

Abstract of Thesis

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The thesis is divided into two parts which treat, respectively, the principal recurrent themes in Pigault-Lebrun's novels and his novelistic theory and technique.

The Introduction gives a brief background survey of those literary, social and biographical aspects of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which were influential in Pigault-Lebrun's choice of novelistic form and theme.

This is followed in Part One by an analysis of the principal recurrent themes in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun, namely, love; social and political concepts and customs; and religious institutions and doctrines.

Part Two deals with the theory and techniques of the eighteenth century novel before Pigault-Lebrun and then examines their effects on the author's own concept and treatment of his craft.

The Conclusion presents a short summary of previous criticism on Pigault-Lebrun's novels, before attempting a general appraisal of the author's contribution to the art of fiction.

THE NOVELS OF PIGAULT-LEBRUN

by

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PREFACE

From one of the most widely read novelists of his time, Pigault-Lebrun has, today, become little more than an obscure name to be found among the more detailed histories of French Literature. No substantial criticism has been published on this author either by past or present day critics. Even those few who give more than a passing mention to Pigault-Lebrun devote little more than a few paragraphs or, at most, a single chapter to an author who was one of the most popular novelists of his day.¹ For more than fifty years, with the exception of one specialised edition at the beginning of the twentieth century,² both publisher and critic, alike, have chosen to ignore the novels of Pigault-Lebrun.

We have, therefore, decided to undertake this study of the novels of Pigault-Lebrun, since we feel that the reasons for the success and subsequent neglect of this novelist deserve more than a passing glance and may help to throw some light on the taste and sensibility of a period which, from a literary point of view, has been largely neglected in the past.

1. e.g. Le Breton, André, Le Roman français au XIXe Siècle, avant Balzac, Paris, Boivin, 1901, pp. 73-84.
Saintsbury, George, History of the French Novel, London, Macmillan, 1917, Vol. I, pp. 456-468.

2. i.e. La Folie Espagnole, ed. Bibliothèque des Joyeusetés Littéraires, Paris, A. Lemerre, 1923.

We also feel that since great literary creations rarely give a just and complete idea of the psychology of the public which was contemporary to their creation, a fact borne out by the frequent lack of acknowledgement of these masterpieces on the part of the reading public of the day, it is not too presumptuous to think that the study of even minor authors, like Pigault-Lebrun, may bring new elements of information to social as well as to literary history.

As a result of the above considerations, we have decided in the Introduction to give a brief background survey of those literary, social and biographical aspects of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which were influential in Pigault-Lebrun's choice of novelistic form and theme.

In Part One we have treated the principal recurrent themes of his novels, namely love; social and political concepts and customs; and religious institutions and doctrines. These reflect the social and political life and thought of the period extending from the end of the reign of Louis XV to the beginning of the reign of Louis XVIII, and reveal a deep and continued concern with solutions to problems of contemporary importance.

In the second and final Part we have concentrated exclusively on the theory and techniques of the novel, by first tracing the evolution of novelists' concepts and techniques of fiction in the eighteenth century before Pigault-Lebrun, and then by examining, in the light of this research,

the author's own concept and treatment of his craft. We have analysed these techniques in relation to the following aspects of fictional art: narrative form; plot structure; characterisation; dialogue; background and style.

In the Conclusion, before attempting a general evaluation of the novels of Pigault-Lebrun, we have first given a short summary of previous criticism on the novelist's work. In this summary we have concentrated primarily on those first hand sources of criticism written by Pigault-Lebrun's contemporaries, rather than on those later critics whose sources were frequently second hand.

We should like to express our gratitude to Professors J.E.L. Launay, J. Terrasse and G.P. Collet whose advice and assistance were a constant source of encouragement in the writing of the present thesis.

INTRODUCTION

Preface

It is our intention in the following Introduction to outline those literary, social and biographical aspects of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which we consider to have been influential in Pigault-Lebrun's choice of novelistic form and theme.

As a product of the Age of Enlightenment, Pigault-Lebrun was not only influenced by the forms, themes and concepts of the eighteenth century novel, but also by the social and political events of the period in which he lived and wrote. This is revealed both in his didactic and derogatory approach to the novel, and in the importance he attached to the study of contemporary social and political problems.

A. Aspects of the Novel in France, 1715-1789

Despised and denounced during the first sixty years of the eighteenth century, the novel acquired a reasonable, if limited, reputation as an acceptable literary genre in the closing decades of the Ancien Régime. One of the most important reasons for this elevation of the novel's status

can be attributed to the social movement of the century as characterised by the continually rising influence of the bourgeoisie. Despite its shortcomings, the novel was the only literary genre in the eighteenth century that had continued to evolve and generally to reflect the changing manners and aspirations of its time. As the principal means of expression of the bourgeoisie, it portrayed the social realities of the period by the greater role it conferred upon lower class characters and by the shift in narrative interest from heroic adventures and passionate love stories to family life and social climbing. The Cornelian concept of honor and glory gradually gave way to a newer, more mediocre, form of heroism. Even those novelists who, by their intellectual and moral attitude remained hostile to the bourgeois ethos, used, in opposition to their seventeenth century predecessors, a contemporary and realistic milieu as a setting for the dramatic adventures of their élite heroes.

In addition to these sociological factors, the rapid rise of the eighteenth century novel can also be ascribed to literary and aesthetic reasons. Unlike tragedy and poetry, which continued slavishly to submit to the conventions of Classicism, the novel, by reason of the critical disdain in which it was first held by critics, and the later absence of any unanimously proclaimed official poetic to constrict it, was allowed a considerable freedom of development in comparison

to the more noble genres. Thus unencumbered by the binding rules and conventions of Classicism, the novel was in a position to portray what tragedy and poetry had omitted, namely contemporary milieux, manners and people. In this respect it was linked more than any other genre to the evolution of society, a fact reflected in the increasing growth of interest in fiction.¹

This relative freedom of expression to describe the ambient reality of the times was also reflected in the multiplicity of the forms which the novel took throughout the eighteenth century. Novels of adventure, novels of manners, 'psychological' novels existed side by side with philosophical, exotic and erotic novels. Most novels, by sharing the characteristics of several categories, failed, in fact, to fit any one particular type of classification, adding yet further proof to the vitality of the genre. This inability to define individual novels was further complicated by the distrust evoked in the novelist's mind by the word 'roman'. Novelists concealed

1. In the seventeenth century approximately 1200 novels were published. In 1700 18 novels were published as opposed to 52 in 1750. The second half of the century saw even more novels published than the 946 of the first half.

Williams, R. C., A Bibliography of the 17th Century Novel in France, New York, Century, 1931.

Jones, S. P., A List of French Prose Fiction from 1700-1750, New York, Wilson, 1939.

Mornet, D., Les Romans postérieurs à 1750, un aperçu bibliographique dans l'édition de la Nouvelle Héloïse, Paris, Hachette, "Coll. les Grands Ecrivains de la France," 1925, Vol. I, pp. 335-385.

the pejorative connotations of the word by pretending to publish authentic stories, memoirs or letters, or by producing marginal works in the forms of satires, dialogues, pamphlets or allegories. This desire to lend an air of authenticity to their work was reflected in the general abandonment of the third-person narrative form for the more realistic first-person narrative technique which largely prevailed until the end of the century.

By adopting the dates of 1715, year in which appeared the first volumes of Gil Blas, and 1761, date of publication of La Nouvelle Héloïse, the history of the eighteenth century novel can be conveniently, if somewhat arbitrarily, divided into two periods. A first period, from 1715 to 1761, of creative activity which, in the face of increasingly hostile criticism, reached its peak around 1740. The comparative stagnation of the following twenty years ended with the successful publication of La Nouvelle Héloïse in 1761. The second period, from 1761-1789, was characterised by a multiplicity of forms which, while attesting to the vitality of the genre, brought about its general dissolution and qualitative decline towards the end of the century by placing exaggerated emphasis on the didactic aims of the novel.

The novel in the first period of the eighteenth century owes, in part, its most important innovations to the profound upheaval of the intellectual and moral values of the "Ancien Régime" which began to take effect around 1680.¹ One of the

1. Hazard, Paul, La Crise de la Conscience Européenne, 1680-1715, Paris, Boivin, 1935.

most important effects of this "crise de conscience" for the novel form resulted in novelists writing about their own period or the immediate past instead of Classical Antiquity, and about relatively unknown people rather than the historical personages of more remote periods. With the greater desire for the emancipation of the individual and the discovery of the "pittoresque de la vie"¹, they began to offer increasingly realistic portrayals of contemporary society and manners.

This trend towards recent and private events in the novel was most apparent in those two forms which were to dominate fiction in the eighteenth century, namely the letter novel², and the fictional memoir novel.³ Both these types of novel, by combining history and fiction, indicated the novelist's desire to lend a greater air of authenticity to his work. This was in direct reaction to the extravagances and exaggerations of the heroic novel, and showed the importance attached by writers to the aesthetic dictates of Classicism with its then prevailing emphasis on 'vraisemblance'. It was for reasons of lack of 'vraisemblance' that the novel had been treated with

1. Hazard, Paul, Op. cit., p. 386.

2. Vide, Coulet, H., 'Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution', Histoire du Roman en France, Paris, P.U.F., 1967, Vol. I, pp. 223-237.

3. Ibid., pp. 280-281.

such disdain by critics. When Boileau declared,

"Un roman, sans blesser les lois ni la coutume,
Peut conduire un héros au dixième volume."¹,

he was not only implicitly condemning the novel's lack of 'vraisemblance' and its disrespect for 'les bienséances', but also its lack of literary tradition and reputation, a viewpoint shared by the majority of the critics of this period.² These criticisms aimed primarily at the lengthy heroic and comic novels of the preceding baroque period were responsible for the greater brevity and simplicity of the later Classical works, and for their authors' attempts to achieve a greater realism and prestige for the novel by a deeper attachment to the standards of history.³

The novel's closer affiliation to the standards and practices of history was best exemplified at the close of the seventeenth century by the pseudo-historical memoir form, which was to exert considerable influence on the genre in the first half of the eighteenth century. The chief exponent of this type of novel, Courtilz de Sandras, filled his works⁴ with a fusion of the true and the imaginary, by arranging historical

1. Satire IX, 1667-1668, l. 107-108.

2. Daniel Huet proved an exception. Vide, Lettre à M. de Segrais sur l'Origine des Romans, 1670, Amsterdam, Ed. A. Kok, 1942.

3. e.g., La Princesse de Clèves.

4. Mémoires de M.L.C.D.R., 1687; Mémoires de M. d'Artagnan, 1700; Mémoires de M. de B---, 1711.

facts, and by sacrificing historical truth to psychological 'vraisemblance' and novelistic manipulation. His works, according to Henri Coulet, even went so far as to exert their influence on the better novelists of the first half of the eighteenth century:

Il sera lu et utilisé par de plus grands que lui. Marivaux se souviendra des Mémoires de M. de B--- en écrivant le début de La Vie de Marianne. Prévost des Mémoires de M.L.C.D.R. en évoquant dans Manon Lescaut le tripot qu'est l'hôtel de Transylvanie, et il y aura plus d'une ressemblance de caractère et de carrière entre le roturier Gil Blas et les gentilshommes pseudo-mémorialistes de Courtilz.¹

However, in one important respect, these later novelists differed from Courtilz de Sandras. Instead of wishing to provide real history, they manifested a desire to escape from the pretensions of the pseudo-historical memoir novel by portraying the lives of purely imaginary characters. They understood that their art did not consist in imposing upon the reader by making him accept imaginary 'truths' as authentic facts, although they sometimes felt obliged to disavow this belief in their Prefaces. When a writer like Marivaux ironically asserts:

Comme on pourrait soupçonner cette histoire-ci d'avoir été faite exprès pour amuser le public, je crois devoir avertir que je la tiens moi-même d'un ami qui l'a réellement trouvée, comme il le dit ci-après, et que je n'y ai point d'autre part que d'en avoir retouché quelques endroits

1. Coulet, Henri, Op. cit., p. 307.

trop confus et trop négligés. Ce qui est de vrai, c'est que si c'était une histoire simplement imaginée, il y a toute apparence qu'elle n'aurait pas la forme qu'elle a.¹,

he is tacitly demonstrating his awareness of the novel's poor reputation, and of the advantages to be gained, in terms of prestige, by allying it with a more respectable literary form such as historical memoirs. The forced duplicity of such statements is also revealed by Crébillon fils in his Preface to Les Egarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit:

Les Préfaces pour la plus grande partie, ne semblent faites que pour en imposer au Lecteur. Je méprise trop cet usage pour le suivre. L'unique dessein que j'aie dans celle-ci, est d'annoncer le but de ces Mémoires, soit qu'on doive les regarder comme un ouvrage purement d'imagination, ou que les aventures qu'ils contiennent soient réelles.²

Such statements by novelists claiming that their works were not really novels but narrative accounts of authentic events resulted from their double desire to avoid the criticism of 'invraisemblance' and to appease the critics' biased judgements by associating their novels with an established and respectable literary genre such as history in the form of memoirs.³ Critics usually applied the aesthetic criteria of history to the novel since the latter form lacked any

1. La Vie de Marianne, Préface.

2. Ed. Cluny, 1961, p. 3.

3. Several historical memoirs had appeared during this period: e.g. the memoirs of Cardinal de Retz- 1717; Dangeau- 1720; and Mlle. de Montpensier- 1729.

established literary tradition, and was therefore impossible to judge according to the rules of tragedy and poetry. This comparison with history was invariably unfavorable to the novel as it was considered unworthy to rival with an ancient form that had the added advantage of dispensing knowledge. Despite the injustice and short-sightedness of such criticism, it had the effect, as these Prefaces illustrate, of considerably stimulating the novelists' determination to dissociate their works from the unrealistic extravagances of the seventeenth century heroic novel and of forcing them to adopt more realistic modes of expression. It thus reinforced the feeling, already latent in the novelists of the period, that it was necessary to elaborate a form of literary expression in harmony with the sensibility and thought of the age, at a time when the traditional forms of tragedy and poetry were associated with an outmoded representation of society.¹

Thus more than fifty years after Boileau's double-edged criticism of the novel, novelists were still made keenly aware of the lack of prestige and realism of the form they cultivated. While epic and tragedy retained their reputation, the novel was still considered a vulgar amusement, lacking in art and thought. The aristocratic taste which prevailed in poetry and in tragedy still preserved its prestige, and it

1. Vide, May, G., Le Dilemme du Roman, Etude sur les Rapports entre le Roman et la Critique, 1715-1761, Paris, P.U.F., 1963, pp. 247-248.

was not until the appearance of Diderot and Rousseau that it was finally denounced as an anachronism, principally in the theatre. Even then writing for the stage was considered an honorable occupation, whereas to write a novel was to appeal to the least worthy segments of society. As a result a writer would admit with pride that he was working on a poem, a play or a history but would be less inclined to admit that his current production was only a novel.

This inferiority complex, instilled in the novelist by the critic, is illustrated by the large number of novels which were published anonymously. Of the 1200 or so novels published in French between 1600 and 1699, some 350 were anonymous, and another fifty had only initials on the title-page.¹ In the first half of the eighteenth century the proportion is even greater: only 134 of the 946 novels published bear the name of the author on the title-page.² Moreover, even in those works which bore the author's name, the word 'roman' was omitted from the title-page. During this same fifty year period only four or five novels indicated by their titles that they were indeed novels.³ This habit of seeking refuge in anonymity indicates that novel writing at this time was not generally held to enhance one's literary reputation.

1. Williams, R.C., Op. cit.

2. Jones, S.P., Op. cit., Introduction, p. xiii.

3. Ibid.

Besides being attacked for its lack of official prestige, the novel continued to be criticised on purely literary grounds. Since Boileau's unfavorable comment on the structure of heroic novels,¹ other critics² and even novelists, themselves, had attacked the common literary weaknesses of the novel, with its exaggerated characters and events, its interpolated stories, rambling plots and general air of 'invraisemblance'. In his Preface to Les Egarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit, Crébillon fils sums up the general consensus of opinion towards the novel form at this time:

Le Roman, si méprisé des personnes sensées, et souvent avec justice, serait peut-être celui de tous les genres qu'on pourrait rendre le plus utile, s'il était bien manié, si, au lieu de le remplir de situations ténébreuses et forcées, de Héros dont les caractères et les aventures sont toujours hors du vraisemblable, on le rendait, comme la Comédie, le tableau de la vie humaine, et qu'on y censurât les vices et les ridicules.

Le Lecteur n'y trouverait plus à la vérité ces événements extraordinaires et tragiques qui enlèvent l'imagination, et déchirent le coeur; plus de Héros qui ne passât les Mers que pour y être à point nommé pris des Turcs, plus d'aventures dans le Sérail, de Sultane soustraite à la vigilance des Eunuques, par quelque tour d'adresse surprenant; plus de morts imprévues, et infiniment moins de souterrains. Le fait, préparé avec art, serait rendu avec naturel. On ne pécherait plus contre les convenances et la raison. Le sentiment ne serait point outré; l'homme enfin verrait l'homme tel qu'il est; on³ l'éblouirait moins, mais on l'instruirait davantage.

1. Boileau, Op. cit., l. 107-108.

2. Vide, May, G., Op. cit., pp. 20-23.

3. Op. cit., pp. 3-4.

Although such criticisms were aimed at the 'heroic' type of novel, which had already begun to lose favor by this time, these same faults can still be found, though on a smaller scale, in some of the best novelists of the 1730's and 1740's.¹ Thus the word 'roman' was still unfavorably associated in the minds of many people with rambling and exaggerated stories about unlikely people.

It was on account of these aesthetic and literary attacks that the novelists of the first half of the eighteenth century, like their predecessors, had turned towards history for their inspiration, since history was backed by a reputation, however dubious, of literary prestige, which the novel lacked. This attitude was expressed by the author, probably Duclos himself, of Lettre à l'Auteur de Madame de Luz, which appeared in 1741 after the publication of Duclos' Histoire de Madame de Luz:

Les Auteurs des Romans se seraient donc contentés d'altérer l'Histoire, s'ils eussent pû se flatter de faire recevoir leurs imaginations pour la vérité; mais voyant qu'ils n'y pouvaient plus prétendre, ils se livrèrent uniquement aux fictions. Comme jamais les hommes ne gardent de mesure en rien, les Romans devinrent si extravagants, qu'ils tombèrent dans le mépris. Dès-lors on exigea plus de vraisemblance; et bientôt pour plaire, il fallut que le Roman prît le ton de l'Histoire, et cherchât à lui ressembler. Ce fut une espèce d'hommage que le mensonge rendit

1. e.g. Lesage, Marivaux, Prévost. The early novels of Marivaux such as, Les Effets surprenants de la Sympathie, 1712-1713; Pharsamon ou Les Folies Romanesques, 1713; Le Télémaque Travesti, 1714, were parodies of this type of 'heroic' novel.

à la vérité, et l'Histoire rentra presque dans ses droits sur un nom supposé. On veut que chaque Aventure soit vraisemblable en elle-même, et que le Roman ne s'éloigne de la vraisemblance, qu'en rapprochant en un court espace de temps des situations qui ne sont pas si pressées, ni si fréquentes dans la Nature, et qui seraient par conséquent plus éparses dans l'Histoire.¹

This tendency to introduce more 'vraisemblance' into the novel was illustrated by a desire, on the part of the better novelists of the first half of the eighteenth century, to give the plots of their novels a contemporary or near contemporary setting, and, where this involved foreign settings, to directly,² or indirectly,³ gain information on the habits and customs of those countries that served as backgrounds to their novels. 'Vraisemblance' now came to be based on a sense of historical, geographical, and cultural perspective and had replaced 'les bienséances' in the minds of novelists, if not of critics, as the principal criterion of aesthetic judgement.

This emphasis on greater 'vraisemblance' led to the accusation by contemporary critics that novelists were attempting to undermine the moral function of the novel.⁴ This idea that

1. La Haye, Ed. de Hondt, 1741, p. 14.

2. e.g. Prévost in Cleveland.

3. e.g. Lesage in Gil Blas; Prévost in Manon Lescaut with regard to his description of New Orleans.

4. Vide, Green, F.C., "The 18th century critic and the contemporary novel", Modern Language Review, xxiii, 1928, pp. 174-187; May, G., Op. cit.; Ratner, M., Theory and Criticism of the Novel in France from l'Astrée to 1750, Thèse de Doctorat, New York University, 1938.

the purpose of literature was to instruct and edify goes back to Horace's Ars Poetica and was to prevail in the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries. Together with the notion that the task of novels is to please and entertain, it constitutes the main body of literary theory throughout the pre-revolutionary period. The clearest evidence that a novel was to be morally instructive as well as pleasing can be found in the frequent statements of authors in the Prefaces to their novels. Prévost says of Manon Lescaut:

Les personnes de bon sens ne regarderont point un ouvrage de cette nature comme un travail inutile. Outre le plaisir d'une lecture agréable, on y trouvera peu d'événements qui ne puissent servir à l'instruction des mœurs; et c'est rendre, à mon avis, un service considérable au public, que de l'instruire en amusant.¹

A similar idea is expressed by Crébillon fils in the Preface to Les Egarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit:

L'homme qui écrit ne peut avoir que deux objets: l'utile et l'amusant. Peu d'auteurs sont parvenus à les réunir. Celui qui instruit, ou dédaigne d'amuser, ou n'en a pas le talent; et celui qui amuse, n'a pas assez de force pour instruire: ce qui fait nécessairement que l'un est² toujours sec, et que l'autre est toujours frivole.

This does not necessarily mean that the novelists' assurances can be accepted as valid, but the mere fact that several writers took the trouble to announce the moral value of their works shows that such a standard was considered both

1. Ed. Garnier, 1957.

2. Ed. Cluny, 1961.

relevant and desirable. Prévost not only states that works such as Manon Lescaut are morally instructive, but also discusses the way in which this instruction may become effective. Since moral precepts are general, abstract and vague, one way of making them a more useful and practical guide to conduct is to embody them in the events of a specific story:

Il ne reste donc que l'exemple qui puisse servir de règle à quantité de personnes dans l'exercice de la vertu. C'est précisément pour cette sorte de lecteurs que des ouvrages tels que celui-ci peuvent être d'une extrême utilité, du moins lorsqu'ils sont écrits par une personne d'honneur et de bon sens. Chaque fait qu'on y rapporte est un degré de lumière, une instruction qui supplée à l'expérience; chaque aventure est un modèle, d'après lequel on peut se former; il n'y manque que d'être ajusté aux circonstances où l'on se trouve. L'ouvrage entier est un traité de morale, réduit agréablement en exercice.¹

However, while admitting that mere discussion of moral precepts in the abstract may be ineffective, Prévost does not go so far as explicitly to state the notion that a reader's emotions must be stirred if a moral lesson is to become effective.² This notion was more clearly expressed by Prévost's contemporary, the Marquis d'Argens, who aptly sums up the aims of these better novelists of the first half of the eighteenth

1. Manon Lescaut, ed. Garnier, 1957, "Avis de l'Auteur," p. 4.

2. This idea that the emotional impact of the novel enforces the moral lesson was to be better expressed in the second half of the century by writers such as Diderot. This concept was, however, abused by the libertine writers whose hypocritical moral proclamations were belied by the immorality of their works.

century:

On a réduit depuis quelque temps les romans et les Histoires Gâlantes au point de devenir utiles pour l'Instruction du Coeur et de l'Esprit. On a fait succéder, à ces Combats de Lances, à ces Enchantements merveilleux, à ces Princesses dix fois enlevées et toujours retrouvées, à la fin d'un dixième Volume, aussi Vierges que les Vestalles; on a fait, dis-je, succéder à ces Idées Gigantesques, le Naturel, et le Vraisemblable, non content de plaire, on a voulu aussi instruire: l'on a joint l'Agréable à l'Utile. On a cherché à peindre d'après Nature; assuré, que le Vraisemblable va toujours au Coeur, et qu'il a des droits souverains sur l'Esprit. On a entremêlé une morale pure à une fiction enjouée; et l'on a rendu les Romans plus utiles pour former les moeurs, que beaucoup de Mauvais Sermons, dont le But est de condamner la Lecture.¹

Despite these novelists' arguments that the truth is always good to know, that to depict vices and weaknesses does not necessarily imply immorality, but, on the contrary, provides the reader with concrete examples far more useful to his moral welfare than abstract principles, the critics, with some justification, remained singularly unconvinced by the apparent sincerity of these assertions. So insistent were the critics on safeguarding the readers' moral values, that some of the former even went so far as to claim that novels were not merely powerless to improve the readers' morals, but actively pernicious and a source of corruption. Lenglet du Fresnoy deplored the growing tendency in fiction to introduce low realism,² while Père Porée delivered a public lecture on the evils of novel

1. Le Mentor Cavalier or Les Infortunes de Notre Siècle, London, 1736, Avertissement.

2. De L'Usage des Romans, Amsterdam, 1734.

reading at the Collège Saint Louis.¹ The major complaint seemed to be the novelists' handling of the subject of love. This, said the critics, was portrayed as an attractive passion, and discussed in ways which were liable to mislead and inflame the thoughts of readers, particularly the young and inexperienced.

This criticism was of some relevance if applied to such novels as Manon Lescaut, La Vie de Marianne, Le Paysan Parvenu and Les Egarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit. These novels of Prévost, Marivaux and Crébillon fils, though infused with a deep moral meaning, portray passions which were unacceptable to the narrow contemporary standards of conventional morality. Moreover, except in their Prefaces, they made no clear-cut attempt in these novels to depict a code of ethics acceptable to the authorities. This change of sensibility, which caused writers like Prévost, Marivaux and Lesage to depict characters who preferred individual happiness to the public good, was but part of a wider movement of ideas which was becoming manifest in many other fields. In relation to the larger domain of speculative thought, these changes in the novel reflect current interest in the particular, the individual, the observable aspects of human nature, as against the more general, universal and abstract theories which had earlier prevailed.

That such moral criticism was, nonetheless, serious and influential could be seen in the governmental decision to severely

1. De libris qui vulgo dicuntur Romanses, Paris, 1736.

limit if not ban the publication of novels. From 1738 to 1744 novels published in France were submitted to a rigorous examination and those novelists who, in their works, offended religion or morality by making allusions to contemporary events, persons, or institutions were summarily prosecuted. No wholesale ban on novels as such was made, however, as some novels continued to appear during this period duly provided with the legal 'privilège', while others were published abroad or in France and circulated clandestinely.¹ The desire to safeguard the interests of traditional morality was the determining factor in this decision and those novelists who refused to abide by it were dealt with accordingly.²

This proscription of novels was a symptom of the conflict between novelists and critics in the first half of the eighteenth century. Attacked more often in the seventeenth century on literary rather than on moral grounds, the novelist of the 1730's now found himself confronted with a reversal of the critics' priorities and subjected to accusations of immorality for having exceeded the boundaries of good taste. It was the novelists' inability to resolve this conflict between aesthetics and morality that led to the restrictions on his freedom of expression in 1738.

Such censorship had the effect of considerably diminishing the growth of novelistic production until 1744.³ After this

1. May, G., Op.cit., p. 13.

2. Vide, Ibid., pp. 79-81, and Green, F.C., Op. cit., pp. 175-176.

3. May, G., Op. cit., p. 92.

date the relaxation of the stringent regulations on the publication of novels provoked a spate of erotic and pornographic works,¹ which only revived the vexed question of the status of the novel in literature. In his Entretiens sur les Romans, 1755, the Abbé Jacquin exceeded even Père Porée by the intensity of his attacks on the pernicious effects of novels, while Delasolle² and the Chevalier de Mouhy³ both ascribed to the standard arguments defending the moral aims of the genre. This continued emphasis on the necessity of protecting the conventional standards of morality had been thus motivated by the flow of mediocre and vulgar works published between 1745-1761. During this period the French novel declined, and was overshadowed, in quality at least, by the works of the 'Philosophes',⁴ and the translations of English novels.⁵ The better novelists of the first half of the eighteenth century such as Lesage, Prévost, Marivaux and Crébillon fils had published their major works by 1745. From this date to the publication of La Nouvelle Héloïse in 1761 only the philosophical tale⁶ could be said to

1. e.g. Le Portier des Chartreux, Gervaise de Latouche, 1745. Thérèse Philosophe, Marquis d'Argens, 1748. Margot la Ravaudeuse, Foucheret de Montbron, 1750.

2. Deux Amis, Préface, 1754.

3. Le Financier, Préface, 1755.

4. e.g. L'Homme Machine, La Mettrie, 1748; Lettres sur les aveugles, Diderot, 1749; De l'Esprit des Lois, Montesquieu, 1748; Traité des Sensations, Condillac, 1754.

5. e.g. Pamela, Richardson, translated by Prévost, 1742; Tom Jones, Fielding, translated by La Place, 1750; Clarissa Harlowe, Richardson, translated by Prévost, 1751.

6. e.g. Zadig and Candide by Voltaire.

have provided works comparable to those fictional masterpieces of the period 1715-1745.

During this thirty year period, despite the poor reputation from which it suffered and the official censorship to which it was submitted, the novel had undergone a development which it had never known before. Unencumbered by the rules and precepts of Classical dogma, the novel constituted the only literary form to possess a direct apprehension of contemporary life and manners. It, alone, portrayed modern man and defined his ambitions in a world where social and religious barriers had begun to lose their rigidity, and where established beliefs were constantly being subjected to rigorous examination. What the philosophy of the period stressed by reasoning and polemics, the novel accomplished by rehabilitating the instincts and the emotions in its portrayal of the individual's energetic rise to success, and his search for happiness through materialistic rather than through transcendental goals. The novel in this first period of the eighteenth century therefore became a faithful rendering of man's individual destiny in society. For the first time the bourgeoisie possessed its own form of literature and recognized itself in works which, instead of holding it up to ridicule, exalted its virtues and encouraged its aspirations.

With the appearance of La Nouvelle Héloïse in 1761, the novel was to regain some of its lost esteem in the eyes of the critics. The unexpected success with which the novel was

greeted¹ was proof of a decided change in the tone of French society. Sensibility and humanitarianism now prevailed and critics and novelists temporarily united in extolling the moral utility of the novel,² thus healing the differences of opinion which had separated them in the first half of the century. This change in sensibility was discernible in the existence of a predominantly virtuous and sentimental bourgeois reading public which had begun to replace the libertine aristocracy as the arbiters of literary taste.³ It was to this type of public that Mme. de Beaumont referred in the Preface to the second edition of her Lettres du Marquis de Roselle, published in 1764:

L'accueil que le public a bien voulu faire à cet ouvrage moral a rendu cette seconde édition nécessaire, plus tôt qu'on ne l'aurait pensé. L'auteur s'est fait un devoir de répondre à cet empressement en y faisant quelques changements et quelques corrections qui lui ont paru plus propres à remplir le double objet d'instruction et d'agrément qu'on s'est proposé.

Two years earlier Diderot had expressed this same didactic point of view more emphatically in his Eloge de Richardson:

S'il importe aux hommes d'être persuadés qu'indépendamment de toute considération ultérieure à cette vie, nous n'avons rien de mieux à faire pour être heureux que d'être vertueux, quel service Richardson n'a-t-il pas rendu à l'espèce humaine? Il n'a point démontré cette vérité; mais il l'a fait sentir.⁴

1. Vide, Préface, "Ce livre n'est point fait pour circuler dans le monde, et convient à très peu de lecteurs."

2. There were, however, certain critics like Fréron, Voltaire and Marmontel who accused La Nouvelle Héloïse of immorality.

3. Vide, H. Coulet, Op. cit., pp. 420-421.

4. Oeuvres Esthétiques, Ed. Garnier, Paris, 1959, p. 32.

This desire to instruct the reader by appealing to his emotions was shared by the majority of the novelists of this period. They became willing disciples of Rousseau whose religiosity and moralism were found to be more attractive than the aridity of voltairianism. Whereas Candide had been, in part, a satirical attack on the novel, La Nouvelle Héloïse was considered by its superficial imitators as an exemplary model of the didactic sentimental novel. Unlike the false and uncontrolled sentimentalism of his imitators, however, Rousseau's was marked by candor and lucidity. Like Prévost and Marivaux before him, but with greater force, Rousseau fully portrayed the conflict between the individual's right to self-expression and the religious, social and moral code of a society which excluded passion. Misunderstanding Rousseau, his followers took to fervently exalting passion and to reducing morality to sensibility. In their hands, intelligence ceased to control the emotions and the novel became a moral treatise filled with exaggerated and mawkish sentimentality.¹

This type of exacerbated sensibility in Rousseau's successors not only deformed his thought but ultimately led the novel to justify the portrayal of morally condemnable acts and people in the name of moral edification. The edifying statements of novelists such as Laclos and Sade, as manifested in their

1. This type of novel remained one of the most important forms of fiction until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Prefaces,¹ were written to deceive the reader into believing that their works, far from being subversive and corruptive, were all the more morally edifying in as far as they warned the reader in advance of the evils to be avoided in society. This argument is aptly summed up by Laclos in the Preface to Les Liaisons Dangereuses:

L'utilité de l'ouvrage, qui peut-être sera encore plus contestée, me paraît pourtant plus facile à établir. Il me semble au moins que c'est rendre un service aux mœurs, que de dévoiler les moyens qu'emploient ceux qui en ont de bonnes, et je crois que ces lettres pourront concourir efficacement à ce but.

Laclos' apprehensions proved to be justified and the novel was considered by his contemporaries as being a sympathetic portrayal of libertine mores. Today literary critics are more inclined to take the novel's Preface at face value and see Les Liaisons Dangereuses as marking an attempt to depict a progressive and respectable bourgeoisie's triumph over an unenlightened and corrupt aristocracy.² The latter's defence was assumed by Sade whose pretences to follow the moral dictates of the didactic novel only served to disguise his own personal hedonistic philosophy.³

This growing tendency to convey immorality under the guise of morality had already caused certain critics to view

1. e.g. Les Liaisons Dangereuses & Les Malheurs de la Vertu.

2. Vide, H. Coulet, Op. cit., pp. 471-482.

3. Vide, Justine ou Les Malheurs de la Vertu, Préface.

this phenomenon with alarm. Marmontel in his Essai sur les Romans Considérés du Côté Moral, published in 1787, conceived of the novel as being primarily a means of correcting morals and not of arousing emotions. It was useless, he felt, to overwhelm and depress the reader with the spectacle of sufferings and misfortunes, unless he was at the same time inspired by a hatred for the vices or weaknesses which precipitate the downfall of the hero. In the character portrayed, misfortune should be clearly shown as the result of crime, and crime as the consequence of a moral lapse. Marmontel emphasised the moral responsibilities of the novelist who, having a wide choice of subjects at his disposal, was morally bound to select those which would enlighten and edify his public.

This preconceived idea that the novel must have a moral purpose necessarily imposed limits upon the novelist's freedom of expression by diminishing his choice of subjects. However, unlike the majority of contemporary novelists, Laclos, Restif de la Bretonne and Sade refused to subject the novel to a cloying sentimentality and idealism and, instead, chose to set it on the path to that greater realism which it was to show in the nineteenth century. Diderot, too, had raised doubts as to the authenticity of the image of life reflected in the sentimental novel of this period, but his novels remained unpublished before 1796 and were, therefore, unknown to the majority of his

contemporaries.¹ To these novelists the moralising tone of Marmontel was anathema, not because they all necessarily desired to be immoral in their work, but because they wanted to exercise their right to mirror life in all its aspects. In their opinion the didactic novel and its offshoots, 'le genre troubadour' and 'le genre pastoral', through their reticence to express the more realistic aspects of life, only distorted nature. This inordinate moral preaching and exasperating sentimentality only deprived the novel of its freedom of inspiration and expression and led to 'invraisemblance'. This reaction against the sentimental novel was exemplified by Sade at the close of the century:

C'est donc la nature qu'il faut saisir quand on travaille dans ce genre, c'est le coeur de l'homme, le plus singulier de ses ouvrages, et nullement la vertu, parce que la vertu, quelque belle, quelque nécessaire qu'elle soit, n'est pourtant qu'une des modes de ce coeur étonnant dont la profonde étude est si nécessaire au romancier, et que le roman, miroir fidèle de ce coeur, doit nécessairement en tracer tous les plis.²

This plea for greater realism in the novel was largely to go unheard until the advent of the early nineteenth century writers who vindicated the novelist's right to an absolute freedom of choice of subject matter by reacting against the

1. La Religieuse, written in 1760, and Jacques le Fataliste, written in 1771-1773 were respectively published in La Correspondance Littéraire in 1780 and 1778-1780.

2. Idée sur les Romans in Les Crimes de l'Amour, 1800, Ed. Rouveyre, Paris, 1878, p. 25.

tenets of the moralistic school of the eighteenth century critics.¹ In the years immediately preceding the Revolution the novel, with few exceptions, had thus strayed from the path of realism it had adopted in the first half of the century. Seeking an escape from the harsh realities of the day, the novel resurrected the fantastic, the fabulous, the poetic and the excessive. Combining anguish with enthusiasm, it inspired utopias which foreshadowed the Revolution and the societies of the future;² poetic stories of people in distant lands who had preserved their innocence;³ pastoral tales filled with scenes of natural beauty;⁴ adventures which evoked the age of courtly love;⁵ and, finally, narratives which, by their sombre and apocalyptic tones, conveyed the apprehensive fear and general unrest caused by the dissolution of the 'ancien régime'.⁶

1. From Rousseau through to the Empire the didactic novel remained, however, the dominant category of the genre. Vide, Etienne, Servais, Le Genre Romanesque en France depuis l'Apparition de la Nouvelle Héloïse jusqu'aux Approches de la Révolution, Paris, Armand Colin, 1922.

2. e.g. La Découverte Australe par un Homme Volant, Restif, 1781.

3. e.g. Paul et Virginie, Bernardin de St. Pierre, 1787.

4. e.g. Estelle et Némorin, Florian, 1788.

5. e.g. La Fleur des Batailles, Tressan, 1778.

6. e.g. Dolbreuse, Loaisel de Tréogate, 1785.

B. Aspects of the Novel in France, 1789-1830

With the advent of the Revolution the novel was to suffer a temporary eclipse until the beginning of the Directory, a fact which can be mainly attributed to the general political unrest, during which the public was so obsessed by current events as to have no time for imaginative literature. Newspapers, reports of meetings, lists of suspects and condemned prisoners, news bulletins and proclamations had replaced the novel as a faithful image of contemporary life.

Another factor in this temporary decline of fiction was the emigration of many writers of the 'ancien régime' who were, therefore, forced by circumstances to publish abroad.¹ Of those novelists of the previous generation who remained in France throughout the Revolution, such as Laclos, St. Pierre, Restif de la Bretonne and Sade, none produced anything of importance during this period. Among the minor novelists, Mme. de Genlis continued to write during the Revolution, and Louvet de Couvray put the finishing touches to his popular and licentious novel, Les Aventures du Chevalier de Faublas.

As a result of these two preceding factors there was a general depression in the publishing trade between 1789-1795, and only one publisher, Pierre Didot, had the courage to continue.² From 1795-1813, however, the trade slowly recovered,

1. e.g. Mme. de Souza, Adèle de Sénange, published in England, 1793.

2. Pottinger, D.T., The French Book Trade in the Ancien Régime 1500-1791, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1958, pp. 22-43.

despite the restrictive measures of the Bonapartist régime.¹ This decline and subsequent revival of the publishing trade, before and after 1795, is reflected in the reports of the journal, La Décade Philosophique.² During the Terror the number of novels decreased, though translations of English authors, already much in demand before 1789, were still eagerly sought after because of the democratic sentiments which they sometimes expressed.³ The same journal notes, however, that in 1795 the native novelists were becoming more active:

The Revolution has not been disastrous to novels; New ones are appearing every day, certain proof that they still find a great number of readers. It seems that in the midst of political troubles the mind needs more than ever to occupy itself with chimeras, to get outside itself and to wander in another universe.⁴

This "great number of readers" included a new public, "un public populaire"⁵, which had been stimulated by the educational reforms of the Revolution and by a strong sense of civic duty to free themselves from the bonds of illiteracy.

1. George, Albert, The Development of French Romanticism--The Impact of the Industrial Revolution on Literature, Syracuse, Syracuse Univ. Press, 1955, p. 44.

2. Quoted by Green, F.C., French Novelists from the Revolution to Proust, New York, Ungar, 1964, pp. 8-10.

3. e.g. Godwin, William, Caleb Williams, 1794.

4. Green, F.C., Op. cit., p. 10.

5. Thibaudet, Albert, Histoire de la Littérature Française de 1789 à nos jours, Paris, Stock, 1936, pp. 5-7.

The eighteenth century, despite its good intentions, had possessed a literature reserved for an educated élite. The social problems raised by Rousseau, Voltaire and Diderot in the Encyclopédie, the Dictionnaire Philosophique, the Nouvelle Héloïse or the Contrat Social went beyond the understanding of the lower classes due to their general lack of education. Only Restif de la Bretonne, among the better known novelists of the 'ancien régime', expressed their feelings and aspirations through his frequent use of the popular vernacular.

However, during the Revolution refurbished forms of literary expression arose which made a direct appeal to the popular imagination, and thus helped in the education of the lower classes. This was the period of the patriotic song and poem; of the political harangue; and of the spontaneous printing of countless newspapers. Due to these more direct forms of mass communication, this period did not give rise to a similar flood of popular works in fiction, and it was not until the beginning of 1796, during the Directory, that the popular novel really came into its own, a direct product, nonetheless, of the Revolutionary period. At its inception, the popular novel formed two distinct branches; on the one hand, the 'roman bouffon' or the 'roman gai', often of a licentious nature, which was characterised by the early work of Pigault-Lebrun; and, on the other hand, the 'roman sentimental' fused with elements of the 'roman noir', moral in aim, and whose chief practitioner was Ducray-Duminil.

The novel at the beginning of 1796 did little, however, directly to reflect the social and political changes of the day. Only a few novels of this period evoke the events of the Revolutionary years. Pigault-Lebrun and Fiévée both sketch episodes of the Terror and the fall of Robespierre,¹ while Mme. de Souza and Sénac de Meilhan relate the adventures of the 'émigrés'.² This almost total reluctance to mirror the life of the times represents a natural reaction on the part of writers who had been too caught up in the events of a period, so shortly removed in time, to be able to view them with any detachment. The majority, too overly disgusted at the loss of traditional values to even wish to describe them in novels, preferred to leave this task to the more realistic forms of contemporary journalism and memoirs. This period of history would be more vividly described by a later generation of novelists, when the impact of events had been more fully absorbed.

At the turn of the century, however, this refusal to portray the manners and customs of the time increasingly became the rule. Between 1800 and 1820 the progress of the novel toward that faithful depiction of everyday life ceased,

1. e.g. L'Enfant du Carnaval, 1796.
La Dot de Suzette, 1798.

2. e.g. Charles et Marie, 1801.
L'Emigré, 1798.

with the exception of certain novels of Pigault-Lebrun.¹ As André Le Breton stated:

.....si au lendemain de la Révolution, aux premières années du XIXe siècle, le roman s'est trouvé seul en état d'exprimer l'âme du temps, il en exprime l'âme, à vrai dire, bien plus que la vie extérieure et les moeurs.²

Speaking of the novelists of this period the same writer adds:

.....des événements et des hommes de la Révolution ou de L'Empire ils n'ont à peu près rien dit.³

.....Le contre-coup de la Révolution est partout dans leurs oeuvres; l'image de la France républicaine ou impériale en est presque complètement absente.⁴

This was particularly true of the sentimental novel, one of the most widespread forms of the early nineteenth century. In the novels of Mesdames de Staël, de Souza, de Charrière, de Krüdener and Cottin, the situations presented are fairly identical. In a story of unrequited love portraying the same stereotyped characters and the same conventional situations, the outline of the plot remains almost invariable: two young people in love are unable to marry, due either to their parents' opposition or their own idealistic pledges.

This type of fiction was a pale imitation of Werther

1. e.g. Monsieur Botte, 1802; Jérôme, 1804; Une Macédoine, 1811; Tableaux de Société, 1813; Adélaïde de Méran, 1815.

2. Le Roman Français au XIXe Siècle avant Balzac, Paris, Boivin, 1901, p. 4.

3. Ibid., p. 4.

4. Ibid., p. 5.

and La Nouvelle Héloïse. It lacked flesh and blood characters, and its melodramatic adventures were invariably played out against the uniform background of high society, which resembled, more often than not, a vague décor than a realistically-drawn milieu. Flaubert ironically summed up this type of fiction which used to give such great pleasure to the fifteen year old Emma Bovary before she became enamored with the works of Walter Scott:

Ce n'étaient qu'amours, amants, amantes, dames persécutées s'évanouissant dans des pavillons solitaires, postillons qu'on tue à tous les relais, chevaux qu'on crève à toutes les pages, forêts sombres, troubles du coeur, serments, sanglots, larmes et baisers, nacelles au clair de lune, rossignols dans les bosquets, messieurs braves comme des lions, doux comme des agneaux, vertueux comme on ne l'est pas, toujours bien mis, et qui pleurent comme des urnes.¹

Pigault-Lebrun, departing from his earlier picaresque tales of adventure, had also tried his hand at this type of fiction with the publication of his novel, Angélique et Jeanneton in 1799. It met with little success,² however, and he was rarely to resort to this type of fiction again.³

This contrast between the momentous social and political events of the early nineteenth century and the comparatively

1. Madame Bovary, Ed. Garnier Flammarion, 1966, pp. 71-72.

2. Vide, La Folie Espagnole, p. 588.

3. The novel, La Famille Luceval, is written in a similar vein.

colorless content of the novel of this period is most strikingly revealed in the 'roman personnel'.¹ This takes on a poetic and exotic character in Chateaubriand, an analytic one in Constant and Senancour. Theirs is a subjective art, in which their own autobiography is thinly transposed. A solitary personality emerges, their own, under the guise of 'René', 'Adolphe' or 'Oberman'. Descendants of Rousseau, they employ the first-person narrative form of the diary, memoirs or occasionally, as in Oberman, the letter-novel. Escaping from the novelistic conventions of the 'roman sentimental', the novel offered them the most appropriate means of expressing their innermost thoughts and feelings. As Mme. de Staël had found in the novel a means of conveying a certain feminine ideology, so Chateaubriand, Senancour, and Constant used the genre to reveal and analyse the subtlest shades of inner feeling. The action of the novel no longer gravitated around a series of events imposed from without and beyond the control of the leading protagonists, but around the evocation and the exploration of their most complex emotions.

However introspective and however removed from the historical realities of the day these novels appeared to be, they, nevertheless, reflected a certain 'Zeitgeist' which was deeply-rooted and widespread enough to be given the name 'mal du siècle'. This may be attributed to three main factors.

1. Vide, Merlant, Joachim, Le Roman personnel de Rousseau à Fromentin, Paris, Hachette, 1905.

First of all to the literary influences of pre-romanticism, which greatly contributed to exalt and to exacerbate the passions; secondly to the anguish and turbulence of the Revolutionary period which persecuted and forced these writers into exile; and lastly to the progress of individualism at the end of the eighteenth century. This last factor, influenced by the free-thinking 'Philosophes', brought about a weakening of the Christian ethic and promoted the emancipation of the individual in the fields of politics and philosophy. Combined with these other factors, the dissolution of that social life of the Salons, so cherished by the 'ancien régime', had the total effect of forcing the individual to resort more to his own inner resources. If these writers had the good taste to free the novel from the dull insipidity of the 'roman sentimental', they, nonetheless, forced the novel off the realistic path it had taken with Marivaux, Diderot, Laclos, Restif de la Bretonne, and more recently still with their contemporary, Pigault-Lebrun. The same generation of novelists included writers who appeared to belong to different ages.¹

As a result of their varied approaches to the novel, the writers of this period can be divided into three distinct groups. In the first group there are those novelists who were

1. e.g. in 1802 were published:

Amélie Mansfield - Mme. Cottin
Delphine - Mme. de Staël
René - Chateaubriand
M. Botte - Pigault-Lebrun

survivors of the eighteenth century and who prolonged their century beyond its bounds; such were Mme. de Charrière, Xavier de Maistre and Mme. de Souza. In the second group are to be found those who, though formed in the eighteenth century, were more strongly influenced by the events of the Revolution, such as Pigault-Lebrun, Ducray-Duminil and Mme. de Staël. Those of the third group are the representatives of a new humanity, of a new mode of expression, characterised by the work of Senancour, Constant and Chateaubriand.

This new mode of expression, however, was rarely to take the form of the novel. Senancour was to produce nothing of significance after Oberman in 1804, and after René and Atala, which were themselves but extracts taken from his larger epic work Les Natchez. Chateaubriand, with the exception of Les Martyrs in 1809, was to abandon novel writing altogether. Like Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant showed an equal disdain for the novel form.¹ He refused to consider himself a novelist and allowed his political writings and his religious philosophy to occupy his literary activities. He attached little importance to Adolphe,² and stated that his only thought

1. Vide, Les Natchez, Préface: Chateaubriand, speaking of the second part, indicates that:

".....le merveilleux disparaît mais l'intrigue se complique, les personnages se multiplient; quelques-uns d'entre eux sont pris presque dans les rangs inférieurs de la société. Enfin le roman remplace le poème, sans néanmoins descendre au-dessous du style de René et d'Atala."

2. Written in 15 days in 1807 but not published until 1816.

in writing the novel had been to:

..... convaincre deux ou trois amis réunis à la campagne de la possibilité de donner une sorte d'intérêt à un roman dont les personnages se réduisaient à deux et dont la situation serait toujours la même.¹

Like Chateaubriand, Constant despised the over-burdened plots and innumerable characters, typical of the popular novel of his day.

This latter form of novel, through the work of its two leading practitioners, Ducray-Duminil and Pigault-Lebrun, filled the gap left by other novelists between 1800 and 1820. For more than twenty years these two novelists continued to publish novels at regular intervals. Between 1796 and 1818, Ducray-Duminil wrote more than fifteen novels,² while Pigault-Lebrun, beginning his novelistic career in the same year, was to have almost twenty novels published by 1829. It is true that Pigault-Lebrun only wrote one novel between 1821 and 1830, as he was primarily occupied during this period in writing his eight volume Histoire de France. It was precisely during these ten years that history was to play such a large part in the renewal of the novel form. Impressed by the success of Walter Scott's novels in France, Vigny, Balzac, Mérimée and Hugo had turned to the historical novel. Ever conscious of

1. Vide, Préface.

2. He had already published two children's novels before 1796. Lolotte et Fanfan, 1788; and Petit Jacques et Georgette, 1789.

current trends, Pigault-Lebrun also tried his hand at this new form in his last novel, La Sainte Ligue, published a year before the July Revolution of 1830.

Thus at the beginning of the nineteenth century the novel that prided itself on a certain aesthetic dignity occupied but a small section of a vast novelistic industry which had first sprung up around the 'roman populaire'. The latter, marked by a commercial character, offered works of mass consumption to an uneducated and semi-literate public. Such were the novels of Ducray-Duminil and, to a lesser extent, those of Pigault-Lebrun. From the Revolution on the public for this type of literature continued to increase. This was due, principally, to four factors; firstly the better organized brigades of 'colporteurs' who toured the provinces with popular works; secondly the elevation of the lending libraries to their position as depositaries of accepted literature; thirdly the recovery of the publishing trade after 1813;¹ and finally the progress made in education since the Restoration.²

This vogue of the 'roman populaire' was reflected by the books on display in provincial bookshops. Aside from a stock of French classics and translations of modern foreign novelists such as Scott and Cooper, most of the writers represented were the same whose works the 'colporteurs' peddled; Pigault-Lebrun, Ducray - Duminil, Lamothe Langon, Mme. de Souza,

1. Vide, George, Albert, Op. cit., pp. 37-45.

2. Ibid., pp. 21-23.

and the ever-present Mmes. de Genlis and Cottin.¹ Ducray-Duminil could even boast that his works were more widely read than those of Walter Scott. The novel, Coelina ou l'Enfant du Mystère was republished eleven times between 1798 and 1825 and more than a million copies printed. Even Balzac served his apprenticeship as a novelist by writing anonymous works² for popular consumption which, later, he was the first to despise.

Between them, Pigault-Lebrun and Ducray-Duminil, taking advantage of contemporary political and social circumstances, contributed to the popularisation of the novel, and, in so doing, helped to return novel-writing into an industry.³ Despite many failures and half-successes they did manage to give it a sort of regularised practice, if not aesthetic dignity and critical approval.⁴ This lack of aesthetic dignity only furthered the impression that the novel was a disreputable genre, deserving of its relegation to the bottom of the literary hierarchy. It would only be recognised as a genre

1. Ibid., pp. 43-44.

2. e.g. Vicaire des Ardennes, 1822
Argow le Pirate, 1824
Jane la Pâle, 1825

3. Sainte-Beuve, in 1840, called this type of literature: 'la littérature industrielle'. Quoted by Raimond, Michel, Le Roman depuis la Révolution, Paris, Armand Colin, 1967, p. 8.

4. Specific criticism of the popular novel was provided by the journalists of the period.

worthy of taking its place alongside drama and poetry when it was capable of analysing and specifying its own intrinsic values. It was not until Flaubert that the modern novel could truly be said to have come into existence, and to have started the trend which was to make it not only quantitatively but also qualitatively the most important literary genre in France.

C. The Life and Character of Pigault-Lebrun

Our biographical research on the author is based primarily on his autobiography entitled: Vie et Aventures de Pigault-Lebrun par lui-même, or, Mes Grandes et Petites Aventures, published by Gustave Barba, in 1836, a year after the death of Pigault-Lebrun.¹ Although the publisher firmly upholds the truth of this autobiography:

Si donc cette histoire présente presque toujours le vif intérêt du roman, c'est le mérite qui lui est propre et qui n'a rien coûté à la véracité de l'historien,²

certain details give the impression that Pigault-Lebrun has, in fact, created a slightly romanced version of his career, filling out his narrative with embellishments and anecdotes.³

1. Ed. Romans Illustrés, No. 6, Vol. 32.

2. Ibid., p. 1.

3. e.g. the fortuitous meetings of Pigault-Lebrun after his escape from prison with a) the convict Bontemps, p. 13, and b) the prostitute Esther, p. 18.

These, however, are of such minor importance that they in no way distort the general outlines of the author's life, as established by both past and present day critics.¹

1. Life. Born in the middle of the eighteenth century and living to the venerable old age of eighty-two, the life of Pigault-Lebrun spans a period of great political and social change in France. Nearing the age of forty at the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789, he was almost eighty, and still actively writing, when the Bourbon Restoration was overthrown in July 1830. A witness to the closing years of Louis XV's reign, as he was to the opening years of Louis Philippe's, Pigault-Lebrun took an active part in the political and social upheavals of the period.

Charles-Antoine-Guillaume Pigault de l'Epinoy, better known as Pigault-Lebrun, was born in Calais on April 8th, 1753, son of the town's chief magistrate, a harsh man in whom were ingrained all the prejudices of the 'ancien régime'. Pigault-

1. Vide, Bronne, Carlo, "Feu Pigault", BARL (Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Langue et Littérature Françaises), Bruxelles, 1961, pp. 54-61.

Grimaldi, Edouard, Hommage à la Mémoire de Pigault-Lebrun, Paris, 1840.

Le Breton, André, Le Roman Français au XIXe Siècle, Avant Balzac, Paris, Boivin, 1901, pp. 73-75.

Rabbe, Boisjohlin & Sainte-Preuve. Biographie des Contemporains, Paris, Rabbe, 1836, Vol. 4, pp. 945-946.

Saintsbury, George, A History of the French Novel, London, Macmillan, 1917, Vol. 1, pp. 457-458.

Wogue, Jules, "Le Centenaire de Pigault-Lebrun, ses Démêlés avec la Comédie Française", documents inédits, La Revue de France, juillet-août 1935, Vol. 4, pp. 310-319.

Lebrun completed his secondary education at the college of Boulogne-sur-mer, which was at that time directed by the Oratorians. From there his parents, who destined him for the bar, sent him to Paris to study law, but his volatile and vivacious character proved unfit for such a vocation. It was then decided to send him to London to learn business from a rich trader in the City, named Mr. Crawford, who was a friend of his father's.

On reaching London at the age of eighteen, Pigault-Lebrun found the amorous advances of his new employer's daughter, Jenny, to be more stimulating than his apprenticeship in commerce. Believing the zeal and talent of Pigault-Lebrun to be motivated by an interest in business affairs, Mr. Crawford entrusted to his care the delivery of an important cargo of goods to Brazil, valued at 20,000 pounds sterling. Jenny, now pregnant, and unwilling to part from her lover, disguised herself as a boy and stowed away on the ship with Pigault-Lebrun. The ship, seized in a storm, capsized off the Irish coast. Jenny was drowned, while Pigault-Lebrun having escaped the wreck, but too frightened to return to London, made his way back home, after having explained the incident in a letter to Mr. Crawford.

The latter, in turn, forwarded the information on to Pigault-Lebrun's father, who, considering his family name dishonored, immediately requested the drawing up of a 'lettre de cachet', and, on his son's return home, promptly had him

placed under lock and key. Imprisoned for two years, Pigault-Lebrun finally sought the forgiveness of his father who had him released and conscripted in 1774 as a gentleman-trooper in the 'gendarmerie d'élite de la petite maison du roi', a privileged corps which only received sons of well-to-do families. After having led a boisterous existence as an officer, Pigault-Lebrun was obliged to return to Calais when a royal decree by the new king, Louis XVI, disbanded the corps in 1776.

Unoccupied and bored by provincial life, Pigault-Lebrun became interested in a young neighbor of modest background, Eugénie Salens, who lived alone with her widowed mother. When Pigault-Lebrun raised the question of marriage, his father bitterly opposed the project, fearing, once again, a loss of family honor if the son were to marry below his station. Pigault-Lebrun retaliated against this rejection of his plans by eloping with Eugénie, having first deceived his father into financing his project on the pretext of wishing to continue his commercial studies in England. Once Pigault-Lebrun's real intentions were made known to his father through Mme. Salens, the magistrate had his son arrested and, with the help of a second 'lettre de cachet', caused him once again to be placed in confinement.

This time, however, Pigault-Lebrun refused to seek his father's clemency and chose to escape from prison with the help of the concierge's daughter. On learning that Eugénie and her mother had settled down in Amsterdam after the scandal caused by the elopement, Pigault-Lebrun set off for Holland

to rejoin her. Stopping on the way at Lille to visit a few of his former regimental comrades, he was stripped of his possessions in a place of ill-repute, after a rowdy night's revelry, by an impecunious young lady named Esther. The latter, sharing her bounty with an actor, promptly proceeded to leave town. Lacking resources but not resourcefulness, Pigault-Lebrun decided to replace the very same actor who had been an accomplice to the crime, and joined the local repertory theatre under the assumed name of Legris. He only remained with the company long enough to save the money necessary for his continued pursuit of Eugénie.

He finally found her and, encouraged in his matrimonial intentions by the blessing of Mme. Salens, decided to seek that of his father. The latter, as was to be expected in the circumstances, not only refused his consent but also refused the documents necessary for the ceremony of marriage to take place. The ceremony took place, however, due to the initiative of Mme. Salens, although the exact place of the wedding remains unknown.¹ When the news of this clandestine marriage reached Calais, Pigault-Lebrun was promptly disowned by his father, whose decision was communicated to his son by a decree of law drawn up by the mayor of Calais:

Je ne sais, monsieur, si le nom que vous portez
vous appartient mais ce qui est certain et

1. The research carried out by C. Bronne in the parish registers of Liège remained unfruitful. Op. cit., p. 56.

constaté par un décret que j'ai rendu à la sollicitation de l'honorable magistrat dont vous prétendez être le fils, c'est que ce fils est mort depuis deux ans. Si, donc, il vous prenait la fantaisie de venir en France, je vous conseille de ne pas oublier que la loi punit sévèrement les imposteurs. Vous trouverez ici un extrait du décret constatant la mort du jeune Pigault.¹

Cut off from all family assistance by his father and with the added burdens of marital responsibility to consider, Pigault-Lebrun was obliged to look for work. Taking advantage of the little experience he had gained as an actor, Pigault-Lebrun made his way to Brussels and from there to Liège, where he again took to the stage. With sufficient money saved, he left the theatre and set out for Calais to seek a redress of justice for his father's action. Unable to change his act of deacease in his town of birth, he appealed to the Paris Law Courts, and after considerable delay, his case was finally considered. His father, however, aided by influential friends, won the case; the decision, passed by the mayor of Calais, was reaffirmed, and Pigault-Lebrun found himself compelled to pay the court costs. Whereupon he resigned himself to the situation, and changing colors, adopted the name of Lebrun.

He decided to stay in Paris and once again took to the stage, combining the triple functions of actor, producer, and playwright. It was at this time that he wrote such plays as

1. Mes Grandes et Petites Aventures, Paris, Barba, 1836, p. 18.

Le Pessimiste, L'Amour et la Raison, and La Mère rivale de sa Fille, played respectively in 1789, 1790, and 1791. In 1792, seeing France's frontiers threatened by the invading Coalition powers, he enlisted as a private soldier in Custine's cavalry regiment, distinguished himself at the Battle of Valmy, and returned to Paris with the rank of warrant officer. He was then sent to Saumur, during the uprising in the Vendée, to take charge of military supplies. It was here that he pronounced his Discours à la Société de la Liberté et de l'Egalité, May 26, 1793,¹ a vigorous and patriotic appeal to the local citizens, the purpose of which was to restore the local population's waning belief in republican ideals and institutions, at a time when Saumur, itself, was threatened by the approaching forces of the insurgents.

Pigault-Lebrun's own enthusiasm for republican ideals and virtues was, also, to wane when he later witnessed the profiteering and racketeering of the army's suppliers. So great were the profits made at the expense of the soldier's comfort and security, and so well concealed through the corruption and bribery of military personnel, that Pigault-Lebrun's disgust at such exploitation led him to shed his uniform and return once again to Paris to take up his theatrical career. At the age of forty his life of political and military adventure was over.

1. This speech was also read to the Société des Amis de la Liberté et de l'Egalité of Calais, June 18th and 19th, 1793.

After writing a few more plays which were largely based on his military experiences,¹ Pigault-Lebrun made the acquaintance of the publisher J.N. Barba² who soon became his close friend. It was he who encouraged Pigault-Lebrun to write a novel, and in 1796 appeared L'Enfant du Carnaval. The novel proved a success and was republished seventeen times in the space of thirty years.³ But in 1798 the relative failure of the novel Les Barons de Felsheim caused Pigault-Lebrun to cast doubts on his vocation as a novelist, all the more so since he had continued to write successful plays during this very same period.⁴ On the instigation of Barba, Pigault-Lebrun added two more volumes to his novel and its success increased accordingly. Now firmly consolidated in the public esteem, Pigault-Lebrun wrote in rapid succession, Angélique et Jeanneton; Mon Oncle Thomas; La Folie Espagnole; and M. Botte, published respectively in 1799, 1800, 1801 and 1802, all of which were

1. e.g. Les Dragons et les Bénédictines, 1794.
Les Dragons en Cantonnement, 1794.

2. Besides publishing the works of Pigault-Lebrun, he published those of Picard and all the novels written by Paul de Kock during his youth. His firm was situated at the Palais Royal, centre of literary activity until 1830. He was succeeded by his son Gustave Barba in 1836.

3. Ironically enough this very same novel brought about the temporary ruin of Barba in 1826 when the seventeenth edition was seized at the request of the royal attorney general and placed on the index. Barba lost his printer's license, was fined and imprisoned.

4. e.g. Claudine de Florian, 1797; Le Major Palmer, 1797; Le Cordonnier de Damas, 1798; Les Rivaux d'eux-mêmes, 1798.

largely successful with the exception of the first novel.

Meanwhile he had lost his wife Eugénie and had remarried the sister of the actor Michaud. He had also lost his father who, in his last days, had become reconciled with Pigault, and had left him, as the eldest son, with the greater part of his inheritance. However, on the death of his father, Pigault-Lebrun ignored the terms of the will and instead shared the inheritance among his seven brothers and sisters, with the result that he continued to remain poor. It was also at this time that Pigault-Lebrun drew up a contract with Barba, by the terms of which the author would receive from his publisher a pension of 1200 'livres' on the publication of his fortieth volume, independent of the revenue of each individual work and to be payable to his wife in the event of his death.

Not yet in a position to meet the terms of this contract, Pigault-Lebrun, in order to meet his financial responsibilities as family head, obtained a customs position in 1806, which he held during the successive régimes until forced to resign in 1824. According to Edouard Grimaldi:

.....un personnage infâme, l'un des valets du pouvoir, profita d'une circonstance malheureuse pour lui nuire.¹

The circumstances of Pigault-Lebrun's dismissal are not specified by Grimaldi, but it is possible that, at this time,

1. Hommage à la Mémoire de Pigault-Lebrun, Op. cit.
p. 18.

certain ultramontane influences drew the attention of Charles X's reactionary government to the irreligious nature of certain of Pigault-Lebrun's former works. These were subsequently banned more than twenty years after their original date of publication.¹ During this eighteen year period as customs official, Pigault-Lebrun had divided his spare time between his literary career² and his family responsibilities at Saint Cloud where he led a reasonably comfortable bourgeois life.

After his dismissal from the Customs, Pigault-Lebrun retired definitively from active public service and withdrew to Valence in the Dauphiné to spend a year with his son-in-law Victor Augier, a distinguished lawyer, his daughter, and his young grandson, another future writer in the person of Emile Augier. Pigault-Lebrun then returned to Paris accompanied by his family. Considered by those who knew him as a good husband, a considerate father³ and an admirable grandfather,

1. e.g. Le Citateur, 1803, a collection of anti-religious aphorisms; and L'Enfant du Carnaval, 1796.

2. e.g. a) ten novels published between 1806 and 1820.
b) several short stories and prose pieces published jointly in Mélanges Littéraires et Critiques, 1816, and in Le Beau-Père et le Gendre, 1822.

c) the beginning of his eight-volume Histoire de France, 1823-1828.

3. This was exemplified when Pigault-Lebrun, in order to raise a sufficient dowry for the projected marriage between his daughter and the lawyer Victor Augier, complained to the Committee of the Comédie Française in a letter dated October, 1819, of the undue neglect to which his plays had been subjected: "C'est une terrible chose que de marier sa fille. Il existe dans ma très petite caisse un vide effrayant, et j'ose me flatter, messieurs, que vous la remplirez en partie à l'aide de L'Amour et la Raison, et des Rivaux d'eux-mêmes, qui n'ont pas été joués depuis l'éternité....." The Committee, swayed by this letter, complied with the request. Quoted by J. Wogue, Op. cit., p. 315.

Pigault-Lebrun, having witnessed the downfall of the régime which had persecuted him, died on July 24, 1835 at La Celle near Saint Cloud while in his eighty-third year.

Pigault-Lebrun's life can be divided into two different parts. The first, until the age of forty, when he gave up his military career, was marked by its activity and instability, a life filled with sentimental adventures, military exploits and constant wanderings; the second, until his death at the age of eighty-two, was more notable for its calmness and stability, a life distinguished by literary activity and family happiness. The boisterous, unruly life of an amorous adventurer gave way to the comfortable, disciplined life of a sedentary bourgeois, or to use the pithy phrase quoted by Carlo Bronne:

.....sa vie commença comme celle de Des Grieux
et finit comme celle de Greuze.¹

2. Character. Having spent the formative years of his life in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Pigault-Lebrun was by temperament a product of that particular spirit of the Age of Enlightenment associated with Voltaire. Irreligious, sardonic, sometimes smutty, but never insensitive, he possessed the social and political convictions of a moderate middle class reformer,² and the literary sympathies of an educated neo-classicist.³ At a time when France was being

1. Op. cit., p. 55.

2. Vide, L'Enfant du Carnaval, pp. 384-394.

3. Ibid., pp. 156-158.

rocked by political upheavals from within and lured away from her classical traditions by a new literary sensibility from without, Pigault-Lebrun continued to plead for order, clarity, and reason. Avoiding extremism and fanaticism, he refused to imitate the fiery demagoguery of certain Jacobins,¹ or the maudlin sentimentality of certain Romantics,² but showed throughout his work, as throughout his life, with the exception of his early youth, a marked taste for moderation and tolerance.

In addition to these qualities Pigault-Lebrun possessed a certain moral integrity which prevented him from renouncing his own principles for reasons of political or personal expediency. Refusing to be an accomplice to the corrupt practices he encountered as head of military supplies in Saumur, he resigned from the Republican army, while later, under the Empire, he proved as equally incorruptible in the presence of influential people by declining to seek important or lucrative posts.³ This loyalty to his political and moral principles was to last until the end of his life. Removed from his post as a custom's official in 1824, and despite the censorship of certain of his works,⁴ he continued to voice his moderate

1. Ibid., pp. 393-394.

2. Vide, L'Officieux, pp. 216-217.
Le Garçon Sans Souci, p. 116.

3. Vide, Grimaldi, Edouard, Hommage à la Mémoire de Pigault-Lebrun, Op. cit., pp. 11-12.

4. See above, p. 48.

political views and give vent to his anti-religious feelings during the most reactionary years of the Restoration.¹

This very same moral integrity and unselfishness was also apparent in his closest personal relationships. Although in his youth he can be justifiably accused of certain ill-intentions,² they were not motivated by malice but by adolescent passion. Indeed, even given the social conventions of the day, the treatment he received at the hands of his own father was far from justified. On the other hand, his conduct towards his first wife, Eugénie Salens, was a model of resoluteness, resourcefulness, and, above all, passionate fidelity.³ Equally commendable was his reaction to his father's will which had left him as practically sole heir to the family fortune.⁴

Another aspect of Pigault-Lebrun's character was his frankness and sincerity. He preferred to voice his dislikes openly rather than resort to shabby underhand acts, as he proved in his novel, Jérôme, where he openly attacked the Abbé Geoffroy⁵ for having unfavorably reviewed his previous novel, M. Botte.⁶ Like the literary character he created, Pigault-

1. Vide, La Sainte Ligue, published in 1829.

2. See above, pp. 41-42.

3. See above, pp. 42-43.

4. See above, p. 47.

5. Vide, pp. 34, 41-42, 66-68, 86-87, 105, 262-263.

6. Vide, Le Journal des Débats, January 10, 1803.

Lebrun was a 'bourru bienfaisant', stubborn, bluff, and sharp-witted, a little boorish at times, but nearly always open-minded, frank, and energetic in word as in deed. According to his friend, Edouard Grimaldi, who only knew him in his later years:

Il fut un homme de famille avant tout, ami sincère et dévoué, ne connaissant ni l'orgueil ni la vanité, vivant pour aimer ses semblables.¹

The publisher, Barba, however, who had known Pigault-Lebrun for a considerably longer period of time than Grimaldi, used a more colorful and less flattering description when adding a final comment to the deceased's racy autobiography:

Pigault-Lebrun fut un excellent renard qui a pu croquer plus d'une poulette, mais qui ne désira jamais les raisins verts et ne flatta pas les corbeaux.²

1. Hommage à la Mémoire de Pigault-Lebrun, Op. cit., pp. 18-19.

2. Vie et Aventures de Pigault-Lebrun par lui-même, Op. cit., p. 148.

PART ONE

PRINCIPAL THEMES

Preface.

The novels of Pigault-Lebrun were written over a period of more than thirty years.¹ After having begun his literary career as a playwright,² it was not until he had reached middle age that he decided to turn his attention to the novel. Encouraged by the success of his first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, published in 1796, Pigault-Lebrun continued to write fiction until 1829, date of publication of his historical novel, La Sainte Ligue. Of the nineteen novels that he wrote, seven were published under the Directory and the Consulate; four under the Empire;³ and the remainder under the Bourbon Restoration. With the exception of the period 1820-1829, when he only published two novels, Pigault-

1. In our study of the novels of Pigault-Lebrun we have essentially used the edition of the author's Oeuvres Complètes in twenty volumes, published in Paris by J.N. Barba, 1822-1824. All the novels are included in this edition, with the exception of L'Enfant du Bordel, published anonymously in Paris in 1800, and La Sainte Ligue, published in Paris by J.N. Barba in 1829.

2. He had already written over a dozen plays before the publication of his first novel. With the exception of the two plays, Les Calvinistes, ou Villars à Nîmes, written in cooperation with A.J. Dumaniant in 1806 and Les Memnon Français, written in 1816, his career as a playwright was over by the end of the eighteenth century.

3. The novels Une Macédoine and Tableaux de Société were written under the Empire but published under the Restoration.

Lebrun wrote at a regular rate of almost a novel a year. During the period of the Restoration, however, his inspiration flagged and his last five novels¹ were considerably shorter than the preceding ones. From 1821 to 1829 he abandoned the novel to devote his exclusive attention to the writing of an eight-volume Histoire de France, which he left uncompleted for fear of censorship.

With the exception of the novels La Folie Espagnole and La Sainte Ligue, which deal respectively with medieval Spain and sixteenth century France, the novels of Pigault-Lebrun have as their historical background the period covering the reign of Louis XV to the beginning of the Restoration. The novels that treat this period are almost equally divided among those that portray the life of the 'ancien régime', and those that portray the life of the post-revolutionary régimes. The geographical background of his novels is not, however, limited to France,² or even to Europe.³ He depicts

1. Le Garçon sans Souci, 1817; L'Officieux, 1818; L'Egoïsme, 1819; L'Observateur, 1820; La Sainte Ligue, 1829.

2. e.g. Les Barons de Felsheim is set in Prussia; La Folie Espagnole and Le Garçon sans Souci in Spain; Mon Oncle Thomas and L'Homme à Projets are set partially in England, and La Sainte Ligue in Switzerland.

3. e.g. Mon Oncle Thomas is set partially in the West Indies and L'Homme à Projets in Mexico.

not only French scenes but also English, of which he had a first hand knowledge, German, Spanish, and South American.

Not only did he lend variety to the geographical setting of his novels, but also to the type of novel which he adopted. Novels of adventure and of manners, psychological novels, historical novels and even an erotic novel bear witness to the versatility of Pigault-Lebrun in his approach to the genre. When viewed in this light, his novels would seem to disprove the statement of André Le Breton who affirms that the novels of Pigault-Lebrun:

.....sont presque invariablement l'odyssée incohérente et burlesque d'un enfant du peuple qui se débrouille et se tire d'affaire à lui tout seul en se moquant des préjugés, boit comme un suisse, jure comme un charretier, au demeurant le meilleur fils du monde, bon en dépit de sa brutalité et gai en dépit de ses infortunes.¹

This is certainly true of the majority of novels of Pigault-Lebrun's first period,² with the exception of Angélique et Jeanneton, but, from the beginning of the Empire on, there is really only one novel, Le Garçon sans Souci, that one could place in this category. The remainder, which include more than half of his novels, deal almost invariably with bourgeois characters and eschew vulgar language and scurrilous scenes.

1. Le Roman Français au XIXe Siècle, avant Balzac, Op. cit., p. 79.

2. e.g. L'Enfant du Carnaval, 1796; Mon Oncle Thomas, 1799; Jérôme, 1804.

As George Saintsbury stated:

.....as time went on and the Empire substituted a sort of modified Reason and ribaldry, Pigault-Lebrun tried things less uncomely.¹

This variety in the type of novel chosen by Pigault-Lebrun helps to explain the diversity of the topics which he treated. The principal recurrent themes of his novels concern love, with its concomitant themes of parental attitude, marriage, divorce and libertinage; social classes, their customs and inter-relationships; and religion, its institutions and doctrines. Other themes such as gambling, anti-militarism, duelling and chauvinism do occur, but they are, by comparison, of minor importance, as they do not recur frequently enough to constitute major obsessions. By attacking the injustices and vices of the social and political life of the times from the end of the reign of Louis XV to the beginning of the reign of Louis XVIII, the novels of Pigault-Lebrun reflect both the outer and inner effects of that unsettled period, which saw the 'ancien régime' supplanted in rapid succession by the Revolution, the Directory, the Consulate, the Empire and the Restoration.

1. History of the French Novel, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 465.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONCEPT AND TREATMENT OF LOVE

Consistent with the current conventions of the popular sentimental novel and with his own personal experience, Pigault-Lebrun ascribed a predominant place in his fiction to the theme of the vicissitudes of love.¹ With the exception of the novels L'Homme à Projets, and its sequel M. de Roberville, L'Egoïsme and L'Observateur, the love intrigue invariably ends on a happy note with the marriage of two young lovers, or with the remarriage of a disenchanted widow or widower as in the novels Une Macédoine, its sequel, Tableaux de Société, and Adélaïde de Méran.

There is, however, an evolution in Pigault-Lebrun's treatment of the love theme. In his earlier novels, written under the Directory and the Consulate, the love intrigue, with the exception of the novels Angélique et Jeanneton and L'Enfant du Bordel, is invariably concerned with the fluctuating fortunes of adolescent love, which, after much contempt for social convention, eventually finds its consummation in marriage.

1. In the novels Mon Oncle Thomas; Jérôme; Les Barons de Felsheim; La Folie Espagnole and Le Garçon sans Souci, the love element is, however, largely subordinated to the narrative adventures.

In his second creative period under the Empire, Pigault-Lebrun showed a more mature approach to the theme of love.¹ Less reliance on such extraneous aids as social conventions for the development of his plot enabled him to devote more attention to the deeper psychological conflicts of the lovers. In the novels L'Homme à Projets and Une Macédoine and their respective sequels, M. de Roberville and Tableaux de Société, the heroines are confronted with two temperamentally different suitors. Their choice turns out to be a disastrous one, culminating in the death of both husband and wife in M. de Roberville and in the death of the husband and the subsequent remarriage of the wife in Tableaux de Société. In the other two novels of this same period, La Famille Luceval and Adélaïde de Méran, Pigault-Lebrun only submits to the convention of the happy ending after subjecting the lovers to a series of trials and tribulations.

Thus having portrayed the growth of adolescent love and its consummation in marriage in the first period of his work, Pigault-Lebrun proceeded, in the second, to depict the inherent difficulties and problems of married life. The four novels of his final period,² the least artistically

1. This transition is already apparent in the final novel of his first period, Jérôme, where Pigault-Lebrun comments on the advantages and disadvantages of matrimony, p. 491.

2. Pigault-Lebrun's final novel, La Sainte Ligue, does not conveniently fit into any of these prescribed periods, having been written nine years after his second to last novel, L'Observateur. Moreover, the love theme is subordinated to the themes of religion and politics.

effective one, only re-enact the themes adopted in his two previous periods. Le Garçon sans Souci and L'Officieux both treat the theme of adolescent love and its conventional union in marriage, while L'Observateur differs in its treatment of the same theme by its untypically tragic ending. The novel, L'Egoïsme, on the other hand, reflects the problems raised by the marriage of two partners who differ considerably in age.

Despite his ingrained anti-religious feelings and his later more cynical attitude towards marital life, Pigault-Lebrun never condoned the practice of libertinage, adultery or divorce.¹ On the contrary he considered the institution of marriage as the strongest moral bond of society, the protector of public morality and one of the firmest guarantees of the safeguard of private property.

We shall now examine the theme of love in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun with regard to parental attitude; marriage; divorce and libertinage.

a) Parental attitude. More than a third of the novels of Pigault-Lebrun treat the theme of adolescent love, and, of these, the majority² reveal the conflict between love and duty. Filial duty in the context of the eighteenth century

1. His pornographic novel, L'Enfant du Bordel, is a humorous satire rather than an apologia of libertinage.

2. e.g. L'Enfant du Carnaval; Les Barons de Felsheim; M. Botte; Adélaïde de Méran; Le Garçon sans Souci.

meant a rigid adherence to parental wishes, even at the expense of personal happiness. It was to the credit of Pigault-Lebrun that, in his own life, he rebelled against the rigidity of these social conventions, by defying his father's wishes and marrying the woman of his choice. These events are amply described in the preface to his play, Charles et Caroline, equally entitled, Les Abus de l'Ancien Régime or La Lettre de Cachet.¹ These autobiographical elements are also transposed in several of his novels. Although Pigault-Lebrun refrains from directly attacking his father by name, his description of the effects of the misuse of parental authority on both female as well as male children recur often enough in the novels of his earlier period to leave no doubt as to the former bitterness of his feelings.

In the novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, a young girl, freed from a convent by the enterprising young narrator of the novel, tells her liberator how her fate befell her:

Elle nous raconta qu'elle aimait un homme, du plus rare mérite. Elle avait résisté longtemps aux prières et aux menaces de sa famille. Mais il avait fallu céder enfin à l'abus de l'autorité; elle s'était laissé ensevelir dans un cloître.²

In a much later novel, Le Garçon sans Souci, the two young lovers are separated and punished in similar fashion. Valentin

1. Oeuvres Complètes, Paris, J. N. Barba, 1823, Vol. 9, pp. 369-370.

2. Vide, p. 318.

is forced to enter a seminary and Estelle is sent as a novice to a convent. This was the general¹ fate of many an eighteenth century girl who refused to obey her father's wishes in marriage. This abuse of paternal authority is vividly rendered in the novels M. Botte and Adélaïde de Méran. In the former novel a heated argument between M. Botte and the Marquis d'Arancey to decide upon the fate of the latter's daughter, Sophie, ends in a stalemate:

- ...Ignorez-vous ce que vous devez à votre fille?
- Le bonheur.
- Et croyez-vous le lui procurer en la privant d'un homme qu'elle aime, pour la donner à un inconnu que vous lui amenez du fond de la mer glaciale?
- C'est l'époux qui lui convient.
- Qu'en savez-vous?
- C'est moi qui l'ai choisi.
- La belle raison!
- Elle suffira à une fille bien née. Mais ne parlons plus de cela, je vous prie.
- Si fait, parbleu, je vous en parlerai. Votre chevalier n'a pas d'amour pour Sophie...
- Pour Sophie!
- Et quand il saura qu'elle est prévenue pour un autre...
- Mademoiselle d'Arancey le lui taira.
- Elle en est capable; mais je le lui dirai, moi.
- Vous aurez un tort de plus, monsieur, et vous n'empêcherez rien. Ma fille fera son devoir.
- Et sera malheureuse toute sa vie, parce que, monsieur, qui aime tant son roi, est sans pitié pour son enfant.²

In Adélaïde de Méran, father and daughter are brought into violent physical confrontation by the refusal of Adélaïde to

1. The obvious literary exception to the rule is the indulgent father of Sylvie in Marivaux's Le Jeu de L'Amour et du Hasard.

2. Vide, p. 340.

conform to her father's wishes.¹ On his daughter's categoric refusal to heed his advice, M. de Méran gets up to leave. Adélaïde clinging to his coat tails drags herself after him on her knees, but is violently pushed back by her angered father and cuts open her forehead on the floor. Her father, insensitive to her condition, leaves the room.²

For disobedient sons another form of punishment was used which, if more immediately effective than the former, proved ultimately less consequential in its severity. In the novel, Les Barons de Felsheim, Charles, a young soldier of eighteen, falls in love with a girl of sixteen and writes to his parents to warn them of his decision to get married. His mother, desiring a more distinguished match for her son, advises him to give up his matrimonial intentions. The son, offended by his family's objections, replies to their advice by an abusive letter addressed to his father. The latter's reply was soon forthcoming:

Son style était sans aigreur, mais il rappelait les torts du baron, et l'avertissait que des parents, comme les siens, savent toujours ramener au devoir un enfant qui s'égare. Il l'invitait à ne pas le contraindre à se servir des moyens de rigueur, et surtout à se garantir des séductions de certaines femmes,³ dont la conduite ne lui paraissait pas délicate.

1. Vide, Oeuvres Complètes, Paris, J.N. Barba, Vol. 19, pp. 311-312.

2. Vide, p. 312. This scene is somewhat reminiscent of the one between Julie and her father, the baron d'Etange in La Nouvelle Héloïse, Première Partie, Lettre LXIII.

3. Vide, p. 481.

These 'moyens de rigueur', in the France of the eighteenth century, usually implied imprisonment as the result of the implementation of a 'lettre de cachet', requested from the authorities by the father against a recalcitrant son. The majority of 'lettres de cachet' used in family affairs of this kind were motivated by a strong feeling of family honor. A family, in seeking such a warrant from the king against one of its own members, desired not only to avoid the painful rigors of sentences proclaimed by the courts, but also, and above all, to avoid the disgrace which a criminal procedure, brought upon the family name, would certainly have entailed. Moreover, the power invested in the family head was upheld throughout by the king who considered it to represent a sure source of social stability. When a father had cause to complain about one of his children, irrespective of the latter's age and position, the father, be he a rich financier or a lowly peasant, had the right of recourse to the king's authority, and the king, through the intermediary of one of his commissioners or police magistrates, usually complied with his request. Such was the general practice that only one way existed for young people to evade paternal authority; to enter the king's service if one was a boy, or to be accepted as a ballerina or a singer at the Opera if one was a girl.¹

1. Funck-Brentano, F., Les Lettres de Cachet, Paris, Hachette, 1926.

One of the motives which appeared most frequently in family requests for administrative action was the fear of a mismatch, but, as the eighteenth century progressed, the royal authority became increasingly less hostile to marriages by choice. Indeed from the second half of the eighteenth century on, influenced by the more enlightened ideas of this period, administrative refusals to family requests became more and more frequent. From this point of view the fate of Pigault-Lebrun was to be all the more pitied as he was subjected to this harsh treatment on the eve of the Revolution.¹

Twice victim of this arbitrary judicial system, it is not surprising to see Pigault-Lebrun attack its inherent injustices. In all the novels that treat the theme of forced marriage, with the exception of Adélaïde de Méran,² the inflexible father is seen finally bending before the wishes of his son or daughter and allowing the marriage to take place. This is best illustrated in the novel, M. Botte, where Pigault-Lebrun not only portrays his principal character as being finally responsible for the marriage between his nephew and Sophie d'Arancey, but also shows the latter's impoverished and unbending father, the Marquis d'Arancey, finally consenting to marry below his station.

1. Funck-Brentano, F., Op. cit.

2. In this novel the heroine complies with her father's deathbed wishes to marry a man against her will. She, however, finds happiness in a second marriage on the death of her first husband.

This critical, though unembittered, attitude towards the abuses of parental power,¹ from which he himself had suffered, proved that Pigault-Lebrun believed vehemently in the fundamental rights of the individual to be the sole arbitrator of his own destiny, particularly when the future happiness of his life was at stake.

b) Marriage. This desire of Pigault-Lebrun to ensure a sound basis for future happiness in marriage sprang from the conviction that marriage represented one of society's most fundamental institutions, one which assured its stability and continuity and protected the public morality. He felt that, despite the inconveniences which marriage presents, the social order would collapse without it, and that man, without parents or allies, deprived of the help and counsel of his intimates, narrow in his outlook, would be stripped of that force and collective will which assures success. Furthermore, he would remain a stranger to the more gentle human emotions, to those of pride, self-esteem and neighborly affection which result from family interest. Isolated, abandoned to his own resources and miserable in his own independence, man would descend to the rank of the animals.²

1. In his novel, La Folie Espagnole, Pigault-Lebrun, using Trufaldin as a mouthpiece, concludes the third point of his moral discourse on the art of happiness in the following manner: "Supportez l'injustice qui vous frappera, et n'oubliez jamais qu'elle ne vous dispense pas d'être juste envers les autres," p. 162.

2. Vide, Angélique et Jeanneton, pp. 24-25; La Folie Espagnole, p. 166; Tableaux de Société, pp. 217-218; L'Observateur, p. 326.

This firm support of the institution of marriage, although constantly present in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun, underwent certain modifications in his later work. In the novels written under the Directory and the Consulate, with the exception of Angélique et Jeanneton, marital relations are not described at length as the novels invariably end with the consummation of adolescent love in marriage,¹ or only broadly hint, in the final pages, at the possible future complications of married life.² The novels written under the Empire, with the exception of La Famille Luceval which, by its rapid résumé of married life in the closing pages, is more akin to M. Botte and Jérôme, treat marriage and its problems in a less whimsical and more mature fashion. This, however, is only true of one novel written under the Restoration, L'Egoïsme, which manages to approach marital difficulties from a fresh angle.

These more serious observations and reflections on 'la vie à deux' are already evident in Pigault-Lebrun's third novel, Angélique et Jeanneton.³ In this novel, however, despite the pangs of jealousy provoked in a husband by the illusory infidelity of his young wife, their relationship is only

1. e.g. L'Enfant du Carnaval; Les Barons de Felsheim; Mon Oncle Thomas; La Folie Espagnole.

2. Vide, M. Botte, p. 521, and Jérôme, p. 491.

3. Due to the unpopularity of this novel, Pigault-Lebrun decided to use a more ribald approach to marital problems in his other novels written prior to L'Homme à Projets.

temporarily threatened and all anxiety and animosity is removed when a mutual friend gives proof to the husband of the innocence of his young wife.

In his later novels, however, Pigault-Lebrun shows the imperfections of marital life to be more tragic, particularly when they result from a hurried and unwise choice as in L'Homme à Projets, Une Macédoine, and L'Egoïsme, or from social conventions as in Adélaïde de Méran. One of the consequences of married life for Pigault-Lebrun is that it is destructive of true love. That love cannot last in marriage, but at best is transmuted into friendship, is a constant theme which he treats wistfully in M. Botte and Jérôme, humorously in La Famille Luceval and L'Officieux, and tragically in M. de Roberville, Tableaux de Société, Adélaïde de Méran, and L'Egoïsme.

In the novel, M. Botte, with the double union of Sophie and Charles, and the Marquis d'Arancey and Mme. Duport, love is finally seen to triumph over social convention, but Pigault-Lebrun leaves the reader in little doubt as to the durability of this sentiment:

Sophie fut mère avant la marquise, et cela devait être. Un mari de vingt ans a tant d'avantages, qu'on a perdus à soixante! Elle le fut une seconde, une troisième fois, et, à chaque fois, Charles lui jurait qu'il l'aimait toujours davantage. C'est difficile à croire; mais ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est que l'estime, une bonne et franche amitié remplacèrent, avec le temps, un sentiment qui, malheureusement, ne dure pas toujours.¹

1. Vide, p. 521.

A similar but more penetrating analysis of the transience of love occurs in the novel, Jérôme, where the notion of the compatibility of love with marriage is clearly refuted.¹

The irony of married life is treated in a lighter vein in La Famille Luceval, and L'Officieux. In the latter novel Pigault-Lebrun intervenes in the narrative to reinforce his character's reflections on the ephemeral aspects of love:

Enfin tout le monde sait que ce sentiment-là n'est pas éternel, et cela est fort heureux; comment un mari se consolera-t-il de la perte de sa femme, la fillette de l'infidélité de son amant? Comment tant de veuves se remariaient-elles? Comment un joli homme aurait-il son tour auprès d'une femme à la mode? Ma foi, toutes réflexions faites, je suis tenté d'en venir à l'avis de Pangloss; "nous sommes dans le meilleur des mondes possibles."²

In three other novels, L'Homme à Projets, Une Macédoine, and L'Egoïsme, the unhappiness of married life is attributed to the precipitate choice of a marriage partner. This is usually based on a superficial physical attraction rather than on the more lasting ties of mutual respect and esteem. The first of these novels ends with the over-hasty marriage of Robert to Rose Perceval, a choice which, in the sequel, M. de Roberville, is quickly found to be disillusioning. Marital conflicts ensue and both fall victim to the libertine practices of the Court of Louis XV. The novel ends tragically with the

1. Vide, pp. 429-430.

2. Vide, p. 444.

death of Mme. de Roberville quickly followed by that of Robert, himself.

In the novel, Une Macédoine, and its sequel, Tableaux de Société, the dénouement, though happy, is preceded by numerous tragic events. The first half of this two-decker novel relates the adventures of a man who, wavering between his love for two women, finally marries one of them, and, on her death in childbirth, remarries the second. This part of the novel ends, as in L'Homme à Projets, with the hope of attaining happiness in marriage. In the second half of the novel this hope proves to be short-lived as both husband and wife indulge in extra-marital relationships. Their marriage deteriorates and finally ends in divorce. The husband, Francheville, is finally imprisoned for the attempted rape of his ex-wife and dies leading a prison revolt. Fanchette is now free to marry her young lover, Sainte-Luce, but finds an unexpected rival in her daughter, Honorine. This rivalry between mother and daughter ceases with the latter's death by illness, and the novel ends with the marriage of Fanchette and Sainte-Luce.

The novel, L'Egoïsme, not only warns against the disadvantages of making a hurried choice but also against those of making an unwise one. The inherent drawbacks of a large difference in age bring disillusionment to the marital relations of the fifty year old d'Alaire and his young wife,

Julie. The latter is not long in forming a liaison with a younger man, named Charles, and d'Alaire, in order to ward off the attentions of his rival, decides to distract his young wife by proposing a trip to Italy, leaving Pigault-Lebrun to ironically conclude: "malheureux d'Alaire, il y a des Charles partout."¹

The novel, Adélaïde de Méran, though as equally dramatic in some respects as the previous three novels, differs from them in so far as the tragedy is a result of social convention rather than of personal choice. The relationship of the heroine, Adélaïde, with Jules is broken up by the latter's forced marriage to Mlle. d'Apremont and her own unwilling marriage to M. d'Apremont in order to concur with the wishes of her dying father. With the respective deaths of the d'Apremonts, Jules and Adélaïde are free to marry, but not before Adélaïde has twice been raped by a government official, named Des Audrets, and Jules almost fatally wounded in the final struggle against Napoleon.

Marital relations can, therefore, be seen to constitute a recurrent theme in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun. Firm in his belief that with time and age love will pass, he, nonetheless, asserts that, given the right choice and circumstances, this transient emotion can be transmuted into a more lasting one of permanent friendship, based on mutual respect and tolerance.

1. Vide, p. 319.

Despite the relaxation in the laws governing marriage during the Revolution, Pigault-Lebrun continued to believe in its fundamental concept as a sacred bond linking the members of society in a mutual pact of security and stability.

This explains why he was so insistent in his belief that man should repress his natural instincts for the general good of society:

Qu'est-ce donc que le mariage, qui se présente quelquefois d'une manière si séduisante, et dont les suites sont si amères? De qui vient cette institution si bizarre, qui contrarie la nature, s'oppose à ses vœux les plus doux, et n'est plus qu'un insupportable fardeau pour deux êtres qui ont cessé de s'aimer et de se convenir? S'il n'est pas d'amour éternel, pourquoi s'engager à une constance illimitée?.....
Non, non ces raisonnements sont la dernière ressource d'un être coupable, qui voudrait s'étourdir sur une première faute, s'appuyer de prétextes spécieux pour en commettre de plus graves, et imposer silence à sa conscience alarmée.¹

This adverse attitude towards adultery is revealed in more specific detail in one of Pigault-Lebrun's last novels, L'Observateur, where M. Martin, the protagonist of the novel, manages to convince his married friend, Dubourg, of the disadvantages of an illicit love affair.²

In rejecting the attractions of adultery as a solution to marital problems, Pigault-Lebrun was only stressing the need for the proper freedom and exercise of choice in

1. Vide, Tableaux de Société, p. 217.

2. Vide, pp. 26-27.

determining one's future marriage partner, a choice which was to be seriously considered, and based on a deeper emotion than that of mere physical attraction if one was to avoid the risk of future strife.

C. Divorce. Legalised under the laws promulgated by the Revolution, divorce, like adultery, was roundly condemned by Pigault-Lebrun for breaking the social pact of marriage, and for encouraging a general decline in morality. Its immediate consequences for husband, wife and children were outlined in his very first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, as part of a general attack on revolutionary customs and institutions:

Quelques époux étaient mal assortis: on autorisa le divorce; on lâcha la bride aux passions; on rompit tous les liens sociaux. La femme renonça à l'estime, et crut pouvoir s'en passer. Elle se livra sans pudeur aux obscénités de plusieurs hommes qu'une loi insensée appelait ses maris, et elle osa prononcer encore le mot vertu, avec des lèvres souillées de la lave du vice. Des hommes abusèrent de cette loi barbare pour tromper, pour perdre l'innocence. Ils jurèrent amour, fidélité à des vierges qu'ils brûlaient de déflorer, pour les abandonner ensuite à de vains, à d'impuissants regrets, et tel est l'avilissement de ces prétendus époux, que leurs victimes languissent, sèchent et meurent sans trouver un homme estimable qui daigne leur succéder.

On reconnut les bâtards. L'homme sans frein put avouer publiquement les fruits de son libertinage, et dépouiller en leur faveur les héritiers légitimes d'une épouse vertueuse. Que reste-t-il à la mère infortunée, qu'on afflige jusque dans ses enfants? L'abandon, le mépris qui poursuit son époux, et le souvenir de sa turpitude.¹

1. Vide, pp. 392-393.

A similar attitude is expressed in Angélique et Jeanneton, but in this novel greater emphasis is placed on the victimisation of the children.¹ This theme is likewise treated in the novel, Tableaux de Société, where Francheville divorces his wife Fanchette when he discovers that she is having an illicit love affair with a younger man, named Sainte-Luce. Their child, Honorine, is handed over to the custody of Fanchette who is eagerly continuing her relationship with Sainte-Luce. The daughter, who is too old to treat Sainte-Luce as her potential step-father, begins to rival her mother for his love, but her advances in this direction are gently repulsed. Stricken with grief at this rejection she falls ill and finally dies of a fever. Thus the divorce of the parents indirectly leads to the ultimate death of the child. In Fanchette's concluding remarks directed at Sainte-Luce, however, Pigault-Lebrun, while continuing to advocate the need for a carefully studied choice of marriage partner, seems to have implicitly modified his rigid censorship of divorce, considering it, in certain extreme cases, as a necessary evil for the preservation of human happiness:

Les années s'écoulent, et notre félicité n'a pas souffert d'atteinte. Il est toujours le même, et pourquoi? Des plaisirs faciles ne l'ont pas porté à mal juger des femmes. Il m'a donné son estime avec son coeur; il me l'a conservée, parce que je lui ai résisté longtemps. Il ne peut m'ôter ni l'un ni l'autre,

1. Vide, p. 165.

parce qu'on tient à un bien acquis en proportion de ce qu'il a coûté.¹

D. Libertinage. In the light of Pigault-Lebrun's views on marriage, adultery and divorce, it is hardly surprising to find him condemning most forms of libertinage. However, he does make a distinction between those extra-marital relationships founded on love and mutual respect and those motivated by the mere satisfaction of carnal desires. The basic difference between these two forms of libertinage is revealed in their respective attitudes towards the children that may be born from such relationships. While still condemning this first form of libertinage, it is the latter which most arouses the anger of Pigault-Lebrun:

Mais combien sont plus coupables encore ces voluptueux inconstants, qui n'aiment que pour jouir, et qui cessent d'aimer quand ils ont joui; qui, semblables aux animaux, méconnaissent l'objet qui concourait à leurs plaisirs, et les fruits qui en résultent! La nature, quelque indulgente qu'elle soit, proscriit de semblables feux. Les unions qu'elle forme ont une postérité pour objet, et c'est ce que ces libertins décidés craignent et évitent.²

This hostile attitude towards the latter type of libertine, whom he considers, like bachelors, as "cette classe inutile et parasite, véritable fardeau du globe,"³ is

1. Vide, p. 535.

2. Vide, La Folie Espagnole, p. 167.

3. Vide, Adélaïde de Méran, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 19, p. 488.

reflected in his novels by their condemnation and subsequent punishment.¹ In the novel, Angélique et Jeanneton, Denneterre, a notorious libertine, unable to seduce Angélique, abducts her and is hotly pursued by her husband. The latter finally catches up with the couple, a duel ensues but the husband gracefully spares the life of his wife's abductor. The libertine's crime, however, does not go unpunished:

J'ai su deux mois après, qu'en arrivant à Namur il avait trouvé sa destitution conçue en termes si humiliants et si durs, qu'il ne lui était plus permis² d'espérer, ni même d'oser solliciter du service.

In the novel, M. de Roberville, it devolves on a member of the opposite sex to play the role of the libertine. Mme. Thomasseau, perceiving the potential corruptness of M. de Roberville's wife, initiates her into the secrets of libertinage and finally manages to destroy her marriage. Mme. de Roberville, through her new acquaintance, willingly becomes the mistress of several powerful political figures including Louis XV, himself, but fails to maintain her eminent position and suffers a sharp decline of fortune. At the end of the novel she is

1. The characters of Pigault-Lebrun's libertine novel, L'Enfant du Bordel, constitute an exception. Published anonymously in 1800, this novel depicting the erotic adventures of a fourteen year old boy seems to parody the novels of Sade. Without preaching any moral, Pigault-Lebrun depicts eroticism in comic rather than in sadistic terms.

2. Vide, p. 225.

left penniless by one of her numerous lovers and finally commits suicide.

Death also befalls Francheville in Les Tableaux de Soci  t  , but even his sadism pales before that of the sinister Des Audrets in Ad  laide de M  ran. Having turned Ad  laide's husband against her to satisfy his own sexual cravings, Des Audrets' intentions are discovered and he is promptly imprisoned. However, rewarded for his fidelity to the Bonapartist r  gime during the final days of the Empire, he is released and granted a position of power in the police. Thus he finds himself advantageously placed to persecute Ad  laide and her husband who have supported the return of the Bourbons. Threatening to have her imprisoned husband executed if she fails to yield to his demands, Des Audrets fulfills his sexual desires and promptly sends Ad  laide's husband to the guillotine. However, on the Russian entry into Paris, Des Audrets is captured and condemned to an even more horrible death.¹

Pigault-Lebrun's final unflattering portrait of a libertine is somewhat alleviated by a last minute act of repentance. In the novel, L'Ego  sme, Versac², a corrupt political figure, who rewards sexual satisfaction with lucrative official appointments, is finally discovered and killed in a duel. His tarnished reputation is, however, redeemed by a

1. Vide, pp. 153-154.

2. Versac was also the name of Cr  billon's notorious libertine in Les Egarements du C  ur et de l'Esprit.

final act of contrition for his crimes.

Throughout his novels Pigault-Lebrun constantly confronted this libertine morality with a bourgeois morality founded on true love and passion. These two opposing moralities are vividly illustrated in M. Botte by Guillaume, a thirty year old groom, who advises his young twenty year old master, Charles, on the most appropriate manner of seducing Sophie d'Arancey:

- Ecoutez-moi, monsieur: un homme de vingt ans ne se marie pas, ou il a tort. Il prend une maîtresse; il la quitte pour en quitter deux, six, vingt, et à trente ans il se marie pour doubler sa fortune, ou rétablir ses affaires. Voilà la morale du jour, tout le monde la suit, tout le monde s'en trouve bien, et je vous conseille de vous conformer à l'usage.
- Mais, Guillaume...
- Mais, monsieur, vous aimez mademoiselle d'Arancey, et vous avez raison: elle est fort jolie. Vous l'aurez c'est tout simple; vous vous en lasserez, c'est tout naturel, et alors nous verrons.
- Je n'entends rien à ces systèmes de séduction. Ils me révoltent, ils m'indignent.
- Je me chargerai seul des détails.
- Et de quoi te chargeras-tu, malheureux? de troubler la paix d'une famille estimable? de tourmenter, d'affliger la beauté, l'innocence? Et je la permettrais, moi, qui prodiguerais mon sang pour l'arracher à un ravisseur!
- Ce sont des mots que tout cela, monsieur; raisonnons. Dans votre position, vous avez à choisir de trois choses.
- Lesquelles?
- La première, et la plus sage, c'est d'oublier mademoiselle d'Arancey.
- Je ne le puis.
- Vous le pouvez, si vous le voulez. Soyez quinze jours sans la voir, et vous n'y penserez plus.
- Je la verrai demain, je la verrai après-demain, je la verrai aussi souvent que je le pourrai.
- Ah! vous ne voulez pas l'oublier! Venons au second moyen. La séduction...
- Jamais, jamais.
- Parlons donc du troisième,¹ le mariage.
- Oui, parlons de celui-là.

1. Vide, pp. 33-34.

Charles is typical of those lovers of Pigault-Lebrun, who braving social convention, remain passionately attached to the object of their affections. This passion is founded not only on physical attraction but also on mutual feelings of respect and admiration, although, in the case of Happy¹ and Jérôme, this does not necessarily exclude other amorous adventures of a purely carnal nature.

The problems involved in the conflict between physical and spiritual love also become the main preoccupation of the love life of Edouard in the novel La Famille Luceval. Fluctuating between the physical beauty of Julie and her less attractive but more talented sister Caroline, Edouard, after much soul-searching, and despite the frantic efforts of Mme. Luceval to foist Julie upon him, finally opts in favor of Caroline, thus demonstrating the triumph of spiritual love over mere physical attraction.

A failure to consider such problems seriously enough leads to disaster in M. de Roberville, but in Tableaux de Société and Adélaïde de Méran the consequences of a first mistake are redeemed by a new found passion, based not solely on physical attraction or social convention but on a spiritual rapport as well.² Despite the failure of their first marriages, Fanchette and Adélaïde remain passionate beings, for whom love

1. Narrator-hero of L'Enfant du Carnaval.

2. See above, pp. 72-73.

takes precedence over everything. In contrast, Pigault-Lebrun's earlier adolescent heroines, of the type to be found in the contemporary sentimental novel, often seem flat, insipid and colorless.¹ Thus love, while it lasts, is, for Pigault-Lebrun, a legitimate if dangerous passion.² For Fanchette and Adélaïde the passion of true love can only be found through the regenerative forces of misfortune and suffering.

Pigault-Lebrun's male characters are equally passionate, but in a different way. Vigorous, resolute and enterprising, they brave the obstacles of social convention like Happy, Charles, and Valentin,³ or the rigors of war like Jérôme, Sainte-Luce and Jules,⁴ but, distracted by the pursuit of adventure or glory, are never wholly consumed by their passion like their female counterparts.⁵ This different attitude of the sexes towards love is revealed by Fanchette and Adélaïde during the absence of their respective lovers, Sainte-Luce and Jules, both engaged

1. e.g. Juliette in L'Enfant du Carnaval; Sophie in M. Botte; Caroline in La Famille Luceval.

2. Only in the novel, L'Observateur, however, does true love end in the tragic death of the two lovers.

3. Vide, L'Enfant du Carnaval; M. Botte, and Le Garçon sans Souci.

4. Vide, Jérôme; Tableaux de Société, and Adélaïde de Méran.

5. Edouard in La Famille Luceval and the narrator in Angélique et Jeanneton are exceptions.

in active combat. Fanchette, awaiting her first letter, reflects on this difference of attitude between the sexes:

Mais bientôt la gloire disputera son coeur à l'amour. La nécessité, le devoir, la vigilance continuelle qu'exige le commandement, affaibliront insensiblement ces impressions du coeur, qui se fortifient dans la solitude, auxquelles je ne peux échapper. Eh! tant mieux. Ne suffit-il pas de ce que je souffre? Que les jouissances de l'ambition le dédommagent, le consolent.¹

Adélaïde, on receiving her first letter from Jules, is besieged by similar thoughts:

Quelle foule de réflexions a fait naître en moi cette lettre! Non, les hommes, agités, sans cesse, par des mouvements impétueux, et souvent opposés, ne peuvent point savoir aimer. C'est dans le silence, le recueillement, la méditation, dans une sorte d'abnégation de soi-même, qui est propre à notre sexe, que l'amour naît, croît, se développe, devient un sentiment exclusif, et s'identifie entièrement avec nous. Il nous suffit, il comble tous nos vœux; l'être adoré alors est l'âme de notre vie; nous ne pouvons plus voir et sentir que par lui. Notre gloire est dans notre constance, dans les soins, les prévenances, les caresses, qui assurent à notre amant un bonheur, sans lequel il n'en est plus pour nous. L'homme veut une autre espèce de gloire, il l'avoue, il le proclame; l'homme ne sait pas aimer.²

Man's divided loyalties are further proof for Pigault-Lebrun that true and passionate love can rarely endure between the sexes. This pessimistic conception of love as a fleeting emotion is tempered, however, by his belief that lasting happiness is founded on friendship and not on love. This

1. Vide, Tableaux de Société, p. 321.

2. Vide, Adélaïde de Méran, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 20, p. 165.

distinction between love and friendship is most clearly defined in the section of his novel L'Homme à Projets, entitled "Morale par Alphabet", under the headings 'Amitié' and 'Amour'. They leave no doubt that the aging novelist conceived of friendship as a more lasting and gratifying human emotion than that associated with the ephemeral sensations and satisfactions of love:

L'amitié est la passion des belles âmes. Elle survit à l'amour, parce que les désirs s'envolent avec les grâces, et que l'amitié marche d'un pas égal à côté de la vertu.¹

1. Vide, p. 424.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONCEPTS AND CUSTOMS

As the son of a high ranking magistrate from Calais, Pigault-Lebrun belonged by class to the provincial 'haute bourgeoisie'. However, his disinheritance and subsequent failure to reverse the unfavorable judicial verdict of the Paris courts convinced him of the legal corruption and social discrimination of the 'ancien régime'. Without the support of people in high places and without the necessary financial backing, Pigault-Lebrun's powerlessness to act caused him to reflect on the inequalities and injustices of society.¹

These reflections take on a dramatized form in the novel, Mon Oncle Thomas, during the course of a public criminal hearing.² Pigault-Lebrun, alluding to his own experiences, takes pains to warn the reader in a footnote³ that all these events are based on real facts and that only the names of the principal participants have been changed. The degree of justice exercised is in direct proportion to the rank and social influence of the plaintiff. Thus a duke, satirised by a poet, proffers charges and the poet's manuscript

1. See above, pp. 43-44.

2. Vide, pp. 86-108.

3. Vide, p. 67.

is promptly ordered to be burnt,¹ while a poverty-stricken woman with eight children who is seeking indemnity for the death of her husband, crushed under the wheels of a marquis' carriage, receives a mere pittance in compensation.² The hearing concludes with a biting satire of the morals of high society ladies and Franciscan friars, to whose deviations the court shows itself to be more than accommodating.³ The accuracy of Pigault-Lebrun's observations on the inequalities of legal justice, though perhaps tinted with a streak of vindictiveness and exaggeration, is generally confirmed by legal historians of the period. According to J.B. Brissaud:

....while the old magistracy as a whole was distinguished for its integrity, the sale of judgeships and exorbitant judicial fees could not fail to throw a shadow over its good name. Justice was sometimes arbitrary (commissioners and 'lettres de cachet'), often unequal (removals of cases to other courts, decrees of suspension relieving great personages from paying their debts, and always very slow and very costly in consequence of the complications of the procedure)....⁴

Another writer, Robert Anchel, condemns the corruption of the judicial system of the 'ancien régime' in even harsher terms:

1. Vide, pp. 96-100.

2. Vide, pp. 90-91.

3. Vide, pp. 100-108.

4. Vide, A History of French Public Law, Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1915, p. 559.

Un peuple de magistrats et de suppôts de justice grouillaient dans ce chaos. Propriétaires de leurs offices qu'ils payaient fort cher, ils vivaient tous, du puissant conseiller au Parlement jusqu'au plus mince commissaire, aux dépens des justiciables. La vénalité des offices rendait ceux qui les détenaient accessibles aux influences, aux sollicitations de tout genre. Les moeurs admettaient, d'ailleurs, la considération du rang social de la part des juges. Un personnage qui se tirait d'un procès criminel par l'appui de ses parents ou de ses relations mondaines, ne s'en montrait que plus fier et jouissait ensuite d'un plus grand respect, en raison même de son influence. On peut tenir pour constant, malgré la rigide honnêteté de certains magistrats, qu'en général toutes les compromissions imaginables se produisaient, jusqu'à l'association entre des juges et des voleurs. Cela ne fait aucun doute si on n'envisage que les commissaires et autres officiers de police.¹

This explains why, on the eve of the Revolution, Pigault-Lebrun, himself a victim of the corrupt and outmoded legal system of the 'ancien régime', sympathized with the mass popular uprisings of 1789, and changed the ostentatious name of Charles-Antoine-Guillaume Pigault de l'Epinoy to the more simple appellation of Pigault-Lebrun. This sympathy for the popular cause was, however, of short duration. Disenchanted by the turn of events during the Terror, and by his own personal experiences in the army, Pigault-Lebrun quickly lost his enthusiasm for the Revolution and began to balance in favor of a moderate form of government which would preserve order and social stability.² This moderate political viewpoint

1. Vide, Crimes et Châtiments au XVIIIe Siècle, Paris, Perrin, 1933, pp. 9-10.

2. Vide, L'Enfant du Carnaval, pp. 389-394.

explains his opposition to the despotism of the closing years of both the Empire,¹ and the Bourbon Restoration,² as well as his support for the principles of the 1830 July Revolution.³

This defence of the bourgeoisie, already apparent in his first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, becomes increasingly stronger in his later novels. In Mon Oncle Thomas the narrator-author, returning to France following the coup d'état of 18 Brumaire, comments on the changes effected in his country since the days of the Terror. Condemning the extremist factions of the Revolution, he emits great enthusiasm for the new Napoleonic régime, a position which Pigault-Lebrun was radically to modify some fifteen years later:⁴

Mais combien je fus satisfait des changements heureux qui s'étaient opérés dans ma triste patrie! Je l'avais laissée dans un état déplorable. Un peuple trompé se battait pour le choix de tyrans obscurs; des ambitieux pour opprimer; des brigands pour partager des dépouilles. Des criminels étaient à la place des juges qui les avaient flétris; des hommes, ruinés par leurs profusions et leurs débauches, proscrivaient le citoyen paisible dont ils voulaient envahir le patrimoine. L'avidité s'enrichissait sans travail; les vengeances

1. Vide, Adélaïde de Méran, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 20, pp. 120-179.

2. Vide, L'Educateur, Ed. Romans Illustrés, Vol. 32, pp. 28-33.

3. Ibid., pp. 34-35.

4. Vide, Adélaïde de Méran, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 20, pp. 53, 164.

s'exerçaient sans crainte; la licence écartait tout frein, et la fureur brutale de la multitude détruisait ce dont elle ne savait pas jouir.

A mon retour, un soleil nébuleux encore, mais déjà actif et chaud, animait l'horizon. Les misérables, qui avaient souillé ma patrie, étaient retombés dans l'obscurité et le mépris. L'habitude du crime et de la violation des lois s'était évanouie devant l'homme rare, devenu le premier par sa seule énergie. Toutes les factions étaient courbées devant lui; on pouvait travailler avec la certitude de jouir; on pouvait devenir père sans craindre d'être arraché à ses enfants; l'asile du citoyen n'était plus violé. Si la misère, effet inévitable d'une guerre longue et sanglante, se fait encore sentir, le nom d'un héros semble commander la paix. Son gouvernement sera durable, car où le chef s'entoure d'hommes probes et éclairés, le contrat social a une garantie.¹

This vindication of bourgeois principles is also apparent in Pigault-Lebrun's definition of the different social classes, and in his description of their customs and mutual relations. Like Voltaire, Pigault-Lebrun, despite his earlier sympathies for the popular cause, showed a general disdain for the lower classes. In the section of his novel L'Homme à Projets, entitled "Morale par Alphabet", Pigault-Lebrun, alluding to the turbulence of the revolutionary years, derides the lower class's lack of discrimination:

Le peuple ne juge que sur l'apparence. Ce ne sont pas les honneurs, la puissance, les richesses qui lui en imposent;² c'est le faste qui les annonce ou qui les suit.

1. Vide, pp. 541-542.

2. Vide, pp. 467-468.

This unflattering comment on the popular mentality is preceded by an equally unflattering definition of the nobility:

La noblesse suppose la vertu, et doit être la satire vivante du vice. La noblesse était éteinte avant sa suppression. Pas de principe sans exceptions: elles étaient rares.

Des parchemins plus ou moins anciens, différents degrés de noblesse, étaient de vaines distinctions. Le degré du mérite seul distingue les hommes. Celui qui remplit ses devoirs sociaux et qui s'occupe des intérêts de la patrie, est un grand seigneur.¹

Although Pigault-Lebrun significantly refrained from giving any unflattering definition of the bourgeoisie, he satirised all the social classes when it came to describing their customs and mentality. Not only did he ridicule the ludicrous mimicry of the bourgeoisie by the 'peuple' and of the nobility by the bourgeoisie, but also the arrant pretentiousness of those members of the nobility who wanted a return to the social structure of the 'ancien régime'.

One characteristic of the lower classes, to which Pigault-Lebrun constantly alludes, is their fickle-mindedness. In the novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, Happy, the narrator-hero of the novel, unjustly accused of a crime he did not commit, is finally proved innocent and released by the guard amid the cheers and applause of the mob, which, as Pigault-Lebrun sarcastically remarks:

.....aime autant trouver un innocent qu'un coupable, mais à qui il faut des spectacles de quelque genre que ce soit.²

1. Ibid., p. 462.

2. Vide, p. 103.

Such spectacles were in constant supply during the revolutionary years and furnished adequate proof of the capriciousness and gullibility of the popular mentality. As Pigault-Lebrun cynically pointed out in the same novel:

Tout tendait à une désorganisation générale. Le peuple, étourdi par la rapidité des événements, ne savait ce qu'il devait craindre ou espérer. Sans gouvernement, sans lois, sans morale, sans pain, il voyait ses bourreaux insulter à sa misère, et salir les murs d'affiches, adressées au peuple souverain. Quel souverain, grand Dieu! On le flagornait, on le trompait, on l'égarait, on le perdait en son propre nom, et il ne s'en doutait pas. Il s'arrêtait devant ces affiches, les lisait, n'y entendait rien, et faisait ce qu'on lui faisait faire, et allait où l'entraînaient les factieux de tous les partis. Il cria vive le roi, et à bas le tyran; il cria Pétion ou la mort, et il proscrivit Pétion: il fit le dix août, les deux et trois septembre, et le trente et un mai; il porta Marat au Panthéon, et le jeta à la voierie; il adora Robespierre, et le chargea d'imprécations au moment de sa mort. La crédulité des peuples est le patrimoine de ceux qui savent les tromper.¹

However, the lower classes do possess some redeeming features for Pigault-Lebrun. Despite their defects, he admires their simplicity and informality, particularly in regard to relations between the sexes.² He also acknowledges their fortitude in the face of adversity, though in a rather haughty and condescending manner:

Le peuple est imprévoyant, et c'est un bonheur pour lui: l'idée du lendemain affligerait des

1. Ibid., p. 393.

2. Vide, L'Homme à Projets, p. 141.

êtres qui n'ont jamais de subsistance assurée, et qui ne s'aperçoivent qu'ils sont quelque chose dans l'état, que par les avertissements que leur fait distribuer le receveur des impositions.

Si le peuple pensait à son avenir, il joindrait, au sentiment de sa misère, les soucis qui tourmentent l'homme riche. Il renoncerait au mariage, par la crainte de faire des enfants, qui seraient malheureux à leur tour. Cependant le peuple multiplie plus que les grands, parce que c'est le seul plaisir qui ne coûte rien, du moins pour le moment. La naissance de l'enfant, sa layette, sa dentition, rien n'est prévu. Au moment où l'embryon sort de son étui, le père regarde s'il a une main au bout de chaque bras; prend sa bêche ou sa coignée, va travailler, et revient gaiement le soir. Il ne craint pas que les cris du nouveau-né interrompent son sommeil: le canon n'éveillerait pas un journalier. La mère-nourrice souffre; mais elle sait que l'impatience ne remédie à rien, et elle prend son parti. Tout n'est pas bien, sans doute, mais les choses pourraient être plus mal.¹

Pigault-Lebrun's portrayal of bourgeois manners is best illustrated in the novel, M. Botte. Annoyed by the tendency of the post-revolutionary bourgeoisie to ape the nobility, he derides the pretentious claims of M. Botte to the possession of hereditary titles. Using these claims, he seeks to prove to the Marquis d'Arancey, a repatriated émigré, that he is of noble birth and, therefore, perfectly within his rights to seek the approval of the marquis for the marriage of the latter's daughter to his own nephew Charles. However, Botte's plans are ruined by one of the marquis' friends, who is an expert on the subject of hereditary titles. Botte's claims to nobility are refuted in a scene at once amusing and

1. Vide, L'Observateur, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 18, pp. 406-407.

ironical.¹ Crestfallen, he is promptly ushered out by the triumphant marquis, who, desperately trying to control his laughter, crams the falsified documents back into the unsuspecting arms of M. Botte. It is, however, the latter who emerges triumphant at the end of the novel. Compensating for his lack of nobility by the size of his fortune, Botte finally succeeds in imposing his wishes upon the marquis. The marriage of his nephew, Charles, to the marquis' daughter, Sophie, marks the triumph of an established bourgeoisie over a declining nobility.

This desire of the opulent bourgeois to play the noble also had its feminine counterpart. In the introduction to his novel, La Famille Luceval, published in 1806, Pigault-Lebrun ironically comments on the pretensions of the well-to-do bourgeoisie:

Aujourd'hui la bourgeoisie aisée dédaignerait de chiffonner elle-même un bout de gaze dans ses cheveux. Elle a des amants, elle publie ses goûts, et, si le mari veut trancher du Ménélas, on se moque de lui. On ne traite ses amis que par ostentation, pour faire valoir le talent d'un empoisonneur, qu'on appelle un cuisinier, et on est assez platement sordide pour reprendre sur les cartes une partie des frais du festin. Remarque-t-on parmi les convives un homme qui ne puisse pas traiter à son tour? On le néglige ou on l'éconduit: nos Anacréon ne trouvent plus de Polycrate.²

1. Vide, pp. 478-479.

2. Vide, pp. 7-8.

It is, however, the nobility which bears the greatest brunt of Pigault-Lebrun's satire. He especially condemns their profligate morals which form a striking contrast with the virtuous habits of the bourgeoisie. In the novel, Mon Oncle Thomas, an ambassador's wife relieves her boredom during the absence of her husband by constantly changing partners in an effort to satisfy her sexual appetites. In M. de Roberville the deceit is reciprocal. A duke and a duchess vie with one another in the gratification of their sexual fantasies to the extent of allowing them to influence their public lives. The duke, ever faithful to the rigid observance of etiquette, never extends the time spent with his mistress beyond the prescribed limits of decency. His wife, however, unsuspectful of her husband's sacrifices to decorum, profits by his absences and can only regret their lack of frequency. Her influential lover, Saint-Florentin, nevertheless grows tired of seeing his activities restricted to Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays and seeks more profitable ways of ridding himself of such an inconvenient husband. With the complicity of the king, he finally obtains for the duke the coveted ambassadorship of Berlin, leaving Pigault-Lebrun to sarcastically conclude:

Et voilà comment se distribuient alors les grandes places. O le bon temps, le bon temps! regrettons-le donc bien.¹

1. Vide, p. 184.

A less damaging condemnation than the moral laxity of the eighteenth century nobility concerned their arrogant attachment to the importance of hereditary titles and honors. This constitutes the main theme of the novel, M. Botte. It is precisely because Botte can lay no claims to nobility that the impoverished Marquis d'Arancey rejects his determined efforts to unite their families in marriage.¹ This tenacious attachment to hereditary titles is likewise portrayed in the novel, Adélaïde de Méran. M. de Méran is another representative of those intransigent 'émigrés' who, on their return to France after the amnesty accorded by Napoleon, refused to adapt to the life of post-revolutionary France. Clinging to the prejudices of the 'ancien régime', his conduct appears all the more reprehensible for being seen through the eyes of his more liberal-minded daughter. In her opening letter to her friend, Mme. de Villers, Adélaïde reveals her reactions to her father's attitude:

Mon père souffre toujours de la nécessité de vivre au fond d'une province, confondu avec quelques propriétaires, qui prennent avec lui un ton d'égalité qui le choque, et dont la fortune rapide lui paraît blesser les principes rigides dont il a toujours fait profession. Il regrette le temps, où, entouré de complaisants et de valets, chamarré d'or et de cordons, il allait chercher des humiliations à la cour. Il se plaint toujours des Anglais, qui ont sacrifié, à Quiberon, l'élite de la noblesse française. Il leur impute

1. See above, pp. 90-91.

la perte de ses meilleurs amis et des trois quarts de sa fortune. Tout cela peut être très vrai, son ressentiment peut être légitime; mais moi, qui n'ai rien à regretter, je conçois qu'on puisse oublier le passé, et se trouver heureux du présent, entre une épouse attentive et prévenante, et une fille tendre et soumise. Qu'importe qu'on ait eu cent mille écus de rente, lorsqu'ils sont perdus sans retour, et que, de cette immense fortune, il reste encore une terre qui produit au-delà de nos besoins.¹

As a result of these social prejudices being maintained by a certain unenlightened segment of the repatriated nobility, conflict and confrontation ensued between the varying social classes at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This confrontation took on its most acute form in the struggle between the bourgeoisie, who had attained power by dint of hard work and self-sacrifice, and the aristocracy, who, ruined by the social upheavals of the Revolution, obstinately continued to cling to the outmoded prejudices of the 'ancien régime'.² This confrontation between a determined and powerful bourgeoisie and an impoverished and unenlightened aristocracy is best illustrated in the novel, M. Botte, by a lengthy and animated conversation between Botte and the Marquis d'Arancey. The

1. Vide, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol 19, pp. 6-7.

2. Vide, Cobban, A., The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1964, pp. 162-173.

Dupeux, G., La Société Française 1789-1960. Paris, Armand Colin, 1960, pp. 104-114.

Greer, D., The Incidence of the Emigration during the French Revolution, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1951, pp. 96-105.

former, with great brio, sums up their respective positions in a manner somewhat reminiscent of Figaro's monologue in Le Mariage de Figaro:¹

Votre bisaïeul était maréchal de France, et le mien pilote; ici l'avantage décline un peu. Votre père était colonel, le mien était capitaine-propriétaire de son navire; il y a déjà quelque rapprochement. Vous avez été mousquetaire, et vous avez mangé une partie de votre bien; moi j'ai été l'homme de l'état à qui j'ai prêté des fonds. En état de paix, j'ai envoyé des flottes marchandes dans les deux Indes. En temps de guerre, j'ai armé, j'ai fait respecter le pavillon du roi, et mes facteurs, dans tous les temps, ont fait respecter ma probité aux peuples des deux hémisphères. J'ai acquis des millions; j'ai fait du bien à tout le monde. Je vous en ai fait à vous, j'en veux faire plus encore à votre fille, et tout bien calculé, morbleu, vous devez savoir gré à M. Botte de vouloir bien être l'égal de l'ex-marquis d'Arancey.²

This candid declaration of middle class accomplishments only leads to a rupture in relations between the two neighbors. However, Botte, not possessing as much amour-propre as the marquis, tries to mend their differences when he hears of the forthcoming marriage of the marquis' daughter to another ruined aristocrat, the chevalier d'Egligny. Determined to replace this new suitor by his own nephew, Botte, in a scene both vivid and humorous, barges unceremoniously into the marquis' home at a most inopportune moment. Furious at this intrusion by an impertinent bourgeois into an aristocratic assembly, the marquis succeeds in mastering his anger and,

1. Vide, Acte V, Scène III.

2. Vide, p. 341.

instead of having Botte removed as etiquette demanded, decides to hear him out. Botte, taking full advantage of the opportunity offered, draws attention to the marquis' poor financial state and spiritedly reiterates the advantages to be gained by uniting their two families. Unperturbed by these persuasive arguments, the marquis once again refuses Botte's offer and the latter stamps out determined to resort to harsher measures.

Frustrating the marquis' efforts to regain the property which had been confiscated during the Revolution, Botte, by his financial schemings and with the complicity of the chevalier d'Eglny, finally triumphs over his adversary and the proposed marriage duly takes place. So definitive is the victory of the money bag over the title deed that the marquis, himself, is drawn into a marriage with a well-to-do bourgeoisie. The novel ends with the double marriage of Sophie and Charles, and Mme. Duport and the marquis, thus demonstrating the ability of the wealthy bourgeoisie to successfully break down the barriers of social prejudice, so jealously and tenaciously guarded by an impoverished and declining nobility.¹

Wealth, however, was not the only means of overcoming social prejudice, as Pigault-Lebrun's earlier novels L'Enfant du Carnaval and Les Barons de Felsheim were to illustrate.

1. A similar theme was later to be adopted by Pigault-Lebrun's grandson, Emile Augier, in his play, Le Gendre de M. Poirier, written in collaboration with Jules Sandeau in 1855.

But in his later novels Pigault-Lebrun was to adopt a more ambiguous attitude towards inter-class marriages of the kind represented in these two novels. In one of the later novels, Une Macédoine, the principal character, Francheville, seeking the hand of a girl of an inferior social class, remains undaunted by the arguments she puts forward against the advisability of such a marriage:

Mon ami, ces conventions, que tu appelles des préjugés, sont respectables: c'est sur elles que repose l'ordre social. Il indique des places, il marque des distances. Cent mille individus, qui voudraient tout rapprocher à la fois, détruiraient tout. Destiné par ta naissance, par tes talents, à remplir les grandes places; appelé à être un des conservateurs de cet ordre, que tu veux intervertir aujourd'hui, que répondrais-tu à ceux qui seraient tentés de t'imiter, et qui, forts de ton exemple, te diraient: Celle que vous avez honorée du nom de votre épouse est aussi une fille de néant.¹

The marriage, which eventually takes place, ends in failure and ultimate divorce, as if to prove Fanchette's point of view.

These allusions to the necessity of maintaining social distinctions recur more frequently in subsequent novels. The novel, L'Homme à Projets, shows Pigault-Lebrun intervening as the omniscient author to comment upon the relations between M. de Roberville and his servant Lafrance:

Or, comme la vertu veut que chacun remplisse les devoirs qu'il s'est imposés, il exigeait beaucoup de son domestique, et il s'en donnait encore d'excellentes raisons: occuper un homme exactement,

1. Vide, pp. 549-550.

sans relâche, c'est lui ôter les occasions de penser à mal, et par conséquent de faire des sottises. Pour lui, il dormait commodément dans sa chaise de poste, pendant que Lafrance courait à bidet, parce que la distinction des rangs n'est pas une chimère, et que la subordination, de degré en degré, est la chaîne qui lie le grand ordre social.¹

Failure to observe these social distinctions only results in violent conflict and confrontation as M. Martin, the protagonist of one of Pigault-Lebrun's last novels, pointedly notes:

Avez-vous quelquefois observé les hommes, monsieur le maire? Avez-vous remarqué que tous les pères veulent porter leur fils au-dessus d'eux? Je vois, dans ce peu de mots, le germe de toutes les révolutions politiques. Ceux-ci veulent abattre tout ce qui les empêche de monter; ceux-là s'efforcent de revenir au point d'où la force des choses et les circonstances les ont précipités. Il n'est pas de transaction qui puisse rapprocher ces deux partis.² Il faut que l'un finisse par écraser l'autre.

Later, in the same novel, Pigault-Lebrun again comments on class conflict and its social and political consequences, when describing the sudden social transformation of his leading character:

Ce n'est plus cet homme simple, qui se met, à Achères, au niveau du bourgeois opulent, c'est un grand seigneur, qu'on fête, qu'on caresse, et qui reçoit gravement les hommages qu'on lui adresse. La distinction des rangs, pensait-il, n'est pas une chimère, puisque les hommes sentent la nécessité d'obéir. Ils ne se rendent pas toujours compte de

1. Vide, pp. 357-358.

2. Vide, L'Observateur, p. 340.

leurs mouvements intérieurs; mais un instinct secret leur dit qu'arracher la clé d'une voûte, c'est renverser l'édifice, et que, déranger quelques-unes des pierres intermédiaires, c'est menacer la clé. J'avoue que le chiffonnier, à genoux au dernier degré, lève des yeux avides jusqu'au premier. Un désir vague, une sorte d'impatience l'y portent; mais ceux devant qui il faudrait qu'il passât, l'arrêtent, et il reprend son crochet. Cependant, qu'une commotion violente et générale brise quelques anneaux de la chaîne, elle cesse d'exister. Un forgeron habile se présente tôt ou tard; il réunit les parties éparses de la chaîne; il les replace; il les consolide; il rive le fer. Voilà, en quatre mots, l'histoire et le dernier résultat des révolutions politiques.¹

The action of this novel is, moreover, centered around the false identity of the leading characters. Sophie, Bertrand and M. Martin are, in reality, princess Obinski, prince Obinski, and prince Paloski, political refugees from the Polish aristocracy exiled in France. Their false identity allows them to observe the customs of other social classes at first hand, but at the end of the novel they are able, once again, to assume their true identity. M. Martin sums up their change of situation in the following manner:

- Laissons ici M. Martin, Bertrand et Sophie, et redevenons nous-mêmes.
- En serons-nous plus heureux, mon ami?
- Je l'ignore, Paula. Mais je crois que chacun doit tenir au chaînon que la fortune lui a assigné. Le bourgeois opulent qui tranche du grand seigneur, troque son argent contre des ridicules. Le prince qui descend de son rang, sans nécessité, devient l'égal de ses inférieurs. Dédaigné à la cour, il est encore dépouillé de la considération dont il

1. Ibid., pp. 469-470.

jouissait à la ville. Tout doit rester à sa place, et tout doit être fait dans son temps.¹

This consistent defence of the existing social and political power structure, when viewed in the historical context of the period, indicates that Pigault-Lebrun identified with the bourgeoisie. His class sympathies are also reflected in his advocacy of the economic system of capitalism. In M. Botte, the hero, whose personality is closely modelled on that of Pigault-Lebrun himself,² is reproached by a curé for lavishly furnishing the future home of Sophie and Charles with expensive trifles. Botte, with his customary gusto, answers these accusations in a manner which recalls Voltaire's Le Mondain:

Vous ne savez ce que vous dites, curé. Ne fais-je pas vivre les marchands à qui j'achète, et ces marchands ne nourrissent-ils pas l'ouvrier laborieux et intelligent? Apprenez, monsieur le prédicateur, que le superflu de l'homme riche doit être jeté dans la société, non au hasard, mais de manière à arriver, par mille canaux divers, jusque dans le galetas de l'indigent. Ce pauvre, impertinent et imbécile, s'élève toujours contre le luxe qui l'éblouit, et il ne réfléchit pas que le luxe seul le nourrit, ne fit-il que des petits couteaux de deux sous....³

In the novel L'Homme à Projets, under the section entitled, "La Morale par Alphabet", Pigault-Lebrun again alludes, but in more subtle terms, to the advantages of the economic system of capitalism:

1. Ibid., p. 626.

2. See above, pp. 51-52.

3. Vide, pp. 301-302.

Il serait chimérique de se flatter de distraire les hommes de leur intérêt particulier, au point de ne les occuper que de l'intérêt général: ce fut une des erreurs de notre révolution. Il faut les convaincre que concilier ces deux intérêts, c'est les servir l'un et l'autre, et que les diviser, c'est les trahir également.¹

For Pigault-Lebrun, the political system most capable of effecting this conciliation of the private and public interest was a liberal form of strong constitutional monarchy which would assure stability and public order, and not a republican form of government where everything was embroiled in a constant state of agitation and turmoil:

Si le gouvernement le plus parfait est celui où les têtes sont sans cesse en fermentation, le meilleur des gouvernements est le républicain. Si la tranquillité publique, la sûreté des citoyens sont les effets d'une sage administration, le meilleur des gouvernements est le monarchique.²

The apparent ambiguity of this last statement was finally clarified by Pigault-Lebrun in the closing pages of one of his last works, entitled L'Educateur ou Contes à Mon Petit-Fils, where, after having described the episode of the "Trois Journées Glorieuses", he pays a warm homage to the July Monarchy and its 'roi citoyen':

Tous les jours les imaginations étaient frappées par des choses nouvelles et du plus haut intérêt. La Chambre des Députés venait de terminer la nouvelle Charte. Le lendemain, le lieutenant général devait se rendre au sein de l'assemblée, y entendre la lecture du pacte qui allait lier le

1. Vide, p. 440.

2. Ibid., p. 439.

chef à la nation, en jurer, l'observation et le maintien, et recevoir la couronne des mains des représentants du grand peuple..... On ne put se procurer des billets d'entrée au corps législatif; mais comment ne pas se trouver sur le passage du roi citoyen, du meilleur ami des Français? Comment ne pas joindre ses acclamations à celle de la multitude? ¹

The principal defect of Pigault-Lebrun's social and political analysis lies in its simplistic approach to the problems of the day, though such superficiality can be justified when contemporary social historians, themselves, were guilty of the same misconceptions. By using the broad omnibus terms of 'peuple', 'bourgeois', and 'noblesse', he unknowingly obscured the social complexities of his time. It is only recently that historians and sociologists, by examining the social realities of the period more closely, have finally come to question the validity of this rigid social terminology.²

Pigault-Lebrun is, on the other hand, more authentic when describing the social customs and mores of his day.³ His satire of the lower classes was influenced by the violence and inconsistency of their actions during the Revolution. As a social group he felt little sympathy for them but, as his portrayals of certain popular characters prove,⁴ he was bound

1. Vide, Edition Romans Illustrés, Vol. 32, no. 14, p. 34.

2. Vide, Cobban, A., Op. cit., pp. 20-21; and Dupeux, G., Op. cit., pp. 74-75.

3. Vide, Sagnac, P., La Formation de la Société Française Moderne, Paris, P. U. F., 1946, Vol. 2.

4. e.g. Happy and Fanchon, L'Enfant du Carnaval; Brandt, Les Barons de Felsheim; Thomas, Mon Oncle Thomas; Ruder, Jérôme.

by an affectionate, if at times condescending, attachment to them as individuals.

However, after the beginning of the Empire, Pigault-Lebrun abandoned his portrayal of important popular characters for those of the bourgeoisie or the repatriated nobility. This change in characterisation not only reflected the general state of French society at this time, but also a gradual transformation in the social and political ideas of Pigault-Lebrun, himself. His defence of bourgeois ideals, already strongly proclaimed in M. Botte, became increasingly evident in later novels, such as L'Homme à Projets and its sequel M. de Roberville.

This support of bourgeois values is also indirectly illustrated by his continual condemnation of the nobility's loose morals and outmoded prejudices. Even those four characters belonging to the French aristocracy who are sympathetically portrayed by Pigault-Lebrun,¹ all play a minor role in the shaping of events. In the class conflict which set the rich and established bourgeoisie against the impoverished and declining nobility at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Pigault-Lebrun stood solidly on the side of the bourgeoisie, his own class by birth and by temperament. Seeing

1. e.g., M. Abell, L'Enfant du Carnaval; le Général du Derneval, Jérôme; M. d'Apremont, Adélaïde de Méran; Chevalier d'Egliny, M. Botte.

a threat to the security and stability of the bourgeoisie in the violent emotions aroused in the lower classes by the extremist revolutionary leaders, and a check to its liberty and prosperity in the outmoded prejudices of the repatriated nobility, Pigault-Lebrun favored any form of government which would assure and perpetuate the social and political ideals of the bourgeoisie.

This fear of revolutionary and reactionary extremism led him at first to support the strong centralised government of Napoleon,¹ and later to reject it for its despotism and tyranny,² while the same moderate political position was also responsible for his initial support and later rejection of the Bourbon Restoration.³ This attitude is illustrated in his last novel, La Sainte Ligue, annals of the reign of Charles IX, which is a thinly transposed attack on the religious and political intolerance of Charles X, from which Pigault-Lebrun, himself, had suffered.⁴ This historic tale of two Huguenot families who flee to the Swiss canton of Appenzell to escape religious persecution summarizes and confirms Pigault-Lebrun's

1. Vide, Mon Oncle Thomas, pp. 541-542.

2. Vide, Adélaïde de Méran, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 20, pp. 35, 53, 164.

3. Ibid., p. 187.

4. See above, pp. 47-48.

political and social beliefs:

Là, comme dans toute la Suisse, la propriété est sacrée. La liberté, la suppression de toute charge onéreuse ou arbitraire, la satisfaction de participer par leur vote à la législation dédommagent les Suisses de leur pauvreté. Ainsi, nul n'est assez riche pour acheter son voisin ni assez pauvre pour se vendre.¹

But refusing to believe in the continued state of this helvetic utopia, Pigault-Lebrun concludes this historical novel on a note of disillusionment:

Le luxe commence à s'introduire dans le canton. Les femmes portent le corset de soie, et le tribunal de la réforme se tait, parce que les épouses des membres qui le composent sont les premières à enfreindre la loi. Dans cent ans, les formes du gouvernement seront les mêmes; mais la liberté ne sera plus qu'un mot: le luxe caresse toujours la richesse, qui seule peut l'alimenter, et où l'opulence est tout, l'esprit public a cessé d'exister. Nous sommes riches, nos descendants seront landammans.²

Despairing of any immediately foreseeable change in man, Pigault-Lebrun's concept of society was based on the continuation of class differences rendered inevitable by the misuse of political power and by the pursuit of material wealth. This social and political pragmatism explains his support of the established bourgeoisie, and his own personal interest in maintaining the class system of his day:

....la grande famille dont se compose un royaume est nécessairement divisée en plusieurs classes; la subordination dont dépend le maintien de l'ordre exige que chacun reste dans la sienne.³

1. Vide, Edition Romans Illustrés, Vol. 32, p. 71.

2. Ibid., p. 80.

3. Ibid., p. 13.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND DOCTRINES

One of the most recurrent themes in Pigault-Lebrun's novels involves the undermining of religion and its institutions. Less vehement in his invective against the dogmas of the Church than were his predecessors, the 'Philosophes', he, nonetheless, showed himself to be merciless when attacking what he considered to be the parasitic nature of its institutions. Educated by the Oratorians of Boulogne, he later reacted against this religious education by following in the footsteps of Voltaire and the other Encyclopedists in his determination to 'écraser l'infâme'. He was to maintain this religious antipathy until the end of his life. Bitterly anti-clerical in the first part of his work, Pigault-Lebrun showed more caution during the last years of the Empire and the early years of the Restoration when the resurgent power of the Church was once again making itself felt. He was to revert to his earlier animosity during the reign of Charles X, after having fallen a victim to the religious persecution of the ultramontane party.¹

We shall now examine, in turn, Pigault-Lebrun's attitude towards the religious orders, the clergy, and the

1. See above, pp. 47-48.

dogmas of the Church.

a) Religious orders. There is little indication in his autobiography of any marked adolescent reaction against the authoritarian image of his religious schooling. The only reference to Pigault-Lebrun's religious education was an ironical quip in the opening pages of his first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, concerning the future education of the six year old narrator-hero:

.....il fut arrêté, en outre, que des mains de Monsieur Gondré, je passerais en celles des pères Minimes, qui tiennent à Calais un collège fameux, dont les écoliers de seconde sont en état d'entrer en quatrième chez les Oratoriens de Boulogne, dont les écoliers de quatrième sont quelquefois reçus en sixième dans les collèges de l'Université de Paris; qu'au reste, j'en saurais toujours assez pour être moine.¹

Apart from demonstrating the differences in standards of education between Paris and the Provinces, these remarks already point to the deep anti-religious resentment to be found in certain of Pigault-Lebrun's later works.

Yet, for the majority of past and present day critics, the pedagogical methods, aims and curriculum of the Oratorians, were among the most advanced and enlightened of all those practised by the great teaching orders of the eighteenth century, and render Pigault-Lebrun's criticism slightly suspect.²

1. Vide, pp. 39-40.

2. Vide, Compayré, Gabriel, Histoire Critique des Doctrines de l'Education en France depuis le XVIe Siècle, Paris,

When the Jesuits were expelled from France in 1764, the Oratorians took their place and exercised a considerable influence up to and beyond 1789. During the first years of the Revolution, plans for a restructured system of education were on the increase. Among the projects which were presented before the National Assembly, three,¹ at least, emanated from the Oratorians. They were in favor with the first revolutionaries, who counted on them to form, in accordance with the new Constitution, a 'famille d'instituteurs' and no longer a religious congregation which the law forbade. In 1791, the Oratorian, Paris, called for compulsory free instruction at all levels for the underprivileged, and improved salaries for the teachers.

The general import of this testimony in favor of the Oratorians would seem to indicate that the ironic attitude Pigault-Lebrun adopted towards them was motivated more by his anti-religious animosity than by any deep-rooted dislike for their pedagogic principles. Moreover, the great interest

Hachette, 1879, Vol. 1, p. 210.

Hubert, René, Histoire de la Pédagogie, Paris, P.U.F., 1949, pp. 56-57.

Rousseau, Confessions, Ed. Livre de Poche, Paris, Gallimard, 1963, Livre 6, p. 361.

Voltaire, Essai sur les Moeurs, Paris, Garnier, 1963, Vol. 2 Chapter 139, p. 290.

1. Villier, Nouveau Plan d'Instruction Publique, 1789.
 Daunou, Plan d'Education, 1790.
 Paris, Projet d'Education Nationale, 1790.

shown by Pigault-Lebrun in his novels for historical and geographical accuracy was probably derived from the importance the Oratorians attached to these two subjects.

This same anti-religious feeling can also be seen in his attitude towards the Jesuits. Banned from France in 1764, they returned in 1814, and immediately began to exert their power over the Restoration régime. Pigault-Lebrun held them responsible for his forced retirement from public service in 1824,¹ and used every opportunity thereafter of condemning them. He had, in fact, already drawn attention to what he considered their pernicious influence in his novel, L'Homme à Projets, published in 1807. Digressing from the main action of the novel, he enters, in true voltairian fashion, into the historic dispute between the Jansenists and the Jesuits, satirising, in particular, the religious jargon used by both sects:

Vous croyez, peut-être, que ces gens-là ne pouvaient se regarder sans se rire au nez: pas du tout. Ils disputèrent sérieusement pour des mots qu'ils n'entendaient pas plus que vous.²

He then goes on to sketch a satiric history of this famous dispute, pausing, from time to time, to give vent to his anti-religious feelings:

1. See above, pp. 47-48.

2. Vide, p. 410.

Qui croirait que la nation s'occupa sérieusement de ces misérables disputes, au moment où les gens de lettres et les savants les plus célèbres lui préparaient l'Encyclopédie, recueil immense qui honore également et ses auteurs et le peuple qui le possède.¹

Switching from religious to educational doctrine, Pigault-Lebrun concentrated his attacks on the Jesuits' pedagogical principles in his last novel, La Sainte Ligue. One of the leading characters sums up his experiences in a Jesuit college in the following slyly allusive manner:

On parle beaucoup de la morale relâchée des révérends pères. Moi, je confesse n'avoir jamais entendu dans mon collège, un seul mot qui fût répréhensible, ce qui ne prouve rien, cependant, en faveur des jésuites car s'ils ont des principes erronés en morale et en politique, ils ne sont pas assez insensés pour initier leurs bambins aux secrets de l'ordre.²

In the same novel, however, Pigault-Lebrun shows a little more caution when satirising the educational program of the Jesuits:

.....au reste, j'ai appris sous eux le latin, le grec, la géographie, l'histoire, les mathématiques, l'astronomie, la physique et une mauvaise philosophie. C'est-à-dire que j'ai appris des hautes sciences ce qu'il en fallait pour achever seul mon éducation quand je sortirais du collège.³

This ironic critique of the Jesuit's educational program was more justified than Pigault-Lebrun's criticism of the Oratorians. The former have been, above all, blamed by critics

1. Ibid., p. 414.

2. Vide, Ed. Romans Illustrés, Vol 32, p. 20.

3. Ibid.

for their undue emphasis on classical languages and religion, to the detriment of the native tongue and the experimental sciences.¹ Pigault-Lebrun resumed his attacks against the Jesuits in his short story, entitled L'Educateur or Contes à mon Petit-Fils, a book in which the author, in his last years, reiterated his belief in the pedagogic reforms undertaken during the Revolution.

Pigault-Lebrun's attitude towards the Franciscan and Dominican orders is far more antagonistic than that shown towards the great religious teaching orders. This discriminatory treatment was a direct result of the great importance attached to the question of social utilitarianism during the eighteenth century. It was precisely because the religious orders fulfilled an important social function through their teaching, however, imperfect, that they were more highly esteemed than the Franciscans or the Dominicans whom Pigault-Lebrun considered as mere parasites upon society.

The Capuchin friars and the Grey friars of the order of Saint Francis were the special object of biting satire in several of Pigault-Lebrun's novels. In L'Enfant du Carnaval there is a very unflattering description of a Capuchin friar, Father Jean-François, who is held responsible for the birth of the novel's hero:

1. Vide, Compayré, Gabriel, Op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 161-208. Durckheim, Emile, L'Evolution Pédagogique en France, Paris, Alcan, 1938, Vol. 2, p. 123.

Le père Jean-François était un capucin indigne dans toute l'étendue du mot. Ignorant, comme son saint fondateur, crasseux comme lui, gourmand comme tous les capucins du monde chrétien réunis, égoïste et insouciant comme eux, du reste assez honnête pour un moine.¹

In the novel, Mon Oncle Thomas, two friars of the same order, begging for alms in the local neighborhood, take advantage of a laundress's charms,² while a little later this heavy and rather obvious satire again occurs when Pigault-Lebrun sarcastically relates the forced entry of Thomas into the Franciscan order:

Les pères indignes se recrutaient déjà difficilement, et le fils du moindre bourgeois eût rougi de s'aggréger à un corps sale, puant et ignare. En conséquence, le serviteur des serviteurs avait accordé aux capucins, dans sa sollicitude paternelle, un bref, qui dispensait des épreuves du noviciat les sujets dont la ferveur ne pourrait supporter un an d'attente.³

Pigault-Lebrun's hostile criticism of these mendicant friars subsisted until the end of his literary career. For fear of censorship, the action of his last novel, La Sainte Ligue, was transposed to the sixteenth century and the satire forced to adopt more subtle tones. Antoine de Mouchy, one of the leading protagonists of the novel, arrives at the Franciscan community of Châteaudun. After having appropriated the contents of his purse, on the pretext of using it for

1. Vide, p. 11.

2. Vide, pp. 51-52.

3. Vide, p. 392.

charitable works, the friars provide him with a travelling-bag, the contents of which allow Pigault-Lebrun to slyly allude to the gastronomic advantages of religious life:

...une succulente volaille, une carpe frite,
une tranche d'un jambon rosé, des biscotins
et une bouteille de cet excellent vin que
nous devons aux révérends pères possesseurs
de Clos-Vougeot.¹

The Dominican friars were also subjected to the satire of Pigault-Lebrun. In La Folie Espagnole a Dominican father, who is journeying along the road leading from Sarragossa to Epila, meets a young girl disguised as a clerk and tenders the following piece of advice:

Mon fils, vous êtes sans doute appelé à l'ordre de prêtrise. Vous êtes jeune, et vous verrez bien des choses dont mes yeux ne seront pas témoins. Si vous voyez du relâchement dans la ferveur et dans la foi, servez-vous de vos avantages extérieurs pour approcher les grands; de votre esprit pour les aveugler; excitez une persécution; elle enfantera le fanatisme, et consolidera votre empire.²

This broad satire of the Franciscans and Dominicans on the part of Pigault-Lebrun stemmed from an innate disgust at the apparent social uselessness of these orders in a predominantly utilitarian-oriented society. That there was some justification for these attacks seems to be confirmed by the opinions of two contemporary Christian apologists. André Latreille affirms that:

1. Edition Romans Illustrés, Vol. 32, pp. 3-4.

2. Vide, p. 90.

....dans les couvents d'hommes, la crise de ferveur est indéniable; elle se double parfois d'une crise de discipline, car il y a aussi une coupure entre une plèbe monastique et de hauts dignitaires trop bien nantis. En 1765, à l'abbaye de Saint-Germain-des-Prés vingt huit religieux parmi les plus savants requièrent d'être débarrassés de leur règle et de leur costume qui, disent-ils, les avilit. Des capucins quêteurs accusent leurs supérieurs de trafiquer des aumônes qu'ils recueillent.¹

According to Marie Henri Jette:

On reproche aux moines leur âpreté à recueillir les dîmes, on les voudrait plus généreux envers les indigents, sans considérer que les religieux, grugés par l'abbé royal qui exige souvent plus que sa tierce part, et grevés d'obligations nombreuses, ont quelquefois eux-mêmes juste de quoi de vivre. Mais ce qu'on pourrait attendre d'eux, et qu'ils ne donnent pas parce que souvent ils l'ont perdu, c'est l'esprit de douceur et de paix de l'évangile. Nombre de monastères qui ont la haute main sur les paroisses environnantes, ont vis-à-vis des curés une attitude rien moins qu'édifiante.²

b) The Clergy. In addition to the religious orders, Pigault-Lebrun directed his satire against the ecclesiastical community, in general. However, he was even more discriminating in his treatment of the clergy than he had been in his treatment of the religious orders. Springing in part from his political beliefs, his attacks on the clergy were more intently aimed at the upper than the lower echelons of the Church, with whom

1. L'Eglise Catholique et la Révolution Française, Paris, Hachette, 1946-1950, Vol. 1, p. 24.

2. La France Religieuse du XVIIIe Siècle, Paris, Casterman, 1956, p. 23.

he was sometimes found to be in sympathy.

In his first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, Pigault-Lebrun launches a general attack on the clergy's conduct throughout the Revolution:

Il était de la politique de ménager le clergé: l'expérience de dix siècles avait appris quelle était son influence sur le commun des hommes. Il est vrai, cependant, que la plupart des prêtres ne méritaient aucun ménagement. Des vicaires prêtèrent tous les serments qu'on exigea d'eux pour devenir curés. Des curés dénoncèrent leur évêque pour monter à l'épiscopat. Quelques-uns renièrent leur Dieu pour obtenir des emplois lucratifs, et vivre dans la licence, à la faveur du désordre inséparable d'une révolution. Les moins éhontés épousèrent leurs concubines; d'autres se marièrent par intérêt, et gardèrent leur servante par libertinage et par habitude; presque tous prirent des femmes perdues: un être vil ne trouve à s'associer qu'avec un être qui lui ressemble.¹

Transferring the focus of his satire in his later work from the general to the particular, Pigault-Lebrun made a special attack on the upper hierarchy of the Church. In La Folie Espagnole he denounces the dissolute habits of the Bishop of Saragossa who continued to maintain in his entourage an attractive blond girl, subtly disguised as a young clerk,² while, in a later novel, L'Homme à Projets, among other satirical portraits of society, Pigault-Lebrun describes those of a bishop,³ a canon,⁴ and finally a cardinal:

1. Vide, pp. 391-392.

2. Vide, pp. 69-70.

3. Vide, p. 375.

4. Ibid., p. 377.

....homme d'esprit qui prétend au génie, comme si cela se donnait ainsi que la barrette. Il vient d'être reçu à l'Académie, et il eût pu faire un bon ouvrage pendant le temps qu'il a perdu à régler le cérémonial de sa réception,¹ et à donner à rire aux oisifs de la capitale.¹

Pigault-Lebrun's anti-clerical feelings did not, however, completely blind him to certain of the clergy's merits. In his novel, Jérôme, he admits in a footnote² that not all members of the clergy are necessarily rakes and rascals, and his portrait of a country parish priest in the same novel, though somewhat comic, does contain certain endearing elements.³ It is precisely these country parish priests who most arouse the sympathy of Pigault-Lebrun. In M. Botte there is a very flattering portrayal of a country priest, who had been persecuted, banished and outlawed during the Revolution and who, at the end of the Terror, was finally allowed to return to his parish. His personal appeal to Pigault-Lebrun lies in his compassion and social usefulness, qualities which recall those of the curé de Courgis in Restif's La Vie de Mon Père:

....il prêchait contre un vice, ou il louait une vertu... Il soignait, consolait les malades; il secourait ses pauvres; il arrangeait les procès; il réconciliait les époux, et il engageait celui qui avait tort à se corriger, et l'autre à être patient. L'office du dimanche terminé, il permettait, il encourageait le travail, parce qu'il croyait qu'on fait moins de mal en conduisant sa charrue qu'en s'enivrant

1. Ibid., p. 378.

2. Vide, p. 121.

3. Vide, pp. 16-87.

de mauvais vin.... Il ne haïssait pas le plaisir, et de temps en temps, il rassemblait chez lui quelques-uns de ses paroissiens.¹

In making this distinction between the upper and lower clergy, Pigault-Lebrun was merely following the popular sentiment of the day. At the close of the eighteenth century, the bishops and archbishops, with few exceptions, were liked neither by the rest of the clergy nor by the greater part of the population. This dislike stemmed from the different social origins of the two groups, the upper clergy being mainly identified with the aims and aspirations of the nobility.² As for the lower clergy there were exceedingly few priests who could be congratulated on their good relationships with their superiors. Often victims of the latter's abuse of power, it was the country parish priests who, by their sense of patriotism and social awareness, were to receive the general support of Pigault-Lebrun in the ever-widening split between the upper and lower ranks of the clergy.³

c) Religious doctrine. Unlike his treatment of the lower clergy, Pigault-Lebrun's attitude is far from conciliatory when he comes to examine the doctrines and dogmas of the Church. He is merciless in his criticism of anything that

1. Vide, pp. 247-256.

2. Vide, Jette, M.H., Op. cit., pp. 31-32.

3. Ibid., p. 36.

smacks of superstition, stupidity or irrationality. In this respect he is a faithful follower of those eighteenth century 'Philosophes', like Voltaire, who prided themselves on their rational and scientific approach to life's problems. This attitude is vividly rendered in a discussion between a parish priest and M. Botte, in which Pigault-Lebrun confronts rigid religious dogmatism with a liberal secular morality:

- A quoi mène la fréquentation du monde, qu'à la dissipation, à l'oubli de ses devoirs?
- A quoi mène la vertu; même quand elle est poussée à l'excès, qu'à la misanthropie, à l'orgueil, à un endurcissement, qu'on a souvent admirés?
- Monsieur va attaquer les pères du désert.
- A quoi ont-ils servi?
- Ce sont des saints.
- Je n'en sais rien.
- Que faut-il donc, selon vous, pour l'être?
- Etre bon citoyen, bon époux, bon père, bon ami; aider les humains, compatir à leurs faiblesses, les en guérir par la force de l'exemple.
- L'église ne reconnaît pas ces saints-là.
- L'église a tort.
- Voilà un blasphème.¹

In a similar discussion in the novel, Jérôme, Pigault-Lebrun again reveals what he considers to be the true nature of Christian morality. A 'grand-vicaire' is admonishing a parish priest for having propagated all kinds of absurdities in the local ecclesiastical journal, and for having attacked intelligent and well-respected parishioners. He then proceeds to advise the priest on the proper form of conduct to be

1. M. Botte, p. 305.

adopted in order to earn the respect of both believers and unbelievers:

Soulagez vos pauvres si vous le pouvez;
 consolez vos malades; entretenez la paix dans
 les familles; prêchez rarement, et souvenez-
 vous qu'un sermon sur la concorde, qui aura
 réuni deux voisins brouillés pour les limites
 de leur champ, est plus utile que ce que vous
 pourrez dire de la Sainte-Trinité ou de
 l'Immaculée Conception.¹

And after having further reproached the priest for his abuses of confessional secrets and for his excessive religious fanaticism, the 'grand-vicaire' sums up his point of view in the following way:

Autrefois tout était dans la religion;
 aujourd'hui la religion est dans le gouvernement;
 et le gouvernement veut former des hommes: que
 la religion soit donc la morale mise en action.
 Annoncez toutes les vertus, rendez-les simples
 et aimables; pratiquez-les surtout, car l'homme
 qui s'établit médiateur entre ses semblables et
 Dieu doit être au-dessus des faiblesses dont
 il veut corriger les autres.²

For Pigault-Lebrun such is the conduct to which the men of the cloth must conform, a true Christian morality based on tolerance, understanding, social commitment and freedom from all restrictive dogma and superstitious doctrine. In his fundamental belief in a secular morality, Pigault-Lebrun demonstrated, at least in his novels,³ that he adhered to the opinions of the eighteenth century Deists.

1. Vide, p. 113.

2. Ibid., pp. 113-114.

3. In Le Citateur, a collection of anti-religious aphorisms published in 1803, Pigault-Lebrun professes atheism rather than deism.

Thus by his differentiation between the various religious orders and the ranks of the clergy, as well as by his advocacy of a secular morality, Pigault-Lebrun's general anti-religious bias can be seen to have been motivated by both social and political considerations. This double motivation is synthesized in his very last novel, La Sainte Ligue. Smarting under the effects of the ultramontane persecution,¹ Pigault-Lebrun makes the sixteenth century religious and political struggle between the Catholic Confederation and the Calvinists the principal theme of his novel. This is in striking contrast to his other novels where the theme of religion never occupies the center of attention. Although they contain abundant portraits of the clergy and of the religious orders, virulent satire of their customs and beliefs, these aspects are invariably submerged by the greater importance of the general plot, and are usually introduced to add variety and comic relief to the frequent insipidity of the love intrigue.

This subordination of the religious theme to others which Pigault-Lebrun considered more important can be explained by the context of the period in which he was writing. During the Directory and the Consulate, Pigault-Lebrun's most active period, religious influence was at a relatively low ebb compared to that which it was to reach during the Empire and

1. See above, pp. 47-48.

the Restoration. In this earlier period of his writing, from L'Enfant du Carnaval until the publication of Jérôme in 1804, his broad religious satire constituted a continuation of a certain literary tradition whose roots go back to the 'fabliaux' and 'farces' of the Middle Ages, and whose more immediate representatives were writers such as Rabelais and Voltaire. His religious satire also revealed a concession to the generally rabid anti-clerical feeling which then prevailed throughout the country. Virulent and fanatic anti-religious attacks were unnecessary at this time as the Church wielded little power or influence. This explains the general comic nature of Pigault-Lebrun's satire during this period. During the Empire, sensing a change in the public's attitude, Pigault-Lebrun's generally abandoned his heavy religious satire in favor of more refined topics. It was only after the Restoration that Pigault-Lebrun found cause to renew his attacks on established religion. In his novel, Le Garçon sans Souci, he reverts to his usual methods of comic religious satire but was obliged to transpose the geographic setting of his novel to Spain for fear of censorship.

This fear of censorship became a reality during the final years of the Restoration when the powerful reactionary forces in the Church were not only responsible for the banning of certain of Pigault-Lebrun's works and the imprisonment of his publisher,¹ but also for the author's dismissal from his

1. See above, p. 46.

governmental post.¹ It was, therefore, only in his last novel, La Sainte Ligue, published with considerable courage in 1829, that Pigault-Lebrun's hostile criticism of established religion had any real social or political relevance. Viewed in this perspective, Marie Henri Jette's remarks on anti-religious feeling in the eighteenth century would appear to be particularly appropriate to Pigault-Lebrun's earlier works:

De même que les très grands artistes sont trahis par l'admiration de leurs disciples qui les copient sans les bien comprendre, ainsi Voltaire traîne derrière lui une séquelle d'anti-cléricaux qui n'ont retenu que les négations du maître et les moins avouables de ses procédés: tourner à la blague les questions sérieuses, et couler l'adversaire par le ridicule ou le mensonge. Mais la fine piqure de guêpe a fait place au grossier pavé d'ours.²

1. See above, pp. 47-48.

2. Vide, La France Religieuse du XVIIIe Siècle, Op. cit., p. 87.

PART TWO

THEORY AND TECHNIQUE

Preface.

In this second part we shall first trace the evolution of the concepts and techniques of the novel in the eighteenth century prior to Pigault-Lebrun. Then, before examining to what extent Pigault-Lebrun was aware of these eighteenth century techniques of the novel, and to what degree he effectively practised or improved upon them, we shall first analyse his own concept of the novel, and try to determine in what manner this may have influenced his technical approach to the art of fiction. We shall examine these techniques in relation to narrative form and plot structure; characterisation and dialogue; background and style.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES OF THE NOVEL, 1715-1789

A. Narrative Form:

The whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction, I take to be governed by the question of the point of view--the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story.¹

The importance attached in this remark to the point of view by a twentieth century critic writing under the influence of Henry James, was also characteristic of novelists and critics in the eighteenth century. Of the different types of novels published during this latter period, the majority were written in the first-person narrative form of the memoir or letter novel. This represented a shift in the point of view from the third-person historical method of narration which had been established in the heroic and comic novels prior to 1670. This change in the novelist's narrative approach to his work was the result of aesthetic, literary and sociological factors,² which had induced him to present his work as an authentic literary document. As a result of this claim to

1. Vide, Lubbock, Percy, The Craft of Fiction, London, Jonathan Cape, 1921, p. 251.

2. See above, pp. 1-4.

'truth', the memoir novel could hardly be distinguished, in its manner of presentation, from an authentic autobiography, while the letter novel's format closely resembled a genuine collection of letters.

Besides attempting to convey this notion of 'truth' through a realistic formal presentation, the eighteenth century novelist would usually try either to convince the reader that the story was in fact authentic, by giving an explanatory introduction intended to establish the factual basis of the novel, or to so write the novel that the accepted standards of probability would not be questioned by the reader. The first of these methods is obviously the clumsier, whereas the second demands certain skills in the use of technique, in order to induce the desired illusion of 'truth'. In general the evolution of the eighteenth century novel represents a transformation from the first to the second method. From novels of the first half of the century which lay claims to literal 'truth',¹ there is a trend in the second half of the century towards works which put less emphasis on their supposedly factual origin in order to show, instead, more concern for everyday standards of probability.² As successive writers discovered and learned to exploit effective ways of portraying real life, the novel

1. e.g. La Vie de Marianne - Avertissement.
Manon Lescaut - Première Partie, p. 1.

2. e.g. La Nouvelle Héloïse - Préface.

became more capable of sustaining the illusion of 'truth', and of commanding the reader's imaginative rather than his literal belief.

It was, therefore, the technical innovation of the first-person narrator, introduced by the memoir novel and the letter novel around 1670, with its subsequent influence on the narrative techniques of the eighteenth century, which had largely contributed to the creation of that desired illusion of 'truth'. Memoirs and letters presented the speaking voice of the witness who had himself supposedly lived through the events of the story, thereby lending it an additional touch of authority and authenticity. In such works the thoughts and feelings of the narrator tended to take on a new importance, by involving the reader's sympathies more closely, and leading to his identification with the 'I' of the story.

However, the memoir novelists of the late seventeenth century, unlike the later letter novelists, were more preoccupied with the purely non-literary advantages of first-person narrative than with any specific interest in the possible literary qualities of the narrative 'I'. Intent only on evoking their reader's literal belief, their introductory prefaces regularly explain how or why the autobiography came to be written, and if the text was edited by a second writer, an explanation is usually provided of how the manuscript came into his possession and why it was being published. This information is usually supported by firm assurances as to the authenticity

of the whole work. Such an example can be found in the Preface of the Mémoires de M.L.C.D.R., written in 1687 by Courtilz de Sandras:

Le C.D.R. a été un homme si connu, et qui est mort depuis si peu de temps, qu'il semble presque inutile de vouloir justifier ce qu'il rapporte dans ses Mémoires. Tous ceux qui ont été hommes de guerre, ou hommes de Cour, savent qu'il n'était pas capable de conter une fable pour une vérité, et encore moins de l'écrire pour abuser le public.... Ainsi, si dès le commencement de ses Mémoires il rapporte une chose de son père qui paraît surprenante, il ne faut pas inférer de là qu'elle n'est pas véritable. Nous en voyons arriver tous les jours de si extraordinaires, que ceux qui connaissent Paris ne s'en étonneront pas.....

Thus with this pretence of authenticity to maintain, seventeenth and early eighteenth century writers of memoir novels paid little attention to the literary advantages of first-person narrative as a means of involving the reader's sympathies more closely, and of inducing his imaginative belief. These literary advantages of the first-person narrative technique were only to gain in importance after 1750 when applied by writers to the more artificial form of the letter novel.

One of the most important advantages of the letter novel to be used by novelists in the second half of the eighteenth century concerned the use of the multiple point of view. This was the device of making more than one character describe the same event, and was most effectively used by Laclos in Les Liaisons Dangereuses.¹ Laclos not only practised

1. e.g. Valmont's account of the seduction of Cécile is followed by the latter's own version of the incident.

this method in order to give more factual information about what had happened but also used it in order to create greater depth of characterisation. There is a continual 'jeu de miroirs' through which the various characters and incidents are seen from different angles and in different lights.

When skilfully used as in Les Liaisons Dangereuses, this multiple point of view proved more effective than most other eighteenth century narrative forms. In the first-person narrative, the narrator likewise furnished no more than a single viewpoint of each event and character. The only method comparable to the letter novel's multiple viewpoint is to have whole sections of the story repeated by different narrators.¹ Like the letter novel, this technique can extend the author's resources in describing both the 'truth' of a given set of events as well as deepen the reader's knowledge of the character's inner life. However, the great advantage of the letter-novel, in this respect, is that the relative shortness of the letters allows the separate versions of an event, or a fresh view of a character, to emerge as the plot is unfolding, instead of halting or ending the action and beginning again.

B. Plot Structure: Besides adopting the widespread use of the first-person narrative technique, the eighteenth century

1. e.g. Les Heureux Orphelins - Crébillon fils.
The Alexandria Quartet - Lawrence Durrell.

memoir and letter novel introduced other techniques and practices which were to influence later novelists' attempts to create the illusion of real life in fiction. In general eighteenth century novelists found better methods of shaping and conveying a story than those used by their predecessors. One of these methods for the achievement of better structural coherence in the eighteenth century novel concerned the gradual abolition of the extraneous interpolated story. Such stories, which have little or no relevance to the main outline of the plot, though still in existence in the better novels¹ of the first half of the century, became a dying convention by the 1760's.² By this time novelists had come to realize that such stories, far from adding interest to the novel, had only managed to interrupt its narrative flow and disrupt its coherence and balance.

However, digressive disquisitions continued to be used in the novel and, though forming an integral part of the narrative, did run counter to considerations of relevance and

1. e.g. Gil Blas, "Histoire d'un garçon barbier", and "Histoire de don Raphaël"; Le Paysan Parvenu, the conversation in a coach which includes the story told by the 'plaideur' and some literary criticism directed at Crébillon fils.

2. Jacques le Fataliste's interpolations and digressions are a parody of this structural defect, but do not imitate its weaknesses. The tales and anecdotes form an integral part of the work and are not distinct and detachable like the stories in Gil Blas.

structural coherence.¹ These long discussions and debates are not strictly speaking digressions or interpolations like the subsidiary stories of Lesage, since they are bound up with situations involving the main characters. On the other hand it is sometimes clearly evident that these situations have been arranged as pretexts for discussions.² With the exception of the impressionistic handling of time,³ and certain minor faults of exposition⁴ and dénouement,⁵ there was a general improvement in the structure and organisation of the novel as the eighteenth century progressed. This was particularly evident in the refusal of the better novelists of the second half of the century, with the exception of Restif de la Bretonne, to rely on the flagrant misuse of chance and coincidence,⁶ and

1. e.g. La Nouvelle Héloïse: disquisitions of Saint Preux on Italian music, Première Partie, Lettre XLVIII, and on domestic economy, Quatrième Partie, Lettre X.

2. e.g. La Nouvelle Héloïse: discussions between Julie and Saint Preux on religion, Sixième Partie, Lettres VI, VII, VIII.

3. e.g. Gil Blas, Ed. Garnier, Vol. 2, pp. 337-348; La Vie de Marianne, Ed. Garnier, pp. 27, 145; Le Paysan Parvenu, Ed. Garnier, p. 52; La Religieuse, Ed. Garnier, pp. 301-304.

4. e.g. a) making characters tell each other, for the benefit of the reader, things they already know and have no reason to repeat; e.g. Saint Preux writing to Julie in La Nouvelle Héloïse, Lettre 1, "Vous savez que je ne suis entré dans votre maison que sur l'invitation de votre mère." b) the use of footnotes, e.g. to explain the marquis' animosity towards Gercourt in Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Lettre 2.

5. e.g. Les Liaisons Dangereuses and Paul et Virginie.

6. e.g. Gil Blas.

to resort to other such technical weaknesses as eavesdropping for the development of their plots.¹ In the better technically constructed works of earlier novelists such as Prévost and Crébillon fils,² and especially those of later novelists such as Diderot and Laclos,³ plot development was based on causation and character motivation rather than on chance and coincidence. Even when the novelist held forth on moral and philosophical subjects, ideas and beliefs were evoked through action and not through long-winded conversations and dissertations.⁴

Another structural improvement consisted in the ability of later novelists, like Rousseau and Laclos, to organise a long work as a coherent whole, and to sense the inter-relationships of the various parts.⁵ These works, compared to the structural deficiencies of novels like Gil Blas, La Vie de Marianne, and even later novels such as Le Paysan Perversi, attested to the novelist's desire to shape the novel into a more artistic form. By shaping their stories so that the divisions between the parts emphasized crucial points in the plot and by managing to balance the various parts in terms of length, Rousseau and Laclos created a greater sense of

1. e.g. Les Egarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit and Le Paysan Parvenu.

2. e.g. Manon Lescaut and Lettres de la Marquise de M...

3. e.g. La Religieuse and Les Liaisons Dangereuses.

4. e.g. Les Liaisons Dangereuses.

5. e.g. La Nouvelle Héloïse and Les Liaisons Dangereuses.

coherence and proportion in the novel, and at the same time rendered it more credible.

C. Characterisation: Besides the improvements made in the structural aspects of the novel, advances were also made in the effective rendering of characterisation. Earlier forms of character portrayal such as the static sketches of social types or 'caractères' in Lesage, are avoided in the better novelists of the century. More importance is attached to the creation of a closer causal link between characters and events. Character is seen to determine incident and incident to illuminate character. As a consequence of this treatment, the author probes the areas of feeling and motivation in addition to simply advancing the story line. This emphasis on psychological analysis as opposed to the mere narrative of physical adventures was already present in La Princesse de Clèves, and was adopted by Prévost in Manon Lescaut and exploited even further by Marivaux in La Vie de Marianne. In the latter novel the portrayal of character is accomplished by oblique methods, in addition to the more obvious use of behavior and overt self-analysis as sources of information. In Manon Lescaut the portrayal of personality still depends more on Des Grieux's actions than on any reflective comments he might make on subjects outside his love for Manon, whereas the reflective digressions of Marianne reveal her attitude

toward life in general and her standards of behavior.¹ As F.C. Green stated:

Marivaux was really the first French novelist to discern the potentialities of 'le récit personnel' as an instrument of psychological analysis.²

These reflective digressions are described by Marivaux in Le Spectateur Français, as:

....entretiens intérieurs que nous avons nous-mêmes quand nous réfléchissons sur quelque chose qui nous importe. Vous sentez bien que nous ne voulons alors ni briller, ni nous trouver de l'esprit. Nous voulons simplement voir, connaître et nous déterminer.³

This technical device of the 'entretien intérieur', first exploited by Mme. de la Fayette, had the effect of bringing the character into much closer communion with the reader and giving it increased depth and reality. This effect of bringing the reader into more immediate contact with the emotional experiences of the characters was, however, best achieved in the letter novel. In the traditional novel of historical narrative these are related in the third

1. e.g. her comments on coquetterie, on the humiliation of receiving charity, and on the curiosity of a Paris crowd, Ed. Garnier, pp. 50-51, 20-30, 95-96.

2. 7th International Congress for Modern Language and Literatures - "Some Observations on Techniques and Form in the French 17th and 18th century novel - Stil und Formprobleme in der Literatur," Heidelberg, 1959, p. 210.

3. Ed. Bossard, 1921, p. 185.

person, while in the novel using the 'récit personnel' the same effect is only achieved in the case of one character, the fictitious autobiographer,¹ instead of in all the principal characters as in the epistolary form.

Although the vogue of the epistolary novel in the eighteenth century was initiated by the success of Les Lettres Persanes, it was Crébillon fils who, in 1732, was the first French writer to exploit the resources of the letter-novel for portraying character and motives with his Lettres de la Marquise de M. au Comte de R. The action of this novel consists almost entirely of changes and developments in personal relationships, its interest being purely psychological. This technique was continued and developed by later novelists such as Richardson in England and Rousseau and Laclos in France, where the intimate thoughts and feelings of all the characters are conveyed by their constant reactions to one another and to events, as well as by long passages of self-analysis which help to explain their outlook and behavior.²

This effective method of characterisation, accomplished in the letter novel, was achieved in other narrative types of novel by the intelligent use of dialogue. In the novel, Le Sopha, Crébillon fils discusses and defends conversations

1. e.g. Marianne in La Vie de Marianne, and Suzanne in La Religieuse.

2. e.g. Mme. de Merteuil in Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Lettre 81.

as, at the same time, providing a kind of event and a method of characterisation:

- Vous avez tort de vous plaindre, lui dit la Sultane; cette conversation qui vous ennue est pour ainsi dire un fait par elle-même. Ce n'est point une dissertation inutile et qui ne porte sur rien, c'est un fait..... n'est-ce pas 'dialogué' qu'on dit? demanda-t-elle à Amanzéi en souriant.
- Oui, Madame, répondit-il.
- Cette façon de traiter les choses, reprit-elle, est agréable; elle peint mieux et plus universellement les caractères que l'on met sur la scène.¹

Marivaux also used dialogue as a means of character portrayal, but went beyond the limited range of conversational style to be found in Crébillon's upper levels of society. Keenly aware of the value of words to express nuances of feeling and affective attitudes, not only for indicating external distinctions of class and education, but also for suggesting permanent traits of personality, Marivaux, by his exploration of the resources of speech, managed to create a new depth in characterisation. It was for these reasons that he was unwilling to forsake the use of vulgar speech for his lower class characters. This speech reveals their habitual attitude and modes of feeling,² just as Marianne's reflections give greater insight into her own personality. One of the best examples of the way in which speech habits may serve the ends

1. Vide, Oeuvres, Ed. Pierre Lièvre, Paris, 1930, Vol. III, p. 234.

2. e.g. the quarrel between the cocher and Mme. Dutour, Ed. Garnier, Deuxième Partie, pp. 92-97.

of characterisation is provided in the novel, Le Paysan Parvenu where Jacob, keenly aware of the emotive effects produced by different modes of speech, takes advantage of his uneducated way of talking to gain the favors of Mlle. Habert:

Jusqu'ici donc mes discours avaient toujours eu une petite tournure champêtre; mais il y avait plus d'un mois que je m'en corrigeais assez bien, quand je voulais y prendre garde, et je n'avais conservé cette tournure avec Mlle. Habert que parce qu'elle me réussissait auprès d'elle, et que je lui avais dit tout ce qui m'avait plu à la faveur de ce langage rustique.¹

This difference in stylistic levels of speech is even more evident in the better novels of the second half of the century.² In this respect Restif de la Bretonne goes beyond Marivaux, whose vulgar characters fill only minor roles, and whose realism of speech is limited. This differentiation of characterisation by means of individual modes of expression is even more subtly rendered by Laclos in Les Liaisons Dangereuses than by the author of Le Paysan Perverti, where the effects reside chiefly in the contrast between the language of the peasants and the more conventional educated usage of Edmond. In Laclos' novel each character has a style and language of his own, and is proof of the vast progress made in this respect by the eighteenth century compared to the

1. Vide, Ed. Garnier, Deuxième Partie, p. 85.

2. One obvious exception among the better known novels is Paul et Virginie, where the dialogue is too stylised and formal.

general homogeneity of expression which distinguishes a work such as Gil Blas.

D. Dialogue and Speech: Besides serving the purposes of characterisation, dialogue and speech can also affect the structural balance of the novel as well as contributing to its general air of realism. Prévost's use of conversation in Manon Lescaut does not appear obtrusive because Prévost generally avoids long passages in direct speech.¹ Instead his conversations usually consist of an alternation of short passages of direct and indirect speech. This avoidance of long passages in direct speech is particularly necessary to the memoir novel where it would be unrealistic to have people repeat verbatim conversations which took place months or years previously. Prévost overcame this possible pitfall by having Renancour claim that he wrote down Des Grieux's story almost immediately after having heard it. In this respect, Marivaux and Restif de la Bretonne showed less literary tact than Prévost. In Le Paysan Perverti, for example, Edmond reports verbatim a long conversation he had had, and justifies this unusual feat of memory in the following implausible manner:

1. Des Grieux's long discussion with Tiberge is an exception. But even here Des Grieux's argument is presented in direct speech while Tiberge's answers, except for two isolated sentences, are left in the indirect form. Vide, Ed. Garnier, pp. 101-106.

Ici notre conversation a été interrompue par l'arrivée de M. Parangon; et je suis venu sur-le-champ te l'écrire, de crainte d'en oublier quelque chose.¹

E. Background and Setting: Another technical improvement in the eighteenth century novel consisted of the greater importance attached to the realistic portrayal of background. After the transparent veneer of local Spanish color in Gil Blas and the stuffy, salon life of Les Egarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit, there was an attempt by Prévost to free the novel from this abstract rendering of the concrete visible world. In Manon Lescaut, Prévost used a physical setting for some of the episodes which the majority of his readers were able to recognize. Although the factual details of street names and buildings no longer produce the same emotive response from contemporary readers as they did for those in the eighteenth century, they had the effect of lending an air of actuality and realism to the novel which previous novels with their timeless scenes and psychological abstractions had generally failed to do.

This freedom from a total concentration on abstract analysis of thought and feeling is particularly evident in the last two novels of Marivaux with their wide range of visual references to objects, clothes, movements and gestures. These frequent descriptive touches which help to render a scene

1. Vide, Lettre XVI.

more visually concrete were no doubt influenced by his career as a dramatist, and had the effect of making his last two novels more lifelike and detailed than the majority of the novels before his time.¹

In the second half of the eighteenth century certain novelists, like Rousseau and Bernardin de St. Pierre, used these descriptive elements to exalt the beauties of the outdoor world of Nature. In La Nouvelle Héloïse, in contrast to the descriptions of domestic settings, Rousseau used great visual detail in the portrayal of exterior scenes such as mountain, lake or garden.² An additional merit of such descriptions is that they present places which have some significance in the plot, places where decisions are taken or events occur. Several of the main stages in the story are thus linked with these natural settings, which Rousseau's descriptions enhance and render more vivid.³

But even Rousseau's natural descriptions pale in comparison to those Saint-Pierre lavished on the outdoor world of Mauritius, in Paul et Virginie. The descriptions of

1. e.g. Marianne's threat to hand back her new clothes makes M. de Climal's attempt on her virtue more concrete and more vivid. Ed. Garnier, Troisième Partie, pp. 123-133.

2. e.g. Julie's Elysée, Quatrième Partie, Lettre XI.

3. e.g. the lovers' return to Meillerie, Quatrième Partie, Lettre XVII.

exotic natural scenery with their strange, alluring names was a relatively new sensation for an eighteenth century reading public, nurtured on the abstract vocabulary of Classicism. These descriptions of the vivid colors of the tropical world, though at times overcharged, suffused the novel with a greater range of language, and opened it up to a more complex usage of imagery and metaphor which it had hitherto sadly lacked.

F. Style and Language: This departure from the limited range of linguistic expression of earlier eighteenth century novelists to a more poetic mode of expression, represents another advance in the technique of the novel. In the novels of Lesage, Prévost and Crébillon, the vocabulary and grammar tend toward the general and the abstract. Their natural mode of expression deals in abstract nouns and general terms rather than in the concrete and specific. The following passage taken from Les Egarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit is an example of this abstract stylistic approach to language:

Cependant il restait encore à Madame de Lursay bien des ressources contre moi, si elle eût voulu s'en servir. Ce caractère de sévérité qu'elle s'était donné, et qui, tout faux qu'il était en lui-même, l'arrêtait sur ses propres désirs, la honte de céder trop promptement, surtout avec quelqu'un qui, ne devinant jamais rien, lui laisserait tout le désagrément des démarches; la crainte que je ne fusse indiscret, et que mon amour découvert ne la chargeât d'un ridicule d'autant plus grand qu'elle avait affiché plus d'éloignement pour ces sortes de faiblesses; sa coquetterie même, qui lui faisait trouver plus de

plaisir à s'amuser de mon ardeur qu'à la satisfaire,
et qui avait vraisemblablement¹ causé ses inégalités,
plus encore que tout le reste.¹

This passage, like so many others in Crébillon fils, is notable for weaknesses in its sound and rhythm patterns as well as for its total lack of metaphor and simile. Such lyrical qualities and figurative devices of language, though present to a limited extent in Marivaux and Prévost, were more fully exploited in the second half of the eighteenth century by Rousseau and Saint-Pierre. Rousseau possessed a sensitive ear for the flow of his sentences, and for their rhythms and cadences, which can be best illustrated by his descriptions of natural scenery and by those letters where the lovers express strong emotional reactions.² At the level of linguistic expression, he usually prefers metaphor and other figures of speech to literal terms when dealing with his characters' emotions, and more literal and abstract terms when discussing ethical problems such as duelling or suicide. In his metaphors, however, Rousseau employs expressions which were already familiar or hackneyed such as 'le feu qui me consume'; 'un torrent de délices'; or 'un voile de tristesse', reminiscent of those used earlier by Prévost and drawn from the stock of images established in seventeenth century tragedy. He is, however, more original in his use

1. Vide, Ed. Bibliothèque de Cluny, 1961, pp. 95-96.

2. e.g. Saint Preux's first letter from Meillerie, Première Partie, Lettre XXVI.

of simile. Julie, claiming the right to advise Saint Preux on his actions, remarks:

N'avez-vous jamais remarqué que si la raison d'ordinaire est plus faible et s'éteint plus tôt chez les femmes, elle est aussi plus tôt formée, comme un frêle tournesol croît et meurt avant un chêne.¹

Such comparisons appear naive when contrasted with the complexity and ambiguity of twentieth century imagery, but many of Rousseau's figures of speech were considered obscure or incomprehensible by certain of his contemporaries.² In comparison to the almost complete lack of imagery in the novels of Lesage and Crébillon, and its relatively restrained and cautious use in those of Marivaux and Prévost, Rousseau's figurative language must have appeared daring and original to many of his contemporaries.

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre is even more liberal than Rousseau in his use of metaphor and simile. His favorite sources for the latter are the natural world and classical mythology and, by eighteenth century standards, they are in some cases extended and fairly elaborate:

1. Vide, Ed. Garnier, Première Partie, Lettre XII, p. 29.

2. e.g. Voltaire declared himself incapable of understanding the meaning of the phrase: "nos âmes coulent et fondent comme de l'eau", quoted by Bruneaux, C., "L'Image dans notre Langue Littéraire" - Mélanges de Linguistique offerts à Albert Dauzat, Paris, Éditions d'Artrey, 1951, p. 57.

Comme deux bourgeons qui restent sur deux arbres de la même espèce, dont la tempête a brisé toutes les branches, viennent à produire des fruits plus doux, si chacun d'eux, détaché du tronc maternel, est greffé sur le tronc voisin; ainsi ces deux petits enfants, privés de tous leur parents, se remplissaient de sentiments plus tendres que ceux de fils et de fille, de frère et de soeur, quand ils venaient à être changés de mamelles par les deux amies qui leur avaient donné le jour.¹

This generous use of simile by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre provides an historical link between the figurative style of Prévost and Rousseau and the use of imagery in later novelists such as Balzac and Flaubert. Although less elaborate and more limited than those of later novelists, Saint-Pierre, by making his similes contribute to the general atmosphere and mood of Paul et Virginie, foreshadows the importance which imagery was to assume in the subsequent development of the novel.²

This, as well as other techniques and practices introduced by the eighteenth century memoir and letter novel, enriched the resources of later novelists in their attempts at the representation of real life and the creation of literary illusion. Despite a decline in popularity in both these first-person novel forms at the turn of the century, the nineteenth century novelist did little more than extend

1. Vide, Paul et Virginie, Ed. Garnier, p. 88.

2. Laclos had also made use of imagery by his recurrent metaphors on the theme of warfare, which, if not as striking or poetic as Rousseau's or Saint-Pierre's, are effective for being related to the central theme of Les Liaisons Dangereuses.

their narrative methods for his more elaborate purposes. As Paul et Virginie tended to indicate, the characteristic narrative form of the nineteenth century novel would be a story told by an omniscient third-person narrator. Novelists such as Balzac or Stendhal became completely omniscient by moving into the minds of their characters as they chose. This enlarged point of view had already been used by the writers of the seventeenth century 'roman comique' as well as by the authors of the numerous 'contes' and 'nouvelles' of the eighteenth century. It had also been used tentatively by certain eighteenth century novelists. In Les Egarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit, Crébillon went beyond the accepted conventions of the first-person narrative form. Instead of keeping strictly to the narrator's point of view, describing his own thoughts and feelings but confining himself to an external view of others, he frequently enters the mind of these other characters. Although first-person narrators were traditionally seen to infer the intentions and reactions of other characters, it seems unlikely that the young and naive Meilcour could possibly deduce the following thoughts of the experienced Mme. de Lursay:

Elle avait toujours espéré qu'elle me reverrait, mais sûre enfin que je l'évitais, elle commença à craindre de me perdre, et se détermina à me faire essuyer moins de rigueurs. Sur le peu que je lui avais dit, elle avait cru ma passion décidée: cependant je n'en parlais plus. Quel parti prendre? Le plus décent était d'attendre que l'amour, qui ne peut longtemps se contraindre, surtout dans un coeur aussi neuf que l'était le

mien, me forçat encore à rompre le silence; mais ce n'était pas le plus sûr. Il ne lui vint pas dans l'esprit que j'eusse renoncé à elle: elle pensa seulement que, certain de n'être jamais aimé, je combattais un amour qui me rendit malheureux..... Mais comment me faire comprendre son amour, sans blesser cette décence à¹ laquelle elle était si scrupuleusement attachée?

At such moments Crébillon was moving away from the point of view of the first-person narrator to that of the omniscient third-person. Forced into such omniscience by his preoccupation with the analysis of feelings, Crébillon's transgressions of the accepted modes of first-person narrative, while reverting to the freedom enjoyed by seventeenth century comic novelists, also foreshadow the nineteenth century omniscient narrator, as this technique was not fully exploited by writers of serious novels until the early nineteenth century.

Another example of this trend towards the third-person omniscient narrator of the nineteenth century occurred at the end of the eighteenth century in Paul et Virginie. In this novel, however, the first-person narrator is a witness and a commentator rather than an actor as in Les Egarements du Coeur et de l'Esprit. Although Crébillon shifts the center of interest in the first-person narrative, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre goes even further towards the omniscience of the nineteenth century third-person narrator. The Old

1. Vide, Ed. Bibliothèque de Cluny, pp. 58-59.

Man not only states what he has actually seen and heard but continually gives details of thoughts and actions, which, even allowing for inference, he could not in the framework of the novel, possibly be expected to know.¹ This is reminiscent of the similar liberty taken by Crébillon. But whereas Crébillon's Meilcour is still an active first-person narrator, telling his own adventures, and penetrating other people's motives only in so far as they concern himself, in Paul et Virginie the Old Man stands outside of much of the action and is already more of a passive observer than most first-person narrators. In this respect Saint-Pierre approaches the techniques of Balzac and Stendhal, whose narrators are external to the action and rarely attempt to account for their knowledge either of events or of the characters' innermost thoughts and feelings. The narrative form of Paul et Virginie, therefore, while doing no more than extending certain practices found in previous novels, is moving towards the typical nineteenth century method of presentation.

This omniscient point of view of the nineteenth century novelist, which partly developed from previous third-person techniques and partly from the extension of first-person narrative methods as practised in eighteenth century memoir and letter novels, represents the major formal characteristic

1. e.g. the details of Virginie's midnight bathe and her thoughts on that occasion. Vide, Ed. Garnier, p. 134.

of the nineteenth century novel and constitutes a definite advance in the art of fiction. The omniscient-narrator technique, by its very nature, presupposes the abolition of true to life criteria concerning the novelist's sources of knowledge and frees him from the false pretences which so often dogged the eighteenth century novelist. The nineteenth century novelist no longer felt bound by conventions of 'vraisemblance' to justify the sources of his material, and the novel, as a result, was stripped of its 'historic' pretensions to 'truth' and became unmistakably a work of fiction. This recognition that the novel belonged to the domain of art, brought a new dignity to the genre and fiction could at last be accepted and treated for what it was worth.

Its value, however, still largely depended on those standards used for judging the literary merits of plays or poetry: namely, style, structure, language and theme. In some of these respects, and in many others, the nineteenth century novelist was greatly indebted to the better writers of the eighteenth century. In narrative technique, plot structure, characterisation, dialogue, and in background and style, the more able eighteenth century novelists had, generally, developed better techniques than those used by their predecessors.¹ It was due to its further exploitation

1. La Princesse de Clèves constitutes an exception.

of these eighteenth century techniques, that the novel of the nineteenth century was to become a better structured and more effectively organised work of art.

CHAPTER FIVE

PIGAULT-LEBRUN'S CONCEPT OF THE NOVEL

Pigault-Lebrun's approach to the art of fiction was primarily motivated by materialistic rather than by aesthetic reasons. This unashamed avowal of his predominantly financial interest in literature is immediately discernible in his opening novels. In his first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, the narrator-author's aesthetic views on the creative act of writing are revealed in a brief explanation of the reasons for the novel's gestation:

Je m'avise d'écrire mes aventures, et je ne sais trop pourquoi. Est-ce vraiment besoin d'écrire? est-ce un mouvement d'orgueil, ou un motif d'intérêt? peut-être est-ce un peu de tout cela.¹

This ambiguity of intention is, however, clarified in the author's third novel, Angélique et Jeanneton, when the narrator informs a neighbor of his decision to write a novel:

-Ce soir je commence un roman.
-Hé, pourquoi un roman, répondit le voisin?
Vous avez fait des comédies assez drôles;
que n'en essayez-vous encore une?
-Ma foi, mon ami, c'est que cela ne rapporte rien.²

This unabashed statement of material motives is followed by a long tirade against the fraudulent practices of

1. Vide, p. 7.

2. Vide, p. 5.

theatre directors, who were seemingly guilty of being as indiscriminating in their exploitation of authors as they were of actors. These remarks are consistent with Pigault-Lebrun's own experiences,¹ as it was just prior to the publication of Angélique et Jeanneton in 1799, that he decided to abandon the theatre² in favor of his recently adopted profession as novelist.³ It was the realisation that the novel constituted a more lucrative source of income than the theatre that had prompted Pigault-Lebrun, with the encouragement of his publisher J.N. Barba, to give up playwriting and devote his energies almost entirely to the novel.

This inartistic conception of the novel is generally reinforced by Pigault-Lebrun's degrading remarks on the conventions of the genre. In the novel, Mon Oncle Thomas, he gives an unflattering definition of both novel and history, alike, before elaborating on their respective defects:

Qu'est-ce qu'un roman? Un ramas d'événements imaginaires, qui amusent ou ennuiant, et qu'on oublie après les avoir lus. Qu'est-ce que l'histoire? Des faits réels, défigurés, tronqués, mutilés par l'erreur ou la passion de l'écrivain.
.....Lequel vaut mieux, à votre avis, ou du roman qui s'oublie, ou de l'histoire qui

1. See above, p. 46.

2. He made a brief return to the theatre to collaborate with A.J. Dumaniant on Les Calvinistes, ou Villars à Nîmes, produced in 1801. His last play, Les Memnon Français, was written in 1816. See above, p. 56.

3. i.e., after his first two novels, L'Enfant du Carnaval and Les Barons de Felsheim.

vous burine l'erreur sur le périoste du crâne?
 L'un et l'autre n'ont de valeur, selon moi,
 que celle que veut bien leur accorder le
 lecteur, et tous deux ressemblent à la lanterne
 magique, où on voit paraître, tour à tour, le
 soleil, et la lune, le mitron, le père éternel,
 et Mme. Gigogne.¹

This contemptuous attitude towards the novel remained one of Pigault-Lebrun's most consistent characteristics. On the other hand, his derogatory view of history was, later, to be so radically modified that he abandoned the novel form after 1820 to concentrate almost exclusively on the writing of his favorite genre.² This preference for historiography was based on its greater claims to 'realism' and represented an extension of the eighteenth century memoir and letter novel writer's desire to dissociate himself, as far as possible, from all affiliations with the novel form.³ In the novel, Jérôme, the first-person narrator draws this very distinction between the two forms when he intervenes in the narrative to discourage the reader's anticipation of future events:

Ce n'est pas que, cent fois dans ma vie, je
 n'aie senti battre mon coeur à l'approche de
 tel ou tel individu; qu'un pressentiment secret
 ne m'ait averti que je pouvais fort bien parler
 à mon père; mais jamais ces pressentiments ne
 se sont vérifiés. J'avoue que je pourrais,
 comme un autre, préparer de loin et filer une
 reconnaissance bien pathétique, bien prévue,

1. Vide, pp. 178-179.

2. e.g. the 8 volume Histoire de France. La Sainte Ligue, his last novel, was largely a historical one.

3. See above, pp. 3-4.

bien ennuyeuse; mais je suis historien, et non romancier. Ainsi ne comptez que sur des événements fort simples, et, si le goût du merveilleux vous domine, jetez le livre et prenez l'Apocalypse.¹

This belittling and nonchalant attitude towards the conventions of the novel recurs throughout the novels of Pigault-Lebrun in the form of frequent interventions by the narrator, reminiscent of the technique adopted by his eminent predecessor Diderot in Jacques le Fataliste.² In his first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, Pigault-Lebrun confesses to be totally disinterested in the future development of his plot and its reception by the reading public. He then proceeds to mock the conventional exposition of the first-person memoir novel:

Il n'est pas de héros de roman qui n'instruise le public des moindres détails de sa naissance, et ce n'est pas ordinairement la partie la plus intéressante de l'ouvrage, car nous naissons tous à peu près de la même manière; mais comme il faut commencer par le commencement, je me soumettrai à l'usage reçu, et je dirai, le plus brièvement qu'il me sera possible, quand, comment, et pourquoi je vins au monde.³

Another example of this satirical approach to the novel's exposition is provided by the opening chapter of Angélique et

1. Vide, pp. 8-9.

2. This novel, written between 1771-1773, only became available to the general public in 1796. Since this was the date when Pigault-Lebrun published his first novel, there is a considerable possibility that, outside of his own personal temperament, Pigault-Lebrun was influenced by Diderot's satiric approach to the genre.

3. Vide, pp. 7-8.

Jeanneton. The narrator, when asked about the novel's structure and subject matter, gives the following disinterested reply:

- Je n'en ai pas, et je ne m'en embarrasse guère.
- Quoi, point de plan!
- A quoi bon? un homme célèbre a dit, je ne sais où: Je suis bien sûr que si ma manière d'écrire n'est pas la meilleure, elle est au moins la plus religieuse. J'écris la première phrase, et je m'abandonne à la Providence pour le reste.
- Je crains bien, voisin, que vous ne ressembliez à l'homme célèbre que de ce côté-là.
- C'est toujours lui ressembler, et cette idée me fait sourire. Je remonte chez moi, et j'écris ma première phrase.
- Bonne chance, voisin. Moi, je reprends mon rabot.¹

From a satire of plot presentation, Pigault-Lebrun proceeds to a satire of the plot's mainsprings of action, anticipating and deriding his readers' objections to deviations in the accepted conventions of the novel. Describing the search for a missing young couple in La Famille Luceval, Pigault-Lebrun arranges a chance encounter between three characters who had each taken it upon themselves to seek out the couple. Playing with his readers' objections to such contrivances, Pigault-Lebrun mockingly anticipates their rendering of the sequel of events and proceeds to change them in a most off-handed manner:

Par un hasard assez singulier, madame d'Egligny, François et Duval se rencontrèrent sur le Pont-Neuf. Hasard de roman, allez-vous dire. Ils

1. Vide, p. 8.

jetteront les yeux sur la rivière; en les relevant, ils reconnaîtront le jardin anglais de la préfecture; l'hôtel de la police les fera nécessairement penser à ceux qui l'exercent, et les voilà qui courent, qui arrivent, qui sollicitent des recherches. Vous n'y êtes pas, mon cher lecteur! Fatigués, désolés de l'inutilité de leurs courses, ils prennent une voiture et vont dîner. Un désagrément, un chagrin médiocre, n'ôtent pas tout-à-fait l'appétit.¹

In L'Homme à Projets Pigault-Lebrun changes the direction of his satire from the reader's anticipation of future events to his desired explanation for past events:

Qu'on se moque à présent des maris français. Je viens de prouver qu'ils ont quelquefois de l'énergie comme les autres. 'Un moment, monsieur l'auteur! vous allez, vous allez, sans vous embarrasser si l'on vous suit ou non. Qu'étaient ces matelots et ce Bucentaure? En vertu de quelle loi avait-on appréhendée Robert au corps? Pourquoi le jeter à fond de cale? Pourquoi le barder de fer?'
-Vous avez raison, monsieur le lecteur. Je vous dois l'explication de tout cela.²

Finally, in one of his last novels, L'Egoïsme, Pigault-Lebrun further satirizes plot development techniques by showing the effects of characterisation in advancing the story line:

Encore un départ! encore un voyage. On ne trouve que cela dans ce petit livre-ci. Est-ce ma faute à moi si mes personnages ont un esprit inquiet et remuant? Ne sait-on pas que ces gens-là ne peuvent rester en place?³

1. Vide, p. 260.

2. Vide, p. 245.

3. Vide, p. 233.

In L'Officieux Pigault-Lebrun passes from a satire of plot development to a satire of plot dénouement. Conscious of having already revealed his dénouement some hundred pages before the close of the book, he tries to forestall his reader's likely loss of interest by declaring to be ignorant of the eventual outcome of the novel. This is in reference to an incident which permits the younger of two rivals for the hand of Sophie d'Apremont to gain the favor of her father, and thereby place himself in an advantageous position for an eventual marriage;

Ah çà, monsieur l'auteur, cachez donc vos fils mieux que cela. Il est clair que vous les tendez de manière à enlever le consentement du père à force de services et de qualités. Ma foi, monsieur le lecteur, je ne vous dissimule pas que tous mes vœux sont pour le baron. C'est un jeune homme aimable, qui a des principes que j'honore beaucoup, du jugement, ce qui est assez rare, et surtout de la raison, dont je fais le plus grand cas; voilà pourquoi j'en mets tant dans mes ouvrages. Cependant je vous déclare, dans toute la bonne foi de mon âme, que je ne sais encore qui des deux rivaux l'emportera sur l'autre. Continuons d'aller devant nous, et je vous réponds que le dénouement viendra à la fin du volume.¹

Certain novels go even further in their satire of the conventional unravelling of plot. In La Famille Luceval Pigault-Lebrun brings his novel to an end in the following unconventional manner:

Tous les braves gens, avec qui je viens de vous mettre en relation, moururent les uns après les autres. C'est malheureux; j'en suis fâché comme vous; mais qu'y faire? Consolerez-vous, comme moi,

1. Vide, p. 459.

en pensant, qu'après la consommation des siècles, nous les retrouverons dans la vallée de Josaphat, ce qui est infaillible.¹,

while the dénouement of Une Macédoine is even more remarkable for the impudent way in which he rounds it off:

- Ah, ça, monsieur le lecteur, ou madame la lectrice, n'êtes-vous pas aussi las de lire que moi de conter?
- Oh, nous voulons savoir ce que fera monsieur le préfet, ce qui lui arrivera; si Fanchette est toujours bonne et jolie; si son mari en raffole toujours; si Honorine.....
- Oui? hé bien, madame ou monsieur, partez; allez-vous-en à la préfecture; voyez, interrogez, Moi, je ne me mêle plus des affaires de ces gens-là, et je vous souhaite le bonsoir.²

This derisive indifference to plot dénouement is also typical of Pigault-Lebrun's general attitude to the novelistic convention of characterisation. In Les Barons de Felsheim he gaily informs the reader of his intention to purge his novel of an unnecessary and inconvenient character:

J'entretiendrais volontiers le lecteur des faits et des gestes du cuirassier Joseph; mais comme la nature lui avait refusé l'originalité de monsieur son père, et qu'il ne fit jamais rien que d'assez ordinaire, j'userai du privilège que s'arrogent les romanciers de se débarrasser subito d'un personnage dont ils ne savent plus que faire. Je dirai tout simplement, et pour finir en deux mots, que monsieur Joseph traîna son existence militaire jusqu'à la bataille de Prague, où, ainsi que l'avait prévu madame sa mère, il mourut subitement avec tant d'autres héros de son espèce.³

1. Vide, p. 571.

2. Vide, p. 567.

3. Vide, p. 296.

In the novel, La Famille Luceval, the satire is focused on the problem of the introduction of new characters, rather than on the disappearance of old ones:

C'était l'heure de se mettre à table. M.*** allait rentrer, et Thuillier ne paraissait pas. Thuillier? qu'est-ce que cet homme là? encore un nouveau personnage! Eh! bon dieu, monsieur l'auteur, vous en avez déjà trop de moitié. Ne vous fâchez pas, monsieur le critique, celui-ci ne fera que paraître. Pas d'habits sans tailleurs; M. Thuillier est celui d'Edouard, et peut-être ne serez-vous pas fâché de le connaître. C'est un jeune homme très poli, qui travaille très bien, qui m'est cher, et qui fait crédit aux honnêtes gens.¹

The relationship between character and plot present Pigault-Lebrun with further opportunities for exposing certain stock conventions of the novel form. In Le Garçon sans Souci, undecided as to the desirability of further delving into the mind of a secondary character, Pigault-Lebrun resolves the problem in the following ironic way:

A propos d'Estelle, ne devrais-je pas vous parler un peu de ce qu'elle pense, de ce qu'elle dit, de ce qu'elle fait? Elle est si intéressante! Oui, mais Valentin est mon héros, et vous savez bien qu'une des règles du roman, est qu'on ne perde pas de vue son principal personnage, à moins, cependant, qu'on se permette quelque épisode, ce qui fait languir l'action, et ce que, par conséquent, je m'interdirai. Je reviens à Valentin.²

Finally in one of his last novels, L'Observateur, Pigault-Lebrun sarcastically reproaches his reader for demanding a

1. Vide, p. 553.

2. Vide, p. 136.

conventional rendering of character presentation:

Mais quel est ce M. Martin? où est-il né?
qu'étaient ses parents? quelle est sa fortune?
Diable, vous êtes bien pressé. Peut-être ne
sais-je encore rien de tout cela. Que je le
sache, ou non, vous me permettrez de ne pas vous
le dire: j'ai mes raisons pour me taire. Mais
soyez tranquille; avant la fin du second volume,
vous en saurez tout autant que moi.¹

Compared to the numerous ironic examples of the
novelistic conventions of plot and character, there is
relatively little attention paid to the satire of the novel's
customary setting or background. The best and most amusing
example of this occurs in Les Barons de Felsheim, where
Pigault-Lebrun ridicules at length the forest setting of the
contemporary 'roman noir' and 'roman sentimental':

La belle chose qu'une forêt pour un faiseur
de romans! Comme il s'y trouve à son aise,
lorsqu'il tient une femme intéressante! comme
les incidents se multiplient sous sa plume
féconde! Les vents sifflent, les chênes se
déracinent, sont portés au loin et entraînent
tout sur leur passage. La pluie tombe à grands
flots, les torrents se forment, grossissent,
soulèvent l'héroïne, la roulent au fond d'une
précipice, et elle ne se casse pas la tête,
parce qu'on a besoin d'elle pour le dénouement.
Elle reste suspendue à une roche, et son
désordre et sa pâleur la rendent plus touchante
encore. Passe un grand coquin qui s'amourache
de la belle, qui la charge sur son dos, et qui
l'emporte dans sa caverne. On sent bien que
l'héroïne est la vertu personnifiée, et qu'elle
accable d'imprécations le brigand qui veut la
violer. On sent bien qu'au moment où le crime
va se consommer, l'amant aimé arrive tout à propos
pour faire sauter le crâne au téméraire.²

1. Vide, pp. 314-315.

2. Vide, p. 90.

Pigault-Lebrun also succeeded in expressing his lack of regard for the conventions of the novel by his use, or perhaps misuse, of chapter headings. The majority of those which he puts to satirical use refer to the problems of plot structure, such as presentation, development and dénouement. The first chapter of La Famille Luceval is entitled: "C'est toujours par celui-là qu'on commence"; and the last chapters of L'Officieux and M. de Roberville are respectively headed: "Le dénouement, bon our mauvais", and "Enfin voilà le dernier". The thorny problems which beset the novelist in plot development are made light of by such headings as "Scène qu'on a pu prévoir";¹ "Qui ne vaudra pas mieux que les autres";² "Il commence mal. Comment finira-t-il?";³ "Suites naturelles de ce qu'on a lu".⁴

Pigault-Lebrun also showed, on occasion, a similar satirical attitude towards his reading public. In the novel, La Folie Espagnole, seemingly annoyed at finding himself apologizing for the mediocre development of an intrigue which had promised to be more exciting, he addresses the reader in the following disobliging manner:

Au reste, et pour en finir, si celle-ci vous déplaît arrangez-vous.⁵

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1. La Famille Luceval, Chap. III, Troisième Partie.
 2. L'Homme à Projets, Chap. I, Quatrième Partie.
 3. L'Officieux, Chap. VI.
 4. Une Macédoine, Chap. XXIX.
 5. Vide, p. 384.

In the note to the reader which concludes this same novel, Pigault-Lebrun's attitude is more respectful, but the same carefree, insolent manner is still apparent:

Adieu, mon cher lecteur, adieu, jusqu'au revoir. Vous êtes mécontent peut-être, et vous vous écriez en jetant le livre: Quelles misères! quel fatras! Eh parbleu! soyez donc d'accord avec vous-même. Je vous ai humblement offert Angélique et Jeanneton, petit ouvrage d'un genre tout à fait opposé: vous n'avez daigné l'acheter ni le lire. Mon libraire s'est plaint amèrement, et je crois qu'il faut écrire pour tout le monde. Je suis certain que tout le monde entendra cet ouvrage-ci, depuis le fournisseur jusqu'à sa cuisinière.¹

These unflattering remarks to his readers, which were motivated by the disillusionment he felt at the failure of Angélique et Jeanneton, were occasionally offset by his own admissions of incompetence:

Cette conclusion flattait singulièrement mon oncle, et l'aida à dormir d'un bon somme. Fais-en autant, très cher lecteur, pour peu que ce livre ait de vertu soporative: il sera au moins bon à quelque chose.²

Later in the same novel, Pigault-Lebrun openly admits his inability to overcome certain problems of 'vraisemblance' connected with the memoir novel form:

Vous allez me demander comment Fanny a su ce qui avait préparé et amené son arrestation. Je vous répondrai que c'est ce que mon oncle a oublié de me dire. Il s'est contenté de me rapporter les faits, et vous ne serez pas plus exigeant que moi, si vous le voulez bien.³

1. Vide, p. 588.

2. Vide, Mon Oncle Thomas, p. 58.

3. Ibid., p. 264.

This self-deprecating avowal of his weaknesses as a novelist, coupled with his satirical approach to the novel's conventions and his occasional contempt for his reading public, amply demonstrate Pigault-Lebrun's derogatory opinion of the novel. Unwilling or unable to consider the genre as a serious art form he used it, like most of his eighteenth century predecessors, both as an instrument for public amusement and instruction and as a reasonably lucrative means of supplementing his other sources of income. This concept of the novel is boldly and frankly summarized by Pigault-Lebrun in L'Egoïsme, published in 1819, almost twenty five years after his debut as a novelist.¹ It forms a fitting epitaph to his general opinion of a craft which he had practised for a considerable part of his adult life:

Le titre de ce chapitre² rend assez bien l'espèce d'anxiété où je me trouve. Ce n'est pas la première fois que je me suis dit, en attachant quelques feuilles de papier ensemble: Que vais-je faire? Je commence, n'importe comment; je vais; quelques faits se lient; une action forte ou faible, bonne ou mauvaise s'engage; j'arrive à un dénouement prévu ou non; le livre est lancé; on le lit, puisqu'on le critique, et moi je me repose.

Si cette manière n'est pas la meilleure, elle est au moins la plus commode. Je m'en trouve trop bien pour en changer. D'ailleurs, ce n'est pas après avoir mis, pendant quarante ans, du noir sur du blanc, qu'on s'avise de chercher le mieux possible.

1. His first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, was published in 1796.

2. Chapter 2 is entitled: "Que ferai-je de ces deux hommes-là", and illustrates, this time through characterisation, Pigault-Lebrun's continual tendency to satirize the conventions of the novel.

Allons, avançons, aux risques et périls des
oisifs qui voudrent nous lire.¹

1. Vide, pp. 6-7.

CHAPTER SIX

NARRATIVE FORM AND PLOT STRUCTURE

A. Narrative Form: The focus of narration or point of view in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun is almost evenly divided among the first-person and third-person narrative forms.¹ He employed both narrative techniques at the outset of his novel-writing career,² and generally continued until the end of the Empire to alternate between them, at times within the framework of the same novel as in Mon Oncle Thomas and L'Enfant du Bordel.³ The novels of the Restoration period, however, are almost all exclusively written in the third-person omniscient narrator form.⁴ Of those novels which employ the

1. Seven employ the first-person narrator form, ten the third person, and two a combination of both.

2. e.g. first-person narrator in L'Enfant du Carnaval, and third-person narrator in Les Barons de Felsheim.

3. In the first of these novels, the narrator relates in the third-person form the exploits of his uncle during the first three sections, and in the final section relates his own adventures in the first-person form. The technique is similar in L'Enfant du Bordel, except that the first-person narrative takes the predominant role.

4. The exception is La Sainte Ligue, which uses the first-person memoir form.

first-person narrator technique, approximately half are written in the form of the memoir novel,¹ and the remainder range from the 'protagonist-narrator' of Angélique et Jeanneton and Une Macédoine² to the quasi-epistolary method of Adélaïde de Méran, where the correspondence is unilateral and set down in diary rather than in letter form.³ The novels using the third-person omniscient narrator technique are, in varying degrees, characterised by the presence of authorial intrusions and generalizations about life, manners and morals, which may or may not be explicitly related to the story at hand. This is the case, not only with the novels told from the third-person point of view, but also with those first-person novels, where the narrator partly or completely functions as the author's mouthpiece.

However useful these distinctions in person may be for clarifying terminology, they should be qualified with regard to the specific effects they have on individual novels.⁴ There

1. e.g. L'Enfant du Carnaval; Jérôme; Mon Oncle Thomas, Part IV; La Sainte Ligue. However, unlike the eighteenth century memoir novels, these make no pretence to be 'authentic' memoirs.

2. In Angélique et Jeanneton, the narrator remains nameless, while in Une Macédoine and its sequel, Tableaux de Société, there is a change of narrator from Francheville in the first part to his wife Fanchette in the second.

3. These 'letters' are packaged and sent to her friend, Claire, whose replies are summarized by Adélaïde herself, Vide, pp. 5-6.

4. Vide, Booth, Wayne, C., The Rhetoric of Fiction, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961, pp. 150-163.

are two distinct types of narrator, the dramatized and undramatized narrator. The former has been dramatized as soon as he refers to himself as 'I', or being part of a 'we'. The undramatized narrator is one placed by the author into the story and given no personal characteristics whatever, creating the impression of an author standing behind the scenes like a puppeteer manipulating the characters and the action of the plot.

The latter is true of those novels of Pigault-Lebrun where the narrative form is in the third-person. Each of these novels possesses a type of narrator whose beliefs and characteristics are identical to those of the author. This is, however, only partially true of those first-person novels which employ a dramatized narrator. In L'Enfant du Carnaval, Mon Oncle Thomas, and Jérôme the views expressed by the first-person narrator are seen to be consistent with those expressed by the undramatized narrators of the third-person novels.¹ In other novels where the first-person dramatized narrator is used, the opinions as well as the characteristics of these narrators do not necessarily coincide with those of Pigault-Lebrun. Two of these narrators are firstly of a different sex from that of their author,² and secondly the views and behavior

1. e.g. a) on religion: See above, pp. 112-113; 115-116; b) on love: See above, p. 61; c) on society: See above, pp. 86-90; 92-96.

2. e.g. Fanchette in Tableaux de Société and Adélaïde de Méran.

of Francheville in Une Macédoine, the anonymous narrator in Angélique et Jeanneton and Antoine de Mouchy in La Sainte Ligue hardly reflect the opinions of Pigault-Lebrun.

All these first-person narrators, whether sharing or not the beliefs and characteristics of their author, are, nevertheless, dramatized in their own right, and form characters who are generally as vivid as those they tell us about.¹ They are not mere observers, like the undramatized third-person narrator, but narrator-agents who produce, to varying degrees, a considerable effect on the course of events.²

Further differences exist between these first and third-person narrators, according to the amount and kind of commentary they give beyond the direct relating of events in scene and summary. These differences between narrative commentary usually fall into two categories in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun: commentary that serves a rhetorical purpose but is not part of the dramatic structure, and commentary that is integral to the dramatic structure. Examples of the first category of commentary are more generally found in those novels employing the third-person narrator technique. Such rhetorical commentary is to be found at the beginning of Chapter V of Mon Oncle Thomas:

1. The narrators in Jérôme and Mon Oncle Thomas are, however, overshadowed by the more energetic and dynamic personalities of Ruder and Thomas.

2. However, the role of the first-person narrator in Mon Oncle Thomas is confined to the last section of the novel and, therefore, effects the course of events to a considerably lesser degree than in the other first-person novels.

Rétrogradons un moment, et revenons sur ce qui se passa à l'hôtel pendant que mon oncle fut entre les mains de l'avare et impitoyable Riboulard.

Les décrotteurs ses amis, étaient restés pétrifiés de son enlèvement, car on juge des choses les plus sérieuses, comme des plus futiles, par l'analogie qu'elles ont avec nos intérêts. Ainsi, par exemple, un roi trouve mauvais qu'on vole une province au roi son voisin, dont il ne soucie guère, parce que l'usurpateur, agrandi et fortifié, peut lui prendre son tout; ainsi un ministre veut faire de son maître le prototype des souverains, parce qu'on n'eut, jamais parlé de Mécène, s'il n'eût été que l'homme d'affaires du roi Yvetot; ainsi un officier sans talents, ne peut avancer qu'à son tour, et il crie que les préférences accordées à un mérite dont il ne convient pas, découragent les vieux militaires, et étouffent l'émulation....¹

Shorter but similar examples occur in the novels M. de Roberville and La Folie Espagnole. In the first of these novels, Pigault-Lebrun comments on the inability of man to correct the selfish instincts of his fellows², while in La Folie Espagnole the motivation for moral comment springs from the relations between the sexes during the Middle Ages and allows him to draw a comparison with those of his own time.³

Another variant of this rhetorical narrative commentary is afforded by the narrator who is self-consciously aware of himself as a writer as distinct from the narrators who never intervene to discuss the problems of their craft. With regard to Pigault-Lebrun the self-conscious narrator appears in the majority of his novels, irrespective of their narrative

1. Vide, pp. 58-59.

2. Vide, pp. 112-113.

3. Vide, p. 10.

form.¹

The second category of narrative commentary is exemplified in Pigault-Lebrun's very first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval. The protagonist-narrator's return to Paris at the height of the Terror, allows Pigault-Lebrun to comment at length on the changes effected by the Revolution.² This commentary forms an integral part of the dramatic structure as these very changes are destined to influence the lives of Happy and Juliette. Another narrative commentary which is woven into the dramatic structure of the novel occurs in La Famille Luceval. Pigault-Lebrun's comments on the durability of happiness are pertinent when viewed in the context of the declining love of M. and Mme. Luceval, and the dawning passion of Caroline for Edouard.³

As these specific effects show, the particular qualities of narrator types can only be examined in reference to:

.....the potentialities and necessities of particular works, not by reference to fiction in general, or the novel, or rules about point of view.⁴

This was especially true of Pigault-Lebrun who, writing at a

1. The novels Tableaux de Société; Adélaïde de Méran and La Sainte Ligue are exceptions to the self-conscious narrator technique.

2. Vide, pp. 384-394.

3. Vide, pp. 299-301.

4. Vide, Booth, Wayne, Op. cit., p. 165.

time when such 'rules' were non-existent, adopted that particular point of view most suited to the specific needs of the novel in hand. At first freely alternating between these different points of view, he was later to adopt almost exclusively the point of view of the third-person omniscient narrator.

Although this enlarged point of view constituted the major formal innovation of the 'serious' nineteenth century novel, it had already been used by the writers of the seventeenth century 'roman comique'. As most of Pigault-Lebrun's earlier novels were comic satires, it would not be unreasonable to assume that these distant predecessors¹ influenced his technique. Other possible influences, however, could be ascribed to the third-person narrative forms of the eighteenth century 'contes' and 'nouvelles', and the vogue of the English novel. Not only had Pigault-Lebrun begun writing third-person narrative short stories before novels,² but his fondness for Voltaire,³ and his knowledge of English literature,⁴ could also have turned his attention towards the

1. There is a reference to Le Roman Comique of Scarron in Pigault-Lebrun's novel, Jérôme, p. 63.

2. e.g. Le Danger d'Etre trop Sage, published in London in 1787 and integrated into his first novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, pp. 107-124.

3. Vide, Les Barons de Felsheim, p. 460, where Pigault-Lebrun describes Voltaire: "L'aigle de la littérature, le philosophe aimable, l'apôtre de la tolérance." There is also a reference to Candide in L'Enfant du Carnaval, p. 334.

4. Mention is made of Young in L'Enfant du Carnaval, p. 47, and Robertson in Mon Oncle Thomas, pp. 199, 515. No mention is made, however, of the 18th century English novelists.

potentialities of this technique. This omniscient narrative form had also been tentatively used by certain eighteenth century French novelists,¹ and was also the method employed by history, a subject which continued passionately to interest Pigault-Lebrun, and whose influence can be seen in certain of his novels.²

However, despite this apparent indebtedness to the form of historical narrative, Pigault-Lebrun was careful to avoid the defects that plagued earlier eighteenth century novelists in their efforts to elevate the novel to the plane of history. In the novels of Pigault-Lebrun there are no pretensions to justify the sources of his material or to invest them with 'historic truth'. It was by his avoidance of this widespread eighteenth century convention that Pigault-Lebrun was able to bring the novel into the realm of fiction by assuming total responsibility for the reported facts.

B. Plot Structure: Pigault-Lebrun's general superiority to the earlier eighteenth century novelists in the handling of the problems of narrative technique was, however, offset by his inability to develop a good plot structure. In his earlier novels the abundant accumulation of incidents usually served

1. See above, pp. 144-148.

2. e.g. Les Barons de Felsheim and La Folie Espagnole.

his novels at the expense of a sense of structural balance and coherence.¹ This type of narrative adopts a simple, linear approach to plot, with incident piling upon incident in rapid breathless succession. In his later novels, however, especially those written at the time of the Empire, Pigault-Lebrun adopted more sophisticated techniques and began placing greater stress on the motivation of action rather than on the mere mechanical succession of events.

In his book, Aspects of the Novel, E.M. Forster provides a useful distinction between story and plot.² A story he defines as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot, on the other hand, is a narrative of events with the emphasis falling on causality. In a plot the time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. If this latter remark were applied to the fiction of Pigault-Lebrun, a reversal of the terms would be more appropriate in describing his earlier novels. These usually lay more stress on the time than on the causal sequence of narrative events, a factor determined by the conventions of the picaresque and adventure novel which he practised until the beginning of the Empire. The two principal exceptions to

1. With the exception of Angélique et Jeanneton.

2. Vide, Forster, E.M., Aspects of the Novel, London, Edward Arnold, 1927, p. 82.

this concept of plot are the novels, Angélique et Jeanneton and, to a lesser degree, M. Botte. These two novels, compared to the picaresque L'Enfant du Carnaval, Mon Oncle Thomas, La Folie Espagnole, and Jérôme, are more concerned with the causal aspects of plot than with the mere accumulation of incidents arranged in chronological sequence. In comparison to these earlier works, the later novels of Pigault-Lebrun generally illustrate a greater advance and understanding of the complex problems of plot structure. We shall now attempt to evaluate this improvement by analysing certain individual novels of Pigault-Lebrun in relation to such aspects of plot structure as pattern; proportion; and pace.

1) Pattern. In the novels of his first period, with the exception of Angélique et Jeanneton, and to a lesser degree M. Botte, the plot follows the loosely woven 'epic' pattern of the conventional picaresque and adventure novel. A brief explanatory exposition, followed by a series of crises and resolutions and an equally brief dénouement, make up the substance of the novel. This type of pattern is far removed from the more closely knit or unified pattern of the classical 'dramatic' plot with its gradual interlocking process of exposition, complication, crisis, recognition and dénouement. Both these types of plot pattern were used by Pigault-Lebrun at the beginning of his novelistic career, and testify to a greater interest in the problems of plot structure than his self-derisive remarks would appear to indicate.

This was illustrated in 1799 when the long-winded adventure novels of L'Enfant du Carnaval and Les Barons de Felsheim were followed by the much shorter 'dramatic' novels of Angélique et Jeanneton.¹ In this latter work, after a short prologue on the author's concept of the novel,² the exposition slowly unwinds before giving way to a gradual thickening of the plot with the appearance of Angélique in the fifteenth chapter.³ This rising action culminates in the marriage of Angélique with the narrator and their subsequent departure for Paris at the end of Part One. In the second part of the novel the plot gradually moves towards crisis when the narrator's jealousy is aroused by the interest which his young wife awakens in Parisian society. The 'crisis' is reached when the narrator, returning from a trip to Bordeaux, unjustly suspects his wife of adultery and decides to break off their relationship. This is followed by 'recognition' when the narrator receives clarification from a mutual friend on the total innocence of his wife and her subsequent abduction by the libertine, Denneterre. After a melodramatic pursuit of the abductor which helps to spin out the dénouement and reveals the plot's

1. This novel contains only 225 pages as opposed to the 500 or more of the majority of Pigault-Lebrun's adventure novels.

2. See above, p. 154.

3. Vide, p. 61.

only structural weakness, the novel ends with the narrator's recovery of his wife, and the couple's happy return to the country.

Such a tightly knit plot pattern with its clarity of outline and lack of incident proved unique in the novelistic production of Pigault-Lebrun. Due to the unpopularity of this novel,¹ he was never again to attempt such concentration of detail or simplicity of story line, and, in the novels immediately following Angélique et Jeanneton,² he again resorted to the loose and woolly plot patterns of his first two novels.

2) Proportion. Although abandoning the brevity of Angélique et Jeanneton, Pigault-Lebrun did attempt to rival its more balanced and coherent plot structure in M. Botte and the better novels of his Empire period. The symmetrical structure of Angélique et Jeanneton, where there exists an equal proportion of length between the rising and falling action recurs in M. Botte and Adélaïde de Méran, while in the novels L'Homme à Projets and Une Macédoine, an identical proportion is achieved by the use of sequels.³

In the novel, M. Botte, the four parts are equally

1. Vide, La Folie Espagnole, p. 588.

2. e.g. Mon Oncle Thomas and La Folie Espagnole.

3. i.e., M. de Roberville and Tableaux de Société, respectively.

divided between events which culminate in the decision of Botte to allow the marriage to take place, and the subsequent obstacles raised by the Marquis d'Arancey to such a union. The first half of the novel therefore concerns Botte's resistance and final capitulation to the projected marriage, while the second half deals with exactly the same situation as enacted by the Marquis d'Arancey. In Adélaïde de Méran the action is almost equally proportioned between the events leading up to the abortive marriage plans of Jules and Adélaïde, and their final consummation at the end of the novel. The two-decker novels of L'Homme à Projets and Une Macédoine resemble the structure of Angélique et Jeanneton more closely. However, although there is an almost equal proportion of length between the events preceding and following the respective marriages in these two former novels, their proportion is artificially obtained by the use of sequels, unlike Angélique et Jeanneton where the symmetry is achieved within the same novel. In the novels of his later Restoration period, Pigault-Lebrun, despite the relative brevity of these novels,¹ seems to have been little preoccupied with problems of structure, and, in this respect, they resemble the majority of those novels written during the Directory and the Consulate.

The better balance and proportion to be found in

1. i.e., Le Garçon sans Souci, L'Officieux, L'Egoïsme, and L'Observateur, which all contain approximately 300 pages.

M. Botte and these Empire period novels is generally limited, however, to the solution of problems of length than to a concern with the difficulties involved in sustaining the reader's interest. The proportion in length of the parts preceding and following the climactic events of the plot is accompanied by a disproportion of interest between these same parts. In all these novels the events following the climax of the plot are invariably more interesting and dramatic than those preceding it. The rising action of these novels generally concerns the evolution of an insipidly conventionalized love affair which is thwarted by unforeseen circumstances as in M. Botte and Adélaïde de Méran, or consummated in marriage as in the novels L'Homme à Projets and Une Macédoine. The falling action is more dramatic as it either involves added complications and obstacles as in the two former novels,¹ or unexpected situations and tragic consequences as in M. de Roberville and Tableaux de Société.²

This disproportion of interest between the various parts of the plot is largely due to weaknesses in Pigault-Lebrun's handling of certain intrinsic principles of plot structure. The beginnings of his novels, though differing in manner of presentation, usually resemble one another by their brevity.³

1. See above, pp. 95-96; 71.

2. See above, pp. 69-70.

3. The novels Angélique et Jeanneton and M. Botte are exceptions. In the latter novel, by the use of the device of 'flashback', the action announced on p. 17 is not taken up again until p. 113.

In many of his novels, Pigault-Lebrun, seemingly influenced by his experience as a playwright, uses the technique of 'in medias res' as his method of exposition. In the novels M. Botte, La Famille Luceval and L'Egoïsme, this takes the form of dialogue, while in Une Macédoine and Adélaïde de Méran the first-person narrator is a witness to the events as they are happening. This is usually followed by cursory comments on the character's background and present functions in order to supply the reader with the necessary information before the author may embark on the main story line.¹

Other methods of presentation were largely determined by the conventions of the type of novel selected. In the picaresque novels of L'Enfant du Carnaval, Jérôme, Mon Oncle Thomas, L'Homme à Projets and Le Garçon sans Souci, after a few brief explanatory remarks by the narrator, the novel usually begins at a fixed point of time in the hero's life.² In the historical type of novel,³ after supplying a short geographical and historical background summary, which rarely exceeds more than two pages, the narrator-author

1. Pigault-Lebrun satirizes this method in L'Observateur, pp. 314-315.

2. e.g. at the age of 10 in: Jérôme, p. 4, L'Homme à Projets, p. 6.

3. e.g. Les Barons de Felsheim; La Folie Espagnole; L'Officieux; La Sainte Ligue.

plunges the reader into the main plot narrative, seemingly unwilling to delay the breathless succession of incident any longer.¹

This cramming of all the circumstantial detail into the opening pages of the novel caused Pigault-Lebrun to approach his subject too immediately, instead of approaching it obliquely by a gradual method of progression. This by no means a fault in a competent novelist writing an average length novel,² leads to weaknesses in structure when the novel exceeds five hundred or sometimes six hundred pages as is the case with Pigault-Lebrun. As a result his verve and versatility in the improvisation of incident flagged, and he was forced to resort to such artificial 17th and 18th century supports as interpolated stories and moral dissertations in order to sustain the length of his narratives.

These digressions, which range in length from a few paragraphs to a hundred pages,³ are usually to be found in his earlier, less well-constructed

1. e.g. La Folie Espagnole, p. 1.

2. By the end of the Empire, convention had established a length of 3, 4 or 5 volumes in-12° of 250-300 pages each. Since the normal total length ran to 4 volumes, writers were hard put to fill their quota. Vide, George, Albert, op. cit., p. 137.

3. e.g. the interpolated "Histoire de Tékéli" in Les Barons de Felsheim, pp. 191-291.

novels,¹ though the better novels of the Empire period are by no means exempt from these structural weaknesses.² The novels written during the Restoration years, however, are usually free of such defects due to their relative shortness of length.³ Among such digressions, only a few may be justifiably excused on grounds that they enlighten or advance the development of the plot. In the novel, L'Enfant du Carnaval, the interpolated short story, Le Danger d'être trop Sage,⁴ though an obvious padding device, does in fact, through its moral, influence the decision of Milord Tillmouth to stay in France. In the novel, Mon Oncle Thomas, the historical episode of the expedition of "Bonnie Prince Charlie",⁵ though interrupting the flow of the narrative, serves as background documentation for the events which Thomas is shortly to be involved in, events which the average French reader of 1800 could hardly be expected to know. The other

1. e.g. L'Enfant du Carnaval, pp. 107-124; Les Barons de Felsheim, pp. 191-291; Mon Oncle Thomas, pp. 67-108, 145-178; La Folie Espagnole, pp. 132-172; M. Botte, pp. 115-135; Jérôme, pp. 32-34.

2. e.g. La Famille Luceval, pp. 26-32; L'Homme à Projets, pp. 423-481.

3. Except for a minor digression in L'Officieux, pp. 338-348.

4. Vide, pp. 107-124.

5. Vide, pp. 145-178.

digressions, involving at times lengthy interpolated stories¹ or moral treatises,² can receive no such justification, and are used by Pigault-Lebrun for the mere purpose of padding out his plot.

Pigault-Lebrun's later novels, while generally avoiding the obvious and outmoded devices of interpolated stories and moral dissertations, only managed to sustain their lengthy narratives at the expense of tedious episodes, and generally lacked the verve and vigor of the earlier picaresque type of novel. The novel, L'Homme à Projets, besides containing a lengthy interpolated moral dissertation, relates, for almost a hundred pages, the tiresome adventures of Robert among the indians of Mexico.³ Similar lengthy episodes, though situated in less exotic settings, are typical of the rustic scenes in the novels Une Macédoine⁴ and L'Observateur,⁵ which serve little other purpose than to describe the preparations for the marriage of secondary characters who, in no way,

1. e.g. "L'Histoire de Tékéli" in Les Barons de Felsheim, pp. 191-291.

2. e.g. "L'Art d'être Heureux" in La Folie Espagnole, pp. 131-172. "La Morale par Alphabet" in L'Homme à Projets, pp. 423-481.

3. Vide, pp. 265-351.

4. Vide, pp. 125-224.

5. Vide, pp. 484-539.

influence the future development of the main plot, nor even function as the agents of a subplot or double plot.

Other weaknesses in Pigault-Lebrun's handling of plot concern his extensive misuse of chance and coincidence and his rarer abuses of narrative foreshadowing. Chance and coincidence take the form of unlikely encounters between the protagonist and minor characters, which serve as 'saving' devices for the further development or future unravelling of the plot.¹ Such devices occur throughout all of Pigault-Lebrun's novels, though the implausibilities are less glaring in his later works. In the novel, Les Barons de Felsheim, the young hero, Charles, sent to the military chateau of Spandau as a page, discovers that the commandant's daughter is none other than Batilde, the girl he had been avidly seeking since their first chance encounter in a Berlin street.² This chance meeting develops into the central love intrigue of the novel and ends in the marriage of the couple. In Adélaïde de Méran another such unlikely encounter is instrumental in

1. e.g. Les Barons de Felsheim, p. 404; Mon Oncle Thomas, pp. 125, 252, 339, 527; L'Homme à Projets, p. 359; Tableaux de Société, p. 451; M. de Roberville, p. 298; Adélaïde de Méran, p. 129.

2. Vide, p. 404.

unravelling the plot. Fleeing from the persecution of Napoleon's secret police, the Méran family finally seeks refuge with the invading Russian forces. On their presentation to the Russian commandant the following scene of recognition takes place:

Môn. père se nomme, et le général fait lever les mouchoirs. Il fixe M. de Méran avec la plus grande attention; il l'écoute avec une extrême bienveillance, avec le plus vif intérêt; enfin il lui jette les bras au cou, et il s'écrie:

"Quoi! M. de Méran ne reconnaît pas ce petit garde de la marine, qu'il mettait si souvent aux arrêts, à bord du Tonnant!" Le général Pulki est un seigneur polonais, que ses parents voulaient faire entrer dans la marine royale de France. Les troubles qui bientôt agitèrent ce malheureux pays, déterminèrent sa famille à le rappeler. Après le partage de la Pologne, il entra au service de la Russie, et il est parvenu, à force de mérite, au grade d'officier-général.¹

This chance reunion prevents the further persecution of the family, succeeds in punishing their tormentor, Des Audrets,² and generally precipitates the events leading up to the happy dénouement.

This mild use of a 'deus ex machina' occurs in other novels of Pigault-Lebrun, though he was generally successful in avoiding this device by presenting the principal characters of his plots at the outset of his

1. Vide, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 20, pp. 128-129.

2. See above, p. 71.

novels and allowing them, rather than the secondary characters, to be responsible for the dénouement. In the novel, L'Egoïsme, the young Charles Duval is introduced into the novel¹ as an evident prop to an uninspiring plot, and as a means of demonstrating the novel's moral lesson in the closing pages. In Jérôme a similar intrusion at the end of the novel is used to avoid an implausible situation. Jérôme, the 17 year old hero, despite expectancies to the contrary, does not marry the elder widow, Mme. Ruder, but the younger Thérèse Rinaldi, who after only a very brief earlier appearance,² is introduced once again in the last ten pages.³

Such unforeseen twists in plot dénouement are rare in Pigault-Lebrun's novels, as the ending is usually happy and quite predictable. There is a tendency in his later novels, however, to end on a more pessimistic note,⁴ or, in those novels which imitate the happy endings of his earlier novels, to inject an element of suspense which leaves the reader in some doubt, until

1. Vide, p. 172.

2. Vide, p. 390.

3. Ibid, p. 489.

4. e.g. M. de Roberville; L'Observateur; L'Egoïsme; La Sainte Ligue.

the final pages, as to the eventual outcome of the story.¹ There are also those novels where Pigault-Lebrun, tongue in cheek, frankly admits to his inability to satisfactorily round off his plots. The outstanding example of this nonchalant attitude towards a fundamental aspect of plot structure occurs in the novel, Une Macédoine.² A less candid, but equally incompetent example of plot dénouement occurs in his later novel, L'Officieux.

This general lack of suspense and foreshadowing in Pigault-Lebrun's novels is, at times, consciously created by the author, himself. Foreshadowing may be defined as a plot device based on association in time and through which future climactic events and scenes are prepared and anticipated. It is the trick of borrowing some piece of information from the still unknown future of the story in order to point out the circumstance being presently related, thereby creating suspense through an arbitrary preview.

Such foreshadowing occurs in Stendhal's Le Rouge et le Noir when the hero, Julien Sorel, as a young man,

1. e.g. Adélaïde de Méran; Tableaux de Société.

2. See above, p. 157.

sets out to become tutor to the Mayor's children. On his way, he stops at the village church of Verrières and sits down in the pew belonging to the Mayor's family. There he finds a scrap of newspaper which says: "Details of the execution and the last moments of Louis Jenrel, executed at Besançon, on the" The paper being torn, Julien turns it over and is able to decipher the first two words of a sentence: ... "The first step". On his way out, he thinks he sees blood near the holy water font but it is only a reflection from the red curtains above. He is seized with terror but pulling himself together, cries out, "Should I be a coward? to arms!"¹ This incident cannot be taken as a vague omen. It is, on the contrary, a highly detailed set of clues to events still far in the future. Louis Jenrel is a rhyme for Julien Sorel. Julien is to be executed at Besançon. He is, with the tutor's job, about to take his first step on the road to his crime. It is in this very pew that he will shoot Mme. de Renal and her blood will fall on the same floor.²

Nothing so complex or subtle occurs in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun. On the contrary, he appears, at times,

1. Vide, Ed. de la Pléiade, 1956, Chap. V, p. 240.

2. Ibid, Chap. XXXV, p. 455.

to purposely abuse the narrative technique of foreshadowing. The advance information given in the novels, M. Botte,¹ Jérôme,² and L'Officieux,³ is used to dispel suspense rather than arouse it. This weakness in plot development rids the reader of the illusion that he is, in fact, observing the process of people working out their own destinies on their own terms. When the author anticipates the future in this way, he is, in effect, admitting that his plot is predetermined, arbitrary and already resolved.

3) Pace. This anticipation of future events is, however, the exception rather than the rule in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun. His handling of the time-factor is concerned almost exclusively with the simple chronological progression from one event to the next. There is no preoccupation with the problems of double allegiance to 'life in time' and 'life by values' as discerned by E. M. Forster:

...daily life, whatever it may be really, is practically composed of two lives - the life in time and the life by values - and our conduct reveals a double allegiance. 'I only saw her for five minutes, but it was worth it.' There you have both allegiances in a single sentence. And what the story does is to narrate the life in time. And what the entire novel does - if

1. Vide, p. 402.

2. Vide, p. 8.

3. Vide, p. 459.

it is a good novel - is to include the life
by values as well..."¹

This question of pace in fiction, as determined by 'real' time and 'value' time, is largely a phenomenon of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The varying of pace in Pigault-Lebrun's novels is regulated far more by complications of event than by intensity of experience. Once the adventures have been set in motion, a rapid pace is maintained and no attempt is made to dramatize the intense moment of personal experience, in which it seems that ordinary time is transcended, or to convey any intimate sense of the relentless advance of clock time. This was of course partly a matter of the emotional climate of the age and partly a matter of personal temperament. But if Pigault-Lebrun's relatively simplistic approach to the time factor was conditioned by the novelistic conventions of his day as well as by his own rational temperament, he did generally observe the basic conventions governing chronological accuracy, such as the change in age of his principal characters and its relation to the novel in terms of length.

This proportion between chronological time and the length of the novel, though superficially observed by Pigault-

1. Aspects of the Novel, New York, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1927, Chapter 2, p. 49.

Lebrun, did attest to a greater care for realism than had sometimes been the case in the earlier novels of the 18th century. This general concern for chronological precision, which was dictated in his earlier novels by the conventions of the memoir and picaresque forms, was rendered unnecessary in his later more analytical type of novel.¹ The proportion is however badly managed in the picaresque and memoir novels of L'Homme à Projets and Mon Oncle Thomas, and also in the two historical novels, Les Barons de Felsheim and La Folie Espagnole. In such novels as L'Enfant du Carnaval and Jérôme the change in age of Happy in the one, and of Jérôme in the other, are both in good proportion to the length of the novel.² In the novels La Famille Luceval, Adélaïde de Méran and L'Officieux these allusions to the advance in age of the principal characters become less frequent and disappear altogether in Angélique et Jeanneton, M. Botte, Une Macédoine, Le Garçon Sans Souci, L'Egoïsme, and L'Observateur.

1. Tableaux de Société is an exception.

2. e.g. in L'Enfant du Carnaval 12 years elapse between p. 34 and p. 209 and a further 12 years between p. 209 and the end of the novel p. 427. In Jérôme, the proportion is less convincing: p. 4 the narrator is 10 years old; p. 251, 15 years; p. 387, 16 years; p. 458, 18 years; p. 484, 20 years.

Pigault-Lebrun occasionally varied this chronological movement through fictional time by the use of 'flashback'. This technique is used in its most primitive form in his novels, appearing both awkward and artificial. This is exemplified in the novel, Mon Oncle Thomas, where Pigault-Lebrun seems only too aware of the crippling conventions of the time factor. Interrupting his narrative he offers the following intimate suggestion to the reader:

Revenons au jeune Seymour que nous avons laissé 1
à Oxford, livré à ce que le désespoir a d'affreux.

He concludes this 'flashback' by ironically apologizing for its apparent length:

C'était le jeune Seymour qui le remerciait, avec la chaleur du sentiment de ce qu'il avait fait pour sa femme, et qui lui racontait, en deux pages, ce que vous venez de lire en douze.² Ce n'est pas ma faute; n'est pas concis qui veut.³

In the novel M. Botte, there is a similar, but considerably longer, example of 'flashback' technique. After an initially brief switchback scene,⁴ Pigault-Lebrun breaks off his description of M. Botte's character to invite the reader to retrace with him the origin of the events announced in the opening pages:

1. Vide, p. 304.

2. refers, no doubt, to Pigault-Lebrun's manuscript.

3. Ibid, p. 310.

4. Vide, pp. 13-16.

Si on remontait à la source des belles actions, en trouverait-on beaucoup, en trouverait-on deux qui fussent dépouillées de tout motif humain? Celle de Charles, je le dis à regret, mais je vous dois la vérité, celle de Charles était loin d'être désintéressée.¹

Charles's adventures are then described in lengthy detail until Pigault-Lebrun finally decides to return to his principal story-line:

Cependant le temps passe, à travers ces alternances de plaisir, de craintes, d'espérances. On était arrivé, sans trop savoir comment, à l'époque des mille écus empruntés à dix personnes, et à la grande colère de l'oncle, ainsi que je vous l'ai appris dans mon premier chapitre.²

This desire to describe time past in one long stretch, is attenuated in the novel L'Observateur by its division into two shorter stretches, where firstly M. Martin reveals the details surrounding his true identity,³ and secondly, Stanislas relates the adventures that preceded his arrival in Paris.⁴ However, whether the past is described in one long stretch or in several short stretches it is equally harmful to the narrative pace of the novel. Time present, if made to stand motionless too long, will lose all its momentum of interest for the reader. Unable to divide the past into several different elements such as incidental

1. Ibid, pp. 19-20.

2. Ibid, pp. 111-112.

3. Vide, pp. 429-456.

4. Ibid, pp. 556-574.

reference, thoughts, dialogue or events, and to work these into the story separately and at appropriate places, Pigault-Lebrun's use of the 'flashback' technique tends to divert the reader's attention from the present story by failing to keep his descriptions of time past to the minimum that is clearly meaningful and illuminating.

Unlike his use of narrative technique, Pigault-Lebrun was generally less successful than the better novelists of the second half of the 18th century in the practice of shaping plot. His largely loose-knit plot patterns are far inferior to the tightly woven constructs of Diderot and Laclos in La Religieuse and Les Liaisons Dangereuses, while his maintenance of extraneous interpolated stories prove his inability to sustain the narrative flow of events. Another fault of balance and coherence consisted in his general insensitivity to the inter-relationships of the various parts of his novels. Unlike Rousseau and Laclos he failed to shape his plots so that the divisions between the parts stressed crucial points in the story, though he was considerably more successful in balancing the various parts in terms of length.¹ His weaknesses in plot presentation and dénouement certainly exceed those of Rousseau, Laclos or St. Pierre, and his continual use of

1. See above, pp. 132-133.

chance and coincidence is only rivalled by that of Restif de la Bretonne among the better post-1760 novelists.¹ He cannot, however, be faulted too much on his simplistic approach to time, as this was, with the exception of Jacques le Fataliste, a consistent weakness among the best of 18th century novelists,² though they did manage to avoid some of Pigault-Lebrun's more clumsy experiments with the devices of narrative 'flashback' and foreshadowing.

Pigault-Lebrun's weaknesses in the handling of plot structure stemmed largely from his position as a popular novelist, rather than from any innate literary incompetence, as was proved by his early well-constructed novel, Angélique et Jeanneton. On his own admittance, his plots were never thought out in advance,³ but constructed in serial fashion⁴ to pander to the popular taste and to ensure a steady means of income both for himself and his publisher. Writing until the beginning of the Restoration, at the rate of almost a 600 page novel a year, Pigault-Lebrun could hardly have been expected to devote much time to the literary niceties of conveying coherent and well-balanced plots to a public which was uniquely interested in the more primitive

1. See above, p. 131.

2. See above, p. 131.

3. See above, pp. 154, 162-163.

4. e.g. Les Barons de Felsheim, See above, p. 46.

novelistic elements of a good story line and a rapid succession of entertaining incidents.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHARACTERISATION AND DIALOGUE

A. Characterisation: After having examined some of the problems which plot structure raised in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun, it is now possible to discuss his concept of characterisation and the methods he used in order to convey this concept. The treatment of the problem of characterisation is largely determined by the writer's basic attitude towards the distinction between action and character. Whether he considers the action of the plot to be subservient to the characters, the characters to the plot, or whether he considers character and plot to be inseparably linked, will dictate how the novelist brings out character.

Pigault-Lebrun employed all these methods, at times varying them within the same novel to suit the needs of his individual characters. The first of these methods concentrates on presenting a formal portrait of the characters at the outset and allowing subsequent events to confirm the initial traits enunciated at the beginning. As a result of this type of presentation the characters remain static as the situations of the plot are designed exclusively to bring

out the characters' attributes. They remain the same at the end of the novel as they were at the beginning, and the whole interest of the book lies in the variety of the events and the manner in which the characters remain true to form throughout. This type of 'block' characterisation is exemplified in the novel Les Barons de Felsheim. At the beginning of the novel Pigault-Lebrun gives a description of the main attributes of his principal character's personality which subsequent adventures only too readily confirm:

Entre les bas-officiers de son régiment, monsieur le Baron avait distingué un maréchal-des-logis, gros, court, vigoureux, brave, buvant beaucoup sans qu'il y parût jamais, qualité précieuse pour un ivrogne, qui est bien aise de trouver quelqu'un sur qui il puisse compter, dans tous les temps, pour le mettre au lit. C'est avec Brandt que le Baron s'enivrait de préférence, et il répondait à ses officiers, qui se permettaient quelquefois des réflexions à cet égard, qu'il était du devoir d'un colonel d'encourager les bons soldats.¹

This 'set-piece' or 'block' method of characterisation is perhaps best illustrated in two of Pigault-Lebrun's last novels, L'Officieux² and L'Observateur. In this latter novel, forsaking descriptions of milieu or dramatic dialogue, Pigault-Lebrun sketches in a formal portrait of his leading character from the very first page and then proceeds to

1. Vide, p. 14.

2. Edition Barba, Vol. 20, pp. 196-198.

allow subsequent events to illuminate and bear out his protagonist's various attributes:

Monsieur Martin n'était ni jeune ni vieux, ni grand ni petit, ni gras ni maigre, ni beau ni laid. M. Martin était de ces hommes qu'on ne remarque pas, parce qu'ils ressemblent à tout le monde. Il était fin, il avait le coup d'oeil sûr, et peu de gens s'en doutaient, parce que M. Martin ne disait pas toujours ce qu'il pensait, de peur de blesser quelqu'un; mais quand son âme était remuée, il parlait volontiers, et il s'exprimait avec facilité.¹

While varying his methods of characterisation for his principal characters, Pigault-Lebrun almost invariably used the formal portrait when describing minor characters. This is illustrated in the novel, Jérôme, where Pigault-Lebrun gives a two page description of general Derneval and his family,² and in Une Macédoine where he rapidly outlines the personalities of six minor characters in half as many pages.³

One way in which Pigault-Lebrun succeeds in varying this 'set-piece' presentation of character is by the use of dialogue. In the novel, M. Botte, his opening Chapter is devoted to a conversation between the principal character, Botte, his nephew Charles and their friend Horeau, which allows the reader to deduce the principal traits of the protagonist's personality. At the beginning of the second chapter Pigault-Lebrun considers his task accomplished and

1. L'Observateur, Edition Barba, Vol. 18, p. 313.

2. Vide, pp. 202-203.

3. Vide, pp. 7-11.

proceeds to describe those situations which will conform to this presentation of character:

Je ne vous dirai rien du caractère de monsieur Botte: je me flatte que vous le connaissez.¹

A similar, though less explicit example, occurs at the beginning of the novel, L'Egoïsme, where an animated conversation between two of the novel's leading participants, count d'Alaire and M. de Versac, is likewise indicative of their future conduct.²

The second method of characterisation employed by Pigault-Lebrun shows the personalities of his characters emerging from a chronological account of a group of events and the characters' reactions to these events, so that the character is not fully presented until the story is concluded. This type of 'unrolling' characterisation is largely to be found in the picaresque or adventure novel, and to a lesser extent, in the diary novel. There are no set descriptions of Happy, Thomas, or Jérôme at the beginning of Pigault-Lebrun's three major picaresque novels, L'Enfant du Carnaval, Mon Oncle Thomas and Jérôme, as their personalities are only revealed after their author has taken them through a long and varied sequence of events. A similar 'unrolling' of character takes place in the adventure novels of L'Homme à

1. Vide, p. 17.

2. Vide, pp. 1-5.

Projets and Une Macédoine where the nearest approach to 'set-piece' characterisation resides in a few cursory remarks on the physical appearance of one of the principal characters.¹ This emergence of the complete character from the action of the novel is presented in a more original manner in Adélaïde de Méran. In this novel, written in diary form, the intimate thoughts and feelings of the heroine are conveyed by her reactions to events, as well as by short passages of self analysis which help to explain her outlook and behavior.

These psychological aspects of characterisation are typical of the technique which combines the two foregoing methods. In Angélique et Jeanneton, Pigault-Lebrun gives a fairly adequate sketch of Angélique's character and circumstances,² yet a full understanding of her nature only comes after she has reacted to important events in the narrative, and shown her own part in the shaping of those events. Thus the inset character sketch of Angélique remains incomplete until she is faced with the temptations of the capital and the sollicitations of her abductor, Denneterre. Similarly, the sketch of Mme. Luceval's character in La Famille Luceval,³ only hints at the maliciousness, egoism

1. Une Macédoine, pp. 42-43.

2. Vide, p. 61.

3. Vide, p. 151.

and haughty pride which she will later show in her relations with her husband and abandoned daughter, Caroline.

In these two novels the given qualities of the characters determine the action and the action in turn progressively changes the characters. This is the method which shows the character changing or developing, so that while the initial portrait is valid with reference to the situation presented at the beginning of the novel, it ceases to be entirely valid by the time the novel is concluded. The final character is different in the sense that events have brought out various aspects of his nature which before were only latently present. The completeness of a character is, therefore, judged by the degree to which its potentialities are realized. Thus character determines incident, and incident provides the final illumination of character, by showing how the traits initially on view to the reader precipitate events which confirm his first vague impressions.

These methods, whether used separately or in combination, have been the stock methods of presenting character in fiction from the beginnings of the novel until recently modern times. The first of these methods, to use the terminology of E. M. Forster, will usually provide 'flat' characters, while the second method or the two methods combined are more likely to lead to the portrayal of 'round'

characters.¹ 'Flat' characters are sometimes called types or caricatures. In their purest form they are constructed round a single idea or quality but when there is more than one factor in them, there is a beginning of a curve towards the round. 'Round' characters, on the other hand, are capable of surprising in a convincing way. A 'round' character, E. M. Forster concludes:

has the incalculability of life about it -
life within the pages of a book.²

What makes these characters surprising in a convincing way is further explained by Elizabeth Bowen in her Notes on Writing a Novel:

Action is the simplification of complexity. For each one act, there are X number of rejected alternatives. It is the palpable presence of the alternatives that gives action interest. Therefore, in each of the characters, while he or she is acting, the play and pull of alternatives must be felt. It is in being seen to be capable of alternatives that the character, becomes, for the reader, valid.³

When judged in the light of these definitions, Pigault-Lebrun's 'set-piece' characters would appear 'flat', but are sometimes found to vary according to the number of inherent traits they possess. Characters such as the Marquis d'Oliban

1. Aspects of the Novel, London, Edward Arnold, 1927, pp. 65-75.

2. Ibid, p. 75.

3. Bowen, Elizabeth, Notes on Writing a Novel, Collected Impressions, New York, Knopf, 1950, p. 251.

in L'Officieux, the Comte d'Alaire in L'Egoïsme and M. Martin in L'Observateur are constructed around the single idea of the novel's title, while characters such as Brandt in Les Barons de Felsheim, though equally predictable in their behavior, possess more varied personalities.

The second method of presentation offers characters of fuller dimensions. In the novels of Pigault-Lebrun, however, they are not sufficiently surprising or convincing enough to be classified as 'round' characters. After their initial reactions to certain events their conduct usually proves predictable and there comes a point in the novel where their capacity for surprise is strongly diminished. Certain factors are added to their characters but are rarely in contradiction with those already established at the outset of the novel. Those exceptions which do occur, such as the complete reversal of the patterns of behavior in the Marquis d'Arancey¹ and M. de Méran,² are marred by the psychological improbability of these changes which are established by the author to fit the moral aim of his novel. Even such behavior as Francheville illustrates after his marriage with Fanchette in Tableaux de Société is not altogether surprising in the light of his conduct in Une Macédoine, the first part of this

1. See above, p. 96.

2. Adélaïde de Méran, Ed. Barba, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 20, p. 187.

two-decker novel.¹

However, to say of a character in a novel that it is 'flat' is not necessarily to question its effectiveness as a character. This view is expressed by Edwin Muir, in his book The Structure of the Novel:

...the co-extensive truth and congruity of its attributes, indeed makes the flat character no less remarkable as an imaginative creation than the round; it is not less true, it is only different.²

A similar view is enunciated by Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz in their book, A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms:

By creating flat characters which have depth, if not complexity, a writer such as Dickens may achieve vividness and size.³

Even E.M. Forster, who is, to some extent, biased against flat characterisation as opposed to round,⁴ will sometimes make a concession on this point:

Dickens is actually one of our big writers, and his immense success with types suggests that there may be more in flatness than the severer critics admit.⁵

The 'flat' character belongs by nature to the surfaces of experience, where life can still remain laughable,

1. See above, p. 70.

2. Muir, Edwin, The Structure of the Novel, London, Hogarth Press, 1928, p. 146.

3. Beckson, Karl, and Ganz, Arthur, A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms, A Dictionary, London, Thames and Hudson, 1961, p. 69.

4. e.g., "we must admit that flat people are not in themselves as big achievements as round ones, and also that they are best when they are comic." Aspects of the Novel, Op. cit., p. 70.

5. Ibid., p. 69.

the 'round' character to the more subterranean areas of experience where life confronts the tragic. Pigault-Lebrun, although he attempted both types of characterisation, was more at ease and more successful in his portrayal of the 'flat' comic character. Such characters as Brandt, Thomas, Botte, and Ruder are vividly and vigorously illustrated by their behavior and speech patterns, to an extent which is lacking in the conventional semi-tragic figures of Robert, Francheville, Fanchette, and Adélaïde. Despite their differences, both Pigault-Lebrun's comic and serious 'flat' characters remain types, the former reminiscent of the characters of the seventeenth century 'roman comique', the latter of those of the contemporary 'roman sentimental'. However, it was the former which best suited the ebullient temperament of Pigault-Lebrun, who, by sacrificing detailed analysis of personality to comic effect, was, nonetheless, able to make his principal comic figures come alive.

This he achieved by the use of certain conventional methods of characterisation, with particular stress being laid on those of speech and dialogue. The more usual descriptive methods of characterisation such as gestures, mannerisms, peculiarities of clothing or feature are surprisingly lacking in a novelist who had begun his career as a dramatist. It is by their speech patterns that these principal comic characters, although indistinguishable from one another, set themselves apart from the other characters in their respective novels.

This stylistic differentiation in the patterns of speech resembles the method of Restif de la Bretonne, where the effects reside chiefly in the direct contrast between the idiom of the lower class characters and the more conventional educated usage of the upper class characters, than that of Laclos, who lends each character of Les Liaisons Dangereuses an individual mode of expression. Eschewing dialect and bad grammar, Pigault-Lebrun, by varying the length of his speeches, and his choice of vocabulary, makes the language of these comic characters conform as closely as possible to their patterns of behavior. Although their locutions, idiosyncrasies and rhythms are hardly distinguishable from one another, their speech can certainly not be confused with the undifferentiated usage of the more conventional characters. This is shown in the novel, Les Barons de Felsheim, when Brandt explains his rough handling of the Franciscan friar to the coachman:

Ce drôle-là allait exploiter la donzelle dans ton poulailler, ce qui est contre les règles. Je l'ai prié honnêtement de se modérer, il a fait l'insolent; je l'ai battu, et j'en ferai autant à tous ceux qui manqueront de respect à monsieur le Baron, qui veut bien entrer dans les pages du roi de Prusse, et que je conduis à la cour. Il y a un commandant prussien à Wittemberg, où s'arrête ton équipage, que Dieu confonde, et je t'y ferai passer une rouffle à la garde montante, si tu ne me fais justice ce cet enragé capucin.¹

1. Vide, pp. 310-311.

Thomas's speech is equally colorful when he harangues his English comrades in arms for their discrimination against his nationality:

Vous êtes des gredins qui vous prévalez de l'avantage du nombre pour me turlupiner. Je vous préviens que cela me déplaît, qu'il est temps que cela finisse, que je suis un chien à vous sabrer tous, et que le premier qui m'appellera 'french dog', aura affaire à moi.¹

M. Botte, while restricting his vocabulary to one or two mild oaths, is just as forceful in his language as Brandt and Thomas. This is vividly rendered in the conclusion to his conversation with the Marquis d'Arancey over the projected union of their two families:

- Voulez-vous bien, monsieur, faire arrêter votre voiture? dit le marquis, pâlisant de colère.
- Pourquoi cela?
- Je vais descendre.
- Pourquoi faire?
- Pour continuer ma route à pied.
- Quelle lubie vous passe par la tête?
- Je n'ai accepté la place que vous m'avez offerte...
- Que dans la persuasion que je flatterais votre orgueil, n'est-ce pas? Monsieur le marquis, je ne flatte personne.
- Voulez-vous bien, monsieur, faire arrêter votre voiture?
- Non monsieur.
- Ceci est fort, par exemple.
- J'ai promis à votre fille de vous ramener en voiture, et vous n'irez pas à pied; je lui ai promis de vous équiper convenablement, et c'est de quoi je m'occuperai à Saint-Germain, où nous allons entrer. Vous êtes rouge de colère, votre oeil me menace; mais corbleu, j'ai une

1. Mon Oncle Thomas, p. 193.

tête aussi... Vous brisez mes glaces!...
 j'en ferai mettre d'autres; mais vous courez
 la poste, et dans la voiture de M. Botte.¹

The similarity in speech of these comic characters is rendered, down to the very oaths they use, in the following passage of the novel, Jérôme, where Ruder finding himself in an unfamiliar situation, finally plucks up enough courage to propose to Mlle. Javotte:

- Mademoiselle...mademoiselle...Que le diable m'emporte si je sais par où commencer.
- Mademoiselle, vous êtes charmante.
- Vous me flattez, monsieur.
- Et je vous aime de tout mon coeur.
- Monsieur, vous êtes trop bon.
- Voulez-vous m'épouser, mademoiselle?
- Non, monsieur.
- Comment, mademoiselle! vous ne voulez pas épouser un capitaine?
- Je ne vous épouserais pas, fussiez-vous colonel.
- Et la raison s'il vous plaît?
- Je n'ai pas de goût pour le mariage.
- Mais j'en ai, moi, mademoiselle; vous seule me l'avez inspiré, et corbleu! vous m'épouserez.
- Je ne vous épouserai pas.
- Comment, ventrebleu! Ruder a pris Mantoue, et il n'en prendrait pas une femme!
- C'est que les femmes ne se prennent pas à coups de canon.
- Aussi n'est-ce point à l'arme à feu que je vais vous réduire.²

As these examples prove, Pigault-Lebrun did not always conceive of speech or dialogue as a means for the mere exchange of information, or for the exhibition of the writer's skill with idiom, but as an important method of revealing the speaker's

1. M. Botte, p. 342.

2. Vide, p. 189.

character, and of keeping the story steadily moving forward.

Although less skillful in differentiating the speech patterns of his more serious characters, who invariably conform to the conventional educated usage of polite society, Pigault-Lebrun did manage, in certain isolated cases, to convey characterisation by the more subtle means of psychological analysis as opposed to the mere narrative of physical adventures, or the plain use of speech and dialogue. This probing of the areas of feeling and motivation is sporadically shown in one of his earliest novels, Angélique et Jeanneton, where the occasional brief asides of the narrator appear more convincing than the usual blunt intrusions of the author. In the following example the narrator briefly analyses the motivation for a charitable act he has just accomplished for an impoverished family:

J'allais continuer ma route. Je ne pus m'empêcher de me tourner vers la chaumière. Voulais-je m'assurer que le petit cadeau fût arrivé à sa destination? Voulais-je recueillir le prix d'une bien faible action? Il y a de l'homme partout, et je crois vraiment que ce fut un mouvement d'amour-propre qui me fit retourner.¹

In Tableaux de Société and Adélaïde de Méran the portrayal of character, in addition to the use of behavior and overt self-analysis, is accomplished by more indirect methods. In Angélique et Jeanneton the portrayal of personality still

1. Vide, pp. 39-40.

depends largely on the narrator's actions than on his brief reflective comments, whereas Fanchette's lengthy observations on the opposition between society and the individual¹ and on the psychology of love,² as well as Adélaide's lengthy statements on such topics as social prejudice,³ conventional etiquette,⁴ and coquetterie,⁵ reveal their respective attitudes towards life in general and their habitual standards of behavior. These reflective digressions have the effect of bringing Fanchette and Adélaide into much closer contact with the reader and give an increased depth and reality to their characters, something which Pigault-Lebrun generally failed to obtain in his other novels. This was largely due to the form in which these two novels were written. Tableaux de Société is an account of the personal memoirs of Fanchette written for the benefit of her daughter, Honorine,⁶ while Adélaide de Méran is a detailed account of the heroine's adventures and innermost thoughts addressed to her recently

1. Vide, Tableaux de Société, pp. 118-122.

2. Ibid., pp. 128-135.

3. Vide, Adélaide de Méran, pp. 6-7.

4. Ibid., pp. 210-211.

5. Ibid., pp. 239-241.

6. Vide, Introduction, pp. 1-3.

married friend Claire.¹ Although pertaining to the epistolary form, the latter novel, like Tableaux de Société, concentrates more on the technique of the 'récit personnel' to exploit the fictitious autobiographer's emotions and motives than on dialogue and narrative action, as in Pigault-Lebrun's other first-person narrative novels.

As these examples illustrate Pigault-Lebrun's novels manifested some of the better and weaker aspects of the kinds of characterisation practised by his eighteenth century predecessors. Maintaining the earlier forms of character portrayal, such as the static sketches of social types, reminiscent of Lesage, he was also to employ the more conventional methods of 'set piece' and 'unrolling' characterisation, combining the two in his better novels.

As a result of his methods of characterisation, his choice of subject and personal temperament; most of Pigault-Lebrun's characters appear 'flat', though not necessarily lacking in life and interest. Certain of his more tragic figures almost achieve 'roundness' but are marred by imperfect and ineffective techniques of characterisation. These techniques are largely rendered by narrative action and differences in speech for his comic 'flat' characters, by overt and oblique analysis of feelings and motivations for his 'rounder' more tragic figures.

1. Vide, pp. 5-6.

All these techniques of characterisation had already been used in the eighteenth century, and, in many respects, more effectively. None of Pigault-Lebrun's novels can be said to surpass or even rival the psychological analysis of La Vie de Marianne, with its oblique methods of character portrayal,¹ nor the difference in stylistic levels of speech to be found in Les Liaisons Dangereuses.² Compared to the complex and striking characters of Manon Lescaut, Marianne, the Marquise de Merteuil, and Valmont, the majority of Pigault-Lebrun's characters appear as conventional stereotypes rather than as individualized human beings. As George Saintsbury so correctly imparts, there is little individuality of character in Pigault-Lebrun's novels, only individuality of type.³

B. Dialogue and Speech: Besides being used as an aid in characterisation,⁴ dialogue can also serve other important functions in the novel. One of the most obvious of its uses is to show relationships between people. In the novels of Pigault-Lebrun these relationships are usually presented in straightforward clear-cut dialogues which leave the interlocutors in little doubt as to each other's intentions. There is none of that 'double-entendre' or subtle allusive

1. See above, pp. 133-134.

2. See above, pp. 137-138.

3. History of the French Novel, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 465.

4. See above, pp. 204-207.

dialogue which is found in later, more skilful novelists such as James or Flaubert. A good example of this blunt, forthright manner of verbal fencing occurs in the animated dialogue between M. Botte and the Marquis d'Arancey.¹ At the end of the conversation, their already strained relationship is verging on total rupture.

This dialogue is not only indicative of both speakers' character and the state of their mutual relations, but also adds, in its concluding lines,² to the reader's present knowledge, helps to bring out the novel's important underlying theme³, and generally keeps the story moving forward by forcing Botte to resort to more persuasive means of attaining his goals. Its inherent weakness lies in the obvious desire of Pigault-Lebrun to feed the reader with information concerning the Marquis' background.⁴

Dialogue was also used as a means of social satire. In Mon Oncle Thomas the novel's hero seeks advice on how best to play his newly adopted role of marquis. A lively conversation ensues between Thomas and a valet which not only affords an opportunity for character revelation, but also a subtle satire

1. M. Botte, pp. 331-342, also see above, pp. 206-207.

2. Ibid., p. 341.

3. See above, pp. 94-95.

4. Vide, pp. 334-339.

of the aristocracy.¹ Such dialogue, however, had a frequent tendency to do little more than merely exhibit the author's wit, as is revealed in the conversation between the curé and M. Botte,² or to become an evident vehicle for philosophical speculation as is illustrated by the lengthy drawing-room conversation in the novel Jérôme.³

As this latter example was to prove, the speech of Pigault-Lebrun's characters was to become more stylized and formal in the novels written under the Empire and the Restoration. He abandoned the lively, colorful language of his earlier comic characters⁴ for the uniform style of speech characteristic of the more polite society of the salons. During this period the closest approximation to the popular Parisian slang of Rosalie in Mon Oncle Thomas⁵ was the peasant dialect of Gros Pierre in M. de Roberville.⁶ In addition to these differentiations in speech patterns among the different classes of French society, Pigault-Lebrun also attempted to render the speech patterns of foreigners whose mastery of the

1. Vide, pp. 319-322.

2. M. Botte, pp. 304-307.

3. Vide, pp. 417-438.

4. See above, pp. 205-207.

5. Vide, pp. 8-10.

6. Vide, pp. 381-383.

French language was far from perfect. The best examples of this use of 'pidgin' French are given by the English lord, Milord Tillmouth, in L'Enfant du Carnaval¹ and by the Swiss valet, Trick, in the novel Une Macédoine.²

Dialogue was also effectively used by Pigault-Lebrun to obtain a certain structural balance in his novels. With the exception of the long interpolated stories and moral dissertations, Pigault-Lebrun never wrote excessively long narrative descriptions without varying them with dialogue or direct speech. However, he was to show less literary tact in his approach to those problems of dialogue and speech raised by the conventions of the memoir novel. In L'Enfant du Carnaval the narrator is quite capable of repeating verbatim conversations which took place some twenty years previously, while in the novel, Mon Oncle Thomas, despite Pigault-Lebrun's attempt to explain away the improbability³, it is hardly likely that his uncle would have remembered his mother's words⁴ at the age of two months.⁵ In the novel Jérôme, Pigault-Lebrun became more consciously aware of these pitfalls of the

1. Vide, p. 88.

2. Vide, p. 394.

3. Vide, p. 402.

4. Ibid., pp. 8-10.

5. Ibid., pp. 2 and 6.

memoir novel, but preferred to satirize rather than remedy them. The narrator, who begins to relate his life story at the age of sixty,¹ interrupts his narrative to explain how he was able to report verbatim a conversation which had taken place when he was only ten:

Vous jugez, lecteur, qui certainement ne manquez pas de sagacité, vous jugez qu'un enfant de dix ans, qui ne connaît à fond que la forêt de Senart, et mademoiselle Javotte très imparfaitement, ne peut comprendre, ni par conséquent se rappeler une telle conversation. Mais si j'ai eu le malheur de perdre la jolie, la trop aimable Javotte, j'ai été assez heureux pour la retrouver, et la connaître comme j'avais connu la forêt de Senart, et ma bonne Javotte dictait..., elle dictait...Javotte, me direz-vous, avait de la mémoire. Eh! pourquoi pas? vous répondrai-je.²

In this respect Pigault-Lebrun was less successful than his predecessor, Prévost, in avoiding the implausibilities of the memoir novel's conventions.³ That he was consciously endeavoring to improve his novelistic technique can be demonstrated by his gradual abandonment of the unrealistic memoir novel's conventions of the type illustrated by L'Enfant du Carnaval, Mon Oncle Thomas, and Jérôme, for the more plausible forms of Tableaux de Société and Adélaïde de Méran, in which the narrator preferred to relate events of more recent occurrence.

1. Vide, p. 2.

2. Ibid., p. 41.

3. See above, pp. 138-139.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BACKGROUND AND STYLE

A. Background: According to an eminent critic of the eighteenth century English novel, fictional characters can only have an individual existence when they are set in a framework of particularized time and space.¹ When this opinion is applied to Pigault-Lebrun's novels, it reveals that although the majority of them do mention people in specific places at specific times,² they generally fail to give a vivid impression of the concrete visible world. Concerned principally with achieving historical and geographical veracity by means of an accurate documentation of dates and place names, Pigault-Lebrun paid little attention to visualising the whole of his narrative as though it occurred in an actual physical environment. There is a distinct lack of vivid background description, and place, far from permeating his novels, is merely considered as an incidental factor in the narration of the plot.

In those novels set in France, and particularly in Paris, the background descriptions do not go beyond the casual mention of a few street names and buildings. While this had

1. Vide, Watt, Ian, The Rise of the Novel, London, Chatto and Windus, 1957, p.22.

2. See above, pp. 55-56.

the effect of imparting a feeling of actuality and realism to the novel, it lacked the variety of descriptive references to objects, clothes and mannerisms which had helped to render Marivaux's novels so visually concrete. The nearest approach to such physical description of the capital occurs in the novel Angélique et Jeanneton on the heroine's trip to Paris after the wedding.¹ However, instead of creating a vivid description of the capital, Pigault-Lebrun lists the main attractions in catalogue fashion accompanied by a few terse abstract comments. There is only one brief moment when Pigault-Lebrun manages to capture a little of the Parisian atmosphere:

Son cocher veut-il nous ramener par le chemin le plus court? il prend ou par la rue de la Huchette, ou par Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, ou par la rue de la Tixeranderie, ou par la rue Maubuée, ou par celles du Renard, du Pet-au-Diable, du Coeur-Volant, ou par celle des Boucheries, dont le ruisseau roule sans cesse un sang noir et épais, où vous entendez assommer un boeuf à droite, ou vous voyez dépecer un agneau à gauche, ou vous passez à côté d'hommes dont les bras nus, les mains et le visage rougis, attestent la profession meurtrière.²

A further opportunity for creating good evocative background is disregarded in the novel L'Enfant du Carnaval. Describing the hero's return to Paris at the height of the Terror, Pigault-Lebrun gives a few brief lines of physical description before passing on to a conceptual analysis of the events:

1. Vide, pp. 116-119.

2. Ibid., pp. 118-119.

Je ne reconnus point Paris. Plus d'équipages, plus de dorures, plus d'industrie, plus de gaieté. Des ateliers vides, des hôtels dévastés, l'ortie et le chardon croissant dans les cours, l'inquiétude dans tous les yeux, la tristesse dans tous les coeurs.¹

This insensitivity to the description of urban settings was more than matched by his total lack of emotive response to the settings of provincial France or to those of more exotic places. This is reflected in the novel Une Macédoine when the narrator makes a trip to the Pyrenees, though the circumstances of his situation permit some justification for his lack of sensitivity to his natural surroundings:

Nous sommes arrivés à Perpignan. Nous nous enfonçons au centre des Pyrénées, en tournant par Pau, Tarbes et Saint-Gaudens. Nous entrons dans la ville de Campan. Nous avons traversé des masses de roches, vieilles comme le monde, présentant partout des sites effrayants ou romantiques. Insensibles à ces variétés de la nature, au contraste de ses tableaux, je n'ai vu que Sophie, Sophie n'a vu que moi.²

The rural settings of the novels M. de Roberville,³ L'Observateur,⁴ and La Famille Luceval⁵ are equally lacking in atmosphere and description of place. The irrelevance of background settings for Pigault-Lebrun is also apparent in

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1. Vide, p. 384.
 2. Vide, pp. 518-519.
 3. Vide, pp. 307-388.
 4. Vide, pp. 518-538.
 5. Vide, pp. 320-343.

those novels where part or all of the action takes place outside of France. The novels La Folie Espagnole and Le Garçon sans Souci are reminiscent of the thin veneer of local Spanish color to be found in Gil Blas where even the authentically documented name places cannot compensate for the lack of atmosphere. A similar approach is to be found in the European settings of his other novels. The opening chapter of Les Barons de Felsheim situates its German setting in the following conventional manner:

A quelques lieues de Lunebourg, en Saxe, au milieu des bois, des montagnes et des ravins, existait encore, il y a quelques vingt années, un château gothique, bâti, selon les propriétaires, qui probablement se trompaient, par le fameux Witikind, lors de l'invasion de Charlemagne.¹

Jérôme's entry into Milan after the battle of Marengo is equally noteworthy for being devoid of all visual description:

Nous arrivâmes à Milan, où nous avait précédés la nouvelle de notre victoire et de la blessure du général. Les têtes étaient encore exaltées du récit de la journée mémorable, et l'on regardait avec une sorte d'admiration ceux qui y avaient eu quelque part. Nous étions à peine descendus de nos litières, que le général reçut les félicitations et les doléances des autorités civiles et militaires, ce dont il se serait bien passé alors, et moi aussi.²

Although Pigault-Lebrun's lack of feeling for place may be excused on the grounds that Spain, Germany and Italy were unfamiliar to him, no such justification can be found,

1. Vide, p. 5.

2. Vide, Jérôme, p. 387.

however, for his lack of description in his English settings. He had a first hand knowledge of London and its surroundings,¹ yet this knowledge remained unused. His descriptions of journeys from Scotland to London in the novels Mon Oncle Thomas and L'Homme à Projets are restricted to his usual mention of place names interspersed with the odd anglicism to lend an air of realism to an otherwise superficial setting. In the novel Mon Oncle Thomas, the hero's arrival in the capital is marked by a complete absence of background description,² while in L'Homme à Projets only one aspect of the London scene catches Robert's eye:

Déjà il aperçoit dans l'éloignement cette noire et épaisse fumée qui annonce au voyageur la capitale de l'Angleterre; déjà des inquiétudes d'un autre genre viennent l'assaillir. S'il ne pouvait découvrir la demeure de milord.... si milord n'était pas à Londres.... si le temps avait éteint cet intérêt pressant qu'il lui avait marqué autrefois.... si...si...si... Le chapitre des si était inépuisable.

Le voilà dans un faubourg, se traînant à peine, le dos courbé, les muscles en contraction, redoutant le contact du pavé, qui ajoute sans cesse à sa douleur. Il lève une jambe, il craint de poser le pied. Il compte ses pas; il s'adresse à tous ceux qui passent près de lui, car il n'a ni le courage, ni la force de s'éloigner de la ligne droite. Il apprend enfin que milord a sa maison Cavendish square; mais on le croit dans ses terres.³

1. See above, p. 41.

2. Vide, p. 231.

3. Vide, pp. 215-216.

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1. See above, p. 41.

2. Vide, p. 231.

3. Vide, pp. 215-216.

These same two novels also transported the reader to the more exotic settings of a Pacific island and Mexico, but his descriptions, based it is true on second hand knowledge, only reiterate the conventional 'picture postcard' aspects, gleaned no doubt from the travel books of the day, and look pale in comparison to those first hand descriptions of Mauritius to be found in Paul et Virginie. A typical example occurs in L'Homme à Projets when Pigault-Lebrun describes a Mexican landscape:

Après bien des courses inutiles, il arrive sur les bords d'une large baie. Sa vue perçante se porte à l'autre rive, et il est frappé d'étonnement et de plaisir. Il distingue certains objets noirs qui paraissent avoir du mouvement: ce sont des tortues qui font des trous dans le sable pour y déposer leurs oeufs. Des lamentins, poissons d'une grosseur extraordinaire, d'un goût délicat, et faciles à prendre, jouent sur la surface d'une mer calme et transparente. Une multitude de perroquets, de ramiers, de perruches vont et viennent à travers la baie. La contrée qu'aperçoit Robert brille d'une verdure animée, signe certain de la plus forte végétation, et vous conviendrez que tous ces avantages étaient bien faits pour éblouir un homme qui aimait l'abondance, et qui détestait le travail.¹

The island of Fernandès is even more sketchily outlined in the novel, Mon Oncle Thomas:

Cette île est très petite; elle convenait donc à un très petit roi et à une très petite population. Le terrain en est très mauvais. He! que faisait cela à de très honnêtes gens qui ne comptaient y vivre que de l'industrie d'autrui. Elle n'a qu'une rivière. Il ne la fallait pas si large pour contenir nos vaisseaux. Elle est partout bordée de rochers;

1. Vide, p. 263.

elle en est plus facile à défendre. Il fut donc résolu que mon oncle serait grand régulateur de l'île de Fernandès.¹

Place, then, is employed in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun as simply another addition to the narrative element. A brief description of milieu and the succession of narrative events is allowed to proceed forward at a rapid pace. This description is not intimately involved with the physical action of the story nor bound up with the mental and emotional states of the characters. It is not worked into their lives but appears superimposed and entirely irrelevant to the working out of their destinies. In this respect Pigault-Lebrun's novels lack that close interdependence of character and setting which characterises a novel such as La Nouvelle Héloïse, where places have some significance in the plot.²

This interplay of character and setting is, however, revealed in a broader sense in certain of his novels. In the novels, Angélique et Jeanneton, La Famille Luceval and, more particularly, L'Homme à Projets, Pigault-Lebrun shows how environment can shape a person's life and help make him what he is, though he lacks the wealth of observation and detail which characterises Balzac's and Zola's descriptions of social influences. In these three novels Pigault-Lebrun

1. Vide, p. 483.

2. See above, p.140.

shows the corrupting influence of a materialistic Parisian milieu on a young woman, a young girl and a grown man. With the exception of L'Homme à Projets, Pigault-Lebrun shows the virtues of rural life to triumph over the vices of the city.

Pigault-Lebrun's novels can, therefore, be seen to lack that evocative flavor of place and period. His sparse descriptions of French urban and rural settings are conventionalized and cliché-ridden, while his equally scant descriptions of foreign settings employed the hackneyed phrases of local colorism, thus missing the hidden life, the quality which is unique to the particular place and period. In this respect Pigault-Lebrun's fiction was more akin to the timeless scenes and psychological abstractions of the majority of eighteenth century French novels, than to the vivid descriptions of background and atmosphere evoked by a Bernardin de St. Pierre, a Rousseau, or a later Flaubert and Proust.

B. Style and Language: This almost total lack of interest in setting and background description is indicative of a generally limited linguistic range of expression in the novels of Pigault-Lebrun. His earlier works are marked by a simple, unadorned, almost naive narrative style which was intentionally adopted to suit the unrefined literary sensibilities of his lower class reading public, and to conform to the conventions of the picaresque and adventure novel.¹ In the novels of his

1. Angélique et Jeanneton, though differing in most other respects from these earlier novels, shares their simplicity of style.

Empire and Restoration periods, however, he changed his style from the simplicity of the popular novel to the more refined, formal and abstract style of the earlier eighteenth century novelists, in an attempt to appeal to the more cultivated reading public of the Napoleonic and Bourbon eras.

The most striking aspect of his earlier narrative style is the brevity, plainness and unpoetic tenor of his sentences. These are frequently expressed in the present tense as a means of rendering the events of a picaresque or adventure novel more vivid and dramatic. They generally avoid the use of complex subordinate clauses which halt the rapid succession of events, and rely principally on the staccato effect of commas, colons, and semi-colons to suggest the breathless sequence of the action. In L'Enfant du Carnaval Pigault-Lebrun adopts such a narrative style to describe the narrator's rescue of Juliette from a convent:

Arrivé au pied du mur, j'attache mon échelle à l'anneau qui est au bas du crochet. Avec une bonne ficelle, je lie un bout de mon bâton sur la partie droite du crochet. Je prends alors le bâton par l'autre bout; je lève le bras, et je pose aisément le crochet sur le haut de la muraille: voilà l'échelle fixée. Je monte, je regarde, je vois la serre où couche le jardinier. Je descends dans la rue, j'enlève mon échelle, en prenant le bâton par le bras, et je la place aussi loin de la serre que me le permet l'étendue du jardin. Je remonte, j'enfourche le mur, je passe mon échelle en dedans du clos, je descends; j'enlève de nouveau mon échelle, et je l'étends dans un carré de légumes, de peur que le jardinier ou quelque nonne ne l'aperçoivent en faisant leur ronde, et ne me coupent la retraite. J'écoute,

je n'entends rien, et je m'avance vers le pavillon. Jusqu'à présent cela va à merveille.¹

In the novel Mon Oncle Thomas, a similar narrative style describes the hero's attempt to steal an English ship and return to the safety of his homeland:

Les bateaux étaient arrêtés par des chaînes de fer, qui s'enfilaient les unes dans les autres, et dont la dernière faisait, autour d'un poteau élevé, plusieurs tours, terminés par un fort cadenas. On ne brise pas cela avec les mains, et on n'avait pas même un couteau. Il n'y avait d'autre partie que d'arracher la pièce de bois. Mes sept lurons poussent, tirent, s'agitent, se démènent; le bruit qu'ils font réveille les matins du village; ils aboient devant les portes, ou dans les maisons. Les habitants s'inquiètent et se lèvent.²

The novel Angélique et Jeanneton, although structurally superior to all of Pigault-Lebrun's earlier novels, exemplifies their same simplicity of narrative prose style. The following example describes an event which befalls the thirty year old narrator while journeying between Neuilly and Courbevoie:

J'étais entre Neuilly et Courbevoie. Je tirai Werther de ma poche, et j'ouvris le livre à la fin. Je ne sais pourquoi je l'ouvre souvent là. Serait-ce un pressentiment?

J'en étais au coup de pistolet. J'entends du bruit.... Trois enfants gros, frais, gaillards... On les eût pris pour des amours, sans les haillons qui leur couvraient une partie du corps.

Je m'arrêtai pour les regarder. Ils se jetaient des pelottes de neige; il m'en vint une au milieu du front; j'en renvoyai vite une autre, et voilà la connaissance faite.

J'en recevais toujours trois pour une; j'étais blanc de la tête aux pieds. Je me piquai, je

1. Vide, p. 277.

2. Vide, p. 243.

courus sur mes trois adversaires, je glissai, je tombai, et en trente secondes me voilà enseveli au milieu du grand chemin.'

L'un me tenait les deux bras, que je lui abandonnais; le second s'était assis sur mes jambes, le troisième me couvrait de neige, et ils riaient aux éclats, et je riais comme eux.

Une pauvre mère, déguenillée aussi, vint gronder, et très fort. Elle avait une houssine à la main: personne ne rit plus. Mes petits drôles craignaient d'être battus; je craignais qu'on ne les battît.¹

These three first-person narrative passages are notable for the flatness and monotony of their sentence structure, the unmusicality of their sound and rhythm patterns, and a complete lack of metaphor and simile. Such lyrical qualities and figurative devices of language were more fully exploited, though to a very limited extent in comparison to Rousseau or Bernardin de St. Pierre, in the later more sophisticated first-person novels of Pigault-Lebrun.

In contrast to his earlier novels, the first-person narrative of the Empire period reveals a firmer, and more refined use of sentence structure. This was in large part due to a change in content from the purely physical adventures of his early novels to the more psychological approach adopted in his later novels to suit the tastes of a more refined reading public. Such an example is afforded by the narrator's analysis of small town gossip at the beginning of Tableaux de Société:

1. Vide, pp. 37-38.

Il y a du caquetage ici, comme ailleurs. J'ai su que plusieurs dames ont fait circuler, sur mon compte, des historiettes, qui ne sont pas flatteuses, et qui n'en sont pas moins vraies. Pourquoi les femmes, en général, poursuivent-elles, sans relâche, celle dont les aventures ont fait quelque éclat? Faibles, ou prêtes à le devenir, selon qu'elles sont plus ou moins sensibles, elles croient, peut-être, détourner d'elles l'attention, en la fixant sur une autre, et elles ne sentent pas que commencer par faire des victimes, c'est renoncer pour soi-même à l'indulgence, et même à la pitié. Quoi qu'il en soit, j'ai prouvé à celles-ci que la faiblesse est un vice, quand elle change d'objet; un mal irréparable pour celle qui est abandonnée; une qualité dans celle qu'un amant estimable a jugée digne d'être son épouse, et qui justifie son élévation par sa conduite. C'est du moins ainsi qu'on a parlé de la mienne, à la suite d'une fête brillante, dont on a trouvé que j'ai fait les honneurs avec une aisance, un bon ton, une grâce remarquables, et pendant laquelle j'ai comblé d'attentions et de prévenances les femmes mêmes dont j'avais à me plaindre. Il est, dit-on, des gens qui trouvent du plaisir à écraser leurs ennemis. Je préfère ramener les miens, et me les attacher.¹

The novel, Adélaïde de Méran, also illustrates this fusion of style with theme by the use of a more rhythmic narrative flow to express the sensitive feelings of the young narrator,

Adélaïde:

Le moment du réveil est celui de la journée où les idées sont plus fraîches, les perceptions plus faciles, où on se rend compte, presque sans prévention, de sa conduite et de celle des autres. Tu croiras facilement que je suis honteuse d'avoir accusé Jules, de lui avoir marqué du dépit. L'intéressant jeune homme remplit un devoir pénible, et ce n'est point à moi à l'en punir. Il m'aime, Claire; il m'aime de toute son âme; mais il sent sa position. Sa résistance aux volontés de son

1. Vide, pp. 5-6.

oncle, peut le brouiller avec lui, et dès lors il n'a plus rien à attendre que de l'amitié de M. de Méran. Est-il dans la probité, est-il même dans la délicatesse de chercher à plaire à la fille de son bienfaiteur, sans avoir obtenu l'aveu de ses parents? Il faut éviter les occasions; il faut le vouloir au moins. Nos sentiments ne dépendent pas de nous, peut-être; mais une âme honnête et forte comprime ceux que la reconnaissance défend de dévoiler. Voilà les véritables causes de l'extrême réserve de Jules; voilà ce que tu me répondrais, si ce cahier était rempli et que je te l'eusse adressé. Comment n'ai-je pas pensé tout cela plus tôt? 1

This change in style of Pigault-Lebrun's first-person narrative novels is less apparent, almost non-existent, in those which employ the third-person narrative form. The following examples, taken from M. Botte, L'Egoïsme and L'Observateur, all revolve around the description of a young girl's feelings and actions on the eve of her marriage. The fifteen or more years which separate the first example from the latter two, show little change in Pigault-Lebrun's third-person narrative prose style:

Il approchait, hélas, le jour fixé par le plus absolu des pères. Sophie, rassurée quelque temps par l'idée d'un mariage chimérique, se représentait le bien-aimé et ses agréments séducteurs. Elle sentait renaître en elle sa répugnance et ses craintes. Du moment où elle redouta véritablement d'Egligny, il lui devint insupportable. Cependant, elle était retenue par une promesse qu'elle croyait sacrée, bien qu'elle n'eût pas été faite librement. L'espèce de vénération qu'elle avait pour M. Botte, son estime, qu'elle tremblait de perdre, tout la forçait au sacrifice: elle allait le consommer.²

1. Vide, pp. 20-21.

2. Vide, M. Botte, p. 485.

Le jour si longtemps désiré, si impatiemment attendu, parut enfin. Julie avait demandé que la cérémonie se fît de grand matin et sans éclat. Inébranlable dans sa manière de juger, comme dans ses sentiments, elle ne craignait pas les plaisanteries qui auraient porté sur elle. Mais elle voulait épargner à son ami des saillies dont il eût été difficile qu'il ne se fit pas l'application: il est une sorte d'instinct intérieur qui ne nous trompe jamais, auquel l'amour-propre peut imposer silence, et que Julie redoutait. Cette journée devait être toute entière au bonheur pour son époux, comme pour elle!¹

Rosalie avait devancé l'aurore. Elle avait tout rangé dans la ~~chambre~~ ^{chambre} qu'elle allait quitter, et dont la propreté était l'unique ornement. Elle s'était parée des présents de l'homme à qui elle allait consacrer sa vie. Ses compagnes avaient décoré de guirlandes de fleurs sa modeste habitation.²

As these examples illustrate, Pigault-Lebrun, both in his first-person as well as in his third-person narratives, showed little aptitude for the use of figurative language. Unlike Rousseau and Bernardin de St. Pierre, he refrained from the use of metaphor and other figurative devices of speech when dealing with his characters' emotions, in favor of the more literal and abstract terms characteristic of the conventional language of the eighteenth century. His few examples of simile are hackneyed and, with one exception, usually brief. The most extended and elaborate usage of simile occurs in the novel, Tableaux de Société, when Pigault-Lebrun likens a woman's growing passion to an impending storm:

1. Vide, L'Egoïsme, p. 293.

2. Vide, L'Observateur, p. 518.

Ainsi une belle soirée, un air frais et pur, une élégante nacelle, invitent à se hasarder sur l'onde claire et tranquille. Un point noir se forme à l'extrémité de l'horizon. Il échappe d'abord au nautonier, qui se repose sur un calme apparent. Bientôt ce point grossit, s'étend. La bourrasque s'annonce. Le frêle esquif ne peut lui résister. Les guirlandes dont il est paré deviennent la proie des flots, et la mort se présente, où on ne croyait trouver que le plaisir.¹

Elsewhere, as in the novel L'Officieux, such comparisons are terse and naive:

Le passé ressemblait à un nuage qu'a dissipé un rayon brûlant du soleil, dont l'oeil peut à peine distinguer les dernières traces.²

L'oiseau qui fend l'air pour tomber sur sa proie est moins vif que Julie.³

This relatively restrained and cautious use of imagery reflected Pigault-Lebrun's general distaste for figurative language. Nurtured on the abstract, conceptual language of Classicism, he had little sympathy for the more poetic modes of expression used by the pre-Romantics and the Romantics. In the same novel, L'Officieux, published in 1818, he satirized their exaggerated and affectatious figurative language, by the use of capital italics:

Une nuit d'été passe bien vite quand on est fortement préoccupé. Déjà *L'AUORE AUX DOIGTS DE ROSE OUVRAIT LES PORTES DE L'ORIENT*. Les premiers rayons du soleil *DORAIENT* les faites

1. Vide, p. 197.

2. Vide, p. 242.

3. Ibid., p. 246.

des cheminées, et Larose, fatigué de se promener, de soupirer et de penser, se jeta tout habillé sur son lit. Il n'y a jamais eu, et il n'y aura jamais d'amant malheureux qui n'ait fini, et qui ne finisse par prendre ce parti-là.

Celui-ci goûtait, *DANS LES BRAS DE MORPHÉE*, les douceurs d'un profond repos, et, en style vulgaire, il ronflait à faire résonner les vitres de sa chambre, quand Zéphire vint savoir comment il avait passé la nuit, et lui dire que monsieur le marquis l'attendait.¹

More than a decade later, at the height of the Romantic struggle, he offered the following categoric comment on the new literary movement to demonstrate that his attitude had not changed:

C'est l'absence du génie, du goût et du jugement.²

In summary, Pigault-Lebrun's limited range of expression was a consequence, in his early works, of the few demands placed upon the novelist by the conventions of the popular novel. In his later works it resulted from his use of the more conventional language of polite society which, in its imitation of eighteenth century neo-classicism, placed more emphasis on the precise but abstract analysis of thought and feeling than on the direct and visual rendering of the concrete and the specific. In comparison to the pre-Romantic's poetic usage of simile and metaphor and the more subtly balanced rhythms and cadences of their sentences, Pigault-Lebrun's abstract stylistic approach to language appears monotonous,

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

2. *L'Educateur*, 1831, Paris, Degorce-Cadot, 1881, p. 157.

simplistic and singularly unattractive. Despite the occasional fusion of style with theme,¹ Pigault-Lebrun's flat, literal prose style reveals most of the faults of the early eighteenth century novelists with few of their redeeming features,² and possesses none of those lyrical qualities which Rousseau and Bernardin de St. Pierre managed to impart to their novels.³

In the light of Pigault-Lebrun's concept of the novel, it is hardly surprising that he made little serious attempt to introduce new techniques into the craft of fiction. Like the majority of his predecessors he considered the novel an inferior literary genre, useful as a source of moral edification⁴ and amusement.⁵ As many episodes in his novels illustrate, he was more devoted to the subject of history than to fiction, though he did employ enough literary tact to avoid the false claims to historical authenticity made by the majority of his eighteenth century predecessors. This

1. e.g. his early picaresque novels and later more analytic novels, Tableaux de Société and Adélaïde de Méran.

2. See above, pp. 141-143.

3. See above, pp. 143-144.

4. Vide, Le Garçon sans Souci, p. 309, and L'Egoïsme, p. 319, for moral endings.

5. Vide, L'Enfant du Carnaval, p. 7; Mon Oncle Thomas, p. 1, for latin inscriptions under these novels' title headings.

apparent desire to treat the novel as a work of fiction in its own right was, nevertheless, offset by his frequent intrusions into the narrative which destroyed the fictional illusion and the reader's 'willing suspension of disbelief'. Pigault-Lebrun was still unable to rid himself of the widespread eighteenth century concept that any serious work of fiction must appeal to the literal rather than to the imaginative belief of the reader.

CONCLUSION

Preface.

Before attempting a general appraisal of the novels of Pigault-Lebrun, we shall first give a short summary of previous criticism of the novelist's work. In this summary we have concentrated primarily on those first hand sources of criticism written by Pigault-Lebrun's contemporaries, rather than on those later critics whose sources were frequently second hand.

A. Pigault-Lebrun and the Critics.

Despite the popularity of his novels among his readers, Pigault-Lebrun generally met with an unfavorable response from contemporary critics and fellow writers. This adverse criticism was based principally on aesthetic reasons but was also occasionally motivated by social, political and personal antipathy. With the notable exception of Stendhal,¹ the only

1. Vide, Mélanges de Politique et d'Histoire, 1821, I, p. 155; Courrier Anglais, 1825, II, p. 363; Courrier Anglais, 1828, III, p. 400; Courrier Anglais, 1825, V, pp. 117-118. Oeuvres Complètes, Ed. Martineau, Henri, Paris, Le Divan, 1926-1937.

other favorable contemporary criticism came in the form of posthumous dedications from friends¹ or publishers.² Furthermore, the newspapers of his time, except for brief notices announcing new publications, rarely devoted any full length criticism to his individual novels, and, when they did, this was usually of a hostile nature.³

This relative disregard of Pigault-Lebrun's novels by contemporary critics became even more apparent on the advent of the author's death. With the exception of Le Journal des Débats,⁴ this event caused little stir beyond the usual short obituary notices.⁵ No attempt was made to review his life's work and some newspapers refrained altogether from mentioning his name in the obituary columns.⁶

1. e.g. Grimaldi, Edouard, Hommage à la Mémoire de Pigault-Lebrun, Paris, 1840.

2. Rabbe, Boisjohlin, and Sainte-Preuve, Biographie Universelle et Portative des Contemporains, Rabbe, Paris, 1836, Vol. 4, pp. 945-946. This article was written in 1828 but not published until after Pigault-Lebrun's death.

3. e.g. M. Botte, in Le Journal des Débats, January 10, 1803, p. 3. Le Garçon sans Souci, in La Quotidienne, 1817.

4. Vide, article of August 24, 1835.

5. e.g. Le Journal des Débats, July 29, 1835; Le Constitutionnel, July 30, 1835; La Quotidienne, July 30, 1835.

6. e.g. Le Figaro and Le Moniteur Universel. The latter newspaper was primarily a political and commercial one and it is, therefore, not surprising to see Pigault-Lebrun's name omitted from its obituary lists. Pigault-Lebrun's death was, furthermore, overshadowed by the immense journalistic reaction to the news of an attempt on the king's life which occurred on the 24th July, 1835, four days after Pigault-Lebrun's death.

Except for biographical information,¹ no substantial criticism has been published on Pigault-Lebrun in the twentieth century. André Le Breton gives a favorable, if superficial, interpretation of the man and his work,² while George Saintsbury, although echoing the aesthetic prejudices of his predecessors, justly concedes that Pigault-Lebrun was responsible for introducing greater realism into the French novel.³

The first critical allusion to Pigault-Lebrun's novels did not come, however, from journalists or literary critics, but from an anonymous newspaper subscriber. In Le Journal de Paris the reader reproached the newspaper for having neglected to mention Pigault-Lebrun's latest work, Les Barons de Felsheim. After lavishing praise on Pigault-Lebrun's originality of characterisation and scene, and his ability to successfully fuse fiction with history, he ends his letter by recommending that the newspaper henceforth recognize such original talent:

Certainement, Pigault-Lebrun est peintre; il peut faire d'excellents romans; et mieux que des romans, puisqu'il sait peindre les hommes et les grands hommes. Vous devez, citoyens,

1. See above, p. 40.

2. Le Roman Français au XIXe Siècle, avant Balzac, Op. cit., pp. 75-85.

3. A History of the French Novel, Op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 456-468.

distinguer dans chaque partie de la littérature, si frivole qu'elle puisse être, les talents originaux. Je vous recommande Pigault-Lebrun.¹

Such praise for a novel which can hardly be ranked as one of Pigault-Lebrun's best, either from the point of view of content or form, renders such remarks suspect. The novel, itself, was far from being original either in characterisation or scene, and Pigault-Lebrun, himself, admitted that it was based on his play Le Major Palmer.² Moreover, Pigault-Lebrun had met with little success with this novel on its first publication and was encouraged by his publisher, J.N. Barba, to add a further two volumes.³ It is perhaps not too cynical to assume that, given the popularity of Le Journal de Paris at this time, the subscriber in question had been induced to write his letter in the hope of boosting the novel's sale.

Whatever the motives for the letter, the reader's advice went unheeded by Le Journal de Paris as well as by the other leading newspapers of the day. Apart from the former's mention of the publication of Angélique et Jeanneton,⁴ it was

1. Journal de Paris, Paris, 12 Floréal an VII, p. 976.

2. Vide, Avis in Ed. Barba, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol. 11. This play, shown for the first time on stage at the Feydeau theatre in Paris on the 26th January, 1797, was, like Les Barons de Felsheim, set in Silesia and contained two characters later to be used in the novel, namely Brandt and Mme. Blumenthal.

3. See above, p. 46.

4. July 10, 1799.

not until the beginning of 1803 that any serious reference was made to the novels of Pigault-Lebrun. This took the form of a scathing attack on his latest novel, M. Botte, in an article published under a pseudonym by Geoffroy in the Journal des Débats.¹ This article was written in reply to a biting attack on the critic in the same novel.² The irascible Geoffroy replied to his adversary by first criticizing Pigault-Lebrun's deference to the popular taste:

Si l'auteur de M. Botte a voulu amuser cette classe nombreuse de la société, qui, sans éducation et sans aucun sentiment des bienséances, s'enivre dans les Guinguettes, s'attroupe et rit autour du premier baladin qui élève des tréteaux sur une place publique, il est possible qu'il ait atteint son but.

This aesthetic criticism of the novel, however, concealed religious as well as social animosities. The critic's remarks on Pigault-Lebrun's inconsistency of characterisation with regard to the curé and the Marquis d'Arancey are only partly justifiable,³ and spring, like his criticism of the novel's composition, from entrenched religious and social convictions:

Pigault-Lebrun en voulant peindre l'intérieur des salons du petit nombre des grands seigneurs qui ont encore conservé des salons, prouve qu'il

1. See above, p. 51.

2. Vide, M. Botte, pp. 129-131.

3. The publisher, J.N. Barba, in his reply to this aspect of Geoffroy's criticism, correctly points out in a postscript to the novel that Pigault-Lebrun did portray reputable characters drawn from the nobility, notably the Marquis d'Arancey's daughter, and the chevalier d'Egligny.

n'a même pas pénétré jusque dans l'anti-chambre, où il aurait obtenu de meilleurs renseignements.....

C'est un malheur d'être irréligieux, mais être irréligieux et plat en même temps, c'est à ne devoir pas s'en consoler.

Such criticism, though partly justified, would have been more appropriate to other less well-constructed and more openly licentious novels of Pigault-Lebrun.¹ Replies to such accusations, written in equally virulent terms, were soon forthcoming. The publisher, J.N. Barba, seemingly more concerned with the prestige of his firm than with the literary reputation of his author, attacked Geoffroy in a bitterly satirical article,² while Pigault-Lebrun consistently ridiculed the critic in his following three novels.³

The next journalistic assault on Pigault-Lebrun's reputation came almost fifteen years later in an article published in La Quotidienne in 1817 in reference to his latest novel, Le Garçon sans Souci. This work marked a return to his earlier picaresque period by its broad satire of religion and justice. The royalist newspaper accused Pigault-Lebrun of promoting Jansenism, an unjustifiable criticism in the light of the novel's theme and of the novelist's previous

1. e.g. Mon Oncle Thomas and La Folie Espagnole.

2. See above, p. 238.

3. Jérôme, pp. 34, 41-42, 66-68, 86-87, 105, 262-263; La Famille Luceval, p. 472; L'Homme à Projets, p. 397.

comments on that subject.¹ Pigault-Lebrun was later to refute this accusation in a brief introduction to his following novel, L'Officieux, published in 1818.²

However, Barba's silence and Pigault-Lebrun's relatively mild defence of his position was indicative of a change in the political climate from that which had prevailed at the time of the appearance of M. Botte, some fifteen years earlier. His later novels were far more restrained in their anti-religious comments,³ and attest to the powerful influence that the royalist press exerted.⁴ Moreover, it was at this time that the novels of Pigault-Lebrun were being reprinted and it was hardly in the interests of either author or publisher unduly to antagonize the authorities.⁵

The deluge of popular works which were reprinted between 1816-1825 fared slightly better at the hands of the more prominent writers of the day. Victor Hugo, however, out of a combination of disgust and envy, made the following sarcastic remarks on the popular novels of Ducray Duminil and Pigault-Lebrun:

1. See above, p. 109.

2. Oeuvres Complètes, Ed. Barba, Vol. 20, pp. 193-194.

3. With the exception of the novel, La Sainte Ligue.

4. Vide, Maxwell King, Helen, "Les Doctrines Littéraires de la Quotidienne," 1814-1830, Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, Oct. 1919 - July 1920, Vol. I, nos. 1-4, pp. 8-9.

5. Vide, Nettement, Alfred, Histoire de la Littérature Française Sous la Restauration, Paris, Lecoffre, 1858, Vol. II, 369 sqq.

.....du reste, tous ces faits seront fixés lorsque sa renommée sera montée jusqu'au niveau de celle des auteurs de Lolotte et Fanfan, ou de Monsieur Botte, hommes transcendants, jumeaux de génie et de goût.¹

Stendhal, on the other hand, besides warmly acclaiming Pigault-Lebrun's widespread popularity:

Il n'est pas nécessaire de donner des détails sur Pigault-Lebrun, le plus gai et le plus populaire des romanciers français; ses oeuvres sont connues dans toute l'Europe.²

praised his considerable role in combating the resurgent power of the clergy:

Bref, les prêtres affirment, et le calcul doit vraisemblablement être tenu pour exact, qu'il a été publié contre eux l'énorme masse d'au moins deux millions sept cent quarante et un mille quatre cents volumes. Pigault-Lebrun, ce délicieux romancier, auquel notre âge prude ne rend point suffisamment justice, y a contribué à lui seul pour cent vingt huit mille volumes.³

Pigault-Lebrun's reputation was not only confined to Europe. In 1831 an article in the Southern Review⁴ gave a passing mention of his novels in reference to the recent publication of La Sainte Ligue:

For thirty years or more Pigault-Lebrun has kept all France alive with his inexhaustible gaiety. He does not portray very natural

1. Vide, Han d'Islande, Ed. H.L. Delloye, Paris, 1839, p. xviii.

2. Courrier Anglais, 1825, II, p. 363.

3. Courrier Anglais, 1825, V, pp. 117-118.

4. Vide, Southern Review, August, 1831, Vol. 7, no. 14, Art. III, pp. 367-368.

characters, nor excel in the probability or consistency of his plots. But there is no end to the fertility of his invention, and the oddity of his incidents. The critic may condemn but he cannot help laughing.¹

This was the last piece of criticism to be published on Pigault-Lebrun during his lifetime. On the advent of his death, aside from the usual formal remarks in the obituary columns of certain newspapers,² no funeral eulogies were forthcoming, proof that, at the height of the Romantic era, Pigault-Lebrun was considered a figure of the past. It was not long, however, before his enemies decided that the silence demanded by decorum had been sufficiently respected. A month after Pigault-Lebrun's death, an article appeared in the Journal des Débats,³ written by Jules Janin, which used the review of two anti-religious plays⁴ as a pretext to make a general attack on the works of Pigault-Lebrun. The production of these two plays apparently reminded Jules Janin of the works of Pigault-Lebrun and Dulaure:

Ne dirait-on pas que les théâtres se sont donné le mot pour prononcer une oraison funèbre qui

1. Ibid., p. 367.

2. See above, p. 235.

3. August 24, 1835.

4. Le Curé de Champaubert by M.M. Achille and Mailhan. L'Habit ne fait pas le Moine by M.M. Sainte and Duport. Both these plays were produced in the week of 17-24 August, 1835.

fut digne de leur mémoire sur les tombes de deux hommes qui viennent de mourir, M. Dulaure et M. Pigault-Lebrun.¹

Jules Janin not only found Pigault-Lebrun's works out of date but also singularly lacking in originality of conception:

Ses intentions les plus outrées n'étaient pour lui qu'un jeu d'esprit qu'on lui avait enseigné autrefois dans sa jeunesse, et dont il se servait encore, parce qu'il n'était plus assez jeune pour en apprendre un autre.²

In short, Jules Janin found it difficult to believe that Pigault-Lebrun was able to achieve such a reputation. This attitude, like that of his predecessor, Geoffroy, was based on political, religious and aesthetic grounds:

Comment de pareils livres ont-ils fait partie des lectures d'une société qui venait à peine d'échapper aux horribles assauts des mêmes doctrines, et comment surtout les lecteurs de Voltaire.....avaient pu s'habituer si facilement aux histoires, aux contes et aux sarcasmes contre l'Eglise de M. Pigault-Lebrun Pigault-Lebrun florissait au moment même où la poésie française cherchait à s'affranchir du vieux doute.... à l'instant même où Mme. de Staël nous jetait dans la foi allemande, où M. de Chateaubriand nous rejetait dans la foi chrétienne.³

Like much former as well as future criticism of Pigault-Lebrun this article only seems to take into account the novelist's earlier works. It overlooks the fact that Pigault-Lebrun had welcomed the Bourbon Restoration of Louis XVIII as well as the more liberal constitutional monarchy of Louis Philippe. Its religious and aesthetic criticisms are better founded, though Pigault-Lebrun's anti-clerical attacks were certainly

1. Journal des Débats, August 24, 1835.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

justified in the context of the closing years of the Restoration.

The next publication on the life and work of Pigault-Lebrun appeared a year after his death, though it was written in 1828.¹ This, unlike the previous article of Jules Janin, was unbiased in its appraisal of Pigault-Lebrun, revealing his qualities as well as his defects. After a very summary biography of the author, the article proceeds to give a general analysis of his work up to, and including, the publication of his Histoire de France in 1828, before attempting to analyse his principal merits and defects:

.....Popularité incroyable due au talent et à la verve avec lesquels il rend les scènes populaires; mais sa facilité dans ce genre est devenue l'écueil le plus fréquent contre lequel il a échoué. A force de vouloir être naturel et vrai, il devient souvent trivial, ce qui lui fait contester par des appréciateurs d'un goût délicat et sévère le rang que lui assignent sans contredit la fécondité et l'originalité de son imagination.

The last work of criticism to be published on Pigault-Lebrun by one of his contemporaries was an over-flattering eulogy which appeared five years after the novelist's death.² Its author, Edouard Grimaldi, a close friend of Pigault-Lebrun in the last ten years of his life,³ dedicated this pamphlet to Victor Augier in memory of the deceased novelist's life and work:

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1. See above, p. 235.
 2. See above, pp. 50-52.
 3. See above, p. 52.

.....ses ouvrages portent l'empreinte de l'originalité la plus complète et ont le cachet d'une saine philosophie. Je conviens qu'il est parfois libre, que chez lui la plaisanterie va jusqu'à la licence, et que sa gaieté même est souvent de la folie, je dirai presque du cynisme; mais aussi, comme il sait flétrir le vice et faire aimer la vertu! Avec quelles armes puissantes il combat le libertinage et la débauche! Comme les personnages qui se trouvent placés sur le premier plan de ses ouvrages, parlent et agissent conformément à leurs caractères vrais et naturels!¹

Pigault Removed from the generally biased opinions of their predecessors by a time lapse of more than sixty years, the early twentieth century critics who devoted some attention to Pigault-Lebrun were consequently more detached and dispassionate in their critical assessment of his work. André Le Breton, however, like many of the earlier nineteenth century critics, tends to judge Pigault-Lebrun solely on the more revolutionary ardor of his early works, neglecting to take into account the more polished novels of the Empire and Restoration periods.² George Saintsbury, on the other hand, unmoved by Pigault-Lebrun's earlier displays of republican fervor, concentrates more on the latter's contribution to the French novel. For this critic the value of Pigault-Lebrun's novels, in comparison to those of his predecessors, resides in their closer portrayal of ordinary life, and in their greater awareness of the workings of the novelist's craft.³ This controversial

1. Op. cit., pp. 7-8.

2. Op. cit., pp. 75-85.

3. Op. cit., pp. 456-468.

statement forms the basic premiss of Saintsbury's whole argument and is the justification for his detailed inclusion of Pigault-Lebrun's novels in his two volume history of the genre.

B. General Evaluation of the Novels of Pigault-Lebrun.

Generally viewed with disfavor by the critics and writers of his day, yet widely acclaimed by the public, Pigault-Lebrun's novels reflect the attitudes and beliefs of a late eighteenth century mind nurtured on the works of the 'Philosophes'. At a time when France was undergoing social and political upheavals from within and being attracted by a new literary sensibility from without, Pigault-Lebrun strove to perpetuate the literary, social and political ideals of that segment of the Enlightenment whose principal spokesman was Voltaire. Aided by the medium of the popular novel in his humorous vulgarisation of these concepts, Pigault-Lebrun's continued denunciation of the steadily increasing influence of Romanticism, Catholicism and Absolutism was, however, to reach a far wider audience than that of the 'Philosophes'.

As a vulgariser rather than as an innovator of ideas, Pigault-Lebrun's work lacked the same intense social relevance of his predecessors. Written during the aftermath of the Revolution, his novels had consequently no effect on the social or political institutions of the 'ancien régime'. Nonetheless,

they were instrumental in reminding their predominantly middle class public of the advantages it had gained as a result of the Revolution and of the need to guard against such threats to the existing power structure as were posed by the return of the émigrés and the resurgent power of Church and Crown.

This personal identification with middle class values was embodied politically by Pigault-Lebrun's firm adherence to any form of government which promised to preserve public order and stability and guarantee against a return to any reactionary or revolutionary extremism likely to endanger the benefits reaped from the Revolution by the middle classes. This moderate political outlook not only explains his initial support of both the early Napoleonic and Restoration régimes and his later fervent admiration of the Orleans monarchy, but also his opposition to the last repressive years of the Bonapartist and Carlist régimes.¹

Socially and morally his defence of middle class principles was revealed by his attachment to the notion of utilitarianism, as expressed directly by his consistent emphasis on the principles of hard work and family responsibility, and, indirectly, by his violent denunciation of all forms of parasitic religious and aristocratic behavior. This explains his fundamental opposition to the anti-social aspects of

1. Vide, Adélaïde de Méran and La Sainte Ligue.

divorce, celibacy, libertinage and adultery, and his deep attachment to a secular rather than to a religious morality.

These moral, social, and political preoccupations demonstrate Pigault-Lebrun's adherence to the eighteenth century's didactic concept of the novel. However, compared to his predecessors, Pigault-Lebrun's use of the popular novel enabled him, particularly in his earlier work, to reach a far greater public for the propagation of his views. That these were sometimes simplistic was ~~due not~~ to an inherent naiveté on the part of Pigault-Lebrun but rather to the low educational level of his readers. This deference to the popular taste was exemplified by Pigault-Lebrun's generally optimistic assertion of the widespread eighteenth century belief in the ultimate progress and perfectibility of man. In his earlier novels this principle is vindicated by an invariable insistence on the eventual moral triumph of good over evil. Soured by experience, however, Pigault-Lebrun revealed an increasingly pessimistic attitude in his last four novels which, far from ending in the virtuous manner of convention, demonstrate a widening disbelief in the possibility of man's moral regeneration.

Despite much triviality and tastelessness, Pigault-Lebrun's best novels remain those which reflect the moral, social, and political preoccupations of that turbulent twenty year period from the end of the Reign of Terror to the

beginning of the Bourbon Restoration.¹ It is in these novels that Pigault-Lebrun with his immense verve, incisive wit and varied treatment of form and theme truly succeeded in shedding a revealing, if occasionally lurid, light on the social, moral and political life of this agitated period of history.

As a result of his derogatory attitude towards the novel, and given the low educational level of the greater part of the reading public, Pigault-Lebrun was generally to show little concern for the technical perfection of his craft. Like the majority of his predecessors and contemporaries, he considered the novel as an inferior literary genre, lacking in tradition and prestige, a frivolous and unrealistic form, whose sole purpose was to be a source of moral edification and amusement. It was due to his shrewd psychological insight that he recognized the potentialities of the popular novel in the instruction and amusement of the semi-literate lower-middle class. He correctly assumed that they were more likely to be attracted by the message of works whose main merits lay in an entertaining moral story couched in simple language than by the aridity and complexity of lengthy moral and philosophical dissertations which only exceeded the bounds of their comprehension.

This explains why, aside from his predominant use of the third-person narrative technique and the tactful

1. i.e. L'Enfant du Carnaval; Mon Oncle Thomas; M. Botte; Jérôme; Tableaux de Société; Adélaïde de Méran.

avoidance of false claims to historical authenticity for his novels, Pigault-Lebrun's handling of plot structure, characterisation, speech, background and style revealed the same weaknesses as his eighteenth century predecessors, and showed little serious attempt to introduce new techniques into the craft of fiction. Too much attention to literary niceties would, moreover, have alienated his largely popular public and cut off his means of livelihood. Pressured by publisher and public, alike, Pigault-Lebrun was obliged for financial reasons to pander to the popular taste, a position which he at times resented, as he demonstrated in his novel, Angélique et Jeanneton. Eschewing all vulgar and popular idiom and adopting a tauter plot structure, Pigault-Lebrun sincerely tried his hand at writing a well-constructed novel. However, due to the unpopularity and the financial failure of this work, Pigault-Lebrun subsequently renounced all immediate attempts to escape from the conventions of the voluminous popular novel.¹ It was precisely this financial obligation to keep pace with the popular taste that ultimately prevented him from transcending the conventions of the contemporary novel.

His general lack of concern for the technical aspects of his craft concealed, nonetheless, an acute knowledge of the genre's conventions which, as his ironical comments proved,

1. See above, pp. 174-175.

he found to be restricting, incapacitating and artificial. His realistic depiction of everyday people and events, and his accurate factual documentation of the historical and geographical settings to certain of his novels indicated that his interests lay in a different direction. Continuing the widespread aesthetic views of the eighteenth century, Pigault-Lebrun considered history as a superior genre to that of the novel, but, since historiography was not as lucrative a profession as the writing of popular novels, he had to remain content with the occasional interpolated historical episode, before relative financial security finally freed him in 1822¹ from the onerous task of churning out popular novels for the more relaxing and intellectually stimulating labors of historical research.

Despite this resentment and, at times, overt dislike of both novel and public, Pigault-Lebrun, due to his intense personal experiences and his shrewd knowledge of human nature, almost always managed to successfully probe the popular psyche. His appeal lay in his ability to satisfy the baser instincts of his lower-middle class public while simultaneously satisfying its moral conscience. By combining the crude realism of ordinary everyday life with the principles of middle class morality, the novels of Pigault-Lebrun reflect the past as well as the future history of the genre. They

1. Date of the publication of his Oeuvres Complètes by Barba.

proved him not only to be an adherent to the tenets of the 'roman sentimental et réaliste' of the latter part of the eighteenth century,¹ but also a precursor of those later practitioners of the popular novel such as Paul de Kock, Frédéric Soulié and Eugène Sue. Through his earthy humor and irrepressible verve, Pigault-Lebrun managed to capture the attention of an uncultured and semi-literate public, and thus helped to turn novel writing into a vast and lucrative commercial enterprise. He was the first considerable representative in France of that variety of professional novelist who ministered to the whims of his public by unceasingly producing voluminous novels of a questionable aesthetic quality. That this demand for works of popular mass consumption has continued to increase throughout the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has aroused the attention of writers and critics alike, to the exploitation of this new form of popular literature, appropriately described by Sainte-Beuve as 'la littérature industrielle',² was, in no small way, due to the reluctant but unflagging efforts of Pigault-Lebrun.

1. Vide, Coulet, Henri, Op. cit., pp. 431-444.

2. See above, p. 38.

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