the sorrow of Saint-Preux’s friends and the loss of his talents to his fellow men were not to be treated as negligible considerations.”

<sup>504</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 322.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, 323. “Perhaps Lord Eduard [Bomston], who is said to have a life of public duty to fulfill in England, cannot grasp Saint-Preux’s sense of futility. The actual state of affairs is exactly as Saint-Preux describes it. He lives in a society in which he has no functions to fulfill. Its prejudices prevent him from marrying Julie and becoming a father and a full man, and its politics exclude him from public affairs. He has no duties worthy of his talents and not the slightest hope of achieving personal happiness.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 68, 69.

<sup>506</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 324.



revealed to him, he will regret it for the rest of his life. Saint-Preux agrees to obey the wishes of Bomston in Letter XXIV. Bomston assures him that things have been arranged in Letter XXV. His friend will join a ship for an adventure around the world, one that will last for three years.<sup>507</sup> Saint-Preux says farewell to Claire in Letter XXVI: “I am off, dear and charming Cousin, to sail around the globe; I am going to seek in another hemisphere the peace I have not been able to enjoy in this one.”<sup>508</sup> If Julie has found happiness, Saint-Preux has been sent on a trip to find it for himself. He writes: “Vast, boundless sea, which wilt perhaps swallow me up into thy bosom; let me find again on thy waves the calm that evades my troubled heart!”<sup>509</sup> He sets off as a sailor.

The discussion of love, marriage, and suicide that comprises the third part of *Julie* – with the element of spirited debate between the authors of the letters – serves as an example of the way that Rousseau proceeds with teaching in the novel. He places speeches on the pages that conflict with one another, inviting decisions between two or more sides about what is true or just. Rousseau thought that in order to communicate a message, an author must please his audience. The love story in this novel serves as a vehicle for infusing philosophical questions. This is a kind of rhetoric that had as its goal the attraction of a whole generation of readers and beyond.

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<sup>507</sup> “Once Julie is married, St. Preux must learn to live without the hope of possessing her. He was a slave to his love. After Julie renounces him, he withers into a state of despair that is moderated by self-pity. He reasons about suicide in order to be talked out of it by Bomston. His friendship with Bomston preserves his heart; he is grateful to Bomston and can, therefore, find a reason to continue his life – to pay his debt of gratitude to his friend. Bomston sends him on a voyage where he will either learn to live with his pain and disappointment, or die.” Mark Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization: Love, Marriage, and Family in Rousseau’s Julie* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 67.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, 326. “Poor Saint-Preux sets out on the disappointed Romantic’s tour of the world, learning the ways of men and nations, but without any expectation of finding happiness among them.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 150.

## Chapter 6

### “[A] lovely and moving spectacle”: Domestic Peace in Part IV of *Julie*

The tension that characterized the first three parts of *Julie* because of the romance between Saint-Preux and Julie becomes relaxed in Part IV with Julie as Madame de Wolmar. The longings that tormented the lovers gives way to harmony. A romance with domesticity becomes the theme as Julie and Monsieur de Wolmar govern their house and its inhabitants. Wolmar leads a godlike existence, quietly managing a large estate with perfect equanimity. Marriage, not love, gives Julie the happiness that she had deeply longed for throughout youth. Rousseau exalts life in the home as the best life, if not for himself then for most human beings. The Wolmar home is a beautiful one, ornamented with an orchard that displays wild nature. Meanwhile, Saint-Preux has learned to take enjoyment from being alone, independent of Julie. But is this picture truly a resolution? Or are the lives of Saint-Preux and Julie still incomplete?

Julie writes Madame d’Orbe (Claire) in Letter I. She urges Claire to return to her side. She conveys a keen awareness of the transitory nature of life: “How many precious instants are we letting slip past, when we have none left to give away! The years are adding up; youth is beginning to recede; life is flowing past; the fleeting happiness it offers us is still in our hands, and we neglect to enjoy it!”<sup>510</sup> She recalls the special moments when they were still young girls. The reality of mortality has dawned on her. With the passage of time comes irreplaceable loss. Her “sensible heart” resists a “premature death”; she wants to fully live while being on earth.<sup>511</sup> Suffering inevitable losses in life makes her increasingly more appreciative of what is remaining.

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<sup>510</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 327. She echoes a sentiment of Saint-Preux in Letter X of Part I that they not waste time.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

She indicates that Claire has somehow lost her husband and that she has given birth to sons. Motherhood has made friendship more necessary than ever; she needs to talk about her children, one of whom is named Marcellin. She has been living with Monsieur de Wolmar for six years.<sup>512</sup> Already in Part IV, Rousseau indicates that even a seemingly quintessential domesticity still faces a permanent challenge. The problem of death casts a shadow over an awakened life. Julie notably omits a discussion of the afterlife here, even after her religious turn in Part III.

The hidden romance with Monsieur Saint-Preux, including from her husband Wolmar, still bothers Julie, she admits to Claire in Letter I. Nevertheless, living as a wife and a mother, such as when her children and husband surround her, makes her see the virtue that is in her life. The family banishes her past faults from her mind. But her secret cannot remain hidden forever. Her history torments her. She sheds “tears of pity, of regret, [and] of repentance,” not of love.<sup>513</sup> She weeps for the fate of Saint-Preux, whom she fears has been left with little peace. She wonders if he has perished on his long voyage. Her conscience haunts her for allowing his death. Considering that Claire has become a widow, Julie invites her to live in her house in Clarens. Julie wants to join in her despair, since this is where friendship shines. She envisages their two families coming together, sharing in the education and duties belonging to each. Her letter reveals the primacy of friendship over love. Love wanes but friendship can keep growing.<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> “According to the novel’s internal chronology, we are now in early 1744, and the cousins are about twenty-eight years old. Julie was married in 1738; her former lover set out with the Anson expedition in the fall of 1740.” Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part IV,” in *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, vol. 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), Note 1, 691.

<sup>513</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 331.

<sup>514</sup> Rousseau invites a comparison of the friendships between Saint-Preux and Bomston and Julie and Claire. Bomston and Claire each offer great encouragement. After becoming a widow, Claire expresses dependence on Julie, which Bomston does not share with Saint-Preux. Bomston is

Replying to the generous offer by Julie, Claire shares that Julie has filled the void in her heart left by the recent passing of her husband in Letter II. She has resolved to spend the remaining days of life with her. She envisions marrying her daughter to the older son of Julie. She loved Monsieur d'Orbe but cannot imagine remarrying since she finds constraint unbearable. She hopes to reunite with Julie for the rest of her life. "When I am here," she writes of her house, "I feel only what I have lost. When I am with you, I see only what I have left."<sup>515</sup> They need one another and each would be worse off if fate somehow separated them from enjoying friendship. Since she thinks that Wolmar knows the secret of Julie, Claire suggests that she should reveal it. She indicates that Milord Edward Bomston has received word from Saint-Preux who still lives. His ship had been seen two months earlier. She refers to him as "our philosopher."<sup>516</sup> The repeated usage of the term "philosopher" by Claire to describe Saint-Preux opens the question of whether Saint-Preux, with his advanced education and perpetual doubting of conventions, is indeed a philosopher; or if, on the contrary, he lacks key attributes that true philosophers possess, such as the detached observation and wisdom of Wolmar. Moreover, the casual and playful reference to Saint-Preux as a philosopher suggests that Claire does not take philosophizing seriously, even as her use of the term raises the important question of what a philosopher is.<sup>517</sup>

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much older than Saint-Preux while Julie and Claire are about the same age, making Bomston seem to possess more wisdom than Saint-Preux; whereas Julie and Claire seem equal.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid., 337.

<sup>517</sup> What is the relation of writing to becoming a philosopher? The characters in *Julie* write private letters but not works for the public like Rousseau. Is publishing for a broader audience an essential part of being a true philosopher? Or is this a unique feature of Rousseau?

Upon returning from his extensive journey on the sea, which took him around the globe, Saint-Preux tells Claire that he has been unable to escape her and her cousin Julie in Letter III. He writes, “There is no point in fleeing what is dear to us, its image faster than the sea and the winds follows us to the end of the creation, and wherever we betake ourselves we take with us our source of life.”<sup>518</sup> He thus relays the power that even the image of Julie commands over him. While beholding the suffering of fellow members of his crew, and sharing in their suffering, Saint-Preux promised himself as compensation a resumed life on the shore of Lake Geneva. Bomston has informed him that the cousins have continued the life that he knew before leaving. He gives a sketch of his four-year voyage that left his ship alone among a whole squadron – from the Americas, to Asia, to Africa, then to Europe.<sup>519</sup> Yet he writes, “[W]hat I have not seen in the entire world is someone who is like Claire d’Orbe, like Julie d’Étange, and who might console for their loss a heart that once could love them.”<sup>520</sup> He expresses purified sentiments for Julie. Only by seeing her can he confirm that she has become nothing more than a friend to him.

Having learned of the past romance between Saint-Preux and Julie, Monsieur de Wolmar responds by offering space on his estate to Saint-Preux in Letter IV. Claire repeats his offer in Letter V, calling it “a pure act of generosity.”<sup>521</sup> She wants Saint-Preux to be at peace and content. Happier than ever before, Saint-Preux writes Bomston in close proximity to Julie in

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<sup>518</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>519</sup> Allan Bloom notes that, like Saint-Preux, Rousseau makes Emile take a voyage in the *Emile*, “After his two-year voyage, at the age of twenty-four, still a virgin, Emile returns, eager to take possession of his bride.” *Love and Friendship* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 140. Unlike Emile, Saint-Preux has no bride, no Sophie, awaiting his return.

<sup>520</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 340.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid., 342.

Letter VI. He says, “For me the world is never divided into more than two regions, the one where she is, and the one where she is not.”<sup>522</sup> Where she resides is inhabited and everywhere else is empty. Saint-Preux shares the ecstasy that he felt upon seeing his home of Switzerland after his travels. He delighted in the air, which seemed to him like perfume, as well as the beautiful countryside.<sup>523</sup> Passing through Vevey on the way to Clarens, Saint-Preux experienced dread and restlessness. These emotions came to an end upon seeing Julie, who ran and embraced him upon his arrival before introducing him to Wolmar as an old friend. Wolmar in turn offered his friendship. Following the introduction by Julie of her two young sons to Saint-Preux, Wolmar tells him: “[Y]ou are seeing an example of the candor that reigns here. If you sincerely wish to be virtuous, learn to imitate it: that is the only request and the only lesson I have to give to you.”<sup>524</sup> According to Wolmar, virtue means transparency or sincerity. He continues, “A single precept of morality can do for all the others; it is this: Never do nor say anything that thou dost not wish everyone to see and hear.”<sup>525</sup> Like Julie, Wolmar wants Saint-Preux to be the same

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>523</sup> The description of natural beauty compares with his account of the Upper Valais in Part I.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., 349. “How pleasant it would be to live among us if exterior appearance were always a reflection of the heart’s disposition; if decency were virtue; if our maxims served as our rules; if true philosophy were inseparable from the title of philosopher! But so many qualities are too rarely combined, and virtue seldom walks in such great pomp. ... Before art had moulded our manners and taught our passions to speak an affected language, our customs were rustic but natural, and differences of conduct announced at first glance those of character. Human nature, basically, was no better, but men found their security in the ease of seeing through each other, and that advantage, which we no longer appreciate, spared them many vices.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 37.

<sup>525</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 349. “Wolmar’s rule contrasts interestingly with Julie’s ‘sure rule’ given in Letter III, XVIII, 300, which is to trust one’s conscience. Its formulation is highly reminiscent of the Golden Rule, and its purpose too is similar; but there is a fundamental difference in that it is

everywhere. He imagines a community of perfect authenticity and genuine friendships.<sup>526</sup> He speaks of “that Roman who wanted his house to be built in such a way that whatever occurred within it could be seen.”<sup>527</sup> Wolmar has nothing to hide and hopes that his fellow residents will hide nothing either.

In Letter VII from Julie to Claire, Julie says that she loves Saint-Preux more than ever but in a different way than she loved him in the past. She feels secure with her present care for him. She notes that Saint-Preux has changed, in ways that have made him become a superior person. He speaks his mind with assurance and conveys a confidence in himself that needs no approval. It seems that the urging of authenticity by Wolmar has affected the behavior of Saint-Preux. What is more, traveling around the world has made him less dogmatic, less disposed to judgment, and less inclined to state “universal propositions”; he has seen exceptions to rules.<sup>528</sup>

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based on transparency (i.e., everyone will know) rather than reciprocity (gratitude for kindness, or fear of reprisal).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part IV,” Note 33, 693.

<sup>526</sup> “Rousseau is the philosophic founder of the conception of virtue as sincerity, authenticity, daring to uncover and to be true to one’s inner, unique self – and on this basis, for the sake of this, determining one’s own life, as independently as possible, in a fraternal community with others whom one truly knows and respects. All this he designates as true freedom, which is practically identifiable with virtue as he is characterizing it.” Thomas L. Pangle and Timothy W. Burns, *The Key Texts of Political Philosophy*, digital edition (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 696.

<sup>527</sup> “When a worker proposed to modify the house of Livius Drusus at the cost of only five talents so as to better shield his life from public view, he answered that he would pay ten to have it made transparent, so that everyone could see how he lived (Plutarch, *Praecepta gerende reipublicae*, chap. IV); the anecdote is repeated by Montaigne (*Essays*, III, 2).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part IV,” Note 34, 693.

<sup>528</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 352. Judith Shklar notes that Wolmar traveled before his estate in Clarens: “Who is Wolmar and what does he do? Born somewhere in Eastern Europe, he is rich and a member of the highest nobility. After an active and adventurous life of travel and soldiering he settles down in his later years to marriage and to running a model estate, Clarens.” Judith N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 135. Travel plays a role in the formation of Wolmar and Saint-Preux.

She indicates that the study of books cannot give the reader all the wisdom that travel offers. Saint-Preux has become a lover of truth without indulging the tendency of being doctrinaire. Julie finds that she learns from him more, now that he has spent some time away from a library. This is a surprising insight for a learned person like Rousseau to make through the pen of Julie. Would he encourage his readers to set his texts down and go somewhere? Is he suggesting a balance between an active and contemplative life? Or is only Julie speaking, not Rousseau?

Claire wonders what a wife owes to her husband as opposed to her friend in Letter VIII. Should Julie make Wolmar her confidant? She sees a special wisdom belonging to all women: “All those contemplative sages who have spent their lives studying the human heart know less about the true signs of love than the dullest of sensible women.”<sup>529</sup> Why not keep their privacy? She notices that Julie still speaks of Saint-Preux with a sentiment that intimates hidden feelings. Only because Claire knows her does she interpret the letter with a correct understanding – namely, that Julie has become detached from Saint-Preux and only sees him as a friend. She wonders, “[H]ow in so tender a heart could pure friendship fail to sound still a bit like love!”<sup>530</sup> Her virtue and her reason have caused Julie to make progress in embracing her married state. Julie has moved on from Saint-Preux. Claire wants to have a discussion with “our philosopher” in order to provide counsel on how he should behave with Wolmar and with Julie.<sup>531</sup> In Letter IX, Claire writes of sending Saint-Preux back to Julie after he had provided help with the affairs of Claire and reminisced at length about memories of his “bygone love” with more respect than

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<sup>529</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 356.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 356, 357.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.



love.<sup>532</sup> She concedes that no one can think of Julie dispassionately and sends Julie her daughter, Henriette, for a stay in the Wolmar household, symbolic of the trust the two women share.

A notable change has transpired in the life of Saint-Preux, he tells Bomston in Letter X.<sup>533</sup> He has accepted his new relationship with Julie and found the joy in just calling her his friend. He knows the pleasures of “tranquil friendship” that surpass “the storm of impetuous passions.”<sup>534</sup> Furthermore, he writes, “Milord, what a lovely and moving spectacle is a simple and well-regulated house where order, peace, and innocence reign. ... The countryside, the seclusion, the repose, the season, the vast expanse of water spread out before me, the mountains’ rugged look ....”<sup>535</sup> Considering his description of the Upper Valais and admiration for Swiss natural scenery, Saint-Preux conveys a sensitivity to splendors of nature, making him even more of a romantic.<sup>536</sup> In the innocent atmosphere of the Wolmar abode, he has finally found a life to

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<sup>532</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>533</sup> “Once subjected to their domestic *spectacle*, St. Preux begins to reconcile himself to the changed nature of his relationship with Julie, and in a series of letters to Bomston he extols the virtues of Claren’s domestic economy and of Julie’s and Wolmar’s respective characters.” Elizabeth Wingrove, *Rousseau’s Republican Romance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 109.

<sup>534</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 363.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> “Rousseau believed that modern men and women, though permeated by unnatural tastes and impulses, could still appreciate at least some of nature’s beauty. He expected that readers would respond to his evocative descriptions of natural beauty and it was not a mistake to do so. Indeed, he seems to have been a major force in inspiring a new sensibility. Toward the end of his life and continuing after his death, a new page was turned in European cultural history. The literary classes began to discover the beauty of the countryside, the charm of rustic life, and the voluptuous pleasure of freely expressing one’s feelings. Pristine nature, once lightly regarded, came to mean something good and pure, and Rousseau, the man of nature, came to be hailed as a prophet.” Laurence D. Cooper, *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1999, xi.

his liking. The only thing missing from the place is Bomston and Claire. Before they arrive, he wants to give them an idea of “a domestic economy” that is at the renovated property in Clarens.<sup>537</sup>

The Wolmars value a simplicity and convenience free of superfluous ornamentation, Saint-Preux writes in Letter X. “Everything here is agreeable and cheerful; everything bespeaks plenty and elegance, nothing reeks of wealth and luxury,” he adds to his analysis of the house.<sup>538</sup> He tells Bomston about its winery, its dairy, its vegetable garden, its flower beds, and its trees. The general principle in its remodeling was to replace “attractive things with useful things.”<sup>539</sup> This has made the house radiate “joy and well-being,” instead of its former “dreary dignity.”<sup>540</sup> The Wolmars and their workers farm, which keeps them well occupied. They tend vineyards. Monsieur de Wolmar is actively involved in the business, making daily rounds with Julie. He applies incentives to labor “with prudence and justice,” which improves the quality of work.<sup>541</sup> But Julie insists that money will not suffice to pay them and shows the workers great kindness. She makes their interests her interests and her gentleness and beneficence motivates everyone.

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<sup>537</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 363. “Clarens is meant to be an example of the good society where there is nothing lacking to human happiness.” Mark Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization: Love, Marriage, and Family in Rousseau’s Julie* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 68.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid. The criticism of luxury by Saint-Preux aligns with the criticism of luxury by Rousseau in the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*. For example: “The misuse of time is a great evil. Other evils that are even greater accompany letters and arts. Luxury, born like them from the idleness and vanity of men, is such an evil. Luxury rarely develops without the sciences and the arts, and they never develop without it. ... will our philosophy still dare deny that good morals are essential to the stability of empire, and that luxury is diametrically opposed to good morals?” Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, 50, 51

<sup>539</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 364.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid., 365.

The rich description of Clarens is part of the romanticism of Rousseau, inasmuch as it creates a longing for familial devotion, rural economies, and household management.<sup>542</sup>

The master of a “house of peace” is the happiest being, Saint-Preux claims in Letter X.<sup>543</sup> The happiness of the soul of the master is evident in the reign of order within his administration. He writes, “For my part, I think that the most assured sign of true contentment of spirit is the withdrawn and domestic life, and that those who constantly go about seeking their happiness in others’ homes do not have it in their own.”<sup>544</sup> Happiness is found in the enjoyment of domesticity. Saint-Preux continues, “A paterfamilias who takes pleasure in his house is rewarded for the continual care he assumes there by the continual enjoyment of nature’s sweetest sentiments.”<sup>545</sup> The great sweetness in life originates in the pleasures of the house – the family and its economy. Saint-Preux goes on about the head of the household, “Alone among mortals, he is master of his own felicity, because he is happy like God himself, without desiring anything

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<sup>542</sup> Saint-Preux reports that Fanchon Regard, whom Julie discussed with him in Part I, has separated from her husband, Claude Anet, and become a chambermaid for the Wolmars. The story of Fanchon illustrates that despite its advantages, marriage does not promise happiness.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid., 380.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., 383, 384.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 384. Rousseau makes a similar remark in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*: “The first development of the heart were the effect of a new situation, which united husbands and wives, fathers and children in a common habitation. The habit of living together gave rise to the sweetest sentiments known to men: conjugal love and paternal love.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 46, 47.

more than he already has: like that immense being he does not worry about expanding his possessions....”<sup>546</sup> The paterfamilias is an image of God, if God is not an image of him.<sup>547</sup>

In another letter to Bomston, Letter XI, Saint-Preux turns his attention to amusements or leisure within the Wolmar household. These things can be as useful as things that yield a profit. The enjoyment of good activities offers a reward for industrious labor that mere idleness misses. He writes, “One works in order to enjoy; this alternation of labor and enjoyment is our genuine vocation.”<sup>548</sup> That which fills the hours of repose deserves as much consideration as the labors. For recreation Julie has created a hidden place where she walks that she calls her Elysium.<sup>549</sup> Saint-Preux describes his first encounter of the hidden place set apart for contemplation, “Upon entering this so-called orchard, I was struck by a pleasantly cool sensation which dark shade, bright and lively greenery, flowers scattered on every side, the bubbling of flowing water, and the songs of a thousand birds impressed on my imagination at least as much as my senses ....”<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 384. On one hand, the happiness of the paterfamilias compares with the *homme naturel* in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*. His “imagination suggests nothing to him” and his “soul, agitated by nothing, is given over to the sole sentiment of its present existence without any idea of the future ....” Rousseau, *The Discourse on Inequality*, 117. Of course the paterfamilias must think about the future in order to prepare his household. But perhaps he partakes in the happiness of the *homme naturel* insofar as he is self-sufficient, not always grasping outward or forward. On the other, he sounds like the *Promeneur Solitaire*, as Stewart and Vaché note, “Rousseau remembers this thought, or something very similar to it, in the *Réveries*: ‘What do we enjoy in such a situation? Nothing external to ourselves, nothing if not ourselves and our own existence, like God.’” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part IV,” Note 80, 696.

<sup>547</sup> “For human beings assimilate not only the looks of the gods to themselves, but their ways of life as well.” Aristotle, *Politics*, digital edition, translated by Carnes Lord (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 91.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*, 387

<sup>549</sup> “Elysium in Greek mythology is the abode of the good after death.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part IV,” Note 83, 696.

<sup>550</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 387,

Through Saint-Preux, Rousseau again paints a beautiful picture of natural scenery that elevates the imagination of the reader to dwell upon a charming description. But here he also makes nature the focus of time away from work, as Julie takes an afternoon off to enjoy it. Wolmar has let her be the superintendent of the Elysium and she has designed everything there. The effect of the orchard upon Saint-Preux is happiness as he abandons thinking and slips into a reverie, or a thoughtless contemplation. Julie takes him out of the reverie by touching him.<sup>551</sup>

What Wolmar describes as a miracle – the overflowing beauty within the Elysium – requires patience as well as time to flourish, notes Saint-Preux to Bomston within Letter XI. Most of the wealthy do not want to make the effort. Always hurrying toward the next satisfaction, they only know force and the concern for money. Moreover, the way in which the Elysium grows, with scattered plants and creatures, reflects a view of nature and human nature. Saint-Preux quotes the theory of Julie, “Everything you see is wild and robust plants; it’s enough to put in the ground and they grow on their own. Moreover, nature seems to want to veil from men’s eyes her true attractions, to which they are too insensible, and which they disfigure ....”<sup>552</sup> The Wolmars allow nature to grow without artificial impediments set down by their own hands. The most beautiful places in nature – mountains, forests, deserts – are the least visited as well. Though Rousseau does not articulate it explicitly, the Elysium could be an analogy for education.

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<sup>551</sup> Is this reverie similar to a reverie described in *Les rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*? Or is the reverie of the *Promeneur Solitaire* a kind that Saint-Preux could not attain?

<sup>552</sup> Ibid., 394. “Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man. He forces one soil to nourish the products of another, one tree to bear the fruit of another. He mixes and confuses the climates, the elements, the seasons. He mutilates his dog, his horse, his slave. He turns everything upside down; he disfigures everything; he loves deformity, monsters. He wants nothing as nature made it, not even man; for him, man must be trained like a school horse; man must be fashioned in keeping with his fancy like a tree in his garden.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, translated by Allan Bloom (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1979), 37.

Just as a garden grows one way without maintenance, children can thrive with minimal coercion. Saint-Preux makes Julie and Wolmar laugh as he imagines a Parisian or London man bringing his architect to “spoil nature” with their designs.<sup>553</sup> They would treat the Elysium with contempt and ruin it – just like a parent might damage a child through the wrong education. He asks, “Does nature constantly employ the square and the ruler? Are they afraid she will somehow be recognized despite their efforts to disfigure her?”<sup>554</sup> Nature flourishes without intervention.

Saint-Preux exhibits growth as he discusses his love of virtue and solitude in Letter XI. His love for Julie has transformed from a search for pleasure into an admiration of her virtue. He writes about her, “I seemed to see that woman, so charming, so chaste and so virtuous, in the midst of that same train that surrounded her yesterday. Around her I saw three loveable children, the honorable and precious token of conjugal union and tender friendship....”<sup>555</sup> Furthermore, Saint-Preux once could not travel outside of Vevey without wanting to be in the presence of Julie. Now he still thinks of Julie, like when he locks himself in the Elysium to remind himself of her. But he also shows a contentment with being alone. He writes of enjoying a reverie by himself.<sup>556</sup> He would not trade a thing for the time. According to Saint-Preux, “Seeing with what charm and what rapidity [the hours] had gone by, I found that there is in the meditation of honest thoughts a

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<sup>553</sup> Ibid., 394.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid., 396.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 399. “Through the various kinds of affection for Julie (as lover, as friend, as daughter, as mother, as wife) private life is revealed to be a place of the strongest connections and deepest meanings.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, xvi.

<sup>556</sup> Saint-Preux twice refers to experiencing a reverie, both times when immersed in the Elysium. Reverie is connected to nature in *Julie*.

sort of well-being that the wicked have never known; it is to enjoy being alone with oneself.”<sup>557</sup>  
He now cannot think of a pleasure that compares with solitude.

The Wolmars value authenticity of self-expression, repeats Saint-Preux in Letter XI. Breakfast gives them time to be themselves. Saint-Preux paraphrases Julie regarding the matter, “we say everything we think, we reveal all our secrets, we constrain none of our sentiments; there we can give in without imprudence to the satisfactions of confidence and intimacy. It is practically the one moment when we are permitted to be what we are...”<sup>558</sup> Julie expresses a longing for transparency with her loved ones. The virtuous person hides nothing from view. She wishes that this experience could last all day. This indicates that total transparency is impossible, or that society demands some kind of uniformity, slavery to Rousseau, in order to function.<sup>559</sup> He presents the Wolmar household as an ideal for imitation by polite but inauthentic society.

Julie has lived with Wolmar for six years when she composes Letter XII for Claire. It has been as perfect a union as could be between two spouses. She describes a trip with Wolmar into a bower, joined by “the philosopher,” Saint-Preux.<sup>560</sup> Wolmar describes his character to them.

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<sup>557</sup> “It is evident from many passages in the *Confessions* that daydreaming was an intense activity to which Rousseau himself happily devoted countless hours; it is in a way the principal subject of [*The*] *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part IV,” Note 111, 698.

<sup>558</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 401.

<sup>559</sup> “While government and laws provide for the safety and well-being of assembled men, the sciences, letters, and arts, less despotic and perhaps more powerful, spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains with which men are burdened, stifle in them the sense of that original liberty for which they seemed to have been born, make them love their slavery, and turn them into what is called civilized peoples.” Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, 36.

<sup>560</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 402. Does Julie share a playfulness with Claire in describing Saint-Preux as a philosopher? Does she think that he is in fact a philosopher?

He says that he has “a tranquil soul” with little sensibility to pleasure or to pain.<sup>561</sup> According to Wolmar, “My only active principle is a natural taste for order.”<sup>562</sup> He observes. “Self-love” dominates his studies.<sup>563</sup> He continues, “. . . I do not like playing a role, but only seeing others perform. I enjoy observing society, not taking part in it. If I could change the nature of my being and become a living eye, I would gladly make that exchange.”<sup>564</sup> However, despite his self-sufficiency, Wolmar admits some dependence: “my indifference for men does not make me independent of them; though I care not about being seen, I need to see them, and though I do not cherish them I find them necessary.”<sup>565</sup> But this dependence for observation creates a stark contrast with the mutual dependence between the lovers throughout the novel. Wolmar proceeds by confessing that only Julie could give him happiness and that he loves her, before announcing a trip to Étange. Julie tries to send Saint-Preux with him but he declines her. She asks Claire, whose soul is “calm and tranquil,” what she should do.<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>561</sup> Ibid.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 403. “Wolmar claims that his only love is the love of order, which he arranges where nature does not suffice, that is, in the realm of human freedom and passion. He is godlike, performing the same functions in the household as does the Savoyard Vicar’s God in the universe. He apparently has no illusions and is a mere spectator of life’s peripeties. His strong character is the foundation on which everything and everyone in the household rests.” Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 152.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid. “That is, vanity (*amour-propre*) may have one good side to the degree that, in Wolmar’s case, it makes accurate observation possible.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part IV,” Note 114, 698.

<sup>564</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 403. The description of Emile by Shklar mirrors that of Wolmar here: “Emile is taught how to observe, not how to act.” *Men and Citizens*, 4. Rousseau also understood himself as an observer as opposed to an actor: “I am an observer, not a moralist. I am the botanist who describes the plant. It is for the physician to order its use.” *Men and Citizens*, 7.

<sup>565</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 403.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 409.



When faced with a hard decision, such as the one arising out of the departure of Wolmar, Claire suggests that Julie consult “the inner voice” in Letter XIII.<sup>567</sup> Her conscience is her guide. She refers to her as Heloise.<sup>568</sup> She was once a lover like her before becoming devout like her. Claire wishes Julie more success. Surprisingly, given her turn toward piety, Julie does not pray. She leans on her dear friendship instead. Claire employs this occasion to opine about the sexes: “What separates us from men, is nature itself which prescribes us different occupations; it is that sweet and timid modesty which, although not having precisely to do with chastity, is its surest guardian; it is that attentive and provocative reserve which, fomenting in men’s hearts both desires and respect, serves so to speak as virtue’s coquetry.”<sup>569</sup> Julie possesses the virtues of a woman but lacks the courage that would allow her to endure the short absence of her husband. Claire writes of her need to “spark her courage” before dividing the life of Julie into two parts: “twelve years of tears,” life with Saint-Preux, and “six years of glory,” marriage to Wolmar.<sup>570</sup> She suspects that Wolmar wants Julie to learn how to live with Saint-Preux without error,

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>568</sup> Stewart and Vaché note that this is the only comparison to Heloise in the whole book. “Editors’ Notes to Part IV,” Note 122, 699. “La nouvelle Héloïse must be juxtaposed to the old Héloïse or one might say the medieval Héloïse. This famous tale of love between Héloïse Argenteuil and Peter Abelard is a tragic one. It is a romance between two high born and educated youths. Both are accomplished in philosophy and letters, but neither of their educations legitimate their passions. Their science is abstract and their religion forbidding. ... Abelard renounces his love in the name of Christianity and as a monk exhorts Héloïse, who is cloistered as a nun, to give up her passion for him and to direct it toward God, for they are now brother and sister under the same father. ... She dies unable to conquer, even consumed by, a desperate love that is unrequited and has no force and no nobility other than her devotedness.” Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>569</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 411.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid., 413. Stewart and Vaché note the division of life as such. “Editors’ Notes to Part IV,” Note 126, 699.

referring to him once more as “the philosopher.”<sup>571</sup> She gives advice about how to behave with the aim of protecting her purity. “[L]ittle precautions preserve great virtues,” Claire contends.<sup>572</sup>

Wolmar informs Claire of his exit from Clarens for Étange in Letter XIV. He says that he plans to charge Saint-Preux with the education of his children, since he is so contemplative. Education of youth requires an active life.<sup>573</sup> In Saint-Preux he has found “a man of genius.”<sup>574</sup> Possessing all of the right qualities, he can think of “no greater felicity” for Saint-Preux.<sup>575</sup> Wolmar is aware of the past romance between his wife and Saint-Preux but he trusts his wife. Julie de Wolmar only resembles Julie d’Étange. The new version is no longer a young mistress. Yet Wolmar does acknowledge the power of imagination, which makes lovers seem the same to one another without the effects of time. It hides the changes that occur so that memory of the past supplants what appears in the present.<sup>576</sup> Saint-Preux loved the former Julie, not the wife.

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<sup>571</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 414.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> “Wolmar’s project is, after testing Saint-Preux’s virtue, to make him the teacher of his children, as he was once the teacher of his wife and her confidante, Claire. Rousseau gives an example of what he means by a friend when he speaks of the impossibility of a father’s passing on his duty to educate his children to another, unless the other is a friend. And where to find one? Wolmar makes a friend and provides him with sufficient reasons for caring for another man’s children. Wolmar explains his own reasons for not fulfilling his responsibility as a father. He is old and will not likely be able to complete the job. And he hints that there is another reason which would cause his wife to prefer that somebody else other than himself be charged with the education of their children. This he leaves shrouded in mystery for the time being. It will be revealed in its proper place.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 153.

<sup>574</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 416.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid.

<sup>576</sup> Rousseau adds a note: “You women are really foolish to think you can give some consistency to a sentiment as frivolous and fickle as love. Everything in nature changes, everything is in a continual flux, and you think you can inspire flames that are constant? And by what right do you pretend to be loved today because you were loved yesterday? Then keep the same face, the same

Rousseau repeats his criticism of love: that it is an illusion of the imagination. Wolmar will test the strength of this illusion by leaving the two former lovers alone together, which he believes will cause an enlightening effect on both of them.

The novel takes a dark turn in Letter XV as Saint-Preux writes to Bomston. He tells him of the view of Julie that “there is no true happiness on earth.”<sup>577</sup> Despite the goodness of her husband, the splendor of her children, the tenderness of her friendship with Claire, Saint-Preux, and the pending return of her father; despite the order and peacefulness of her household, neighbors, all of which seems like evidence that heaven wants her happiness, Julie is not happy. She tells Saint-Preux, “A secret sorrow, a single sorrow poisons it, and I am not happy.”<sup>578</sup> She does not reveal this secret, single sorrow, but Saint-Preux does not think that it concerns him. This confession disrupts his peace. The picture of domestic harmony has been complicated.<sup>579</sup>

Saint-Preux tells Bomston about a danger that he has escaped from in Letter XVII. Alongside Julie, he took a boat excursion on the lake by the Wolmar estate. Awesome waves challenged them out on the water.<sup>580</sup> Julie feared that she would never see her children again.

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age, the same humor; be ever the same and we will ever love you, if we can. But to change constantly and still want us to love you, is to want us at every instant to cease loving you; it is not to seek constant hearts, but to seek hearts as changeable as you” (418).

<sup>577</sup> Ibid., 420.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>579</sup> In Letter XVI Julie briefly rebukes Wolmar for testing her virtue.

<sup>580</sup> “Saint-Preux is confronted with a moment of temptation when he and Julie go boating on Lake Lemman, that magnificent stage setting with its variety of visages corresponding to every sentiment of those who near it. A storm occurs, Saint-Preux and Julie are in danger, he saves her, and they are forced into close bodily contact. All the old passions emerge in him in this dangerous proximity. He tells the story, so we cannot know exactly what she felt, but he indicates that she was not exactly indifferent.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 154.

They managed a safe landing on Meillerie. Saint-Preux recounts a walk that he took with Julie. Through the pen of Saint-Preux, Rousseau again portrays sublime scenery in nature, or “those sorts of beauties that are pleasing only to sensible souls and appear horrible to others.”<sup>581</sup> It included a stream on a mountain, cliffs, ice crests, and glimmering colors caused by a bright sun. Likewise, Saint-Preux writes, “the little spot where we were standing displayed the charm of a cheerful and rural site; several brooks filtered through the rocks, and ran down the greenery in crystal trickles. Several wild fruit trees bent their heads over us; the damp and cool earth was covered with grass and flowers.”<sup>582</sup> The place seems like a sanctuary for lovers. Part of the romantic project of Rousseau is to cultivate a love of beauty in the natural world.

On their journey, they encounter a place where Saint-Preux has been not too long before. He shows Julie sentences of Petrarch as well as Tasso that he had etched into surrounding places. The nook reminds him of when he had been in love. Julie insists that they depart from the area. After entering a boat to return home, Saint-Preux and Julie hold hands beneath the moonlight. The rhythm of the oars cause Saint-Preux to begin dreaming. He slips into a deep melancholy. Everything around him reminds him “of the pleasures of another time” with respect to Julie.<sup>583</sup> After juxtaposing his “former happiness” with his “greater present misery,” he concedes: “It is over . . . those times, those happy times are no more; they have vanished forever. Alas, they will never return; and we live, and we are together, and our hearts are still united!”<sup>584</sup> The domestic

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<sup>581</sup> Ibid., 424.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid., 425.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

turn of Julie, which has mostly satisfied her, has left Saint-Preux without a similar freedom.

Despair becomes his fate. He considers the emotions that he felt here as his most powerful ever.

The concluding letters of Part IV of *Julie* revitalize the tension between Saint-Preux and Julie throughout most of the novel. Saint-Preux, still unhappy, dreams of the time of their affair.

Julie, while partly fulfilled by her marriage to Wolmar and their children, still seems wanting.

Through the situation of the lovers, Rousseau indicates that perfect happiness is hard to achieve.

Happiness as the lovers dream of it may only be accessible in another world, or not at all.

However, there are things – like friendship, contemplation of nature or a well-governed house –

that contribute to the project of happiness for most individuals, if not promising perfection.<sup>585</sup> In

a book that often refers to the philosopher, Rousseau demonstrates his understanding of what a

philosopher can do for the happiness of readers through writing and publishing his novel.

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<sup>585</sup> “I believe I have discovered great things, and have stated them with a frankness that is rather dangerous, and none of this is particularly praiseworthy; for my independence is all my courage, and long meditations have stood me in the stead of Genius. A solitary who enjoys living by himself, naturally acquires a taste for reflection, and a man who takes a lively interest in the happiness of others without being in need of them for his own, does not have to spare their false delicacy by telling them what is useful. As such a condition is exceptional and as I have the good fortune to find myself in it, I feel obliged to put it to use on behalf of the truth, and state it without reservations whenever it will appear to me to bear on men’s innocence or happiness.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Preface of a Second Letter to Bordes,” trans. Victor Gourevitch, in *The First and Second Discourses: Together with the Replies to Critics and Essay on the Origin of Languages*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1990), 112

## Chapter 7

### “[N]atural goodness”<sup>586</sup>: Education, Piety, and Rusticity in Part V of *Julie*

Part V of *Julie* explores the domestic life of the Wolmar household, which Rousseau had introduced in Part IV, in depth. He paints a picture of quiet simplicity and shared contentment. This includes a thorough elaboration of an educational system. Julie attempts to preserve the same natural goodness in her children that Saint-Preux sees in her. The question of religiosity also comes under examination, as Julie reveals that Wolmar is an atheist, quite unlike his wife. Belief in a divinity is unnecessary for him to lead an exemplary life of virtue within his family. Finally, cultivation of the pastures of Clarens inspires observers with an appreciation of rural life. In such seclusion, inhabitants are happy, even as their way of life can go overlooked.

Letter I from Milord Edward Bomston to Saint-Preux treats the path to self-knowledge. He writes: “Put an end to your childhood, friend, awaken. Do not turn your entire life over to a long slumber of reason. The years flow by, you have only enough left for becoming wise.”<sup>587</sup> He gives this counsel of living in accordance with reason to a man whose passions have controlled him throughout most of *Julie*. He proceeds to encourage him to know himself: “Thirty years past, it is time to give some thought to oneself; start then to search within yourself, and be a man once before you die.”<sup>588</sup> Introspection, looking within – not the study of books – is the key to acquiring self-knowledge.<sup>589</sup> Bomston accuses Saint-Preux of philosophizing before he knew

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<sup>586</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 436.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, 429.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>589</sup> “The only thing, in fact, that we *can* know is ourselves, and the path to self-knowledge is not the one mapped out by Locke’s psychology of intellectual growth. Only a new kind of

how to philosophize properly. But he also concedes that Saint-Preux has seen much, gaining the experience of an older person. There is a certain kind of wisdom found in great experiences accumulated throughout the world. Bomston says: “Your first observations had to do with simple people virtually emerging from the hands of nature, as if to serve you as a point of reference,” referring to the Valaisans.<sup>590</sup> Then by traveling to Paris, France, he saw “the most celebrated people in creation” and “leapt, so to speak, to the opposite extreme.”<sup>591</sup> Finally he went to England, where he “learned by what signs that sacred organ of a people’s will can be recognized, and how the empire of public reason is the true foundation of freedom,” before sailing around the world to explore new continents.<sup>592</sup> Nothing in the world still deserves his attention, although the travel has been educational. All that remains for him is to contemplate himself in solitude.

Because Saint-Preux is a passionate man who is learning how to govern his passions, Bomston considers him virtuous in Letter I. “Therein lies all your glory,” Bomston contends.<sup>593</sup> What caused Saint-Preux to always love virtue? According to Bomston, “It took on in your eyes

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introspection, the deepest analysis of one’s own feelings, can bring insight.” Judith N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 39.

<sup>590</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 429.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid. The definition of glory given by Bomston, self-mastery, differs from the presentation of glory by the *Citoyen de Geneve* in the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, grand achievement: “If a few men must be allowed to devote themselves to the study of the sciences and arts, it must be only those who feel the strength to walk alone . . . It is for these few to raise monuments to the glory of the human intellect. But if we wish nothing to be beyond their genius, nothing must be beyond their hopes.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 63.

the appearance of that adorable woman who so well represents it, and it would be very unlikely indeed for so dear an image to allow you to lose the taste for it.”<sup>594</sup> Julie has shaped Saint-Preux. Contemplating her mere image caused him to want to imitate her, to become virtuous like her. The effect of Julie on him has left Bomston to wonder: “But will you never love it for its own sake, and will you not strive for the good by your own efforts, as Julie did by hers?”<sup>595</sup> Genuine affection for Julie would lead Saint-Preux to master virtue apart from Julie. Bomston writes, “You speak fervidly of the manner in which she fulfills her duties of wife and mother; but you, when will you fulfill your duties of man and friend after her example?”<sup>596</sup> The virtue of Saint-Preux, whom Bomston calls “a philosopher” and who has struggled with self-government, remains incomplete.<sup>597</sup> Bomston wonders if this philosopher who has only just begun to master himself will only engage in speeches without accomplishing noble actions. He indicates that solitary introspection will further equip Saint-Preux for these. He again urges him to examine himself in order that he may take control of himself.<sup>598</sup> He also expresses puzzlement that Julie is unhappy; for if she is not happy with her fate, who could be happy?

Peace reigns in the soul of Saint-Preux, as in the Wolmar house, he tells Bomston in Letter II. The place has begun to feel like home to him. He respects the simplicity and equality.<sup>599</sup> “I spend peaceful days between living reason and sensible virtue,” he writes with

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<sup>594</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 430.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>599</sup> “Order, regularity, security of expectations and fairness: everything in this stable, harmonious society reflects the soul of the master.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 153.



strong praise.<sup>600</sup> The delight that Julie takes in her duties affects everyone, making them “happy and good.”<sup>601</sup> There may not be wild activities in this tranquil place but every face radiates a cheerfulness. Saint-Preux admits that many women might find the existence of Julie unappealing and boring. “It takes a healthy soul to appreciate the charms of seclusion; one sees almost none but good folk finding contentment in the bosom of their family and closing themselves in with them voluntarily; if there is on earth a happy life, it is without doubt the one they spend there ....”<sup>602</sup> Only a certain kind of soul can find pleasure in the seclusion of a household in the countryside. Happiness is found there, but Rousseau – through Saint-Preux – suggests that it goes unseen. The Wolmars know the art of living.

Two maxims constitute the basis of a good morality according to Saint-Preux in Letter II: do good by doing no harm and be happy by not suffering. Julie holds both of these maxims dear. She is deeply sensitive to suffering. She goes out of her way in order to heal what ills she can. She inquires about the needs of others with the same enthusiasm that she meets her own needs. The beauty of the character of Julie makes Saint-Preux believe that a divine will created her: “There will never be but one Julie on earth. Providence has watched over her, and nothing that relates to her is an effect of chance. Heaven seems to have given her to the world in order to show at once the excellence of which a human soul is capable, and the happiness it can enjoy in

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<sup>600</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 432.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

the obscurity of private life....”<sup>603</sup> Human excellence shines in private life, not public virtues. Saint-Preux writes of “the simplicity that makes [Julie] sublime,” a virtue in being simple.<sup>604</sup>

Julie has enjoyed freedom from oppression, hopeless struggle, and misery, Saint-Preux writes in Letter II. She therefore possesses what he calls “natural goodness.”<sup>605</sup> This is a purity sustained in society that requires a certain kind of favorable circumstances in order to endure. It manifests itself in her happiness and conduct. Natural goodness makes her a “unique example” that some women might not wish to imitate but which they must love. Since Saint-Preux has said that Julie is a rarity, the preservation of natural goodness must be rare too.<sup>606</sup>

Wisdom directs the help that Julie distributes on their estate, says Saint-Preux in Letter II. She demonstrates “an exquisite discrimination in the distribution of her good works.”<sup>607</sup> She is able both to grant as well as refuse requests without causing a deficiency in her goodness. She helps those who really need it, as opposed to those who have become restless with their lives. According to Saint-Preux, “The condition natural to man is to till the land and live off its fruits. The peaceable dweller of the fields in order to feel his happiness needs only to understand it. All the true pleasures of man are within his reach....”<sup>608</sup> Genuine happiness belongs to the simple

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<sup>603</sup> Ibid., 436.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid. “O virtue! sublime science of simple souls, are so many difficulties and preparations needed to know you? Are not your principles engraved in all hearts, and is it not enough in order to learn your laws to commune with oneself and listen to the voice of one’s conscience in the silence of the passions? That is true philosophy, let us know how to be satisfied with it....” Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, 64.

<sup>605</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 436. This is the second use of the phrase in *Julie* (c.f. II.XXI)

<sup>606</sup> For an interpretation of natural goodness, see Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man*, 16-17.

<sup>607</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 437.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid., 438.

farmer, who acquires a self-sufficiency through living in accordance with nature.<sup>609</sup> But all too often, the rich and poor send children to cities, “some to study and one day become Important,” with girls aspiring to “bourgeois finery” and boys enlisting “in a foreign army” for prestige, rather than finding the pleasures inherent in countryside life.<sup>610</sup> Julie recognizes what is special about the Wolmar way of life and does not intervene to help anyone leave for a city. Instead she encourages laborers to take pride in themselves. She sees them as dignified, not as instruments, and tries to consider the individuality of each when assisting them.

In the Wolmar household, Saint-Preux sees near perfect harmony, he writes in Letter II. The place exudes a magnificence, less in riches than in a “fine organization of the whole.”<sup>611</sup> Rather than being a disconnected assemblage of parts, things weave together in a single fabric. Saint-Preux writes, “For my part, I find that it is at least a grander and nobler idea to see a small number of people happy with a common happiness in a simple and modest house than to see discord and turmoil reigning in a palace....”<sup>612</sup> The small size of the place is perfect for balance.

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<sup>609</sup> Rousseau also shows an admiration for farmers in the *Première Discourse*: “Richness of attire may announce a wealthy man, and elegance a man of taste; the healthy, robust man is known by other signs. It is in the rustic clothes of a farmer and not beneath the gilt of a courtier that strength and vigor of the body will be found.” Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, 37. “It must be emphasized ... that these points about the ethic of goodness and naturalness of unity apply in an unqualified sense only to those who have completely escaped society; and, in civilized times, such withdrawal is possible only for superior individuals of philosophic and artistic genius. But in a qualified sense they also apply to all those who live in relative isolation, like early savages and free peasants or farmers. They lead to Rousseau’s subversive preference for the common people – simple, backward, and provincial – over the civilized, cultured, urban elite. ... Rousseau is for the yeoman farmer.” Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man*, 22, 23; 110.

<sup>610</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 438.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*

He continues, “The well-run house is a unit, and forms a whole that is pleasant to behold. . . .”<sup>613</sup> There is something charming about this whole in Clarens: “the sight of the house and the uniform and simple life of its inhabitants imparts to the soul of onlookers a secret charm that grows and grows.”<sup>614</sup> The inhabitants work together peaceably toward achieving common goals. They concern themselves with doing their duties, not necessarily with protecting their rights. There is also an equality that governs: “There is such moderation in those who command and such zeal in those who obey that equals could have distributed among themselves the same functions without any one of them complaining of his lot.”<sup>615</sup> There is even an absence of envy. Inhabitants believe that individual wealth grows only by increasing the total wealth of the estate and the masters measure their own happiness by that of everyone.

The domestic economy of the Wolmars emphasizes simplicity and independence, writes Saint-Preux in Letter II. He would not know what to add nor subtract in the entire residence, since there are only useful things and the right amount of them so that there could be no more.

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<sup>613</sup> Ibid. “Consider . . . the life of domestic simplicity led by Julie and Wolmar on their rustic estate . . . [a] quiet, simple, and uniform life of daily routines and seasonal festivities, it contains nothing exciting, impressive, or intensely pleasant. Yet there is a great charm in the picture of this life as a whole; and the charm is precisely that: the life is a *whole*. It is not a mere sequence of disconnected activities and experiences, but a ‘life,’ a unified manner of being, a kind of ‘state.’ . . . Through such temporal unity, one exists or ‘feels life’ more – not because one has filled it with extraneous pleasures and excitement, but because life’s own native power has been gathered and unified. The full reality of one’s own existence is allowed to shine through undiminished. One feels life whole.” Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man*, 66.

<sup>614</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 448.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid. “A key tenant of liberal political doctrine: inequalities among citizens being justified by functional necessity, anyone could accept without complaint to be born to any of its positions.” Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” in *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, vol. 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), Note 24, 702.

The absence of superfluity, combined with generous charity, is truly “genuine magnificence.”<sup>616</sup> Choosing to value the useful instead of the glamorous has spared the Wolmars needless costs. They only allow their own commodities onto their table and they purchase only local products. They employ discrimination and moderation in selecting things nearby. Saint-Preux says that Julie has taken “relatively inexpensive parts” and “made a whole of great value,” while describing her style as “economical and durable” and “modest simplicity.”<sup>617</sup> “[T]he wise Wolmar” teaches Saint-Preux “how with economy and attention one can rise above one’s fortune.”<sup>618</sup>

The conclusion of Letter II by Saint-Preux emphasizes the contentment of the Wolmars. They love their seclusion and rarely depart from it; they have secured a simple self-sufficiency. Therefore Saint-Preux writes, “Every evening Julie, satisfied with her day, desires nothing different for the morrow, and every morning she asks heaven for a day like the one before: she does always the same things because they are good, and she knows nothing better to do.”<sup>619</sup> Enjoying life in this manner seems to Saint-Preux like the greatest amount of possible happiness. He asks Bomston, “Is not being content in the continuation of one’s state a sure sign that one lives happily therein?”<sup>620</sup> Happiness is not understood as limitless acquisition or constant flux. Rather, writing about the Wolmars, Saint-Preux says, “Content with their lot, they enjoy it

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<sup>616</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 448.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, 453.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*

peaceably; content with their fortune, they do not strive to increase it for their children ....”<sup>621</sup>

Content with being who they are and where they are, the Wolmars serve as an image of felicity.<sup>622</sup>

In Letter III, to Bomston, Saint-Preux portrays the whole Wolmar family at leisure, spending a morning “gathered in silence, enjoying at once the pleasure of being together and the bliss of contemplation.”<sup>623</sup> Saint-Preux adds, “How few people know the delights of this state!”<sup>624</sup> They do needlework or read, chatting little so as not to disrupt “the general contemplation.”<sup>625</sup> Wolmar and Saint-Preux daydream. The children are quiet, preserving a “peaceful tranquility.”<sup>626</sup> Seeing the characters at leisure raises the question of how to spend leisure well. When work is done, what does one do? Saint-Preux meditates in silence for a long time before finally speaking. He sees the “good natural dispositions” of the children of Julie and reflects upon their education: “It is at birth that their education must begin. Is there a better time for forming them, then when they have not yet any form to destroy? If you leave them to themselves from infancy, at what age will you expect them to show some docility? Even if you

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<sup>621</sup> Ibid., 455.

<sup>622</sup> C.f. Thomas Hobbes, the *Leviathan*, “Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call FELICITY; I Mean the felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetual tranquility of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense.” [VI. 58] Part V of *Julie* is a refutation of Hobbes’ theory of felicity.

<sup>623</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 456.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid., 457.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid., 459.

had nothing to teach them, they should be taught to obey you.”<sup>627</sup> He observes that her children do not disobey her; she gives no orders.<sup>628</sup> Julie leads Wolmar and Saint-Preux into the study where they can discuss these things.<sup>629</sup> They engage in an enlightening conversation that Saint-Preux repeats for his letter to Bomston.<sup>630</sup>

Before giving birth to her first child, Julie discussed its future upbringing with Wolmar, an “enlightened observer, who combined a father’s interest with a philosopher’s detachment.”<sup>631</sup> Wolmar says that the “first and most important education, the one precisely that everyone overlooks, is to prepare a child for receiving instruction.”<sup>632</sup> Parents make a common mistake of treating children as if they possess reason at birth and as adults who can engage in speaking.

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<sup>627</sup> Ibid., 460.

<sup>628</sup> “Given that the child must never confront other wills, Jean-Jacques tells us that he cannot be given commandments. He would not understand even the most reasonable restriction on his will as anything other than the expression of the selfishness of the one giving the commandments. The child must always do what he wants to do.” Allan Bloom, introduction to *Emile, or On Education*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (USA; Basic Books, 1979), 13

<sup>629</sup> “The family has a purpose, and an overwhelmingly important one: the education of the children. This is the Wolmars’ chief occupation. The child-centered family was undeniably born on the pages of *Emile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Rousseau thought that the creating of new men has its gratifications for parents also; it is their final self-fulfillment, the completion of their own education.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 24.

<sup>630</sup> The following paragraphs that do not specify a letter under consideration, through Page 172, belong to an analysis of Letter III.

<sup>631</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 460. “The ultimate end of man, the condition that makes a Wolmar god-like, is to be a father and the head of a household. A man is complete only when he is ready to become a father.” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 24. This is the first reference to Wolmar as a philosopher. “[O]ne cannot help but wonder whether Wolmar is truly a philosopher.” Mark Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization: Love, Marriage, and Family in Rousseau’s Julie* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 51.

<sup>632</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 460.

They think that reason is an instrument for instruction. It is the branch of learning acquired last.<sup>633</sup> Saint-Preux repeats Julie, “By addressing them from their tenderest age in a language they do not understand, we accustom them to being satisfied with words, and satisfying others with them, to contesting everything we say to them, to thinking they are as wise as their masters, to becoming argumentative and rebellious....”<sup>634</sup> Early education in reason or speech causes harmful effects. She continues, “Nature...would have it that children are children before they are men ... Childhood has ways of seeing, thinking, feeling which are proper to it. Nothing is less reasonable than trying to substitute ours for theirs, and I would as soon require a child to be five feet tall as to have judgment at age ten.”<sup>635</sup> Julie thinks that children possess a natural goodness like her own.

Since the body matures before the mind, Julie favors much physical activity for children. She does not want to see them sedentary, because this keeps them from experiencing growth. She does not want them trapped in a room with books, because this causes them to lose vigor.<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> “Rousseau insists in *Emile* that reason is the end product of education, a summation of all the child’s capacities, and not its medium. ‘Of all the faculties of man, reason, which is, so to speak, only a composite of all the others, is the one that develops with the most difficulty and latest. And it is this one which they want to use in order to develop the first faculties! The masterpiece of a good education is to make a reasonable man, and they claim they raise a child by reason! This is to begin with the end, to want to make the product the instrument.’ (Book II, Pléiade, IV, 317; Bloom, 89).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” Note 40, 703, 704.

<sup>634</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 460, 461.

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*, 461. “See *Emile*: ‘Childhood has its ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling which are proper to it. Nothing is less sensible than to want to substitute ours for theirs, and I would like as little to insist that a ten-year-old be five feet tall as that he possess judgment’ (BookII, Pléiade, IV, 319; Bloom, 90).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” Note 41, 704.

<sup>636</sup> “This theme surfaces more than once in *Emile*: ‘I take away the instruments of their greatest misery, that is, books. Reading is the plague of childhood’ (Book II, Pléiade, IV, 319; Bloom, 184).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” Note 42, 704.



She speaks of modifying instructional tactics for every child because of “each child’s genius.”<sup>637</sup> Saint-Preux repeats Julie again: “In addition to the constitution common to the species, each individual brings with him at birth a particular temperament which determines his genius and character, and should be neither changed nor constrained, but formed and perfected.”<sup>638</sup> Wolmar adds, “All characters are good and sound in themselves ... There are, he says, no mistakes in nature. All the vices we attribute to natural dispositions are the effect of the wrong shape it has received.”<sup>639</sup> This is a radical view of education that takes into account the notion of distinctive individuality in nature and teaches children to be who they are by nature. It argues that most children receive “damaging or inappropriate instruction” that “thwart[s] nature at every turn.”<sup>640</sup>

The conversation about education proceeds through focusing on human intelligence. Saint-Preux repeats Wolmar, “[I]f minds are different they are unequal, and if nature has made them unequal, it is by endowing some in preference to others with somewhat more delicacy of senses, memory capacity, or ability to concentrate.”<sup>641</sup> These differences factor into upbringing. Some children begin to learn almost just after birth, while others develop at a slower rate. Intervening too early with the latter kind of child can spoil what has been given by nature. Continuing with his thoughts on education, Wolmar considers its most fundamental purpose, “Once again the question is not to change the character and bend the natural disposition, but on

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<sup>637</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 461.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*, 462.

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*

the contrary to push it as far as it can go, to cultivate it and keep it from degenerating; for it is thus that a man becomes all that he can be, and that nature's work is culminated in him by education."<sup>642</sup> Before cultivation, one must study the child, to understand the unique intelligence. Doing nothing at all is preferable to doing something that would harm the development.<sup>643</sup> Emphasizing the different education necessary for the diversity of humanity, Wolmar contends, "To one genius you must give wings, to another shackles; the one needs to be goaded, the other held back; the one needs to be encouraged, and the other intimidated; you should sometimes enlighten, sometimes stupefy. One man is made to carry human knowledge to its utmost degree; to another it is fatal even to know how to read."<sup>644</sup> Some human beings go far with education. Others, like Valaisans, do not need one to be happy and would be better off without it.<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> Ibid., 464.

<sup>643</sup> "The idea of careful observation of the child, which comes from Montaigne, is a basic premise of *Emile*. To it, Rousseau has added an equally important corollary, that of avoiding harmful intervention and therefore doing nothing in preference to doing the wrong thing." Stewart and Vaché, "Editors' Notes to Part V," Note 53, 705.

<sup>644</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 464. Rousseau began his philosophic career by including a frontispiece with his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* that illustrates the inequality of human intelligence. The figure of Prometheus lowers his torch for rare geniuses while keeping the fire of the sciences and the arts away from common citizens. Rousseau thought of himself as Prometheus. He considered it his responsibility to recognize the vast intellectual difference among human beings.

<sup>645</sup> "But if the development of the sciences and arts has added nothing to our true felicity, if it has corrupted our morals, and if the corruption of morals has impaired purity of taste, what shall we think of that crowd of elementary authors who have removed the difficulties that blocked access to the temple of the muses and that nature put there as a test of strength for those who might be tempted to learn? What shall we think of those compilers of works who have indiscreetly broken down the door of the sciences and let into their sanctuary a populace unworthy of approaching it; whereas it would be preferable for all those who could not go far in the learned profession to be rebuffed from the outset and directed into arts useful to society. He who will be a bad versifier or a subaltern geometer all his life would perhaps have become a great cloth maker. Those whom nature destined to be her disciples needed no teachers. Verulam, Descartes, Newton, these preceptors of the human race had none themselves: indeed, what guides could have led them as far as their vast genius carried them?" Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, 62.

Following her husband, Julie shares some of her own maxims concerning education. After expressing doubt with the maxims of Wolmar, which does not stop her from adopting them, she expresses the belief that God has given her children and she wants to raise them well. Although it may not be a “philosophical principle,” she wants to see her children happy.<sup>646</sup> Childhood is the best time for them to become happy, since adulthood may not ever come. Freedom for the child is her first principle. She tries to spare her children from constraints and allow them to live in accord with the impulses of nature.<sup>647</sup> This principle prevents children from “lies, vanity, anger, envy” or “all the vices born of slavery” and lets their bodies grow strong.<sup>648</sup> She does not indulge the will of her children, preventing them from “domination and authoritarianism,” adding: “It is here I believe I am following a new and sure path to make a child at once free, patient, affectionate, docile, and this through a very simple means, which is to persuade him that he is but a child.”<sup>649</sup> Given the natural sweetness of children it is shocking to behold “an imperious and rebellious” one; it is puzzling to see a dependent thing giving orders.<sup>650</sup> Yet “blind parents, approving of this audacity,” allow children to be the tyrants of their

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<sup>646</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 465.

<sup>647</sup> “This principle applies from infancy in *Emile*, notably in his rejection of the practice of swaddling: ‘The newborn needs to stretch and move its limbs in order to arouse them from the torpor in which, drawn up in a little ball, they have for so long remained’ (Book I, Pléiade, IV, 254; Bloom, 43).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” Note 59, 705.

<sup>648</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 466.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.* “What is there, then, more shocking, more contrary to order than to see an imperious and rebellious child command all that surrounds him and impudently take on the tone of a master with those who have only to abandon him to make him perish?” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, translated by Allan Bloom (USA: Basic Books, 1979), 66.

nurses.<sup>651</sup> According to Julie, “For my part I have spared nothing to protect my son from the dangerous image of authority and servitude, and never gave him cause to think he is served more out of duty than pity. This point is, perhaps, the most difficult and most important one in the whole of education ....”<sup>652</sup> Establishing freedom along with respect for authorities are the first principles.

Another principle that Julie emphasizes is to make children realize their total dependence. Saint-Preux repeats Julie saying, “It seemed to me that the most essential part of a child’s education, that which is never treated in the most carefully conceived educations, is to make him clearly appreciate his misery, his frailty, his dependency ....”<sup>653</sup> Children must learn the rank that providence gives them. Similarly, they must not be raised to believe that they can acquire anything that they desire. Since they depart from “the state of nature almost upon birth,” they should not be given whatever they want or ask for, but only what they truly need or what their parents judge is in fact beneficial for them.<sup>654</sup> Giving them whatever they want when they want will only increase the amount they ask for. They must become accustomed to refusal and learn that their forced tears do nothing for them.<sup>655</sup> Consequently children accept what their parents

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<sup>651</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 467.

<sup>652</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, 468.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>655</sup> “The first tears of children are prayers. If one is not careful, they soon become orders. Children begin by getting themselves assisted; they end by getting themselves served. Thus, from their own weakness, which is in the first place the source of the feeling of their dependence, is subsequently born the idea of empire and domination.” Rousseau, *Emile*, 66.

tell them without becoming upset. Children with a proper education realize their dependence and limitations.

The conversation between Julie, Wolmar, and Saint-Preux deepens with more maxims. Julie does not pretend that her children can engage in speaking with adults or make them do it. She argues that encouraging speech, including questioning, plants dangerous seeds too early: “Let us prevent their vanity from springing up, or at least halt its progress; that is truly to serve their felicity: for man’s vanity is the source of his greatest pains....”<sup>656</sup> Vanity is the evil to avoid. Julie pictures a small crowd gathered around a prattling child and says that this harms the child. Children learn more from receiving questions than asking them. They only question for attention. Julie would rather have her children remain silent when they reach the age of reason than see them talking in order to say nothing. No one can be judged unfavorably for silence. According to Julie, “we generally observe that silent people make an impression, that we mind our words in their presence, and lend them greater attention when they speak; the which, leaving them to choose their moments and making us miss nothing of what they say, puts all the advantages on their side.”<sup>657</sup> Julie wants to see her children quiet and wise, not talkative and vain.

Understanding herself as a mother as opposed to a tutor makes Julie raise her children in a certain way. She says, “I nurture children and do not presume to fashion men.”<sup>658</sup> She is in no rush to see development from youth to adulthood. She leaves higher education to her husband. According to Julie, “Once again, the role I am entrusted with is not to educate my sons, but to

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<sup>656</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 471.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, 473.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*

prepare them to be educated.”<sup>659</sup> She is following a system of education created by Wolmar. The result is that she considers one son in particular the happiest and least troubled being on earth. About both of her sons, she observes, “You see them leap, laugh, run about all day without ever bothering anyone. What pleasures, what independence are accessible to their age that they do not enjoy or that they abuse? They restrain themselves as little in front of me as in my absence.”<sup>660</sup> Childhood is distinct because of the happiness that children enjoy which adults can only admire. The Wolmars want their children to be children before seeing them reach maturity.

It took Saint-Preux time to embrace the unorthodox theory of education of the Wolmars. He says to Bomston, “A program so novel and so contrary to prevailing opinions had at first made me apprehensive. In the course of explaining it to me they finally made me an admirer, and I sensed that for guiding man, the process of nature is always best.”<sup>661</sup> Nature is their standard. Julie gives a sketch of common educational methods that seem to her in violation of nature in the name of enhancing the memory of children: “What! Force a child to study languages he will never speak, before he has even learned his own; make him constantly rehearse and parse verses he does not understand, the whole harmony of which for him is only in his fingers; muddle his mind with circles and spheres of which he has not the faintest notion; overwhelm him with a

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid. “Whether he is busy or playing, it is all the same to him. His games are his business, and he is aware of no difference. He brings to whatever he does an interest which make people laugh and a freedom which pleases them, thereby showing at once the turn of his mind and the sphere of his knowledge. Is this not the spectacle appropriate to this age, the charming and sweet spectacle of seeing a pretty child with an eye that is lively and gay, a manner contented and serene, a face open and laughing, doing the most serious things at play or profoundly busy with the most frivolous entertainments?” Rousseau, *Emile*, 161.

<sup>661</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 474.

thousand names of cities and rivers . . . .”<sup>662</sup> This learning does nothing for cultivating judgment and only produces tears in children. They will think they know what they do not understand. They will learn unnecessary knowledge that acts like clutter in the place of necessary knowledge. Nature gives a different path of education more fitting for the developing faculties of the young, one that enlightens them about duties and prepares their conduct in life.

Julie proposes that children not read books, including the study of a catechism.<sup>663</sup> Everything around them is like a book. The memory can become enriched without reading. The object is not to make children learned in order to impress others but rather to let them be good. Julie notes that her older son has become a reader. His listening began with stories mostly found within the Bible and tales that Julie wrote herself. When the son became bored by his dependency, someone proposed that he learn to read. This was at a later age of his development. Julie maintains that “reading is in no way appropriate for children.”<sup>664</sup> Regarding religion and her children, she means “to make Christians of them one day.”<sup>665</sup> Theology belongs to another time. Saint-Preux says why Julie spares it: “Ah, I see now! I cried out; you don’t want their faith to consist merely in words, nor for them only to have learned their Religion, but also to believe in it, and you rightly think it is impossible for man to believe what he does not understand.”<sup>666</sup>

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<sup>662</sup> Ibid., 475. “Rousseau develops in Book II of *Emile* his objections to all forms of memorization, as well as the introduction of abstract concepts such as those of geometry.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” Note 70, 706.

<sup>663</sup> Shklar notes that the tutor introduces “book-learning” to Emile when he matures sexually, alongside religion. *Men and Citizens*, 149.

<sup>664</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 477.

<sup>665</sup> Ibid.

<sup>666</sup> “One of the paradoxes of the educational system of *Emile* is precisely that religion should not be taught the child but reserved for the adolescent when his reason is mature: the child deforms

Amidst this long discussion, Wolmar interrupts Julie and asks Saint-Preux if he is a Christian. Saint-Preux says he endeavors to be one, believing everything that he can understand and respecting the remainder without a rejection. Julie signals to him that she approves of his stance. The interjection raises the question of who Rousseau himself identifies with among the three. Wolmar maintains a conspicuous silence after the profession. Would Rousseau too?<sup>667</sup>

In her last words on education, Julie shares the most fundamental tenets of her method. According to Saint-Preux, she speaks of “two objectives”: “letting the children’s natural disposition develop, and studying it.”<sup>668</sup> The children see themselves as neither powerful nor chained but rather “happy and free.”<sup>669</sup> They live “in their original simplicity,” protected from all vices, passions, and prejudices.<sup>670</sup> Blaming her failings not on nature but rather on herself, Julie implies that nature is good – natural goodness – while society is corrupt.<sup>671</sup> Thus she tries to

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the image of God and learns the catechism only as a parrot would (Book IV, Pléiade, IV, 554; Bloom, 257).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” Note 75, 706.

<sup>667</sup> C.f. Note 76 for Part V of Stewart and Vaché, which describes the controversy surrounding this particular passage of *Julie*. Malesherbes feared that, because Saint-Preux seems to doubt some things about Christianity, the reading public would see Rousseau as heterodox or a heretic.

<sup>668</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 477, 478,

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*, 478.

<sup>670</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>671</sup> “The greatest paradox in Rousseau’s work is the contrast between his exculpatory claim that man is naturally good and his damning insistence that man is wicked and mean. Few have argued *either* side of this paradox as strenuously as Rousseau, let alone both sides. The significance of this paradox has little to do with the difficulty it presents to Rousseau’s readers. Indeed, as veteran readers of Rousseau know, the paradox is not all that difficult to resolve, for what is exculpated and what is indicted are two separate things – namely, nature and man, respectively. It is nature that is good. To say that man by nature is good is to say that man *was* good while he remained natural. Today, no longer natural, he is corrupt and corrupts all he touches.” Laurence D. Cooper, *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1999), ix, x.



preserve the “original character,” which develops “without restriction,” and she studies “the impulses of nature” like an observant scientist.<sup>672</sup> Adults can learn about human nature by watching children, Julie thinks. But is there not a tension between her religion, including the teaching of sinful human nature and her philosophy of education?<sup>673</sup> How does she reconcile the fall with seeing children as good?<sup>674</sup>

After Wolmar leaves, Julie and Saint-Preux keep talking, says Saint-Preux in Letter V.<sup>675</sup> With much sorrow Julie shares with Saint-Preux that her husband does not believe in her God. His disbelief troubles the charm of their family. Saint Preux writes, “Would you have thought it, Milord? That man so wise, so reasonable, so removed from every kind of vice, so little subject to human passions, does not believe any of what gives a value to virtues, and, amid the innocence of an irreproachable life, carries deep in his heart the horrible peace of the wicked.”<sup>676</sup> Observations like this one suggest that virtue and piety need not necessarily join together, or that a man can be good without believing in God. He continues, “His reason, too superior to the stupid yoke they wanted to impose on him, soon shook it off disdainfully; and rejecting all at

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<sup>672</sup> Ibid.

<sup>673</sup> “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Genesis 6:5 (KJV) “And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.” Genesis 8:21 (KJV)

<sup>674</sup> In Letter IV, Bomston asks about a missing letter from Saint-Preux and reports about his time in the army. He has lost his baggage and its books but reads the letters of Saint-Preux.

<sup>675</sup> This is another letter for Bomston.

<sup>676</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 481. “The perfect man, Wolmar, is an atheist....” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 121.

once everything he had learned from an authority so suspect, forced into impiety, he became an atheist.”<sup>677</sup> Saint-Preux therefore intimates a conflict between rationalism and religious belief. What stands out to Wolmar about religion is “the self-interest of its ministers,”<sup>678</sup> whom he considered disingenuous because he did not think that most of the priests believed in God.<sup>679</sup> Everywhere around he saw “nothing but doubts and contradictions” and became a skeptic.<sup>680</sup>

Saint-Preux expresses wonder in Letter V that Heaven has destined Julie for Wolmar. Explaining the faith of Julie, he writes, “One would say that nothing earthly being able to satisfy the need to love that consumes her, that excess of sensibility is forced to return to its source.”<sup>681</sup> She addresses her “overabundant affections to the sole Being worthy of absorbing them.”<sup>682</sup> Deepening her faith causes her to hold a lower opinion of herself. She doubts her own piety while desiring to become more pious. According to Saint-Preux, “Julie finds in all creation nothing but causes for compassion and gratitude. Everywhere she perceives the beneficent hand of providence; her children are the dear charge she has received from it ... while the God of

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<sup>677</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 482.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>679</sup> Probably fearing criticism by censors, Rousseau tries to protect himself with a footnote, so as to say, ‘I do not believe what my character Wolmar believes,’ even as he inserts an impious teaching in the mouth of Wolmar: “God forbid I should approve these harsh and outrageous assertions; I merely affirm that there are people who make them and whose excess is only too often justified by the clergy of all countries and all sects.” *Ibid.* Rousseau criticizes those who argue that ministers privately hold heterodox views in the *Lettre à d’Alembert*.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, 482, 483.

<sup>681</sup> *Ibid.*, 483.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.* Rousseau adds another pious note: “How is this! God will have only what his creatures leave over? On the contrary, the portion creatures can occupy in the human heart is so small, that when we think we have filled it with them, it is still empty. It takes an infinite soul to fill it.” He is exercising prudence while treating matters of supernatural faith.

creation escapes her feeble eyes, she sees everywhere the common father of mankind.”<sup>683</sup>

Considering this piety of Julie, it is reasonable for Saint-Preux to notice the clash with Wolmar.

He writes, “Think, Milord, what a torment it is to share a withdrawn existence with someone who cannot share the hope that endears it to us! Not to be able to bless God’s works with him, nor speak of the happy future his goodness promises us!”<sup>684</sup> Julie marvels that Wolmar does good without acknowledging what makes the doing of good pleasant and that he lives like a Christian. Saint-Preux encapsulates the disagreement in their different ways of understanding nature, “Imagine Julie out walking with her husband; she admiring the rich and brilliant adornment which the earth displays, the works and gifts of the Author of creation; he seeing nothing in all this but a fortuitous combination in which nothing is linked to anything else except by blind force.”<sup>685</sup> Wolmar is a materialist who shares more in common with Lucretius than the Bible.<sup>686</sup> Saint-Preux therefore imagines that the couple must always practice restraint in their speech. Julie feels pain because of the inability to share wonder at the creation of God, for where she hears the voice of God Wolmar only hears “eternal silence.”<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> Ibid., 484.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid.

<sup>686</sup> Shklar refers to Wolmar as “the atheist and materialist.” *Men and Citizens*, 81. Kremer refers to him as “the Epicurean.” *Romanticism and Civilization*, 68. “Julie is now a mother; her life at Clarens is almost ideal, but is marred because Wolmar is an atheist.” Joel Schwartz, *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 116.

<sup>687</sup> “An echo of one of the best-known sentences in Pascal’s *Pensées*: ‘The eternal silence of those infinite spaces terrifies me’ (Brunschvieg no. 206).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” Note 89, 708.

Because of his unbelief, Julie fears either eternal punishment for her husband or that he will cease to exist at death and thus never experience paradise, says Saint-Preux in Letter V. Should Heaven deprive her of converting Wolmar, then she hopes that she will die before him. Referring to atheism or agnosticism as “[t]his System,” Saint-Preux notes, “while it finds partisans among the Great and the wealthy whom it favors, it is everywhere held in horror by the oppressed and miserable multitude.”<sup>688</sup> There is a close connection between poverty and piety. Wolmar keeps his “pyrrhonism,” as Saint-Preux calls it, to himself; he does not advertise it.<sup>689</sup> He even attends church and attempts to conform with the established customs that surround him. His unbelief has remained a secret except to Claire whom Julie confided in.<sup>690</sup>

Saint-Preux tries to persuade Bomston, destined for Paris, to visit Clarens in Letter VI. Claire has arrived there for an indefinite stay. Her surprise arrival brought joy to Julie and to her daughter Henriette. Saint-Preux writes, “O sentiment, sentiment! sweet life of the soul! where is the heart of iron thou has not touched? where is the unhappy mortal from whom thou hast never wrested tears?”<sup>691</sup> The arrival of Claire made the Wolmars feel a collective gladness. The house celebrated with grand entertainments. They danced and Saint-Preux launched rockets. They stayed up late while enjoying themselves. Calm gradually returned and with it order to the Wolmar residence. Julie still plans to devote herself to the education of all of the children. Saint-

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<sup>688</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 485.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid. “Pyrrhonism is named for Pyrrho, a Greek philosopher of the fourth and third centuries B.C.E., but here the word is just a general term for scepticism, or more specifically in this context, agnosticism.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” Note 93, 708.

<sup>690</sup> The nature of this secret does not stop Saint-Preux from sharing it in depth with Bomston.

<sup>691</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 490.

Preux anticipates the arrival of Bomston. "Once you are here," writes Saint-Preux, "we shall have to think ill of any man whose heart seeks anywhere else on earth virtues, pleasures he has not found in this house."<sup>692</sup> He enjoys a self-sufficiency that he had never known before.

Given that it is the first time that he has lived deep in the country, Saint-Preux loves Clarens, he writes Bomston in Letter VII. Inhabitants of cities do not know how to live there. When Parisians visit, they bring habits with them instead of full immersion in the new place. Clarens brings to mind what he calls "the golden age."<sup>693</sup> Saint-Preux writes, "The imagination does not remain cold at the sight of plowing and harvesting. The simplicity of pastoral and rural life always has something about it that is moving."<sup>694</sup> Rousseau continues to idealize rusticity. Paris lacks what can only be found in the countryside, the location of "the voice of nature."<sup>695</sup> This voice is sweet and accompanies those who manage the cultivation of land with generosity. The scene that Saint-Preux articulates makes him imagine what humanity was like in the past: "O times of love and innocence, when women were tender and modest, when men were simple and lived in contentment."<sup>696</sup> He writes of Rachel and Ruth as he portays what could be Eden. Beauty has never reigned anywhere as it does in rural life.

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<sup>692</sup> Ibid., 492.

<sup>693</sup> "The Golden Age is not an early stage of man's development. It is a condition which he has never known and never will enjoy. However, it is necessary to know both it and the state of pure nature, if one is to have a clear vision of man's present life, and if one is to judge the latter properly. To abandon the Golden Age, to say that it is a mere chimera is, above all, to renounce forever the belief in human virtue. The Golden Age of domestic happiness is both a moral necessity and a possibility. Rousseau had seen intimations of it in rural Switzerland." Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 6.

<sup>694</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 493.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid., 494. "Allusion to the sempiternal myth of a precultural golden age; but as the following biblical examples show, it is not a purely classical image and also contains distant echoes of the

Letter VII by Saint-Preux gives an image of daily life on the Wolmar estate in Clarens. He describes a grape harvest. The workers sing and laugh throughout the days, telling tales as they make wine. Evenings bring them together in an assembly room where they share supper. Afterward, they all join in singing. Saint-Preux writes, "I find in these evenings a sort of charm I cannot explain to you, and which I nonetheless very much feel. This congregation of the various estates, the simplicity of the occupation, the thought of relaxation, of harmony, of tranquility, the sentiment of peace it brings to the soul, has something stirring about it ...."<sup>697</sup> On the harmony of voices, he adds, "Nature has made everything as good as it could be, but we want to do still better, and we spoil everything."<sup>698</sup> He emphasizes a doctrine of natural goodness once more. The inhabitants of Clarens conclude their evenings around a bonfire. The days make those who enjoy them wish that they would repeat for their whole lives.<sup>699</sup>

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earthly paradise in the Book of Genesis." Stewart and Vaché, "Editors' Notes to Part V," Note 115, 709. Rousseau writes of a similar, much less developed but still "golden," situation in the second part of the *Discours sur l'inégalité*: "Thus although men had come to have less endurance and although natural pity had already undergone some alteration, this period of the development of human faculties, maintaining a golden mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our vanity, must have been the happiest and most durable epoch.... As long as men were content with their rustic huts ... in a word, as long as they applied themselves only to tasks that a single person could do and to arts that did not require the cooperation of several hands, they lived free, healthy, good, and happy insofar as they could be according to their nature, and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, translated by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 150, 151.

<sup>697</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 499.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid. Stewart and Vaché note the likeness of this passage with the opening line of the *Emile*.

<sup>699</sup> The description of an evening in Clarens by Saint-Preux is similar to a passage from the *Cinquième promenade* in *Les rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*: "After supper, when the evening was fine, we would all go for a little walk together on the terrace to breathe in the air and the freshness of the lake. We would relax in the pavilion, laugh, chat, sing some old song which was easily as good as the modern rigmarole, and finally go to bed content with our day desiring only

Amidst a journey with Bomston to Rome, Saint-Preux composes Letter VIII for Wolmar. He confirms his interest in educating his children. He writes, “Since my departure new reflections have occurred to me on the same subject, and I have reduced the whole into a sort of system which I will send to you one I have worked it out better, so that you may examine it in turn.”<sup>700</sup> After arriving in Rome, he plans to sketch the educational system in his mind. He adds, “This system begins where Julie’s leaves off, or rather it is merely its sequel and development; for everything consists in not spoiling the man of nature by appropriating him for society.”<sup>701</sup> The purpose of education, he thinks, is to protect the goodness within the nature of humanity.

In Letter IX to Claire, Saint-Preux admits feeling a sudden longing for his past love and describes a haunting dream. He dreams of Julie by the deathbed of her mother while the women share touching sentiments. When Saint-Preux tries to reach Julie in the dream, he cannot move. Bomston takes him back to Clarens before resuming travel to Rome. In Letter X Claire says that the dream troubles her. Wolmar writes Saint-Preux in Letter XI, underscoring the good things that he has honored him with and downplaying his dream. Replying to Wolmar in Letter XII, Saint-Preux declares a great longing for prudence. He discusses the delicate manner in which he speaks with Bomston about the love life of Bomston. He asks for the opinion of Wolmar regarding how he should counsel his friend. He hides his thoughts from the cousins.

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a similar one the next day.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, translated by Charles E. Butterworth (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), 67.

<sup>700</sup> Ibid., 501. “A quasi-announcement of the imminent publication of *Emile*, Rousseau’s treatise on education, which was to appear in the year following *Julie*.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part V,” Note 138, 711.

<sup>701</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 501.

While failing to conceal her disbelief, Julie observes that Claire has fallen for Saint-Preux in Letter XIII. Julie writes, “there you are in the same snare you took such pains to extricate me from, and you have not managed to preserve for yourself the same freedom you restored to me. Has my turn to laugh not come?”<sup>702</sup> Claire waits for the letters that Saint-Preux sends her. “You once used to mock love,” says Julie, “but that was because you did not know it; and since you had not felt its arrows, you believed you were beyond its range. Love is taking revenge and has its turn to laugh. Learn to be wary of its insidious joy, or beware lest it cost you many tears some day.”<sup>703</sup> The women have switched roles, with Julie warning Claire for the first time. Writing from “the sad authority of experience,” she insists that love is a dangerous phenomenon, not one to embrace.<sup>704</sup> But falling in love will give Claire a chance to acquire genuine self-knowledge, Julie contends: “Dear friend, it is time to show you who you are; for up till now you have not been able to see yourself clearly; you have been wrong about your character, and unable to appraise yourself at your true value.”<sup>705</sup> None but Julie knows Claire well, even Claire herself. Despite or because of the dangers of love, Julie urges Claire to marry Saint-Preux.<sup>706</sup>

In a book that attempts to educate its readers in the best ways to live, the fifth part of *Julie* concerns the foundations and goals of a proper education in childhood above all else. Through narration of Saint-Preux to Bomston, Rousseau describes his educational philosophy.

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<sup>702</sup> Ibid., 513.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid., 515.

<sup>704</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 515.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> Henriette, the daughter of Claire, writes to her mother in Geneva in Letter XIV.



Absent from the program are books and God, both of which Rousseau thinks children can do without. They are better off doing nothing than being forced to do what they do not naturally do.

The conversation about education transitions to one about the irreligious opinions of Wolmar. The connection between them signifies the importance of the theological question for education.

A few like Wolmar flourish as atheists but the majority, like Julie, need a God to believe in.

## Chapter 8

### “[T]he Next Life”<sup>707</sup>: The Question of an Afterlife in Part VI of *Julie*

In spite of all that has been given to her, Julie still remains unhappy in Part VI of *Julie*. Her unhappiness, present from the beginning of the book with a few moments of exception, prolongs the question of what happiness is and how someone like Julie can acquire it for herself. Is happiness only available in another world and does this world always fall short of that one? The death of Julie brings with it the disputable issue of belief in eternal life – an eternity of rewards or punishments in accord with how one lives on earth. Julie believes in it; she anticipates someday reuniting with her loved ones in a world invisible to those of us living “here below.”<sup>708</sup> Why does Rousseau choose to make this the major theme of the final part of his romantic novel? It appears that he considered belief in a life after death as salutary for those inclined toward it. But in the background is the atheistic outlook of Wolmar, who views this life as the only one. However, even Wolmar conveys perplexity regarding this ultimate question.

Claire informs Julie that she has arrived in Lausanne in Letter I. She wishes that Julie had joined her. She assumes that Julie did not want to abandon her husband, household, and children. She invites her to the wedding of her brother. In Letter II, Claire again writes to Julie. She admits to seeing Saint-Preux with “different eyes.”<sup>709</sup> She confirms the development of an attachment. She thinks about “our philosopher” throughout her days.<sup>710</sup> Her memory of his image is more

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<sup>707</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 588.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, 570.

<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*, 526.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, 529.

powerful over her than his appearance. But despite her feelings, she prefers to remain a widow. She designates the “sacred voice” of her conscience as the standard for making her decision.<sup>711</sup> Her conscience gives her peace with remaining alone and not remarrying.

In Letter III, Bomston accepts an invitation of Wolmar to indefinitely join him at Clarens. Bomston writes, “You will also receive a few books to expand your library. But what will you find that is new in books? O Wolmar, you need only to learn to read in the book of nature to become the wisest of mortals.”<sup>712</sup> Through Bomston, Rousseau continues his inquiry into what constitutes a proper education – whether it comes from books or not and what kind of books.<sup>713</sup> Wolmar replies in Letter IV, “come increase and share the happiness of this house. Whatever truth there may be in Believers’ hope in the afterlife, I enjoy spending this one with them, and I feel that you all suit me better as you are than you would if you had the misfortune to think my way.”<sup>714</sup> Wolmar recognizes that religious belief might be best for some people if not for himself. Replying to Bomston’s statement about books, Wolmar says, “For me the true book of nature is men’s hearts, and the proof that I know how to read it lies in my friendship with

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<sup>711</sup> Ibid., 531. “At various places in his work, Rousseau seems to present conscience as a natural phenomenon. More than once he calls it the voice of nature. ... Conscience, [Rousseau] says, is universal and constant. It is always and everywhere the same, independent of historical epoch and social contingency.” Laurence D. Cooper, *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1999), 5.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid., 538. “Edward adds his voice to those working toward Wolmar’s conversion, on the assumption that nature is a book that reveals God’s glory...” Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part VI,” in *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, vol. 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), Note 26, 714.

<sup>713</sup> Consider Letter XII of Part I by Saint-Preux.

<sup>714</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 539.

you.”<sup>715</sup> He downplays the importance of reading physical books in favor of reading human hearts.

Claire writes Julie from Geneva in Letter V. She observes, “The city is charming, the inhabitants are hospitable, the manners are civil, and freedom, which I love above all else, seems to have taken refuge here.”<sup>716</sup> The appearance of Geneva resembles Vevey, with “fewer mountains, more fields” and no near chalets.<sup>717</sup> She notes that “good sense” prevails in the city.<sup>718</sup> She adds: “[T]here is more art and true talent employed in the government of this little Republic than in that of the vastest Empires....”<sup>719</sup> While other places pound on an organ, as it were, confusing skill with booming noise, the Genevans play a spinet to make a good harmony.<sup>720</sup> Claire proceeds to praise the Genevans for their transparency: “Genevans are of all peoples on earth the one that least hides its character, and that one gets to know most quickly. Its manners, even its vices are mixed with candor. It senses that it is naturally good, and that is enough for it not to fear revealing itself as it is.”<sup>721</sup> Geneva is the only place referred to as

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<sup>715</sup> Ibid., 540.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid. “Geneva is a society dominated by civic virtue.” Mark Kremer, *Romanticism and Civilization: Love, Marriage, and Family in Rousseau’s Julie* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 9. Rousseau praises Geneva in the dedication of the *Discours sur l’inégalité*.

<sup>717</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 540.

<sup>718</sup> Ibid., 541.

<sup>719</sup> Ibid.

<sup>720</sup> “Rousseau believed that, with the exception of a few tiny islands of republican freedom (such as Geneva), all of Europe was in a state of utter debasement.” Arthur M. Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 268.

<sup>721</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 541.

“naturally good” in *Julie*, while Julie is the only person attributed natural goodness.<sup>722</sup> The only flaw with Genevans is too much of a love of money, which Claire considers necessary for its preservation.

It pleases Julie to address Saint-Preux as her friend rather than her lover in Letter VI. Their passion for one another has been purified. She writes, “but after what we have been, to be what we are today, this is the true triumph of virtue.”<sup>723</sup> They honored one another by breaking off contact; now their relationship, with its great emotional distance, does honor to them both. Julie thus feels capable of giving Saint-Preux advice. She hesitates to venture onto the topic; but she is the only one who can speak with him, like as a sister or mother, about what is at hand. She warns of the dangers that face him. “Unable to make you an angel yourself,” she writes, “I mean to offer you one to guard your soul, purify it, revive it, and under whose auspices you might live with us in the peace of the celestial abode. You will, I think, have little difficulty guessing who I mean; I mean the one who is already fairly well established in the heart she is one day to fill, if my plan succeeds.”<sup>724</sup> Knowing the sway that she exercises over her cousin Claire, she has no doubt that she can arrange a match. Falling in love with Claire is the right solution to the problem of the single status of Saint-Preux. What is more, Saint-Preux could become part of her family, “In the dear and sacred bond that will unite us all, we shall henceforth be simply sisters and brothers to each other: the tenderest sentiments having attained legitimacy will be dangerous

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<sup>722</sup> Consider Letter II of Part V by Saint-Preux.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.*, 546. “It has been about seven years since she has written to Saint-Preux.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part VI,” Note 56, 716.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, 550. “Julie ... attempts, in the spirit of arranging everybody else’s life that seems to dominate here and in *Emile*, to arrange a marriage between Saint-Preux and her friend Claire, whose husband has conveniently died.” Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 154.

no longer; when we no longer have to stifle them there will no longer be cause to fear them.”<sup>725</sup>

The marriage would solve her problem, of knowing the right way to feel toward Saint-Preux, too. They would all love “more perfectly,” she writes, “and savor in genuine combination the charms of friendship, love, and innocence.”<sup>726</sup> All of this is for the purpose of happiness: “you will sense, finally, what the vain wisdom of the wicked has never been able to believe: that there is a happiness reserved in this lifetime solely to friends of virtue.”<sup>727</sup> Julie sees this as the path that would make everyone happy. Furthermore, she writes: “the soul’s destiny and the choice of virtue are at stake.”<sup>728</sup> She cares about his soul.

The choice facing Saint-Preux of whether or not to pursue Claire causes Julie to explore the question of piety, “what is most crucial,” in Letter VI.<sup>729</sup> She writes to Saint-Preux, “You have Religion; but I am afraid lest you not draw from it all the advantage it can offer in the conduct of life, and lest philosophical arrogance disdain the simplicity of the Christian.”<sup>730</sup> She doubts his understanding of prayer. “According to you,” she says, “this act of humility is fruitless for us, and God, having in the form of conscience given us everything that can incline us to good, then abandons us to ourselves and lets our freedom play.”<sup>731</sup> Why pray if God grants such freedom? This question is not part of the doctrine of Paul nor the one given in “our Church,” she

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<sup>725</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 551.

<sup>726</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid.*, 551, 552.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.*, 552.

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*

notes.<sup>732</sup> Julie seems to hold a lower view of human nature than Saint-Preux, with a focus on sinfulness.<sup>733</sup> She writes, “We are free, it is true, but we are ignorant, weak, inclined to evil, and whence would come our understanding and strength, if not from him who is its source, and why would we obtain them if we do not deign to ask for them?”<sup>734</sup> She intimates that pride corrupts Saint-Preux. She weighs another of his objections to prayer: Why ask God – who knows all needs – anything? Does not God know what human beings need most? Julie responds that Saint-Preux should be humble in order to become virtuous and see his weakness in order to acquire strength. Prayer allows the pious person to become free and strong. She repeats that the enemy is human pride. By the account of Julie, Saint-Preux is closer to a proud philosopher than the typical believer.

In Letter VII, seven years removed from his last letter to her, Saint-Preux tells Julie that he will never forget the love that they shared. He refers to that love as the flower of his youth. Moreover, he addresses the surprising suggestion of Julie that he wed her dear friend Claire. Claire charms him, he admits, as he struggles to distinguish romantic love from appreciation. The thoughts of Saint-Preux turn to women in general: “Women, women! dear and ominous creatures, whom nature arrayed for our torment, who punish when we defy you, who pursue

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<sup>732</sup> “St. Paul told believers to ‘pray without ceasing’ (1 Thessalonians 5:17).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part VI,” Note 66, 716.

<sup>733</sup> “The doctrine of original sin, to which Calvinism (“our Church”) certainly subscribed, was an embodiment of this assumption that man is inclined to doing evil. But, as all of *Emile* makes clear, Rousseau himself rejected original sin, for the essence of natural man is good.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part VI,” Note 67, 716. There is a contradiction between the philosophy of education espoused by Julie and her Biblical view of human fallenness.

<sup>734</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 552.

when we fear you, whose hatred and love are equally noxious, and whom we can neither seek out nor flee with impunity!”<sup>735</sup> He then considers the inherent dilemma of beauty itself,

Beauty, charm, attraction, sympathy! being or inconceivable phantasm, abyss of sufferings and delights! beauty, more terrible to mortals than the element into which they were born, woe to him who surrenders to thy deceitful calm! It is thou that gatherest the tempests that torment humankind.<sup>736</sup>

He indicates that beauty, while attractive on the surface, becomes a danger to those who see it.

He again compares his friendship with Julie and Claire to becoming trapped inside of a storm, before understanding himself as lost at sea: “But on the seemingly calm sea, you feel yourself being lifted, carried gently and far by a slow and almost imperceptible swell; you think you have not left home, and you arrive at the ends of the earth.”<sup>737</sup> The women deceive like ocean waters.

Although he appreciates the idea of Julie, Saint-Preux declines to pursue a marriage with Claire.

“I shall die free,” he pledges to her, renouncing the thought of marrying anyone else.<sup>738</sup>

Following the lead of Julie, Saint-Preux addresses questions of theology in Letter VII. After beginning by considering the limits of what human beings can know or see, he writes of “the supreme Being”: “In creating man he endowed him with all the faculties needed for the accomplishment of what he required of him, and when we ask him for the power to do good, we ask him for nothing he has not already given us. He has given us reason to discern what is good, conscience to love it, and freedom to choose it.”<sup>739</sup> These are “sublime gifts” of “divine

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<sup>735</sup> Ibid., 555.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid., 556.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid., 558. “Claire and Saint-Preux make a good-faith effort to love each other or at least to put themselves in a marrying frame of mind but fail for various reasons appropriate to the personality of each.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 154.

<sup>739</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 561.



grace.”<sup>740</sup> Saint-Preux herein expresses a firm belief in God, which Julie but not Wolmar shares with him. But he departs from Julie and her reliance on prayer by affirming the power of human reason. Furthermore, he appeals to his “inner sentiment” to counter views that he is not free by believing, suggesting the superiority of what he feels deep within himself to sophisms that he hears.<sup>741</sup> Conscience reappears as a standard for making judgements and proof of the existence of God. Saint-Preux does not oppose prayer – just the neglect of illuminating lights that have been given.

Julie expresses gratitude that Wolmar brought Saint-Preux into their house in Letter VIII. They provide utility to one another. She writes, “I shall confess to you without ambiguity that the last six months we have spent together have been the sweetest time of my life, and that I have tasted in this brief expanse all the blessings of which my sensibility has furnished me a notion.”<sup>742</sup> She considers those who dwell in their household as “perhaps all the best people on earth.”<sup>743</sup> Without a fear of death, she proclaims that she has lived, enjoying every good sentiment of life. The charm of the community that surrounds her is “an openness of the heart that places all sentiments, all thoughts in common...”<sup>744</sup> The place excels in authenticity.

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<sup>740</sup> Ibid.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid. “This refusal to accept merely logical arguments against faith returns in the ‘Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar’: ‘Of what use is it to you to reduce me to silence if you cannot lead me to persuasion. . . . One may very well argue with me about this; but I sense it, and this sentiment that speaks to me is stronger than the reason combatting it’ (Book IV, *Pléiade*, IV, 579, 585; Bloom, 275, 280).” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part VI,” Note 78, 717.

<sup>742</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 565.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid., 566.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, Julie admits her deep unhappiness in Letter VIII, overcome only by faith. She writes, “All about me I see nothing but causes for contentment, and I am not content.”<sup>745</sup> Her heart feels empty and oppressed. Yet she is not sure what in the world she lacks. She continues, “Therefore, finding nothing here below that satisfies it, my avid soul seeks elsewhere what may fulfill it....”<sup>746</sup> Giving up on the world, she once again sets her sights on the worship of God. With respect to practicing virtue, she juxtaposes “the philosopher with his grand principles” and “the Christian in his simplicity,” seeming to take the side of the side of the true believer.<sup>747</sup> Serving God does not mean living in an oratory; it involves fulfilling the duties given by God. Julie anticipates meeting God, whom she sees not as vengeful but rather as merciful and good, on a day of judgment.<sup>748</sup> She wonders whether Wolmar will join her. He does not turn his eyes from God; God hides his own face. He does not wish that others would think the same way he does. He practices the good without expecting a reward in eternity, making him even more virtuous. There is no valid reason for God to punish him. Like the “true Christian,” he is a “just man.”<sup>749</sup> She therefore hopes that Wolmar will ascend into paradise, where she will be happy.<sup>750</sup>

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<sup>745</sup> Ibid., 570.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid., 570. “... we find a letter from Julie, who confesses that in spite of very good reasons for being happy, she is not. Happiness, she asserts, must be found as a reward in the other world. Her effort to make virtue and happiness coincide has failed.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 154.

<sup>747</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 571.

<sup>748</sup> “‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord’ (Romans 12:19): Julie here explicitly rejects a traditional attribute of the God of the Bible.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part VI,” Note 94, 719.

<sup>749</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 574.

<sup>750</sup> “Wolmar is an atheist. The ever more pious Julie cannot endure her husband’s failure to recognize the true foundation of all the good things they enjoy. This is not for all the selfish reasons that pious wives frequently use in browbeating unbelieving husbands. It is because she fears that this man she believes she loves will not be saved. She is full of Rousseau’s gentle

An unfortunate event has transpired, as Fanchon Anet reports to Saint-Preux in Letter IX. On a walk along a body of water, a son of Julie falls in, and she runs in herself to rescue him. After being saved, the son recovered but Julie remained unconscious for a long period of time. Julie does not appear able to recover from the fall, causing Claire and everyone else concern. Letter X consists of a fragment of text begun by Claire for Saint-Preux and finished by Wolmar, announcing the death of Julie. In Letter XI, Wolmar describes the ailment of Julie and her final moments to Saint-Preux. With her loved ones at her bedside, she insisted on the continuation of “the form of education she had adopted...”<sup>751</sup> She gives special consideration to the education of Henriette, her only daughter – one that differs from the education that she gives to her boys – although Wolmar does not go into detail about it. Instead, he gives a thorough account of Julie. After a day, the doctor caring for her tells Wolmar that she has less than three more days to live. He wonders whether to tell her and contemplates the state of the mind in the final moments: “Would announcing her last hour to her not make it arrive sooner? In so brief an interval what becomes of desires, hope, the elements of life? Is it still to enjoy life to see oneself so near the instant of losing it? Was it for me to put her to death?”<sup>752</sup> Nowhere else in *Julie* does an author of a letter ask so many consecutive questions, indicating the grave importance of but also the great mystery surrounding death in the life of a human being. What is life like just before death? Wolmar considers that Julie might be right and he might be wrong about the highest questions: “In three days, according to me, she will feel nothing at all. But if she perhaps were right, what a

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theology that it would be contrary to God’s goodness to punish unbelievers who are nevertheless moral men, but she is obviously not quite sure.” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 154.

<sup>751</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 578.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*

difference! Eternal blessings or sufferings! .... Perhaps! .... how terrible is this word .... thou wretch! risk thy soul and not hers.”<sup>753</sup> In a shocking admission, Wolmar doubts his atheism, caused by the declining health of his wife and the event that caused it.

When it occurs to everyone that Julie will die, she begins to prepare for her departure, writes Wolmar in Letter XI. She makes Claire the mother of her children. A minister visits the house to speak with Julie. Wolmar relays the conversation between the Julie and the minister. But first he notes that Julie spends her time – the last moments of her life – in surprising ways: “[S]he sees herself ready to appear before the fearsome judge; and instead of preparing herself for that terrible moment, instead of putting her conscience in order, she amuses herself decorating her room, dressing, chatting with her friends, cheering up their meals; and in all her conversations not a word about God nor about salvation!”<sup>754</sup> As for the minister who has come to visit, she thanks him for guiding her “in the straight road of morality and Christian faith.”<sup>755</sup> Throughout her journey of faith, she has always sought to conform with God and what is true. She may have made mistakes along the way but her intention has been pure throughout. Preparation for her death took place by leading “a good life,” not in actions just before the end.<sup>756</sup> She says, “When I conversed with you, when I meditated alone, when I tried to discharge the duties God imposes on me; it was then I was preparing myself to appear before him; it was

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<sup>753</sup> Ibid., 581.

<sup>754</sup> Ibid., 585.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid., 586. “Julie is certainly a very pious woman, far too devout to need the advice of a minister, to whom, indeed, she preaches on her death-bed.” Judith N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 119.

<sup>756</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 587.

then I worshipped him with all the strength he gave me; what could I do now that I have lost it; is my estranged soul in a condition to reach up to him?"<sup>757</sup> She had long been readying herself for death.

With the minister by her bedside, Wolmar continues to report in Letter XI, Julie shares her answer to the question: What is God?<sup>758</sup> She says to him, "O great Being! Eternal Being, supreme intelligence, source of life and felicity, creator, preserver, father of man and King of nature, almighty, all good God, whom I never doubted for an instant, and before whose eyes I always happily lived!"<sup>759</sup> She rejoices in him. This life passed, and the next one will begin soon: "I am about to appear before thy throne. In not many days my soul free from its flesh shall begin to offer the more worthily the immortal homage that is to constitute my happiness for eternity. I count for nothing all I shall do until that moment. My body still lives, but my moral life is over. I am at the end of my career and already judged on the past."<sup>760</sup> Nevertheless, she does not fear God and his wrath or punishment, "But I have tried to live in such a way as to have no need to think about death, and now that it draws near, I see it approaching with no terror. Those who go

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<sup>757</sup> Ibid.

<sup>758</sup> "[P]hilosophic questions of the greatest importance appear on the horizon: What is God? Or: Wherein lies the destiny of one's own nature?" Heinrich Meier, *On the Happiness of the Philosophic Life: Reflections on Rousseau's Reveries in Two Books*, American edition, translated by Robert Berman (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 48. Meier is referring to the *Troisième promenade* of *Les rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*. "[T]he all-important question which is coeval with philosophy although the philosophers do not frequently pronounce it – the question *quid sit deus*." Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 24. Strauss makes this comment in the section on Thucydides.

<sup>759</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 587.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid., 588.

to sleep in their father's bosom need not worry about their awakening."<sup>761</sup> Her God is a Being who rewards the faithful devotion of his children.

The words of Julie leave the minister almost speechless, Wolmar observes in Letter XI. The minister says to Julie, "I have nothing more to say to you. You possess the true faith, the one that makes us love God. Take with you this precious peace of a clear conscience, it will not deceive you; I have seen many Christians in your condition, I have found it in you alone."<sup>762</sup> He continues, "Madame, your death is as beautiful as your life. You have lived for charity; you die a martyr to maternal love. Whether God gives you back to us to serve as our example, or calls you to himself to crown your virtues, may we all such as we are live and die like you! We shall be very sure of happiness in the next life."<sup>763</sup> He emphasizes the rewards of a just life that true believers find in an afterlife. Piety is not chosen for its own sake but rather for the eternal returns. It is in the self-interest of the believer to worship God, given that the consequences last forever. But Julie emphasizes living well until the end, versus the state of the soul at the time of death.

After observing "a serene demeanor that sometimes went as far as gaiety" and "a certain exhilaration" in Julie, Wolmar voices a suspicion that death brought her happiness in Letter XI.<sup>764</sup> He says, "I have figured you out; you are delighted to be dying; you are more than happy

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<sup>761</sup> Ibid.

<sup>762</sup> Ibid.

<sup>763</sup> Ibid. Shklar notes that Rousseau himself cared less about the notion of an afterlife than his characters in *Julie*: "One must, to be sure, be very cautious in linking Rousseau to Fénelon, or to any other religious moralist of the century preceding his own. No superficial similarities can hide the fact that Rousseau was concerned with earthly felicity and they with eternal salvation." Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 4. Perhaps he considered the emphasis on eternal life in Part VI to be beneficial for the majority of readers of his novel, while not believing in it himself.

<sup>764</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 590.

to be leaving me.”<sup>765</sup> He raises the question of whether it is possible that Julie indeed wants to die. How could she believe in Heaven and not simultaneously want to abandon this life for it soon? Julie denies this: “I, rejoice at leaving you! You who have lived only to make me happy and virtuous; you of all men the one who suited me best; the only one, perhaps, with whom I could form a good couple, and become a good woman!”<sup>766</sup> It pains her to have to abandon her family. She could not wish to leave what “had risen to the epitome of happiness permitted on earth.”<sup>767</sup> She insists that even as she dies, she will remain with her loved ones. What is more, she believes that they will all reunite together, including Wolmar, for the duration of eternity. The minister, struck by his conversation with her, has never seen someone die so serenely. The thinking of Julie about an afterlife, especially the controversial idea of a soul separating from the body that returns to earth, causes Wolmar “to pay a little more attention to those articles of Julie’s religion in which faith converged upon reason.”<sup>768</sup> He listens to her despite the doubts of an atheist.

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<sup>765</sup> Ibid.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid., 591.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid., 593, 594.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid., 597. Rousseau adds the following note, “Plato says that at death the souls of the just who have not contracted any corruption on earth, break free in all their purity from matter by themselves. As for those who have enslaved themselves to their passions here below, he adds that their souls do not immediately regain their primitive purity, but drag behind them earthly parts which hold them as if enchained about the remnants of their bodies; this, he says, is what produces those visible simulacra one sometimes beholds roaming in cemeteries, while awaiting new transmigrations. It is a mania common to philosophers of all eras to deny what is, and to explain what is not” (587). “The discussion referred to in the note is found in the *Phaedo* 80-82.” Stewart and Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Part VI,” Note 126, 721.

The minister disagrees with Julie about souls that separate from bodies in Letter XI. According to Wolmar, “He said that the immensity, the glory, and the attributes of God would be the sole object with which the souls of the blessed would be occupied, that this sublime contemplation would erase every other memory, that we would not see each other, that we would not recognize each other, even in Heaven....”<sup>769</sup> Since it would sadden her to become separated, Julie hopes that she will see those dear to her, even after departing from this life for eternity.<sup>770</sup> While indicating that she will soon know more about these questions once she has passed away, what she knows is that as long as she lives on earth she will love those who have been with her. Julie never ceases to comfort those around her. She thinks of others before herself to the end. Wolmar expresses amazement that Julie can discuss theological questions in such a state.

Letter XII from Julie to Saint-Preux has been enclosed with Letter XI. Death does not separate her from Saint-Preux. “Nay,” she writes, “I leave thee not, I go to await thee. The virtue that separated us on earth shall unite us in the eternal abode. I die in this flattering expectation.”<sup>771</sup> The hope of reuniting forever with Saint-Preux outweighs the losses that she

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<sup>769</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 598.

<sup>770</sup> Rousseau adds another note, “It is easy to understand that by this word *see* she means a pure act of understanding similar to that by which God sees us and by which we shall see God. The senses cannot imagine the immediate communication of spirits; but reason conceives it very well, and better, it seems to me, than the communication of movement between bodies” (598).

<sup>771</sup> *Ibid.*, 610. “[A]s Julie dies she explains that her chances of felicity in the next world are greater than on earth, because she will be united there forever with Saint-Preux. The society in which both must live can offer nothing comparable. Death is also a path to peace. ... She believes that she will find a life after death and be eventually reunited with Saint-Preux. This thought makes her long to die....” Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 69, 119. “In her last letter, written in the agonies of her fatal illness, she admits to Saint-Preux that he has won and she has always loved him, no matter how hard she tried to overcome it or deny it to herself. The real cause of her dissatisfaction is not Wolmar’s atheism but her illicit love for Saint-Preux. Such is the sophistry of a decent woman’s heart!” Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, 156.



endures on earth. The last letter, Letter XIII from Claire to Saint-Preux, allows her to share her passion for him. She writes, “I am alone amidst everyone. A dull silence surrounds me. In my listless dejection I no longer communicate with anyone.”<sup>772</sup> She petitions Saint-Preux to go to her and share her loss. She urges him to remember his duty to educate the children of Julie. She intimates that Wolmar may have turned the corner of adopting faith, a task that belongs to Saint-Preux to complete. Belief in God compels her to think that the “loving and sensible soul” of Julie lives with them.<sup>773</sup> She writes, “No, she has not departed these premises which she made so charming to us. They are still quite full of her. I see her in every object, I feel her at every step, at every moment of the day I hear the strains of her voice.”<sup>774</sup> *Julie* concludes with this statement on eternal life, the focus of Part VI. Without it, death would be unbearable for Claire or someone like her.

The longing for eternity is the decisive theme of *Julie*. In the letters of Part I, the lovers fuse their cries for one another with references to gods. The theological is tied to the romantic. In this last part of the book, the hope of eternal life with Saint-Preux frees Julie from fearing death. She has lived a good life – a just life – and she deserves rewards for sacrifices in “the next life.” Without this compensation, or her dreams coming true, everything would seem cruel and unfair. The idea of an indifferent nature that governs reality would be impossible for her to understand. God and his providential plan allow her to find meaning in the nature of things. But there is no reason to believe that Julie speaks for Rousseau himself. She is a character in his story with a certain type of soul that he recognizes and maybe even admires but does not share. Wolmar is

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<sup>772</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 611.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*, 612.

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*

closer to him than Julie or Saint-Preux, even though Saint-Preux is called “the philosopher.” Nevertheless, it is instructive that Rousseau articulates the position of Julie with such passion; for he offers an example of how a philosopher might treat the question of God in public.

## Conclusion

### “The spirit of romance”<sup>775</sup>: Reflections on Rousseau’s *Julie*

Both the title of *Julie, La Nouvelle Héloïse* and the epigraph from Petrarch – “The world did not know her while she was here / I knew her, I who remain alone here to weep” – indicate that this epistolary novel or collection of letters between two lovers and friends is a tragedy.<sup>776</sup> Like the medieval story of frustrated passion, *Julie* is a book of intense but unfulfilled longings. These longings appear most prominently in the opening exchange between Saint-Preux and Julie, wherein the two lovers combine cries for one another with references to heaven and gods. The theological question is present throughout *Julie*, but especially as Julie becomes increasingly devout in her religiosity. Is Rousseau suggesting that only God satisfies the deepest longings? This does not seem to be the case, as Julie remains unsatisfied through her final written words. Should we believe that fulfillment only comes in another life? This does not seem true either, given the portrayal by Rousseau of the momentary serenity of Julie, the happy inhabitants of the upper Valais (unlike Parisians) and the head of a tranquil household like Monsieur de Wolmar – but the novel does reflect the common and permanent longing for eternity within human beings. What is Rousseau trying to teach in this tragedy, which treats the subject of education at length? In an age of obsession with romantic novels, Rousseau – unlike his contemporaries – wants to

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<sup>775</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, translated by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, volume 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>776</sup> “From sonnet 338 on the death of Laura, ‘Lasciato ai, Morte, senz sole il mondo.’” Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché, “Editors’ Notes to Prefaces,” in *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, vol. 6, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1997), Note 1, 655.

temper the passions of readers by portraying the dangers of romance.<sup>777</sup> He does not portray these longings in a favorable light, pointing instead to the superiority of self-sufficiency and the advantages of domesticity.<sup>778</sup> Rousseau shows that true contentment is possible in the ways that he depicts and that readers can avoid a tragic fate through self-mastery.

Before returning to the letters, let us consider some points in the illuminating prefaces that might recall some of the purposes of *Julie*. Like the *Lettre à d'Alembert*, Rousseau writes it with reluctance and out of a sense of responsibility. He would have thrown the letters into a fire if the situation in his time had been better. He describes his purpose as the teaching of virtue with a method that trumps “books of philosophy.”<sup>779</sup> He activates his powers as a novelist because writing a romantic novel is a more effective rhetorical strategy for reaching a broad audience.<sup>780</sup> Like the *Lettre à d'Alembert*, he writes for the public, not just for the few as in his discourses. He is a public-spirited philosopher with an interest in the most effective modes of entertainment.

In a fictitious dialogue between Rousseau, R., and an interlocutor, N., Rousseau elaborates the intention of his composition of fiction. His means have changed, not his purpose. R. says that love is an illusion generated by the human imagination that is similar to religion:

Love is but illusion; it fashions for itself, so to speak, another Universe; it surrounds itself with objects that do not exist, or to which it alone has given being; and as it renders all its

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<sup>777</sup> See the introduction by Philip Stewart to his edited volume of *Julie* for a sense of novelists in the orbit of Rousseau and their aims as well as the popular taste for literature.

<sup>778</sup> Heinrich Meier refers to self-sufficiency as *Beisichselbstsein* in *On the Happiness of the Philosophic Life*, which provides the title of the fourth chapter on the *Cinquième promenade*. It is only available to rare *contemplatifs solitaires* while the other options are more universal. *On the Happiness of the Philosophic Life: Reflections on Rousseau's Reveries in Two Books*, American edition, translated by Robert Berman (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 101.

<sup>779</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 3.

<sup>780</sup> The statements of Rousseau to the contrary in the Preface should be taken as ironic.

sentiments by images, its language is always figurative. ... When passion is at the full, it perceives its object as perfect; makes it into its idol; places it in Heaven; and just as the enthusiasm of devoutness borrows the language of love, so does the enthusiasm of love borrow the language of devoutness. It can see nothing but Paradise, Angels, the virtues of Saints, the delights of the celestial abode.<sup>781</sup>

Rousseau will present an image of love in *Julie* but not without an implicit criticism of it throughout. In order to get the attention of readers, whom he sees as children, R. explains that he follows the method of Tasso by disguising the medicine that he wishes to distribute with “sweet liquor.”<sup>782</sup> There is an element of deception in his approach – the promise of indulging the taste for romance among potential readers, for the reason of teaching virtue.

This doctor of sorts does his best to make the medicine go down, suggesting that if he would share his teaching in ordinary prose, it would fail. “Human happiness” depends on the success of his enterprise, which he sees as good citizenship.<sup>783</sup> Through the restatement of N., he elaborates part of the practical dimension of this teaching:

set aside everything artificial; bring everything back to nature; give men the love of a regular and simple life; cure them of the whims of opinion; restore their taste for true pleasures; make them love solitude and peace; keep them at some distance from each other; and instead of inciting them to pile into Cities, motivate them to spread themselves evenly across the territory to invigorate its every part.<sup>784</sup>

Rousseau went against the trend of glorifying city life by centering his novel in rusticity so that rural readers would not hate their estate. He considers their way of life to be the most blissful.

Nevertheless, he anticipates that “fashionable people” will decry *Julie* as “an insipid,

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<sup>781</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 10.

<sup>782</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

extravagant, ridiculous book.”<sup>785</sup> The enthusiasm of the letters between the lovers is ridiculous indeed; but what is ridiculous to a philosopher may be endearing to “[I]nhabitants of the fields.”<sup>786</sup> Rousseau demonstrates an understanding of the different kinds of readers of his fiction. He positions himself against elites, taking the side of “real folk” who understand his ideas.<sup>787</sup>

It is among these “real folk,” in the village of Vevey, Switzerland, that *Julie* commences. The first correspondence, primarily between the tutor Saint-Preux and his pupil Julie d’Étange, fills the pages of the novel with burning desire. Amidst hopeful exclamations, Saint-Preux imagines that Heaven has destined him for Julie. But she is dangerous to him, causing “a fever or rather delirium.”<sup>788</sup> He describes the consequence of love on him as alienation and he is unhappy. The beginning of *Julie* portrays love not as a blessing from Heaven but rather as a curse; and the religious words of Saint-Preux intimate that love and religious belief stem from a similar need. Julie, on the other hand, is mostly concerned about her honor and the honor of her family, yet she admits that she has lost control and has fallen for Saint-Preux without being able to stop herself. Given their circumstances – namely, the father of Julie who would forbid the union between his daughter and a man of a lower station in society – what the characters need most is self-mastery. As Julie writes to Saint-Preux, “A virtuous heart would manage to master

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<sup>785</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid. In his works prior to *Julie*, Rousseau signed his name, “Citoyen de Geneve,” aligning himself with simple people instead of the learned and their societies.

<sup>788</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 27. I.1.

itself,” to which he replies that “[O]ne can perhaps master oneself for the sake of virtue.”<sup>789</sup>

Likewise, Claire, cousin of Julie, writes to Julie: “if you cannot master yourself, I foresee nothing but misfortunes.”<sup>790</sup> While Rousseau makes love the compelling theme of the start of the novel, connecting it to faith, he does not make it attractive. It is a tempting and distracting passion that the wise overcome.

In her foremost musings on happiness, Julie provides a standard for the rest of the novel. Her state in life contrasts with the insatiable desires of Saint-Preux, who writes, “What, fair Julie, are the strange caprices of love! My heart has more than it hoped for, and is not content. You love me, you tell me so, and I sigh. This unfair heart desires still more, when it has nothing more to desire; it punishes me for its fantasies, and makes me uneasy in the bosom of happiness.”<sup>791</sup> By contrast, Julie has discovered serenity. This experience is “life’s most delightful state.”<sup>792</sup> Ancients like Lucretius had written of *ataraxia*, “literally ‘freedom from disturbance,’ but also translated into English as “‘tranquility, peacefulness, calmness,’ ... the goal of the Epicurean.”<sup>793</sup> Julie is not an Epicurean but she has stumbled upon the Epicurean key to genuine fulfillment. Her encounter with *ataraxia* will not last long – she seems to lose touch with it in a short time – but it gives readers of *Julie* an early sense of how Rousseau understood happiness.<sup>794</sup> Happiness

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<sup>789</sup> Ibid., 30, 31.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid., 36. I.7.

<sup>791</sup> Ibid., 38. I.8

<sup>792</sup> Ibid., 41. I.9.

<sup>793</sup> Walter Englert, "Glossary," in *On the Nature of Things*, by Lucretius (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), 213.

<sup>794</sup> After her statements on happiness in Letter IX, Julie returns to her desperate longing for Saint-Preux in Letter XI.

is not found in romantic love but rather in an independence from imaginary needs. Within that state, “no fear, no shame disrupts our felicity,” says Julie.<sup>795</sup>

Another kind of happiness, akin to the *ataraxia* of Epicureans, comes to sight in the way of life of the inhabitants of the upper Valais. Saint-Preux finds them on a journey from Vevey. The Valaisans are simple, equanimous, and tranquil. They are “happy through freedom from pain rather than taste for pleasures,” mirroring Epicureanism.<sup>796</sup> They are a primitive people whose habits, such as the preference for trade over money, may not suit everyone but offer an example that others from more populated areas can learn from. Living in close proximity to nature, without all of the accessories of modernity, brings peace to those who experience it. Saint-Preux refers to the Valaisans as “[h]appy men.”<sup>797</sup> They enjoy a rare satisfaction in the mountains.

Quite opposed to Vevey and the Valais is Paris, France, where Saint-Preux travels next. “[Y]ou are about to enter the world ... an unknown world” Julie observes as she advises him.<sup>798</sup> With only a few words, she cautions him to “never forsake virtue and never forget your Julie.”<sup>799</sup> In *Julie*, Rousseau indicates that virtue flourishes in small villages and in the countryside, while vice tends to thrive in major cities.<sup>800</sup> Saint-Preux is unhappy because of his distance from Julie.

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<sup>795</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 41. I.9.

<sup>796</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. I.23.

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*, 66. I.23.

<sup>798</sup> *Ibid.*, 182, 183. II.11.

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid.*, 183. II.11.

<sup>800</sup> “The purity of soul was of a piece with the idyllic nature of the Swiss landscape. Virtue itself is not a gift of nature: it requires will, it is a kind of heroism that overcomes obstacles; but one can be *unspoiled* in places where city vice has not yet penetrated, and thus be inclined to *love* virtue.” Philip Stewart, “Introduction,” Rousseau, *Julie*.



He can never go anywhere, neither to the Valais nor to Paris, without always contemplating her. Parisians speak well but only “to unsettle with much philosophy all the principles of virtue.”<sup>801</sup> Popularized philosophy appears to Saint-Preux as nothing but a means for moral dissolution.<sup>802</sup> Parisians do not seek what is true; instead they operate in accordance with their self-interest. With no interest in “the common good” there is a perpetual clash of factions – a vast difference from the unity that characterizes a place like the upper Valais.<sup>803</sup> There is also great inauthenticity, unlike the authenticity of the lovers, as Saint-Preux sees masks instead of faces.

The love that Saint-Preux and Julie share is exclusive even as it remains hidden. Emotions that they encounter make them contemplate other worlds, divinities, and eternity. Rousseau warns readers that such love can make lovers dependent and ultimately unhappy. However, there is something special about the purity of the lovers that Rousseau acknowledges. This becomes evident within his depiction of the Parisians, who have replaced the language of “love and lover” with “the likes of *chain* and *flame*.”<sup>804</sup> Saint-Preux continues with his analysis, “Adultery causes no revulsion, nothing about it goes against propriety; the most proper of Novels, those which everyone reads for instruction are full of it, and license is no longer blameworthy, the minute it is combined with infidelity.”<sup>805</sup> Rousseau offers a different kind of novel of the same genre as his contemporaries that features virtue instead of promiscuousness.

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<sup>801</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 191. II.14.

<sup>802</sup> “R.” condemns philosophy in the “Conversation about Novels”: “Oh Philosophy! what trouble thou dost take to shrink hearts, to make men little!” (8).

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.*, 192. II.14.

<sup>804</sup> *Ibid.*, 221. II.21.

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid.*

Saint-Preux argues that love has been denatured in Paris, unlike his own love for Julie, which, however flawed, reflects a more admirable sort of longing.

In his novel, Rousseau subordinates the frenzies of romantic love to the bond of marriage. Societal duties – namely, the obedience of Julie to her father – prevail over desires of the heart. Speaking about the death of her mother, Julie reveals a hope for compensation in another life for the sacrifices made in this one, such as marrying the friend of her father, Monsieur de Wolmar. She will endure marriage until arriving in paradise. Her wedding felt like the last day of her life. But upon meditating on marriage during the ceremony, she experiences a “sudden revolution.”<sup>806</sup> The beauty and dignity of the marriage vows suddenly become evident to her. As she becomes aware of her duties, God reveals himself to her in order to show her the goodness of the union. Friendship, not romantic love, holds a marriage together. Virtue prevails as Julie begins her new life with her husband. But the sentiments of love are powerful. The marriage invites skepticism.

Coinciding with her marriage to Wolmar, Julie becomes a woman of deep religious faith. She describes herself as having been reborn and beginning a new life of devotion to God. She pairs her “sudden revolution” that turned her into a faithful spouse with a “felicitous revolution” that, through the grace of God, allowed her to see the horror of crimes she almost committed.<sup>807</sup> “The secret voice,” “the author of all truth,” and “Eternal Providence” intervened in her life.<sup>808</sup> She describes herself as prostrated on the ground with hands lifted up in prayer toward Heaven, pledging that she will love her husband – that she will be faithful, chaste, and obey true reason.

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<sup>806</sup> *Ibid.*, 292. III.18.

<sup>807</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>808</sup> *Ibid.*

Faith in God will help her – the only thing that can – in the challenging project of self-mastery. She attributes a “sad blindness” to her past, which kept her from seeing truth, including all that had transpired between her and Saint-Preux.<sup>809</sup> Now God has given her the eyes to see clearly. God has called her to replace obedience to natural inclinations and reflection with simple faith. Julie also urges Saint-Preux to turn alongside her to the worship of the “Eternal Being,” which will equip him to “destroy those phantoms of reason.”<sup>810</sup> She condemns philosophers as “apologists of crime” and philosophy as in conflict with belief.<sup>811</sup> Rousseau does seem to speak through Julie about the irresponsibility of philosophers that he has perceived as they attack religiosity or marriage. He takes a different path with *Julie*.

When Julie d'Étange becomes Madame de Wolmar, the novel takes a different shape – such that Rousseau appears to have written two books, one on love and the other on marriage.<sup>812</sup> The turmoil that Julie experienced with Saint-Preux becomes replaced by domestic peace. Meanwhile Saint-Preux has traveled the globe, following the advice of Milord Edward Bomston, yet remained unable to keep Julie out of his mind, even as he sees her as a friend and not a lover. Wolmar invites Saint-Preux to live in his household in Clarens, an offer that Saint-Preux accepts. Julie does not tempt Saint-Preux, who has discovered the gift of “tranquil friendship” surpassing “the storm of impetuous passions.”<sup>813</sup> Saint-Preux sees the beauty of the Wolmar house, “where

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<sup>809</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>810</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>811</sup> Ibid.

<sup>812</sup> N. makes this observation, that “they are two different books,” in the Second Preface “Conversation about Novels” preceding *Julie* (11).

<sup>813</sup> Ibid., 363. IV.10.

order, peace, and innocence reign.”<sup>814</sup> The special place is unlike anything that he has seen in his journey and shines bright in the novel. Saint-Preux conveys his growth as he writes, “For my part, I think that the most assured sign of true contentment of spirit is the withdrawn and domestic life, and that those who constantly go about seeking their happiness in others’ homes do not have it in their own.”<sup>815</sup> The question of happiness, present throughout *Julie*, finds an answer in the happy household. The father of this place enjoys “nature’s sweetest sentiments.”<sup>816</sup> Saint-Preux goes so far as to compare the happiness of Wolmar to God, characterized by a freedom of superfluous desire. As for Julie, she admits a lingering unhappiness to Saint-Preux, perhaps because of her love for him that she has not been able to extinguish.

The Wolmars treat the education of their children seriously, choosing unconventional methods to protect what they perceive as natural goodness, which Saint-Preux also sees in Julie. They want to let children be children, to enjoy childhood, without forcing them to become adults. They see “no mistakes in nature” and try to preserve “natural dispositions” as long as possible.<sup>817</sup> Julie hopes for the happiness of her children during childhood, since adulthood may not bring it. The persuasiveness of the Wolmars and their system of education eventually leads Saint-Preux to conclude that “the process of nature is always best.”<sup>818</sup> Although the Wolmars agree that nature is the standard for education, they disagree about the question of whether or not there is a God.

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<sup>814</sup> Ibid.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid., 383.

<sup>816</sup> Ibid., 384.

<sup>817</sup> Ibid., 461.V.3.

<sup>818</sup> Ibid., 474.

Julie struggles to accept the atheism of Wolmar. She cannot understand how a man who is wise and good can simultaneously be an atheist.

The disagreement between Julie and Wolmar about a divine being remains unsettled through her deathbed, caused by a tragic accident, as she pictures what an afterlife might be like. She has not found happiness on earth – her obedience to her father ultimately left her unfulfilled, so she looks ahead with hope to “the next life.”<sup>819</sup> She believes that Wolmar will join her there. Because of her belief in eternal life, she dies in a state of serenity. Belief seems best for her. Within her final letter, Julie admits to Saint-Preux that she dies with the expectation that Heaven will bring them together for eternity. She dies with the same desire for Saint-Preux. Even Wolmar seems moved by the piety of Julie to the point of considering a life of faith.

Among his objections to *Julie* in the “Conversation about Novels,” N. considers the characters as from “the other world,” most likely meaning the world of God and angelic beings.<sup>820</sup> He would rather see ordinary characters and extraordinary events rather than extraordinary characters and ordinary events. He does not see how the strategy of R. or Rousseau will work. Rousseau answered the critic that he imagined with the great publishing success of his book. We can attribute this outcome to an understanding of human nature – what readers want as opposed to what they need. His contemporaries wanted romance, so he showed them its spirit. But they needed a vindication of virtuous parents and their children in the countryside. In this writing, Rousseau shows what he conceived as the duty of a political philosopher in his time.

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<sup>819</sup> Ibid., 588, VI.11.

<sup>820</sup> Ibid., 7.

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