Charles Pinot Duclos, a humanitarian view of man's social role in the eighteenth century

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CHARLES PINOT DUCLOS, A HUMANITARIAN VIEW OF MAN'S SOCIAL ROLE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The introduction indicates the place occupied by Charles Pinot Duclos in the development of ideas expressed in eighteenth-century literature, and refers to the subjects to be discussed in the thesis.

Chapter One puts forward Duclos's attitude towards religion, and examines the role of the Church within society. This chapter seeks to define Duclos's view of the human condition, and to demonstrate the link between his definition of virtue and man's quest for personal happiness.

Chapter Two examines the position of women in society, and discusses the issue of virtue in relation to chastity. This chapter studies the social responsibilities of the individual with reference to sensibility, intelligence and social rank.

Chapter Three addresses the issue of education in relation to gender and class. This chapter discusses the aims of different types of education, and raises criticisms of the educational system in the eighteenth century.

Chapter Four examines the changes within society brought about by redistribution of wealth and by intermarriage between social classes. It describes the social positions afforded by various careers, and discusses the institution of marriage with reference to passion and reason. This chapter investigates the issue of female emancipation in the eighteenth century.

Chapter Five seeks to define the place occupied by men of letters in the eighteenth century, and discusses their literary and social responsibilities. This chapter appraises Duclos's literary role and achievements; it studies the relationship between the writer and the reading public; and assesses the influence of the salons.

The conclusion evaluates the extent of Duclos's skills as a writer, and defines the limits of his observations. It summarizes his analysis of man's social role with respect to the individual and to the community, and evaluates the humanitarian character of Charles Pinot Duclos.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Charles Pinot Duclos is a man of the Enlightenment, the period in European history which saw a resurgence in man's belief in himself based upon a confidence in his own powers of reason. Though this was counterbalanced by science revealing man as being only part of the universe, and not central to it, still there was a general sense of optimism and confidence in man's capabilities, and this is evident in Duclos's literary works.

There was no question which was not susceptible to rational investigation at this time, not even the question of faith, and the themes which excited the most interest were those linked to the quest for personal happiness. Duclos believes that personal happiness is inextricably tied to the well-being of society: "les hommes sont, dit-on, pleins d'amour-propre, et attachés à leur intérêt. ... Qu'ils consultent leurs vrais intérêts, ils les verront unis à ceux de la société" (Considérations sur les moeurs de ce siècle, I, pp. 9-10).[1] Daniel Mornet affirms that this is typical of eighteenth-century opinion: "l'homme ... vit en société. ... L'instinct égoïste s'aperçoit qu'il a tout intérêt à respecter une partie des intérêts des autres. La morale est ainsi une expérience sociale".[2]

Many critics would argue that Duclos was a better moralist than novelist, and even that he put his moralist principles into practice in his daily life to the detriment of his art. Paul Meister describes him as "homme d'action beaucoup plus qu'homme de plume",[3] and Sainte-Beuve observes that Duclos was "ce

1. Henceforth this work will be referred to as the Considérations. Unless otherwise indicated, references to Duclos's work are taken from the second edition of his Oeuvres complètes published by Auger, reprinted by Slatkine Reprints, Geneva, 1968, 9 vol.
2. Daniel Mornet, La Pensée française au XVIIIe siècle (Paris, Armand Colin, 1973), p. 54. Original edition 1926.
3. Paul Meister, Charles Duclos (1704-1772) (Geneva, Droz, 1956), p. 114.

qu'on peut appeler une spirituelle et essentielle activité, une utilité de premier ordre",[4] and that "il mettait tout en viager".[5] However it remains true to say that Duclos left a fairly considerable amount of literature which merits study since it reflects the ideas and manners of his day. His books "aident merveilleusement lorsque l'on veut prendre le ton de la société du XVIIIe siècle et à travers le temps, tâter, si l'on peut dire, le pouls aux moeurs".[6]

At a time when the middle class was forging a place for itself in influential society, literature was perceived to be a useful tool for spreading the new ideas. Duclos was born of the middle class, and although he was ennobled in 1755, he never lost sight of his origins and the essentially bourgeois ideals of equality and freedom: "le monde ne diffère que par l'extérieur, et ... tout se ressemble au fond" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 68). This notion is pursued in the Considérations, and the principle applied to all sections of society, with the notable exception of 'le bas-peuple': "les gens du monde ne valent pas mieux, ne valent pas moins que la bourgeoisie" (Considérations, VIII, p. 109). These maxims reflect the social situation in Paris at the time when a favourite occupation of men of letters was to attend the various salons held by intellectual women where the bourgeoisie rubbed shoulders with the nobility: "la bonne compagnie est indépendante de l'état et du rang" (Considérations, VIII, p. 110). Duclos gives a personal impression of one of these salons in the Confessions du Comte de ***, which adds a dimension of realism to the novel (pp. 88-97).

Part of the concept of equality is the appreciation of the worth of the

4. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi, third edition (Paris, Garnier, 1947), tome IX, p. 261. Original edition 1881.
5. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 214.
6. Emile Henriot, Introduction to Duclos, L'Histoire de Mme de Selve, edited by Bernard Grasset (Paris, 1961). Original edition Paris, 1911.

individual. In Duclos's case this tends to be restricted to his Considérations, though he does develop the character of Mme de Selve in the Confessions du Comte de ***, Mme de Canaples in the Mémoires sur les moeurs de ce siècle,[7] and Mme de Luz in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz. Other writers of the period devote entire novels to character study, obvious examples being Marivaux's La Vie de Marianne and Le Paysan parvenu, and Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloïse, so that the broad view of eighteenth-century novels is one of "des histoires d'amour, des histoires d'ascension sociale, [qui] se déroulent dans un contexte de liberté individuelle".[8]

Duclos may devote less time to character analysis in his novels than Marivaux and Rousseau, but he most certainly does not neglect the theme of individual liberty. In L'Histoire de Mme de Luz he demonstrates how one can have real freedom only if there is mutual respect between all sections of society. Mme de Luz chooses to deny her love for Saint-Géran in favour of her honour only to suffer ignominy at the hands of unscrupulous men,[9] who leave her in "la plus affreuse situation [qui] n'est pas tant d'avoir épuisé le malheur, que d'y être plongé et de n'oser recourir à la plainte" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 302). Mme de Luz feels excluded from society, despite her choice, because of the inhumane actions of Thurin, Marsillac and Hardouin.

In this way Duclos's first novel meets many of the requirements set out by Henri Coulet in Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution: "le public veut, par le roman, apprendre [des choses] sur lui-même, en mettant en lumière le point de vue individuel, la sensibilité, l'adresse, l'énergie, la chance ou la malchance d'un

7. Henceforth this work will be referred to as the Mémoires sur les moeurs.
8. Isabel Herrero and Lydia Vazquez, Types nationaux européens dans des oeuvres de fiction françaises (1750-1789), Dix-huitième siècle, No. 25, 1993, pp. 115-116.
9. Marsillac is portrayed as a man of honour, but his principles are clearly far from his mind when Mme de Luz is at her most vulnerable.

individu".[10]

In these terms it could be argued that his other novels are not so successful since the character study of the heroes is so superficial that the reader finds it hard to associate himself with either of them, but on the other hand the swiftly penned portraits of social types would interest Duclos's public in a different way since it was widely believed that they alluded to existing individuals.

In the Considérations Duclos develops the general theme of the individual, asserting that the way to assure one's personal liberty is to respect other people: "nous sommes tenus, à l'égard d'autrui, de tout ce qu'à sa place nous serions en droit de prétendre" (Considérations, IV, p. 50). By reasoning in this manner the individual's attitude towards freedom and personal happiness can be reconciled with the good of society in general.

Associated with the theme of personal happiness is the question of religion. Duclos supports a humanist view of man's condition, believing that he is capable of good and evil, and that "pour [le] rendre [meilleur], il ne faut que [l'éclairer]" (Considérations, I, pp. 10-11). He refutes the Jansenist theories that man is fundamentally bad, and believes that human nature can be improved by education. As an atheist Duclos places his faith in man's power of reason, and suggests "qu'on apprenne aux hommes à s'aimer entre eux, qu'on leur en prouve la nécessité pour leur bonheur" (Considérations, I, p. 10). Daniel Mornet affirms that this rejection of religious faith is common to the 'philosophes', who maintain that "pour préparer l'avenir, c'est à la raison qu'on doit faire appel",[11] and the way to do this is to improve one's education.

10. Henri Coulet, Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution, (Paris, Armand Colin, 1967), tome I, p. 320.
11. La Pensée française au XVIIIe siècle, p. 43.

The importance that Duclos attaches to education is apparent in his novels (Confessions du Comte de ***, pp. 7-8, Mémoires sur les moeurs, pp. 385-386); his fairytale, Acajou et Zirphile (pp. 339-341); and particularly in his Considérations where he devotes an entire chapter to the subject (Considérations, II). His concern with education links him with many of his contemporaries, perhaps none more so than Rousseau. However the two men view the subject differently: for instance Rousseau favours learning by experience over bookish education, and puts forward a passive attitude: "la plus importante [leçon] à tout âge, est de ne jamais faire de mal à personne",[12] whereas Duclos places the emphasis on benevolent action: "la vertu agit ... [et] quand la vertu est dans le coeur, ... [c'est] une inclination au bien, un amour pour l'humanité" (Considérations, IV, p. 53).

Duclos believes that the desirable end for education is to produce individuals who have learned how to discover their own happiness through actively contributing to the common good: "dans l'éducation générale, on doit considérer les hommes relativement à l'humanité et à la patrie" (Considérations, II, p. 24). In other words he is looking for 'l'homme de l'homme' whereas Rousseau would prefer to form "l'homme de la nature".[13]

Duclos's attitude towards society colours his view of the merit of sensibility. Bertrand Russell defines sensibility as "a proneness to emotion, and more particularly to the emotion of sympathy. To be thoroughly satisfactory, the emotion must be direct and violent and quite uninformed by thought".[14] To a

12. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile ou de l'Education, Oeuvres complètes (Paris, Seuil, 1971), Vol. III, p. 73.
13. Rousseau, Emile, p. 177.
14. Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, (London, Unwin, 1947), p. 701.

man of reason and moderation such as Duclos this degree of sensitivity would be unacceptable since he would regard it as potentially pernicious to society. Unlike Rousseau he denies that man should allow himself to be guided by his passions, and instead asserts that "la vraie sensibilité seroit celle qui naîtroit de nos jugements, et qui ne les formeroit pas" (Considérations, XIV, p. 181). In this way "les âmes sensibles ... [seroient] un avantage pour la société" because they would be able to anticipate the needs of others, and Duclos believes that "tous les degrés de vertu morale se mesurent sur le plus ou le moins de sacrifices qu'on fait à la société" (Considérations, IV, p. 51).

Duclos's circumspection with regard to sensibility is evident throughout his work, and one of the ways in which it manifests itself is his reluctance to analyse his characters more finely.[15] Coulet suggests that "l'équilibre de l'imagination et de l'observation ... est accompli dans la description de la vie intérieure, non dans celle du monde et des actes extérieurs".[16] If this defines the scope of the novelist, then it becomes clear why Duclos's talents tend to lie with moralistic literature: "à défaut des grands mouvements de l'âme humaine, Duclos excelle à relever et à constater [les] manies passagères de l'esprit de société".[17]

However the worth of Duclos's prose fiction should not be denied, and when read in conjunction with his Considérations, it can be seen that Duclos is consistent in his ideas, many of those presented in the moralistic work reflecting those already outlined in his novels and fairytale. He has been accused of having a dry style of writing, "dénué d'imagination",[18] yet other

15. Duclos's attitude towards sensibility is demonstrated later in this thesis, Chapter Five, pp. 121-122.
16. Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution, tome I, p. 319.
17. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 217.
18. Chamfort, Oeuvres complètes (Geneva, Auguis, 1968), Vol. III, p. 307. Original edition 1824-1825.

critics have interpreted his style as having "de la fermeté, de la finesse".[19] As Marivaux points out through Jacob in Le Paysan parvenu, "chacun a sa façon de s'exprimer, qui vient de sa façon de sentir";[20] and though Stendhal may rank him amongst men who lack emotion, he recognises that "[cette] froideur qui les rend très peu poètes, ne les rend que meilleurs raisonneurs",[21] and contends that it is through reading Duclos that "on ... tire le jus de la connaissance de l'homme".[22]

19. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 205.
20. Marivaux, Le Paysan parvenu, (N.P., Gallimard, 1981), p. 38.
21. Stendhal, Oeuvres complètes, Henri Martineau edition (Paris, Le Divan, 1927-1937), Correspondance, tome II, p. 165.
22. Stendhal, Correspondance, tome V, p. 146.

CHAPTER ONE

DUCLOS'S IDEA OF RELIGION AND ITS SOCIAL ROLE

In eighteenth-century France men of letters touched frequently upon the subject of religion. Writers seemed to fall into roughly two camps: those concerned with religious theory, amongst whose numbers could be counted Bernardin de St Pierre and Prévost, neither questioning the existence of God; and those who tended to question the role of religion within society and to criticize religious institutions. In this group could be placed Voltaire and Diderot. Charles Pinot Duclos has more obvious leanings towards the second group than the first: he rarely mentions God, and rather than examining questions of faith and belief, he comments upon religious practices and describes how men of religion influence society and, in broader terms, become involved in affairs of state. Jacques Brengues points out in Charles Duclos, ou l'Obsession de la vertu that this was prudent at a time of persecution.[1] However it is not merely caution that explains the absence of metaphysical discussion in Duclos's works, it is also the author's lack of interest in it. Paul Meister writes in his study of Duclos that "son oeuvre est exempte non seulement de toute angoisse, mais même de toute inquiétude intellectuelle devant les problèmes de la mort et de l'au-delà".[2] This is borne out in the Voyage en Italie where Duclos writes of the terrible finality of his mother's death: "j'en ressentis la douleur qu'on doit sentir en perdant la seule personne dont on puisse être sûr d'être aimé" (p. 256). Not once does he take comfort from any thought of his mother's continuing to watch over him, nor of her enjoying any form of after-life. A similar attitude is taken by the count in the Confessions du Comte de *** when he learns of the suicide of Milady B: "cette nouvelle me plongea dans la plus vive douleur .... L'image de

1. Jacques Brengues, Charles Duclos, ou L'Obsession de la Vertu (Saint-Brieuc, Presses universitaires de Bretagne, 1971), p. 149.
2. Charles Duclos (1704-1772), p. 217.

l'infortunée milady étoit présente à mon esprit, et même aujourd'hui je ne me la rappelle point sans émotion" (pp. 86-87). Since death is final for Duclos there is no questioning the morality of the suicide nor any examination of the spiritual consequences. Duclos maintains this viewpoint throughout his works, and in the Critique de l'ouvrage intitulé: Recueil de ces messieurs he writes quite candidly, "je trouve encore qu'il est ridicule de donner l'oraison funèbre d'un mort; personne ne s'y intéresse" (p. 420). For each individual all life ceases at the moment of death, and this explains Duclos's disregard for what happens to his own body once he will have died. Not for him concern over providing himself with an elaborate tombstone, nor even over the disposal of his remains: "je lègue douze cents livres à mon curé pour m'enterrer comme il voudra" (Testament, p. cxlvii). In contrast with this are his specific instructions about how to distribute his wealth to the living so that society might benefit after he has gone: "je donne et lègue trois mille livres aux pauvres de la paroisse de Saint-Sauveur de Dinan, ... et j'excepte des pauvres les mendiantes valides, à qui je ne donne rien, et à qui l'on ne doit que du travail" (Testament, pp. cxlvi-cxlvii).

Society, and man's relationship to society are what interest Duclos far more than pondering the question of the existence or non-existence of a God. A virtuous person is not so much someone who strictly observes the laws of the Church, but rather someone who takes into account the people around him, and uses a measure of compromise to find personal happiness without infringing other people's freedom, because Duclos believes that "les hommes sont destinés à vivre en société, et de plus, ils y sont obligés par le besoin qu'ils ont les uns des autres: ils sont tous à cet égard dans une dépendance mutuelle" (Considérations, V, p. 64). What, then, is Duclos's idea of religion?

In the Considérations Duclos writes: "la religion est la perfection et non la base

de la morale", but there is little point in looking for a metaphysical aspect to his concept of goodness (IV, p. 49). He notes that "il ne faut pas rechercher avec trop de sévérité le principe des actions, quand elles tendent au bien de la société" (p. 55), and in the second chapter he comments: "à 1'égard des préjugés qui tendent au bien de la société et qui sont des germes de vertus, on peut être sûr que ce sont des vérités qu'il faut respecter et suivre" (p. 25). Duclos's religion is based on the premise that man should live out his respect for his fellow men because every man's happiness depends on successfully relating to the people around him to one extent or another.

This suggestion of interdependence is at variance with the ideas of another contemporary writer who sees things in a very different light, namely Jean-Jacques Rousseau. On comparing Duclos's premise with Rousseau's ideas as exposed in his Discours sur 1'origine et les fondements de 1'inégalité parmi les hommes a conflict of opinions between the two men becomes evident. Rousseau writes: "on voit du moins, au peu de soin qu' a pris la nature de rapprocher les hommes par des besoins mutuels, et de leur faciliter la parole, combien elle a peu préparé leur sociabilité .... En effet, il est impossible d'imaginer pourquoi, dans cet état primitif, un homme aurait plutôt besoin d'un autre homme qu'un singe ou un loup de son semblable".[3] According to Rousseau man does not need to live in society with other men, and so virtue and vice are defined only thus: "on ... appelle vices dans l'individu les qualités qui peuvent nuire à sa propre conservation, et vertus celles qui peuvent y contribuer" (p. 223). So far as society is concerned man behaves in an unselfish way only because of "un sentiment naturel, qui, modérant dans chaque individu 1'activité de l'amour de soi-même, concourt à la conservation mutuelle de toute l'espèce" (p. 224). This enlightened self-interest inspires the maxim:

3. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, Oeuvres complètes (Paris, Seuil, 1971), Vol. II, p. 222.

"fais ton bien avec le moindre mal d'autrui qu'il est possible" (p. 225), which can be neatly compared with Duclos's platitude borrowed from christianity: "faites à autrui ce que vous voudriez qui vous fût fait" (Considérations, IV, p. 51). For Rousseau social virtues are at best incidental to man's happiness, for Duclos they are essential.

It would be wrong however to suppose that Duclos believes that a man is virtuous only if obeying the dictates of the State. In the first place he differentiates between the State and society, and would regard State interference as an infringement upon the freedom of both the individual and society; and secondly he is confident that the individual can judge for himself what is best for him and for society, and that he requires direction from nowhere else.

Man has within himself "une lumière acquise", which is his conscience (Considérations, IV, p. 49). Uncertain, and even unconcerned about whether the conscience is innate, Duclos contents himself with his knowledge that all men have a conscience, and that its influence extends beyond the demands of law and convention and the bidding of national customs. As Paul Meister observes in Duclos (1704-1772): "comme la plupart des 'philosophes' et encyclopédistes, il croit que l'homme n'a pas de cadres ni de principes innés, qu'il est tout malléable" (p. 216). The conscience is impartial and austere, and Duclos calls it "le juge infaillible", considering it to be "plus éclairé, plus sévère et plus juste que les lois et les moeurs" (Considérations, IV, pp. 47-48). Once again a comparison with Rousseau is valid: in the Contrat social Rousseau rejects his earlier theory in the Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, and proposes that the State, the result of the general wills of all the individuals who compose it, is everything, and that the

individual whose actual will is recalcitrant counts for nothing.[4] For Duclos the individual always counts for something because he believes that man's conscience and sociability are linked: "les hommes ont encore le droit d'attendre de nous, non seulement ce qu'ils regardent avec raison comme juste, mais ce que nous regardons nous-mêmes comme tel, quoique les autres ne l'aient ni exigé, ni prévu; notre propre conscience fait l'étendue de leurs droits sur nous" (Considérations, IV, p. 50).

It is in Emile, ou De l'Education that Rousseau's ideas resemble Duclos's most closely, though there is no evidence to show any direct influence from the older man. Rousseau writes: "connaître le bien, ce n'est pas l'aimer: l'homme n'en a pas la connaissance innée, mais sitôt que sa raison la lui fait connaître, sa conscience le porte à l'aimer".[5] Duclos agrees that man does not instinctively tend towards goodness because "nous avons tous dans le coeur des germes de vertus et de vices" (Considérations, IX, p. 143), but like Rousseau he implies that man's conscience disposes him to love goodness: "que l'homme le moins porté à la bienfaisance vienne par hasard, ou par un effort qu'il fera sur lui-même, à faire quelque action de générosité, il éprouvera ensuite une sorte de satisfaction, qui lui rendra une seconde action moins pénible; bientôt il se portera lui-même à une troisième, et dans peu la bonté fera son caractère" (Considérations, IV, p. 55). This is borne out in the Confessions du Comte de *** by the count who secures the happiness of Julie and her lover despite his own desire for Julie: "je n'ai jamais senti dans ma vie de plaisir plus pur que celui d'avoir fait leur bonheur. L'auteur d'un bienfait est celui qui en recueille le fruit le plus doux" (pp. 134-135).

4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Du Contrat Social, Oeuvres complètes, (Paris, Seuil, 1971), Vol. II, p. 522: "chacun de nous met en commun sa personne et toute sa puissance sous la suprême direction de la volonté générale".
5. p. 201.

Rousseau points out that "ce n'est pas assez que ce guide [la conscience] existe, il faut savoir le reconnaître et le suivre. S'il parle à tous les coeurs, pourquoi donc y en a-t-il si peu qui l'entendent? Eh! c'est qu'il nous parle la langue de la nature, que tout nous a fait oublier. La conscience est timide, elle aime la retraite et la paix; le monde et le bruit l'épouvantent? (Emile, pp. 201-202). Duclos would agree that not everyone can listen to his conscience, but rather than blame society for this he accuses the individual: "la conscience parle à tous les hommes qui ne se sont pas, à force de dépravation, rendus indignes de l'entendre" (Considérations, IV, p. 48). The conscience may well counsel a virtuous action, "mais l'obéissance est libre" (IV, p. 53), and "le vice et la vertu sont également d'imitaton" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 479). The sensual pleasures of vice are tempting, and though virtuous actions may eventually lead to true happiness, the path of vice is shorter and enjoyment, though superficial, is immediate. The choice a man makes depends largely upon his character, which can be defined as the permanent basis of an individual to which are added details particular to his social group or determined by his environment, and which change with time and fashion, and which the individual can accept or reject.[6]

Freedom of choice is, in fact, of vital importance to Duclos, something which at least one critic has not appreciated. L.M. Free contends in his book, Virtue, Happiness and Duclos's Histoire de Mme de Luz, that Duclos holds a Jansenist view of a corrupt, weak human nature, and that the adventures of the heroine illustrate that nature tends towards evil.[7] This conflicts directly with Duclos's words in the Considérations, where he criticizes Jansenist writings: "on commence par supposer que l'homme n'est qu'un composé de misère et de

6. See Henri Coulet, Preface to Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des moeurs du XVIIIe siècle, (Paris, Desjonquères, 1986).
7. L. M. Free, Virtue, Happiness and Duclos's Histoire de Mme de Luz (Hague, Nijhoff, 1974), p. 10.

corruption, et qu'il ne peut rien produire d'estimable". His reaction is that "ce système est aussi faux que dangereux" (I, p. 9). A more accurate conclusion than Free's is to be found in Meister's study: "défenseur optimiste de la nature humaine, [Duclos] s'oppose à la philosophie janséniste qui soutient que l'homme est essentiellement mauvais et que, hors de la grâce, il n'est qu'un composé de vice et de méchanceté" (p. 178). Witness the irony with which the idea of grace is treated in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz when Duclos assesses the villainous Hardouin's feelings towards the young and beautiful Mme de Luz: "il s'applaudit de son zèle, et il le redoubla; il éprouva pour sa nouvelle pénitente des mouvements tendres qui peut-être lui avoient jusqu'alors été inconnus; il les attribua à la grâce: quel autre principe auroit pu les faire naître!" (p. 290). The ambiguity of the 'peut-être' and the irony of the exclamation mark heavily suggest that Hardouin is influenced by physical and sexual feelings rather than any spiritual gift from God. Duclos does not believe in grace, at least, in the Jansenist sense.

He seems to frown upon any dodging of responsibility for one's actions. It would be ridiculous to see anything more than a tenuous link between him and a writer of the twentieth century but both Duclos and Jean-Paul Sartre do believe in man's responsibility for his own deeds. The notion that "chaque homme doit inventer son chemin" would tie in with Duclos's conviction that everyone must face up to the consequences of his actions no matter how circumstances may influence a decision.[8] Denial of freedom of choice and hiding behind the rules of a religious doctrine or the dictates of a State are categorically rejected by Duclos. For instance in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz the heroine turns to religion for consolation and guidance; she accepts a director of conscience and denies her own conscience any way of enlightening her: "elle

8. Jean-Paul Sartre, Théâtre (Paris, Gallimard, 1947), Vol. I, Les Mouches, III. 2. p. 113.

promit de lui soumettre entièrement sa conduite; et, dès ce moment, elle se livra absolument à sa direction" (p. 290). The director of conscience turns out to be the biggest villain of the piece, who dopes Mme de Luz with opium and proceeds to rape her. Such a brutal denouement would suggest Duclos's condemnation of anyone's renouncing moral freedom in favour of blind submission to religious dictatorship.

Man can find happiness without having recourse to a Church or any other religious body. In Maîtres de la sensibilité au XVIIIe siècle Pierre Trahard decides that "Duclos ... prête au coeur des lumières spirituelles et une divination presque mystérieuse, qui dépasse le pouvoir de l'intelligence",[9] but perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it is a man's intelligence and foresight which allow him to appreciate the validity of virtuous actions. "Si chacun faisoit tout le bien qu'il peut faire, sans s'incommoder, il n'y auroit point de malheureux" (Considérations, XVI, p. 207), a practical solution bearing witness to Duclos's confidence in man's ability to organise and direct his own life, and be responsible for his own happiness, which is closely tied to virtue. He thinks that "nous avons tous dans le coeur des germes de vertus et de vices" (I, p. 20), and that the mind is "un ressort capable de mettre en mouvement la vertu ou le vice" (XI, p. 143). Therefore if one heeds one's conscience, "[qui] se borne à inspirer la répugnance pour le mal", then one is more likely to act virtuously than wickedly (IV, p. 52).

Rousseau's 'vicaire savoyard' in Emile deduces rules of conduct not from the principles of a highbrow philosophy, but finds them in the depths of his heart, written by nature in ineffaceable characters. Man's natural feelings lead him to serve the common interest, while his reason urges selfishness. He has therefore

9. Pierre Trahard, Les Maîtres de la sensibilité française au XVIIIe siècle (Paris, Boivin, 1932), tome II, p. 303.

only to follow feeling rather than reason in order to be virtuous.[10] It is obvious that Duclos's views in this respect are not quite in line with Rousseau's because he believes that it is reason that makes a man act in accordance with what is in his heart. Only when heart and head are not in conflict is a man able to conduct his life in a truly religious way, as Duclos sees it, because he has reached the perfect state of being: "quand la vertu est dans le coeur, et n'exige aucun effort, c'est un sentiment, une inclination au bien, un amour pour l'humanité" (Considérations, IV, p. 53). The roles of head and heart are perceived in precisely the opposite way by Rousseau who claims, "si c'est la raison qui fait l'homme, c'est le sentiment qui le conduit";[11] and a good deal of the literature of sensibility has taken this tone. For instance Marivaux's Marianne takes a similar line: "il n'y a que le sentiment qui puisse donner des nouvelles un peu sûres de nous, et ... il ne faut pas trop se fier à celles que notre esprit veut faire à sa guise".[12]

Uniting these writers is their recognition of the difficulty that man has in rejecting vice in favour of virtue in his quest for happiness. Through Duclos's sympathetic treatment of characters who succumb to vice before striving for virtue, such as Marsillac in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, the count in the Confessions du Comte de *** and the narrator of the Mémoires sur les moeurs, it is clear that he rejects the premise that man is fundamentally evil and that he recognises the predicament of the human condition: chance, circumstance, nationality, birth, even the age one lives in all influence the decisions a man makes, and help determine the option he will take in a given situation. The count in the Confessions du Comte de *** is surprised into realising "combien

10. See Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy, p. 719.
11. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse, René Pomeau edition, (Bourges, Classiques Garnier, 1988), Part Three, Letter VII, Claire to Saint-Preux.
12. Marivaux, La Vie de Marianne, (N.P., Garnier-Flammarion, 1978), p. 60.

notre vertu dépend de notre situation" (p. 127); and Marsillac expresses his dismay at this in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz: "faut-il que la vertu dépende si fort des circonstances!" (p. 279). Though Marsillac commits an evil crime in raping Mme de Luz, he is not depicted as an evil man: "que n'eût-il pas fait pour se dérober de lui-même le souvenir d'un crime dont il étoit encore plus déshonoré que celle qui en avoit été la victime!" (p. 279). In ten years Duclos does not alter his opinion that a man can do wrong without being basically evil, and in the Considérations he writes of "des malheureux dans l'âge avancé" who regret the misdoings of their youth, "car il y en a peu qui aient alors le triste avantage d'être assez pervertis pour être tranquilles" (II, p. 26). This view can be linked with Marivaux's in La Vie de Marianne where Marianne describes Valville in the following terms: "[il] n'est point un monstre ... . Non, c'est un homme fort ordinaire ... . Homme, Français, ... c'est-à-dire avec ce qu'il a ... de bon et de mauvais" (pp. 335-336).

The Marsillac episode illustrates another aspect of the human condition which makes it difficult though not impossible for the individual to adhere to a code of ethics based upon virtue: "l'homme est si foible" when filled with passion (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 289). Marsillac could hardly comprehend how he could have acted so heinously when he believed he lived by a code of honour, but Duclos gives an answer earlier in the novel: passion, he writes, "ce n'est pas un vice de notre âme, c'est celui de nos organes" (p. 209); and in the Considérations he mentions "les passions qui rendent les hommes malheureux, sans les avilir" (XV, p. 194).

Even the age one lives in seems to conspire against the individual who seeks happiness through virtuous means. In the Mémoires sur les moeurs Duclos writes of "la dépravation de mon siècle" (p. 445), and in the same novel the Comte de Vergi notes: "je ne ... dirai point qu'il n'y a jamais eu de siècle aussi

corrompu que celui-ci ... mais je crois qu'il n'y en a point eu de plus indécent" (p. 447). This is quite an important distinction, and would refer to a libertine trend rather than condemn man's basic morality. Free contends that Duclos is illustrating the universally applicable premise that man is fundamentally wicked in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz when the heroine is abused by morally weak men and moral nihilists represented by a cross-section of men in society (a judge, a nobleman and a priest), but nowhere in his writings does Duclos accept that man is basically evil. In chapter IV of the Considérations he comments that "[les hommes] sont capables de prendre le pli de la vertu comme du vice" (p. 55), and in a later chapter one reads that "les hommes n'ont qu'un penchant décidé, c'est leur intérêt; s'il est attaché à la vertu, ils sont vertueux sans effort; que l'objet change, le disciple de la vertu devient l'esclave du vice" (X, p. 130), but he always manages to suggest that virtue is preferable to vice because it is through virtuous actions that one is best able to contribute towards social harmony and so find true happiness. After all, "qu'importe en effet qu'un homme ne se propose dans ses actions que sa propre satisfaction, s'il la fait consister à servir la société?" (Considérations, I, p. 10).

Some critics have stressed that Duclos rarely rewards virtue in his novels, implying that virtue is always a matter of pure chance and that man has no real power to choose it, but it is true only to a limited extent that Duclos defines "le vice et la vertu non comme des notions absolues mais comme dépendant des circonstances et des liaisons".[13] He does advocate a measure of indulgence in judging man's quest for virtue, but this does not go so far as a refusal to face the problem squarely, as Henri Coulet accuses him of doing: "Duclos n'a même pas le courage d'un hédonisme revendicatif. Il quête l'indulgence et propose le

13. Laurent Versini, Introduction to the Confessions du Comte de *** (Paris, Didier, 1969), p. 220.

compromis".[14] It would perhaps be fairer to conclude that Duclos simply takes into account the manners of his day, just as Molière did in the previous century:

> Cette grande roideur des vertus des vieux âges
> Heurte trop notre siècle et les communs usages;
> Elle veut aux mortels trop de perfection:
> Il faut fléchir au temps sans obstination.[15]

Duclos does not present himself as a man of absolute ideals and radicalism, so his approach to the problem is not to dodge the issue but to accept moderation as a valid and realistic solution in its own right: man should learn from his mistakes and just keep on trying. Virtue is not completely dependent upon chance and circumstance, but relies more on strength of character and determination to carry on striving despite occasional lapses into vice. This theory is expounded in both the Confessions du Comte de *** and the Mémoires sur les moeurs where the two heroes find happiness and a firm resolve to act virtuously only after going through illusions, mistakes and stupidity. Taken a step further this could be taken to mean that "la révélation de la vertu n'a pas suffi, il faut que s'y ajoute le désenchantement d'un homme pour qui tous les plaisirs sont usés",[16] but whatever the case Duclos proposes an optimistic interpretation of Mme de Volanges's assertion in Les Liaisons dangereuses that "l'humanité n'est parfaite dans aucun genre, pas plus dans le mal que dans le bien. Le scélérat a ses vertus, comme l'honnête homme a ses faiblesses".[17]

The sorry end to L'Histoire de Mme de Luz could be explained by this theory:

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14. Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution, tome I, p. 388.
15. Molière, Le Misanthrope, I.1.153, in Oeuvres Complètes (Paris, Seuil, 1962)
16. Laurent Versini, Introduction to the Confessions du Comte de ***, p. xviii.
17. Laclos, Les Liaisons dangereuses, Oeuvres complètes, Maurice Allem edition, (Bruges, Pléiade, 1967), Letter XXXII, Mme de Volanges to Mme de Tourvel. Original edition 1951.

it has been suggested that Duclos punishes virtue in this novel,[18] but it could be argued that the heroine's life comes to a sad close not because of her virtue but because of her character, which influences all her decisions. Fatality enters the novel almost immediately: "il faut qu'elle succombe" (p. 185), but in Mme de Luz's case it is because her character is such that she directs her life, albeit perhaps unwittingly, towards misery. She decides that she and Saint-Géran will never be happy together: "je ne croirai jamais, monsieur, ... que votre sort puisse être attaché au mien" (p. 190), and she arranges her life with the result that her words ring true. She sends away Saint-Géran, who would have protected her idea of virtue since "invisiblement M de Saint-Géran s'étoit fait aux idées et à la vertu de madame de Luz" (p. 209); she rejects the possibility of throwing herself on the king's mercy to save her husband's life, and instead gives herself to Thurin; she chooses to go to a lonely spot in the country rather than face her husband and Saint-Géran, and there she is raped by Marsillac; and finally, unable to cope with the consequences of her own actions and subsequent misfortunes, she turns to the Church, and is raped by Hardouin. It is ironic that she says to Saint-Géran, "j'aurois été trop heureuse que le ciel m'eût unie avec vous; mais je n'ai pas disposé de mon sort" (p. 306). It seems implicit that had her idea of virtue coincided with Duclos's definition, then she could have chosen a different course of action to solve the problems facing her. Duclos's treatment of Mme de Luz would suggest that he felt she had an erroneous concept of virtue, confining it merely to physical fidelity but this, and the possibility of her sex having coloured her understanding will be discussed in another section.[19]

Having looked at Duclos's understanding of religion it would seem appropriate to examine how he sees those people in society who label themselves men of

18. See Free, Virtue, Happiness and Duclos's Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 10.
19. Chapter 2, pp. 30-33.

religion. Most of his comments on religious practices are found in the Voyage en Italie and the Histoire de Louis XI, but some evidence of his views can be located in his works of prose fiction and in his Considérations. His antagonistic feelings concerning those people who cut themselves off from their fellow men to live in monasteries can be clearly discerned. Sceptical of monks' desire for spiritual wealth, he attributes their religious zeal to material and social preoccupations, and does not spare his own brother who lived in "une de ces abbayes de génefins, où trois ou quatre religieux forment toute la communauté, et vivent à-peu-près comme des gentilshommes de château" (Mémoires de Duclos, p. lxiii). He embroiders more detail into the Considérations, attacking the fact that monks owe a stronger allegiance to their order than to society in general: "souvent divisés par des animosités personnelles, par des haines individuelles, ils se réunissent, et n'ont plus qu'un esprit, dès qu'il s'agit de l'intérêt du corps". Worse, "ils y sacrifieroient parents, amis, s'ils en ont, et quelquefois eux-mêmes. Les vertus monastiques cèdent à l'esprit monacal" (XIV, p. 182).

Duclos is not automatically prejudiced against individuals within the clergy, but if there is one religious order he detests more than any other it is the order of Jesuits. This could be because of their political involvement in world affairs: as a patriot Duclos would resent foreign interference in French politics and, on political rather than religious grounds, would take a stand against a sect which undermines the power of the monarch by dividing the allegiance of the nation between the French king and the foreign Pope. [20] In the Voyage en Italie he viciously attacks the Jesuits as cruel "rats qui sentent un chat de très loin" (p. 164), and in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz he describes them as "souples, adroits, insinuants", and volunteers with irony that "ils auroient toutes les qualités nécessaires pour suivre la fortune, si ces hommes divins pouvoient envier ses

20. Considérations, I, p. 16. This page gives some idea of Duclos's strong patriotism.

faveurs" (p. 282). He paints a hideous portrait of Hardouin, the Jesuit priest in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz. Of the villains in the novel Hardouin is the most evil, prepared to go to any length to have his way, and never once feeling remorse. Indeed, to escape the possibility of recrimination, he flees to Holland and changes religion, which clearly illustrates how little his career is based upon true religious conviction. Duclos is careful to show that Hardouin is fully aware of the criminal nature of his approach to Mme de Luz: "il ne pouvoit ignorer que ses désirs fussent criminels", yet "M. Hardouin se livra sans scrupule au tendre penchant qu'il ressentoit pour madame de Luz" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 291). He passes himself off in society as a good man, devoted to religion, yet a startling comparison can be drawn between his attitude towards innocence and the attitude taken by the libertine count in the Confessions du Comte de ***. The latter finds himself in a position to do what he will with a young girl, Julie, who more than half expects him to take advantage of her sorry plight. However even though the count finds her sexually attractive, he respects her innocence and her love for somebody else, and he arranges for Julie and her lover to live in happiness and relative prosperity on his lands. Hardouin, on the other hand, thinks of nothing but satisfying his carnal desires when Mme de Luz turns to him for help. As the heroine herself comments earlier (though about other characters), "quelle différence la probité délicate met entre deux hommes qui ont les mêmes désirs!" (p. 242).

Given Duclos's strength of feeling in favour of society it is obvious that he cannot admire those people who choose to set themselves apart from it.[21] He criticizes monks, and does not spare religious sects which interfere with

21. Of Rousseau he wrote in 1766 "je suis loin de l'excuser en tout; mais le connaissant aussi parfaitement que qui que ce soit, je ne me dispenserai jamais de le plaindre" (Correspondance générale de Rousseau (Paris, Colin, 1924-34), tome XVI, p. 153.

political and social order. He knows that wars of religion cause as much destruction as civil wars. In L'Histoire de Mme de Luz he refers to his country's past which was troubled by two sorts of conflict: "outre les dérèglements qui régnoient à la cour, les troubles de la religion ... agitoient encore l'état" (p. 280). Being agnostic himself he could appreciate the political motives of Henri IV, who was more concerned with State unity than the religious label he wore (p. 281). Duclos sees that problems of a spiritual nature may become problems of State: superstition is an example; but he rejects the possibility of solving such problems through the Church. A hint of why this is so may be seen in the Considérations where he writes: "attaquer la superstition ... seroit louable et utile, si l'on s'y renfermoit en philosophe citoyen" (II, p. 26). As always Duclos speaks "en philosophe, qui ne s'appuie que sur la raison, et ne procède que par le raisonnement" (IV, p. 49). Religious fervour, or loyalty to a religious sect is likely to influence one's outlook on secular matters, and this is perhaps why Duclos worries about the clergy becoming too involved in society. He points particularly at the Jesuits, "un ordre uniquement destiné à l'édification" (VIII, p. 102), and frets about their taste for social acceptance and advancement, fearing that "il semble que ce qui touche le bien public ... soit étranger" (VIII, p. 102).

His ironic humour shines through L'Histoire de Mme de Luz in his analysis of the past role of the Church co-existing with society: "on croyoit sans examen, on péchoit sans scrupule, on se convertissoit sans repentir: toutes les fautes se rachetoient par des legs pieux; les prêtres vivoient heureux, et les malades mouroient tranquilles" (p. 280). This is obviously an appalling situation so far as integrity is concerned, but Duclos compares this hypocrisy favourably with the state of religious practice in his day, when he feels that social harmony is disrupted for the sake of appearance.

Apart from the scheming and interfering nature of many men involved in the Church, Duclos also condemns some Catholic practices because of their harmful influence over the clergy. In the Voyage en Italie he criticizes the practice of mortification of the flesh, saying that "une idée plus juste et plus noble de Dieu est de croire qu'il nous donne les biens pour en abuser sans abus" (p. 303). The confessional in particular attracts criticism in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz where Duclos blames it for weakening virtue: "des détails aussi délicats et aussi vifs que ceux que M. Hardouin entendoit chaque jour devoient faire quelquefois sur son esprit une impression bien dangereuse pour sa vertu" (p. 289); and "à force d'entendre le récit des moeurs les plus dépravées, on peut se familiariser avec leur idée, et le crime en fait moins d'horreur" (p. 291). This last idea is reflected in the Confessions du Comte de *** where the count has feelings of remorse for being unfaithful to Mme de Selve, but "l'habitude de les mériter les fait bientôt perdre" (p. 157); and again in the Considérations where Duclos notes that "on contracte le sentiment des actions qui se répètent" (IV, p. 56).[22]

The confessional box therefore is potentially pernicious to the man hearing the confessions (and Duclos never forgets that a priest is a man before he is a priest), but Duclos also points out that the practice is not always beneficial to those who come to confess because communication is between penitent and priest, not between man and a superior being. The consequences of this can be disastrous. Mme de Luz genuinely wanted to find relief in religion but, confused by all the dogma, she found no succour: "les sentiments d'une religion pure, qui devroient faire la consolation des innocents malheureux, achevoient de l'accabler" (p. 279). Duclos takes pains to portray his heroine as "la plus vertueuse ... de toutes les femmes" (p. 307), but the clergyman she turns to

22. Duclos is referring here to acts of virtue, not vice, but the argument is effectively two-pronged.

makes her feel that she is criminal. It is worthwhile to note that turning to the Church does not mean the same thing as turning to God, or even simply to something superior to oneself, according to Duclos. Mme de Luz experiences initial relief once she has shared her secret only because "un des plus grands supplices de madame de Luz étoit d'être obligée de renfermer sa douleur" (p. 279), but the Church does not help her to rebuild her life or prepare her for happiness on earth because its representative has selfish motives for feeding her unhappiness.

It seems appropriate at this juncture to examine why people turn to religion. Duclos often appears dubious about their reasons. He asserts that some people fling themselves from one drama in life to another and "ils embrassent les pratiques les plus austères de la religion: avec plus de douceur elle leur plairoit moins" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 286). After a short while some other fancy will distract them and they will drop their obsession with religion. In the critical edition of L'Histoire de Mme de Luz by Brengues it is suggested that by the eighteenth century religious devotion has become a mask to hide crime and hypocrisy,[23] and this is borne out in the novel where Duclos writes how courtiers are preoccupied with their fortune and ambition: "ils n'ont pas besoin de vertu pour suivre leur objet; mais il faut du moins qu'ils en aient le masque, et par conséquent un vice de plus" (p. 283).

In his notes on the Confessions du Comte de *** Versini points out that Duclos modelled his hostility towards women who turn to religion under false pretences, and his distinction between these and sincerely devoted women on La Bruyère.[24] In L'Histoire de Mme de Luz Duclos elaborates upon why

23. Jacques Brengues, Introduction to L'Histoire de Mme de Luz (Saint-Brieuc, Presses universitaires de Bretagne, 1972).
24. La Bruyère, Caractères (Mayenne, Pléiade, 1941), chapter III, Des Femmes, sections 35-43, pp. 136-139.

women in particular turn to religion. He writes that "dans la jeunesse, uniquement occupées du soin de plaire, elles en perdent en vieillissant les moyens et jamais le désir. Quelle sera donc leur ressource? ... Le dépit les jette dans la dévotion" (pp. 283-284). He remarks that this is the last period in women's lives, and often their only remaining satisfaction can be derived from the confessional box because "l'aveu de leurs fautes ne leur [coûte] point; en les confessant elles se [retracent] leurs plaisirs" (pp. 288-289). Duclos feels that is is sexual instinct that drives these women, not a desire for spiritual comfort. In the Confessions du Comte de *** the reader is encouraged to suspect that Mme de Gremonville is her confessor's mistress, and that her reason for becoming a religious devotee is in order to "ramener l'esprit de son mari, qu'une affaire assez vive avec un jeune homme avoit un peu éloigné d'elle" (p. 53). A similar scepticism can be found in Molière's Le Misanthrope where Arsinoé is depicted in the following terms:

> Elle ne saurait voir qu'avec un oeil d'envie
> Les amants déclarés dont une autre est suivie; ...
> Elle tâche à couvrir d'un faux voile de prude
> Ce que chez elle on voit d'affreuse solitude.[25]

The hypocrisy of these false women is roundly denounced in the Confessions du Comte de *** where Duclos records that "les visites des prisonniers, celles des hôpitaux, un sermon ou quelque service dans une église éloignée, donnent cent prétextes à une dévote pour se faire ignorer, et pour calmer les discours, quand par hasard elle est reconnue. ... C'est ainsi que, la réputation étant une fois établie, la vertu, ou ce qui lui ressemble, devient la sauvegarde du plaisir" (pp. 54-55); and in Acajou et Zirphile where "Zobéide goûtoit les plaisirs d'un amant obscur, dans le temps qu'elle fatiguoit tout le monde par l'étalage de sa fausse vertu" (p. 360). In the fairy tale Zobéide's hypocrisy is revealed but in real life it often passes undetected or is acknowledged as a social vice and, as

25. III.2.857, 861.

such, is rendered almost acceptable. Duclos disagrees. Both his heroines, Mme de Luz and Mme de Canaples, give duty as reason enough to reject the possibility of having a lover. Their duty lies in remaining loyal to the institution of marriage, which is part of the infrastructure of society and contributes to social order.

A transient happiness may be discovered by satisfying one's passions, but Duclos stresses that man should master his passions through reason because "si nous sommes affectés pour ou contre un objet, il est bien difficile que nous soyons en état d'en juger sainement. ... C'est l'intérêt public ... qui a dicté les lois et qui fait les vertus; c'est l'intérêt particulier qui fait les crimes" (Considérations, XIV, p. 175), an attitude reminiscent of the Princesse de Clèves's. An individual cannot find firm and enduring happiness by renouncing society in favour of satisfying selfish desires. This assertion is a rejection of the apology of the passions made by writers such as Prévost, and reveals Duclos as being far removed from the reversal of values as operated by Sade in Justine, ou Les Malheurs de la vertu.

Throughout the Considérations and his works of prose fiction Duclos is at pains to criticize the hypocrisy of the higher echelons of society, but does not condemn out of hand those people like the Comte de *** and the narrator of the Mémoires sur les moeurs who live by its rules, since he recognises that stubbornly adhering to the mores of a bygone age can give rise to conflict between the individual and the rest of society. He suggests that man accept himself as he is; rejects the mediaeval concept of man as an infinitely inferior creature; and contends that, since morals change from age to age and from nation to nation, and those of the eighteenth century are not particularly honourable or even decent, man should seek a situation of tolerance within society by mitigating pleasure and desire with a judicious measure of reason:

"soyons donc ce que nous sommes; n'ajoutons rien à notre caractère; tâchons seulement d'en retrancher ce qui peut être incommode aux autres et dangereux pour nous-mêmes. Ayons le courage de soustraire à la servitude de la mode, sans passer les bornes de la raison" (Considérations, IX, pp.118-119).

Thus one can see that Duclos rejects the principle that man is fundamentally bad. Like Diderot he recognises that man is equally capable of living according to a code of virtue as to one of vice,[26] but he is explicit in his denunciation of the latter.[27] As Emile Henriot points out: "avec un grand amour pour le plaisir, Duclos portait en lui un goût certain pour la pureté".[28] Though Meister suggests that "Duclos pense que la vertu et le vice n'ont pas de rapport avec le bonheur ou le malheur",[29] Duclos himself shows how virtue is indeed linked to happiness and his definition of virtue, found in the Considérations, is a platitude borrowed from the Bible: "faites à autrui ce que vous voudriez qui vous fût fait" (IV, p. 51). In opposition to Rousseau he believes that virtue is based upon acts that are beneficial to the interdependence of the individual and society, because society is indispensible to human happiness.

In true eighteenth-century style, typical of the 'philosophes', he rejects the idea of divine judgement, and instead places his faith in man's own conscience and reason. There is no such thing as fate or destiny for him; man chooses how to lead his own life and, though he may be influenced by circumstances such as birth or wealth and by chance occurrences, it is entirely up to each individual to direct the course of his existence. Duclos considers submission to another

26. "Nos vertus ne sont pas plus désintéressées que nos vices", Diderot, Les Bijoux indiscrets, Oeuvres de Diderot ed. by André Billy (Pléiade, 1951), p. 257.
27. See Duclos's cruel portrait of the ageing Don Juan in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, pp. 209-210; and his condemnation of Saint-Maurice in his own Mémoires, p. xcii.
28. Emile Henriot, Les Livres du second rayon, irréguliers et libertins, (Paris, Le Livre, 1926), p. 175.
29. Charles Duclos 1704-1772, p. 139.

individual is just as undesirable in the quest for happiness and virtue as subservience to a religious sect or acquiescence to a social institution, when this is carried to excess.[30] Though a long way from Sartre's philosophy it is interesting to see the similarities, and to note how this idea crops up again in a work by an English writer some seventy years after Duclos's work. Jane Austen wrote Mansfield Park in 1814, and in the introduction by Tony Tanner to the 1986 edition we read of an "inner light" which guides the heroine. In the novel itself Fanny says "we have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be".[31]

Duclos has an optimistic but realistic view of the human condition. He feels that man should act virtuously because this makes life in society happier, but that virtuous acts do not buy a way into heaven, since he believes in no after-life. The importance he attaches to the present could offer an explanation for Sainte-Beuve's apparent dismissal of Duclos: "il mettait tout en viager".[32] Since there is no eternal damnation or salvation, life on earth is man's only existence, and surviving harmoniously with his fellow men is of paramount interest.

30. See Senecé's subjugation to La Dornal in the Confessions du Comte de ***, and Mme de Luz's submission to the Church in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz.
31. Tony Tanner, Introduction to Mansfield Park, (Aylesbury, Penguin, 1986), p. 23 and p. 404.
32. Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 214.

CHAPTER TWO

VIRTUE: REPUTATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

In the previous chapter one aspect of virtue is dealt with mainly: the active promotion of social harmony; and it would seem reasonable to propose that this angle interests Duclos more than any other. Furthermore virtue in this sense is closely linked to happiness.

The subject of virtue with particular respect to women has been touched upon only superficially because the values of virtue, as defined by Duclos, apply equally to the two sexes.[1] Since "les deux sexes ont en commun les vertus et les vices,", then "il n'y a qu'une morale pour les deux sexes" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 181). Virtue in the sense of chastity is not a compelling issue for Duclos, if we are to judge by the lack of observations on this point in the Considérations. However he concedes that women traditionally play a different role from men in society, and although he has Mme de Selve insist that "la nature n'a pas donné d'autres droits aux hommes qu'aux femmes" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 177), and expresses the same opinion through Mme de Retel in the Mémoires sur les moeurs when she opposes the suggestion that there should be "une morale différente pour les deux sexes" (p. 423), the intimation remains that chastity and reputation are closely tied in with the idea of virtue so far as women are concerned. This is apparent in his novels, particularly L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, where a woman's concept of virtue is a major influence in the development of the storyline.

How should a woman of virtuous disposition behave according to the code of

1. Duclos's adopted definition of virtue is a rather banal borrowing from the Bible: "faites à autrui ce que vous voudriez qui vous fût fait" (Considérations, IV, p. 51).

ethics understood by French society in the eighteenth century? Duclos describes Mme de Luz as "la plus vertueuse ... de toutes les femmes" (p. 307), yet her behaviour, especially vis à vis Thurin, can hardly be considered virtuous in itself since it involves fornication. The answer may partly lie in the Considérations where Duclos describes virtue as "un effort sur soi-même en faveur des autres", and refers to "un sacrifice de son bien-être à celui d'autrui" (p. 51). According to this definition Mme de Luz is acting virtuously when she gives herself to Thurin in order to save her husband's life. Her situation when seen in this light can be compared with Mlle de St Yves's predicament in Voltaire's L'Ingénu: Mlle de St Yves saves her intended husband's life by yielding to the sexual advances made by St Pouange who, like Thurin, holds a position of influence. Voltaire makes a similar comment to Duclos's when he writes, "elle ne savait pas combien elle était vertueuse dans le crime qu'elle se reprochait".[2] However the understanding can be corrupted, as Voltaire demonstrates in L'Ingénu when a Jesuit advises Mlle de St Yves that it is perfectly acceptable for her to fornicate with St Pouange, quoting from St Augustin's opinions on adultery to justify his words.[3] Hardouin too attempts to distort the image of virtue by skilful manipulation of language: "[il y a eu des casuistes] qui ont penché à ne pas regarder comme un péché mortel le commerce de deux personnes libres, ... puisque ce n'est que la loi qui fait le péché" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 296). Yet despite these elements of persuasion a woman of integrity and regular morals never fails to suffer terribly from a sense of guilt and remorse once she has had sex outside of marriage, for whatever reason, and this conviction of having sinned or committed a crime usually overrides any other feelings. This is just as true of Mme de Luz as it is of Mlle de St Yves, Laclos's Mme de Tourvel, and Richardson's English

2. Voltaire, L'Ingénu, Romans et contes (Paris, Garnier Flammarion, 1966), p. 369. See also L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 279.
3. Saint Augustin, De Sermone domini in monte, I, 16.

heroine, Clarissa Harlowe.

It is obvious that keeping up appearances is also vital to Mme de Luz: she hardly hesitates before revealing to Saint-Géran that she is in love with him, but is firm in her resolve that he should not become her lover and enjoy a physical relationship with her because she must protect her reputation and thereby her peace of mind. A love affair is likely to become public, and Mme de Luz fears "les suites d'un pareil engagement" with Saint-Géran (p. 194). She is aware that "de la perte de l'honneur naissent des malheurs trop certains" because a woman's happiness resides not so much in physical pleasure as in "l'honneur et la réputation" (p. 206). Mme de Canaples reacts in a similar way, cautioning the narrator of the Mémoires sur les moeurs: "tâchons ... de retrouver notre repos; partez, et que le premier effet de notre amour soit un effort pour la vertu" (p. 401). A comparison with Mme de Lafayette's heroine might be appropriate at this point: Mme de Luz declares that, "il n'y a de véritable tranquillité pour [une femme] que dans la vertu" (p. 202), and the Princesse de Clèves refuses to marry the Duc de Nemours when circumstances suggest she is at liberty to do so partly because she fears his love for her will grow cold, and this she could not bear; Mme de Canaples experiences a similar dread, rendered acute by the disparity of age between the narrator and herself; whereas Mme de Luz denies her hand to Saint-Géran for quite different reasons.[4] Unable to accept that virtue has its limits, she feels unworthy of the man she loves, and cannot view her situation in any other light. Duclos writes: "quand on connoît les limites de la vertu, quand on ne s'éxagère point ses devoirs, on est incapable de les violer" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, pp. 208-209); but Mme de Luz fails to apply these words to herself after her

4. Mme de Selve marries the Comte de *** only once she is sure that their relationship is based upon friendship and not passion.

husband's death. In fact Duclos goes so far as to suggest that she often acts out of pride, mistaking it for virtue: "l'orgueil même dans une belle âme a ses scrupules comme la vertu, et produit les mêmes effets" (p. 224). Perhaps this explains her final rejection of a bid for happiness despite Saint-Géran's assurances that "[ses] malheurs seront pour [lui] un titre de plus pour [la] respecter" (pp. 306-307). Her confined outlook means that, "agitée de mille remords, elle ignoroit qu'ils naissent moins du crime que de la vertu" (p. 279). Confused by events Mme de Luz finds it impossible to reconcile her values with what has befallen her. Duclos explains her predicament in his Lettre à l'auteur de L'Histoire de Mme de Luz: "une femme peut être forcée au crime, mais ... sans devenir criminelle, elle peut être déshonorée" (pp. 321-322). Her first consideration is her responsibility for the public image of her marriage, and this explains why, even when convinced of her husband's guilt, she saves him and her associated reputation, by her adultery with Thurin. Incidentally the veiling of the truth and the corruption of justice do not enter into this equation. However her duty to the institution of marriage concerns not only show but physical fidelity to her husband too. In honouring the one she violates the other, and here lies her dilemma, made all the worse by the fact that she is in love with Saint-Géran, yet has given her body to a man she loathes, thus sacrificing her right to Saint-Géran's esteem: "[elle] fut forcée d'immoler au salut de son mari la vertu, le devoir et l'amour" (p. 247).

One aspect of the problem is tackled in Duclos's fairytale, Acajou et Zirphile, where Zirphile is concerned that her body may have been abused. Her attitude is to reject any acceptance of guilt on the grounds that neither love nor volition was involved on her part. She does not hold with Cornelian values and fully expects Acajou to understand her situation: "vous seriez trop généreux pour me reprocher un malheur dont je suis innocente", and Acajou acquiesces (p. 364).

A variation on the theme is explored in Manon Lescaut where the heroine argues that she does no harm by becoming G...M...'s mistress for all to see since she remains emotionally true to the Chevalier Des Grieux. Her code of honour lies in "la fidélité ... du coeur",[5] an attitude adopted to a certain extent by Meilcour in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit when he refers to "le quiétisme de l'amour".[6] Duclos's outlook is more sober and he shows more restraint; without going so far as to condone Mme de Luz's opinion, he claims that "il n'y a de vrai bonheur que dans l'union du plaisir et du devoir" (Mémoires sur les meours , p. 532), but leaves the question open as to whether Mme de Luz is right to reject marriage to Saint-Géran. The reader would be justified in observing that when Duclos employs the word 'virtue' to mean 'chastity' he does not particularly admire the quality nor link it to happiness.

Pleasure, duty, happiness; there is a suggestion here which touches upon the eighteenth-century sophism that what is pleasurable is right. As late as 1811 in England Jane Austen makes play of it in her novel, Sense and Sensibility. Marianne, the character embodying 'sensibility', acts at the direction of her feelings, believing that the feelings have a moral significance, and that the pleasure taken in an action is a gauge of its rightness: "if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure".[7] Saint-Géran uses this line of argument too and its implications are interesting: "pourquoi faut-il que l'amour et le devoir aient des droits séparés?" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 206). He asks, "si le commerce

5. Prevost, Manon Lescaut, Oeuvres de Prévost (Grenoble, 1978), tome I, p. 419.
6. Crébillon fils, Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit (Paris, Armand Colin, 1961), p. 211.
7. Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility, (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 59.

de deux amants n'étoit pas innocent, auroit-on imaginé de leur imposer des devoirs? Cependant les amants ont les leurs comme les époux" (p. 207).

The answer for many women lies in the importance attached to reputation. Mme de Luz is more deeply concerned with this than with religion. When she turns to the Church for comfort it is in the hope of finding some release for her pain in a socially-accepted establishment, and when deceived by a member of this establishment her cry of anguish has no bearing with the teachings of Loyola: "ciel cruel! par où puis-je avoir mérité ta haine?" (p. 300). This is the first time she calls upon any form of superior entity and even now she has no clear idea of whom or what she is addressing. She seems to have an almost classical concept of a deity, more akin to the beliefs of the ancient Romans than to those of the Catholic Church. Her chief concern is keeping up moral standards which testify to her good name.

Mme de Luz is not alone in her convictions since for many women of eighteenth-century French literature virtue is synonymous with reputation, and appearances become vitally important. In La Vie de Marianne the heroine is horrified that Valville might misinterpret a scene he has witnessed, and mistakenly conclude that Marianne was soliciting the amorous advances of another man: "ne me méprisera-t-il pas? ne me regardera-t-il pas comme une indigne ..., moi qui suis si sage, qui ne possède rien que ma sagesse, qu'on s'imaginera que j'aurai perdu? ... C'est le plus grand malheur qui pouvait m'arriver".[8]

For some this notion of appearances opens up possibilities for hypocrisy to slip in. Some women pretend to turn to religion merely to cover licentious

8. Marivaux, p. 135.

behaviour. Mme de Gremonville is a case in point: she can travel alone to any part of the town she chooses, and ostensibly she is making a charity call; she can entertain a man in private, and say that he is her confessor. In this way "la réputation étant une fois établie, la vertu, ou ce qui lui ressemble devient la sauvegarde du plaisir" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 55).

However Duclos endows Mme de Luz with sincerity, and it is this quality which teams up with her naïveté to produce the tragedy of the novel, since it prevents her from indulging her love for Saint-Géran. Like Mme de Tourvel in Les Liaisons dangereuses she feels that "il vaut mieux mourir que de vivre coupable", because her happiness resides in knowing that she has carried out her duty, and her behaviour is founded upon well-established notions which she has obeyed since childhood: those of religion and society.[9] Extramarital infidelity, for whatever reason, is criminal. Robert Mauzi pushes home the point in L'Idée du bonheur au XVIIIe siècle: "le tout-puissant empire de la réputation, qui fait et défait les vertus, dissimule ou dénonce les crimes, pèse surtout sur la femme mariée, qui dépend plus que quiconque de l'opinion".[10] In many ways a woman's situation is hapless: she often finds it difficult to take control of her life because she has little or no public influence. She may indeed set herself high moral standards, but circumstances can wreak havoc in her attempts to maintain them. One such circumstance is poverty; Mme de Retel is quite sure that many women turn to vice because it is their only resource: "il y en [a] beaucoup de plongées dans le vice, non par égarement du coeur, rarement par le goût du plaisir, et presque toujours par la misère" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 143). Duclos underlines the fragility of a woman's situation

9. Letter CII, La Présidente de Tourvel to Mme de Rosemonde. See also Madeleine de Therrien, Les Liaisons dangereuses, une interpretation psychologique (Paris, 1973), p. 238.
10. Robert Mauzi, L'Idée du bonheur au XVIIIe siècle dans la littérature et la pensée françaises (Paris, Armand Colin, 1965), p. 32.

in his Lettre à l'auteur de L'Histoire de Mme de Luz when he indicates his wish to demonstrate how "la femme la plus vertueuse peut se trouver dans des circonstances auxquelles elle est forcée de sacrifier sa vertu" (p. 321). Once again 'virtue' refers to chastity and, by extension, reputation and happiness.

In the seventeenth century Molière wrote:

> Du côté de la barbe est la toute puissance.
> Bien qu'on soit deux moitiés de la société,
> Ces deux moitiés pourtant n'ont pas d'égalité.[11]

Little has changed by the eighteenth century: women's lives are still comparatively private whereas men lead a more public existence through pursuing a career in the army or the Church or else enjoying elegant idleness in high society, and this has the effect of lending weight to male opinion. This is perhaps the reason why a man's reputation is viewed quite differently from a woman's. True, the standard is that of 'l'honnête homme' but it frequently seems that a man is allowed what might be termed a period of apprenticeship when he is generally excused a certain amount of libertine behaviour. Society does not accept this unconditionally, but for a while passions experienced for the first time can be enjoyed to the full. Reason and love take second place to physical pleasure, and the widely accepted justification is: "est-ce le coeur qui parle, à dix-huit ou vingt ans?".[12] Juvenescence is excused many things; however once the first flowering of youth is over a man must abandon his philandering and turn to a life of decency, otherwise he risks incurring "le mépris des deux sexes" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 210).

Critics have claimed that this final condition is imposed only "pour sauvegarder

11. L'Ecole des femmes, III.2.700.
12. Diderot, Les Bijoux indiscrets, p. 222.

la moralité du livre", and is merely "une concession à un plan conventionnel",[13] but even Meister has to concede that the libertine hero is "présenté sous des dehors ridicules" until he embraces the values of 'l'honnête homme'.[14] Mauzi seems to offer an explanation for this when he describes true love as it is understood in the eighteenth century; he claims that it is not platonic, but nor is it unspiritual: "il doit s'accompanier d'une élévation de l'âme et d'un enrichissement du coeur, qui transforment l'expérience amoureuse en un progrès moral".[15] As Free points out, not one character finds lasting happiness through enjoying immediate sensuality.[16]

A woman can expect no leniency regarding her behaviour, which has always to be seen as impeccable since this is what "les hommes ... exigent dans leurs femmes ou dans leurs maîtresses" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, pp. 233-234). It must be remembered that an unmarried bourgeoise or noblewoman at this time can look forward only to the confines of a convent or at best a secluded life within her family; hence the significance of male opinion. Once wed a woman's reputation remains vitally important; indeed "l'amour de la réputation est quelquefois plus puissant que celui de la vie", since it is often her only means of introduction to a world outside the home (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 302). Yet even exemplary behaviour cannot guarantee her good name: any man has the power to sabotage it should this suit his purpose. The narrator of the Mémoires sur les moeurs reflects upon different sorts of betrayal of a woman's trust, and refers to one "qui consiste à noircir, par une horrible calomnie, la vertu d'une femme dont on a quelquefois essuyé des mépris" (p. 428). It is a situation of which Mme de Luz is made cruelly aware by Hardouin after he has

13. Meister, Charles Duclos, p. 211.
14. Charles Duclos, p. 215.
15. L'Idée du bonheur au XVIIIe siècle, p. 477.
16. Virtue, Happiness and Duclos's Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 49.

raped her: "si vous laissez le moins du monde soupçonner ce qui s'est passé entre nous, je rendrai public toute l'histoire de votre vie ... et j'y saurai donner des couleurs capables de vous couvrir du dernier opprobre" (p. 302). The threat to the woman's reputation safeguards the man's.

The libertine attitude of some men and the emotional traps laid by accomplished seducers pose a dangerous threat to the high moral standards a woman might set herself. Many writers, such as Crébillon fils and Laclos, defend women on the grounds that they have "l'âme tendre, qualité qui naît encore de la vertu", and which predisposes them to become the victims of emotional blackmail or persuasion (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 181). The sort of naive reasoning put forward by Cécile Volanges, ("est-ce qu'un homme n'est pas notre prochain comme une femme, et plus encore?"),[17] is held cheap by more experienced women such as Mme de Lursay in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit and Mme de Retel in the Mémoires sur les moeurs: "les femmes ... ont l'âme plus sensible, plus sincère et plus courageuse en amour que les hommes. ... La plupart des femmes de monde passent leur vie à être successivement flattées, gâtées, séduites" (p. 413), with the result that "la plupart ne sont tombées dans le dérèglement que pour avoir eu dans les hommes une confiance dont ils ne sont pas dignes" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 181).[18]

Both the count in the Confessions du Comte de *** and the narrator of the Mémoires sur les moeurs pursue a course of gallantry. Like Valmont in Les Liaisons dangereuses whose 'victims' have to be worthy of conquest, the young men do not seek merely to satisfy carnal urges; they endeavour to establish a

17. Laclos, Les Liaisons dangereuses, Letter XVI, Cécile Volanges to Sophie Carnay.
18. See Les Egarements for Mme de Lursay's criticism of a man's lack of perspicacity in judging a woman harshly for having fallen in love, pp. 199-204.

reputation of being 'un homme à la mode', and certain standards have to be maintained. According to Pranzi in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit a nobleman is dishonoured should he take a mistress from a lower social order even if she is wealthy: "L'homme le plus désoeuvré, le plus obéré même, serait encore blâmé, et à juste titre, de faire un pareil choix".[19] The count in the Confessions du Comte de *** notes through experience that "il faut non seulement se marier au goût du public, mais encore prendre une maîtresse qui lui convienne" (p. 74). Accordingly he leaves one mistress "pour satisfaire à l'opinion publique" and takes another "pour [se] réconcilier avec le public" (p. 75). This code of practice leads the young men to choose women whom society will recognise as women of quality, some of whom wish to uphold a good reputation. A combination of wanting to "augmenter la liste" and the discovery that it is more exciting to move from one woman to another rather than remaining faithful to just one means that they challenge a woman's virtue out of frivolous motives.[20] As Duclos points out in Acajou et Zirphile, "on a obligé un sexe à rougir de ce qui fait la gloire de l'autre" (p. 350). Acajou would make amorous advances towards a woman "uniquement pour [lui] faire perdre la réputation de vertu [qu'elle avait]" (p. 368). This is a common point in eighteenth-century literature and so is the recognition that the consequences are often disastrous for the women. In Les Liaisons dangereuses Valmont's principal aim in seducing Cécile Volanges is to prove a point to Mme de Merteuil, but it results in ruining the young girl's life. In La Vie de Marianne the curate's sister indicates the consequences of a woman's failing to maintain the moral standards expected of her sex: some men constantly try to make a woman lower these standards because their reward is physical pleasure, but if

19. Crébillon fils, p. 103. Note that this attitude towards a mingling of the social classes is undergoing changes during the eighteenth century; see Chapter Four, this thesis.
20. Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 75. See also Mémoires sur les moeurs: "grossir la liste", p. 425; and Acajou et Zirphile; "étendre la liste", p. 368.

they should succeed they regard the woman as inferior and unworthy of the esteem awarded to those of her sex who resist: "les hommes qui se moquent le plus de ce qu'on appelle sagesse traitent pourtant si cavalièrement une femme qui se laisse séduire, ils acquièrent des droits si insolents avec elle, ils la punissent tant de son désordre, ils la sentent si dépourvue contre eux, si désarmée, si dégradée, à cause qu'elle a perdu cette vertu dont ils se moquaient, qu'en vérité ... ce n'est faute d'un peu de réflexion qu'on se dérange".[21]

How can novelists who claim to promote morality in their works let such wrongs go unpunished? It is made clear that gentlemen are fully aware of their duties towards decent women: "il est sûr que l'amour ne peut jamais procurer à une femme estimable autant de bonheur qu'il lui en fait perdre; ainsi un honnête homme ne doit pas la rendre la victime d'un goût léger et passager";[22] yet principled women are deceived and abused right the way through eighteenth-century literature. At the time when Duclos was writing novelists had departed from the hitherto traditional line that goodness is rewarded, and though one might still expect wickedness to be penalized, this is not always the case. Separating Duclos from an author such as Voltaire is the fact that the latter is exploring metaphysical hypotheses and so varies his treatment of characters according to which philosophy he is investigating; and setting him apart from a writer such as Laclos, to take another example, is the fact that Laclos punishes offenders like Valmont and Mme de Merteuil whereas Duclos does not appear to be consistent in this.[23] As mentioned in the previous chapter he draws the line at reversing established moral values (unlike Sade), but he fails to avenge his victims at least in a public sense.[24] It could be argued

21. Marivaux, pp. 58-59.
22. Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 428.
23. It is arguable that Laclos, however inadvertently, punishes everybody, though how convincing this "punishment" is may be another matter.
24. Chapter One, p. 27.

that this goes some way towards rejoining his attitude that each individual is largely responsible for his own happiness; and events in his novels and comments in some of his other works could be taken to corroborate the theory. For instance in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz the author seems to reserve judgement in that no calamity strikes down the wrong-doers. Instead his characters react according to their given personalities: Hardouin simply escapes the country and changes religion, neither gaining nor losing by his wicked deed; whilst Thurin is left feeling "interdit, confus, et la fureur dans l'âme" (p. 237), on realising that he has failed to dominate the socially superior Mme de Luz, and "peut-être quelques remords [commencent] à se faire sentir dans son coeur" (p. 248). As for Marsillac, "humilié par son crime", he suffers huge remorse and despair (p. 276). One's character, and not Providence or chance, determines one's decisions and reactions to events and circumstances, and this would include feelings of triumph or remorse which could be interpreted as reward or punishment: "chacun [a] dans son coeur un juge qui défend les autres, ou qui le condamne lui-même" (Considérations, IV, p. 49).

In the Mémoires sur les moeurs the Comte de Vergi puts a different slant on how one regards virtue and vice by claiming, "c'est au vice enfin qu'il appartient de détruire les plaisirs. ... On réclamera la vertu jusqu'à un certain point pour l'intérêt du plaisir" (pp. 478-479). This could be said to anticipate Sade's proposition which distorts generally accepted values ("la fatalité sauve inévitablement le crime en immolant la vertu"),[25] if it were not for Duclos's firm rejection of a life of vice because of its pernicious effect on social harmony, and his refusal to believe in destiny or Providence.[26] His attitude

25. Sade, Justine, ou les Malheurs de la vertu (Paris, Au Soleil Noir, 1950), tome I, p. 38.
26. A more detailed comparison between Duclos and Sade can be found in Meister's study of Duclos, pp. 137-140; and Albert-Marie Schmidt: Duclos, Sade et la littérature féroce, Revue des Sciences Humaines, April-Sept, 1951, pp. 146-155.

could be more justifiably compared with Voltaire's in Candide. The conclusion to this short story implies that one is better off accepting a mediocre sort of happiness instead of seeking exhilaration because at least one avoids great misery. Duclos concurs to a certain extent, seeing beneficence as assuring one of a reputation which is "ni étendue ni brillante; mais elle est souvent la plus utile pour le bonheur" (Considérations, IV, p. 55). However he does not negate the value of reason, as Voltaire appears to do at this stage, and rejects mindless physical labour as "le seul moyen de rendre la vie supportable" in favour of intelligent self-analysis: "tout ce que l'homme qui a le plus d'esprit peut faire, c'est de s'étudier, de se connoître, de consulter ses forces, et de compter ensuite avec son caractère; sans quoi les fautes et même les malheurs ne servent qu'à l'abâtre, sans le corriger" (Considérations, XIII, p. 173).[27]

Laclos's Valmont also undermines the idea of virtue in Letter XXI to Mme de Merteuil in Les Liaisons dangereuses where he writes: "j'ai été étonné du plaisir qu'on éprouve en faisant le bien; et je serais tenté de croire que ce que nous appelons les gens vertueux, n'ont pas tant de mérite qu'on se plait à nous dire". Yet this scepticism can be countered with an assertion made by Duclos in his Considérations written some thirty years earlier: "plus on est vertueux, plus on est éloigné d'en tirer vanité" (II, p. 27). A virtuous person acts for the benefit of others, incidentally assuring his own happiness, not the other way about: "la première marque de l'affoiblissement du bonheur, ainsi que de la vertu, est lorsque l'on commence à en faire gloire" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 441).

There is, of course, another facet to this argument, one linked with Duclos's prejudice towards anything which is beneficial to society, and one which lays the responsibility of choosing to act virtuously firmly at the feet of intelligent

27. Candide, Romans et contes (Paris, Garnier Flammarion, 1966), p. 259.

and sensitive people. An intelligent man can see how a virtuous action can work for both his and others' benefit, but a dullard would lack such perspicacity. Duclos is generous in his praise of the individual who uses his head: "combien l'esprit a-t-il guidé, soutenu, embelli, développé et fortifié de vertus! L'esprit seul, par un intérêt éclairé, a quelquefois produit des actions aussi louables que la vertu même l'auroit pu faire" (Considérations, XI, p. 143). He had first aired his thoughts on this in his inauguration speech to the Académie Française on 16th January 1747 with the words: "l'esprit doit être le guide le plus sûr de la vertu" (p. cxxxv); and one can find the next logical step in the Considérations: "la sottise seule a peut-être fait ou causé autant de crimes que le vice" (XI, p. 143).

The darker side of intelligence is revealed in the Considérations where appears the statement: "l'esprit n'est qu'un ressort capable de mettre en mouvement la vertu ou le vice" (XI, p. 143), and this explains why Mme de Dornal from the Confessions du Comte de *** would have been doubly awful, approaching Hardouin in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz in character, had she been intelligent: "elle auroit été trop dangereuse si elle eût eu de l'esprit" (p. 106). Hardouin is portrayed as being particularly wicked because he is clever, hiding his evil beneath a mask of virtue (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 302). Les Liaisons dangereuses, published forty-one years later, offers a fuller exploration into the realms of vice through the eyes of two intelligent libertines who feel a sense of achievement in being evil and licentious, but Duclos does not venture so far.

Duclos is quite specific in his proposal that intelligent people have an increased responsibility to act with a mind to the welfare of others : "les gens d'esprit doivent, tout balancé, être encore meilleurs que les autres hommes" (Considérations, XI, p. 144), because "la vertu s'épure à mesure que l'esprit s'éclaire" (Histoire de Louis XI, preface, p. 16). Duclos, like Marivaux, sets

different standards for people of varying intelligence, and of sensibility, since he notes in the Considérations that "la sensibilité prépare l'homme vertueux" (IV, p. 51). Sensibility is a prerequisite for compassion; if a man can feel compassion for his fellows then he is in a position to act virtuously in a social context. In La Vie de Marianne Mme de Miran is kind-hearted but fails to discern other people's needs unless they are spelled out for her because "son esprit [borne] la bonté de son coeur".[28] Together sensibility, education and intelligence can direct a person towards virtue, with intelligence being the driving force: "de deux personnes également bonnes, sensibles et bienfaisantes, celle qui aura le plus d'esprit l'emportera encore par la vertu pratique. Elle aura mille procédés délicats, inconnus à l'esprit borné. Elle n'humiliera pas par ses bienfaits" (Considérations, XI, p. 144). This can be compared with a false sense of virtue and lack of sensitivity as described by Marivaux through Marianne: "la belle chose qu'une vertu qui fait le désespoir de celui sur qui elle tombe! ... C'est une oeuvre brutale et haïssable".[29]

If intelligent people are regarded as having an increased responsibility for their actions, then who is responsible for reminding them, for pointing out their duty? The Church? Hardly, since Duclos takes pains to ignore what he sees as interference from the Church. If one could take the ideas expounded in the preface to a writer's works as being indicative of his true opinions then perhaps one could allow that it is the responsibility of writers to make people aware of their obligations. At the very least one can accept that writers are keen to convince the reading public of their worth, and they often assume a moral role to justify their work. Laclos claims that "c'est rendre un service aux moeurs, que de dévoiler les moyens qu'emploient ceux qui en ont de mauvaises pour

28. La Vie de Marianne, p. 212.
29. La Vie de Marianne, p. 66. See also "un service offert par vanité, ou rendu par foiblesse, fait peu d'honneur à la vertu" (Considérations, IV, p. 54).

corrompre ceux qui en ont de bonnes",[30] and Duclos seeks to convince in a similar fashion in the Avertissement preceding his Mémoires sur les moeurs: "parmi [les moeurs] qu'on a peintes, on en trouvera quelques unes de peu régulières; mais il me semble que l'aspect sous lequel elles sont présentées est aussi favorable à la morale que ces moeurs y sont contraires" (p. 383). Facetious probably; nonetheless it cannot be denied that many writers recognise their unique position of influence, and see how their works could be used as an instrument for instruction. If Duclos is categorical in his Lettre à l'auteur de L'Histoire de Mme de Luz when he claims that to imagine that authors write novels with an instructive moral aim is "plus favorable à l'humanité qu'à la vérité" (p. 319), he still permits himself the luxury of presenting his Confessions du Comte de *** as "une confession fidèle ... qui pourra ... servir de leçon" (p. 7), and in the Epître au public which prefaces Acajou et Zirphile he speaks of the duties of an author. Whatever these duties may represent Duclos is convinced of the powerful influence of books even when the writer is oblivious of it: "les comédies et les romans déposent des moeurs du temps, sans que les auteurs en aient eu le dessein" (Mémoires de Duclos, p. lxii), and certainly it would appear that readers see the relevance of books to everyday life. Specific to Duclos is the comment passed by Rousseau, who received a copy of the Confessions du Comte de *** from Mme de Broglie: "du moment que j'eus lu cet ouvrage, je désirai d'obtenir l'amitié de l'auteur. Mon penchant m'inspirait très bien: c'est le seul ami que j'aie eu parmi les gens de lettres".[31]

Perhaps novels are not the most reliable books to read in order to glean some idea of virtuous behaviour, but a work which professes to be a series of observations on mankind in a social role and which is cast in the mould of La

30. Préface du rédacteur, Les Liaisons dangereuses, p. 17.
31. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Confessions, Oeuvres complètes, (Paris, Seuil, 1971), Vol. I, p. 232.

Bruyère's Caractères and La Rochefoucauld's Maximes offers itself as a serious guide to morality.[32] Such is the Considérations and it is in this moralistic work that Duclos criticizes those people who set a bad example to others. Since he suggests that "l'honneur est l'instinct de la vertu [qui] se dévéloppe par l'éducation, se soutient par les principes, et se fortifie par les exemples", then it follows that a virtuous man should act positively in the hope that his example will be emulated (IV, p. 61). It is clear that Duclos divides people into groups of initiators and imitators, and one does not have to look very far before it becomes apparent that social class is a key issue in this debate.

Those of a high rank in society have a responsibility to act virtuously and to give example to the lower classes since "le bas peuple n'ayant aucun principe, faute d'éducation, n'a d'autre frein que la crainte, et d'autre guide que l'imitation" (IV, p. 61). Duclos credits the nobility and the bourgeoisie with the same potential for wit and virtue, but condemns the lower class as irresponsible: "[le] bas peuple ... n'a que des idées relatives à ses besoins, et ... en est ordinairement privé sur tout autre sujet" (VIII, p. 109). The toilsome life of the lower class does not represent an ideal for Duclos; he sees no purity in hard labour; and cannot agree with Rousseau's assertion that "c'est sous l'habit rustique d'un laboureur ... qu'on trouvera la force et la vigueur du corps ... [de] l'homme de bien".[33] Indeed for this product of the decent entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, the lowest class in society represents merely a manifestation of crass ignorance, and to behave like the common people evokes not admiration but unadulterated scorn: "l'ignorance et le mépris des devoirs

32. Cast in the mould of these works only in that Duclos presents himself as a moralist in the sense of an observer of the manners and morals of his time. His ideas and observations are of the eighteenth century, and he owes no great debt to La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld.
33. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts, Oeuvres complètes (Paris, Seuil, 1971), vol. II, p. 54.

produisent le même effet ... . Voilà pourquoi on trouve quelquefois parmi des gens d'une classe supérieure les mêmes moeurs que dans le bas peuple" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 482).

Much of eighteenth-century literature bears witness to a certain degree of movement between the social classes. This will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter, but at this point it is relevant to note the continuing powerfulness of traditional class ideals. Libertinism can never represent a means of crossing social barriers to a woman, particularly if she is of the bourgeoisie. An extramarital affair made public can make her a social outcast, and should she ignore the barriers of class and take a nobleman as her lover, then the social alienation is twofold: jealous peers treat her with scorn once the affair is over, and the nobility rejects her as an upstart: "une foiblesse d'éclat pour une bourgeoise et une lâcheté pour un militaire, sont de ces choses dont on ne se relève point" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 490). Duclos compares this treatment with that meted out to women from the nobility and observes that noblewomen tend to turn to religious devotion once their love affairs are over, and can even aspire to commanding respect for their new position in the social circle.[34]

Nonetheless the reader is left with the impression that "quand une femme est digne de l'amitié, elle ne doit pas se perdre par l'amour" because it is in her interest to respect the conventions of marriage and so maintain social harmony (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 459). Of course this reasoning comes direct from Duclos's bourgeois background, but a similar conclusion can be reached via a different route. Marivaux, for instance, adheres firmly to the dictum that class will out. He presents a romantic problem, that of social prejudice which forms

34. Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 490.

an obstacle to love, but he uses this prejudice to prove the force of love; he does not use love to break down social barriers. In Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard Sylvia experiences great relief when she discovers Dorante's true identity: "j'avais grand besoin que ce fût là Dorante", because her rank and education would not allow her any peace of mind when she felt attracted to a man she thought was a valet.[35] According to Marivaux like attracts like on the social scale, and this explains the denouement of this play which maintains the status quo of social divisions.

Thus one can discern the disparities between a general idea of virtue and a particular understanding of it by women. Since women play a different social role from men their concept of virtue has an added dimension: not only must they act positively for the good of society, but they must also respect certain passive commitments, which reflect their less prominent position in society. Men are in the foreground, playing an active part in the running of their world; women see men as their means of introduction to a more public and interesting way of life, and so are generally dependent on men's good opinion of them. Hence the attitude that a spotless reputation is crucial for female happiness, a concept which is in men's interest to reinforce, when they do not have a libertine bent.

Unfortunately chastity and fidelity do not guarantee contentment since women feel passions just as strongly as men. According to Rousseau, "la femme [a] des désirs illimités", and has only modesty to curb her passions,[36] a view not totally shared by Duclos who attributes to women the powers of reason. However carrying out one's duty and respecting the laws of marriage do have

35. Marivaux, Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard, II.12.80.
36. Emile, p. 244.

the bonus of giving peace of mind, leaving a woman fairly secure in the knowledge that she has protected her good name and so merits society's approval. Conforming therefore has its rewards. On the other hand, though the institution of marriage is important for social stability and harmony, there is evidence in Duclos's work suggesting that it should be reassessed in terms of its contribution towards individual happiness.[37] Libertinism is presented in an ambiguous light. If contained it is not always inexpedient: for instance a Frenchman's frivolity "qui nuit au développement de ses talents et de ses vertus, le préserve en même temps des crimes noirs et réfléchis" (Considérations, I, p. 17); but it must be remembered that Duclos's epicureanism is measured. One has only to look at the degrading description of the ageing Don Juan in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz to see the truth in this (p. 210).

In broad terms Duclos holds that each individual is responsible for his own actions, and that all have a duty to contribute to social harmony. He shares Marivaux's views as expressed by Marianne: "nous avons tous besoin les uns des autres; nous naissons dans cette dépendance, et nous ne changerons rien à cela".[38] Virtue therefore stems from an enlightened self-interest, and it follows that thinking men and women have over less perceptive people an increased responsiblity to behave virtuously.

A confirmed atheist, Duclos spurns mindless submission to any religious institution by persons seeking a motive or guide for their actions. He favours a wider understanding of how and why man can live happily in society. Independence of spirit and conscience is essential: "il est indubitable que les consciences doivent être libres ... . Nulle persécution, beaucoup d'indifférence

37. See this thesis, Chapter Four, pp. 95-96.
38. La Vie de Marianne, p. 211.

et d'oubli, c'est la mort de toutes les sectes".[39]

As a writer he, like many of his contemporaries, lacks confidence in the intrinsic worth of fiction, but he does suggest that novels can instruct as well as entertain if morals are embodied in their stories.[40] This could be interpreted as writers having a duty to alert their readers to their moral responsibilities. Certainly at least one modern critic has pinpointed instruction as one of the main aims of the eighteenth-century novel as a genre, and the Confessions du Comte de *** has been singled out as "une étude des moeurs qui, même dans le cadre d'un roman, a déjà des affinités avec le style du moraliste des Considérations."[41] The sometimes scatalogical nature of the novels is justifiable by the author since he can claim that they are vehicles for examples of both virtue and vice, which enable the reader to recognise the consequences of vice and allow him to make a balanced decision about his own behaviour. Duclos argues that "pour rendre [les hommes] meilleurs, il ne faut que les éclairer : le crime est toujours un faux jugement" (Considérations, I, p. 11). It is at this point that one sees how Duclos recognises the importance of education. He suggests that honour is the instinct of virtue but, "quoique l'honneur soit une qualité naturelle, il se développe par l'éducation" (Considérations, IV, p. 57). Of course Duclos is far from being isolated in this preoccupation with education; he and his contemporaries are generally dissatisfied with the educational system of the time, but they rarely agree on how the situation could be improved. For Duclos the main aim of education is

39. Mémoires secrets sur les règnes de Louis XIV et de Louis XV, ed. by A. Petitot and Monmerque (Paris, Foucault, 1829), tome I, p. 243. Henceforth this work will be referred to as the Mémoires secrets.
40. See also Prévost, Manon Lescaut: "mettons la chose dans un example" (Avis de l'auteur).
41. Laurent Versini, introduction to Les Confessions du Comte de ***. See also Vivienne Mylne, The Eighteenth-Century French Novel, Manchester University Press (1965).

obvious, and ties in with his concept of virtue: "qu'on apprenne aux hommes à s'aimer entre eux; qu'on leur en prouve la nécessité pour leur bonheur" (Considérations, I, p. 10).

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATION

Duclos sees education as multifaceted. At the outset of the second chapter of the Considérations he clearly distinguishes between education and instruction, education being based upon patriotism, and instruction upon cultivating the mind and one's individual talents. It is to be expected that Duclos, the writer who inextricably links a man's virtue with the good that man does within society, should tie in education with the benefit of society, and ultimately with that of the country. Education is a tool, a means of directing man's development: "il n'y a point d'objet vers lequel le préjugé de l'éducation ne puisse quelquefois nous porter" (Considérations, XIV, p. 182); and for this reason Duclos is anxious that the subject of education should not be neglected. Paul Meister points out in his work on Duclos that "il croit que l'homme ... est tout malléable. ... En raison de quoi, l'éducation prend à ses yeux ... une importance décisive" (p. 216). The time to act is now, feels Duclos: "il y a une certaine fermentation de raison universelle qui tend à se développer, qu'on laissera peut-être se dissiper, et dont on pourroit assurer, diriger et hâter les progrès par une éducation bien entendue" (Considérations, II, p. 22). As Duclos understands it, one of the aims of this education should be "rendre les hommes utiles et heureux. ... Telle est l'éducation qui devroit être générale, uniforme" (II, pp. 20-21), and he is more explicit: "on devroit, dans tous les états, inspirer les sentiments de citoyen, former des François parmi nous" (II, p. 22). Men should be considered in relation to humanity and to their country: "dans l'éducation générale, on doit considérer les hommes relativement à l'humanité et à la patrie" (II, p. 24). In holding this view Duclos pre-empts Rousseau's Emile where a boy's education does not proceed from books, nor aims at intellect, but is a training for a useful life, rooted in virtue and inspired by patriotism: "après s'être considéré par ses rapports physiques avec les autres

êtres, par ses rapports moraux avec les autres hommes, il lui reste à se considérer par ses rapports civils avec ses concitoyens".[1]

Instruction, on the other hand, relates to the individual, and so its field is much narrower. For this reason it should not be confused with education. Education applies to everyone, but instruction is specific, tailored to the needs of the individual: "l'instruction concerne la culture de l'esprit et des talents" (Considérations, II, p. 21). Duclos complains that it is often instruction which is given instead of education: "on trouve parmi nous beaucoup d'instruction et peu d'éducation" (II, p. 20); and asserts that, ideally, men should be taught to respect and help each other, that there should be a basic general education to this end, and that individual instruction should come only after this general education "de façon qu'ils fussent accoutumés à chercher leurs avantages personnels dans le plan du bien général" (II, p. 20).

Duclos also marks a distinction between different types of education, and these would seem worth examining. Three aspects are closely connected: these are the moral, social and sentimental considerations. On examining first of all the moral concept of education that Duclos puts forward, it can be seen that he believes virtue to be a desirable end, and this links moral education with social education. He speaks of forming men: "qu'on forme d'abord les hommes à la pratique des vertus" (II, p. 25), and explains his meaning: "c'est-à-dire de les élever respectivement les uns pour les autres, de faire porter sur une base d'éducation générale toutes les instructions particulières, de facon qu'ils fussent accoutumés à chercher leurs avantages personnels dans le plan du bien, et que, dans quelque profession que ce fût, ils commençassent par être patriotes" (II, p. 20). The explanation and reasoning behind the lessons can be given at a later

1. Emile, p. 310. See also Kingsley Martin, French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century, (New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1963), p. 211.

date; they are not of prime concern. "Pourquoi entreprendre de leur faire pratiquer par raisonnement ce qu'ils suivent par sentiment, par un préjugé honnête" (II, p. 25). The philosophy of Fontenelle has not been lost on Duclos: "la raison chassera de notre esprit toutes ces anciennes opinions et n'en mettra pas d'autres à la place. Elle y causera une espèce de vide. Et qui peut la soutenir? Non, non, avec aussi peu de raison qu'en ont tous les hommes, il leur faut autant de préjugés qu'ils ont accoutumé d'en avoir. Ces préjugés sont le supplément de la raison".[2]

Honour, the instinct of virtue, can be developed by education, he claims: "quoique l'honneur soit une qualité naturelle, il se développe par l'éducation" (Considérations, IV, p. 57); and there is no limit to its progression: "la vertu et l'honneur peuvent s'étendre et s'élever à l'infini" (IV, p. 62).

Once a man has completed his moral education, that is to say, has learned how to find happiness through being actively involved in promoting the well-being of society, and through being loyal to his country, then his sentimental and social education may begin in earnest. Since the different types of education overlap, the pupil could well already have been introduced to some form of social education in so far as it is tied in with his moral education. However Duclos is quite aware that there exists another type of social education which abides by rules of hypocrisy and simulation. He is vigorous in his condemnation of learning false 'virtues' to gain entry into high society: "il me semble que dans l'éducation des gens du monde, on les suppose incapables de vertus, et qu'ils auroient à rougir de se montrer tels qu'ils sont. On ne leur recommande qu'une fausseté qu'on appelle politesse" (Considérations, III, p. 34). Though Duclos understands the importance of social integration, and sees

2. Fontenelle, Nouveaux Dialogues des morts, critical edition by Jean Dagen (Paris, Didier, 1971), part II, pp. 343-344.

that there is sometimes a case for what might be termed 'white lies', he refuses steadfastly to accept insincerity and sham: "la politesse d'usage n'est qu'un jargon fade, plein d'expressions exagérées, aussi vides de sens que de sentiment" (III, p. 34); it is but "un moyen nécessaire à la fortune" (II, p. 30). According to Duclos "la politesse est l'expression ou l'imitation des vertus sociales; c'en est l'expression, si elle est vraie; et l'imitation, si elle est fausse" (III, p. 31).[3]

Men owe each other respect: "ils se doivent réciproquement une politesse digne d'eux, faite pour les êtres pensants" (III, p. 36), and social politeness should always be "unie à celle qui partiroit de la droiture du coeur" (III, p. 37). In this sense he harks back to an aspiration already familiar to writers in the previous century, when Molière put into the mouth of Alceste the words:

> Je veux qu'on soit sincère, et qu'en homme d'honneur,
> On ne lache aucun mot qui ne parte du coeur.[4]

At the same time he strikes a chord with Rousseau who will refer to Duclos's words in Emile: "il me semble que si quelque éducation doit produire l'espèce de politesse qu'exige ici M Duclos, c'est celle dont j'ai tracé le plan jusqu'ici".[5]

Of course Duclos is not alone in recognising the hypocrisy of Parisian society. To take but one example from many, Crébillon fils uses Varsac as a mouthpiece when he describes society: "le coeur et l'esprit sont forcés de s'y gâter, tout y est mode et affectation".[6] Crébillon goes a step further than Duclos in his condemnation of high society, and his conclusion about its corrupting nature more nearly approaches Rousseau's viewpoint: "c'est une erreur de croire que

3. "Les vertus sociales sont celles qui nous rendent utiles et agréables à ceux avec qui nous avons à vivre" (Considérations, III, p. 31).
4. Le Misanthrope, I.1.34.
5. p. 232.
6. Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit, p. 169.

l'on puisse conserver dans le monde cette innocence de moeurs que l'on a communément quand on y rentre".[7] Rousseau feels that to introduce a person to society "avant qu'il connaisse les hommes, ce n'est pas le former, c'est le corrompre; ce n'est pas l'instruire, c'est le tromper".[8] In comparison Duclos believes emphatically that one can remain, and indeed learn to become virtuous within society (provided that virtue is defined in his terms), and feels strongly that a proper education can encourage the practice of social virtues. Yet one could claim that the conclusion of the Confessions du Comte de *** is discouraging, as Bette Gross Silverblatt maintains in The Maxims in the Novels of Duclos,[9] since she argues that those characters who find happiness in the novel are the exceptions to society; but this would be to ignore the implication of the count's words to his relative: "malgré l'horreur que la retraite vous inspire aujourd'hui, vous la regarderez un jour comme un bien. J'ai eu vos idées, je me suis trouvé dans les mêmes situations" (p. 6). Was not his experience of the social whirl necessary for him to choose a life of virtue?

Man the social animal must learn that his first responsibility is towards his fellow men living in society. Here it should be made clear that the label 'society' refers to the system of living together to form a community and, by extension, to the complicated network of human relations. It is to this that a man is to swear allegiance, even above his own private pleasure. This includes even the pleasure of writing, as Duclos remarks in his Considérations: people in professions dealing with war, magistrature, commerce and the arts can benefit from "le goût modéré des lettres" because "ils y trouvent un délassement, un plaisir, et un certain exercice d'esprit qui n'est pas inutile à leurs fonctions"; however if this taste for literature degenerates into a passion, then their real

7. Les Egarements, p. 169.
8. Emile, p. 157.
9. Bette Gross Silverblatt, The Maxims in the Novels of Duclos, (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1972), p. 102.

duties suffer, and this is wrong "parce que la première obligation est d'être citoyen" (XII, p. 149).

A moral education leaning towards social virtues as distinct from social niceties is Duclos's idea of good education, but he does not neglect the obscure code of salon conversation and behaviour, which can be taught and learned, and which contributes so much to that world of brilliant repartee and sensibility beloved of Duclos himself. Learning what to say and how to say it is a valuable asset when making one's way into the domain of the upper classes, and sometimes it can even be a substitute for wit: "c'est une preuve d'esprit, ou du moins de l'éducation, que de s'exprimer bien" (Considérations, VIII, p. 108). Marivaux, master of language, had already incorporated this idea into the character of Jacob in Le Paysan parvenu. Jacob uses different modes of expression to suit the disposition of his interlocutor: "il est certain que je parlais meilleur français quand je voulais", he notes (p. 127); and later, "je tâchais d'avoir le ton touchant, le ton d'un homme qui pleure", when persuading Mlle Habert of his affections for her (p. 135); and again, when he is before M le Président, his use of language wins over the entire company in his favour (p. 180).[10] The importance that Duclos attaches to expression reflects his concern with education which is manifest even in the work he wrote for a wager, the fairytale Acajou et Zirphile, where he writes that the fairy Ninette "suppléeroit par l'éducation à ce que manquoit à l'enfant du côté de l'esprit" (p. 338).

Duclos has a sanguine view of the influence of education. Coupled with intelligence it can be a means of helping a man rise in social status: "il reste toujours à l'esprit dans les classes les plus obcures des moyens de fortune et d'élévation qu'il peut saisir" (Considérations, XII, p. 153). Duclos himself learned at an early age the value of excelling in his education: "dans un collège,

10. Gallimard, 1981.

république d'enfants, le petit bourgeois vigoureux réprime le petit seigneur avantageux et foible; et celui qui prime dans sa classe jouit d'une considération marquée de la part de ses camarades" (Mémoires, p. lxxvi).

Seen in this light education is a training for life broadly based upon patriotism: "l'étude des hommes avec qui nous avons à vivre est celle qui nous est vraiment utile" (Considérations, I, p. 12);[11] but there is a side to the study of men that has not yet been looked at closely, namely their sentimental education.

Like many of his contemporaries Duclos contends that love between a man and a woman is best when it is physical as well as emotional. Marivaux, for instance, depicts with fond irony the delight taken by Mlle Habert in her husband after thirty years of religious devotion as a spinster: "ma pieuse épouse se mit au lit et me dit, couchons-nous, mon fils, il est tard; ce qui voulait dire, couche-toi, parce que je t'aime".[12] However Duclos also believes that true love must be underpinned by decency and morality. This is in contradiction to one relatively modern accusation, made by Le Bourgo in Un Homme de lettres au XVIIIe siècle, Duclos, sa vie et ses ouvrages, that Duclos professes "la morale facile du monde dans lequel il vivait", which was "un large fonds d'impudeur et de grossièreté".[13] It is true that Duclos is a self-confessed reformed libertine, and that the heroes of two of his prose fiction works are libertine too, but he concludes that true love and happiness are not to be found in a life of shamelessness and vulgarity at all. Indeed the only recommendation for a life of easy morals and loose living, apart from having fun for a short period of time, is that it leads to a feeling of dissatisfaction which in turn highlights the

11. See also a similar comment in the Critique de l'ouvrage intitulé: Recueil de ces messieurs: "qu'y a-t-il de plus important que d'étudier les hommes, et de connoître leur caractère?" (p. 423).
12. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 245.
13. Léo Le Bourgo, Un Homme de lettres au XVIIIe siècle (Geneva, Slatkine Reprints, 1971), p. 32. Original edition Bordeaux 1902.

rewards of decency and virtue. R. Mauzi sums this up well when he writes that love at its best is virtuous and is linked to morality: "l'amour vertueux, tel que l'on le comprend au XVIIIe siècle, n'a ... rien de commun avec l'amour platonique. Il peut fort bien être charnel. Mais il doit s'accompagner d'une élévation de l'âme et d'un enrichissement du coeur, qui transforment l'expérience amoureuse en un progrès moral."[14]

So far as Duclos is concerned, this ideal situation of harmony between morality and love is not to be attained without effort. Through the Confessions du Comte de *** and the Mémoires sur les moeurs he demonstrates that true love, like true virtue, is found by trial and error. Both the count and the narrator of the Mémoires sur les moeurs begin their sentimental education through contact with an older woman, and continue it by passing through several relationships of varying influence upon them until the ideal is found.[15] Perhaps it would be appropriate to mention here that the sentimental education of women is usually very different from that of men, as is their general education on the whole, but for the present it is the latter which is under examination.

In the 'Epitre au public' which prefaces Acajou et Zirphile Duclos claims: "je ne désespère pas qu'on ne parvienne à trouver la vérité, à force d'avoir épuisé les erreurs" (p. 327). He would appear to be writing tongue-in-cheek, yet the words put in a nutshell the attitude towards moral and sentimental education which he presents in his prose fiction. In the Confessions du Comte de *** the count learns about different sorts of women until they blur into one image, and the lessons he learns at first have usually less to do with morality than how to

14. L'Idée du bonheur et la pensée française au XVIIIe siècle, p. 477.
15. "Les prémices des jeunes gens les plus aimables appartiennent de droit à des vieilles" (Acajou et Zirphile, pp. 334-335). A notion there, in all probability, essentially to titillate the reader. This is, of course, still a thriving attitude. (See Vizinczey's In Praise of Older Women).

further his advancement into the world of high society. For instance, after Mme de Sézanne breaks off their relationship, the count notes: "je fis une sérieuse réflexion sur les femmes et sur moi-même. Je compris que ... je devois reprendre les moeurs de ma patrie, et me borner à la galanterie française. Je résolus de me conduire sur ce principe, de ne point m'attacher, de chercher le plaisir en conservant la liberté de mon coeur, et de me livrer au torrent de la société" (p. 47). It is not until a young and innocent girl enters his life that the count realises that the pleasures of the flesh and the whirl of society are not enough: "je trouvai un vide dans mon âme que tous mes faux plaisirs ne pouvoient remplir; ... je sentis que je ne pouvois être heureux, si mon coeur n'étoit véritablement rempli" (p. 135). He eventually finds tranquility in a close friendship with Mme de Selve, the woman he once loved almost exclusively in a physical way, and this marriage of friendship replaces "toutes ces passions aveugles et tumultueuses" of his previous love-affairs (p. 6).

There is a suggestion implicit in the chronology of both the Confessions du Comte de *** and the Mémoires sur les moeurs that the heroes could not have made their final decision without all that had gone before. Diderot would appear to agree with this sentiment in Les Bijoux indiscrets when he makes it quite clear that, at a certain stage of a man's life, specific circumstances govern his actions and colour his understanding of events and, when he is young, a man is largely dictated to by physical needs: "mais a-t-on du plaisir sans aimer?" asks the sultan's favourite, to which Sélim replies, "est-ce le coeur qui parle, à dix-huit ou vingt ans?".[16] Already in Acajou et Zirphile Duclos has noted that "les hommes sont gouvernés par leurs sens avant de connoître leur coeur" (p. 342).

In the Mémoires sur les moeurs the case is a little different: the narrator is

16. p. 222.

given instruction by women who put the lessons of love into words and deliver them in the form of conversational dialogue. Each woman marks a stage in the narrator's development towards finding true love. Very close to the start of the trail of his amorous adventures he acknowledges, like the count, the same 'blurred' picture of women when he recalls that "elles faisoient toutes une égale impression sur mon coeur ou plutôt sur mes sens" (p. 389), but unlike the female characters in the earlier novel, the women in the Mémoires sur les moeurs are more memorable by virtue of the lessons they impart to the narrator. It is Mme de Retel who teaches him the so-called virtues of carnal pleasures, something in the way of the Marquis de Sade, and it is Mme de Canaples who has him learn that these pleasures must be linked with sincerity before happiness results. In retrospect the narrator recognises how he changed under Mme de Retel's instructions: "j'étois sensible par caractère, je devins fat par principes" (p. 424); but gradually he rediscovers his integrity and sensibility. The reader follows him through the stages of his development, witnessing his cruel mistreatment of Mme de Clerval, then his changed reactions towards Mme de Saintré in a similar situation: "je ne fus nullement tenté d'en faire trophée" (though it must be admitted that his prime motivation is still physical pleasure) (p. 449). Mme de Saintré imparts to him the value of friendship, though the narrator is yet too full of self-importance to assimilate her lessons at this point; still they make him think, and eventually contribute to his acceptance that he must regard Mme de Canaples as a friend, not as a mistress, at the end of the novel.

In the Confessions du Comte de *** Duclos underlines the value of friendship in the Dorval episode, where he condemns La Dorval for splitting up two friends. Indeed it could be argued that the moral of the whole book is to show the worth of friendship, since the count writes at the very beginning about "un ami fidèle, ... qui, me tenant lieu de tout, m'empêche de rien regretter" (p. 6);

and concludes his original edition with the conviction that he has "l'univers entier avec [sa] femme qui est [son] amie" (p. 180).

In the Mémoires sur les moeurs a further point is raised and, in the final analysis, it can be discerned that Mme de Retel and Mme de Canaples point the same moral, albeit in dissimilar ways and for different motives. Mme de Retel observes that "si la sensation de l'amour est très vive, le sentiment en est très rare: on le suppose où il n'est pas; on croit même de bonne foi l'éprouver, on se détrompe par expérience" (p. 411); whilst Mme de Canaples awakens the narrator to the fact that he is suffering from just such an illusion regarding his feelings for her: "je ne veux pas vous laisser vous abuser vous-même. Vous n'avez eu pour moi que le goût qui naît de l'impression que la première femme aimable doit faire sur le coeur d'un jeune homme" (pp. 526-527).

Over half a century later the romantic novelist views the revelation of the true nature of one's sentiments in a quite different way. Benjamin Constant uses it to add to the romantic tragedy of his novel, Adolphe, by making it clear that the hero deliberately deludes himself and indeed wishes to maintain a status quo of self-deception. When Ellénore asserts that Adolphe's professed love for her is in fact pity disguised as love, the revelation has the opposite effect to the one made by Mme de Canaples in Duclos's novel. Adolphe asks, "pourquoi prononça-t-elle ces mots funestes? Pourquoi me révéla-t-elle un secret que je voulais ignorer?"[17] The step forward on the path to enlightenment does not lead to happiness as it does in the eighteenth century, but has become by the nineteenth century a step deeper into the misery and confusion of Romanticism.

In the Mémoires sur les moeurs both Mme de Retel and Mme de Canaples are

17. Benjamin Constant, Adolphe, ed. by Paul Delbouille (Paris, Les Textes français, "Les Belles Lettres", 1977), p. 159.

acutely aware of the vital importance of the partners in love being worthy of each other, but this is no Cornelian code of equality. Mme de Canaples knows that the narrator will eventually deceive her if she accepts his offer of marriage because she is too old for him. However any similarity between this heroine and the Princesse de Clèves ends here because Mme de Canaples goes on to match up the man she loves with the young and well-bred Mlle de Foix, not forgetting to ensure that the couple is on an equal financial footing too. For her part Mme de Retel grudgingly agrees that some relationships can endure, but is adamant that these are happy arrangements only if each partner knows the other well and has found the qualities necessary for friendship. These qualities last even when the blind passion of love has worn thin: "ces amants se sont heureusement trouvés dignes d'être amis; et c'est de ce moment qu'ils vivent heureux avec une confiance plus entière qu'ils ne l'auroient peut-être s'ils n'avoient pas été amants, et avec plus de douceur et de tranquilité que s'ils l'étoient encore" (p. 415). This of course rejoins the conclusion of the Confessions du Comte de *** where the count acknowledges a transition from "les plaisirs de l'amour" to "un sentiment plus tendre", that of friendship which, along with virtue, leads to "l'état ... le plus heureux où un honnête homme puisse aspirer" (pp. 179-180).

As Duclos sees it, a man's sentimental education is two-edged: Man learns about love; and love helps man learn about himself. In Acajou et Zirphile Duclos writes "le plaisir embellit, et l'amour éclaire", as if love has educational properties and is something to exploit in order to discover more about oneself (p. 348). The 'Avertissement' to the Mémoires sur les moeurs contains these words: "l'amour [a] de tous temps fait un article si considérable dans la vie de la plupart des hommes, ... qu'on ne connoîtroit qu'imparfaitement les moeurs d'une nation, si l'on négligeoit un objet si important" (p. 383). An excuse for the raciness of his novel? Perhaps, but Duclos mentions elsewhere the merits

of love and its links with enlightenment both in his prose fiction and in his moralist work. In the Considérations he writes "qu'il y a d'idées inaccessibles à ceux qui ont le sentiment froid!" (IV, p. 50), and later, "il y a une infinité d'idées, je dis d'idées justes, ... qui ne sont réservées qu'au sentiment" (XIV, pp. 178-179), and in Acajou et Zirphile he defines love as "un rayon de lumière dans l'esprit" (p. 346). Writers such as Prévost and Rousseau seem to believe in the superiority of those richly endowed with sensibility, Rousseau having Julie pen the words: "ne vaudrait-il pas mieux cesser d'être que d'exister sans rien sentir, et pourrais-tu te résoudre à trainer sur la terre l'insipide vie d'un homme ordinaire, après avoir goûté tous les transports qui peuvent ravir une âme humaine?";[18] whilst Prévost makes it quite clear in Manon Lescaut that Des Grieux is to be considered with respect, not only because of his social class, but also because of his sensibility. Experience of anything is vital since it sharpens ones's sense of judgement, and experience of love is no less important because it refines one's sensibility. The ideal of a harmonious society would be a hopeless dream if men were insensitive to the needs and feelings of their fellows.

On the other hand, as Pierre Trahard has observed, Duclos considers sensibility from the point of view of the general interest, not just of one man, and it is the former which receives his approbation.[19] He sees that sensibility can have a damaging influence as well as a beneficial one: "nous sommes portés à aimer de préférence les personnes reconnues pour sensibles, parce que nous nous flattons de devenir l'objet de leur affection, et que nous nous préférons à la société" (Considérations, XIV, pp. 180-181). Marivaux and Prévost both create a rather unsavoury atmosphere in Le Paysan parvenu and Manon Lescaut by introducing characters who play on sensibility in some way or

18. La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part Two, Letter XI, Julie to Saint-Preux.
19. Maîtres de la sensibilité française au XVIIIe siècle, p. 306.

another. In the former novel a young man uses flattering praise of sensibility to win over the devout Mme de Ferval: "plus on a de sensibilité, plus on a l'âme généreuse, et par conséquent estimable";[20] and in Manon Lescaut Manon herself is portrayed as frivolous and amoral, yet she has an element of sensibility which attracts the Chevalier des Grieux (and the reader, incidentally), and this attraction leads to the dramatic disorder of the Chevalier's life.

It is only once it is directed at the general good that sensibility is salubrious: "les âmes sensibles ... ont encore un avantage pour la société, c'est d'être persuadées des vérités dont l'esprit n'est que convaincu; la conviction n'est souvent que passive, la persuasion est active, et il n'y a de ressort que ce qui fait agir" (Considérations, IV, p. 51). As usual with Duclos, balance and moderation are key words, and he recognises the need for an equilibrium between sensibility and reason.[21] There is a great difference between "la vraie sensibilité" which is "celle qui naîtroit de nos jugements", and "l'espèce de sensibilité vague qui n'est qu'une foiblesse d'organes" (XIV, p. 181). His condemnation of oversensitive parents is unequivocal: "les parents tendres jusqu'à la foiblesse sont les moins propres à rendre leurs enfants bons citoyens" (p. 180). Enthusiasm is all very well, concedes Duclos, but it is not always what is required. Duclos's comments on genius underline his preference for steady moderation: "les grands esprits . . . ne sont propres qu'aux révolutions; ils sont nés pour édifier ou pour détruire" when "la raison cultivée suffit à tout ce qui nous est nécessaire" (XII, p. 161).

Education provides man with the guidance necessary to find personal

20. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 297.
21. See this thesis, Chapter Four, p. 100 for his evaluation of sensibility and reason concerning marriage.

happiness: his moral education encourages him to be virtuous by putting the general good first; this ties in with his social education which teaches him the advantages of the patriotism advocated by the moral lessons, since social harmony leads to happiness in the individual; and then his sentimental education completes a man's awareness of himself and others, and teaches him the pleasures of friendship, all of which is positive in a social, and therefore moral context.

In Duclos's work there is also evidence of a preoccupation with the physical side of education, and an awareness of the need for education to be appropriate to each social group and to each sex.

Sometimes a man's physical education is dictated by his social status, and when Duclos writes about his own education he is careful to point out that he was given an uncommon opportunity in that he received the sort of education normally reserved for a gentleman. He lists fencing as one of his favourite activities, although it must be said that Duclos himself prescribed these lessons, not his school (Mémoires, p. lxxxiii); and when he was too young to fence he was taught how to dance at his first school (p. lxxiv). Both activities have implications of social class and privilege, but in mentioning them Duclos shows that physical considerations should be taken into account when it comes to education. In the Voyage en Italie he tells how he advised a young mother to undo the swaddling wrapped around her baby to stop it crying, and this little episode suggests that Duclos thinks that one's physical well-being is important, no matter what a person's social class (p. 326). (The anecdote is strongly redolent of Rousseau's Emile). Duclos believes that "toutes les facultés de l'âme se réduisent à sentir et à penser" (Considérations, II, pp. 20-21), and that "il y a mille occasions où il est nécessaire que le caractère, l'esprit et la santé soient d'accord" (XIII, p. 173), precisely because one's health and physical

condition affect one's performance and reactions generally. This is why physical education is so important.[22]

If one turns now to the subject of suitability of education according to one's social grade, one can see that Duclos clearly differentiates between the types of education for each class. In the Considérations he puts forward the notion that the lower class has no principles, "faute d'éducation", (IV, p. 61), and his remarks in the Mémoires secrets condemning ministers who wilfully keep the common people in ignorance would suggest that Duclos is keen on educating the people: "tout ministre assez présomptueux pour méconnoître son ignorance, ou qui craint de la manifester en cherchant à s'instruire, veut tenir le peuple dans les ténèbres, et ne veut avoir que des aveugles pour témoins de ses démarches".[23] However Duclos would not like to see the lower classes educated in an inappropriate fashion. His adhesion to the ideas of Fontenelle has already been mentioned, for, though Fontenelle owes his celebrity to his vulgurisation of scientific treatises, Duclos records him as having said: "j'aurois la main pleine de vérités, que je ne l'ouvrirois pas pour le peuple" (Mémoires de Duclos, p. c). Duclos is against social revolution, and feels essentially that the members of the lower class should remain in their undistinguished place if they lack the intelligence to move out of it by their own means. Brengues suggests that the basic principle of Duclosian thinking is "être, rester à sa place".[24] Yet this is not totally true, since Duclos firmly believes in advancement by merit.

Complete ignorance can lead to crime, since Duclos argues that crime is merely bad judgement (Considérations, I, pp. 10-11). For the lower classes the general education recommended for everyone else applies, and for those who

22. Duclos is not alone in this opinion; see also D'Alembert's article, 'Collège' in the Encyclopédie, for example.
23. Mémoires secrets, ed. by Petitot and Monmerque, tome I, p. 45.
24. Charles Duclos, ou L'Obsession de la vertu, p. 349.

possess some skill, then this should be their individual instruction: "les artisans, les artistes, ceux enfin qui attendent leur subsistance de leur travail, sont peut-être les seuls qui reçoivent des instructions convenables à leur destination" (II, pp. 22-23). One has the impression that Duclos believes that the middle class has the greatest future. He himself is from the bourgeoisie and proud of it; he speaks of his family as "honnête et ancienne", and refers to his mother, whom he describes as "une bourgeoise", in glowing terms (Mémoires, pp. lvii-lviii). When recounting his schooldays he demonstrates how he was able to make his way in the world not by imitating the nobles with whom he shared the classroom, but by surpassing them academically. On the other hand a young bourgeois should not receive the same education as a prince, nor indeed should anyone but a prince: "qu'un ouvrage destiné à l'éducation d'un prince ait de la célébrité, le moindre gentilhomme le croit propre à l'éducation de son fils. ... Quel rapport, en effet, y a-t-il entre deux hommes dont l'un doit commander et l'autre obéir, sans avoir même le choix de l'obéissance?" (Considérations, II, p. 24).

When one comes to consider the education appropriate to each sex, one reaches the main area open to reform, so far as Duclos is concerned. He is unhappy about the quality of education in general "mais celle des femmes est la plus négligée" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 181), especially their moral and sentimental education. In comparison "l'éducation des hommes, tout imparfaite qu'elle est, ... a du moins l'avantage de les occuper, de remplir leurs têtes d'idées bonnes ou mauvaises, qui font diversion aux sentiments du coeur" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, pp. 413-414). In the fourth edition of the Confessions du Comte de *** he excuses women their sometimes dubious moral behaviour: "leurs fautes sont plus dignes de grâce par la mauvaise éducation qu'elles reçoivent" (p. 181), because their ignorance leaves them vulnerable to seduction. There is a parallel to be drawn here between Duclos's

thoughts on the education of women and those of Laclos. The latter asserts that women may behave badly because they are slaves within society and "sans liberté point de moralité et sans moralité point d'éducation".[25] However, unlike Duclos, Laclos claims that "il n'est aucun moyen de perfectionner l'éducation des femmes".[26]

Duclos affirms that there is no explanation or reasoning behind women's instruction: "dans l'enfance on leur parle de leurs devoirs sans leur faire connoître les vrais principes" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 181), so that later in life their convictions are not strong enough to resist temptation. They are curious about men and about their own reactions to the opposite sex, but their sentimental and moral education is deficient and they are left largely in the dark. Duclos indicates the folly of this policy in Acajou et Zirphile where Zirphile is portrayed as artless and naive, "et ce n'est point du tout la sauve-garde de la vertu" (p. 341); the only reason why she comes to no harm is because the fairy Ninette "ne la laissoit approcher d'aucun homme pour son honneur, ni même de certaines femmes pour son innocence" (p. 342). Duclos's humour here is of course ironic and belies his belief that basing women's education upon a premise of ignorance does not ensure their innocence. Only in a fairy-tale world could a woman be protected in this way. In the Mémoires sur les moeurs he shows how Mme de Clerval mistakes a young man's vanity for discretion, being unfamiliar with the ploys of seduction, and "ce raisonnement, qui prouvoit mieux son candeur que son expérience, fut ce qui la perdit" (p. 427).

The solution to the problem? This is difficult to pin-point since Duclos always

25. Laclos, De L'Education des femmes, Oeuvres complètes de Laclos, Allem edition, (Bruges, Pléiade, 1967) p. 405.
26. De l'Education des femmes, p. 403.

seems to shy away from suggesting a reform ("je ne veux pas m'engager dans une discussion qui exigeroit un traité particulier"),[27] but perhaps it lies in the Mémoires sur les moeurs: "il vaudroit beaucoup mieux, sans exagérer la vertu ni imposer sur le plaisir, faire connoître les suites de l'un et de l'autre" (p. 463). As it is, it would appear that women are reduced to learning via experience, and then are condemned for it.

Rousseau makes a similar observation in Emile: "pour paraître leur prêcher la vertu, on leur fait aimer tous les vices: on les leur donne, en leur défendant de les avoir".[28] However Rousseau is referring to general education, which he reserves for men. On studying his views it becomes obvious that he and Duclos are poles apart when they examine women's education. Rousseau would appear to condone the repression of women: "toute l'éducation des femmes doit être relative aux hommes" (Emile, p. 247); and "il faut les exercer d'abord à la contrainte, ... pour les soumettre aux volontés d'autrui" (p. 252); and then "leurs études doivent se rapporter toutes à la pratique" (p. 264). He claims that women are created simply to please men (p. 243), and that their intelligence is inferior to men's (p. 257). Duclos does not subscribe to this chauvinist view, and claims to have more respect for women's individuality. He admires women who think for themselves, declaring: "je suis d'autant plus surpris que les femmes soient les dupes des hommes, qu'elles ont infiniment plus d'esprit qu'eux".[29] He has the female characters in his prose-fiction give an explanation for the phenomenon, Mme de Retel in the Mémoires sur les moeurs claiming that "c'est le fruit de leur éducation, si l'on peut appeler de ce nom le soin qu'on prend d'amollir leur coeur et de laisser leur tête vide, ce qui produit tous leurs égarements" (pp. 412-413); and Mme de Saintré recognising

27. Considérations, XII, p. 164.
28. p. 72.
29. Critique de l'ouvrage intitulé: Recueil de ces messieurs, p. 422.

"combien l'éducation qu'on [leur] donne est défectueuse et maladroite" (p. 462). Eight years later d'Alembert was to reply to Rousseau's Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles in a similar vein, referring to women's education in disparaging terms: "elles apprennent presque uniquement à se contrefaire sans cesse; à n'avoir pas un sentiment qu'elles n'étouffent, une opinion qu'elles ne cachent, une pensée qu'elles ne déguisent. Nous traitons la nature en elles comme nous le traitons dans nos jardins, nous cherchons à l'orner en l'étouffant".[30] Duclos resents the fact that women do not have the same opportunity as men to better their social situation because "l'éducation qu'on ... donne aux filles n'a rien qui puisse élever assez l'amour-propre, pour que celles d'une naissance commune puissent aspirer à se procurer une distinction de mérite personnel qui les fasse considérer de leurs compagnes d'une naissance illustre" (Mémoires, p. lxxvi). As the situation stands, women receive instruction which is irrelevant to their needs: "du moment que les filles commencent à être capables de recevoir des instructions, on les enferme dans une maison religieuse, pour leur apprendre à vivre dans le monde".[31] Duclos gives the impression of suspecting that, given the opportunity, some women could surpass intellectually many of their male counterparts because "une fille ... est obligée, grace au peu de soin qu'on prend de son éducation, de penser d'elle-même", whereas a boy would simply repeat the stupidity of his teacher (Critique de l'ouvrage intitulé: Recueil de ces messieurs, pp. 422-423).

Nowhere, on the other hand, does Duclos offer a tangible solution to the problem. Indeed one could contend that the only practical suggestion he makes for the improvement of women's moral and sentimental education is for them to read novels, which could be regarded as being insincere, a transparent

30. Written in 1759. Oeuvres, Paris, Belin, 1821-1822, 5 vol.
31. Mme de Graffigny, Lettres d'une Péruvienne, (Paris, Duchesne, 1752), Letter XXXIV, Zilia to Aza.

marketing of his own books. However it is probable that he ranks among those eighteenth-century writers referred to by Vivienne Mylne in The Eighteenth-Century Novel, who claimed to edify in their prose fiction, and who maintained that they were not content simply to entertain with their offering to the public.[32] In fact Duclos does claim in the 'Avertissement' to the Mémoires sur les moeurs: "j'ai cru que l'ouvrage pouvoit être utile: c'est l'unique raison qui m'engage à le donner au public" (p. 383).

Another twentieth-century critic, Henriot, notes this about Duclos: "ce moraliste croyait sincèrement à la morale, et bien qu'il eût beaucoup d'esprit, il ne considéra jamais qu'un écrivain put se ravaler au simple rang d'un amuseur".[33] Even Sainte-Beuve, who made such an important contribution to the sullying of Duclos's posthumous reputation, concedes that "Duclos, dans ses récits, dans ses livres de morale, a de ces observations de bon sens bien touchées, bien frappées, et qui prouvent que le moraliste en lui connaissait bien son sujet, et le médecin son malade".[34]

In other words Duclos conforms to the general consensus of opinion expressed by Henri Coulet in Le Roman jusqu'à la révolution that the eighteenth-century novel was to be "une leçon sur la vie réelle",[35] though not a portrait of real life. In the Confessions du Comte de *** the author claims that "ce récit sera une confession fidèle des travers et des erreurs de ma jeunesse, qui pouvoit vous servir de leçon" (p. 7); and Diderot quotes it (with a degree of sarcasm) in Les Bijoux indiscrets as accurately representing the morals of the day.[36]

32. Manchester University Press, 1965.
33. Les livres du second rayon, p. 175.
34. Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 208.
35. Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution, p. 319.
36. Les Bijoux indiscrets, p. 223.

If Duclos refuses to be precise about reforms, at least he points a finger at the literary world, which he sees as having a responsability in the field of education: "le plus grand service que les sociétés littéraires pourroient rendre aujourd'hui aux lettres, aux sciences et aux arts, seroit de faire des méthodes et de tracer des routes qui épargneroient du travail, des erreurs, et conduiroient à la vérité par les voies les plus courtes et les plus sûres" (Considérations, XII, p. 164). This is not to say that men are to be spoon-fed, simply that Duclos fails to see the point in doubling up on work already completed since this can slow down progress: "c'est par la connoissance et la comparaison des idées étrangères, qu'on parvient à en produire une quantité d'autres qu'on ne doit qu'à soi" (Considérations, XII, p. 154).

In a similar vein he refutes the necessity for spending so long in studying dead languages: "faut-il six ou sept années pour apprendre du latin et les éléments du grec? Deux ans au plus, et de meilleurs méthodes, suffiroient pour ce objet. Faut-il qu'il y ait à Paris douze collèges de pleine exercice pour la même routine, et qu'il n'y en ait aucun de ceux-là pour les langues vivantes?" (Mémoires, p. lxxx-lxxxi). Compare these words with Rousseau's, and once again Duclos's ideas are at variance with those of the younger man: "il faut apprendre le latin pour savoir le français; il faut étudier l'un et l'autre pour entendre les règles de l'art de parler".[37] It must not be forgotten that Duclos is the author of two memoirs on the evolution of the French language,[38] so it is hardly through ignorance that he personally uses phonetic spelling in favour of traditional orthography; and, if he has been accused of ignoring the future ("il mettait tout en viager", noted Sainte-Beuve),[39] then on the other hand he

37. Emile, p. 234.
38. Mémoire sur l'origine et les révolutions des langues celtique et française in the Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, tome XV, pp. 565-579. Second memoir on the same subject, tome XVII, pp. 171-190.
39. Causeries du lundi, pp. 214-217.

cannot be charged with incomprehension of the past. It would seem that he wishes to see the past serve the present.

Various writers of the period, including Mme d'Epinay and Rousseau, comment on Duclos's candour,[40] and Duclos's views on education are not out of keeping with this image: he would like to see education come straight to the point, as it were. He questions the wisdom of teaching too much general knowledge: "ce seroit un problème à résoudre, que d'examiner combien l'impression a contribué au progrès des lettres et des sciences, et combien elle peut y nuire" (Considérations, XII, p. 164); and he recommends specialisation, believing directness to be the key to a good education: "un homme qui veut s'appliquer à un genre particulier, l'approfondir, et s'instruire, est obligé de payer à l'étude un tribut de lectures inutiles, rebutantes et souvent contraires à son sujet. Avant d'être en état de choisir ses guides, il a épuisé ses forces" (XII, p. 164).

In connection with this concern for relevance, Duclos deplores the ineptitude of some teachers. In the first instance the teacher should be educated himself, and secondly he should teach the subject appropriate to his knowledge. In the Confessions du Comte de *** Duclos condemns the ignorance of the count's tutors, qualifying them as "ces deux inutiles" (p. 7); and he writes mockingly of his own early education at the hands of "une manière de précepteur, qui, en montrant le latin, achevoit d'en apprendre lui-même autant qu'il lui en falloit pour être prêtre" (Mémoires, p. lxvi). In Acajou et Zirphile Harpagine "fit venir un fameux philosophe ... pour montrer au prince à monter à cheval et à tirer des armes; elle chargea un musicien, un maître à danser, et un poète

40. Mme d'Epinay caricatures Duclos in L'Histoire de Mme de Montbrillant in the person of Desbarres ("je vous parle franchement"), edition G. Roth (Paris, 1959), tome II, p. 419. Rousseau qualifies Duclos as "homme vrai" in his Confessions, p. 342.

lyrique de lui apprendre à raisonner; les autres furent distribués suivant ce plan" (p. 339); and over twenty years later Duclos's continuing concern for the suitability of instructors is reflected in his comments on the education afforded to the young king of Naples: "c'étoit un jésuite allemand qui lui enseignoit le francais" (Voyage en Italie, p. 272).

In this way it can be observed that Duclos sees the need for reform in the field of education: "si l'éducation étoit raisonnée, les hommes acqueroient une très grande quantité de vérités avec plus de facilité qu'ils ne reçoivent un petit nombre d'erreurs. ... L'éducation est bien éloignée d'être systématique" (Considérations, II, p. 30). He criticizes some of the subjects taught at length, such as Latin and Greek, and suggests that the primary aim of teaching should be to instill a broad sense of patriotism in the students. To this effect the teachers should be competent: educated themselves and well-versed in the subject they teach. A parent as tutor is considered to be generally unsuitable: "les parents tendres jusqu'à la foiblesse sont les moins propres à rendre leurs enfants bons citoyens" (XIV, p. 180). Indeed he would appear to recommend that one learns best away from home in a spirit of competition with one's classmates. Duclos recognises that women's education is shamefully neglected. Conservative as always however, he does not suggest a complete overhaul of society's attitude, but puts forward the idea that women should at least be taught the consequences of virtuous and lascivious behaviour (this for the ultimate promotion of social order). Nowhere does he suggest which other subjects might form part of a curriculum. Once again Duclos's moderation is obvious; no great social change is sought after; he makes no attempt to outline a general system of education applicable on a national scale, and in fact differentiates between what is suitable for the separate social classes. All the same it is evident that Duclos considers education to be a vitally important element in the study of men (he devotes a whole chapter to the subject in the

Considérations), and that he sees plenty of room for improvement in this domain, particularly so far as the education of women is concerned.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHANGING FACE OF SOCIETY THROUGH WEALTH AND MARRIAGE

Through the writings of the eighteenth century one can build up an image of a certain section of society where "le divertissement, c'est ... la conversation... . Et l'on aime surtout une chose dans la vie mondaine, c'est aimer ou du moins parler d'amour".[1] The themes of wealth and marriage can be observed to have a direct influence upon the action in many plays and novels such as Marivaux's Les Fausses Confidences and Prevost's Manon Lescaut. In the former a rich bourgeois widow is wooed by both a member of the aristocracy and a man from a good family of legal stock who has recently and abruptly lost his fortune; the different circumstances of the two men in relation to those of the heroine affect the direction that the action takes. In Manon Lescaut the stages of the development of the novel are prompted by the characters' diverse attitudes towards marriage and by their financial situation: for instance Des Grieux's father refuses to entertain any suggestion of his son's marrying below his station so, from the outset, Des Grieux has to cope with his father's opposition to Manon; for her part Manon appears not to set out to marry Des Grieux, but to be intent on remaining in the company of whoever can afford to keep her in a life of luxury, and therefore there is a constant pressure on Des Grieux to have a supply of money, a factor which directly influences the action within the novel. Finally the tragedy is brought about by the main characters' decision to marry and the opposition to it by the people in power around them.

The interest excited by the themes is not restricted to French literature: in England Richardson's Pamela relates how a servant-girl moves up the social ladder through marriage; and later in the century German novelists show a

1. Daniel Mornet, La Pensée française au XVIIIe siècle, p. 22.

concern about social inequality, particularly Schiller in Kabale und Liebe, an indictment of political intrigue which results in the sacrifice of youth and love to the caste system; and in the early nineteenth century Jane Austen is still basing her English novels on her female characters' attitude towards marriage. Other writers use the themes indirectly: their characters' stance in relation to marriage, for example, places them eventually before a dilemma which prompts self-examination, and allows the author to indulge in a certain amount of psychological analysis. Laclos falls into this category with his Liaisons dangereuses; likewise Duclos with L'Histoire de Mme de Luz.

The themes are not new, of course: Molière was mindful of them when he wrote many of his plays and had already discussed the subject of marriage, notably in L'Ecole des femmes; but by the eighteenth century marriage and money are in fact changing the face of French society by generating movement between the social classes, and this phenomenon is reflected in the literature of the time as authors begin to deal with a particular subject proposed by the changing social structure, namely the provincial in Paris.[2] Their works reveal one aspect of social movement at the time, the possibility of moving up the social ladder. There is also the other side of the coin to be faced up to by some individuals, that is a lowering of their social standing due to a sudden decline in fortune. The Law affair of 1720 had drastically altered the financial position of many families and individuals in France, and Duclos refers to the effects of the change in his Mémoires where he writes of "la révolution subite qui se fit dans les fortunes", and observes that "avant ce temps, qu'on peut nommer fabuleux, les particuliers n'espéroient de fortune que du travail et de l'économie. ... Aujourd'hui, personne ne met de bornes à ses désirs" (p. lx). He describes "[des] gens devenus subitement riches ou pauvres" (p. lxi), giving the

2. There are many examples: Marivaux's Le Paysan parvenu, Mouhy's La Paysanne parvenue, Voltaire's L'Ingénu.

impression that nothing is fixed or certain any longer. According to at least one twentienth-century critic this is a true picture of eighteenth-century society: "on entrevoit comme un univers en mouvement où la tradition et l'innovation se mêlent, s'unissent dans un rythme vivant, image de cette société changeante et en gestion continuelle du XVIIIe siècle".[3]

Whatever the case it cannot be denied that Duclos, the champion of moderation, strongly opposes sudden social change, and harshly criticizes its causes. He launches a diatribe against Law's illfated system "[qui] commença par énivrer les têtes d'un fol espoir d'opulence, et finit bientôt par bouleverser toutes les fortunes" (Mémoires, p. lxxviii). He deplores the fact that many people from the middle class ("la plus honnête et la plus utile de toutes") were financially ruined while "des fripons grands ou petits" became rich (p. lxxviii).

Traditionally a person's social position depended upon birthright, and it would be too hasty to dismiss this deep-seated conventionalism as outmoded and irrelevant. Duclos may be critical but he is also a conformist: "dans tous les états il y a des chefs, un ordre mitoyen et du peuple" (Considérations, X, p. 120); he points out that wealth is not a guarantee for social success: "l'orgueil des richesses ne ressemble point à celui de la naissance. L'un a quelque chose de libre, d'aisé, qui semble exiger des égards légitimes. L'autre a un air de grossièreté révoltante qui avertit de l'usurpation" (p. 127); and suggests that it is reasonable to adhere to the formula of words and gestures which symbolises respect for traditional social order: "il y a depuis longtemps deux sortes de respects, celui qu'on doit au mérite, et celui qu'on rend aux places, à la naissance" (XIV, p. 184). He refers to this principle in Acajou et Zirphile when describing Podogrambo's arrival at the king's court: "il y fut reçu avec cette

3. C. Dédeyan, Vérité et réalité dans Les Fausses Confidences, Mélanges d'histoire littéraire offerts à D. Mornet (1951), p. 124.

espèce de politesse qu'on a pour tous les grands, et qui n'engage point à l'estime" (p. 343). Duclos draws his values from his middle-class background, and feels that merit deserves reward; originally nobles earned respect for their fighting ability, and the memory of this respect has been carried through the centuries. In the Confessions du Comte de *** Mme de Selves advises the count that "un homme de [sa] naissance n'avoit point d'autre parti à prendre et à suivre que celui des armes; que c'étoit l'unique profession de la noblesse françoise, comme elle en étoit l'origine" (p. 151). Brengues has suggested that keeping to one's place is the fundamental principle of Duclos's way of thinking,[4] and certainly Duclos would seek to maintain a differentiation between the classes when he records in his Mémoires: "je n'ai ... jamais accepté avec des seigneurs, de ces soupers libertins que j'ai souvent faits avec mes égaux" (p. cxxi). In the Confessions du Comte de *** the count dismisses relationships he has with women from a different social class essentially as failures, whether he enjoys them at the time or not. He feels affection for Mme Pichon, a rich merchant's wife, but finishes by advising her to "vivre avec un homme de son état" (p. 69); and he somewhat cruelly describes Madame L'Intendante in the following terms: "[elle étoit] souveraine en province, [mais] elle n'étoit qu'une bourgeoise à Paris" (p. 36). On reading the Mémoires sur les moeurs one would be justified in wondering how far Duclos owes a debt to another member of the group of "sept sages" who met at Mme de Tencin's salon, namely Marivaux.[5] After all the hero ends up with a woman of his own class in a similar financial position.

However, though Duclos accepts the social hierarchy of his time (he dedicates his Considérations to Louis XIV),[6] he would substitute a moral architecture for

4. Charles Duclos, Ou L'Obsession de la vertu, p. 349, footnote 9.
5. The "sept sages" were Fontenelle, Marivaux, Mairan, Boze, Mirabaud, Astruc and Duclos.
6. In 1748 Duclos ordered a statue of the king during the session of the Etats de

the class system. He seems keen to make it understood that there is no need to feel in awe of the nobility: "les grands et les petits ont le même maître, ... [et] ils sont liés par les mêmes lois" (Considérations, VI, pp. 84-85). One should be able to make one's way whether from the aristocracy or not: "je voudrois seulement que la différence des rangs ne fût pas la règle de l'estime comme elle doit l'être des respects" (Considérations, XVI, pp. 205-206). He claims that most men are equal and should therefore be able to seize any opportunity to move up the social ladder by dint of their own efforts: "à l'éxception du bas peuple, ... le reste des hommes est par-tout le même" and congenial company (so important to eighteenth-century society) "est indépendante de l'état et du rang, et ne se trouve que parmi ceux qui pensent et qui sentent, qui ont les idées justes et les sentiments honnêtes" (Considérations, VIII, pp. 109-110).

Duclos claims that "tous les hommes ont leurs devoirs respectifs" (XVI, p. 206), and that true nobility stems not from birthright but from "l'air qui annonce, qui promet de la bonté, et qui tient parole" (VI, p. 89). Men should have self-respect and "cet amour-propre, bien entendu, est la source des vertus morales, et le premier lien de la société" (XVI, p. 200). Duclos was ennobled in 1755, but he had already made his mark on society and had reached a position of influence by that time largely through his own efforts. He set out to be successful from an early age at school where he recognised that "[il ne pouvoit se] distinguer des petits comtes ou marquis ... que par supériorité sur eux à d'autres égards.... [Il n'oublia] rien pour éclipser [ses] compagnons d'études" (Mémoires, p . lxxv). He admits that "la seule chose respectée que les richesses ne peuvent donner, c'est une naissance illustre", but is lucid in his analysis of the precarious nature of this respect, observing that if a person's noble status is not backed up by financial power "elle est éclipsée par tout ce que l'or peut procurer" (Considérations, X, pp. 128-129). Though many

Bretagne, and by 1754 had written the Latin inscription for it.

members of the aristocracy might hope to play on the influence of their historically powerful name to command a position of strength within society, they are learning that name alone is not sufficient, and that money is fast becoming the base of society.

The situation is most complex; Duclos attempts to describe how the pyramid of social position is held in place, the lower orders actually sustaining the power that the nobility holds over them by their very submission: "les esclaves volontaires font plus de tyrans que les tyrans ne font d'esclaves forcés" (VI, p. 85). Nevertheless Duclos avoids falling into the trap of underestimating the power of the masses: should a noble fall from grace "le peuple devient son plus cruel persécuteur. Son respect étoit une adoration, son mépris ressemble à l'impiété; l'idole n'étoit que renversée, le peuple la foule aux pieds" (Considérations, VI, p. 87). Does Duclos scent revolution in the air? Sénac de Meilhan would think not, indicating that Duclos "ne s'élève pas au-dessus du cercle de la société de son temps";[7] but Sainte-Beuve perceives that Duclos "entrevoyait très nettement une révolution ou crise imminente".[8]

It is certain that Duclos detects an uneasiness about him, but it would be exaggerating to claim that he foresees the 1789 Revolution. In any case the word 'revolution' for almost the whole of the eighteenth century did not really have the sense of violent political upheaval. There are even those who claim that Laclos is the first to use it in indisputably this sense, in his fragmentary essay on the education of women, as late as 1784. Therefore when Duclos describes his period as marking "le temps de la révolution" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 388), he is merely observing that events seem to him to recur in a

7. Sénac de Meilhan, Portraits et caractères du XVIII, (Paris, Wittman, 1945), pp. 109-110.
8. Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 207.

cycle: "les choses ... préparent une nouvelle révolution qui arrive en France, où tout s'oublie, tous les quarante ans. Nous touchons actuellement à une de ces crises d'état" (Mémoires, p. lxxix). Nor would he welcome such violent change, as Sainte-Beuve goes on to point out: "Duclos veut une réforme en effet, et non point une révolution".[9] The consequences of a minister's failed financial policies are terrible enough, but the possibility of an uprising involving the lowest orders of society, whom Duclos has always deemed unworthy and incapable of playing anything other than an ineffectual role within society, would be unthinkable.

Traditionally certain sections of society had been looked down upon, tax-collectors being one example. During Duclos's lifetime attitudes towards these people are in a state of flux. So it is that Duclos can at one and the same time despise and praise those men who practise the profession of financier: "ne voit-on pas déjà des hommes assez vils pour abandonner des professions respectables, et embrasser, en se dégradant eux-mêmes, le métier de la finance?" (Considérations, X, p. 125). He concedes however that "l'état doit avoir des revenus; il faut qu'il y ait des citoyens chargés de la perception, et qu'ils y trouvent des avantages" (X, p. 122); and in holding this point of view he rejoins Voltaire who comments on "l'avidité du financier, qui n'est pas au fond plus avide que les autres hommes, et qui est nécessaire".[10] In 1721 Montesquieu analysed the social position of a financier thus: "il est autant au-dessus des autres par ses richesses, qu'il est au-dessous de tout le monde par sa naissance",[11] recognising near the beginning of the century the new position of men of money, but choosing to see little to envy in their situation. By 1741

9. Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 219.
10. Voltaire, Le Monde comme il va in Romans et contes (Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), p. 106.
11. Montesquieu, Lettres persanes, Versini edition (Paris, Collection de l'Imprimerie Nationale, 1986), Letter XLVIII, Usbek to Rhédi.

Duclos has enough confidence that some of his essentially bourgeois values will be accepted by his public to write that a financier who carries out his job honestly and well deserves respect because of the importance of his work to society: "la finance est absolument nécessaire dans un état, et c'est une profession dont la dignité ou la bassesse dépend uniquement de la façon dont elle est exercée" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 99). Voltaire would appear to agree that the profession should no longer carry a social stigma because "rien n'empêche qu'on ne soit un bon juge, un brave guerrier, un homme d'état habile, quand on a eu un père bon calculateur".[12] Duclos notes the development in the relationship between financiers and the nobility, commenting that: "il n'y a pas encore long-temps que les financiers ne voyaient que des protecteurs dans les gens de condition, dont ils sont aujourd'hui les rivaux" (Considérations, X, p. 120). Indeed the balance is tipping the other way, and impoverished nobles are often keen to marry into wealthy families despite the latter's lowly origins. By 1751 and the publication of the Considérations Duclos is able to write that "les gens de condition ont déjà perdu le droit de mépriser la finance, puisqu'il y en a peu qui n'y tiennent par le sang" (X, p. 125). Indeed "tous ceux qui tirent vanité de leur naissance ne sont pas toujours dignes de se mésallier" because by this stage the.financiers are calling the tune, and are becoming increasingly selective about potential family connections (X, p. 126).

Montesquieu noted three powerful elements within society: the Church, the nobility, and the higher echelons of the legal profession. He also observed the animosity between the three factions: "chacun a un mépris souverain pour les deux autres: tel, par example, que l'on devrait mépriser parce qu'il est un sot, ne l'est souvent que parce qu'il est homme de robe".[13] In L'Histoire de Mme de

12. Le Monde comme il va, p. 105.
13. Lettres persanes, Letter XLIV, Usbek to Rhédi. (Montesquieu was himself old

Luz Duclos introduces the idea of confrontation and hatred between the aristocracy and the influential members of the legal profession in the episode concerning Mme de Luz and Thurin, the magistrate. The figure of Thurin illustrates the rise of the middle class to positions of power and influence in the French court. Thurin considers his social category as being as powerful and respectable as the nobility, yet needs to feel that the nobility recognises his status. His clumsy attempts to seduce Mme de Luz would translate this vanity, since to have an aristocrat as his mistress would be a sign of his social success. To claim, as Free does in his critical work on Duclos, that sensual pleasure replaces Thurin's ambitions as his principal motivating force would be to misinterpret the social situation of the 'noblesse de robe' in eighteenth-century France.[14]

The successful magistrate or judge yearns to be accepted by the traditionally superior class of nobles: hence the new class born of marriage alliances between the families of financially embarrassed aristocrats and wealthy lawyers. This gives rise to a certain levelling out of social strata: "on arriveroit jusqu'à la bourgeoisie, sans avoir distingué une nuance de séparation", but there still remains an undercurrent of disharmony which belies the inequality between the 'old' and the 'new' nobility (Considérations, VI, p. 84). Already in the previous century La Bruyère had noted the rejection experienced by the 'noblesse de robe' trying to integrate itself into life at court, referring to "des dédains de la cour, et des petites humiliations qu'elle y essuie".[15] Duclos observes the same phenomenon in his century, and comments wryly on how each element of society disdains the order below it: "je remarque ... qu'il n'y a personne qui ne croie qu'elle peut se trouver dans un ordre supérieur au sien, et jamais dans une

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'noblesse de robe'.)

14. Virtue, Happiness and Duclos's Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 73.
15. Caractères, Chapter VII, De la ville, section 5, p. 224.

classe inférieure. La haute magistrature la suppose à la cour comme chez elle; mais elle ne la croit pas dans une certaine bourgeoisie, qui, à son tour, à des nuances d'orgueil" (VIII, p. 107). This supports comments made earlier in the Confessions du Comte de *** which illustrate the ambiguity of the social position of the 'noblesse de robe': "ils ne cessent de déclamer contre les gens de la cour, qu'ils affectent de mépriser, quoiqu'ils vous étourdissent sans cesse du nom de ceux à qui ils ont l'honneur d'appartenir" (p. 61). Duclos's conclusion is that "en général, la robe s'estime trop, et l'on ne l'estime pas assez" (p. 61).

For this moralist the first duty of a magistrate is to society: a judge should apply himself to his work instead of affecting the manners of the aristocracy. After all "les imitateurs ne saisissent ordinairement que les ridicules de leurs modèles" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 196). Of Thurin he writes: "au lieu de s'occuper ... des devoirs de son état, il avoit la ridicule ambition d'être à la cour" (p. 197); and he clearly ascribes the hopelessness of Thurin's attempted seduction of Mme de Luz to the lady's conviction of her superiority as she orders Thurin to remember that "une femme de [son] rang peut être déshonorée et par l'amour et par l'amant" (p. 200).

Contradictions in social expectations abound on all sides. On the one hand Duclos condones what might be seen as the status quo, the necessity for deference to traditional social class distinctions: "c'est une loi nécessaire de la société, qui ne révolte que l'orgueil, et qui ne gêne point les âmes faites pour l'ordre" (Considérations, XVI, p. 205); and on the other hand he suggests a point of view which depicts almost all men as being equal: "le monde ne diffère que par l'extérieur, et ... tout se ressemble au fond" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 68). Of course both conditions can exist simultaneously if men of modest backgrounds are successful and remain useful to society. In this case they are entitled to respect just as much as any aristocrat, and besides this have

earned their fellow men's esteem: "qu'est-ce que l'estime, sinon un sentiment que nous inspire ce qui est utile à la société?" (Considérations, XIV, p. 175). What Duclos deplores is seeing people exercising professions useful and necessary in society and then abandoning them in favour of imitating the inactive life of a certain section of the nobility. For instance he sees shopkeepers as essential for a healthy economy, "qui ne s'enrichissent qu'en procurant l'abondance, en excitant une industrie honorable, et dont les richesses prouvent les services" (Considérations, X, p.131); and is disgusted at those who neglect or abandon their businesses to join the ranks of the idle rich: "de bons citoyens et d'excellents bourgeois ils deviennent de plats anoblis" (Confessions du Comte de ***, pp. 68-69). There is another aspect he frowns upon, considering it to be unhealthy for society if the traditional rights to respect are abused; in other words if those of high rank demand more than what is due to them, confident that their position will bring them what they want: "la supériorité du rang favorise l'erreur à cet égard, et l'exercice de la tyrannie la confirme" (Considérations, XVI, p. 205). Duclos comments that it is unfortunate that "on fait plus pour ceux que l'on craint que pour ceux que l'on estime" (Acajou et Zirphile, pp. 333-334). Connected with this point is his scorn for flattery, and he ironises when describing the good qualities of a minister: "on peut le séduire, le tromper, et le faire servir d'instrument à l'injustice" (Considérations, V, p. 77). Molière had already penned some bitingly sarcastic lines on the subject of flattery:

> Quel avantage a-t-on qu'un homme vous caresse,
> Vous jure amitié, foi, zèle, estime, tendresse,
> Et vous fasse de vous un éloge éclatant,
> Lorsque au premier faquin il court en faire autant.[16]

Duclos feels that those men, such as ministers, who hold a position of power should be both kind and firm in their distribution of favours and privileges: "les

16. Le Misanthrope, I.1.49.

gens en place ne sauroient employer trop d'humanité pour adoucir les refus nécessaires" (Considérations, VII, p. 96), precisely because refusals are often required for the good of the State. In his own capacity as perpetual secretary to the Académie Française Duclos tried hard to be fair, if accounts of his actions have been judged correctly. Meister, who consults the registers of the Académie Française as his source, assures his readers that Duclos was always the champion of academic equality, unafraid to oppose even a prince of the blood if the latter felt he could pull rank on the officers of the Academy.[17] Meister claims that "son intention était de consacrer par le fauteuil académique les réputations les mieux fondées, celles volontiers des esprits indépendants, et de mettre ainsi l'Académie en rapport avec l'opinion publique",[18] and certainly these were the aims outlined in Duclos's speech on entering the Académie Française (p. cxxxiv).[19]

Members of the illustrious French Academy enjoy recognition in the exalted ranks of high society. This prestigious institution bestows dignity upon its members who, no matter what their origins, have a passport into the social life of the nobility. Already by the eighteenth century writers and other artists cross social barriers with considerable ease. Men of letters are regularly invited to court, and eventually a certain levelling out of social ranks can be observed since "le plaisir et l'habitude de vivre avec eux font naître l'intimité, et quelquefois l'amitié, malgré les disproportions d'état" (Considérations, XI, p. 138). Duclos observes that "les lettres ne donnent pas précisément un état; mais elles en tiennent lieu à ceux qui n'en ont pas d'autre" (XI, p. 136). A writer is still somewhat marginal to society and could be described as an

17. Les registres de l'Academie Française (Paris, 1895), 4 Vol.
18. Charles Duclos (1704-1772), p. 110.
19. See also Critique de l'ouvrage intitulé: Recueil de ces messieurs: "je crois...que le manteau de Sganarelle décoreroit bien autant l'académie, qu'un manteau ducal", p. 420.

exception to the rule of having to climb the social ladder. Men of wealth (but commoners' blood) have to find their own way up, but a writer is often helped up by a patron because "lorsqu'on a une supériorité de rang bien décidée, on accueille l'esprit avec complaisance; on est flatté de donner à un homme d'un rang inférieur le prix qu'il faudroit disputer à un rival à d'autres égards" (XI, p. 136). This aligns Duclos's thoughts in particular with Marivaux's, at least in Le Paysan parvenu: "c'est une erreur . . . que de penser qu'une obscure naissance vous avilisse, quand c'est vous-même qui l'avouez";[20] and Duclos strikes a note of optimism in his suggestion that "il reste toujours à l'esprit dans les classes les plus obscures des moyens de fortune et d'élévation qu'il peut saisir" (Considérations, XII, p. 153).

The world of the literary salon is open to writers, allowing, indeed encouraging a mingling of the classes. Commoners such as Rousseau, Diderot and Grimm rub shoulders with the Baron d'Holbach, Mme d'Epinay and the Comte de Mirabeau. The salons would seem to be a focal point for intrigues, a meeting-place where one can further one's interests, as much as a centre for discussion of literary topics and bright conversation. Women reign supreme in the salons, and wield their influence through the people who come there. Voltaire made the wry comment that "quand on est aimé d'une belle femme ... on se tire toujours d'affaire dans ce monde",[21] and his words are backed up by Montesquieu's in the Lettres persanes: "celui qui ... voit agir des ministres, des magistrats, des prélats, s'il ne connaît les femmes qui les gouvernent, est comme un homme qui voit bien une machine qui joue, mais n'en connaît point les ressorts".[22] Duclos himself had no cause for ingratitude to the women he

20. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 38.
21. Voltaire, Zadig, ou la destinée, Romans et contes (Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), p. 74. See also Marivaux, Le Paysan parvenu: "si les hommes vous en refusent, appelez-en aux femmes" (p. 257).
22. Letter CVII, Rica to Ibben.

met through the salon of Mme de Tencin who helped him into the French Academy, not least by appealing to the king's favourite, Mme de Pompadour. (Later it was Mme de Pompadour who obtained for Duclos the post of historiographer of France).

It can hardly be denied however that Duclos ends up disliking the narrow-minded outlook of many of the salons. As early as 1741 he reminds his readers that though plays and novels may well be rated highly or else run down during literary discussions "il n'y a ni particulier ni société qui puisse faire le sort d'un ouvrage: il dépend absolument du public" (Lettre à l'auteur de L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 311). That same year he paints an unflattering picture of "[une] société tyrannique et entêtée de l'esprit" which many critics have taken to represent Mme de Tencin's own salon (Confessions du Comte de ***, p.97).

Judging from a comment made a decade later in the Mémoires sur les moeurs, the salons reflect the movement detected in the rest of society: "il n'y a point aujourd'hui d'espèce qui, écartée d'une maison, ne puisse être bonne compagnie dans quelque autre" (p. 387).

The sorts of people to be found in the salons and the rest of Parisian high society are depicted by many writers of the period, not least Duclos, this avid observer of men and morals. It is useless to seek descriptions of fashion and places in his writings because these things hold little interest for him, but he paints a marvellous picture of "cette société mondaine, ou demi-mondaine, élégante et perverse, [qu'il] fréquente avec empressement".[23] Duclos conveys a limited view of society, something which a number of critics have reproached

23. Pierre Trahard, Les Maîtres de la sensibilité française au XVIIIe siècle, tome I, p. 296.

him for, but it is to his credit that he does it well. Chamfort notes that "il n'affecte point de parler de ce qu'il ne sait pas. Les gouvernements, les hommes, les moeurs générales et celles des différentes classes de la société, voilà presque les seules objets de son attention";[24] and Henriot remarks that "on a fait à Duclos ce juste reproche d'avoir peint la société contemporaine, plutôt que l'homme en général, ... au lieu d'avoir cherché la vérité universelle".[25] Duclos's reasons for restricting most of his observations to the confines of Paris? His answer is simple: "c'est dans Paris qu'il faut considérer le François, parcequ'il y est plus François qu'ailleurs" (Considérations, I, p. 13). He continues: "le François [est] de tous les hommes le plus sociable" (VIII, p. 98); and completes his justification with: "l'homme sociable est le citoyen par excellence" (VIII, p. 99). He is however anxious not to confuse 'l'homme sociable' with 'l'homme aimable' because he regards the latter as being particularly pernicious to society: "l'homme le plus dangereux dans nos moeurs est celui qui est vicieux avec de la gaieté et des graces" (VIII, p. 100); and is aware of how easily this man can slip into the world of lively discussion, animated suppers, and light-hearted entertainment that is the essence of opulent and idle Parisian society. He describes the hanger-on as appearing pleasing and obsequious, as having the gift of delightful conversation, yet who destroys the hitherto successful symbiosis of social exchange because his scandal-mongering and slanderous comments cause disruption, and his habits prevent him from carrying out his social duties: "on dira sans doute que la société est devenue ... plus délicieuse qu'elle ne l'avoit jamais été; mais il est certain que ce qu'elle a gagné l'état a perdu, et cet échange n'est pas un avantage" (Considérations, VIII, p. 102). 'L'homme aimable' puts on a different face for every person that he meets, and Duclos deplores this false front.

24. Oeuvres complètes, Vol III, p. 307.
25. Les Livres du second rayon, p. 160.

Rousseau seems to share this view when he laments: "qu'il serait doux de vivre parmi nous, si la contenance extérieure était toujours l'image des dispositions du coeur";[26] and he yearns for an ideal, which he describes in La Nouvelle Héloïse: "le charme de la société ... est dans cette ouverture de coeur qui met en commun tous les sentiments, toutes les pensées, et qui fait que chacun se sentant tel qu'il doit être se montre à tous tel qu'il est".[27] However Rousseau's wariness runs deeper than Duclos's: "on n'ose plus paraître ce qu'on est ... . On ne saura donc jamais bien à qui l'on a affaire".[28] Duclos is rather more confident, believing that one can discover the truth about men by observing them, and he would even turn this observation into a science, as he claims in the introduction to the Considérations. Duclos needs to be amongst people because he believes that "pour connoître les hommes, il faut les pratiquer" (Considérations, Introduction, p. 6); whereas Rousseau would prefer to flee society, which he defines as corruptive, and instead seek solitude and the calm of Nature.

Duclos enjoys company and adores Paris where he finds "les intérêts croisés, les événements multipliés, les plaisirs, la variété des sociétés, la facilité d'en changer" and all the energy of city life which appeals to his sociable nature (Considérations, I, p. 140). He claims to recognise a phenomenon which involves movement from the provinces into the capital as soon as someone's fortune is made: "les grandes fortunes se commencent souvent en province; mais ce n'est qu'à Paris qu'elles s'achèvent, et qu'on en jouit" (VIII, p. 100). This of course he understands, but he does hold reservations about the way some people behave when they suddenly come into money. He tends to turn his nose up at anything showy as being in poor taste, noting that "cette

26. Discours sur les sciences et les arts, p. 54.
27. La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part six, letter VIII, Mme de Wolmar to Saint-Preux.
28. Discours sur les sciences et les arts, p. 54.

ostentation d'opulence est plus communément la manie de ces hommes nouveaux qu'un coup de sort a subitement enrichis, que de ceux qui sont parvenus par degrès" (X, p. 121). This ties in with his disapproval of men's finding success without deserving it, and brings one back to his criticism of Law's system. In comparison is his approbation of men who earn their wealth honestly through hard work, especially since these people's work is normally beneficial to the rest of society. He takes the case of shopkeepers as an example: "ils ne font aucune entreprise, il ne leur arrive aucun avantage que le public ne partage avec eux" (Considérations, X, p. 132).

One negative aspect to the fact that wealth converges on Paris is the increase in numbers of prostitutes, whom Duclos defines as "ces tristes victimes de nos fantaisies et de nos caprices" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 124). Another negative facet is the appearance of 'l'homme aimable' within society; and Duclos is not the only writer to describe this parasite. Diderot makes an excellent study of the type in Le Neveu de Rameau, describing his amorality and cynicism. Diderot's Rameau claims that "toutes les conditions se dévorent dans la société", and considers that this gives him the right to make himself noticed through "ce que ... [le philosophe qualifie] d'adresses viles, d'indignes petites ruses".[29] Diderot uses the waster as a means to reveal the hypocrisy of society, whereas Duclos contents himself with criticizing 'l'homme aimable' as a social type. If Duclos's rakish heroes have an initial tendency to live as 'hommes à la mode', he endows them with laudable qualities too, and they turn out to be exemplary citizens in the last analysis.

Diderot does not hesitate to name individuals whom he goes on to berate, whereas Duclos is far more circumspect, and only hints at the identity of certain

29. Diderot, Le Neveu de Rameau in Oeuvres de Diderot, ed. by André Billy (Pléiade, 1951), pp. 450-451.

people.[30] He would prefer to depict the social type rather than to publish his resentment at the behaviour of any one particular person.[31] In this sense he differs from Mme d'Epinay, who felt moved to write a novel in which she smeared the reputation of more than one person (Duclos included), crudely veiling their identity beneath a pseudonym.[32] Duclos would feel that it is relevant to identify types of people who are potentially pernicious to social harmony rather than to pursue a personal vendetta against any one individual.

One can see that despite social changes taking place and a certain levelling of social ranks manifesting itself, traditional social expectations still hold firm. The newcomers to positions of strength in society, such as the 'noblesse de robe', the financiers and the successful investors in Law's system, aim to be accepted by the old established members of the nobility and often emulate their behaviour; a new social class is born of the alliances. Duclos writes of impoverished nobles who marry below their station in order to replenish the family coffers, and notices that "la mésalliance a commencé par les hommes, qui conservent toujours leur nom"; but he observes an extension of the trend: "celle des filles de qualité est plus moderne, mais elle prend faveur" (Considérations, X, pp. 124-125). One is not so very far-removed from the world of Araminte in Marivaux's Les Fausses Confidences: the new alliances reflect on the one hand the nobility's need for financial support, and on the other hand the desire on the part of the bourgeoisie to be formally accepted into the hitherto inaccessible circle of the leaders of society.

There is of course a potential hitch in all of this scheming, and that is the

30. It has been suggested that Mme de Tonins portrays Mme de Tencin, (Confessions du Comte de ***, pp. 88-97)
31. See Considérations, XI, p. 147: "il semble qu'on fasse aujourd'hui précisément le contraire de ce qui se pratiquoit lorsqu'on faisoit combattre des animaux pour amuser des hommes".
32. L'Histoire de Mme de Montbrillant.

complication of passion. Where does love fit into these arrangements? According to Pierre Trahard "la morale empirique de Duclos rejoint celle de Prévost, pour qui la passion est une nécessité cruelle, une fatalité impitoyable"[33] and certain comments made by Duclos would corroborate this assessment. For instance he writes of "la surprise des sens" which cannot be parried, and affirms that even a virtuous woman cannot elect to be exempt from experiencing passion: "il faut qu'elle succombe" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 185). However he proposes mastering one's emotions, and he emphasizes the importance of fulfilling one's duties and acting out one's social role: "le goût pour des maîtresses doit être subordonné aux devoirs de l'amitié, on y doit être plus fidèle qu'en amour" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 103); and even goes so far as to claim that "un homme qui est bon citoyen activement n'est pas ordinairement fait pour l'amitié ni pour l'amour" because his concern for his country and society replaces love for any individual person (Considérations, XIV, p. 181). Both Mme de Luz and Mme de Canaples reject their passionate feelings towards a man for the dignity they believe that they have in their social position as married women; they are the antithesis to Manon Lescaut.

Duclos's heroes interpret love as a pleasure, not as an over-riding passion, and are quick to distance themselves from any woman who becomes despotic in a love-affair. In the Confessions du Comte de *** the count's reactions to Dona Antonia's reclusion and Milady B's suicide are governed by reason: he himself would not change his life so dramatically for love. Indeed he bitterly regrets the one occasion when he takes part in a duel, the quarrel being over a woman: "rien n'approche du dépit que j'éprouvai d'être engagé dans une aussi malheureuse affaire" (p. 78). There is no place for any sort of fore-runner to Constant's Adolphe in Duclos's work. Indeed one could argue that his views are closer to Mme de Lafayette's in the sense that he believes that passions are

33. Les Maîtres de la sensibilité française, p. 295.

potentially damaging, if it were not for his quintessentially eighteenth-century heroine, Mme de Selve, who anticipates the problem by wearying her lover of other women before she consents to marry him: "pour prendre un mari, [elle a été] obligée d'attendre qu'il n'eût plus d'amour" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 179).

Arranging marriages between noble families was a regular and customary procedure by the eighteenth century, and writers often made reference to the practice in their novels, not least Rousseau. In La Nouvelle Héloïse Julie is to marry Wolmar on her father's orders and, though her initial reaction is one of indignation ("enfin, mon père m'a donc vendue? il fait de sa fille une marchandise, une esclave"), she complies with his wishes despite her love for Saint-Preux.[34] It had to be a relatively small step to take to involve the upper bourgeoisie in the arrangements since the practice was so well-established. Duclos puts these words into the mouth of the Comte de Vergi in the Mémoires sur les moeurs: "les mariages sont des espèces de traités faits sur les convenances de la naissance et de la fortune" (p. 474). However the bourgeoisie was accustomed to freedom of choice in these matters, and Duclos's being from the bourgeoisie might explain his attitude towards arranged marriages. In L'Histoire de Mme de Luz and the Confessions du Comte de *** he qualifies the heroines' husbands as being too old to make their wives happy; and though his heroes are libertins, he most certainly does not write the apology for their philandering. Despite the Comte de Vergi's claiming that an aristocrat's arranged marriage is "une espèce de divorce continuel" which authorises infidelity, the heroes of the novels finish by freely choosing a wife and remaining faithful to her (p. 475). Could it be argued that the narrator of the Mémoires sur les moeurs enters into an arranged marriage? Possibly, but it must be remembered that both parties are at liberty to refuse the

34. Part One, Letter XXIX, Julie to Claire.

arrangement, and that Duclos makes the point that they are infinitely suited to one another because of their age, their fortune, and their attraction to each other.

For Duclos marriage contributes to the moral fibre of society, and helps maintain a sense of order and duty, essential for social harmony. Perhaps he allows that it is acceptable to take a lover or a mistress when one has been forced into a 'mariage de raison', but lovers then have a responsibility to each other almost as if they were married. Saint-Géran is the champion of natural inclination, but Duclos has him insist upon lovers being true to one another: "de tels amants sont plus estimables que des époux que les lois forcent de vivre ensemble" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 207); and the narrator of the Mémoires sur les moeurs refers to "[des] liaisons formées par l'amour, et qu'une longue suite d'années a rendues respectables" (p. 414). The undesirable extreme is only reached when "on voit des intrigues de convenance comme des mariages de raison" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 445).

One can discern the difference between Duclos's views upon arranged marriages and Rousseau's, even though both writers take a stand against the practice. Duclos would put forward the suggestion that one should be at liberty to make a choice of partner oneself, taking into account one's background, one's financial footing, one's age, and one's attraction for the other person; Rousseau would argue that a successful marriage depends upon natural selection with no regard for fortune, class or family. Indeed Nature decides whom one is suited to, and reason does not enter into the matter. Through the words of Julie in La Nouvelle Héloïse he writes: "c'est ... en dépit de la fortune, des parents, et de nous-mêmes, nos destinées sont à jamais unies, et ... nous ne pouvons être heureux ou malheureux qu'ensemble".[35]

35. Part One, Letter XI, Julie to Saint-Preux.

Whatever Duclos's point of view may be, the fact remains that the nobility and the bourgeoisie are organising marriage alliances by the eighteenth century. The next step might be to consider whether women can expect more freedom and respect in the new alliances between the established nobility and the more recently formed wealthy class. Attitudes are certainly not what they were: Duclos reminds his readers through the character of Mme de Retel of "un temps où ... les femmes n'étoient pas comptées dans la société, dont elles sont l'âme aujourd'hui" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 411); and the count in Confessions du Comte de *** observes that in France women are "le principal objet de l'attention des hommes, et l'âme de la société" (p. 79). Would this more 'modern' approach signify therefore a new freedom and happiness for women within the confines of marriage? Not according to Diderot, who riposts with: "dans notre société rien n'est plus conforme aux lois qu'un mariage; et rien n'est souvent plus contraint au bonheur et à la raison".[36]

Duclos would admit that many women suffer within an arranged marriage if one can judge by his comments on Mme de Selve: "elle remplissoit ses devoirs, et sa conduite la faisoit respecter, sans la rendre plus heureuse" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 136); and he has Mme de Canaples complain: "qui dit aujourd'hui une femme respectée, dit une infortunée trop décente pour se plaindre de certains torts, et qui se respecte assez elle-même pour dévorer ses chagrins" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 515). Duclos is referring here to marriages within the nobility and in fact avoids the question of mixed marriages, his heroes marrying within their class and even on the same financial footing as their spouses. It seems clear however that he opposes marriages based upon passion and natural inclination in favour of a more stable relationship based upon friendship. Brengues claims that "Duclos considère le

36. Les Bijoux indiscrets, p. 83.

mariage comme la consécration d'une vie familiale. Il pense que la vie en famille entretient l'amour".[37] Perhaps it would be more accurate to assert that family life preserves decency; Duclos's assertions in the Confessions du Comte de *** would support this understanding: "on n'est pas toujours obligé d'avoir ses parents pour ses amis; mais il est décent de vivre avec eux comme s'ils l'étoient, et de cacher au public toutes les dissentions domestiques" (p. 106).

Is this the stance he takes when considering the institution of marriage? He knows that passionate love is not eternal, therefore it would be inappropriate and inadvisable to base a social institution upon it: "la sagesse de la conduite dépend de l'expérience, de la prévoyance et du jugement des circonstances on doit donc faire attention au passé, au présent et à l'avenir; ... L'amour ne s'occupe que du présent" (Considérations, XV, p. 192). He hints that marriage partners should be of a similar age and should have equal financial resources so that they have a reasonable chance of being happy together, but he recommends a rational approach to marriage, which he refers to as "[une] espèce d'insensibilité" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 6). In other words he rejects the denial of a woman's will, and in this sense would share Molière's abhorence of Arnolphe and his desire to form Agnès:

Pour la rendre idiote autant qu'il se pourrait[38]

but would rely on a woman's intelligence to persuade her of the benefits of a largely passionless, but steady marriage; and would demand of a man that he be faithful to his wife out of respect for her. He could hardly put forward a more typically bourgeois attitude to the question. His approach is on a parallel with Marivaux's in Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard where Dorante and Sylvia appear to choose each other freely, but in fact merely realise their fathers' projects, and conform with the expectations of their social condition.

37. L'Obsession de la vertu, p. 372.
38. L'Ecole des femmes, 1.1.138.

One can draw the conclusion that women may well have a more active role to play than previously in the social activities of the eighteenth century, the salons providing the most obvious evidence for this deduction; and that they also would seem to wield some indirect influence behind the scenes in the distribution of royal favours and the making of ministerial decisions.[39] However their social strength and freedom are severely curtailed, and they are still second class citizens, unable to direct their own lives and usually relying on their families to set them up with a husband who will provide for them once they reach a certain age. Rousseau has Julie resume the situation in these terms: "on passe ... ses beaux jours sous la tyrannie des bienséances, qu'aggrave enfin celle des parents dans un lien mal assorti".[40]

In this way one can see that though a new class is being formed from the alliances between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, marriage remains as old-fashioned as ever, and female emancipation is a very long way off.

39. The infuence of royal mistresses is of course not new. Mme de Lafayette made it quite clear in La Princesse de Clèves that it was an accepted part of life at Court by the reign of Henri II: "l'amour était toujours mêlé aux affaires et les affaires à l'amour" (Paris, Flammarion, 1966), p. 38.
40. La Nouvelle Héloïse, Part Two, Letter VII, Julie to Saint-Preux.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WRITER'S PLACE

In the previous chapter it has been shown how the face of society is changing in the eighteenth century. With this evolution is identified a new task for the writer, which Henri Coulet defines as "peindre l'homme moderne, l'aider à définir ses ambitions dans un monde où les barrières sociales et religieuses ont perdu leur rigidité".[1] If asked to name a writer representative of the period, one would perhaps be most tempted to elect Voltaire or else Rousseau: they are undoubtedly the best known. Yet two authors could hardly be more at variance with each other both in the way they live and in their written work. Voltaire made it his business to be a part of both upper class and literary circles: he was historiographer to the king before Duclos, a member of the Académie française, contributed to the Encyclopédie; and kept company with the highest echelons of the nobility, attending salons, and eventually leaving France for the brilliant court of Frederick II of Prussia. Rousseau on the other hand, far from seeking company and enjoying an active role in society, preferred (especially later in his life) to flee the bustle of city life and seek solace and peace in the countryside, maintaining that "l'oisivité des cercles est tuante ... . Celle de la solitude est charmante".[2] His attitude towards any form of hostility, whether real or imagined, was not to fight back furiously in the manner of Voltaire, but to feel wounded and persecuted, bitter and rejected. In his Confessions he descibes his feelings: "tourmenté, battu d'orages de toute espèce, fatigué de voyages et de persécutions depuis plusieurs années, ... poursuivi dans tous mes refuges par les menées souterraines de mes secrets persécuteurs . . . ".[3]

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1. Le Roman jusqu'à la révolution, p. 318.
2. Confessions, p. 368.
3. p. 372.

Duclos's position in relation to Voltaire and Rousseau is interesting: he manifests qualities of both one and the other, yet remains apart from both in his moderation and lack of partisanship. Like Voltaire, Duclos sees the role of the writer in society as active. He assumed several positions of responsibility: Mayor of Dinan, Député du Tiers in Brittany; he was a member of various literary academies, not least the Académie française where he became Secrétaire perpétuel; he also travelled abroad, to England and Italy, where he represented his country before the most politically powerful people in the land. Sainte-Beuve records that "personne ... n'a joui plus agréablement que lui dans ses voyages, et en toute occasion, de l'ouvrage social qu'il y avait alors à être le confrère des gouverneurs de provinces, des archevêques et des ambassadeurs. Le degré de considération avec lequel il fut traité à l'étranger ..., fait partie de l'honneur des lettres à cette époque".[4]

Duclos also played an active literary role and, in so far as his involvement with literary bodies is concerned, it might be appropriate to take a closer look at how Duclos viewed his position and responsibilities. In 1750 he was made historiographer of France in place of Voltaire who left for Prussia, and it seems that he took his role seriously, delving into the archives at his disposition to carry out research for his Mémoires secrets, and consulting former ministers to verify the authenticity of his sources.[5] In 1755 he became Secrétaire perpétuel to the Académie française, and it is perhaps this position which afforded him the best opportunity to further the interest of men of letters. Even prior to his nomination as Secrétaire perpétuel he bore witness to a concern for equality

4. Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 252.
5. Charles Collé, Chroniques indiscrètes sur la Régence, tirées d'un manuscrit autographe de Collé, ed. by Gustave Mouravit (Paris, Moniteur du Bibliophile, 1878), p. 59.

amongst Academy members, going so far as to oppose a prince of the blood, the Comte de Clermont, who demanded privileged treatment: "si S.A.S. fait à l'Académie l'honneur d'y entrer, elle doit confirmer, par sa présence, le droit du corps, en ne prenant jamais place au-dessus de ses officiers".[6] During his time in office new members were no longer predominantly nobles or religious zealots. Duclos campaigned tirelessly for the rights of authors, claiming that "l'Académie appartient de droit aux gens de lettres",[7] and his efforts are recognised by Auger in his preface to Duclos's Oeuvres Complètes: "les gens de lettres lui ont une grande obligation, celle d'avoir soutenu, dans toutes les occasions, la dignité de leur titre".[8]

Duclos is conscious of the ambiguity of the writer's place in society, observing that "les lettres ne donnent pas précisément un état" (Considérations, XI, p. 136), but he is convinced that men of letters deserve the respect of the rest of society. He justifies his conviction by claiming that writers are useful to society because they enlighten men and "avec les gens d'esprit, on développe, on étend, et on leur doit une partie du sien" (Considérations, XI, p. 138). Since Duclos believes that "toutes les facultés de notre âme se réduisent ... à sentir et penser" (XIV, p. 174), then it must be conceded that writers make an appreciable contribution to their fellow men's intellectual and sentimental development, and should be rewarded accordingly. "Pourquoi les ouvrages d'esprit ... méritent-ils plus d'estime et font-ils plus de réputation que des talents plus rares? C'est par l'avantage qu'ils ont de se répandre, et d'être par-tout également goûtés par ceux qui sont capables de les sentir. ... Le plaisir qui naît des ouvrages d'esprit, développant celui des lecteurs, ou leur touchant le coeur, flatte le sentiment"

6. Histoire de l'Académie, Oeuvres Complètes de Duclos, Auger edition, tome VIII, p. 383.
7. Histoire de l'Académie, p. 379.
8. Tome I, p. xxvii.

(XV, pp. 190-191).

In this way Duclos argues that writers are useful to society in general and are pleasing to the individual: "nous estimons ce qui est utile à la société, ... nous aimons ce qui nous est personnellement utile" (XIV, p. 185). He notices a change from the previous century's attitude to writers, which he suggests is due to "une certaine fermentation de raison universelle" (II, p. 22), and points out an alteration in writers' behaviour too, which differs greatly from when "leurs moeurs ... n'avoient guère de rapport avec celles de la société" (XI, p. 135). This two-pronged development, which has taken the previously marginal writer into the heart of high society, works for the benefit of all; if the writer has gained consideration and become more sociable, then "les gens du monde ont cultivé leur esprit, formé leur goût, et acquis de nouveaux plaisirs" (XI, p. 135).

As a writer himself, Duclos would wish for the consolidation of the position of men of letters. Perhaps the most obvious way to do this is through strengthening the role of literary bodies. Duclos suggests that established literary academies should firmly adhere to traditions, both for their own preservation and to set an example for their members. He expresses disapproval at a departure from form by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres which made an exception of one of its members by refraining from mentioning him during the public session following his death and so, according to Duclos, failing in tradition and decency (Mémoires, p. c). A certain amount of pomp and ceremony reinforces the idea of superiority and distinction; therefore the academies must set the standard or else lose their prestige. As Secrétaire perpétuel to the Académie française Duclos defended the rights of its members, ever mindful of the fact that the Académie was answerable only to the king, and therefore theoretically free from ministerial

harrassment. Lucien Brunel sums up Duclos's achievement in these terms: "[il a su conférer aux gens de lettres] une haute dignité, consacrée et relevée par la protection nominale du roi; ... stimuler chez les uns le talent, chez les autres le goût et le respect des lettres, et ... constituer une représentation aussi fidèle, aussi élevée que possible, de l'esprit français".[9]

It is perhaps relevant to recall at this point that, though Duclos underlines the importance of literary bodies, he is above all a firm believer in individual responsibility.[10] He holds that everyone has a duty to contribute actively towards general harmony; therefore he highlights the need for writers to behave with dignity and to show each other the same respect that they feel is their due from the rest of society. He is exasperated by those members of the Académie française who abase themselves by becoming embroiled in what he considers to be petty arguments: "[les gens de lettres] devroient sentir que leur désunion va directement contre leur intérêt général et particulier; et quelques uns ne paroissent pas s'en apercevoir" (Considérations, XI, p. 146). A writer should rise above quarrels which often degenerate into personal squabbles, unworthy of men of talent. This is why Duclos did not always side with the 'philosophes', though they were probably the most talented writers within the Académie, seeing clearly that any form of intolerance (and the 'philosophes' detested the 'parti des dévots') could lead only to weakening the influence of the Académie. Rousseau confirms that Duclos practises what he preaches when he recalls in his Confessions how the success of his opera, Le Devin du village, incited the jealousy of his literary colleagues: "Duclos seul, au-dessus de cette jalousie, parut même augmenter d'amitié pour moi".[11]

9. Lucien Brunel, Les Philosophes et L'Académie Française au XVIIIe siècle (Paris, Hachette, 1884), p. 265.
10. This thesis, Chapter One, p. 14, Chapter Two, p. 50.
11. p. 270.

Duclos is adamant that writers have a duty towards educated society to produce works of art and beauty, and to develop new ideas based upon truth, "objet qui n'a jamais causé ni fiel, ni aigreur, et qui tourne à l'avantage de l'humanité" (Considérations, XI, p. 146). In his inauguration speech to the Académie française he identifies what he sees as the role of its members: "leur devoir est d'éclairer les hommes; leur intérêt, de vivre dans une union qui réduise leurs ennemis à une jalousie impuissante et peut-être respectueuse" (Discours de Duclos, p. cxxvii). His frustration at the lack of solidarity (if one might use a modern term) amongst writers is evident in the Considérations: "je crois voir dans la république des lettres un peuple dont l'intelligence feroit la force, fournir des armes à des barbares, et leur montrer l'art de s'en servir" (XI, p. 147). Moderation and discipline are required if writers are to gain in strength and influence in society: "ce n'est qu'en se poliçant que les hommes ont appris à concilier leur intérêt particulier avec l'intérêt commun; qu'ils ont compris que, par cet accord, chacun tire plus de la société qu'il n'y peut mettre" (III, p. 36).

It can be seen that, in order to win recognition for their merit, writers must present a united front, and Duclos dedicates much of his life to promoting this theory. However he does not forget the writer as an individual, and dutifully records his observations on this member of society. He notes how writers seem to slip through class barriers and, far from being excluded from high society, are welcomed into the world of the privileged classes. Duclos suggests an explanation for this phenomenon: he holds that "l'amour des lettres rend assez insensible à la cupidité et à l'ambition" (XI, p. 144); and consequently "les courtisans [qui] ne pensent pas à nuire à ceux qui ne peuvent les traverser, ... font quelquefois gloire de les obliger" (XI, p. 139). In conjunction with this is his affirmation that "les gens de fortune qui ont de l'esprit et des lettres ...

recherchent les gens de lettres, et se font honneur de leur amitié" (XI, pp. 140-141). Duclos contends that "la véritable égalité vient de celle des âmes" (XI, p. 138), and therefore it is right to see men of letters from various backgrounds on an equal footing with men of noble birth: "le plaisir et l'habitude de vivre avec [les gens d'esprit] font naitre l'intimité, et quelquefois l'amitié, malgré les disproportions d'état" (XI, p. 138).

Duclos recognises that "les liaisons de goût entraînent nécessairement des distinctions" (XI, p. 140), and sees how the career of writer could appear attractive to those who are not drawn to it by vocation. He cautions against misplaced enthusiasm because of its repercussions on society. For instance he warns that those men who have chosen a career which is directly useful to society should not devote too much time to literature since "il est impossible que les devoirs réels n'en souffrent. Les premiers de tous sont ceux de la profession qu'on a embrassée" (XII, p. 149). He also alludes to those people who simply do not have the talent to make good authors, and suggests that they renounce their ambitions in favour of any other profession which is beneficial to society. Perseverence would serve no purpose since "l'état [auroit] perdu de bons sujets, sans que la république des lettres y ait rien gagné" (XI, p. 141). This raises the question of professionalism alluded to by Molière in Le Misanthrope when Alceste cautions Oronte against publishing his mediocre verses:

> Quel besoin si pressant avez-vous de rimer?
> Et qui diantre vous pousse à vous faire imprimer? ...
> Croyez-moi, résistez à vos tentations,
> Dérobez au public ces occupations,
> Et n'allez point quitter, de quoi que l'on vous somme,
> Le nom que dans la.cour vous avez d'honnête homme,
> Pour prendre, de la main d'un avide imprimeur,

Celui de ridicule et misérable auteur.[12]

Duclos is anxious to demonstrate the worthiness of men of letters, and emphasizes their positive aspect: "ce qui constitue l'homme de lettres n'est pas une vaine affiche, ou la privation de tout autre titre; mais l'étude, l'application, la réflexion, et l'exercice" (Considérations, XII, p. 151). A writer has to work at his skill: "à talents égaux, les écrivains les plus distingués sont toujours ceux qui se sont nourris de la lecture réfléchie des ouvrages de ceux qui ont paru avec éclat dans la même carrière" (XII, p. 154).

Perhaps it is at this point that one should examine the reasons for any one writer's success. Clearly "l'intérêt public, fixant l'opinion générale, est la mesure de l'estime, du respect, du véritable prix, c'est-à-dire du prix reconnu des choses" (XIV, p. 175); and so it follows that a writer's work must appeal to the general public if it is to win recognition. How does this reflect upon the writer's attitude?

The position of the writer is equivocal, particularly if he has already come into the public eye: in one way he solicits the public's approval and could be thought of as subservient; and in another way he is a man of mark who enjoys consideration and public admiration. Often a writer will address an imaginary public in a preface, and his words indicate how he views his position with regard to his readers. Marivaux tests out the popularity of La Vie de Marianne in his 'Avertissement': "on en donne la première partie au public, pour voir ce qu'on en dira. Si elle plaît, le reste paraîtra successivement";[13] whilst Prévost flatters "les personnes de bon sens" in his 'Avis de l'auteur' of Manon Lescaut, and promotes the idea that his novel is useful, even educational: "c'est rendre, à

12. Le Misanthrope, I.2.364, 367.
13. p. 47.

mon avis, un service considérable au public, que de l'instruire en l'amusant".[14] In his 'Epitre au public', which prefaces Acajou et Zirphile, Duclos insults his readers, yet his gibes derive not from contempt, but from his concern for approbation: "je ne sais, mon cher public, si vous approuverez mon dessein; ... vous parlez sans penser, vous agissez sans dessein, et vous croyez juger parceque vous prononcez" (p. 329). In his speech on entering the Académie française Duclos refers to the ever-present anxiety of all writers, the fact that each publication is something of a trial by fire because "une réputation d'éclat n'est jamais dans un état de consistance; si elle ne croît, elle s'éclipse" (Discours de Duclos, p. cxxv).

The fear of rejection might explain the propaganda campaign resorted to by some authors in order to encourage a favourable reception for their books. Duclos might be accused of this tactic when he dedicated his Considérations to the king, especially as he also distributed complimentary copies to the royal family, and read out a chapter from the work (VIII, "sur les gens à la mode") during a public session at the Académie française before the book became generally available. Voltaire too prepared the ground for his works. On one occasion he wrote to D'Alembert, expressing his impatience to read a novel, L'Ingénu, which he claimed was the subject of everyone's conversation. Two months later L'Ingénu was published.[15]

In his Lettre à l'auteur de L'Histoire de Mme de Luz Duclos confirms that "le sort d'un ouvrage ... dépend absolument du public" (p. 311). He admits that "l'amour-propre de ceux qui se font imprimer est extrêmement sensible" (p. 310) probably because of the writer's precarious position in relation to the

14. Tome I, p. 363
15. Voltaire to D'Alembert, 21 July 1767.

reading public, an observation supported by Rousseau, who refers to "le très irritable amour-propre des gens de lettres".[16] In his Confessions Rousseau records his reluctance to publish the Contrat Social not only for fear of reprisals, but also because of doubts about how the public would receive the work: "je craignais qu'il ne parût trop hardi pour le siècle et le pays ou j'écrivais".[17]

It is in relation to public opinion that one might consider the influence of the salons. It is generally accepted that the eighteenth-century salon was largely responsible for spreading philosophical ideas, but to what extent did the salons influence public opinion about literary publications?

In 1741 Duclos publishes his opinion on the subject in the Lettre à l'auteur de L'Histoire de Mme de Luz; he is categorical: "il n'y a ni particulier ni société qui puisse faire le sort d'un ouvrage" (p. 311). The decade that follows encompasses almost all of the publication of his prose fiction, and at the end of it Duclos writes that "il n'y a point de ... société si brillante qu'elle soit, qui détermine le jugement du public" (Considérations, XI, p. 146). Clearly his experience has confirmed his supposition.

In the Confessions du Comte de *** Duclos parodies the style of salon conversation, and mocks the biased attitude adopted by a number of salons to the effect that "nul n'aura de l'esprit, hors nous et nos amis" (Lettre à l'auteur de L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 311). He describes this type of salon as "tyrannique et entêtée de l'esprit ... odieuse au public, et souvent à charge à elle-même" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 97). His criticism bites deeper

16. Confessions, p. 315.
17. p. 278.

when he refers to the tyranny of a certain salon, which several critics have taken to represent that of Mme de Tencin: "le ton de cette petite république étoit de blamer généralement tout ce qui ne venoit pas d'elle, où qui n'étoit pas sous sa protection" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 91); and his denunciation of the sectarian nature of this salon links up with his stricture of any group whose interests run counter to those of society in general. In the Considérations he reveals his hostility towards "certains établissements qui subsistent parmi nous ... qui ne sont nullement patriotiques relativement à la société" (XIV, p. 182).[18] It could be argued that closed-minded salons are guilty of preferring their own pedantry to wide-spread opinion.

On a more light-hearted note Duclos's raillery is directed at the rejection of common sense which prevails in some salons; he ridicules the conversation of those present: "ce [n'est] point de ces discours où il n'y a que du sens commun, [c'est] un torrent de saillies, tout le monde [interroge], personne ne [répond] juste, et l'on [s'entend] à merveille, ou l'on ne [s'entend] pas, ce qui revient au même pour les esprits brillants" (Acajou et Zirphile, p. 340). In contrast with this is his description of how the general public proceeds: "ce public ne décide pas toujours dans le premier instant. ... On parle quelque temps d'un livre en bien ou en mal, avant que de le fixer à sa juste valeur" (Lettre à l'auteur de L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 316); and this value is relative to the public interest: "la société a consulté l'intérêt commun, qui rectifie l'intérêt particulier" (Considérations, XIV, p. 175).

It is clear therefore that, although the salons are important collectively as centres for discussion and the exchange of ideas, separately they wield little

18. This comment is in fact directed at religious establishments, and in particular at the Jesuits, but the sentiment remains valid for any schismatic group.

influence over public opinion.

One of the reasons for Duclos's repeated references to salons is that they were very much a part of his world. It would be far from the truth to picture him permanently in the king's library or occupying his seat at the Académie. He revelled in company, and delighted in the recreational activities of the educated and wealthy in Paris. During the early stages of his career he was often to be found at the Brancas' table or at Mme de Tencin's salon. Later he was assiduous in his attendance at salon meetings presided over by women such as Mme Geoffrin and Mlle Quinault; and regularly dined at the Comtesse de Rochefort's.[19] This indulgence in worldly leisure activities would appear to be characteristic of the eighteenth-century intellectual if one may judge from the company Duclos kept. Period paintings reproduce the salon atmosphere, and in the picture of D'Alembert reading Voltaire's L'Orphelin de Chine at Mme Geoffrin's salon in 1755 one can pick out the faces of Rousseau, Diderot, Marivaux, and Fontenelle as well as Helvétius and Montesquieu amongst others.[20]

A marvellous exchange of ideas must have taken place during these meetings of some of the most brilliant French minds of the century, and one could argue that this could have had only a positive effect on the creativity of the writers involved. However there are possible negative aspects to this social and intellectual exchange. Duclos for instance has been accused of an unusual lack of concern for posterity, preferring to shine in conversation and action instead of in his written work. Sainte-Beuve for one suggests that "Duclos s'est

19. Evidence of Duclos's presence at social evenings is to be found in the correspondence of various people such as Montesquieu (Paris, ed. by Gébelin et Morize, 1914) tome II, p. 44; whilst Rousseau recalls in his Confessions: "Duclos ... m'introduisit chez Mlle Quinault" pp. 270-271.
20. Painting by Gabriel Lemonnier from a drawing by Boucher.

dépensé en causant".[21] Meister believes that this interest in the present can be explained by Duclos's sense of duty towards society: "Duclos ... préfère à la création artistique l'action personnelle, l'utilité directe, afin de réaliser dans son domaine les revendications de morale pratique qu'il avait formulées tout au long de ses Considérations".[22] This conclusion is drawn from accounts by witnesses of the time who mention Duclos's talented conversation, and assumes that Duclos had the potential to write as cleverly as he could speak.

Duclos's Mémoires inform the reader that he early established a reputation at the café Procope as a brilliant conversationalist (p. ci); and he was prized by the Brancas family, particularly the Comte de Forcalquier and Mme de Rochefort, for his witty contributions to their 'soirées'.[23] Fontenelle, impressed by Duclos's wit, pressed him one evening at Mme de Tencin's salon to write a book about what he had just said.[24] Therefore one could contend that the success of Duclos's novels and his Considérations during his life-time was due perhaps to his person. Certainly he was known at home and abroad as a philosopher and courtier, and his reputation as a wit was established.[25] Sénac de Meilhan is quite explicit in his analysis of Duclos's success: "ses écrits ne sont pas du premier ordre; mais l'auteur avait dans la conversation une supériorité marquée",[26] which might suggest that his readers expected to find a similar brilliance in his writing.

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21. Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 205.
22. Charles Duclos (1704-1772), p. 127.
23. La Comtesse de Rochefort et ses amis, Louis de Loménie (Paris, 1870), p. 219.
24. This anecdote is related by E. Henriot in his introduction to L'Histoire de Mme de Selve, Bernard Grasset edition (Paris, 1961).
25. The Voyage en Italie gives a glimpse of how important was Duclos's social and political standing: he had an audience with the Pope; he met ambassadors and ministers; and he renewed old acquaintances from the Church and from the nobility; p. 151, p. 161, p. 257, p. 347. See also Sainte-Beuve's comments, this chapter, p. 103.
26. Portraits et caractères du XVIIIe siècle, p. 110.

The quality of his work was criticized by some of his contemporaries, Voltaire qualifying the Mémoires sur les moeurs in these terms: "ils sont d'un homme qui est en place, et qui par là est supérieur à sa matière";[27] but these criticisms came usually from the pen of writers who had reason to dislike Duclos himself. (Voltaire appeared to resent Duclos's replacing him as historiographer of France; Diderot, who did much to discredit Duclos through Mme d'Epinay's pseudo-memoirs, claimed to despise the Académie française and seemed to feel that he and its Secrétaire perpétuel were incompatible).[28] Those contemporaries who praised Duclos's work tended to like the man: Montesquieu wrote of the Considérations: "vous avez bien de l'esprit et dites de bien belles choses . ... vous êtes agréable à lire, et vous faites penser",[29] whilst it can be observed that the two men went to the same salons and shared an affinity for moderation in the face of the intemperance of the 'philosophes'. In this way one could argue that Duclos was an intelligent and spirited conversationalist whose talents were restricted once he took up his pen.

It would be as relevant to suggest that Duclos held himself in check when writing, acutely aware as Secrétaire perpétuel to the Académie française that censorship was a powerful governmental instrument and that caution was advisable if he wished to avoid a clash with ministers. Rousseau refers to Duclos's circumspection in his Confessions when he was about to publish Emile: " je riais de mes pusillames amis .... Duclos fut de ce nombre, et j'avoue que ma confiance en sa droiture et en ses lumières eût pu m'alarmer à son example, si j'en avais eu moins dans l'utilité de l'ouvrage et dans la probité de

27. Voltaire to Formont, 25th February 1752. Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire, Louis Moland edition (Paris, 1877-1886), vol 37, p. 378.
28. "Au moment où un homme de lettres entre à l'Académie française, il semble qu'il devienne stupide". Diderot et Catherine II; ed. by Maurice Tourneux (Paris, Calman-Lévy, 1899), p. 444.
29. Correspondance de Montesquieu, Montesquieu to Duclos, 4th march 1751, tome II, p. 351.

ses patrons".[30] Duclos would argue that some works should not see the light of day because of the upheaval they could cause within society. He laments "la coupable frénésie qui règne aujourd'hui, de tirer des cabinets et de rendre publics des écrits qui n'en devoient jamais sortir" (Mémoires de Duclos, p. cii). This contrasts with Rousseau's attitude which is that one should publish and face the consequences: "à moins d'être homme d'intrigue, quand on veut consacrer des livres au vrai bien de la patrie, il ne faut point les composer dans son sein".[31] It also differs from Voltaire's strategy of publishing anonymously. Though Duclos might not have put his name to his novels immediately, perhaps through modesty or fear of rejection by the reading public, he did not publish politically provocative works as Voltaire and Rousseau did. His Mémoires secrets were not meant for publication in his life-time; Duclos intended this historical work for a future generation: "on écrit actuellement, et le public ... ne tardera pas à ... juger".[32]

It is when treating the subject of historical works that Duclos expresses a degree of concern for posterity. This could be explained in some part by his atheism. According to Paul Meister, Duclos believed, perhaps naïvely, that history was a means of judging a man. Since there is no after-life, and because censorship can stifle the truth, then the writer has a duty to record events and names so that statesmen's actions and decisions are one day made public: "comme ni la religion, ni l'avis moral direct n'avaient d'emprise sur eux, Duclos croyait pouvoir réveiller leur sens de la responsabilité par le rappel que chacun de leurs actes était enregistré, qu'ils paraîtraient en un mot, devant le 'tribunal de l'histoire'".[33] Rousseau too understands that history can be exploited in this

30. p. 338.
31. Confessions, p. 278.
32. Mémoires secrets, ed. by Petitot and Monmerque, p. 48.
33. Meister, Charles Duclos (1704-1772), p. 122.

way, and asserts in Emile that "pour connaître les hommes il faut les voir agir. Dans le monde on les entend parler; ... mais dans 1'histoire [leurs actions] sont dévoilées, et on les juge sur les faits".[34] How far Duclos is successful before his "tribunal de 1'histoire" is open to question because his talents as a historian have been put in doubt by various critics: Sénac de Meilhan complains that "[Duclos] ne remonte pas aux premiers principes des actions des hommes et de la morale";[35] and Sainte-Beuve accuses him of simply summarizing existing works.[36] The response to these criticisms might be to point out that, although Duclos undoubtedly made use of other writers' work (notably Saint-Simon's), he looked to his own experiences to record events which occurred during his life-time, and much of this later work was confiscated on his death and destroyed, probably because of its politically embarrassing nature. As Chamfort affirms: "Duclos n'était point en position de braver un ministre, mais il pouvait 1'inquiéter".[37] In this way it could be argued that Duclos's personal interpretation of historical events can never be properly evaluated or his verdict on political leaders revealed.

In contrast with Duclos's timidity regarding the content of his works destined for publication is his lack of restraint in his speech. His vociferous defence of La Chalotais, who had insulted the Duc d'Aiguillon and was being brought to trial for it, resulted in Duclos being recalled to Paris from Brittany in 1765, and ultimately in his decision to leave France for his own safety, and travel through Italy.[38] He felt that private quarrels should be kept out of literature intended for the general public because of their potential to divide society and disunite

34. Emile, p. 166.
35. Portraits et caractères, pp. 109-110.
36. Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 243.
37. Oeuvres Complètes, Vol III, p. 308.
38. Duclos's bitterness at the La Chalotais affair spills over into a general criticism of politics in France in the Voyage en Italie, p. 154; he claims that "il n'étoit permis de parler ni de penser honnêtement."

men of letters: "leurs querelles sont aussi dangereuses pour eux que scandaleuses pour les sages" (Considérations, XI, p. 146). It is for these reasons that, unlike Voltaire, Duclos cannot be described as an 'intellectuel engagé' in the manner of Zola.[39]

Yet, despite Duclos's caution, it is clear that freedom is important to him, whether it concerns individual liberty or freedom of expression. He writes in his Mémoires of "une répugnance naturelle pour la dépendance, ou plutôt l'asservissement" (p. cxx); and Chamfort asserts that "[Duclos] pensait et s'exprimait en homme libre" when writing his Mémoires secrets,[40] (This work was not to be submitted for censorship and the author had no intention of exposing himself to danger by premature publication). In this way Duclos manages to reconcile an instinct for self-preservation and caution with a desire for freedom of expression and citizenship.

All eighteenth-century writers in France had to cope with the fetters of censorship and the threat of imprisonment or exile if they overstepped the line drawn by government ministers. Both Voltaire and Rousseau were made acutely aware of the reality of these deterrents, each forced to face the consequences of publishing works which were considered dangerous by the State. Duclos's standing as Secrétaire perpétuel to the Académie française, his contacts with influential people such as Mme de Pompadour, and his extreme caution when taking up the pen together provide an answer to Rousseau's query: "comment faites-vous pour penser, être honnête homme, et ne vous pas

39. An anachronistic comparison perhaps, since Zola wrote in the free press whereas Voltaire's work was subject to censorship. Still both men, though writing a century apart, believed that literature was a vehicle for defending a cause or an individual.
40. Oeuvres complètes, vol III, p. 296.

faire pendre?".[41]

There is no doubt that, despite the restrictions imposed by censorship, Duclos wrote novels which were popular during the first half of the eighteenth century. Free contends that "Duclos was so tuned to the tenor of the period that he naturally struck a common chord with his contemporaries in his writings".[42] This is true to the extent that Duclos's early novels, L'Histoire de Mme de Luz and the Confessions du Comte de ***, were generally acclaimed by the reading public and several editions were produced, both in French and other languages.[43] However his last novel, the Mémoires sur les moeurs, was poorly received. The libertine spiciness of the earlier works and the suggestion that the Confessions du Comte de *** was a 'roman à clés' could explain in part their acclaim, but this does not clarify why the Mémoires sur les moeurs failed to reap the same success. One contemporary at least supplies a possible answer: Diderot affirms that "il n'y a que Dieu ou quelques génies rares pour qui la carrière s'étend à mesure qu'ils y avancent".[44] Could it be that Duclos, like Marivaux and Crébillon fils according to Diderot, outlived his literary success? By the time Duclos published the Mémoires sur les moeurs a new generation of writers was pursuing a different style of writing based on the analysis of sentiment; and at the forefront of this move towards the expression of sensibility was Rousseau.

It is perhaps worth examining why Duclos was 'so tuned to the tenor of the

41. Letter from Rousseau to Duclos whilst the former was in exile, 2nd December 1764. Quoted by Jacques Brengues in Charles Duclos, ou L'Obsession de la vertu, p. 151. Original publication in Rousseau, ses amis et ses ennemis, correspondence, ed. by Streckeisen-Moultou (Paris, 1865).
42. Virtue, Happiness and Duclos's Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 9.
43. Meister gives an account of the number of editions published in his study of Duclos, pp. 132-134.
44. Le Neveu de Rameau, p. 460 and p. 427.

period' in the first half of the century. At this time the 'philosophes' were asserting that truth was to be found only through the application of reason. They expressed this new way of thinking through their writing, and set a trend for lucidity and an elegant style. Novels were often written in the form of memoirs or in an epistolary form which had the effect of narrowing the distance between the reader and the heroes. According to Daniel Mornet these heroes never allowed sentiment to cloud their reason: "dans les périls ou dans les situations les plus troubles ils restent capables de lucidité".[45] In this climate of reason, clarity and observation Duclos's novels were well received. His were the perfect heroes and heroines: Mme de Luz "toujours tranquille, toujours la même" even when in love (Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 208), manages to act rationally in the most trying circumstances such as when she disposes of the evidence incriminating her husband almost immediately after her ordeal with Thurin. She even checks that Thurin has handed over "les moindres papiers où le nom et l'écriture de M de Luz se trouvoient" (p. 249). As for the Comte de ***, no matter how emotional he may become, he always returns to the principle of "chercher le plaisir en conservant la liberté de [son] coeur" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 47) until, of course, he marries Mme de Selve, at which point he observes that "ce [n'est] plus l'ivresse impétueuse des sens: un sentiment plus tendre, plus tranquille et plus voluptueux [remplit] mon âme; il y [fait] régner un calme qui [ajoute] encore à mon bonheur en me laissant la liberté de le sentir" (pp. 178-179).

With Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloïse there was opened up "un univers d'imagination et de sensibilité" which struck a chord with a large percentage of readers,[46] especially when associated with the portrayal of the middle classes,

45. La Pensée française au XVIIIe siècle, p. 19.
46. Henri Coulet's introduction to La Nouvelle Héloïse, (Paris, Gallimard, 1993), p. 9.

up to then largely ignored in favour of the world of the nobility. It is ironic that Duclos, the champion of the bourgeoisie, should be left behind in this new self-awareness on the part of middle-class writers. Henri Coulet points out that "la bourgeoisie considérait de plus en plus qu'entre l'aristocratie et le bas-peuple elle détenait le véritable caractère national et que ses moeurs, à elle, méritaient d'être peintes",[47] a view very similar to that expressed by Duclos in his Considérations, but one which he appears unable to assimilate into his novels.

It is perhaps precisely because of Duclos's moralist tendencies that he rejected excessive indulgence in sensibility and the move towards introspection, believing that "nous n'avons qu'une portion déterminée de sensibilité, qui ne se répartit point sans que les portions diminuent" (Considérations, XIV, p. 181), and preferring rational observation to sentimental impulses. Pierre Trahard recognises Duclos's limitations in this domain: "sans doute ... un moraliste averti, comme Duclos, ... fait subir [au lecteur] l'expérience du monde. Mais les salons du moraliste ... ne se prêtent pas au développement complet de la sensibilité".[48]

In this way it can be observed that Duclos did not evolve as a novelist in the sense that he remained with a dated style of novel-writing aimed at old values; and also that he failed to respond to the vogue for 'sensibilité', expressing instead a concern that "les gens naturellement sensibles ne sont pas ordinairement les meilleurs juges de ce qui est estimable, c'est-à-dire de ce qui l'est pour la société" (Considérations, XIV, p. 180).

It would be unfair however to dismiss out of hand Duclos's abilities as a

47. Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution, p. 378.
48. Maîtres de la sensibilité française au XVIIIe siècle, pp. 311-312.

novelist. Auger sums up his qualities in these terms: "dans Duclos le romancier est inférieur et subordonné au moraliste. Il avoit toute la sagacité, toute la pénétration qui conviennent à celui-ci; il n'avoit peut-être pas l'imagination et la sensibilité qui sont nécessaires à l'autre".[49] Yet it could be argued that Duclos pre-empts the refinement of sentimental analysis perfected by the Romantics. In Acajou et Zirphile he depicts the turmoil of an adolescent experiencing the first stirrings of passion: "[Acajou] éprouvoit cette mélancolie qu'on pourroit mettre au rang des plaisirs, quoiqu'elle en fasse désirer de plus vifs; il soupiroit après quelqu'un qui pût dissiper ce trouble, et cherchoit cependant la solitude. Il se retiroit dans les lieux les plus écartés du parc" (p. 342). This can be compared with a passage in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's Paul et Virginie which describes Virginie's sad confusion at her changing emotions: "[elle] se sentait agitée d'un mal inconnu. ... Elle errait ça et là dans les lieux les plus solitaires de l'habitation, cherchant partout du repos, et ne le trouvant nulle part".[50] Jacques Brengues also compares Duclos's analysis of Acajou's feelings with Chateaubriand's description of René's emotions: "un penchant mélancolique l'entraînait au fond des bois; il y passait seul des journées entières".[51]

Therefore Le Bourgo could be accused of underestimating Duclos's skills as a novelist when he dismisses him as having "aucune qualité de conception et d'exécution",[52] and it could be argued that he lacks perception when he restricts his assessment of the literary value of Duclos's novels to "des documents précieux sur les moeurs du XVIIIe siècle, .. [que] l'historien peut ... consulter avec fruit".[53]

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49. Preface to Duclos's Oeuvres complètes, p. xlvii.
50. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Paul et Virginie, ed. by Pierre Trahard (Paris, Garnier, 1964), p. 132.
51. Chateaubriand, René in Atala, René et Les Aventures du dernier Abencérage, ed. by Letessier (Bourges, Garnier, 1962), p. 181.
52. Un Homme de lettres au XVIIIe siècle, p. 155.
53. Un Homme de lettres au XVIIIe siècle, p. 155.

In this way it can be observed that Duclos sees the role of 'un homme de lettres' as being broader than simply writing. The eighteenth-century man of letters plays an active social role, which often lifts him out of the habitual circle of his social class. He takes on responsibilities and can become involved in politics, with the proviso that personal ambition takes second place to the public interest. Duclos himself was mayor of Dinan and Député du Tiers in Brittany; in this capacity he worked to improve the conditions for the people in the province.[54] He is adamant that political quarrels cause only harm, and that men in a position of power have a duty to work together for the benefit of society as a whole: "ceux à qui le sort des hommes est confié doivent toujours ramener leurs calculs à la somme commune, c'est-à-dire au peuple" (Considérations, XV, p. 192).

The writer has a literary role to play which involves promoting the writer's image and strengthening the influence of literary academies. In order to succeed in this task men of letters must stand together: "ils peuvent se déshonorer eux-mêmes par les choses injurieuses qu'ils font, disent ou écrivent contre leurs rivaux" (Considérations, XI, p. 145). They have a duty to publish "des ouvrages travaillés avec soin, des critiques sensées, sévères, mais justes et décentes, où l'on marque les beautés en relevant les défauts, pour donner des vues nouvelles" (Considérations, XI, p. 146); and Duclos is severe in his condemnation of any writer who publishes satirical, impious and licentious works: "je ne puis me dispenser ... de blâmer les écrivains qui ... sapent les fondements de la morale, et donnent atteinte aux liens de la société" (Considérations, II, p. 26). This sentence makes it quite clear at which point

54. Duclos improved road and canal communications in Brittany and fought for a fairer tax system. See Le Bourgo, Un Homme de lettres au XVIIIe siècle, pp. 39-41. The source used is the Archives départementales de la Loire-Inférieure.

must be drawn the line in any comparison between Duclos and the Marquis de Sade.[55]

The social and literary roles of a writer must be balanced or a writer risks losing his skill: "[il] néglige ses talents, et les perd faute de les cultiver" (Considérations, VIII, p. 101). A number of critics have accused Duclos of this very weakness: "pour lui, la morale sociale ne relevait pas simplement du programme comme pour tant de ses contemporains, il la vécut dans son activité quotidienne et lui sacrifia jusqu'à l'art".[56] Perhaps, though, Duclos was happy with his moderate success: he argued that "les grands talents ne marquent pas absolument la supériorité de l'esprit. ... Le talent et le génie coûtent souvent plus qu'ils ne valent à ceux qui en sont doués" (Lettre à l'auteur de L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 314). Despite the lack of public enthusiasm for his last novel it is improbable that Duclos felt he was a failure. He remained in the public eye until his death, and nothing in his personal Mémoires suggests that he was anything but satisfied with his life.

As a writer Duclos was successful during the first half of the century. His first novel shows evidence of the influence of Mme de Lafayette, his heroine being young, married without love, and refusing the man she loves in preference for dignity and virtue. However Mme de Luz is no sixteenth- or seventeenth-century heroine: she is unhappy despite her decision, whereas if the Princesse de Clèves is unhappy it is because of hers; and the men who play a part in Mme de Luz's downfall are from eighteenth-century society, particularly Thurin, the ambitious magistrate.

55. For further comments on Sade see this thesis, Chapter One, p. 27; Chapter Two, p. 42.
56. Meister, Charles Duclos (1704-1772), p. 127.

Duclos's second novel, the Confessions du Comte de ***, reflects the period well, depicting the relaxed morals and libertine tendencies of the Regency. It is written in the form of memoirs, a literary device which had become popular as novelists began to offer more realistic portrayals of contemporary society and manners than their seventeenth-century counterparts had done. However the superficial portraits of its characters and indeed its hero fail to induce the reader into believing the narrative until perhaps the second part, where the tone changes and becomes analytical. Emile Henriot has pointed out that in some ways Mme de Selve, the subject of the second part of the novel, pre-empts Adolphe's Ellénore in her ability to discern her lover's emotions before he does himself.[57] Yet Mme de Selve remains typical of her era, a woman of reason who finds happiness through her enlightened mode of thought, whereas Ellénore is condemned to sadness because of her Romantic values.

Though Duclos touches upon the sort of sentimental analysis that could have led to a development of his skill as a novelist in both the Confessions du Comte de *** and Acajou et Zirphile, it would seem that his interests lay elsewhere. Instead of perfecting a sophisticated style of writing through creating characters of substance with whom the reader could empathise, and attempting to "construire une intrigue parfaitement cohérente et à inventer des circonstances rigoureusement possibles",[58] Duclos moved over to moralistic literature, "où [il étoit] naturellement porté" (Mémoires, p. lxiii).

It is tempting to compare Duclos with the moralists of the previous century but, though he may have covered topics already chosen by La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, the fact that he was observing the manners of a different

57. Emile Henriot's Introduction to Duclos, L'Histoire de Mme de Selve.
58. Henri Coulet, Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution, tome I, p. 319.

century ensures his individuality. Montesquieu made a comment to this effect when the Considérations were first published: "on dira que La Bruyère et vous connoissiez bien votre siècle; que vous êtes plus philosophe que lui, et que votre siècle est plus philosophe que le sien".[59]

The eighteenth-century writer occupies a different place from his predecessors. No longer marginal to society, he is regarded as a man of intellect and talent who deserves recognition by the most privileged classes. In his speech on entering the Académie française Duclos affirms that "ceux qui unissent ici un rang élevé à une naissance illustre, seroient également distingués, si le sort les eût fait naître dans l'obscurité" (Discours de Duclos, p. cxxxiv). Often from a middle-class background, the writer moves in the same social circles as the nobility, and indeed his company is sought after: "[il a été attiré] dans le monde à proportion de l'agrément qu'on a trouvé dans [son] commerce" (Considérations, XI, p. 135). His views are represented by esteemed literary academies, notably the Académie française, and his opinion carries weight in society, particularly if he has taken on responsibilities extraneous to the world of literature.

The writer who is in a position to enjoy these relatively new privileges is successful: he publishes works which are pleasing and instructive, and introduces new ideas to the public; "[il cache] les préceptes de la morale sous des fictions ingénieuses, et [donne] des leçons d'autant plus sûres, qu'elles sont voilées sous l'appât du plaisir" (Discours de Duclos, p. cxxxiv). This relates to the concept advanced by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre that "les romans sont les livres les plus agréables, les plus universellement lus, et les plus utiles".[60]

59. Correspondance de Montesquieu, tome II, p. 351. Letter dated 4th March 1751.
60. Preamble to the 1806 edition of Paul et Virginie in Paul et Virginie, ed. by Pierre Trahard (Paris, Garnier, 1964), p. 23.

Bernardin regards the novel as a vehicle for transmitting what he considers to be universal truths and for teaching men how to guide their lives. In the 1789 edition of Paul et Virginie he writes: "je me suis proposé ... d'y mettre en évidence plusieurs grandes vérités, entre autres celle-ci: 'que notre bonheur consiste à vivre suivant la nature et la vertu'".[61] He also asserts that "il est dangereux de n'offrir à la vertu d'autre perspective sur la terre que le bonheur",[62] a proposal which is redolent of Duclos's intentions in L'Histoire de Mme de Luz.

The writer's talent raises him above the ordinary man because "[sa gloire] est sentie et publiée par le commun des hommes, qui sont jusqu'à un certain point en état d'en concevoir les idées, et qui se sentent incapables de les produire sous la forme où elles leur sont présentées" (Considérations, XII, p. 158). However he has duties to fulfil, apart from self-imposed restrictions concerning morality and decency: he must abide by government rules of censorship. Just as soon as a writer offends a minister by touching upon matters of State or questioning religious principles, no matter how high he has climbed in the ranks of society, he risks imprisonment or exile, his books banned from publication. Keenly aware of this, Duclos calls for moderation and circumspection and, though he might express himself without caution in conversation, "en écrivant, son bon sens lui [revient] et lui [dicte] des restrictions qu'il [a] le courage de maintenir plume en main et de professer".[63]

61. Avant-propos to the 1789 edition of Paul et Virginie, p. cxlv.
62. Avis to the 1789 edition of Paul et Virginie, p. clviii.
63. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 221.

CONCLUSION

It is generally agreed that Charles Pinot Duclos was a man of wit and intelligence, yet despite this he has been accused of being restricted in his outlook and lacking in imagination. Goethe wrote of him: "Duclos ist fein und geistreich, doch fehlen ihm grosse Blicke",[1] and other contemporaries could be just as ungenerous: "Duclos ne s'élève pas au-dessus du cercle de la société de son temps".[2] Yet it could be argued that this was precisely Duclos's intention. It is true that he expresses a hope that "l'examen des moeurs actuelles pourra servir à faire connoître l'homme de tous les temps" (Considérations, Introduction, p. 6), but he does not claim this to be his aim. In fact he is careful to limit his subject matter to "ceux à qui l'opulence et l'oisiveté suggèrent la variété des idées, la bizarerie des jugements, l'inconstance des sentiments et des affections, en donnant un plein essor au caractère" (Considérations, I, p. 13); he also prefers to ignore places outside Paris, claiming that "c'est dans Paris qu'il faut considérer le François, parcequ'il y est plus François qu'ailleurs" (I, p. 13); and he goes so far as to exclude even those Parisians who, "dévoués à des occupations suivies, à des travaux pénibles, n'ont par-tout que des idées relatives à leur situation, à leurs besoins" (I, p. 13). In this way it can be discerned that Duclos proposes to make a profound study of the manners and morals of the men and women in whose company he finds himself daily, his close contact with his subject making him attentive to detail so that "[il] aperçoit quelquefois ce qui avoit échappé à une vue étendue et rapide" (Considérations, III, p. 31).

1. Goethe, note dated 30 April 1782 in Weimarer Sophien-Ausgabe (Weimar, 1887-1912), section IV, tome 5, p. 317.
2. Sénac de Meilhan, Portraits et caractères, pp. 109-110.

Duclos has been criticised for his dryness of style and for a certain pedantry, Sainte-Beuve taking him to task for his "maximes jetées d'un air de leçon",[3] and accusing him of keeping "toute sa chaleur et son intérêt pour la conversation".[4] Others have discerned, on the contrary, a wealth of ideas in his concise mode of expression, and Auger claims that "les idées se présentoient à lui avec tant d'abondance . . . que s'il n'eût pas eu la phrase serrée, il eût été bègue".[5] Duclos himself indicates a personal distaste for what he regards as unnecessary description (not to be confused with his penchant for digression) when, in Acajou et Zirphile, he refers to "un palais enchanté [qu'il] prie le lecteur d'imaginer à son goût, et dont [il] lui épargne la description de peur de l'ennuyer" (p. 334). His Voyage en Italie contains practically no description of buildings or places; indeed "les gouvernements, les hommes, les moeurs générales et celles des différentes classes de la société, voilà presque les seuls objets de son attention".[6]

There is, of course, an element of satirical intent in Duclos's refusal to give a detailed description of the 'palais enchanté' since his interests lie, not with the fairy tale, but with social observations. The use of satire is a technique common to many writers who wish to highlight social abuses or ridicule certain trends.

Diderot makes clever use of it in Les Bijoux indiscrets in order to demonstrate, amongst other things, the similarity between the bourgeoisie and the nobility;[7]

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3. Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 231.
4. Causeries du lundi, tome IX, p. 205.
5. Preface to Oeuvres complètes de Duclos, p. xxxiii, note 1.
6. Chamfort, Oeuvres complètes, vol III, p. 307.
7. Diderot's view of the bourgeoisie and the nobility is one of scepticism: each is as bad as the other (Les Bijoux indiscrets, p. 43). This differs from Duclos's view; see this thesis, Chapter Three, p. 69, Chapter Four, p. 82, Chapter Five, p. 126 and Conclusion, pp. 133-134.

and Voltaire employs satire to good effect in his novels, such as in L'Ingénu and Candide, to demonstrate the fallacy of various philosophical premises.

Meister asserts that "[Duclos] ne parle qu'à un lecteur capable de l'entendre à demi-mot",[8] and also suggests that he has already composed his thoughts before putting pen to paper, hence the succinct style and the impression of prejudgement referred to by Auger: "son opinion paroissoit arrêtée et sa phrase faite à-peu-près sur tout".[9] Certainly the opening lines of Duclos's Considérations would give some justification to this interpretation: "j'ai vécu; je voudrois être utile à ceux qui ont à vivre. Voilà le motif qui m'engage à rassembler quelques réflexions sur les objets qui m'ont frappé dans le monde" (Introduction, p. 5); and the beginning of the Confessions du Comte de *** would give the impression that the author has formed his opinions conclusively: "j'ai eu vos idées, je me suis trouvé dans les mêmes situations; ... ce récit ... pourra vous servir de leçon" (pp. 6-7).

Sénac de Meilhan interprets Duclos's brevity as "une grande précision dans l'expression",[10] which brings to mind Duclos's speech on entering the Académie française: "en s'appliquant à parler avec précision, on s'habitue à penser avec justesse" (Discours de Duclos, p. cxxxii). It is certain that Duclos intended noting with accuracy and precision his observations on the social world about him because he expresses in the introduction to the Considérations a desire to conform to "la science des moeurs" (p. 6), which would be based on "l'examen et la confrontation des faits" (p. 5).

8. Charles Duclos (1704-1772), p. 196.
9. Preface to Oeuvres complètes de Duclos, p. xxxiv.
10. Portraits et caractères, p. 109.

Henriot perceives a source of historical facts in Duclos's portrayal of society: "Duclos n'invente pas des types inédits. Il les prend dans la société qui l'entoure, tels qu'il en a pu voir les modèles les plus communs".[11] Both Léo Le Bourgo and, later, Laurent Versini take this assertion a step further, each claiming that Duclos's fictional characters, particularly the hero in the Confessions du Comte de ***,[12] are based on historical personalities, a claim which is difficult to substantiate since many elements of the fictional characters do not correspond to the supposed models. Besides, Duclos affirms that his intention is to examine "les moeurs générales, ... et non les moeurs des particuliers", asserting that "c'est la principale différence qu'il y a de la morale à la satire" (Considérations, I, p. 11). This argument relates to the seventeenth-century interest in character Types, manifest in La Bruyère's Caractères and La Rochefoucauld's Maximes, and to what is still being advanced by Laclos later on in the eighteenth century.[13]

Duclos's attitude towards his fellow man, after years of observation and analysis, is primarily one of affection and sympathy. He firmly believes that man is a social creature: "les hommes sont destinés à vivre en société" (Considérations, V, p. 64); and that the way to find contentment is through learning how to live with other people: "qu'on apprenne aux hommes à s'aimer entre eux; qu'on leur en prouve la nécessité pour leur bonheur" (Considérations, I, p. 10). As an atheist he rejects depending on God for a means to discover happiness, and instead puts forward a positive theory that men and women are responsible for ensuring their own well-being "par le bien

11. Les Livres du second rayon, pp. 170-171.
12. Versini and Le Bourgo believe the Comte to be the Maréchal de Richelieu. See Versini's introduction to the Confessions du Comte de ***; and Le Bourgo, Un Homme de lettres au XVIIIe siècle, p. 155.
13. See Laclos's correspondence with Mme Riccoboni immediately after the publication of Les Liaisons dangereuses in 1782, Oeuvres complètes de Laclos, Allem edition (Bruges, Pléiade, 1967).

qu'ils feroient et qu'ils éprouveroient eux-mêmes" (Considérations, II, p. 20). Therefore the relationship between man and society is one of interdependence based upon the actions of each individual. This attitude towards integrating into society relates to the seventeenth-century concept of the 'honnête homme' who, in La Rochefoucauld's words, is "celui qui ne se pique de rien".[14]

Duclos does not share Rousseau's view that society is potentially harmful: "tout consiste à ne pas gâter l'homme de la nature en l'appropriant à la société";[15] or the opinion of Crébillon fils that living in society is a matter of competition, a question of the survival of the most cunning: "il faut ... que vous joigniez à l'art de tromper les autres, celui de les pénétrer; que vous cherchiez toujours, sous ce qu'ils veulent vous paraître, ce qu'ils sont en effet. ... Si nous étudions les hommes, que ce soit moins pour prétendre à les instruire, que pour parvenir à les bien connoître".[16] Duclos rejects "cette manière de penser ... [qui] devient de plus en plus dangereuse pour la société" as "l'artifice le plus adroit et le plus criminel" (Considérations, IV, pp. 60-61). He is conscious of man's propensity for selfishness, but is firm in his conviction that this can be directed towards the common good: "on ne corrige les particuliers qu'en leur prouvant de l'intérêt pour eux" (Considérations, II, p. 34). Duclos would prefer to praise the beneficial consequences of a deed than to condemn an egoistic principle behind it: "il est toujours sage et avantageux d'encourager les hommes aux actes honnêtes" since, believes Duclos, "ils sont capables de prendre le pli de la vertu comme du vice" (Considérations, IV, p. 55). An enlightened self-interest would ensure that each individual acts for the benefit of all, persuaded that such conduct is to his own advantage.

14. La Rochefoucauld, Oeuvres de la Rochefoucauld (Paris, A la cité des livres, 1929), vol II, Maximes, p. 61.
15. La Nouvelle Héloïse, part five, letter VIII, Saint-Preux to M de Wolmar.
16. Varsac to Meilcour in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit, p. 172.

It seems clear that Duclos takes an optimistic stance with regard to the human condition and, more narrowly, with respect to the influence of society upon the individual.[17] In so far as man's role within society is concerned, it would seem that this depends largely upon social class.

The lower classes are virtually absent from Duclos's work. He appears to hold them incapable of intelligent thought or refined activity, and seems to consider menial tasks and hard physical labour suited to their disposition.[18] In the Confessions du Comte de *** Julie and her lover broadly conform to this image of their class, and their inclusion in the story is more a literary device to change the pace of the novel than an interest in 'le bas-peuple'.

The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, claims Duclos's close attention, particularly the upper middle class, represented by financiers, 'la noblesse de robe' and men of letters.[19] This is in keeping with many other writers of the time who, as Henri Coulet points out, regard the bourgeoisie as being the true representatives of the national character, gradually replacing the nobility in this role.[20] Duclos therefore presents the reader with the moral and social values of the middle order in preference to those of the upper class.

It is imperative to note at this point that Duclos does not reject the nobility out of hand in favour of the bourgeoisie: he merely observes that "le monde ne diffère que par l'extérieur" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p . 68) and that for this reason the nobility should not be accorded a superior rank in society simply

17. Henri Coulet, in his introduction to the Mémoires sur les moeurs, suggests that Duclos's originality as a moralist lies in "le rôle qu'il prête à la société", in his introduction to the Mémoires sur les moeurs, (Paris, Editions Desjonquères, 1986).
18. See Considérations, I, p. 13; IV, p. 61; and VIII, p. 109.
19. See this thesis, Chapter Five, p. 107 for comments on how writers slip through class barriers.
20. Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution, vol I, p. 378.

because of "la noblesse du sang [qui] n'est qu'un heureux hasard" (Considérations, II, p. 28). He grants a token respect to the nobility as "un hommage à la mémoire des ancêtres qui ont illustré leur nom" (II, p. 29), but implies that those nobles "qui dérogent à l'honneur, à la probité, à l'humanité même" (II, p. 30) should lose their rank and title. This refusal to be impressed by the upper class is manifest throughout Duclos's work, perhaps nowhere more so than in his first novel where he recognises the shift in the balance of power between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, and deplores the insincerity of certain members of the aristocracy faced with the strength of the middle class whom they greet with "un accueil caressant, qui marque le besoin qu'ils ont des autres, plus que l'estime qu'ils font de leurs personnes" (L'Histoire de Mme de Luz, p. 217).

For Duclos equality is based upon merit, not upon birthright, and the role he ascribes to the middle and upper classes is one of mutual respect for achievements gained, since he maintains that "les égards réciproques ... forment le lien de la société" (Considérations, III, p. 34).

Perhaps one of the closest bonds within society is that of friendship which, Duclos believes, can transcend the barriers of class (Considérations, XI, p. 138) and sex: "pour prendre un mari, [Mme de Selve a été obligée] d'attendre qu'il n'eût plus d'amour . ... Ce n'est point [son] amant [qu'elle] épouse; c'est un ami avec qui [elle s'unit], et dont la tendresse et l'estime [lui] sont plus précieuses que les emportements d'un amour aveugle" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 179). Love is uncontrollable whereas friendship is based upon reason: "l'amour est un mouvement aveugle qui ne suppose pas toujours du mérite dans son objet. ... On est comptable de l'amitié ... l'amitié se mérite" (Confessions du Comte de ***, p. 108). The comparisons between social and sexual equality would seem clear. Yet Duclos and other 'philosophes' cast some doubt on the

possibility of love and friendship coexisting in the same relationship.[21] Rousseau discusses the subject in La Nouvelle Héloïse when Julie asks Saint-Preux to consider marrying Claire; Saint-Preux argues that it would be a mistake to attempt to alter the nature of their attachment, observing that "tous les droits de la tendre amitié me sont trop chers auprès d'elle pour que je m'expose à les perdre en cherchant à les étendre".[22] There is even the implication that it would go against nature to try: "les sens, libres de cette passion terrible se joignent au doux sentiment de l'amitié. Devient-elle amour pour cela? Julie, ah quelle différence! Où est l'enthousiasme? Où est l'idolâtrie? Où sont ces divins égarements de la raison ...?"[23]

For Duclos 'ces divins égarements' can never replace the pleasures offered by friendship justified by reason. Indeed he suggests that the greatest compliment that former lovers can pay each other is to become friends: "le plus grand honneur [qu'on pourroit] faire à un amant qui cesseroit de ... plaire, ce seroit de la garder pour ami" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 424).[24]

It is perhaps ironic that this former libertine should prefer to put aside the complication of sex when ascertaining man's social role, which he suggests, rather simplistically, as being: "si chacun faisoit tout le bien qu'il peut faire, sans s'incommoder, il n'y auroit point de malheureux" (Considérations, XVI, p.

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21. It is arguable as to what extent it is appropriate to describe Duclos as a 'philosophe' since he puts forward no philosophical theory or system. However he shares the new ideas of the Enlightenment, which are based on reason rather than religion, and, like the 'philosophes', "[son] premier principe ... est un optimisme réfléchi" (D. Mornet, La Pensée française au XVIIIe siècle, p. 42).
22. Part six, letter VII, Saint-Preux to Mme de Wolmar.
23. Part six, letter VII, Saint-Preux to Mme de Wolmar. This can be compared with Duclos's comment voiced by Mme de Retel: "il y a ... des amitiés qui deviennent de véritables passions, et ce ne sont ni les plus sûres, ni les plus heureuses" (Mémoires sur les moeurs, p. 419).
24. A similar stance is taken in the Confessions du Comte de ***: "je possède un ami fidèle, qui ..., me tenant lieu de tout, m'empêche de rien regretter" (p. 6). He speaks of his wife, married for friendship after they have been lovers.

207). Banal the maxim may be, but it does indicate Duclos's concern for man's welfare; it infers the individual's duty of active participation within society; and implies that everyone has the right to hope for personal happiness.

Duclos has been criticised for his narrowness of vision and for his lack of imagination and sensibility. His talents as a writer have been put in doubt, and his novels broadly assessed as "guère bons qu'à amuser un instant".[25] However he has also been admired for "la pénétration, la justesse, la précision de son esprit",[26] and for "ses qualités d'observateur et de psychologue".[27] Chamfort writes of "son esprit d'observation, sa philosophie libre et mesurée, sa manière de peindre par des faits, des anecdotes, des rapprochements heureux",[28] and Emile Henriot concludes that "il est l'honnête homme de lettres de son siècle".[29] It is perhaps Stendhal who best measures the extent of Duclos's success, placing him amongst "les bons écrivains dans le genre médiocre qui font la richesse d'une littérature, en forçant les grands hommes à s'élancer au delà".[30]

Perhaps it would be fair to conclude that Duclos is a man of moderation, a humanitarian with a certain literary talent who does not demand perfection from his fellows, but lays great store by endeavour. Terrestrial happiness is achievable through one's own efforts even after error and, provided that one actively promotes the well-being of society, what is beneficial for all is salutary for the individual. In order to secure his own happiness the individual must contribute towards the good of everyone else. According to the rational

25. Henri Coulet, Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution, tome I, p. 387.
26. The response of the Prince de Beauvau to M. Beauzée's speech on taking Duclos's seat at the Académie française, Oeuvres complètes de Duclos, vol I, p. clxiii.
27. Meister, Charles Duclos 1704-1772, p. 227.
28. Oeuvres complètes, vol III, p. 307.
29. Les Livres du second rayon, p. 151.
30. Pages, p. 41 in Stendhal's Oeuvres complètes, Henri Martineau edition.

optimism of Duclos, typical of a man of the Enlightenment, "ce principe est aussi sûr en morale, qu'il est certain, en géométrie, que tous les rayons d'un cercle sont égaux et se réunissent en un même point" (Considérations, I, p. 11).

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