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Denis Diderot, Samuel Richardson and the Colour of Philosophy

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Denis Diderot, Samuel Richardson and the Colour of Philosophy

That the works of Samuel Richardson impressed Denis Diderot is incontestable. The Englishman, Richardson, is “the man who made the novel” (to employ an appellation which entitles a piece published in 2016 by Adelle Waldman).¹ Diderot expressed the same position over two and a half centuries earlier (in 1761), in the opening paragraph of his *Éloge de Richardson, auteur des romans de Paméla, de Clarisse et de Grandisson*. The term “roman” is insufficient to describe what Richardson produces, Diderot tells us: “[j]e voudrais bien qu’on trouvât un autre nom pour les ouvrages de Richardson” (1). Richardson’s masterly works spoke to Diderot and allowed Diderot to speak eloquently to us. The fashion in which *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady* and *The History of Sir Charles Grandisson* actually played in the development of the Frenchman’s body of work and thought has been the topic of much, and of rewarding, discussion. However, alongside this variety of analyses, there persists an intriguing issue concerning *what* Diderot says — in fact, *how* he says what he says — in his *Éloge de Richardson*.

In their “Notice préliminaire”, of 1875, to the *Éloge* J. Assézat and M. Tourneux emphatically pronounce: “[n]ous croyons que ce morceau coloré est trop coloré. Nous croyons que c’est un de ceux qui a le plus nui, parce que c’est un de ceux qui a été le plus lu, à la mémoire de Diderot, en le faisant accuser [...] de s’échauffer sur commande et de n’être qu’un déclamateur” (212). Over 125 years later, while providing a detailed analysis of *Pamela* and in discussion of Richardson’s other major works, Pierre Hartman refers in passing to “Diderot et son fracassant *Éloge*” (45).² Not quite a decade after Hartman, Shelly Charles speaks of the panegyric nature of the *Éloge*.³ 2013, one year after Charles’ work, heralds the publication of Colas Duflo’s insightful analysis of the *Éloge*. In his *Introduction. Diderot: Roman, Morale et Vérité*, Duflo does not attend to the excessively emotive aspect of Diderot’s work, but rather sets up discussion of 18th-century narrative fiction — Diderot’s in particular.⁴ Duflo reminds us that the philosopher from Langres writes from “un univers de pensée où jugement moral et jugement esthétique ne sont pas vécus comme séparés” — the moral and the aesthetic are not, as they would become following Kant, separate realms (5-6). In fact, as Duflo concludes and we shall discuss, “Diderot pense [...] une unité profonde entre l’exigence de vérité, la pédagogie morale et la réussite esthétique” (12). Truth, moral instruction and aesthetic success are deeply interconnected; this matters for fiction. It will also matter, we shall see, for philosophy.

From Assézat through Duflo, we have a sampling of the way in which the blended philosophical and aesthetic tones playing through the *Éloge* — which to Diderot seemed so correct and harmonious — may well register as *trop colorés*, at least from the middle of the 19th century. (How content and form are related is, of course, significant. We need to recognize that subject matter can be relayed by both avenues.) It is a comment on our intellectual times that we tend to focus either on Diderot’s philosophical argumentation *or* on his fictive artistry. In this essay, we will consider whether Diderot’s emotive effusion adds to his reasoning — to the conclusion(s) he extends to the reader of the *Éloge* — or whether it is simply decorative noise befitting his mood, which must be separated from his reasoning.

Does the *Éloge* do something new? Duflo notes that, as a novelist, “Diderot n’a pas à entrer dans un moule [...] à chaque fois qu’il s’empare d’une idée il réinvente un genre” (36). The *Éloge*, we will

¹ Adelle Waldman, “The Man Who Made the Novel Loving and loathing Samuel Richardson,” 2016.

² Pierre Hartman, “La Réception de Paméla en France : Les Anti-Paméla de Villaret et Mauvillon,” (2002).

³ Shelly Charles, “Les mystères, d’une lecture : quand et comment Diderot a-t-il lu Richardson ?” (2010).

⁴ Colas Duflo, “Introduction. Diderot : roman, morale et vérité” (2013).

argue, is in fact a new twist in literary criticism, involving reasoned argument and emotive engagement of the reader's own senses or emotions (therein lies its colour).⁵ We grant that the important scholarly neglect of the colourful aspect of the *Éloge* is clear and understandable. However, the contention which motivates the current essay is that Diderot's reflection *in its entirety* is too important to be ignored; the position reached by Assézat and Tourneux needs to be overturned, rather than simply set aside. Given Diderot's status as a truly remarkable thinker worthy of serious attention, it is time to attend to the colour (carefully) woven into the *Éloge* — that very colour which appears to have been relegated to the back burners of academic discussion. In fact, focus on the colour of the *Éloge* will allow us to suggest that in the piece Diderot offers a commentary on philosophy itself. We will defend the claim that, in Richardson's work, Diderot discovers not only the new (and much needed) novel, but the opportunity to demonstrate his own fresh take on philosophical discourse and communication itself. In this essay we will argue that the style — the form as well as the emotional vivacity of content — of the *Éloge de Richardson* is not "too colourful", but that it in fact befits its subject matter and serves as a critical component of Diderot's analysis of Richardson. Diderot *is* effusive in his description and praise of the Englishman. He writes to impart convictions born of his own experience of, as well as his reflections about, what Richardson does and makes possible.

So, to understand its "colour" will be to most fully comprehend the *Éloge* itself, this work which stands as another in the varied forms of expression for which Diderot is renowned. We shall see that in the *Éloge* form is part of function; the work convinces by way of reasoned argument coupled with experientially communicated empirically gleaned understanding. The real — perhaps new — work of the present essay will lie in its final stage where we discuss the experience Diderot offers to the reader of the *Éloge*. Three steps preparatory to the presentation of this foray will be necessary. First, having already identified the sort of criticism of the *Éloge* we aim to treat, we will sample its presence in the *Éloge*. Second, leaning on the work of Shelly Charles, we will set out an introductory account of Diderot's acquaintance with the works of Richardson in order to confirm that the *Éloge* stands on years of thought and experience. Third will follow, by way of reference to an analysis set out by Colas Duflo, a synopsis of the reasoned argument Diderot provides in the *Éloge* to the effect that the finely wrought novel provides what moral philosophy alone cannot. Along the way we will refer to several additional Diderot scholars as well as one contemporary thinker who does not discuss Diderot but focuses on literature and moral theory.

A selection of examples of Diderot's exuberant emoting — of his "colour" — will confirm what seems of late to have been downplayed or ignored in favour of attention paid to the rich thought his work offers in a more traditional philosophic vein. The items adumbrated here will serve us later as we recognize the scope of Richardson's value for Diderot. We begin with the rhetorical question — generally deemed philosophically faulty in argumentation as it permits dangerous ambiguity. The suspect tactic jumps from the page in the *Éloge*. From its outset, the text captures a level of heartfelt certitude which it presses on the reader by way of question after question, to which, we recognize as readers, there is only one right answer (Diderot's):

Qui est-ce que le caractère de Lovelace, d'un Tomlinson, n'a pas fait frémir ? Qui est-ce qui n'a pas été frappé d'horreur du ton pathétique et vrai, de l'air de candeur et de dignité, de l'art profond avec lequel celui-ci joue toutes les vertus ? Qui est-ce qui ne s'est pas dit au fond de son cœur qu'il faudrait fuir de la société et se réfugier au fond des forêts, s'il y avait un certain nombre d'hommes d'une pareille

⁵ In the *Éloge* we find a new twist in literary criticism from the man who — with his *Salons* — will firmly develop and establish art criticism. Michel Delon concludes his introduction to the Diderot of the *Salons* with a remark relevant to our discussion of the novelty of the *Éloge*: for Diderot, "le devoir d'abstraction philosophique ne fait jamais l'économie du foisonnement du réel et du silence de l'émotion" (36).

An important lexical field at play here is one of the emotive force of effect. Diderot's is struck by the visceral poetic tone employed in describing the effects of reading Richardson.

We also find the *Éloge* wildly peppered with exclamatory remarks. The exclamation point abounds — many times in even a single paragraph — along the length of the piece. For instance:

Et cette foule de personnages subalternes, comme ils sont caractérisés ! combien il y en a ! Et ce Belford avec ses compagnons, et Mme Howe et son Hickman, et Mme Norton, et les Harlove père, mère, frère, sœur, oncles et tantes, et toutes les créatures qui peuplent le lieu de débauche ! Quels contrastes d'intérêts et d'humeurs ! comme tous agissent et parlent ! Comment une jeune fille, seule contre tant d'ennemis réunis, n'aurait-elle pas succombé ! Et encore quelle est sa chute ! (222)

Repeated exclamations are not new to Diderot in the *Éloge*. In his *Pensées philosophiques* of 1746 we read, for instance: “Quelles voix ! quels cris ! quels gémissements !” (VII). Later, in the *Salons*, Diderot continues the practice. In one case he employs the punctuation mark 13 times in a single paragraph (*Salon de 1767*, 363). The philosopher from Langres thinks and feels deeply; he works diligently to share his experience — and, ultimately, his knowledge — with us. The “colourful tactics” of the *Éloge* are neither new nor in their final instantiation in Diderot's works. They are, however, extremely noticeable for their profusion. Although the exclamation points intrigue for their visual vivacity, the same holds true of each of the emotive techniques enumerated here, another of which is the voice Diderot often chooses to address his reader.

Diderot's use of the first person inclines his reader to feel, to share, the emotional outpourings which constitute a large part of the *Éloge*. “Je me souviens encore de la première fois que les ouvrages de Richardson tombèrent entre mes mains: j'étais à la campagne. Combien cette lecture m'affecte délicieusement !” (215). He addresses the reader who speaks poorly of Richardson without having truly read him: “Vous qui n'avez lu les ouvrages de Richardson que dans votre élégante traduction française” (218). He speaks to us; we feel with him.⁶ When, in closing, Diderot repeats the refrain, which yet again captures the esteem in which he holds Richardson — “Ô Richardson” — we feel the force of an ode (226). Paragraphs linked by opening refrains contribute to the sustained musical impression of the piece as they carry their message: “J'ai remarqué,” “J'ai entendu” and again, “J'ai entendu” (219). The *Éloge* is undeniably colourful. What remains to be suggested is that the piece is not “trop colorée.” For, by Diderot's brush, as reasoned argument speaks to the mind, so colour speaks to the senses and so shapes emotions.

Diderot's *Éloge de Richardson*, aims to convince us in body and mind — both of which, in Diderot's metaphysical account, are wholly material. The work of Shelly Charles alongside that of Colas Duflo will complete our introductory analysis of the *Éloge*. Neither Charles nor Duflo focuses on the emotive aspect of the piece.

In speaking of Diderot's ability to grasp and relay the very heart of Richardson's unique (and notably English) literary outpourings, Charles describes “la capacité de Diderot à pénétrer l'essence même de l'anglicité de Richardson” (2). The origin of this capacity of Diderot's, defends Charles, significantly predates the *Éloge*. Charles convincingly demonstrates that Diderot's appreciation of Richardson was sparked in 1956 by his reading of a literal translation into the French of Richardson's

⁶ Each reader of the *Éloge* must at some point, surely, ask himself where he fits in amongst the readers of Richardson painted by Diderot, as well as how Diderot's address might suggest that he is or is not a sufficiently appreciative and able reader ... of Diderot.

Grandisson — commentary on which, she points out, is the only exact citation of Richardson Diderot is known to have penned. Charles explains: “C’est encore à une traduction suisse littérale que renvoie le ‘vous ne connaissez pas Clementine’ de l’*Éloge*” and several lines later she adds that the quotation is, “à notre connaissance, à la fois la première référence de Diderot à Richardson et la seule citation exacte qu’il en fera jamais” (5). Diderot had several years in which to savour and study the particularities of Richardson and his three major novels, all of which works Diderot in fact discusses in the *Éloge*. Though he prefers *Clarissa*, *Grandisson* and *Pamela* participate in the creation of the fervour he evinces for Richardson’s works in general. And, as Charles concludes in an argument which defends the significant length of time Diderot enjoyed in which to think before penning his *Éloge*,

[...] ce n’est pas d’une lecture de l’original anglais de *Clarisse* en 1760 qu’il s’agit, mais de celle du *Grandison* de Monod quatre ans plus tôt. Quatre années cruciales, durant lesquelles se forment justement les idées de Diderot sur le théâtre et le roman : théories et pratiques dans lesquelles l’inter texte richardsonien en général, et *Grandison* en particulier, est sans doute plus présent qu’on ne croit. (9)

The significance of Charles’s work to our project is large: the *Éloge* is no suddenly produced, emotionally enflamed, response to Diderot’s first meeting of Richardson’s work. The piece was penned in 1761 and, notes Charles, “[a]u moment où Diderot écrit le panégyrique, sa lecture de Richardson n’est pas récente et son enthousiasme non plus” (4). The *Éloge* was most certainly meticulously orchestrated to be what it is; Diderot was nothing if not a literary and communicative craftsman.⁷ If it is colourful (*too* colourful?), Diderot designed it so. We need to understand why Diderot made such a choice. In order to do so, our final step preparatory to focus on the philosophical nature of the colourful work is a consideration of Colas Duflo’s analysis of the reasoned aspect — the clearly articulated, philosophical stance — of the *Éloge*.

Here we begin by noting that many of the strands of argument on which Diderot relies in the *Éloge* are ideas which will be presented ever more fully over the course of works which post-date the eulogy (such as the *Pensées sur l’interprétation de la nature* and all but his first two *Salons*). Duflo, in fact, references the *Salons* when he explains that, for Diderot, an account of the truly successful writer of literary fiction is akin to that of a master painter such as Vernet. For each, “le détail est vérité” (10). Truth is in the artfully captured and communicated details. In the *Rêve de d’Alembert* (which predates the *Éloge* by eight years) Diderot’s characters describe the connections which experience forges — connections whose very force we feel as we vibrate to recognition of the truths that give shape to our knowledge and so gain appreciation of the world of which we are a part. Ideas such as these are not set out and defended in the *Éloge*, but they play through it. One familiar with Diderot’s philosophy — his metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics and so forth — is poised to understand the premises upon which the reasoning of the *Éloge* rides. Here (to know that there is reasoning in the *Éloge*), we need only summarize the basic line which Diderot adumbrates. Duflo explains how Diderot encapsulates the fact that Richardson’s novel brand of fiction combines realism and — what we come to see is truly — moral philosophical work:

[S]i le romancier assure en un sens la relève du moraliste, c’est aussi en le dépassant. La narrative n’est pas un habillage indifférent pour des pensées qui pourraient s’exprimer ailleurs et autrement. Il n’y a pas de réversibilité. Si le roman intègre les réflexions des moralistes, leurs

⁷ In his “Diderot, grand communicant” (1995), Pierre Zémor provides an excellent defense of this characterization of Diderot.

recueils n'ont pas la puissance du roman. Sa forme est une force : ce que les moralistes ont « mis en maximes, Richardson l'a mis en action » (IV, 155). (7)

Where moral philosophy identifies maxims — extrapolates rules or describes virtuous being — the author of fiction (in particular, Richardson) composes complex, richly peopled stories inspired by his deep study and understanding of human beings in the real world. Richardson's expressive splendour couples philosophically profound insight with the artistic ability to beautifully see and fully depict humans and morality at play so realistically and compellingly in his fictive works that the reader becomes one with the fiction. That is, the reader is drawn into the story and participates in it by proxy — the role of imagination and the preparation of the reader are important facets of this occurrence. Diderot speaks of hearing people speak as if Richardson's characters were real, of — for instance — the young woman who told a friend leaving for London, “Je vous prie de voir de ma part Miss Émilie, M. Belford, et surtout miss Howe, si elle vit encore” (223). He describes friendships torn where the novels cause deep disagreement between friends (223). Diderot is clear: reading the whole unfolding work is essential, “il faut commencer l'ouvrage et lire jusqu'à cet endroit” (225). To read Richardson is to actively engage in preparation for the real world.

In short, Richardson's style of fiction is new. In its nuanced, studied, length it provides the moral experience and practice which eludes moral philosophy proper as the latter is limited to the explication of maxims and abstract rules, at which point it simply drops us. Strictly — traditionally — speaking, moral philosophy “nous laisse l'application à faire” (213).⁸ Yet, a well-rounded moral human being needs to observe, practice and learn so as to become increasingly morally adept. Reasoned argument and amassed experience are the two integral parts of moral philosophical competence. The position is solid. It is in fact one we find made by the contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum who, in her *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* sets out a surprisingly similar case, grounding her thought in the writings of Henry James on the moral imagination (and works of art).⁹

Consider Nussbaum, who explains how the reader is drawn into the finely nuanced *The Golden Bowl*: “I shall go further. I shall try to articulate and define the claim that the novel can be a paradigm of moral activity,” and, “these alert winged books are not just irreplaceable fine representations of moral achievement, they are moral achievements on behalf of our community” (148, 165).¹⁰ The relevance of Nussbaum's work here is as confirmation of the recognized philosophical merit of the line of argument. Her work is widely respected; she provides us reaffirmation, in strikingly similar vein, of Diderot's reasoned position in the *Éloge*. Her conclusion: the finely wrought novel is the missing piece of a full moral education which a moral philosophic education alone can never provide. Nussbaum describes the detail and exquisite conundrums faced in *The Golden Bowl* with clinical aplomb, though by way of richly literary vocabulary and turn of phrase. Her reasoned argument does not risk being labeled “too colourful” where by “colour” is indicated emotional excess encroaching on

⁸ Even virtue theory only describes human flourishing; it does not help us practice. No more does it provide richly realistic empirically grounded examples. Diderot demonstrates awareness of an interesting similarity to rule-based moral philosophies here.

⁹ Martha C. Nussbaum, “Finely Aware and Richly Responsible”: Literature and the Moral Imagination” (original publication: 1985).

¹⁰ Interestingly, nowhere in the presentation of her case does Nussbaum mention Diderot. Western philosophy seems only to have recently begun to discover Diderot. We may, here, suffer ignorance due to the spirit captured by the remark of Assézat and Tournieux cited at the outset of this article. It could also be a bit of Western Analytic provincialism, for Diderot clearly does philosophy, though after his stint in prison at Vincennes (for just over 3 months of 1749) Diderot did not publish any more philosophy “properly” speaking. His genius was not quashed; he published and/or penned and had circulated other things which incorporated his cutting-edge hypothesis. (I must admit that, schooled in the Western Analytic Tradition of philosophy, I did not hear *at all* of Diderot until I undertook studies of the French language. A personal, but relevant, anecdote.)

argument. Clearly, a straightforward philosophical case — absent emotive trimmings — for the essential philosophical role and value of Richardsonian fiction can be made. Yet Diderot chooses to enthuse, to emote and even to use his own experiences as reader in order to supplement the argument he offers in praise of Richardson. Diderot may have had to hide his philosophy in the guise of other, and new, genres (or risk return to prison). He does so, however, with panache as well as an authorial craftsmanship which plays into his talent of reinventing genres of *nonfiction* — just as he does in the realm of fiction of which Duflo speaks in his “Diderot et le roman” (4).

Duflo’s analysis of Diderot’s fictive writing style is relevant to our assessment of a work of nonfiction: “[I]l ne va pas de soi que la lecture, et qui plus est de textes fictionnels, produise une forme d’éducation morale. Diderot construit une réponse à cette interrogation qui dit la puissance du genre aussi bien que sa mission nouvelle et qui s’articule en plusieurs niveaux d’argumentation” (6). The *Éloge*, as we have seen, is a non-fictive piece which argues that fiction can — when properly crafted — be morally, pedagogically and motivationally, important. The argument is multi-faceted, pulling from Diderot’s metaphysics coupled with empirically-based, experiential proof. This much, following Duflo, we have established. We now turn to a demonstration of the presence of an additional level of “argument” which one cannot ignore while digesting the full force of the *Éloge*. Here is the side of the *Éloge* in which Diderot communicates with and aims to convince his reader by means of “colour” (borne — we recall — by such things as adjectival use, exclamation, the first person, refrain and so forth). Diderot describes how profoundly affected (and spurred to reaction in the real world) he and others are by Richardson’s tales: the authour of the *Éloge* incorporates valid emotional communication in order to supplement his reasoned argument.

A human being is not purely rational. We are touched by the world, literally (as Julie de Lespinasse and company will discuss, several years later, in the *Rêve de d’Alembert* and as Diderot will express time and again over the course of his later *Salons* as he works to communicate — rationally and emotively — the effect of visual art on its public as well as the methods and mechanisms involved in the creative work of master painters). We are sensate *and* rational; we gather information about the world and build interwoven webs of understanding by way of feeling and reason. Thus, when Diderot brings his own reader to react viscerally, by way of emotional outpourings which reflect how Richardson has touched him, Diderot causes in his reader an experience which will — hopefully — help the reader to sense, to register and so to form an experience akin to that to which Diderot himself is privy, given his original experiences. Diderot adds his own sensory conviction to his reasoned argument and so provides those readers prepared to fully attend to him a full —reasoned and sensed — experience of the effect and so the worth of Richardson. But there is more. The *Éloge* stands as an example of nonfiction which communicates to the whole reader. The point may, even now in our discussion, seem belaboured, yet it bears further explication.

The *Éloge* itself is experienced by its reader who thus learns that reasoning *and* sensing play in the force the work exerts on us. If only “ressentir” were a verb in English! For, Diderot enables the reader to understand — to experience, to be touched by — the importance of the sensed aspect of empirical facts which are used, in rational, reasoned vein, to explain and defend a conclusion. This is no sheer rhetorical fervour. Diderot in no way aims to emotionally bully his reader into agreement. His aim, as the project of the *Encyclopédie* attests, is to further and foster understanding, not to force belief. Thus, with the *Éloge*, Diderot passes along the energy of experience instilled in him as a result of Richardson’s creative verve. Diderot’s full empirical experience of Richardson plays a role in his reasoned defense of the Englishman’s work as a crucial component of moral education. It is what our philosopher wants to communicate; his writing reverberates with that energy which Richardson’s work provoked in him.

It is imperative that we recall Diderot’s insistence on the recognition of truths as an essential part of artistic and philosophical communication. “Le fond de son drame est vrai,” he writes of

Richardson's masterpieces, "[s]ans cet art, mon âme se pliant avec peine à des biais chimérique, l'illusion ne serait que momentanée et l'impression faible et passagère" (214). Duflo underscores the importance of artistic verisimilitude: "pour Diderot, ce qui détermine la réussite esthétique et la force de l'impression produite par le texte : le lecteur reconnaît le vrai" (8). The reader of Richardson and the reader of the *Éloge* will — if sufficiently prepared to do so (by experience and reflection amassed prior to reading the respective works) — both sense *and* rationally grasp the veracity of the respective works. Reason, of course, functions alongside sensual affect. Absent colour, the *Éloge* would stand as a lovely argument to the effect that Richardson's novels of a new (and much needed) sort, permit moral practice by proxy (which is to say, preparatory practice; Duflo speaks of "une expérience du monde par procuration", 11). But, a purely reasoned (dare we say "drab and colourless"?) result alone would not bring a reader of the *Éloge* to sense, to feel, to viscerally experience the critical importance of the way in which this new genre — which the *Éloge* itself represents — affects human wellbeing and knowledge. Not only does the *Éloge de Richardson* work to communicate the full effect of Richardson's novel genre, but it also importantly communicates the full effect and range of which philosophy is capable.

"*Ressentir*" the *Éloge* as a piece of philosophy is, thus, to recognize that one can deeply and importantly feel alongside what one's reason understands. The interesting twist we bring out here is that the *Éloge* seems to do — or at least to suggest — for philosophy what Richardson's fiction does for moral philosophy. When we read the *Éloge* we are convinced by reason. But we are *also* affected by emotive, empirical, outpourings which are at once grounded in truth (authorial truth, which is to say Diderot's, experience) and which speak to our sensory/emotional capacities and understanding of the world. We can, and Diderot would of course say we should, verify Diderot's reasoning and his emoting. We will quite likely agree with him (for his coloured and reasoned argument is strong), as long as we do not lack understanding and feelings pertinent to the truths expressed in the *Éloge*. Two items are of note. First: reaching agreement may require much experience and reasoning; the journey need not be easy for the conclusion to be true. Second: in his *Pensées détachées sur la peinture* of 1776 (which constitute a part of his *Salons*), Diderot will suggest that the master painter has a right to expect from the viewer of his art such that his artwork stands a chance of being properly understood and appreciated — the reader's imagination must stand ready to receive the artwork if the latter is to properly communicate, which is to say affect and share understanding, with its audience (465). These very lines of thought are clearly at work in the *Éloge*. From the Salon, where the answer expected to the rhetorical question is clear: "Et puis, l'artiste, n'a-t-il aucun droit à compter sur mon imagination?" (465). The audience must be sufficiently prepared such that they stand ready to interpret what the painter presents. The same is true for the writer. From the *Éloge*: "L'intérêt et le charme de l'ouvrage dérobent l'art de Richardson à ceux qui sont le plus faits pour l'apercevoir" (221).

In Diderot's hands an adulatory essay becomes a new genre: the *Éloge* is an instance of philosophy, reasoned *and* felt (*raisonnée et ressentie*) — both aspects of which, according to Diderot, permit of talk of objectivity. With Diderot, colour is not dastardly rhetorical flourish designed to force emotional agreement where rational argument is absent or impossible to communicate. Sensorial response (which cashes out in emotive terms) is particularly relevant where ethics and aesthetics are concerned — where "le vrai, le bon et le bien" interplay, as Duflo emphasizes [11].

It is relevant that the connection between reason and feeling will not exclusively belong to discussion of the arts and of morality, for sensorial experience in the world is what grounds our thought and reasoning. To sense is to feel; sensory experience grounds knowledge. Thus we can regard Diderot's work in the *Éloge* as a sort of preparatory foray into consideration of the role of feeling in philosophy more generally. In the *Rêve de d'Alembert*, Julie de Lespinasse and the doctor Bordeu will discuss the physicality of an individual's being and knowing in the world:

MADemoiselle de LESPINASSE

Chaque fil du réseau sensible peut être blessé ou chatouillé sur toute sa longueur [...] je reviens toujours à mon araignée ; que c'est l'araignée qui est à l'origine commune de toutes les pattes, et qui rapporte à tel ou tel endroit la douleur ou le plaisir, sans l'éprouver.

BORDEU

Que c'est le rapport constant, invariable de toutes les impressions à cette origine commune qui constitue l'unité de l'animal.

MADemoiselle de LESPINASSE

Que c'est la mémoire de toutes ces impressions successives qui fait pour chaque animal l'histoire de sa vie et de son soi.

BORDEU

Et que c'est la mémoire, et la comparaison qui s'ensuit nécessairement de toutes ces impressions qui font la pensée et le raisonnement. (123-124)

The world literally makes us vibrate as it impinges on us; we feel what we experience and come to learn. Earlier on in the text, the waking Julie experiences the dreaming d'Alembert's climax: "Il a poussé un profond soupir [...] Le cœur me battait, et ce n'était pas de peur" (94). The processes of thought and knowing are sensorially registered. Even epistemology *touches* us. With art its focus, the *Éloge* can easily illustrate the essential interplay of feeling and reason in human experience and the philosophy engendered. As Duflo establishes: "*L'Éloge de Richardson* [...] s'interroge sur les effets moraux du roman et sur les ressorts spécifiques de la fiction narrative" (6). In so doing, as we have seen, Diderot shares his emotive response. He also illustrates that doing philosophy can require feeling as well as reason if it is to fully communicate its author's intent. Diderot, philosopher, communicates by way of reason *and* feeling; the reader needs to be able (experientially and rationally enabled) to understand him.

From the *Éloge*: "Plus on a l'âme belle, plus on a le goût exquis et pur, plus on connaît la nature, plus on aime la vérité, plus on estime les ouvrages de Richardson" (216). There is a state of human being and preparedness to know toward which all humans can continually work — by observation, reflection and practice. To know nature is to be able to recognize its truths and so to learn more of the same. The colour Diderot paints as he writes (in the *Éloge*, in later *Salons* and in many other of his works — fictive and otherwise) is not fanciful invention. It is the result of sensed experience (as well as rational reflection, as Duflo's analysis helps us to understand). Diderot's enthusiasm is grounded in truth, which is itself grounded in experience; Diderot is ever the materialist empiricist philosopher. He sees Richardson as one never lost "dans les régions de la féerie" (214), but as an author who truthfully and artfully imagines fictive worlds based on his deep understanding of our real one:

[L]e fond de son drame est vrai ; ses personnages ont toute la réalité possible ; ses caractères sont pris du milieu de la société ; ses incidents sont dans les mœurs de toutes les nations policières ; les passions qu'il peint sont telles que je les éprouve en moi ; ce sont les mêmes objets qui les émeuvent, elles ont l'énergie que je leur connais [...] il me montre le cours général des choses qui m'environnent. Sans cet art, mon âme se pliant avec peine à des biais chimériques, l'illusion ne serait que momentanée et l'impression faible et passagère. (214)

The prepared reader will be enthused — literally set to vibrating — by the experience which the reading of Richardson's occasions. Connections are made, impressions are forged; practice is had and the reader is deeply touched. It is this experience which Diderot colourfully communicates in the *Éloge*, where no amount of reasoning alone can completely relay the experience to Diderot's reader of his own experience in reading Richardson. Thus that very "colour" of which Assézat and Tourneux speak, justified by verifiable experience — that of the gifted artist (Richardson) and the prepared audience (Diderot) — adds an essential aspect of communication to the *Éloge*, a work wherein Diderot stands

as artist and we, his readers, as audience.

The *Éloge* requires colour to fully communicate what Diderot intends to help us understand about Richardson's new genre of fiction. Furthermore, in demonstrating that sensing and reason are essential to moral philosophy, the *Éloge* exemplifies the fact that philosophical argument — to be complete — can require emotional, sensed, response as well as reason. Thus we conclude that when Diderot is cast aside for being too colourful, or when the colour of his *Éloge* is left unattended in favour of focus on his fascinating reasoned argument, an important aspect of Diderot's philosophical thought is ignored. To attend to all of Diderot's *Éloge* is to find that and how the work itself deserves *full* philosophical attention; its style contains argument and illustrates the relevance of this very fact to philosophy.

Two final remarks are in order. First, a word about Diderot's mention of Hume in the *Éloge* is relevant: “« Avez-vous vu le poète Richardson ? » Ensuite : « Avez-vous lu le philosophe Hume ? »” (222). Hume, the great empiricist and moral philosopher, plays second fiddle to Richardson. For, the inventor of the new novel not only communicates maxims, but helps us to feel them in action and so to be able to extrapolate to our own future moral judgments applied in the real world.¹¹ Diderot's *Éloge* does the same: he helps us to understand (by way of reason) and to feel (by way of emotive, sensual response) the range of material relevant to the discovery of truth. Second, a reiteration of the importance of the work of Shelly Charles is in order. Charles convincingly argues that Diderot had several years of experience and thought regarding Richardson prior to penning the *Éloge*. She thus helps us to confirm that Diderot had ample time to compose the colourful and reasoned assessment of Richardson communicated in the *Éloge*. Diderot had ample time, as well, then, to register and so set out to communicate at an additional level, about the place of “colour” — properly grounded — in argument. Thanks to Samuel Richardson, Denis Diderot found in experience the ballast needed to provide an argument in support of the essential roles of both feeling *and* reason to philosophy. The *Éloge de Richardson* is only too colourful if we don't reason *and* feel carefully what Diderot intends to communicate by it.

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¹¹ It is intriguing to read Grimm's remarks, of his *Correspondence littéraire*, edited by Tourneux; as cited by Ernest Campbell Mossner (in his “Hume And the French Men of Letters” [226]). Speaking of the two great minds, Hume and Diderot, Grimm comments that Hume, “n'a pas le coloris, ni peut-être la profondeur de génie de M. Diderot.” Grimm appreciates Diderot's colour, colour which Hume lacks.

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