The Venetian Story

The Venetian story is a concrete, even allegorical, portrayal of the thoughts and feelings that assailed the young Rousseau and determined his actions at one of the most decisive moments in his life. We become aware of this when we compare the text of *Les Confessions* with the actuality of the period 1743 to 1744. We may reconstruct events by probing archives and memoirs, official documents and secret reports as well as massive volumes of correspondence both public and private until we are nearly submerged beneath the weight of our research and have all but lost sight of human and literary values. On the other hand, by having recourse to the raw materials from which the autobiographer has taken his book, we can more easily grasp the means by which he has converted them into the transfigured reality of art to embody his youthful aspirations and frustrations. He shows us life and the world seen through his own temperament until they become modes of expression to reveal his soul and its rebellion during the critical Venetian experience.

THE ROUSSEAU-MONTAIGU ANTITHESIS

Although Rousseau's association with the French ambassador is the inspiration of some of the finest pages in *Les Confessions*, the writer gives us no description of the meeting of the two men in Paris. Nor does he give a
physical portrait of either one. We are not even told that the ambassador is twenty years older than his prospective secretary and fifty-one years of age when they meet. But we are told at once that the Count de Montaigu is a former captain in the (Grenadier) Guards who won his diplomatic post by paying court to Barjac, valet de chambre to the Cardinal de Fleury, prime minister of Louis XV. The count offers the young man scarcely sufficient salary to maintain the external dignity considered essential for prestige. The latter rejects the post and then is persuaded by the chevalier, Montaigu's younger brother, who is in the suite of the dauphin, to accept a second offer when another secretary, called Follau and obtained through the Foreign Office, abandons the ambassador to his folly upon their arrival in Venice. This is all the author of Les Confessions says and all he really needs to say. There is nothing we can glean from other sources to add anything of real psychological value, for he has carefully selected the most eloquent details. Without oversimplifying for the sake of an antithesis and without reducing characters and events to mere abstractions, he subtly distills their essential meaning and gives it force by his very reticence and reserve. His few but well-chosen words are prophetic. They contain in germ the whole Venetian story, with its fund of artistry and inner truth, which grows out of the contrast here instituted between the principals. An abyss lies between the wealthy but parsimonious aristocrat and the impoverished but insatiably proud and ambitious young republican who was to be hailed as "the father of democracy."1 A still greater abyss lies between the artist and the military man. We know that in actual fact Montaigu, after thirty-seven years' unrewarding service in the army,2

1 His claim to this title is that he divests the prince of sovereignty and invests it in the general will of the people, formulated as law, to which all individuals including the prince must submit; see Du Contrat social in O.C., Pléiade, III, 1477 n1 (to p. 404).

2 For Montaigu's career see Prosper Faugère, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Venise," Le Correspondant, CLI (June 10, 1888), 816, 828 n1; Auguste de
did indeed owe his diplomatic mission to Fleury's valet, and, like many of his colleagues, was ill prepared for it. We can judge his sense of values by the very modest salary he offered his secretary, while his own was thirty times as much. Small wonder if Rousseau was little tempted. His hesitation is confirmed by history, which shows that he did indeed reject the offer at first, probably in the spring of 1743 and partly in the hope of completing Les Muses galantes. It is true that all details of Les Confessions are not similarly verifiable. For example, Follau, far from leaving Montaigu to his madness, as the writer alleges, was in fact dismissed by his employer at Chambéry for smuggling on their way to Italy. This modification of events in the memoirs is probably intended to give us a premonition of disaster without distorting the count's character as it evolves in the book. Other elements in the story are taken directly from life. Letters formerly in the Montaigu archives and now in the Bibliothèque Nationale prove that the young Rousseau had to be persuaded to accept a second offer, made at the end of June not merely by the count's brother, as the autobiographer says, but by his wife too, who did not join her husband in Venice for over a year. We also know from the same source that he did not leave

Montaigu, Démêlés du comte de Montaigu, ambassadeur à Venise, et de son secrétaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Plon, 1904), pp. 4–6; and O.C., Pléiade, I, 1387 n1 (to p. 295). He did not bear the titles “maréchal de camp” and “chevalier de Saint-Louis” but it is to be noted that captains in the French Guards had the rank of colonel.

Several of Barjac's letters, addressed to the count, prove this; see O.C., Pléiade, I, 1387 n2 (to p. 295). Mr. Leigh draws attention to letters of Fleury to show the cardinal's interest in Montaigu, but this interest was aroused by Barjac; see C.C., I, 192 note a (to no. 57). These letters, like all the documents originally preserved in the Montaigu archives at La Bretesche and mentioned in this study, have now been transferred to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

Rousseau received 1,000 francs a year and Montaigu 30,000: O.C., Pléiade, I, 1398 n2 (to p. 312); 1404 n5 (to p. 326); and III, 1818–1819 n1 (to p. 1079). Some money was advanced for Rousseau's journey and the amount coincides with the sum stated in Les Confessions: C.C., I, 190–192.
for Venice until July 10, 1743, only one day before the
ambassador arrived there.\(^5\) The situation is ominous. The
two men were clearly ill matched, for the Montaigu of
history was, strangely enough, not unlike his counterpart
emerging from the text of *Les Confessions*, where he is
gradually enlarged into an image of hostile society to serve
as a foil to the writer's self-portrait. In the book as in life,
the count is a man of action and the very reverse of the
thinker and sensitive young artist who now wrests himself
from his music and poetry, striving to overcome a brooding
introspective nature and win his way in life by selling his
talents.

The description in the memoirs of the departure for
Venice and the journey there bears a fine symbolic relation­
ship to spiritual responses. The young man's delay in
leaving Paris is a sign of moral uncertainty and reluctance
to face another engagement with society. His obvious
doubts are reminiscent of those that preceded his first
encounter. His misgivings are further conveyed in the story
of his travels, which is treated as a phase in the story of the
soul and is a perfect example of the writer's skill in adapting
the experience of life to his artistic and spiritual purpose.
Many critics have wondered and exclaimed at his reticence
without realizing that it is imposed upon him by the nature
of his book and that he does not use imagery for its own
sake but rather for its psychological value. We know from
contemporary documents that the voyage lasted almost
two months, by contrast with Rousseau's earlier journey
to Italy fifteen years before when he apparently traveled

\(^5\) The second offer, made by the chevalier and Mme de Montaigu, is de­
scribed in a letter from the former to his brother dated June 29, 1743: *C.C.*, I,
187–188. Montaigu was appointed January 1, 1743, but he did not reach his
post until July 11 and did not officially assume his functions until August 26,
when his presence was finally announced to the Venetian senate: *O.C.*, Pléiade,
I, 1387 n1 (to p. 295); and *C.C.*, I, 191 note b (to no. 56). His wife joined him
October 24, 1744; *ibid.*, I, 214 note e (to no. 71); *O.C.*, Pléiade, I. 1396 n2 (to
p. 308).
from Annecy to Turin in less than three weeks.\(^6\) In the account of this new journey, as in the case of the one from Savoy to Paris, the autobiographer gives literary form only to what is meaningful to express the inborn temptation to abandon society forever and take refuge in some desert hermitage. Such is the keynote of these travel reminiscences. Everything that does not harmonize with it is omitted altogether or transposed into other contexts and utilized elsewhere. With what wistfulness the traveler sets out, full of the desire to take the Mont Cenis road for the sake of seeing his "poor mamma" in passing, but then he is forced by the circumstances of war to take instead the river route to the Mediterranean! Historical records show that, whether he saw her or not, he did indeed visit Chambéry.\(^7\) Arriving at Lyons, heedless of all friends and their generosity of the previous year, he went in haste to the Charmettes like a man in pursuit of a dream and, only after eight days' perhaps fruitless waiting for the absent lady, combined with other business, finally returned to Lyons for a three-day visit before continuing his travels. What then is the meaning of those nostalgic words in *Les Confessions*? They present no historical difficulty if we understand all the circumstances of Rousseau's uncertain plans when he was preparing to set out for Italy. The overland routes were the best, and he had a choice of

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\(^6\) July 10 to September 4, 1743. For details of his itinerary, see C.C., II, 275–278 (Appendix 54) and *ibid.*, I, 194 note c (to no. 58), 197. The route was: Paris, Chalon, Lyons, Chambéry, Lyons, Avignon, Marseilles, Toulon, Genoa, Milan, Venice. The longest sojourns were eight days at Chambéry, three at Lyons, five at Marseilles awaiting the felucca to cross the Mediterranean, and eighteen to twenty-one days at Genoa. For the journey to Turin see O.C., Pléiade, I, 55, 58, and notes.

\(^7\) For this visit to Chambéry see C.G., I, 237–238, where there is a note by P.-P. Plan; also Noëlle Roger, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau et Madame de Warens," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, XXIII (1924), 653; O.C., Pléiade, I, 1388 n° (to p. 295); and C.C., I, 195. M. Plan and Mme Roger believe that Rousseau's reticence about the visit is an attempt to defend the memory of "mamma," while the Pléiade editors and Mr. Leigh suggest that she was absent. The latter are probably right.
two, of which he had made a study in 1739: the Mont Cenis from Lyons to Turin via Chambéry and Savoy, and the Mont Simplon through Switzerland, by which he later returned to Paris. At the time of his departure for Venice he thought of taking the Simplon road southwards, and acquaintances in Paris believed that he actually did so. At the last minute, however, he changed his mind and decided to try to pass through Savoy and Piedmont in the cherished hope of a reunion at Chambéry. The text of the memoirs suggests that he would have waited there longer if the events of the War of the Austrian Succession and the imminent Spanish invasion of Piedmont had left him any possibility of taking the Alpine road as Montaigu had done such a short time before, instead of forcing him to take the longer river route to the sea. Obviously after he arrived at Chambéry he learned at army headquarters, where the Infant Don Philippe had established his administration, that it was impossible to proceed. This must be so since he expected his employer to pay the expenses of the trip from Lyons to the Savoyard capital and later included them in his financial account, evidently believing the claim to be reasonable. All these explanations are omitted from Les Confessions where the only motive recorded is the psychologically meaningful one. It is imparted in a simple but translucent phrase akin to a heavy sigh of the spirit, to

Spain had declared war on Sardinia, Austria's ally in the War of the Austrian Succession, and had occupied Savoy, and was preparing to invade Piedmont. It is worth noting that just before he left Paris, Rousseau's itinerary was uncertain. Even after he had left, the count's brother and banker both thought he had gone through Switzerland (C.C., I, 192–193). There is no doubt that Montaigu took the Mont-Cenis road: he dismissed Rousseau's predecessor, Follau, at Chambéry and dated his first dispatch from Turin on July 3, 1743. See O.C., Pléiade, I, 1387 n7 (to p. 295), and C.C., I, 188, regarding Follau's discharge; for Montaigu's first dispatch see Faugère, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Venise," pp. 824–825. Mme de Montaigu took the same route the following year; see A. Monglon, "Rousseau, secrétaire de M. de Montaigu, ambassadeur de France à Venise, documents inédits," Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, XXVI (1935), 48. For Rousseau's study of the two overland routes made in 1739 see C.C., I, 96–97.
signify a longing for solitude as deeply rooted in the protagonist’s nature as the self-distrust from which it springs.

The same longing is still more powerfully proclaimed in striking imagery in the story of his quarantine at Genoa, the only other theme of the autobiographer’s comments upon the journey. Having said almost nothing of the six days’ crossing from Marseilles in the heat of early August in an oar-drawn and vermin-infested boat, he dwells at length upon the detention to which all passengers are subjected upon arrival at the Italian seaport as a precaution against the plague raging in Sicily and Dalmatia. In this story, the austere nudity of a Genoese lazaret, where the young Rousseau alone chooses to be confined in preference to the ship, becomes a veritable image of his introspective soul. We see him in a spacious and windowless palace, furnished with scarcely more than his inkhorn and books, cleansing his body of vermin and purifying his mind in mysterious converse with his own thoughts for a fortnight of happy days, or seeking new horizons in nature by roaming about an adjacent cemetery with a view of the sea. The taste for solitude, austerity, and self-reliance manifests itself throughout this narrative of “the new Robinson Crusoe.” It immediately identifies the writer of all the masterpieces that had flowed from the same pen. None of them expresses more eloquently than the lazaret incident the aspiration to purity and the need to withdraw from the filth and contagion of an unregenerate and degrading society. This symbolic presentation of character is the great virtue of Les Confessions, which of course has nothing to do with the virtue or vice of the character portrayed. By comparison other problems seem trivial, such as those posed by purely historical criticism. For example, does it really matter whether in actuality the quarantine lasted twelve, thirteen, or fourteen days;⁹ and whether the French

⁹ In Les Confessions Rousseau says fourteen days, but according to Montaigne’s account of August 6, 1744, the quarantine lasted twelve days (C.C., II, 275). Mr. Leigh says thirteen (ibid., I, 197).
envoy to Genoa, who in life as in the book had Rousseau released and entertained him, also accommodated him in reality as he does in the story and as he certainly did years later, or whether Rousseau or merely his luggage or both were in actual fact lodged at an inn for the rest of the three weeks' sojourn to which he had been subjected? These are matters of mere anecdotal interest. They are lacking in literary value and psychological significance. This can hardly be said of the memorialist's account of his travels, which in two brief themes deftly embodies the secret yearnings of his languid nature now sacrificed to the pursuit of prestige.

Rousseau's arrival in Venice is also a rich source of artistic and spiritual delineation in Les Confessions. Even his silence betrays him as much as his happiest phrases. For instance, the same writer who describes meticulously and exhaustively the empty lazaret of Genoa and spares us no detail, not even the vermin, is not at all inspired to recreate for us those enchanted isles, born of the sea like the goddess of beauty herself, with the delicate filigree of their pink marble palaces exquisitely set in an iridescent landscape. His restraint is all the more astonishing since he arrived in early September (September 4, to be exact) when the mellow glow of colors and the amber radiance of Venetian light are at their best. Those of us who would see in imagination the scenes of the writer's abode and fix his person in time and place must explore for ourselves the site of the former palace of France, in the poor Canareggio district near the present railway station and the Ghetto, remote from Saint Mark's Square and the suspi-

\[10\] In Les Confessions, Rousseau says he spent eight days with the French envoy, Jonville, but according to Montaigu's account of August 6, 1744 (ibid., II, 275), he had his effects taken to a hotel and charged Montaigu for eight days' sojourn in Genoa. Whether or not he actually stayed in the hotel, he would still have incurred expenses for a week's sojourn. He cultivated Jonville some years later; see the tenth book of the memoirs in O.C., Pléiade, I, 509-510.
cious Venetian government. We must imagine for ourselves the ardent young man moving about the stuccoed rooms of the once noble Querini palace, a baroque mansion built in the early seventeenth century by Baldassare Longhena, the great architect of the Salute church. What does Rousseau's reticence mean? His lack of lyricism in this instance, puzzling to most readers, has been attributed to everything, from want of serenity and excessive preoccupation with work to "scandalous insensitivity." More probably the secret of his reserve is to be sought in the nature of his book—the story of his soul. We can only conclude that descriptions of the Venetian scene are unsuitable substance for his art since they would not disclose what he has promised to tell. This must mean that Venice provides no reflection of his inner life and character.

The memorialist's silence is matched only by that of the young secretary in actual life. His correspondence contains no evocations of the city at all. Three of his personal letters, written during the first two months of his residence there, are extant. They are addressed to Madame de Warens, her friends or connections, and might have been sent from the bleak mountains of the moon. No one would ever suspect that the writer had just arrived in Venice. He pleads pathetically for news of "mamma," suffers anguish by her silence, and seizes the least pretext to speak of her to others. These letters are filled only with his longing for her who had given the substance of reality to

11 For the location of the palace which then belonged to the procurator Tommaso Querini see C.C., I, 220. It is now Fondamenta delle Penitenti no. 968.

12 See, for example, Jules Lemaître, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, n.d. [1907]), Chapter II; Maurice Montigny, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau secrétaire d'ambassade," Revue des études historiques, 95e année (January to March, 1929), pp. 419, 434; and Mongland, "Rousseau, secrétaire de M. de Montaigne," p. 76.

13 C.C., I, 194–195, 198–210, letters to M. de Conzié at the Charmettes, of September 21, 1743, and to Mme de Warens and the Comte de Lautrec, both presumably dated October 5, 1743.
his nostalgic dream of solitude. In each one the brilliant Venetian world is conspicuous only by its absence, as though it were alien to his nature. If so, it could hardly find a place in the self-portrait of the memoirs.

His relations with Montaigu furnish an even richer antithesis than that of the city and the soul. *Les Confessions* contains no account of their meeting at the embassy any more than in Paris. Rousseau merely recalls being impatiently expected by the ambassador. Then he plunges at once into memories of the tasks awaiting him without even interrupting his story for a moment to dwell more fully upon a formal introduction of the man who is to fill a central place in the annals of the soul and is dramatically revealed in the course of events. The new secretary, deciphering the accumulated dispatches, learns how simple are the ciphers that his employer is unable to master, and how tediously trivial the affairs entrusted to a man incapable of dictating fluently or writing legibly. This is the memorialist’s boastful version of the situation.

Now if we turn from art to life and consult history, we learn that Montaigu, who delayed assuming his functions until August 26, only nine days before his secretary’s arrival, used no ciphers at all before Rousseau’s term of office or afterwards. The truth is that the ciphers presented problems not merely for the man who used them but for the man who had to read them. For example, on November 19, six weeks after the secretary reached Venice, his dispatches were criticized by a short-sighted clerk in the Foreign Office for mistakes in ciphering, a complaint apparently directed against two in particular of October 26 and November 2, which contain the only extensive ciphering in the correspondence prior to the rebuke. However the same office admitted in a later communication intended for the embassy in Venice, but never sent and simply kept on file, that the complaint had been unjustifi-

14 This can be seen from the archives in Paris. The system of ciphering is explained in *O.C.*, Pléiade, III, pp. ccl–ccli.
fied. A study of the ciphers confirms this. Nevertheless Rousseau believed that he was guilty and says so in *Les Confessions* a little further on in the story where the supposed errors are attributed to haste and carelessness. In reality the secretary handled the ciphers well, while the ambassador refrained from handling them at all. Quite apart from the matter of ciphers, it is verifiable that the autobiographer’s charges about Montaigu’s ineptitude for dictation and writing are founded in objective fact. Except when Rousseau was in charge of the secretariat, the embassy correspondence is vulgar and clumsy in style, even incorrect and incoherent, besides lacking in diplomatic expression in missives to the King of France and the Venetian senate. The editor of the *Venetian Despatches*, Monsieur Jean-Daniel Candaux, frequently comments upon the count’s muddled style in letters prepared when he was alone at the embassy, and even in parts of Rousseau’s bulletins, for sometimes he insisted upon dictating word for word certain paragraphs dealing with matters of special importance. In these hybrid texts, says Monsieur Candaux, “the manner of the former captain of the guards . . . is often mingled with the style of the future author of the *Contrat social*.” The Pléiade editor

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assumes that it was during this dictation, while Montaigu was, by his own admission, struggling in pursuit of elusive words, that his secretary "habitually" took the employer's chair, picked up a book, and looked at him pitifully.\footnote{C.C., II, 50–53, letter from Montaigu to the Abbé Alary, August 15, 1744. This letter is discussed below. The detail about the dictation is frequently referred to by critics, e.g. R. Grimsley and F. C. Green. For M. Candaux's discussion see O.C., Pléiade, III, pp. ccxlviii–ccxl, ccxi, 1811 n2 (to p. 1054), 1813 n1 (to p. 1057); cf. ibid., I, 1389–1390 n6 (to p. 297).} Such was the ambassador as he depicts himself in a letter written the following year and as he appears in all his correspondence. As for the business of his mission, not only does it seem for the most part trivial today, but it must have been obviously so at the time. Otherwise when Rousseau was later accused by the count of selling the embassy ciphers to the Austrian Prince Pio, would he have dared to exonerate himself by writing to the French Foreign Office, from which alone he could expect redress, saying that it knew better than anyone how important were the affairs entrusted to the Count de Montaigu and that Prince Pio would not be fool enough to give a penny piece for all the ciphers?\footnote{C.C., II, 61–62. The letter is discussed below. Prince Ludovico Pio of Savoy was the Austrian ambassador in Venice until December, 1743.} Even if the letter is not contemporary, as has been suggested, Montaigu's instructions confirm its view of his mission and state clearly that the residence of an ambassador in Venice had no more important object than to flatter the republic.\footnote{Ibid., I, 188. It is useless to discuss the matter further. Many critics have expressed various opinions about it, the anti-Rousseauists like A. de Montaigu, and Montigny emphasizing the significance of the embassy's activity, and the others, like Derche and Monglond, taking the opposite view.} In the almost unanimous opinion of critics,\footnote{The exceptions are A. de Montaigu and Montigny. The latter's whole object is to vindicate the count's memory, against Rousseau.} the historical personage reflected in all this documentation bears a rather pathetic resemblance to the figure in Les Confessions who, though favored by birth and by fortune, is incompetent and limited in vision and in scope. He therefore lent himself perfectly to the part he assumes
in the book, which is to justify the young Rousseau's contempt for the great, glimpsed in the "Epistle to Parisot," and to crystallize further his conception of society and of himself and their mutual relations. Society is the count to whom he now sells the birthright of his genius for a mouthful of food which is not the bread of heaven as he would gladly think.

The autobiography shows how the hero's fond illusions are flattered as his employer confers upon him the office of secretary of the embassy, taking it away from the consul Le Blond, who had been interim chargé d'affaires and the count's adviser in the period of his initiation, but of whom he had become jealous and resentful. Graced with this new dignity, the young man appears in the memoirs as the ambassador's envoy to the Venetian senate and as head of the palace of France, maintaining diplomatic privileges, preventing abuses, and countersigning permits for the importation of merchandise while Montaigu seeks vainly to share in the supplementary profits of the subordinate's office. In other words, the protagonist is clearly presented as secretary, not to the count personally, but to the legation, all too conscious of his position, fiercely proud of his duties no less than of his privileges, and extremely jealous of his rights.

These tableaux in Les Confessions are inspired by historical facts which modern erudition has analyzed repeatedly. Some critics refer to Rousseau simply as the ambassador's secretary; others point out that, since he performed the functions of secretary to the embassy, he was probably recognized and treated as such; still others conclude that he was so in reality, however he was called.

21 See Les Confessions in O.C., Pléiade, I, 299, 301.
What is the fact of the matter? Abundant documentation is available. In contemporary correspondence he calls himself secretary to the embassy, envoy to the senate, and head of the palace of France. He does so, not merely in private letters to people like Madame de Warens, but in correspondence with the secretaries of French residents abroad, and even in writing to Madame de Montaigu, who remained in Paris the following year. He assures the latter that he is at the head of her house in Venice by virtue of his eagerness and zeal still more than by his rank. He must surely have had the ambassador’s authorization for making such a claim at the time even if Montaigu changed his mind later, as he apparently did. It is true that a note on the first memorial which Rousseau presented to the Venetian senate refers to him as the ambassador’s secretary. However, on the previous memorial Le Blond is similarly designated although he was in truth royal secretary for the Italian language. As such he had acted as embassy secretary for years as well as during the six months prior to Montaigu’s arrival, when he was in complete charge of affairs, and for this reason initiated both the ambassador and Rousseau in their functions.


23 C.C., I, 198, 212–213, and II, 39; letters to Mme de Warens, Mme de Montaigu, and M. de Vertmont, dated October 5 and November 23, 1743, and August 4, 1744. In a letter of May 12, 1745, addressed to Rousseau at the embassy after his departure, he is styled “embassy secretary” (ibid., II, 82). Faugère (“Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Venise,” p. 822) notes that the secretary was in fact head of the household.

24 Le Blond was “secrétaire royal pour l’italien” and, in this capacity, performed the functions of secretary to the embassy under Montaigu’s predecessor, the Comte de Froully (November 28, 1733, to February 13, 1743), whom he also replaced during the ambassador’s illness and after his departure: Derche, “Autour du séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Venise,” p. 146; and Monglond, “Rousseau, secrétaire de M. de Montaigu,” p. 72 n67. For the two memorials see Cérèsole, J.-J. Rousseau à Venise, pp. 10–11; cf. p. 21.
Since the count, grown distrustful of Le Blond,\textsuperscript{25} displaced him as Italian secretary of the King’s embassy in favor of the younger man, the latter must also have been recognized as such, even if he was engaged not by the French court but by Montaigu personally. Perhaps, as Monsieur Candaux suggests, he understandably confused that title with the not yet officialized one of embassy secretary, which was rarely used.\textsuperscript{26} At this period secretaries of French embassies were, with very few exceptions, appointed not by the state but by the heads of diplomatic missions.\textsuperscript{27} This may be why Rousseau says in the \textit{Lettres écrites de la Montagne} that he had been First Secretary of the Ambassador of France. In any case the state archives in Paris and Venice prove incontestably that he performed the duties incumbent upon the secretary to the legation, such as the conduct of embassy correspondence, the delivery of memorials to the Venetian senate, or rather to the “College” or cabinet of ministers, and the countersigning of permits, one of which bearing his signature is reproduced in the new \textit{Correspondance complète}. The correspondence also shows that he even provided the consul with permits and pre-

\textsuperscript{25} For the relations between them see Derche, “Autour du séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Venise,” pp. 145–156. The ambassador, whose official instructions specifically referred him to the consul’s guidance, resided with Le Blond for about a month after his arrival in Venice (\textit{O.C.}, Pléiade, III, 1053, 1822 \textit{n}2 [to p. 1094], 1810 \textit{n}1 [to p. 1052]). But there was ill will between them as early as August 26, 1743, when the consul refused to transcribe the Venetian senate’s oral reply to Montaigu’s first memorial (\textit{C.C.}, I, 203–204). Thereafter their hostility is obvious in the ambassador’s letters of September 28 and December 7, 1743, and April 4, 1744, to the Foreign Office, where the consul is called ignorant and ill informed and is blamed for the unsatisfactory installation of the embassy household (\textit{O.C.}, Pléiade, III, 1053, 1093–1094, 1096–1097). Thus Montaigu tried to discredit Le Blond at court, probably through jealousy as Rousseau says. He even tried to deprive him of his importation rights, with the result that the King himself had to intervene in the consul’s favor. After all, Le Blond had long been established in Venice with his large family. In fact he had been consul for twenty-five years when Montaigu arrived and was to hold his post for over forty years.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, p. ccxi.

\textsuperscript{27} Mr. Leigh in \textit{C.C.}, I, 199 note \textit{h} (to no. 62) notes that there were some exceptions; e.g., there was one at Soleure (\textit{ibid.}, II, 40).
pared them himself. But it is debatable whether he could have borne the title of secretary to the French embassy, even if that title had been in general use at the time, since he was Swiss and therefore a foreigner, as he constantly reminds us in the memoirs. On the other hand he could not be described as Montaigu’s private secretary either since the duties of that office were discharged by the second secretary, the Abbé de Binis (or d’Ebenis), who handled the ambassador’s personal correspondence during Rousseau’s term of office and slightly longer. All these explanatory details, by their very aridity and dullness, their redundancy and failure to produce anything new, bring us to a fresh realization and appreciation of the autobiography. In that work we actually witness the birth of a new self-confidence in the young man’s soul and an exasperated, even exasperating sense of his own intellectual superiority growing out of his contact with the count. These moral qualities take shape in the contrast—indisputably artistic if hardly modest—between the ambassador, whose character is no more extraordinary than his mind, and the subaltern, whose rich mind and character were to modify the course of occidental civilization. The opposition between the two men, which obviously has its source in actuality—and there can be no room for doubt on this point—is here used to externalize the strife within Rousseau himself between social prestige and individual merit. This inner strife is complicated by the contradiction between reality and appearance in his equivocal position as a Swiss national at the head of the palace of France. This paradox also corresponds to an essential inconsistency between his Swiss republicanism and his French “patriotism.” The complexities of his situation in the suite of Montaigu are


29 O.C., Pléiade, 1, 301, 325, referred to below.
eminently suited artistically to portray the vicissitudes of a youthful spirit. However unattractive the protagonist of the story may appear, the memorialist is unquestionably an artist.

Analyzing *Les Confessions* one is constantly reminded of Dr. Johnson's famous phrase reported by Boswell: "Pound St Paul's church into atoms and consider any single atom: it is to be sure good for nothing: but, put all these atoms together and you have St. Paul's." Our historical research does precisely this with Rousseau's masterpiece and the results are the same. In that work, synthesis rather than analysis is employed to translate into imagery the inmost recesses of mind and heart, and the drama enacted therein: a drama of inordinate pride suddenly prevailing over self-doubt and distrust as it seeks to find an outlet in life.

The following pages of the autobiography, containing a picture of diplomatic affairs at the embassy, are intended to show further the incongruity of Rousseau's subordination to the count by way of a cunning antithesis between the two men in the performance of their respective duties. The transparency of the symbolism leaves us no choice but to perceive natural genius exclusively on one side and arbitrary social distinction on the other. We see Montaigu commissioned to preserve Venetian neutrality with the collaboration of his Spanish colleague, the Marquis de Mari, whose friendship becomes a visible symbol of the bond between two crowns and their alliance against Austria in the War of the Austrian Succession. In the book the ambassador obeys instructions by giving the French court false and complacent assurances of success in spite of undeniable indications of the republic's sympathy for the common adversary. Moreover we are assured of his "ignorance," "stupidity," and "stubbornness" in all matters of correspondence in general. He forces his secretary, who must frame his dispatches from a few sparse notes, to cipher most of the tedious court missives, to answer letters
that have not yet arrived, to redistribute all news to its sources, and then the would-be diplomat signs many of the communiqués without reading them. The secretary's absurd position is further illustrated by a vivid portrayal of the allegedly irreproachable integrity, courage, and talents that he lavishes upon his trivial tasks. We are persuaded that he does more than justice to his early training in Turin and Savoy,\textsuperscript{30} serving well a foreign land to which he owes nothing and winning the esteem of everyone including the consul Le Blond whom he regretfully supplants in his office at the embassy. The opposition between rank and personal distinction was never more indignantly set forth than in these pages of \textit{Les Confessions}, whatever relationship they may bear to the facts of actuality.

It is possible to compare this picture with historical records of the very occupations that moved the artist to paint it. His personal epistles furnish almost no evidence on the subject, but in the archives of Venice, Paris, and French embassies abroad, historians for eighty years or more have been spying upon Rousseau far more closely than the State Inquisitors ever did. They have brought to light much of the vast correspondence of the French embassy in Venice, which was a news center at the crossroads of Europe and the Orient. This correspondence contained weekly letters to the French court, both to the King and the Foreign Office, and to French embassies in Vienna and the large Italian cities (especially Naples, Bologna, Florence, Genoa, and Turin), along with less regular missives to the French Minister for the Navy and to diplomatic agents all over Europe including those at Frankfort, the Hague, Geneva, Constantinople, and St.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 301. Again at the end of the Venetian story, p. 327, Rousseau recalls his early training in Turin and his studies at Les Charmettes between the autumn of 1735 and 1739. Regarding his studies see \textit{C.C.}, I, 29–33, letter from Rousseau to his father at Nyon, presumably toward the end of 1735.
Petersburg. It also comprised copies of all official letters, except court dispatches, written or received at the embassy and retranscribed for the French Foreign Office. In addition it included memorials in Italian to the Venetian senate, the only means of communicating with the government of the republic except in special cases when a counselor was named for private discussion. Copies and translations of these memorials and of the Venetian government's replies were also made for the French court. Nine of the memorials in translation have been included in the 130 recently published Venetian Despatches, most of which are addressed to the King and Foreign Office. Between September 14, 1743, ten days after he arrived in Venice, and July 25, 1744, almost a month before he left, this immense correspondence was with rare exceptions written by Rousseau and transcribed by his hand. The same may be said, judging by a few remaining fragments, of a fairly extensive memorial of late September, 1743, dealing with the local government and influential senators, drafted at the request of the French Foreign Office but torn from the archives in the last century and never recovered. A similar one of the following month, on the personality and character of members of the Venetian cabinet, is extant in the same hand and was, like the other, prepared so that the King would know the persons upon whom France could eventually rely in case of an emergency. Scholars concur and

31 See O.C., Pléiade, I, 1391 n3 (to p. 300), where Montaigu's instructions are transcribed from the Archives of Foreign Affairs; cf. ibid., p. 1394 n1 (to p. 306), where there is a note on the extent of the embassy correspondence; see also III, 1813 n3 (to p. 1057). The dispatches to the French court and Foreign Office were not supposed to be duplicates. In general, letters to the King summarize the main facts, while those to the minister give more detailed information about everything of interest from a practical, administrative standpoint.

32 Ibid., III, 1067.

33 C.C., II, 28–29, letter from Rousseau to M. Dupont, secretary to the French envoy at Genoa, July 25, 1744.

34 O.C., Pléiade, III, 1075–1077. The first memorial was sent on September 28, 1743. Fragments can be seen in Volume 205 of the political correspondence of Venice in the Foreign Office Archives in Paris between folios 114 and 115 (ibid., pp. 1051–1052).
have proof that Rousseau did not simply transcribe these texts but played a major part in their composition. As a general rule Montaigu merely furnished brief indications of the points to be developed or else handed on news bulletins which came from local French residents and Italian informers, including priests, and were incorporated into the dispatches. Sometimes of course he dictated passages himself, but these are easily identified by comparison with extant drafts and especially by their confused style, which stands out in stark contrast with Rousseau's clarity, precision, and occasional eloquence. This eloquence graces both French dispatches and Italian memorials alike and won the admiration of the Venetian senate and the King of France too, as the archives show. However, apart from such rare glimpses of the future writer, we are hardly aware of his presence in this huge body of documentation, for he was engaged merely to give intelligible and tactful expression to the facts available to him. In this it must be admitted that he was as successful as the memorialist says he was in spite of a few peccadillos such as an odd mistake in date or some minor inattention hardly worth notice.

An examination of all these historical records leads to a better understanding of the art of Les Confessions and the role of circumstantial truth therein. Although the author magnifies the use of ciphers, which are limited, often arbitrarily, to about a dozen pages in all, and although

35 We have the ambassador's notes from which a dispatch was made and which are preserved in the Montaigu family collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale: ibid., pp. 1081–1083, 1819 n1 (to p. 1083). We also have a news bulletin with an appended note from Montaigu to Rousseau, as well as the dispatch in which it was used: ibid., pp. 1114–1115, 1827 n1 (to p. 1115); and C.C., I, 211, 221.


37 In the Pléiade edition of the Venetian Despatches, all ciphered passages are italicized. The use of ciphers is not always arbitrary; e.g., during "lista" discussions treated below, passages concerning Montaigu's counselor, Nicolò
he maliciously over-emphasizes Montaigu's peculiarity of redistributing news to its source, which is nevertheless exemplified on several occasions,\(^{38}\) we cannot accuse him of inventing the idea that letters were answered before they arrived. In several missives to the Foreign Office the count himself admitted having adopted this practice. Sometimes the results are ludicrous. For example in one such letter, after expounding for the fifth time all the reasons that induced him to apply to the King for permission to request a Venetian counselor, he suddenly announced the arrival of the dispatch which he was in the midst of answering and which rendered his pleas superfluous by informing him categorically that he was not to have one at all. After five more pleas of a similar nature, the very opposite occurred: at the end of one of his missives hinting again at the value of a counselor, the face of things was abruptly changed by the delivery of a letter to which his own was supposed to be a reply and which contained news that the long sought permission had already been granted.\(^{39}\) These absurdities on the part of the unfortunate ambassador contrast, even in the correspondence, with the secretary's undeniable intelligence in contending with the duties of his office. It is precisely this contrast that gives the texts their hybrid character and explains the dissimilarities in style previously observed.

Apart from peculiarities of method, the content of embassy communications yields even more valuable information for the reader of Les Confessions. From the welter of trivial matter two forms gradually emerge to complement each other, Montaigu and the city-state to which he was accredited. We see the ambassador obeying official instructions by allying himself with Mari to main-

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\(^{38}\) Id., pp. 1150, and see 1834 \(n_1\) (to p. 1150); cf. p. cclix.

\(^{39}\) Id., p. 1114; cf. p. 1066. For Montaigu's admission see p. 1812 \(n_1\) (to p. 1056), and p. 1086; cf. p. ccxlix.
tain Venetian neutrality\textsuperscript{40} and then giving the French court ungrounded assurances of his success. He does so in one-third of the \textit{Venetian Despatches}. Since they also contain evidence of pro-Austrian and anti-French feeling in Venice, perhaps he meant that the republic, while favoring Austria, was too prudent to infringe its neutrality.\textsuperscript{41} But the fact remains that it was not. Montaigu refused to admit this and even contradicted evidence supplied by French diplomatic agents in Vienna who, in spite of his repeated denials, convince us beyond a doubt that Venice was indeed secretly furnishing Austria with assistance.\textsuperscript{42} His statements, challenged by the Foreign Office on several occasions, appear all the more incongruous since on January 2, 1744, he followed the lead of Mari and submitted a rather undiplomatic memorial to the Venetian government protesting its alleged partiality for Austria and warning that the French King was not indifferent to affairs in Italy.\textsuperscript{43} In the senate’s reply, and indeed in all its business with the embassy, we detect the pathetically degraded form of the oligarchic Venetian state in those last fateful years of the republic, a half century before Napoleon and, ironically

\textsuperscript{40} Montaigu’s instructions make it clear that he was to foster Mari’s friendship: \textit{ibid.}, 1805 \textit{n2} (to p. 1045); and \textit{C.C.}, I, 199 note \textit{d} (to no. 62). The dispatches confirm this: \textit{O.C.}, Pléiade, III, 1045, 1047, 1059–1060, 1092, 1105, etc. His instructions also enjoined that he maintain Venetian neutrality since Austria was seeking to draw Venice into an alliance: \textit{ibid.}, pp. 1809 \textit{n2} (to p. 1050), 1826 \textit{n1} (to p. 1108).

\textsuperscript{41} For evidence of pro-Austrian feeling see \textit{ibid.}, pp. 1052, 1053, 1061–1062 1195, 1227. But after Rousseau’s departure the embassy correspondence contains much more evidence of this nature, especially from the moment that the Foreign Office questioned the assertions of Venetian neutrality as it did in letters to Montaigu dated December 8, 1744, and March 9 and 16, 1745 (A. de Montaigu, \textit{Démêlés}, pp. 34–35; Derche, “Autour du séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Venise,” pp. 144–145). From that time on, allusions to anti-French sentiment become fairly frequent in Montaigu’s dispatches to the French government (e.g., letters of January 9, April 14, June 12, 1745; January 2 and August 13, 1746). But in Rousseau’s time, the French agents in Vienna make it clear that Venice was not as neutral as Montaigu declares in the same period.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{O.C.}, Pléiade, III, 1830–1831 \textit{n1} (to p. 1128), 1843 \textit{n1} (to p. 1195), 1848 \textit{n1} (to p. 1226). Cf. Montaigu’s denials on pp. 1046, 1048, 1104, 1105, 1106.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 1109–1110. For Mari’s influence see p. 1111.
enough, the Austrians put an inglorious end to fourteen hundred years of glorious history. The government of the city answered the ambassador's memorial by humbly pleading friendship for France. Yet it was moved by fear to court her rival, and in fact professed to seek the goodwill of all princes. At the same time it was aloof and distrustful of their envoys, forbidding its members to consort with them or even to exchange courtesies with them under pain of inquisitorial punishment, so great was its desire to spread a pall of mystery about its poverty and weakness. This shadowy image of a cowering state to which Europe sent "the most inconsequential men as ambassadors" is reminiscent of many a detail in Les Confessions. So is Montaigu's naïveté, which matches the pretentiousness of the Venetian government in all their relations with one another. For example, his aforesaid memorial to the senate, warning of the French King's interests in Italy, was unauthorized and therefore became a source of considerable anxiety to the French Foreign Office. When he was finally able to supplement his memorials by conferring personally with a Venetian counselor, he committed worse blunders still. For instance, when the Foreign Office belied his affirmations of Venetian neutrality by forwarding a copy

44 Ibid., pp. 1827–1828 n2 (to p. 1117). This is a French translation of the reply. The senate answered memorials, not in writing, but by sending a Venetian secretary to read and even dictate the reply to the ambassador's secretary. Montaigu's counselor, in their first interviews together, conveyed similar assurances (pp. 1123–1124, 1128–1129).

45 See ibid., pp. 1815–1816 n1 (to p. 1067), and p. 1076, where it is recalled that a nobleman, suspected of consorting with foreign envoys, was once hanged, although his innocence was later recognized; cf. pp. 1098, 1129, where Montaigu reports that several nobles had been reprimanded for exchanging civilities with Mari.


47 O.C., Pléiade, III, 1833 n1 (to p. 1137); cf. 1140–1141; 1144–1145, 1834 n2 (to p. 1144).
of a dispatch from Vienna containing confidential information about the republic’s collaboration with Austria, he at once communicated its contents to his newly appointed counselor, Nicolo Erizzo. The latter appreciated his frankness much more than did the French minister to whom the count artlessly reported his indiscretion without even recognizing it as such.48 But later, when the trusted counselor took a less favorable view of certain abuses in the administration of embassy affairs, he fell a victim to what the critics call Montaigu’s “rage,” “lack of discernment,” and “blindness.”49 These are precisely the qualities which, even in the archives, contrast with the secretary’s competence and which the memorialist calls “ignorance,” “stupidity,” and “obstinacy.” It is difficult not to see in external reality an important source of his writing.

All these circumstances, scattered at random through dispatches and letters, clearly represent the facts which, like so many fragmentary pieces, are integrated into the tableau of Rousseau’s memoirs. But there ends the similarity between archives and art. The work of art gives us not a pallid reflection of life but an intense and composite vision proceeding from the writer’s nature, which assumes consistency in figures and events. This is so even in the pages on the ungrateful theme of the embassy functions. Here we see the secretary’s zeal and talents undaunted by the tedious tasks entrusted to him or by the ambassador’s inadequacy. This inadequacy is, after all, that of society, which we disclaim as alien to us much as the Greeks looked upon their neighbors as barbarians, but its weaknesses are,

48 Ibid., pp. 1128, 1148–1149 show Montaigu’s naïveté; Amelot’s reply is quoted on p. 1834 n1 (to p. 1149). Montaigu apologized later for his frankness (p. 1184). The counselor, the chevalier Nicolo (Andrea) Erizzo, was later named Venetian ambassador to Vienna and replaced as counselor by Count Mocenigo. See Derche, “Autour du séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Venise,” p. 160; Montigny, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau secrétaire d’ambassade,” p. 432; O.C., Pléiade, III, 1825 n2 (to p. 1102); and especially C.C., I, 239.

49 O.C., Pléiade, III, 1197–1198; 1843–1844 n1 (to p. 1198); cf. also 1216–1217, 1220–1221, 1221–1223, 1225–1226.
in fact, our own. Without acknowledging this, the young Rousseau has the intoxicating illusion that he is strong enough to contend with them and to rise above them. For the moment the memorialist relives and espouses his blindness and intoxication, though later he admits that he knows better. He speaks a language whose accents we can understand, for they register faithfully and lucidly the pride and illusions of his soul, which resound in our own “to teach us to know ourselves and grow wise at the expense of the dead.” To see this is not to approve or to disapprove of his nature or its affinity with ours, but simply to recognize the artist and the universality of his art, however pathetically fragile the flesh in which his gifts were lodged.

SCENES OF EXTROVERSION

After telling of the reportedly singular virtues expended upon Montaigu’s absurd assignments, the writer of Les Confessions proceeds to relate a series of heroic actions which are momentous enough for him to allude to them again in the final pages of his last book recalling the “generous intrepidity” and “fermentation of heart” of Montaigu’s secretary. The latter accomplishes these actions on his own initiative and on behalf of the French nation in Paris and abroad. The people are depicted as neglected and even ignored by their ambassador, who is completely absorbed in his friendship with Mari. These exploits are rendered the more astonishing by Rousseau’s allusion to the isolation of embassy personnel, virtually debarred by the inquisitors from communicating with persons in authority such as Venetian nobles and members of the government. It is even impossible for the young hero to seek help from the consul who, born in Venice where he has a permanent residence with his family (like his father the consul before him and his son after him), feels obliged to show a certain deference to the Venetian authorities.
Nevertheless we see the energetic secretary obtaining the services of talented Italian dramatic artists for the Parisian theater; securing the release of a French merchant ship unjustly detained by the republic; intervening at his own expense to force a Venetian nobleman to repay a Parisian creditor; and finally saving the Bourbon realm of Naples from falling into the hands of the Austrians. These feats are the themes of a sequence of colorful scenes that are undeniably reflected in the Venetian dispatches and memorials and are therefore founded in actuality.\(^\text{50}\) In Les Confessions they give visible form to some of the most complex states of soul recorded in the book, where they represent a supreme trial of strength on the part of the protagonist to prevail in a mighty struggle with the forces of society. Moreover, since in each case he appears as the instrument of the King of France’s protection, all these situations betray the austere young republican’s lasting affection for France, a country synonymous with the very social forces against which he is contending. This strange affection is also the theme of his little one act comedy, Les Prisonniers de guerre, begun in Paris about May, 1743, and later completed there, but largely inspired by his residence in Venice and significantly never published during his lifetime.\(^\text{51}\) The playwright conveys his feelings through the character Dorante, a French prisoner in Hungary during the War of the Austrian Succession, who represents France in a foreign land much as the hero of the seventh book of Les Confessions. Dorante wins respect abroad for the civilizing role of France, native land of the human race, fostering knowledge and the fine arts even in the midst of war. Here the Swiss writer claims France as his own. Yet how much more intense and personal

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. ccli, where M. Candaux points out that Rousseau’s “services” are confirmed by the Venetian dispatches and memorials. For the above-mentioned allusion at the end of Book XII, see ibid., I, 653.

is the feeling in the memoirs where he exults in deeds that he himself performed at Venice in the service of the French King! Little wonder if this affection caused the new Alceste some embarrassment, for it was as paradoxical as the old Alceste's love for Célimène, but as Molière wisely observes reason does not govern love.

THE VERONESE THEME

The first scene manifests Rousseau's youthful enthusiasm for the theater as well as a new delight in the dramatic moment and generous gesture. It is one of the few scenes in which he visualizes himself in a typical eighteenth-century Venetian setting, in the metropolis of pleasure and the country of improbable adventures like those of Casanova. We see him during carnival time, disguised in mask and domino and accompanied by the ambassador's livery, as he takes his gondola to the palace of the patrician impresario Zustiniani where, being an alien, he might not normally have access or expose himself to recognition. As a “siora maschera,” he is ushered into the presence of the noble Venetian. Boldly unmasking, he claims the release of the actor Veronese (and his daughter Coralline), who are currently appearing at Zustiniani's St. Samuel theater, although they are already under contract with the French court to perform in Versailles and Paris. This action is the young Rousseau's personal response to an urgent appeal from the court chamberlain, whose orders are almost ignored by Montaigu and the consul as well. Finally, to ensure success he sends a warning to Veronese himself, threatening to have him arrested if he does not leave for France with his two daughters, Coralline and Camille. Veronese departs within a week and the secretary's triumph is complete in these daring gestures on behalf of his adopted homeland.

This animated scene, which the Pléiade editors consider particularly brilliant, has given rise to much historical research. The scene is of course morally true, for it testifies
both to the secretary's paradoxical devotion to France and to his interest in the stage. This interest is also evident in the first memorial he presented to the local senate only five days after his arrival, requesting loges in four of the seven Venetian theaters.\textsuperscript{52} But does the scene in the memoirs have any other links with life? Eighty years ago it was regarded by critics like Cérèsol and Saussure as having no foundation at all in actuality since the correspondence then known contained no reference to it. Twenty years later Auguste de Montaigu, the ambassador's descendant, discovered in the family archives and then published a letter of December 7, 1743, addressed by Rousseau in the count's name to the court chamberlain, the Duke de Gesvres, proving that Montaigu had sent his secretary in carnival costume to deliver a note from the French court to a patrician impresario, Michele Grimani, proprietor of the St. Samuel theater.\textsuperscript{53} The letter explains that the disguise was to circumvent the law forbidding communication between foreign ministers and Venetian nobility. It also gives a clue to the contents of the note which Grimani had not yet answered. The missive demanded seizure of the wages of a comedian Veronese, who was engaged with his daughter at the theater after he had ignored a contract with the French court and even collected part payment for his prospective services. Auguste de Montaigu also published at the same time and from the same source a brief Italian version of the court note prepared by Rousseau. Twenty years after the publication of these two pieces the duke's appeal to the embassy, dated November 6, 1743, which had accompanied his note for Grimani, came to light in the same archives and was published by Monsieur Joseph Souchon

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., I, 1395–1396 n1 (to p. 308); cf. Cérèsol, \textit{J.-J. Rousseau à Venise}, pp. 11–13, 61. The memorial is dated September 9, 1743.

in 1915. More recently, a draft of the note itself, also dated November 6 and no doubt identical with the original, which was probably destroyed by Grimani, was discovered in the archives of Foreign Affairs in Paris. It has now been reproduced in its entirety in Mr. Leigh's edition of the Correspondance complète together with Rousseau's brief Italian version already published by Montaigu's descendant.\textsuperscript{54} It is well known that Coralline Veronese, the daughter in question, did not make her debut in Paris until May 6, 1744, exactly six months after the court appeal to the embassy.\textsuperscript{55} This is all that can be positively said of the historical events that furnished the elements of the scene in the memoirs.

Yet more can be added with a fair degree of certainty, for some things are easily conjectured, and they do not essentially impugn the literal veracity of Les Confessions. For example, the court message of November 6 to Grimani must have been delivered by Montaigu's secretary on or about November 23, since at that time the Versailles dispatches took fifteen to twenty days to reach Venice.\textsuperscript{56} This assumption is virtually confirmed by Rousseau's private letters, which help to clarify matters, although this point has been overlooked by the critics. On the same November 23 he wrote to Madame de Montaigu referring to the close bond between the houses of France and Spain which, in the eyes of the memorialist, so distracted the ambassador from his duties that the secretary was forced to take the initiative in embassy affairs such as the Veronese matter. A passage in the letter reads: "I have upset my

\textsuperscript{54} Derche first drew attention to the draft of the court note in "Autour du séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Venise," p. 135 n3. It was partly published in O.C., Pléiade, III, 1822-1823 n2 (to p. 1097), and completely in C.C., I, 204–205. For the duke's letter to Montaigu accompanying it see Souchon, Correspondance diplomatique, p. 366.

\textsuperscript{55} See O.C., Pléiade, I, 1392 n1 (to p. 302), and III, 1823 n4 (to p. 1097).

\textsuperscript{56} If the court message was indeed delivered on November 23, it would be strange that it was not mentioned in dispatches of November 30, unless Montaigu waited in the hope of having something definite to report.
philosophy a little to dress like other people, with the result that I go about the square and the theatres in mask and domino as proudly as if I had spent my whole life in this attire." The excitement and exultation in these lines remind us vaguely of the tone of the famous scene in the memoirs where alone the correspondence assumes meaning. If the event took place at the Grimani palace instead of the Zustiniani, this would not change matters in the least. The scene in *Les Confessions* would not be altered by a name or lose its literary or psychological value for such a trivial reason, especially since Grimani was also a patrician, as we have said, and in fact the doge of Venice at the time was Pietro Grimani. The situation would therefore be essentially the same as the writer describes it. The editor of the *Venetian Despatches* also draws this conclusion, but he adds that Rousseau perhaps wrongly appropriates all the honor of the negotiation. This may be so. On the other hand, nothing prevents us from believing, as we read in the memoirs, that the bold and imaginative step was taken on the secretary's initiative, instead of Montaigu's, and that it was instigated by the ambassador's indifference and the consul's timidity. In fact the count's reluctance to intervene in the matter is visible in his reply to the court on December 7, where he concludes that he can really do nothing more about it except have Veronese arrested. Mysteriously enough he makes no further reference to the affair in the dispatches. If he had done anything else he would likely have mentioned it, since he loses no opportunity to recommend himself to the court. Where then does the denouement of the memorialist's story originate? I refer to the secretary's final and decisive action of threatening the

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67 C.C., I, 212–213.

58 Girolamo Grimani, a senator, made a memorial for the Council of Ten concerning the “lista” discussions, treated below. The name Zustiniani may have been in Rousseau's mind because it was the name of the senator who declined to take any action on Montaigu's memorial of August 31, 1744, against Rousseau; consult the index.
actor with arrest, which brings the affair to a happy conclusion and procures for the Italian comedy in Paris the services of Coralline, one of that theater's most famous actresses, whom Rousseau met personally a dozen years later. Does the silence of the dispatches indicate that these gestures were his own independent work, that the ambassador had no part in them, and that they were therefore unauthorized and unworthy of recognition in the official correspondence? Or should we suppose that the memorialist invented them out of nothing? In either case the facts of actuality are strangely inconclusive by comparison with the text of *Les Confessions*, which was however obviously inspired by them.

The truth is that even the conclusion of the Veronese story in the memoirs may owe some debt to actuality. It contains curious echoes of another entirely different affair, discussed in more than a dozen of the *Venetian Despatches* over a period of nearly three months, from January 25 to April 18, 1744, but ignored in the memoirs to the surprise of many scholars. This is the incredible affair of the renowned dancer, Barberina Campanini, who was in Venice for the carnival, ignoring a contract with Frederick II of Prussia similar to Veronese's engagement with the French court.\(^{59}\) The Prussian agent, Cattaneo, a Venetian "gentleman" whom Rousseau frequented and whose daughter he admired, appealed to Montaigu and Mari to help him force Barberina to honor her commitment. The count obliged by inviting her to dinner in the hope of persuading her to respect the engagement, but the capricious lady was more interested in another engagement of a different sort with a young Scottish lord, James Stuart Mackenzie, son of Sir George, who had followed her to Venice from London and Paris and was said to be madly in love with her. Whether Rousseau, who usually shared

\(^{59}\) For references to the Barberina affair in the dispatches see *O.C.*, Pléiade, III, 1125, 1127, 1130, 1132–1133, 1135, 1138–1139, 1142, 1147, 1150, 1159, 1163, 1172, 1177, and notes on pp. 1829, 1833–1834.
the ambassador's table, was present at the dinner—at least as Italian interpreter—we cannot tell. But there is no doubt that it was he who, reporting upon the failure of this expedient, wrote in a dispatch of February 1, 1744, to the King of France's minister that she had a head as light as her feet. Next Cattaneo made representations to the Venetian senate to intervene on behalf of His Prussian Majesty, who, in case of refusal, was reportedly planning to arrest the Venetian ambassador traveling to London through Prussia to take up his post. This threat stirred the senate to action, although Barberina, as a native of Parma was subject not to Venice at all but to Austria, which may have forced the republic's hand in order to please the King of Prussia, as Rousseau's dispatches surmise. And so the dancer became a kind of pawn in the War of the Austrian Succession. On February 15, 1744, when the distraught Cattaneo, as a last resort was pleading with Montaigu and Mari to help him engage "twelve or if necessary fifty men" to kidnap the ballerina in the midst of the opera, the Venetian government suddenly ordered her to fulfill her engagement abroad, secured her arrest the next day, kept her under detention for two months, and finally in mid-April had her escorted to Berlin where she arrived on May 8. There her Scottish lover followed her but was promptly banished by the great Frederick, who took the ballerina as his mistress. Such is the story of Barberina, which we may trace through Rousseau's Venetian dispatches.

Can it be that the writer of *Les Confessions*, ignoring these events because he was not personally involved, was, however, moved by them to invent the conclusion of the Veronese story contained therein? I think not. But I do think that the two affairs have a connection which critics in the past have not suspected. It is very likely that the greatly publicized events concerning Barberina inspired and emboldened the young secretary to threaten the actor

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60 Ibid., p. 1130.
with the dancer's fate and to frighten him into honoring his contract with France and leaving Italy within a week's time. In this case, he must have done so over three months after the carnival scene of November and about the time of Barberina's arrest in mid-February, thereby precipitating Veronese's departure and ensuring Coralline's Parisian debut of early May. In fact, if Veronese left Venice about February 22 and if he traveled at the same rate as Rousseau, he would have arrived in Paris in time for a debut about May 6. In the work of art events are telescoped, so to speak, and time is contracted in the story of the soul, or rather it does not exist. Exposition, climax, and denouement are brought into close proximity and interrelated so that the facts, which in themselves are unaltered, assume both coherent form and psychological significance.

But if the denouement of the Veronese story in the memoirs is, as we may now conclude, based upon the facts of actuality, why were these facts ignored in the correspondence? We have already proposed that there may have been good reason for this. Perhaps the secretary's zeal in issuing the summons was considered an act of insubordination, especially if, as Les Confessions implies, he failed to consult his superior. Is this how he alienated the latter in mid-February? His personal letters show that he did so sometime between February 7 and February 22, 1744. On February 7 he was clearly expecting to remain in Venice indefinitely since on that date he reiterated an earlier request for merchandise to be sent from Paris; but on February 22 he thought of returning to France, judging by a missive drafted at that time and supposedly intended for the Abbé Alary at the French court, through whom his appointment was originally proposed. In the latter draft he says that the air of Venice is bad for his health and that, in spite of Montaigu's goodness, he longs for Paris.\(^61\) This letter, hinting that all was not well at the embassy, was

\(^61\) C.C., I, 229–230. Cf. p. 224, letter from Rousseau to Roguin, February 7, 1744. However, in a letter of February 8, Rousseau makes similar statements about his health (pp. 225–226).
written about the time Veronese would have left Venice if he was threatened at the moment of Barberinna's arrest and if, as we are told in the memoirs, he left within a week of the threat. Of course the draft does not testify conclusively to the writer's estrangement from his employer and, even if it did, there is no internal evidence to connect the estrangement with Veronese, nothing but a coincidence in time. A similar coincidence is more persuasive in the case of another of Rousseau's letters containing definite proof that, approximately at this very period, the ambassador threatened to replace him in six weeks. On April 30, 1744, the secretary drafted a letter, probably for the Chevalier de Montaigu in Paris, alluding to some such threat made in February, asking whether he might expect a successor and rather naively trusting his correspondent to make good use of these confidences by following right sentiment and reason. If it was the young man's zeal that aroused the count's hostility in actual life as well as in the pages of Les Confessions—for so we are told later in that book—then the dispatch of a menacing message to Veronese may have contributed to a rift in the embassy, especially if the count was ignored in the matter. In that case the failure of the correspondence to refer to it is comprehensible.

There is another possible interpretation of events, prompted by a collation of documents and memoirs. The secretary may have fallen from grace in February by taking some other independent and aggressive action connected with the same incident. For example he may have been moved by the Barberina affair to re-enact at the Zustiniani palace a scene that had taken place three months earlier at the Grimani house, since Veronese's second daughter, Camille, was engaged at the San Mosé theater, belonging to the Zustiniani family, and the comedian and Coralline could hardly have left without her. Besides,
Rousseau boasts of having obtained for France the services of both sisters. Mr. Leigh, in his edition of the correspondence, favors the possibility of two scenes, but without connecting either one with the Barberina affair or Montaigu's hostility. This hypothesis, though not easily defended, would have strong psychological support. Rousseau, who had parts of his ballet, *Les Muses galantes*, performed in another of Grimani's theaters, the St. John Chrysostom, would probably not have confused the name Grimani with any other, since he must have had permission for this privilege from the owner of the theater. Besides, would he really have forgotten a name which was also that of the doge? If the theory of two scenes were true—and it could hardly be proved conclusively—then both events and all accompanying circumstances would, in the work of art, be quite naturally translated into a single composite scene containing elements from both experiences. In any case, there are enough echoes of actuality in the Veronese story of *Les Confessions* to convince us that it is not a product of the author's creative imagination as everyone, even the best known critics, believed hardly more than sixty years ago.

Yet, quite apart from its literal veracity, it has great artistic and spiritual value, which a transcription or violation of actuality could neither make nor mar. This narrative furnishes not the least of all scenes in a work of art embodying the story of the writer's soul. It sets forth a new-found vigor and confidence born within the young Rousseau as a result of his contact with the Count de Montaigu. The memorialist, moved by an intuitive vision of himself, of his love for the theater, and his devotion to France, chooses imagery perfectly consonant with these states of mind and heart, even if they belie his professed convictions. Indeed it is precisely his infallible taste in selecting tableaux most appropriate to the psychological truth conveyed that gives conviction and distinction to the autobiography. The picturesque scene there immortalized
does not lack historical verisimilitude either. Montaigu's secretary appears in carnival costume, worn six months of the year in eighteenth-century Venice, where a piece of black or white satin on the face and a black silk cape or "bauta" over the shoulders conferred the liberty to do or say anything and go anywhere with absolute impunity. Arrayed in this manner and announcing himself as a "siora maschera," he is not posing as a woman as readers have supposed. He is simply a mask and nothing more. The title he assumes, like the costume he wears, is the only one admitted for either sex during the carnival and is an open sesame that moves his imagination and fascinates his mind. Has the Queen of the Adriatic cast her spell upon the lonely hermit of the empty lazaret? Probably not. More likely the hermit has been drawn from his retreat by a consciousness of superior strength and by the demands of his post. Accordingly he is inspired with a love of grandiose gestures that infuses a fresh strain of lyrical romanticism into the art of the memorialist many years later, producing vivid pictures of his energetic grasp of embassy affairs rather than descriptions of landscape.

THE OLIVET THEME

The second of the heroic scenes in the seventh book of *Les Confessions* is almost as theatrical as the first. The secretary appears again in his gondola on the waters of the Venetian lagoon, playing an imposing role. This time we see

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63 Monnier, *Venise au XVIIIe siecle*, pp. 61–63. People went about masked from the first Sunday in October to Christmas; from Epiphany to Lent (the carnival proper); two weeks at the Ascension, on the feast of St. Mark (April 25) and other festive occasions. See also Charles Diehl, *Une République patricienne: Venise* (Paris: Flammarion, 1935), p. 297.

64 O.C., Pléiade, I, 1392 n5 (to p. 302); here "una siora maschera" is translated "une femme masquée." The title "Signora" is simply explained by the fact that "maschera" is feminine, even when referring to male persons. Similarly one says "Signora guardia" in addressing a police officer. "Une siora maschera" is therefore not "une femme masquée" but a mask in the sense of a masked person.
him far from the city, beyond the Lido at Poveglia, alongside a French merchant vessel placed under an embargo as a result of a quarrel between the crew and some quarantined Slavonian sailors, engaged on a ship belonging to the republic. There, on the spot, he draws up an official report and while his companion, the Abbé Patizel, chancellor of the consulate and vice-consul, sits in utter silence, he alone, we are told, courageously questions the mariners to elicit replies favorable to the French ship in the hope of securing its release. He can hardly induce his companion to sign the report after him and, as in the previous scene, he is represented as acting independently, on account of the ambassador’s indifference and the consul’s reluctance to intervene. This grandiloquent gesture culminates a series of more conventional proceedings that throw it into artistic relief: notably, the presentation of a memorial to the Venetian senate on behalf of the French ship, and communication of the incident to the French government. His success earns for him the gratitude of Captain Olivet, the ship’s master, and arouses new respect for the King’s protection in the minds of all, including the Venetians.

This colorful scene has been the object of an enormous amount of research. Most of it is of an historical order and has cast suspicion upon the writer’s veracity and upon the literal truth of Les Confessions. No one disbelieves that Captain Olivet’s ship suffered the indignity described, inflicted by the Slavonian crew of a quarantined Venetian vessel. Nor does anyone doubt that, the following day, Montaigu’s secretary submitted to the local senate a protest in the form of a memorial, the original of which, written in his own hand and dated July 7, 1744, is preserved in the state archives of Venice. No one doubts either that he communicated the matter to the French government. On the contrary, we know that copies of the memorial, in the hand of the second secretary de Bins, were forwarded to Paris,

65 The name is not mentioned in Les Confessions. See C.C., II, 17. In Venetian dialect it is called Poveggia.
to the Foreign Office, and the Ministry for the Navy respectively, and that the matter was mentioned in official dispatches of July 11, written by Rousseau to the same correspondents as well as to the King himself. It was also mentioned in Le Blond’s dispatch to the Ministry, sent by the same courier. We know too that on that very day the Venetian senate replied to the memorial promising an examination of French claims for compensation. The story in *Les Confessions* is therefore far from being entirely fictitious.

The only point that has been seriously questioned is precisely the dynamic decisive gesture in which Rousseau takes most obvious pleasure. Is this pleasure purely aesthetic? Or did he really take Patizel in his gondola to interrogate the ship’s company? A copy of a report such as he describes, dated July 17, 1744, and recording a ship’s side interrogation of July 14, was published in 1885 after being found in the chancery of the French Consulate in Venice, but it is not in Rousseau’s hand, nor does it bear his signature or any reference to him at all. It is signed by

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67 Cérésole, *J.-J. Rousseau à Venise*, pp. 26–36. The report confirms a declaration made by Olivet to the consulate on July 6 about an incident that had occurred the same day. During a violent storm a Venetian ship manned by Slavonians was thrown against the French vessel. A quarrel broke out between the two crews and finally a dozen Slavonians, armed with sabers, boarded the French ship, whose crew members either hid or threw themselves into the sea with the exception of one who was seriously wounded. The report contains the results of an interrogation of seven witnesses and participants who declared that the Slavonians had taken the initiative in the affair.
Patizel to whom the depositions are attributed. The same is true of other copies in the Foreign Office archives in Paris. One was forwarded by the embassy directly to that office, enclosed with a dispatch of July 18, which is extant but which does not even mention Rousseau although it contains an explanation of the enclosure and is written in his own hand. Other dispatches of the same date sent by the embassy and consulate to the Ministry for the Navy both ascribe the report to Patizel and show that Le Blond had undertaken to forward it to that department, presumably because commercial matters concerned the consul primarily.\footnote{For one copy of the report in Paris see \textit{ibid.}, pp. 123–127. This research was done by Saussure, who published Cérésole's work. For the dispatches of July 18 to the Foreign Office and Ministry for the Navy see O.C., Pléiade, III, 1226–1228, 1229.} He finally did so on July 25, specifying in an accompanying letter that the document had been prepared, at Montaigu's orders, by Patizel. It too is preserved in Paris and, like the one sent by the embassy to the Foreign Office, is copied and signed by the vice-consul. Eighty years ago the only logical conclusion of all this evidence seemed to be that Rousseau had no part in the report or in the inquiry upon which it was based. Such was the skeptical attitude of scholars like Cérésole and Saussure, supported by Auguste de Montaigu twenty years later, and still another twenty years afterward by Courtois.\footnote{Cérésole, \textit{J.-J. Rousseau à Venise}, pp. 27–28, 37–38, 127; A. de Montaigu, \textit{Démolès}, pp. 53–62; Courtois, “Chronologie critique,” p. 46 \textit{n}2.} The deduction might have been justified on the basis of the then known correspondence and records in Paris, since it seems strange that Montaigu, in writing to his superiors, would deliberately deprive the embassy of the honor of both the depositions and the report to assign them to the consulate, unless of course one were to suppose with Monsieur Monglond that his relations with his secretary were even more strained than with the consul and had moved him to eliminate the young man's signature in the communications.
with France. Even if this were the case, historical research has done much to bring *Les Confessions* into disrepute.

However, many of its conclusions are unwarranted. The absence of Rousseau’s signature on the copy of the report in the consulate archives of Venice proves nothing, for it may understandably have been removed by that office, which had jurisdiction in commercial affairs and ought therefore to have taken the initiative in the matter. That it failed to do so was made known forty years ago when a contemporary letter of July 15, 1744, came to light in the *Correspondance générale* to prove that the original report was indeed Rousseau’s work and that the copies in existence are mere copies and nothing more. The letter is addressed by him to the count, who was on holiday in the country. He writes: “I must report to Your Excellency that yesterday I spent the day at Poveggia [sic] with M. Le Blond’s chancellor and Captain Olivet, taking depositions from the crew and witnesses of the fact in question. If I can get the report ready to-day, I shall wait upon Your Excellency to-morrow morning, in accordance with your orders.”

Here we see that the secretary was even then preparing the controversial document following the investigation and interrogation of the crew which he had made the previous day at Poveggia in the vice-consul’s presence. With the discovery of this letter, Patizel’s role was reduced to a signature. This has been confirmed today by more new evidence. Only recently have we learned that a year after the event—in a letter of September 18, 1745—Montaigu informed the Foreign Office, though belatedly, of his secretary’s part in the affair but without explaining why the copy of the report, which he had forwarded at the time of the inquiry, attributed all negotiations to Patizel. The ambassador’s letter was found in the Foreign Office archives by Monsieur Jean-Daniel Candaux, who published it in the *Venetian*...
Despatches. Referring to the procès verbal embodied in the report, the count writes: "The consul stayed in the country so as not to incur the displeasure of the republic by making it himself which I was obliged to do through my secretary [J.-J. Rousseau] and the vice-consul."\(^2\) Does this mean that the report was made under Montaigu's orders as his descendant declared years ago? The letter of July 15 makes this at least debatable. It shows that the count, no less than the consul, stayed in the country while the depositions were made and was represented by his secretary, as the consul was by Patizel, who ought to have assumed responsibility in a commercial matter but obviously did not do so, any more than did Montaigu. Although the ambassador may have been present at the embassy at the time of the memorial to the senate and left the city only when he received the rather indecisive reply, yet he did not wait for the matter to be definitively settled before going off to his villa, and in any case he had no hand in drawing up the report, nor did he ever pretend to have. The report was the secretary's work, even though all known extant versions bear the signature of another. Like the Veronese incident, the Olivet affair conceivably played a role in his disgrace, and in any case certainly coincides in time with his definitive withdrawal from the service of the legation. The Venetian government settled the matter in Olivet's favor on July 26, 1744, just ten days before Rousseau left the embassy,\(^3\) although no reparation of any kind was made for the insult to the French flag. This is all we can learn from available documents. Once again historical study does little more than confirm piecemeal the isolated data from which the autobiographer was able to draw a scene considered by the editor of the *Venetian Despatches* as one of the most brilliant of all.

\(^2\) O.C., Pléiade, III, p. cclii.

\(^3\) Ibid., 1848 n1 (to p. 1225), and especially C.C., II, 38. The connection of the Olivet affair and Rousseau's disgrace is discussed below.
But positivistic criticism does not and cannot solve the most vital matters which alone give point to the scene and justify its inclusion in the story of the soul. Was it the secretary's effort, springing from an irrational and all the more intense love for France, that moved the Venetian government to make compensation? Was it his memorial, based upon the captain's evidence and subsequently reinforced by the depositions and report, that effected the ship's release? Of course, even if it was not, the effort alone as recorded in the memoirs is eloquent of the writer's inner life. But it is far more so taken in conjunction with the repercussion of the affair in that book. I refer to the captain's gratitude toward the secretary, which makes the republic's concession in favor of the French vessel seem something more meaningful than a mere act of diplomacy. Olivet's acknowledgment, made in the famous dinner on board ship, the theme of one of the most memorable scenes in *Les Confessions*, which will be discussed later, must have some foundation in life. One can hardly assume that it is a figment of the writer's creative imagination. But if we accept it to be so, we can pay no greater tribute to his artistic sense, which is also admirable in the gondola scene at Poveglia. This fine conception not only has its origin in the circumstances of actuality, prosaically sketched in contemporary letters, in Rousseau's report, memorials, and dispatches, but it is resplendent with spiritual truth as well. The daring gesture is intended by the autobiographer to proclaim a new extroversion, a heart aflame with generosity, heroic devotion to duty, and an undying love for France, and is accordingly clothed in a dramatic form consistent with the boastful exuberance of these states of soul.

A MATTER OF JUSTICE

The third situation recounted in the memoirs shows the embassy secretary extending the King's protection far
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beyond the bounds of duty. Yet it is not in the least theatrical. On the contrary it is perfectly designed to give visible form to a simple love of justice. He undertakes to collect a debt from a Venetian patrician on behalf of a French hairdresser in Paris and is entrusted with the debtor's promissory note. Since the matter is a commercial one it concerns the consul, whose intervention is however ineffectual as usual. During the course of proceedings and in the confusion of the secretary's sudden departure from the legation, the note is lost and the Venetian refuses to pay the debt. Rousseau is obliged to settle it in its entirety at his own expense five years later, when he is finally compensated for his services to the ambassador. Such is the autobiographical account of an incident which is a source of distress and frustration to the author as much as it is to the young man he portrays.

This story is based upon an actual situation that may be partly reconstructed from correspondence published by Monsieur Joseph Souchon in 1915 and by Mr. Leigh in 1965. However all critics and editors without exception have failed to see the close relationship of the correspondence in question to the text of *Les Confessions*. Two letters in particular have a bearing on the problem of truth in that book. They are addressed at a later date to the Count de Montaigu. One is from the Parisian creditor and is dated April 17, 1745. The writer complains bitterly to the ambassador that he has tried unsuccessfully to collect a quarter of the debt from Rousseau in Paris and to convince him that the whole amount was even then deposited at the French consulate in Venice. Critics immediately hastened to point out that this letter belies *Les Confessions*. They accused the author of a double error, namely the two

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74 Souchon, *Correspondance diplomatique*, pp. 382, 418–419 (fragments) and *C.C.*, II, 81–82, 110–111. The most significant part of the first letter is quoted in *O.C.*, Pléiade, I, 1394 n3 (to p. 305). For criticism see notes by both Souchon and Leigh, and also Monglon, “Rousseau, secrétaire de M. de Montaigu,” p. 40 n2.
allegations that the debtor had refused to pay his debt, and that the creditor had insisted upon claiming the whole amount from the unfortunate arbiter. They concluded by convicting the autobiographer of boastfulness. What they failed to notice is that another letter, addressed to Montaigu by his brother, the chevalier, on October 21, 1748, relates to the same incident, and proves that Rousseau's whole text is based upon the truth. This letter is also far more informative than the hairdresser's and contains an account of the affair from 1744 to the end of 1748. From it we learn the following: that the creditor originally entrusted the promissory note to the Chevalier de Montaigu in Paris, who sent it to Venice in the autumn of 1743 by courtesy of the ambassador's French cook; that early in 1744 the embassy secretary used it effectively to present a claim before the senate which enjoined payment (although the said claim has not yet come to light any more than the senate's judgment); that, although the secretary later lost the note, the debtor was nevertheless eventually forced to remit but only after Rousseau's departure, when the sum was deposited at the consulate doubtless without his knowledge; and that the chevalier, who accompanied Madame de Montaigu to Venice in October, 1744, was upon that occasion unable to secure the money without Rousseau's consent, presumably because the latter could be held answerable for it. If the creditor's letter to Montaigu shows that the hairdresser tried unsuccessfully to collect a quarter of the debt from Rousseau in Paris in 1745, the chevalier's letter shows that in 1748 the same hairdresser successfully took the ambassador's brother to court for the whole amount by unscrupulously maintaining that the latter had taken the note to Venice himself and was therefore responsible for it. In his letter the distraught victim, forced to appeal the case, begs the count to send him proof of the senate's judgment and of the debtor's remittance, together with verification of the dates of these events and of his own visit to Venice. He also asks for Rousseau's
address. This is all we know. If, as is most likely, the information was furnished, Rousseau in turn could have been indicted unless he paid the entire debt. He probably did so for that reason if for no other, but not until he received his salary from the ambassador the following year (1749). The writer of Les Confessions furnishes hardly any of these details. He imparts only the former secretary’s unwillingness to submit to an obvious injustice. The latter’s repugnance must have been aggravated by the thought that, if he had been remunerated when he should have been and had not been completely impoverished in 1745, he would have had to pay only a quarter of the sum. As for the money left at the consulate, which ought to have been forwarded to him or to the creditor, its fate is uncertain. The documentation remains fragmentary and obscure as usual. On the other hand, there is no lack of clarity in the story in the memoirs, where events are used to symbolize a love of justice which victimizes the hero and enriches others without winning gratitude or even gratification for himself. The youthful idealist does not always escape unscathed from the personal risks involved in the signal privilege of performing glorious or vainglorious deeds to bring the King of France’s protection to his subjects. Years later, the writer’s classical sobriety of style and simplicity of narration underline the contrast between his illusions and his disillusionment when he is brought to face the reality of life.

CLIMAX: WAR STORY

The fourth and last in the sequence of “heroic” scenes in the seventh book of Les Confessions is the most dramatic of all. The young Rousseau, whose work is all his study, is alone at the embassy going about the King’s business while Montaigu, always impatient to be away on post days, that is Saturdays, is absent on vague errands. The War of the Austrian Succession is spreading through Italy. The
Austrian commander, Lobkowitz, is marching toward Naples to wrest it from France's allies the Spanish Bourbons, whose army has just effected a "memorable retreat" under the Count de Gages. In this emergency, news from Vienna reaches the embassy at Venice that a spy in the service of Austria is on his way to Italy to arouse the Neapolitans against their rulers as the Austrians approach. Rousseau forwards the message at once in a letter, which he signs and dispatches himself, to the French ambassador at Naples, the Marquis de l'Hôpital. The kingdom is saved for the Bourbons and they "perhaps" owe this grace to the service of Montaigu's secretary, who is warmly commended by the marquis in a letter to his colleague. But the hero only incurs his employer's resentment for his distinguished role in these affairs and in others of lesser consequence which are nevertheless the occasion of similar expressions of approval from the King's ambassadors abroad.

This story, the self-confident tone of which I have tried to render as faithfully as possible, has been discredited ever since Les Confessions was first published. Its detractors have sought to cast doubt upon its literal truth. Indeed the whole incident was for a long time, and until about forty years ago, regarded as entirely fictitious by all critics unanimously. Today we know that it is at least partially true, in the narrowest sense of the word. We possess the message from Vienna to Venice concerning the spy, dated October 26, 1743. Although we do not have the letter from the embassy to the marquis, we do have the latter's reply of November 19 addressed to Montaigu. But Rousseau is not even mentioned in the reply or in any other letters, long preserved in the Montaigu archives or elsewhere, and originating in French legations in Naples or abroad, whose

75 Mme d'Epinay was the first to discredit it and this is recalled by Cérèsole, Faugère, and A. de Montaigu.
76 This view is defended by Cérèsole, Faugère, A. de Montaigu, and Montigny.
commendation the memorialist professes to have won.\textsuperscript{77} Besides, the two missives from Vienna and Naples date from about four months before Lobkowitz’s advance and de Gages’ retreat that began the following March 7, 1744.\textsuperscript{78} It was on June 16 to 18, more than three months after this military offensive, that the Austrians at Velletri surprised the King of Naples and the Duke of Modena, who were saved by an alarm from the Marquis de l’Hôpital and were thereby enabled to triumph over the enemy.\textsuperscript{79} This is all that can be said with certainty about the circumstances in which the famous narrative evidently took its source. Modern scholars are therefore inclined to conclude that the writer of Les Confessions is guilty either of confusion or illusion. It is tempting to accept this explanation, so much so that even the editor of the Venetian Despatches adopts it.\textsuperscript{80} In fact, he considers Rousseau’s pretensions ridiculous, chiefly on the grounds that news of spy activities in Naples was peddled by all French embassies in Italy from the beginning of January to late March, 1744, and that the fate of Naples did not in any case depend upon such reports. He is surely right on both counts. But his conclusion is as dangerous as that of his predecessors.

The danger of such a dogmatic deduction resides in the lack of evidence to support it at the present time, even

\textsuperscript{77} For letters from Naples, Genoa, and Constantinople formerly preserved in the Montaigu archives, see Souchon, Correspondance diplomatique, pp. 325–342. For the marquis’ letter dated November 19, 1743, see O.C., Pléiade, I, 1395 n4 (to p. 306). For the letter from M. Vincent, chargé d’affaires at Vienna, addressed to Montaigu, see \textit{ibid.}, 1395 n5 (to p. 306), and III, 1816 n2 (to p. 1068).

\textsuperscript{78} De Gages’ retreat is often mentioned in Montaigu’s official correspondence; see Souchon, Correspondance diplomatique, pp. 30–31, 60, and especially Venetian Despatches in O.C., Pléiade, III, 1116–1117, 1132, 1139, 1147, 1157, 1159, 1175.

\textsuperscript{79} The engagements at Velletri are discussed in the embassy correspondence; see Souchon, Correspondance diplomatique, pp. 75–76, 330–331, 343–344. See also the Venetian Despatches of June and July in O.C., Pléiade, III; and cf. I, 1394–1395 n2 (to p. 306).

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Ibid.}, III, pp. ccxii–ccxiii, 1835–1836 n1 (to p. 1160).
though it may perhaps be confirmed by future findings. We might be wiser to proceed more cautiously and to suspend judgment for the moment, especially if we recall that the memorialist's other statements, contradicted by well-known critics of the past, have gradually been authenticated, even if it took a century of research to confirm them. Thus we avoid giving grounds for Rousseau's contention in Book IV that "even when we meet with truth, we are subject to build our opinions on false principles." In Book IX he adds: "... how deceiving are judgments founded on appearances to which people give so much credit."

The reasoning that tempts us to doubt the memorialist's truthfulness in this particular case, while very compelling, is not entirely flawless and I think it is safer to admit it. For example, how can we form any opinion at all from the marquis' immediate reply to an early warning which he could hardly appreciate at its full value more than a month before Austria's ambitions in Italy became clear, four months before they were activated, and over seven months before they were finally thwarted? His letter of November 19 is not the acknowledgment to which Rousseau alludes in *Les Confessions*. It could not possibly be. The order of events in the book makes it quite clear that the acknowledgment mentioned dates from after the defense of the Kingdom of Naples when the marquis was in a position to estimate the value of Rousseau's "service to the common cause," as the writer phrases it. That service did not consist exclusively in the initial spy report, but in other bulletins as well, of which the memorialist says nothing but which were numerous in the ensuing months. In giving prominence to the first one he imparts concreteness to his narration. He also exercises the artist's right to use discrimination in selecting among the facts of experience the most striking and forceful circumstance for, as far as we know today, the warning forwarded by Montaigu's secretary in early November was the first intelligence Naples had of Austrian spy activities in the kingdom. All other
warnings date from much later. The marquis may have realized this and acknowledged it after the issue at Velletri. But, whether he did or not, by that time he must have understood the value of other news bulletins which Rousseau sent to Naples to report on war developments every week throughout his term of office. They surely constituted an essential part of his "service" to the Bourbons.

There are grounds for this broader interpretation of the work of art. Rousseau's weekly bulletins to Naples have not yet come to light and perhaps never will. However we can form a fair idea of their contents, for, like all the others sent to French ministers at home and abroad, they no doubt paralleled his weekly dispatches to Versailles and were based on the same material procured through Italian informers and French residents. Why is it ridiculous to assume that the communications with Naples won praise from the marquis, especially since the corresponding court dispatches were commended by the King of France, precisely for their fine reports upon the war in Italy? Let us look into the dispatches for a moment, beginning with the spy report, for of course it was also forwarded to Versailles. In these letters Montaigu's secretary, after relaying to the King that first startling alert from Vienna, related other major events of 1743 to 1744 that were just as decisive in the history of Naples and even more so, such as Austria's designs upon the kingdom and Lobkowitz's intentions as these became clearer. In fact the usually well-phrased texts record step by step Austria's diplomatic entanglements with Sardinia and England, in her enterprises against the Bourbons of Spain and Naples supported by France. In particular the communiqués permit us to follow important troop movements in Romagna in the autumn of 1743 when the Austro-Sardinians under Lobkowitz and the Spaniards under de Gages faced one another there, bidding their time for months while Franco-

\[1\] Ibid., I, 1394 n1 (to p. 306).
\[2\] Ibid., III, 1068, 1816 n2 (to p. 1068).
Spanish troops from the North slowly approached Sardinian Piedmont, with Austrian Lombardy and Tuscany separating them from their allies in the South. Suddenly, early in 1744, the Venetian dispatches warned the French court of imminent action in Romagna and Naples. On January 11 and more especially on February 1, a few weeks before Lobkowitz’s offensive and de Gages’ retreat began, the embassy in Venice informed the French king that the Austrian commander had assembled his troops on the Adriatic at Rimini and Cattolica, as if he were about to march against the Spaniards. Moreover he had publicly declared that he had designs upon the kingdom of Naples, in which case the Count de Gages was expected to retreat. On February 8, another dispatch from the embassy advised the King of France that Lobkowitz had definite orders from Vienna to attack the Spaniards and proceed with his plans. It is inconceivable that all this news was not conveyed in the weekly bulletins to the marquis at Naples. It would have been of even greater value to him than the November warning about the Austrian conspiracy which, by the way, was confirmed by informers throughout Italy from January to March, 1744.

Even more urgent and crucial alarms are to be found in the Venetian dispatches of the ensuing critical months, from the eve of the offensive launched by Lobkowitz early in March to the beginning of summer when the danger was past. These dispatches to Versailles, which must have been practically duplicated in the lost Neapolitan ones, reported diligently and intelligently upon Austrian military tactics and de Gages’ “memorable retreat” to the Abruzzi to join forces with Charles VII and the Neapolitans on the frontiers of the Bourbon realm. The communications verified information about the spreading Austrian conspiracy,

82 Ibid., 1135 and cf. C.C., I, 248 note f (to no. 95). See also letters of January 11 and February 1 in O.C., Pléiade, III, 1116–1117, 1131–1132. In fact, the fortunes and misfortunes of Lobkowitz can be traced throughout the Venetian Despatches.
forwarded news from Vienna, and recorded all the movements of both armies down the Adriatic coast, until the encounters at Velletri in the papal states on June 17 and 18, 1744, when Austrian progress toward Naples was definitively arrested, although the Austrians were not really defeated until about three weeks later. These excellent news bulletins, undoubtedly reproduced for the marquis as they were for other ambassadors, were well received at the French court and won praise, which Montaigu acknowledged in these terms on June 27, ten days after the engagement at Velletri: "I am very glad that the news I have been giving to the King about the military affairs of the kingdom of Naples pleased His Majesty even if it had no other merit than that of being the only news to reach him."

In the light of the memorialist's contention that the secretary's zeal, evinced here and elsewhere too, caused disputes in the embassy, a contention apparently supported by the Veronese and Olivet affairs, is it a coincidence that on the same June 27, Rousseau, in despair over the count's hostility, drafted a written appeal, presumably to Mari, in the hope of restoring peace in the palace? Is it also a coincidence that at this very time Montaigu located someone to replace him, as documents long kept in the family archives prove? Dissensions must have risen high if the marquis was not less generous than the French court in acknowledging similar bulletins at the same time, and if, as we are told in Les Confessions, the secretary, having signed some of them himself, was therefore specifically designated. The memorialist's account might be true. Montaigu, although careful to sign all dispatches to the

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84 E.g., ibid., pp. 1169–1170. Regarding the spreading Austrian conspiracy see pp. 1159–1160.

85 Ibid., pp. 1211–1212: "Je suis fort aise que les nouvelles que je donnois au Roy des affaires militaires du Royaume de Naples aient été agréables à Sa Majeste, quand elles n'auroient d'autre mérite que celui d'être arrivées seules."

86 C.C., I, 250, and Mr. Leigh's notes. See also A. de Montaigu, Démêlés, pp. 82–86.
French court and ministers in the French government, was not scrupulous about signing letters to other ambassadors. This is proven by two very fine ones of June 16 and July 15, 1744, addressed to the Count de Castellane in Constantinople and signed by Rousseau in his employer's absence. They contain excellent reviews of the military situation and were recently found to confirm the text of Les Confessions and belie the critics who had doubted it for more than fifty years. If Rousseau, left alone in charge of the embassy, performed this service for the Bourbons in Naples and won recognition for it, then his superior may conceivably have suspected him of excessive zeal and may even have destroyed some of the correspondence from the marquis, together with any other testimonials in the young man's favor, except the one from the King of France, who does not name him. Such an action would not be very surprising if we have some elementary understanding of human nature and reflect upon the bitter feeling that existed between the two men. Of course there is also the possibility that the missing letter of commendation from Naples may yet come to light. Even if it does not, there is really no serious discrepancy between the basic facts recorded in the correspondence and those incorporated into the autobiography.

This study of historical documents and the work of art,
taken together, gives us new insight into their relationship. The comparison of texts ought to weaken considerably our traditional confidence in archives and epistles, as opposed to literature and art, an attitude fostered of course by scientific positivism. Without *Les Confessions* the correspondence or lack of it would often appear enigmatic and perplexing. Taken alone the letters are frequently hypothetical, allusive, and inconclusive. We have also seen that they can be as full of passion and prejudice as the memoirs. And yet, in letters as in life, when feelings are revealed at all and are not completely concealed, as they so often are, they are much more ambiguously and deviously conveyed, less fully and finely expressed, than in a literary work like Rousseau's masterpiece. The further we pursue our collation the more we are brought to realize that, while in the past the correspondence was used to test the "truth" of *Les Confessions*, on the contrary it is the autobiography that imparts truth and meaning to the letters.

Let the reader not misunderstand. The foregoing discussion merely shows that, if the war story in the memoirs cannot be proven literally true, it cannot be proven false either. Yet no one has to this day made such an admission. Suppose for a moment that the account is based upon objective facts, like the other stories preceding it, which scholars have gradually been forced to accept as inspired by actuality. If a whole succession of weekly warnings was sent to Naples, as it undoubtedly was, between the dramatic news of the now notorious spy from Vienna, which was relayed long before the Austrian conspiracy became common knowledge, and the final issue at Velletri almost eight months later, which proved the value of all bulletins from the first, it would be artistically permissible and even desirable for Rousseau in his narrative to epitomize and compress the diffuseness of actuality as he did in the Veronese case. He could quite legitimately juxtapose cause and effect, eliminate useless, repetitive detail, and reduce the story to its indispensable elements for the sake of
greater force and concentration. To impart an idea of the most important and burdensome part of his work, namely the formulation of war bulletins, instead of speaking of them in general terms and thereby running the risk of redundance and vagueness, he could justifiably select the first concrete and impressive case of the spy. He could then lead the reader directly from this initial alert to the ultimate outcome, passing over in silence the many bulletins that followed, to reach the possible conclusion that the Bourbons may “perhaps” be indebted to Jean-Jacques as was their kinsman, the King of France, and as the ambassador to Naples allegedly professed to be. Rousseau makes no positive assertion about it. Their indebtedness would be owing to a warning about spy activity, issued long in advance of all other such warnings and followed for months by regular reports of military movements, which the memorialist ignores although the marquis could hardly have afforded to do likewise. In this case the only liberty the writer would have taken with material reality is the one he took in the Veronese case: he fails to mark clearly the passage of time. But this might be expected of an historian of the soul. An appreciation of his purpose in this capacity, and an understanding of his artistic procedure, undoubtedly foster a keener awareness of the writer’s meaning.

Yet in whatever manner the memorialist handles the real events to which he refers, they are not the determining factor to assess the relative place of art and truth in his work and to judge of its value from the double point of view. The literal adherence of a scene to objective facts, or its deviations from them, cannot recommend or discredit it artistically or even psychologically. But it can draw attention to the writer’s methods and throw into new perspective the spiritual qualities he seeks to embody in an artistic form. The war story in particular contains an unusually penetrating portrayal of Rousseau’s character, as well as a fine example of his writing, aspects that have been overlooked by all critics without exception.
Although they are the most important of all. The spy incident with which the story begins has the advantage of rendering the youthful excitement of the erstwhile introvert as he is now caught up in the events of a major European war. As for the part he assumes in the final issue, surely it is worth observing that he can scarcely contain his exultation as he contemplates himself as the savior of the Bourbons. Would he have been as pleased to be credited with having shaped the course of things to come, prepared the way for the revolution, and brought about the ultimate downfall of the monarchy in France? The paradox in his nature is here invested with figurative imagery and finds dramatic expression in these recollections of personal accomplishment in the service of France and her allies.

The importance that the author of Les Confessions attributes to this scene is indicated by its position in the narrative, which does not follow the chronological order of events. The writer is well aware that the Olivet report and the other commercial affair date from the time of the secretary's definitive disgrace and the last days in Venice, since he has already attributed the loss of the promissory note to the confusion of his departure and since later in the story of his resignation he reverts to the Olivet matter. Nevertheless the war story displaces the others and is given prominence as the climax of the seventh book and the highest point in the young man's life at the head of the palace of France. Since it represents the most substantial and responsible part of his task at the embassy, this is as it should be.

Anti-climax

In the part he plays in these four scenes Rousseau seems suddenly unaware of the disparity between personal dignity and social distinction. The soul expresses itself no longer in a sequence of contrasts and conflicts but in a
series of triumphs in which all its powers are challenged to fulfillment. The theme of the seventh book is almost reversed. The actual role assumed by the protagonist is great, exceeding the personal limitations of the indolent dreamer, and carries the individual outside himself and beyond himself. But the distinction he enjoys is hardly the kind he might have been expected to seek, for it violates his professed principles no less than his naturally introspective temperament. He whose republican birthright entitled him to share the supreme power as a member of the sovereign and to defend that noble privilege "with the heart of a hero and the virtues of a sage," as he says in the epistle to Parisot, is claiming his heritage in a compromising manner. Yet, for the moment, he seems insensitive to any inconsistency between his democratic convictions and his position as agent of the King of France, so gratifying is that position to his personal aspirations and to his sense of justice and social order too.

In the memoirs the secretary's situation is precarious, not because he is violating his nature and his creed but because his energy has aroused the count's suspicion. This is directly stated in the last of the four scenes. Reading Les Confessions in conjunction with correspondence and archives, we cannot help but observe that all the glorious or vainglorious deeds coincide perfectly in time with either Rousseau's discharge or his earlier letters of distress motivated by his employer's antagonism, as though his zeal were in very truth the cause of his disgrace. We are tempted to conclude from our collation that he fell from favor because he secured artists for the French court, freed a French ship for duty, and saved Naples for the Bourbons. In fact the autobiographer tells us openly that his dedication to his task instigated Montaigu's wrath and was the only complaint laid against him until the day of their separation.\footnote{O.C., Pléiade, I, 307, 311.} We are intended to witness this devotion in the four scenes leading to the climax.
ART OR APOLOGISTICS?

The young man’s hazardous paradoxical position inevitably determines the denouement of the story in *Les Confessions*. In the book his plight is subtly expressed in a series of implied antitheses, which have never before been brought to light. They underline the connection that the writer has already made between heroism and humiliation. The daring deeds, which are the source of complaints against him, find strangely ignoble counterparts in the mortifications of the sordid scenes that follow in the memoirs. There is a curious and very cunning parallelism between them. For example, the man who took pleasure in forcing a patrician impresario to release artists for the Parisian stage is himself publicly deprived of his loge in a Venetian theater by the ambassador’s “gentleman,” Domenico Vitali, a Mantuan bandit and pander engaged by the count and placed at the head of the palace. Rousseau compels Vitali to make a public apology but thereafter is himself obliged to withdraw from a house where—we are assured—the discipline and dignity he has established give place to debauchery and licentiousness, and where even the ambassador’s chamber is not very orderly. Vitali and an associate, who keeps a house of ill-fame at the Maltese Cross and is appointed to replace a good and long trusted servant of the embassy, make the palace of France intolerable for a well-mannered man. This sinister reversal of fortunes for the embassy secretary prepares us for the anti-climax of the Venetian story.

More vicissitudes lead to his resignation and correspond finely in the memoirs to other “heroic” gestures of brighter days. The champion of justice, who settles debts that are not his own, is himself the victim of injustice, defrauded

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90 Faugère, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Venise,” p. 822, notes that the ambassador’s household was composed of his secretary, two gentlemen or “maîtres de chambre,” four pages, six officers, two porters, twelve footmen, and twelve gondoliers. He quotes however from the “Relacion manuscrita de l’entrée du marquis de Durfort,” of November 28, 1759.
of compensation for his services to the legation. He lives in the most abject poverty. The supper table, which is part of his rightful payment, is ignoble, cheerless, and ill-lit, nor is it graced by the ambassador's presence, for His Excellency does not sup. Other privileges belonging to the secretary are taken from him, such as his gondola and liveried attendant. For a whole year—which is stretched to five—his salary is withheld. The ambassador all the while lives in luxury, leasing an extravagant holiday villa on the Brenta Riviera and transforming it in the French manner at enormous cost to himself. Even these frustrations do not drive the young man from his post. What material privation cannot do, anguish of spirit accomplishes. He feels impelled to retire, we are told, only when he becomes conscious of his employer's unmistakable intention to deny him the honor due to faithful service. He discerns this intention on two notable occasions. He, who acted to save the realm of Naples for the Bourbons, is deemed unworthy by birth to take his usual place at the ambassador's dinner table in the event of a proposed visit from the Duke of Modena. The duke, dispossessed of his estates by the Austro-Sardinians, is temporarily staying in Venice with his family. The fact that the dinner fails to take place does not make the offense less hurtful. Greater mortification still is in store for the secretary. He, who alone procured the release of Captain Olivet's ship, is denied any recognition for his zeal. In the book the ambassador engages the second secretary, who is also his private secretary, to write an account of the affair for the Minister for the Navy, divesting Rousseau of the honor of the depositions and enclosing a duplicate of the report to attribute it to Patizel. This is the last incident the memorialist confides to us before confessing the circumstances of the secretary's resignation. The latter relinquishes his post in spite of the ambassador's desire to retain him, but not until he is as convinced as the writer would like us to be that further
association with a man who has fallen into general dis­esteem could never make but only mar his fortune.

Throughout the story of these vexations the reader cannot help but recall the epic scenes that prefigure them and are now infamously inverted. It would be difficult to believe that this clever parallelism or antithesis is not deliberate. But whether it is or not, it is there just the same and it performs a function, as we have already hinted. It reinforces the connection that the writer has established, and which the correspondence actually suggests, between the secretary’s almost exaggerated zeal and ensuing humiliations, as between cause and effect. The implication is that the vainglorious deeds are the cause of his misfortunes, as though his services were indeed considered crimes, as the autobiographer says. Thus an artistic device casts subtle light upon what is intended as a moral truth and lends power to the closing episodes of the drama. At the same time, the analogy of opposing scenes brings out once more the leitmotiv of the seventh book, the discrepancy between personal worth and social approval, which breeds rebellion in the restless soul of the young Rousseau at a critical moment in his brief public life.

Before analyzing historically these pages of the Venetian story, I should forewarn the reader that, from this point, we shall be considering largely the narration of an open quarrel between the ambassador and his secretary. I do not, for that reason, propose to change either my object or my method. Rousseau is being treated not as an apologist but as a writer who seeks to embody psychological truth in an artistic form. I shall therefore continue to bring into relief, not merely artistic devices, like the inverted parallelism discussed above with its moral implications, but also the role of truth in the writer’s art. I shall trace the historical origins of these pages as I have all others, and the elements of both circumstantial and psychological truth contained therein, without hesitating to state the facts as they are known to us, whether the author is or
is not the spokesman of the truth he promises, and whatever relation that truth bears to actuality. In stating facts I seek neither to defend nor to attack, but merely to pursue my literary purpose in order to learn to what extent Rousseau pursues his.

The phase of the Venetian experience to which I have been alluding, rich as it is in documents, archives, and erudite research, is particularly valuable to determine the relative place of the intuitive and romantic imagination in the art of *Les Confessions*. Contemporary evidence is sensational enough to show that the author probably had material for memoirs in the manner of Casanova. This evidence consists mainly of three spy reports, made for the Venetian inquisitors on April 23, May 5, and May 10, 1744, and preserved in the state archives of Venice at the Frari convent there. They contain the results of investigations on the neighborhood and household of the French embassy at the time, and accentuate the classical discipline of Rousseau's narration. He might have told us, for example, as the spy does, that armed bandits, smugglers, thieves, and other criminals, living on embassy territory, enjoyed the protection of diplomatic immunity by paying tribute to Montaigu's "gentleman," who was head of the "lista," and that one of them even frequented the ambassador's court and rode in his gondola. The memorialist might have related, as colorfully as the spy, how "the Mantuan gentleman," as Vitali is called, associated only with thieves, swindlers, and panders, and completely dominated the ambassador, together with an associate, Carlo of the Maltese Cross, familiar to the

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91 These reports by the spy Falletti were published in Cérèsole, *J.-J. Rousseau à Venise*, pp. 68–71; cf. p. 19. See also O.C., Pléiade, III, 1822 n1 (to p. 1097).

92 The "lista" is the territory occupied by the embassy and all adjoining houses to which the rights and privileges of diplomatic immunity were extended (particularly exemption from customs duties), though sometimes a distinction is made between "lista," as freedom of the palace, and "varij," as freedom of the neighborhood.
reader of *Les Confessions*. Rousseau might even have added, as does the spy, that the ambassador himself was quite absorbed in revelry, courtesans, gaming, and the rest, but never thought of paying his debts.\(^{93}\) He might have disclosed, finally, that these disorders provoked the Venetian police to intervene on embassy property, forcing Montaigu to protest to Nicolò Erizzo, his Venetian counselor, against such violations of diplomatic privileges, jealously guarded by the French government for over a hundred years. The seriousness of the ambassador’s position may be judged by a contemporary report upon France’s intransigent attitude in the matter of diplomatic immunity. The report was prepared on May 15, 1744, for the Venetian Council by the senator Girolamo Grimani and is preserved in the state archives of Venice. It contains a detailed history of innumerable disputes between French envoys and the local senate from 1639 to 1744 and was prompted by incidents that took place under Montaigu’s jurisdiction.\(^{94}\) Rousseau knew of these things, for he wrote numerous communications about them, not only to the French court,

\(^{93}\) In his report of May 5, dealing mainly with Montaigu’s household, Falletti writes:
On Sunday, after a conference with Erizzo, he [the ambassador] went to the Brenta with the Marquis Mari and Chichina ballerina. . . . These men continually go to amuse themselves in her house. The same evening at one o’clock he sent his Mantuan gentleman with the porter to the houses where wine was sold to stop the sale, except at the house of the widow Fera because the gentleman with Carlo of the Maltese Cross and G. B. Bozato and a certain Ruberti go to that house with prostitutes day and night. This gentleman frequents only thieves and swindlers and those who live on prostitution. . . . This gentleman, with Carlo of the Maltese Cross, leads the ambassador as he wishes and makes him do what he wishes. And indeed the ambassador himself is completely absorbed in revelry, courtesans, gaming, and so on, but he never thinks of paying his debts.

See Cérésolle, *J.-J. Rousseau à Venise*, p. 70. In this connection, Monglon, “Rousseau, secrétaire de M. de Montaigu,” p. 47, recalls one of the count’s letters showing that he was in no hurry for his wife to join him (see Souchon, *Correspondance diplomatique*, p. 93). But it is also true that, one month after he arrived in Venice, Montaigu asked for permission to return to France to fetch his family, and on October 5 and November 30 he repeated the request; see O.C., Pléiade, III, 1057, 1813 n1 (to p. 1057), 1093.

\(^{94}\) Cérésolle, *J.-J. Rousseau à Venise*, pp. 72–78.
but also to the Venetian government, whose inquiries brought the scandals to light. The autobiographer might have written a great deal more to win sympathy for the secretary against his superior, especially since he was not personally involved in the scandals. It is true that three years later, in a letter to the Foreign Office of June 17, 1747, Montaigu accused his “former secretary” of smuggling, but without naming anyone. It is also true that 150 years afterwards his descendant took up the accusation and applied it to Rousseau. But leading scholars have either exonerated him of all suspicion or else declared that it is impossible to prove anything.\(^95\) In fact there is no evidence at all that he was in any way implicated. Besides, all spy reports and other disclosures prompted by diplomatic abuses date from after late February, when he lost his ascendency at the embassy,\(^96\) was estranged from his employer, and was even expecting to be replaced in a few weeks, judging by the draft of a letter dated February 22, to which we have referred, taken in conjunction with that of April 30, presumably intended for the count’s brother in Paris. Rousseau cannot therefore be connected with the irregularities. Hence it is all the more noteworthy that the account of affairs in *Les Confessions* is strangely subdued by comparison with historical documents.

\(^{95}\) A. de Montaigu, *Démêlés*, pp. 22–23, 46–47, 65–66. Théophile Dufour successfully exonerates Rousseau of all suspicion in his review of A. de Montaigu’s book in *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 1 (1905), 305–306, and is strongly supported by Derche, “Autour du séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Venise,” pp. 136–137, and by the editor of the *Venetian Despatches* in O.C., Pléiade, III, 1844–1845 n1 (to p. 1201). As the latter points out, since smugglers used permit duplicates as permits by erasing the written (not printed) word “duplicate,” Rousseau would have had to erase a word he had just finished writing himself. Strangely enough, Mr. Leigh (in *C.C.*, 1, 239) reopens the case, alleging that Rousseau may perhaps have been guilty, although he admits that it cannot be proven. Perhaps it is better to consider a man innocent until he is proven guilty.

\(^{96}\) On May 5 Falletti reports that the Mantuan gentleman and Carlo of the Maltese Cross enjoy primacy in the embassy, and on April 23 he refers to the Mantuan as “capo di lista.” See above.
The memorialist’s forbearance appears even more remarkable when we examine the *Venetian Despatches* in detail. They show beyond a doubt that, coinciding with the secretary’s disgrace, there was a marked change in the ambassador’s attitude toward rogues seeking refuge from justice under his protection. In the early dispatches, for example in the autumn of 1743, Montaigu zealously professed to rid the embassy, and the city too, of several scoundrels. At that time he prided himself on adhering scrupulously to his instructions, which warned him specifically against abuses of this kind and enjoined upon him careful supervision of all embassy personnel. His explicit duty and expressed desire was to show Venice that the King of France did not seek to shelter criminals in the palace. If even at the beginning of his term of office Montaigu occasionally encouraged adventurers, he did so in the hope of engaging them as spies to obtain secret information. It was in those first months that he dismissed Count Piati, the so-called “good and long trusted servant of the embassy” who was in fact found guilty of smuggling in December, 1743. Upon that occasion, Montaigu in writing to the Foreign Office blamed Le Blond for the unsatisfactory installation of the embassy household and choice of servants. His intention was to discredit the “ignorant and uninformed” consul in the eyes of the court. Yet it was because the ambassador ultimately replaced the smuggler by a rogue of another sort, and in the end retained notorious criminals in his service, that the Venetian police intervened. When they first did so in February,

97 O.C., Pléiade, III, 1087.
99 Regarding adventurers used as spies see O.C., Pléiade, III, 1092, 1119. Regarding the dismissal of Piati for smuggling and Montaigu’s attacks on Le Blond see pp. 1053, 1093–1094, 1096–1097, and C.C., I, 218. The dispatches, which discuss Piati’s activities and were written by Rousseau, show that he knew about them. Perhaps he felt that Piati was respectable by comparison with his successor. Montaigu certainly lacked discernment in the establish-
as the spy reports show, Montaigu made no allusion to the matter at all in his dispatches to Versailles. If, on March 22, he finally complained about such intervention in a meeting with his Venetian counselor, as the latter states in a report submitted to his government two days later, Montaigu’s report to the French authorities on the same meeting indicates that the two men merely discussed the republic’s neutrality and nothing else.\(^{100}\) This sudden cautiousness is remote from his early naiveté, though less puzzling than the memorialist’s discretion.

At last, in a dispatch of early April, the count artfully inquired of the French Foreign Office about the extent of diplomatic privileges, explaining that he had no reproach to fear but merely wished to know how to defend his rights in case of an emergency.\(^{101}\) He fails to say that the emergency had already arisen, that the rights in question had been infringed two months before and that he could hardly wait any longer to vindicate them. He tried to defend them in a subsequent conference on May 8, necessitated by another incident of a few days earlier, but he failed in the endeavor and succeeded only in earning the contempt and derision of his counselor, who promptly reported the matter to the Venetian government and whose report, dated May 12, is extant.\(^{102}\)

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\(^{100}\) See O.C., Pléiade, III, 1163 (Letter to Amelot of March 28, 1744), and cf. p. 1843 n5 (to p. 1191) and see below, n102.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., pp. 1167–1168.

\(^{102}\) Ibid., p. 1843 n1 (to p. 1192). First on March 24 and then more especially on May 12, 1744, Erizzo reported to the Venetian senate on interviews with Montaigu concerning diplomatic immunity. In the second interview they discussed intervention by the Venetian police on embassy territory in February and May. During the discussion Montaigu claimed freedom of the palace and of the neighborhood too. As evidence of his good intentions to prevent abuses, he referred to his dismissal of an embassy gentleman for smuggling (presumably Piatì, who was dismissed in December) and to his efforts to control the illegal use of permit duplicates used for importing merchandise on several occasions between April and June, 1744. For this report of May 12 now in the Venetian archives, see Cérésole, J.-J. Rousseau à Venise, pp. 79–84.
prompt to notify his superiors. Not until May 16 do the Venetian dispatches finally refer to the action of the police. Their intervention is represented however as having occurred only within the previous month, instead of three months before, and is attributed, not to disorders in the embassy, or to Le Blond’s ill advice in the selection of the household, but to pro-Austrian and therefore anti-French tendencies in the republic, fomented by Montaigu’s estranged counselor. In fact, the count uses the incidents to discredit Erizzo at Versailles in a malicious letter of May 30. In this incredible document he asks the King for permission to refrain from conferring again with the counselor, and even from applying for a new one. He requests the liberty to communicate with the senate exclusively by means of memorials, in order to undermine Erizzo’s influence in the Venetian government and to show “how dangerous he is to the interests of the Bourbons with his haughty, supercilious air and indecent sneer.” Here Montaigu displays what critics call his “lack of discernment,” “rage,” and “blindness.” Such were his violent reactions when his protests not only failed to stop the incidents but were ridiculed besides. The counselor’s mockery is not incomprehensible. He must have wondered as we do, why, in a serious matter like this, the ambassador did not appeal to the senate if he was sure of his rights, since memorials were the usual expedients for negotiations of the kind, even though a counselor had been named.

Documentation permits us to follow Montaigu’s vagaries still further in this business with a view to comparing the flux of life with the story of Les Confessions. Only after waiting for months did he finally have recourse to official

103 For the letter of May 16 see O.C., Pléiade, III, 1191–1192, addressed to the Foreign Office. There Montaigu tells of complaining to his counselor, and in the next letter of May 23 he says that it was on that occasion that Erizzo showed his pro-Austrian sympathies; see p. 1194. The “incredible” letter is on pp. 1197–1198; it is entirely ciphered and is addressed to the Foreign Office. The words “lack of discernment,” “rage,” and “blindness,” are Derche’s words, adopted by Candaux: pp. 1843–1844 n1 (to p. 1198).

104 Ibid., p. 1828 n1 (to p. 1119); here Rousseau’s translation of a message from the senate to Montaigu explains this.
channels and then he was careful not to let Versailles know about it. In an apparent effort to be tactful or perhaps to confuse the issue, he submitted to the senate two memorials almost at once, within three days of each other. In the first one, of June 5, he expressed his disapproval of contraband, urging the arrest of smugglers in the city who used embassy permits illegally. His object was presumably to ingratiate himself with the Venetian government and restore its confidence in him in order to prepare the way for the second memorial. Then at long last on June 8 he formally protested against police intervention on the lista, dating back over a period of almost four months.¹⁰⁵

The senate was not deceived. It ignored the protest memorial for six weeks but replied immediately on June 6 to the first innocuous one, which Montaigu forwarded to Versailles on June 13 together with the senate's answer and his regular weekly dispatch.¹⁰⁶ In the latter he explained his action against smuggling by saying that he merely wished the Venetian government to have no advantage over him in case of more essential matters. He refrained from enclosing or even referring to the memorial of June 8, probably to avoid divulging that there had been skirmishes with the police on embassy territory since February, and also perhaps to avoid giving the impression that the local authorities were justified. This impression arises from the combination of the two communications, the first of which, the denunciation of smugglers, was far too obviously intended to win a favorable reception for the second. The ambassador could not even mention the latter to Versailles without forwarding a copy at once, as he was supposed to do in any case. Meanwhile all his subterfuges were vain, for


¹⁰⁶ For the dispatch see O.C., Pléiade, III, 1204–1205. For Rousseau's translation of the senate's reply see pp. 1845–1846 n3 (to p. 1204), and C.C., I, 241–243, where Leigh gives the Italian text too. He also gives part of the dispatch on p. 243.
smuggling was not the only crime fostered at the embassy, and the police had to intervene again in July\textsuperscript{107} before the republic was finally intimidated into giving satisfaction. It did so by an obsequious reply to the memorial of June 8 and by the arrest of its own officers. Only then was Versailles informed of the protest memorial, in letters of July 25, which were the last of Rousseau’s official dispatches.\textsuperscript{108} The secretary who handled all the correspondence must have understood the events it records, events of great seriousness in the eyes of the French Foreign Office, and the memorialist can hardly have forgotten them, yet he is noticeably restrained in his references to them.

This restraint is an aspect of Rousseau’s writing that has psychological implications as well as artistic. If he refrains from regaling us with the lurid tales he must have known it is simply because he had no part in them and so they have no place in the self-portrait of \textit{Les Confessions}. If he had been involved, he would conceivably have related them just as unabashedly and shamelessly as he does other lurid stories in which he was personally concerned. Yet the crimes encouraged by the embassy determined the course of his life, and he might therefore have been justified in dwelling upon them at length. Even so he desists with curious reticence. No doubt he felt that such incredible situations were an unsuitable theme for his art. Their lack of verisimilitude would only weaken his work, since they would distract attention from the story of the soul and overshadow psychological truth and the fruits of the intuitive imagination. In other words, material which would have been valuable to an apologist is willfully sacrificed in favor of the psychological object, or, as Rousseau would say, “in favor of nature and of truth,”

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{O.C.}, Pléiade, III, 1221–1223, letter to the Foreign Office, July 11, 1744.

\textsuperscript{108} The letters are to the King and Foreign Office; see pp. 1229–1232. For the senate’s reply of July 23 to the memorial of June 8 see pp. 1849–1850 \textit{n}1 (to p. 1231). On August 15, Montaigu finally relented and asked for the release of the officers (Cérésole, \textit{J.-J. Rousseau à Venise}, pp. 96ff.).
which amount to the same thing since he speaks the language of the classics. If *Les Confessions* in general, and the Venetian story in particular, is a failure as apologetics—and I think it is—the reason is partly to be sought in such sacrifices. But a more potent reason is the writer’s frankness and success as a psychologist. He adhered too closely to Plutarch’s classical ideal, and, by revealing his nature and its flaws too freely and too fully in his work, armed against him those whose sympathy he sought. But his art gains in sobriety and realism. He never allows these qualities to be obscured by sensationalism, even in the interests of self-justification and still less for the sake of self-glorification. Small wonder if the Venetian adventurer Casanova refused to call his own memoirs “confessions” upon the grounds that the Swiss writer had marred that fine title! The author of *Les Confessions* bridles his imagination and disciplines his mind and heart in order not to disfigure spiritual truth.

**THE AMBASSADOR’S LETTER**

In addition to the archives which tell us many things Rousseau does not say, we possess private correspondence containing references to all the situations that inspired his dismal picture of the last days in the ambassador’s service: the desolation of life, the mean economies, the somber suppers, the public mortifications, the penury contrasting with Montaigu’s extravagance, the affront occasioned by the Duke of Modena’s proposed visit, and the unjust report of the Olivet affair leading to the crisis in the embassy. This correspondence is valuable since it shows more clearly still what happens to the circumstances of actuality when they are grafted into a work of art to express psychological truth. In particular there is a contemporary letter from the count to the Abbé Alary at the French court, written August 15, 1744.\(^{109}\) It provides a

strange commentary upon the whole denouement of the Venetian story in *Les Confessions* and further underlines the discreet realism of the writer’s art. For this reason it is worthy of study. In it, the ambassador, who confesses that he has not paid his secretary for a year, raises the question of the table which the two men normally shared. Having said that they met only at dinner because the younger man spent every evening gaming at the Venetian casino\(^{110}\) (and therefore presumably did not sup at the embassy), he paradoxically complains of the secretary’s unreasonable demands for supper. A suppressed passage of the original draft of the letter (for we have both versions) is even more paradoxical, for there he says that he himself does not sup. He must have seen that this detail invalidates his previous explanation of why the two met only at dinner. The explanation is weak in any case, since the young man was penniless and could hardly have indulged in such costly pastimes as gaming. Besides, the autobiographer, who confesses his most shameful sins to the world, would surely have admitted the passion for gaming with his usual immodesty, if he had been a victim of it, whereas he professes in fact to have disliked games of chance.\(^{111}\) On the other hand, the inquisitors, who kept the ambassador under close scrutiny, testify, as we have seen, that Montaigu was completely absorbed in these very amusements, like his colleague and constant companion, Mari.\(^{112}\)

As he was wealthy, this would be a more credible reason why he and his secretary did not meet at the embassy supper table. The detail is of no consequence in itself. But it

\(^{110}\) The Ridotto in San Moise street near San Marco; it operated until 1774. Of course there were other private casinos as well, since gambling was one of the most popular Venetian amusements; see Diehl, *Une République patriotique: Venise*, p. 302.

\(^{111}\) His dislike of gaming is mentioned in a letter written to M. de Saint Germain, February 26, 1770, where he says that he played only once in his life, at the Venetian Ridotto (*C.G.*, XIX, 249).

\(^{112}\) We know that the ambassador of Spain gambled at the Ridotto; see Montaigu’s letter to the Foreign Office, written in Rousseau’s hand, February 1, 1744, in *O.C.*, Pléiade, III, 1129.
serves to draw attention to the fact that the memorialist refrains from giving any explanation at all for His Excellency's alleged absence from supper. He makes a laconic reference to it and nothing more. This is another indication of artistic moderation in *Les Confessions*.

The count in his letter to the court furnishes abundant evidence of this nature for he himself is anything but moderate. He deals exhaustively with the most tediously trivial matters. He tells in great detail how he rejected his secretary's demand for a gondola a fortnight after the young man's arrival, and how he repeatedly ignored the plea even when it was made in writing two weeks later. He is careful not to state that he acceded to the "ridiculous" request in November, 1743, as we infer from his correspondence with his brother, which, incidentally, does not even suggest that the gondola was rented. He clearly implies to the court that the secretary never did have a gondola, and even ascribes the latter's insolence to this privation.\footnote{C.C., II, 50. In spite of the ambassador's refusal to grant him a gondola in September, Rousseau was apparently happy, judging by two letters addressed to Montaigu, one of October 7, 1743, from Alary and another of October 25, 1743, from the chevalier (A. de Montaigu, *Démêlés*, p. 25). There are extracts from these letters in C.C., I, 201–202. At the end of October, the secretary still had no gondola (*ibid.*, p. 202, letter from Rousseau to Le Blond, October 29, 1743). Yet, judging by a letter addressed to the count by his brother on November 19, 1743, the former must have acceded to the request by then (A. de Montaigu, *Démêlés*, p. 68 n1, who errs however in attributing the letter to the ambassador, as Mr. Leigh points out).} We are inevitably carried back to Rousseau's one and only terse statement on the subject in the memoirs: "My gondola was taken from me." He does not even say that the ambassador had three luxurious gilded ones, as we know from the *Venetian Despatches*.\footnote{O.C., Pléiade, III, 1821–1822 n1 (to p. 1093).} The simplicity of his narration is remarkable from a literary point of view, whatever moral judgment we may be tempted to make about the pretensions of the two men. By contrast, Montaigu in his letter is undisciplined, indulging in extravagant accusations against the secretary,
much like those he made the following year against the consul, such as disloyalty, spying, insolence, and mediocre service for the duration of a year's engagement. He even intimates, with characteristic suspicion of the intellectual, that he could not trust his subordinate with the embassy ciphers.115 He further accuses the young Rousseau of maliciously presenting letters for signature at the moment the post was leaving. Perhaps he did. Perhaps it was the post that was leaving, instead of the ambassador who, in the pages of Les Confessions, is impatient to be away on post days, leaving the secretary alone to relay to Naples the dramatic news of Austria's movements and save the day at Velletri. The count of course does not acknowledge any collaboration at all on the part of the secretary whom he seeks to discredit at court. He writes with such abandon that he makes us more sensitive than ever to the restraint of the autobiographer's story.

In his letter Montaigu further charges his secretary with resentment at the prospect of being excluded from the society of the Duke of Modena, who was expected to visit the palace but never did. The ambassador does not say why the young man was to be excluded, but since the latter was obviously informed of all state secrets, one can hardly assume that it was for diplomatic reasons. In any case, the incident, also carefully narrated in Les Confessions, was like the Veronese affair, a major cause of dissension in the embassy sometime about mid-February. Indeed, it must have occurred between January 1 and February 26, when the duke was in Venice for family reasons, and certainly not before January 20, when he was released from quarantine. Perhaps it took place even as late as February 22, when Montaigu was in touch with

115 Derche, who supports Dufour to defend Rousseau against the accusation of smuggling, also exonerates him of the suspicion of espionage, recalling that Montaigu made the same accusation against others, including Le Blond, denounced as a spy in a letter of September 19, 1745 ("Autour du séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Venise," pp. 136–138).
him for news of the army, the very day that Rousseau first began to think of returning to Paris apparently as a result of some major vexation. Since the duke, who left for the Spanish front on February 26, was to owe his safety to the diplomatic advice received at Velletri in June, and therefore at least in some degree to the secretary’s offices, the situation created by the count’s pretentiousness is pregnant with dramatic irony, which is brought out by the memorialist’s antitheses. Of course there are no such subtleties in the ambassador’s letter, but his account of the incident basically accords with the one in Les Confessions. Yet there are no further grounds for comparison between them. In the work of art literal truth of circumstances is respected but transfigured into a visible reflection of the soul, its insatiable pride aggravated by an ever present and deep-rooted diffidence.

These spiritual responses are vaguely reflected in another act of rebellion of which Montaigu accuses his secretary in the same letter. This is the haughty refusal to take the public diligence to Padua, where the count was on holiday at his marble villa on the Brenta Riviera, the resort of wealthy patricians, situated between Venice and Padua. The public water coach of Padua was notorious, as Rousseau must have known since he had taken it on his arrival the year before: the passengers in the normal course

115 O.C., Pléiade, III, 1117, 1142 contains references to Montaigu’s connections with the duke, who was in quarantine until January 20. The latter’s family was in Venice since his territory had been occupied by Charles-Emmanuel III of Sardinia in early June, 1742.

117 Regarding the Brenta Riviera in the eighteenth century see Monnier, _Venise au XVIIIe siècle_, p. 43; and Diehl, _Une République patricienne: Venise_, pp. 303–304. Courtois (“Chronologie critique,” p. 43 n2) does not understand that the palace “at Padua” is in fact the holiday villa on the Brenta, a river linking Padua with Venice. A. de Montaigu (_Démêlés_, p. 70) mistakenly asserts that the palace on the Brenta is the house in Venice on the Canareggio canal watered by the Brenta river. This is strange since he knew of his ancestor’s letter to Alary of August 15, 1744, where the ambassador, referring to his country house, implies that it was between Venice and Padua (C.C., II, 51).
of life enacted scenes that might have belonged to some boisterous comedy or grotesque farce.\textsuperscript{118} His refusal is therefore not very surprising. However, Montaigu in his letter implies that the secretary refused to take any means whatsoever to wait upon his orders at the country house.\textsuperscript{119} This would belie \textit{Les Confessions}, since the writer describes the villa as though he had seen it. He probably had, since in an extant contemporary letter, cited above, he proposes to join the ambassador there the following day and submit to him the Olivet report together with some embassy dispatches. But the matter is trivial. Disputes like this about the Paduan diligence find no place in the work of art, for they lack distinction and depth of meaning.

But another of the count’s indictments resounds strangely in the mind and memory of the reader of \textit{Les Confessions}. The ambassador declares in his letter to the court that he finally dismissed the secretary for engaging the second secretary to transcribe a memorial for the Venetian senate instead of doing it himself, on the pretext that the other man’s hand was more beautiful than his own.\textsuperscript{120} This action, which Montaigu does not present in any context, would be incomprehensible unless he himself had already employed de Binis or someone else to handle not private letters but official correspondence, which the punctilious and hypersensitive first secretary regarded not merely as his duty but as his special prerogative. Such, for example, was the copy of the Olivet report prepared for the Minister for the

\textsuperscript{118} Monglond accepts this statement too as made in Montaigu’s version of the quarrel and separation (“Rousseau, secrétaire de M. de Montaigu,” pp. 69–70 n57). For him, the refusal to go to Padua and the entrusting of the memorial to the second secretary, de Binis, explain the violent breach. Rousseau’s departure is discussed below.
Navy and forwarded by Le Blond.121 This alleged injustice figures in the memoirs just before the secretary’s final withdrawal from the palace of the legation. No doubt readers of *Les Confessions* are meant to link the two events, the Olivet affair and Rousseau’s retirement, and to see again in his zeal the real cause of his employer’s alienation. This contention constitutes the real discrepancy between the autobiographer’s version of the quarrel and the ambassador’s. Yet, in a sense, the latter confirms the former, at least by implication. Montaigu unwittingly implies in his letter that he was painfully conscious of his intellectual inferiority to the secretary. This self-consciousness, which would have been enough to breed in his mind distrust and suspicion of the latter’s zeal, appears in the final paragraph of his letter, where he complains of his subordinate’s contempt for his faltering dictation and thus naively testifies against himself. Inadvertently he almost supports Rousseau’s view of the real reason for the breach between them. In any case, throughout his letter, he touches upon and verifies in advance the literal veracity of many details incorporated into the gloomy pages of the Venetian story. His version of the crisis will be discussed below.

It will be seen from the foregoing analysis that the ambassador’s letter to the court records allusively and enigmatically some of the younger man’s resentment. Years later the same mood is still fresh in the soul of the memorialist, and it finds meaning only in his book. There we see how it arises from an acute, over-susceptible sense of dignity which springs in turn from a consciousness of inner worth and accomplishment but is pitifully vulnerable, wounded to the quick by exclusion from a ceremonial banquet or the privation of petty privileges. The hero of the memoirs exemplifies what the author of *Emile* calls “the mad vanity of youth that rebels against humiliation.” The portrait taking shape in the seventh book is not

121 See p. 71 above. The copy, like other extant copies, was made at the consulate and Le Blond undertook to have it sent to the Admiralty.
that of a man on display exhibited by an apologist who is concerned with his "public image" as we say nowadays. The contrast between the petty pride set forth here and the energy of soul depicted earlier recalls the praise of Plutarch cited above. In the Greek writer's biographies Rousseau admires just such contradictions and intimate traits that teach us to love nature or human truth and to know ourselves. Moralists who denounce the autobiographer as a man pay no small tribute to his ability as a portraitist. In the pages under discussion his classical simplicity of phrase and rigorous austerity of detail add clarity and power to the expression of moral confusion and spiritual weakness masquerading as pride. What we have called the leitmotiv of the book reappears in a renewal of the conflict between natural and social values, bringing havoc in its train for the individual who is ill prepared to cope with it.

A CRISIS

The scene in *Les Confessions* showing the last encounter of the principals in the Venetian story is tense with drama. The secretary is suddenly called into the presence of His Excellency. Montaigu is convulsed with rage, provoked by a letter from his brother, to whom Rousseau has appealed for his discharge and a successor after several similar and futile petitions made to the ambassador himself. When the count accuses his secretary of selling the embassy ciphers and is consequently derided on the grounds that no one in Venice is stupid enough to give a penny for them, he threatens to have the servants throw the young man from the window. The secretary gains control of the situation, bids his employer a grave farewell, and makes a dignified retreat, passing through the antechamber where attendants rise in homage as he leaves the palace never to return. Such is the well-known version of the affair.

This scene is based on an actual situation described in
contemporary correspondence, and the truth of the autobiographer’s presentation may be partly understood by a comparison with the letters. These include Montaigu’s above-mentioned letter to the court wherein the only theme that remains to be discussed here is the situation in question. The count’s missive dwells at length upon the circumstances of the last meeting between the two men on August 6, 1744, nine days before it was written. The ambassador confesses to his fury culminating in a threat of violence but says he had already discharged his secretary for being arrogant about the memorial to the senate. He does not say that he had located a new one a month before. He attributes his rage to a dispute over certain deductions he had made in the account and to which the young man insolently objected. The account, by the way, is in the Montaigu family collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale. It shows that the deductions were for certain traveling expenses, notably the journey to Chambéry which Rousseau had made in the vain hope of taking an overland route; for excessive carriage charges levied by the embassy on merchandise that he had ordered from Paris; and for a sum which he owed to a merchant of Venice and which the count, alleging that he had given caution, insisted upon paying although, according to the Venetian Despatches, he had debts enough of his own, and although, according to the memoirs, Carrio too reimbursed the creditor. The ambassador discusses some of the details of the account in his letter. He does not say what incited him to summon his secretary on August 6 and close the account at that time. He does not say it was a letter from his brother. Nor does he mention other details of the situation described in Les Confessions, such as Rousseau’s repeated requests to be replaced or the accusation of selling the ciphers, although elsewhere, in the same letter, he thrice hints vaguely at distrust and suspicion of his secretary. This is all he says.

Yet this item of his letter helps to clarify the circum-

122 C.C., II, 275–278 (Appendix 54).
stances of Rousseau's dismissal in actual life. It confirms other contemporary evidence showing that the dismissal originated with Montaigu and, as we have already observed, was tentatively proposed in February, and more resolutely in June. However, even this evidence does not necessarily belie Les Confessions, since the secretary chose to take the first threat more earnestly than it was intended, as we have seen in his letters drafted in February and April, presumably for Alary and the chevalier. When the ambassador failed to act upon it—and this proves that he was much less serious about it than Rousseau—the latter conceivably raised the question himself in their subsequent relations with one another, just as he does in his April correspondence, probably because of an obvious incompatibility of character. Montaigu's other letters show that he located a new secretary toward the end of June. Rousseau received his discharge shortly after July 25, on which date he drafted messages of homage to possible Parisian patrons, perhaps in view of future dependence. He may have received it on July 31 if it was really occasioned, as the ambassador has said, by a dispute about a memorial to the senate, since a memorial was submitted by the embassy on that day. In any case, on August 1, he notified a correspondent that he had ceased to exercise the functions of embassy secretary. In fact the second secretary wrote the regular court dispatch the same day. The violent scene took place a week later. During the intervening period Rousseau was still residing at the embassy, handling some of the official correspondence and apparently training the second secretary to cope with his duties until the successor should arrive in Venice. Historical documentation therefore

123 For the above-cited letters of homage see ibid., pp. 30–31. For the memorial of July 31 see Cérésole, J.-J. Rousseau à Venise, pp. 102–103. It relates to an attempt on the part of Montaigu to recover effects left in Venice by his predecessor. For the letter of August 1, addressed to François Régny, see C.C., II, 37. On August 4 Rousseau wrote a letter for Montaigu to M. de Vertmont, private secretary to the French ambassador at Soleure, and another to a certain Mme de Montigny, though the latter may perhaps date a few days earlier: ibid., pp. 34, 39.
verifies Montaigne's version of the sequence of events as related in his letter to the court. But we are still left wondering what induced him to call his secretary to account and terminate their relations so abruptly, especially since the second secretary was not qualified to fill the vacancy and assume powers originally delegated to the consul himself. Nor did the successor arrive to alleviate the situation until October. By reason of this psychological gap in the letter it is unconvincing. It lacks the clarity and consistency of Rousseau's narration.

The real clue to an appreciation of the truth and artistry of the farewell scene as told in Les Confessions is to be sought elsewhere. Montaigne's story to the court is complemented by the secretary's private correspondence, clarifying our view of actuality that later becomes a source of art. Rarely does a writer describe in letters events that have just occurred and that are to furnish him with the elements of a major scene in a work of art a quarter of a century afterwards. I refer in particular to two missives which he wrote on August 8, the next day but one after the stormy encounter. One is addressed to Montaigne's correspondent, the Abbé Alary, and the other is the first of three so-called Venetian Letters, which Rousseau wrote personally to the head clerk in the Foreign Office to complain about his treatment at the hands of the ambassador and which Voltaire scandalously procured and partially published in 1766 in an effort to bring disgrace upon his rival. As far as we know, none of these letters was honored with a reply.

124 The archives show that from July 25 to October 17, 1744, Montaigne's letters, with very few exceptions, were written by de Binis. When the count wrote in his letter to Alary of August 15 that he tolerated Rousseau until he was sure of his present secretary, he must have been referring to the Abbé de Binis. Le Blond's indignation at being replaced by the second secretary is seen in a letter of October 10, 1774 (ibid., p. 61).

125 Regarding the fate of these letters see O.C., Pléiade, I, 1402 n1 (to p. 324); and III, p. cxxlvii; and especially C.C., II, 46, 63–64. Cf. C.G., XVI, 200, letter from Rousseau to M. du Chauvet, January 5, 1767. Voltaire published fragments of the first two letters in Notes sur la lettre de monsieur de Voltaire à monsieur Hume.
The message to Alary is very different from the February draft expressing vague nostalgia for Paris. This new one, actually dispatched, is valuable because it shows that what produced the count’s sudden decision to settle matters with his secretary was a letter from the chevalier. Rousseau tells Alary that he had confided his discontent in writing to His Excellency’s brother, adding that the man might have made different use of the letter if he had merely consulted his own reason and sentiments. The meaning is that whatever use he made of it clearly kindled Montaigu’s hostility. Rousseau’s appeal to the chevalier, like the latter’s missive to the count, has disappeared and may have been quite unlike the April draft, but the role of both lost letters in precipitating the catastrophe is implied in the secretary’s definitive communication to the abbé in August.

In Rousseau’s second letter referred to above and addressed to the Foreign Office, as in the one to Alary, the writer, having said that grievances were reciprocal, refrains from rehearsing his own, since it would distress him to mitigate them for the sake of verisimilitude. He simply implies that, on account of them, he had welcomed his employer’s decision to relieve him of his post and to look for someone to replace him, although he had hoped that they would part in a dignified manner. Thereupon he tells of being unexpectedly summoned into the ambassador’s presence to find him in a rage, impatient to settle the account at once with his secretary. Rousseau does not explain here that the summons was motivated by the chevalier’s missive, but the letter to Alary hints that this

126 C.C., II, 41–42.

127 In writing Alary about the lost letter to the chevalier, Rousseau quotes from the April draft which may or may not be the letter mentioned in Les Confessions. Mr. Leigh thinks it is (ibid., I, 235–236).

128 Ibid., II, 43–45, and especially 43: “Les mecontentemens étoient réciproques, et il est aisé de juger que chacun n’a reconnu que les siens pour légitimes; Monsieur l’Ambassadeur a enfin pris le parti de me congédir. Je comptois que la chose se passeroit avec ... honnêteté ... ”
was the case in actuality as well as in *Les Confessions*, where all the “tangled threads” are wrought into a clear design to give form to life and deepen its meaning. The letter to the Foreign Office also tells of the threat of physical violence that ensued, and discloses what induced it. The cause was not the secretary’s mockery of the accusation about the ciphers, as we are informed in *Les Confessions*. Later correspondence hints that this accusation was perhaps made about two months afterwards, although Montaigu, who often took advantage of the younger man’s alien birth to taunt him with disloyalty, would conceivably have repeated the charge at the moment of their definitive breach. This is all the more likely since, on the day of the secretary’s departure from Venice, the count complained to the Foreign Office that he had reason to suspect his ciphers were known. But these suspicions had nothing at all to do with the threat of defenestration, as it has been called. Rousseau’s own letter of August 8 shows that matters reached that pass when he objected to certain deductions in the account, whether the objection was made “respectfully,” as he tells the Foreign Office, or “insolently,” as his employer alleges.

Basically his letter confirms Montaigu’s testimony about the cause of near violence between them. It tells what must have happened in actuality, and the author of *Les Confessions* was undoubtedly fully aware of the facts. Nevertheless, although he mentions the account four times in the memoirs, where he calls it an “apothecary’s bill,” he deliberately refrains from doing so in the scene of the crisis. He omits reference to it, not to distort the facts,

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130 *O.C.*, Pléiade, I, 309, where he describes the sordid conditions at the embassy; 312, where he mentions the dinner with Le Blond; 324, where, on his return journey to Paris, he verifies a detail of the account here called a “mémoire d’Apothicaire”; and 326 where he acknowledges final payment made in 1749.
nor even because he regarded money as lacking in grandeur and dignity for a theme of art, but because it was not morally what severed the association between the two men. Here we have a perfect illustration of Socrates' contention that "the actual falls short of the truth." To present the final rupture as a quarrel about financial matters would be essentially false and out of character. This is a case in which literal circumstantial truth would be morally and spiritually untrue. Events, which are intended to be raiment for the soul, would be nothing but a grotesque disguise to conceal it. There is however no real violation of factual veracity in the scene of *Les Confessions*. Similar scenes had certainly been enacted previously, for example in June when the secretary drafted a message of anguish presumably for Mari, and even earlier, in February, and again in April when he may have asked the count to act upon his word and relieve him. The scene in the book, like the dispatch to Naples, and perhaps the Veronese incident too, is undoubtedly a blending and a synthesis of a number of life experiences, which are treated with the historian of the soul's usual felicitous disregard for the sequence of events in the world of time and space. All these experiences are integrated, together with the discharge and the last violent encounter, into a single composite drama to express the young Rousseau's innermost being. He manifests a profound contempt for social order, which he regards as disorder, and an invincible conviction of his own intellectual superiority at the very moment of retreat. The result of these sentiments is an immense pride of spirit, momentarily prevailing over that innate languor and longing for solitude, which is born of moral frailty and diffidence and is as much a part of his nature as the present challenge to society and its inverted scale of values in the person of the count.

Some of the states of soul, portrayed in *Les Confessions* in the stormy leave-taking at the embassy, are reflected in other letters that Rousseau wrote at the time. For example on August 15, in the second of the *Venetian Letters*
to the Foreign Office, as well as in the one discussed above, he is moved by a conviction of his own merits to appeal to the justice and mercy of the King. But he does so with little faith in his plea and little hope of redress for he is persuaded that social prejudice is set against the subordinate, even though he contends that Venetian public opinion openly favors him. He accuses the ambassador of having him pursued from house to house, of forbidding proprietors to afford him lodging, and of giving orders to have him beaten. Finally he complains that his clothing is withheld at the palace. These details, which testify against the count and are therefore omitted in his letter to the court, are not included in Les Confessions either, even in a modified form, probably because they would impair the illusion of psychological truth and verisimilitude. Again we have occasion to observe that whenever any supposed apologetic end would conflict with his psychological purpose—and the two are in fact irreconcilable—he deliberately pursues the latter at the expense of the former. The historian of the soul, or, if we prefer, the introspective portraitist, gains at the expense of the man, and so does the littérateur. Our collation serves well to illustrate this important point. In the present case, a letter defining the circumstances surrounding the last scene at the embassy and the victim's psychological reactions brings us to realize once more the artistic moderation displayed in Rousseau's book to accentuate inner truth. Neither scene nor character is there disfigured. On the contrary, both are transfigured by the author's obvious restraint, by the elimination of sensational details, and by a powerful use of synthesis to achieve greater intensity for the expression of the spirit. There we see a man in his

131 C.C., II, 48–49; Montaigu may have resorted to the so-called "Braves" (hired bandits) which he recommended to Cattaneo to kidnap Barberina and which are defined in a dispatch as "... espèces de gens ... dont on se sert pour des actions de vivacité quand les Princes l'ordonnent à leurs ministres." See O.C., Pléiade, III, 1139, 1833 n1 (to p. 1139).
pride who paradoxically wins a victory and is obliged to withdraw at one and the same time and who will never let this experience fade from his mind and heart. Admittedly the same sentiments are reflected in both letters and memoirs. But in the letters the writer discourses upon injustice and social prejudice exemplified in melodramatic events, while in the work of art the same ideas are concretely portrayed in a tableau that gives an illusion of life itself. Yet there is an abyss between the diffuseness of life and letters too and the concentrated imagery of *Les Confessions*, where the two protagonists confront one another in a last monumental encounter, which is not only a struggle between the individual and society but also a struggle between the old order and the new. It is as if the young Rousseau has closed the door not merely upon the palace but upon the system of things for which it stands and has resolutely walked out into the world as the champion of another. The scene has all the gravity and fullness of meaning of an authentic crisis that is also a new departure already fashioning the future.

Reading this part of the master work without the correspondence, we might have been tempted to ask whether the author is really pursuing his avowed intention of reliving past emotions, or whether he is merely projecting present moods into the past and attributing them to the hero of the seventh book. We might have seen traces of misanthropic obsession, and wondered whether it was, or was not, an anachronism in the context. Reading the same pages in conjunction with the letters, we are brought to realize the psychological conformity of the story with real life and to wonder in amazement at its almost literal adherence to actual events. The latter are treated in the book as the cause or effect of emotions which are also recorded in the letters, but in a much less subtle and expressive form.

In the Venetian story, the hero's expulsion has a triumphant finale that is by no means the definitive finale but which contrasts in a magnificent crescendo with the sordid
scenes that precede. Only these musical terms can really convey the spirit of the original text. He is straightway fêté by the consul Le Blond at a brilliant banquet attended by the most distinguished French residents of Venice. In this tableau, rather than in the previous one, and twice again in the ensuing pages, the author mentions the unsettled account. All the guests, apprised of his circumstances, open their purses in spontaneous sympathy for the impecunious young man and unanimously denounce the ambassador. This banquet is clearly an artistic pendant to the proposed dinner at the embassy for the Duke of Modena. The former secretary of France is also welcomed by the chancellor of the consulate, whose dwelling he is invited to share. He is even honored by the Venetian senate, which ignores a memorial from the count requesting his exile, and advises Le Blond that Rousseau may remain in Venice at his pleasure. In a word, he enjoys universal approval and esteem. Even foreign diplomats exchange courtesies with him. At last, financially assisted by the consul himself, he takes leave of the city of the lagoon and sets out on his journey northward. This whole sequence of pictures, symphonic in treatment, expresses the voice of public opinion resounding in his favor and responding to his own youthful indignation.

The pictorial drama contained in these pages of *Les Confessions* is a transmutation of actuality through the medium of artistic devices, conceived to bring out its symbolic meaning. We can illustrate this statement by an historical study of that same actuality which is the theme of another appeal supposedly made by Rousseau to the Foreign Office shortly after the events occurred and dated October 7 when he was already on his way to Paris. I say “supposedly” because there is strong evidence to prove that the writer did not merely rephrase the letter twenty years later as has previously been believed, but that he actually composed it only in 1763 to supplement the
autobiography then under contemplation.\footnote{C.C., II, 61–62 and explanatory notes on pp. 63–65.} In any case, it recounts many of the above-mentioned circumstances incorporated into Les Confessions, and since it does so without transcending them it helps to bring out the literary merits of the book.

The letter mentions Montaigu’s belated accusation about the ciphers, his memorial against his former secretary, and the Venetian senate’s favorable decision conveyed in a message entrusted to Le Blond. It also cites other proofs of public esteem shown to the writer: the sympathy accorded him by the French population of Venice, the hospitality extended by the chancellor of the consulate, the generosity of everyone, especially the consul himself. Finally it refers to the unsettled account. Everything that is in Les Confessions is here too; everything except art—everything except the cumulative effect of the crescendo, gathering momentum as it rises to symbolize the resounding voice of public opinion, echoing his own turbulent emotions. The analogy of certain aspects of the writer’s art with music, illustrated by the Pléiade editors, is amply justified by passages like these. The virtues of the memoirs and their musical tonalities are brought to our attention by a comparison with the correspondence, which lacks these qualities. The conclusion of the letter is that the testimony of all Venice to the writer’s personal dignity and faithful service is his only defense against aggressiveness of rank in the person of the ambassador, who is allegedly quite lost to reason.

The archives of the Venetian inquisitors also report upon Montaigu’s curious memorial against his former secretary, which, though actually presented on August 31 after the intended victim’s departure for France, contrary to what we read in Les Confessions, was no doubt contemplated and discussed long before. Rousseau must therefore have been aware of it while he was still in Venice. This is why
the historian of the soul discusses it in that setting. In fact the petition it contained was delivered orally a week earlier, only two days after the secretary had left the city, although, as in the case of the accusation of smuggling, he was not named on the first occasion. The council that received the memorial, and specifically the chairman Almoro Zustiniani, who may be the impresario of the Veronese affair, declined to bring the matter before the senate or even to make a reply, and this may explain why the archives apparently contain no trace of the document. Instead he called upon the state inquisitors to notify not the ambassador but the consul of Rousseau's departure on August 22. Le Blond, already informed since he had advanced funds for the journey, replied that he had been unable to offer advice, by reason of Montaigu's character, for of course he bore the man no affection and had previously been the victim of his disloyalty as he was later to be the victim of another of his amazing memorials.

Such are the matters of fact, but in themselves they are utterly formless in every sense of the word: formless because they are lacking in harmony and ordered arrangement; formless too because they are mere records instead of modes of being for the revelation of the spirit. Yet they hold for us the fascination of actual scenes that have furnished the raw material for a great painting or inspired a magnificent symphony. This is all the more so, as the pages they have prompted in the memoirs recreate the author's inner life at a moment of intoxication and crisis, when he flatters himself that public opinion at least is on his side, and that this is the side of justice and of truth. These illusions, together with that excitement or agitation of spirit which invariably attends a disturbing, even tragic event in life, overlay for the moment the deeper wound which inevitably makes itself ever more painfully felt.

133 C.G., I, 253–255. This is a French translation of an extract from the archives, dated September, 1744. Mr. Leigh gives the original Italian text (C.C., II, 58–60). For the memorial against Le Blond mentioned below see Derche, "Autour du séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Venise," pp. 150–151.
SCENES OF INTROVERSION

Before recounting in *Les Confessions* the adventures of his journey northwards, Rousseau interrupts his narrative at this point to devote some dozen pages to confidences of a more intimate nature than the previous ones. He offers no explanation for setting aside these souvenirs in a sort of supplement. But there is clearly a certain symbolism in the very framework of the Venetian reminiscences, a symbolism which is everywhere explicit, as we have already observed, for instance, in the orderly arrangement of the "heroic" deeds, gathered together, and matched against the mortifications and embassy disorders, without regard for chronology. In the present case the writer scrupulously separates the most highly subjective impressions of his story from the account of his stewardship that precedes. Perhaps he means to signify that the pleasures he relives in these pages are to be taken as an afterthought and nothing more in the life of the ardent young secretary of the house of France. Much more probably, these emotional experiences, which transmit the same spirit recognizable in all its manifestations, disclose some vital truths about the real meaning of the fateful year that is now drawing to an equally fateful end.

MUSIC AND THE SOUL

An important part of what we have called the supplement is devoted to the pleasures of music, which, together with other amusements such as dancing and, more rarely, games of chance, Rousseau shares with his friends. The latter include the consul and his large family; the amiable and

134 The balls are mentioned in the *Venetian Despatches*. Montaigu and Mari each held two balls without entrance fee like those given by the Venetian republic. Both men attended one of the latter on the last day of the carnival in St. John Chrysostom theater, where the illuminations were such as they had never before seen (*O.C.*, Pléiade, III, 1165). Further with regard to Rousseau's lighter moments in Venice, in the *Lettres écrites de la montagne*, he recalls amusing his friends with oracles and divination. He refers to this passage in the sixth book of *Les Confessions* (*ibid.*, I, 241).
witty Carrio or Carrion, secretary to the Spanish embassy, whom he saw years later in Paris; a young Spanish student, Altuna, whom he is soon to join in the French capital; and a few Englishmen of intelligence and learning among whom is undoubtedly Lord John’s tutor mentioned in Emile.\footnote{For Carrio (n) see ibid., pp. 304, 305, 313, 316, 318, 322, 508; for Altuna see pp. 305, 313, 327–330, and see below; with regard to the Englishmen, one of whom was no doubt Lord John’s tutor, consult the fifth book of Emile (O.C., Hachette, II, 442).} The reader is a witness as the youthful Swiss conceives an enduring passion for Italian music. Rousseau has not forgotten hearing an orchestra in Turin years before, but in Venice it is mainly Italian song that takes possession of his soul. He hears it for the first time on the lips of gondoliers. Afterwards it so charms him at the opera with its sweet harmonies and enchanting airs that one evening at the theater, as he is roused from sleep by the sound, he imagines himself in paradise. Even more delightful to his ear is the music of the four houses of charity, especially the Mendicanti, where he lingers to listen to cloistered orphan girls, wards of the state, singing at vespers in the chapel and accompanied by a great orchestra but screened from public view. Meeting them later at a collation, he is cruelly disillusioned by their personal ugliness. To his astonishment, however, it is transcended again thereafter by the beauty of soul poured forth in their song. Moved by these revelations he engages musicians to rehearse with him, not only Italian arias, but orchestral pieces from his own unfinished ballet, Les Muses galantes, parts of which are also performed at the most magnificent of all Venetian theaters, St. John Chrysostom, owned by Grimani of Veronese fame. These pages of Les Confessions fairly pulsate with intense feeling as the writer, a quarter of a century later, travels back over the years and from among the vague, shadowy depths of the past allows the fitful light of impassioned recollection to bring forth only the most deeply emotional
moments: memories of a barcarolle, the first pure song to strike his ear; of music from the heavenly spheres and choirs of angels exquisitely sweet.

In this part of the autobiography the writer conveys the pure impressions of music, shorn of all imagery, which has been so effectively used until now. The change of method is clear enough in the text of the book itself where the only pictures that emerge are austere evocations of the listener, asleep in his loge or sharing a collation in an almshouse. The modification in form becomes still clearer by comparison with documents of an impersonal nature, originating in the same phase of life. Before considering contemporary evidence, it is enlightening to consult Rousseau’s musical writings which contain autobiographical details relating to the same perceptions but deliberately excluded from the memoirs. For example, the most important of these works, the *Lettre sur la musique française*, which dates less than a decade after the Venetian sojourn and is a declaration of the superiority of Italian music over French, contains an engaging picture of a singer, who is probably Rousseau himself, in the midst of a company of friends in Venice. He succeeds in enchanting an Armenian with a badly sung aria of Galuppi but merely astonishes his hearer with a tolerably executed French monologue.136

This tableau, which is so pleasantly appealing to the imagination, does not belong in *Les Confessions*, since it does not relate to the writer’s own intimate impressions.

Even more valuable for an understanding of this aspect of the book is his *Dictionnaire de musique*, composed at the same time as the autobiography and dealing with the varieties of music mentioned therein, especially the barcarolles and opera, for, significantly enough, he alludes only briefly to the orphan choirs in the more objective publication. In the dictionary he recalls hearing in Venice the most beautiful of barcarolles, Tasso’s *Jerusalem Delivered*, which the gondoliers on summer evenings used to sing by heart,

alternating from gondola to gondola and responding in

This colorful image finds no place in the story of the writer's soul, as though he had intentionally eliminated picturesqueness in the pages on Venetian music. It is also remarkable that, in both dictionary and autobiography too, he speaks of the opera as if he saw in it no spectacle at all: he reduces it to pure melody that expresses all states of mind and modes of being, and seeks out the deepest recesses of the listener's heart. Since this is essentially its function and its effect, he manifests both without having recourse to material forms that are so obtrusive in opera but of which he gives not a hint.

The same principle is most striking in his treatment of the unseen orphan choirs in Les Confessions. It is further demonstrable by a comparison of the text of the memoirs on this theme with an epistle on the same subject which the author composed in verse during the Venetian sojourn and dedicated to Monsieur Bordes of Lyons. In this new but fragmentary poem addressed to his Lyonnaise friend, Rousseau, nominally Catholic for sixteen years and destined to remain so for another decade, shows the splendor of the Mendicanti chapel during Holy Week. He comes upon the shrine bedecked with worldly luxury and pomp, marred only by the mysterious litanies and exorcisms of the monks. Religious devotion that has drawn him hither is promptly forgotten as his senses thrill to painted images, fragrant censers, an orphan's song, and the beauty of the worshippers. After forty days of Lent he sees the charming Venetian women, arrayed like the lilies of the field and offering to the Virgin vows of adora-

137 Ibid., p. 353. Cf. Monnier, Venise au XVIIIe siècle, p. 342. For Rousseau's predilection for Tasso, whom he quotes in the Lettre sur la musique française, in La Nouvelle Héloïse, and in Emile, and whose story of Olindo and Sofronia he translated, see O.C., Pléiade, I, 1385–1386 n6 (to p. 294).

138 O.C., Hachette, VII, 339, under "unité de mélodie."

139 O.C., Pléiade, II, 1144–1145; or C.G., I, 141–142.

140 Rousseau was theoretically Roman Catholic from April 22, 1728, to August 1, 1754.
tion that they long to receive from the race of men, transmuting sensuous ardor into mystical ecstasy. The author of Les Confessions has deliberately excluded this spectacle from his book, for both artistic and religious reasons. His religious objections to the scene are implied in the epistle of many years before. In those verses the reader, who is on familiar terms with the writer, easily sees through the veil of the future. Rousseau's Calvinist nature will reject the splendor of Catholicism in favor of that Lenten austerity for which he was not yet spiritually prepared but which was to become the very keynote of his life and thought. The scene in the chapel is clearly not the occasion of a religious experience for him. It does not offer him a real artistic experience either, and, upon this account too, he has barred it from his autobiography. His innermost being responds not to painted images, however much they may caress his senses, but solely to the orphan's song, which alone finds a place in the annals of the soul. He is most deeply sensitive to music, an art that best expresses the unseen, all the mysterious vicissitudes of the human spirit, rather than the shapes of the material world, and whose effects are equally invisible and unfathomable. Faithful to the nature of that art he renders, in the pages of Les Confessions, only the ecstasy of musical impressions and nothing more.

These pages of the memoirs contain striking proof of Rousseau's skill in artistic transposition, the use of words without imagery to convey the effect of music upon him. The reverberations of song in his inner life are his whole preoccupation. Everything else is superfluous and unsatisfying. By comparison with the hidden world, which is a source of art and beauty, the objective world of matter leaves him disillusioned. This is why he finds more delight in the invisible choirs than in the opera, which offers in addition a pageant for the sense of sight so pitifully inadequate that he banishes it by closing his eyelids as he listens and then falls asleep in the loge. For the same reason, when he finally
sees the orphan singers, they seem to him ugly and ill-favored. Other writers, his contemporaries, for example Charles de Brosses, who visited Venice hardly five years before, describe them as beautiful. They appeared in public engagements too, clad in white in the religious manner but wearing clusters of pomegranate flowers in their hair. It is difficult to believe that forty Mendicanti orphans, whatever flaws marred their youth, were less comely than other girls of twenty. In Les Confessions they are ugly only in relation to the beauty of their voices, echoes of the spirit, for beauty must be clothed in life as humbly as truth itself. Beyond a doubt this is the writer's meaning, for the white-robed orphans become beautiful again in his fancy, by virtue of their song. In other words, the inner reality of grace and emotion finally overshadows and obscures the mediocrity of material actuality, and by its very intensity and depth imposes itself as true. It is this inner reality, sheer musical impressions divested of all picturesque forms, that the author of Les Confessions clearly wants to render, not only in the case of chapel choirs but in all those pages where he relives the first powerful impact of Italian music upon him, or rather within him. Just as the barcarolles are quite simply the first pure song to fall upon his ear, as the opera is for him a divine harmony that stirs his being to consciousness and nothing else, in like manner the orphan choirs are the essence of beauty itself that is the more exquisite for remaining invisible and frees the mind from earthly bonds.

Since Rousseau's autobiography is really a self-portrait, it excludes other arts to which he was almost insensitive.

141 Charles de Brosses, Lettres familières (écrites d’Italie en 1739 et 1740), I (Paris: Perrin, 1885), 193ff. There are five letters in which he speaks of Rosalba Carriera, Venetian palaces and painting, and the music of the forty cloistered orphans in each of the four houses of charity (the Pietà, Mendicanti, Incurabili, and Ospedaletto). Finally he sings the praises of Venetian courtesans, including a certain Julietta, who has been compared to the Zulietta of Les Confessions.
The plastic arts of sculpture and painting seem to have left him unmoved, even in Venice where masterpieces abound. Or if his sensuous nature did indeed answer to the sensuousness of Titian, for example, and Venetian Renaissance art, we search in vain for some trace of these "correspondences." The bright canvases of his Venetian contemporaries, then the greatest school of painters in the whole of Italy, most of whom were at the height of their careers at this time, seem to have made no impression on his mind and heart: neither Tiepolo’s frescoed festivals of light, nor Rosalba’s delicate portraits in pastel, nor Longhi’s elegant interiors, nor Canaletto’s or even Guardi’s brilliant visions of the Venetian scene. All these artists were adorning and enriching the city during Rousseau’s sojourn, yet he does not even mention them in any of his works. Why does he ignore them, while he speaks with unconcealed delight of the contemporary Venetian composer Galuppi? How can we explain his indifference to painting, as opposed to his passion for music? In Emile he says that painters like Raphael and Il Albano to whom he is not indifferent are too remote from nature. But if we conclude from this statement that he is a man of direct sensation, attracted by nature alone, and that painting, as an art of imitation, distracts the attention from life and nature, which we see only through the artist’s spiritual reactions, what else does music do, or literature either for that matter? Music too is an art of imitation, even though formal rhythm is an important source of the pleasure it affords. However it does not normally attempt to represent the external forms of life and the world; it usually confines itself to conveying the inner being of man and creation. In fact Rousseau himself says that music paints visible things only indirectly, by

142 Rosalba Carriera was sixty-nine years of age when Rousseau was in Venice; Tiepolo was fifty-four years old; Canaletto, forty-seven; Longhi, forty-two; and Guardi was Rousseau’s age.

143 This explanation is proposed by the editors of O.C., Pléiade, I, 1398–1399 n2 (to p. 313).
arousing in the soul the same movements we experience beholding them.\footnote{See \textit{Dictionnaire de musique}, article “Imitation” (\textit{O.C.}, Hachette, VII, 140–141). In brief, Rousseau writes: \textit{La peinture, qui n’offre point ses tableaux à l’imagination, mais au sens et à un seul sens, ne peint que les objets soumis à la vue. La musique semblerait avoir les mêmes bornes par rapport à l’ouïe; cependant elle peint tout, même les objets qui ne sont que visibles. ... Mais ... l’art du musicien ... ne représentera pas directement ces choses, mais il excitera dans l’âme les mêmes mouvements qu’on éprouve en les voyant. Of course Rousseau had no talent for the plastic arts as he had for music: see fifth book of \textit{Les Confessions} in \textit{O.C.}, Pléiade, I, 180.} This is the real reason he prefers it to the plastic arts. This is also why music moves his creative gifts in much the same way as literature. It may be objected that literature, like painting and sculpture, expresses external reality too. But the world of matter is less obtrusive and more transparent when represented in words, rather than in such media as stone or pigment, which appeal so insistently to the sense of sight; words, appealing directly to the mind, are a more subtle mode of expression. This is not equally true of all literature but it is eminently true of \textit{Les Confessions}. The book also illustrates the idea of Socrates, who tells us that “language is more pliable than wax or any similar substance,” including pigment. Throughout its pages, the author paints pictures in words, except when conveying his love for music.

Paradoxically, he seems to have been indifferent to architecture, which has the same limitations and the same powers as music, and which Schlegel even called “frozen music.” Although elsewhere in his work Rousseau speaks with admiration of ancient classical ruins, such as the Pont du Gard, near Avignon, and the amphitheatres of Nîmes and Verona,\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 256 (sixth book of \textit{Les Confessions}).} yet never once does he allude to Venetian Gothic and Renaissance palaces. The lovely House of Gold on the great lagoon seems not to have existed for him. He describes Montaigu’s summer palace on the Brenta, richly inlaid with mosaics and adorned with fine marble columns and pilasters, but says not a word about
the gleaming mosaics and marble splendor of Saint Mark's basilica or even the palace of the doges where he often appeared as the embassy envoy. Why? Because Montaigu's villa becomes a symbol of injustice and moral disorder, not because it was a source of aesthetic pleasure for the beholder, any more than Saint Mark's. In fact, the latter is used in *Emile* as an image of splendor, without secure foundations, to symbolize ostentatiously brilliant but ill-grounded encyclopedic learning, which is alien to his nature and violates his principles.\(^{146}\) Rousseau's reactions always betray the same unfailing concern with his own inner being, which he apprehends rarely in the plastic arts but finds so fully expressed in Italian music and in his proper conception of literature.

Other phases of Venetian life seem hardly to have touched his consciousness. Even the natural graces of the city, whose gay frivolity inspired writers like de Brosses, Voltaire, and Goethe, and which later became a favorite theme of the melancholy romantics, failed to stir the sensibilities of the great precursor of nineteenth-century lyricism. His silence, which impressed us in the story of his arrival, remains unbroken to the very end. There is not a single Venetian landscape or seascape in the whole of his work, or letters either. His grave and austere Protestant nature seems alien to the blithe setting of the Venetian isles, to their nebulous enchantment of marble lacework and water; yet he was almost moved to write a supplement to his memoirs by the sight of the quiet, simple beauty of the Borromean Islands, which he saw on his return to France and thrice recalls in *Les Confessions*.

Not only was he indifferent to the city of the lagoon, but also to Venetian public life, which in the eighteenth century was renowned for the brilliance of its festivities. He refers only once in all his writings to a Venetian festival. In a footnote to *Emile* the value of state insignia and

\(^{146}\) *O.C.*, Hachette, II, 95.
ceremonials is illustrated by the Ascension Day rituals in Venice, in which the doge, on board the bucentaur barge, cast a ring into the Adriatic to signify the marriage of the city and the sea.¹⁴⁷ In other words, the magnificent ceremony is merely used to exemplify a political idea. In the story of his soul Rousseau tells us nothing about the great feasts or even about the extravagant carnival that lasted half the year. His reserve is remarkable, since for six months of his sojourn the public squares were perpetually filled with throngs of merrymakers; masks and disguises sanctioned every license; the theaters and coffee shops, veritable centers of contemporary Venetian life, never closed their doors; and banquets, balls and fireworks turned night into day and day into night. All this the autobiographer passes over in silence, even though in one scene we catch a glimpse of him in mask and domino as he goes about his duties. His reticence is as eloquent as his most impassioned periods. The city and its life or the artists who embellished it could strike no chord in his nature that is powerful enough to resound in his memory or in his memoirs.

THE JULIETTA PARABLE

Yet this is not entirely so. Before taking leave of Venice the writer makes confession of having tasted, however timidly, the fruits of voluptuousness, abounding in a city famed for its beautiful women. These confessions are not astonishing in a book so entitled. The reader is, in a sense, prepared for them. On the other hand, one is often surprised by careless little asides that cast a sudden and sinister gleam upon the moral fiber of a century, as frankly wanton as any other. For instance, in presenting his friends to us, Rousseau refers quite casually to their “mistresses.” The word sometimes means “betrothed,” as in the case of Miss Lucy in Emile,¹⁴⁸ but it also means “concubine,” as in the case of

¹⁴⁷ See p. 11 n11, above.
¹⁴⁸ O.C., Hachette, II, 443.
Bettina, who danced the ballet scenes from *Les Muses galantes* at a Venetian theater. Moreover, in the autobiography there is a tacit acceptance of the society of women as being quite normally of an intimate nature, without question of marriage. This is implied in remarks about the daughters of the French consul and the Prussian agent: out of respect for their fathers, his friends, Rousseau declines to pay court to them. The implication is that the act of homage he has in mind would be offensive to the friends, not because of any lofty moral principles on their part or on his but because of their paternal interest in the ladies. He has the skeptic's attitude toward chastity, for he takes pride in his record of continence during the Venetian engagement, of a brief eighteen months in *Les Confessions* and a still briefer fifteen months in actuality and hardly twelve in the city itself. These traits of contemporary manners, reflecting his own attitudes and desires, are an intrinsic part of the work, and bespeak a point of contact between him and eighteenth-century Venice, city of the Anadyomene no less than of Saint Mark. Even gentlewomen were as free as the air, and their love still freer. Moreover, the prestige enjoyed by courtesans and concubines was still a respected tradition. They combined wit and the most exquisite grace with a strange blending of voluptuousness and childish candor and ingenuousness. These are the qualities that beguile even the grave and austere secretary of France.

The confessions of sensual indulgence relate to the end of Rousseau's residence in Venice. First we see him led by the scandalous Vitali to the chambers of the handsome Padoana, whose song is the only real favor his ducat affords him, since her embraces are little more than an occasion of fears, however groundless, for his health. Not long afterwards he meets the enchanting Zulietta. During a dinner on board ship, offered in gratitude by Captain Olivet to the young secretary, accompanied by his friend

Carrio, she suddenly alights from a gondola like an apparition: a charming, vivacious brunette of hardly more than twenty, with large, dark, almond-shaped eyes, and speaking the sweet accents of Italy. Willfully confusing Rousseau at first with some lost lover of the past, she takes him as her slave on condition that he be wholly hers or not at all. And so he is. He behaves like a man in a trance. He holds her fan, her sash, her veil; he dismisses the gondola at her behest and sits wherever he is bidden. As he and Carrio escort her after dinner to the island of Murano, he wonders at her careless indifference to money, her own much more than theirs. When they conduct her to her apartments in the evening, he admires the pride with which she explains that the pistols on her table safeguard the respect of her person. The next day he returns alone to her dwelling place and, in an unforgettable scene, discovers his soul completely. We are even told in the autobiography that this confession is the most illuminating of all. As he embraces “his” Zulietta, who, arrayed like a flower to enhance her charms and graces, is for him the awe-inspiring goddess of love and beauty herself, he is suddenly stricken by painful reflections and moved to tears. He tells us why. Won by her wit and warmth and radiance, he imagines princes as her slaves and kings at her feet; instead, she is at the disposal of a common sailor. Perplexed, he concludes that there must surely be some secret flaw. He discovers one, the “téton borgne.” But, he reasons, this imperfection alone cannot possibly explain the tragic incongruity: surely the tiny blemish must be merely a sign of some monstrous natural vice, which alone could make her the social outcast she is. Zulietta, discomposed by his tears and doubts, coldly and disdainfully dismisses him, scornfully recommending that he renounce the ladies and devote himself to mathematics. Three days later, still striving in vain to reconcile her personal perfections with

150 Malformation of the breast.
the indignity of her estate, he returns by appointment, only to find her gone from the city and to mourn her loss. This narrative is supplemented and complemented by that of the fair and gentle child, Anzoletta, offered for sale by her infamous mother to the secretary of Spain, who proposes to share her with his colleague of France. However their paternal affection for her would have led them to protect her innocence at the time of her nubility if Rousseau had not left Venice before his virtue could be put to the test to convince the skeptical reader.

These confessions are framed to heighten the story of Zulietta, which is in fact the concluding incident of the Venetian drama in the autobiography. Before consulting contemporary evidence upon the subject, it is indispensable to appreciate fully the text of *Les Confessions* as it stands, especially since, in this case, it has not attracted the attention it deserves. These pages exemplify the author's art at its best. The man who writes them is master of the most powerful resources of literature, and he exhausts them all. Everything is carefully calculated, and nothing is left to chance. The tale of Zulietta, five pages long in the Pléiade edition and longer than any other single incident in the book, is in striking contrast with the brief page given to the Padoana affair, which is its antipathetic prologue. The story finds an echo or response in the appended page about Anzoletta, where there is also an element of contrast with the principal narrative, especially in the feminine figures, between blonde and brunette, gentleness and impulsiveness. The situation involving Anzoletta, unfinished as it is, would not in itself make a forceful ending to the vitally important story of the Venetian sojourn but must be seen in relation to the preceding scenes.

These scenes, of which Zulietta is the heroine, are of rare literary beauty for the wealth and depth of portraiture they contain. Of all the people he knew in Venice, with the exception of the lightly sketched Anzoletta, Rousseau takes pains to make a moving portrait, physical as well as
moral, but certainly not objective, of Zulietta alone, although later he presents, somewhat more briefly, the young Spanish student, Altuna, whom he cultivates again in Paris. He does not even hint at the traits of Le Blond or Carrio. But the evocation of Zulietta is one of the most startling images in Les Confessions, and indeed in all literature. In the eyes of the writer, the single blemish cannot justifiy her tragic role in life and the place to which society has relegated her, unless it betokens some great natural vice. We must observe that this vice is never revealed. Does it even exist? Is this lovely creature really a monster, an outcast of nature, no less than of men and of love? If she is not, then society stands condemned. And so it does. The parable of Zulietta, for it is really a parable, is one of the most terrible indictments of society in the whole of Rousseau's work. It is intended to proclaim once more his thirst for justice and for truth. In the final analysis nothing can reconcile nature's blessing and society's curse in the figure of Zulietta, or even in the heavy heart of Zanetto, as she calls him, for he is sorrowfully conscious that his weakness makes him an accomplice of social injustice. There is something very compelling about this story. The Lady of the Camellias, or her musical counterpart in La Traviata, are not more disturbingly moving than Zulietta, who gives perfect form to the tragedy of life, intensified for the narrator by the depth of his sympathy and by Zanetto's complicity. The pathos of her disappearance and the young man's poignant sense of sadness and of loss when she vanishes as suddenly as she first appeared contrast arrestingly with the brilliant, even intoxicating, scene of the dinner on board ship. For those who know how to "read from all points of view at once" these contrasts are not only an endless source of aesthetic delight, flattering the taste and beguiling the imagination, but they also promote a new awareness of the writer's meaning by bringing it

151 See below where his complicity is discussed in the case of Thérèse Le Vasseur. The same complicity embitters his happiness with mamma in Book VI.
into unusual relief and thus inviting reflection. We may even find ourselves wondering whether Zulietta's fate is partially told in the person of Anzoletta, whose lot was that of many others, bartered by their parents in early childhood through regular contracts recognized as legal or rather, in the Rousseauist vocabulary, betrayed by society. Is this a clue to the mystery of the hauntingly beautiful Zulietta?

There are few contemporary documents relating to this episode of *Les Confessions*. Apart from de Brosses' letters of 1739, praising the beauty of a Venetian courtesan called Julietta, we have three poems presumably composed by Rousseau in tribute to the Zulietta of actual life. They are inscribed on embassy papers and were kept in the Montaigu family archives before being transferred to the Bibliothèque Nationale. The subject of these rather indifferent verses appears only vaguely reminiscent of the apparition in the story of the soul, which is much more profoundly personal. In other words, the lady of the poems is as remote from "his" transfigured Zulietta of the memoirs as de Brosses' Julietta certainly is, and as the flesh and blood creature of historical fact probably was. In one of the pieces, hardly more than descriptive, the writer enumerates her charms: the graceful address, delicate frame, dazzling complexion, and winsome features, matchless wit, and utter sweetness. In another one too he is lavish in her praise, and yet it is as insipid as the first by comparison with the text of *Les Confessions*, for it is equally lacking in depth of feeling and sympathy in the full etymological sense of the term. The lady, like mamma in the memoirs, is the new Aspasia and, like the old who was renowned in antiquity as the friend of Socrates and wife of Pericles, is famed for the brilliance of her mind and of her person. Triumphant she holds the universe in thrall. France, Spain, Italy, and

152 For these contracts see Monnier, *Venise au XVIIIe siècle*, pp. 364, 366.
153 Critics usually compare Rousseau's text with de Brosses'. 
Switzerland are slaves at her feet, so sweeping is her sway over the hearts of men. This idea of her rightful sovereignty reappears in the love scene of *Les Confessions*, where, however, the young man suddenly penetrates beneath the surface to see the roles reversed and the sovereign herself in thralldom. Inspired by the same scene in a third contemporary poem, he abandons French altogether, takes refuge in another tongue, and speaks the language of Zulietta, in whom he sees the goddess of love and beauty as in *Les Confessions*. Disconcerted by his mockery, for so she interprets his tearful doubts, she stands at the window with head bowed and eyes downcast, the shadows of the palings falling upon her features, so that the sun of her beauty bursts into a thousand stars. This is the only poem of the three where there is a trace, however faint, of the wistfulness of *Les Confessions*, a feeling that is immeasurably heightened in the story of the writer's inmost being, where it strikes a chord of deepest intimacy.

The profoundly personal quality of these pages of *Les Confessions* is deliberate and shows beyond a doubt that vastly more is implied than the romantic rehabilitation of the courtesan. The author himself warns us that the

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154 The text of these two poems is given in O.C., Pléiade, II, 1145–1146, and in C.G., I, 223. “France” in the second poem may or may not be Montaigu or his predecessor, the Count de Froullay, notorious for his romanesque adventures. The Zulietta of whom Froullay was enamored, according to de Brosses, is identified by Monglond with Rousseau’s Zulietta (“Rousseau, secrétaire de M. de Montaigne,” p. 69). Jean Guéhenno doubts this; see his *Jean-Jacques*, I (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 154. For mamma and Aspasia, see O.C., Pléiade, I, 199.

155 C.G., I, 215. The Italian poem is not included in the Pléiade edition. Perhaps the editors feel that the authorship is too doubtful. The lines are inscribed in Rousseau’s hand on the verso of the draft of a letter written by him on behalf of Montaigu and addressed to one of the latter’s colleagues. It would be difficult to prove that Rousseau composed the poem. The most that can be said, on the grounds of certain linguistic errors, is that it is not likely to have been written by an Italian as it stands: e.g. “Tienea” (the reading “Trenca” given in C.G. is impossible) instead of “Tenea” in the fourth line; and “de’” instead of “da’” in the fifth line. Of course, these may be simple errors in transcription.
love scene in particular fully depicts his own nature. He does so in a passage unlike any other in the memoirs:

If there is a circumstance in my life which portrays my nature well, it is that which I am going to relate. The forcefulness with which I recall at this moment the object of my book will bring me to despise the false delicacy which would prevent me from fulfilling it. Whoever you may be who wish to know a man, have the courage to read the following two or three pages, and you will become fully acquainted with J. J. Rousseau.\textsuperscript{156}

This means that the autobiographer, who has shown various facets and phases of his temperament and feelings through an infinite variety of situations, now reveals himself completely in the experience of love. His method of using the theme of love to express a personal knowledge of life recalls that of modern fiction, derived from the Freudian doctrine that a man reveals himself in sensual passion. The method also reminds us of Rousseau’s statement, made earlier in the seventh book in reference to Monsieur Parisot of Lyons and his lady Godfroi, that a man’s true inclinations (and therefore presumably his attitude toward life) are best shown by the nature of his attachments.\textsuperscript{157} The idea is symbolically set forth in Valère, Rousseau’s Narcissus, whose love is quite literally the perfect image of himself. The theme is far more cleverly handled in Les Confessions, where, in the light of the writer’s own statements,

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{156} \textit{O.C.}, Pléiade, I, 320:
S’il est une circonstance de ma vie qui peigne bien mon naturel, c’est celle que je vais raconter. La force avec laquelle je me rappelle en ce moment l’objet de mon livre me fera mépriser ici la fausse bienveillance qui m’empêcherait de le remplir. Qui que vous soyez qui voulez connoître un homme, osez lire les deux ou trois pages qui suivent vous allez connoître à plein J. J. Rousseau.
Of course some people are convinced that he is referring to sexual frigidity; e.g. Maxime Nemo, \textit{L’Homme nouveau Jean-Jacques Rousseau} (Paris: La Colombe, [1957]), pp. 130–135. Even if this were true, it would not invalidate my interpretation of this episode.

\item \textsuperscript{157} \textit{O.C.}, Pléiade, I, 281, and the author’s note. The text reads: “Rien ne montre mieux les vrais penchants d’un homme que l’espèce de ses attachemens. Quand on avoir vu la douce Godefroi, on connoissoit le bon Parisot.” Cf. p. 142.
\end{enumerate}
the love scenes and situations must be taken as allegorical portrayals of character and soul to deepen our knowledge of the man and his art.

What then do the scenes with Zulietta serve to symbolize? Perhaps the young Rousseau's spiritual inadequacy as he takes refuge in the senses from the demands of actuality, but especially his moral disquietude. These disclosures are made as much in Zulietta's person as in Zanetto's reactions. He manifests himself in and through her, and in this way the writer uses her, as he does everyone else, to tell about himself in the past. We see this when she first appears upon the ship, and the enchanted young man obeys her slightest wish or whim as though he were under a spell. He is her word made flesh, and she the spirit pervading him with life, like Emile "when the soul of Sophie seems to animate him." Zulietta's command that Zanetto be wholly hers or not at all finds an echo in his own temperament shown in a reflection, occurring toward the end of the book, that for him there is no middle term between the whole and nothing. Her sentiments are his. Her indifference to money is his own. How carefully the writer refrains from mentioning payment in reference to her, he who makes a point of the matter in the story of the Pacloana, and Anzolletta too, where financial gain is the main issue. Moreover, Zulietta's demand for respect corresponds not only to the young Rousseau's awe in her presence but also to the demands of his own pride for

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158 Zanetto and Zulietta are reminiscent of Emile and Sophie. Here is Emile falling in love: "Il ne parle plus, il ne répond plus, il ne voit que Sophie, il n'entend que Sophie. Si elle dit un mot, il ouvre la bouche; si elle baisse les yeux, il les baisse; s'il la voit soupirer, il soupire; c'est l'âme de Sophie qui paraît l'animer." Finally Sophie takes possession of him, tells him what to do, commands him as her slave (O.C., Hachette, II, 387, 396).

159 O.C., Pléiade, I, 332. He is referring to Mme de Warens' promiscuous affections. Cf. p. 522 (Book X) where, speaking of his friendship with M. and Mme de Luxembourg, he writes: "J'ai toujours été tout ou rien." Cf. p. 422.

160 Rousseau did not make payment to Zulietta (ibid., p. 287). He says that he paid for sensual gratification only once in his life, which must be on the occasion of his visit to La Padoana.
deference to his person and his place. This claim and not money produced the storms in the embassy. For it must be remembered that his love for Zulietta is a sequel of the Olivet affair and therefore belongs to the period of his disgrace. In actual life it dated from about July 26, when the affair was settled. He was still at the legation, as the three poems scribbled on embassy papers prove, although he had perhaps but not necessarily been replaced at his post. His plight brought into play certain traits in his character, such as the need for total commitment, indifference to money, and the tyranny of pride which the writer quite naturally sees exteriorized in the person of Zulietta.

In the love scene of the autobiography a sense of the ruthlessness of life is suddenly borne upon the hero, now that the brief moment of triumph and illusion is almost over and is expiring with the excitement of the banquet with Le Blond and his friends. This event precedes the Zulietta episode in the book, even though the dinner party that inspired it actually occurred after Rousseau's meeting with the Venetian courtesan. The sequence of events in the book is not chronological but psychological and artistic. The author deliberately inverts their order to conclude this part of his story with a tragic picture instead of a triumphant one, a fact that has not been hitherto appreciated but which is nevertheless extremely important. This pathetic picture represents forcefully and concretely a much deeper level of consciousness in the young man than the precarious exultation of the dinner with the consul. Zanetto, weeping over Zulietta, feels united with her in a common destiny, for her life, which becomes for him the symbol of our human condition, is also meant to be a symbol of his own. Her brilliance and degradation are akin to his natural genius, which had lately burst into light with the inspiration of Les Muses galantes in Paris and had then been exploited and degraded by society. In his own eyes, what else has he been doing but prostituting himself, selling his talents to Montaigu for the performance of trivial tasks, as he was
later to sell them to others, the Duke de Richelieu, Voltaire and Rameau, Madame Dupin and Francueil? Nor has he gained anything thereby. The outcast in the Zulietta story is himself.

The writer of *Les Confessions*, from his vantage point in time, conceives this moving drama as synthetizing his own social dilemma in those far-off days, and the conflicting moods of his troubled spirit. For him, the young Rousseau’s humiliation can be neither explained nor justified by the assumption of “some monstrous natural vice.” Yet in the parable of Zulietta, he confesses to a frailty that was only occasionally apparent in the proud scenes at the embassy. This does not mean that he accepts responsibility. In the person of Zulietta he tells us that society vitiates the individual and fosters his weakness to degrade him. In this way it makes him an accomplice of its prejudices and iniquities, in which Zulietta participates as much as Zanetto. The tears he sheds over her are shed for his own fate, which he equates with that of mankind. It was precisely this analogy that awakened from its long sleep the genius of the pilgrim of Vincennes here foreshadowed in Zanetto and his love. He identifies himself and humanity with her, and so does the autobiographer, much as Rousseau the novelist identifies himself with Julie, as I have illustrated in a previous study. The comparison is not inappropriate. The name of Zulietta is immortalized in that of his famous heroine and in the title of one of his greatest books, for “Zulietta” is the Venetian diminutive of “Julie,” as “Zanetto” is of “Jean.”

The author of *Les Confessions*, who might have taken to himself Flaubert’s well-known dictum in the form “Julie is myself,” now sees himself in the deeply human Zulietta. This explains the tone of urgency in the narrative. Beyond a doubt, Rousseau portrays himself completely in this tableau which, no less

161 In Book IX, describing the dreams whence *Julie* emerged, he recalls “the bewitching Zulietta whom my heart cannot forget.”
than the others and even more, permits him to eternize in living memory "a man and his sincere love of justice and of truth," a love which the Venetian adventure has failed to requite. When at the beginning of the Zulietta story he promises to make us fully acquainted with J. - J. Rousseau, he does not seek to lead us astray by falsely pretending to offer a clue to his character, as some readers have suspected. Nor does he, as still others have supposed, mysteriously conceal himself under the pretext of revealing himself. On the contrary, we recognize him unmistakably in this parable, not only as he was in 1744 but as he was to become in his celebrated discourses, and in the masterpieces that are like milestones marking the course of his journey through time. The essential themes of all his writing are best treated here, in the crowning work of his life: the incompatibility between the man of nature and the social man, the impairment and demoralization of the one by the other, accompanied by a shift of moral liability, that in some curious way allows nature’s graces, in spite of their complicity, to remain essentially intact as the object of society’s disgrace. Not even in the Discours have these paradoxical ideas been more passionately or imaginatively treated than in Les Confessions, which culminates twenty-five years of artistic discipline. Rousseau the writer, no less than the man, stands before us in these scenes of the Venetian story, scenes richly fulfilling the pledge implied in the words: “It is the story of my soul that I have promised. . . .”

The whole supplement of the Venetian engagement, as told in Les Confessions, is as prophetic of the future as the experience it consummates and whose most hidden shades of meaning are mirrored in translucent images. The ardent meditations upon music are a warning of the potent reality

162 These theories are advanced respectively by the Pléiade editors (I, 1401–1402 n1 [to p. 321] and Guéhenno (Jean-Jacques, I, 154–155). The latter sees in the Zulietta story a mere device to follow the fashion of the day and introduce a licentious trait into the memoirs. He therefore marvels at the solemnity with which Rousseau promises to reveal himself completely in the tale.
of Rousseau’s inner life, which in a moment of intoxication can exclude all else and bend the world of matter to its will. This inner life finds a mode of allegorical expression in the apologue of Zulietta and Zanetto, where the individual, struggling against the forces of arbitrary social judgments, admits his own moral disarray and yet is sensible of the latent but very real powers that were ultimately to play no small part in molding the destiny of modern Europe. Whether we approve of that mold or not has absolutely nothing to do with the skill of the artist to express the potency and vulnerability of an undeniably significant figure.

**FINAL TABLEAUX**

As the memorialist resumes the story of his travels to Paris in quest of retribution—for he tells us about his plea made to the Foreign Office from Venice—he shows once again that he is not simply recording his movements through the world of space and time. The recollections of this journey on the overland route through Northern Italy and Switzerland are as subjective and symbolic as those of the much misunderstood voyage to Venice which they serve to counterpoise. While the solitary wayfarer, drawn to Venice almost in spite of himself, is the outward token of an invincible aspiration to solitude that quite blinds him to the wonders of Provence and Italy, the embittered outcast, on his way back to Paris, portrays an ardent desire for justice and nothing more. He takes his course through Lombardy and the lovely Italian lake district, where he admittedly has interesting adventures and is touched by the spectacle of the Borromean Islands in Lake Maggiore, especially Isola Bella. However, the writer of *Les Confessions* refrains from describing these things as one would normally do in the chronicle of an itinerary, since he is recording the annals of the soul where the object is to render states or movements of mind and
heart. He does not use imagery simply for the sake of picturesqueness. He dismisses the Alps in an incredibly laconic phrase: "I crossed the Saint Plomb!" In other words, the traveler took the "St. Plomb" (Simplon) road that he had thought of taking the year before, though the autobiographer does not explain this or comment further. He hardly mentions Sion, the capital of the Valais, in the heart of country that inspired the most eloquent pages in *Julie*. The hero of the memoirs passes blindfold, as it were, through the most magnificent landscape, for the author excludes everything that is not significant to convey a disconsolate spirit and the cruel inner reality of an actual or imagined injustice. It matters little whether or not the young Rousseau was on this occasion warmly greeted in life, as he is in the book, by the French agent personally in Geneva, as he assuredly was at Sion and as he had been in his native city seven years earlier. The newly appointed agent at Sion at once sent news of the visitor to Montaigu, who in replies of September 12 and October 10 sought to discredit his former secretary. He did so by saying that Rousseau had been forced to leave Venice and the states of the republic "for good reason," by insinuatingly inquiring about his proposed course from Sion, and by calling him an adventurer who had been careful not to reveal the rest of his "adventure." In the autobiography the "adventurer" is simply a man in search of justice and of truth, clutching at the least promise of comfort or the shadow of a promise.

The most meaningful incidents of his travels are the two that the writer brings into high relief: only two, as in

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163 For his visit to M. de Chaignon, the French agent at Sion, see Courtois, "Chronologie critique," p. 47 n6. For Montaigu’s letters see Souchon, *Correspondance diplomatique*, p. 99, and C.C., II, 55–56, 65–66. For the visit to the French resident in Geneva see Courtois, "Chronologie critique," p. 47 n6; and François Mugnier, *Madame de Warens et J.-J. Rousseau: étude historique et critique* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1891), pp. 153 n1, 219 n2. Apparently Rousseau was greeted at Geneva, not by the French agent personally, as he had been in 1737, but by the chaplain and secretary. For the visit of 1737, see C.C., I, 45, 47.
the case of the journey southward. In them he visualizes the disillusioned idealist as the victim of society, which has robbed him of his honor and of the laborer's hire. These incidents are the last reunion with his father Isaac at Nyon, and a visit to Lyons. The harm to his reputation is shown in a sense of humiliation which almost makes him renounce in shame the meeting at Nyon. His mortification is further underlined by his tribute to a friend who overcomes this sentiment for the sake of others more pleasing to the human heart by bringing father and son together for the last time. The joy that ensues only accentuates, by its sudden and brief intensity, the pervading gloom of these pages of Les Confessions and deepens the reader's insight into the young man's dismay. There is a fine contrast between the highly subjective scene of filial and paternal love, and the intentional and almost forced objectivity of the second incident illustrating another injustice to which he is exposed, the withholding of funds that belong to him.

He goes to Lyons to verify the weight of a box for which carriage charges from Paris to Venice were deducted from Montaigu's account—the famous apothecary's bill mentioned above—at an enormous rate of payment out of all proportion to the contents of the shipment. This incident is founded in historical fact and we have already referred to the deduction in question. The box contained merchandise which Rousseau, in a letter from Venice dated November 23, 1743, had asked Madame de Montaigu to forward by sea, that is from Le Havre together with her own effects. Since, in making the request, he had suggested that another rather large item for the count be sent overland to Lyons by coach, and then dispatched to Marseilles and Genoa, she must have decided to do the same with the box, for she was uncertain when her belongings would be shipped. Judging by the contents, a vest, some cuffs, stockings, linen, and a few other clothes, the box in question could hardly have been heavier than the one in the memoirs
which weighs forty-five pounds and which doubtless refers to the secretary’s one and only shipment recorded in historical documents.\textsuperscript{164} In the book, the visit to Lyons is of an abstract, mathematical aridity that reduces equity to its traditional symbols, the scale and balance, “emblems of the Lord’s own justice.” The narrator is clearly intent upon setting aside respect of persons and all human considerations, for the traveler appears to have no thought for the friends who, only two years before, sent him auspiciously on his way to Paris. At this moment in time they no longer exist for him, or so it seems. Does he avoid them for fear that, if they were to see him dishonored and unpaid, they would favor society’s judgment against the personal qualities they once professed to admire? I think not. Probably Rousseau actually did see them, as he saw many things and many people, for he had a number of experiences that the artist fails to record. The latter simply disengages from a welter of incidents the two that, in conjunction with one another, give singular expressiveness to a sense of injustice and desolation of soul.

In \textit{Les Confessions}, the Venetian sojourn lasts eighteen months, as the author says twice. In actuality Rousseau was back in Paris by October 11, 1744, exactly fifteen months after he had left, almost twelve of which he spent in Venice itself. In contemporary letters, calculating the

\textsuperscript{164} Regarding the contents of the famous box, see \textit{ibid.}, pp. 212–213, 224; and \textit{C.G.}, I, 271, letter from Rousseau to Mme de Montaigu and two letters to Roguin. The latter are dated February 7, 1744, and July 9, 1745. A. de Montaigu (\textit{Démêlés}, p. 178) tries to show that there were two boxes, one sent by sea and the other by land, and that Rousseau is intentionally confusing them in an effort to charge the ambassador with fraud. The Pléiade editors reject this explanation (I, 1403 n9 [to p. 324]); Mr. Leigh accepts it (\textit{C.C.}, I, 214, and II, 55, 86) for the following reasons, upon which I comment in parentheses: (1) Rousseau had asked that the shipment be sent by sea, that is from Le Havre, instead of through Lyons (but there is no evidence that it \textit{was}); (2) Mr. Leigh feels that the box must have been heavier than the memorialist admits (but forty-five pounds seems reasonable enough judging by the contents); (3) several shipments must have been made (but there is no evidence of more than one).
length of his engagement, he always includes the time spent in traveling. For example in the first of the *Venetian Letters*, dated August, 1744, he says he had been in Montaigu's service for fourteen months. Perhaps the author of *Les Confessions* meant to do likewise and forgetfully added the three months twice. Either the historian of the soul ignores time altogether, as in the Veronese and Naples stories, where no one would suspect that three and then eight months respectively elapse, or else, when he does take the trouble to compute time, he uses his own measure, as in the case of the duration of his absence from Paris in Montaigu's service.

In the memoirs the young man's return to the French capital only widens the rift between the soul and life, between natural self-respect and social abasement, which is the burden of the seventh book. By universal accord he is a victim of the ambassador's folly and cruel iniquity. But, being a foreigner, he has no right to national protection, and so his pleas to the Foreign Office are ignored. In this passage, where the memorialist puts his finger on the real reason for the government's failure to act, the bitterness of Montaigu's former secretary is intensified by that of the author of *Les Confessions*, who had already given to France the flower of his genius. Besides, as a mere secretary, the young Rousseau is sacrificed to so-called right order, which, we are persuaded, has nothing to do with truth or justice either. This principle is manifested by Madame de Beuzenwal and the Jesuit friend who had recommended him to her good graces for both of them withdraw their patronage. The same principle reappears, but without the artistic antithesis between public sympathy and apathy, in two contemporary letters attributed to Rousseau and supposedly written shortly after his return to Paris. One, which is surely not authentic but conveys some of the spirit of the memoirs, is directed to Madame de Beuzenwal and is a bitterly ironical attack on rank that exempts a man from
dignity, nobleness of purpose, honor, and integrity. The other, the last of the Venetian Letters to the Foreign Office, dated from Paris, October 11, 1744, is a plea in self-defense of far richer and more genuine feeling even though it too fell upon deaf ears. The ambassador’s apparent injustice and violence, in return for a perhaps over-zealous devotion to his service, have bewildered and unnerved the writer, who, as he had also complained in the second letter two months earlier, is defamed merely because he is the subordinate even though he can prove his rights in matters of honor and honorarium too. Here we are witnessing the evolution of ideas that are ever more forcefully interpreted in literary works of the future, and especially in the memoirs. To realize this, and to appreciate the fact, is not to accept the ideas or even to reject them, but simply to relate various versions of them and to find their perfect formulation in Les Confessions.

The last pages of the Venetian story in the autobiography are inspired by events in Venice after Rousseau’s departure and by his later contact with Montaigu in Paris. In the book, the ambassador almost at once shows his indiscretions to the world through his relations with his household, especially the newly appointed secretary, who robs him ruthlessly and is finally arrested and imprisoned. These sordid facts have their counterparts in history, and this is quite undeniable. The new secretary was the notorious Henry, who was a real “adventurer” and not an imaginary one like the visitor to Sion. His mediocre talents are shown

\[\text{C. C., II, 376–377. Cf. O. C., Pléiade, I, 1404 n1 (to p. 326). For the origin of this letter see C.G., I, n1, and C.C., I, 7.}\]

\[\text{C. C., II, 66–68. In later letters, too, Rousseau makes similar complaints; e.g. on p. 256 he writes thus to Mme de Warens, February 25, 1745: “... je me plains de mon cheval d’Ambassadeur, on me plaint, on m’estime et l’on ne me rend pas d’autre justice: Ce n’est pas que je n’espère m’en vanger un jour en lui faisant voir, non seulement que je vaux mieux, mais que je suis plus estimé que lui.” This is the thought in his mind when he completes Les Muses galantes; see p. 163 below. The letter to “mamma” is close to the text of the memoirs but the idea of a spurious social order is absent.}\]
in the deterioration in the style of embassy dispatches. Engaged before Rousseau’s discharge upon the recommendation of the count’s Parisian banker, Jean-Pierre Kolly, as we have seen, he was entrusted with the direction of the palace of France and turned out to be something of a banker himself for he seized the opportunity to defraud his employer until he was at last convicted of embezzlement and smuggling. ¹⁶⁷ His sway at the legation actually lasted three years and not just one as in the case of the new secretary in the Venetian story, where the author has in this case attenuated the ambassador’s lack of discernment.

Other incredible reports circulated about Montaigu’s relations with his dependents in actual life. For example, his enemy Le Blond tells of a closure of the embassy brought about in 1749 by a fierce quarrel between the count and two servants whom he had dismissed. When they complained of their wages he flew into a rage and beat them with his cane while they retaliated with insults and stoning. ¹⁶⁸ Accounts like this are far less restrained than the story in Les Confessions, where the embassy scandals finally give rise to Montaigu’s recall. This interpretation of events was impugned by historians like Cérésole eighty years ago, since the government did not recall the ambassador until May, 1749, when, after having asked for temporary leave of absence, he was summoned to relinquish his post. ¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ For Henry’s escapades see Faugère, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau à Venise,” p. 1076; A. de Montaigu, Démêlés, pp. 46, 82–86; and Derche, “Autour du séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Venise,” pp. 161–169, where there is a careful study of this affair which led to the ambassador’s ultimate downfall.


But half a century later the same interpretation was confirmed, and researchers established beyond a doubt that his recall was in fact an act of disfavor, as Les Confessions suggests. He pleaded against the order in June but was told not to delay his departure beyond August, when the consul, Le Blond, would relieve him until a successor could be found. It has been said that the consul, who was in Paris at the time, contributed to Montaigu's downfall, but the latter's own escapades testify against him more powerfully than anyone, including Rousseau, for whom the ambassador is clearly not an individual at all, but the symbol of an unjust society.

In the count's case, term of office was no sign of the approval of his superiors, any more than it was for his predecessor. Froullay held the post for a decade despite the fact that, after a period of reputable service, he was completely discredited and even incapacitated during the last three years and was notorious for his scandalous escapades, including the seduction of the patrician Maria de Riva within the sanctuary of her convent. In the same way, Montaigu's undeniable incompetence did not prevent the impoverished French government from retaining him in a relatively inactive embassy, instead of appointing a more qualified person, and pensioning the count for his thirty-seven years' military service, as it was finally obliged to do. Historical research shows that he was miscast in the role he tried vainly to play. He betrayed himself from the moment he assumed his mission. As we have already observed, he was reproached for the form of his dispatches and for disrespect to the King before Rousseau arrived in Venice. After the young man left, the soldier-diplomat was reproved for giving the French court unwarranted assurances of Venetian neutrality, as well as for the form of a memorial to the Venetian

170 Of course the corruption that existed even in monasteries is notorious; Monnier and Diehl both speak of it. See also O.C., Pléiade, III, 1820 n1 (to p. 1087).
171 A. de Montaigu, Démêlés, p. 95 n3, and C.C., I, 188.
senate and of court dispatches too. He was even recalled in 1746. But it was scarcely possible to replace him without compensating him. The astonishing fact is that he received no emoluments until 1749, whereupon he was given a successor.\textsuperscript{172} When the government first proposed to relieve him of his post, he was quick to remind it of its obligations toward him, and this, rather than friendly intervention on his behalf, is no doubt the real reason why the matter was pursued no further at that time. The count's dispatches are full of pleas for money, even during Rousseau's secretaryship. The government's indebtedness is not even mentioned in \textit{Les Confessions}, where the settlement of the account between the two men, upon the occasion of Montaigu's definitive recall, concludes their mutual relations.

Some early critics censured the writer for failing to say that the ambassador himself had not previously been paid.\textsuperscript{173} Yet this omission hardly constitutes a violation of moral truth, since Montaigu, who never once acknowledged the younger man's services as secretary of the embassy, might at least have been expected to draw upon his own personal income in order to pay his private secretary's modest salary, if such was Rousseau's official position or title. Everything concurs to prove that the count was a man of means: his private life reflected in the inquisitorial files, the opulent splendor of his summer villa extravagantly remodeled in the French style, and the vast sums of which he was deprived by Rousseau's successor, probably amount-

\textsuperscript{172} Montaigu received a quarter's salary before leaving for his post but after he arrived in Venice he received nothing. The \textit{Venetian Despatches} are full of requests for money: \textit{O.C.}, Plégade, III, 1079, 1108, 1117–1118, 1131, 1133–1134, 1145, 1170, 1186, 1193, 1209, 1212, 1228. For example, on May 14, 1746, when he was first recalled, Montaigu wrote thus to the Foreign Office: "Je suis tout prest de partir quand il plaira a Sa Majeste, mais il faut absolument pour que je sorte d'icy que vous ayez la bonté de me faire payer tous mes appoiments qui ne sçaurais payer toutes les dettes que j'ay contracté à Venise...."

\textsuperscript{173} Two examples are Ritter and Seiliere.
ing to more than twenty thousand francs. Yet it is true that he did not compensate his subordinate until he himself was finally recalled, paid, and retired all at once. If we acknowledge this, we do so not to convict or exonerate anyone but simply to know the role of truth, or rather factual truths, in the autobiography and the treatment they receive in that book. The author, in incorporating them into the story of his soul, does not do violence to them or disfigure them in any way. In these passages, he gives proof of the same moderation observable in his account of the earlier embassy scandals. He records a few, but not all, of the unhappy and often incredible adventures that might have testified against his former employer. He could have said much more in his own defense, as historians have amply demonstrated. Again he sacrifices material that would have been valuable to an apologist, and he does so for the sake of his psychological purpose. His omissions, which distort nothing, neither external fact nor inner truth, serve to safeguard the clarity, simplicity, and integrity of both.

But we must look beyond events to grasp the truth of the memoirs, a truth intimately bound to the art of the writer. Rousseau respects events, it is true, but he molds them to impart his spiritual message, and thus he transcends them. This message, which is nothing else but his own inner response to life, implies an indictment, not of a man, not even of Montaigu, but of society, whose arbitrary, abstract principles have less to do with reality than the myths of the "Contract." Unfortunately the count lent himself to the unsympathetic part he plays in the book, as the embodiment of a hostile world. His defects are contrasted with society's awe of rank and wealth in his person, to which the secretary is represented as being complacently

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174 The calculation is Mr. Leigh's; see C.C., II, 54. One might add his willingness to pay a year's rent to free himself from a three-year lease of the Querini palace after residing there for only five months: O.C., Pléiade, III, 1121-1122, 1828 n1 (to p. 1122); and Cérèsole, J.-J. Rousseau à Venise, pp. 64–65.
sacrificed, in spite of the latter's part in the holocaust. Artistic discipline, far from concealing, most effectively reveals the flame of indignation kindled in Rousseau's youthful soul and still flickering ominously through the writer's words many years later. The young man sees an immense and ever widening gulf between nature's gifts and fortune's favors, and this discrepancy is only adding fuel to the fire of his wrath. His rebellious spirit is storing up resentment against the day of retribution which would surely dawn, as dawn it did, and judgments were reversed, long before the memorialist took up his pen. For example in 1761 Rousseau had occasion to decline a new post in the diplomatic service offered by the Duke de Choiseul, then Minister of Foreign Affairs. The offer came too late. Besides, the next year in the writer's life ushered in a long period of exile, persecution and misanthropic obsession that lasted until death. This is why recognition never healed the scars of distrust in human society that are visible in all his works, from the Discours to the Dialogues.

The Venetian story, concluding as it began by a vague communication with the count in the setting of Paris, is an excellent example of the sustained artistry of Rousseau's composition in Les Confessions. There is a remarkable completeness in this reconstitution of fifteen critical months in his life, wherein he arouses, reawakens, revives, and actually relives the visions, aspirations, emotions, and psychological impressions of his youth. All his passions and prejudices are set before us. He uses the world of sense to translate them into a variety of pictures that blend harmoniously into the portrait of a man in search of "justice and truth." We can hardly fail to see this, whatever moral judgments we may have formed about the writer as a man, or the image he transmits. Opposite this image there stands another figure, intended as the very personification of injustice and ignorance, of moral and intellectual disorder,

175 Rousseau tells us this in the eleventh book of Les Confessions (O.C., Pléiade, I, 553).
who embodies at the same time the glorification of high birth and wealth. This figure is the Montaigu of Les Confessions. From a purely factual point of view he bears a close resemblance to his model in life, and there is little difference between them. But, artistically, there is a vast gulf separating the two. This new avatar of social prejudice and tyranny, created by the writer, is infinitely more significant and monumental than the man of flesh, whose eccentricities are none the less scrupulously respected. But the figure in the book is enlarged and expanded by a most skillful and powerful contrast with the younger man into a great symbol of society, whose mandate he holds and with which the unprivileged individual, who is yet projected as a privileged soul, struggles in an epic encounter. Rousseau, grappling with society in the person of its official emissary, is Jacob wrestling with the angel again to win a blessing. Only this time his adversary turns out to be the Adversary, the fallen angel of light transformed into an angel of darkness. And so Jacob in the person of Jean-Jacques, son of a latter-day Isaac, wrestles in vain and obtains only a curse. This analogy serves to illustrate the spirit of the epic tale and to bring into relief Rousseau's ideas on the relations of the individual to the social environment. We are made to feel that the protagonist cannot hold his own or prevail against a society fallen from primitive grace to its present state of defilement, mainly because he is vitiated, instead of being superelevated, by it. But the weaknesses of his opponent, unfaithful even to its minions, are shown in the fate of its figurehead, the count. If a kingdom divided against itself is doomed to fall, then the old order, or rather social disorder, cannot prevail forever. The young Rousseau is an optimist and the memorialist espouses his conviction that an orderly society must emerge in the end. It alone, in his eyes, can redeem the individual, just as social disorder is for him responsible for the fall. The idea haunts his mind and adds the force of passion to his quest as he resumes the struggle on the Parisian scene.