



La RÉVOLUTION et le

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TOURNANT



Le combat des Lumières
RETRANSCRIPTION

des LUMIÈRES

THE IDEA OF "A TURNING POINT" AND THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE TIME

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Part 1 – Continuity and new openings

To finish off this course, let's dwell on the final decades of the 18th century. For a long time, it was seen as a waiting time between the Enlightenment struggles and the advent of romanticism. It was a time of change towards creative and, for a long while, misunderstood activity. Under the devaluing label "pre-romanticism", Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre would announce the arrival of a weaker version of a romanticism to come. For the last thirty years, we've preferred to talk of a turning point in the Enlightenment.

This image underlines both the continuity and the deep splits taking place. They did not boil down to revolutionary upheavals, even if they were often accelerated or brought to light by the sudden collapse of the Ancient Regime. All the philosophers were dead by 1789, Voltaire and Rousseau in 1778, Diderot in 1784, but the publication of their work continued and remained a reference for revolutionaries. Their successors carried on their work right up to the Empire by way of new intellectual institutions, the Institute being one of them.

Condillac's sensualism, or atheism among the more radical, is taken on by ideologists who, after Condorcet, took charge of the practical application of scientific methods in society. As such, they gathered anthropological and medical knowledge. They studied mental patients, the deaf, the mute, even uncivilised children so as to better understand brain function.

In literature, existing genres persisted, even if they were sometimes otherwise invested. The epistolary novel, therefore, came to recount the misfortunes of the day in a novel on the emigration of the nobility during the French Revolution, while bourgeois tragedy's aesthetics met theatrical emancipation, giving rise to melodrama, a highly successful genre at the turn of the 19th century. But the classical repertoire, including *Tartuffe*, was also the subject of revolutionary remakes.

Finally, like a study by Michel Delon shows us, the epistemology of the Enlightenment promoted experience over the notion of essence and largely prepared for the change in perception of time which was introduced by the revolutionary crisis. Morally, it made inaction obsolete in favour of action. It restored passions that the Revolution will liberate in an unexpected way. Incidentally, Germaine de Staël will feel the need to contemplate the influence of these passions on individuals and nations in 1794.

This passionate energy could be found as much in natural history as in the first English or German romantic works, circulated by popular translations. These bestsellers put the spotlight on the moving and melancholy but would also help theorists to affirm the role of imagination, originality, like the integration of art in society. This is notably what Mercier or Germaine de Staël will do in *De la littérature* and *Of Germany*. Outdated art, which had dominated until the middle of the century, ceded its place to a negative aesthetic and to the sublime. Edmund Burke discerned the sublime in the grandiose and overwhelming spectacle of nature in his essay from 1757.

Finally, another source of energy came from the rediscovery of the Antiquity upon the excavation of cities consumed by the eruption of Vesuvius; that's without talking about Plutarch being reread by Rousseau, and lots of others in his wake, as a model for republican energy. Neoclassicism, therefore, mixed with pre-romanticism. The second change was, of course, social and political and it was brought about by the fall of the Ancient Regime.

Part 2 – The birth of a new society

Incidentally, the image of a revival showed ambition which stirred revolutionaries into a quickly disillusioned enthusiasm. It was about creating a new man and a new society, separated from religion. This voluntarist impetus resulted in a cultural policy including fetes, ceremonies and a calendar established by the Convention in 1793, symbolising the dawn of a new era. Year I coincided with the abolition of the monarchy.

The form of order in society is marked by the end of privileges and noble titles, proclaimed on the 4th August 1789, and also through the suppression of monastic resolutions and orders. From then on, everyone's place and identity were no longer defined at birth, as is evidenced by the trajectory of Napoleon Bonaparte. However, the end of the monarchy, abolished by the Convention, was destabilising, even traumatising. The sentencing of Louis XVI is seen symbolically as a parricide.

From an institutional viewpoint, the proclamation of the republic was a step into the unknown, despite the American federal example still being rather new. The Abbot Sieyès imagined a representation allowing for the exercise of power in a large country which seemed impossible until now. But the constitution of Year I would not be applied and the fratricidal fight between federalist Girondins and Jacobins made way for men strongly in favour of revolutionary wars.

As such, the generation living through the Revolution experienced a definitive split despite the return of institutional and literary order which the Consulate then the Empire would execute. Storm, volcano, cataclysmic metaphors implied the feeling of incertitude among individuals facing history which altered the face of Europe.

And Chateaubriand retrospectively underlined this acceleration of time when he talked about writing his *Essai sur les révolutions*: "I started to write the essay in 1794 and it was published in 1797. Often, in the evenings, I'd have to erase the scene that I'd made a start on during the day. Events took place quicker than my pen could write about them. A revolution occurred which disproved all my similes. I wrote about a vessel during a storm and I meant to paint the fugitive sides as rooted objects which fell into disrepair". Mercier, who opposed Chateaubriand, joined him in his *Tableau de Paris*. But the Revolution also marked the end of the Republic of Letters as well as changes to production conditions.

Part 3 – From the Republic of Letters to literature

The elitist Republic of Letters was governed by norms of taste which perpetuated academies and salons. New literature became a market and a consumable object preyed on by fashions. Incidentally, the Revolution discredited the men of letters and the institutions of the Ancient Regime. Most importantly, freedom, heralded by the human rights declaration, gave a boost to production which was no longer censored and made available to everyone. A surge of pamphlets, discourse, newspapers would accompany and, on occasion, make history of the convening of generals at Thermidor.

Simultaneously, writers began to make a living from their pen and depended on a readership whose tastes mattered. As such, they exploited editorial tricks. Reading began to stand out, as evidenced by critical reception of *The New Héloïse* by Rousseau in 1761, but it was also rumour-mongering, reading rooms and diverse forms of collective reading which insured a wider circulation of new ideas. Some people, like the counter-revolutionary publicist Barruel, saw in this the source of the plot which gave rise to the Revolution.

In conclusion, from 1770 to 1880, changes produced by society rendered classical values obsolete. This translated into literature through a crisis of genres and the progressive diminution of forms. La Harpe, a hostile to the Revolution, lamented, in 1799, this type of fantastic world that the Revolution

produced. I quote: "New literature, which we know nothing about, which exists only for it, which is deserving only of it, and which, any minute now, should disappear." Of course, we'll see if his diagnosis was justified.

CONDORCET

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Part 1 – The last Encyclopaedist, defender and heir to the "philosophers"

A brilliant mathematician, Condorcet shares the ambition that animated the Encyclopaedists, to put knowledge at the service of society and the happiness of men. A disciple of Voltaire, D'Alembert and the economist Turgot, the Marquis de Condorcet represented the liberal elite of the Ancient Regime who played an active role in the Revolution, trying to bring and apply the ideas of the Enlightenment to it. His triple career as an academic, bureaucrat and politician testifies to this.

First of all, the Marquis de Condorcet extends the work of the philosophers, of whom he is, in Michelet's eyes, the last heir and defender. Mathematician like D'Alembert, he was his natural disciple right from his admission to the Academy of Sciences in 1769. But he also shared Voltaire's last legal battles to which he quickly became attached, the case of La Barre d'Etalondes in 1774. And this earned him the nickname "enraged sheep". Finally, his third spiritual father was the economist Turgot, whom he assisted in his brief ministry from 1774 to 1776. He is also the last of the Encyclopaedists.

Condorcet assists D'Alembert with the mathematical articles he writes for the *Supplement* to the Encyclopaedia, published by Panckoucke. Then, in 1781, he managed the *Encyclopédie méthodique* alone. He also organises the Kehl edition of Voltaire's *Complete Works*. Thus, his brilliant but unprofitable career reflected the triumph of the philosophers' party on the eve of the Revolution.

Indeed, as perpetual secretary of the Academy of Sciences since 1776, he was elected to the French Academy in 1782 and his reception speech is a vibrant manifesto of the Enlightenment. In it, he pays tribute to the late D'Alembert and Turgot, echoing the idea dear to the former of an indefinite advance in knowledge and the application of the exact sciences to the new sciences, an idea of the latter. Like his spiritual fathers, he intends to put knowledge at the service of public happiness in all fields; judicial, administrative and even political.

Part 2 - Science for the public good and the defence of human rights: towards equality and the republic

From the philosopher depicted by Dumarsais, Condorcet shares the ardent concern of contributing to the happiness of men, first a material happiness. His administrative career as a coin inspector with Turgot led him to create a commission to develop canals, hydraulic science or to work in 1775 on the unification of weights and measures, a reform that would lead to the Constituent Assembly. As we can see, the academician does not stay in his office. But his name also remains associated with the introduction of the probability calculation in social life.

He thus founded human science as an applied science and went far beyond Turgot's reformist views by applying it to the right to vote. It is also the probabilities that lead him to vote against the death

penalty because of the risk of error associated with any judgement. Finally, he goes further than the philosophers of the Enlightenment, the defence of human rights, by claiming equal rights for slaves, Jews and women. He thus presided over the "Friends of the Blacks" society, created in Paris in 1787, and signed a pamphlet under the meaningful pseudonym Joachim Schwarz.

Finally, in politics, when the king's flight to Varennes on 20th June 1791 compromised the constitutional monarchy, the example of America encouraged him to take the step towards the idea of a republic. And to advance it in public opinion, he created a company and a newspaper in July 1791. A member of the first elected Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, in October 1792, he worked diligently on three committees: The Committee on the Drafting of the Constitution, the Committee on Public Education and the Committee on Weights and Measures. A poor speaker, this "intellectual in politics", as Elisabeth Badinter calls him, tirelessly uses his pen as a parliamentary columnist and pamphleteer. He is aware of the role played by the press and public opinion.

But his works will be buried in the shift of the Revolution towards the Terror. He was opposed to the coup de force against the Assembly on the 31st May and 2nd June 1793, which marked the fall of the Girondins, and he was quickly outlawed and died in prison on 29th March 1794. Such political commitment can surprise a scholar. But it is explained by its radical rationalism.

Part 3 - A radical rationalism: the indefinite perfectibility of man

Indeed, what differentiates him from the other philosophers of the Enlightenment is an absolute faith in reason, the law of history. For him, misfortune is first and foremost the effect of prejudice, intolerance and superstition. But unlike D'Alembert or Voltaire, he believes that men will be able to do without religion when they are educated and where Rousseau had defined man by an ambivalent perfectibility, he thinks of him as indefinite and positive. The mission of the scholar and the philosopher follows from this. It intends to stimulate scientific research from the 70s onwards by coordinating the academies. Then he drew up a public education plan that would inspire the school of the Third Republic.

Indeed, in addition to the idea of free education, secularism, he is also responsible for the idea of basic knowledge that will enable all people to really exercise their rights and this will not be a low-cost form of knowledge. His observation is socially daring. "Nowhere, he writes, is the domestic citizen, worker, farmer, of a very rich citizen, his equal. Two classes of citizens are therefore established wherever there are very poor and very rich people, and republican equality cannot be established in a country where civil laws, finance laws and trade laws make it possible for great fortunes to last for a long time."

His unfailing confidence in the progress of reason is expressed in the book *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, written during his five months of clandestinity just before his death. He proclaims: "The time will therefore come when the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master but their reason".

Part 4 - The Next Generation: Ideologists

The next generation of ideologues, whom Condorcet met in Madame Helvétius' salon, took over after the Revolution; Volney, Daunou, Destutt, Ginguéné and Cabanis, Condorcet's brother-in-law. Materialists like their elder, they share with him republican ideas and the ambition to develop a science of man that will enable society to be transformed.

Its foundation will be the science of ideas which will give its name to the ideology that Destutt proposes to create in his *Mémoires sur la faculté de penser* in 1796. In line with Condillac, it explains

the mechanisms by which sensory experiences are transformed into thought and combined into an ever-increasing logic. From 1794 onwards, they will express themselves in a newspaper, *La Décade*, and in the cultural institutions they have helped to create and run, first the Ecole normale and then the Institute.

Their scope of action is threefold. Epistemology with Garat and Destutt de Tracy, medicine and alienism with Cabanis, Esquirol or Pinel and anthropology illustrated by Volney. The Société des observateurs de l'homme, created in 1800, as we also call the ambitious trips of the geographer and naturalist to continue this study.

Ideologues are first protected by the Empire and they multiply reform projects in all fields. But they took refuge in a silent opposition as soon as Christianity returned after the Concordat of 1801. Thus, Condorcet and then the ideologues shared the Enlightenment's ambition to put the progress of knowledge at the service of the transformation of society for the happiness of men.

BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE

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Part 1 - Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's career

LV: Hello Colas Duflo. You have assisted in the publication of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's works. In what way is he a significant author of the "turning point" of the Enlightenment and can we say that he is an heir to the philosophers?

CD: Born in 1737 and dead in 1814, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre is a perfect representative of this last generation of 18th-century writers who were to cross what is now called the "turning point" of the Enlightenment. His literary career is in itself an exciting testimony to these troubled times. His beginnings were those of an Ancient Regime writer, who submitted his books to royal censorship, frequented salons and sought pensions from government departments. And he ended his life under the Empire, a member of the Institute, decorated with the Legion of Honour, President of the Académie française and friend of Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's eldest brother.

Between the two, there was this great swing in history that is the French Revolution, where the world of these writers has completely changed. During the Revolution, he was steward of the royal garden, our current Jardin des Plantes, where he created the Menagerie. That's why we find his statue at the entrance of the Jardin des Plantes today. He was a professor of republican morality at the first Ecole normale, where things did not go very well.

Like all men of his generation, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was influenced by the works of Voltaire but also those by Rousseau, who along with Fenelon is the modern writer he admires most. He had the chance to meet Rousseau himself in 1771 and to establish a friendly relationship with the author of *The New Héloïse* in the last years of his life, of which he left us some testimonies. But the decisive event in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's formation came about a few years earlier.

Part 2 - Formative trips

LV: Indeed, I believe he has been involved in faraway journeys as a naval engineer. Can you tell us more about this experience?

CD: In 1768, when he was only a poor young man, vaguely engineer and vaguely adventurous man, he sailed for the Indian Ocean and arrived at Isle de France, which is now called Mauritius, where he lived for two years. Upon his return, he also spent a month and a half on Bourbon Island, currently Reunion Island. This journey will have a lasting impact on him and will feed into all his future work. In 1773, he published his *Voyage à l'Isle de France*. It is a collection of letters that reflects his experiences. He takes a very harsh look at colonial society and there is, in his pages, a very strong condemnation of slavery and the way slaves are treated. But Bernardin de Saint-Pierre also retains from his trip an experience of exotic and unspoiled nature that will deeply nourish his thoughts and sensitivity.

Part 3 - An important philosophical work: *Nature studies*

LV: You recently re-edited a philosophical work, *Etudes de la nature*. How does it sit in relation to the ideas of the Enlightenment?

CD: In 1784, he published his great philosophical work, *Etudes de la nature*. So, for us today, the process seems a little strange. It is a question of proving to the materialist philosophers and the science of his time, which he considers too mechanical, that Providence is at work everywhere in nature, that nature is good and entirely finalised for the general good. This sometimes gives quite comical and scientifically questionable reasoning, but it also gives very deep insights into the need for a holistic conception of nature, in which all beings are interdependent.

The tree is related to the place where it grows, to the animals that inhabit it and vice versa. But above all, this philosophy of nature, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre has developed deeply innovative literary descriptions of nature and in particular of exotic nature, which are absolutely magnificent. And his descriptions will inspire romantic authors such as Chateaubriand and Lamartine very closely. There are anthology pages here that will be read and imitated throughout the 19th century.

Part 4 - An iconic novel: *Paul and Virginie*

LV: What made him most famous is a little novel inserted in his *Etudes de la nature*, called *Paul et Virginie*. What does he say and what made it such a success?

CD: Well, in 1788, in fact, in the fourth volume of *Etudes de la nature*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre added a little novel, *Paul et Virginie*, which soon had separate editions and enjoyed phenomenal success throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel is a form of exotic, pastoral work.

In the sumptuous background of the Isle of France, two mothers, rejected by the French society of the Ancient Regime, raise their children alone, Paul and Virginie, with the help of two slaves forming a kind of micro-utopian society, where we live a virtuous life in poverty but in happiness, in conformity with nature. Children live and work in nature without prejudice, both as brothers and sisters and promised to each other. As a teenager, Madame de Latour, concerned about Virginie's future, wanted to secure her fortune by sending her to Paris to her aunt's house, a noble woman who represented both devout and corrupt nobility, but this evil aunt wanted to make young Virginie forget her island.

After two long years of separation during which the two young people were very unhappy, Virginie returned to the Isle of France. But on arriving in sight of the Isle de France coasts, a hurricane dragged the boat over the surrounding reefs. Paul, from the shore, watches helplessly as the shipwreck unfolds. Virginie appears on the deck, a sailor tries to save her, but she would have to take off her large dress. She refuses out of modesty and drowns. After this dramatic episode, Paul is seen wandering all over the island, melancholically travelling through all the places of their childhood and finally, he dies as well as all the members of the small society.

This exotic and melancholic fiction, which comes entirely out of the contemplation of the ruined huts of the small society, as a meditation on an ideal past now gone and on a proximity to nature forever lost,

has fascinated contemporaries at a level that is difficult to imagine, to the point of becoming a kind of myth almost independent of the book that gave birth to it. *Paul et Virginie*'s adaptations will be found in the theatre, opera, in the Epinal print collection and recently again in television series and musicals.

And the story will be the subject of many rewritings in the 19th and 20th centuries. As the novel, with its beautiful illustrations, was also a book that young people were given a lot to read, sometimes in redacted versions, it can be said that it has long been part of the common culture and has had a profound impact on French literary culture. For example, Madame Bovary reads *Paul et Virginie*, or Baudelaire imagines a corrupt Virginie. Cocteau and Radiguet wrote an opera libretto around *Paul and Virginie* and Jean-Marie Le Clézio remembers *Paul and Virginie* in 1984 in one of his most beautiful novels, *The Prospector*.

LV: Thank you Colas for this rich insight into an heir to the Enlightenment who was also, as we can see, a great novelist.

AN EYEOPENING OF ENLIGHTENMENT CONTRADICTIONS: SADE AND NATURE

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Part 1 - Portrait of the Marquis de Sade

LV: Hello Colas Duflo. Sade is a scandalous author whose reputation has long hindered the reading of his work. However, should we only remember the scandals of the life of the “great evil lord” who was banned and censored for a long time?

CD: Indeed, Sade's works have long been read as testimonies of psychiatric anomalies to which his name, sadism, has been given. But when we return Sade to the 18th century, if we remember that he spent a good part of his life locked up, reading the literature and philosophy of his time, we will not be surprised to find in his works a great recapitulation of the age of Enlightenment, marked by the climate of historical upheavals, political violence and intellectual freedom that characterised the revolutionary years.

Sade read all the novelists of his time. He testifies to this in a particularly interesting critical text entitled *Reflections on the Novel*. He puts this text at the head of his great collection of short stories, *The Crimes of Love* and in it he praises Voltaire's *Candide* and *Zadig*, Rousseau's *New Héloïse*, Marmontel's *Bélisaire*; he celebrates Prévost, he expresses his admiration for the English writers Richardson and Fielding, who, and I quote, “have taught us that the profound study of man's heart, a true maze of nature, can only inspire the novelist”. In short, it reflects the novel's ambition to be philosophical and moral. It also reflects his critical interest in new trends such as the English roman noir.

Part 2 - Aline and Valcour or the Philosophical Novel

LV: As it happens, can we find a trace of this interest in his own fictional production?

CD: Yes, of course, the great novel he began writing in the Bastille just before the Revolution and finally published in 1795, after many historical upheavals, *Aline and Valcour or the Philosophical Novel*, testifies to Sade's anchoring in 18th century literature. It is presented as an epistolary novel with a philosophical ambition, a bit like *The New Héloïse*.

Aline and Valcour, who are sensitive characters and who seem to have come straight out of a Rousseauist fiction, love each other like novel heroes. But Aline's father, Monsieur de Blamont, who is an evil libertine, opposes their marriage. These characters and those around them therefore exchange letters in a somewhat confined atmosphere that is not without reminding us, through this epistolary framework, of *Dangerous Liaisons* by Laclos.

When two new characters meet, Léonore and Sainville, a couple of lovers who have travelled around the world in search of each other, come along and tell their stories in two very long letters that occupy almost half of the novel and that look much more like novel-memoirs in the Prévost's form.

Cannibal peoples, utopian territories, evil Spanish inquisitors, a troop of bohemians, all the exotic romanticism is summoned in adventures that spare neither surprises nor coincidences. All in all, we are dealing with a novel that alone resembles a great recapitulation of all the novels of the 18th century.

Part 3 - The major philosophical questions eating away at Sade

LV: I imagine that this great reader also inherits the great questions that haunt the philosophers of the Enlightenment.

CD: Yes, Sade did not only read the novelists of his time in his years of imprisonment. He also read all about the philosophy of the Enlightenment and, in particular, that of the heretical Enlightenment. In some of his works, he copies entire pages of Voltaire, La Mettrie, Freret or d'Holbach. He was also concerned about the same philosophical problems as the men of his time. Are we free? Do we have a soul that's independent of the body? Is there a god? He puts his discussions in the mouths of his characters and to all these questions, these libertines always answer negatively.

But the great philosophical problem that obsesses Sade is the question of evil. The undeniable presence of evil on this earth and the scandal that virtue is not rewarded. This problem is not unique to Sade, it obviously goes back to Antiquity, but it particularly works with the philosophers of the 18th century from Leibniz and Bayle until the beginning of the century, to Kant via Voltaire, Rousseau or Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. This is the concern about the relationship between morality and happiness. What is the use of virtue if it does not make you happy?

Part 4 - A paradoxical answer to the question: what is the point of virtue if it does not make you happy?

LV: And how does he answer that question?

CD: He responds with a paradox for which he has the genius to make an excellent fictional script at the same time. He had the idea very early on, which he summarised in his notes as follows: "Two sisters, one very libertine lives in happiness, abundance and prosperity. The other, extremely wise, experiences misfortunes that eventually lead to her ruin." It is an embryonic scenario. These two sisters are Juliette and Justine.

There is a cruel comic dimension to this story. Every time Justine manifests a virtue, she is punished by Romanesque Providence. Every time Juliette commits new crimes, she gets rich. This narrative opposition of *The Misfortunes of Virtue* and *the Prosperity of Vice* obsessed Sade so much that he wrote three versions, each one longer than the last. First, a long short story around 1787 entitled *Les Infortunes de la vertu*, which was then developed into a short novel published in 1791, *Justine, or Good Conduct Well-Chastised*. In both versions, it is Justine, the virtuous heroine, who tells the sad story of her misfortunes.

Finally, in the last years of the century, Sade published a complete rewrite in two main parts, "*The New Justine, or Good Conduct Well-Chastised* followed by the *History of Juliette* her sister." This represents about 1800 pages in an edition like the one of the Pleiade, decorated with 100 engravings. Justine's ordeal is no longer told by herself but by an often-ironic narrator, who, in the second part, gives the floor to Juliette who tells her own story in a great picaresque novel-memoir that celebrates *The Prosperity of Vice*.

In a mixing of Sade's characteristic genres, the novel alternates pornographic scenes with philosophical essays, in which Sade recopies the most subversive elements of Enlightenment philosophy and diverts them into a celebration of evil, vice and violence.

LV: In conclusion, Colas, how can we file an author as unclassifiable as Sade?

CD: We could say that Sade is both an heir to Enlightenment's critical state of mind, and that he is at the same time to systematically betray it. Nevertheless, Sade thus creates a work that is fascinating by its subversive and disturbing dimension and, which for this reason, has been celebrated by all the literary avant-gardes of the 20th century, from the Surrealists to the Tel Quel group, passing by Georges Bataille or Michel Foucault, for example.

LV: Thank you very much Colas.

CD : Thank you, Laurence.

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN JOURNALISM AND FICTION

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Introduction

One of the most noteworthy examples of literary renaissance at the turn of the Enlightenment's period is provided in the chronicles written by Louis Sébastien Mercier or Restif de La Bretonne in the 1780s. Somewhere between journalism and fiction, they thought outside the box, portraying a new reality; a new spatial, social and soon a new political reality thanks to the Revolution while, in turn, expanding their work to add new chapters.

Their social background for Restif and/or their marginality regarding literary institutions can help to account for the boldness in their writing. Restif de La Bretonne, son of a well-off farmer, a self-taught man, was a member of the bohemian literary scene. Mercier nicknamed "a heretic to literature" by Jean-Claude Bonnet, lashed out at classical tragedies and verses during the 1770s and helped to conceive the definition of middle-class tragedies.

Part 1 – The *Tableau de Paris*, a painting of contemporary reality

Incidentally, both men pursued different genres of writing; theatre was Mercier's utopia, while Restif de La Bretonne favoured autobiographical and novella writing. It's believed that by turning his back on the previous century and to its rigid forms, Mercier deliberately chose, in 1781, to portray the contemporary, the town and the evolution of traditions. This sentiment can be strongly felt in the *Tableau de Paris*. I quote "the reality of the times based on living figures". The words are very telling. It is about capturing from life unknown insights, fashions, customs of daily life, anecdotes and even new words.

A journalist by trade, Mercier would expand the range of articles published in the *Journal des dames* which, incidentally, he managed a few years before. Paris is picked apart in every sense and in very small, sometimes trivial detail, like we see in some of his chapter titles: "Peau d'orange", "Ecaillés d'huître" in *Le Nouveau Paris* and "Latrines publiques". In fact, the minute details of contemporary life greatly interested him, after all he was an Enlightened writer. He wanted to observe traditions and customs, even breaking with the norm when it came to his choice of words, which was just as trivial. He writes "the town is round like a pumpkin". This form of writing is based on accumulation and, by breaking from the classical norms, he aimed to portray a sprawling town where one is in keeping with the passage of time.

As he sees it, urban scenes are in perpetual change, and this is not without some despair being felt by the author, like we observe when he exclaims in a note: "Oh! How can one depict subjects which move too quickly for the pen to capture?" The abundance of chapters is devoid of any organisational order, whether it be geographical or chronological, just like interlacing lanes, roads and junctions in a town.

Incidentally, Mercier highlights the multiplicity of points of view on real life. "Suppose that a thousand men made the same journey; if each man were an observer, each man would write a different book on the subject, and there would always be something plausible and interesting to say for whomever came after them". As such, the book is a collection of short chapters which were added from 1781 to 1788, of which only the first two volumes would have any literary success. There would be 12 in total.

Part 2 – *Les Nuits de Paris* by Restif, or the phantasmatic variant

Exploiting the editorial stratagem spearheaded by Mercier, Restif published *Les Nuits de Paris ou le Spectateur nocturne* in 1788. The title, which echoes that of the collection written by Young called *Night-Thoughts*, is not circumstantial. Restif chooses to add a narrative framework and an autobiographical dimension, maybe even a phantasmatic dimension, to his Paris which takes on a disturbing incongruity. The first night opens on an invocation by the narrator to his double, the owl. "Owl, how many times have your solitary cries not made me quiver in the dark of night? Sad and lonely like you, I venture alone within this immense capital." It is the half-light of great painters.

The epigraph *Nox et Amor*, "Night and Love", is reduplicated in an illustration which entices the reader just as an advertisement would do. It says: "We see an owl flying above his head and in the road a girl is abducted, burglars break down a door, a lookout on horseback, another on foot". Each day, the walker recounts his stories to a marquise who cannot sleep and who, in turn, relates everything to his own obsessions.

The foreword states: "Not only will you witness extraordinary scenes but also philosophical pieces inspired by the point of view of abuse committed under the dark cloak borrowed from the night". Interesting stories, in one word, everything which might arouse curiosity. His aimless wandering borders on voyeurism. The nocturnal spectator meddles in couple and family affairs, pries into homes, inscribes dates onto the Île Saint-Louis to keep account of all his sexual conquests. He is also not afraid of meddling in scenes which sometimes span several evenings.

Le Nouveau Paris by Mercier in 1798 and *Les Nuits révolutionnaires* by Restif in 1790 and 1794 depict tales from the Revolution which are just as different as the two writers themselves. Mercier, having become a deputy in the Convention, fought alongside the Girondins and was imprisoned in 1793 for having signed a petition which spoke in their favour. This would signal a slide into national representation which occurred after this date. As for Restif, he wrote a chronicle about the Revolution through the eyes of a homeless man, a disorientated spectator. The storming of the Bastille, the September's Massacres, the execution of Louis XVI, capturing from life, making use of terror and horror, all of this alternated with news which brought some respite.

We also find examples of Restifian-styled fantasies, incest, polygamy, notably in the last nights which are marked by a Jacobin rally. In conclusion, at the time when descriptive poetry was being developed, Mercier and Restif were inventing a contemporary genre of writing which mixed genres and introduced changing realities to literature, even the historic crisis of the Revolution. It created a new style of poetry, one linked to emotions and free of verse, which would take some time to be widely recognised. It also conveyed a change in the conception of time that the Revolution had simply accelerated or brought to light.

THE NOVEL ON THE EMIGRATION DURING THE REVOLUTION

Laurence VANOFLEN, Lecturer in Literature and Philosophy, Paris Nanterre University

Introduction

The schemas of the sentimental novel remain largely in force in novelistic production at the end of the century, with Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Sophie Cottin, Germaine de Staël, Félicité de Genlis or Adélaïde de Flahault Sousa. We will talk here mainly about one of its ramifications, the emigration novel. Re-emphasised by the publication of Sénac de Meilhan's *Emigré* in the Romanesque anthology of the Pléiade, it has generated a recent revival of interest and several re-editions.

The importance of the motif for emigration, some forty titles recorded between 1792 and 1850, is obviously due to the sociological and numerical weight of the phenomenon. The emigrant is a political and social reality created by the Revolution. Under the laws on emigration, in the spring of 1793, several thousand Frenchmen were banished under penalty of death and their property was seized by the nation. We will see that while taking charge of the story of the misfortunes of time, the sentimental novel, by way of this motif, also faces the challenge of telling an astounding story.

Part 1 – An adaptation of the sentimental novel

Whether or not novelists have experienced it themselves, emigration is first and foremost a novelistic theme of choice. As Sénac notes, "Everything is likely and everything is romantic in the French Revolution. The most extraordinary encounters, the most amazing circumstances, the most deplorable situations become common events and surpass what novelists can imagine." Reality goes beyond fiction and undermines plausibility. As the noble titles disappear and the places are exchanged, the moving potential is at its height. I always quote Sénac: "The French, scattered all over the world, present an infinite variety of touching scenes, too often tragic and many of which are romantic".

The novel no longer needs to claim to be drawn from rediscovered correspondences in order to bestow upon itself a truth given to it by history. The separation of lovers, husbands and wives, friends, family members, amply justified by the hazards of the Revolution, will provide a tension to the plot and a likelihood to the exchange of letters. The epistolary form also makes it possible to insert embedded stories, to multiply the number of secondary characters and thus to broaden the diversity of testimonies on the situations of emigrants. This is can be seen in Sénac's novel or in *Les Petits Emigrés* by Madame de Genlis.

But the emigration novel also extends the perimeter of fiction to European dimensions; France, England, Switzerland, Germany and as far as Iceland or the borders of Denmark in the novel by Madame de Souza, *Eugénie et Mathilde*, published in 1811. The reason for emigration throughout this period spreads to the point of sometimes appearing as an opportunistic adaptation of the sentimental genre. The figure of the emigrant, a word entered into the dictionary in 1798, quickly became a selling point for a readership in need of sensations and jaded by a hectic history. Thus, in 1801, came *L'Innocence échappée de plusieurs naufrages* presented by its subtitle as *Mémoires d'une femme émigrée* or in *Firmin ou Le Jouet de la fortune*, the story of a young emigrant from Rosny.

However, it would be difficult to understand the circulation of this kind, particularly in France, without taking into account among readers the need to exorcise the great revolutionary upheaval. The Revolution, often seen as a cataclysm, a masked ball or a great upheaval, is part of familiar novel forms, the novel-memoir or the epistolary novel that master the entry into the unknown.

But in contact with history, the novel is tinged with a new degree of realism. To tell the story of the end of his hero skinned by the people, Sénac's novel uses a process called collage. It juxtaposes, in

testament to the hero, an extract from the gazette that makes us read about revolutionary propaganda. I quote: "The people with the word of king entered into fury, threw themselves on the inanimate body of the aristocrat, whom they could not be prevented from tearing to pieces. Humanity revolts against these bloody excesses, but in all countries, the roots of the tree of freedom have been sprinkled with blood and how can we contain a people who see their government and the laws that are so dear to them insulted?"

Part 2 - Making History meaningful

Through the vicissitudes of departure and survival or after Thermidor with the return of the emigrant, the novel will offer a mirror to the questions and uncertainties of men and women, who, as Stéphanie Genand notes, are citizens driven out of time and struggling to find their place and meaning in the century that is beginning.

The emigration novel can thus follow the tragic turn of the Revolution, in Sénac's already cited novel, *L'Emigré*, whose plot begins after the king's death. The motifs of the sentimental novel allow him then to say the impossibility of a future. The emigrant Saint-Alban was welcomed in Germany near the castle of the Countess of Levenstein, who soon fell in love with him. The awakening of feelings mapped out through a correspondence between the Countess and her friend Emilie de Wergentheim and we find the usual adventures of the genre: disappearance of the portrait made by Saint-Alban, ball and finally double wedding project when the Countess's old husband dies opportunely. But the desired marriage was prohibited by Saint-Alban's sense of duty, who, aware of the inequality of fortune, returned to fight and was taken prisoner by the revolutionary armies, committed suicide in Paris in the middle of a courtroom.

The epistolary form can also be used effectively to ward off the fanaticism of time. This is the case in the *Lettres trouvées dans des porte-feuilles d'émigrés*, composed between March and July 1793 by a Dutch noblewoman living in Switzerland, Isabelle de Charrière. During the Vendée uprising, the republican officer Laurent Fontbrune had such a dialogue in the Vendée with his friend Alphonse, who had fled the Princes' army in Switzerland, while Germaine in London received letters from her father who had gone to Germany to fight, forbidding her to see her fiancé Alphonse again.

Between uncompromising nobles, noble critics of the past, such as Alphonse, and reasonable republicans, the points of view will indeed become closer. Laurent and Alphonse thus agreed in their exchange on the forms of government, while Germaine's father finally accepted the wedding of the betrothed in Holland. The fiction stops, however, on this hope, the novel can do no better than to express the historical uncertainty through its incompleteness.

Finally, after Thermidor, some novels feature the return of the emigrant and reconciliation in a return to providential order. I am thinking in particular of *La Dot de Suzette* by Fiévée, or the anonymous *Mémoires d'une famille émigrée*, which contrasts the pathos of emigration with the story of a happy proscription accompanied by a return. Theodore de Clairsans, the hero, is forced to flee to Germany after the looting of the family estate and he can reveal his feelings for the young orphan taken in by his mother, called Alix, despite the prejudices of rank, then join her in Switzerland to start a family. This novel therefore responds to the Directory's ideological programme, which is that of the nation's reconciliation.

Emigration, the result of the Revolution, in any case, forces the novel to embrace history in its most immediate upheavals. It allows the reader to question the attitude to adopt in the face of historical changes. It is therefore understandable that, in addition to its truly moving potential, this motif could have marked the fictional production of the time. Thus, the emigration novel, in its diversity, is part of this novel production, which after having long been forgotten in the history of literature, nevertheless testifies to the vitality of the turning point in the Enlightenment.



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THE POETRY OF RUINS AND TOMBS, THE GOTHIC

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Introduction

Nothing at first glance is further from the quest for philosophers' happiness and the rationalism generally associated with them than certain literary motifs that were fashionable at the turn of the century. Thus, ruins or tombs are places conducive to the development of a feeling, melancholy, rehabilitated in 1802 by Germaine de Staël as part of what she calls "literature of the North".

It would undoubtedly be inappropriate to see it as a simple consequence of the shake-up of the Revolution and the fall of the Ancient Regime, because this fascination began in the 1770s. More decisive in fact seems to be the opening to foreign literature that has already been marked by the "Sturm und Drang" movement, and the *Werther* by Goethe, and then the opening to the landscape that travellers were able to contemplate even before the Emigration.

Part 1 - The poetry of cemeteries, a fashion from across the Channel

In poetry, moreover, the best-sellers of the period arrived from across the Channel with the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* by Thomas Gray, or the *Night-Thoughts* by Young, a collection translated in 1769 by Le Tourneur and reprinted 20 times between 1770 and 1836. Inspired by real grief, Edward Young's collection depicts the poet's grief with an abundance of images, in a poem that is at once religious, moral and romantic. Young is presented by Le Tourneur as the very model of the original genius. From the preliminary speech preceding his translation, I quote: "Carefully nourishing the feeling of active melancholy, he followed the various movements of his soul, mapped out all his thoughts in the order in which they were born, expressed everything he felt, and expressed it as many times as the same feeling was reborn, without bothering the readers too much".

Similarly, *The Poems of Ossian* of the Scottish poet James Macpherson, supposedly translated from Gaelic, and written by a 3rd century bard, make an audience dream of a primitive poetry. Translated in 1777 by the same Le Tourneur, they offer an alternative to the Greco-Roman model, as Germaine de Staël points out in *De la littérature*. They will soon give impetus to national literatures as the Napoleonic wars push defeated nations to seek their popular roots. These will be the bedside books of a whole generation, including Saint-Just and Bonaparte. And we can quote Fontanes' letter to the latter: "It is said that you always have *Ossian* in your pocket, even in the middle of battles. It is indeed the champion of value."

The poems of the pseudo-Gaelic warrior bard largely inspired painters such as Gérard or Girodet or musicians such as Lesueur, who wrote an opera dedicated to Napoleon in 1804. And the emperor had his room in the Quirinal Palace in Rome decorated with a painting of Ingres representing *Ossian's Dream* in 1811. But other manifestations of this revolution in taste are the English garden, celebrated in *The New Heloise*.

Part 2 - English Gardens and Ruins

They gave pride of place to curved lines and natural vegetation over the straight French-style garden layout, emblematic of classicism. While these English gardens embody new sensibilities, we often like to build ruins called "factories" to recreate landscapes that are ideal for daydreaming. A whole range of literature evokes them, from treatises to poems by De Lisle or novels, consider Julie's garden at Clarens and Rousseau's descriptions.

Landscape painters, such as Hubert Robert, also collaborate in their design. And as early as the 1767 salon, Diderot was ecstatic about *The Ruins* brought back by Hubert Robert from his trip to Italy, and I quote: "Oh, the beautiful, the sublime ruins, everything is destroyed, everything perishes, everything passes. We look back on ourselves, we anticipate the ravages of time." And this is the first line of the poetics of the ruins. Because under the pen of travellers, ruin thus becomes a poetic motif at the end of the century.

The ideologist Volney travels as a historian through Syria and Egypt in the 1780s. He will bring back an ethnographic account of it, but also *The Ruins: Or a Survey of the Revolutions of Empires*, published in 1791. He meditated near Palmyra at sunset, the spectacle of nature that covered both the landscape and human history for him soon opened up to a revelation, that of the natural laws with which future legislation must comply. And a spirit announces to him, in chapter 15, the advent of the new century, that of the revolution.

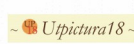
Contrariwise, Chateaubriand, who travelled to Jerusalem or Italy, deduced from the ruins the truth of Christianity on the eve of the Concordat concluded by Napoleon I. His *Genius of Christianity* published in 1802, develops the poetics of ruins under the revealing title of *Harmonies of the Christian Religion with Scenes of Nature and Passions of the Human Heart*. His *Harmonies* culminate, in chapter 5, with the ruins of Christian monuments which bring together all the motives already mentioned; ruins, tombs, ocean mist. Finally, this poetry of ruins and tombs is circulated in the novel where a very prolific vein first develops across the Channel, the vein of the Gothic novel.

Part 3 - The popularity of roman noir, known as "Gothic novels"

At the end of the century, people devoured scary novels: *The Romance of the Forest* and then the 800 pages of Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, or Matthew Lewis' *Monk*, translated in 1797. The action takes place in disturbing settings; convents, old castles, dungeons, undergrounds, mountains, forests and it puts innocent victims and stereotyped villains in opposition, including the perverse monk who is darkness in Lewis's eyes, or even bandits with a big heart. The success of the genre evokes many imitations in France and influences fiction production, if only by introducing wild and deserted settings like mountain landscapes into many novels.

Novelists like Ducray-Duminil exploit this editorial vein in *Victor ou l'Enfant de la forêt* in 1796, or *Celina ou l'Enfant du mystère* in 1798. The Gothic genre sees its political significance oscillate with the events. But the Gothic novel unquestionably makes it possible to express the fantasies of individuals in a period of profound psychological upheaval. The Gothic novel also contributes to the restoration of the Middle Ages and to the renewal of the representation of nature.

Thus, to conclude, these various motifs depict the shake-up of the norms of taste, both in the choice of subjects that integrate the imperfect or even the ugly, but also the desired effect. The moving or sublime replaces the beautiful with the feeling of greatness, even terror, but mixed with delights. It is this terror that Burke analysed as early as 1757 in his *Treatise on the Sublime*. It heralds, in aesthetics, the privilege granted to imagination over reason, to genius over rules. In short, these motifs are telling of a period when essences give way to the future, shaking classical aesthetics.



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ELOQUENCE AND REVOLUTIONARY NEWSPAPERS

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Patrick BRASART, Lecturer in French Literature, Paris 8 University

Part 1 - Nostalgia for an active word in the age of Enlightenment

LV: Hello Patrick Brasart, you have devoted your work to revolutionary eloquence. Can we say that public speaking, newspapers that are normally considered extra-literary, are essential to understanding intellectual and cultural life of the “turn of the century”?

PB: If we want to explain the importance of public speaking and political journalism emerging with the Revolution in the last decade of the century, we must first remember one fact. We often identify Literature with a big L with fiction; novel, theatre or poetics, whereas in the 18th century, the word “literature” refers to everything that is written, everything that is printed. Moreover, what we now call “literature” was then referred to as “eloquence” and “Belles Lettres”, so oratorical genres are an integral part of it.

First of all, the education received in the colleges is massively based on learning the literature of Greek and Roman Antiquity. In addition to epic, dramatic and lyrical poets, it studies political speakers such as Demosthenes, author of the *Philippics*, directed against King Philip of Macedonia, who threatened the freedom of Greek cities, or Cicero, author of the *Catiline Orations*, speeches against an attempted coup d'état. Logically, the 18th century therefore developed a nostalgia for a strong word that could influence the course of events.

Against harmless or frivolous, ornamental Belles Letters, the philosophers of the Enlightenment dream of being speakers, at least since Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on Science and the Arts* and his famous *Prosopopée de Fabricius*. The oratory praise of great men became a central genre of cultural life and Father Raynal's famous *Histoire philosophique des deux Indes* was dotted with harangues, the most famous of which was the apostrophe to the American insurgents, where eloquence was associated with freedom.

Thus, when political eloquence was finally reborn, in concrete terms, in 1789 with the opening of the Estates General, it was perceived as a political tool, certainly, but also in its aesthetic dimension. For all contemporaries, one can't persuade without saying so well and the greater the stakes of speaking out, the more force and beauty the verb will have.

At the beginning of the Revolution, one of the most important literary critics of the time, La Harpe, who paradoxically later denounced the revolutionary language, thus presented Mirabeau, the oratory leader of the Constituent, as the Demosthenes or as the Cicero of France. He asks that a higher eloquence course be instituted where the best speeches of the National Assembly would be studied. And the latter, for a writer like Chamfort, is intended to replace the Académie française.

LV: Yes, but does the literary value attributed to a political discourse not simply hide the ideological preference of the critics?

PB: Of course, the political level of critical judgement often parasitizes the aesthetic level, sometimes completely stifling it. But our distance from the Revolution liberates us. As Burke, the theorist of the sublime, recalled, a cataclysm cannot be experienced aesthetically by those who are its direct victims, but at a distance it can be.

Thus, we can appreciate how a speaker will emerge in a given political camp, one who will best be able to take advantage of his situation in the field of ideological clashes. The revolutionaries themselves were the first to recognise the oratory skills of their opponents. Thus, at the Convention, the Montagnards, in fighting the Girondins, constantly denounce them as enchanter, fine talkers who would subjugate opinions by the magic of their verb and even more dangerous and all the more to fight because of this.

Part 2 - Some oratory figures to remember

LV: And who would you consider to be the main oratory figures to remember?

PB: We could mention dozens of names, but among the first-rate speakers are the Constituent Mirabeau and Barnave on the left side and, on the right side, Abbot Maury and Cazalès. Under the Legislative and the Convention, Vergniaud and Guadet for the Girondins, Danton, Robespierre and Saint-Just for the Montagnards. But if there was only one name to remember, it would be Saint-Just. Surrounded by a tragic aura of the Archangel of Terror, guillotined at the age of 26 with Robespierre, he established himself between 1792 and 1794 as a theorist and a practitioner of Laconism. Its incomparable height of your repudiation makes any compromise possible. "What constitutes a Republic is the total destruction of everything that is opposed to it," he wrote, lapidary.

However, they are first of all texts written to be spoken in public. It takes an effort to read to imagine this oral performance. They cannot be appreciated without knowing a context; the political situation, the balance of power, a context in constant change from 1789 to 1794. And the oratory language of the revolution made up of great turns of phrase is a thousand miles from the current language of the 21st century.

Part 3 - Newspapers that do "work"

LV: At the beginning of our interview, we mentioned the birth of political journalism. Have some newspapers taken on the same value as speeches? And if so, why?

PB: Political journalism, born with the Revolution, also claims judiciary exercise. A people's court placed between the people and their representatives, a mediator, the journalist competes with the Assembly's speakers, whose oratory stance he adopts, arrogant and exhorting the public of his readers and potentially the entire nation. Among the countless titles that emerged at that time, at least three eventually metamorphosed into works, those of Marat, Hébert and Desmoulins.

Marat, self-proclaimed "friend of the people", has a unique way both of identifying his life with his mission as a journalist and of maintaining a permanent dialogue with his addressee, the people, whom he blames and lectured tirelessly, reproaching them for their apathy and naivety, while increasingly organising his issues around the readers' letters. He also circulates alarmist news and increasingly calls for the punishment of traitors.

Hébert, on the other hand, borrows from his diary the burlesque identity of Father Duchesne, a man of the gruff people who is never lost for words, comes straight from the theatrical genre of the charade. He punctuates his speech with countless swearwords, scorn, shit primarily, and comical sketches to demand the physical liquidation of his opponents. A counter-revolutionary satirical journal, *Les Actes des Apôtres*, written by Rivarol, had paved the way for him.

Finally, Camille Desmoulins, greatest writer of the time in Michelet's eyes, edited two newspapers: *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant* and then *Le Vieux cordelier*, under the Terror, to fight the accusations of the Exaggerated, the Hebertists against the Dantonists. He protested against the poison of fear and the support for the Terror, which for him was the antithesis of the utopian ideal of true justice, happiness and freedom of the Revolution.

LV: And to conclude, Patrick Brasart, what can we learn from this revolutionary literature?

CD: Undoubtedly, revolutionary eloquence, like journalism, embodies the dream long cherished by the man of letters, by the philosopher of the Enlightenment, to be the spokesman and/or guider of opinion. After being despised for a long time as pure rhetoric, this eloquence fascinates us because it testifies to a world of grandiose expectations, of formidable challenges where the sublime overwhelms speech, in contrast to the current political speech, often impoverished by communication advisors, and reduced to insipid elements of language.

LV: Thank you, Patrick Brasart.

ANALYSING THE REVOLUTION

Laurence VANOFLEN, Lecturer in Literature and Philosophy, Paris Nanterre University

Marc-André BERNIER, Professor of French Literature, Québec à Trois-Rivières University

Part 1 - Literature: A Key Work of the 1800s

LV: Marc-André Bernier, hello. You teach in the University of Québec in Trois-Rivières in Canada and you recently devoted a collection of articles to *De la littérature* by Germaine de Staël. Could you tell us how important this book is? Is it a key work of the turning point in the Enlightenment?

MAB: In the year of its publication in 1800, this book immediately represented a significant political and intellectual event. First of all, political because Madame de Staël defends the intellectual and philosophical heritage of the Enlightenment and, at the same time, the republican heritage of the Revolution in a context where her opposition to Napoleon Bonaparte is beginning to assert itself, after the coup d'état of the 18th Brumaire, that is to say in November 1799.

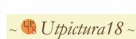
So, an intellectual event then, as several of his contemporaries immediately understood, starting with Chateaubriand. Indeed, this text represents a major contribution to the intellectual effort of an entire era which seeks to conceive the new world emerging after the Revolution. The complete title of the book is now as follows: *Literature Considered in its Relations with Social Institutions*. In this title, the important word is "relation". For Madame de Staël, cultural life has a relationship with all the historical phenomena that, over the centuries, have transformed societies, institutions and, more generally, mentalities.

So let us take the classic example of the difference between ancient and modern literature. In the Antiquity, Latin literature, written by Madame de Staël, would have remained absolutely foreign to the intimate dimension of emotional life. On the other hand, modern writers, especially English and German writers, writers like Richardson, Young and MacPherson and his bards seized *Ossian* or, in Germany, Goethe and Schiller, these writers would have sought above all to deepen the secrets of the human heart.

But why? According to Madame de Staël, modern literature inherits the general transformation of mentalities caused by the invasions of the peoples of the North and the Christianisation of the Roman Empire. However, these great historical phenomena have also revalued the status of women, considered as slaves by the Ancients, but promoted by the Moderns to the rank of companions thanks to which they have reached a greater delicacy of feeling. It is therefore necessary to understand the productions of the mind in the light of these millenary religious and moral, social and political resolutions.

This example clearly shows the importance of this book of literature in the birth of a literary history and beyond what we now call the human sciences. Chateaubriand, for example, will soon take up the scheme again by replacing perfectibility, we can come back to this, by Christianity, which according to him has developed the expression of love and melancholy, two values very dear to Madame de Staël.

Part 2 - A history based on theory and perfectibility



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LV: You have just mentioned the originality of this approach, Marc-André, but what exactly distinguishes Germaine de Staël and the other critics of the time?

MAB: It should be recalled that in the 18th century, the conception of history was most often based on the idea of cyclical time, i.e. periods of progress alternating with periods of decline. Voltaire, for example, in his *Essai sur les mœurs*, fears that decline will follow the classical 17th century, which he considers to be the Great Century. At the end of the century, La Harpe considered that the Revolution, by ruining all moral and aesthetic religious values, made it impossible to produce masterpieces.

And that is why his *Cours de littérature*, which was held between 1799 and 1804, defended a return to classical aesthetics and great models. So in this context, Madame de Staël, on the other hand, applies the theory of "perfectibility", I mentioned the word earlier, to the evolution of literature; a theory defended a few years earlier by the philosopher Condorcet in the *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, which dates from 1794.

From this perspective, the history of the human mind is part of a process that has seen our knowledge gradually and above all irreversibly increase since the Antiquity to the present day. In *De la littérature*, Madame de Staël's investigation therefore follows step by step this slow but continuous march of the mind from the Antiquity to the French Revolution. Madame de Staël thus inscribes it in a dynamic time, in other words, in an evolution that gradually reduces ignorance and prejudices, fanaticism and superstition for the benefit of a better knowledge of the human heart. The painting that Madame de Staël offers is thus animated by a feeling of hope in a future necessarily better than the past, an idea that will, of course, be taken up with fervour in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Part 3 - A Response to the Denunciations of the Enlightenment

LV: So, you began by talking about the political dimension of the book. By turning to literature, does Germaine de Staël not respond indirectly to the denunciations of philosophers and the Enlightenment that flourish precisely at the moment when society aspires to return to order, that is, after Thermidor?

MAB: The hopes raised by the doctrine of perfectibility that I have just mentioned come up against the recent experience, in 1800, of revolutionary terror, an experience that Madame de Staël herself describes as, and I quote, "a monstrous phenomenon" that has suspended the progress of the Enlightenment. Many of her contemporaries, however, do not hesitate to go a little further by claiming that the Terror was the inevitable consequence of the progress of the Enlightenment itself. This is the thesis of one of the most influential counter-revolutionary philosophers, the Englishman Edmund Burke.

In a book entitled *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published at the beginning of the Revolution in 1790, Burke criticised in particular the notion of a "social contract" that came from Rousseau, and he also criticised the Declaration itself of Human Rights. For him, these were in fact abstract principles, that is to say foreign to the historical experience of a humanity that he conceives as dominated by selfish passions, and therefore foreign to the principles of equality and fraternity. That is why it is better to prefer very real historical traditions which have always moralised the behaviour of individuals by rooting them in secular convictions, national habits or even prejudices, compared to abstract legal principles, which, according to him, do not refer to any human truth.

Madame de Staël, on the contrary, considers the return to traditions and old prejudices to be illusory. We cannot do, and I quote her, she has a wonderful expression, "we cannot downgrade reason" and to the Terror, we must respond, on the contrary, with even more light. Above all, this attitude invites it to open up new perspectives.

Following her aspiration, an aspiration that will be very characteristic of the coming 18th century and soon of our own modernity, the writer and the artist will have to respond to the violence of history by committing themselves, this is already the idea that is present in her work, to actively engaging in the transformation of the world.

De la littérature therefore calls on writers to renounce the frivolous puns that characterised French literature at the end of the Ancient Regime, because new times require literature capable of exercising a true magisterium over opinion, either from the speaker's platform or in the burning pages of a work of imagination.

In other words, with the Revolution, writers must set out to conquer new progress that can anticipate the times in which they live. Soon, these theses will guide the fictional choices of *Corinne ou l'Italie*, which is a major novel of the early 19th century.

LV: In any case, it is useless to say that the First Consul does not like this notion of the writer's role, since it wants to provide its regime with a literature that is equal to the classics. Thank you Marc-André Bernier for this rich exchange which taught us a lot about literature.

MAB: It is I who thank you.

THE FLOWERING OF THE INTIMATE: FROM THE CONFESSIONS BY ROUSSEAU TO THE MEMOIRS BY MANON ROLAND

Laurence VANOFLEN, Lecturer in Literature and Philosophy, Paris Nanterre University

Introduction

The last event marking the end of the century in literature was the development of personal writing in the wake of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*; two volumes appeared posthumously in 1782 and 1789, giving birth to the autobiographical genre promised to have a rich future until today. Autobiography is different from memoirs where the interest of the narrative lies in the social status of the narrator, which is generally important. It gives him the opportunity to witness historical facts that make the genre so interesting in the classical era.

Autobiographical writing derives, on the contrary, from the emphasis placed on privacy in the 18th century with the emergence of the middle class as much as the sensualist epistemology of the Enlightenment. Identity is indeed the result of an experience. Autobiography implies enunciative duality but also the awareness over time of the narrator's genesis of his own personality. The singularity of a commoner self is therefore at the centre of the story, which is indeed the novelty of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*.

Part 1 - The birth of a genre: The *Confessions* of J-J. Rousseau

Published for the first six books in 1782, four years after Rousseau's death, the *Confessions* were nevertheless conceived at the end of the 1760s. The project was born in part from the need to justify the various attacks on Rousseau, especially after the banning of *Emile* in both France and Geneva. These attacks came from religious authorities as well as philosophers.

A pamphlet by Voltaire in 1764 reveals that the author of *Emile* abandoned his children. Rousseau would then feel the need to prove the goodness of his heart by going back through his life and confessing to his every mistake. He thus returns to the theft of a ribbon that cost the dismissal of a poor cook or to the episode of the broken comb at the home of Pastor Lambercier for which he is unfairly accused, just as he will return to his first sexual emotions during the spanking that is administered to him on that occasion.

Jean-Jacques's *Confessions* will, of course, cause scandal as soon as the book is published, throwing light on the peculiarities of his relations with women, from masochism to exhibitionism. He anticipated the revelations of Freudian theory. But the most important thing for Rousseau is to understand the coherence of his personality. The episode of the broken comb, for example, the extract of which can be found in the eBook, dates the beginning of indignation at the injustice that will animate the author of the second *Discourse*.

And Rousseau also underlines his contradictions, such as those between his imagination and his mind, contradictions that make him unsuitable for worldly life. I quote: "I would have done impromptu but at leisure", as he says with a certain humour in Book 3.

The autobiographical writing then becomes in itself a victory over time. The feeling of authenticity is indeed felt in the moments when Rousseau tells the happy course of the Charmettes in Book 6, or when he talks of a night under the stars during his wanderings between Paris and Chambéry. This happiness is at the junction between writing and memory. I quote again: "I liked the slightest facts of that time because they are from that time". And Volume 2, on the other hand, devoted to the entry into literature and its relationship with philosophers, will be darker, overwhelmed by Rousseau's growing sense of conspiracy.

But less than historical truth, what Rousseau then comes to affirm is subjective and felt truth. It does not matter that the memory is not faithful, that it filters and selects as it will be accused. Many other writers, after Rousseau, from the seducer Giacomo Casanova in Chateaubriand, Stendhal, George Sand to Marcel Proust, will continue the task at hand in the series of homages, the thrush of Combourg by Chateaubriand, like the madeleine by Proust, which undeniably owe to the periwinkle of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. But the hazards and violence of the Revolution will reinforce and exacerbate the need to leave a trace of individual existence, captured both in their uniqueness and in the circumstances of a humble and sometimes dramatic daily life.

Part 2 - Waiting for the guillotine: The *Private Memoirs* of Madame Roland (1793)

Thus, Manon Roland, the simple wife of a factory inspector who would become Minister of the Interior, caught in the fall of the Girondins, was arrested on 31 May 1793. As the muse of the Revolution, she became its victim and devoted the six months of her arrest, before her speedy trial and execution, to drafting some *Historical Records* and some *Private Memoirs*.

At first focused on the need to defend the action and memory of the men with whom she shared her political commitment, her husband, of course, Roland, Buzot or Brissot, her writing then turns to the evocation of childhood, going back to the date of 1780. Both derivative and an act of resistance to its accusers, her story is also an opportunity to pull oneself together.

Like Rousseau, she took a vow of sincerity and recounted an indecent assault she suffered in her father's studio in her early teens, as well as the psychological repercussions, unrest, guilt and shame she would experience. This is obviously a very rare testimony under a female pen, given the decorum in place. A book too, a precious chronicle of a childhood in the Parisian middle class, her father was indeed a master engraver, with her intellectual itinerary, the history of her friendships and her marriage.

Marked by Plutarch's reading of *The New Héloïse* at the age of eight after her mother's death, she forges for herself a heroic ideal marked by virtue and energy. This personality, which pierced her writing, earned her the admiration of Chateaubriand, Stendhal, Lamartine, or the English historian Carlyle. Witnesses reported her last words on the Revolution Square in front of the Statue of Liberty when she was guillotined; she was quoted as saying: "O freedom, what crimes are committed in your name!" Unfinished, the text of the *Memoirs* is written on the pressure of circumstances and the sinking of the political ideals which she has committed herself to. The last words of the *Memoirs*, at 39 years old, are a sober reminder of this.

These *Memoirs* will be published in 1795 in an altered form. Thus, writing appears as the only way to save an irreplaceable self that time threatens, from Restif to the aging Casanova who stayed away from the Revolution, or even to the nobles imprisoned or not, emigrated or not, like Madame de La Rochejaquelein, Madame de La Tour du Pin or Madame d'Arconville.

But personal writing also spread to diaries, even fiction at the same time. Let us think of the great monologue of Figaro by Beaumarchais or the novel by Chateaubriand, *Senancour*, or Benjamin Constant at the beginning of the 19th century. To conclude, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* thus mark the emergence of autobiography, understood as an ordered narrative by which a simple individual intends to give an account of what he is, of his singular identity captured again by memory.

Autobiography is telling of the profound transformation of literature at the end of the 18th century, insofar as it is an entirely new genre, without rules, which escapes decency to affirm the truth of the subject.

CONCLUSION: THE ENLIGHTENMENT AFTER THE COUP

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Part 1 - An "unnamed" period

Taking stock of the turning point of the Enlightenment raises two questions. One concerns the links between the Enlightenment and the Revolution and is immediately raised when the 18th century comes to an end. The other is what the period has left us as a legacy. Beyond a process of the Enlightenment that took as its pretext the unleashing of the violence of Terror supposed to be its effect, we will therefore wonder what the Enlightenment still has to pass on to us.

But first of all, it is necessary to underline the extraordinary complexity of a period that rejects simplifications and clear-cut oppositions. Indeed, the 19th century opened with a society that had experienced an unprecedented clean slate, but which did not yet know where it was going. Revolutionary ups and downs favour sinuous individual trajectories, even without mentioning the opportunist politicians who have crossed all regimes, such as Talleyrand or Fouché. Satirists have had a field day out of these reversals, inventing the pejorative term "weathervane" to describe the phenomenon. The critic La Harpe thus moves from the philosophers' party to that of his determined opponents.

The young Chateaubriand, a Rousseauist and incredulous, from the *Essais sur les révolutions* in 1797, became in 1802 the banner bearer of a resurrected Christian faith. It must feed a renewal of literature that the nascent Empire is calling for. And the same authors can be claimed by all sides. This is the case of Rousseau, the object of an unprecedented cult in the 80s and of numerous pilgrimages to Ermenonville, invoked alternately or simultaneously by aristocrats, Girondins and Jacobins.

But ideological divisions are also often less clear-cut than one might think. Historicalized patterns of thought are spreading in this way. And even a conservative like Senac de Meilhan admits the necessity of the Revolution. Conversely, the triumphant reason ebbs and the need for the spiritual also affects the heirs of the Enlightenment. And for a counter-revolutionary and monarchist theorist like Bonald in 1802 or Madame de Staël, I quote: "Literature is the expression of society". The best proof of the complexity of the period lies in the ambivalence of these key notions such as melancholy or the return to the ancient.

Part 2 - A period between energy and nostalgia, momentum and loss

Both a negative and positive force for writers such as Staël and Chateaubriand, melancholy signals existential vertigo in the face of time and historicity. But it also allows us to surpass ourselves and opens up to a form of transcendence. The call of the spiritual is expressed in both of them, whether it takes the form of Catholicism or not. Similarly, the neoclassicism that triumphed in Chénier or in painting by David, as by writers, expresses the tensions of the end of the century, caught between energy and nostalgia, a call to the future and a sense of loss. We met them in the ruins' motif.

The return to the ancient is indeed a process of re-foundation and not a simple frozen academism, as underlined by this appeal launched by Germaine de Staël in 1800: "Comparing our wealth with that of antiquity, far from being discouraged by the sterile admiration of the past, let us be revived by the fruitful enthusiasm of hope; let us unite our efforts, let us deliver our sails to the fast wind that leads us towards the future".

But in the end, this call of the spiritual leads to the recognition of the powers of literature. It sometimes leads to incompleteness or to modern forms of writing such as the fragment. However, literary history has simplified and rewritten this uncertain period after the event, which itself felt the need to forge its own myths.

Thus, Chateaubriand himself rewrites history in the *Memoirs from Beyond the Grave*, by posing himself, several decades later, as the founder of the emerging romanticism. I quote: "In me, with the so-called romantic school, a revolution in French literature began." The author of the *Genius of Christianity* thus became, for posterity, the founder of a new, romantic literature, unfairly relegating Madame de Staël and *De la littérature* written two years earlier to the background.

It remains to be seen how the process opened to the Enlightenment at the end of the 18th century. Is the responsibility for the revolutionary violence attributed to the Enlightenment part of those myths that the time felt the need to forge to master a vertiginous history?

Part 3 - The Revolution, achievement or betrayal of the Enlightenment?

Indeed, at the end of the 18th century, counter-revolutionary theorists, in Burke's wake, opened a trial of philosophy, held responsible for the great shaking of the Ancient Regime. This trial, as summarised in the refrain of the Gavroche's song in *Les Misérables*: "'Tis the fault of Voltaire, 'tis the fault of Rousseau", has left its mark on the collective memory.

However, the Revolution is not the mere implementation of a pre-existing programme since, as we have seen, the Enlightenment is not itself a doctrine and none of its representatives, including Rousseau, advocates overthrowing the established government. In addition, the Revolution is multifactorial. It is due as much to social developments, the emergence of public opinion as to the failure of the reforms attempted to adapt the administration, particularly the tax administration, of the Ancient Regime, or to circumstantial facts such as subsistence crises that may have served as a trigger.

At most, philosophical literature has prepared it in public opinion by legitimising its claims and providing these actors with intellectual tools. Concepts such as social contract, natural law.

Certainly, its dark side is undeniable. On the political level, the desire to base a more just social order on reason leads to the violence of Terror and the revolutionary courts, or to the authoritarianism of the Empire. The question of equality, raised, will wait a long time for its answers; 1848 for the abolition of slavery, 1944 for women's right to vote. The desire to spread the values of freedom, equality, fraternity, and the ideal of happiness of peoples also leads to wars and sister republics in Europe, and even new kingdoms in Italy.

Finally, on the social level, the concern to establish property and wealth, whether good or bad, takes precedence over the implementation of public education projects, which will await the Third Republic, not to mention a social justice called by the most audacious as Condorcet. The Stendhalian and Balzacian novel highlights the speculations and enrichments allowed by revolutionary wars - think of *Father Goriot* or the assignats - and welcomes the entry into what Stendhal calls the 19th century plateau. Beyond the revolutionary decade, would the Enlightenment still have to be forgotten?

Conclusion - The Enlightenment Today: A Current Debate

On the literary level, first of all, the raging verdict of La Harpe, which considered new literature monstrous, was invalidated by history. From autobiography to urban chronicles by Mercier or Restif, or even newspapers, the genres that emerged in the last decades of the 18th century are central to the modern cultural landscape. The press, the writing of the intimate including autofiction, or the visionary forms of poetry of the surrealists - think of the *Paysans de Paris* by Aragon - bear witness to this. Similarly, the struggle of the Enlightenment has remained relevant in the 21st century; religious tolerance, freedom of opinion, human rights, the right to education, regularly appear in the most burning news of our decade in all corners of the globe.

In an era of scientific misdeeds, fake news and all-powerful communication, the need for critical debate, mistrust of authority and the awareness that knowledge has a history, are still useful watchwords. As is the motto of the Enlightenment: "Dare to think for yourself. *Sapere aude.*"

BAUDELAIRE GIVES A COMMENTARY ON *MARAT EXPIRING* BY JACQUES LOUIS DAVID

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FB: On the 13th July 1793, Marat, a well-known journalist and revolutionary speaker, was assassinated by Charlotte Corday as he was working in his bath, as he often did, because he was suffering from a skin condition. The Convention immediately charges David, 1748-1825, the most popular artist of the Revolution, with the task of painting a work in homage to Marat. This work, which will become one of his most famous, presents Marat as a martyr of the Revolution. The original can be found today in Brussels' Royal Museum of Fine Arts, while a workshop copy hangs in the Louvre. In 1846, Baudelaire visits an exposition which showcases noteworthy paintings by David and Ingres. In keeping with Diderot, a writer turned art critic, he passes comment on *Marat Expiring* by Jacques-Louis David.

Reading by CD:

"The divine Marat, one arm hanging over the side of the bath and holding weakly onto his last pen, the chest punctured with the fatal wound, has just drawn his last breath. On the green rug in front of him, his hand is still holding onto the treacherous letter: "Citizen, given that I am unhappy, I have the right to your help". The water in the bath is red with blood. The paper is bloodied. On the floor, lies a large kitchen knife covered in blood. On the pitiful, wooden support which made up the relentless journalist's desk, we can read the words: "To Marat. David".

All these details are as realistic and genuine as a novel by Balzac. The drama is there, living in its lamentable horror. And yet by strange coincidence, what made this painting David's masterpiece and one of the biggest curiosities of modern art is that it is neither trivial nor vile. What is more astonishing about this unusual ode is that it is painted with extreme rapidity and when you consider the beauty in the work, this is where the mind is truly baffled. It commemorates a personable hero and is a triumph for spiritualism. Cruel-like in nature, this painting has all the elements of the ideal.

What was it then this ugliness that Death has so quickly wiped from the tip of his wing? Marat can now defy Apollo. Death just kissed him with his loving lips and he now lies in the calm of his metamorphosis. In this work, there is something both tender and poignant. In the cold air of the room, on the cold walls, around the cold and funereal bath, there is a fluttering soul. Will you permit us, politicians of all parties, and even fierce liberals of 1845, to feel moved before David's masterpiece? This painting is a gift to the grieving country and our tears are not dangerous."

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