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Kaitlin Anne Shirley

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**Imagination and Morality: The Third Party Spectator in *Julie ou La
Nouvelle Héloïse***

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Karen Pagani

Alexandra Wettlaufer

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Kaitlin Anne Shirley, B.A.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my parents, whose love and support has helped me through all the times I've had.

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Abstract

Imagination and Morality: The Third Party Spectator in *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*

Kaitlin Anne Shirley, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Supervisor: Karen Pagani

In this paper I am going to look at Adam Smith's and Rousseau's conceptions of conscience and the latter's development of the third party spectator in the society of three in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. The Smithian notion of the impartial spectator is supposed to make one behave better than we are capable of on our own, acting like a conscience which we consult when making choices, tempering our emotions and actions. In Rousseau, with a third party watching our response is indeed affected, but the external eyes of society and the awareness of the regard cause all kinds of problems because society is corrupt and we are corrupted in turn by our amour-propre. Rousseau develops the friendship of three as an alternative to society, which then involves a vested party who takes interest in the individuals. While he may not have been reading Smith, Rousseau develops a similar concept to the imagined impartial spectator, with one twist: his spectator is interested and is real. The third party spectator is interested in our virtue and he has both a say and a stake in the relationship. He is an actual third person looking in on the relationship as an invested spectator and participant but in order to successfully guide the other individuals, they must have the right interests and capabilities. The third party spectator must be invested in cultivating their virtue rather than suppressing nature or abandoning duty. In this paper, specifically, I will look at the failures of Claire and Eduard in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* to effectively guide the relationship between Saint-Preux and Julie. Then I will examine why Wolmar's interests in Julie and Saint-Preux are ultimately the right reasons, making him the most able, if not completely successful, third party spectator.

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INTRODUCTION

Rousseau's *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) is a tragedy in which the heroine, Julie, is unable to resolve the conflict between her duty as a daughter and wife and role as an individual. It is also a novel of her education, full of people trying to guide her in the face of her struggle; even her lover, Saint-Preux, starts out as her tutor. In this paper I will suggest that within Rousseau's text there is an entity similar to the Smithian impartial spectator in the third-party of the "society of three", a group within the novel that consists of two lovers and a third-party who guides them. The regard of the third-party in the society of three is then interiorized by the two lovers, which in turn makes them behave virtuously because they want to be seen as good by the third-party. While there is no evidence that Rousseau had ever read Smith, his imaginary impartial spectator and ideas about imagination as defined in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) will help us to better understand the role of imagination in moral development and the internalization of the regard of Rousseau's third-party. Rousseau's use of the society of three has been examined by numerous critics¹, and as Christopher Kelley explains:

such domestic circles occur frequently in Rousseau's works in numerous variations. Rousseau presents them as the best possible arrangements for civilized humans who do not live in healthy political communities. He gives an image of an admittedly unconventional life which offers hope for some semblance of wholeness for those who have developed imaginations. (146-7)

¹ Christopher Kelly writes about the society of three in Rousseau's *Confessions* in his book, *Rousseau's exemplary life: the Confessions as political philosophy*, pages 146-147

Whereas I agree with Christopher Kelley's assessment of the society of three, in this paper I am trying to add another dimension to it, emphasizing the importance and meaning of the interiorized exterior regard in Julie's moral development and the different ways in which one can be a third party spectator. In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, there are three different people who occupy the role of the third-party in the society of three: Claire, Edouard, and Wolmar and I will be highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each. Claire takes on the role of a friend to Julie, but her judgment is clouded by her over-identification with Julie, and she is unable to properly advise her. Edouard takes on the role of a tutor, and while he has some good ideas, his intentions, which are guided by his British nationality, do not align with Julie's duty as a French woman. It is Wolmar, who takes on the role of a sovereign to Julie and Saint-Preux, who is finally able to guide them in the face of their passion to a place of virtue. I believe that each of them has different interests and roles in the society of three which contribute to their success or failure and that it is ultimately Wolmar, taking on the role of a sovereign at Clarens, who both has the character for and right interests in leading Julie and Saint-Preux back to virtue.

Julie's story is tragic because she is alienated from herself and there is no solution. In the face of our alienation from ourselves², we need someone to guide us in our struggle, and in this paper I suggest that the idea of conscience or the regard of an other is an essential component of facing this dilemma. The third-party in the society of

² Scholars such as Judith Shklar, Arthur Melzer, and others have examined the relationship between man's roles as citizens and individuals and the resulting alienation at length in their books, respectively titled, *Men and Citizens* pages 60-65, and *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought*, pages 63-64

three is supposed to help one to overcome the conflict between our competing roles as citizen and individual by uniting them through virtue. One is not supposed to favor either role over the other but instead should love and strive for virtue in all aspects. My main focus is the interiorized exterior regard but I bring in Smith and Rousseau's theories in order to emphasize the role of imagination in moral development in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. The plan of this paper is as follows: first, I will look at Smith's impartial spectator to establish his notions of conscience and moral development. I will also talk about Rousseau's different notions of the regard of the other in the *Contrat Social* (1762) and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, emphasizing that while Smith's spectator is imaginary and Rousseau's is real, in both works his regard must still necessarily be internalized in the same way in order for him to be successful. Then, I will examine the society of three in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the interests of Claire and Edouard as a friend and tutor and their respective failure to guide Julie and Saint-Preux. Finally, I will look at the interests and success of Wolmar as a sovereign in shepherding Julie and Saint-Preux and the political community of Clarens. In the conclusion, I will gesture toward further lines of inquiry related to both the society of three, tutors, sovereigns, imagination and the internalization of the regard of the other as a component to conscience.

CONSCIENCE: SMITH AND ROUSSEAU

In this paper, my main focus is the spectator in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and I bring in Adam Smith's moral theory and Rousseau's political theory in order to look at moral development in the text. Smith and Rousseau seem to agree that we need a third party for moral development; for Smith it was an imaginary impartial spectator and for Rousseau it was an interiorized exterior regard. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith begins with the idea that we have natural empathy for, via our imagination, we can understand the pain and suffering of others. He contends

by the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. (Smith 1)

He notes that an excess of emotion upsets us and thus potentially others, which leads us to temper our emotions for the sake of the other's perception: "as they are constantly considering what they themselves would feel, if they actually were the sufferers, so he is as constantly led to imaging in what manner he would be affected if he was only one of the spectators of his own situation" (Smith 14). Here we can see the role of imagination in constructing our morality: we are supposed to ask ourselves what the other watching us would think and imagine his reaction and then act accordingly. In his account of Smith's impartial spectator and sympathy, Charles L. Griswold notes that, "morality demands that one be able to see a situation from the other person's point of view" (77-78) which sets

up a standard for how to judge our feelings and actions: we internalize the regard of the other and act according to how it will be perceived.

But what specific ‘other’ should we use to guide ourselves? Smith suggests that we should behave so that any imagined *disinterested* person acting on objective principles would fully agree with our emotions and actions in the given situation. Smith says that “the compassion of the spectator must arise altogether from the consideration of what he himself would feel if he was reduced to the same unhappy situation, and, what perhaps is impossible, was at the same time able to regard it with his present reason and judgment” (4). We should aim to temper our emotions and guide our actions so that this impartial spectator would approve. We do not have to judge a wrong done to us by how we feel about it, but by how a disinterested party would feel and “the impartial spectator; which allows no word, no gesture, to escape it beyond what this more equitable sentiment would dictate; which never, even in thought attempts any greater vengeance, nor desires to inflict any greater punishment, than what every indifferent person would rejoice to see executed” (Smith 16) allows us to develop our morality via its guidance. We have different interests in each situation that we face, but the impartiality of the internalized spectator allows us to behave according to a code since he has no interest in the outcome other than for it to be ethical. The imagination is at work here and it “does not simply join us to others; it gets us ‘inside’ their experience. It joins us to their world, to their motivations, to the circumstances to which they are responding” (Griswold 86) which helps us to see just how vital imaginative power is in moral development. We have to enter into their situation and Smith’s focus is on the response to the situation since, as

Smith says, “our senses will never inform us of what [our brother] suffers” (16), access to the situation is the best we can do in terms of judging the response of the agent. The imagination is key to sympathizing with the other and internalizing the regard of this impartial spectator, which is vital to our moral development.

Smith suggests that it is the society of others that helps us to judge our own behavior. He states that we are able to temper our emotions,

especially when in their presence and acting under their observation: and as the reflected passion, which he thus conceives, is much weaker than the original one, it necessarily abates the violence of what he felt before he came into their presence, before he began to recollect in what manner they would be affected by it, and to view his situation in this candid and impartial light. (14)

Viewing our actions through the eyes of the impartial spectator is almost like viewing through society, except the impartial spectator is a disinterested party, thus when we reflect on our actions, we should, “recollect in what manner the other would be affected by it, and to view our situation in this candid and impartial light” (Smith 14). Smith suggests that by using our imagination to view our passions through the gaze of the impartial spectator they are tempered and we are better able to guide ourselves according to a standard morality, thus “the space between doing and seeing is bridged in part by means of the imagination’s creative and ‘sympathetic’ work (Griswold, 82). As we imagine that we are being watched, and adjust our actions accordingly, our morality begins to develop via this practice.

In the society of three, Rousseau formulates something similar in structure to Smith’s impartial spectator in that we are still internalizing the regard of the other person—in fact, that person is the regard itself. While the Smithian spectator is

necessarily impartial, in Rousseau, the third party is necessarily somehow interested. The interiorized exterior regard in Rousseau really only occurs in private, interpersonal relationships. In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, it comes up in the structure of the family, but not exclusively. It is a private relationship and that is where the link to the *Contrat Social* is interesting, because his political theory is driving his development of the interiorized exterior regard. In Rousseau's political philosophy he maintains that people should feel the eyes of society on them at all times. The eyes of society are interested in our behavior because the people who have to coexist with us do not want crime going on in their midst, and this because of their *amour de soi*: crime destroys *their* community. However, his fictional and autobiographical texts contradict that, instead saying that the eyes of society are corrupt and that if we use society as our conscience, we too will be corrupted by our *amour-propre*. This tension is unique to Rousseau, we don't find the same problem of *amour-propre* in Smith. It seems that the problem in the *Contrat Social* is that the eyes of society are not concerned with the general will, as the impartial spectator would be, but instead with their own particular will and thus we cannot guide ourselves according to their interests in our behavior. The interest of the third-party is thus key to determining their success in guiding the society of three to virtue.

In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, there are three third-parties at different points, Claire, Edouard, and Wolmar, each of whom attempts to take on the role of cousin, tutor, and legislator, respectively, to the two lovers. The interiorized exterior regard is not the same as the Smithian impartial spectator as defined above. It is an actual third person looking in on the relationship as an invested third party who takes interest in the individuals and

their happiness. The third party is interested in the success of Julie and Saint-Preux's love, and while he feels vicariously through them, the lovers still owe something to him. The internalized exterior regard acts as a guarantor of sorts to the relationship, and that is why the bridge to the Smith is illuminating—because in his thought that is the internalized guarantor, the impartial spectator. In Rousseau, the third-party has both a say and a stake in the relationship and is not at all impartial, whereas with Smith, the imagined spectator is vested in morality but indifferent to the situation.

The internalized exterior regard in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is also interested in a different way than society, it is not simply that one does not want crime occurring in one's midst or *amour de soi*, one's interest is in bringing the other parties to virtue and curing the conflict with their nature which makes them suffer. The external eyes of society and the awareness of the regard usually cause us to become obsessed with the regard of a corrupt other because the corruption of society inflames our *amour-propre*. Society's interest is not in rehabilitating our alienation from ourselves; society does not care if we are virtuous or if we love the laws, only that we do not break them. But virtue is not simply the absence of crime and while the internalized exterior regard indeed affects our response, according to Rousseau, the third-party manages to bypass our *amour-propre* exactly by internalizing the regard and re-educating through undetectable manipulation. Wolmar says to Saint-Preux,

vous voyez un exemple de la franchise qui règne [à Clarens]. Si vous voulez sincèrement être vertueux, apprenez à l'imiter ; c'est la seule prière et la seule leçon que j'aie à vous faire. Le premier pas vers le vice est de mettre du mystère aux actions innocents ; et quiconque aime à se cacher a tôt ou tard raison de se cacher. Un seul précepte de moral peut tenir lieu de tout les autres, c'est celui-

ci : ne fais ni ne dis jamais rien que tu ne veuilles que tout le monde voie et entende. (Rousseau *LNH* 317; pt. IV let. VI)

Here we see how the internalized exterior regard serves to bring actions out into the open. Hiding anything from the tutor, or any dissimulation at all, indicates that there is something potentially immoral to it, but if, at Clarens at least, we are always acting as if everyone is watching, then the regard of the other manipulates us to strive toward virtue. Acting as though the world is watching also brings our imagination into play, imagining how the world would react and to act accordingly gives the imagination an important role in our moral development.

The Rousseauvian third-party not only has sympathy and compassion but also love and affection for the other two members, but is it necessary to love him/her back? It is a possibility that the society of three is actually a sort of continuation of Rousseau's political theory because just as in society we must love the law, in the society of three we must love the third-party. As noted above, the interiorized exterior regard in Rousseau comes into play in interpersonal, private relationships; while the society of three is politically structured, it is private. In a retreat where the outside laws are not as present, the tutor is involved in an interpersonal relationship, even at the level of Clarens. Anyone can leave any time they want to; Saint-Preux could leave if he did not love Wolmar, which is exactly the key to his success—he is both capable and loved. We have to love the third-party in the private interpersonal realm because the sovereign, e.g. Wolmar, does not have the kind of authority as the State.

CLAIRE

Claire is Julie's cousin and best friend from childhood. She doesn't have a mother of her own, she isn't close with any of her family; Julie is her life. Shortly after the death of their governess, Claire writes to Julie, "la perte que je pleure en elle, c'est son bon cœur, son parfait attachement, qui lui donnait à la fois pour moi la tendresse d'une mère et la confiance d'une sœur" (Rousseau *LNH* 21; pt. let. VII). Here she indicates that she has no family left; Claire is almost like an orphan in this novel, the rest of her family takes little interest in her. Claire, as a cousin, is really concerned with preserving the appearance of Julie's virtue, which is different from what Julie wants, which is to truly be virtuous. In the following passage, we see how relieved she is that her Julie is not compromised in the eyes of society:

Tout est fait ; et malgré ses imprudences, ma Julie est en sûreté. Les secrets de ton cœur sont ensevelis dans l'ombre du mystère. Tu es encore au sein de ta famille et de ton pays, chérie, honorée, jouissant d'une réputation sans tache et d'une estime universelle. Considère en frémissant les dangers que la honte ou l'amour t'ont fait courir en faisant trop ou trop peu. Apprends à ne vouloir plus concilier des sentiments incompatibles, et bénis le ciel, trop aveugle amante ou fille trop craintive, d'un bonheur qui n'était réservé qu'à toi. (Rousseau *LNH* 122; pt. I let. LXV)

It is clear from the above passage that Claire has no idea how to prevent Julie from succumbing to her passion. She tells her learn how to not want to reconcile her love with her duty but has no plan to help Julie learn to do this. Claire's interest in Julie goes so far that she feels herself to be a part of Julie, writing "je sentais que j'allais perdre avec la moitié de toi-même une partie de ma propre existence" (Rousseau *LNH* 124; pt. 1 let.

LXV), but because of this she has no agency. Writing to Julie, she says “quand je dis *nous*, tu m’entends; c’est surtout de toi que je parle” (Rousseau *LNH* 19; pt. I let. VII) which indicates that she has linked herself to Julie. This lack of agency is a core problem with Claire’s interest in Julie: she lives through Julie but does not know any better than her friend how to guide herself in the face of her passion. She seems to be living vicariously through Julie and she perhaps commiserates too strongly because she is too close to Julie. To Claire, it feels like the drama of Julie’s life is also the drama of her life. She writes of the morning that Saint-Preux is to leave: “Je comptais les heures avec inquiétude ; et, voyant poindre le jour, je n’ai pas vu naître sans effroi celui qui devait décider de ton sort. J’ai passé la matinée à méditer mes discours et à réfléchir sur l’impression qu’ils pouvaient faire” (Rousseau *LNH* 124; pt. I let. LXV). The use of litote here signifies her identification with Julie. She thinks about what she is going to say that morning and how she is going to send away a lover who is not actually her own.

It also seems like she is too proud, being confident that she can help her friend even though she has no credentials. She wants to take on the role of their dead governess, writing early in the novel to Julie that: “tu n’as qu’à marcher droit quand tu seras sous ma garde : tu verras, tu verras ce que c’est qu’une duègne de dix-huit ans” (Rousseau *LNH* 21; pt. I let. VII). But as we will see, it is not as simple as Claire thinks it will be to guide Julie in the face of her passion. She does not have the necessary experience to be more than Julie’s cousin, and because of this she unknowingly gives Julie bad advice—she is simply not qualified for the job within the society of three. She does not have the kind of moral authority that Wolmar embodies, and her regard is never internalized in such a way

that Julie thinks of Claire before she acts. That internalization is integral to the success of the internalized exterior regard, no matter how real they are, the imagination must hark back to what the third party would think, even in their absence, in order for moral development to take place.

When Julie writes, “Crois-moi, ne te charge point de me dire mes vérités, tu t’en acquitterais trop mal : les yeux de l’amour, tout perçants qu’ils sont, savent-ils voir les défauts ? C’est à l’intègre amitié que ces soins appartiennent, et là-dessus ta disciple Claire est cent fois plus savante que toi” (Rousseau *LNH* 83; pt. I let. XLVI), we can see how Claire’s limited success lies in Julie’s candid faith in her cousin and her ability to accurately diagnose Julie’s affliction. Like we will see with Lord Edouard and Saint-Preux, Claire helps to support the two lovers as best as she can. At one of many points in the novel, Julie is floundering and does not know to whom to turn, writing to Claire:

Quoi ! ce fatal voyage était-il si nécessaire ou si pressé ? Pouvais-tu me laisser à moi-même dans l’instant le plus dangereux de ma vie ? Que de regrets tu t’es préparés par cette coupable négligence ! Ils seront éternels ainsi que mes pleurs. Ta perte n’es pas moins irréparable que la mienne, et une autre amie digne de toi n’est pas plus facile à recouvrer que mon innocence. (Rousseau *LNH* 58; pt. I let. XXIX)

Julie desperately needs a guide, a conscience, and she clings to her cousin Claire who is unable to fill a larger role. Julie cannot talk to her mother, her father, or even Saint-Preux, and has only Claire who lacks the experience necessary to guide Julie. In *Émile ou de l’éducation*, Rousseau writes, “mais quiconque s’impose un devoir que la nature ne lui a point imposé, doit s’assurer auparavant des moyens de le remplir ; autrement il se rend comptable même de ce qu’il n’aura pu faire” (*Émile*, 28-9) and while Claire can diagnose

her friend, she ultimately does not know the cure and is incapable of guiding Julie and Saint-Preux.

In her role as a cousin, Claire claims to be disinterested, like the impartial spectator, even though this is not the case. When she has to tell Saint-Preux that he must leave in order to save Julie's reputation, she laments,

Dans la sécurité de son cœur il jouit encore du bonheur qu'il a perdu ; au moment du désespoir, il goûte en idée une ombre de félicité ; et, comme celui qu'enlève un trépas imprévu, le malheureux songe à vivre, et ne voit pas la mort qui va le saisir. Hélas ! c'est de ma main qu'il doit recevoir ce coup terrible ! O divine amitié, seule idole de mon cœur, viens l'animer de ta sainte cruauté. Donne-moi le courage d'être barbare, et de te servir dignement dans un si douloureux devoir. (*LNH* 121-122; pt. 1 let. LXIV)

This is not the voice of someone who is disinterested. She feels the pain of a lover, not the calm of a messenger. Rousseau seems to be saying that Claire's actual interest in Julie is where the problem lies. She loves Julie, which is admirable and their friendship is beautiful, but the kind of love that Claire has for Julie is not the right kind for the internalized exterior regard. She is too close to Julie, who makes Claire less mediocre, and she loves herself by looking through the mirror that is Julie. She finds in Julie a satisfaction for her amour-propre, but her pride and amour-propre are based on a fantasy. Thus this over-identification involves a kind of self-effacement wherein Claire forgets herself and invests herself completely in Julie and her success. When she writes to Monsieur d'Orbe, her future husband, "mais ne vous y trompez pas ; je suis en femme une espèce de monstre, et je ne sais par quelle bizarrerie de la nature l'amitié l'emporte en moi sur l'amour" (*LNH* 121; pt. I let. LXIV) we know what it is that makes her prefer her Julie to her future husband. Claire is obsessed with Julie because Julie makes her feel

like she is not Claire. Claire is mediocre and her life is mediocre and through her friendship with Julie she feels as special as Julie. In the same letter, she says that

je m'attache tellement à tout ce qui lui est cher, que son amant et vous êtes à peu près dans mon cœur en même degré, quoique de différentes manières. Je n'ai pour lui que de l'amitié, mais elle est plus vive; je crois sentir un peu d'amour pour vous, mais il est plus posé (*LNH* 121; pt. I let. LXIV)

and even after saying this she knows that he will not be jealous. She is involved in all of Julie's life to such an extent that she even loves whom Julie loves: "dès nos premiers ans mon coeur s'absorba dans le tien. Toute tender et sensible que j'eusse été, je ne sus plus aimer ni sentir par moi-même. Tous mes sentiments me vinrent de toi; toi seule me tins lieu de tout, et je ne vécus que pour être ton amie" (Rousseau *LNH* 487; pt. VI let. II).

Here we can see how Claire has absorbed herself into Julie to such an extent that she cannot exist apart from her. In addition to which, we can see the mediocrity of her love, marriage, and future and can perhaps understand why she is this caught up in Julie's love affair.

EDOUARD

The second third party whom we encounter is Lord Edouard. Saint-Preux notes that Edouard is in love with Julie at first, “Je crains fort que le pauvre philosophe anglais n’ait un peu senti la même influence [que moi]” (Rousseau 84). However, once Edouard finds out that Julie is in love with Saint-Preux,

Il avoue avoir conçu pour toi les sentiments dont on ne peut se défendre en te voyant avec trop de soin ; c’était une tendre admiration plutôt que de l’amour. Ils ne lui ont jamais inspiré ni prétention ni espoir ; il les a tous sacrifiés aux nôtres à l’instant qu’ils lui ont été connus, et le mauvais propos qui lui est échappé était l’effet du punch et non de la jalousie. (*LNH* 110 ; pt. I let. LX)

Edouard lives vicariously through Julie and Saint-Preux’s love. The moment he finds out that they are in love, he abandons his personal interest in Julie and becomes interested only in their union and takes on the role of the tutor. He sees the extraordinary quality of their love and is inclined to help them: “vos deux âmes sont si extraordinaires, qu’on n’en peut juger sur les règles communes. Le bonheur n’est pour vous ni sur la même route ni de la même espèce que celui des autres hommes : ils ne cherchent que la puissance et les regards d’autrui ; il ne vous faut que la tendresse et la paix” (Rousseau *LNH* 111 ; pt. I let. LX). While Edouard sees the merit in their relationship, “il s’est joint à votre amour une émulation de vertu qui vous élève, et vous vaudriez moins l’un et l’autre si vous ne vous étiez point aimés” (Rousseau *LNH* 134 ; pt. II let. II), he is unable to understand the duty that chains them which is where his failure as a tutor ultimately lies. He claims to be disinterested, but as we saw with Claire, this is not the case. He is interested in subverting

the French system with his British morality, which cannot work out. As Rousseau writes in *Émile* (1762), “ne t’y trompe point ; ce n’est pas même un maître que tu lui donnes, c’est un valet. Il en formera bientôt un second” (*Emile* 23), and thus we can see that Edouard is not appropriate to guide Julie and Saint-Preux purely because since he does not share their morality and culture; he would have them become British instead of French.

As a British citizen, he does not understand the French system in which Julie and Saint-Preux are negotiating their lives. As Shklar notes, “Lord Edouard, who is English and a political animal, thinks that all of Saint-Preux’s problems would disappear in a free Republic where he could marry Julie and be a citizen. He is not wrong, but neither is he altogether right” (139). Saint-Preux and Julie would be abandoning their country and virtue were they to follow Edouard’s advice. When he offers Julie the estate in York he says, “votre sort est en vos mains, Julie” (*LNH* 139; pt. II let. III) but his plan goes against her duty to her family and her role as a citizen, Julie’s life isn’t her own to take charge of in this way. The job of Rousseau’s third-party spectator is to help one to negotiate one’s actions in the face of both of these competing roles of citizen and individual, not to negate one or the other, which is what Edouard would have Julie do.

When Edouard writes to Claire about the argument he has with Julie’s father about wedding her to Saint-Preux, he says

je ne m’intéresse pas moins que vous au sort de ce couple infortuné, non par un sentiment de commisération qui peut n’être qu’une faiblesse, mais par la considération de la justice et de l’ordre, qui veulent que chacun soit placé de la manière la plus avantageuse à lui-même et à la société. Ces deux belles âmes sortirent l’une pour l’autre des mains de la nature ; c’est dans une douce union,

c'est dans le sein du bonheur, que, libres de déployer leurs forces et d'exercer leurs vertus, elles eussent éclairé la terre de leurs exemples. (Rousseau *LNH* 134 ; pt. II let. II)

Here we can see how his interests in the couple go beyond Julie and Saint-Preux and to the basis of the laws that bind them and make their situation tragic. He notes that Claire is commiserating with Julie (also noting this as a potential weakness, similar to how we noted above that Claire's is too close and thus her commiseration with Julie leads her to feel like she is a part of Julie) and says that he is instead concerned with justice and order according to nature, and as he sees the unfair nature of the laws, is willing to abandon them in order to satisfy nature. He believes that if they were free to love, then their example would enlighten the world.

Edouard is incapable of understanding a Frenchman's sense of duty and virtue, he does not know what it means to be a French citizen or individual. The supposed injustice of the French system which refuses to allow Julie and Saint-Preux to be together infuriates him, and he asks:

Pourquoi faut-il qu'un insensé préjugé vienne changer les directions éternelles et bouleverser l'harmonie des êtres pensants ? Pourquoi la vanité d'un père barbare cache-t-elle ainsi la lumière sous le boisseau, et fait-elle gémir dans les larmes des cœurs tendres et bienfaisants, nés pour essuyer celles d'autrui ? Le lien conjugal n'est-il pas plus libre ainsi que le plus sacré des engagements ? Oui, toutes les lois qui le gênent sont injustes, tous les pères qui l'osent former ou rompre sont des tyrans. Ce chaste nœud de la nature n'est soumis ni au pouvoir souverain ni à l'autorité paternelle, mais à la seule autorité du Père commun qui sait commander aux cœurs, et qui, leur ordonnant de s'unir, les peut contraindre à s'aimer. (*LNH* 134; pt. II let. II)

Edouard argues for the rights of the individual self. He is a champion for our nature, which he calls God-given. For him, to go against nature is to go against God. This does

not reconcile with Julie's role in her family, her nature still conflicts with her duty, which is the key to her virtue. For Edouard, virtue means something else and he places love above duty to the sovereign and paternal authority. His failure is not a fault of character but simply a product of his being an other in French society. He cannot understand their morals and therefore he has no place in advising them. He too lacks the credentials and qualities which we will see in Wolmar because he wants to impose a belief system on France that France might not be ready for. Edouard's mistake is that he clearly had not read Rousseau's political theory. Rousseau notes in the *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne et sur sa reformation projetée* (1772), “

si l'on ne connoît à fond la Nation pour laquelle on travaille, l'ouvrage qu'on fera pour elle, quelque excellent qu'il puisse être en lui-même, péchera toujours par l'application et bien plus encore lorsqu'il s'agira d'une nation déjà toute instituée, dont les goûts, les mœurs, les préjugés et les vices sont trop enracinés pour pouvoir être aisément étouffés par des semences nouvelles. (*Œuvres Complètes III*, 953)

Edouard is not competent in the French tradition and thus he cannot properly guide Julie and Saint-Preux. They are inextricably linked to the French system of values which Edouard does not understand. He does not realize that cultural relativism is a powerful force. He cannot make the French into Brits because culture and mores cannot be forced, each government is to be appropriate to the people and land; as much as Edouard sees and celebrates the beauty of their love, Rousseau shows that Edouard's British morality isn't suited for France. Edouard is a further commentary on the way the tutor is outlined in *Émile*, even if it isn't directly stated, Edouard demonstrates that the tutor must be of the same national identity as the pupil.

Edouard does however, serve a role in guiding Saint-Preux until the arrival of Wolmar and in their friendship, we see that, “Lord Edouard and Saint-Preux are models of what human beings really owe each other” (Shklar, 145). Similarly to how Claire looks after Julie,

Lord Edouard, his friend and protector, pleads with him to emerge from childhood and to be a man before he dies. [...] Saint-Preux cannot respond to this advice, because his natural passions have become distorted. It is not enough to tell a man of thirty to grow up. He must be made capable of it and given a motive for asserting his will. (Shklar 136)

Edouard has not been able to show Saint-Preux the way back to virtue and the way out of his tragic passion, not because he does not want to, but because of an innate character flaw—being English. Unlike Claire, he at least has advice, it’s just the wrong advice because it alienates the self from the community and abandons French virtue. While Julie is better able to control herself, Saint-Preux struggles deeply with his love for Julie and finding a position in the world and it is not until the appearance of the final third party spectator, Wolmar, that Saint-Preux emerges from this stunted state to become a fuller version of himself.

WOLMAR

Wolmar is the final third party that we encounter in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. He is the Baron's old friend to whom Julie is promised. Wolmar is a perfectly suitable husband and his presence in her life will ultimately bring Julie as close to peace as she can be. Wolmar, in describing himself to Julie and Saint-Preux, says that "j'ai naturellement l'âme tranquille et le cœur froid. Je suis de ces hommes qu'on croit bien injurier en disant qu'ils ne sentent rien, c'est-à-dire qu'ils n'ont point de passion qui les détourne de suivre le vrai guide de l'homme" (Rousseau *LNH* 368; pt. IV let. XII) which is his reason. Wolmar is not blinded by any passion, which aligns him with Smith's impartial spectator. Then he goes on, saying that, "Mon seul principe actif est le goût naturel de l'ordre" (Rousseau *LNH* 368; pt. IV let. XII). Wolmar's love of order allows him to make judgments and organize Julie and Saint-Preux's lives in such a way that there is no out of place passion. When Wolmar moves to the subject of his passions, he says, "Si j'ai quelque passion dominante, c'est celle de l'observation. J'aime à lire dans les cœurs des hommes ; comme le mien me fait peu d'illusion, que j'observe de sang-froid et sans intérêt, et qu'une longue expérience m'a donné de la sagacité, je ne me trompe guère dans mes jugements" (Rousseau *LNH* 368; pt. IV let. XII). Wolmar has learned about men by watching, and he has learned to be a formidable judge. He makes the perfect legislator because, as he says:

la société m'est agréable pour la contempler, non pour en faire partie. Si je pouvais changer la nature de mon être et devenir un œil vivant je ferais volontiers cet échange. Ainsi mon indifférence pour les hommes ne me rend point indépendant d'eux, sans me soucier d'en être vu, j'ai besoin de les voir, et sans m'être chers, ils me sont nécessaires" (*LNH* 368; pt. IV let. XII).

We can see here that because his love of contemplating men makes them necessary to him, the society of three is not a one way street because he is not only interested in bringing them back to virtue but even takes pleasure in it. Wolmar has the kind of love for Julie and Saint-Preux that Edouard and Claire are lacking. His is a love void of passion, it is the love of a sovereign, but it is bolstered by respect, a love of order, and a desire to guide the two lost lovers back to virtue. Even Saint-Preux notes that "je commençai de connaître alors à quel homme j'avais affaire, et je résolus bien de tenir toujours mon cœur en état d'être vu de lui" (Rousseau *LNH* 318; pt. IV let. VI). Once he is interested, once his regard matters, then both Julie and Saint-Preux improve their behaviors and they can take pleasure in their virtue once again.

When Wolmar is telling Julie and Saint-Preux about his life, he tells them of how he lived for a while in each station so as to learn about men and their lives: "méprisant la vaine opinion des conditions, je me jetai successivement dans les divers états qui pouvaient m'aider à les comparer tous et à connaître les uns par les autres" (Rousseau 368; pt. IV let. XII). This is similar to what we see in the *Contrat Social*, where Rousseau suggests that the prince ought to visit different nations to see how different kings rule their states,

pour découvrir les meilleures règles de société conviennent aux Nations, il faudroit une intelligence supérieure, qui vit toutes les passions des hommes et qui n'en éprouvât aucune, qui n'eut aucun rapport avec notre nature et qui la connût à

fond, dont le bonheur fût indépendant de nous et qui pourtant voulut bien s'occuper du notre ; enfin qui, dans le progrès des tems se ménageant une gloire éloignée, put travailler dans un siècle et jouir dans un autre. (381)

This almost reads like a description of Wolmar, who has visited each class, each station in life, to find out how best to live and how best to help others live, giving him the credentials that Claire was obviously lacking. Not everyone can be Wolmar, and Claire write to Julie that “je croirais volontiers que les hommes froids, qui consultant plus leurs yeux que leur cœur, jugent mieux des passions d'autrui que les gens turbulents et vifs out vains comme moi, qui commencent toujours par se mettre à la place des autres, et ne savent jamais voir que ce qu'ils sentent” (p 378). Even Claire seems to recognize the superior nature of Wolmar's reason, and she advises her friend to give herself over to her husband, which is perhaps the best advice she has been able to give. What is most important about what she says though, is that it is his nature which renders him a qualified third party in the society of three, and that not all men are endowed with such qualities.

Wolmar wants to manipulate their experiences in such a way that they go through a reeducation of sorts and learn to behave in such a way as to elevate their friendship and their hard-won virtue. He makes Julie want to be a better subject and magistrate in Clarens and helps Saint-Preux to come out of his childhood and become a fully developed self. He tries to break down all masks and mysteries in their behavior, in this way they will behave more openly. Through Wolmar's efforts, we see that “transparency is reconquered because individuals have made an effort to achieve virtue and mutual confidence” (Starobinski 111). He wants them to realize that they aren't slaves to their

passions—they aren't that young couple anymore, “vous n'êtes plus cette fille infortunée qui déplorait sa faiblesse en s'y livrant; vous êtes la plus vertueuse des femmes, qui ne connaît d'autres lois que celles du devoir et de l'honneur et à qui le trip vif souvenir de ses fautes est la seule faute qui reste à reprocher” (*LNH* 371; pt. IV let. XII). By helping Julie to see that she is no longer that young girl in love, we can see how he manipulates the memories of their passion that have plagued them. Wolmar realizes that Saint-Preux is obsessed by the Julie whom he knew long ago, and must be reintroduced to the new Julie who now exists and whom he does not love like that anymore. His passion has become an obsession and his memory haunts him. Wolmar tries to create new memories between Julie and Saint-Preux in order to diminish the power of his previous memories.

Wolmar asks Saint-Preux to look at Julie again and Saint-Preux remarks:

J'ai cru voir l'image de la vertu où je cherchais celle du plaisir ; cette image s'est confondue dans mon esprit avec les traits de Mme de Wolmar ; et pour la première fois depuis mon retour, j'ai vu Julie en son absence, non telle qu'elle fut pour moi et que j'aime encore à me la représenter, mais telle qu'elle se montre à mes yeux tous les jours. (*LNH* 364-5; pt IV let. XI)

By reducing their passion to a memory, and creating new memories for them, Wolmar hopes to give birth to a new friendship based on virtue and reason.

Wolmar succeeds in guiding Julie and Saint-Preux because of the way his regard is internalized: “such a man does not tell people what they ought to do. Far from it. He draws them to himself because they long for his approval, and to be at one with him. This alone is the source of every real form of authority” (Shklar 134). As we noted above, it is important for the two lovers to love the third party in order for the society to function.

Saint-Preux notes that right away, “M. de Wolmar commençait à prendre une si grande

autorité sur moi, que j’y étais déjà presque accoutumé” (Rousseau 317; pt. IV let. VI).

Wolmar has to take complete control over Saint-Preux, because:

Pour [Saint-Preux], qui, bien que vertueux, s’effraye moins des sentiments qui lui restent, je lui vois encore tous ceux qu’il eut dans sa première jeunesse ; mais je les vois sans avoir droit de m’en offenser. Ce n’est pas de Julie de Wolmar qu’il est amoureux, c’est de Julie d’Étange ; il ne me hait point comme le possesseur de la personne qu’il aime, mais comme le ravisseur de celle qu’il a aimée. La femme d’un autre n’est point sa maîtresse ; la mère de deux enfants n’est plus son ancienne écolière. Il est vrai qu’elle lui ressemble beaucoup et qu’elle lui en rappelle souvent le souvenir. Il l’aime dans le temps passé : voilà le vrai mot de l’énigme. Otez-lui la mémoire, il n’aura plus d’amour. (383; pt. IV let. XIV)

Saint-Preux can serve neither his nature or his duty in his present condition because he is stuck in the past, unable to see the reality of the changes that have happened over the years since their love began. Wolmar is the patriarch and the sovereign and he takes in Saint-Preux as part of his family not only in order to save Julie, but also to save Saint-Preux. He must guide him like a father because Saint-Preux is obsessed by his past, his passion for Julie has consumed him for all these years and he has no position, no where to go. Wolmar brings him to Clarens in order to remove him from the society that Saint-Preux feels has wronged him in order to rehabilitate him.

While Edouard tried to advise his friend, “sors de l’enfance, ami, réveille-toi. Ne livre point ta vie entière au long sommeil de la raison. L’âge s’écoule, il ne t’en reste plus que pour être sage. A trente ans passés il est temps de songer à soi ; commence donc à rentrer en toi-même, et sois homme une fois avant la mort” (Rousseau *LNH* 395; pt. 5 let. D). Edouard is aware of Saint-Preux’s affliction, but he romanticized it, and wanted him to let Julie abandon her virtue, because he didn’t believe in it. Here he tells Saint-Preux what he needs to do, but lacks the means to help Saint-Preux to do it. On the other hand,

in a letter Julie write to Claire, she describes how Wolmar recognizes each of them for what they are and doesn't strive to change them so much as to reorient them:

Je vous ai vu, vous ne m'avez point trompé, vous ne me trompez point ; et quoique vous ne soyez pas encore ce que vous devez être, je vous vois mieux que vous ne pensez, et suis plus content de vous que vous ne l'êtes vous-même. Je sais bien que ma conduite a l'air bizarre, et choque toutes les maximes communes ; mais les maximes deviennent moins générales à mesure qu'on lit mieux dans les cœurs ; et le mari de Julie ne doit pas se conduire comme un autre homme. Mes enfants, nous dit-il d'un ton d'autant plus touchant qu'il parlait d'un homme tranquille, soyez ce que vous êtes, et nous serons tous contents. Le danger n'est que dans l'opinion : n'ayez pas peur de vous, et vous n'aurez rien à craindre ; ne songez qu'au présent, et je vous réponds de l'avenir. (Rousseau *LNH* 372 ; pt IV let. XII)

Wolmar wants to help Saint-Preux, he wants him to recognize what he is worth. He sees them for what they are and knows them better than they know themselves and this is where his success lies. He is able to judge their present condition and knows how to manipulate it in order for them to undergo a reeducation and emerge with their virtue intact and enhanced. He knows that they are capable of it, he just needs to direct their experiences in such a way that they discover this for themselves. His actions may seem strange, but this is because he is not afraid to cater his remedy to the specific situation, which is admittedly a little bizarre. When he notes that maxims don't always apply, he is making the case that Julie and Saint-Preux's love *was* special, like Edouard saw. However, Wolmar also sees that they could not have been happy with each other and thus strives to make them happy as they are.

Julie, in another letter to Claire, notes what Wolmar says about Saint-Preux, "nous ne laisserons point un si honnête homme en doute sur lui-même ; nous lui apprendrons à mieux compter sur sa vertu ; et peut-être un jour jouirons-nous avec plus

d'avantage que vous ne pensez du fruit des soins que nous allons prendre" (Rousseau 320; pt. IV let. VII). He doesn't have to teach Julie or Saint-Preux to be virtuous, but only to access their virtue. Wolmar's education of Saint-Preux is simple, "he never preaches, never reproaches, never punishes. What he does is to arrange situations which force Saint-Preux to face reality: first the reality of Mme de Wolmar as a woman whom he no longer loves, then himself as a man capable of making decisions for himself (Shklar 142). When he leaves them alone, he does so because he thinks the days spent together, "suffiront peut-être pour leur apprendre à démêler leurs vrais sentiments et connaître ce qu'il sont réellement l'un à l'autre. Plus ils se verront seul à seul, plus ils comprendront aisément leur erreur en comparant ce qu'il sentirent avec ce qu'ils auraient autrefois senti dans une situation pareille" (Rousseau *LNH* 384; pt. IV let. XIV). He cannot tell them what to do, he must allow for them to figure it out for themselves by arranging lessons for them in the safe environment of Clarens.

Wolmar's success with Saint-Preux is more evident than his work with Julie because Saint-Preux was very much a child until he met Wolmar, it was only through Wolmar that he was able to become a man, while Julie was never in need of that much help in making her transformation. Unlike Wolmar's heavy-handed reeducation of Saint-Preux, Julie's path to virtue is much of her own doing although she does not succeed without some help from Wolmar, as he notes: "un voile de sagesse et d'honnêteté fait tant de replies autour de son cœur, qu'il n'est plus possible à l'œil humain d'y pénétrer, pas même au sien propre" (Rousseau *LNH* 382; pt. IV let. XIV). Julie knows that what she did was wrong, she is capable of looking at herself and diagnosing the problem, but

“conscience, as one of these [natural instincts], is independent of reason and judgment, and it is also more powerful, being capable of inspiring feeling and action. But feeble as they are, reason and judgment must guide conscience.” (Shklar 61) and thus she has need of Wolmar too in learning to overcome her guilt and recognize her hard-won virtue.

Wolmar remarks that “la seule chose qui me fait soupçonner qu’il lui reste quelque défiance à vaincre, est qu’elle ne cesse de chercher en elle-même ce qu’elle ferait si elle était tout à fait guérie, et le fait avec tant d’exactitude, que si elle était réellement guérie elle ne le ferait pas si bien” (Rousseau *LNH* 382; pt. IV let. XIV). Julie is capable of recognizing her struggle, but needs a guide for her natural impulses.

As much as Wolmar tried to create new memories for Julie and Saint-Preux to build their friendship, “Julie does not find her happiness [at Clarens] because she is no longer capable of living in the present, as peasants might” (Shklar 154). She is still in love with Saint-Preux, her memory haunts her too, and she is still suffering in the face of her duty. It should be noted that we are always alienated from ourselves to some extent, and therefore, Julie’s failure can be expected. She can never overcome the alienation from herself and the struggle between her love for Saint-Preux and her duty to Wolmar. She was never able to be truly happy with Wolmar, and thus, “death is Julie’s only release: she dies happy, freed of the need to act, joyful that her duty is finally done” (Starobinski 91), because she could never let go of her inner desire, her love for Saint-Preux, she was happy to die.

CLARENS

Looking at the society of three, it is also necessary to look at their retreat from society: Clarens, where people can be rebuilt after suffering from and succumbing to the corruption of society. But in this community too, the eyes of the people around us should always be on us, at Clarens there is a surveillance quality that goes on, there is a sense that everyone knows what everyone else is doing, as in the *Contrat Social*. Unlike in the *Contrat Social*, however, at Clarens our *amour-propre* is not inflamed by the eyes on us. Here, we can see M. Wolmar's success. He is the sovereign of a community at Clarens, "M. Wolmar is, in fact, Rousseau's most perfectly realized figure of authority" (Shklar 134). Clarens is a society apart from the rest of the world, it is a retreat from society: "Rousseau's declared message in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* was to encourage those who were capable of it to flee from the society of fantasies and opinion, and to regain a taste for the real pleasures of a simple rural life (Shklar 87). This allows us to escape the corruption of society and rehabilitate ourselves. But as we noted above, Wolmar is not a sovereign in the sense of the *Contrat Social*. He is loved and from this love comes his authority, anyone at Clarens can leave whenever they want, if they stay it is because they choose to do so. As Melzer notes, "[Rousseau] argues that outside society (but only there) such contradictory impulses in the soul would not arise in the first place, rendering unnecessary "virtue" of any kind [...] and making possible the new moral posture Rousseau calls "goodness" (20) by keeping everything out in the open, through the

surveillance of all eyes on us, it becomes natural to behave in accordance with the general will of the community. Thus our duty and nature converge in goodness.

At Clarens, they are doing damage control on the victims of society; “Wolmar must take men as he finds them and create an environment for them that will prevent their becoming even worse” (Shklar 154). There is no return from the corruptive force of society, but Wolmar tries to foster an environment for rehabilitation. We can see the soul of Wolmar himself in the community of Clarens: “Order, regularity, security of expectations, and fairness and everything in this stable harmonious society reflects the soul of the master. And although everyone seems to be doing what pleases himself it is Wolmar who directs each one, for all are united in their attachment to him (Shklar 153). He is not just the third party spectator in the society of three, he uses the same means as sovereign of a community that he did in rehabilitating Saint-Preux and Julie. Everything is done in the open in Clarens, and it “is based on unanimous consent, like the society in the social contract, in which each individual member must conform to the general will” (Starobinski 91). Since the particular will is subjected to the general will, we have an uncorrupted conscience with which to guide ourselves. Donald Wehrs notes that “Clarens presents a society that resembles the one recommended in the *Contrat Social*: individual desires are subordinated to the interests of the community as a whole and tight control is maintained by an all-powerful Legislator: Wolmar” (79). While Rousseau says that for the society of three, the eyes of society cannot serve as conscience, he also says that in a community run by a sovereign like Wolmar, absent of dissimulation and falsehood, the eyes of the community can serve as one’s conscience because the love of and respect for

the lawmaker “[cultivates] in individuals a readiness to surrender personal desires and to recognize the ‘moi commun’ as one’s truest self” (Wehrs 83). It is easier to love the laws and the law-giver in such a community.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have looked at the three different people who function as the internalized exterior regard in the society of three: Claire, Edouard, and Wolmar, their interests, and their success or failure. Smith's imaginary impartial spectator helped us examine the role of imagination and the internalization of the regard of Rousseau's real third-party, which allowed us to see why Wolmar is the most successful; not just because he has the right interests and character but because his regard is internalized by the other two parties in such a way as to make them behave better without being overcome with amour-propre, as happens in society. Leading Julie and Saint-Preux back to virtue is a pleasure for Wolmar, and following his lead is a pleasure for Julie and Saint-Preux as they are able to recognize their own goodness through him. While in the end, Julie is unable to let go of her passion for Saint-Preux and live a satisfied life in her virtue, in the society of three Julie is guided in the face of this conflict toward a place of virtue. This kind of analysis could be fruitful in examining the tutor and the society of three further in the *Confessions* and in *Émile*, and in examining the role of imagination in moral thinking. If we contrast Smith to Enlightenment thinkers, we notice that they never talk about imagination, but instead about self-interest, thus Smith and Rousseau's use of the imagination in developing morality opens up new ways to think about virtue and conscience.

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