# ROUSSEAU ET L'ÉDUCATION
# ÉTUDES SUR L'*ÉMILE*

ACTES DU COLLOQUE DE NORTHFIELD
(6 - 8 MAI 1983)

publiés et présentés par
Jean TERRASSE

avec une bibliographie
et des Index

ÉDITIONS NAAMAN
C.P. 697
SHERBROOKE (Québec, Canada)
J1H 5K5

Collection COLLOQUES
dirigée par le professeur Jean Terrasse

1. *Rousseau et l'Éducation: études sur l'«Émile»*. Actes du colloque de Northfield (6-8 mai 1983), publiés et présentés par Jean Terrasse, 152p.

*Novembre 1984*

# PROPERTY, POSSESSION AND ENJOYMENT. WOMAN AS OBJECT, SUBJECT AND PROJECT IN THE *ÉMILE*

by Aubrey Rosenberg

In several of his works Rousseau differentiates between the notion of *having* something, an object, a house, a piece of land and the like, and *owning* something because of a generally recognized or legal entitlement to it. The first instance he calls possession, and the second, property. In the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, for example, he points out that natural man possessed clothes, weapons, shelter, etc. without owning them, in the sense that if someone seized these possessions there was no recourse to the claim that property rights had been infringed since, in the state of nature, no such rights were recognized.[1] In the *Émile* the notion of property is further developed in the scene with Robert the gardener where we learn that the claim to priority of acquisition must be based on the evidence of priority of effort. This distinction between having and owning is further modified and set out most succinctly in the *Contrat social* as follows:

> Chaque membre de la communauté se donne à elle au moment qu'elle se forme, tel qu'il se trouve actuellement, lui et toutes ses forces, dont les biens qu'il possède font partie... Le droit de premier occupant, quoique plus réel que celui du plus fort, ne devient un vrai droit qu'après l'établissement de celui de propriété... Ce qu'il y a de singulier dans cette aliénation, c'est que, loin qu'en acceptant les biens des particuliers la communauté les en dépouille, elle ne fait que leur en assurer la légitime possession, changer l'usurpation en un véritable droit, et la jouis-

1. *O.C.*, III, 176: «D'ailleurs, quelque couleur que [les riches] pussent donner à leurs usurpations, ils sentaient assez qu'elles n'étaient établies que sur un droit précaire et abusif... Ceux même, que la seule industrie avait enrichis, ne pouvaient guère fonder leur propriété sur de meilleurs titres. Ils avaient beau dire: c'est moi qui ai bâti ce mur; j'ai gagné ce terrain par mon travail. Qui vous a donné les alignements, leur pouvait-on répondre; et en vertu de quoi prétendez-vous être payé à nos dépens d'un travail que nous ne vous avons point imposé?»

sance en propriété. (*O.C.*, III, 365)[2]

It takes little imagination to see that this same distinction between possessing something *de facto* and owning it *de jure* was applicable to the relationship between men and women in the eighteenth century, and still applies in many parts of the world today. Before marriage a man may well consider he has certain prior claims to the enjoyment of a woman's affection and/or her body. He may even delude himself that he is the first occupant. But, until his claims have been legitimized by a marriage contract, as the social contract legitimizes ownership, he cannot rightfully regard the woman as his property. At least, this was the case in Rousseau's time when women were a marketable commodity, like pieces of land, and when, once married, a wife became, in the eyes of the law, simply a chattel in the household of her husband.[3]

The analogy between a woman and a piece of land is by no means farfetched, deriving as it does not merely from legal premisses but from sources much more deeply rooted. After all, the notion of earth as a woman, as Mother Earth, must be almost as old as culture itself. Certainly fertility was characterized as a goddess, and a man sows his seed in the ground and in a woman with comparable results. Similarly, one speaks of virgin forests, the rape of the land, and so on. A line from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* sums up the discussion. Agrippa, referring to Cleopatra says, "She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed / He ploughed her, and she cropp'd." (Act II, Sc. 2, 11. 228-229)

That Rousseau was fully aware of this analogy and its implications is quite evident from an observation he makes in the *Confessions* (Bk VI) when he is describing the time spent with

---

2. For a discussion of the complexities of Rousseau's attitude towards property see J. MacAdam, "Rousseau: The Moral Dimensions of Property", *Theories of Property. Aristotle to the Present*, ed. Anthony Parel and Thomas Flanagan, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1979), p. 181-201, and the comment by N.O. Keohane, p. 203-217.

3. The situation of women in eighteenth-century Europe has been well-documented. See, for example, the relevant articles in *Women in the Eighteenth-Century and Other Essays*, ed. Paul Fritz and Richard Morton, (Toronto and Sarasota: A.M. Hakkert, 1976) and Paul Hoffmann, *La Femme dans la pensée des Lumières*, (Paris: Éditions Ophrys, 1977). The struggle by women to establish their rights, their brief success and subsequent failure during the French Revolution are the subjects of an excellent article by David Williams, entitled "The Fate of French Feminism. Boudier de Villemert's *Ami des Femmes*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 14 (Fall 1980), p. 37-55.

Mme de Warens at her property, Les Charmettes, a brief period he remembers as the happiest in his life. Book VI opens with an epigraph taken from Horace in which the Roman poet gives thanks to the gods for bestowing on him an ideal retreat with a little wood, a garden and fresh water running by the house. Rousseau likens his own situation and sentiments to those of Horace except that, unlike the poet, Rousseau was not the proprietor of Les Charmettes. However, Rousseau adds, «il ne m'en fallait pas davantage; il ne m'en fallait pas même la propriété: c'était assez pour moi de la jouissance; et il y a longtemps que j'ai dit et senti que le propriétaire et le possesseur sont souvent deux personnes très différentes; *même en laissant à part les maris et les amants*» (my italics). This remarkably rapid transition from a discussion of real estate to the status of husbands and lovers provides an indication of the role assigned to women in this association of ideas. Rousseau clearly sees the woman as the object or the subject according to whether she is owned by the husband or possessed by the lover. Furthermore, by saying he had no need of property, that all he needed was «la jouissance,» and by equating the husband with the owner, and the lover with the possessor, Rousseau seems to imply that enjoyment is not something experienced by the owner-husband.

It is not immediately evident, from the passage quoted, in what sense the enjoyment of an estate such as Les Charmettes is comparable to what a lover feels about his loved one. Obviously, the enjoyment but not the ownership of a house and garden in the country means, on a practical level, the use of these amenities. But clearly, when applied to the emotions experienced by a lover, this interpretation of enjoyment is scarcely appropriate, and some other meaning must be intended. A study of Rousseau's writings reveals that the words «jouir» and «jouissance» are key words in his sentimental vocabulary, and have a restricted status in that they are seldom associated with physical sensations but rather with spiritual ones. A few examples will suffice.[4] The Savoyard Vicar says, «nous jouirons de la contemplation de l'Être suprême et des vérités éternelles;» (IV, 591) in a letter to Julie Saint-Preux apostrophizes «paisible et pure

4. For a more detailed analysis and for examples of the uses of the words «jouir» and «jouissance» see the volume of the *Collection des études rousseauistes et Index des œuvres de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, entitled *Le Vocabulaire du sentiment dans l'œuvre de J.-J. Rousseau*, éd. Michel Gilot et Jean Sgard, (Genève-Paris: Éditions Slatkine, 1980), p. 90-94.

jouissance qui n'a rien d'égal dans la volupté des sens;» (II, 115) in the *Dialogues* we read that «rien ne peut ôter [les biens] de l'imagination à quiconque sait en jouir.» (I, 814) When Rousseau equates possession with enjoyment, therefore, as he does in the passage from the *Confessions*, he does so in a very special sense. His possession or enjoyment of the natural environment of Les Charmettes, and the lover's possession or enjoyment of his loved one, refer to that elevated emotion produced by the contemplation of divine Nature or a sublime woman.

Although it may be common enough to use possession and enjoyment interchangeably with regard to the appreciation of Nature, the usual understanding of the act of possession as applied to the relationships between men and women is of something primarily physical. Natural man, according to Rousseau, simply used women indiscriminately to satisfy his basic sexual appetite. He possessed them fleetingly after which there was no further contact. The transition to a more stable relationship occurred during «l'époque d'une première révolution qui forma l'établissement et la distinction des familles, et qui introduisit une sorte de propriété.» (III, 167) Although Rousseau does not say so explicitly I think we are entitled to infer that the women themselves are to be included in this «sorte de propriété.» Indeed, it was the women who encouraged the development of the notion of property, under the guise of love, «pour établir leur empire, et rendre dominant le sexe qui devrait obéir.» (III, 158) It was clearly more to the advantage of the woman, who bore children, who, because of a more sedentary life, became increasingly dependent for food, shelter and protection, that the man should be persuaded to regard her as his own.[5] Man, by contrast, had little interest in this kind of relationship. Given a choice between freedom and responsibility he needed good reasons for choosing the latter. Since such reasons were not self-evident it became the function of the state to promote and foster the institution of marriage, to make it sacred, so that social stability, of which property rights are one of the cornerstones, would be guaranteed. It is noteworthy that Rousseau speaks of the institutions of marriage and property in

5. Two recent works on anthropology lend support to Rousseau's theory of the dominant role of the woman in the formation of the primitive family. They are: Helen E. Fisher, *The Sex Contract. The Evolution of Human Behavior*, (New York: Gage, 1982) and Nancy M. Tanner, *On Becoming Human*, (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

almost precisely the same terms. In the *Discours sur l'économie politique*, for example, he describes the right of property as «le plus sacré de tous les droits des citoyens» (III, 263) while, in the *Émile*, marriage is defined as «le plus inviolable et le plus saint de tous les contrats.» (IV, 650)

Having briefly set out the distinctions between possession and property as they apply to women in general, I want now to discuss more specifically the roles they play in the *Émile*, and their relationship to the idea of enjoyment. I should point out, of course, that these ideas are treated at length in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, but there Rousseau poses the problem in a fragmented way in that, in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the lover or possessor, Saint-Preux, and the husband or owner, M. de Wolmar, are two different people competing for the same piece of property. It is only in the *Émile*, where lover and husband are destined to be one and the same, that Rousseau faces squarely the awful dilemma of how to own a woman legally, possess her physically, and enjoy her spiritually, all at the same time. This is the ideal towards which Émile's sexual and Sophie's domestic education are directed. That it is simply an ideal and, therefore, incapable of attainment, the tutor makes quite clear to the yound couple on the eve of their marriage: «J'ai souvent pensé que si l'on pouvait prolonger le bonheur de l'amour dans le mariage on aurait le paradis sur la terre. Cela ne s'est jamais vu jusqu'ici.» (IV, 861)

What is it that prevents such an achievement? What frustrates the realization of permanent enjoyment? It is sex, that deadly villain, that arch enemy that causes man to place physical possession above all else.[6] Sex, to thoughts of which a young man's fancy turns more than lightly in spring, and more than likely in summer, autumn and winter, especially if the young man, like Émile, is approaching manhood and hasn't yet laid eyes, never mind anything else, on an eligible nubile female. If only there were no imagination and no women there would be no problems: «un solitaire élevé dans un désert sans livres, sans instructions et sans femmes y mourrait vierge à quelque âge qu'il fût parvenu.»

6. *O.C.*, IV, 466: «En commençant cette seconde période, nous avons profité de la surabondance de nos forces sur nos besoins, pour nous porter hors de nous: nous nous sommes élancés dans les cieux; nous avons mesuré la terre; nous avons recueilli les lois de la Nature; en un mot, nous avons parcouru l'île entière; maintenant nous revenons à nous; nous nous rapprochons insensiblement de notre habitation. Trop heureux, en y rentrant, de n'en pas trouver encore en possession l'ennemi qui nous menace, et qui s'apprête à s'en emparer.»

(IV, 662) Or if only men and women were chaste, at least there would be the chance of a decent future together. The tutor's aim is to demonstrate to Émile «comment au goût de la chasteté tiennent la santé, la force, le courage, les vertus, l'amour-même, et tous les vrais biens de l'homme.» (IV, 650) But it is all in vain. Émile is interested in only one thing. If the tutor does not proceed judiciously Émile will discover the dangerous supplement that dispenses altogether with women, and that undermines man's physical and moral integrity. Even association with a prostitute is preferable to the practice of that debilitating vice. However perilous sexual intercourse may be, at least it is intercourse, a facet of human relations. Whereas masturbation leads not only to the destruction of the self but also of the social order. This is why Rousseau insists that once Émile «connaît une fois ce dangereux supplément, il est perdu. Dès lors il aura toujours le corps et le cœur énervés; il portera jusqu'au tombeau les tristes effets de cette habitude, la plus funeste à laquelle un jeune homme puisse être assujetti... S'il faut qu'un tyran te subjugue, je te livre par préférence à celui dont je peux te délivrer; quoi qu'il arrive, je t'arracherai plus aisément aux femmes qu'à toi.» (IV, 663) What one must do at this stage, then, is direct Émile's desire towards the kind of woman most fitted to satisfy it and, at the same time, associate this desire with more lofty sentiments.

Because man is, by nature, strong and active while woman is weak and passive, and because it is a wife's duty to obey her husband in all matters including those pertaining to sexual activity,[7] there is a distinct danger that the marriage could turn into a master-slave relationship, that Sophie could become

7. I have refrained, in this article, from participating in the heated debate as to whether or not Rousseau was an utter sexist. There are those, such as Paul Hoffmann, *Op. cit.*, Ruth Graham, "Rousseau's Sexism Revolutionized," *Women in the Eighteenth Century and Other Essays*, p. 127-139, and Allan Bloom, in his forthcoming commentary on the *Émile*, who are prepared to defend Rousseau. There are others, such as Lynda Lange, "Rousseau: Women and the General Will," *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory*, ed. Lorenne M. B. Clark and Lynda Lange, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 41-52; Susan Moller Okin, in chapter six of her *Women in Western Political Thought*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), and Nannerl O. Keohane, "But for her Sex...: The Domestication of Sophie," *Trent-Rousseau Papers*, ed. Jim MacAdam, Michael Neumann and Guy Lafrance, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980) who can scarcely hide their contempt for him. For a new reading of the education of Sophie see Jane Roland Martin, "Sophie and Émile: A Case Study of Sex Bias in the History of Educational Thought," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 51 (August 1981), p. 357-372.

simply a piece of property. As Rousseau points out, «Ce n'est pas tant la possession que l'assujettissement qui rassasie, et l'on garde pour une fille entretenue un bien plus long attachement que pour une femme.» (IV, 862) There is also the problem of familiarity which, even if it doesn't always breed contempt, often produces boredom, especially when the woman's physical appeal disappears as it is wont to do rather quickly: «La beauté s'use promptement par la possession; au bout de six semaines elle n'est plus rien pour le possessseur.» (IV, 769)

This tendency to regard woman as property is not simply a result of marriage and the act of possession, but is an attitude that develops much earlier. In his own life Rousseau had seen many examples of young girls treated as commodities by their parents as a preparation for being subjected to the tyranny of their husbands. In the *Confessions* he provides some notable instances. Mme Dupin, for example, was given to her husband as a reward for his hospitality to her mother. The only daughter of the vicomtesse de Rochechouart was married against her will to M. de Chenonceaux, Mme Dupin's son. As a consequence, «[elle] aima mieux renoncer aux agréments de la société et rester presque seule dans son appartement que de porter un joug pour lequel elle ne se sentait pas faite.» (I, 359) Sophie de Bellegarde was similarly married «très jeune et malgré elle au comte d'Houdetot, homme de condition, bon militaire, mais joueur, chicanier, très peu aimable, et qu'elle n'a jamais aimé» (I, 440) Mme de Verdelin, who was married at the age of 22 to a man of 64, spent her time outwitting her husband whom Rousseau describes as «vieux, laid, sourd, dur, brutal, jaloux, balafré, borgne... Ce mignon, jurant, criant, grondant, tempêtant, et faisant pleurer sa femme toute la journée, finissait par faire toujours ce qu'elle voulait.» (I, 528) It was as a result of such personal observations that Rousseau, in the guise of the tutor, carefully instilled in Émile the belief that marriage should be a contract between the couple and not between the parents. Sophie's father, in turn, instructs her that the only valid bases for a mariage contract are love and mutual respect:

> Dans les mariages qui se font par l'autorité des pères on se règle uniquement sur les convenances d'institution et d'opinion; ce ne sont pas les personnes qu'on marie, ce sont les conditions et les biens... C'est aux époux à s'assortir. Le penchant mutuel doit être leur premier lien... C'est là le droit de la nature que rien ne peut abroger; ceux qui l'ont gênée par tant de lois civiles ont eu plus d'égard à l'ordre apparent qu'au

bonheur du mariage... La naissance, les biens, le rang, l'opinion n'entreront pour rien dans nos raisons. Prenez un honnête homme dont la personne vous plaise et dont le caractère vous convienne. (IV, 755-758)

These are the ways Rousseau envisages for minimizing the chances of a wife being relegated to the status of property. Émile, of course, has no interest in owning Sophie, and he cannot properly understand what all the fuss is about. As we have said, all he wants is to possess her.[8] Therefore, part of his education has been designed to show him the dangers of physical possession, to instruct him in the several varieties involved, and to lead him to an apprehension of that highest and most permanent form of possession, enjoyment.

Because the man is physically stronger he is able to possess a woman against her will. The marriage contract, therefore, legitimizes the lowest form of physical possession, i.e., rape which is «non seulement le plus brutal de tous les actes, mais le plus contraire à sa fin; soit parce que l'homme déclare ainsi la guerre à sa compagne et l'autorise à défendre sa personne et sa liberté aux dépens même de la vie de l'agresseur; soit parce que la femme seule est juge de l'état où elle se trouve, et qu'un enfant n'aurait point de père si tout homme en pouvait usurper les droits.» (IV, 695) There are, however, other ways to possess a woman without resorting to such violent actions. There are prostitutes and mistresses who sell their favours. But this alternative constitute another kind of degradation, especially for the man who is cheated, since he is obliged to pay for what he could have got for nothing. Although some men are satisfied with this form of possession others want something more. They like to feel that their passion is shared. They want a relationship in which the woman gives herself not for money but for some motive that helps to reinforce the man's *amour propre*.[9] These complexities and gradations of possession are outlined most cogently by Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Regarding a woman, for example, those men who are more modest

8. *O.C.*, IV, 817: «S'il faut vivre avec elle quoi qu'il arrive, que Sophie soit mariée ou non, que tu sois libre ou ne le sois pas, qu'elle t'aime ou te haïsse, qu'on te l'accorde ou qu'on te la refuse, n'importe, tu la veux, il faut la posséder à quelque prix que ce soit.»

9. *O.C.*, IV, 684: «Celui qui disait: je possède Laïs sans qu'elle me possède, disait un mot sans esprit. La possession qui n'est pas réciproque n'est rien, c'est tout au plus la possession du sexe mais non pas de l'individu. Or où le moral de l'amour n'est pas, pourquoi faire une si grande affaire du reste? Rien n'est si facile à trouver. Un muletier est là-dessus plus près du bonheur qu'un millionnaire.»

consider the mere use of the body and sexual gratification a sufficient and satisfying sign of "having," of possession. Another type, with a more suspicious and demanding thirst for possession, sees the "question mark," the illusory quality of such "having" and wants subtler tests, above all in order to know whether the woman does not only give herself to him but also gives up for his sake what she has or would like to have: only then does she seem to him "possessed." A third type, however, does not reach the end of his mistrust and desire for having even so: he asks himself whether the woman, when she gives up everything for him, does not possibly do this for a phantom of him. He wants to be known deep down, abysmally deep down, before he is capable of being loved at all; he dares to let himself be fathomed. He feels that his beloved is fully in his possession only when she no longer deceives herself about him, when she loves him just as much for his devilry and hidden insatiability as for his graciousness, patience, and spirituality.[10]

In his own life Rousseau experienced most of the varieties of possession from the purely physical to the most sublime. Three women particularly represent the different levels of experience. They are Mme de Larnage, Mme de Warens and Sophie d'Houdetot. Mme de Larnage gave Rousseau his only perfect physical relationship in the sense that his passion seemed to be reciprocated, and the woman gave herself to him freely, to say the least. If Émile must have sexual intercourse it ought to be of the kind Rousseau experienced in the arms of Mme de Larnage:

> Quand je vivrais cent ans je ne me rappellerais jamais sans plaisir le souvenir de cette charmante femme... On pouvait la voir sans l'aimer, mais non pas la posséder sans l'adorer... Elle s'était éprise d'un goût trop prompt et trop vif pour être excusable, mais où le cœur entrait du moins autant que les sens, et durant le temps court et délicieux que je passai auprès d'elle j'eus lieu de croire aux ménagements forcés qu'elle m'imposait, que quoique sensuelle et voluptueuse elle aimait encore mieux ma santé que ses plaisirs... Cette vie délicieuse dura quatre ou cinq jours pendant lesquels je me gorgeai, je m'enivrai des plus douces voluptés. Je les goûtai pures, vives, sans aucun mélange de peines, ce sont les premières et les seules que j'aie ainsi goûtées, et je puis dire que je dois à Mme de Larnage de ne pas mourir sans avoir connu le plaisir (I, 252-253)

It will be important for Sophie to emulate Mme de Larnage by thinking more of her husband's requirements than her own.

The second level of possession Rousseau encountered during his life with Mme de Warens. What he experienced with Mme de

10. F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 106-107.

Warens was friendship, a perfect understanding, a harmony of souls, a sympathy that transcends the physical.[11] All this was ruined when Maman decided to initiate him into the mysteries of sex. Rousseau tries to explain his ambivalence towards Mme de Warens by comparing his feelings towards her with those evoked by Mme de Larnage: «Je ne l'aimais pas... comme j'avais aimé et comme j'aimais Mme de Warens; mais c'était pour cela même que je la possédais cent fois mieux. Près de Maman, mon plaisir était toujours troublé par un sentiment de tristesse, par un secret serrement de cœur que je ne surmontais pas sans peine; au lieu de me féliciter de la posséder, je me reprochais de l'avilir.» (I, 253-254)

It was with Sophie d'Houdetot that Rousseau experienced the highest form of enjoyment, that is, love without physical possession, the only true love:

> ...je proteste, je jure, que si quelquefois égaré par mes sens j'ai tenté de la rendre infidèle, jamais je ne l'ai véritablement désiré. La véhémence de ma passion la contenait par elle-même. Le devoir des privations avait exalté mon âme. L'éclat de toutes les vertus ornait à mes yeux l'idole de mon cœur; en souiller la divine image eût été l'anéantir. J'aurais pu commettre le crime, il a cent fois été commis dans mon cœur: mais avilir ma Sophie! ah cela se pouvait-il jamais! Non non je le lui ai cent fois dit à elle-même; eussé-je été le maître de me satisfaire, sa propre volonté l'eût-elle mise à ma discrétion, hors quelques courts moments de délire, j'aurais refusé d'être heureux à ce prix. Je l'aimais trop pour vouloir la posséder. (I, 444)

If we consider these three women, for a moment, we are forced to acknowledge that they were hardly paragons of virtue. Mme de Larnage had a casual affair with a stranger she picked up in a stagecoach. Mme de Warens attached about as much importance to her body as she did to her handkerchief, and the only woman Rousseau really loved already had a lover in the person of Saint-Lambert. Nevertheless, for the marriage between Émile and Sophie to succeed it is essential that Sophie be a combination of these three women. She must be a sex-pot like

11. *O.C.*, I, 222: «Nous commençâmes, sans y songer, à ne plus nous séparer l'un de l'autre, à mettre en quelque sorte toute notre existence en commun, et sentant que réciproquement nous nous étions non seulement nécessaires mais suffisants, nous nous accoutumâmes à ne plus penser à rien d'étranger à nous, à borner absolument notre bonheur et tous nos désirs à cette possession mutuelle et peut-être unique parmi les humains, qui n'était point, comme je l'ai dit, celle de l'amour; mais une possession plus essentielle qui, sans tenir aux sens, au sexe, à l'âge, à la figure tenait à tout ce par quoi on est soi, et qu'on ne peut perdre qu'en cessant d'être.»

Mme de Larnage, a perfect friend like Mme de Warens, and an object of sublime worship like her namesake. The problem is that she is to begin this formidable undertaking with an upbringing that places her at a considerable disadvantage. Her marked lack of experience of sexual techniques hardly qualifies her to compete in the field in which Mme de Larnage was an expert. After all, if Mme de Larnage had been a virgin like Sophie Rousseau might never have known the delights of sex, and it was thanks to the instructions he received at the hands of Mme de Warens that he knew what to do with Mme de Larnage when he was presented with the opportunity.

In a vain attempt to compensate for Sophie's deficiencies the tutor tries to play down the importance of physical possession and emphasize the delights of spiritual possession or enjoyment. The tutor tells Émile that anticipation is better than realization, an idea that is hardly likely to impress someone whose whole education has been based on practical experience and the suppression of imagination: «Ô bon Émile, aime et sois aimé! Jouis longtemps avant que de posséder; jouis à la fois de l'amour et de l'innocence; fais ton paradis sur la terre en attendant l'autre;» (IV, 782) But the evil moment cannot be put off indefinitely, and Émile and Sophie are finally married. Sophie, misinterpreting the advice of the tutor, tries to play the capricious mistress rather than the predictable wife. So, on the second night, much to his shock and disappointment, she rejects Émile's advances. This inauspicious but understandable beginning is destined to have only one sequel, as we discover in the first letter of Rousseau's second attempt at an epistolary novel, entitled *Émile et Sophie ou Les Solitaires*. Here we learn that, for a time, the married couple did manage to approach the ideal. Émile describes to his tutor how as «Époux, et toujours amant, je trouvai dans la tranquille possession un bonheur d'une autre espèce, mais non moins vrai que dans le délire des désirs.» (IV, 883) But the death of Sophie's parents, followed by the death of her daughter, and the consequent move from the countryside to the city, proved too much for this once happy family. Émile became indifferent to his surroundings and, eventually, to Sophie whom he began to treat as simply his property, having long since lost the desire to possess her physically. — When he wants to revive the relationship he discovers it is too late, — for Sophie has been possessed by another:

Je voulus rétablir les droits d'époux, trop négligés depuis longtemps;

> j'éprouvai la plus invincible résistance. Ce n'étaient plus ces refus agaçants, faits pour donner un nouveau prix à ce qu'on accorde. Ce n'étaient pas non plus ces refus tendres, modestes, mais absolus [...] Les difficultés enflammaient mon cœur, et je me faisais un point d'honneur de les surmonter. Jamais peut-être après dix ans de mariage, après un si long refroidissement, la passion d'un époux ne se ralluma si brûlante et si vive [...] arrêtez, Émile, me dit-elle, et sachez que je ne vous suis plus rien. Un autre a souillé votre lit, je suis enceinte; vous ne me toucherez de ma vie. (IV, 889-890)

This pessimistic, though unfinished account of a marriage for which the greatest care and preparation were provided to ensure its success, must embody some deep-seated conviction of Rousseau about the possibilities of married bliss, especially when we reflect that the supposedly ideal union between Julie and Wolmar also ended on an ambivalent if not tragic note. The very nature of marriage seems to militate against the possibility of prolonged happiness. The inherent and fundamental conflict that arises between owning, possessing and enjoying prohibits the realization of any lasting enjoyment. In theory, once the physical desires have been assuaged there should be a movement towards spiritual harmony. But, in practice, human nature and social mores combine to sacrifice enjoyment on the altar of possession and property. What is the solution? For Rousseau it was to be self-sufficient, self-possessed, independent of women and of men. The only answer, as Rousseau enunciates it in the *Rêveries*, is to be «impassible comme Dieu même.» (I, 999) If this solution does not bring happiness, at least it provides peace of mind. And when all else fails, Nature is always there, not to be owned or physically possessed but to be enjoyed. For it is only in the bosom of Nature that man can achieve any real and lasting enjoyment.

Aubrey Rosenberg
Victoria College
University of Toronto