French Women and the Age of Enlightenment

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Diderot and Women

While there exists in the eighteenth century an impressive body of writing on women, apologies along Petrachist lines and traditional treatises on the relative excellence of the sexes and their equality or inequality remain far more numerous than those containing new and revolutionary ideas. Furthermore, the querelle des dames, in great part the work of men, is little conducive to the birth of an authentic and autonomous feminism. That “great revolution,” which Laclos declares only women can bring about, does not appear imminent.

The philosophe and encyclopedist, Denis Diderot, whose fictional writings contain some extraordinary feminine characters, was always fascinated by the woman. His deep personal involvement with women—his wife, his daughter, his mistress and her sisters, as well as their mother, among others, made the woman a constantly felt presence in his life and a frequent object of his reflection. Such fictional characters as Suzanne Simonin and Mlle de La Chaux not only give evidence of Diderot’s sympathetic attitude toward women but also register a firm protest against the demeaning position of women in eighteenth-century French society. Suzanne Simonin, the heroine of his famous novel La Religieuse, is a young woman of courage, sensitivity, lucidity, and determination. Her struggle against repressive civil and religious law, family authority, and social tradition is calculated to evoke a strong response and to draw attention to the plight of so many unfortunates of her sex. Diderot often encouraged women of talent, such as Mlle Jodin, an aspiring actress, and Mlle Collot, Falconet’s nineteen-year-old protégée and assistant; and he took particular interest and delight in the education of his daughter.

But if Diderot had a genuine interest in women, their well-being, their education, and creative powers, he was not one of those who, following the example of Poulain de La Barre, attempted to eliminate the distinctions traditionally maintained between the sexes. In fact, in many respects, Diderot shared the more traditional view of women of many of his contemporaries. This view, which had not substantially changed since Montaigne, is succinctly expressed by Mme Thiroux d’Arçonville in her treatise De l’amitié, published in 1761:
Friendship which requires firmness of spirit, right conduct, and discernment of choice, is very little suited to a sex which is weak by nature, frivolous by education, scatter-brained by pretension, coquette by vanity, & inconstant for want of occupation. Women are thus capable of friendship only to the degree that they depart from their essence, & that they are more disposed to those male virtues which characterize superior men.¹

Numerous passages in his works and correspondence attest that Diderot subscribed to this perception of women. In his Réfutation d’Helvétius, Diderot remarks, “Nothing is so rare as logic: an infinite number of men lack it, nearly all women have none.”² The same idea is repeated in the Neveu de Rameau, in reference to sound reasoning, which Diderot describes as “a thing so uncommon among men, and still rarer among women.”³ Again, in La Religieuse, Suzanne, having described the suffering she has undergone, comments: “life is a burden to me; I am a woman; I have a weak mind as do those of my sex.”⁴ A letter to Sophie Volland provides another illustration: “How essential it is that a woman annex to herself a man of sense! You are for the most part only what we wish you to be.”⁵ Those rare women not characterized by these traits are seen as deviating from their essence when they embody those qualities that are considered the prerogative of superior men. “There are women who are men, and men who are women....”⁶ Of Sophie, his mistress, he says that she is “man and woman, as she pleases”;⁷ and in another instance, he means to compliment her when he says “you are scarcely a woman.”⁸ While Diderot concedes that women could be better educated than they are, he disagrees with Helvétius that women are capable of the same education as men.⁹ Furthermore, from the acknowledged genius of a few women, he denies that one can infer an equal aptitude to genius in both sexes: “The Saphos, the Hypatias, the Catherines were women of genius.... And from this small number I am to conclude equal aptitude to genius in one and the other sex, and that one swallow makes a summer.”¹⁰

Such examples are readily found in Diderot’s works, but one must look further to get at the basis of his thought about women. “When one writes of women,” says Diderot in his essay Sur les femmes, “one must dip his pen into the rainbow and sprinkle over the lines the dust of butterfly wings.”¹¹ Such a remark may well give the impression that this work is little more than a stylistic exercise. Yet, without being a systematic exposition of Diderot’s ideas on women, it nevertheless contains a number of ideas fundamental to his perception of women as expressed in his philosophical works and vividly illustrated in his fictional works. Ruled by her passions, the woman emerges in this essay as a creature of excesses; she experiences love, anger, jealousy, and superstition to a degree never experienced by men.¹² Her singular
behavior is explained by "the organ proper to her sex," which exerts a powerful influence upon her. The idle and frivolous life imposed upon her by society only intensifies this influence. While a full and active life distracts the man from his passions, this is not so of the woman: "The woman incubates hers: they are a fixed point to which the idleness or the frivolity of her occupations keep her gaze ceaselessly attached." This physiological explanation of the woman's character is entirely in accord with the ideas expressed in Diderot's *Rêve de d'Alembert* and *Eléments de physiologie*, in which he stresses the relationship between the psychic and the physiological. The sexual organs, like all the organs, have a life of their own: "All of our organs...are but distinct animals which the law of continuity maintains in sympathy, unity, general identity." The sense of identity the person has is the translation of the unity the body has realized among its different parts, each of which has a will of its own. This unity may, at any time, be disrupted, and the life of the body be reduced to fragmentary and anarchical determinations. Vapors, to which women of the eighteenth century were often subject, are symptoms, according to Diderot, of this anarchy of the organs, of their insubordination to the brain. It is in the brain that sensorial impressions are synthesized, according to laws that Diderot describes as analogous to the laws of acoustics. The brain is a resonance center and, by means of mental representations, can give to a desire or need, a decisive influence over the whole body. A passionate love can thus become a force capable of restoring the organic order perturbed by accidental or morbid causes. In the *Rêve de d'Alembert*, Bordeu relates the incident of a woman who, perceiving that her lover was losing interest in her because of her illness, cured herself of a nervous malady through the power of her will. "She resolved to be cured. There arose within her a civil war in which it was first the master who prevailed, then the subjects." Several instances of the same type are mentioned in *Sur les femmes*. Passion is perceived by Diderot, not as a primitive tendency of the body, but as the exacerbation of certain internal movements or organic wills that are thwarted or obstructed. It is a pathological state. As Hoffmann explains it, the great passions—delirium, fanaticism, ecstasy—have their source in man's condition as a social being, wherein he experiences the presence of the other as an obstacle to his happiness. The ideas and feelings of the passionate man compose a mental structure whose relation to reality is falsified. This is explained by his imperious need to give meaning to a reality that is disappointing to him and results in his inventing a new and fictitious world in which he can be happy. Madness, an extreme form of passion, is, for Diderot, the breaking of the link between the real and the mental. Imagination, like madness, of which it is a moderate form, is a
distraction from reality, an indifference to its order. The sensitive
being, and the woman above all, is subject to the determinism of her
organs, and her behavior is the result of this sensitivity and of social
taboos. When such a tendency is aggravated by a life of reclusion, the
result can be a total loss of touch with reality, and madness.\textsuperscript{23} This is
vividly illustrated in Diderot's \textit{La Religieuse}. The mysticism, cruelty, and
lesbianism of the superiors of the three convents to which Suzanne
Simonin is successively sent derive from the same cause, i.e., hysteria,
which Diderot considers an intrinsic part of the feminine character.
However, in the case of the superior of St. Eutrope, as Hoffmann
notes,\textsuperscript{24} the problem occurs when she internalizes the taboo and
perceives her behavior and her irrepressible desire as sinful. Her
delirium is filled with terrifying images by which she punishes herself.
Since she is unable to be happy, she bans her desire in order to give
meaning to her suffering. Her lesbianism is, thus, a form of organic
madness; and her delirium is a result of the excessive authority
 accorded the childish prejudices instilled in her, a kind of conspiracy of
sensuality and sacred terror. The exaltation of Mme de La Carlière,
her theatrical actions, and her solemn and dignified bearing as well as
the single-minded relentlessness with which Mme de La Pommeraye
pursues her revenge against the marquis des Arcis are further
illustrations of this natural inclination to hysteria. "Impenetrable in
dissimulation, cruel in vengeance, constant in their projects, without
scruples as to the means of succeeding...," Diderot writes in \textit{Sur les
femmes}.\textsuperscript{25} But the great poetic vision he ascribes to woman originates
from the same "ferocious beast" that she carries within herself. "It is
from the organ proper to her sex that all of these extraordinary ideas
proceed."\textsuperscript{26} Only a woman, he says, is suited for the role of Pythia.\textsuperscript{27}
"Only the head of a woman could become exalted to the point of
divining seriously the approach of a god..."\textsuperscript{28} Here again, one is
reminded of \textit{La Religieuse} and Mme de Moni, the superior of the first
convent, whose moments of great exaltation, eloquence, and inspiration
Suzanne witnesses: "In truth," she says, "this woman was born to
be a prophetess..."\textsuperscript{29} Woman, as described in \textit{Sur les femmes}, retains the
great energy of primitive nature that manifests itself as readily in
Machiavellianism as in mysticism. As for her intellectual powers, as
noted in other works, Diderot judges them to be weak: "For lack of
reflection and of principles, nothing penetrates beyond a certain
degree of conviction in the understanding of women.\textsuperscript{30} Women’s
pride and self-interest, however, retain all of their primitive force. At
heart, women remain "real savages.\textsuperscript{31}

If, in this essay, Diderot dwells considerably upon the bizarre, the
violent, and the spectacular aspects of the feminine temperament, in
which one can readily recognize many of his own literary creations, he
also speaks with compassion of the unhappy condition of women and of the injustices that have always been their lot. “In nearly all countries, the cruelty of civil laws has been joined with the cruelty of nature against women.”32 Woman’s unhappy fate in society, he points out, is due primarily to her biological vocation. It is her body that determines her relationship to the world; and while fulfilling the destiny prepared for her by her body and imposed on her by its mechanisms—the instinct and the imagination—the woman encounters suffering and disillusionment. From dependence upon her parents, she goes to dependence upon her husband. Her anticipation of freedom through marriage is short-lived:

Her imagination opens upon a future filled with chimera; her heart swims in a secret joy. . . . A husband is chosen for her. She becomes a mother. . . . It is in pain, in peril of their lives, at the expense of their charms and often to the detriment of their health, that they give birth. . . . The years pass; beauty fades; the years of abandonment arrive. . . .”33

Having lost her beauty, and her capacity to bear children, she no longer has a role in society: “What, then, is a woman? Neglected by her husband, deserted by her children, a mere cipher in society. . . .” Her only recourse, he adds, is “to take to religion.”34

The woman, as perceived by Diderot, is doubly a victim: she is subject to time because she is dependent upon the body, and she exemplifies the fragility of a happiness based on the imagination. The woman constantly imagines her happiness as if to compensate in advance for a destiny of suffering that she cannot escape. Her happiness is both carnal and laden with fiction, rooted in the body and threatened by it. The happiness she dreams of is soon belied by illness and suffering. Her life ceases to be perilous only to become insignificant.35

Does Diderot then see no solution to the problem of the woman? In Sur les femmes, he has little to offer them but pity: “Women, how I pity you! . . . had I been a legislator . . . , freed from your servitude, you would have been sacred in whatever place you may have appeared.”36 But the question was never far from Diderot’s mind, and in his correspondence, he proposes to his mistress and her sister certain cas de conscience (points of conscience) that would seem to propose alternatives to this unhappy situation of the woman. One case involves a young woman who wished to have a child but who had, in Diderot’s words, “sense enough to perceive that marriage is a stupid and troublesome state.”37 She justifies her action on the grounds of her courage in accepting the physical risks involved in childbirth and in facing public reprobation. She further claims that she is capable and desirous of instilling in the child principles of honor and of justice and of providing
Diderot and Women

society with a good citizen. It is not difficult to discern here what Diderot is suggesting. Outside the institution of marriage, the woman can hope to escape the contradiction between the natural inconstancy of the human heart and the indissolubility of marriage. The solution chosen by the young woman, in fact, gets rid of the dilemma at the heart of Diderot’s psychology. On the one hand, she will obey the dictates of nature that demand that she be fruitful, since it did not make her sterile;38 on the other hand, she will escape the fatality of inconstance.39

In another instance, Diderot does not scruple to approve the actions of a mother of six children and of little means who proposes to “give one night” to a man in consideration of which he will assure her husband an important position. “Only one night is asked of her. Shall she refuse a quarter hour of pleasure to the one who offers in exchange ease for her husband, education for her children, a suitable condition for herself?”40 Diderot’s judgment here is based on the demands of nature, and nature, he says, is not concerned with morality. “It is entirely engaged in two pursuits: the preservation of the individual, the propagation of the species.”41 In the name of a utilitarian morality, Diderot reduces sexuality to a mere mechanical function having no moral significance. In the Suite du rêve de d’Alembert, pleasure becomes the sole value, and anything that promotes it is legitimate.

Ultimately, what Diderot wishes to do is to free the relationship between men and women of all the constraints that civil and moral authority have placed upon it. As noted before, marriage for Diderot is “a stupid and troublesome state.” His own unhappy marital experience certainly influenced his perception of this institution as not only unhappy for both partners but also contrary to nature. Man’s natural inconstancy, he maintained, is incompatible with a lifelong commitment. “The vow of indissoluble marriage makes and must make almost as many unhappy people as there are spouses.”42 Diderot’s attitude toward marriage, while in keeping with his materialistic philosophy, also reflects the mores of the society in which he lived. Eighteenth-century society viewed marriage as an institution whose essential objects were to maintain the family and transmit property.43 It was primarily a juridical institution. If the immutable character of marriage was widely upheld, it was far more from a desire to insure that the terms of the contract would be maintained than to be faithful to sacred vows. Diderot was one of the rare men of his day, and of his milieu, to believe, at least for a time, that love and marriage were compatible. When he decided, against his father’s wishes, to marry Antoinette Champion, he firmly believed in love as the basis for marriage. “What makes the happiness of the spouses,” he wrote to his fiancée, “is their

The Philosophes: Feminism and/or Antifeminism

mutual tenderness.”44 The same philosophy is evident in his Père de famille, even though by that time (1758) he had long lost his illusions about his own marriage. In May 1765, he writes:

One of the great disadvantages of the state of society, is the multitude of occupations, and especially the casualness with which one takes on obligations which dispose of all happiness. One marries; takes on an occupation; one has a wife, children, before having common sense. Ah! If it were to do over!45

Sentimentally, the marriages of those of whom he speaks in his correspondence were hardly better than his; however, they were far more socially and economically stable than his own.46 The majority of the time, husband and wife lived separate lives, once descendants were provided; and so long as outward appearances were maintained, each arranged his sentimental life as he saw fit, without objection from either partner. For Diderot, the real couple is joined by mutual tenderness, and to oblige two people who biologically change constantly to promise eternal fidelity is against nature. “Marriage is an indissoluble engagement,” he writes in the Encyclopédie. “The wise man shudders at the very idea of an indissoluble engagement. The legislators who prepared for men indissoluble ties were little aware of his natural inconstancy. How many criminals and unhappy people have they created!”47 His story of Mme de La Carlière, linked both genetically and ideologically with the Supplément au voyage de Bougainville,48 illustrates society’s view of marriage as an indissoluble union and its condemnation of infidelity, or what Diderot ironically calls “consequences of our absurd legislation.”49 Mme de La Carlière combines the poetic and the pathetic aspects of the woman whose exalted image of love inevitably leads to disillusionment and unhappiness. She insists upon absolute fidelity; and when she learns that her husband, Desroches, has once been unfaithful, she condemns him without appeal. The account of the relationship between Mlle de La Chaux and Gardeil in Ceci n’est pas un conte makes the same point with respect to the inconstancy of the human heart and the folly of eternal vows.

In Diderot’s Supplément, Orou, native of Tahiti, defines marriage in Tahiti as “the agreement to occupy the same cabin and to sleep in the same bed, so long as we find this agreeable.”50 While Diderot does not propose this as an alternative to marriage, he attempts in this work to find a basis for individual morality in the laws governing the development of the species, rather than in the interdictions of religion.51 As Gilbert Chinard remarks: “To the sublime mummerly of Mme de La Carlière . . . Diderot means to oppose good natural law such as it is found among the natives of Tahiti.”52 But if Diderot felt that “one can be inconstant in love, even pride himself in having little religion with
respect to women, without being bereft of honor and probity," he was not a proponent of total sexual freedom.\(^5\) Even in Tahiti, a whole network of laws surrounds the reproductive act. As Michèle Duchet remarks: "Nothing, however, is less anarchical than this Tahitian paradise. . ."\(^5\) Diderot was compelled to introduce detailed laws in Tahiti in order to reconcile the inhuman order of the body with the obligatory political order.

One of the arguments Orou makes against marriage is that it transforms the person into an object to be possessed. However, it soon becomes evident that in the state of nature, such as it exists in Tahiti, the man and woman are even more transformed into objects and means because sexual relations are totally subordinated to the continuance of the race and the public interest.\(^5\) As Herbert Dieckmann points out, the only argument of the Supplément that might have served as a basis for reform was the one that condemned the will to possess in love and the transformation of a thinking, feeling, and free being into an object. But Diderot did not pursue this argument beyond an eloquent protest. Had he further developed his idea of the freedom and dignity of the person who loves, he would have observed, suggests Dieckmann, that this idea, far from removing moral ideas from "certain actions," would rather have increased their number.\(^5\)

Despite his frequent assertions that marriage is contrary to nature and his apparent approval of alternatives to marriage, there was never any question in Diderot's mind as to alternatives for his own daughter. The man whom she ultimately married had been chosen for her when she was little more than a year old,\(^5\) and Diderot's preoccupation with her dowry fills many pages of his correspondence. It was only a month before he wrote his Supplément, in which marriage is judged as contrary to nature and to the dignity of the person, that Diderot's daughter, Angélique, was married. In the letter Diderot wrote her on that occasion, one hardly recognizes the author of the Supplément. His advice to her is not unlike that found in the most traditional marriage manuals of the day. His authority over her, he says, now belongs to her husband, and her happiness also is bound up entirely with his. "Your happiness is inseparable from that of your spouse... Have for [him] all the condescension imaginable."\(^5\) He counsels her against anything that might be interpreted as improper behavior, for "One has the right to judge women on appearances..." Her life must now revolve entirely around that of her husband; she must receive all those whom he desires her to meet, but her own associations must be restricted as much as possible. "Restrict, restrict again your society. Where there are many people, there is much vice."\(^5\) In Sur les femmes, Diderot condemns the idleness and frivolity of the lives of women and attributes to this form of life much of their instability. The antidote for
this, he believes, is in occupying women with household duties. "Rise early; give to your domestic occupations of all kinds the first hours of your morning; perhaps your entire morning. Fortify your soul." However, he stresses equally his daughter's need to improve her mind by reading and improving her talents. He advises Angélique to retain her teacher, if only to motivate her to work; and he cautions her against dissipation: "Fear dissipation. It is the symptom of boredom and of distaste for all solid occupations." As to the roles of husband and wife: "Exterior affairs are his; those of the interior are yours."

In reminding his daughter that her happiness was inseparable from that of her husband, Diderot undoubtedly believed this to be true ideally; however, such had not been the case with respect to his own wife, whose existence he recognized as futile and unhappy: "And whose is the health which could withstand the life which she leads? Never going out, working constantly; living on nothing; and screaming from morning until night. Bronze would not withstand it."

The inconsistency in Diderot's views on marriage, as expressed in the Supplément and in his letter to his daughter, may be explained in part by nostalgia for the simple life, uncomplicated by the interdictions of religion and society. Dieckmann puts it very well when he says:

For those who suffer from deep-seated conflicts caused by the passions and the distressing confusion of emotions repressed by an interior resistance or by exterior obstacles; for those who are trapped in the contradictions of love and desire, the simple unequivocal appetite and its satisfaction take on curiously an almost ideal signification.

In the conclusion of the Supplément, however, Diderot's position is not so far removed from that in his letter to his daughter. While persisting in the view that certain actions are wrongly judged by religion and society, he nevertheless advises against committing such actions; and he adds, "We will speak against senseless laws until they are reformed; and, meanwhile, we shall submit to them. . . . There are fewer disadvantages in being mad with the madmen, than in being wise all alone."

In Diderot's philosophical works, the woman is perceived as a body; but he is aware that the body, by itself, cannot be a source of happiness, and must be reinvented by the imagination. This contradiction in Diderot's thought, says Hoffmann, made it impossible for him to come to terms with the question of love. The right to inconstancy is one of the principle ideas of the Supplément that renders love insignificant in all its forms: conjugal, paternal, maternal, and filial. If love is protected from all suffering, it is also deprived of all joy. Diderot thus oscillates between a naturalistic interpretation in the Rêve de d'Alembert and in the Supplément and a poetic vision in the story of Mme de La Carrière and in the Réflexion.
The illusion of eighteenth-century philosophy was to discover rational models of society by which might be reconciled order and happiness, the body and the law.68 The Supplément was Diderot's attempt to do this; it was his utopia, wherein he attempted to construct a primitive state in which happiness existed and the body determined the nature of the institutions. But in confusing the mythical order with the political order, he transformed the state of nature into a machine-society, wherein all conflict was abolished, but with it, too, all freedom.69 In other works, however, such as Sur les femmes and the Réfutation, Diderot devalues the state of nature. He notes the miserable condition of savage women, brutally oppressed by men: "The woman, unhappy in the cities, is even more unhappy in the depths of the forests."70 These contradictions, says Hoffmann, are the result of a dual view of nature, one patterned after Hobbes, the other after Rousseau; and Diderot alternates between the two.71 The savage woman of the Orenoque, described in Sur les femmes, and Polly Baker in the Supplément together seem to symbolize the woman: the first is a victim of brute nature, devoid of all feelings of pity and humanity; the second, a victim of a society ruled by prejudice.72

In the chapter "Morale" of the Histoire des deux Indes, Diderot clearly modifies the ideas expressed in the Supplément. He admits the failure of the Tahitian utopia; no social order can be founded on total sexual freedom. It is the value man assigns to behavior and binds himself to respect that constitutes morality. Thus, if infidelity is, in itself, an indifferent act, it is an immoral act, because it goes against established law. The sexual act also entails a moral sense from that time when social life has developed prejudices in man. Accepted opinion, however unreasonable, is legitimate insomuch as it has received a value status. Henceforth, a certain idea of continence and of modesty is linked in the mind of the woman to her sense of dignity and of morality. Without this constraint, Diderot says, the woman would yield to the excesses of her nature.73 Nature, in the state of civilization, thus seems to have lost its normative sense. Opinion, here, takes the place that the law had in the Hobbesian dialectic and value had in Rousseau's thought. Deference to opinion is not only the fundamental structure of all social life, but the prejudice that imposes fidelity in marriage and modesty on women is identified with the law of reason itself.74 If nature appears first as a norm then as excess and prejudice and modesty first appear as signs of a weakness of mind then as values essential to all familial and social life, this contradiction, says Dieckmann, reflects Diderot's attempt to rationalize love. "Bourgeois marriage and the free union are two attempts made to rationalize love."75

In the final analysis, women remain for Diderot mysterious beings, "most extraordinary children."76 On the one hand, he declares that if women are "real savages" and "entirely machiavelic,"77 this is due to a
society that rules by prejudice and represses the instinct; on the other hand, he seems to imply that the constraints of society are necessary to restrain the energy peculiar to a creature determined by "the organ proper to her sex." 78

By temperament—warm, enthusiastic, and capable of remarkable flights of fancy—Diderot was naturally disposed to great sympathy for those whom he describes as "beautiful as the seraphins of Klopstock, terrible as the devils of Milton." 79 However, his fascination with all that proclaimed the uniqueness of the individual inclined him more to an interest in woman's psychological condition than in her social condition. He condemned the idle and frivolous life society imposed upon women and encouraged those who were able to rise above this condition, but he viewed the role of women as essentially different from that of men. If he perceived the woman as an extraordinary and poetic being, endowed with all the energy of primitive nature, he saw her no less as the ideal companion of man, whose happiness and fulfillment are intimately bound up with hers.

Oh! how many true, touching and tender things are there to say about the inclination of the man toward the woman . . . woman, the being in nature who most resembles the man, the single worthy companion of his life, the source of his most delightful thoughts . . . the mother of his children . . . , the unique individual beneath heaven to feel his caresses and whose soul fully responds to his. He who does not love the woman is a kind of monster; he who seeks her out only when prompted by need, departs from his kind and places himself alongside the brute. 80

To categorize Diderot as feminist or antifeminist would be an oversimplification. As Hoffmann points out, the terms feminism and antifeminism are inadequate to describe the main currents of thought that prevailed throughout the eighteenth century. He links Diderot (the Diderot of the last part of his life) with Montesquieu and states that both

inscribed into history the search for values; but, following Locke, they accepted the rational structure of the mind, which, in their eyes, is justified by man's sociability, which is unquestionably his destiny. They saw a meaning, a tension in history, an effort toward the founding of social and political conditions which would be more and more in accord with the fundamental demands of reason. 81

NOTES

1. Mme Thiroux d'Arçonville, De l'amitié (Amsterdam, 1761), pp. 78-79.
Diderot and Women 307

d’Alembert, and to the Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville will be from this edition.
8. Ibid., 4.54.
10. Ibid., p. 606.
12. Ibid., p. 979.
13. Ibid., p. 982.
15. Œuvres philosophiques, p. 293.
18. Hoffmann, pp. 496-497.
19. “Always, the body is the origin of the will . . . .”, ibid., p. 497.
21. “A physician says to the women of Bordeaux, tormented with frightful vapors, that they are threatened with epilepsy; and thereupon they are cured.” Sur les femmes, p. 984.
23. “[T]he passionate woman would need only the complete solitude which she seeks.” Sur les femmes, p. 980.
24. Hoffmann, p. 503.
26. Ibid., p. 982.
27. In Greek mythology, Pythia is the priestess of Apollo at Delphi who delivered the oracles.
29. Diderot, La Religieuse, p. 42.
31. Ibid., p. 987.
32. Ibid., p. 985.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Hoffmann, pp. 532-533.
38. Ibid., 123.
39. Hoffmann, p. 489. See also pp. 488-491, in which Hoffmann points out the contradictions inherent in this and the second cas de conscience presented in another letter to S.V., Corr. 4.84.
The Philosophes: Feminism and/or Antifeminism

41. Corr. 4.85. Also: "What connection is there between a just or generous action and the voluptuous loss of a few drops of a fluid?", ibid.
42. Ibid., 5.134.
44. Corr. 1.46.
45. Ibid., 5.37.
46. Ibid.
48. Hereinafter referred to as Supplément.
50. Oeuvres philosophiques, p. 484.
53. Ceci n'est pas un conte, in Oeuvres, p. 802.
54. Duchet, p. 133.
56. Ibid., p. lxvi.
58. Ibid., 12.123.
59. Ibid., 125.
60. Ibid., 126.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 124.
63. Ibid., 3.124.
64. Dieckmann, Supplément, p. xlviii.
65. Ibid., p. 515.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Sur les femmes, p. 985.
71. Hoffmann, p. 535.
72. Ibid., p. 520.
73. Ibid., p. 529.
74. Ibid., pp. 530-531.
76. Sur les femmes, p. 984.
77. Ibid., p. 987.
78. Ibid., p. 982.
79. Ibid., p. 979.
80. Assezat and Tourneux, vol. 4, p. 95.
81. Hoffmann, p. 22.