CHAPTER 4

Recycling and Reembodying, Twining and Untwining
Paul et Virginie and Its After-Things

Préambule

Embodied Experience spotlights authors who envision a social contract based on the idea that a stable and liberating community – one that resonates with a vital mutuality between the human and nonhuman world – arises from *belonging with*, which itself involves a prismatic connection with quotidian things.[1] *Paul et Virginie*, like *Corinne*, opens with the vision and hope for such communion, as the eponymous heroines forge such links – whether that involves regarding Rome as a friend or recycling food so others may eat. In both cases, however, that contract is, after many efforts to sustain it, broken. This chapter's *préambule* begins with a brief investigation into Bernardin's *Études de la Nature*, with which the novel *Paul et Virginie* was originally published (1788).[2] Enfolding these two texts together thus makes organic sense and urges me to look in counterpoint at them in relation to belonging with the healing efficacy of human–thing connection, with the ripening of an ardent, sensory regard for the nonhuman's diversity and ambiguity, and with the cultivation of an acute consciousness that all things exist in relation to other things.

The *Études* begins with Bernardin's observations of insects on a strawberry plant. As his wonder unfolds, he offers a template for belonging with things that manifests early in *Paul et Virginie* and that provides a springboard for reading that novel and its things. He draws on what *Corinne* calls the "keener eye" (*C*, p. 82), carefully charting for three weeks the thirty-seven species that visit the plant. He observes and respects how each being

[1] A shorter version of this chapter first appeared as "'Amber does not shed so sweet a perfume as the veriest trifles touched by those we love': Engaging with Community through Things in Bernardin de St. Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* and Alphonse de Lamartine's *Graziella*," in *Engaged Romanticism*, ed. Mark Lussier and Bruce Matsunaga (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008).

[2] Chris Bongie illuminates the *Études* in relation to *Paul et Virginie*, though not in relation to material culture. See *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 92. All translations from the *Études* are mine.

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varies in appearance and in movement: The insects are "gold," "silver," or "striped"; even their heads are varyingly "dark like a patch of black velvet" or spangled "like a ruby"; furthermore, he believes they enjoy themselves as they extend their wings: Some "flew spirally, like butterflies," and others, resembling pilots, "rose into the air by steering themselves against the wind," using "a mechanism more or less similar to that of paper kites" (*É*, pp. 3, 4). Their happy playfulness and the fact that "they seemed to take pleasure in displaying" (*É*, p. 3) their wings anticipate Potkay's claim that "[t]he possibility that subrational things experience joy implies ethical consequences in our attitude toward or interaction with them."[3] Discussing those ethical consequences, Bernardin says that these beings are "surely worthy of my attention, since Nature bestowed upon them hers" and to express his frustration with "man's" tendency to "call everything worthless which he cannot immediately use"; far from taking an Anthropocene viewpoint since he satirizes his gaze as coming from "the height of my greatness," he grants to the nonhuman not only joy, but technological superiority, for their eyes can "perceive, by a mechanism of which we have no idea, every thing that is close, and that is far off" (*É*, p. 5).[4] He acknowledges that he longs to become acquainted with the strawberry plant, though that would require the impossible task of tracing "how it has been able to scatter itself" from France to "*les montagnes de Cachemire jusques à Archangel*" (*É*, p. 11). He further highlights this ethical relationship between human and nonhuman: that to know the flower, one must study it in "*relation* to the rest of Nature," to the "sun, which makes it bloom, to the winds which sow its seeds," and "to the streams that strengthen and embellish their banks" (*É*, p. 11; emphasis added). Likewise, one must see the lily "on the edge of a rivulet," "raising in the middle of the grasses its stately stem, and reflecting in the waters, its beautiful calix, whiter than ivory" (*É*, p. 30). Bernardin acknowledges that the nonhuman ultimately remains a mystery, but in partially deciphering it and respecting interlacings, one can belong with it. In *Paul et Virginie*, learning how humans connect to their environment, becomes, as it is in *Corinne*, crucial to the family's survival and, when they abandon this practice, every member dies, an annihilation arising from forgetting one

[3] Potkay, p. 398.

[4] Malcolm Cook discusses the reception of the *Études*, explaining that in this text, "Bernardin seeks to define the essence of nature by showing its harmonious working, a process that is engineered and driven by a divine entity." See *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: A Life of Culture* (Oxford: Legenda, MHRA, and MANEY, 2006), p. 92.

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of the lessons of the *Études* – that humans and nonhumans are "surely worthy" of mutual belonging.

4.1 Twining and Untwining

4.1.1 They "Twine Together to Withstand the Hurricane"

Paul et Virginie demonstrates how significantly humans and nonhumans *require* cooperation to survive and flourish. The families initially experience solidarity because, like delicate and "weak plants," they "twine together to withstand the hurricane" ("*Ainsi des plantes faibles s'entrelacent ensemble pour résister aux ouragans*" [*PV*, p. 65; Ehrard, p. 148]). In their daily life, the characters accomplish this by watching over each other and revering the nonhuman; in doing so, they attend to each other's emotional and working lives, as well as their environment itself, animating a simultaneous liberation of feeling and a solidifying of affective support.

Specifically, Paul and Virginie accomplish this twining together through the growing, sharing, and eating of food, as I show in this first section. I acknowledge that food as an object constitutes something rather materially different from the goods I have examined in the first two chapters – statues and diamonds – as well as the *Paul et Virginie* artifacts (Section 4.3.2) and the hats I discuss in Chapter 5. However, in analyzing the ways the hero and heroine belong with each other and with their environment, my choice of food is apposite (one might say inevitable), first, insofar as they have nothing else they could share and only one object that could be considered a possession, a miniature portrait, which I will introduce shortly. Their focus on belonging with things heartens them to belong with each other, a condition that will change when Madame de la Tour later persuades herself and the family that without property they cannot survive, a conviction that ironically leads to obliteration. Second, food fits well with the other consumer goods *Embodied Experience* reflects on, given that like those, it is recycled to join a dynamic human–nonhuman rotation, though with even more oomph since it is literally consumed and thus taken inward physically. Third, Paul and Virginie garner pleasure from belonging with harvesting and eating and – given that "pleasure is its own way of knowing" – their activities break down binaries between feeling and intellect and consumption and possession.[5] Finally, my premise here is

[5] Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 2.

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that while food is distinct from diamonds or statues, the same principle of *belonging with* applies, since consumers, in sharing a diamond and/or its wealth with others, animate the intimacy, generosity, and respect that sharing food can offer.

Initially the family finds happiness belonging in and with the world at large. Their ability to see or try to see things as experiencing joy and to take delight in their pleasure stimulates human–nonhuman cooperation, which in turn supports their own – as well as their land's ecological – endurance. In a passage exemplifying this radiant eco-social philosophy, wherein nothing is "worthless," we hear that Virginie, committed to recycling, "would never eat fruit in the country without burying the stones or the pips in the earth. 'They will produce trees,' she would say, 'which will give their fruit to some traveler, or at least to a bird'" (*PV*, p. 100). Her vigilance here ensures a productive cycle where no being goes hungry, and where humans help sustain nature. In another example, we see that, at the feet of two coconut trees, they have planted maidenhair that "beamed like green and black stars, and bunches of hart's-tongue, hanging down like long ribbons of purplish-green, [that] waved at the wind's pleasure" (*PV*, p. 63). Here the nonhuman "beams," offering smiles and light, and it "waves" when the wind experiences "pleasure." They eat "country fare, for which no animal had paid with its life" (*PV*, p. 64) and keep the dynamic human–nonhuman cycle in motion since what they have planted feeds the animals that feed them: "[W]hile making cheeses with their milk, [Virginie] would watch with delight as [the goats] browsed on the maidenhair" (*PV*, p. 63). Although "clouds will sometimes arise to darken even the most perfectly regulated soul," when this occurs, the family would "gather round" to put "bitter thoughts to flight" (*PV*, p. 65). Timothy Morton has written that "[s]olidarity *requires* nonhumans."[6] Certainly these gatherings – among humans and nonhumans – strengthen the ecosystem they all inhabit. And Peter Mortensen has rightly said that the novel, "[c]ombining political liberalism and abolitionism with philosophical holism and organicism . . ., urges the necessity . . . of reconsidering the conditions under which human beings interact with other living organisms – a dual focus that makes *Paul et Virginie* a prime example of the 'ecological' or 'ecosocial' Romantic orientation."[7] Indeed, the novel poses

[6] *Humankind*, p. 189; emphasis original.
[7] *British Romanticism and Continental Influences: Writing in an Age of Europhobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 97.

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the question, how do we belong with the things that surround us, an inquiry that simultaneously explores a community's ethical structures.

Bernardin's *Études* reminds us that to become more intimate with the flower or any nonhuman thing, one must study them in "relation to the rest of Nature" (*É*, p. 10). The family themselves live in relation to nature's pulse, which orders their daily life: They know that "[i]t is dinner-time, . . . [for] the shadows of the banana-trees are at their feet" or, "[n]ight will fall soon, the tamarinds are closing their leaves" (*PV*, p. 70). Initially, the children, their somatosensory systems attuned to the material world, are especially aware of living in "relation to the rest of Nature." As Virginie belongs to an ecosphere where food must be composted to keep all its beings alive, so does Paul identify the nonhuman as *belonging with* in relation to other beings. He renders food gathering a loving act when he tells Virginie to "[e]at this honey-comb which I took from the top of a high rock for you" (*PV*, p. 71). Here another example emerges of the labor, vitality, and movement requisite for belonging with others, as Paul's climb to "the top of a high rock" to find this delicacy reveals his willingness to step toward both thing and human.

Resembling Castel-Forte's ability to perceive in Corinne's things "a spark of her life" (*C*, p. 26), Paul's sensory keenness finds incandescence in the interlacings among Virginie, the nonhuman, and his own love. He exclaims that: "Although the trees should hide you from my sight, I have no need to see you to find you again; something of you that I cannot express remains for me in the air when you pass, on the grass where you rest" (*PV*, p. 71). Even after Virginie's exile from the island, Paul remains able to connect with her through things. He gathers

> the last posies she had carried, a coconut-shell cup from which she used to drink—and as if these traces of his friend had been the most precious things in the world, he would kiss them and carry them next to his bosom. The rarest perfume has not so sweet an odour as the objects touched by the object of one's love. . . . [A] lover's soul finds traces of its beloved everywhere. (*PV*, pp. 90, 127)

Here, as he kisses the posies and the coconut-shell – the latter another reference to the gustatory – the hero does not merely project onto these objects but reveals that he, Virginie, and these things, again to quote Nancy, live a life of "being-with." Human and nonhuman things leave their "traces" of touch, taste, sight, and "rarest perfume," ones that, when respected, encourage a continuum among the animate. Even the posies' "sweet odour" is recycled – moving vigorously from human to nonhuman

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to human. These examples of recycling, listening, and caressing highlight the radiant ways Paul and Virginie live in sensuous relation to each other and their world.

Early on in the novel, drawing on the pleasures of eating and sharing food, *Paul et Virginie* suggests that consciously creating more eco-harmonic relations among all beings arises when one engages with the nonhuman's rich dimensionality; so, while Anna Neill contends that an ideal state is possible only when the "corrupting and divisive forces of economic and social progress"[8] are resisted, I would say that, at least in *Paul et Virginie*, the process is less about resistance than about positively embracing the opportunities to nurture nonhuman and human connections – that is, the "ideal state" starts from the ground up. For example, this concept provides the key to the community's survival when the banana tree serves as food, shade, and table linen (*PV*, pp. 48, 64, 78), when "[h]alved gourds were all they had for dishes" (*PV*, p. 78), and when *belonging with* expands such that human relations defy rigid roles and boundaries: Women simultaneously are friends, sisters, and mothers to each other's children (sharing nursing duties); and children are friends, quasi-siblings, and lovers. I am not proposing that the community inhabits Rousseau's "state of nature" since the family enslaves human beings.[9] Neither is it utterly utopian, licensing a perfect union between subject and object, person, and thing.[10] Nor am I advocating for a naïve, full-on primitivism as an antidote for civilization's poisons. Instead, these non-dualistic engagements with the external world tender glimpses of how a less hierarchical social contract could look, one in which humans live more harmoniously with their environment by acknowledging the life and spirit inherent in things and by refusing to objectify other human beings,

[8] "The Sentimental Novel and the Republican Imaginary: Slavery in *Paul and Virginia*," *Diacritics* 23.3 (1993): 36–47, p. 40.

[9] Neill connects Rousseau and Bernardin, noting that Rousseau's phrase "little society" is also the one Bernardin uses (p. 40). Roddey Reid charts how the "Old Regime" first "victimize[es] Marguerite and Madame de la Tour," who then "unite" in "pastoral harmony," only to be destroyed by "the Old Regime social logic." See *Families in Jeopardy: Regulating the Social Body in France, 1750–1910* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 121. Bongie says that "notwithstanding the unproblematized but highly problematic status of Domingue and Marie . . ., to say nothing of Bernardin's own reliance on slaves . . ., Bernardin consistently and vocally stressed in his writings the need to abolish the practice" (p. 451, note 69).

[10] I argue that the novel's first part offers movement and the second part resists motion; Racault suggests instead that the opening in its "happy immobility" provides a "utopian enclave," but that Virginie's sexual awakening sparks mobility and closes the utopian moment. "*Paul et Virginie* et l'utopie: De la 'petite société' au mythe collectif," in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 242 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986): 419–471, p. 433.

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evacuating their inherent being-ness. Catherine Labio has persuasively shown that the family's failure "is the continued subordination of the *petite société* to the colonial, that is, the European model that determines it."[11] I suggest that the colonial model itself arises symptomatically from a foundation that opposes nature and culture, body and spirit, and human and nonhuman. In revealing this dualism, the novel's appalling closure shows the consequences of rejecting such mutual engagement and of choosing separation.

In conclusion to this section, I requote Capra, who elucidates how "the origin of our [current ecological] dilemma lies in our tendency to create the abstractions of separate objects, including a separate self"; once we heal this "separate self," however, we can "overcome our Cartesian anxiety . . . [and] realize that identity, individuality, and autonomy do not imply separateness and independence."[12] While Bernardin embraces human–nonhuman belonging in his *Études*, *Paul et Virginie*'s characters cannot surmount "Cartesian anxiety"; and because they devolve from joyful connection to isolation, the latter shocks more than it might in a setting where there has been only estrangement. The contrast intensifies, though no doubt inadvertently, the ways the novel puts on view the penalties dualism legislates. This has political consequences since this disrespect for human materiality – the inability to see or acknowledge bodies – haunts the culture of slavery itself. Spinoza's claim is apropos here: "The human body, to be preserved, requires a great many other bodies, by which it is, as it were, continually regenerated" (*Ethics*, IIP13POSTIV). As I will show, the novel discards so many bodies that the community cannot revitalize itself. Nevertheless, by embodying how a community *could* function, fragments of *Paul et Virginie* dramatize how to live "lively" with the nonhuman.

4.1.2 Untwining: Dissolving Ties, Desecrating Things

In my Introduction to *Embodied Experience*, I noted how many thing theorists find a foundation in nonbinary cerebration. Coole and Frost, to offer one example, define their ethos as having an "antipathy toward oppositional ways of thinking," as constituting an ontology "more positive and constructive than critical or negative," and as avoiding "dualism" by

[11] "Reading by the Gold and Black Clock; Or, the Recasting of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 16.4 (July 2004): 671–694, p. 681.
[12] *The Web of Life*, p. 295.

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championing the "generative" and "lively."[13] Acknowledging matter's radiance and committing to a respect for materiality seems to me an ongoing challenge in fiction and daily life, especially in worlds like ours today where untwining is the standard. *Paul et Virginie*'s characters embody this struggle when they misfire in their ability to recognize the other's materiality as forming part of a larger personal and social connectedness. As I broached earlier in this chapter, the novel does not dramatize just one "fall" from harmony to polarity; instead, dualism's presence makes itself known at the text's beginning, coexisting (but not dominating, as it does toward the end), with the family's striving toward full engagement with the nonhuman world.

One episode stages an initial plummet into rupture, arising when the children fail to feel, taste, smell, see, and hear matter. This occurs when, left alone, they discover a woman, "emaciated as a skeleton" and wearing "nothing but a shred of coarse cloth wrapped round her loins" (*PV*, p. 51), who has liberated herself from enslavement, She asks Virginie for help – significantly telling the heroine her *own* agonizing story:

> "Young lady, have pity on a poor runaway slave; I have been wandering in these mountains for a month, half dead with hunger and many times pursued by hunters and their dogs. I escaped from my master, a rich planter in the Black River district; see for yourself how he treated me;" and she showed Virginia her body which was furrowed with deep scars from the whippings she had received ["*il m'a traitée comme vous le voyez; en même temps elle lui montra son corps sillonné de cicatrices profondes*"]. "I was going to drown myself," she added, "but knowing that you lived here, I said to myself: 'I needn't die yet; there are still some good white people in this country.'"
>
> Virginia was much affected . . .. "Poor wretch; I must go to your master and ask him to pardon you; when he sees your condition he will be moved to pity." (*PV*, p. 51; Ehrard, p. 127)

Appealing to Virginie's sympathy, beseeching her to "have pity on a poor runaway slave," this woman adopts "sentimental affect" as she describes her appalling hunger and the enslavers' pursuit of her as if she were an animal. Ramesh Mallipeddi, arguing against the current theoretical grain, claims that "designating emotional responsiveness to slave sufferance as always politically suspect and compromised . . . [has] made it hard to grasp the embodied dimensions of black experience in slave narratives and in black cultural and aesthetic forms more generally"; thus, he advocates for

[13] "Introducing the New Materialisms," pp. 8, 9.

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"sentimental affect," for the compelling link between "spectacle and sympathy."[14] He explores how "sentimental affect did not merely extend unilaterally from the privileged to the powerless, from English subjects to colonial slaves, but was a resource deployed by . . . women and slaves . . . to fashion their subjectivities."[15] And though she is a fictional character and Bernardin is white, this black woman does "spectacularize" herself by describing her scars at the same time that she shows them to Virginie, simultaneous communications apparent in the French: "*en même temps elle lui montra son corps*" (Ehrard, p. 127).[16] Her visual-verbal interweaving intensifies her story for the reader.

This woman does evoke Virginie's sympathy – the girl is "much affected" ("*tout émue*"); however, the heroine evidently glances at, but does not hear or actually see this black body, and because she does not *move toward* that body, it makes no imprint on her: No moment of radiant *belonging with* follows. While the enslaver objectifies the Maroon by stealing her labor, physically torturing her, and, no doubt, forcing her to reproduce, thereby rendering her wholly material, the hero and heroine here unwittingly enact their own dualistic bargain by being unable to read the harrowing story carved hieroglyphically into the woman's body, which was "furrowed with deep scars from the whippings she had received" (*PV*, p. 51). Their inability to belong with the "*Marronne*"[17] arises from their inability to see her body as abused. The children transport her back to her enslaver, asking him to forgive the woman,[18] but his "forgiveness" merely doubles commodification and physical brutality, for Domingue, the enslaved laborer who works for the children's family, reports that he has seen the woman "chained by the foot to a block of wood, an iron collar with three hooks fastened round her neck" (*PV*, p. 56). Thus, while agreeing with Mallipeddi that sympathy can wage a protest against injustice, I want to emphasize my own point – that because the children skim

[14] *Spectacular Suffering: Witnessing Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), pp. 5, 4, 18. Mallipeddi does not discuss *Paul et Virginie*. I am adopting his definition of "spectacle" as "an act of exhibiting a thing or person for the viewer's pleasure" or for exhibiting those who suffer (p. 27).

[15] Mallipeddi, pp. 4, 182.

[16] Ehrard notes that in *Voyage á l'Ile de France*, Bernardin himself obtained a pardon for "*une esclave marronne*" (p. 321, note 27); thus, it is possible that some of the character's words were spoken by the actual woman he met.

[17] Bernardin uses the name "*une negresse marronne*" (Ehrard, p. 126).

[18] Ian Henderson observes that in returning the enslaved woman, Virginie acts according to the "ameliorationists," rather than those who advocated for "slavery's abolition." See "Reading Lessons: A New Appreciation of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*," *SVEC* 12 (2003): 309–329, ed. Jonathan Mallinson (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation), p. 317, note 29.

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over her punished skin, failing to feel the inflamed ridges of scar tissue, they cannot register that this black body, resonant with material, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual energies, has been unspeakably harmed. The *Marronne* simply functions as a maverick possession that must be returned to her enslaver since, in their own family system, they have seen enslavers as kind.

If readers did not initially register the woman's arteries of scars, Bernardin gives them another chance to do so when Domingue describes her body, chains immobilizing her and an iron collar suspending her in constant pain. The novel, spotlighting the horrific in tangible detail, protests enslavement, as does Domingue's savvy irony, which underscores this injustice: "*Mais quelle grâce!*" – an irony Donovan loses when he translates this as "[b]ut what a cruel pardon it was!" (*PV*, p. 56; Ehrard, p. 134). If we apply Elizabeth Colwill's thesis that eighteenth-century "Europeans' sense of the superiority over the 'primitive' obtained not from cranial measurements but rather from an ethos of politeness and sociability linked to commerce and civilization itself," then Domingue certainly reveals his "superiority," given that he remains "polite" while using inflection to make his powerful point.[19] From my perspective, then, the novel does not put slavery under "sentimental erasure" but rather shows unmistakably that when characters cannot – or refuse to – respect an other's materiality and to see it infused with spirit, they perpetuate conditions that make enslavement possible.[20] For Carolyn Vellenga Berman, Bernardin "openly expected" *Paul et Virginie* to "produce immediate political effects";[21] in his 1789 "Avis sur cette édition," he explains that the episode portraying the freedom seeker could plead "*en faveur de la liberté des noirs*

[19] "Sex, Savagery, and Slavery in the Shaping of the French Body Politic," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth-and Eighteenth-Century France*, ed. Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 204.

[20] Neill, p. 43. Christopher L. Miller strongly argues that while Bernardin's "representation of . . . Domingue and Marie is dangerously close to his depiction of their dog," what would have "grabbed [readers'] attention was [his] daring exposé of the cruelty of slavery," the inclusion, that is, of the self-liberated woman. See *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 106.

[21] *Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 67. Bongie remarks that "the visions of cultural change and exchange that frequently surface in Bernardin's writings are in many ways remarkably 'advanced' for their time"; Bernardin's "hybridizing visions have at their core the scenario of interracial coupling" (p. 96). Roger Mercier affirms that "this brief episode in *Paul et Virginie* was powerful enough to cause reforms on the Ile de France, improving the lives of slaves." Quoted in Miller, p. 106; for original, see *L'Afrique noire dans la littérature française: Les Premières images (XVIIIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Dakar: Publications de la section de langues et littératures, 1962), pp. 170–171.

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before a public already disposed to break their irons" (Ehrard, p. 267).[22] Ultimately, this incident proposes that humans render any material being – whether human or nonhuman – contaminated matter when they cannot acknowledge that entity's multiple dimensions (having a soul and the capacity to love). In documenting the black woman's escape, her sentimental appeal for help, the children's journey to the Black River to return her, and the punishments the enslaver inflicts on her, this cameo, in its compressed form, confronts enslavement.

The enslaver, unable to connect to matter, adds sexual exploitation to his abusive commodification. When he promises to "pardon" this woman, he does so with "a dreadful oath, . . . not for the love of God but for love of her": By *her*, he means Virginie, and by "love" he in fact means that this child's beauty has aroused him sexually (*PV*, p. 52). In this instance, he can only apprehend Virginie's "beautiful blonde hair . . . [and] the softness of her voice" (*PV*, p. 52) as erotic matter. In the end, he releases his violence and sexual frustration in the retribution he enacts on the enslaved black woman. The heroine, after meeting this enslaver, sees his rage but does not initially recant her decision to return the woman to a man she herself finds horrifying. Thus, while the journey to the Black River leads to further dehumanizing of the woman, and while Virginie ultimately realizes her mistake, the experience functions only to intensify the protagonists' mutual love and to catalyze their later erotic attraction, rather than to spotlight enslavement's inherent corruption, or even to offer the heroine a template for what it means to send a human into captivity.[23] As a whole, the episode underlines that although the children belong with each other, Virginie has already internalized the notion that the female body is property, and that the enslaver sees all as material – black bodies as merely bodies to be tortured and children's bodies to be used for sexual gratification.

The enslaver's reaction to Virginie also anticipates the shattering consequences of her own awakening sensual desires and underscores that while the novel can overtly protest enslavement, it is yet held in thrall to women as spirit constantly under matter's threat. The heroine's unknown and

[22] Ehrard includes Bernardin's "Avis sur cette édition" in his edition of *Paul et Virginie*. Paradoxically, Bernardin writes, however, that Paul and Virginie's return of the "*négresse maronne*" was an act of "*vertu*" and "*bienfaisance*" ("charity") (p. 267). My translation.

[23] For Donovan, the enslaved woman "carries the burden of Virginia's sexuality" (Introduction, *PV*, p. 28); I suggest that Virginie carries the burden of her own sexuality insofar as it precipitates her exile from Mauritius. I see the enslaved woman and Virginie as both exploited, though the former suffers more horrifically.

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"strange ailment" ("*un mal inconnu*" [*PV*, p. 72; Ehrard, p. 157]) causes a crisis, though, in reality, it is nothing "evil" or "unknown" – but simply her transition to sexual maturity. This change reaches a climax when, one night, restless with desire and unable to sleep, she flings herself into the outdoor bath that Paul has built for her and sees "in the dim water, on her bare arms and on her breast, the reflection of the two palm-trees that were planted at her brother's birth and at her own, intertwining their green branches and their young coconuts above her head" (*PV*, p. 73). This astonishing passage interlaces body and spirit and human and nonhuman, since moonlight and tropical heat activate the trees, which manifest the children's hitherto spiritual connection, causing the vegetation to imprint themselves physically on her arms and breasts, working in tune with her own desires. Confused and thus frightened by the way this yearning interlaces the tactile and the emotional, the spiritual and the corporeal, the thing and the subject, she runs to her mother, who rejects her daughter's feelings, telling her instead that God gives her these desires to test her "today only to reward [her] tomorrow"; and that she must "hide" her affection from the man she loves (*PV*, pp. 74, 81), a dictum that necessarily undermines Virginie's materiality. In other words, because her desires, simply put, do not now belong with her mother's in this "Eden," she has no right to feel or express them.

Both the enslaver and the mother act out the same impulse to desecrate Virginie's sexuality. In *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, Lynn Hunt asks, "once the French had killed the king, who had been represented as the father of his people, what did they imagine themselves to be doing . . .?"[24] Though anachronistically, the novel's early editions pose a parallel question, for what does Madame de la Tour, part of a thriving matriarchal society, imagine herself to be doing when she divides her own daughter's body into warring parts? In this sense, Bernardin's plot embodies in condensed form the actual historical trajectory that occurs before and after its initial publication, since, like the Revolution, it defiles the new social contracts it is founded upon, enacting terrorism against its own inhabitants, and creating the grounds for the community's own self-immolation.[25] This mother's inability to see her daughter's body and embrace her sexuality echoes Virginie's inability to see the Maroon's

[24] *Family Romance*, p. 8.

[25] The novel's position vis-à-vis the Revolution is striking given that before 1788, the "expectation that a fundamental revolution was pending became positively commonplace." See Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, p. 25.

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abused body, though this is not a cause-and-effect relationship, since the Black River episode occurs first. Yet, both mother and daughter, in their respective ways, coerce another into turning her own eyes away from those longings for survival and joy, for human emancipation and for a spiritually infused, life-giving sexual union.

When Madame de la Tour "unlearns" the equipoise between steadiness and plasticity and collapses Virginie's multiple roles as daughter, sister, friend, and lover into one – a beautiful body that functions as a cash crop – she transforms her child into a being who must resist the reciprocity between body and spirit. This decision arises from Madame's growing distrust of the nonhuman that had previously sustained them (the goat milk, plants, and honeycomb). Such distrust and thus disconnection leads to the breakdown of the community's "immune system." From being confident that the families will have enough, she collapses into lack – "[w]hat would become of Virginia if I were to die and leave her without fortune?" To recall *Corinne*, Madame, forgetting to let her "whole being" be "moved by nature's power," becomes "distracted" by "society's arrangements" (*C*, p. 194). No longer present or attentive to human or nonhuman, she rekindles a toxic relationship (one she, herself, tried to escape), writing to her aunt to ask for money (*PV*, p. 49). Trying to remind her friend to trust the cycle of care Virginie nurtured wherein the human and nonhuman feed each other, the wiser Marguerite exclaims, "[w]hat need have we of your relations? . . . Have we not lived happily until now? Why do you vex yourself? Have you no courage?" (*PV*, p. 50).

Marguerite's call to "courage" could have reminded Madame de la Tour that ethical actions emerge, as Alaimo states, from an "uncomfortable and perplexing place where the 'human' is always already part of an active, often unpredictable, material world."[26] Reminiscent of Wendell Berry's "bafflement," which leads us "to our *real work*," Marguerite's bravery – like all survival – requires an ability to adapt physiologically and culturally.[27] Ellen Spolsky explains how flexible creatures are "more likely to survive the unpredictable events of a feckless environment . . .. The point is that the distinction we once thought so clear between biology and culture becomes fuzzy: what our evolved biology has apparently determined us to do is creatively to devise cultural means to provide a felicitous balance of stability and flexibility."[28] Madame de la Tour rejects the happiness

[26] Alaimo, p. 17. [27] Berry, p. 205.
[28] "Introduction," in *Iconotropism: Turning toward Pictures*, ed. Spolsky (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), p. 15.

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Marguerite experiences, loses conviction in belonging with the nonhuman, and falls back stubbornly on the very things – fortune and rank – that will lead to the very same tragedies she fears.

Eschewing *belonging with*, Madame de la Tour sees both black and white humans as her property. Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, studying American "slave-owning" women in the south, "understand[s] [their] fundamental relationship to slavery as a relation of property, a relation that was, above all, economic at its foundation"; she contends that "[t]he regime of slavery could not have been sustained if the power, authority, and violence that characterized it had belonged to elite white men alone."[29] Jones-Rogers's scholarship draws out Atlantic world contexts for me, since *Paul et Virginie* emphasizes that Madame de la Tour wages "authority and violence" against her children and the humans she has enslaved in the interest of property. For example, when she decides to prevent or at least postpone the hero and heroine's marriage, she orders Paul to travel to the West Indies to sell raw cotton so that he can purchase and profit from stolen labor, knowledge, and skills. I draw on another of Jones-Rogers's analyses of southern white women's powerful governance when she analyzes the term "mistress" in a way "that aligns . . . with its original meaning . . . in Western Europe," where a mistress was "'a woman who governs" a "subject or [a] servant.'"[30] This partially explains why the novel refers to *Madame* de la Tour only by her title, for in this family compound, she is both a widow and "*la maîtresse de maison*,"[31] the family's governor, that is. Thus, when Paul refuses her mandate, she asserts her authority by exiling her more biddable daughter to France to "earn" a family inheritance, an action indicating how fully she considers her daughter a possession and not a belonging.[32]

[29] *White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. ix, xii–xiii, 149.

[30] p. xv; Jones-Rogers quotes Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, explained in their different meanings, ... Abstracted from the folio edition, by the author, Samuel Johnson, A. M. To which is prefixed, A grammar of the English language*, vol. 2 (London: 1786), n.p.

[31] Definition of "Madame." See Définitions, *Larousse*. I italicize "Madame" to highlight the character's title, the counterpart to "mistress."

[32] Madame de la Tour shares the responsibility for this decision not only with La Bourdonnais, as Bongie shows, but also with a "colonial 'bureaucracy'" (p. 115), since, as the governor says, "your aunt has used her influence with the authorities to bring your daughter to France," and they have "instruct[ed] me to use the powers of my office if necessary" (*PV*, p. 78). This pressure is undeniable; however, if Madame had not written to her aunt or had allowed the couple to marry, even "*les bureaux*" could not have separated them.

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I argued that early in the novel, *Paul et Virginie* draws on vegetable gardening, gathering, and sharing to embody *belonging with*; now, performing the "Severing," the text employs clothes to execute a shift to possession. Initially, the family's home-spun apparel, gesturing toward their autonomous economy, revealed their ability to reduce their material desires and to keep their needs connected holistically to their environment's limits – they do not take more than they require. However, when Madame requires more than they need, Tonquin's pink taffetas and China's grass-green silks arrive to outfit Virginie for her voyage, foretelling the tragedy that will follow her exile from paradise to Paris. This fashion metamorphosis leads to a new social order, one manifesting discord between humans and the material world. Disembarking in their colony are India's "richest cloths," Gudalur's "splendid dimities," Dacca's embroidered muslins," Surat's "bafts of splendid whiteness," and China's "magnificent silken stuffs" (*PV*, p. 82).[33] Dressed up in such cloth, Virginie becomes a map of imperial conquests, embodying the possessions of countries and peoples, and advertising the colonies' burdens by "wearing" against her skin stolen labor; as Rauser explains, "[t]he abjection of the enslaved black body and the plantation culture it inhabited stalked neoclassical dress, which could not escape the material traces of its manufacture."[34] The heroine has been "reduced to [her] object-like qualities"[35] and so too have these fabrics been reduced to their person-like attributes – "splendid," "heavy," and "soft," but distanced from the colonized who have labored to create them.

In transforming Virginie into an object whose sexuality cannot belong with her love for Paul, and then dressing her according to her new market value, Madame de la Tour prepares Virginie for the gaze of the island's Old Man and for that of the "old nobleman," a Frenchman her aunt expects her to marry, and who, she says, "is much taken with my person" ("*qui a, dit-elle beaucoup de gout pour ma personne*") [*PV*, p. 93; Ehrard, p. 186]).

[33] Most of these geographical sites were or ultimately became colonies.

[34] Rauser, p. 139. Rauser explains that not only did cotton "pla[y] a vital role in the eighteenth-century slave trade, ... [f]inished cotton cloth was a desirable commodity in exchange for slaves in West Africa .... [D]uring the height of the cotton boom, nearly 30,000 slaves per year [were sent] to Saint-Domingue ... alone." Further, the descriptions of Virginie's new clothes would, in a different way, have allowed for cross-cultural interaction with English women, since "[t]he emergence of new illustrated fashion journals in London, Paris, and Weimar in the late 1790s cross-fertilized these innovations .... By 1800, the high-waisted white muslin dress was the orthodox style for women across Western Europe and the Americas" (pp. 139, 22).

[35] Daniel Miller, "Introduction," in *Materiality*, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 39.

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Admiring her body beneath its transparent gown, the narrator reveals his attraction to her as she wears these luxuries. Although "Virginia had always seemed charming to me in blue Bengal cloth and with a red handkerchief tied round her head," now, "arrayed like one of the ladies of this country, she made another sort of impression altogether":

> She was dressed in white muslin lined with pink taffeta. Her high and slender waist was perfectly outlined by her bodice ["*corset*"] .... Her fine blue eyes were full of melancholy and the passion she was struggling against in her heart gave a flush to her complexion and to her voice tones rich with emotion. Her elegant attire, which she seemed to have put on in spite of herself, contrasted with her languishment ["*langueur*"] and made it all the more affecting ["*touchante*"]. (*PV*, p. 83; Ehrard, pp. 172, 173)

Resisting such luxury, though at the "centre of a circle of radiation,"[36] she herself does not care if such fashion expands her orbit; she wears these possessions for others. Even her "melancholy" and "passion" no longer belong with her, but rather serve another's sensual pleasure in her body – visible beneath her "*corset*" – in her flushed complexion, and in her voice's resonant "pitch."[37] The narrator enjoys watching her "struggles," underscoring how "Virginie's virginity and goodness offer us the paradigm of the young woman as consumable object."[38] No longer recognizable, she is now a possession, wearing possessions; consequently, no one can listen to what the pink satin and white muslin say about their origins or about the fact that the heroine herself has been colonized, disconnecting her from her own physical body and reducing her to base materiality. She and her clothes do not belong with each other.

Her attire, expensive and lavish, bestows on her and on Paul sexualities that disenfranchise each from their hitherto harmonious companionship. Marguerite feels that her son, in loving Virginie, now "entertain[s] false hopes which only add to the bitterness of privation" since, as she now tells him for the first time, he is a "bastard" and thus nothing more than

[36] Simmel, *Simmel on Culture*, ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1997), p. 209.

[37] Rauser underscores that "[n]eoclassical dress is transparent," and that "[t]ransparency was so highly prized in neoclassical dress that some garments added even more transparent panels of netting to amplify the effect" (p. 65). Thus, Donovan's translation – her figure is "perfectly outlined by her bodice" – undermines the image's eroticism, given that the Old Man evidently sees Virginie's figure beneath her stays. Gutwirth translates this as "[h]er tall, lithe figure was perfectly visible beneath her stays." See *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 201. For links among luxury, sensuality, and pleasure see Woodruff D. Smith's *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600–1800* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 63–81.

[38] Gutwirth, *Twilight*, p. 201.

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certified by the conditions of his conception; Virginie, too, has become an abstraction, now formally referred to by Paul as "Mademoiselle," while her actual being has been discarded (*PV*, p. 83). Further, for the first time, they neither belong together, nor do they belong with each other. Lucas D. Introna contends that it is easy to move from a vantage in which things exist only for us to one in which humans themselves become objectified and thus lose the possibility for "simultaneous attunement," a state "in which humans and things . . . allow for a multiplicity of different ways of being to emerge"; and when that vanishes, things are waste that can be "dumped if broken."[39] Accordingly, when Madame disposes of her daughter, the space for "simultaneous attunement" has passed: Dressed up, Virginie jettisons herself as she herself has been jettisoned. In other words, the adults embrace what Bernardin critiques in his *Études* – the human tendency to "call everything worthless which [one] cannot immediately use" (*É*, p. 5).

In requiring Virginie to remain dressed rather than survive drowning, the novel transforms dynamic materiality into base corporeality. Sent back to Mauritius during hurricane season by her vengeful great-aunt when she will not make a profitable marriage, Virginie stands in a storm on the ship in sight of her family, forced either to disrobe or die. In electing the latter – in refusing to divest herself of gender "baggage" – she chooses death over life.

> Only one of the sailors had remained on deck . . .. He was completely naked and muscular as Hercules. We saw him approach Virginia with respect, throw himself down before her, and even do what he could to remove her clothes; but she, *turning away her eyes*, rejected with dignity his attempts to help her. At once the onlookers redoubled their cries: "Save her! Save her! Don't leave her!" (*PV*, p. 120; emphasis added)[40]

In *turning her eyes away* from his body – a corporality amplified by his Herculean masculinity – to meet "dignity's" demands, itself an abstraction which outstrips material-spiritual life force, Virginie turns away from a virtuous marriage with Paul to a construct of virtue. Even the "*spectateurs*" have overcome any gender prejudices as their cries "redouble." Conversely, Virginie has become "defenseles[s] against the demands of fashion" – the

[39] "Ethics and the Speaking of Things," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26.4 (2009): 25–46, p. 41.

[40] Scholars have surmised that "this scene was inspired by the real sinking of the *Saint-Géran* in 1744, when, so it is said, it was the captain who, not wishing to arrive naked on shore, refused to take off his clothes." See Lieve Spaas, "*Paul et Virginie*: The Shipwreck of an Idyll," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 13.2–3 (2001): 315–324, p. 322.

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fashion, that is, for false modesty.[41] Disrobing (one assumes down to her undergarments) would certainly reinforce that she is indeed made of matter and perhaps would spotlight a rousing sign of oneness. As Hunt argues, the "tension between dressing for difference and dressing for equality" seemed to sum up the *ancien régime* versus the revolution.[42] This idea's most extreme out-growth—one perhaps that reveals what underlies fear of the naked body – was the notion that "the nude pornographic scene made the basic materialist point that all bodies are alike."[43] Virginie does not have the right to be a body, let alone have one that is equal. In supposedly embracing spirit over matter and dignity over animality – which constitutes instead custom parodying religion and triumphing over reason – her drowning recalls her mother's rejection of Virginie as matter: her sexuality, that is. Elizabeth Grosz has stated that "[u]ntil . . . women's bodies are inscribed and lived (by the subject and by others) as a positivity, there will always remain paradoxes and upsetting implications from any notion of femininity."[44] As Virginie was instructed to turn her eyes away from Paul, so does she here turn away from life to fulfill an abstract "notion of femininity." This does not constitute virtuous behavior.

Abandoning matter leads to personal disintegration. Virginie remains subjugated rather than linked to the very things which she has agreed to wear while in bondage to an aristocratic system. Like Corinne, Virginie succumbs to death trying to cast off matter. When the Old Man finds her, however, he sees only her body, half buried in sand: "One of her hands was on her clothes; the other, pressed against her heart, was tightly closed and stiffened. I opened it with difficulty and took from its grasp a little box; but what was my surprise when I saw that it was Paul's portrait, which she had promised him never to part with" (*PV*, pp. 121–122). The objects she touches indicate the underlying dualism provoking her death: One hand lies upon her clothes, that is, upon custom, while the other holds the miniature, signifying her human love for Paul. These allegedly dueling loyalties prove to worship at the same fount, however, since the image does not depict Paul, though he resembles it, but St. Paul the Hermit, who,

[41] Louis Rose, "Freud and Fetishism: Previously Unpublished Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 57.2 (1988): 147–166, p. 156.

[42] "Freedom of Dress in Revolutionary France," in Melzer and Norberg, p. 229.

[43] Hunt, "Freedom of Dress," p. 235.

[44] *Volatile Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 73–74.

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unlike Virginie, was rewarded for wearing only "woven palm leaves."[45] Further, she tightly clenches the miniature, which could indicate her loyalty to her lover, but her "stiffened" hand also implies tradition's "rigor," which itself has obviated any choice she might have made between life and death.

The narrator concludes that Virginie would have been neither human nor virtuous if she had discarded her clothes and lived. Finding a positive outcome in her drowning, he blesses the young woman for having left her body – her *ekstasis* – given that if she had lived and married, he believes, she would have had to barter herself sexually for food, a repulsive inversion of Paul's loving acts of giving food to Virginie, which we encountered earlier. In a bizarre attempt to console Paul, he claims that the couple would have been unhappy once united, since their *inevitable* poverty would have led *inevitably* either to hunger or to Virginie having to "curry favour with" – that is seduce – the island's governor to "obtain some paltry relief"; and if not that scenario, her very "virtue" would have led to his "persecution" (*PV*, p. 128).[46] The dystopian future the narrator imagines, one which splits sexuality from virtue and virtue from survival, renders death preferable to an existence without a lot of possessions. Evidently at least one eighteenth-century British reader noticed this sentence because Helen Maria Williams's 1796 translation of *Paul et Virginie* excluded it and the paragraph itself. She explains in her Preface that she has "omitt[ed] several pages of general observations, which, however excellent in themselves, would be passed over with impatience by the English reader, when they interrupt the pathetic narrative."[47] More likely, her omission

[45] Charles Kingsley, "The Life of Saint Paul," in *The Hermits* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1891), pp. 86, 91.

[46] The Old Man's speech in its entirety here follows in French:

Que savez-vous si, dans une colonie qui change si souvent d'administrateurs, vous aurez souvent des la Bourdonnais ? S'il ne viendra pas ici des chefs sans mœurs et sans morale ? si, pour obtenir quelque misérable secours, votre épouse n'eût pas été obligée de leur faire sa cour ? Ou elle eût été faible, et vous eussiez été à plaindre ; ou elle eût été sage, et vous fussiez reste pauvre : heureux si, à cause de sa beauté et de sa vertu, vous n'eussiez pas été persécuté par ceux mêmes de qui vous espériez de la protection ! (Ehrard, p. 236)

As Ruth Thomas argues, the "essence of the [nineteenth-century French] novel "is the incompatibility between the real world and the ideal. ... But in the eighteenth century, this incompatibility is stated in purely sexual terms, with the real constraints placed on the woman's ideal." See "The Death of an Ideal: Female suicides in the Eighteenth-Century French Novel," in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Samia I. Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 329. I suggest that *Paul et Virginie*, published in 1788, fits both narratives.

[47] *Paul and Virginia*, trans. Helen Maria Williams (London: G. G. & J. Robinson, 1795), p. vi.

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anticipates the English reader's distaste when being asked to imagine the heroine prostituting herself for food.[48] The Old Man thus falls into a binary: Either Virginie "would have been weak and you much to be pitied, or she would have been honourable and you would have remained poor" (*PV*, p. 128). Ruth Thomas demonstrates how French eighteenth-century male authors insist "that chastity and fidelity, lying at the heart of the family and the community, ensured the stability of the entire social structure."[49] If the novel is trying to embody such an idea, it completely fails, since Virginie's relinquishment of life, speech, body, and subjectivity leads to a rippling impact that annihilates the family, exterminating the community as a whole.

Virginie's suicide – her physical divesture – precipitates the family's network collapse, the all-systems shutdown of a radiant, pulsating energetic field. As a result, much has been written to reconcile us to the heroine's dematerialization and the consequences it levies on her community. For example, Janine Rossard justifies Virginie's death on aesthetic grounds since "its mystery renews its poetic value";[50] for Dorothy Betz, "the children's discovery of passionate love" destroys the harmony in their community.[51] In an early essay, Malcolm Cook opines that her death, "a happy one, . . . please[s]" readers – "[s]he is transformed into light and will serve as an example to the darkness of human existence."[52] Clifton Cherpack locates an answer in mythic patterns: The "presence of death is so intense [in the novel] and the pessimism so pervasive" that it makes sense to situate it "in the wider perspectives" of the "Tristan myth" and the "myth of the hero."[53]

[48] For Gary Kelly, "*Paul et Virginie* portrays the edenic world as thoroughly feminized, not only lacking a central adult male presence but validating 'feminine' values of domesticity and philanthropy." *Women, Writing, and Revolution: 1790–1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 58. In contrast, I argue that patriarchy dominates, even in the female figure of Madame de la Tour.

[49] Ruth Thomas, p. 330.

[50] "La Mort mystérieuse de Virginie," *The French Review* 42.3 (1969): 409–418, p. 416.

[51] "Bernardin's *Paul et Virginie*," *Explicator* 53.3 (1995): 138–141, pp. 139–140.

[52] Malcolm C. Cook, "Harmony and Discord in *Paul et Virginie*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 3.3 (1991): 205–216, pp. 215, 216. However, in *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre* (2006), Cook instead argues that "the reading that sees Virginie as a tragic figure who is a victim of social prejudice is, in my view, one that underlines the political dimension of the novel, which . . . appeared in 1788–89" (p. 109). Karin Peters argues that "[t]he narration makes Virginie a martyr and reunites the virtuous *petite société* in heaven," though she concludes that the drowning "proves that the novel has literally come to a dead end, an ideological deadlock." See "Arcadia Goes Overseas: Pastoral and Planetary Consciousness in Bernardin de Saint Pierre's *Paul and Virginia*," in *Globalizing Literary Genres*, ed. Jernej Habjan and Fabienne Imlinger (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), p. 102.

[53] "*Paul et Virginie* and the Myths of Death," *PMLA* 90.2 (1975): 247–255, pp. 252, 253. See Henderson on Bernardin's "reject[ion] [of] the binaries which structure reason, '*l'opposition des*

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While the scholars I canvassed in the previous paragraph pardon Virginie's death on religious, mythic, or aesthetic grounds, from my perspective, her martyrdom, detached from pulsating matter, is outside the perimeters of what any social or familial ethical contract should demand.[54] Matter, now debased, must be expelled, because it has become one and only one thing: virtue's opposite.[55] And yet, as Spinoza asserts, "[t]he striving to preserve oneself is the first and only foundation of virtue"; to commit suicide is to be "conquered by external causes contrary to [one's] nature" – it is, in fact, to act without virtue (*Ethics*, IVP22COR; 4P18sii). Forced by "external causes" to "dress up" and stay dressed up, Virginie exposes how the community can no longer even try to embody a contract that strives to deepen what Gregory Bateson calls "circuit structure": Mark Lussier defines this notion as "the fundamental ecological relationship of mind and matter .... In this context, mind and matter exist, to fuse terms from David Hartley and Michael Faraday ... as a vibrating field comprised of interactive forces."[56] Virginie's drowning insists that moments before reaching land, marriage, and participation in "a vibrating field," she must repulse her so-called brutish spirits. Because Madame and Virginie's great-aunt successfully indoctrinate her – the former recommending spirit without body and the latter trumpeting body without spirit, but both governing for economic gain – the novel ends by thrusting its characters and readers into heart-stopping binaries that repudiate the possibility that spirit, sexuality, and virtue could coexist in any one woman. Bateson guides us to see that "when you separate mind from the structure in which it is immanent, such as human relationship, the human society, or the ecosystem, you thereby embark ... on a fundamental error, which in the end will surely hurt you."[57] Indeed, the hurting family members fall one by one, having broken down their contract for productive community: No longer can they, like plants, "twine together to withstand the hurricane" (*PV*, p. 65). Belonging with

contraires,' entities juxtaposed physically and chronologically" which contrast to the "harmonies which reveal the single '*vérité intellectuelle*,' the existence of God" (p. 309).

[54] Gutwirth wryly observes that "*Paul et Virginie* verifies the failure of human connection as surely as does Sade's *Justine*" (*Twilight*, p. 201).

[55] For Vallois, the novel's plot "turns upon a semantic conflict ... over the word 'virtue,'" one which "opposes the old man and Virginie"; this "conflict between two theories of language" leads to Virginie's demise ("Exotic Femininity," pp. 191, 192).

[56] Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 146; Lussier, "Self-Annihilation/Inner Revolution: Blake's *Milton*, Buddhism, and Ecocriticism," *Religion & Literature* 40.1 (2008): 39–57, p. 41.

[57] Bateson, p. 493.

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the nonhuman – and even the human – ultimately fails in *Paul et Virginie*, since there, if spirit must trump body, some*thing* must go, and in this novel that miserable material source is Virginie's body.

4.2 Retwining by Recycling *Paul et Virginie*

4.2.1 After-Literature

Regardless of perpetually causing misfortune, dualism has permeated Western culture, rendering it both a present condition and a powerful cultural memory that many Romantics, philosophers, and now thing theorists have challenged; this suggests that something more than an idealistic, sentimental fantasy drives the nonhuman and human to want to belong together. As Mieke Bal explains, "cultural recall," something "you actually *perform*," helps us "to mediate and modify difficult or tabooed moments of the past – moments that nonetheless impinge, sometimes fatally, on the present"; memorializing the past "rang[es] from conscious recall to unreflected reemergence, from nostalgic longing for what is lost to polemical use of the past to reshape the present."[58] In the next sections, I explore how readers, disturbed by Virginie's death, long for the lost, but also use "the past to reshape the present." Although *Paul et Virginie* divests its characters' belonging with the nonhuman and human world, future writers and artists try in varying ways to amend this imbalance: Striving to heal, so to speak, the novel's disastrous finale, they reenvision its ending as happy. Rather than indicating an intolerance to tragedy, this seems to me a revolt against the novel's ultimate endorsement of dualisms between body and spirit and human and nonhuman so entrenched that neither reason nor love – parental, fraternal, or romantic – could heal it.[59]

Here I turn to three literary works – *The Ruined Cottage*, *Belinda*, and *Bélinde* – as well to some paintings, watercolors, a fan, textiles, and plates that all recycle characters and episodes from *Paul et Virginie*. Their

[58] "Introduction," *Acts of Memory*, p. vii.

[59] Other writers have discussed those who transform the novel's ending into a happy resolution: two examples include James Cobb's *Paul and Virginia: A Musical Drama* (1801), which is, for Mortensen, "Anti-Jacobinism's most brazen co-optation" of the novel (p. 106). Alliston shows how George Sand "rehabilitate[s] Bernardin's pair of child-lovers in the tropics and allow[s] them, at the ending of *Indiana*, to live out the fantasy of adult sexual sympathetic community." See "Transnational Sympathies, Imaginary Communities," in *The Literary Channel: The Inter-national Invention of the Novel*, ed. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 141.

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refabrications resemble one of recycling's oldest and most congenial forms, architectural salvage. As *Corinne* explains, "a portico standing beside a humble roof, columns between which little church windows have been inserted, a tomb used as a shelter for a whole peasant family, produce an indescribable mixture of great and simple ideas, an indescribable pleasure of discovery" (*C*, p. 64). That recycling matter creates democratic and enjoyable energies inspires my own thoughts. *Paul et Virginie* recyclings stimulate "perpetual interest" insofar as they testify to desires to reembody the novel's crisis of materiality. These texts and artworks, which I refer to as "after-things" (and to be more specific, after-literature and after-art) resuscitate and rematerialize Bernardin's hero and heroine.[60] Such cross-cultural recyclings stimulate conversations between and among multiple novels and two nations, conjoin literary things with readings of the narratives, and historicize embodiment while simultaneously unfolding the influential effects these precipitate in each text. I suggest that this English after-poem and novel are looking to *reembody* Paul, Virginie, and the environment they inhabit and thus to link more closely the human and nonhuman, while Ségur's French translation, *Bélinde*, reverses that move, reinforcing separation.

4.2.1.1 The Ruined Cottage

Wordsworth excavates Bernardin's novel, rendering it the "archaeological" pre-history to *The Ruined Cottage*: In this, the poet emphasizes connection with the material world.[61] Recycling the novel's insistence on separation into a renewal of connection, he establishes the kinds of interactions Bernardin's strawberry plant and its occupants experience. Striking parallels between this French novel and *The Ruined Cottage* materialize, though I have found only one other scholar, Nelson Adkins, who has noted the similarities. His point, though, is that the two texts share the same values: "a delight in the helpless, bright-eyed child" and "a sermon in the

[60] Julie Park makes a point pertinent to my argument that *Paul et Virginie* as a book becomes a material thing to be transmuted, when she writes that "[i]n its own status as a 'new' literary form that turned the experience of life into a curiously lifelike object of psychological and circumstantial plausibility, the novel shared a vital relationship with other objects of market culture positing subjectivity" (p. xix).

[61] Charles Rzepka argues that in "The Thorn," Wordsworth reveals himself as "our first truly archaeological poet, the first to take seriously the notion of 'pre-history' as a mode of encountering the material world in the present, and not just a way of designating a material world that pre-dates written records." See "From Relics to Remains: Wordsworth's 'The Thorn' and the Emergence of Secular History," *Romanticism on the Net* 31 (2003): n.p.

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rain-washed stone . . .,"[62] while I suggest that Wordsworth recycles it to contemplate and revise *Paul et Virginie*'s values. Parallels abound. Each work's characters (two them share the same name) face mirrored circumstances: The poem's Robert and Margaret perish in exile or self-imposed banishment, and the novel's characters – Virginie, Marguerite, Madame de la Tour, and Paul die self-imposed deaths. Both Wordsworth's Pedlar (Armytage) and Bernardin's Old Man must each cope with losing a young woman they cared for, women who, effectually, bring on their own deaths – though with ample help from gender ideologies, colonial violence, war, and class injustice. Structurally, both texts open with a young and solitary male traveler who, after coming upon a ruined cottage – or, in the novel's case, "*les ruines de deux petites maisons*"[63] – encounters an older man, who narrates the story behind these remains. This section concentrates on the characters' different reactions in each text to grief and separation, parsing how Armytage and Bernardin's younger visitor find redemption in loss through belonging with things, in contrast to the novel's Old Man, who disconnects himself from both the human and the nonhuman, spurning an ecosystem that remains and positing nature as mourning its own destruction.

Bernardin's young, unnamed visitor meditates upon the grief in these ruins as Wordsworth's Armytage does, finding a belonging with nature that offers consolation. *Paul et Virginie*'s visitor, gazing on the ruined cabins, reflects on how "a profound silence reigns: all is tranquil, the air, the waters and the light. The echo barely repeats the whispering of the palmettos that grow on the high rock shelves, their *long spears* swaying constantly in the wind" (*PV*, pp. 39–40; emphasis added). When *The Ruined Cottage* invokes tranquility and the high spear grass, it recycles the novel's winds whispering among the palm's "*longues flèches*" (Ehrard, p. 110). These things from Bernardin's novel play centrally in the Pedlar's consoling philosophy.

> I well remember that those very plumes,
> Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,
> By mist and silent rain-drops silver'd o'er,
> As once I passed did to my heart convey
> So still an image of tranquility,
> So calm and still, and looked so beautiful

[62] "Wordsworth's *Margaret; Or the Ruined Cottage*," *Modern Language* Notes 38.8 (1923; italics original in title): 460–466, p. 461.

[63] Ehrard, p. 318, note 2; he quotes this from MS. Bibliothèque Victor Cousin. Later the cottages are referred to as cabins (*PV*, p. 39).

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Amid the uneasy thought which filled my mind,
That what we feel of sorrow and despair
From ruin and from change, and all the grief
The passing shews of being leave behind,
Appeared an idle dream that could not live
Where meditation was.

(*RC*, ll. 513–524)[64]

The very difference between how the Pedlar feels and what the spear grass looks like enables him to endure Margaret's death. And the very ability, as I will show throughout this discussion, connecting with matter strengthens that endurance since though the spear grass is "still," the forces of mist and rain recycle it into a "silver'd o'er" living substance; noticing this movement helps move the brain and heart from rigidity. Thus, Armytage describes how he (as Corinne urges Oswald to do) reanimates his relationship with his own being by turning kinesthetically toward this luminescent matter.[65] This *moving toward* – this decision to "leave behind . . . an idle dream," the dream that one should forever mourn – offers the possibility of belonging with matter's radiant energies, for they retain life force even while individuals grieve. Such a *model* proposes an opportunity for belonging with the nonhuman and the means by which one could return to reality – even in unspeakable moments of "sorrow and despair" – by resuscitating one's own vitality.[66] This is not a symbiosis, however, since he contemplates how these nonhuman things are both connected to but different from him and how, in order to remain living and thriving, though Margaret suffered, he must withdraw not from her but from fusing entirely with grief.[67] The Pedlar thus reminds readers how difficult it is *not* to burden things or ourselves with our own grief, but that we should at least try, and, in trying, we make an ethical choice, thereby rendering

[64] I use MS. D for my analysis. Jared Curtis's headnote says this version revises the 1798 one (MS. B) and includes "material dating from 1799, 1801–1802, and – possibly – 1809–1812."

[65] In contrast, see Douglas Berman: The poem depicts nature "in two different ways: first, as destroyer of life, of Margaret's garden and, by extension, of her life, but also as a posited eternal nature, a nature of rebirth, as envisioned at the end of the poem by the Pedlar." I see the poem presenting nature as both simultaneously. See "Reading Wordsworth with Hegel and Deleuze," *Comparative Literature and Culture* 14.5 (2012): 1–8, p. 7.

[66] Potkay persuasively argues that "[i]nstead of anthropomorphizing things, Wordsworth here moves toward 'thingicizing' ethics. That is, his ethics of things is grounded in the nature of things, and, more particularly, in the claims to (our) conscious attention made by natural things" (p. 401).

[67] I admire Zoe Beenstock's argument that Wordsworth presents "withdrawal as necessary for understanding" Margaret's pain, since a "direct encounter" with that suffering would constitute "a voyeuristic 'feeding on disquiet.'" See "Reforming Utilitarianism: Lyric Poetry in J. S. Mill's "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 81.4 (2020): 599–620, p. 602.

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belonging with possible. Continuing the Spinozian thread I have woven through this book, Armytage chooses life and thus virtue. This passage echoes Corinne's endorsement of "festive" death, an ability to sustain one's *élan vital*, though bereavement seeks unbending domination.

Wordsworth's recyclings of Bernardin's novel suggest that the Old Man's bitter rupture from nature and others provides an instance of incommensurability in *The Ruined Cottage*. Accidentally meeting the young visitor where the ruined cabins recline, the Old Man reveals his disaffection, for he refuses the consolation which a connection to things offers. Instead, he mourns the ruins and memories that persist, seeing them as vindictive: "yet still, alas! Only too much remains for my memory to work upon. Time, which so quickly destroys the monuments of empires, seems in this wilderness to spare those of friendship and thus to perpetuate my sorrows to the end of my days"; this elderly storyteller, in fact, fractures the "profound silence" and the scene's tranquility (*PV*, pp. 43–44, 39–40) by defining nature as a punisher, one that has permanently destroyed and abandoned the plot's – and his own – vitality. The patriarch claims that nature's "things," both human and nonhuman, have departed from the place and no longer interact with it since, after the family's death, no one "has dared to till this desolate ground or rebuild these humble cabins. Your goats have run wild, your orchards are destroyed, your birds have fled" (*PV*, p. 136). Even worse, he imagines nature here as torturing itself by sending only prey-seeking creatures to the spot: "[N]othing can be heard but the cries of the sparrow-hawks as they circle high above this rocky valley" (*PV*, p. 136). The Old Man's hopelessness steers him to assume that nature has come to have a "psychoterratic dis-ease" – a negative relationship, that is, with itself.[68] Such an anthropocentricism suggests that human death leads to nature's own expiration, a point Wordsworth refutes.

Wordsworth's reformulation of the novel's binaries into a more holistic comradery between the human and the nonhuman supplies a contrast to what an alienating outlook – as embodied in Bernardin's elderly colonialist – looks like, and, in doing so, the poem calls attention to social injustice. That is, his recycling of *Paul et Virginie* furnishes a rebuttal to some New Historicist readings of this poem, which argue that its emphasis

[68] Glen A. Albrecht, "Psychoterratic and Somaterratic Health and Dis-ease," July 20, 2018, https://glennaalbrecht.com/2018/07/20/psychoterratic-and-somaterratic-health-and-dis-ease/

He describes psychoterratic dis-ease as arising "from a negative relationship to our home environment, be it at local, regional or global scales," one that triggers a "decline in well-being" (n.p.).

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on spirituality, or beauty, or consolation displaces from view the all-too-real and horrible material conditions of the Romantic-era wars, industrialization, and deforestation, just to name a few. My point is that Wordsworth finds in Bernardin's Old Man the human–nonhuman alienation that some scholars have discovered in the poet's own thinking, especially as manifested in *The Ruined Cottage*.[69]

Emphasizing human–nonhuman connections, Bernardin's young rambler and Armytage advocate for a productive coexistence, one that inspires belonging with what is gone, what is mourned, and what lives. The poem helps us hear how sound fills the space beneath the "shade / Of clustering elms" as the warbling linnet, the singing thrush, and "other melodies . . . peopled the milder air" (*RC*, ll. 29–30, 531–533) – the "peopled" here suggesting that the birds' descants populate a spectrum with human song. Likewise, *Paul et Virginie*'s young traveler "loved to visit this place where I could enjoy at once a boundless view and the deepest solitude" (*PV*, p. 40) – that is, he strives for an inner and outer attunement. Both he and Armytage tap, as it were, into an ecological unconscious to strengthen belonging, which is necessary for ethical mourning. To recover from grief, there must be, as Corinne says, more than just a singular "me" or "you": Grief cannot "absorb every other interest and every other thought" (*C*, p. 89). And to accomplish that, one must cultivate a physical, sensuous knowledge of the thinginess of things. Doing so, prevents one, Armytage says, from reading "[t]he forms of things with an unworthy eye" (*RC*, ll. 508–512) – reading them, that is, as abstractions or only as subjective signs. A turn toward the nonhuman, Wordsworth's thing theory urges sufferers to imprint how connecting to materiality could help them participate more actively and less statically – as when paralyzed by sorrow – in the world.

Things remind us that humans should not let grief immobilize them (as with *Paul et Virginie*'s Old Man), but rather that they should work actively to observe and move toward the world's living things. Armytage, who neither descends into a trance-like state to protect himself from pain nor

[69] For example, see Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology*: *A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Conversely, see Jonathan Bate's ecocritical reading: *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge Revivals, 2013), p. 4; Morton offers a compelling interpretation: "Instead of embedding the narrator in an othered war, *The Ruined Cottage* embeds the war in our experience of reading. In its very tranquility, it is one of the most powerful antiwar poems ever written." See *Ecology without Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 147.

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disregards the material conditions causing Margaret's demise, emphasizes such movement:

> The unprofitable bindweed *spread* his bells
> From side to side and with unwieldy wreaths
> Had *dragg'd* the rose from its sustaining wall
> And bent it down to earth; the border-tufts—
> Daisy and thrift and lowly camomile,
> And thyme—had *straggled* out into the paths
> Which they were used to deck.
>
> (*RC*, ll. 314–320; emphasis added)

As previous chapters have shown, things make other things move, compel them to spread, drag, bend, and straggle, and while these images could be read allegorically as the forces that destroy Margaret – a "rose" herself – this would be only half of the story since the Pedlar's elemental details intimately link, from the ecosystem's perspective, human–nonhuman outcomes.[70] That is, nature's vibrancy offers an *aide-mémoire* of matter's therapeutic movements; thus, although the bindweed's transgressive materiality is "unprofitable" from the gardener's viewpoint, it continues to stride, in its own way, toward *belonging with*; further, the Pedlar's attentiveness to its "bells" reveals his own striving to "move toward" since his intense sensory alertness to sonic and visual energies persists, though Margaret could not. This awareness keeps him belonging with the world.

The poem suggests that sorrow cannot be appeased until it is recognized and that attention to matter generates this restorative process:

> When I stooped to drink,
> A spider's web hung to the water's edge,
> And on the wet and slimy foot-stone lay
> The useless fragment of a wooden bowl;
> It moved my very heart
>
> (*RC*, ll. 88–92)

This passage recalls the "festive" death in life we saw in *Corinne*'s Pantheon. Together, the bowl and the web signal nature's (and

[70] Paul D. Sheats argues that in this passage "particulars map two forces, natural and human, which exhibit roughly opposite physical vectors, centripetal and centrifugal with respect to the cottage"; the Pedlar, he continues, measures these forces "in terms of motion: the advance of a daisy beyond its appointed border registers not only its continued vitality, but the failure of the force that had opposed it" – Margaret, that is. For my purposes, these "particulars" do not present in opposing "vectors." See "Cultivating Margaret's Garden: Wordsworthian 'Nature' and the Quest for Historical 'Difference,'" in *Placing and Displacing Romanticism*, ed. Peter J. Kitson (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), p. 25.

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correlatively humans') ongoing need for nourishment since the arachnid builds a silk trap for its survival, and while new vegetation renders the footstone "slimy," its slickness intimates its liveliness, though human feet no longer walk on it. The wooden bowl has "moved" his heart, as Virginie's coconut-shell (which Wordsworth here recycles) moved Paul. And like Paul, who feels his lover's energies lingering on her cup, the flora and fauna still sense the vigor with which Margaret infused this bowl, though it is broken and though she is no longer there to drink from it. Her vitality resonates in the fragment (as we saw in *Corinne*'s classical statues), and this thing, in turn, drives its own animation by housing other organic creatures. When we hear that the dish is "useless," these words project human thought onto things, while simultaneously revealing how the nonhuman accomplishes its own work as it recycles what exists for its own purposes. That is, the bowl still *belongs*.[71] The poem, aware of these things' thinginess, returns us to social reality rather than displacing it, for that bowl, juxtaposed to the spider's feeding trap, recalls the family's hunger and, since it is emblematic of meal sharing, the breakdown of kinship and community. Margaret imprinted herself in that bowl, and now nature does the same, though nature (and the Pedlar) alone retain the *conatus* – the striving – that Margaret so desperately tried sustaining while poverty-stricken and abandoned.[72] Armytage, eschewing abstractions and returning to matter, shows how, after disaster, he can find consolation in the knowledge that we exist on the same continuum as these earthly things and that the dead reside as well in this orbit, even though they (and things themselves) remain mysterious, given that humans endure loss while the earth remains "calm, . . . and peace is here" (*RC*, l. 512).

The Ruined Cottage ends peacefully while *Paul et Virginie* concludes with every family member dying, and the only remaining survivor, Bernardin's Old Man, celebrating estrangement; in this he remains in

[71] Ron Broglio's *Beasts of Burden: Biopolitics, Labor, and Animal Life in British Romanticism* (New York: SUNY University Press, 2017) argues instead that Wordsworth offers "an ecology apart from humans" (pp. 131, 129–130) and Jacques Khalip puts the bowl in the category of the "rubbishy, irreparable *ready-unmades* that block any kind of recuperating interpretation." See "The Ruin of Things," *Romantic Frictions*, ed. Theresa Kelley, *Romantic Circles* (September 2011), para. 16. https://webarchive.loc.gov/all/20200209034433/https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/disaster/index.html

[72] I see a recognitional "ministering" here. And although I argue in Chapter 5 that nonrecognition can provide a method of self-ministering for women, here I would say that the Pedlar's form of recognition differs dramatically from the kind humans generally offer. Khalip argues that the "thingification" of Margaret arises from "refusal of identification, a refusal of the viral nature of sympathetic co-existence" and that, in so doing, the poem forms "a different kind of non-recognitional 'ministering'" ("The Ruin of Things," para. 15).

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keeping with the novel's adhesion to separation: Madame de la Tour uncouples Virginie and Paul, and Virginie severs herself from life itself. The Old Man's punishing agitation drives him into discord, and he contends that "[d]eath is a blessing for all men" (*PV*, p. 130). Here he experiences "solastalgia," the grief felt when humans recognize that their beloved home and sense of place can no longer provide solace but is instead "under immediate assault" and subject to "physical desolation"; causing mental and physical distress, his solastalgia does not, however – as it sometimes can – lead to "a strong desire to sustain those things that provide solace" and become "future oriented."[73] Instead, he chooses everlasting melancholy and dis-ease, while the Pedlar chooses to "wal[k] along my road in happiness" (*RC*, l. 525). Because the Old Man sees only disconnection, withdrawing from the young visitor, he nurtures misery, feeling "like a friend bereft of friends, . . . shedding tears," bemoaning his losses, and experiencing anguish like "a father who has lost his children, . . . a traveler left to wander over the earth alone" (*PV*, pp. 136–137). Like Oswald and ultimately Corinne, the Old Man cannot belong with either the human or the nonhuman. Wordsworth preserves Bernardin's visitor, but recycles him into his main character, Armytage, whose lesson teaches concord with rather than resentment toward the natural world – an affective state which, to return to Spinoza, helps diminish wretchedness as opposed to increasing it; logically, then, the poem can close with union rather than rupture, the two friends meditating on "that low bench" and then retiring together to "a rustic inn" (*RC*, ll. 529, 538). Wordsworth's thing theory, like *Corinne*'s, prefers *belonging with*, and, in doing so, illuminates the destructive consequences of separating the part from the whole.

4.2.1.2 Belinda *and* Bélinde

Many scholars have pointed to *Belinda*'s inclusion of *Paul et Virginie*'s plot and characters, and most have addressed how Edgeworth incorporates it to criticize Rousseau's impact on female gender roles.[74] Others, such as

[73] Etymologically, the term "solastalgia," which means "pain, suffering or sickness," originates in "the concepts of 'solace,' 'desolation,' and 'algia.'" See Albrecht, who coined the term: "'Solastalgia': A New Concept in Health and Identity," *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature* 3 (2005): 44–59, pp. 48, 49.

[74] Kilfeather claims that the subplot "satirizes the notion that an ideal woman is formed in ignorance of the world," a point I concur with. See "Introductory Note," vol. 2, p. xxvii. For Colin Atkinson and Jo Atkinson, the plot of *Paul et Virginie* shows "that the Rousseauian argument for preserving the 'natural' innocence and ignorance of women is absurd in a practical world." See "Maria

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Isabelle Bour, argue that Edgeworth uses Bernardin's novel to "parody" French sentimental fiction, that "she projected a negative image of France in *Belinda* through the character of the woman of fashion, Lady Delacour . . ., and that "the inset story of Virginia St. Pierre" is only "loosely related" to *Paul et Virginie* itself.[75] In contrast, I hope to show that *Belinda* recycles Bernardin's novel so as to address the positive benefits of female materiality, and that it is Lady Delacour's French wit and conversational prowess that partially keeps her from being a "pattern woman." Further, while not addressing Rousseau's philosophies, I do focus on gender expectations in relation to female physicality and women's relationships with the nonhuman to provide evidence that *Belinda* diverges from Rousseau in that she claims for women a virtuous sexuality. Edgeworth's novel "rematters" Bernardin's.

Although Hervey initially attempts to educate Virginia to be his perfect – that is, dematerialized – wife, Edgeworth ultimately liberates her physically as well as freeing her from his machinations. *Belinda* first enacts this "remattering" by recorporealizing Virginie de la Tour such that its own Virginia St. Pierre (whose real name is Rachel) lives a full, carnal existence, and second by drawing on specific things – a miniature portrait and the book *Paul et Virginie* itself – so as to renounce, as Wordsworth does, that French novel's estrangements.[76] The miniature portrait, Edgeworth's source object from *Paul et Virginie*, both endorses *belonging with* between human and thing and a human separation from materiality. Though depicting St. Paul the Hermit, it looks like Paul, since his mother, while pregnant, had "contemplate[ed]" it so profoundly and so constantly, that "the baby in her womb had acquired some resemblance to it"

Edgeworth, *Belinda* and Women's Rights," *Eire/Ireland* 19.4 (1984): 94–118, p. 115. Laura Kirkley argues that the subplot responds "to the intersecting issues of French cultural politics, Rousseauvian sentimental philosophy, and women's rights." See "Translating Rousseauism: Transformations of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* in the Works of Helen Maria Williams and Maria Edgeworth," *Readers, Writers, Salonnières: Female Networks in Europe, 1700–1900*, ed. Hilary Brown and Gillian Dow (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), p. 96. In "Control Experiment: Edgeworth's Critique of Rousseau's Educational Theory," *An Uncomfortable Authority: Maria Edgeworth and Her Contexts*, ed. Heidi Kaufman and Chris Fauske (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), Catherine Toal reads the Virginia plot as "a version of *Practical Education*'s conception of development"; and though it "mocks the gender politics of *Émile* . . . [,] *Belinda*'s intricate narrative strategies attest [that] the forms of control to which the Edgeworthian system resorts are no less calculated and complex than those for which it criticizes Rousseau" (pp. 226, 228).

[75] Bour, pp. 40, 38.

[76] Andrew McCann says this well: "Hervey's pedagogical scheme . . . is also an emphatic denial of Virginia's liberty and autonomy." See "See Conjugal Love and the Enlightenment Subject: The Colonial Context of Non-identity in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 30.1 (1996): 65–77, p. 72.

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(*PV*, p. 75).[77] Here humans and things share agential power, since Marguerite and the miniature have so belonged with each other that they have triggered epigenetic changes in Paul. However, when Virginie, departing for France, asks Paul to give it to her, "the only thing in the world that [he] possessed" (*PV*, p. 75), we are reminded that desire for possession is catching. This, the first time she has required property, is evidently a habit newly learned from her mother, who, considering her as property to be disposed of for profit, exiles her. And yet, in giving the portrait to Virginie wholeheartedly and expecting nothing in return, Paul transforms it into a belonging; and when she blushes when asking for and receiving the miniature, she somatically manifests her desire for Paul. He responds in kind, trying to "embrace her," but she runs away, "light as a bird" (*PV*, p. 76), persuaded she has no *right* to think of her body as her own or as one she could share with Paul.

In contrast, Edgeworth fleshes out this miniature, "re-mattering" it and magnifying its narrative prominence by rendering Virginia's encounter with it as animated as that between humans. She does so by creating for her Virginia a miniature of a man the character has never met, Captain Paul Sunderland, but about whom she secretly worships and dreams. Melinda Rabb notably recognizes that "the phenomenon of scaling objects down … has a relationship to large-scale events (as large as financial revolution, war, globalization, and natural disaster) that challenge old modes of representation and demand new ones."[78] In *Belinda*, the "large-scale events" presented in miniature signal the wide-ranging impacts of gender norms and highlight women's right to command their own choices. That is, seeing the portrait as a belonging, this English heroine does not differentiate between the emotions she feels toward the man in the miniature and the nonhuman portrait itself. *Belinda* manifests this since there the thing has a potent agency: When Virginia's grandmother first "catches" her with the portrait a well-meaning neighbor has given her, she seizes it, fearful that "the girl could be run away with by a picture," to which her neighbor quips, "as if a picture had any sense to hurt a body"

[77] "*Il était même arrivé qu'étant enceinte de lui, et délaissée de tout le monde, à force de contempler l'image de ce bienheureux solitaire, son fruit en avait contracté quelque ressemblance*" (Ehrard, p. 162).

[78] *Miniature and the English Imagination*, pp. 3–4. Also see my work on miniatures in *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions*, where I argue that in *Sense and Sensibility*, "sentimentalized and sexualized miniature objects both insist on and diminish a stable sense of identity"; they create tension between their naturalistic presentations and their emphasis on privacy – for example, "miniatures that illustrated only one eye both confided and withheld clues about the subject's identity"; and "third, these objects embody the characters' subjectivity, often hypostatizing their personal desires and fears" (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 30, 31, 33.

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(*B*, p. 369). And yet the miniature's presence in Edgeworth's novel multiply underscores not just this possibility, but its inverse – the thing's capacity to benefit the characters.[79] Nonhuman effervescence leads Virginie's miniature, recycled in *Belinda*, to impact the human. While for Jennie Batchelor, Hervey, in casting himself and Rachel in Bernardin's romance, "[b]ind[s] both characters to a fiction from which they cannot extricate themselves," I claim that Virginia's interactions with the book and miniature actually emancipate them both from this romantic "fiction."[80]

By sexually agitating and educating Virginia, Bernardin's novel and the miniature therein keep *Belinda*'s subplot spinning. Thus, I interpret Virginia's reading as one that activates self-knowledge, rather than as Edgeworth's critique of the deleterious effects of some kinds of novels.[81] Bal explains that the relationship between a text and an embedded fabula can be particularly "intense" when the latter is "presented only in part."[82] Indeed, parts of *Paul et Virginie*, woven into *Belinda*, heat up the novel when Virginia reads her quasi-biography, which Edgeworth quotes from Daniel Malthus's translation of *Paul et Virginie*, specifically, the scene wherein the heroine feels sexual passion for Paul as she bathes in the bower:[83]

> She thought of Paul's friendship, more pure than the waters of the fountain, stronger than the united palms, and sweeter than the perfume of flowers; and these images, in night and in solitude, gave double force to the passion,

[79] Malcolm Cook argues insightfully that characters in eighteenth-century novels use miniatures to explore "the nature of imitation." See "Portraits in Eighteenth-Century French Fiction," *Australian Journal of French Studies* 35.2 (1998): 141–155, p. 143. While Egenolf discusses portraits in *Belinda* in great depth, arguing that these "yield new sets of messages as new discourse situations are generated" (p. 76), she does not discuss the miniature of Paul Sunderland or that belonging to Paul in Bernardin's novel.

[80] See *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York, 2005), p. 159.

[81] In contrast, see Marie McAllister, who describes Rachel as "addict[ed] to romance novels" (p. 315). In "Lady Delacour's Library: Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and Fashionable Reading," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 48.4 (1994): 423–439, Heather MacFadyen finds that Virginia's "unsupervised novel reading overstimulates her adolescent sexual yearnings" and that "fashionable reading and the trope of female reading present women's reading as a breach of domestic femininity" (p. 428). McCann argues that "Virginia's . . . interest in gothic and sentimental texts, . . . encourage[s] both ennui and an over-active fantasy life" (p. 72).

[82] *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2009), p. 60.

[83] Malthus's translation abridges Bernardin's novel and retitles it as *Paul and Mary: An Indian Story* (London: J. Dodsley, 1789).

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> which she nourished in her heart. She suddenly left the dangerous shades, and went to her mother, to seek protection against herself. (*Paul and Mary*, quoted in *B*, p. 381)[84]

Malthus's translation expurgates words and passages, making his translation less physically amatory than the French original, or even than other translations, by occluding the original's steamy and burning water imagery. For example, Malthus excises how, in Donovan's translation, Bernardin's Virginie "is possessed with a consuming fire" ("*un feu dévorant la saisit*"), and how the bower's waters "burn hotter than the sun" ("*eaux plus brûlantes que les soleils*" [*PV*, p. 74; Ehrard, p. 160]). Nevertheless, by quoting this scene, *Belinda* floodlights the amatory feelings Rachel-Virginia has for her miniature-man and emphasizes her ability to let a thing potently captivate her psyche. Conversely, our French Virginie must ultimately numb herself to all stimuli. Rabb asks the important question: "How are gendered assumptions about the small and delicate as feminine contradicted or reinforced by miniatures?"[85] Certainly, Virginia's small picture takes on sublime proportions in her life.

Virginia identifies with Virginie, and the book and the miniature redux in *Belinda* enable her to clarify her own desires. What she learns by embracing her new name and character is that Bernardin's heroine knows who she loves, a knowledge that, in turn, teaches Rachel-Virginia that she is not in love with Hervey.[86] Bernardin's novel, thus, functions as a highly useful thing for helping Virginia recognize the feelings she has for Sunderland and his portrait and to differentiate those emotions from her affection for Clarence: She doesn't love him *that* way. With energy and conviction uncharacteristic of her, Virginia assures Mrs. Ormond that "of this I am certain, that I had not the name [Clarence], which you were thinking of, upon my lips" (*B*, p. 381).[87] The human and nonhuman work contiguously here since the miniature offers Virginia an initiation into love

[84] Malthus, p. 130. [85] Rabb, p. 14.

[86] In contrast, Britton argues that Virginia "struggles to articulate an identity independent of the name and image with which she has been forcibly identified" (p. 443).

[87] Although Stephanie Insley Hershinow does not discuss the authors I do, her remarks on *Clarissa*'s heroine are applicable to Edgeworth's Rachel-Virginia: Readers generally pity or condemn the latter as too naïve, as too much of a "novice," to use Hershinow's language. Yet Rachel-Virginia's very innocence, as Hershinow argues about Clarissa's, helps sustain her. Through her intuition, her eurythmic connection to things (the miniature), and her moral sense of what is right (that she loves Paul, the man in the miniature, more than Hervey) Rachel-Virginia is able to resist the pressure to deny her feelings and, in resisting, she becomes "a moral exemplar" (to use Hershinow's phrase) who helps make her own and Belinda's companionate marriages ethically possible. See *Born Yesterday: Inexperience and the Early Realist Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), p. 59.

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as complete as if she had met the man himself. *Paul et Virginie*, folded inextricably into *Belinda* as an amatory manual and self-help guide, first for Clarence and then for Virginia, becomes an uncanny "neighbor" that seduces both characters, though it does not lead them to love each other, a fact which renders their "proximity" rather "traumatic."[88]

The miniature constitutes more than an abstraction for Virginia, for its image seeps into her dreams, where she says, "it speaks to me" (*B*, p. 383). *Belinda* thereby celebrates materiality by addressing Virginia's passion as frankly as was possible and by demonstrating how fruitless it is to wrest a woman's desires from her and thereby empty out half her being. Allegedly the "purest" and most "transparent" woman in *Belinda*, Virginia in fact nurtures secret and erotic longings; along these lines, Mary Jacobus brilliantly observes that, in the novel, "the *mise en abyme* of representation unfolds to remind us that there can never be . . . a heart empty of desire. No virgin, however sequestered, can be defended against cultural seduction; no mind, however unbookish, can be secluded from the lure of reading; no imagination, however innocent, can resist the romance of representation."[89] However, when Jacobus suggests that *Paul et Virginie* turns out to be "a place-holder"[90] in *Belinda*, I would argue that the book exceeds such status since it and the miniature have excited Virginia's yearnings, and these things themselves precipitate kinesthetic results – even fomenting the right marital pairings. Consequently, once recycled, Bernardin's novel yields a newly nimble purpose, offering Virginia a template for choice and teaching her self-awareness. While one review found that "the character of Virginia seems in its final ending to outrage all probability,"[91] for my purposes, when she falls in love with a picture, meets its subject in the flesh, and then is affianced to him, the novel's plot successfully envisions how nonhuman agency rattles, influences, and heals characters' lives. Further, Lady Delacour and the portrait, doing "real work" together, solve several enigmas: Who is the miniature man (Paul Sunderland), who is Virginia St. Pierre (Rachel), who is Virginia's father (Mr. Hartley), who does Virginia actually love (Paul), and who does

[88] Reinhard, p. 785.
[89] "'The Science of Herself': Scenes of Female Enlightenment," in *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming Literature, 1789–1837*, ed. Tilottama Rajan and Julia M. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 264.
[90] "The Science of Herself," p. 264.
[91] *British Critic and Quarterly Theological Review* (London, 1801), vol. 18, p. 85. "Edgeworth's *Belinda*," *Women Writers in Review*, Art. 22 (1801–1807), the Northeastern University Women Writers Project, 2016-11-16.

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Clarence really love (Belinda)? Recycling Bernardin's plot and characters into socially beneficial, ethical, and happy outcomes, Edgeworth ensures that a Paul and Virginia marry.

4.2.1.3 Bélinde

The novel's radical efforts stimulate links between virtue, sexuality, and materiality when female characters can belong with these three simultaneously,[92] though the French translation of *Belinda*, as I briefly show, obliterates that possibility. Chapter 3 considered a comparative approach that unveiled how Ségur's *Bélinde* effaces the original's emphasis on materiality and colonialism; here I suggest that such a juxtaposition also emphasizes Edgeworth's and Ségur's respective pedagogical and aesthetic agendas. The former's goal is to recycle Bernardin's novel and give Rachel-Virginia the right to happiness, while the latter's is to turn "*Belinda* into a moralistic narrative adapted to French consumers."[93] Both books try to belong with their respective ethics, as each resets (to use a jewelry analogy) their borders according to different standards of what constitutes female virtue. Specifically, the translation's Virginie comes to resemble Bernardin's protagonist more than Edgeworth's Virginia when Ségur changes (among other things) Edgeworth's ending, sidelining Lady Delacour and placing Virginie center stage.[94] His Virginie, a martyring heroine of sensibility who calculates her modesty to inspire respect, sacrifices her sexuality by refusing marriage first to Sunderland and then to Clarence, the latter because she knows that "Belinda has all of his love" (*Ségur*, vol. 4, p. 184).[95] A magnanimous response, no doubt.

Yet *Bélinde*'s Virginie has another, less magnanimous reason to dematerialize herself by refusing Sunderland's marriage proposal. Fearing slander from those who labeled her as Clarence's mistress, she wants to save her reputation. At least to a modern audience, this motivation for sacrifice seems far from virtuous and all too allied to abstractions. *Bélinde*'s Virginie begs her father, "take me with you to the Indies, let me consecrate my life to caring for my father . . .; there no one can defame me; I would

[92] Deborah Weiss insightfully observes that "the radicalism of Edgeworth's understanding of gender has generally been overlooked owing to what scholars have taken to be the timidity of her approach to reform." See "Extraordinary Ordinary Belinda: Maria Edgeworth's Female Philosopher," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19.4 (2007): 441–461, p. 442.

[93] Fernández Rodríguez, p. 109.

[94] No wonder Edgeworth and her family disliked the translation: Charlotte Edgeworth (1802) describes a meeting with Ségur, who she says has "translated Belinda not only into [F]rench language, but [F]rench taste for he has altered the story," in Colvin, pp. 16, 25.

[95] Quotations from Ségur are my translations.

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like always to think about you, and, when I know you are happy, I could endure my existence. Yes, I could endure my life with pleasure if I could beautify yours, my father. Oh! Let us leave as soon as possible, I beg you" (Ségur, vol. 4, pp. 180–181). In twice repeating "I could endure my life" if he were content, her aspirations seem noble, though again, her primary concern – to escape defamation by leaving England immediately – relies on the same bodiless principles that lead to the first Virginie's death and recalls Wollstonecraft's bafflement as to how or why true "morality" can be "undermined by sexual notions of the importance of a good reputation" (*VRW*, p. 162).[96] When the translator returns Edgeworth's Rachel-Virginia closer to her original state as Bernardin's Virginie, the character must abandon her sexuality for a gendered virtue in not just one novel, but in two. As Ségur's Virginie surrenders her future as a married woman to avoid calumny, so does Mademoiselle de la Tour when, refusing to disrobe, she willingly drowns. While it may seem here as if I were lauding the original English novel over Ségur's translation-rewriting, in fact I find his recycling a dynamic process that reveals tense cross-cultural interlacings, a process that returns us to Staël's statement (quoted in Chapter 2) that when we read other nations' literature "our mind is excited by new comparisons, [and] our imagination is enlivened as much by the audacities it condemns as by those it approves."[97]

4.2.2 *Recycling Plot and Characters: After-Art*

I began this chapter by briefly analyzing Bernardin's *Études*, and thus far I have explored how two British texts respond to the ways *Paul et Virginie* discards its own initial premises: the restorative value of human–nonhuman connections, the mindfulness that all things exist relationally with other things, and a healthy bond between women and materiality. Here I turn to how the novel's after-things – paintings, textiles, fans, and dishes – also investigate these ethical relationships. These personal belongings of course differ from the massive public monuments Corinne and Oswald visit; yet they resemble how Corinne individually curates Nelvil's tourism such that each object bears the stamp of what she believes will best heal her lover. The popularity and wide distribution of these artisanal objects suggest that they held the hope both of restoring the characters and

[96] For Wollstonecraft it is absurd that a woman, having lost her reputation, cannot "regai[n] respectability by a return to virtue" (*VWR*, p. 164).

[97] *Delphine*, p. 6.

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of bringing the reader into physical, tangible intimacy with the narrative. To viewers today, however, this archive might appear problematic rather than ameliorative since some of these art objects idealize the characters, others erase colonial contexts, and many minimize enslavement's horrors. As I will show, this after-art both reflected and stimulated urgent cultural needs, such as encouraging readers to identify themselves as "curious and sensitive."[98] In turn, these artifacts nourished the novel's iconic standing. Reciprocal influencing emerges: For example, a pair of Paul and Virginie bookends, objects which presumably could be used to hold a copy of the novel itself, rouses the objects to lean on each other for mutual support.[99]

What compelled readers to so yearn for *Paul et Virginie* artifacts that their desires germinated an after-art industry, a fashionable commerce that existed alongside the dazzling popularity the novel itself experienced?[100] As Lieve Spaas has written, "[a]t the time of the French Revolution, [the novel] was read more than any other book. More than three hundred imitations were written soon after its appearance. Between 1788 and 1799 there were fifty-six editions, twenty of them translations."[101] And Paul Toinet has recorded the thousands of decorative objects the novel inspired, most of them now either vanished or held in private collections. First, the desire for a more enduring and concrete link to the novel's ephemerality must have stimulated this industry during the span of the novel's celebrity. As Antoine Lilti argues, the eighteenth-century "reproduction of works … allowed for [their] massive distribution … and assured [their] permanent

[98] Antoine Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity: 1750–1850*, trans. Lynn Jeffress (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), p. 10.

[99] I observed this in a private collection in France. I am extremely grateful to the owners for allowing me to tour and photograph their works. They wish to remain anonymous.

[100] Such after-art underscores the importance of ephemeral objects in any study of French eighteenth-century history and culture. François Cheval and Thierry-Nicolas C. Tchakaloff point out that, "[i]f research in the historical aspect" of *Paul et Virginie* helps us understand its "multiple existences," it is essential also to turn to its objects: The novel "outsmarts monocular approaches, and throws off one-way studies." See their "Préface," in *Souvenirs de Paul et Virginie: un paysage aux valeurs morales*, ed. Cheval and Tchakaloff (Paris: Adam Biro, 1995), p. 14. Relationships between any representation and its original generally lead to discussions of simulacra and authenticity; see, most famously, Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 221. Thing theorists would argue that whether mass produced or unique in their manufacture, things still have energetic intensities.

[101] "*Paul et Virginie:* The Shipwreck of an Idyll," pp. 316–317. Toinet, *Paul et Virginie: Répertoire bibliographique et iconographique* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1963). Gabriel-Robert Thibault further notes that "*Paul et Virginie fut un best-seller: 42 éditions entre 1816 et 1850. Chacune de ces éditions compte un tirage global supérieur à 20,000 exemplaires.*" See "Si le grain ne meurt …", in *Paul et Virginie, un exotisme enchanteur*, ed. Élisabeth Leprêtre (Paris: Nicolas Chaudun, 2014), p. 56.

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presence in the public sphere."[102] Second, other cultural and psychological incentives rendered these after-things indispensable. For Festa these objects "anchor and preserve a continuously narrated self in a world whose local attachments were being unmoored by exposure to different cultures and people."[103] Lynn Hunt's work suggests a third alternative: If *Paul et Virginie* had been read from a revolutionary standpoint – an interpretation suggesting that the novel's return to *ancien régime* beliefs in fact leads to tragedy – the objects could come to stand in as codes for more radical ideas, with Virginie's death, for example, embodying the problems following from obedience to parental and governmental control.[104] Janine Barchas and Kristina Straub help me to articulate my fourth point. Maintaining that acquiring Shakespeare and Austen memorabilia follows a "proud" two-century "tradition ... of fans actively participating in and shaping a culture of celebrity," they clarify how wanting such things is "less about the crass materialism of commodity culture and more a part of a long history of holding our most beloved authors close by bringing them home."[105] This desire to bring the "beloved" home enforces how readers yearned to experience the characters' adventures far beyond the page.

Although I agree that Paul and Virginie after-things promised to keep the characters near (on plates or in clothing) and added the extra frisson of sensibility "rubbing off" on their owners via association, my larger point is that these things highlight the longing for the embodiment *Paul et Virginie* excises, and this, for a revolutionary audience, might well have resonated with the questions of the embodiment of rights. That is, what is merely abstraction and what can be counted on? These tangible objects restore the bodies – and their rights of life, liberty, and happiness – that the novel vaporizes.[106] Deborah Tarn Steiner, examining Greek statues that

[102] Here Lilti discusses engravings, but his research applies to *Paul et Virginie* after-art, given its popular distribution (p. 57).

[103] *Sentimental Figures of Empire*, p. 3.

[104] "The Unstable Boundaries of the French Revolution," in *A History of Private Life: Vol. 4, From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, ed. Michelle Perrot (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Also see Hunt's *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), and *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

[105] "Collecting Will and Jane," August 26, 2016, http://shakespeareandbeyond.folger.edu/2016/08/26/collecting-william-shakespeare-jane-austen/

[106] I argue that *Paul et Virginie* objects are recycled to improve or restore; in a fascinating essay, Laurent Châtel discusses the opposite in showing how William Beckford recycles in a way that "respects the otherness of the foreign item by making it the standard or reference of its displaying dress." See "Recycling Orientalia: William Beckford's Aesthetics of Appropriation," in Fennetaux, Junqua, and Vasset, p. 62.

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function as "representations of the absent and the dead," discusses how "[a]rchaeological evidence that long predates written accounts demonstrates the role of the statue as a replacement figurine that doubles for the dead. . . . The creation of a doubling image can correct the disturbance that certain forms of death generate."[107] By extension, such a practice helps explain how these "re-representations" embody a distrust of the novel's fragmentation of sexuality and spirit, body and mind, mind and psyche.

Edgeworth's and Wordsworth's textual recyclings of *Paul et Virginie* thus demonstrate ways that remaking a literary scene or character dislodges that original liveliness into renewed and corporeal performances. This resembles what Robert Stam claims about cinematic adaptations: They "redistribute energies and intensities, provoke flows and displacements; the linguistic energy of literary writing turns into the audio-visual-kinetic-performative energy of the adaptation."[108] Thus, I investigate how these copies on canvas or cloth might converse with an afterlife-admirer about the novel's morphology of gender and matter. And yet, as I will show, some of these items, though embodied, replicate the novel's dualistic principles, though how that binarism is received can contradict or befuddle any original intention. Whether reproducing or challenging ideology, after-things can baffle, and as Wendell Berry reminds us, "the mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings."[109] I agree in the main with Judith Pascoe's claim that objects "refuse to cooperate entirely with the collector's . . . best-laid schemes";[110] yet though ultimately irrepressible, these after-things, from my viewpoint, generate radiant connections between the nonhuman and the human, even in representations that initially seem to dispute or deny the possibility.

First, some after-things that might baffle viewers who are also readers of the book are the ones that reincarnate Paul and Virginie's sensual energies, moving viewers toward those that the novel represses. This restores that world of touch, taste, sound, and smell that the novel's early sections so fervently manifest. For example, some after-art recaptures the hero and

[107] Deborah Tarn Steiner, pp. 3, 5, 7.

[108] "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation," in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, ed. Stam and Allesandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 46.

[109] Berry, p. 205; emphasis added.

[110] Pascoe continues: "[C]ollected objects float free of their possessors and come to exist in inscrutable isolation, defying scholars' efforts to recast them as definitive evidence" (p. 23). While I agree in general that things ultimately remain elusive, I primarily investigate how these objects can also "float" toward each other, connecting to one another and to history.

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heroine's sexual affection by depicting them as adults in scenes from the novel when they are children. Consequently, these recyclings manifest their love and validate the impassioned chemistry the novel eradicates, as we see in *The Storm* (Figure 4.1). Pierre-Auguste Cot here recycles an episode in which the children use Virginie's petticoat to protect themselves from the rain, but he intensifies the scene's eroticism by clothing the heroine in a transparent gown.[111] He further dramatizes the characters' sexuality and their mutual attraction by posing them as young adults whose bodies know each other (their feet are in perfect step), and by placing Paul's thumb familiarly under Virginie's dress, directly on the skin of her breast. By titling this *The Storm*, he also reimagines the novel's life-changing storms – those occurring when Virginie, bathing, feels passionate attraction to Paul and when a hurricane collapses the ship – as harmonious and fulfilling moments.[112] Jean-Frédéric Schall's *Adolescence de Paul et Virginie* conversely presents them as the novel does: little children with "two pretty heads" (*PV*, p. 47). That this representation would more closely mirror the novel makes sense given, as Gabriel-Robert Thibault points out, it is among "the first iconographic interpretations of the novel, which were created under the guidance of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre."[113] The children's pale innocence and Schall's static palms and serene landscape contrast to the teenagers' robust health, their intelligent eyes emphasizing amatory vitality, and Cot's animated wind, which capriciously lifts and curls Virginie's petticoat into a voluptuous rococo paradise.

Danièle Lancelle considers the novel's eroticism, an element remarkable enough to lead one 1838 French edition to "revise and purge" it, leaving out phrases describing how the children were bathed together and how they slept and played together unclothed.[114] I would agree with Lancelle that in cases where "the illustrators . . . have influenced the text's meaning so as to produce a more titillating effect," another, more compelling impact arises: that the "narrativity of the image is superimposed on that of reading, sometimes enhancing a feature the text includes," but other times "making

[111] Here Cot evidently offers neoclassical verisimilitude since this era's female dress was transparent. For more on this transparency, see Rauser, p. 65.

[112] While art historians have discussed whether this painting portrays Daphnis and Chloe or Paul and Virginie, James Henry Rubin argues that because in *Paul et Virginie* "the sexual interest is sublimated and Bernardin consistently maintains a high moral tone," the painting must refer to Longus's novel (second century CE), which is "overtly erotic." See "Pierre-Auguste Cot's *The Storm*," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 14 (1979): 191–200, p. 196. That Cot has Bernardin's novel in mind is made evident in Rubin's essay, which includes Cot's preliminary drawings for *The Storm* which show the artist addressing the Black River episode (p. 194).

[113] Thibault, p. 52. [114] Lancelle, in Leprêtre, pp. 95, 96.

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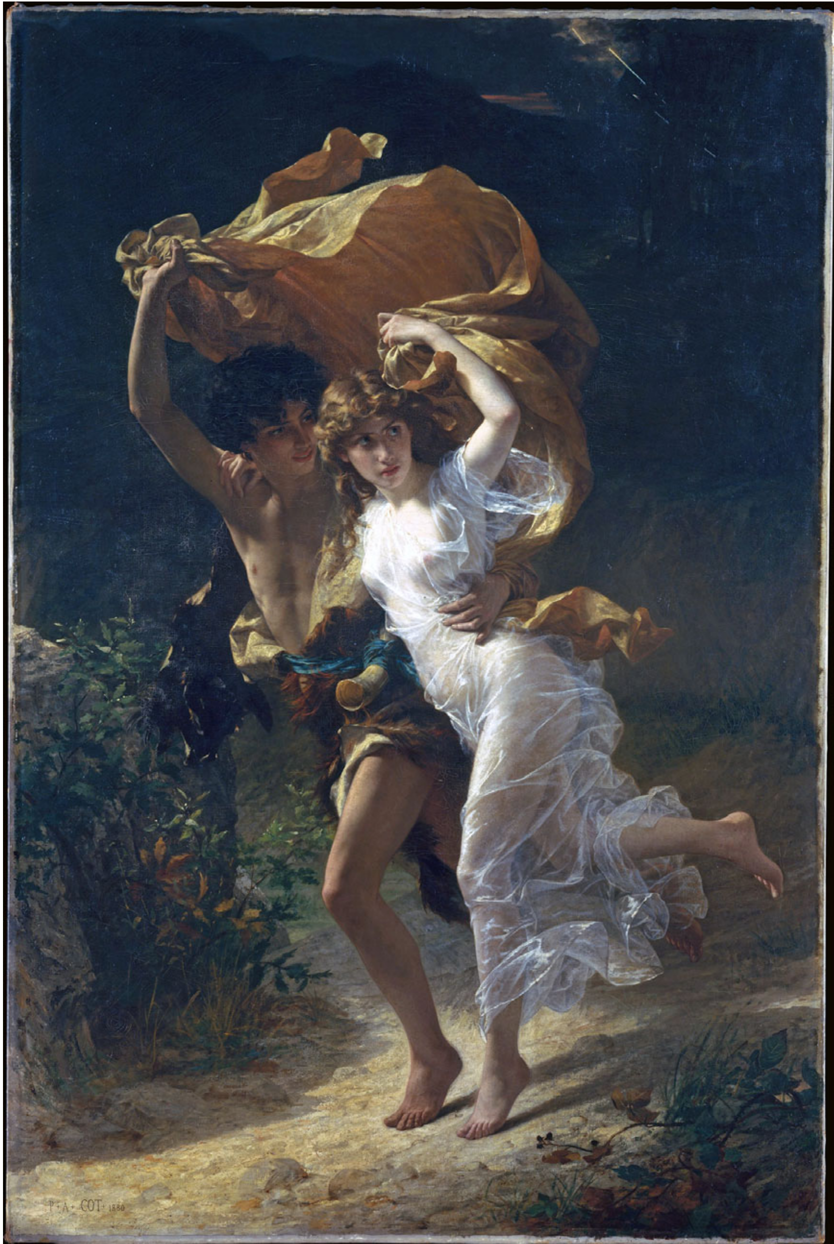

Figure 4.1 Pierre-Auguste Cot, *The Storm* (1880). Courtesy of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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it more seductive depending on the circumstances."[115] To put this in the terms *Embodied Experience* uses, things affect other things; and, once we see an eroticized illustration, we read the text as more sexual than it might be or in ways that the novel itself intimates but does not directly acknowledge. Further, any artifact that shows as fulfilled Paul and Virginie's sensuous physical love must, in counterpoint, recall that which the novel forbids.

In contrast, some after-things prescind the human–nonhuman connection by dematerializing the characters depicted, a phenomenon seen in a textile design (Figure 4.2) which pictures the characters displaced from nature and from work. Paradoxically this is realized by rendering them as solidly statuesque, aristocratic, and classically beautiful. Indeed, except when they are depicting the protagonists as children, most artists' illustrations recoil from the family's impoverished conditions by embodying the characters as patricians wearing fashionable European attire (as opposed to coarse muslin) and by refining their bodies by elongating them and posing them in courtly, cultivated attitudes, a "polishing" phenomenon that becomes more prevalent as time passes from the novel's first publication date. The design includes repeating patterns illustrating the novel's most familiar episodes: the children returning the freedom-seeker to her enslaver and the Maroons, under Domingue's leadership, rescuing the children, here presented anachronistically as adults. Focusing less on the storyline – the motifs are in a nonlinear order – and more on the figures' dignity, the artist tightly wedges the bodies together within the visual field, a compression intensified by the lack of negative spaces, as the designer has used a composite overlay by placing the subjects on a floral-geometric patterned ground. As the printed cotton canvas disconnects the human from the nonhuman by physically disengaging them from their environment, so does it separate the characters from each other. Floating in stacked panels and isolated from the backdrops, the figures do not fully belong with their environment. Taken as a whole, the scenes represent formidable physiques, exuberant plant life, and sturdy architecture, revealing that neither mortality nor fragility threaten the white subjects.

Earlier I reflected on how the novel protests enslavement as well as the enslaver's sexual abuse of the Maroon and (less horrifically) of Virginie. To address the latter first, we see that the enslaver's visage does not reveal the eroticizing leer the novel records (*PV*, p. 54) as he "lift[s] his cane to heaven," swearing "a dreadful oath that he would grant his pardon not for

[115] Lancelle, in Leprêtre, pp. 95, 98.

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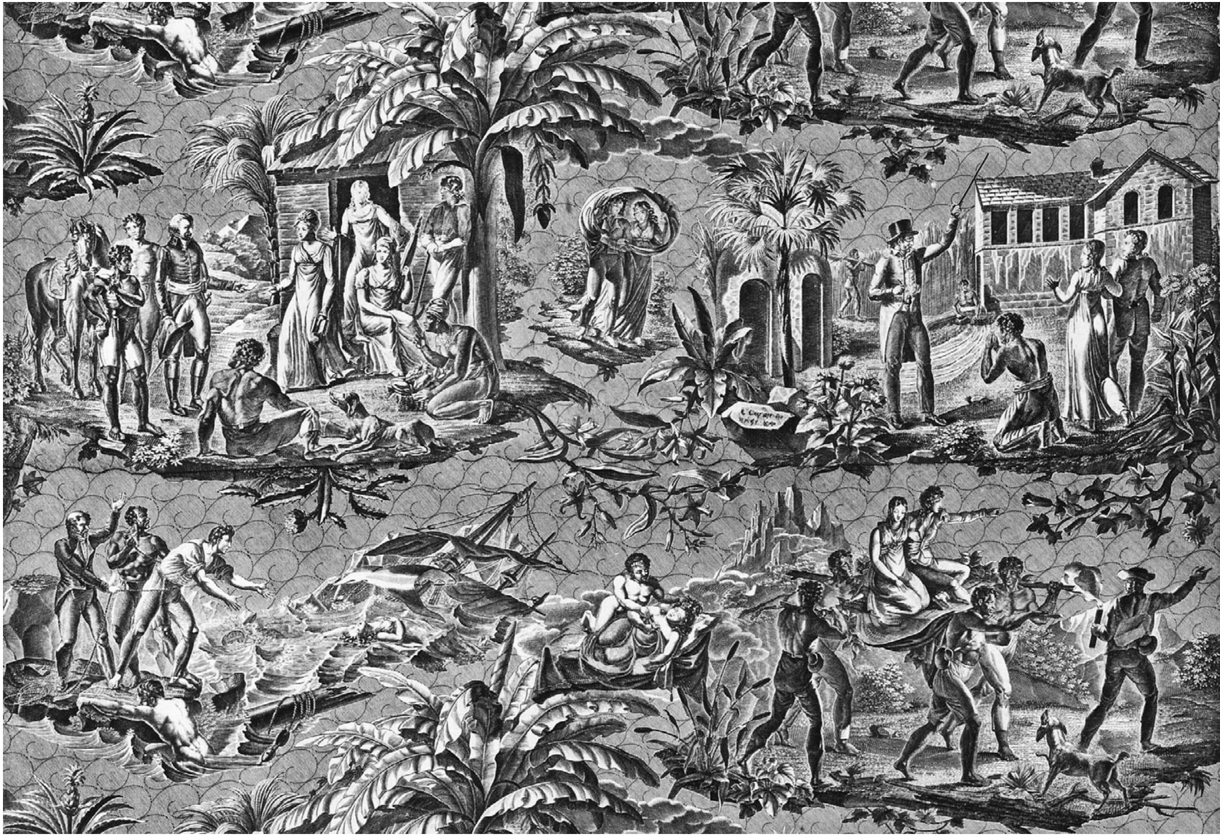

Figure 4.2 Scenes from *Paul et Virginie*, after Charles Chasselat and Antoine Johannot (1825–1830). Courtesy of the Musées d'Art et d'Histoire, Culture et Patrimoine Ville du Havre.

the love of God but for the love of her" (*PV*, p. 52),[116] but as he gazes at Virginie and menaces her with his weapon, prompting her startled, shocked look, his prurience is displaced in the way the image itself objectifies the heroine, shining light on her right buttocks and the curve of her calf. Shifting now to Bernardin's objections to slavery, it is apparent that the fabric design (Figure 4.2) diminishes those. In recycling and reinterpreting his treatment of the returned slave, the designer casts the Maroon's body as powerful and vibrant, ironically rendering her and her back a specimen of solid, well-nourished, physical perfection. The standard representations "routinely associated with Africans" were "the valiant, the erotic, and the treacherous Moor."[117] I suggest that the artist combines these descriptors, presenting the woman as physically "valiant" in her strength, eroticized in that she is half naked, but also "treacherous" insofar as she has liberated herself from this man's possession. Though genuflecting before her supposed "*maître*," she vividly contrasts to Bernardin's description, which portrays her as "emaciated as a skeleton" (*PV*, p. 51). Simultaneously the artist, by eradicating all scarring from her back and literally effacing her – we cannot look in her eyes or at the expression on her countenance – weakens *Paul et Virginie*'s oppositions to such torture and injustice and especially to any viewer's understanding of enslavement.

The lower half of the image further disregards enslavement's reality by offering a light-hearted presentation of Maroons carrying these adults (not lost children) back to their cottages, thereby reducing the journey to a pleasant experience, with Paul pointing toward their home to reassure Virginie, and the heroine, herself, depicted as complacently looking down on the Maroons, though they are risking their own lives to return them. And while the novel's Black River episode provides a spectacle of "suffering and mutilation," this textile reassures the viewer by depicting the Maroons as the "idealized demigod hero[es]" of the scene.[118] The novel starkly exposes human–human abuses and protests slavery, such that readers see and feel the black woman's anguish. Transferred onto the wall or other surfaces for decoration, this textile represses such gritty material truths, except to those who notice their absence.

[116] Though infrequently reproduced, this violent vignette resembles those Bernardin describes on Mauritian plantations in his *Voyage à l'Ile-de-France*. See Leprêtre, "Regarder l'esclavage," in Leprêtre, p. 85.

[117] Mallipeddi, pp. 34, 35.

[118] Mallipeddi, p. 26. Discussing Oroonoko, Mallipeddi "utiliz[es] spectacle as a category of analysis for a variety of representations," one being an "idealized demigod hero, whose familiar traits are courage, valor, fortitude, and generosity" (pp. 26, 36).

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Figure 4.3 Anon., *Éventail* (c. 1860). Courtesy of the Musées d'Art et d'Histoire, Culture et Patrimoine Ville du Havre.

Decorating homes and human bodies, these representations from a novel protesting stolen labor, whippings, exile, and death portrayed humans brutally disjointed from other humans and from the nonhuman things near them. These strive to reembody beloved characters, but did intimate physical proximity with them require the kind of emptying out of blatant reality the cotton canvas realizes? It is arresting, psychologically, that the textile, as other objects do, often seems to reject *Paul et Virginie*'s initial emphasis on human–human and human–nonhuman connections and to emphasize the later part of the text, which focuses on want not need, on money not family bonds, on luxury not conservation. For example, a fan (Figure 4.3) primarily made of shell, seems initially to fit that pattern. Its paper periphery illustrates three scenes from the novel, each encased within a gold medallion and each of which is bordered on either side with elaborate embellishments. An intricate frieze of geometric and floral designs, complete with beading and rosettes, such as one would see on cotton toile or silk dress fabric, decorates the edging.[119]

[119] The fan's artistic excellence reminds us that these objects were "characterized by decorative complexities and precious materials," such as "vellum, silk, lace, and paper," and that "[s]ticks and guards were made from precious materials such as mother-of-pearl, tortoiseshell and ivory." See Miriam Volmert, "Introduction," in *European Fans in the 17th and 18th Centuries: Images, Accessories, and Instruments of Gesture*, ed. Volmert and Danijela Bucher (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), p. 10 and note 6, p. 10.

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In embodying friction between economic registers and retreating from the novel's material circumstances, the fan resembles many expensive and elegant *Paul et Virginie* things which represent the characters on and in sumptuous materials such as marble, gold, precious jewels, and select fabrics. Since these things appear to be adapting the book for stylish association, the recyclings are in some ways more in line with what Arnold Nesselrath refers to as the "re-use" of material "as a kind of cultural trophy."[120] Fans, however, are never just one thing or never do just one thing: According to Roach, they have a "meaning-making virtuosity," and because "fan-users" can "perfor[m] every conceivable behavior" with them, they make an entrance into the list of "enchanted accessories."[121]

This accessory, in its "enchanted" moment, performs prismatic undertakings. First, the labor of ornamentation on the fan provides an ironic counterpoint to the mothers' labors, spinning "cotton from morning to evening," while the highly wrought design apparently forgets that the novel's inhabitants were "so unfurnished . . . with the goods of civilization that they went barefoot about the settlements" (*PV*, p. 45). And yet, luxury items, a "special 'register' of consumption," have a use-value which "is *rhetorical* and *social*"; they are "goods that are simply *incarnated* signs," rich with "semiotic virtuosity" in their ability to "signal fairly complex social messages"; purchasing them is intensely linked "to body, person, and personality."[122] Once opened, the lavish fan, juxtaposed to the family's poverty, could potentially act to remind the fan's owner and viewers of nature's moral simplicity and authenticity. Certainly, the fan embeds this memory of the nonhuman since its lower part, composed of shell (comprising about 15 of its 22 centimeters), recalls the ocean. Coalescing form, function, and meaning, the fan's folds mimic the movement of waves, and the light wind created when one opens and closes it evokes ocean breezes while also recalling Virginie's drowning at sea.

This exquisite fan embodies the book's tragedy, requiring viewers to contemplate the troubling pleasure of beauty in the presence of death, but it also adds two further levels of contemplation and paradox. First, it reintroduces the eroticism lost to the eponymous characters. "The fan, like the muff, became a symbol of female sexuality," and both, according

[120] "Venus Belvedere," p. 206. As I mentioned, the figures become more elegant as time passes, while twentieth-century depictions, no doubt freed by modernism, eradicate the characters' refinement. For example, see watercolors by Othon Friesz (1879–1949) illustrating the novel. Élisabeth Audoin, "Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, portrait de l'aventurier de la Porte Océane," in Leprêtre, p. 34.

[121] Roach, p. 54; Roach draws from Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 117.

[122] Appadurai, p. 38.

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to David Nokes, were "slang terms for female genitals."[123] By opening and closing this object – by exposing and hiding the face – one can tragically or playfully reenact how the novel introduces sexual love, only to reject it. Second, things, as many scholars reveal, offer the displaced means by which to address contemporary political issues.[124] Though made in the nineteenth century, this fan does so by including what was no doubt the eighteenth century's chief tragedy: enslavement. In this sense it acts as a memorial. Its miniature medallions, while offering "white-washed" representations of the Maroon, still render her – and enslavement in general – both visible and palpably present every time the fan is unfolded and in the flow of air it stimulates. Pierre-Henri Biger observes in "Introduction à l'éventail européen aux XVII et XVIII siècles," that the "face" of the fan, the side the most ornamented ("*le côte le plus orné*"), was always "turned toward the public."[125] This means that the scenes of enslavement are the ones facing the audience, reminding them of these horrors. Susan Stewart argues that souvenirs offer "catastrophe and *jouissance* simultaneously,"[126] and I would suggest that this fan, which represents episodes of the children's bliss, their misfortune, and the Maroon's enslavement, functions similarly as a memento of the reader's journey through the novel, rendering it more than just an indulgence that only exploits the novel's plot or frames Virginie's death as a trophy.

Other objects paradoxically embody the characters, while endorsing their evanescence, a phenomenon that occurs in artifacts which emphasize, even in the happiest scenes, the novel's ruinous conclusion, finding restorative, teleological meaning in Virginie's death.[127] For example, a set of round, scalloped porcelain plates, dating from the *époque* of Napoleon III, all convey the ending's death-by-water, by incorporating blue decoration and scalloped edging resembling tidal movements, and by representing the ground as undulating in wave-like patterns. The first plate, *La naissance de Virginie* (Figure 4.4, bottom row, far right), represents Madame de la Tour's body as half-reclining on a stylish settee, forming a graceful arc, one the drapery falling from her bed echoes. The shimmering, Titian-like curtains billowing behind her reflect light as water

[123] Rabb, p. 119, n. 63; for Nokes, see *John Gay: A Profession of Friendship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 133.
[124] For Rabb "miniatures are symptomatic of a society seeking ways, through indirection and displacement, to deal with problems of the full-scale world" (p. 123). Other critics, as I mention in my Introduction chapter, argue for objects' ability to reveal social problems in coded ways.
[125] *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 26.1 (2014): 84–92, p. 88.
[126] Stewart, p. 135.
[127] I previously published a short part of this section. See Heydt-Stevenson, "*Paul et Virginie*: la danse du roman et de l'objet," in Leprêtre.

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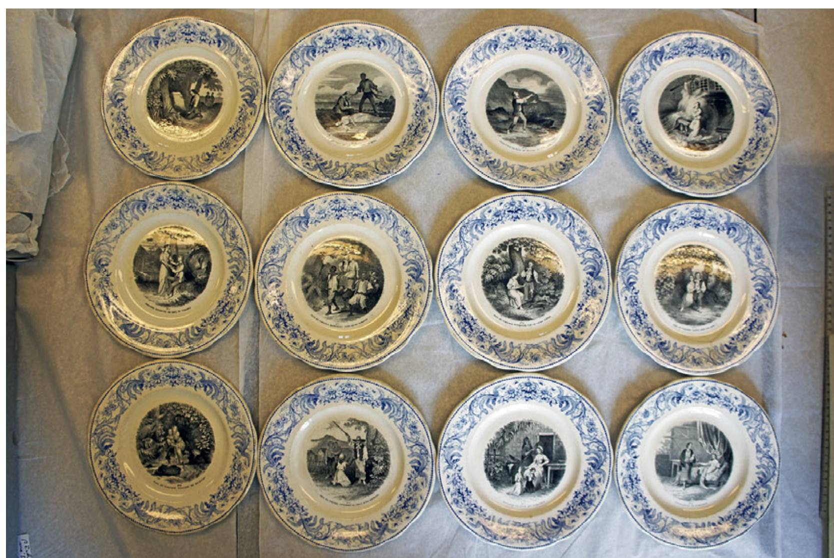

Figure 4.4 Anon., set of twelve plates with scenes from *Paul et Virginie* (1849–1867). Author Photograph. Manufactured by Creil et Montereau (Oise, Seine-et-Marne). Number 1 is in the lower-right-hand corner of the bottom row; number 12 is in the far left of the top row.[128] Courtesy of the Musées d'Art et d'Histoire, Culture et Patrimoine Ville du Havre.

glitters in sunshine, but also presage the glossy pink taffeta Virginie will wear upon departure to France. Held in the Old Man's arms, the infant Virginie performs her own curving wave, which prefigures her death by drowning.[129] This image conservatively undermines the matriarchal structure by offering a patriarchal fantasy of the nuclear family, with the Old Man here posing as a father-substitute taking possession of the infant, while Marguerite is relegated to the background, crowded between Madame and the sumptuous drapery, figured not as partner but as servant. Although most apparent in the series' first plate, this typological symbolism of her death appears throughout the sequence in wave and water motifs. For example, in *Virginie Found after Her Death* (Figure 4.4, plate 11), she has become a wave, lying on her side on the sand, facing us, one

[128] As Barbier explains, there were many versions of these plates. Those he analyzes, from the Musée Historique of Saint-Gilles-les Hauts, were also made by Creil et Montereau and date to the mid nineteenth century, though his are tinted in a sepia tone and ornamented with luxurious flowers (p. 185).

[129] For Jean Barbier, the image's design makes it "a theatrical representation." See "Une histoire pour se mettre à table," in Cheval and Tchakaloff, p. 194.

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leg folding into the other like breakers rising and falling. And in the last plate, *Paul sur le Tombeau de Virginie* (Figure 4.4, plate 12), the hero kneels at her tombstone, which is weathered with a waving design, an image that seals this marine motif into eternity. The designer, heralding her death in each plate, reinforces Christian redemption and salvation, presumably to spur readers to find spiritual consolation in Virginie's "virtuous" decision to drown. Manifesting the future tragedy in plates illustrating their happiness before the "fall," however, also continually calls to mind the body itself, and all of its festive exuberance and tenuous mortality.

The plates return us to my opening discussion about food, while also introducing opinions about taste and enslavement. We should remember, of course, that these objects served the utilitarian function of holding food, and that while eating from dishes representing scenes from the novel, readers could recall Paul and Virginie harvesting and exchanging nourishment. As readers devour the book, so do they devour their food, creating what Barbier calls the "correspondence cannibalesque" between the plates, book, and their contents; and though he notes playfully that "'[r]e-reading' *Paul et Virginie* daily at . . . mealtimes" will "whet one's appetite!" ("*se mettre en appétit!*"),[130] this doubled activity also, in more serious ways, physicalizes reading and continues the motif of the vibrant human–nonhuman cycle I have been exploring, even if a meal is placed on *une assiette en faïence fine I* (a finely glazed earthenware plate), while the family's banquet rests on "[h]alved gourds" (*PV*, p. 78). None of these dishes depicts elements from the plot pertaining to eating, as when the children make cheeses or find honeycomb, but instead illustrate three major categories of events – early childhood (Figure 4.4, plates 1–2); the Black River episode (plates 3–7); and Paul and Virginie's parting, the shipwreck, and her death (plates 8–12). Despite the subject matter's generally grim tone, evidently those with the good "taste" to read *Paul et Virginie* would also have the good "taste" to choose dinnerware depicting the characters, thereby encouraging the owners to doubly reinforce their aesthetic choices.[131]

Further the dishes most likely served an abolitionist purpose similar to that which some Wedgwood merchandise advocated, such as the depiction of an enslaved man accompanied by the motto "Am I Not a Man and a Brother." Certainly, both before being served and after finishing a course if

[130] Barbier, in Cheval and Tchakaloff, p. 196.

[131] Denise Gigante historicizes connections between taste both aesthetic and alimentary and traces tensions in this era between enjoying food's sensory pleasures and fearing the sensory excess associated with it.

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eating from the plate that illustrates the enslaver raising his cane above the head of the kneeling Maroon, the diner would have to look directly at the cruelty perpetrated against the female maroon. In contrast to the figure in the textile above, here the enslaved woman, dressed in white, kneeling with her back to us, is rendered tiny in comparison to the man threatening her. This underscores the far more serious aspect of a "correspondence cannibalesque" insofar as the scenes remind one that enslavement "cannibalizes" human beings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, whether they offer messages about spiritual redemption, gender, abolition, the need to restore the character's physicality or, antithetically, to dematerialize them both sensually and literally, I suggest that these after-things – paintings, textiles, fans, and dishes – open unseen dimensions rather than resolving them: Each of these joins an expansive and rousing conversation about human and nonhuman connections, human tolerance for others, and about fertile interlacings between literature and art. *The Ruined Cottage*, *Belinda*, *Bélinde*, and artisanal objects recycle *Paul et Virginie*, leading to what George Steiner calls "the heightening of a work's existence when it is confronted and reenacted by alternate versions of itself."[132] As I have shown, some after-art, though making written words "fleshy," ironically continues the novel's tendency to render Virginie a celestial fantasy or decorporealize enslavement's real abominations, thereby endorsing the tragedy that disembodiment and abstraction themselves cause in *Paul et Virginie*. This chapter has explored how Bernardin's novel sets off a series of chain reactions wherein later poets, novelists, and artists come to have "witness-bearing" functions. Thus, the characters witness Virginie's death, the Old Man witnesses the family's demise, the young traveler witnesses the Old Man's suffering, and Wordsworth, Edgeworth, and ubiquitous objects witness the damage Bernardin's characters undergo. After-literature or after-things do not, of course, always succeed in healing the binaries found in *Paul et Virginie*, but I do believe that, in striving to repeal the idea that an entire community must be wiped out because they decide not to coalesce mind and body, virtue and sexuality, and human and nonhuman, these after-books challenge the supposed inevitability of dualistic thinking.

[132] *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 453.

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