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ART AND MORALITY IN THE NOVELS OF RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE

by

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an analysis of the structural and thematic relationship between the earliest novels of Restif de la Bretonne (those inspired by popular writers such as Mme Riccoboni, Voltaire, Prévost, ~~Marivaux~~, and Rousseau), and the first of his autobiographical novels, Le Paysan perversi, published in 1775. Restif criticism has tended to focus on aspects of realism manifest in the series of autobiographical novels initiated by Le Paysan perversi. This critical focus neglects both the pre-Paysan novels, which manifest a strong tendency to propagandize in favor of bourgeois morality, and the author's own assertions that he consistently wrote moral novels. The present comparison between Restif's non-autobiographical novels and Le Paysan perversi attempts to show that Restif's earliest novels, and his affirmations of moral concern, may in fact be included in a coherent definition of his contribution to fiction. Both the non-autobiographical novels and Le Paysan perversi explore a common moral problem, for all of the characters are involved in surmounting the obstacle of passion in order to attain happiness in conformity to social values. The heroes of the non-autobiographical novels are distinguished by their easy success in this regard, in contrast to the multiple difficulties encountered by the characters of Le Paysan perversi. Analysis of the plot structures, or the reasons for the characters' success or failure in attaining happiness, reveals, however, that the novels share a pessimistic vision of the possibilities of practicing virtue, however essential to happiness it may be.

The first chapter deals with the early non-autobiographical novels, from La Famille vertueuse (1767) through La Femme dans les trois états (1773). These novels are shown to be characterized by plots in which the hero is passive, for his ultimate happiness in virtue is brought about by his family and friends, and/or coincidence. These forces conspire to create a world in which the hero's passional motivations appear to be sources of unhappiness. This emphasis on causes external to the main characters implies that in the Restivian view, human nature (of which the qualité maîtresse is sensibility) does not of itself cause the individual to elect virtue as the only source of happiness. Although sensibility disposes to a sentimental attachment to virtue, it also disposes to passion, which is likely to dominate the individual's behavior in the absence of rigid control.

The second chapter shows that by focusing on the sensibility of the hero as the dynamic element in the action, Le Paysan perversi develops directly the implications of the earlier novels. When the hero is deprived of the pressures of social context and coincidence, the passional aspect of his sensibility does in fact separate him from virtue. Passion also separates him from happiness, because it frustrates the sentimental aspirations to virtue that he shares with the earlier heroes. The plots of the secondary characters in Le Paysan perversi are discussed as complementary illustrations of the individual's inability to dominate his nature in the interest of happiness.

The study leads to the conclusion that in the novels examined, a world view emerges in which the human condition is represented as a conflict between the individual's aspiration to permanence and stability, on the one hand, and the rarely surmountable mobility of a human nature that tends to create chaos, on the other. The study concludes with a sketch of the ways in which this vision is prolonged in Restif's later novels.

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INTRODUCTION

WHO WAS RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE, NOVELIST?

In his characterization of Restif de la Bretonne, Pierre-Henri Simon effectively summarizes the dilemma of the critic faced with the task of defining him as a novelist: "L'homme n'était certes pas sot, mais son intelligence, fureteuse et mobile comme son regard, se dépense en idées sans suite et en pressentiments avortés; elle s'éparpille sans construire, et bien fin qui en déterminera la pente."¹ The fact that Restif's contribution to eighteenth-century fiction is so diffuse in theme and style as to defy coherent description is attested by the variety of treatment he has received at the hands of his critics. He finds a place in Pierre Trahard's Les Maîtres de la sensibilité française au XVIII^e siècle,² as well as in André Lichtenberger's Le Socialisme au XVIII^e siècle;³ he is identified by Charles Monselet as a precursor of Balzac⁴ and by Brunetière as the "aventurier du naturalisme."⁵ Restif's novels have served as documents for study of rural and Parisian life in the

¹"Restif de la Bretonne: un moraliste ambigu," Journal de Genève, (30-31 janvier, 1965), Supplément Littéraire, p. 1.

²Paris, 1933, Vol. IV.

³Paris, 1895.

⁴Rétif de la Bretonne, sa vie et ses amours, (Paris, 1854).

⁵"Le Roman expérimental," Revue des Deux Mondes (15 février, 1880), p. 937.

eighteenth century⁶ as well as for studies of pathological eroticism, such as that of P.-J.-Louis Charpentier, Restif de la Bretonne, sa perversion fétichiste⁷. And more recently, Raymond Joly concludes his Deux études sur la préhistoire du réalisme, by affirming that Restif cannot be considered a social realist because his sexual peculiarities obstruct "ce minimum d'objectivité dans les vues et de normalité dans les sentiments qu'on est en droit d'attendre de quiconque veut servir de mentor à ses concitoyens."⁸

Restif himself offers yet another view of the interest of his novels. In Les Posthumes he states his purpose in writing fiction: "Pour moi, je ne me suis jamais occupé qu'à indiquer à mes semblables, différentes routes de bonheur, surtout dans l'état du mariage, qui est le plus ordinaire, et celui de tous les hommes."⁹ The various routes to happiness wend their way through a fictional terrain delimited by social morality, judging from Restif's definition of a good novel:

-- Qu'est-ce qu'un bon roman? C'est un ouvrage d'imagination, en partie fondé sur la réalité, ne

⁶Charles Porter, "Life in Restif Country," Yale French Studies 40 (1968), pp. 103-117.

⁷Thèse médecine (Bordeaux, 1912).

⁸Québec, 1969, p. 168. For detailed accounts of the present state of Restif criticism, see Armand Bégué, Etat présent des études sur Rétif de la Bretonne (Paris, 1948); J. Rives Childs, Restif de la Bretonne. Témoignages et Jugements, Bibliographie (Paris, 1949); Angus Martin, "Restif de la Bretonne devant la critique: 1950-1963," Studi Francesi, IX (1965), pp. 278-283.

⁹Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1802, IV, 335. In all quotations from Restif, I modernize spelling.

sortant jamais de la classe des possibles, dans lequel on se propose de tracer l'histoire des sentiments et de la conduite d'un héros ou d'une héroïne d'une manière capable d'instruire doublement le lecteur: par ses vertus, par ses succès, par ses chutes, par ses imprudences, et par ses malheurs. C'est un ouvrage où l'auteur met une morale vivante, d'autant plus instructive qu'elle joint l'exemple au précepte.¹⁰

In Restif's opinion, all of his novels are good according to these criteria; they provide, without exception, living lessons in morality. Again in Les Françaises, an admiring -- and reliable -- critic recommends the novels of Restif de la Bretonne: "Lisez ses ouvrages; ce sont les plus utiles en morale qui aient été publiés depuis qu'on écrit des romans; je n'en excepte pas Richardson; je n'en excepte aucun moraliste . . . " (III, 262) Restif constantly reaffirms these moral pretensions in his prefaces, his conclusions, and in the course of his narratives, through the intermediary of his narrators.

Restif is pretty much alone in placing the chief value of his fiction in its moral aspect. At worst, his moral claims attract accusations of hypocrisy, such as those of Henri Bachelin, who chides him in the following terms: "Laissez donc vertu et morale aux châtres qui se voilent la face devant une feuille de vigne! Laissez-les aussi à Tartuffe et à son impérissable descendance!"¹¹ Moved by similar views, Daniel Mornet accords

¹⁰Les Françaises (Neufchâtel et Paris: Guillot, 1786), III, 265-266.

¹¹Ed., L'Oeuvre de Restif de la Bretonne (Paris, 1930), I, xix.

Restif's moralism a grudging degree of recognition only to justify placing his works in the category of feeble imitations of Rousseau, in which " . . . il n'y aura donc pas le moindre grain d'esprit, mais des torrents de sentiment qui rouleront tous vers des résignations, des bonheurs, ou des châtements vertueux. Restif n'avait pas d'autre philosophie."¹² At the very best, Restif's preoccupation with morality is considered a puzzling element of contradiction in his fictional worlds. For Armand Bégué, Restif's real claim to excellence as a novelist lies in "une vision dure, presque cynique de l'existence, que Rétif laisse coexister, contradictoirement, avec un autre monde, aux sentiments faux et aux vertus larmoyantes."¹³ And P.-H. Simon sees ambiguity in the fact that Restif is "aussi enivré de sensualisme épicurien que d'idéalisme moral, aussi porté à cultiver le plaisir qu'à idolâtrer la vertu."¹⁴

The fact that moralism is considered a superficial and dispensable aspect of Restif's fiction is reflected in a general critical neglect of the first eight years of his activity as author. The tendency to propagandize in favor of bourgeois virtues dominates. The portion of his fiction that antedates Le Paysan pervers (1775), the novel in which Restif first begins to show his talents for portrayal of the less edifying aspects of

¹²Ed., La Nouvelle Héloïse, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris, 1925, I, 274.

¹³Armand Bégué, Etat présent des études sur Rétif de la Bretonne (Paris, 1948), p. 126.

¹⁴Loc. cit. (above, note 1).

life. The resulting thematic contrast has led Servais Etienne, who discusses Restif in the section of his book devoted to "Le réalisme et la réaction contre le conte moral", to comment, " . . . c'est perdre le temps que d'éplucher, comme j'ai pensé le faire, les romans qu'il publia avant 1775 . . ."¹⁵ Even Restif did not have a much higher opinion of his earliest novels, although he bases his criticism on his lack of originality in technique, rather than on an excess of moralism, when he confesses, "Je me traînais alors sur les pas de tous les romanciers que j'avais présents; il le fallait, afin que je me dégoûtasse de cette imitation servile, de cette trivialité d'aventures."¹⁶ In this period, Restif was inspired by a wide variety of writers: Mme Riccoboni, Voltaire, Diderot, Marivaux, and above all, Rousseau. Resemblances between Restif's earliest works and their models are extremely superficial, however, except in the case of Rousseau. Echoes of Rousseau are frequent in Restif's novels; but for Restif, they are not a manifestation of the servile imitation for which he otherwise reproaches himself. He often recognizes specifically his debt to Rousseau by pointing out that he improves upon and surpasses his illustrious predecessor. Judging from the oblivion into which these novels have fallen however, it is clear that Restif may be guilty of exaggerating their superiority over the works of Rousseau.

The only extensive critical consideration of what we might

¹⁵Servais Etienne, Le Genre romanesque en France depuis l'apparition de la "Nouvelle Heloise" jusqu'aux approches de la Révolution (Bruxelles, 1922), p. 391.

¹⁶Monsieur Nicolas (Paris: Pauvert, 1959), VI, 470.

call Restif's apprenticeship novels is offered by Charles Porter in his exhaustive study of the genesis of Restif's fiction, Restif's Novels, or An Autobiography in Search of an Author.¹⁷ Porter does little, however, to establish the relevance of what he calls the "imitative and didactic" works to the world view he sees Restif beginning to develop only in Le Paysan perversi. He basically agrees with Restif that in writing these novels he was casting about for his true identity as novelist, an identity which he did not discover until he abandoned imitation of popular writers in favor of the artistic transposition of his own experiences and desires that characterizes Le Paysan perversi and the major portion of his later novels. It is upon the autobiographical and near-autobiographical novels that Porter bases his ultimate definition of Restif, novelist: "Restif de la Bretonne, naked before the million bits of mirror reflecting a world full of distorted themselves -- there, in his own words, is the best image of his novels, before which we too admit standing in astonishment." (p. 416)

We question, however, whether a picture of what Restif's fiction represented for its author, based on only the autobiographical novels, really constitutes the truest image of his art. The present study of Restif's fictional worlds represents an effort to resist the influence of the orthodox critical approach which seeks the real Restif, novelist, only in the revelations concerning his own personality or in the attention to material

¹⁷New Haven and London, 1967.

realities of existence offered by his later fiction. Our resistance is based on the conviction that Restif's novels offer a coherent world view of which both moralistic and realistic representations of human motivations are integral parts, and to which both the autobiographical and the non-autobiographical novels contribute. In other words, we are persuaded that close examination of the opposing aspects of Restif's fictional worlds allows the attentive reader to find a basic underlying unity and a coherent conception of Restif as implied author. We designate the implied author as our principle concern, agreeing as we do with Wayne Booth's point that such concern best compels attention to the "core of norms and choices" in the work as a whole:

Our sense of the implied author includes . . . the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole; the chief value to which this implied author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life . . . The "implied author" chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices.¹⁸

We are not so ambitious, however, as to attempt to define Restif as he is implied by all twenty-five of his novels. We propose, rather, to lay the first foundations of a definition of his contribution to fiction that is comprehensive enough to include the extremes of sentimental moralism and crude realism. We work toward this objective by studying the relationship between the world views of the much-neglected early non-autobiographical novels and the first of the autobiographical novels, Le Paysan

¹⁸The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago and London, 1961), pp. 73-75.

perverti.

In order to identify the "core of norms and choices" that relates Restif's earliest novels to Le Paysan perverti, we have adopted the method of the critic as explicator, who, in the words of Peter Nurse, "begins by formulating an initial impression d'ensemble, the validity of which is subsequently put to the test in an analysis of individual details of form and content."¹⁹ Our impression d'ensemble is that the non-autobiographical novels and Le Paysan perverti are in fact closely bound together by the moral preoccupations of the author. The theme of the relevance of social morality to individual happiness, particularly in matters of love, is central to all of these novels. The main characters are consistently involved in the problem of surmounting the obstacle of their own passions, and sometimes those of others, in order to attain happiness in socially approved love relationships. The author's break with tradition in favor of personal experience as a source of inspiration for his narrative results in changes in fictional structure that modify, but do not displace, this central theme. The structures arising from each source of inspiration explore from different points of view problems involved in reconciling human nature and morality.

The conclusions imposed by such different points of view are not, moreover, as contradictory as might be supposed. It is our conviction that all of the novels present, more or less directly, a pessimistic vision of the possibilities of allying human nature and social morality in the interest of happiness.

¹⁹The Art of Criticism (Edinburgh, 1969), p. 3.

We say that this vision is presented more or less directly, because it is implicit in the non-autobiographical novels, and explicit in Le Paysan perversi.

Validation of our impression d'ensemble therefore involves a double analytical task. First, we must show how the pre-Paysan novels, which we group together in a first chapter entitled The Triumph of Virtue (because the characters are uniformly successful in attaining moral happiness), in fact go beyond simple illustration of the efficacy of virtue toward a more complex vision of human nature and morality. Secondly, we are required to show that the vision of morality implicit in these novels is developed more directly in Le Paysan perversi; that the moral theme is in fact an essential part of the fictional fabric of a novel that invited the following accusation of immorality in the Correspondance littéraire of November, 1775:

Quelque moral que puisse être l'objet de l'auteur, il est à craindre que l'effet de son livre ne le soit guère. Je connais même peu d'ouvrages dont la lecture me paraisse plus dangereuse pour la jeunesse; le vice y joue le rôle qui attache le plus, il n'est combattu que par des idées et par des événements romanesques, et le peu de philosophie que l'auteur s'est efforcé d'y répandre se trouve entièrement étouffé par les tableaux les plus propres à enflammer les sens et l'imagination.²⁰

We rely on the fictional structures to reveal the role of morality in these novels. Our acceptance of Restif's own comments regarding his art does not mean, therefore, that our findings concerning the unifying theme in his fiction are guided by his

²⁰Grimm et al., Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique (Paris: Garnier, 1879), XI, 160.

statements of intent. On the contrary, in our analysis of Restif's novels, we deal with technique in the second sense defined by Mark Schorer: "Technique in fiction . . . we somehow continue to regard as merely a means to organizing material which is 'given' rather than as a means of exploring and defining the values in an area of experience which, for the first time then, are being given."²¹ In approaching technique as exploration rather than as illustration of an a priori idea, we expect to find that Restif's novels do provide instruction in matters of morality and happiness; but we may not in fact always be led to agree with the judgments offered by his narrators concerning the precise sense of that instruction in specific novels.

Plot structures, or patterns of cause and effect, and narrative point of view are the aspects of technique that we see as most influential in shaping the moral theme in these novels. In stating that the action of the novels consists, in its broad outlines, of surmounting the obstacle of passion in order to attain happiness in social conformity, we have already begun to identify the nature of Restif's plots. When the characters are involved in resisting the influence of their own passions, they are the heroes of sentimental plots, for which Paul Goodman supplies the following generic definition:

Novels of the sentimental kind are sequences of occasions for sentiment, leading to abiding attitudes or active commitments. Unlike serious poems, the actions of the persons do not essentially engage them; that is, formally, the persons have

²¹"Technique as Discovery," Approaches to the Novel, ed. Robert Scholes (San Francisco, 1966), p. 142.

a scope and career greater than these particular actions; the persons respond to the events rather than being personally in them. And yet, unlike comedies of deflation, these actions and other occasions of response do make a difference; the responses add up; disposition is fixed into character. In analyzing the structure of a sentimental sequence, therefore, we must look for two things. First, the principle of the adding up, to the fixing of character, including the predispositions of the persons to such a career. But, second . . . we must explain the retardation, why it is that the persons are not more seriously committed to the actions, for this also is something positive and dynamic . . .²²

The moral implications of the plots in Restif that trace the development of the individual's social identity will be brought out by analysis of precisely those elements of sentimental plots that Goodman considers significant: the principle of adding up to the fixing of character, and the principle of retardation. Identification of the causes of the characters' ultimate commitment to virtue, as well as analysis of the role played by passion in hindering that commitment, will yield up a consistent vision of the ambiguous relationship between the individual's nature, social morality, and happiness. In the course of our analysis, we will note how variations in the degree of explicitness of this vision are created by variations in the relative importance accorded the positive and negative aspects of the sentimental plot. The narratives may focus on either the causes of the characters' success in attaining moral happiness, or on the obstructive role of their passions.

²²The Structure of Literature (Chicago and London, 1962), p. 127.

We will, furthermore, have occasion to analyse the intervention and defeat of passion in a different context, that of the adventure plot. In this type of plot, again according to Goodman, attention is centered "on the acts, with little attention to the fixing of character: where the persons are merely plausible agents, we have simple adventure stories . . ." (p. 129) In the adventure plots, Restif's characters are involved in resisting the interference of other people's passions with their own projects for moral happiness. Here again, the manner of interference and the way it is eliminated contribute to shaping the moral theme.

These then are the guidelines we intend to follow in our attempt to extract a new definition of Restif, novelist, from a representative segment of his fiction.

CHAPTER I

THE TRIUMPH OF VIRTUE

The heroes of the novels Restif published between 1767 and 1775 enjoy the privilege of inhabiting a world in which the conflict between human nature and social morality is easily resolved, almost to the point of being negated. A brief period of experience with extra-virtuous manifestations of passion suffices to convince the majority of these characters that conformity to social values, in marriage to other virtuous characters, fully satisfies the requirements of their natures, and hence procures happiness. Thus it would seem that on one level, that of story, or sequence of events, these novels imply Restif as the sort of moralist who equates nature, virtue, and happiness. But we shall see that there is, in fact, a more lucid moralist behind these stories. As we examine the ways in which the variations in sentimental and adventure plots bring about these apparently optimistic dénouements, we shall discover evidence that the moral solution to the problem of happiness is not as comprehensive as it appears. There is more sacrifice of human nature involved than meets the eyes of the characters who find their happiness in virtue.

Restif's first novel, La Famille vertueuse, published in 1767,¹

¹See Charles Porter, Restif's Novels (New Haven and London, 1967), for details concerning genesis and circumstances of publication of Restif's novels. Such background is interesting, for it reveals Restif's curious methods of working. We do not include this material ourselves because it would constitute a repetition of Porter, and would interrupt the continuity of the structure we have attempted to give to our study.

illustrates the triumph of virtue in a sentimental plot complemented by an adventure plot. These two plots establish the basic values and functioning of a world governed by virtue that will be enlarged upon in subsequent novels.

In this novel, the objective of the action is the marriage of the two main characters, Sir Blaker and Léonor, who are cousins. The objective is established by the parents of Sir Blaker and Léonor at the outset of the narrative. Two obstacles must be overcome before this plan can be realized, however. The first obstacle is dealt with in the sentimental plot, which, as we have said, traces the adjustment of the hero's own personality to social values.

It is the personality of Sir Blaker that first causes problems. Léonor is a model of virtue, but Sir Blaker is not worthy of her. He is regrettably "léger", a bit too "brillant", and manifests too much misplaced "finesse".² He thus does not live up to the ideal of masculine virtue expressed by Léonor's father:

La façon de faire la cour à notre aimable jeunesse, n'est pas de leur rendre de ces soins frivoles que la légèreté ordinaire des femmes leur fait trouver charmants. La droiture du coeur, la solidité de l'esprit, la douceur du caractère, furent toujours, pour [nos femmes], ce que sont les talents colifichets pour les autres. (II, 26)

Sir Blaker tends not only to be a bit too worldly in his manners, he is also too inclined to appreciate the charms of women other than Léonor. These faults do not indicate, however, that Sir

²La Famille vertueuse (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1767), IV, 11.

Blaker is basically a wicked person. As Léonor's father identifies the source of Sir Blaker's faults, " . . . je redoute de mauvaises connaissances, des amis corrompus; surtout je crains qu'on ne lui inspire du goût pour le jeu." (II, 167-68)

Those hoping for the marriage of Sir Blaker and Léonor thus compete with malevolent outside influences to form Sir Blaker's character. The success of this moral education depends entirely on his family, as Léonor's father implies when he says to Sir Blaker's mother, " . . . il y a bien à travailler encoré, auparavant d'amener votre fils ou point où je le souhaite, pour faire son bonheur et celui de Léonor, en les unissant." (II, p. 136. Our emphasis)

Making the couple happy involves not only making Sir Blaker virtuous, but making him love Léonor. This is of course a necessary condition if marriage with Léonor is to constitute happiness for Sir Blaker; if he is to find happiness in virtue. We need have no fears on this point, however, for Léonor's father is convinced that Sir Blaker is simply unaware of his profound love for Léonor: " . . . sir Blaker adore ma fille; j'en suis sûr . . . " (II, 167)

Thus Sir Blaker need only be awakened to his true nature, which is temporarily obscured by bad influences, in order to find happiness in virtuous love. We have no choice but to believe this, for Sir Blaker's recalcitrant personality, and the corruptive influences that encourage this recalcitrance, have no reality in the narrative. The epistolary form of the novel is responsible for this. The narrative is composed entirely of correspondence

among characters whose virtue is beyond reproach. No one ever gets any letters from Sir Blaker, so what we know about him is entirely hearsay, and extremely vague. Sir Blaker is thus confined to a completely passive role in the novel. His dependency on his family for his existence in the narrative underlines his dependency on it for his virtue and his happiness.

The narrative focus on the positive aspect of virtue and its relationship to happiness, rather than on resistance to these values, prevents our knowing and possibly sympathizing with Sir Blaker. In compensation, the positive focus permits intimate acquaintance and identification with Léonor. Though she has no more influence on the outcome of the conflict than Sir Blaker, her letters form a large part of the narrative, for she is a model of virtue.

The most important indication of Léonor's virtue is the fact that she loves Sir Blaker, unworthy as he is. Her love for him is virtuous, for it is not a function of blind passion. As she confesses her feelings to her father, "Je vous l'avoue, ô mon père! je l'aime tendrement; je l'aimai dès le premier instant que je le vis. Il était votre choix; il aura toujours des droits sur mon coeur . . . " (IV, 11)

In this expression of her sentiments, Léonor offers an important insight into the conception of virtuous love in Restif's early novels. Léonor's love is a function of obedience, in the form of transfer of filial love to the person chosen by her parents. In other novels, virtuous love may take slightly different forms, but it will always be assimilated to non-

passional affections such as filial love, paternal love, or friendship. It will become evident, furthermore, that as a solution to the problem of individual happiness in society, this kind of love has both advantages and disadvantages, some of which are foreshadowed by Léonor when she reveals her reaction to Sir Blaker's infidelities.

Léonor has developed a strong affection for her future mother-in-law (her cousin), and it is this affection that explains her sadness at the idea of losing Sir Blaker. As she explains to her best friend, Rose,

J'examine mon coeur; il me semble que ma cousine m'est plus chère que son fils. L'amour ne serait-il fait que pour y occuper la seconde place, dans ce coeur? Je ne pourrais me voir, sans mourir, indifférente à Madame Blaker, à toi, ma tendre Rose; je m'imagine que je supporterais mieux l'oubli de mon amant.... Je ne sais trop si ces sentiments sont légitimes, s'ils sont dans la nature; mais ils sont dans mon coeur . . . On est moins exposé aux dangers de l'amour, quand un sentiment plus doux, plus tranquille, remplit déjà notre âme. (III, 118-119)

Léonor's friendship for Rose is another of the gentle sentiments that protects her against the ravages of passion, and here again, she wonders if this is entirely natural. As she expresses her reaction to a surprise visit from Rose,

. . . on entre.... c'est ma tendre Rose qui se précipite dans mes bras! Dans cet heureux moment, toutes les délices de l'amitié ont inondé mon coeur et ravi mon âme.... Oui, ma charmante amie, je me l'avoue, mon attachement serait coupable si l'on pouvait trop aimer l'image la plus parfaite de la divinité. (III, 262-63)

This kind of revelatory chattiness is typical of Restif's virtuous characters, and constitutes one of the ways in which the pre-Payan novels go beyond simple illustration of the

efficacy of virtue. The positive focus of the sentimental plot successfully disarms some of the antagonists of the world of virtue; but this same focus also permits a loquacity on the part of the virtuous characters that does not always further the cause of virtue. In this particular case, the definition of virtuous love is attacked from within. Léonor implies that the assimilation of passion to more civilized sentiments such as filial affection and friendship, in spite of its obvious advantages for the tranquility of the individual and society, may in fact have peculiar consequences. If the assimilation is too thorough, it might ultimately discourage the kind of love necessary to the propagation of the species; but it is even more likely to lead to homosexuality and incest. Restif will later deal directly with the very possibilities inherent in Léonor's refusal to accept the difference between masculine-feminine love and other forms of love. It will become evident that although nature may be suppressed in one area, it has an inconvenient tendency to pop out in others.

In La Famille vertueuse, however, Léonor's failure to be motivated by an irresistible passion for Sir Blaker is hardly a cause for concern. Her submission to her father's will, as a function of her affection for him and for her future mother-in-law, seconds their objectives as effectively as would passion, and indicates a becoming innocence.

In keeping with her submissive attitude, Léonor does not participate directly in solving Sir Blaker's identity problems. She contents herself with cultivating qualities that will

encourage Sir Blaker to see in her a perfect wife. She succeeds in surrounding herself with a peaceful atmosphere of virtue that does temporarily captivate the somewhat jaded Sir Blaker. This in itself is considered an indication that Sir Blaker is basically virtuous. As Léonor's father says, "Les agréments que procure notre société sont de nature à n'être goûtés que par une âme qui commence déjà à aimer la vertu." (II, 14) Sir Blaker's appreciation of Léonor's society indicates that he is receptive to the esthetic appeal of virtue; he is sensible. This is a point to keep in mind, for Restif's sentimental plots will develop the notion that sensibility is the basis of the reconciliation of human nature and social virtue.

The delights of Léonor's society that appeal to Sir Blaker recall, on a modest scale, the order, peace, and innocence that Saint-Preux admires in Clarens.³ In Léonor's company, "on ne joue point, on n'est point oisif; on s'occupe toujours à quelque chose d'honnête et d'utile; un exercice modéré, et la joie d'avoir bien passé la journée, est l'assaisonnement d'un souper que l'appétit rend délicieux." (II, 14) Unlike Saint-Preux, however, Sir Blaker does not see a permanent source of happiness in the harmony and simplicity of such a society. He continues to cause anxiety in his parents and Léonor, and before this problem can be solved, the adventure plot intervenes to further complicate the situation.

The adventure plot, as we have said, deals with obstacles

³Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse (Paris: Garnier, 1960), 4^e partie, Lettre X.

to the hero's happiness that arise from the passions of secondary characters. It provides much more lively action than the sentimental plot, in which the conflict is more talked about than illustrated.

The agents of the adventure plot are Cecily Kinkter, Sir Nandan, and Sir Lankton. Cecily and Sir Nandan are in love with Sir Blaker and Léonor, respectively, and Sir Lankton has designs on Rose, Léonor's best friend. The passions of these three characters are illegitimate because they do not fit into the parental plan, and are not expressed as tender, respectful love. The brutal nature of their sentiments is made manifest when they kidnap Sir Blaker, Léonor, and Rose, with the intention of compromising the two women and forcing Sir Blaker to marry Cecily.

This villainous plot is of course thwarted. Léonor's virtue is saved at the beginning of the episode when she jumps out of the getaway carriage into the arms of her father, who happens by at the right moment. Rose and Sir Blaker are left to deal with their aggressors, whom they succeed in intimidating temporarily. "Soit par un effet de la protection du ciel, soit par la supériorité qu'a naturellement la vertu sur le crime, ils furent effrayés de notre résolution, ils se retirèrent . . . ", explains Rose later. (III, 47-48) The reasons for the temporary triumph of Rose and Sir Blaker are indeed mysterious, and we suspect it is the effect of plain good luck. Their debt to mere chance will in fact be considerable by the end of the episode.

The situation becomes much more difficult for Rose and Sir Blaker when their abductors become increasingly insistent. The following scene, narrated by Rose, renders effectively the violent atmosphere of the abduction episode, in contrast to the peaceful atmosphere of the sentimental plot. Cecily and Sir Lankton have been mistreating Rose in a darkened room: "Ce malheureux assouvissait sa brutalité . . . Ils n'étaient pas encore contents; ils voulurent jouir de la honte de celle qu'ils venaient de déshonorer." (III, 68) Cecily calls for light, and discovers that their actual victim is a servant girl disguised as Rose. "Cecily poussa un cri de fureur. Puis s'élançant sur elle, comme une forcenée, elle lui plongea plusieurs fois son poignard dans le sein." (III, 69) Cecily's plans for Sir Blaker are announced in terms only slightly less vigorous. It has been decided that "sir Blaker donnerait la main à miss Kinkter, ou serait abandonné à toute sa fureur. Elle ne lui promettait pas moins que la mort. Il lui déclara qu'il préférerait le trépas à l'horreur d'être son époux. Cecily ne se posséda plus, elle l'accabla d'injures . . . " (III, 70-71)

Unable to resist this kind of abuse much longer, Rose and Sir Blaker are rescued in time by the fortuitous arrival of the fathers of Cecily and Sir Lankton, who are opposed to the projects of their offspring. Cecily escapes her father's wrath, but the other two villains are punished in due form. External interference with Léonor's and Sir Blaker's happiness is thus removed, and the two lovers can be reunited.

The problem of Sir Blaker's personality remains, however.

It is eventually resolved very unsatisfactorily, in a reversal that has no connection with either the sentimental action or the adventure action, which theoretically have been preparing the dénouement. The efforts of Sir Blaker's parents to awaken him to his true nature do not suddenly "take" as a result of the abduction episode, as might reasonably be expected. Sir Blaker is neither brought to his senses by the threat of Léonor's seduction, nor by his disgust with the world of violent passions.

It is in fact Cecily who provides the link between the two plots, but as a reformed character. She returns to the scene following a period of self-imposed seclusion and repentance, and her reform is accepted in good faith by Léonor's society (whose indulgence is made slightly more credible by the fact that the girl Cecily stabbed has survived). Cecily's energetic intervention, this time benevolent, arranges a happy ending to the sentimental plot. In a conversation that takes place beyond the range of the narrative, she makes Sir Blaker believe he is in danger of losing Léonor permanently, and this finally dissipates "l'espèce d'enchantement qui rend sir Blaker contraire à lui-même." (IV, 61) Sir Blaker becomes aware at last that he truly loves Léonor, and the other virtues requisite to happiness follow of themselves.

Cecily also clears up any doubts we may have had concerning Léonor's attitude toward Sir Blaker. After her marriage to Sir Blaker, Léonor warms up considerably, according to Cecily: "Je n'eusse jamais cru le coeur de Léonor si tendre. O mon amie! moi qui lui disais un jour qu'elle ne connaissait pas

toute la violence des désirs d'un coeur maîtrisé par l'amour, toute la force de cette passion impérieuse, comme je me trompais!" (IV, 274)

The novel ends with happy marriages for all. A small, closed society, closely knit by marriage, blood ties, and common moral values is the result. As we shall see, this method of tying up the destinies of his characters is typical of Restif. The family is always the context in which virtue and happiness flourish.

The patriarch, Léonor's father, gets all the credit for the happy conclusion of La Famille vertueuse:

La vertu, plus que d'immenses richesses et les honneurs qui suivent une naissance illustre, distingua sa postérité. On ne la nomme plus à Londres que the virtuous family, (la famille vertueuse). Tant les bons exemples d'un père ont de force sur ses enfants! (IV, 298-299)

The story is thus extremely edifying, for the outcome faithfully illustrates the precepts set forth in the preface. By following Duty, the characters have indeed found "le plaisir sans remords, la joie délicieuse et pure, l'aimable tranquillité, des amours constants, et l'amitié fidèle . . . " (p. xiv). We may permit ourselves, however, to draw more literary conclusions as well. It is evident from the plot structures that the example of moral values alone is not responsible for the triumph of "the virtuous family".

The sentimental plot develops the positive aspect of the novel. It defines virtue and links it to happiness with little reference to virtue's antagonist, passion. The predominant role of virtue in the narrative does not succeed, however, in

establishing virtue as an absolute force in determining happiness. The reasons for this become evident when we review Sir Blaker's progress toward virtue and happiness in terms of Goodman's definition of the sentimental plot. As we define Restif's handling of this plot in La Famille vertueuse, we will be identifying a structural variation on the sentimental plot that is typical of Restif's worlds of virtue.

The sentimental plot of this novel emphasizes the passivity on the part of the main character implied in Goodman's statement that in sentimental plots, "persons respond to events without being personally in them" (see above, p. 11). The role of the hero in causing the events of the novel is minimal; the real hero of the narrative is in fact society. For this reason, we will call this type of plot the external sentimental plot.

The focus on the role of society is established first by the narrative point of view. The progress of Sir Blaker toward virtue is narrated by characters representing social values. In La Famille vertueuse, these partisans of social morality are other characters, due to the epistolary form. In the non-epistolary novels, the voice of the narrator will impose the point of view of society. In the pre-Paysan fiction, the narrator is always a social conformist.

Society remains the hero of this type of sentimental plot on the level of the action, as well as on the level of narrative point of view. It is the agent of the movement toward the triumph of virtue. In La Famille vertueuse, representatives of social values establish the objectives of the action and

bring about their realization. The objective of the action is, to be sure, the happiness of the nominal hero, Sir Blaker; but it is a pre-established happiness defined in terms of social values. Happiness for Sir Blaker is, in concrete terms, marriage with an incarnation of virtue, who is chosen by his family. It is easy to see how this kind of happiness benefits society; it implies conformity of the individual to social values and ensures propagation of these values. The problem, of course, is to make the individual realize that this conception of happiness is good for him as well, and this is the source of the action in the external sentimental plot.

In keeping with the focus on social context rather than on the individual, the necessary coincidence of social and personal objectives is brought about in La Famille vertueuse by the efforts of Sir Blaker's family and friends. The events that provoke responses in Sir Blaker, the principle of adding up to fixing of character, are not haphazard contingencies of life, but rather conditions arranged by other characters. In Restif's external sentimental plots, it is again typically the social context that consciously provides the occasions for sentiment that lead to the active commitment of the main character to a socially defined happiness.

Exactly how these occasions for sentiment provided by the family context become the principle of adding up to the fixing of character in virtue remains vague in La Famille vertueuse. Sir Blaker becomes aware of his love for Léonor, hence of his

love for virtue, in a mysterious fashion. A private interview with Cecily magically sweeps away the obstacles that have pre-occupied the characters throughout some 1000 pages of narrative. Subsequent novels develop more fully the fixing of character, but still with more focus on result than on the psychological processes that make this result possible. Ultimately the early novels make consent to virtuous love as a source of happiness appear to be a sort of conditioned reflex.

In La Famille vertueuse we do have, however, an indication of some of the bases of this conditioning, particularly in the predisposition of persons to a career of virtue. As Goodman suggests, the predisposition of the character to respond to the principle of adding up is an important aspect of sentimental sequences. Predisposition is of particular importance to Restif's sentimental plots, for it establishes the very foundations of a world governed by virtue.

As we have seen, Sir Blaker's moral education involves bringing him to awareness and expression of his "true" nature; specifically, to expression of his natural sensibilité. This is his predisposition to a career of virtue, and it is primarily indicated in his receptivity to the order and calm of Léonor's society. In this Sir Blaker sets a precedent for the early novels, in which moral education is sentimental education; it is a fixing of character in a very real sense. Moral education does not encourage simply external expressions of virtue, it instils a virtuous essence in the individual. Nature's gift of sensibility is fixed in sentiment, or an emotional preference

for the specific attributes of virtue, such as tenderness, respect, order, and harmony. As a result, the individual automatically demands the satisfactions of tender respectful love that society offers. This is in fact a description of Léonor, who represents the prototype of the education process in La Famille vertueuse.

As Goodman points out, however, another important point to consider in analyzing a sentimental sequence is the principle of retardation in the fixing of character. In Restif's novels, the hindrance is that which opposes the fixing of human nature in sentiment; hence it opposes virtue as a source of happiness. As we have seen, however, this opposition is merely hinted at in the sentimental plot of La Famille vertueuse. The hindrance is not positive and dynamic, for the narrative is weighted in favor of virtue. A glimpse of this hindrance is nevertheless offered in Léonor's sublimation of her passions, and may be further clarified by Cecily's reflections on the origins of her misfortunes: "[Sir Lankton] a détruit dans mon coeur des préjugés, il est vrai, mais qui m'auraient fait vivre dans l'innocence: il a développé le germe de passions fougueuses qui m'ont entraînée malgré moi." (III, 91) It would seem that sensibility predisposes to passion as well as to tender, respectful love, and that this is the real reason why moral education must take the form of sentimental education. Curiously enough, Cecily calls the principles learned through sentimental education préjugés, thus suggesting that sentimental education is artificial, less solidly based on nature than we have been led to

believe.

Subsequent novels will develop these implications, as well as enlarge upon the methods by which sensibility is fixed in sentimentality. La Famille vertueuse already provides, however, enough elements to permit formulating some conclusions concerning the significance of the external sentimental plot for the theme of morality and happiness.

In spite of the fact that the external sentimental plot constructs a world where virtuous love causes happiness because it satisfies human nature, it would seem that such a world functions according to a narrow definition of nature. The narrative point of view implies this by denying a dynamic role to Sir Blaker's recalcitrant nature, thus committing a sin of omission that is almost as eloquent as outright contradiction. We have the distinct impression that something about nature is being ignored, and this impression is supported by the comments of Léonor and Cecily, which indicate that passion is a very real aspect of human nature. This is why we have said that the sentimental plot in this novel inadequately imposes virtue as an absolute force for happiness. It adopts an artificial point of view that manifestly ignores the real contribution of nature, or of the individual, to such a law of causality.

This artificiality is further aggravated by the fact that the reward for virtue is separate from virtue itself. Sir Blaker is hardly obliged to be happy with the esthetic satisfactions offered by order and harmony. He is rewarded with the more concrete satisfaction of possessing a lovely incarnation

of virtue. Happiness is, furthermore, not won through the initiative of the individual, it is conferred by other characters. Thus the external sentimental plot would seem to imply that the link between virtue and natural desires, and the culmination of virtue in happiness, depend entirely on the arrangements of a very limited social context.

The adventure plot in La Famille vertueuse imposes similar conclusions. As we have seen, the adventure plot provides the real action of the novel, for Sir Blaker's personality as hindrance does not give rise to much visible conflict. This has the advantage of keeping the values of the world of virtue in an apparently absolute position, but does not lend itself to much active demonstration of the superiority of virtue. The adventure plot compensates for this lack by providing virtue with an occasion to triumph over an active obstacle; but we must question whether this triumph constitutes real proof of the inherent superiority of virtue. The advantages and disadvantages of the adventure plot as a technique of illustrating moral conflicts comes out in fact quite strongly in this novel.

The adventure plot, to recall the definition we have borrowed from Goodman (see above, p. 12), focuses on acts, rather than on the fixing of character; the characters are merely plausible agents. This is an accurate characterization of the conflict provoked by the interference of Cecily and her accomplices in La Famille vertueuse. The obstacle they oppose to the progress of virtue originates outside of the main characters, and does not influence Sir Blaker's commitment to

virtue. This relegation of passion to an external, material conflict has the advantages of presenting the negative side of the issue of morality and happiness which is so obviously lacking in the sentimental plot; and it is presented in a way that justifies the omission of passion from the definition of human nature as sentiment.

The adventure plot concretizes passion as a violent agent for destruction that seriously threatens the happiness in store for Sir Blaker and Léonor. In a word, the adventure plot defines passion as vice, which is presented "sous le jour odieux qui lui convient," as the preface has promised (p. xxiii). After such a hair-raising contact with passion it is indeed difficult to avoid concluding that what is bad for society is also bad for the individual, and that one does well to stay at home. Rose in fact draws this very conclusion from what she calls her "experience"⁴ with passion: "Je crois . . . (du moins j'en juge par mon expérience) que le malheur donne du ressort à l'âme, rend son goût plus pénétrant, et lui fait trouver de la satisfaction dans ce que l'uniformité lui rendait auparavant insipide." (III, 102-103)

Limitation of the activity of passion to an adventure plot thus has the thematic advantage of maintaining a vivid contrast between positive and negative moral values and their consequences. Unfortunately, however, the adventure plot has a resolution that

⁴It is important to note that knowledge of passion in the adventure plot is superficial contact, not experience. The main character does not yet discover that his own passions are destructive.

does not have much to do with moral values. The source of the conflict is circumstantial, it remains external to the characters, and its resolution is circumstantial as well. We have seen how the characters are rescued from the persecution of other people's passions by Providence -- or by authorial string-pulling -- in the shape of virtuous characters who arrive on the scene just in time to avert disaster.

Thus both the external sentimental plot and the adventure plot of La Famille vertueuse reveal the limitations of the optimistic story by showing that the characters depend on something other than virtuous love alone to acquire happiness. In the external sentimental plot, they depend on context to reveal their true sentimental nature and to crown it with happiness. The circumstantial resolution of the adventure plot casts further doubt on the efficacy of virtue. Neither of these types of fictional action establishes, therefore, an essential link between virtue and happiness, due to their emphasis on causes unrelated to either nature or morality, such as luck and family intervention. The only other solution to the problem of incorporating morality in fictional action would be to concretize the hindrance and the predispositions to a career of virtue in the personality of the main character, focusing on the qualitative conflict between passion and sentiment that grows out of human nature, and on the direct consequences of this conflict for happiness. This possibility will be explored in two of the non-autobiographical novels, but only after further development of the possibilities of the external sentimental

and adventure plots.

Lucile, où les Progrès de la vertu (1768) represents an assimilation of the adventure plot to the external sentimental plot. The interference of secondary characters with the triumph of virtuous love is not as irrelevant to the personality of the main character as it was in La Famille vertueuse. In Lucile, other people's passions threaten to fix the heroine's own character in passion. Virtue-sentiment must thus prove itself superior to vice-passion in a much more direct competition than in La Famille vertueuse, and it does. As we shall see in our analysis of the plot structure of Lucile, the cause of virtue gains ground on one level, but loses ground on another, in this more direct confrontation between moral antagonists.

In Lucile the first problem is to discover whether the activities of characters hostile to her virtue will provide her with an occasion to find happiness in virtuous love. Part of the fun is to learn the identity of Lucile's future husband, for here the union is not predestined. Lucile's adventures are set in motion, in fact, by her refusal to accept the marriage arranged by her parents. Her revolt seems justifiable, for the man her parents have chosen is a "magôt" by the name of Fisiomon, who is "noir, maigre, petit, mal fait, brutal, ivrogne, et se livrait quelquefois à la plus sale débauche."⁵ The match is obviously unsuitable, for Lucile is the exact opposite: " . . .

⁵Lucile, où les Progrès de la vertu (Francfort et Leipsig, 1769), p. 4.

son âge, quatorze ans; sa figure, séduisante; son esprit, flexible et juste; son coeur, droit, tendre, et faible. Les soins que l'on prit de son éducation avaient ajouté des talents à toutes ces qualités . . . " (p. 2) This would in itself seem sufficient reason to reject Fisiomon, but more important than Fisiomon's repulsiveness is the fact that Lucile is in love with Dangeot, her father's clerk. Dangeot has several attractive qualities. Besides being "fait au tour", Dangeot "de plus était instruit, tournait joliment les vers; parlait à tort à travers Philosophie et religion; disait du mal des Moines, s'attendrissait jusques aux larmes sur le sort des religieuses . . . " (p. 6) Lucile and Dangeot run off together to escape the parental authority fatal to their love. They live together in innocence, though according to the narrator, Lucile can no longer be considered virtuous. Since she has left the family fold, and has disobeyed her parents, she is by definition half corrupted already: "Non, Lucile n'était plus vertueuse: et si sa pudeur n'avait point encore reçu d'atteintes, c'est à celui qui fit pour elle le personnage d'amant, qu'en est tout le mérite. Cependant, je conviens que son âme était innocente . . . " (p. 22)

Fisiomon is of course in a rage, and he eventually discovers the lovers' hiding place. Dangeot is arrested, but Lucile escapes. She wanders the streets of Paris, entirely without resources, until she is taken in by a woman of apparently generous motives. The dialogue between the two women provides one of the best scenes in the book. We are able to appreciate

the dramatic irony of the following conversation because we know that the two women have met at the Palais Royal, notorious for its frequentation by courtesans, and the narrator has qualified Lucile's interlocutor as a "dangereuse bienfaitrice";

[Lucile:] Mais, qui peut donc vous intéresser au sort d'une infortunée qui, sans vous, n'aurait su que devenir? -- [Woman:] On n'est pas turc; on a un coeur et puis, vous savez travailler, sans doute; vous ne serez pas à charge.... Si vous ne savez pas, on vous montrera. -- [Lucile:] Que ne vous devrai-je point!.... On m'avait bien dit, que, dans cette ville immense, il se trouvait de bonnes âmes, dont les vertus compensaient le mal qu'y commettent les méchants. -- C'est un trésor! s'écria par distraction l'obligeante Courton....
(p. 15)

La Courton is of course an entremetteuse, and she wastes no time in turning the "treasure" she has found in Lucile to her profit. Here the methods of vice are much more subtle than in La Famille vertueuse. Once the victim is separated physically from the protective world of virtue she is systematically corrupted through her sensibilité, which has not yet been firmly fixed in sentimentality. We may assume that something similar happened to Cecily of La Famille vertueuse, who has suggested that although sensibility is a strength in the world of virtue, it also makes the individual vulnerable to corruption through the senses. La Courton is very aware of this, as she reveals in her plan of action:

-- Il faut de la hardiesse et une certaine force d'esprit, se disait-elle, pour être capable de ces choses-là: cette jeune fille n'est point sotte, elle n'est qu'ignorante; trompons-la; gagnons son coeur; il est facile à séduire, mais il serait impossible de le contraindre. La Courton raisonnait juste: il lui en avait tant passé par les mains, que l'expérience lui tenait lieu de philosophie.
(pp. 22-23)

La Courton thus takes advantage of Lucile's naive confidence and affectionate gratitude, which make her see in La Courton a "seconde mère". She encourages Lucile to forget Dangeot by reporting false rumors on his conduct, and by cultivating in her a penchant for pleasure. This is mainly accomplished through selected reading, which is an effective method, judging from the results: "Les sens de Lucile étaient en feu; son imagination pétillait. Pour tomber, il ne lui manquait qu'un amant: c'était là où la Courton l'attendait." (p. 25) Only a stroke of luck can save Lucile now from becoming a prostitute, a material as well as a moral victim of La Courton's "protection".

Lucile's first client, Durichemont, is luck personified. He is struck by a coup de foudre upon his first sight of Lucile; but since he is a virtuous young man (his presence in La Courton's establishment notwithstanding), love inspires respect, and he cannot profit from Lucile's situation: "Il se disposait à l'embrasser: il avait la main tendue, pour lui faire de ces caresses libres, ordinaires dans les lieux où il se trouvait; un je ne sais quoi l'arrêta: Il lui semblait qu'il voulait dire, m'amie, ma mignonne; il ne prononça que mademoiselle." (p. 40) Durichemont's intentions are honorable. Motivated by love and the desire to marry Lucile, he removes her from La Courton's influence and places her under the protection of his own virtuous tutor.

Here Lucile's reintegration into the world of virtue begins. The circumstantial obstacle to her finding happiness in virtuous love, her abandonment in the world of corruption,

has been removed, and the only obstacle remaining is constituted by the attitudes she has acquired in the world of corruption. Like Sir Blaker, she must learn to love virtue before she can find happiness with its representative.

Lucile's progress toward virtue is a precise inversion of her downward movement toward vice. Her impressionability is again the basis for her moral formation, and it is manipulated in exactly the same way as it was in the world of corruption. Edifying reading material serves as the antidote to the influence of La Courton's literature. First Lucile develops a taste for comic opera, and becomes précieuse. This is considered promising, for she has at least been distracted from La Courton's nefarious lessons. Then, under the influence of such works as La Nouvelle Héloïse, Emile, and La Famille vertueuse, she becomes more serious and more disposed to tendresse, dropping her coquettish ways in favor of becoming modesty. Her literary appreciations are, incidentally, judicious. Though she finds La Famille vertueuse somewhat inferior to the other works, she prefers it anyway. She only half-heartedly approves of Emile, but admires Sophie's "manière d'aimer". The narrator indicates that we may consider these judgments proof of Lucile's level-headedness.

Lucile's re-education is successful, to the point that her experience with corruption is completely erased from her personality: "Toutes les actions de l'aimable fille annonçaient qu'elle était redevenue comme auparavant la première visite de Fisiomon, et son malheureux séjour chez une appareilleuse. Quel retour heureux! Il est aussi rare qu'il est

désirable." (p. 89) She is now deemed worthy of the impatient Durichemont, whom she has learned to love. There are, however, a couple of circumstantial obstacles that are yet to be removed. On the level of attitude, she has regained her original innocence; but does this correspond to physical innocence?

In response to the searching but delicate questions of her tutor, Lucile reveals that she never knew what La Courton expected of her -- hence Durichemont was her first client. Doubts concerning Lucile's relationship with Dangeot are cleared up as well when he reappears opportunely to reveal that he is actually a woman in disguise,⁶ and marries Lucile's brother.

The two deserving lovers are thus united, Lucile's parents forgive her for her disobedience, and the villains are punished -- in fact they have already been punished, for the narrator has considerately gotten rid of them so they will not spoil the happy ending. As he says, "Pour débarrasser tout d'un coup mon lecteur de ces odieux personnages, j'anticiperai sur l'ordre des événements." (pp. 114-115) The punishment of La Courton and Fisiomon is suited to their crimes. Fisiomon catches a nasty disease in La Courton's establishment, and "Dès qu'il s'aperçut de l'ignominieux présent qu'il avait reçu chez elle, il devint furieux, jura qu'il en tirerait vengeance, et tint parole." (p. 114) Fisiomon kills La Courton for revenge, and

⁶The potential implications of lesbianism in the relationship between Lucile and Dangeot are not realized in Lucile, but they come out more strongly in the first part of La Femme dans les trois états de fille, d'épouse, et de mère, which is a rewrite of Lucile's story.

is arrested.

The narrator does well to dispose of the villains before the end of the novel, for their picturesque punishment risks inserting a false note into the edifying tone of the dénouement, as set by Lucile's conclusion to her adventures: "Il est donc vrai, et tout me l'annonce, qu'il vaudrait mieux accepter une chose désagréable, en demeurant dans l'ordre prescrit par la nature, que de chercher par la désobéissance un bonheur imaginaire . . . " (p. 90)

Lucile's humility is becoming, and constitutes an accurate appreciation of the significance of her adventures. Her experience with vice has provided a vivid lesson in its insidiousness; but her experience has also shown the very limited responsibility of the individual in determining his morality, to say nothing of his happiness.

Such are the advantages and disadvantages for the cause of virtue of presenting the moral conflict as a competition between agents of virtue and vice for formation of Lucile's sensibility. The conflict in Lucile provides a more effective illustration of the dangers of exposure to other people's vices than does the adventure plot of La Famille vertueuse. The vices of secondary characters not only cause physical separation from situations conducive to virtuous love, they also threaten to contaminate Lucile's morals. Since La Courton's actions do not immediately announce themselves as destructive of Lucile's happiness, Lucile makes no effort to resist their influence.

Lucile becomes aware of La Courton's threat to her virtue,

but only in retrospect, and on this point rests the moral significance of her adventures. The nature of the conflict permits qualitative comparisons between passion and sentiment, but on a theoretical level only. The conflict is only potential, it never becomes real. Passion never becomes a dynamic force that determines Lucile's conduct. Hence she never sees, through direct experience, where she is headed, and she never has to evaluate the consequences of her conduct for her happiness. It is of course the intervention of coincidence that prevents passion from reaching the level of act in Lucile, and allows her to benefit from the guidance of an external sentimental plot; and it is a most astonishing coincidence at that. We have been prepared in the preface for the novelty of seeing a girl saved from prostitution by her first client: " . . . une jeune personne, qu'une suite d'imprudences précipite dans le plus affreux danger, et qui l'évite par les mêmes moyens que l'on prend pour consommer la dépravation, offre un tableau nouveau." (p. viii)

The moral significance of a story in which the threat of passion is disarmed by coincidence resides in the very uniqueness pointed out by the narrator. As the sentimental plot of La Famille vertueuse has led us to suspect, it is events that determine moral values; and in Lucile, it is evident that in the wide world it is most unusual if these events do not have an adverse effect on morality. The only choice one has, given this state of affairs, is to remain in a context where events are arranged to favor virtue; where one need not rely on the

intervention of luck. In a word, one must remain in a sentimental plot such as that of La Famille vertueuse in order to be a living example of the attributes and efficacy of virtue. This choice of context becomes in fact an essential aspect of virtue, as the narrator implies when he says that Lucile's virtue is already seriously flawed by her flight from home.

Thus the plot renders indulgence in adventure of limited edification for both characters and reader. The non-epistolary form of the narrative of Lucile further prevents our taking Lucile's adventures as matter for extensive moral reflection by creating a distance between Lucile and the reader. In La Famille vertueuse, the action is filtered through the social consciousness of the participants, who consider the action morally significant. In contrast, the narrative of Lucile suspends the involvement of the reader in the moral significance of the action, because the narrator imposes the point of view of a detached observer who does not lack a sense of humor. This has been evident in the light, sometimes ironic, tone of the passages we have cited in discussing the plot.

The detachment of the narrator is not sustained, however, and this too is significant. In the portion of the narrative devoted to Lucile's return to virtue, the narrator's voice imposes a greater preoccupation with the moral resonances of his subject. He adopts a serious, even pompous style similar to that of La Famille vertueuse to develop in minute detail Lucile's virtuous sentiments, as if to make the reader forget, as Lucile forgets, the somewhat scabrously entertaining

acquaintance with corruption.

Thus in Lucile we are witness to a collaboration between plot, narrative point of view, and style to nullify the moral edification of events in the big world. This would seem to imply a rejection by the author of this kind of fictional action, which exteriorizes moral antagonists in a circumstantial conflict. Though such a conflict effectively gives tangible form to the abstract concepts of virtue and vice, it does not, by its very nature, show a very extensive applicability of these values.

In Le Pied de Fanchette, ou L'Orpheline française (1769), we have confirmation of the impression given by Lucile that Restif did not consider a fictional conflict moved by fortuitous events a substantial way of dealing with moral issues. Fanchette develops the same theme as Lucile, the vulnerability of virtue, but in a way that makes the moralism of virtue's ultimate triumph more explicitly ironic. The sentimental plot is entirely eliminated from Fanchette, for there is no pretense of relating the conflict to the personality of the main character. The narrative consists entirely of a succession of physical attacks on the heroine's virtue; these are the obstacles that retard her finding happiness in marriage with a virtuous character, whom we meet in the course of the action. As a result, the circumstantial nature of the adventure plot -- and of virtue -- is self-consciously exaggerated. Fanchette is manifestly not a moral novel, in spite of the fact that the vocabulary of

morality is liberally sprinkled throughout the narrative.

The narrator's burlesque announcement of his subject in the prefatory chapter prepares us to take an ironic view of the light varnish of moralism subsequently applied to Fanchette's adventures: "Je suis l'historien véridique des conquêtes brillantes du Pied mignon d'une belle," he proclaims, and addressing the great conquerors of history from Ninus to Louis XIV, he adds,

. . . pavillon bas . . . Vous avez régné sur les hommes que fit trembler votre redoutable puissance; et Fanchette, jeune, sans nom, sans naissance; mais avec un minois séduisant, des yeux pleins de douceur, un pied . . . ah ciel! un pied . . . comme on n'en vit jamais, tant il est joli, règne, par l'amour sur tous les coeurs.⁷

There follows an account of how the narrator came by this épopée of the foot, on a tone that hardly enhances the seriousness of the subject. This account constitutes a story in itself, and provides material for two chapters. It immediately becomes evident that we are not confronted here with a conventional justification of an incredible story in the name of truth, but rather with a satire of that convention. The very accumulation of details in the narrator's disavowal of responsibility for his narrative casts serious doubt on the credibility of his devotion to truth. This doubt is confirmed by the fact that he exposes his sources in a chapter entitled "Qui n'en imposera pas au lecteur".

⁷Le Pied de Fanchette, ou L'Orpheline française (Francfort et Leipsig, 1769), I, 9-11.

The narrator has seen Fanchette in the street, and has been overcome by admiration for her charms and by the consequent desire to know her story. He then fortuitously encounters the only person in possession of the truth about Fanchette. This individual promises to lend the manuscript containing Fanchette's secrets to the narrator, for a generous reason: "Vous, me dit-il, qui ne vous repaissez que de chimères, auteur infortuné de romans plus malheureux encore, je veux vous procurer les moyens de dire vrai au moins une fois dans votre vie." (I, 16) This is but the beginning of the narrator's tribulations, however. The old man who has promised the manuscript is first too busy to keep his promise, and then loses the manuscript. A valet has taken it "pour en faire des papillotes!" (I, 17) After a number of other mishaps, the manuscript is finally pieced together, and we can get on with Fanchette's story. It is to be hoped that our curiosity is by now as thoroughly whetted as the narrator's own by these multiple obstructions.

We have been thoroughly prepared to see all sorts of abuses of verisimilitude in Fanchette, and we are not disappointed. We will not attempt to trace the complicated plot in detail, but will simply give its general outlines and a sampling of its atmosphere.

Fanchette, the orphaned daughter of a merchant, has been given into the care of Apatéon, a friend of her father. She is soon forced to flee this haven, however, because Apatéon has unpaternal designs on her.⁸ Apatéon's housekeeper, Néné,

⁸We are informed that the name Apatéon is Greek for trompeur.

aids Fanchette to triumph in this first attack on her virtue, for she has Fanchette's interests at heart. Néné is, in her own words, firmly determined that Apatéon "n'en tâtera brin." (I, 45) Néné's choice of the word tâter to designate Apatéon's intentions is appropriate. It is his reliance on his sense of touch that permits Néné to obstruct his first attempt on Fanchette. Apatéon executes his plan of seduction under the cover of darkness, slipping into Fanchette's bed after she is asleep, with the following result: "Enfin il entend soupirer; il ne se possède plus: sa bouche cherche celle de Fanchette: ses mains pressent.... -- O ciel! s'écrie-t-il, en reculant d'horreur! que viens-je de toucher là! Ce n'est pas ma jolie Fanchette, c'est un monstre qui la remplace --". (I, 44) It is of course Néné who has worked the traditional switch.

Néné places Fanchette under the protection of a kindly dressmaker, but this hardly suffices to preserve Fanchette from further attacks. Nothing can replace the protection of a family, and Fanchette is aware of her underprivileged status, for she reflects,

Heureuse mille fois la jeune fille, que n'abandonne
jamais une mère prudente et chérie! Elle coule,
au sein de l'innocence, des jours fortunés et tran-
quilles: sa maman voit pour elle; elle lui fait
éviter le danger; elle la préserve des discours
trompeurs; elle la défend contre les téméraires
. . . lorsqu'il en est temps, cette mère sage
conduit elle-même par la main auprès de sa fille,
l'aimable jeune homme qu'elle lui destine.

(I, 141-142)

Fanchette is more innocent and unfortunate than Lucile, for she has not chosen to be alone in the big world. Another point is scored for the family as the proper context for virtue. Not

only is membership in a family a duty, it is a privilege.

Fanchette is aware that her beauty makes her deprivation of family support all the more dangerous, for it makes active the host of enemies who use "la finesse, la douceur, la violence, l'amour" (I, 141) to provoke her downfall. Fanchette attempts to conceal her beauty, but to no avail, because her foot is the most seductive part of her. So although she muffles herself to the eyes when she goes out, "comme une femme turque qui sort pour aller au bain", "tous les yeux se fixaient sur son joli pied: elle ne rencontra pas un homme dont il ne touchât le coeur; pas une femme dont il n'émût la bile . . ." (I, 89). Fanchette's inability to be inconspicuous results in the repeated attempts on her virtue, in the form of abductions, that compose most of the movement of the novel. She is always rescued in time by her friends, however, led by her favorite suitor, Lussanville. One of her shoes, lost along the way, frequently leads her rescuers to her. She ultimately finds security in a convent, which she leaves only to marry Lussanville.

Fanchette's story ends on a note of triumph for virtue, but the bow to morality is added almost as an afterthought, and on a facetious tone: "Tout le monde nagea dans la joie. C'est ainsi que l'amour et la fortune se réunirent pour récompenser la vertu." (II, 153) If we compare this conclusion with another comment addressed to Fanchette, ". . . le ciel sauva votre vertu comme par miracle . . ." (II, 151), we are highly doubtful that Fanchette can take the credit for keeping her virtue intact. The multiplication of fantastic and

erotically suggestive adventures over-proves, if anything, the unlikelihood of virtue's survival in the world of adventure.

The narrator helps along the impression we have of the superficiality of the novel's moral significance. He sometimes intrudes to deny responsibility for the artificiality of his narrative. Such denials mainly serve of course to call attention to this very artificiality, as if the narrator wanted to prevent the reader from becoming too involved in the narrative. On one occasion, for example, he obtusely points out that the reader should be interested in Fanchette's motivations, which are not revealed by the narrative: "Cher et curieux lecteur, les mémoires où j'ai puisés ne disent rien de ses motifs: Mais si vous voulez, je ferai comme les autres historiens mes confrères, je vous donnerai mes conjectures pour des réalités . . . " (II, 111-112).

This teasing of the reader with the emptiness of a narrative that sticks to facts knowable by the narrator might be interpreted as a criticism of omniscient authors, but it is more likely a satire of the superficiality of the adventure novel as exemplified by Fanchette. Since the "truth" the narrator claims to be relating is obviously fabricated -- the narrator practically dares us to swallow whole his claim to being an "historien véridique" -- his refusal, in the name of this same truth, to use his imagination in dealing with his characters' motivations must be ironic.

This irony is not present throughout the narrative, however. In extensive passages the mocking narrator disappears, and the

narrative is presented at face value. In view of this inconsistency, we may conclude that Fanchette "implies" the author less as an uncompromising critic of novels in which assertions of the truth of external event, however extravagant, and of morality, however unjustified, are claims to seriousness, than as an author who has a penchant for adventure novels, but is aware of their shortcomings. If penchant there was, it seems to have been temporarily exorcised by Fanchette, for in his next novel, Restif turns to a much more serious, direct treatment of moral issues.

Lettres de Lord Austin de N*** à Lord Humfrey de Dorset, son ami, subtitled La Confidence nécessaire⁹, was written and published at approximately the same time as Fanchette. In Restif's own words, this novel is "une peinture de la situation de mon coeur, lorsque, dans ma première jeunesse, j'aimais plusieurs filles à la fois; ce n'est pas une histoire véritable; mais c'est une situation vraie, et un tableau fidèle."¹⁰ We are thus prepared to find in this novel a very different kind of "truth" than in Fanchette. Given our structural point of view, this means that La Confidence nécessaire offers a first glimpse of the influence of personal inspiration on the fictional form, hence on the theme of morality and happiness.

It is only a glimpse, however, for the new plot variation

⁹This is also the title of the second edition. We use this title in our discussion of the novel, for it is more indicative of the theme than the original.

¹⁰Monsieur Nicolas (Paris; Pauvert, 1959), III, 565.

introduced by this novel is not sustained throughout the narrative. We will call this structural variation the internal sentimental plot, because the hero's own nature has a more important role in determining his morality and his happiness than in the external sentimental or adventure plots. The hindrance of the hero's own passions to commitment to virtue is more active; it influences his happiness; but in La Confiance nécessaire, this influence is not definitive. As we shall see, the new, more active link between the hero's nature, his morality, and his happiness created by this plot is cut short by the intervention of an external sentimental plot.

The internal sentimental plot traces, in the first part of the novel, the development of the conflict between the main character's passions and his sentiments. In this portion of the narrative, Lord Austin, the hero, relates the story of his past escapades in letters to his intimate friend, Lord Humfrey, who has elicited this confession.

Austin's problems begin when vague notions of love trouble his relationship with two female childhood companions. He describes this awakening of his sensibility:

A quinze ans, les désirs commencèrent à dilater insensiblement mon coeur. Qu'il serait doux, me disais-je quelquefois, d'avoir une maîtresse tendre et jolie; de recevoir d'une bouche chérie ces noms flatteurs que l'amour fait donner; de savourer sur des lèvres de rose un baiser à moitié ravi; de presser dans ses bras une amante timide! Ah! que tout cela serait doux, si cette fille aimable était ou la séduisante Alice, ou la jeune Bess!¹¹

¹¹Lettres de Lord Austin de N*** à Lord Humfrey de Dorset, son ami (Cambridge et Londres: Nourse, Snelling, 1769), I, 51-52.

Austin is thus thoroughly disposed to find happiness in love; but in what kind of love, and with whom? As indicated by this expression of his état d'âme, his dreams of love represent a vague mixture of sentimentality and sensuality, and are associated with two girls, both of whom return his affection. Ultimately, it is the choice of the girl that determines the precise nature of his sentiments. It soon becomes evident that Austin is not subject to the same kind of attraction to both girls. He has a distinct sentimental preference for Alice, but this preference is countered by an irresistible physical attraction to Bess -- whose last name is Folly, by the way. As Austin indicates, his dilemma is total:

Je rêvais à mes amours, à mes maîtresses: je ne pouvais me résoudre à sacrifier ni l'une ni l'autre. Cependant Alice m'était la plus chère; mais Bess était si belle, si tendre.... je ne pouvais soutenir l'idée de chagriner Bess.
(I, 125-126)

This is not to say that Austin's love for Alice is devoid of desire, or that his love for Bess is devoid of tenderness. Ultimately, the choice he makes between the two girls commits him to principally sentimental, or to principally sensual love. Before Austin makes his choice, however, he becomes acquainted with a third kind of love, which influences that choice. The housekeeper of Austin's tutor, Mawd, has initiated him into the purely physical aspects of love. This experience does not bring in a third element of conflict, however, for as Austin says, "Le goût passager que Mawd m'inspira n'était qu'une ivresse: auprès d'elle, et dans ses bras même, je sentais un vide; je cherchais quelque chose qui me manquait." (I, 156)

Although Austin finds sensuality devoid of tenderness dissatisfying, his experience with Mawd does have an effect. It shows him the true outlet of the vague desires that have been tormenting him. He is further incited to satisfy these desires by the inflammatory conversation of Frank, a corrupt shepherd.

The crisis is not long in coming. It appears that catastrophe has been averted, because Austin overcomes this new imperiousness of his passions in order to exchange solemn oaths of eternal fidelity with Alice. But alas, Austin is wrong in thinking he has resolved the conflict between his sentiments and his sensuality. He succumbs to the charms of Bess immediately after his solemn engagement to Alice. He has met Bess by accident, and is unable to tell her that his heart belongs to another, for "L'innocente Folly me caressait. L'ardente volupté se glissait dans mes veines; elle éblouit ma raison.... L'expérience que Mawd m'avait donnée hâta la défaite de Bess." (I, 184)

This is the first real involvement of a Restivian hero in passion. Austin's involvement is thorough, for it is emotional as well as physical; but at first glance, it hardly seems as catastrophic as the implied ethical norm of the earlier novels has led us to believe:

Et j'étais heureux, après cette action criminelle!
je jouis encore de tous les fruits de mon indigne
victoire! . . . Après avoir accordé la suprême
faveur, si tu savais combien une fille innocente,
dont l'âme pure ne soupçonne pas même qu'elle a
failli, si tu savais combien elle est tendre!
Comme elle est touchante, dans ces moments de
désordre, où son teint est animé par le plaisir et

nuancé par la pudeur! où sa main, qui s'égare, cherche à rajuster sa parure! Elle jette sur son amant un regard timide, et semble lui demander qu'il justifie la faiblesse qu'elle vient d'avoir, par la vivacité de ses transports. Que ces heureux instants ont de charmes pour un coeur délicat! Il ne désire de jouir encore, que pour les faire renaître. (I, 185-186)

Austin is immediately forced to take a more moral view of his seduction of Bess, however. Alice's father, who is aware of Austin's engagement to his daughter, arrives at the end of this interesting scene. The disapproval of Alice's father makes Austin realize that his actions are in need of justification:

Alice méritait toute ma constance, et Bess ne devait pas être la victime d'un goût passager. J'étais faible; un tempérament bouillant m'égarait, je cédaï alors sans résistance au charme de la beauté: Frank m'avait gâté le coeur; Mawd avait excité le goût du plaisir.... Voilà mes excuses; je crains bien qu'elles ne soient insuffisantes. Cependant je ne me consolerais jamais qu'il y eût dans toute ma vie un seul instant, où l'on ait pu me compter au nombre des séducteurs; au moins, tu le vois, j'eus des remords.... (I, 191)¹²

Remorse, recognition of his fault, is not the only price Austin pays for giving free rein to his sensuality. It has much more extensive consequences for his happiness. Bess becomes pregnant, and Alice dies of chagrin at this concrete proof of Austin's infidelity (she has forgiven other, less decisive, infidelities), and at Austin's determination to

¹²We note in passing the defensive attitude of Austin as regards his sensuality. It is typical of Restif's internal sentimental heroes to consider themselves victims of their sensuality, or to justify it in the name of generosity (as does Austin, cited above, page 50) or of sensibility. This will come out more strongly in Le Paysan pervers.

marry Bess.

Austin's offer to marry Bess is refused, for reasons that will be revealed later. When Austin learns of Alice's death, he falls dangerously ill. His true parents, who have remained mysterious for reasons not particularly relevant to the story, appear in order to care for him, physically and morally. Here begins Austin's return to virtue, which takes place, significantly enough, within the protective family fold. The implication is that his passions have gained a strong lead over his sentiments because he is not in his proper context. As we shall see, however, the subtle authoritarianism of the virtuous social context is more effectively reaffirmed after this temporary loss of control over events than in Lucile.

For Austin, as for Cecily and Lucile, commitment to virtue means renunciation of sensuality as motivation. Austin's sporadically remorseful tone in narrating his amorous adventures would seem to indicate that he has made that sacrifice, but further confirmation is needed. This confirmation is provided by the remainder of the letters, which now deal with events contemporary to the correspondence.

It becomes increasingly evident that Lord Humfrey, Austin's correspondent, has not elicited these confessions out of idle curiosity. He is testing the sincerity of Austin's remorse, for much like Léonor's father in La Famille vertueuse, he is interested in discovering the hero's true moral identity. This identity is again revealed as virtuous if the hero indicates that in his heart of hearts, he really loves the virtuous girl.

We suspect, of course, that confirmation of Austin's constancy will have an influence on his fate; he will not be obliged to take eternal comfort in his fidelity to Alice's memory. We have had ample hints, in fact, that Alice is still among the living, and is simply waiting for proof of the worthiness of Austin's sentiments before reappearing. This of course is why the confidence is nécessaire.

Proof of Austin's fidelity to Alice's memory is mainly given in the fact that he consistently resists the attempts of his family and Lord Humfrey to interest him in marriage to Lord Humfrey's sister, Adelaïs. Austin is not even tempted, despite assurances that Adelaïs is much like Alice in beauty, charm and virtue; her portrait even bears a strong resemblance to Alice. Austin eventually relents, out of friendship for Lord Humfrey, but he makes it clear to Adelaïs that theirs would not be a marriage of love. His indifference to the charms of Adelaïs insults the girl; but this infraction of the rules of galantry is taken as ultimate proof that Austin is entirely absorbed in his love for Alice.

Austin's constancy is undeniable proof of the power of his love for Alice, because there is apparently no reward in sight for his virtuous conduct. The un hoped for reward is not long in coming, however, for Alice is at last ressusitated. Austin's friendship for Lord Humfrey is preserved into the bargain, for as we had long suspected, Alice is in reality the sister in question, and has been destined since birth to marry Austin. This is of course why Austin was not allowed to

marry Bess.¹³

Austin and Adelaïs are married. Austin's passions are now legitimized by the priority he has given to sentiment, and of course by marriage. He profits from this new respectability of his sensuality to end his correspondence with a titillating evocation of his wedding night:

Malgré toute mon ardeur, je n'ai pas précipité
l'instant de la volupté suprême: les moindres
faveurs sont d'un si grand prix, quand Adelaïs
les accorde!.... . . . prolongeons le plaisir;
sentons sa délicieuse ivresse; on le double en
le différant. O moments.... Cher Humfrey!
brûlé, consumé de mille feux, rien ne s'opposait
plus.... J'ai vaincu cet obstacle charmant, qui
jadis sauva son innocence.... (II, 211-212)

Let us not allow the erotic note of the finale to distract us from the moral significance of this novel. Austin's final expression of his sensuality completes the sense of an arduous moral-sentimental education that sheds new light on the place of sensuality in virtuous happiness.

La Confidence nécessaire presents a much more direct treatment than the earlier novels of some of the problems involved in reconciling morality and happiness. It does so by acknowledging the necessity of including passion in virtuous love -- within limits. Both this acknowledgment and its limitations, as well as the justifiability of these limitations in the name of happiness, are implied in a number of clearly identifiable

¹³ Another reason is that Bess and Austin do not belong to the same social class. The injustice of sacrificing Bess to class prejudice is tempered by the fact that a husband of her own class is found for her -- one who does not object to the flaw in her virtue.

innovations in fictional structure.

In this novel, the passivity typical of the external sentimental hero is eliminated temporarily. The hero possesses a personality that determines events, whereas in La Famille vertueuse and Lucile, the main characters are essentially anonymous objects shaped by others. This new dynamic role of the hero's personality is supported by the narrative point of view. The epistolary form allows Austin to reveal his own motivations and actions directly, rather than having them filtered through the moral consciousness of other characters or of the narrator. Although some interpretation of Austin's actions in the light of morality is provided by the mature hero's judgments of his behavior, this often occurs only after the actions have been allowed to speak for themselves.

As a result of these structural contrasts between La Confidence nécessaire and the other novels we have studied, the definition of moral values is considerably modified. But the new conception of moral values does not create a more essential link between morality and happiness than the one we have found in the plots of the other novels. The link is in fact more artificial than ever, for other structural reasons we shall shortly consider.

On the level of definition of moral values, the internal sentimental plot of La Confidence nécessaire has attenuated the contrast between passion and sentimental virtue by concretizing the hindrance to commitment to virtue, passion, in the personality of the main character. In the other novels, passion is defined as vice by its relegation to an adventure plot in

which characters motivated by passion are agents for destruction of happiness. In La Confidence nécessaire, on the other hand, passion inhabits the same world, even the same personality, as sentiment. This does not lead to the moral schizophrenia we have observed in Cecily and Lucile. In Austin, passion and sentiment are intimately associated, and are a function of the same personality trait -- a highly developed sensibility. As a result, the hindrance to virtue is no longer brutal passion or corruption, but sensuality. The expression of love, as a sign of one's moral nature, does not represent a choice between rape and platonic love, but rather between primarily physical or primarily sentimental attraction. Passion is no longer sordid and repulsive, either; it is actually a source of happiness. Thus a real choice between sentiment and passion exists for the first time, and the choice is difficult, for it involves a sacrifice. The solution is not self-evident, as it is in the other novels.

Austin ultimately discovers, of course, that whether we call it vice or natural sensuality, ungoverned passion is hostile to real happiness. As might be expected of an internal sentimental plot, the distinction of value between passion and sentiment comes through direct experience of their inherent consequences. The fact that Austin's seduction of Bess causes Alice's death makes him realize that he is fundamentally committed to sentimental love, or, as he says, that " . . . je n'aimais qu'Alice, la seule Alice, comme on doit aimer; et que je n'avais que du goût, ou peut-être que de la reconnaissance pour

Bess." (I, 152-153) Confirmation of this commitment to sentimental love furthermore restores his happiness. Thus Austin's experience constitutes a much more effective moral-sentimental education than that of his predecessors. It provides him with empirical evidence that happiness depends on commitment to sentimentality first, and to sensuality second. From Austin's point of view, sensuality is placed in the perspective that Restif imagined to be the perspective offered by all of his novels:

. . . je n'ai pas, comme les enthousiastes, condamné tous les plaisirs, mais j'ai tâché de vous inspirer l'horreur de l'adultère. Honorable lecteur, je ne vous ai jamais dit que l'amour physique fût un crime, et je vous ai toujours dit que l'amour moral est une vertu . . . Non, l'amour physique n'est pas un crime, non! C'est la plus belle faculté des êtres vivants, mais faculté sainte, sacrée, respectable, dont l'abus est le plus affreux des crimes.¹⁴

Abuse of the faculty of sensuality comes to have a rather liberal definition in Restif's later novels. In the early novels, however, sensuality is subject to rigid and uncompromising controls. As we have seen in La Confiance nécessaire, and as we shall see in Restif's next novel, passion must be expressed in the right way, at the right time, and toward the right person to be an acceptable part of virtue -- and a real source of happiness. We must question, however, whether this novel's restrictive acknowledgment of the relevance of sensuality to virtue has really valorized any more effectively than

¹⁴Les Contemporaines (Paris, 1875), I, 304.

La Famille vertueuse or Lucile the monopoly of sentimental virtue on happiness.

The question is again imposed by the plot structure. We have observed that Austin is the hero of an internal sentimental plot only up to a point. Beginning with the disastrous effect of his actions on Alice, he becomes the passive object of an external sentimental plot.¹⁵ Although Austin is certainly responsible for the events that lead up to the catastrophe, he does not cause the disaster directly. Alice's death is only simulated, and this supposes outside intervention (Alice is too passive to take the initiative herself). Austin's commitment to virtue is not, therefore, made necessary by his own actions, it is a response to events arranged by his family and friends. This intervention by context to resolve the conflict between sentiment and sensuality is much more detrimental to the integrity of virtuous happiness than it is in La Famille vertueuse, however. Due to the fact that it occurs after the hindrance of sensuality is thoroughly and directly developed in the personality of the main character, the arbitrariness of the definition of nature as sentiment is unmistakable. What is implied by omission in La Famille vertueuse is thus made

¹⁵The way in which this passivity is indicated shows that the internal and external sentimental plots do not mix well in an epistolary novel that adopts the point of view of the hero. Austin has to impose his passivity on himself when he becomes an external sentimental hero; he has to indicate that he is being manipulated without knowing he is being manipulated. Thus the focus on the hero's personality in this novel is effective in enhancing the reality of the hindrance to commitment to virtue, but it is distressingly awkward in showing how this hindrance is suppressed from outside, and makes the hero seem uncharacteristically lethargic and obtuse.

practically explicit in La Confidence nécessaire: nature is insubordinate to the determinism of the world of virtue. Not only does nature submit with difficulty to a selective definition as sentimentality, it threatens to find satisfactions outside the domain of virtue. In Restif's next novel, La Fille naturelle, we have the other example among Restif's early novels of an internal sentimental plot that deals directly with the participation of nature in the issue of morality and happiness. As a result, an empirical situation is again created that punctures the illusion maintained by the external sentimental plot that there is a natural, necessary link between nature, morality, and happiness.

In La Fille naturelle (1769), Restif has moved a long way from the sterile and readily resolved conflict of La Famille vertueuse, Lucile and Fanchette, in which the only real hindrance to virtuous happiness are the passions of easily ostracised secondary characters. The period of the characters' experimentation with morality is pursued even further in this novel than in La Confidence nécessaire. This is made possible for the same structural reasons that the experiment is even able to begin in the preceding novel. The hindrances to commitment to virtue are again developed directly, as a function of the personality of the main character, beyond the control of social context. They are furthermore developed in such a way as to make their moral color, and their relationship to happiness, even more ambiguous than in La Confidence nécessaire.

We are not immediately involved in this conflict, however. When we first meet the hero of La Fille naturelle, D'Azinval, the obstacles to his commitment to virtue have already been overcome, and the only problem remaining is to make this virtue a source of happiness. The opportunity presents itself in the person of a young orphan, Marion, whom D'Azinval meets in the street. Moved by pity and a mysterious sympathy, D'Azinval takes charge of Marion's material and moral comfort. Under his protection she blossoms into a young woman of beauty, charm and virtue. D'Azinval falls in love with his protégée, and intends to marry her when her education, that is, her moral formation, is complete. D'Azinval sees in Marion the ideal wife, and his reasons give us another insight into the Restivian conception of conjugal relationships, in which passion ideally takes a back seat to more constructive sentiments: "Marion me devra tout; je ferai tout pour elle: ses mœurs, son état, sa fortune, tout sera mon ouvrage: elle envisagera dans le même homme, un père, son bienfaiteur, et son époux."¹⁶ These utopic plans are brought to a halt when D'Azinval, struck by the increasing resemblance of Marion to his former mistress, discovers that she is in fact his daughter. This, however, is not an obstacle to his happiness; but readers familiar with Restif's autobiography, Monsieur Nicolas, will be disappointed if they expect incest to be D'Azinval's solution.. His happiness does not depend upon the sensual satisfactions promised by

¹⁶La Fille naturelle (Paris: Humblot, Quillau, 1769), I, 66.

marriage to Marion. As the above expression of D'Azinval's sentiments indicates, his affection for Marion is primarily paternal, and it adjusts easily to paternity of fact.

The essential conflict of the novel occurs in the story of D'Azinval's past, which comes to light when D'Azinval finds the woman to whom Marion's dying mother had entrusted her daughter shortly after birth. Before revealing his identity, D'Azinval elicits this woman's version of the story of Marion's mother, Laurence. To his great distress, he learns that Laurence died in despair, believing she had been abandoned by her lover. D'Azinval is of course forced to recognize that he is the lover in question, and he tells his side of the story to correct the impression that Laurence was the victim of a vile seducer.

D'Azinval reveals that his love for Laurence was sincere, but was not approved by his mother, who mistakenly believed that Laurence was a fortune-hunting adventuress and the daughter of a criminal. After a struggle with his conscience and a fruitless attempt to sway his mother, D'Azinval married Laurence in a clandestine religious ceremony, which, according to law, was of course not a marriage at all. D'Azinval's mother discovered that he was still seeing Laurence, and unaware that the two lovers were married in the eyes of the church, imprisoned her son to cure him of what she believed to be a passing fancy for a woman of easy virtue.

D'Azinval is thus acquitted of responsibility for his unhappiness and that of Laurence. Indeed, if we consider the

motivations accompanying the actions of the two lovers, we are left with the impression that the moral antagonisms established in the other novels have been inverted in La Fille naturelle. The hindrance to virtuous happiness seems to come from the hero's family -- in this case D'Azinval's mother -- and the force for commitment to virtue, from the recalcitrant lovers.

The love between D'Azinval and Laurence is presented in much more virtuous terms than is Austin's passion for Bess. D'Azinval's love does not constitute an infidelity to anyone, and it is less motivated by sensuality than is Austin's. It is, in fact, what Austin's love for Alice might have been had he not been encouraged to separate sensuality and sentiment. As D'Azinval expresses his sentiments to Laurence's friend, "J'étais sans expérience: aucune femme n'avait encore fait sur mon coeur l'impression la plus légère; toute ma sensibilité semblait s'être réservée pour votre amie: ce fut un torrent." (II, 22) The reserve of Laurence further places their love on a plane far above the impetuous sensuality of Austin and Bess. She gives herself to D'Azinval in terms that deny the passionate nature of her action:

Je m'abandonne à ta probité: Souviens-toi que je me donne; que tu ne m'as point séduite, éblouie, trompée; que tu ne devras point ta victoire à l'émotion de mes sens: mais à l'amour, à l'estime, à la tendresse la plus pure, la plus constante. Je me rends: mais si je croyais que ce fût par faiblesse, je ne me rendrais pas. Je t'accorde le prix de l'amour, parce que je crois que tu le mérites . . . Je veux que tu ne doutes pas, que tu ne le dois qu'à ma confiance, à mon dévouement pour toi.
(II, 43-44)

Lest the reader think Laurence is given to such eloquent speeches

at the moment of according "le prix de l'amour", let us just point out that these are the terms of a sort of contract drawn up between Laurence and D'Azinval to solemnize their commitment to each other.

The union of the two lovers is furthermore sanctified by religion. This preserves Laurence's illusion of innocence, which as the priest points out, is as good as innocence itself: " . . . elle va se croire votre légitime épouse, et se respecter elle-même: la persuasion qu'elle est honnête, fait qu'on l'est toujours . . . " (II, 63) Even the birth of the illegitimate child is justified in the name of social virtues. Laurence's friend reassures Laurence on this point (at this stage she is in need of reassurance, for D'Azinval has disappeared): " . . . qui oserait penser, qui l'oserait soutenir, que nous sommes avilies par la seule chose qui nous reste pour nous mettre au rang des citoyennes?" (I, 124)

Such motives tend to make the lovers seem more unfortunate than guilty, especially when we compare them to the motives of the opposition to their union. If the attitudes of the lovers seem more social than antisocial, those of D'Azinval's mother are correspondingly less than pure. She has obstructed the union of Laurence and D'Azinval in terms that convey less a defense of virtue, and of her son's happiness, than an unreasonable severity, and an almost pathological reluctance to give up authority over a mature son. The statement is actually made that under these circumstances emancipation from the rule of filial obedience is legitimate: "La soumission des enfants ne

doit point être aveugle; elle a des bornes raisonnables; et ce serait une injustice, abuser des loix de la nature même, de vouloir toujours régner en despote sur ceux qui nous doivent la vie." (I, 160)

Thus the moral issues in La Fille naturelle are extremely ambiguous. The distinction between right and wrong is even less self-evident than in La Confiance nécessaire. The priest who performs the illegal marriage ceremony ultimately serves as arbitrator between what amounts to two conflicting interpretations of virtue. When virtuous love conflicts with filial submission and obedience to social laws, one must refer to an order superior to that of society to determine which is the more essential value:

Je ne vois qu'écueils et précipices: un mariage illégal d'un côté; l'affreux libertinage de l'autre: car je suis homme, et je ne vous proposerai pas le moyen cruel de renoncer à votre amour.... De deux maux choisissons le moindre . . . violons une loi sage faite par les hommes, plutôt que de donner atteinte à l'éternelle loi de la raison et de la nature. (II, 64-65)

In the case of conflicting allegiances, the ultimate standard for judging conduct is its harmony with the laws of nature, which are discovered through the exercise of reason. In the case of D'Azinval and Laurence, reason dictates the construction of a love relationship that exists outside of, but parallel to, the world of pure virtue. Their union is based on a sense of social responsibility and tends toward the founding of a family. Thus, on the level of motivation, it would seem that the revolt of the lovers is justified.

If such is the conclusion we must draw, it is a lesson

potentially dangerous to the integrity of the world of virtue. The admission of reason and the rights of nature as guides to determining truly virtuous conduct could encourage a tendency to redefine virtue in order to justify any antisocial inclination, or lead to the realization that the definition of virtue is arbitrary.¹⁷ The narrator hastens to counter these possible effects of his story and bring his reader back to the idea that unquestioning adherence to the dictates of pure virtue is the surest way to happiness.

In the "Préface nécessaire," the reader has already been warned at length against interpreting the experience of D'Azinval and Laurence as advocacy of independent interpretations of virtue:

Son respect pour les moeurs l'oblige [l'auteur] de prévenir sur les discours et la conduite des personnages qu'il met en action, si les conjonctures dans lesquelles ils se trouvent les portent soit à des actions peu régulières, soit à débiter des paradoxes, qu'ils croient des vérités démontrées.

Dans cet ouvrage, l'enthousiasme de l'amour fait quelquefois agir et penser D'Azinval d'une manière reprehensible; quoiqu'au premier coup d'oeil, il paraisse n'avoir écouté que la voix de la nature et même de la raison. Il aime avec autant de violence que de délicatesse; mais sa passion n'est pas innocente; elle a des suites funestes pour lui, et pour la tendre et trop imprudente fille qui en est l'objet. Ce n'est pas assez pour une femme, d'avoir l'âme honnête et pure; d'être tendre, sincère, douce, constante, soumise à son époux, il faut qu'elle soit entrée dans l'état saint du mariage, par la porte que nous ouvrent les loix: une fille, qui s'est donnée comme Laurence, est, à la vérité, bien au-dessus des libertines; mais sa place est autant au-dessous des épouses avouées, que la société a vu s'unir solennellement à l'un de ses membres.

¹⁷ These potentialities of reason are to be kept in mind, for they will become central to Le Paysan perversi.

D'Azinval et Laurence sont coupables: le premier ne mérite son bonheur, qu'après avoir donné des preuves de la bonté de son coeur, par un acte d'humanité . . . (I, 4-5)

Elements of structure support this rectification of the significance of the story of D'Azinval and Laurence. The affirmation that a love relationship, however virtuous, cannot survive without the stamp of public approval is supported by the material fact of the culmination of that love in despair and death. D'Azinval's past is further placed in the conventional moral perspective by events that have taken place since the disaster. It has been hinted that D'Azinval's adoption of Marion is an expiatory act, a tacit admission of guilt, that atones directly for past faults. His conduct toward Marion shows him to be fundamentally a worthy husband and father. What could be a more suitable reward for this worthiness than the discovery that the role he has adopted is his natural role, or almost? He ultimately plays the husband part of this role opposite a friend of Marion, who is identical to his daughter in charm and virtue. Thus, as far as D'Azinval is concerned, pure virtue is superior to equivocal virtue as a source of happiness. The final ambiguity, the impurity of his mother's attitude, is eliminated as well. She is finally forced to recognize that her persecution of the lovers was based on a mistake and on misguided affection for her son. In the end, then, all attitudes and actions are put back into their proper moral perspective, and we cannot accuse our author of having written a too-human and perhaps anti-social novel -- or can we?

La Fille naturelle imposes a question similar to that raised by the dénouement of La Confiance nécessaire: does the outcome counter as effectively for the reader as for the characters the subversive implications of their experiments with morality? We are not convinced, in fact, that happiness has been shown to depend upon the individual's strict adherence to social values, because the dynamic role of the hero's personality characteristic of the internal sentimental plot is again not maintained to the end of the novel. D'Azinval's recalcitrant nature is not directly responsible for the catastrophe that provokes his unhappiness and reform, nor is his return to virtue uniquely responsible for the specific happiness he ultimately enjoys. In other words, La Fille naturelle resembles the other novels we have studied in that the causes of the hero's ultimate enjoyment of virtuous happiness are still constituted by events unrelated to the hero's morality.

The unhappiness of D'Azinval and Laurence does not come from their own disorder, nor from the reaction of an outraged, righteous society, but rather from unjust parental persecution based on neither respect for virtue nor interest in the hero's happiness. The lovers are thus punished, not for lack of virtue, but simply for having sentiments contrary to those of a person in a position of authority.

The optimistic outcome of the novel is artificial as well, and even more so than in the La Confiance nécessaire. Virtue does not cause happiness any more than does immorality cause unhappiness. D'Azinval's discovery of a reincarnation of his

mistress in his daughter is too extravagant a coincidence to valorize his new virtue. In comparison, the reversal of the disaster that makes the happiness suit the reform in La Confidence nécessaire is downright persuasive. The optimism of the conclusion furthermore obscures the undeniable fact that although the lovers' flawed virtue may have been at least an indirect cause of their unhappiness, they would probably not have been happy had they been virtuous.

It is therefore difficult to maintain, the preface notwithstanding, that the conflict in La Fille naturelle demonstrates moral necessities. Even the narrator lamely concludes, "L'union règne enfin entre ceux que le malheur sépara, que les chagrins rongèrent, que l'injustice poursuivit." (II, 202) The fact that the attitudes and actions of the characters would fit uneasily into a superimposed pattern of causality between virtue and happiness makes this the only conclusion possible. By extension, we may conclude that human realities, if left to themselves, do not contribute to this determinism. In the novels that immediately follow La Fille naturelle, these human realities will not be left to themselves, nor will fate be relied upon to do the work of the moral educator.

In this stage of his art, Restif does not pursue the evolution of his moral novel from allegorical illustration to experiment. The revolt of his internal sentimental characters, who in La Confidence nécessaire and La Fille naturelle have threatened to create a happiness of their own, instead of contenting themselves with illustrating an a priori conception

of strictly moral happiness, is put down. We will not see a morally creative character pursue the advantage gained by D'Azinval and Laurence before the appearance of Le Paysan perversi. The deterministic moral and fictional edifice is battered but still standing, and will be shored up by a return to the attempt to eliminate ambiguities in external sentimental plots spiced up by adventure plots. We will not, therefore, discuss in detail the novels separating La Fille naturelle and Le Paysan perversi, for they do not offer any new interpretations of the relationship of morality to happiness. We will content ourselves with selecting aspects of these novels that complete the Restivian conception of a world governed by virtue, particularly concerning its theoretical bases and active methods of self-preservation. As Porter points out, the remainder of the novels that precede Le Paysan perversi are concerned with various aspects of moral education, "as if Restif were going about a systematic review of a virtuous family to show how a father should train his son (Le Marquis de T***); how a daughter should confide in her father (Lettres d'une fille à son père); how a wife should treat her fiancé, husband, and family (La Femme dans les trois états de fille, d'épouse et de mère) . . . "¹⁸ As we examine these novels the implications of the preceding fiction will be confirmed: in the world of virtue the illusion that nature determines morality determines happiness is created by a structure in which the reverse

¹⁸Op. cit (above, note 1), p. 69.

operates; socially defined happiness determines morality determines nature.

We read Restif's next novel, Le Marquis de T***, ou l'Ecole de la jeunesse (1771), as a supplement to the guided moral-sentimental education themes of the La Famille vertueuse, Lucile, and La Confidence nécessaire, although Restif himself proposed this novel as a supplement to Rousseau's Emile. In his introduction to Le Marquis de T***, Restif criticizes Emile for being too idealistic to be of real use to the educator: "[Rousseau] suppose [l'élève] toujours docile, raisonnable, guidé par un homme sage, qui ne se dément jamais." Restif sets out to compensate for these shortcomings by providing a more realistic model for the moral educator: "Pour moi, j'entreprends de retracer dans ces Mémoires, la conduite que tinrent de raisonnables Parents, pour ramener à la vertu un Fils chéri, qu'ils avaient perdu de vue, et qui s'égarra sous des conducteurs mercénaires."¹⁹

As Restif's expression of the theme of Le Marquis de T*** suggests, this novel enlarges upon the role of society, or of the family, as the real hero of a fictional world in which virtue determines happiness. It does so by intensifying the conflict between the main character and his context. Like Sir Blaker and Austin, the Marquis de T*** tends to indulge his passions a bit too freely, or, as the narrator puts it, "Il

¹⁹Le Marquis de T***, ou l'Ecole de la jeunesse (Londres et Paris: Humblot, 1771) I, 22.

fut extrême dans ses goûts; dévoré par la soif des plaisirs, il ignorait le grand art de n'en prendre que la fleur, de les varier, et surtout de les choisir." (I, 59) Unlike his predecessors, however, the Marquis is not at all disposed to love the virtuous girl his parents have chosen for him. The conflict is thus not half-resolved before it begins, as it has been in preceding external sentimental plots. Since resistance to the determinism of the world of virtue is more systematic, the hero's context is obliged to put forth extra effort in order to force his commitment to virtuous happiness.

The principles of the Marquis' moral-sentimental education are simple. His parents exercise an invisible (to the hero) authoritarianism, recalling that of Austin's family, that makes it impossible for the Marquis to be anything other than virtuous and still be happy. They place the objects of the Marquis' passion out of his reach, so that he is continually frustrated until he turns his amorous attentions to the right object. In a nutshell, "[le père du Marquis] prit tous les moyens possibles de prévenir le mal, sans le défendre." (I, 173) It is of prime importance that this authoritarianism be invisible, for as the Marquis' father explains to his wife, Henriette, a too-obvious exercise of authority might provoke hypocrisy in their son. The only influence that should be regularly perceived by the Marquis is that of tenderness and good example:

En usant de toute mon autorité, disait-il à Henriette, je n'en ferai qu'un hypocrite, qui ajoutera à ses autres désordres, la haine envers son père: si vos exemples, ceux que monsieur de V*** et moi nous efforçons de lui donner, si les éloges que toutes bouches font ici de la vertu,

d'autant plus propres à produire leur effet qu'ils n'ont point l'air du reproche; si tout cela jusqu'à présent à glissé sur son coeur, qu'opéreront les sévères réprimandes, les punitions révoltantes?
(I, 101)

Nevertheless, direct exercise of parental authority is sometimes necessary, and it is all the more effective if it is applied judiciously. If the method of indirect influence fails, instructs the narrator,

tonnez alors; servez-vous de votre autorité: ces grands coups ne doivent frapper qu'une ou deux fois dans la vie. Vos enfants, accoutumés à être caressés, seront atterrés d'un regard foudroyant: mais il faut n'avoir été que tendre, et non pas familier; s'être fait chérir, aimer, et non pas s'être avili. (II, 62)

In other words, parental intervention should seem to the child to be the word of God, as it does to the Marquis when his father reproaches him vigorously on two occasions, once for dueling and once for seducing a married woman. As the narrator describes the Marquis' reaction, "Un homme qui voit tomber la foudre sur l'arbre qu'il désignait déjà pour se garantir de l'orage, est moins surpris et moins épouvanté que le Marquis, en entendant la voix de son père: ce reproche sanglant fut un trait de lumière qui pénétra son âme: il ne put résister."
(I, 127)

Ultimately, then, the moral-sentimental education in this novel develops the implications of La Famille vertueuse and La Confidence nécessaire that the education process creates an illusory empirical situation for the benefit of the individual to be educated. In this we can see an echo of Rousseau, in spite of Restif's prefatory claims to originality. The education

process is empirical in the sense that the individual discovers through experience the immutable moral laws to which his happiness is subject. We have had several occasions to note, however, that this method is scientific from the point of view of the hero only; it is used to make him discover what the other characters want him to discover.

To continue the comparison with Rousseau, it is evident that in Restif this social conditioning of the individual is far less persuasive to the reader, hence it is even less practical, than in Emile, in spite of our author's ambitions -- or perhaps because of these ambitions. If Rousseau's theories on education are idealistic, they at least have the merit of recognizing that such conditioning can only work if applied from birth. Restif, on the other hand, in his desire to be more practical, naively attempts to apply the theory that human nature is infinitely malleable to personalities that are already formed, with results even less edifying in Le Marquis de T*** than in the other novels we have studied.

Le Marquis de T*** is in fact a more honest novel than the others, since these fine theories are actually shown -- or discovered -- to be ineffective. The return to the perspective of the virtuous social context, in order to develop its role in educating a main character whose passions are rather more active than in the other external sentimental plots, does little to combat the implications of La Confidence nécessaire and La Fille naturelle that passion is an integral part of sensibility. Unlike his predecessors, the Marquis resists social conditioning;

frustration of his passions and parental disapproval do not suffice to make him give up his passional motivations.²⁰ And it is not an experience of the destructiveness of his own passions that brings about his ultimate realization that illegitimate love is a devastating torrent, and that his true happiness lies in an "amour honnête," which is "modeste et timide; il ressemble au ruisseau qui coule paisiblement entre deux rives qu'embellissent la verdure et les fleurs." (II, 7)

The Marquis finally classifies his passions in the category of vice following a frightening experience of the violence of other people's passions, which recalls the adventure plot of La Famille vertueuse. Unlike Sir Blaker, the Marquis draws conclusions from this experience. After seeing the degradation to which his passions could lead him, he returns chastened to the family fold, "haïssant le vice, se détestant lui-même" (I, 189), and marries the virtuous girl his parents have reserved for him.

Inconclusive as this dénouement may appear concerning the inherent relationship between one's own passions and his happiness, it would seem that the question of the place of masculine sensuality in moral happiness is settled by Le Marquis de T***, at least as regards this stage of Restif's fiction -- the

²⁰In later novels, such as La Femme dans les trois états, Le nouvel Emile and Le nouvel Abeillard, Restif recognizes the importance of beginning social conditioning early, when there is no resistance, particularly where women are concerned. The results are devastating for the novel aspect of these works, however (as real conflict has been devastating for the aspect of moral determinism), since by definition, conflict is eliminated.

question is re-opened in Le Paysan perversi. In his next novel, Restif turns to the feminine side of the problem of moral-sentimental education.

As a moral novel, Adèle de Com***, Lettres d'une fille à son père (1772) offers less conflict than the Marquis,²¹ and this represents a logical parallel between theme and form. The reader will have noted that all of the central characters who have freely indulged their passions, who have given rise to sustained conflict with their social contexts, have been men. The feminine characters, Lucile, Fanchette and Laurence, are, on the other hand, presented as victims of other people's passions, and their chastity is never really sacrificed. This is as it should be, if feminine characters are to be edifying, for the definitions of masculine and feminine virtue diverge on the issue of sexuality.

Adèle provides the theoretical justification for the double standard of morality implied by this difference in activity between Restif's masculine and feminine characters. Such a double standard is based on the natural order, for it derives from the assumption that there is a difference between the moral capacities of men and women that corresponds to the difference in their physical capacities. Feminine virtue is by

²¹The qualification "as a moral novel" is necessary, for a lot goes on in this novel that has little to do with the theme of feminine education. The theme is complemented by one of the most complicated adventure plots to be found in Restif. We invite the interested reader to consult Porter's résumé of the "terribly complex plot" of Adèle. (Op. cit., pp. 73-75).

definition chastity and innocence. Repentance and reform can never fully repair a flaw in feminine virtue, for as Adèle's father points out, "Dans [les vues] de la nature, les prémices ne sont rien dans l'homme, parce que tout ce qu'il fait ne laisse pas plus de traces que le vaisseau qui sillonne la surface de l'onde: mais c'est le contraire dans votre sexe; ainsi la différente manière d'envisager ces choses est fondée sur la raison, et non sur le préjugé, comme quelques Femmes osent l'avancer de nos jours."²² We may assume that Adèle's father is speaking of the physical traces left by experiences with sensuality; but his remarks apply just as well to their moral effects. Woman cannot be trusted with knowledge of passion, for it is to be feared that her moral fibre is not strong enough to resist temptation. In the face of moral choices, "qui dit vertu, dit force, empire sur soi-même, courage, résolution . . . " (III, 373), and these are not considered feminine qualities.²³

Responsibility for protection of feminine innocence falls, of course, to the stronger sex, and this is another reason to be relatively indulgent of masculine experience outside the world of virtue. If the enemy of virtue is known, more effective measures of defense can be taken. An expression of this masculine prerogative in Restif's next novel enters into the spirit

²²Adèle de Com***, Lettres d'une fille à son père (Paris: Edmé, 1772), III, 23-24.

²³We have not had much evidence that these are masculine qualities either. The masculine characters have received a great deal of help in resisting temptation in these novels.

of Adèle: " . . . vous [les femmes] devez tout ignorer; et peut-être nous est-il avantageux de tout savoir: notre expérience et votre innocence sont également nécessaires . . . telle est la Nature.... ."24

Given this masculine monopoly on experience, the moral conflict in Adèle, such as there is, does not arise from an unbecoming penchant for pleasure in the heroine. On the contrary, the problem in Adèle is an inversion of that presented by unruly masculine passions. Whereas our masculine heroes have had to be cooled down, Adèle has to be warmed up. Her father has played his role as protector too well. As the preface to the novel has promised, he is "un Père tendre, qui se conduit avec sa Fille, de manière qu'elle ne puisse voir dans le monde, personne de plus vertueux, qui l'aime d'avantage; personne qu'elle puisse regarder comme plus digne d'être aimé, d'avoir sa confiance, de l'éclairer . . . " (p. vii)

Adèle's heart is filled with fond admiration for her father, to the point that she considers the necessity of loving a stranger, in the way necessary to marriage, repulsive and even unnatural. In a letter to her brother, she explains her reluctance to marry the Comte d'Ol^{**}, the man her father has chosen for her. The terms of the letter indicate that Adèle is a soul-sister to Léonor of La Famille vertueuse, although her attitudes and the solution she proposes to her dilemma are a bit more radical than Léonor's:

²⁴La Femme dans les trois états de fille, d'épouse et de mère (Londres et Paris: de Hansy, 1773) I, 152.

Je hais l'amour: les sentiments de la nature sont mille fois plus doux; ils sont plus sûrs. Ah! mon Frère, pourquoi les lois s'opposent-elles? je serais ton épouse. Mon Père et mon Frère sont les deux seuls hommes parfaits que je connaisse. Le Comte d'Ol^{**} est trop impétueux; il m'intéresse péniblement; il a troublé la tranquillité dont je jouissais . . . Je voudrais quasi n'être pas aimée. Ne pourrait-on se marier sans amour? . . . je voudrais que l'Epoux que j'aurais . . . ne m'inspirât qu'un goût tranquille, une tendre amitié. (III, 284-285)

In short, Adèle wants "un homme rassis, un Wolmar." (IV, 24)

As if she had read the novels preceding her own story and digested their overt message, Adèle considers passion dangerous. Such an attitude would seem to be the logical consequence of a moral education that cultivates the dominance of sentiment, of a tendency to consider the calm world of gentle affections representative of the natural order, and the only true source of happiness. Adèle's father does not congratulate himself on the success of his daughter's education, however. As he expresses his misgivings,

Croiriez-vous que je crains qu'Adèle n'ait pas l'âme tendre! c'est-à-dire susceptible d'amour? . . . elle est portée à l'amitié . . . Si nous n'avions pas eu une Hortense, je m'applaudirais peut-être de cette disposition; mais je tremble, lorsque je songe qu'elle fut la base des vices de ma Bellesœur. (III, 289-290)

The Hortense in question is at the source of much of the adventure action in Adèle. She is one of the rare characters in Restif's early novels who is unredeemably wicked; and she is wicked because she is completely devoid of sensibility. As we have had several occasions to note, sensibility is the indispensable predisposition upon which the effectiveness of

moral education depends; or, to use the metaphor of agriculture provided by this novel, "il n'y a que les campagnes mortes, où rien ne croît, dont [le cultivateur] ne puisse faire usage."

(I, 36-37) Hortense is just such a sterile subject, and Adèle's father fears that his daughter may be another. Her excessive distaste for love may indicate that her virtue lacks the necessary foundation of sensibility. Her sentiments are thus put to the test, and they pass with flying colors.

Adèle is subjected to the pressing advances of her fiancé, whose success is unequivocal -- Adèle becomes pregnant. The success of the enterprise as a test of her sensibility is thorough, for she confesses that she actually enjoyed the experience: " . . . dans cette malheureuse entreprise du Comte, je ne fus pas toujours insensible: un plaisir dont je n'avais pas d'idée suivit la douleur; et....je le confesse, depuis, je ne me le suis pas rappelé avec indifférence: je me suis surprise à désirer la vue du Comte . . . (IV, 35-36)

Adèle's mixed reaction to her seduction by the Comte d'Ol^{**} indicates that she has not, for all her enjoyment, renounced her commitment to other aspects of virtue. She nearly dies of chagrin, in fact, believing that her chastity is beyond repair. Such is not the case, however. Her doubts -- and those of the reader -- concerning the morality of her actions are dissipated by the revelation that she was actually married to her lover all along. What she had believed to be a mock marriage ceremony preceding the seduction scene turns out to have been the real thing.

This tardy concession to more orthodox social morality serves to underline the real implications of the glance at the other side of the coin of sensuality and social morality offered by Adèle. We may read this novel as the terminal point in Restif's early novels of a progressive refinement of the definition of the place of sensuality in virtuous love. From preceding novels, we have learned that passion is permissible in the world of virtue, within well-defined limits; it has to be expressed in the right way, at the right time, and toward the right person to be acceptable. In Adèle, we learn that passion is necessary to virtue, as proof of sensibility -- but again within the same well-defined limits. As a result, Adèle completes a composite image of the situation of the early Restivian hero. His progress toward virtuous happiness involves walking the tightrope of sensibility between excessive sensuality and excessive sentimentality, and his balance is precarious. As we have seen, it is only maintained thanks to the support of vigilant and omnipotent parents and friends, and sometimes of luck. We will not be astonished to see, therefore, that when the support of social context is removed in Le Paysan perversi, the hero experiences considerable difficulty in maintaining the proper equilibrium between the extreme inclinations of his sensibility.

In spite of the inconvenient tendency of sensibility to provoke excesses of sensuality or sentiment, the possibility of basing the alliance between nature and social morality on something more reliable than sensibility -- on reason, for

example -- is not considered. The reader will have noted the conspicuous absence of reason as motivation for consent to virtuous happiness in these novels. Even for men, who are supposedly relatively capable creatures, moral education has hardly involved learning to make judicious moral choices.

In Adèle we have evidence that the denial of a dominant role to reason in the world of virtue is not the result of an oversight, it is a matter of principle. Anything resembling enlightened self-interest, or rational commitment to virtue in view of advantages to be gained, is explicitly rejected by Adèle's father on the grounds that such a virtue risks being selective. He does not consider the devotion of a minor character to his military duty sufficient indication of fundamental virtue, for as he says,

Je sais parfaitement qu'un égoïste éclairé fait son devoir comme le plus zélé citoyen; c'est un des avantages de la Société de tourner, malgré eux, vers le bien général, l'intérêt personnel de chacun de ses membres . . . Ainsi, toutes les bonnes qualités que j'ai remarquées chez le Comte comme militaire, ne détruisent pas un seul de ses défauts comme citoyen et comme homme-du-monde.
(II, 243)

If virtue is not part of the individual's nature, as an emotional reflex, it is not an absolute guide to behavior. The rational individual risks deciding, in fact, that in some cases his interest lies in asocial, if not in antisocial, behavior. As one character in La Femme dans les trois états explains, " . . . une vue trop étendue donne un certain fond de mépris pour tout ce que les autres hommes admirent, et fait négliger les choses nécessaires à l'agrément de la vie

sociale . . . " (III, 93) This is nothing short of heresy, of course, for it constitutes affirmation that natural and social requirements may conflict. We recall that D'Azinval of La Fille naturelle is of this opinion, and decides in favor of nature. His experiment meets with disaster; which just goes to prove that reason, like passion, can be bad not only for society, but for the individual as well. As we shall see, the role of reason as an enemy of virtuous happiness is further developed in Le Paysan perverti.

Ultimately, then, the difference between masculine and feminine education, as regards experience of alternatives to virtue, is a difference of degree rather than of kind. What is true for men is even more true for women: virtue must be a conditioned reflex, a second nature (or a préjugé, a term often used by the characters), rather than the result of rational choice.

The last novel we will consider before turning to the much-foreshadowed Paysan perverti provides a fitting finale to this series of novels.²⁴ La Femme dans les trois états de

²⁴In passing directly from La Femme dans les trois états to Le Paysan perverti, we in fact leave aside three novels. Two of them we do not consider really Restif's. Les Nouveaux Mémoires d'un homme de qualité (1774) is a continuation of a novel begun by Marchand, the censor of one of Restif's other works, and Le Fin Matois (1775) is a liberal translation of Quevedo's Gran Tacano. The third work, Le Ménage parisien (1773), presents a treatment of moral problems in a vein Restif does not pursue. In this novel, Restif departs from his usual serious presentation of the attributes of morality to offer a comic inversion of his world of virtue, in a satire of the infidelities of a Parisian wife and the stupidity of a husband who lets her get away with it. Restif himself repudiates the

fille, d'épouse et de mère (1773) looks beyond the happy endings of the other novels to offer a glimpse of the fates of the virtuous characters after marriage, and of the ways in which this generation of characters passes on its values to the next. The central couples in La Femme dans les trois états are none other than those formed in Lucile. Lucile and Durichemont return in this novel as Félicité and De Combleval; Dangeot and Lucile's brother become Alexandrine Casellet and De Vorterre. To this group of old friends is added a secondary couple also familiar to us, Fanchette and De Lussanville.

Before we turn to the continuing adventures of Lucile-Félicité and her friends, however, the vicissitudes of their period of courtship are recapitulated and embroidered upon in the first part of the novel. The most interesting amplification concerns the relationship between Félicité and Casellet. The lesbian undertones of the love between the heroine and her father's clerk are more explicit than in Lucile. Félicité learns the true sex of her lover much sooner than Lucile -- before she runs off with him, in fact -- and this revelation is hardly occasion for disappointment or a change in plans: " . . . toutes deux se livrèrent ensuite aux plus doux épanchements de l'amitié." (I, 14) When the two run off to Paris to escape the revolting marriage planned for Félicité by her parents, they present themselves as man and wife, "afin d'occuper le même

irreverence of this novel when he writes, "Mon coeur n'eut aucune part à cette composition; pas un trait intéressant; pas un trait qui aille à l'âme . . . " (Monsieur Nicolas [Paris: Pauvert, 1959] VI, 388).

appartement et le même lit". (I, 25)

Eventually, of course, Félicité and Alexandrine enter into more normal love relationships. Félicité marries De Combleval, who saves her from corruption, and Alexandrine marries Félicité's brother, whom she has met in the course of a trip to America. Marriage changes little in the mutual affection of Félicité and Alexandrine, however; in fact they prefer each other to their husbands. In the second part of the novel Alexandrine recalls their period as "lovers" with nostalgia: "Te souvient-il de mon déguisement? --On ne peut guères l'oublier. --Ah! ma chère, que n'étais-je pour toi ce que je paraissais! . . . " (II, 38)

Indeed, the second part of the novel, entitled "L'épouse", justifies Alexandrine's implication that women make the best husbands. It also justifies Léonor's and Adèle's preference for the greater solidity and durability of filial relationships. If De Combleval and De Vorterre are typical, it would seem that once the novelty of conjugal bliss has worn off, men have a tendency to revert to their original inclination to indulge their passions indiscriminately; that is, outside the limitations of time and place we have observed in the other novels.

Both Félicité and Alexandrine are afflicted with unfaithful husbands. Their infidelity is caused by the very aspects of human nature we have seen so carefully directed in the other novels. De Combleval is led astray by a sensibility that disposes him to sensuality, and De Vorterre, by an intellect

that disposes him to rationalize antisocial behavior.²⁵ The narrator satirizes De Vorterre's philosophical pretensions when he describes his personality as a mixture of cynicism, egotism, and frivolity, and adds that "il avait amalgamé le tout avec une forte dose d'épicurisme, pour rendre la masse plus liante, et s'en forger un système de morale, auquel il avait surajouté le vernis de ce qu'il nommait sa philosophie." (II, 12)

The ways in which Félicité and Alexandrine deal with the waywardness of their spouses enlarge our conception of the feminine role in preserving the orderliness of the world of virtue. In Félicité we see the power a woman can wield under the cover of the innocence and submission prescribed by Adèle. Indeed, when we compare the effects of Félicité's gentle methods with those of Alexandrine's more aggressive techniques, we see that a woman's influence is greatest when she does not depart from her subordinate role.

The methods Félicité and Alexandrine employ to reconquer their husbands accord with their own personalities (as well as with their names) and with the personalities of their husbands. In an image rather unflattering for men, Alexandrine justifies the contrasting means the two women employ to attain the same end: "On apprivoise les animaux paisibles par la douceur, par de bons traitements [Félicité's method]; mais les bêtes féroces

²⁵De Vorterre furthermore encourages De Combleval to abandon his principles and indulge his sensuality. In this we may see yet another foreshadowing of Le Paysan perversi, where the hero is influenced by a character who resembles De Vorterre, although he is presented in much less satirical terms.

ne sont domptées que par l'affaiblissement, la faim, les coups [Alexandrine's method]." (II, 36)

Félicité's constant tenderness and respect for De Combleval eventually inspire in him repentance and renewed esteem for his wife. Alexandrine's efforts to dominate and ridicule De Vorterre -- at one point she nearly defeats him in a duel -- succeed in wearing down his resistance. Although the two husbands are thus brought to heel, the tone of the reconciliation scene indicates that De Combleval's remorse is likely to have a more lasting effect than De Vorterre's subjugation:

De Combleval s'avance vers sa Femme, et se met à ses genoux: De Vorterre s'écrie: -- A genoux! c'est bien fort! allons donc, puisqu'il le faut -- Et il en met un en terre, fort lentement. -- Ma divine Epouse, dit alors De Combleval, faites grâces à mon repentir.... Félicité l'interrompt par ses caresses, elle est dans ses bras; elle ne lui permet pas d'articuler un mot. Pour Alexandrine, elle reste gravement debout, tandis que De Vorterre fait sa harangue: -- Ma lutine Epouse, dit celui-ci, faites trêve à vos tours de farfadet; je me mets à la merci de votre espièglerie, afin qu'elle me lutine tant qu'il lui plaira de lutiner, fusse pardelà secula seculorum --.
(II, 146-147)

The postscript to the second part of this novel further tempers the optimism of the dénouement:

Madame De Combleval, et surtout Madame De Vorterre, prient les Belles qui liront cet ouvrage, de ne pas s'imaginer qu'un Mari revenu de ses égarements soit comme un Mari tout neuf; c'est un vieux bâtiment reblanchi, un habit retourné, un mets réchauffé, etc., etc. Il n'est rien tel que les fleurs du printemps, celles d'automne ont toujours quelque chose de sombre et de triste. (II, 202)

Marriage brings disillusionment with one's spouse as well as with virtue. When the motivation of love no longer exists,

the sacrifices inherent in commitment to virtue at last become apparent. This is not to say, according to the narrator, that conjugal fidelity cannot be a source of satisfaction: " . . . le vrai bonheur n'est que dans le mariage, et dans l'attachement à son Epouse: ce n'est plus l'amour de passion . . . ce sont des Maris contents de leurs Femmes, qu'ils estiment, qu'ils vénèrent, et qui le méritent." (II, 201)

This reassurance is perhaps not sufficient to compensate for the pessimistic undertones of the second part of La Femme dans les trois états. The disillusionment of Félicité and Alexandrine suggests that marriage is not a universal solution to the problem of happiness, and this implication is supported by a narrative that vividly underlines, sometimes humorously, the contrasting personalities of the main characters -- without dividing them into clear-cut categories of good and bad. This peculiarity of the narrative attests yet again to the existence of a reality more complex than that acknowledged by the value system of the world of virtue. People have a tendency to be individuals; but this is not occasion to abandon the ideal of virtuous happiness on the grounds that it does not correspond to human nature. On the contrary, Félicité's experience with human realities results in a renewed determination to take charge of those realities.

The third part of the novel deals with Félicité's role as mother. We see how she employs the methods of manipulation established by the other novels to fix the varied temperaments of her children and of her friends' children in a uniform

sentimental commitment to virtue. This new generation seems more promising than the last, for not only are the children all alike in the end, they are interchangeable. Félicité's son and his fiancée illustrate this ultimate triumph of moral-sentimental education. The young De Combleval has been brought up to love his cousin; but due to a change in plans, he is obliged to transfer his affections to another woman. As he explains to his new fiancée, this change will not affect his happiness in any way:

. . . j'aimais, vous le savez; j'aime encore,
et jamais je n'en ferai mystère; mais, puissiez-
vous lire dans mon coeur, et voir les sentiments
que vous y avez fait naître! j'aurais été
heureux sans doute avec ma Cousine, non parce
qu'elle est belle, mais parce qu'elle a toutes
les vertus de son sexe; vous les réunissez
comme elle . . . (III, 72)

This attitude is surely the most logical, the most perfect result of a moral-sentimental education that has always striven to eliminate independent self-expression.

The determinism of the world of virtue has had the last word; but in casting a backward glance over the total thematic implications of Restif's early novels, it becomes clear why they do not serve unequivocally the cause of social morality, in spite of their optimistic stories. Their optimistic vision that virtue is the solution to the problem of happiness in society presents, in fact, a striking analogy (on a modest level, to be sure), with the situation of mid-century lumières as described by Paul Hazard, whose comment could serve as an appropriate introduction to our study of Restif's novels:

Nous avons à voir . . . comment une doctrine s'est dissoute, non par l'intervention d'ennemis extérieurs, mais de l'intérieur même; comment des obscurités sont restées dans la théorie qui paraissait la plus claire, des contradictions dans le système qui paraissait le plus logique; comment une victoire proclamée n'était pourtant pas acquise; comment allait échouer, une fois de plus, un immense effort accompli pour atteindre le bonheur humain.²⁶

The novels we have studied exhibit a similar duality. If we consider only the evidence provided by the story lines and direct statements of ideology, we can reconstruct a "logical system" that apparently eliminates the conflict between social morality and human nature. Moral values are a function of a well-defined (principally according to sex) hierarchy of family roles²⁷ prescribed by the natural order. The social system furthermore generously gratifies the individual's natural sensibility. To the esthetic and affective satisfactions procured by the order and harmony of family relationships is added the more concrete, personalized sentimental satisfaction of possessing an attractive incarnation of virtue -- at which time a concession is even made to passion.

²⁶Paul Hazard, La pensée européenne au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1963), p. 275.

²⁷Our choice of the word role is not anachronistic use of modern sociological jargon. As proof, we take the liberty of citing La Vie de mon Père out of sequence. In addressing his wife, the main character uses the term role to designate the point of convergence of the natural and social orders: " . . . nous sommes des époux mûris, qui doivent agir sérieusement et remplir chacun leur rôle dans toute son étendue. Ce n'est qu'en suivant la nature qu'on peut être heureux: le rôle naturel du plus fort, c'est le gouvernement; le rôle naturel de la plus faible, de la plus aimable, c'est d'en tempérer la dureté . . . Ma chère épouse, j'ai résolu fermement de me conformer au vœu de la nature: soyez douce; obtenez, et n'exigez pas." (La Vie de mon Père [Paris: Garnier, 1970], pp. 137-138)

If we had approached these novels from the point of view of ideological rather than artistic structure we would have been able to reconstruct in much greater detail the functioning of a Restivian world in which the good of society is the good of the individual.²⁸ The essential aspects of this world, as outlined above, have of course been perceptible in the action of the novels; and it is this same action that has forbidden our reading the novels as simply illustration of an ideological system. If we had done so we would have missed half of their implications.

We have read Restif's novels as art, in the sense defined by Rousset: "L'oeuvre est donc pour l'artiste un instrument privilégié de découverte. Guidé, ordonné, modelé par l'oeuvre qu'il compose, c'est à travers elle que le poète se découvre poète . . . Qu'il le sache ou qu'il l'ignore . . . tout artiste porte en lui un secret que la création a pour but de lui révéler."²⁹ We have no evidence that Restif used the fictional form as an instrument of discovery as consciously as did Diderot, whom Ronald Grimsley evokes as "un savant qui fait dans la solitude de son laboratoire une expérience dont lui-même ignore le résultat."³⁰ Restif was at least aware of the difficulty of

²⁸The value system of Restif's fictional worlds of virtue is analogous to the one he develops in his theoretical works, such as L'Andrographe and Le Gynographe. A study of Restif's ideal social order is offered by Mark Poster's The Utopian Thought of Restif de la Bretonne (New York, 1971).

²⁹Jean Rousset, Forme et Signification (Paris, 1962), p. ix.

³⁰Ronald Grimsley, "L'Ambiguïté dans l'oeuvre romanesque de Diderot", Association internationale des études françaises, Cahiers, 13 (1961), 228.

incorporating preconceived ideas in fictional action. As he points out in La Femme dans les trois états,

Ce n'est pas qu'il ne soit utile, nécessaire de moraliser; mais il faut le faire sans ennuyer. Pour cela, je vois deux moyens; le premier, de présenter des faits moraux par eux-mêmes; il n'est pas toujours facile d'en avoir de tels: le second, de laisser le lecteur maître d'enjamber une morale qu'on lui donne réunie sous une étiquette qui l'avertisse. J'ai suivi les deux routes . . . (I, 136-37)

The notion that moralizing is frequently separable from the fictional action, and may even be inapplicable to it, is justified by the novels we have studied. Grimsley's conclusions concerning the effect of the fictional form on morality in Diderot apply admirably to Restif's early novels: " . . . ces protestations morales ne sont pas toujours assez puissantes pour exorciser les sinistres fantômes évoqués sous la dictée d'une inspiration plus affective."³¹

As we suggested in the introduction to this chapter, it is primarily the plots that add the element of discovery to the pre-Paysan novels. Whereas the stories, or the sequences of events, illustrate the smooth functioning of a system in which happiness is a function of virtue, the plots, or the how and why of these events, explore the functioning of such a world. It is this exploratory tendency of plot that has subverted the world of virtue from within, and has forced us to judge it as artificial. If, unlike the characters, we do not mistake the moral structure of these novels for the reality it organizes, it is not just due to a prejudice similar to that of a character

³¹Op. cit. (above, note 30), p. 231.

in Adèle who says, "Tout le monde est si platonique ici, qu'il faut bien chercher audehors quelqu'être qui soit un peu du parti d'Epicure --" (II, 175)

Each of the three plots experimented with in this series of novels has revealed essentially the same "secret" concerning the relationship between morality and happiness. They have each discovered the worm in the fruit of the optimistic doctrine that virtue is necessarily a source of happiness because it satisfies nature; the recalcitrant element is nature itself. The external sentimental and adventure plots have implied this in their reliance on the intervention of social context and coincidence to condition the individual's natural sensibility so that it requires the precise combination of sentimental and passionnal satisfactions offered by society. This implication that the link between human nature, morality, and happiness is not purely natural, but rather an intellectual construction based on a highly selective and precarious definition of human nature, has been made explicit by the internal sentimental plots. The focus of these plots on the role of the individual in the nature-society conflict has revealed that when sensibility is allowed to develop freely, its passionnal aspect is likely to dominate its sentimental aspect. Natural sensibility is thus more likely to isolate the individual from society, and from socially defined happiness, than to harmonize individual and social interests. It is this vision of man and society that will be developed in Le Paysan perversi, Restif's first "realistic" novel.

The early novels thus permit us to classify Restif among the more lucid moralists, in the sense defined by Mauzi:

Les plus naïfs parlent d'être heureux "selon la nature et selon la vertu", sans se douter qu'ils énoncent une absurdité et que les deux termes sont contradictoires. Seuls les plus lucides -- Rousseau et Diderot sont de ceux-là -- savent bien que la vertu consiste non pas à suivre la nature, mais à lui résister.³²

The fact that Restif indicates in his novels an awareness of a basic opposition between nature and virtue does not necessarily imply, however, that in writing superficially optimistic moral stories he was just off-handedly adopting moral and esthetic idées reçues in order to impose his works on the market. If we wish, we can apply to the positive aspect of the novels our argument that art is discovery, and conclude that in developing in such detail a world governed by virtue Restif "discovered" in himself a penchant for such a world. His novels imply in him a belief that conformity to social morality is the surest way to happiness, and a recognition that a rigid channeling of nature is necessary if such happiness is to be attained. This definition of Restif as implied author is supported by Le Paysan pervers, as we shall see in our study of this novel's amplification of the underlying pessimism of the non-autobiographical novels.

³²Robert Mauzi, L'Idée du bonheur dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1960), p. 78.

CHAPTER II

LE PAYSAN PERVERTI, OU LES DANGERS DE LA VILLE

Le Paysan perversi, published in 1775, is the fruit of a "germ" that was planted early in Restif's literary career, when he returned to his childhood home to compose La Confiance nécessaire. After having found a solitary place in which to work, he confides in Monsieur Nicolas,

. . . mon imagination éparpillée au grand air . . .
par les sites chéris de mon enfance, ne put
jamais se recueillir assez pour produire. Je me
rappelai seulement que j'avais gardé un jour les
moutons dans cet endroit avec ma soeur infortunée
Geneviève . . . et je m'attendris, en me
rappelant ces temps de ma jeunesse, où nous
étions innocents, ma soeur et moi. Je versai
des larmes amères, qui furent le premier germe
du Paysan perversi . . . ¹

The extensive use of his own experiences as a displaced peasant in Auxerre and Paris as the basis for a novel is new in Restif.² The innovation was well received by contemporary readers, who found the book fascinating and moving, in spite of its shockingly crude portrayals of sexual mores. After pointing out that the qualities of Le Paysan perversi caused the work to be attributed to Diderot and Beaumarchais, the author of the review article in the Correspondance littéraire goes on to enumerate its merits and shortcomings:

Plein d'invraisemblances, de mauvais goût, souvent
du plus mauvais ton, ce livre promène l'esprit sur
les scènes de la vie les plus viles, les plus
dégoûtantes, et cependant il attache, il entraîne.

¹Paris: Pauvert, 1959, III, 558.

²See Charles Porter, Restif's Novels (New Haven and London, 1967), Chapter III, for a discussion of the relationship between the events of Le Paysan perversi and the author's life.

On peut le jeter avec indignation après en avoir lu quelques pages, mais, si la curiosité l'emporte sur ce premier mouvement, on continue à le lire, on s'y intéresse, il n'y a plus moyen de s'en dépêtrer, il faut le finir.³

The success of Le Paysan perverti encouraged Restif to re-edit the book in 1776, 1780, and 1782, and to publish a supplement, La Paysanne pervertie (1780-83), as well as a combined Paysan-Paysanne pervertis (1784-87).⁴

The favorable reception accorded Le Paysan perverti, and the frank portrayals of moral degradation that constitute a large part of the narrative, do not, however, cause us to consider this novel a complete revolution in Restif's art. The change from bookish to personal inspiration adds, rather, a new facet to Restif's fictional exploration of the relationship between human nature, morality, and happiness. Le Paysan perverti develops explicitly the vision of an ambiguous relationship between human nature and social morality that is latent in the earlier novels; and the fictional structure that gives rise to this vision also has roots in the early fiction. It is as if our author's experiments with novelistic techniques in the pre-Paysan novels had taught him that "certain techniques are sharper tools than others, and will discover more . . . the writer capable of the most exacting technical scrutiny of his subject matter will produce works with thickness and resonance,

³Grimm et al., Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique (Paris: Garnier, 1879), XI, 160.

⁴We base our analysis on the edition of 1775, although we will have occasion to refer to later versions of the novel for significant variations or thematic amplifications.

works with maximum meaning."⁵

In Le Paysan perversi Restif pursues his scrutiny of the conflict between individual and social values more exactly than he did in the earlier novels by placing a hero with the same temperament and objectives as his predecessors in a sustained internal sentimental plot, and by improving upon his use of the epistolary form.

Edmond R^{**}, the hero of Le Paysan perversi, resembles his counterparts in the earlier novels in that he is generously endowed with sensibility, and he seeks an answer to the question, does natural sensibility dispose us to commit ourselves to social or to asocial sources of happiness? For Edmond, however, the question is much less easy to answer than it is for the pre-Paysan heroes.

When Edmond's honest, hardworking peasant family sends him off to town to learn the art of painting, he becomes the hero of an internal sentimental plot. As in La Confiance nécessaire and La Fille naturelle, a first-person narrative focuses on the independent development of the hero's sensibility, rather than on the efforts of a social context or coincidence to shape his sensibility into commitment to virtue. And as in the other internal sentimental plots, this focus on the hero's sensibility as the agent of the action reveals that sensibility poses a much greater identity problem than that acknowledged by the focus of the other plots. The narrative develops the hero's sensibility as a predisposition to virtue;

⁵Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," in Approaches to the Novel, ed. Robert Scholes (San Francisco, 1966), pp. 141-142.

and it also develops the activity of the passional aspect of sensibility as hindrance to such a commitment. Passion is neither kept in the background as the vague sin of a recalcitrant central character, nor brought in as an outside agent of violent destruction when action is needed, as it is in the external sentimental and adventure plots; it is a positive and dynamic aspect of the hero himself.

The structure of Le Paysan perverti therefore resembles most closely that of La Confidence nécessaire and La Fille naturelle; but Edmond's moral-sentimental education is far from being a carbon copy of that of Austin and D'Azinval. In Le Paysan perverti the focus of the internal sentimental plot on the ambiguous role of sensibility in relating the individual to social morality is sharpened. Edmond's experience of the contradictory inclinations of his temperament is developed at greater length, because unlike Austin and D'Azinval, he must resolve the conflict himself. No devices of the external sentimental and adventure plots intervene this time to tip the balance in favor of sentimentality, thus aiding Edmond to discover his essentially social identity. On the contrary, Edmond lives in a world that keeps the conflict active by encouraging expression of each of his opposing dispositions. As a result, the shape of the action in this novel is different from the one we have observed in the earlier narratives. We recall that the converging pressures of society and coincidence typically provoke a simple movement away from, then toward social conformity, in the earlier fiction. In contrast, Edmond's

moral sentimental education acquires a see-saw movement. It is characterized by a series of commitments to one or the other of his passional and sentimental inclinations, followed by immediate rejection of the identity his choices confer upon him.

The conflict is eventually resolved, of course, and in a manner entirely in keeping with the nature of a plot that makes the vacillating temperament of the hero the determining factor in the action. Edmond learns very early in his career that his passions cannot make him happy, but this realization does not influence his acts, to the point of becoming a positive commitment to his sentiments, until his passions cause a series of unmistakeable and irreversible disasters, and even then, he does not trust himself to put his choice of a social identity into practice until the passional aspect of his nature is, quite literally, amputated.

We shall have occasion to comment further on the significance of the conclusion to Le Paysan pervers, of course, after we have traced the complex pattern of action and reaction that forms the body of the novel. We may find, in fact, that the conflict is more significant than the resolution. The two major aspects of Restif's sentimental plots, the hero's sentimental inclination to adhere to social values, and the obstacle to this adherence opposed by his passions, are so equally balanced as to make resolution appear impossible; and this may be the most significant comment the novel has to make concerning the relationship between human nature, morality, and happiness.

The improvements on the internal sentimental conflict manifest in Le Paysan perversi are not, furthermore, the only modifications in technique that make the complexity of moral problems more explicit in this novel than in Restif's earlier fiction. The sustained internal sentimental plot places Edmond in a difficult situation by depriving him of the influences that in the early novels have turned the choice between passionate and sentimental motivations into a simple choice between black and white; and the epistolary form of the novel, in the point of view it offers on Edmond's experiences, places the reader in a similar situation. There is no authoritative partisan narrator in Le Paysan perversi who mitigates the moral ambiguities of Edmond and his experiences for the reader. We are just as involved as Edmond in the exploratory nature of his moral-sentimental education.

We recall that in La Confidence nécessaire Restif has already associated the epistolary form with the internal sentimental plot; but the potential of the epistolary form for involving the reader in the hero's conflicts is only partially exploited. Austin's correspondence is simply a pretext for his retrospective narration of his own experiences, and in fact this pretext for adopting the hero's point of view is easily dispensed with in La Fille naturelle. Both Austin and D'Azinval are, furthermore, confirmed social conformists when they narrate their adventures.

In Le Paysan perversi Restif takes up again the tool of the epistolary form, and this time he puts it to better use

in reducing distance between the reader and the hero's dilemma. The epistolary form enhances, first, the intimacy of our acquaintance with the principal complicating element in the main character's situation, the conflicting dispositions of the hero himself, for it not only permits Edmond to expose his own attitudes and actions, it permits him to expose them as they occur. The epistolary form of Le Paysan perversi thus adds the effects of temporal immediacy to the effects of spatial immediacy already created by the first-person narrative of La Confiance nécessaire. As a result, Le Paysan perversi places Restif among the eighteenth century novelists for whom the epistolary form was "un instrument privilégié pour appréhender . . . l'éveil et les vibrations de la sensibilité, les caprices de l'émotion."⁶

Although the epistolary form of Le Paysan perversi allows detailed apprehension of Edmond's capricious personality, his personality does not monopolize our attention. We thoroughly apprehend as well the variety of influences that combine with Edmond's vacillating sensibility to produce a bumpy moral-sentimental career, for Restif extends the privilege of independent self-expression to the characters who take an active interest in Edmond's destiny. These characters reveal more to us than to Edmond concerning the nature and motivation of the influence they exert, in fact, for they write to each other as well as to Edmond. But our superior knowledge does not make it easier for us to form dogmatic moral judgments of these

⁶Jean Rousset, Forme et Signification (Paris; 1962), p. 68.

characters, for the motivations they reveal are often as complex as those of Edmond himself.

Restif does not leave moral interpretation of his narrative entirely up to his reader, however, in spite of the relative freedom with which his characters express themselves. As if he felt that in this novel, as in La Fille naturelle, it is necessary to warn the reader against being taken in by ambiguous behavior on the part of the characters, he supplies moral guideposts in the comments of the "editor" of the letters. Edmond's virtuous brother Pierre, who has organized the letters and made them fit for publication, provides titles for the letters, makes significant suppressions, and adds footnotes, in order to remind the reader of the moral ideal from which the characters all too frequently depart. These comments are easily overlooked, however, in the heat of the action. They are often simply neutral résumés of the letters Pierre presents; and the moral commentary he does offer tends to acknowledge the fact that the evidence of the narrative does not lend itself to dogmatic moral interpretations. Letter headings such as "Mélange de bien et de mal; mais ce dernier l'emporte" (II, 205), or "L'innocence quelquefois s'en impose à elle-même" (II, 253), are so vague that they in fact leave considerable liberty of interpretation to the reader.

Pierre does provide, however, a more substantial moral ideal, within the narrative itself, against which the reader, as well as Edmond, may compare the hero's attitudes and actions. Pierre is one of Edmond's principal correspondents, and he is

Edmond's only link with the family he leaves behind on the farm. Pierre's descriptions of the innocent, industrious, and happy life he leads provides a point of contrast with the life Edmond leads in the city -- and his letters also constitute one of the influences which sustain, rather than resolve, the conflict between Edmond's passional and sentimental inclinations.

It is clear that the technical devices that link morality and happiness in the earlier novels are in large part absent from Le Paysan perverti; and that these devices are replaced by enlargements upon the very aspects of technique that tend, in the pre-Paysan novels, to expose the weaknesses in the link between morality and happiness. This in fact results in a more effective incorporation of morality in the fictional action, as we shall now see in our analysis of Edmond R^{***}'s moral-sentimental education.

When Edmond arrives in Au^{**} to take up residence at the home of M. Parangon, the painter who is to teach him his art, he brings in his baggage a general commitment to country values, and a particular commitment to the values relevant to his prevailing interest, women. Edmond assumes that only shy, gentle, innocent women, who inspire respect for their virtue, are likely to make a man happy in marriage. He reveals his emotional attachment to this principle in his letters to his elder brother Pierre, when he describes his attraction to two women he has met in the town who display those qualities. Of the first, Tiennette, a servant in the Parangon household, he writes,

"Elle me fait quelquefois songer à Marie-Jeanne; ton aimable maîtresse est du même caractère que Tiennette. Que je te trouve heureux!" (I, 26) This is a high compliment to Tiennette, for Pierre's fiancée is an incarnation of the feminine virtues prized in the country. Edmond is not destined to find a happiness analogous to Pierre's with Tiennette, however, because she is already spoken for. He next turns his attentions to another girl of similar character, Edmée, who seems ripe for the picking: "On voit à sa gaîté, que son coeur est encore insensible; à la douceur de ses regards, à son embarras quand un jeune homme lui parle, à l'aimable rougeur dont ses joues se colorent, qu'elle ne le sera pas longtemps." (I, 47) Edmond envisages a happiness with Edmée similar to that of Tiennette and her fiancé, of whom he says, "En vérité, ces jeunes gens-là s'aiment bien! . . . Je le savais déjà, mais je sens comme ils doivent être heureux, depuis que j'ai vu Edmée." (I, 54)

At the same time Edmond is entertaining notions of acquiring a country-style happiness, however, he discovers that there may be other sources of happiness as well. He has a tendency to appreciate the refinements of dress and manner "capables de démonter l'homme le plus rassis" (I, 32) peculiar to city women. The sensual nature of this response becomes evident when Manon Palestine, Parangon's elegant and beautiful cousin by marriage, who is acting as mistress of the house (in more ways than one) in Mme Parangon's absence, begins making advances to Edmond. When she praises his appearance and establishes physical contact, Edmond rises to the occasion. All Manon

need do is step on his foot, and he is "beside himself". He does not describe his reaction in detail when Manon proceeds to hold his hand, but we may assume that the comment, "J'étais loin de m'ennuyer avec Mlle Manon," (I, 35) is understatement.

Edmond is thus involved in his first conflict. He is confronted with the necessity of choosing between gratification of his emotional inclinations and gratification of his sensual inclinations. He is not yet aware of the moral implications of this choice, however. He knows that Manon's charms have a different effect on him than those of Edmée, but he does not know that in responding to them, he risks compromising his commitment to virtuous love.

Edmond's indecisions are temporarily suspended at this point by the return home of Mme Parangon, for she appeals to both the inclinations he has discovered in himself so far. He accordingly ranks her at the top of the list of women who have made an impression on him:

Elle n'a peut-être rien de plus mignon dans les traits que les trois autres; car Tiennette est bien mignonne; Mlle Manon l'est aussi, et de plus elle a un je ne sais quoi qui parle aux sens . . . Edmée a la plus belle chevelure brune, un air séduisant de jeunesse et d'ingénuité si touchant, si touchant!.... Mais dans Mme Parangon les attraites sont plus développés; elle a cette aisance et cette grâce que donne l'usage du monde, surtout le séjour à la capitale, et dont on n'a pas d'idée chez nous . . . ajoute à cela que ses vertus font encore plus d'impression sur moi que ses charmes. (I, 76)

In a word, Mme Parangon combines the seductive elegance of Manon and the sweet virtue of Edmée. No wonder, then, that Edmond should experience the strongest attraction of all toward

her: "Je sens, en m'occupant d'elle, un feu dans ma poitrine, une joie, un plaisir, avec des mouvements...." (I, 71)

Pierre hastens to remind Edmond that his enthusiasm is wasted, for of course he cannot think of Mme Parangon as a solution to his conflict. Both the tone and the content of his reply effectively dampen Edmond's impulsive fervor: " . . . il n'y a rien là pour toi, entends-tu, mon Edmond, et je ne te conseille pas de t'aller tant mettre son mérite dans l'esprit; c'est à son mari à s'occuper de ça; s'il ne le voit pas, tant pis pour lui." (I, 74) It is Mme Parangon who will eventually cause Edmond to experience most cruelly the conflict between his sentimental and his sensual inclinations. But first, he must work out the Edmée - Manon conflict.

Edmond decides to marry Manon. A number of factors, added to his sensual attraction to her, swing the balance in her favor. Edmond knows Manon better than Edmée, the folks back home favor the choice of Manon because she is more suitable to his "avancement dans le monde", and marriage to Manon would establish a close and at the same time legitimate relationship to Mme Parangon: " . . . je sens un plaisir que je ne saurais exprimer, lorsque je songe que par là je serai le cousin de Mme Parangon." (I, 77) Edmond is furthermore convinced by his response to Manon's demonstrations of affection that he loves her "pour la vie".

This is one of the occasions upon which Pierre offers a point of contrast with his brother. When Edmond brings his fiancée home to meet the family, Pierre is impressed by her

coquettish ways, and by Edmond's galantry. He in fact envies Edmond slightly, and he even expresses the wish that his own fiancée were a bit like Manon, but, as he says, "ça n'est pas la mode ici que les filles disent aux garçons de si jolis petits mots, et puis ci, et puis ça, si gracieusement qu'il me semble que mon oreille en est chatouillée." (I, 99) Pierre later opposes his own simple and down-to-earth method of courtship to that of Edmond and Manon in the following terms.

Voilà les douceurs que je débite à Marie-Jeanne. Je ne loue jamais sa figure; quand il n'y aurait point de miroirs, une femme saurait toujours mieux que personne ce qu'elle a de joli; mais je lui prends la main, et je ne la baise pas au moins, comme tu faisais, et je lui dis: -- Marie-Jeanne, tu me parais bien soigneuse, tu seras bonne ménagère quand nous serons ensemble; tu aimes ton père et ta mère, tu aimeras bien ceux qui viendront de toi . . . tout me revient en toi, Marie-Jeanne, des pieds à la tête; ce n'est pas que tu sois plus jolie qu'une autre, mais tu es propre, tout te va . . . si bien donc, Marie-Jeanne, que nous serons bien ensemble tous-deux -- En finissant ces paroles, je la laisse, et je la vois, quand je m'en vas, qui me regarde tant qu'elle peut; et si je me retourne tout à fait, elle baisse les yeux, et devient toute honteuse.
(I, 125-126)

Pierre soon becomes aware that he was wrong to envy Edmond his fiancée's seductive ways. Behind the difference in manners between Manon and Marie-Jeanne, there is a fundamental difference in morals. Just before Edmond's wedding is to take place, Mme Parangon reveals that Manon is pregnant by Parangon, and the marriage to Edmond is to save her honor -- and perhaps cover further "accidents" that might occur as she continues her affair with Parangon.

Edmond's first reflex, in view of the knowledge that Manon

does not conform to his ideas of feminine morality, is to reject her. But when he visits her, with the intention of informing her of his decision, his resolve is weakened, to his own astonishment:

Je la trouvai plus tendre, plus belle, plus intéressante que jamais; en ce moment, elle effaçait tout ce que je connaissais d'aimable. Je baissai les yeux, mon coeur palpita; je la regrettai . . . je regrettai qu'elle ne me parût plus digne de mon attachement . . . Elle excitait au fond de mon coeur des désirs; son indignité ne les empêchait pas de naître, je sentis même un aiguillon plus vif; je ne sais de quelle nature était ce mouvement-là; sans doute il n'était pas pur, car j'en rougis l'instant d'après . . . je me disais, elle ne sera pas ma femme, j'aimerais mieux mourir, que de souffrir qu'elle devienne ma femme; et je la désire! (I, 162-163)

In this interview with Manon, the evidence of Edmond's senses supports some indoctrination he has been receiving in the background to the effect that happiness need not be limited to moral relationships in a rigid sense of the term. In conversations concerning the relativity of morals, Gaudet, a cousin of Manon, and D'Arras, a priest,⁷ have been implanting in Edmond the suspicion that the requirements for happiness he brought with him from the farm are not dictated by his own temperament at all, they have been suggested to him by others; they are merely prejudices. Manon does not, furthermore, shock Edmond's moral sensibilities as thoroughly as he had imagined, for she recognizes the error of her ways, and follows through with a complete reform. The arguments of theory, his own senses,

⁷These two characters are combined in the third edition of the novel to create the libertine monk, Gaudet d'Arras.

and Manon's repentance convince Edmond that Manon does answer the requirements of his temperament after all. He marries her, and she does make him happy, not precisely because of the flaw in her virtue, but because of the temperament that has made the flaw possible. Manon is sensible, "le contraire de ces belles indolentes, toujours tièdes, qui se croient des modèles à citer, parce qu'elles n'ont pas de tempérament. Oui, ma femme est sensible, voluptueuse même (et c'est une qualité selon moi) mais elle n'est pas vicieuse." (I, 235-236)

It would seem that in marrying Manon, Edmond has effected a satisfactory compromise between his prejudices and his sensual inclinations; but we soon learn that Edmond's temperament does not lend itself to compromise. Marriage to Manon has taught him that he can let his passions dominate his conscience without disastrous consequences for his happiness, so he pushes experimentation with his new faculty further, in the seduction of an innocent virgin. We might believe that this act is the most direct affront to his original code of morality conceivable, if we did not happen to know that eventually he will commit incest with his sister, for it constitutes an infidelity to his wife, the girl he seduces is his cousin Laure, whom he would probably have married had he stayed on the farm, and the seduction takes place on home ground, during the celebration of Pierre's marriage.

It may be, of course, that the scene of the seduction is dictated in part by the epistolary form of the novel, for if Edmond were obliged to continue revealing his actions in his

letters to Pierre, we would not know what he is up to. He is not sufficiently emancipated to reveal his turpitude to his virtuous brother -- who does not even know, in fact, that Edmond has married Manon. Edmond's return home permits him, therefore, to describe his activities in letters to Gaudet, the most appropriate recipient of such confidences.

Edmond appears to be thoroughly enjoying his role as seducer, for he writes, " . . . la petite cousine m'a presque anéanti. Je l'aime, je l'adore, j'en suis fou, je ne saurais la quitter . . . " (I, 205) Yet there is ample indication that Edmond has not become a full-fledged libertine. He indicates that his charming cousin has not annihilated his moral reflexes, by announcing his intention to discontinue the liaison when he is reunited with his wife. Edmond still feels that "sans [les vertus morales], on n'est pas digne de vivre, car l'on doit racheter ses vices par quelquechose." (I, 206)

Edmond does not, furthermore, limit his enjoyment of the wedding festivities to indulgence of his passions. Mme Parangon is also present at the wedding, and although -- or perhaps because -- Edmond is as strongly attracted to her as ever, he is not tempted to practice his seducer's art on her. On the contrary, he says, " . . . le respect que je ressens pour Mme Parangon, est un plaisir pour moi: je n'en ai pas davantage à aimer Manon, que de respecter la vertueuse Colette C^{**}." (I, 199) This lingering attachment to virtue is further reinforced by the knowledge, acquired through eavesdropping, that Mme Parangon loves him. Although for the moment the revelation

renews Edmond's desire to merit her affection, it is becoming abundantly clear that loving virtue in the person of Mme Parangon is dangerous for the virtues of both of them. A sensual undertow in the calm waters of their relationship makes itself felt during a stroll in the country. Mme Parangon turns her ankle, thus obliging Edmond to support her in his arms, with the following result: " . . . une jouissance ne vaut pas ce que j'ai éprouvé; je ne pouvais me résoudre à la poser à terre. Un regard (j'ai cru que la Pureté même l'avait lancé) un simple regard m'a imposé; je l'ai timidement priée de s'asseoir." (I, 210-211)

The comparison Edmond chooses to describe his sensations is surely significant. Mme Parangon reveals equivocal sentiments as well, in the conversation overheard by Edmond: "Tout à l'heure, il m'a pris la main, il l'a baisée....il m'a fallu toute ma raison pour la retirer; il a fallu me fâcher, pour m'étourdir sur une satisfaction criminelle..." (I, 214)

Mme Parangon is obviously more aware than Edmond of the threat to her virtue inherent in loving him. She has already thought of a way of diverting the danger, in fact; but we will reserve our discussion of her solution to her own virtue-passion conflict for the moment when it influences Edmond directly.

The encouragement provided by Mme Parangon to continue to find satisfaction in virtue is supported by events that undermine Edmond's confidence in his passions as a source of happiness. Laure becomes pregnant, Edmond's responsibility in the matter is known, and Manon commits suicide out of despair at his infidelity.

Edmond's liaison with Laure dashes Manon's hopes of finding happiness in virtuous love. She feels that her past sins will constantly poison her relationship with her husband, because his infidelity is indirectly caused by the very faults she had hoped to efface by being a loving wife. It was, after all, she who first awakened his passions, and encouraged him to allow them to dominate his conscience. As she says, " . . . le mépris qu'il a pour moi a relâché ses mœurs: c'est moi qui souilles une âme qui fut restée pure: je saurai m'en punir; et je m'en suis punie . . . " (I, 267)

The lesson of this disaster is clear to Edmond: illicit passion is an obstacle to both morality and happiness. To D'Arras he writes, "O mon Père! que je paye cher quelques heures de plaisir! Il est vrai, il est donc vrai, que la peine suit toujours le crime . . . " (I, 260) Edmond's remorse is made all the more acute by the fact that through his "crime" he has become a father; although the following expression of his regret, which he addresses to Pierre, suggests that he is revolting against the injustice of social prejudices as much as he is reproaching himself for his act: "O mon frère! pourquoi ce qui nous rend pères est-il quelquefois un crime! C'est un nom si doux! Heureux aîné, tu le porteras sans remords! au lieu que le crime empoisonne pour moi, jusque dans leur source même, les faveurs de la nature! . . . " (I, 277) Edmond soon has the opportunity to envy the innocent joy Pierre and Marie-Jeanne find in parenthood, in fact. The following letter from Pierre does little to spare Edmond's feelings:

Oh! ce que c'est que la nature! Marie-Jeanne, depuis qu'elle a mis un fils au monde, ne voit plus que lui . . . s'il pousse un cri, elle tressaille; et s'il dort, elle l'admire; et s'il s'éveille, elle le baise; et s'il la regarde, elle lui sourit, mais d'un sourire!... O cher petit enfant, dès ton entrée dans le monde, tu possèdes un trésor inestimable, le coeur de ta mère, ce coeur si pur, ou le vice n'est jamais entré! (I, 290)

Edmond thus decides that virtue is the surest source of happiness. As he announces to Gaudet, "Le raisonnement ne saurait l'emporter sur les sentiments, mon Cousin: je sens, et c'est plus que d'être convaincu. Mettez de la vertu, au lieu de tous nos vices, n'étions-nous pas heureux?" (I, 271) But alas, Edmond does not get a chance to find out whether he could be happy by putting his virtues where his vices were. More of Gaudet's theories, and more opportunities to test them, encourage Edmond to renew his experimentation with his passions.

After the death of Manon, Mme Parangon goes off to Paris, and Edmond is faced with the necessity of finding something to occupy him: " . . . je vais succomber à l'ennui; je sens déjà dans mon coeur un vide qui m'épouvante." (I, 284) In short, Edmond needs a woman. Gaudet suggests one who is not likely to further encourage Edmond to return to his prejudices. He introduces Edmond to Madelon Baron, "fille charmante, vive, enjouée, qui paraît toujours environnée des Grâces et des Ris; mais à qui la Pudeur (dit-on) ne tient pas toujours aussi fidèle compagnie." (I, 285)

Edmond does not show much interest in Madelon at first, so Gaudet launches another verbal attack on his moral reflexes.

Gaudet argues that both vicious and virtuous men act according to the same principle, pleasure: "Le méchant et l'homme vertueux font tous deux ce qui leur plaît davantage; tout dépend de la position, du point de vue . . . " (II, 5) The only difference between them is that the pleasures of the wicked man harm others, whereas those of the virtuous man do not. More elaborate distinctions than this between good and bad actions are merely the result of prejudice. Indulgence of Edmond's sensual inclinations would not offend, therefore, his essential moral sensibilities, it would merely offend his artificial ones. Gaudet seems to overlook the fact that when Edmond last indulged his passions he caused considerable harm. If Edmond were to offer this objection (it is surprising that he does not) Gaudet would no doubt reply that past experience does not invalidate the pleasure principle, but rather provides proof of his further argument that considerable judgment must be exercised in the application of the principle: " . . . la justesse de l'esprit est la source de la bonté du coeur; les méchants coeurs le sont en conséquence d'un esprit faux . . . " (II, 8) The fact that Edmond failed to observe this article in Gaudet's code of behavior when he seduced Laure was in fact explicit. He had announced his intentions to Gaudet in the following terms:

. . . les plaisirs m'environnent, et je m'y livre sans contrainte. Ma foi, tu as raison, il faut jouir; ce n'est pas manquer de religion, que d'user des biens que Dieu nous a donnés: cette maxime, il est vrai, peut mener loin; mais, cher Mentor, tu joins à cet art admirable que tu as pour lever les scrupules, une prudence consommée; ainsi je m'y abandonne . . . (I, 197. Our emphasis)

Half convinced, Edmond consents to give Gaudet's philosophy another try. He begins seeing Madelon, and she gives weight to Gaudet's arguments: "Tiens, le meilleur argument en faveur de la nouvelle façon de penser que tu m'invites à prendre, ce sont les charmes de Madelon. Dès que je la vois, je ne raisonne plus, je sens que l'évidence est pour elle et pour toi." (II, 16) There is also evidence in favor of a more moral source of happiness, however. Once again, Edmond finds someone in his vicinity who prevents libertinism from monopolizing his pleasures, just as he did when he was enjoying Laure's favors. As we can see, the vacillation we have described as characteristic of the movement in this novel is in full swing.

Edmond has rediscovered Edmée, and is again strongly attracted to her. He is fully aware that this attraction belies commitment to a libertine philosophy: "Il est vrai . . . que cette beauté rendrait à ton Edmond toute sa bonhomie. Eh! Qu'importe, s'il était heureux? Je t'avertis que la Baron aura besoin de toute sa légèreté pour dissiper ma rêverie." (II, 20) Madelon does succeed in diverting him -- " . . . esprit, beauté, talents, vertu, elle éclipse tout; et l'amour, l'amour même, la douce et constante tendresse n'a pas autant de charmes que sa voluptueuse coquetterie." (II, 20) -- but the effect is only temporary. Edmond decides he does need the love Madelon cannot provide, but that it cannot make him happy unless he can also indulge his passions, so marriage to Edmée is the only solution: "Tel est mon malheur, que je ne puis . . . renoncer aux plaisirs illicites qu'en leur substituant des

plaisirs permis aussi vifs, et plus durables." (II, 46)

But once again, Edmond's friends intervene to prevent him from resolving his conflicts according to his understanding of his own temperament. Gaudet objects to the marriage on the grounds that Edmond only thinks Edmée will make him happy, and in fact he will soon be bored with "une innocente bergère, jolie fade, vertueuse et bégueule." (II, 59) The decisive objection comes, however, from Mme Parangon, who has very different reasons for wishing to prevent Edmond's marriage. She has planned to marry Edmond to her younger sister Fanchette, a paragon of beauty and virtue like herself, when she comes of age.

The marriage of Edmond and Fanchette is the solution to her own virtue-passion conflict that Mme Parangon had found when she first became aware of it. "Ne pouvant espérer, n'osant même pas nourrir l'espérance qu'Edmond puisse être à moi," she had said, "c'est à ma soeur que je le destine . . . Il serait mon frère: à ce titre je pourrais l'aimer d'une manière innocente; je ne rougirais plus de suivre un penchant plein de douceur..." (I, 214)

In Mme Parangon's attitude toward love, and in its consequences, we see a definite prolongation of the theme of virtuous love in previous novels. We recall that in the earlier fiction masculine-feminine love was assimilated to such society-oriented sentiments as filial love, friendship, and affection between brother and sister. These sorts of affection were considered the ideal basis for marriage; although passion was not eliminated,

it was considered secondary to these more constructive sentiments. Some characters, we remember, tended to take this definition of virtuous love rather literally, and consider family relationships more satisfying and natural than those requiring a dash of passion in order to ensure propagation of the species. The heroines of La Famille vertueuse, Adèle de Com***, and La Femme dans les trois états were cases in point.

Like these heroines, Mme Parangon mistrusts passion; but in her it is not a matter of general principle. She is already married, and although she does not love her husband, she is determined to remain virtuous. She therefore consciously channels the energies of her sensibility into the non-passional relationships mentioned above. In speaking of herself she says, "Elle s'est jetée dans les bras de l'amitié et de la nature, pour éviter l'amour . . . que de combats pour tromper la destination de la nature!" (II, 57)

But nature will not be diverted from its course. In reading the earlier novels, we have had occasion to suspect that the channeling of sensibility into non-passional relationships would not result in the elimination of passion at all. Passion would very likely emerge in these very relationships, giving rise to such phenomena as lesbianism and incest (see above, p. 18). This suspicion was borne out by the overtones of lesbianism in La Femme dans les trois états, and it is now further confirmed by Mme Parangon.

Mme Parangon had first attempted to redirect her love for Edmond by throwing herself into the "arms of friendship" with

Ursule, Edmond's sister, who looks very much like Edmond.

Ursule's demonstrations of affection had brought Mme Parangon considerable satisfaction, but she finds herself obliged to give up this way of diverting her passion for Edmond. She has become aware that in her demonstrations of affection for Ursule she is not compensating for an illegitimate passion, she is in fact expressing it. Again speaking of herself in the third person she says, "Une jeune beauté [Ursule], qui lui retraçait des traits chéris, fut celle qui l'éclaira; elle sentit qu'elle l'aimait trop pour une amie . . . elle trembla de profaner l'amitié par une caresse sortie d'une source impure." (II, 57)

It is not clear whether Mme Parangon considers her sensual relations with Ursule illegitimate because they are sensual, or because they are the expression of her passion for a man. In any case, the sensuality of the relationship is made perfectly clear by Ursule much later in the novel. When Gaudet compliments her on her lubricity (she follows a path of corruption parallel to that of Edmond), she reveals that she acquired her "art de la débauche" from Mme Parangon herself, for "ses caresses d'amitié sont comme celles de l'amour." (III, 22)

Mme Parangon therefore feels that she might more successfully control her passion for Edmond if she can give free expression to the sentimental aspect of her attachment by loving him openly, as a sister. Hence her protest when Edmond reveals his desire to marry Edmée: " . . . elle voulait rendre légitime un attachement dont la vertu s'effarouche, en lui donnant un frère pour objet....vous ne le voulez pas, Edmond; vous allez

la contraindre à diminuer les sentiments qui faisaient son bonheur, mais qu'il ne lui conviendrait pas de nourrir pour le mari d'une étrangère...." (II, 57-58)

This epistolary appeal to Edmond's generosity is supported by Mme Parangon's return to Au^{xx}. Although the move will prove to have been a tactical error, for the moment it seems to have the desired effect. Edmond consents to give up Edmée, for Mme Parangon's presence, in reactivating his attraction to her, renews his interest in her happiness, and inspires him to consider the proposed marriage to Fanchette a symbolic marriage to Mme Parangon. She in fact encourages this view when she says to Edmond, "Je n'empêche pas que vous ne nous unissiez, ma soeur et moi. -- Ah! Madame," replies Edmond, "je vous mentirais, si je promettais de vous séparer." (II, 80) It seems, furthermore, that the prospect of marrying Fanchette will have the same salutary effect on Edmond that he had expected of marriage to Edmée: " . . . je vais mettre tous mes soins à me rendre digne d'être son mari; c'est autant par la vertu que par l'amour que je prétends la mériter...." (II, 76), and in the meantime Mme Parangon's presence provides all the immediate happiness he needs. He therefore tells Gaudet he can keep his libertine philosophy: "Sois heureux par les plaisirs que tu vantes; ils ne sont pas faits pour mon coeur. J'en connais de plus doux et de plus piquants; la tendre, la pure amitié me les fait goûter." (II, 85)

These utopic plans are shortlived, of course. Passion again intervenes to destroy the illusion that Mme Parangon can

find a virtuous outlet for her love for Edmond, but this time it is Edmond's passions that refuse to be sublimated. The proximity of Mme Parangon is causing the sensual undercurrent in his sentiments we have already observed to rise to the surface, to the point where he admits to Gaudet that he now wants her to "satisfaire les désirs qu'elle inspire avec tant d'impétuosité." (II, 130) Gaudet has had a hand in bringing things to this point, as might be expected. He has observed that it is principally Mme Parangon's virtue that has kept alive Edmond's attachment to morality. If he destroys that virtue by seducing her, will he not destroy his attachment to morality in the process? Such is Gaudet's reasoning:

. . . il faut avoir eu Mme Parangon: elle purifiera ton coeur, et ta victoire chassera le sot respect que tu as pour la vertu du sexe: oui, l'âme brûlante de cette femme sensible consumera ton penchant vicieux à la sotte tendresse; elle désèchera cette humeur visqueuse et grossière; en un mot, tu deviendras, après l'avoir vaincue, le plus agréable des papillons d'amour. Eh! serait-il possible que tu fusses tendre pour une autre femme, après l'avoir été pour elle? Non, mon ami; en te la soumettant, c'est le nec plus ultra de la vertu féminine que tu auras vaincu . . . (II, 138-139)

Although Edmond is inclined to agree that "il faut avoir eu Mme Parangon," his reasons are not the same as Gaudet's. As the penetrating Gaudet comments, "Ce n'est pas un plan sagement conçu, digéré par la prudence, qui t'amène au point où je t'ai souhaité; c'est l'excès de la passion . . . " (II, 136-137) Gaudet's analysis of Edmond's motives is prophetic. His attack on Mme Parangon's virtue is entirely uncalculated. The crisis arises, in fact, when Edmond rushes to Mme Parangon's side "pour y abjurer tout ce qui pouvait lui déplaire dans [ses]

sentiments" (II, 146), upon her discovery of the above exchanges between Edmond and Gaudet.

In comparison to the scene that follows, Edmond's previous sentiment-passion conflicts have been minor skirmishes. Here the conflict is greatly intensified, for the antagonists meet for the first time on common ground. Edmond must now choose between conflicting attitudes toward one woman, the one he loves best, rather than between minor women who gratify one or the other of his inclinations. The conflicting demands of his temperament are furthermore brought to their full intensity by Mme Parangon's superior appeal in both areas. As a result, we may say that Edmond now vibrates, whereas before, he has only vacillated. Yet as we shall see, even this new, more acute experience of his conflicts does not suffice to bring about a change in his situation.

At first it seems as if Mme Parangon will indeed inspire Edmond to forswear his dishonorable intentions: "Il semblait que son entretien, ses avis, eussent entièrement ramené l'innocence dans mon âme égarée." (II, 146) BUT

. . . notre conversation fut trop longue: les désirs revinrent sourdement, et ils m'avaient enivré avant que je m'en fusse aperçu: mes yeux pétillaient; mes mains inquiètes, brûlantes, ne touchaient d'abord que ses habits; bientôt elles s'emparent de sa main; elles la pressent; elles en sont pressées.... Résister après cela n'aurait pas été d'un mortel!..." (II, 146-147)

Edmond does resist for the moment, however, and contents himself with expressing verbally his revolt against virtue: "Maudite soit la vertu (si c'est en avoir que de vous ressembler); le vice est cent fois plus aimable -- " (II, 147) Mme Parangon

again succeeds in calming him, by appealing to his generosity in asking him not to destroy her happiness, and by appealing to his egotism in pointing out that a man of his delicacy should not wish to share her favors with her husband. She also speaks eloquently of her plans for Edmond and Fanchette, so that in the end, says Edmond, "ce discours me charmait; j'étais plus tendre, et moins entreprenant. J'ai fait des protestations qu'on a crues sincères (et qui l'étaient, mon ami)." (II, 149-150)

This might have been the dénouement of the confrontation, had Edmond and Mme Parangon not sealed their accord with a kiss. We note in passing that although we may not be able to accuse Mme Parangon of consciously encouraging Edmond's advances, this is a curiously irresponsible act for a woman so concerned for her virtue, and so aware of Edmond's dispositions. As Edmond tells it, ". . . dans un transport dont la cause me faisait illusion à moi-même, j'ai hasardé un baiser, que je croyais d'un frère. Ma cousine, devenue plus confiante, me l'a rendu. Fatal baiser! il a détruit le calme: la tempête la plus violente a succédé." (II, 150)

In Edmond's description of his violation of Mme Parangon, which is a direct violation of his sentimental inclinations, it is evident that the act does not in fact destroy his sentimentality, as Gaudet had hoped:

Ce n'a pas été l'amour, mon ami; ce n'a pas été le plus délicieux des sentiments qui s'est emparé de mon coeur: c'est une odieuse frénésie; c'est une sorte de rage . . . Dans mon emportement, je froissais, je meurtrissais avec une abominable

brutalité ces appas enchanteurs, ces membres délicats, qui ne doivent recevoir que des adorations et des caresses....Employer la violence...Ah, dieu! . . . et quel est la victime de ce forfait horrible?....Ce que je respecte le plus au monde.... (II, 150)

Not only does Edmond fail to enjoy his act, he is bitterly ashamed of it. He once again rejects his passions as a source of happiness -- and blames Gaudet first for this new discovery of their destructiveness:

Ame cruelle, ennemi de toute vertu, que n'es-tu pas ici pour éprouver le diabolique plaisir de voir expirante la victime de ta corruption, et l'égarément furieux du vil instrument dont tu t'es servi! . . . Je te maudis...ou plutôt, je me maudis moi-même . . . O crime que tes fruits sont amers!... (II, 141-142)

The crime promises to bear a fruit less bitter than remorse, however. Mme Parangon is pregnant, and this enables Edmond to find a justification in nature for his act: "Oh! plus de remords, les sentiments de la nature... le feu de l'amour doivent les avoir tous consumés!..." (II, 161) Another event occurs to divert Edmond's attention from his remorse. Ursule, who has been residing in Paris, has been kidnapped, and Edmond rushes off to save her, and take revenge on her abductor.⁸

Edmond's preoccupation with Ursule's difficulties provides a useful hiatus in the action of the novel. Gaudet and Mme

⁸Restif forestalls reader criticism of this carryover of the superficial devices of the early novels by placing it in the mouth of a character: "Enlever, violer, fi-donc! On ne peut rien de plus bourgeois! C'était bon pour nos grand'mères: aujourd'hui l'on est si dégoûté des enlèvements, qu'il suffit d'en voir un dans une brochure nouvelle pour qu'on la jette là, et qu'on prenne de l'auteur et du livre la plus mince idée!..." (II, 169)

Parangon (who has emerged from the temporary madness brought on by Edmond's attack with strengthened, though humbled, virtue) profit from the suspension of Edmond's active involvement in his own conflicts to define the conflict on an intellectual level. Each rallies arguments to support his own definition of happiness, in hope of influencing the further course of Edmond's search for moral identity. And this résumé of the approaches to life they represent -- in their own opinions, at any rate -- provides us with some theories concerning the relationship between human nature and society against which to compare Edmond's practical experience of that relationship in the first half of the novel.

Mme Parangon's definition of happiness is an echo of the one developed in the early novels. "On a beau dire, et beau faire," she affirms, "le droit, le juste, l'honnête sont essentiels pour le bonheur . . . " (II, 182) According to Mme Parangon, the pleasure of doing good is infinitely superior to the pleasures of vice: " . . . en redevenant Chrétien, vous serez tout à la fois bon fils, bon ami, bon citoyen; et un jour bon mari et bon père; en un mot, Edmond, vous serez heureux." (II, 228-229) Mme Parangon also accuses Gaudet of attempting to lead Edmond in a diametrically opposed direction, although she grudgingly recognizes that his motives are similar to her own:⁹

⁹The motives of Gaudet resemble hers more than she realizes, in fact. In Gaudet, as well as in Mme Parangon, tender friendship for Edmond is supported by sensual attraction. The most explicit indication of this is given in an editor's note: " . . . nous avons supprimé, sans aucune indication, beaucoup de choses

Nous vous aimons tous les deux; et sans doute vous ne croirez pas que je sois la moins tendre et la moins désintéressée. Cependant notre conduite est tout à fait différente. Mon amitié pour vous me fait désirer que vous soyez . . . un homme ferme dans son devoir envers la société. Que demande au contraire l'amitié de votre séducteur? Que vous brisiez tous les liens qui vous attachent à Dieu et . . . aux hommes. (II, 204-205)

The philosophy proposed by Gaudet does not, however, turn the alternative attitudes toward social conformity which the two represent into a choice between black and white. Gaudet simply suggests a broader definition of good and of pleasure than does Mme Parangon. He qualifies her maxim, "il n'y a de bonheur que dans le BIEN," by saying, "On trouve toujours du plaisir dans le bien," in its narrow definition, but "ce serait aller contre toute évidence, contre les vues et la destination de la nature, que de prétendre que les accessoires du bonheur ne se trouvent pas dans les jouissances, qu'on ne peut nommer proprement de bonnes actions morales . . . " (II, 190-191) Actions that do not fall within the category "bonnes actions morales" cannot automatically be considered bad, for nature's scale of values is broader, and more authoritative, than that of society: "Tout ce que défend la nature est universel et absolu," and only the laws of society that coincide with those of nature are valid. This limitation reduces laws worthy of

qui auraient éclairé le lecteur sur la nature de l'attachement de Gaudet pour Edmond: le voile ne peut être trop épais là-dessus." (II, 43) Later editions of the novel, the fourth in particular, are less discreet on the subject of the homosexual motivations behind Gaudet's devotion to Edmond, but the relationship never becomes central to the action of the novel.

respect to those that are based on self preservation and reciprocity. All other laws are either laws of decency or pure caprice, based only on prejudice, and therefore superfluous. Finding the good in this sense depends of course on the exercise of reason. As Gaudet counsels Edmond,

. . . prends de la nature et de la divinité, des idées saines; étudie le physique, et sur cette étude bien réfléchie, fonde toute ta morale. Tu seras alors un être naturel et social, d'une manière éclairée, qui ne te rendra plus esclave et malheureux; tu verras jusqu'où tu peux t'écarter des loix sociales, sans troubler l'ordre politique, et sans t'attirer de la part des autres individus une répulsion désagréable.
(II, 199)

In Gaudet's view, it is in fact to the advantage of society, as well as to that of the individual, that reason replace prejudice as a guide to behavior, "de peur que [les yeux des personnes] venant à se dessiller d'eux-mêmes, elles ne se trouvent sans frein, ne se perdent, et ne causent beaucoup de mal aux autres." (II, 202)

This debate between the advocate of social conformity and the advocate of conformity to the laws of nature results in a deadlock as far as Edmond is concerned. As he confesses to Gaudet,

Tu vas dire que je suis toujours pour le dernier qui parle. J'étais pour toi, il n'y a que huit jours; et je suis contre à présent . . . Lorsque tu es auprès de moi, que tu me parles, que tu réponds à toutes mes objections, avec cette promptitude, cet air assuré qui t'est propre, tu me fais partager la conviction que je vois dans tes yeux: le ton impérieux que tu prends d'ailleurs m'impose: mais lorsque je suis auprès de ma cousine, il me semble entendre la voix mélodieuse de la vertu elle-même: la persuasion coule de ses lèvres . . . Lorsque je suis auprès de l'un ou de l'autre, je ne vois

que par vos yeux, et c'est votre âme qui m'anime.
 Au nom de notre amitié, ne me tiraillez pas ainsi;
 jouez-moi au dés, et que celui de vous deux qui
 me gagnera m'enlève à l'autre . . . (II, 229-230)

Edmond's inability to choose his identity on the theoretical level has been amply prepared in practice. The action of the novel has been marked by impasses, in the sense that aspects of Edmond's sensibility have led him in directions he cannot pursue, due to interference by other aspects of that same sensibility. This has meant that his temperament has placed him in neither of the positions vis-à-vis society described by Mme Parangon and Gaudet. Each suits part of his character, but neither satisfies it entirely.

Throughout the first part of the novel, Edmond's sensibility has inclined him to the acceptance of Mme Parangon's definition of happiness he now expresses: "Je sens qu'elle a raison, mon coeur le crie plus fort qu'elle; nous cherchons le bonheur où il n'est pas . . . " (II, 187) This is the propensity that Edmond brought with him from the village, and that has continued to express itself in his efforts to establish moral relationships with virtuous women such as Edmée and Mme Parangon. But Edmond is incapable of following through this emotional attachment to virtue with active commitment, because it fails to dominate the sensual aspect of his sensibility. It is his sensuality that has resulted in the concrete acts of the novel, marriage to Manon, involvement with Laure and Madelon, and the attack on Mme Parangon. His compulsive indulgence of his passions thus prevents him from being the happily virtuous individual Mme Parangon wants him to be; but it does not place

him in Gaudet's camp, either.

The reliance on the laws of nature as a guide to conduct recommended by Gaudet offers Edmond the possibility of satisfying his need to believe that he is adhering to some sort of absolute moral order, and at the same time allows a freer play to his passions than does a narrow religious or social definition of morality. Edmond's adherence to this philosophy is, however, only intellectual, and sporadic, at that; it is not supported by emotional conviction. Reference to the laws of nature does not replace Edmond's moral reflexes as a basis for judging good and bad, it merely weakens them sufficiently to allow him to seize opportunities to indulge his rampant sensuality, and to justify its indulgence after the fact, particularly when children are the result. But his need for gratification of his sentimental attachment to more orthodox morality constantly intervenes to render the happiness he finds in physical relationships incomplete. This has been manifest in the facility with which he is distracted from his mistresses when a sentimental attachment presents itself, as when Mme Parangon distracts him from his involvement with Laure, and when first Edmée, then Mme Parangon divert his attention from Madelon Baron; and of course it has been manifest as well in the remorse Edmond experiences following expression of his passions, even before it results in a concrete disaster such as the death of Manon.

Sensibility thus prevents Edmond from being a happy libertine, as Gaudet himself recognizes in the following penetrating analysis of Edmond's character:

. . . tu as sans doute de l'esprit; mais il est offusqué par une imagination qui s'allume trop facilement; ce qui vient, je crois, de l'exquise sensibilité dont tu es doué. Les personnes de ce caractère ont un grand défaut, c'est que la sensibilité, toujours aveugle, leur tenant lieu de pénétration, leur jugement est embarrassée par une sorte d'ivresse . . . le sentiment étouffe le raisonnement. (II, 188-190)

Sensibility functions in two ways as the obstacle to Edmond's adoption of a rational compromise between his own nature and social values. According to Gaudet, a man who is liberated from prejudice should not become

le sectateur de tous les vices et de tous les abus: il respecte la Nature et ses loix sacrées: si d'abord, et dans le premier moment de liberté, il ressemble à un plomb suspendu, qui éloigné de la perpendiculaire, retourne beaucoup au-delà; l'homme éclairé revient aussi, comme ce plomb, peu à peu au juste milieu, qui constitue l'honnête homme et le bon citoyen. C'est la position où je me trouve, et celle où je te désire. (II, 278)

In Gaudet's view, passion, as well as sentiment, must be dominated by reason. We have seen, however, that reason does not moderate sentimentality in Edmond; nor does it moderate passion, as he has indicated in his description of his involvements with Laure and Mme Parangon.

These tendencies will continue to develop in the remainder of the novel. Reason weakens more and more the tenuous hold of moral prejudices over Edmond's passions, but it never replaces those prejudices as control. Indulgence of his passions becomes a life style for Edmond, to the point that even the liberal Gaudet is startled: "Vous êtes . . . d'un sang où l'on ne donne que dans les extrêmes . . . je ne me serais jamais attendu à tout ce qui est arrivé..." (III, 59) Gaudet thus deserves

only in part the appellation "corruptor" that is frequently applied to him by the "editor" of the novel, Edmond's brother Pierre. In implanting in Edmond the idea that expression of his passions is justified, Gaudet does not make Edmond a social misfit. It is Edmond himself who does so, by misapplying Gaudet's philosophy. Edmond later recognizes this in a rare moment of lucidity: " . . . c'est moi, qui changeant tout en venin, en ai abusé comme de tout le reste. Et voilà bien la preuve que j'avais le coeur méchant, car dès que le frein a été ôté, j'ai bu l'iniquité comme l'eau . . . " (III, 49)

Edmond is not, furthermore, as corrupted as he thinks. Although his moral reflexes cease to function as control of his acts, they continue to function in his judgments of them. In his elaboration of the self criticism quoted above, Edmond in fact indicates that his corrupt acts do not reflect his attitudes:

. . . je n'ai plus respecté les lois sociales elles-mêmes, ces lois sages, dont je vois à présent que la force réprimante est la source de la félicité des hommes. Malheureux que nous sommes! dans notre enfance, on fonde nos moeurs sur de chimériques idées, qui ne peuvent soutenir les lumières de la saine raison; quand le plein jour est arrivé, quand le ténébreux phantôme de l'erreur est évanoui, il ne nous reste plus de contrepoids ni de guide . . . O Raison! viens à mon secours, et rentrons dans l'ordre, si je puis [sic]! (III, 49)

Edmond's sensibility thus involves him in a vicious circle that Gaudet's rational approach to morality, in conjunction with the permissive atmosphere of city life, only succeeds in aggravating, because it is half-digested. The more reason encourages Edmond to seize the multiple opportunities to indulge

his passions which city life offers, the more he is exposed to the unhappiness of knowing that he is violating his yearning to be virtuous; and the more impossible it becomes for him to fulfill that yearning. When he fully recognizes this, the pattern of the action changes. In keeping with the logic of Edmond's temperament, the first major change in his attitudes and situation will not involve a conversion to the reason he has so fervently invoked. Before we get to this reversal, however, two more major episodes complete the sequence of impasses in the novel: the parallel development, then the convergence, of Edmond's and Ursule's careers in corruption.

Edmond does not follow through the condemnation of his passions that has resulted from his rape of Mme Parangon, of course, because his pursuit of Ursule and her abductor leads him to Paris. He recognizes that Paris breeds vice, for the anonymity people enjoy means that "ils ne rougissent presque jamais les uns devant les autres." (II, 166) But this recognition of "les dangers de la ville" does not prevent Edmond's passions from taking advantage of this new freedom from the pressures of public opinion.

Edmond, in league with Gaudet, succeeds in rescuing Ursule from her abductor, a marquis. Ursule's innocence remains behind, however, so Edmond feels called upon to challenge the Marquis to a duel. He triumphs; and this provides an opportunity for a new flourishing of his passions. Edmond's generous treatment of his wounded adversary, and the intervention of

Mme Parangon not only divert the potentially disastrous consequences of his illegal act, they gain him entry into the world of marquis -- and of marquises. The charms of the Marquis' wife (which Edmond has occasion to appreciate when he paints her in the nude) and ambition inspire Edmond to undertake a new seduction. The Marquise is amenable; so is her husband, for Ursule shows signs of being inclined to become his mistress. As Gaudet explains Ursule's rapid progress in libertinism, "Mon enfant, dès qu'une femme a goûté des plaisirs de l'amour, fût-ce par violence, elle ne saurait plus résister à la tentation." (II, 302) Edmond, too, is inclined to be comprehending of an act that reverses his strenuous efforts to save his sister's honor, even to the point of encouraging it, for it advances his own projects. "Ce n'est pas que je n'éprouve une grande répugnance à voir ma soeur engagée dans une galanterie," explains Edmond to Gaudet, "Mais mon intrigue avec la Marquise; les effets que j'en attends; ce que je me propose de faire pour ma soeur, aidé de tes sages avis, tout cela m'étourdit sur une conduite, que je sais très bien qu'on trouverait très criminelle, si elle était connue." (II, 307-308)

These friendly plans are realized. The Marquis conquers Ursule, and Edmond conquers the Marquise. But Edmond falls far short of being a new paysan parvenu. At the very moment of success, he writes to Gaudet,

Je suis heureux...et dans cet instant même je ne suis pas content.... Taisez-vous, chimères de mon imagination; vieux préjugés, disparaissez pour jamais; ou laissez-moi du moins quelques instants d'une joie pure. Qui, moi! j'ai possédé... Est-ce bien toi, Edmond? et quand dans ton village, tu

conduisais le troupeau de la maison paternelle, te serais-tu attendu au degré de gloire où l'adorable Marquise t'a fait monter? . . . mes efforts pour m'exagérer mon bonheur sont inutiles; il devient un fardeau qui m'accable. En quel état me voilà réduit! Ah! dans mes jeunes années, qui m'aurait dit, -- Tu corrompras la femme d'un autre, et tu prostitueras ta soeur à ce même homme dont tu corrompras la femme! Ta propre soeur! . . . Non, je ne suis pas heureux! non, je ne le suis pas! . . . Mais pardonne mes fréquents retours aux préjugés de l'éducation. Ils prennent quelquefois tant d'empire sur moi; ils reviennent avec tant de furie, que je suis obligé de leur céder. Je ne te déguise rien; je veux te rendre spectateur de mes combats et de ma victoire. (III, 4-5)

The promised victory over his "old prejudices" is not forthcoming. Repeated infidelities on the part of the Marquise offend them sufficiently to cause him to discontinue his liaison with her, and to try to reconvert Ursule, as well. But this new defeat of libertinism is not a victory for virtue, either. It might have been, if Fanchette were there to fill the vacuum left by the Marquise: "Je me jeterais dans ses bras; elle me consolerait de la perte que je fais, et des écarts de ma soeur; elle me garantirait d'un écueil plus dangereux...que tous ceux où j'ai donnés." (III, 13) The dangerous trap is the one held out by the seductive appeal of Ursule herself.

Ursule's career in corruption has been marked by no such hesitations as Edmond's; for her, libertinism is a real vocation. She in fact mocks Edmond's timid experimentation with vice: " . . . mon frère est un faible courage; il n'est pas de ces âmes dégagées qui s'élançant au-delà des préjugés, bravent les erreurs communes; Je crois même que sans son penchant au plaisir, il n'aurait pas encore fait le premier

pas vers le bel usage." (III, 14) It is she who causes Edmond to fall into the trap he so dreads, and narrates the event for the delectation of Gaudet:

Il faut que je vous conte une espièglerie que je lui fis l'autre jour. Il me prêchait, et m'ennuyait. Je l'écoutai longtemps: ma patience l'encourage; il continue. Je me lève, et vais l'embrasser: mes caresses le dérident. Il me vient une idée...folle, que l'envie d'humilier le prêcheur me fit suivre.... (Pierre R** lui-même laisse ici une lacune assez considérable: il est à présumer que ce qu'il a retranché ne pouvait pas être mis utilement sous les yeux de sa famille.) Qu'Edmond mérite bien d'être la folie des femmes! En vérité, sa prude cousine n'est pas de mauvais goût, et je crois que la commère ne serait pas fâchée d'avoir encore des pleurs à verser, et une pénitence à faire..." (III, 14-15)

This is not, of course, the sort of incest brought on by an excessive tenderness between blood relatives foreshadowed by the early novels -- that variety will be fully developed in Monsieur Nicolas. On the contrary, it is provoked here by an excess of sensuality, as Edmond indicates in his description of his involvement: "En vérité je ne sais ce que je suis ni ce que je veux, depuis quelques jours: ce n'est pas de l'amour que j'éprouve; des désirs impétueux, effrénés, suffoquants ne sont pas de l'amour: Je ne suis point jaloux; le sentiment désordonné qui m'anime se fortifie en voyant mes rivaux . . . " (III, 18)

Edmond is entrapped by his passions in an immoral situation for which, for the first time, he can find no justification, and he at last begins to draw conclusions concerning his character: "Ah! mon coeur est absolument gâté, corrompu; je le reconnais; je me déteste, et ne voudrais pas guérir de mon

mal!..." (III, 19) In spite of this statement, however, he still entertains the illusion that he can save himself by returning once again to the idea of marrying Fanchette. He visits her, and it does seem that sentiment is still alive in him, for Ursule's spell over him is broken by Fanchette's gentle expression of regret at his and Ursule's waywardness: "ces mots ont été jusqu'à mon coeur; l'objet coupable s'en est effacé; l'aimable Fanchette y a régné en souveraine. Transporté de joie de cet heureux changement, je me suis mis aux genoux de ma jeune divinité..." (III, 19) Fanchette agrees to marry Edmond, in spite of his unworthiness, provided that Mme Parangon gives her consent.

Before Mme Parangon's consent has time to arrive, however, Gaudet and Ursule join forces to dash Edmond's last hopes for reform. Gaudet again displays his tendency to think he knows what is best for Edmond, when he writes to Ursule, "Empêchons ce mariage, qui le rendrait trop raisonnable, et par conséquent aussi malheureux qu'incommode aux autres. Tu connais son faible, Pouponne; retiens l'oiseau prêt à s'échapper en lui faisant aimer sa cage." (III, 20) Ursule carries out her mission by reaffirming her particular hold over Edmond, and by intercepting letters from Mme Parangon to Edmond indicating her presence in Paris.

Edmond is finally freed from this situation when Ursule marries a lowly type she fancies, and is brutalized by him. Suitably enough, he is the instrument of revenge of a disdained lover. Ursule's suffering, for which Edmond feels responsible,

since he has had a hand in her corruption, and the news from Pierre that their corruption is causing their parents to waste away from shame, brings about a reaction in Edmond that is quite different from the one to which we have become accustomed. As he expresses his current feelings,

. . . je veux encore un degré à mes maux; ma seule envie, c'est de braver le malheur à son comble . . . Maudit soit l'amour! maudites soient l'amitié, la nature! Un sentiment profond, affreux, me fait désirer de ne voir que des horreurs, et ne goûter que des atrocités: mes songes ne me présentent que des crimes; je vois ceux qui les commettent enivrés d'une joie barbare, et je l'envie, ne la pouvant partager... (III, 39 -41)

It is clear that here we are witness to a reversal, or a change in the action pattern of the novel. The latest evidence of the destructiveness of his passions does not provoke in Edmond a renewed commitment to virtue, however temporary. On the contrary, his inability to extricate himself from incest with his sister seems to have convinced him that although his passions make him miserable, he is incapable of following the opposite course, the one dictated by his sentiments. Edmond's latest crisis therefore breaks the cycle of impasses that has characterized the action of the novel up to this point. His sentimental and passional motivations can no longer cause impasses by interfering with each other, because they have both been destroyed. Edmond can no longer entertain the illusion that either pursuit is likely to procure happiness for him. As he indicates in the above-quoted expression of his attitudes, awareness of his inability to realize either of his values results in a desperate attempt to deny their existence, to

actively pursue the identity his failure appears to confer upon him: that of an unhappy social outcast, even a criminal.

Edmond first implements his will to give up all constructive activities by killing Ursule's husband. Then, as he describes his situation to Pierre,

tombé dans le découragement comme dans un profond abîme, [ton frère] erre chaque jour en insensé; il fréquente les sociétés les plus viles . . . les fainéants, les escrocs, les filous, les voleurs lui offrent des scènes qui lui plaisent; il aime à voir l'humanité criminelle et dégradée prendre le chemin de l'échafaud. (III, 42)

Edmond sinks for a long period into a vague "océan de turpitude," only resurfacing from time to time to inform Gaudet of his state of mind with such comments as "je me complais sur mon fumier," (III, 46) and to reveal the sequel to Ursule's adventures. Edmond has encountered her in a brothel, and as he writes to Gaudet, she is "atteinte d'une maladie que tu devines aisément." (III, 48)

This dénouement of Edmond's impasses could be an appropriate resolution to the novel. We now know, and the hero knows, why "la ville est un dangereux séjour pour quiconque a le coeur fait comme Edmond." (I, 219) We have seen that the city is not dangerous to Edmond because it makes him discover in himself a vocation for vice, but rather because its atmosphere of freedom exposes him to awareness that of itself, his sensibility places him neither thoroughly within, nor thoroughly without, society. In the reversal we see that he does not possess sufficient strength of character to choose, or even to

effect a compromise, between the social and asocial inclinations of his sensibility. The only course open to him is to try to annihilate his nature, or his sensibility, by frequenting, and attempting to identify with, the miserable scum of society.

Moral as it is, the desperation that has resulted from the emancipation of Edmond's passions is apparently not a decisive enough conclusion for Restif, who, as we know, likes to tie up his stories neatly at the end. Edmond's old conflicts are not, in fact, thoroughly destroyed in this reversal. They are merely suppressed temporarily, and will resurface for a more concrete resolution at a much later date. In order to reach this point, Edmond emerges from his despair, or his "néant", as he calls it, and constructs a new life for himself -- so that when his old conflicts do catch up with him, they are all the more acutely felt. As we shall see, Porter is justified in finding Restif guilty of "creating a problematic cumulation of effects . . . The end of the novel is distressingly melodramatic."¹⁰ Porter attributes the weaknesses of the ending to the fact that the events in the latter part of the novel, beginning with Edmond's arrival in Paris, have much less basis in Restif's actual experiences than they do in the first part; he notes however, that the end does correspond to the author's state of mind: "That is to say, he will try to find in his novel an equivalent in action for the way he felt about himself after he had lost his self-respect." (p. 143) Restif's own guilt complex is an interesting explanation for

¹⁰Op. cit. (above, note 2), p. 144.

the fact that Edmond will be called upon to pay a much higher price for his sins than that of his present discouragement.

The period of what Edmond calls his "férocité" gives way to a new line of action, in which the apparent defeat of his sensibility is turned to more constructive ends. This change is brought about when Edmond falls seriously ill, and is nursed back to physical and mental health by a warm-hearted prostitute, who is "enjouée, sémillante, légère, un peu plus qu'étourdie, et portant le nom de Zéphire, comme le plus analogue: c'est l'inconséquence, la vivacité, la pétulance personnifiées . . . " (III, 51)

Zéphire restores Edmond's interest in love; hence, his interest in life. But love no longer has the same significance for him it had before his period of defeatism. Appropriately enough, Zéphire encourages Edmond to take a light view of women and love. Love is now more a hobby than a full-time activity for Edmond; he no longer allows it to become the serious involvement that has caused him so much soul-searching as to its significance for his moral identity.

Gaudet is enchanted with this evolution in Edmond's attitudes, for they now promise to lend themselves to Edmond's advancement in the world. Although Edmond has not acquired his new sense of freedom concerning love through mature reflection, but through exhaustion resulting from the conflicts his pre-occupation with love has caused him, the desired effect is attained; love now leaves Edmond time and energy for more

profitable pursuits. As Gaudet appreciates the situation,

. . . tu vois à présent l'amour, non comme on l'envisage en commençant à vivre, mais tel qu'il est réellement: l'amour n'est qu'une agitation violente, à laquelle le repos du coeur est préférable . . . Tu connais les délices de l'amour sous toutes les formes possibles; il ne t'en imposera plus . . . à présent, tu commanderas en maître à l'objet de tes désirs. Te voilà dans un âge où le sang-froid est nécessaire; il est temps que l'ambition succède au goût du plaisir. Je veux te faire un sort, un nom, et j'espère te porter aussi loin qu'il sera possible . . .

(III, 102)

We note here that Gaudet is changing his tune. His concept of the proper use of reason has been considerably modified. Rather than serving to construct a personal ethic that does justice to what is most essential in both nature and society, reason now serves as a weapon against society in the name of ambition. As Gaudet says, " . . . de quoi nous servirait les lumières de la raison, si ce n'est pour nous faire profiter de l'instinct de tous les êtres? Je te le répète, rapportons tout à nous; profitons des vices et des vertus de ceux qui nous environnent; de leurs lumières, et de leur ignorance . . . "

(III, 110) Gaudet's understanding of reciprocity has thus evolved. Reciprocity no longer limits emancipation from the laws of society, but rather justifies taking advantage of its vices: "Cela se fait. Depuis longtemps, je te recommande d'envisager les choses qui se font ordinairement, comme légitimes . . . on dit, on fait, on croit, on peut, toutes les choses qui commencent par une de ces phrases, sont permises, fussent-elles défendues par toutes les lois." (III, 210) It would seem, then, that Gaudet has reserved exposition of the

cynicism of his philosophy for the moment when the defeat of Edmond's moral prejudices, aided by Gaudet's original, more noble philosophy of nature, would allow him to accept it.

Edmond indeed appears ready to enter into Gaudet's views. His version of Gaudet's philosophy is, do unto others what others would do unto you if they were strong enough: "Tâchons donc, mon cher, comme tu me l'as dit une fois, de nous maintenir au rang des mangeurs; le rôle des mangés n'est fait que pour les faibles et les sots." (III, 120) Yet there is some indication that the new self Edmond has discovered is not to be his permanent identity. Although the passional aspect of his former self has become inactive; his sentimental inclinations have not been repressed. He is frequently made aware of this, as when he catches a glimpse of Mme Parangon in Paris. He is upset by this "vision," as he confides to Gaudet: "Je fus si troublé de la vision dont je t'ai parlé . . . que de la nuit je n'ai pu goûter de repos. O nuit cruelle! que de tourments tu viens de renouveler!" (III, 84) He is further shaken when he subsequently receives a reproachful letter from her indicating that she has found Ursule, and has taken her away for a cure of her corruption and its effects: "Mon coeur palpite, et ma main tremble...La foudre est moins terrible...la mort est moins redoutable que le reproche de la vertu . . . Je suis aterrité...." (III, 90) The "sombre nuage" brought over Edmond's spirits by this experience is temporary, however; it does not divert him from pursuing his wordly ambitions.

After discouraging some inferior projects Edmond undertakes,

such as acting and authorship, Gaudet succeeds in placing Edmond in the ranks of the "mangeurs" by arranging his marriage to a rich and ugly old lady -- and he gives Edmond moral support by marrying the woman's daughter, who is also well advanced in age. Edmond does not share the appreciation of the grotesqueness of the situation that Gaudet displays when he says of his wife, " . . . depuis notre mariage, j'aurais été deux fois tenté de l'embrasser, sans cette malheureuse dent saffranée qui lui sort de la bouche, et cette grosse verrue qu'elle a sur le nez, qui n'imite pas mal une corne de rhinocéros."

(III, 225) But the disgust Edmond experiences at having to "caresser cela," as he describes his relations with his wife, is compensated for by the fact that both of the women soon die, and Edmond's improved financial circumstances permit him to become a magistrate. He will not long enjoy his influential position, however.

Zéphire, who has found her own way to virtue, appeals to Mme Parangon to seize the opportunity to marry Edmond (she is now a widow), and thus save him from further influence by Gaudet: " . . . il s'agit d'un malade, d'un esprit subjugué; il faut le guérir, l'arracher à la séduction, l'empêcher de nous échapper, ou plutôt empêcher qu'il ne s'échappe à lui-même." (III, 238) Mme Parangon is willing, and she is optimistic of success: "Enfin, il paraît que la divine justice est satisfaite . . . " (III, 239) Mme Parangon does succeed in causing Edmond to shed his varnish of cynicism and find at last his true self; but she does so only indirectly, and not at all in the way she had intended.

Justice, divine or otherwise, is by no means satisfied. Gaudet and Edmond are accused by relatives of the deceased of having murdered their wives. During their arrest, the instability of a life style based on the detachment of either Edmond or Gaudet is exposed in spectacular fashion. The collapse of their world is brought about involuntarily by Mme Parangon, who faints when Edmond is about to be led off to prison. Edmond, who believes she is dying, kills several guards who try to prevent him from rushing to her aid:

Un lion en fureur est moins terrible. -- Ah! monstres, s'est-il écrié, hommes lâches et vils, vous ne me permettez pas de la secourir! . . . Il s'est emparé d'une bayonnette; et en un clin d'oeil, il en a poignardé trois . . . (IV, 5)

Gaudet then joins the fray:

M. Gaudet, cet homme prudent jusqu'alors, qui avait répondu avec le plus grand sang-froid, les choses les plus raisonnables quand on l'avait arrêté, M. Gaudet a perdu la raison: et soit que des craintes bien fondées lui fissent appréhender les regards sévères de la justice; soit que le ciel las de ses crimes.... Se voyant abandonné de ses gardes, qui tous s'étaient précipités pour saisir Edmond, il est tombé sur eux par derrière, en a désarmé un, et sans leur donner le temps de se reconnaître, il a fait mordre la poussière à quatre hommes de l'escouade, à l'exempt, et au commissaire. (IV, 5)

When Edmond proceeds to stab Zéphire by mistake in his frenzied defense of Mme Parangon, Gaudet, "effrayé de ce coup", aids him to escape and stays behind to delay pursuit. Edmond is subsequently recaptured, however, and the two face trial. They are acquitted of the murder of their wives, but Gaudet is condemned to death for his murder of the guards. Since Edmond does not appear to be a hardened criminal (he tries to take the blame for all the crimes, "assurant qu'il croyait les avoir

tous commis, et qu'il n'était pas probable que son ami, homme rassis et raisonnable, se fût porté à cet excès." (IV, 14) he is only sentenced to the galleys after being obliged to witness Gaudet's execution -- or rather the execution of Gaudet's dead body. Gaudet manages to carry his refusal to submit to society to the end by stabbing himself just before he is to mount the scaffold, saying, "Ils ne me tueront pas, et je ferai mon sort -- ." (IV, 16)

Edmond's sentence to the galleys is successfully appealed by his friends, but he refuses to return to them, and as he later explains his reasons,

J'erre depuis trois ans, et depuis trois ans je me punis . . . avez-vous pu croire qu'en me soustrayant au châtement, vous me soustrairiez à la peine? Avez-vous pensé que j'abuserais de vos bontés . . . Qui, moi! je vous aurais associé un infâme forçat! en passant dans les rues, par les chemins, on m'aurait montré avec vous, et l'on aurait dit: Le voilà! Ce mot n'est rien, c'est la conscience de celui dont on le dit qui le rend foudroyant....Non . . . je ne dois plus être heureux . . . (IV, 43)

It is evident that the arrest scene has caused another reversal. Character traits of both Gaudet and Edmond are brought into the open that make it impossible for them to pursue the action line sustained by their cynicism.

It is Edmond's old sentimental self that re-emerges in his response to the threat to Mme Parangon, who has been the most constant object of his tenderness. Melodramatically extreme as this expression of his sentimental inclinations may appear, we have to admire its suitability to his character, and the devious way in which it leads to a decisive victory

for virtue.

Edmond has been well-established as a creature of extremes, and as a man whose sentimental extreme can never reach active expression under ordinary circumstances. The violent explosion of his sentimentality in the arrest scene therefore has a certain appropriateness to his character; and its very violence definitively destroys the motivations that have separated him from virtue throughout his career. Edmond's violence not only points up the artificiality of the detachment and indifference that have permitted him to play the role of the cynic, it also leads to a destruction of his passional motivations that is more decisive than the discouragement that followed his incest with Ursule. The fact that his sentiments have at last become active, only to destroy or seriously damage their objects (he believes he has killed Zéphire, and is responsible for Gaudet's death and the eternal anguish of Mme Parangon), will cause Edmond to reject -- in retrospect, since it has already become inactive -- the aspect of his temperament that has led him to the present artificial situation, which has provoked such a perverted expression of his better nature.

We may say, therefore, that Edmond's violence, although it happens to be directed against representatives of the social order, is in fact a spontaneous and rather misguided revolt against himself, or against the false situation into which he has allowed himself to be led, rather than a revolt against society. His fundamental respect for society is indicated by the fact that he later demands punishment at the hands of the

law, in contrast to Gaudet's refusal to accept such punishment.

For Gaudet, the carnage of the arrest scene has a rather different significance than it has for Edmond. We need not attribute his seconding of Edmond in the attack on the guards to either panic or Providence, as does the witness of the episode. His participation, and his later decision to stay behind so as to cover Edmond's escape, are perhaps in part motivated by solidarity with his friend and disciple. But the situation also releases an aspect of Gaudet's personality that exposes the artificiality of his cynical life style, as it does for Edmond. But for Gaudet, that life style is not artificial because it is directly opposed to his fundamental nature; it is artificial because it is not a completely frank expression of his true nature. Gaudet reveals that behind his apparently detached and coldly rational exploitation of the vices of society for enjoyment or profit, there lies a much more violently and emotionally anti-social aggressivity. He does much more killing in this episode than is necessary to save Edmond, and he accompanies his blows with murmured comments such as "meurs, infâme" (IV, 6), as if he had found the most accurate expression of his mission in life.

Although murder of agents of the social order may be a faithful representation of his true feelings, Gaudet does not seem to consider it a viable alternative to attacking society from within. His expression of his will to stay behind while Edmond escapes suggests awareness that in the present exposure of his true self, he has reached a dead-end in his career as

an effective anti-social individual, and that the end of his career is the end of his life; for unlike Edmond, he has no alternative identity to adopt. "Sauve-toi," he says to Edmond, "tu peux vivre encore: pour moi, je touche au bout de la carrière -- " (IV, 6)

Gaudet makes it clear that in renouncing his career, he is not repudiating his fundamental defiance of society. He in fact attempts to reaffirm his revolt against social authority by stabbing himself then and there, before he can be captured. The fact that the attempt fails, and he thus lives to face execution, but provides him with an opportunity to express his defiance of society in more spectacular fashion by killing himself under the eyes of the public executioner. He furthermore prepares this ultimate manifestation of his will to totally dissociate himself from society by expressing verbally his refusal to accept the criminal identity conferred upon him by public and legal opinion: " . . . les hommes peuvent bien déclarer que tel de leurs semblables est flétri, mais non le flétrir." (IV, 16)

Both Edmond and Gaudet thus arrive at the end of their careers as cynics, and Edmond is left alone to create a new life for himself. He first affirms his new-found sentimental identity by punishing himself for all of his past crimes against morality, and in this he provides support for Robert Mauzi's point that "Si la vertu est source de bonheur pour l'âme qui s'abandonne à sa douce effusion, elle ravage et torture

épouvantablement l'âme rétive qui s'y refuse. Le remords devient ainsi le signe négatif de la vertu."¹¹ The first three years of Edmond's wandering, following his release from prison, are devoted to doing penance at the scenes of his progressive corruption, in recognition of the fact that his present status as an "infâme forçat" is the end result of his original emancipation from moral prejudices. He starts his pilgrimage, in fact, with an incognito visit to the family farm, as if to acknowledge that separation from his family was the first cause of his separation from virtue. There, he meets with a reception that gratifies his desire for punishment. As he writes to Pierre,

Avant hier j'ai baisé le seuil de ta porte; je me suis prosterné devant la demeure de nos vénérables parents. Je t'ai vu; et les sanglots m'ont suffoqué. Ton chien est venu pour me mordre; il a reculé en hurlant, dès qu'il m'a eu senti, comme si j'eusse été une bête féroce: tu l'as sans doute pensé toi-même; tu as lancé une pierre; elle m'a atteint: c'est la première de mon supplice.... (IV, 42)

The moment when positive commitment to virtue will succeed Edmond's detailed rejection of everything that has separated him from it is still far off. His period of expiation is in fact prolonged by an exaggerated revolt against passion and its effects. Ursule has married the Marquis, for the sake of their son, and when Edmond sees them together, he believes she has returned to vice. Under the influence of a blind rage, he kills her, thus adding sororicide to his list of sins

¹¹L'Idée du bonheur au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1960), pp. 617-618.

requiring punishment.

The period of expiation is arduous, and Providence has a hand in this. Edmond loses the arm that killed Ursule when he is bitten by a poisonous snake. He next goes off to Canada to live with the eskimos, whose barbaric life style -- they are parricides -- suits the state of his soul. He eventually returns to France, but does not immediately yield to the urging of his friends, who have constantly believed that he is more "malheureux" than "coupable", to join the closely-knit virtuous society they have formed in his absence. Their society is so closely knit, in fact, that Mme Parangon's and Edmond's daughter, and Zéphire's and Edmond's son, have been innocently encouraged by Zéphire to marry. Their incest is, in Mme Parangon's opinion, part of God's punishment for her sins.

Edmond waits to join the virtuous society of his friends until blindness and impotence assure the permanency of his rejection of passional motivations. Shortly before his return, he writes, "Je suis sans passions; la source de la plus extrême de toutes est retranchée; . . . méprisez l'ombre d'un homme qui se survit à lui-même; et surtout apprenez que ce qu'il vient de perdre, ce n'est pas de son choix, mais la suite de ses anciens débordements." (IV, 133-134)

A tender reunion with Mme Parangon, his friends, and his various offspring finally takes place, and Edmond's return to virtue is solemnized by marriage to Mme Parangon. But the happiness Edmond has struggled for so long to attain is ephemeral. When his nephew, the son of Ursule and the Marquis, arrives

to join the festivities, Edmond is run over by his carriage -- the one in which he killed Ursule. Here ends Edmond's story.

According to Pierre, the moral is as follows:

Mes enfants, voilà d'étranges événements! Je vous les ai mis sous les yeux, non pour satisfaire une curiosité vaine, mais pour que vous profitiez des lumières qu'ils vous ont procurées. Le crime ne reste jamais sans punition; Manon a été punie; M. Parangon aussi par une maladie douloureuse; et Gaudet plus que tous les autres: D'Arras a péri; Ursule fut châtiée de la main du Seigneur; la respectable Femme fut affligée par celui qui lui avait plu; Edmond enfin plus faible que coupable, a été traité selon ses oeuvres: M. le Marquis de ~~xxx~~ lui-même, ainsi que sa première femme sont tombés sous la verge de l'Ange Exterminateur. Dieu est juste. (IV, 151)

We may agree with Pierre that God deals out the punishments in this novel, if he means that in addition to causing Edmond to lose his arm, and to be run over by the carriage in which he killed Ursule, God is also responsible for the fact that emancipation from social morality has inherent effects upon the happiness of the characters.

Edmond's plot has paralleled the internal sentimental plots of La Confidence nécessaire and La Fille naturelle by developing the dynamic role of passion in human activity, and has gone beyond them by showing that of themselves, passional motivations are contrary to happiness because they lead the individual to commit acts that offend his own social instincts. The sharpened focus of the internal sentimental plot on the individual, rather than on society, thus enlarges upon the Restivian conception of human nature. Edmond's plot exposes the artificiality of the earlier presentation of a human nature dominated by sentiment; but it does not fall into the opposite

extreme, and affirm that man is a passional creature who requires only passional satisfactions. Instead, Le Paysan perversi offers a vision of human nature as composed of two opposing and irreconcilable elements, sentiment and passion; passion dominates acts, and sentiment dominates attitudes.

For this reason, we assume that in affirming that Edmond's story will, of itself, provide a useful negative lesson in morality for his children, Pierre means that it will encourage them to stay at home. Edmond's story has improved upon the morality of the earlier novels in showing the inherent detrimental effects of passion; but at the same time it has shown more clearly than ever the difficulty of following the course dictated by sentiment. The most sentiment can do to combat passion in Edmond is to prevent him from finding full satisfaction in expression of his sensuality. When this finally results in discouragement with his passional motivations, sentiment still does not become the basis of his activity. Edmond's enslavement by his passions has undermined his confidence in his ability to be virtuous, so he gives up the effort. His sentiments only become active again when they are stimulated by the unusual circumstances of the arrest scene. The implication of the earlier novels that human nature must be rigidly conditioned if the individual is to become a thoroughly social, hence happy, creature, is thus fully justified by the hero of Le Paysan perversi. Pierre seems to realize, in fact, that the only way to avoid a repetition of the disasters that have resulted from the flourishing of Edmond's passions is to

confine the passions of his children to arid soil, where they cannot develop. He appends to the novel a project for a communistic organization of the family that promises to leave its members little time or privacy for extra-curricular activities.

The plots of the other characters provide variations on the moral we have extracted from Edmond's plot. We have discussed the other characters mainly when they have influenced Edmond's moral-sentimental education in some way, and it has been clear that they do not serve merely as catalysts for Edmond's conflicts. The multiple point of view of the epistolary form has given us insights into the attitudes of some of the secondary characters, and has permitted us to see that they, too, have experienced, in various ways, the obstacles that their own natures oppose to happiness. Edmond, in his turn, has a definite responsibility in exposing them to this experience.

The contrasting ways in which Edmond and Ursule respond to the corruptive influence of city life supports the tenet of the earlier novels, Adèle in particular, that women are led astray by their sensuality even more easily than are men. Unlike Edmond, Ursule is contaminated on the level of act and attitude by acquaintance with the delights of sensuality. Her headlong progress into corruption is not retarded by a lingering attachment to virtue. In the incest episode, where the careers of brother and sister converge, we have had occasion to compare their attitudes directly. Ursule throws herself body and soul into the seduction of her brother, whereas Edmond struggles

desperately against this ultimate entrapment by his lower instincts. Their contrasting attitudes toward their own corruption are evident as well in their parallel involvements with the Marquis and his wife. At the very moment of consummating his liaison with the Marquise, Edmond has definite mental reservations; but once Ursule decides to become the Marquis' mistress, she devotes herself to making her power over him complete. In league with the Marquise, she plots the financial ruin of her lover. In Ursule, vanity and ambition combine with sensuality to render her emancipation from virtue more complete than Edmond's. These contrasts come out more strongly, of course, in the novel that develops her career in detail, La Paysanne pervertie (1780-83), and more opportunity for direct comparison between the experiences of Edmond and Ursule is provided when their stories are combined in Le Paysan et la Paysanne pervertis (1784-1787).

In keeping with the inactivity of the social instinct in Ursule, it takes something rather more tangible than moral anguish to make her renounce her sensual motivations. Like Edmond, she does not commit herself to virtue until her passions become inactive. But they do not become inactive through discouragement, as they do in Edmond; they cease to function when venereal disease causes her extreme physical disintegration. Past indulgence in his passions ultimately has the same effect on Edmond, of course, but it plays only a secondary role in his reform. It assures the permanence of a reform that has already been accomplished by the revolt of his sentimental

self. In contrast, Ursule is only receptive to the beneficent influence of virtue, in the shape of Mme Parangon, when she is rendered utterly helpless by disease.

Under Mme Parangon's care, Ursule recovers beauty, virtue, and happiness, and she invites Edmond to take this as indication that he, too, can still be saved:

Ose m'imiter, Edmond, frère trop cher et trop coupable, ose te confier à la Vertu! Depuis que je respire le même air qu'elle, mon âme s'est épurée; depuis que je suis ses traces, le gouffre du crime s'est fermé sous mes pas . . . Je trouve une douceur inexprimable, inattendue (car je n'aurais jamais osé l'espérer) dans la vie paisible que je mène . . .
(III, 93)

Ursule's peace is of short duration, however. Her new sense of moral responsibility causes her to marry the Marquis for the sake of their son, the fruit of her abduction by the Marquis, and this means that she continues to pay for her first departure from virtue, involuntary as it was, with the unhappiness, of being tied to a man who has not given up his penchant for vice. And later, of course, she experiences, in more vivid fashion, the impossibility of thoroughly casting off her former identity, when Edmond kills her, believing she has returned to corruption.

Ursule's plot therefore supplements the pessimistic implications of Edmond's career by suggesting that women have even a greater capacity than men for self-destruction through corruption. It also shows the full extent to which the individual is condemned to unhappiness by his passions. The happiness Edmond acquires as a result of his total commitment

to virtue is cut short when he is run over by the carriage in which he killed his sister; but the life Ursule leads following her reform shows, in more effective fashion, the far-reaching consequences of passional motivations. Even when the difficult task of reform is accomplished, past sins against virtue continue to have detrimental effects on happiness.

The plots of the other important women in Edmond's life, Manon and Mme Parangon, have similar implications, although they mitigate, on one level, the fatalism of Edmond's and Ursule's plots. The experiences of these two women suggest that it is in fact given to some individuals, even to women, to resist the pull of their sensual natures, and obey the dictates of their sentimental attachment to virtue. After a first confrontation with concrete evidence that the paths into which they are led by their sensuality are opposed to happiness, both Manon and Mme Parangon reaffirm their virtue.

When Manon falls in love with Edmond, she discovers the superior satisfactions offered by sentimental values, and this causes her to reject the pleasures of her illicit liaison with Parangon, to the point of considering them a form of torture. As she describes the evolution in her attitudes provoked by her love for Edmond, " . . . mon goût devint de la tendresse. Ce fut alors que la vertu commença de rentrer dans mon coeur avec le véritable amour . . . quel supplice, que d'aimer, avec passion, et d'être forcé de se livrer...." (I, 187) New-found modesty prevents Manon from being more explicit concerning the nature of the torture, but it is clear that she means the attentions of Parangon. Manon eventually manages to free

herself from Parangon's influence, and devotes herself to being a virtuous wife, in hopes of earning Edmond's love and respect.

Edmond fortifies Mme Parangon's virtue in a rather different way. When he awakens in her a passional inclination, and leads her to express it, he causes her to take energetic defensive measures against further temptation. We have suggested that although Edmond feels he violates Mme Parangon, she is not precisely an innocent and unwilling victim of Edmond's passion. Her sensual response to Edmond is evident from the first moment she expresses her penchant for him, and during the crucial scene, she does not do all she could to help Edmond retain his self-control. During the period of delirium that follows the compromise of her virtue, she further reveals the true nature of her attraction to Edmond. As he says, "Dans les plus violents accès de son délire, si je l'embrasse, elle sourit, me presse contre son coeur, et semble m'inviter à renouveler mon offense...." (II, 152) Edmond does not respond to the invitation. On the contrary, concern for her health causes him to solemnly promise to respect her virtue in future, and this recalls her to her virtuous self. Reason returns, and with it, a renewed determination to resist Edmond. Her first act, reports Edmond, "a été de me donner l'ordre de sortir de sa présence, et de ne la voir qu'avec tout le monde." (I, 153) Knowledge that her nature disposes her to betray her principles does not, therefore, cause Mme Parangon to question their validity; it inspires her, rather, to reform her nature. And unlike Edmond, she implements that will.

Manon and Mme Parangon thus triumph over their sensuality with relative facility, in comparison to Edmond and Ursule. But their fates prolong the suggestion of Edmond's and Ursule's plots that reform cannot undo the damage to happiness caused by offenses against virtue. Manon's project for happiness is condemned to failure by the fact that her first effort to ensnare Edmond is an expression of her sensual nature, in that it takes the form of seduction, and is designed to give her greater security in her liaison with Parangon. In thus attracting Edmond by awakening his sensuality, she prepares frustration of her subsequent desire for a stable sentimental relationship with him, by creating for herself a husband who is dominated by his passions. As we have seen, she prefers death to this situation.

Mme Parangon is also rendered permanently unhappy by her illicit love, although it no longer separates her from virtue by manifesting its passional nature. She is still emotionally involved with a man who is dominated by his passions, and this destroys the contentment of her return to virtue. Her love for Edmond makes her sensitive to the effects of his continuing indulgence of his passions, which not only separates them, and causes Edmond's own unhappiness, it also serves as a constant reminder of Mme Parangon's own flawed virtue. She finds a vivid image to describe this situation to Edmond:

. . . ne croyez pas que la certitude que vous êtes avili, dégradé, ne croyez pas qu'elle vous rende odieux à celle que vous offensez; non, mon cousin; par un juste décret sans doute, le Ciel me condamne au supplice de ceux qu'on lie avec un cadavre infect; et cette horrible image,

qui me poursuit en tout lieu, qui ne m'abandonne pas un instant, est la punition de la faute involontaire que j'ai faite, de prendre pour vous des sentiments,.... qu'il faut bien qui soient criminels. (II, 181-182)

Although we consider Edmond's death, at the very moment his reaffirmed virtue permits their union, rather loosely connected to his past sins, it is for Mme Parangon the ultimate way in which she is rendered unhappy by a love that involves her in the effects of Edmond's passions.

Edmond and the women in his life therefore share a common experience of the involuntary crimes that human nature commits against happiness. Gaudet is subject to the same experience, on a rather different level. Like the other characters, he commits acts that violate the tenets of social morality. But in so doing he follows reason, instead of passion. He professes rational independence from the aspects of human nature that have caused conflicts and unhappiness in the other characters: the tyranny of the passions, on the one hand, and the tyranny of emotional attachment to virtue, on the other. And Pierre suggests that Gaudet is punished, "plus que tous les autres," (see above, p. 149) by the ignominy of public condemnation, because he is the most voluntarily anti-social character in Edmond's world. It would seem that although one cannot acquire happiness through sensibility, in the absence of outside support, reason is even more inconducive to happiness. Reason leads the individual to commit anti-social acts, which eventually expose him to social retaliation. In the case of Gaudet, however, this only occurs when reason ceases to

function, when he loses his self-control in the arrest episode.

Gaudet's error, the act that leads to his destruction, is not his disrespect for social laws, or even his exploitation of the vices of society, but rather his failure to observe the limits of his own philosophy, the conditions upon which its efficacy for happiness depends. As he had told Edmond, he must liberate himself from social laws, "sans troubler l'ordre politique, et sans t'attirer de la part des autres individus une répulsion désagréable." (II, 199) When Gaudet's self-possession gives way to a passionate outburst of violence in the arrest scene, in response to Edmond's own violence, he does expose himself to social reprisal. But he does not take this as indication that in being an anti-social individual, he has acted against his own best interests. He feels, rather, that he is incapable of implementing adequately an anti-social ideal that involves self-domination in the interest of exploiting the weaknesses of others. The sangfroid he so highly prizes is not proof against the provocations of external circumstances. And since reform, commitment to virtue, does not offer a life style that suits his nature any better, he prefers to retire from life -- in a way that leaves no doubt that his fundamentally anti-social attitude subsists, even if he can no longer live that attitude.

Gaudet's plot thus fails to show the inherent effects on happiness of rational emancipation from social morality, even if this emancipation goes beyond construction of a personal ethic of independence, and is used as a weapon against society.

But Gaudet's story rejoins those of the other characters in showing that the individual is unable to escape the destructive caprices of his passions, whether they take the form of sexuality, or anti-social antagonism -- in society as it exists, at any rate.

Le Paysan perversi is, in fact, more than just a collection of parallel experiences of the individual's inability to dominate his nature so as to acquire happiness. This is an epistolary novel that deserves the name, according to the definition offered by Henri Coulet: " . . . dans presque tous les romans par lettres qui méritent ce nom, la vérité n'est dans aucun personnage, elle est dans un lieu où convergent les divers fragments de vérité et où se compensent les diverses erreurs."¹² The fragments of truth presented by each character's experience of his capricious nature converge in the reciprocal quality of these experiences. The activity of each character's passional instincts is a response to the propensity of other characters to obey impulses that create disorder. We therefore consider the interdependency of the happiness of the characters, rather than the failure of any one character to attain happiness, the "truth", or the thematic center, of the novel. Happiness involves control of one's own nature, and this is only possible if the natures of other individuals are under control as well. Morality, and happiness, is thus a collective, rather than an individual concern. This is very

¹²Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution (Paris, 1967), I, 480.

much the conclusion Pierre draws from the letters he has edited, as he indicates in his proposal to create a virtuous micro-society that will make the collective moral experience a positive one, in opposition to the self-perpetuating chaos of society at large.

CONCLUSION

We are struck by a contrast in texture, or in structural quality, between Restif's non-autobiographical novels and the first of the novels inspired by his own experiences, Le Paysan perversi, when we disengage ourselves from myopic examination of detail, stepping back from the novels, as we might from paintings, in order to receive a general impression of form and color. There is indeed, as Restif and other critics have asserted, a marked difference between the fictional worlds arising from the two sources of inspiration. This difference lends itself rather well, in fact, to description in pictorial terms.

The non-autobiographical worlds display a flat, two-dimensional quality. The values of virtue and vice are opposed in an external, unambiguous conflict between black and white, where white dominates. Details of character portrayal are thus sacrificed to clarity of outline, and both the adventure and external sentimental plots contribute to this effect. The difference between the two plots is that in the adventure plots a clear definition of values is maintained by fortuitous events, whereas in the external sentimental plots the hero's family visibly structures his world in order to eliminate ambiguities.

In contrast, the world of Le Paysan perversi is three-dimensional. The nuanced coloration of moral issues produced by the complex motives of the hero and the secondary characters, as communicated by the multiple point of view of the epistolary form, and the more concrete presentation of the modes of

existence of the characters, contribute to an impression of life that is lacking in the non-autobiographical novels. This has led Bachelin to comment that we seek in vain a structural mechanism at the heart of the action of Le Paysan perversi, but "En revanche, à toutes les pages nous y trouverons la vie frissonnante."¹ We take exception to the assertion that Edmond's world is devoid of structure; but it is certainly evident that his search for identity is more complex than that of the other heroes -- witness the number of pages required to describe it, whereas the moral-sentimental educations of the other heroes have lent themselves to relatively succinct description. The difference in length of discussion has nothing to do with the length of the novel. Many of the non-autobiographical novels are as long, if not longer, than Le Paysan perversi. The difference lies in that fact that in Le Paysan perversi, all of the narrative is devoted to the moral development of the hero and to the complementary development of the secondary characters. In the other novels, the narrative is frequently interrupted by tiroirs giving past histories of minor characters, which are irrelevant to the movement of the main plots.

These observations concerning contrasts in esthetic effect between Le Paysan perversi and the non-autobiographical novels invite the conclusion that Restif was capable of creating convincing fictional worlds only out of situations in which he had

¹Henri Bachelin, ed. L'Oeuvre de Restif de la Bretonne (Paris, 1930), VI, 467.

been personally involved. Bégué draws this conclusion when he states, "Ce sont, somme toute, ses livres autobiographiques surtout, qui peuvent donner à Rétif le titre de romancier."² Although we acknowledge the opposition in structural quality between the two kinds of fictional world in Restif, we stop short of concluding that the contrast in esthetic effect reflects a radical opposition in basic vision. If the data of our study imposes recognition of contrasts, it also imposes the conclusion that these contrasts are the effect of different techniques in presenting a common problem.

The apparent opposition between the non-autobiographical novels and the first of the autobiographical novels is attenuated by the fact that each of Restif's characters, regardless of his origins, provides a similar lesson in morality. As Restif himself has said, his hero instructs either "par ses vertus, par ses succès," or "par ses chutes, par ses malheurs" (see above, pp. 2-3). In the first place, the non-autobiographical heroes are happy, and the characters of Le Paysan pervers are unhappy, in terms of their adherence to or their departure from a well-defined ideal of morality that is common to all of the novels.

The happiness that Restif's virtuous characters enjoy, and of which his less virtuous characters are deprived, is very much that described in the following passage from the Encyclopédie

²Armand Bégué, Etat présent des études sur Rétif de la Bretonne (Paris, 1948), p. 91.

article, Bonheur: "Notre bonheur le plus parfait dans cette vie n'est donc . . . qu'un état tranquille semé ça et là de quelques plaisirs qui en égaient le fond."³ In Restif's novels, the link between this kind of happiness and morality is provided by the definition of virtue as the perpetuation of a cohesive family unit (with particular emphasis on the nucleus of the family, the couple) which is, by its very nature, conducive to a uniform state of tranquility enlivened by positive pleasures. The calm is found in the stability and the predictability of human relationships created by the adherence of individuals to clearly defined family roles; and this is prevented from becoming an "indolence paraisseuse, où notre activité n'ait rien à saisir."⁴ (which is the danger of too much tranquility, according to the Encyclopédie article), by the affective and sensual pleasures that family relationships provide. The conception of the family as the appropriate framework for happiness is so thoroughly developed in Restif's novels that Robert Mauzi could very well have added them to La Nouvelle Héloïse as an illustration of the ideal of "bonheur domestique" in the eighteenth century novel, which he describes thus:

Le fond du bonheur domestique, c'est l'innocence.
L'amour entre époux est le seul à ne pas comporter
d'amertume, car il est le seul que n'entache aucune
faute, que ne compromet aucune violence . . . Le

³Diderot et al., Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers (Paris: Briasson, 1751-65), II, 322.

⁴Loc. cit.

bonheur familial . . . est lié à une certaine structure. C'est un bonheur de groupe, un état moyen entre la sociabilité étendue au "monde", où l'on risque de se perdre, et la solitude insupportable à toute âme sensible . . . A l'intérieur du groupe, des relations de nature différente s'établissent. Le bonheur domestique suppose une polyvalence du coeur, dont il remplit et épuise les besoins, grâce aux divers liens -- conjugal, paternel, filial, fraternel -- qui tissent la trame de l'univers familial.⁵

We add that in Restif's novels, the "divers liens" represent, not so much a pleasing variety of emotions, as a variety of objects for the same emotion. We have seen how all family affections are characterized by a general tenderness and respect, to the point that they adjust easily, if need be, to a change in relationship -- as when D'Azinval of La Fille naturelle learns that the girl he is planning to marry is his daughter, for example. We have also had occasion to observe that this failure to differentiate between conjugal relationships and filial or fraternal affections is sometimes exaggerated, and has rather peculiar effects. The heroine of Adèle, who wants to marry her brother, is a case in point.

Our conception of the ideal of happiness in Restif is principally derived from the non-autobiographical novels, and from the external sentimental plots in particular, where the ideal dominates the lives of the characters. In these plots, the narrative typically focuses on characters who divide their time between developing their ideas on the subject of virtue and

⁵Robert Mauzi, L'Idée du bonheur dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1960), p. 358.

happiness, and leading recalcitrant characters to conform to these ideas; to manifest, in particular, tender, respectful, and moderately passionate love vis-à-vis a worthy object in view of forming a stable and happy couple.

The fact that we extract the family ethic mainly from the novels in which it is practiced by the majority of the characters does not mean, however, that it is absent from the world of Restif's unhappy perverted peasant. The subject of Le Paysan perverti is, precisely, the unhappiness attendant upon departure from virtue; and the virtue from which Edmond quite literally departs when he goes to town to seek his fortune is essentially the same family ethic as that developed in the other novels. We do have, however, a different perspective on the ethic in Le Paysan perverti than in the other novels. The image of the betrayed ethic held up to Edmond and the reader in the letters of Pierre represents virtue as a life style in more concrete fashion than the other novels, no doubt because here Restif attributes it to a milieu he knew. As we have seen in Pierre's appreciation of the qualities of his fiancée (see above p. 106), virtue is more practical and less sentimental than in the other novels. The peasants' devotion to family roles is furthermore accompanied by other, less noble motivations, such as pride and ambition.

This paradisiac style of existence serves, as a subject for nostalgia or envy in Edmond when he reads Pierre's letters; but it also has a more active presence in the novel, in Edmond's repeated attempts to realize innocent, stable love relationships

analogous to those of the country. He does eventually succeed in the attempt, of course, and finds happiness in his success, but so tardily that the unhappy consequences of departure from virtue nevertheless form the main development of the novel.

In the non-autobiographical novels, then, the Restivian hero is virtuous and happy, in Le Paysan perversi he is less virtuous and unhappy, and both virtue and happiness have much the same meaning in both contexts. But in making these observations, we do not suggest that the unity of vision of the two worlds resides only in their complementary presentations, the one negative and the other positive, of the same lesson, the necessity of morality to happiness. The characters' successes and failures in attaining happiness in virtue are not the only elements of instruction in the novels; the reasons for them are of equal importance.

The causes of Edmond's failures, and of the successes of his non-autobiographical counterparts, indicate whether or not it is the individual who determines the outcome of his search for happiness. Our study of plot structures, of the patterns of cause and effect in the novels, has revealed that the hero's own nature is the cause of his repeated failure to attain happiness in Le Paysan perversi; but it is not the cause of either his eventual success, or of that of the heroes in the other novels. We are therefore led to see another thematic link between Restif's two fictional worlds. The statement of both worlds that happiness is dependent upon virtue is qualified by the suggestion that happiness is but a vain aspiration,

because virtue is beyond the reach of common mortals.

The plot structures suggest that sensibility, the qualité maîtresse of human nature in the majority of Restif's characters, makes an ambiguous contribution to realization of the domestic ideal. Sensibility does dispose the individual to enjoy the sentimental pleasures offered by the stable, harmonious love relationships characteristic of domesticity; but another aspect of sensibility, a penchant for sensual pleasures, prevents putting the sentimental disposition into practice.

The family ethic apparently does justice to sensual dispositions by including marital sex in its fund of pleasures. But when we compare this prescription for happiness against the realities of human nature as presented in the novels, we note an error in dosage of gratifications. The assumption that the sensual demands of sensibility lend themselves to a subordinate position vis-à-vis sentimental satisfactions is unjustified, for in the event of competition between sentimental and sensual sources of pleasure, the individual in fact responds more readily to the latter. This does not mean, however, that indulgence of sensuality offers the sensitive individual an anti-social source of happiness in the place of domestic felicity. Abandonment to one's passions does not fully answer the requirements of sensibility any more than does the family ethic, because the individual retains his sentimental aspirations.

We may therefore affirm that the Restivian hero is to be counted among the eighteenth-century figures who inhabit the uncomfortable limbo

où l'on n'est ni homme ni citoyen, où l'on n'appartient ni tout à fait à l'État ni tout à fait à soi-même, où l'on conserve des impulsions naturelles, alors que l'innocence est perdue, où l'on est ligoté par un système social, sans avoir la volonté de s'y fondre.⁶

In the novels we have studied, the "social system" is constituted by the family in general, and stable conjugal relationships in particular. The individual is "bound" to this system not only by social obligation, but by his own nature, his innate desire for order. He does, therefore, have a certain "will" to become part of the system; but integration is made impossible by the overriding biological impulses of his nature.

This vision of man's divided loyalties is of course most explicit in Le Paysan perversi, where the internal sentimental plot allows the hero's nature to determine his relationship to social morality. The relationship established is ambiguous in precisely the sense described above. The sensual aspect of Edmond's nature separates him from virtue on the level of act, but not on the level of attitude, and this continual frustration of his aspirations to innocent pleasures by his passions is the cause of his unhappiness. He does not extricate himself from this situation. His enjoyment of a tardy moment of positive commitment to virtue comes only when his passions have lost, through over-use, the power to combat that commitment. And as we have seen, the plots of the other characters are variations on the theme of the unhappiness caused by the

⁶Mauzi, L'Idée du bonheur, p. 138.

individual's inability to dominate his nature. The way these individual experiences are interwoven furthermore suggests that human weakness is highly contagious.

In Le Paysan perversi it is clear that the individual who does manage to attain virtue, and happiness, does not owe his success to his ability to dominate his sensuality; and the fact is also clear in the non-autobiographical novels. We do not make Le Paysan perversi uniquely responsible for the Restivian vision of man's probable victimization by his passions, any more than we attribute the conception of domestic felicity exclusively to the non-autobiographical novels. The two fictional worlds meet in their vision of the obstacles to realization of the domestic ideal, just as they do in their image of that ideal.

In the external sentimental plots of the non-autobiographical novels, the triumph of virtue is not the outcome of the heroes' own efforts to control their passions; it is, rather, the end result of a rigorously guided moral-sentimental education that eliminates the necessity of choice. The heroes' passional motivations are aborted before they can actively compete with sentimentality for possession of their identities. The methods of conditioning recalcitrant characters include frustrating their passions by removing their objects, as in Le Marquis de T^{xx}; making it appear that their passions destroy their sentimental attachments, as in La Confiance nécessaire, and reinforcing the sentimental reflex with selected reading, as in Lucile.

The purpose of educating the individual's nature to the domestic ideal is not, of course, to stifle passional motivations entirely, but rather to make them take a secondary place to sentimental motivations. We have noted that the task of conditioning women is particularly delicate in this respect. Since they are exceptionally impressionable creatures, they are protected from anything that might awaken their passions even more than are men; but due to this same impressionability, the moral education of women tends to be too successful. Sentimentality threatens to monopolize their natures entirely, so that their sensuality appears atrophied -- or rather, it is redirected toward family members and female friends. Fortunately, this turns out to be a minor problem, however. A little experimentation such as that in Adèle is sufficient to reveal that normal sexuality in virtuous women is but dormant, and is readily awakened by a husband -- one who resembles father or brother in virtue.

The principle objective remains, then, to diminish the power of sensual reflexes in the male characters. Circumstances beyond the control of the heroes' educators aid in the effort. The havoc wreaked by other people's passions in the adventure plots provides vivid, concrete evidence that passional motivations are not only inconducive to happiness, they are anti-happiness. The resolutions of the adventure plots cast yet another aspersion on the strength of the characters' moral fibre. The fortuitous rescue of the heroes -- or more often of the heroines -- before they are contaminated by the attack

of passionate individuals suggests that they are as inadequate to the task of resisting other people's passions as they are to the task of resisting their own.

The conditioning process is successful, from the point of view of the characters. When they find their pursuit of happiness in expression of their passions blocked at every turn, they finally turn down the only passage that leads to satisfaction, the one with the virtuous girl waiting at the end. But from the point of view of the reader, the moral-sentimental education is rather less convincing in its painting of passions in black and sentimentality in white. The process of sacrificing nuances to clarity of outline is so evident that we are led to suspect that the presentation of passions as clearly anti-happiness is rather arbitrary. The suspicion is awakened particularly when the heroes' families intervene in La Confidence nécessaire and La Fille naturelle to falsify the evidence provided by the internal sentimental plots that independent expression of the passions can cause enjoyment and even happiness. In these novels, there is no direct link between the heroes' own passions and their unhappiness. The absence of this link considerably weakens the overt statement of these novels that rejection of the passions is as essential to the happiness of the individual as it is to society. We are in fact led to wonder whether, in the view of the author, a connection between passion and unhappiness really exists, or whether when allowed to develop freely, Restif's characters would imply their creator as an apologiste of the passions, who only sacrifices

those of his characters in the non-autobiographical novels in order to cater to the literary and moral prejudices of his day.

These implications of the non-autobiographical novels are rectified by Le Paysan perversi. This novel provides the missing link between the characters' passions and their unhappiness. At the same time, it gives evidence that even direct experience of the destructiveness of the passions provides insufficient motivation to dominate them. Le Paysan perversi thus makes it clear that in the guided moral-sentimental education themes of his non-autobiographical novels, Restif was not just giving lip-service to the notion that ignorance of the delights of purely sensual motivations is essential to personal happiness. The plots of Edmond and his friends imply a fundamental conviction in Restif that happiness can indeed be assured the individual only when there is no possibility of his finding occasions to satisfy his sensuality outside the framework of conjugal relationships.

We have found, then, a common denominator in the fictional worlds arising from the different sources of inspiration in Restif, a common standard which permits us to add the two worlds together, and allows us to formulate a tentative definition of Restif as implied author. The moral norms and the technical choices in the novels we have studied add up to a coherent image of Restif as moralist and artist. Our conclusions do not constitute, of course, a complete definition of Restif's vision of morality, for the novels that follow Le Paysan perversi have a contribution to make to this definition. We arrive, rather, at a new, more educated hypothesis concerning

his artistic tendencies that can serve as a guide to further study of his treatment of the theme of morality and happiness.

Both the non-autobiographical worlds and the world of Le Paysan perversi imply the same Restif, an individual in whom a nostalgia for innocence coexists with a constant awareness that its preservation is a luxury. The duality is reflected in the common denominator we have found, the simultaneous presence in both worlds of the same ideal of happiness and of the same obstacles to its realization. In its broadest terms, the ideal of happiness is order and permanence, and its rarely surmountable obstacles are the propensities of the individual to pursue activities that create disorder, even chaos. We may say, in fact, that the archetypal Restivian conflict is that described by Coulet as central to La Nouvelle Héloïse, "un . . . conflit entre notre aspiration à la permanence et notre fatale mobilité . . ."⁷ The two poles of this duality are not present, of course, in the same proportions in both kinds of fictional worlds we have studied; and this accounts for the contrasts in texture we have observed. In the non-autobiographical worlds, forces for immobility control the forces for disorder, and this triumph of order is reflected in the tidy, schematic nature of the novels' texture. In Le Paysan perversi, the forces for disorder are the agents of the action, and this too is reflected in the multi-dimensional

⁷Henri Coulet, Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution (Paris, 1967), I, 403.

quality of a novel which is vibrant with life.

Here we have a basis for defining artistic tendencies in Restif that will require testing against the evidence of the later novels. When he bases his world on his own experience, he is the novelist of unhappiness, devoting his literary talents to depicting the various ways in which the individual's "fatale mobilité," and that of others, prevent realization of the aspiration to permanence; and when the source of inspiration is non-autobiographical, he indulges in development of methods of correcting, or compensating for, the chaos of human existence. We are led to expect that only the hero of a dream world can enjoy the privilege of total commitment to order, and that, on the other hand, the heroes rooted in reality can never find a solution to their conflicts.

A glance over the list of novels following Le Paysan perversi that make a contribution to the Restivian vision of the individual's adjustment to the mobilities of existence suggests that this expectation is generally fulfilled, with one exception.

Restif's fictionalized biography of his father, La Vie de mon père (1778) stands as an exception to our rule that Restif condemns all of the heroes drawn from his own world to unhappiness. Restif in fact presents the story as an exceptional case. The hero is an extraordinary man who is equal to making the sacrifices necessary to living the ideal of order, without the accumulation of pressures that provoke similar sacrifices in the heroes of the non-autobiographical novels.

The hero does not experience precisely the same propensity for disorder as the majority of Restif's characters we have studied so far, however. As a character of already solid virtue, he asserts his independence, like D'Azinval in La Fille naturelle, by giving himself up to a virtuous passion for a worthy girl who nevertheless does not fit in with the plans of his parents. But unlike D'Azinval, the hero of La Vie de mon père gives up the girl, returns to the farm at the behest of his father, and marries the unattractive but solid girl who has been chosen for him. The investment in conformity to the family ethic, the first mark of which is filial obedience, is complete, and it is rich in returns for happiness. The pleasures of warm, stable human relationships are enjoyed at the level of family, of household (servants and farm workers), and the community at large.

In some ways, however, the presentation of the moral ideal in this novel does manifest the tendencies of Restif's autobiographical art as set by Le Paysan perversi. Although the psychology of the characters remains vague, their existence is attached to reality with concrete details of country life; and this existence is presented, as in Le Paysan perversi, as an unattainable state. The theme of exile from paradise is present in the voice of the narrator, the perverted peasant, when he comments, for example, "Quant au caractère, infiniment inférieur [à mon père] pour la bonté et cette force de vertu qui le rendait si vénérable . . . je gémissais, avorton informe, également indigne et du sang dont je sors, et des exemples que

j'ai eus . . . "8

Apart from La Vie de mon père, the remaining novels of social adjustment follow the pattern that has emerged in the novels we have studied in detail. Remedies are developed in the non-autobiographical novels, and the illness continues to be diagnosed in those based on Restif's experience. We find the guided moral-sentimental education theme prolonged with no essential modifications in L'Ecole des pères (1776) and in Le Nouvel Abeilard (1778).

The aspects of existence that violate the desire for order are enlarged upon, however, in Restif's continuing exploitation of the autobiographical vein, which gives rise to six novels besides La Vie de mon père and the various editions of the Paysan-paysanne pervertis story. In these novels, there is a tendency to make the heroes' happiness depend more and more on the stability of others. In most cases, this means that he is condemned to unhappiness. The Restifian hero is definitely not gifted with independence, with an ability to take his destiny into his own hands.

The fact is nowhere more evident than in La Malédiction paternelle (1779), where a first departure from order, in contracting a marriage against the wishes of his father, condemns the hero to permanent frustration of his efforts to construct stable love relationships. The marriage, which fails, provokes a paternal malediction, and this serves as an excuse

⁸La Vie de mon Père (Paris: Garnier, 1970), p. 143.

for the hero to accept both his capricious temperament, and the infidelity of the women he meets -- and loves -- as facts of life.

Restif's next two novels, La Femme infidèle (1786) and Ingénue Saxancour (1789), continue the tendency to present the opposition between stability and mobility as a conflict between the main character and his social context, rather than as a conflict within the hero himself. In La Femme Infidèle, the failure of the hero's wife to fulfill his expectations of stability is entirely responsible for his unhappiness. In Ingénue Saxancour, which is based on the unhappy marriage of Restif's daughter, the heroine's world not only fails to favor stability, it works actively to involve her in a violent style of life. Ingénue is the innocent victim of a brutal and perverted husband. This unhappy situation is in fact presented as the indirect result of the sort of unstable family situation presented in La Femme infidèle. The lack of coherent guidance by her father and mother confuses her, and causes her to make the wrong choice of husbands. Both parents are against the marriage, but since her mother has always acted against the interests of her daughter, Ingénue assumes that her opposition to the marriage is indication enough that it is advantageous. Here again, a first departure from order, in failing to respect her father's judgement, makes her a permanent victim of chaos.

The most significant contribution among the later novels to the Restivian vision of happiness and its unsurmountable obstacles is found, of course, in Monsieur Nicolas (1794-1797),

Restif's most literal and detailed, but still fictionalized, autobiography. This work takes up again the theme that is central to Le Paysan pervers: the individual's struggle to reconcile the conflicting requirements of his own nature. The most interesting development of this theme is provided in the way the hero attempts to realize fully and simultaneously both aspects of his duality.

Monsieur Nicolas first traces in detail the emergence of the hero's duality, which consists of a commitment to brotherly or fatherly adoration of the feminine sex, on the one hand, and to physical enjoyment of it, on the other. And then the narrative develops the way he ultimately manages to satisfy both inclinations, by persuading himself that the numerous liaisons in which his sensuality involves him are consistent with the moral order, because they are dominated by paternal affection. When the relationship is actually incestuous, as is often the case, so much the better, in Nicolas' view.

This somewhat special system works out well until Nicolas' last great love, Sara⁹ one of his figurative daughters, fails to manifest stable daughterly affections; her repeated infidelities destroy the illusion of permanence upon which his happiness depends, and with it the hope of reconstructing the same sort of happiness elsewhere.

How does L'Anti-Justine (1798), Restif's pornographic novel, fit in with our hypothesis that in Restif's world view,

⁹Sara is also the heroine of a separate novel, published in 1783, La Dernière aventure d'un homme de quarante-cinq ans.

ungovernable sexuality is the major cause of the sensitive individual's condemnation to unhappiness? The obvious contradiction is in fact more apparent than real. Restif's ostensible purpose in publishing the novel was to satisfy the reading public's taste for literary obscenity with a work that would not incite to sadism. As its title suggests, the book is explicitly proposed as an antidote to the Justine of the Marquis de Sade. In the novel itself, Restif states, "Pour remplacer la Justine et faire préférer l'Anti-Justine, il faut que celle-ci surpasse l'autre en volupté, autant qu'elle lui cède en cruauté . . ."¹⁰ However, the book does not in fact present the sexuality of the characters as a voluptuous liberation of the senses, but rather as exorcisation of a demon of eroticism. As Porter points out, "there is much frenzy here, but no joy."¹¹

It is evident that in tracing Restif's career as novelist from La Famille vertueuse through L'Anti-Justine we encounter exploration of a rather wide variety of human experience, but viewed persistently in a moral perspective, which eludes the narrowly pious and ostensible conventionality of most eighteenth-century didactic prefaces, including his own.

In Monsieur Nicolas, Restif clarifies for us his own conception of his role as moralist when he says, "Je ne veux point

¹⁰Paris: Girouard, 1798, I, 101.

¹¹Restif's Novels, p. 389.

être moraliste proprement dit, mais je veux que mon livre et ma personne soient un instrument entre les mains des moralistes; qu'ils étudient en moi, et par moi, la série des actions humaines."¹² In our study of his early novels we have discovered that Restif is not, indeed, a "moraliste proprement dit," if by such he means that his novels do not incite to virtue. As we have seen, virtue, as perpetuation of a stable order of human relationships, is presented as beyond the reach of individuals who experience in full measure the realities of human nature and society. And it is this function of virtue in his novels, that permits us to interpret Restif's expressions of moral concern as much more than just the conventional excuse for placing sordid scenes of degradation before the eyes of his prurient readers. Restif's moral concern is in fact at the very heart of his fictional action, as an ideal of happiness against which the characters measure, and find wanting, the realities of the human condition.

¹²Paris, 1959, IV, 52.

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