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## DIDEROT'S *ÉLOGE DE RICHARDSON*

### AND ROUSSEAU'S

### *JULIE OU LA NOUVELLE HÉLOÏSE*

The purpose of this paper is to re-examine the idea that one of the intentions of Diderot's wildly enthusiastic *Éloge de Richardson* (1762) was to undermine the success of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Joseph Texte, for example, found it plausible to suppose that "l'*Éloge* était destiné à rappeler aux nombreux admirateurs de *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, publiée depuis quelques mois, que Rousseau — avec qui Diderot, comme on sait, était maintenant brouillé — avait eu un précurseur et un maître. . . ."<sup>1</sup> More recently, Arthur Wilson, in a similar vein, argued that "Diderot's praise of Richardson may have had an unconscious and certainly unacknowledged purpose. It could have been a means of suggesting to French readers that Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, currently being compared with Richardson's works, was not really so original nor so great as the Richardson novels that preceded it."<sup>2</sup> June Siegel put it somewhat differently, although the result is the same: "Rousseau's success, arriving at a time when Diderot's claim to Parnassus was not very substantial, spurred a rather natural reaction. Henceforth, Richardson is to be a standard for the denigration of Rousseau, implied or explicit, in both Grimm's (rabid) and Diderot's restrained criticism of their erstwhile friend."<sup>3</sup>

Not all critics, however, have subscribed to this view of the *Éloge* as an attack on Rousseau and his novel. According to Robert Loy, for example:

It has often been suggested (and interpretation of the evidence is tempting) that Diderot really wrote his 'extravagant' praise of Richardson only to depreciate the vast literary success of Rousseau with his *Héloïse*, and this out of professional

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1. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitisme littéraire*, Paris, Hachette, 1895, p. 266.
  2. *Diderot*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 427.
  3. "Diderot and Richardson: Manuscripts, Missives, and Mysteries," *Diderot Studies*, 18 (1975), 146.

jealousy. Aside from the problem of dating, there are cogent reasons why such conjecture is not valid and I, personally, believe none of it. . . . Whatever the natural envy that might have arisen from such great success of an erstwhile friend at a time when Diderot was himself . . . passing through a moment of creative depression, his appreciation of Rousseau's contribution to the novel and his praise of a great literary and psychological talent in Richardson are not false.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, these three arguments of Loy's are hard to follow. First, it may well be that "professional jealousy" was not a significant motivating factor but there is no doubt that contempt and disillusion played a part in the relations between the two *philosophes* ever since Rousseau's repudiation of Diderot in the preface to the *Lettre à d'Alembert* (1758).<sup>5</sup> Second, Loy does not make clear his reference to the "problems of dating," but he must be implying that the publication dates of *Julie* and the *Éloge* were too close to allow Diderot to read Rousseau's somewhat lengthy novel and prepare his criticism of it. The chronological facts, however, in no way support this argument. Copies of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* first became available in England in December 1760 and in France in January 1761, although it did not appear there "officially" until February.<sup>6</sup> Diderot's *Éloge*, supposedly drafted in a day, was not started until at least six months later, after the death of Richardson in July 1761, and it was not published until January 1762.<sup>7</sup>

4. "Richardson and Diderot," *Enlightenment Studies in Honour of Lester G. Crocker*, ed. Alfred J. Bingham and Virgil W. Topazio, Oxford, The Voltaire Foundation, 1979, p. 150.
5. "J'avais un Aristarque sévère et judicieux, je ne l'ai plus, je n'en veux plus, mais je le regretterai sans cesse, et il manque bien plus à mon cœur qu'à mes écrits." Rousseau buttressed this observation in a note in which he quoted, in Latin, from *Ecclesiasticus*, XXII, 26-27, to the effect that between friends there is always the possibility of reconciliation "except for upbraiding, or pride, or disclosing secrets, or a treacherous wound: for these things every friend will depart." *Lettre à d'Alembert*, Paris, Garnier Flammarion, 1967, pp.49-50. It is not quite clear what specific "secrets" Rousseau has in mind but his "affair" with Sophie d'Houdetot and the disposal of his illegitimate children are no doubt involved. For further details of the relationship between Rousseau and Diderot, see my *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Providence: An Interpretive Essay*, Sherbrooke, Naaman, 1987, pp. 109-113.
6. For full details of the publication of Rousseau's novel, see Jo-Ann E. McEachern, *Bibliography of the Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau to 1800, I, Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, Oxford, The Voltaire Foundation, 1991.
7. In the *Correspondance littéraire* for January 1762, referring to the *Éloge*, Grimm wrote to his subscribers: "Je comptais vous parler quelque jour de Richardson . . . mais un morceau que vous trouverez dans le mois de janvier du *Journal étranger* me dispense d'exécuter ce projet. Ce morceau, que vous lirez avec grand plaisir, a été ébauché en vingt-quatre heures par M. Diderot."

It may be that Loy was led astray, as some critics seem to have been, by the discrepancy in dates between the drafting of the *Éloge* and its eventual publication.<sup>8</sup> Finally, although Loy speaks of Diderot's "appreciation of Rousseau's contribution to the novel," he gives no indication of where this appreciation may be found, and I have come across no evidence to support this contention. On the contrary, in January 1757, when Rousseau sent the first two parts of his novel to Diderot for his opinion, he received no response. When Diderot did offer an appraisal, in March, it was unfavourable:

Il y avait près de six mois que je lui avais envoyé les deux premières parties de *Julie* pour m'en dire son avis. Il ne les avait pas encore lues. Nous en lûmes un cahier ensemble. Il trouva cela *feuilleu*, ce fut son terme, c'est à dire, chargé de paroles et redondant.<sup>9</sup>

In no way do I wish to suggest that Diderot's *primary* purpose in writing the *Éloge* was to denigrate Rousseau. His main intention was clearly to praise Richardson in whose work he found many of the realistic, sentimental and dramatic features he would introduce into his own novels and plays. Indeed, some critics have suggested that the *Éloge* is really Diderot's celebration of his own genius.<sup>10</sup> But I do want to suggest that the criticism of Rousseau and his novel is an implicit and important element of the *Éloge*. Indeed, Rousseau himself must have been aware of the criticism implied in Diderot's excessive adulation of the English author. As we have seen, he certainly knew, even before *Julie* was finished, that Diderot considered the opening to be heavy going and that he was generally unimpressed with Rousseau's new venture.

Although critics have asserted that the *Éloge* was a deliberate slight, no one, as far as I know, has examined it in detail for internal evidence of the supposedly veiled attack. It has simply been assumed

8. André Billy, in his edition of Diderot's *Œuvres*, Paris, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1962 (copyright 1951), p. 1059, note 1, places the publication of the *Éloge* in 1761, with no other qualification. Rita Goldberg, *Sex and Enlightenment: Women in Richardson and Diderot*, Cambridge U.P., 1984, p. 136, seems to think that the *Éloge* came only "slightly after Rousseau's novel."
9. *Les Confessions*, vol I, pp. 460-461, of the four-volume *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69.
10. "Tout cela . . . venait fort à propos pour confirmer les propres théories de Diderot sur la vraisemblance dans l'art. Et de même cette apothéose de Richardson — au lendemain de la publication du *Fils naturel* (1757) et de la représentation du *Père de famille* (1761) — venait à point pour consacrer ses idées sur la moralité au

that Diderot's failure even to mention Rousseau's novel, added to the already well-established and overt hostility between the two men, is sufficient proof of Diderot's design. The object of this paper, then, is to examine the text of the *Éloge* and to show that Diderot's attack on Rousseau was premeditated. This is not to claim that the whole of the *Éloge* refers to Rousseau — my examples, admittedly speculative, will not be numerous but will, I hope, be persuasive. I am well aware, too, of the risks involved in trusting the reaction of Rousseau himself. After all, when one considers his outrage at the line in Diderot's *Le Fils naturel*, "Il n'y a que le méchant qui soit seul," it is not impossible that he could have taken the whole of the *Éloge* as a deliberately personal affront.<sup>11</sup> Finally, I recognize the obvious danger in this kind of enterprise — in order to substantiate a thesis, it is easy to read into a text interpretations that are not only hypothetical but perhaps unjustifiable. To minimize this danger, therefore, I shall try to provide, at the least, good circumstantial evidence for my interpretations.

The circumstances surrounding the publication of Diderot's *Éloge* are, in this regard, of great interest. The *Éloge* appeared in January 1762, in the *Journal étranger* (Art. 9, 184-195), the same journal that had the previous month published a translation of an article in the *Critical Review* of September 1761 (Art. 8, 203-211). This article, favourable to both Richardson and Rousseau, drew a parallel between the two men that was to become the standard for all future comparisons. The person who did the translation, one of the two editors of the *Journal*

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théâtre et dans le roman." Joseph Texte, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

"Diderot y formule non pas tant les principes esthétiques de Richardson que les siens propres, qui l'ont guidé dans la composition du *Fils naturel*, du *Père de famille* et de *La Religieuse*." Diderot, *Œuvres complètes*, vol.5, Introductions de Roger Lewinter, Le Club français du livre, 1970, p. 120.

"Hardly concealed by the formal act of eulogizing, Diderot urgently staked his own claim for immortality if not on the basis of what he considered his uncertain merit as a literary artist then at least for his virtue, demonstrated publicly in his sensitive reading and appreciation of Richardson, and in the 'fiery imagination' of a kindred soul — kindred, that is, if not always to Richardson, at least to Pamela and Clarissa." Herbert Josephs, "Diderot's *Éloge de Richardson*: A Paradox on Praising," *Essays on the Age of Enlightenment in Honor of Ira O. Wade*, ed. Jean Macary, Genève, Droz, 1977, p. 171. Raymond Trousson, in an oral communication, has emphasized the significance of the timing of Diderot's *La Religieuse*, a thoroughly Richardsonian novel, written in 1760, that he could not publish. His praise of Richardson, therefore, is also a homage to his own hidden accomplishment.

11. See the *Confessions*, p. 455.

*étranger*, was Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard (1733-1817), a friend of Diderot and Grimm, and an habitué of the Baron d'Holbach's *cénacle de la libre pensée* which, by 1760, Rousseau regarded with considerable distaste. According to Mme Suard, "The Baron d'Holbach, more than anyone, cherished [Suard] like a brother" and, in his own correspondence, Suard constantly refers to his close association with the d'Holbach coterie to the point that, "it is doubtful that any man, between 1760 and 1780, attended more assemblies at the Baron's home."<sup>12</sup> There is good circumstantial evidence, therefore, that Rousseau, at the time of the publication of the *Éloge*, had no liking for Suard. This, of course, does not prove that Suard felt the same about Rousseau, but in offering to Diderot the facilities of his journal for an article in praise of Richardson that totally ignored the enormous impact of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Suard must have been aware that he was implicitly taking sides. Certainly by 1766, when Suard translated David Hume's account of his quarrel with Rousseau, he made no bones, in the introduction to his translation, about his hostility towards Rousseau.<sup>13</sup>

That Diderot was a sworn enemy of Rousseau needs little substantiation. According to Diderot's indictment, written in 1758 after Rousseau's rejection of his friendship, Rousseau had shown himself to be a monster of ingratitude towards Mme d'Épinay, had deceived and maligned his friend Grimm, tried to break up the relationship between Saint-Lambert and Sophie d'Houdetot whom he wanted for himself, attempted to poison the friendship between Saint-Lambert and Diderot, accused Diderot of treachery, ill-treated Thérèse Levasseur and her family, and betrayed his friends and the cause of the *philosophes*. Diderot ends his *réquisitoire* as follows:

J'ai vécu quinze ans avec cet-homme là. De toutes les marques d'amitié qu'on peut donner à un homme, il n'y en a aucune qu'il n'ait reçue de moi, et il ne m'en a jamais donné aucune. . . . Il ne dit pas ce qu'il doit à mes soins, à mes conseils, à mes entretiens. . . . Il dit du mal du comique larmoyant, parce que

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12. See Alan C. Kors, *D'Holbach's Coterie. An Enlightenment in Paris*, Princeton U.P., 1976, pp. 24-25.
  13. In the unsigned "Avertissement des Éditeurs" that prefaces the *Exposé succinct de la contestation qui s'est élevée entre M. Hume et M. Rousseau, avec les pièces justificatives* (Londres, 1766), Suard praises Hume and absolves him of all responsibility in the affair. Rousseau, by contrast, is portrayed as the villain. In *L'Année littéraire*, VII, 1766, Fréron complained about this lack of editorial impartiality. I am grateful to Dr. William Hanley for drawing Fréron's review to my attention.

c'est mon genre. Il contrefait le dévot, parce que je ne le suis pas; il traîne la comédie dans la boue parce que j'ai dit que j'aimais cette profession. . . . Cet homme est faux, vain, comme Satan, ingrat, cruel, hypocrite et méchant. . . . En vérité, cet homme est un monstre.<sup>14</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that, by the end of 1761, he had any reason to revise this opinion.

The first salvo in the attack on *La Nouvelle Héloïse* was delivered in two parts, dated January 15 and February 1, 1761, in Grimm's private newsletter, the *Correspondance littéraire*, to which Diderot was a major contributor. If Rousseau's relations with Diderot were bad at that time, they were even worse with Grimm, whom Rousseau regarded as the architect of his misfortunes. Grimm's attitude towards Rousseau was equally contemptuous and, after Rousseau's allegedly disgraceful behaviour towards Mme d'Epainay in 1757, Grimm, in sentiments similar to those of Diderot, severed all connection with him:

Je ne connaissais pas alors votre monstrueux système; il m'a fait frémir d'indignation; j'y vois des principes si odieux, tant de noirceur et de duplicité. . . . Je ne vous reverrai de ma vie, et je me croirai heureux si je puis bannir de mon esprit le souvenir de vos procédés; je vous prie de m'oublier et de ne plus troubler mon âme.<sup>15</sup>

Grimm's assessment of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* takes the form of a vitriolic assault on the book and its author who, in Grimm's opinion, is simply incapable of writing a novel since he has no notion of how to organize a plot, to construct believable characters, vary his style and, in short, create a fictional world in which the transported reader willingly and sometimes helplessly suspends his disbelief. All that Rousseau knows how to do, according to Grimm, is write dissertations on duelling, suicide, and the like. Everything is artificially arranged so as to provide a pretext for the introduction of these treatises, and nothing happens out of that necessity that is the basis of any worthwhile work of fiction. All is subordinated to the didactic aims of the novel. From time to time, Rousseau tries unsuccessfully to liven up the proceedings by dragging in extraneous events such as Julie's contraction of smallpox or her falling in the water. All the characters adopt the same discourse

14. See Appendix 206 (Les Tablettes de Diderot) in Ralph Leigh's edition of the *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Oxford, The Voltaire Foundation, 1965-1993, 53 vols.

15. *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, letter 555.



with the result that the style throughout is monotonous. Rousseau's only talent is that of an ancient sophist who loves paradoxes, and delights in drawing conclusions totally the opposite of what any reasonable man would expect. Grimm makes two brief references to Richardson in order to highlight the English author's superiority in characterization and his exquisite taste and tact in dealing with situations. He concludes his critique as follows: "Voilà la différence de l'homme de génie à l'homme ordinaire. Le premier sait employer souvent des circonstances communes d'une manière sublime et qui produit les plus grands effets. Le second gâte même les belles choses qu'il trouve, ou ne sait du moins en tirer parti."

Diderot fully endorsed these sentiments but probably saw little point in repeating them, especially since others had already done so.<sup>16</sup> So it made more sense to attack Rousseau's novel by deliberately ignoring it. Everything Grimm had found deficient in Rousseau, Diderot would find laudable in Richardson. Where Grimm criticized Rousseau for his inability to construct a credible plot, create believable settings and characters, and vary the style accordingly, Diderot praised Richardson's incomparable mastery and originality in the art of the novel in all its aspects. The two appraisals, when taken together, form yet another parallel, but it is up to the discerning reader to make the connection.

The *Éloge* is preceded by an introduction attributed to Suard but that Diderot could well have written himself.<sup>17</sup> The point of the introduction, which praises Diderot without naming him, is to make the distinction between a man of wit and a man of intelligence, "un homme d'esprit," and "un homme sensible," like Diderot. This is just the distinction Grimm made, at the end of his article, between Rousseau the ordinary man and Richardson the genius. Only the latter kind, says the introduction to the *Éloge*, is qualified to pass judgement on the English author and on the art of the novel. I take this characterization

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16. See, for example, Voltaire's *Lettres sur La Nouvelle Héloïse*, signed by the Marquis de Ximenès, that appeared in February 1761. Throughout the year, Pierre Rousseau's *Journal encyclopédique*, in a show of impartiality, published a variety of critiques for and against the novel.
  17. In the *Journal étranger*, the introduction is not signed, but in the Abbé Arnaud's *Variétés littéraires*, 1768-69, where the *Éloge* is reproduced, it is signed with the initial S, presumably Suard. My reason for suggesting that Diderot might have written it is based on his delight in mystification, of which his novel *La Religieuse* is the best example.

of the true critic to be an attack on Rousseau who, it is implied, being merely "un homme d'esprit," is incapable of understanding the greatness of Richardson.

The *Éloge* proper begins with the following standard observation: "Par un roman, on a entendu jusqu'à ce jour un tissu d'événements chimériques et frivoles" (p.1059).<sup>18</sup> The words "jusqu'à ce jour" deliberately exclude Rousseau's novel from consideration. It is just as though it had never been published and received such an enthusiastic reception from the general public. The only valid reason for discounting *La Nouvelle Héloïse* must be that there is nothing in it that adds to what Richardson has already achieved. If we want to study the epitome of the novel we must go to its source and not to its inferior imitations. Now, as Jean Sgard points out:

Définir le roman un 'tissu d'événements chimériques et frivoles,' . . . c'est reprendre l'argumentation des moralistes les plus étroits. Il y a même une part de tricherie à invoquer une conception du roman vieille d'un siècle et contre laquelle se sont déjà insurgés Lesage, Marivaux, Prévost, Crébillon et Rousseau . . . . L'*Éloge de Richardson* nous donne du roman une problématique désuète et parfois suspecte de mauvaise foi: Diderot admire chez Richardson ce qu'il aurait pu admirer tout aussi bien chez Prévost ou dans *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, et ses arguments sont ceux de Prévost ou de Rousseau.<sup>19</sup>

As far as is known, Diderot had no animosity towards Prévost. It is true that he criticized severely the abbé's translations of Richardson but Prévost was, nonetheless, someone who shared his admiration of the English author.<sup>20</sup>

The *Éloge* continues: "Tout ce que Montaigne, Charron, La Rochefoucauld et Nicole ont mis en maximes, Richardson l'a mis en action" (p. 1059). In the final note to his novel and in the second preface, Rousseau, in fairly open and derogatory references to Richardson, prides himself on the lack of action and the simplicity of his characters, on having followed the Racinien doctrine of making

18. Quotations from the *Éloge* are taken from the André Billy edition referred to in note 8.

19. *Œuvres complètes de Diderot*, Paris, Hermann, 1975-86, vol. 13, p. 187.

20. Cf. Texte, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-66: "On a voulu y voir une attaque indirecte contre Prévost. Mais comment expliquer alors que Prévost ait été le premier à reproduire le morceau en tête de sa propre traduction? Et d'ailleurs, . . . Prévost lui-même n'avait-il pas été le premier à condamner le romanesque trop facile de ses premières oeuvres? . . . Et pourquoi, si [Diderot] loue Richardson, veut-on qu'il attaque Prévost?"

something out of nothing.<sup>21</sup> If I read Diderot correctly, his reply to Rousseau is that while Richardson's novels, through the behaviour of their characters, teach us the value of virtue and morality, Rousseau's static, didactic and boring portrayal of the good life is more akin to a series of maxims. Richardson's portrait of society, he goes on to argue, is so powerful and true, his virtuous characters so appealing, his villains so real that we tremble in their presence. In the end, good wins over evil, but not before our confidence in the beneficence of society has been shaken.

This observation about villains is followed by two remarks that sound as if they ought to refer pejoratively to Rousseau and yet, in the context in which they occur, seem rather to approve of him. The first remark is: "Qui est-ce qui ne s'est pas dit au fond de son cœur qu'il faudrait fuir de la société et se réfugier au fond des forêts, s'il y avait un certain nombre d'hommes d'une pareille dissimulation?" (p. 1060). Surely we have all experienced such moments of doubt and despair but, since virtue eventually and convincingly triumphs, one comes away uplifted from Richardson's novels "qui élèvent l'esprit, qui touchent l'âme, qui respirent partout l'amour du bien" (p. 1059). The implication is, I think, that only someone as irrational and as unfeeling as Rousseau would be unaffected by the cathartic ending of the novels, would persist in his jaundiced view of society, and actually think it appropriate to flee from society and futilely take refuge in the depths of the forest. The

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21. "En achevant de relire ce recueil, je crois pouvoir voir pourquoi l'intérêt, tout faible qu'il est, m'en est si agréable, et le sera, je pense, à tout lecteur d'un bon naturel. C'est qu'au moins ce faible intérêt est pur et sans mélange de peine; qu'il n'est point excité par des noirceurs, par des crimes, ni mêlé du tourment de haïr. Je ne saurais concevoir quel plaisir on peut prendre à imaginer et composer le personnage d'un scélérat, à se mettre à sa place tandis qu'on le représente, à lui prêter l'éclat le plus imposant (p. 745).

"Quant à l'intérêt, il est pour tout le monde, il est nul. Pas une mauvaise action, pas un méchant homme qui fasse craindre pour les bons. Des événements si naturels, si simples qu'ils le sont trop; rien d'opiné; point de coup de théâtre" (p. 13).

The quotations in this note, and those given henceforth in the text of the article, are from vol. II of the Pléiade edition of Rousseau's *Œuvres complètes*. The references are clearly to Richardson and especially to the character of Lovelace in *Clarissa*. It is true that, in a note to the *Lettre à d'Alembert*, p. 167, Rousseau expressed his great admiration for Richardson: "On n'a jamais fait encore, en quelque langue que ce soit, de roman égal à *Clarisse*, ni même approchant," but that was before he had finished his own novel and received such a glowing reception from the public, if not from the critics.

second problematic remark has to do with Diderot's assertion that Richardson's novels are addressed precisely to "l'homme tranquille et solitaire, qui a connu la vanité du bruit et des amusements du monde, . . . qui aime à habiter l'ombre d'une retraite, et à s'attendrir utilement dans le silence" (p. 1064). Again, this sounds as if Diderot is condoning Rousseau's retreat from the world. But I think the key words here are "utilement" and "silence," neither of which applies to the activities of the hypocrite Rousseau who, having railed against supposedly inept novels, now produces a perfectly inept one of his own.

Richardson's novels, says Diderot, are so absorbing and convincing that they take over completely the mind and soul of the reader who, at the end, after so many twists and turns, so many conflicting emotions, emerges from the ordeal a better person with a heightened sense of justice and morality: "Combien j'étais bon! combien j'étais juste! que j'étais satisfait de moi! j'étais au sortir de ta lecture, ce qu'est un homme à la fin d'une journée qu'il a employé à faire le bien" (p. 1060). As Jean Sgard points out,<sup>22</sup> Diderot here, using similar language to that of Rousseau, challenges the argument in the *Lettre à d'Alembert* that all the spectator derives from such emotional turmoil is a superficial and transient feeling of complacency and superiority that produces no effect of moral rehabilitation: "Au fond, quand un homme est allé admirer de belles actions dans ses fables, et pleurer des malheurs imaginaires, qu'a-t-on encore d'exiger de lui? N'est-il pas content de lui-même? ne s'applaudit-il pas de sa belle âme."<sup>23</sup>

The world that Richardson portrays is based on the one in which we live: "Ses personnages ont toute la réalité possible; ses caractères sont pris du milieu de la société" (pp. 1060-61). They are representative of all humanity, in sharp contrast, it is implied, to those atypical specimens in Rousseau's novel who are characterized in the second preface to *Julie* as: "simples mais sensibles. . . . Ils sont enfants, penseront-ils en hommes? Ils sont étrangers, écriront-ils correctement? Ils sont solitaires, connaîtront-ils le monde et la société? . . . Ils se détachent du reste de l'univers; et créant entre eux un petit monde différent du nôtre, ils y forment un spectacle véritablement nouveau" (pp. 16-17).

In his writings, his pronouncements, and his style of life, Rousseau had come to regard himself, and was regarded by some, as the

22. Hermann, *Œuvres, op. cit.*, p. 193, n. 2.

23. *Lettre à d'Alembert*, p. 79.

champion of the oppressed, in theory if not in practice.<sup>24</sup> In the *Discours sur l'inégalité* (1755) for example, on which Diderot had "collaborated,"<sup>25</sup> Rousseau identified pity or compassion as one of man's two fundamental instincts. This instinct was to become the cornerstone of his political edifice.<sup>26</sup> But Diderot, in the *Éloge*, denied him the title of defender of the downtrodden, awarding it instead to Richardson: "Si Richardson s'est proposé d'intéresser, c'est pour les malheureux. Dans son ouvrage, comme dans ce monde, les hommes sont partagés en deux classes: ceux qui jouissent et ceux qui souffrent. C'est toujours à ceux-ci qu'il m'associe; et sans que je m'en aperçoive, le sentiment de la commisération s'exerce et se fortifie. . . . Grâce à cet auteur, j'ai plus aimé mes semblables, plus aimé mes devoirs; . . . je n'ai eu pour les méchants que de la pitié; . . . j'ai conçu plus de commisération pour les malheureux, plus de vénération pour les bons, . . . et plus d'amour pour la vertu" (pp. 1062 and 1066).

In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, in his guise as editor, Rousseau indicates, in several footnotes, the extent to which he has modified the text, especially with regard to eliminating a number of letters that, for a variety of reasons, he claims to find unsuitable for inclusion.<sup>27</sup> Diderot's unjustified criticism of this common editorial subterfuge is contained, I believe, in one of his comments on *Pamela* and *Clarissa*:

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24. When Rousseau was asked to use his pen to intervene on behalf of the Protestants persecuted in France, he declined to get involved. See letters 1498, 1521, 1581 and 1615.
  25. "De ces méditations résulta le *Discours sur l'inégalité*, ouvrage qui fut plus du goût de Diderot que tous mes autres écrits, et pour lequel ses conseils me furent le plus utiles" (*Confessions*, p. 389). In a footnote to this remark, Rousseau observes: "Dans le temps que j'écrivis ceci je n'avais encore aucun soupçon du grand complot de Diderot et de Grimm, sans quoi j'aurais aisément reconnu combien le premier abusait de ma confiance pour donner à mes écrits ce ton dur et cet air noir qu'ils n'eurent plus quand il cessa de me diriger."
  26. Allan Bloom, "The Education of Democratic Man," *Daedalus*, Summer 1978, p. 149: "Rousseau's teaching on compassion fostered a revolution in democratic politics, one with which we live today. . . . Rousseau singlehandedly invented the category of the disadvantaged. . . . Rousseau takes advantage of the tendency to compassion resulting from inequality, and uses it, rather than self-interest, as the glue binding men together. For Hobbes, frightened men make an artificial man to protect them: for Rousseau, suffering men seek other men who feel for them."
  27. See, for example, the editorial footnotes on pp. 47, 345, 429, 528, 557, 596 and 605.

Une idée qui m'est venue quelquefois en rêvant aux ouvrages de Richardson, c'est que j'avais acheté un vieux château; qu'en visitant un jour ses appartements, j'avais aperçu dans un angle une armoire qu'on n'avait pas ouverte depuis longtemps, et que, l'ayant enfoncé, j'y avais trouvé pêle-mêle les lettres de Clarisse et de Paméla. Après en avoir lu quelques-unes, avec quel empressement ne les aurais-je pas arrangés par ordre de dates! Quel chagrin n'aurais-je pas ressenti, s'il y avait eu quelque lacune entre elles! Croit-on que j'eusse souffert qu'une main téméraire (j'ai presque dit sacrilège) en eût supprimé une ligne? (p. 1065)

Another observation that could well have been intended for Rousseau, and that he might have taken personally, concerns Rousseau's inability to read English and, therefore, to appreciate fully the superiority and genius of Richardson.<sup>28</sup> Rousseau, like many others, depended for his knowledge of the English novels on the translations by Prévost that Diderot found quite deficient not only stylistically but, more important, in the amount of material Prévost omitted altogether:

Vous qui n'avez lu les ouvrages de Richardson que dans votre élégante traduction française, et qui croyez les connaître, vous vous trompez.

Vous ne connaissez pas Lovelace; vous ne connaissez pas Clémentine; vous ne connaissez pas l'infortunée Clarisse; vous ne connaissez pas Miss Howe, sa chère et tendre miss Howe, puisque vous ne l'avez pas vue échevelée et étendue sur le cercueil de son amie, se tordant les bras, levant ses yeux noyés de larmes vers le ciel, remplissant la demeure des Harlove de ses cris aigus, et chargeant d'imprécations toute cette famille cruelle. (p. 1065)

One of the outstanding features of Richardson's genius, according to Diderot, was his ability to find an individual style for each of his numerous characters with the result that, in reading the letters, one can never confuse them:

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28. In reply to Panckoucke's suggestion, in 1764, that he undertake an edition of Richardson's works, Rousseau stated: "Je me fais bien du scrupule de toucher aux ouvrages de Richardson, surtout pour les abrégés; car je n'aimerais guère être abrégé moi-même, bien que je sente le besoin qu'en auraient plusieurs de mes écrits. Ceux de Richardson en ont besoin incontestablement. Ses entretiens de cercle sont surtout insupportables; car comme il n'avait pas vu le grand monde il en ignorait entièrement le ton. . . . D'ailleurs, n'entendant pas l'anglais, il me faudrait toutes les traductions qui ont été faites pour les comparer et choisir" (Letter 3290).

Il y en a jusqu'à quarante [personnages] dans *Grandison*; mais ce qui confond d'étonnement c'est que chacun a ses idées, ses expressions, son ton; et que ces idées, ces expressions, ce ton varient selon les circonstances, les intérêts, les passions, comme on voit sur un même visage les physionomies diverses des passions se succéder (p. 1067).

We are intended to infer from this, I believe, that Rousseau, by contrast, is incapable, even with the few characters portrayed in his novel, of distinguishing them by their style. All of them write in the same boringly hyperbolic fashion so that the reader is hard put to identify the author of a letter. This was one of the charges levelled by Grimm in his assessment of Rousseau's novel. Diderot, therefore, had no need to repeat it. All he had to do was emphasize Richardson's skill in this area. It made no difference to Diderot that Rousseau, in his second preface or "préface dialoguée," claimed to have deliberately avoided the differentiation of character by style since he believed it to be more true to life that young people in love, and isolated from society, would adopt a similar discourse:

Dans la retraite on a d'autres manières de voir et de sentir que dans le commerce du monde; les passions autrement modifiées ont aussi d'autres expressions; l'imagination toujours frappée des mêmes objets, s'en affecte plus vivement . . . . Une lettre que l'amour a réellement dictée; une lettre d'un amant vraiment passionné, sera lâche, diffuse, toute en longueurs, en désordre, en répétitions . . . . Si vous les lisez comme l'ouvrage d'un auteur qui veut plaire, ou qui se pique d'écrire, elles sont détestables. Mais prenez-les pour ce qu'elles sont, et jugez-le dans leur espèce (pp. 14-16).

According to Susan K. Jackson, the "préface dialoguée" was designed specifically for Diderot whose reaction to the novel had so disappointed Rousseau. In the exchanges between R. and N., the latter "becomes the designated beneficiary of remarks clearly meant to be read by Diderot himself. By placing the preface in circulation, Rousseau thus renews the pair's long-standing practice of exchanging personal messages under cover of literary texts addressed to the general public. With the number and virulence of these messages increasing in direct proportion to the difficulty of face-to-face confrontation, the *Préface de Julie* joins the intertextual debate close on the heels of Diderot's *Le Fils naturel* and Rousseau's own *Lettre à d'Alembert*."<sup>29</sup>

29. Susan K. Jackson, "Text and Context of Rousseau's Relations with Diderot," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Winter 1986-87, p. 211. For a more recent discussion of the second preface, see Philip Robinson, "Literature Versus Theory: Rousseau's Second Preface to *Julie*," *French Studies*, October 1990, 403-415.

It may well be, then, that Diderot's *Éloge de Richardson* is directed as much against the ideas contained in the preface as against the novel and the author himself. Whatever the case, I hope I have shown that the *Éloge* embodies a concealed but, in my view, not overly subtle attack on the moral and artistic worth of Rousseau. If I have ascribed to Diderot intentions he may not have had, for Rousseau there was little doubt that Diderot's extravagant praise of Richardson was directed against him. His comment, in the *Confessions*, shows clearly the extent to which he took personally Diderot's infatuation with the English author:

Diderot a fait de grands compliments à Richardson sur la prodigieuse variété de ses tableaux et sur la multitude de ses personnages. Richardson a en effet le mérite de les avoir tous bien caractérisés; mais quant à leur nombre il a cela de commun avec les plus insipides romanciers qui suppléent à la stérilité de leurs idées à force de personnages et d'aventures. Il est aisé de réveiller l'attention en présentant incessamment et des événements inouïs et de nouveaux visages qui passent comme les figures de la lanterne magique; mais de soutenir toujours cette attention sur les mêmes objets et sans aventures merveilleuses, cela certainement est plus difficile, et si, toute chose égale, la simplicité du sujet ajoute à la beauté de l'ouvrage, les romans de Richardson, supérieurs en tant d'autres choses, ne sauraient sur cet article, entrer en parallèle avec le mien (pp. 546-547).

For the modern critic of the epistolary novel, the question of superiority does not arise, partly because the technique of both Richardson and Rousseau is vastly inferior to that of Laclos. If Diderot's *Éloge*, considered excessive in his own time, still seems so today, the desire to denigrate Rousseau and his novel may well be the principal cause.<sup>30</sup>

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30. I am grateful to my colleague David Smith for his most helpful suggestions in the writing of this paper. Its defects are attributable entirely to me.