British-French Exchanges
in the Eighteenth Century
In memory of Joseph Patrick Lee

(30 November 1942-29 July 2006)
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INTRODUCTION

France and Great Britain, so near and yet so far, had been exchanging merchandise, visitors, rulers and ideas for hundreds of years before the eighteenth century. The flow of traffic continued during the Age of Enlightenment, contributing not a little to its development. Certain high points of the mutual examinations are well known: Voltaire’s exposition of English mœurs in the *Lettres philosophiques* of 1734, the sojourns in Paris and other parts of France of many a young milord on the Grand Tour, the huge influx of émigrés into Britain during the Revolution. A periodic accounting of the finer points of these exchanges would appear to be in order, as scholars study secondary figures as well as particular groups who interacted with the nation across the Channel / la Manche, and as the impact of certain works in the neighboring country is analysed. We have assembled fourteen recent studies of such connections in this volume.

Correspondences and translations, and correspondences about translations, are obvious forms of cultural sharing and are in play, directly or indirectly, in many of the essays. Directly, there is a peek into a corner of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s vast correspondence, the twenty-one letters from two young English admirers of his works, one of whom completed the first English translation of *Paul et Virginie*. Another correspondence, that between Jean Baptiste Antoine Suard and William Robertson, turns chiefly on Suard’s translations of two of the eminent Scottish historian’s works, a collaboration that was intended to enhance the literary reputation of both parties. The extensive correspondence between André Morellet and Lord Shelburne, stretching from 1772 to 1802, delves deeply into economics and politics, while also revealing the personal ties forged between a self-made French man of letters and a Prime Minister of Britain. The numerous translations of Voltaire’s *La Pucelle* suggest an enduring English interest in this irreverent treatment of a seminal figure in early British-French relations.

Accounts of those who actually visited the other country abound. We include the story of the unusual sojourn of two youngnobles who volunteered in 1748 to serve as hostages to the French pending the return of the Louisbourg fortress, as stipulated in the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. The two young men spent approximately nine pleasant months being fêted in Paris, while Britain chafed at the requirement. More commonly, travellers to France were on a continental journey with more or less fixed points to visit. One destination that remained
popular throughout this period was Catholic convents, where, contrary to prevailing opinion, English visitors observed many positive aspects of female monasticism. In the other direction, we offer two studies centred on the emigration during the Revolution, one a picture of how individual émigrés coped with life in London, the other a *roman à clef* about the adventures of a young aristocratic émigrée.

Intellectual exchanges and influences are implicated in many of the preceding pieces, and are the primary focus in the remaining six studies. While the major British encyclopedias did not borrow as heavily from the *Encyclopédie* as might have been expected in view of its celebrity, two encyclopedias did translate significant amounts of text from it. A later French successor, the *Encyclopédie méthodique*, acknowledged the role of Britain in French history by providing numerous entries on British figures. In a less serious genre, political satire, an obscure pamphlet, which is published here for the first time, harks back to Diderot’s *Bijoux indiscrets* for inspiration. A complex case of cross-cultural influence involves Crèvecoeur, born French and retaining ties with his native country, lifelong admirer of the British, and naturalised American. He attempted to interpret the philosophical underpinnings of his new culture for his two European publics, first in the *Letters from an American Farmer*, then in a revised version of the book in French. The British influence, particularly that of Locke, on French humanism of the eighteenth century is developed in an essay linking the different strands of connoisseurship; the illustrations derive from salon painting and archaeological and natural history engravings. A final essay expands on such cosmopolitanism in the arts, in the figure of the francophone Jean Huber, a stay-at-home Genevan with whom various prominent British visitors developed lasting friendships.

Certain authors were granted minor deviations from the stylistic guidelines governing the collection, and those citing the Oxford *Dictionary of National Biography* chose the version most readily available to them or the most appropriate for their essay. Texts are quoted in the original language, with translations provided in a few pertinent cases. The index includes full names where possible. We would like to thank Patrice Bruneau, Julie Crocker, Arnold Heertje, Kirk Jackson, Michel Lopez, Linda McCurdy, Jeffrey Merrick, Amanda Millar, Mary Pedley, David W. Smith, Melissa Skye, and Marie-Paule Stone for their assistance. We are deeply grateful to Louise Lee and T. E. D. Braun for helping to retrieve the text of J. Patrick Lee’s contribution after his sudden death. This book is dedicated to his memory.
PART I:

TRANSLATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE
Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814), author of what is perhaps the most popular and most edited novel in the French language, *Paul et Virginie* of 1788, travelled the world, visiting Malta, Holland, Russia, Finland, Poland, the Austro-Hungarian empire, and Prussia in the 1760s and at the end of the decade left France to serve as a military engineer on the Ile de France (now Mauritius) (where the novel is set). Although, clearly, he was a seasoned traveller in the years up to 1771, he never made the short trip from Calais to Dover and never set foot in England. Nor, to his regret, did he speak English. Bernardin had to rely on translations and assistance for his knowledge of what was happening across the Channel and in the English-speaking world. England was, in every sense, foreign to him.
Our work to date on the Correspondence of the author, much of which is unpublished, reveals that there were at least two English women with whom he became acquainted in Paris during the last days of the Ancien régime and the early days of the Revolution. In the this paper I want to consider the exchanges which took place between Bernardin and his two correspondantes to see to what extent the letters tell us more about the society of the time, the character of Bernardin, and the literary background which comes to light through the study of the letters. Studying letters is a fascinating occupation as one has the constant sense of reading material one is not supposed to see – we are ‘voyeurs’ in the strict sense of the term, looking in from outside at events taking place discreetly between two individuals. But we know from our reading of the French eighteenth century that writing letters in the context of a relationship is a dangerous pastime; left behind are ‘preuves écrites’ – never intended for dissemination to a large audience – of a liaison never intended to be public, of a relationship which is private and possibly secret. The evidence of contemporary prose fiction is compelling and novelists make good use of the practice which was common in the eighteenth century of keeping one’s letters and even of making copies of letters that were sent. Why do people write letters, or more precisely perhaps, why did people write letters in the eighteenth century? The obvious reason is that two correspondents are separated by space and that epistolary contact is the only one possible. But there are other reasons – there is

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3 The reference is to Laclos’s novel, the Liaisons dangereuses of 1782, almost contemporary with the correspondence we are studying for this paper. In the novel, as the tense climax arises, Merteuil and Valmont both realise that they possess evidence which can destroy the other; their letters have been too explicit and Danceny, in the conclusion to the novel (Letter CLXIX), writes to Madame de Rosemonde: ‘N’en croyez pas mes discours; mais lisez, si vous en avez le courage, la correspondance que je dépose entre vos mains’. Another striking example of the dangers of letters is to be found in the Diderot short story ‘Sur l’inconséquence du jugement public de nos actions particulières’, where letters are discovered which damage the reputation of the male protagonist, although the moral problem which Diderot introduces is the central focus of the account.
the intimacy which a letter or a note allows, the secrecy of the process is part of the delight, and Laclos understands that perfectly; there are obviously social reasons: a note can often prepare a meeting, so people in Paris might write short notes to each other to offer an invitation, or to see if there is a convenient time or place where they might meet. But letters of an intimate kind can be dangerous, and our reading of some of the Bernardin letters makes us realise that there are episodes here about which biographers in the past have been silent and there are relationships which we will make public which were supposed to have remained hidden and unknown for ever. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, humans are sentimental beings and they keep remnants of a dead or dying passion, so when prudence demands that the evidence be destroyed, that demand is not always obeyed. The written proof remains.

However, studying letters from the outside can be a frustrating business. While Bernardin kept many letters sent to him, many of his replies have been lost over time or perhaps destroyed deliberately out of prudence, so that there are references to events and to people in the surviving letters which are hard to identify and allusions which no doubt meant much to the correspondents but mean little to us, studying the corpus some 200 years later. The entire remaining correspondence includes approximately 2600 letters of which we possess copies – the particular corpus I am looking at here is small, 22 letters in all, less than 1% of the total – but these letters can tell us a good deal about the matters of importance to the particular writers and they shed light on the preoccupations of the readers and writers of the time. However, and this is the frustration, many paths are opened up, which look fascinating, but which might lead to a dead end, or at least an end which needs extensive further time-consuming investigative activity. The detective in us is excited by the possibility of a new discovery but without evidence, some of what we will suggest will be speculative. Other information is, of course, of significant interest for those of us working on a major author of his time.

What can we make of the letters we are looking at in this paper? Bernardin’s two correspondents would both seem to be relatively young, naïve, innocent women who may be in Paris as part of their sentimental education. We know

4 There are two obvious examples of this, both of which I refer to in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: A Life of Culture; there are letters between Bernardin and Madame Challe which suggest a relationship which should not be taking place. She writes to him: ‘bonjour mon aimable frere, mon charmant ami. dites moy un petit mot que je puisse baiser comme celui dhier. mais non n’entretenez pas ma folie…encor un coup, brûles mes lettres[…].’ See Le Havre, 151C:13-14 (BSP_00301). The request that the letters should be destroyed is telling evidence of a relationship which should not be public. The other example is the letters between Bernardin and Louise de Keralio which date from 1773. The two express love for each other but any permanent liaison is ruled out by Bernardin’s lowly status.
next to nothing about them, other than what we can glean from the letters themselves. They are both English and write French that is competent, fluent, and sometimes excellent. They make contact with a major cultural figure and he responds. This in itself may be surprising, except that we know that Bernardin was finding a life of solitude difficult to bear and he was finding it hard to cope with the voluminous correspondence which the success of his works had generated. One figure who had read Bernardin’s texts wrote to him offering his niece in marriage. She appears, to us at least, to be a possible perfect partner for Bernardin, knowing as we do that he would soon marry a very young woman

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5 See, for example, the letter from Bernardin to his friend, the diplomat Hennin, of 16 May 1788: ‘les lettres et les visites que m’attirent mes études m’ont étendu le temps d’étudier et surtout celui de vous aller voir’ (BSP_00950).

6 He writes: ‘Maintenant, Monsieur, quoique je ne sois plus tant votre ami, comme vous êtes toujours le mien, je vais vous faire une proposition bien plus étrange peut-être. Le plus doux bien de la vie pour vous, dès à présent, et ensuite les consolations et le bonheur de votre vieillesse en dépendent. Si mon idée réussit, je crois que la Providence vous aura bien traité, que vous serez heureux et agréablement dédommagé de toutes les peines que les injustices de la société vous ont fait subir. Une jeune personne fort aimable, naïve comme l’innocence, pure comme un beau jour de printemps, d’une physionomie heureuse, ne manquant pas de beauté, ne manquant pas d’esprit, d’une simplicité agréable, d’un naturel charmant, et surtout du caractère le meilleur, est ma nièce; elle ne dépend que de moi; c’est-à-dire d’elle-même sous ma direction; car son bonheur est tout mon désir. Sa mère, veuve, l’a retirée depuis quelques mois d’un couvent de province, qui ne ressemble pas aux de Paris. Elles me l’a confiée avec un plein abandon de son pouvoir; je l’ai amenée ici dans mon dernier voyage. Je l’ai mise chez une dame vertueuse de mes amis pour perfectionner son éducation. Tous ceux qui la voyaient l’affectaient. Elle est dans sa dix-huitième année; mais je pense qu’il importe à un homme d’une sensibilité comme la vôtre, à quelque âge qu’il veuille se donner une compagne, de la recevoir immédiatement des mains de la nature, avant que la société l’ait contournée à ses méthodes, et que c’est à lui à achever de la rendre telle qu’il la lui faut, pour qu’elle puisse toujours lui plaire. Sa mère est veuve, elle ne l’est point du tout; mais aussi elle n’est pas accoutumée à l’abondance. Son père est mort après des entreprises trop au-dessus de ses moyens, et qui, toutes dettes payées, n’ont rien laissé de sa fortune. Il ne reste à ma nièce qu’un tiers assuré dans le bien de ma bonne et excellente sœur, qui a eu le même patrimoine que moi, c’est-à-dire 20,000 francs en fonds de terre, avec lesquels elle vit assez doucement dans sa petite campagne, au moyen de ce que je fais les frais de l’éducation du dernier de ses deux fils. Ainsi, sa dot se réduirait à l’assurance de 6 ou 7,000 francs de fonds après la mort de la mère, c’est-à-dire à rien; mais je suis son oncle, et je l’aime comme ma fille. Sans disposer pour elle de mon revenu d’église, je peux lui donner celui que je retire de mon patrimoine, qui est de 900 livres par an, et tant que je serai au monde, elle ne manquera de rien pour son nécessaire. Il est vrai que vous n’auriez à vous deux que du viager; mais nous croyons, vous, elle et moi, à la Providence’ (Letter from the abbé Fauchet to Bernardin, 21 May 1788, BSP_00952).
who seems to be equally young and innocent, the daughter of his printer, Didot. He married Félicité in 1793 and the couple had two children, Virginie and Paul. We know too that Bernardin had not ruled out the idea of marriage; writing to Hennin on 4 December 1780 he complained about his lack of status and his precarious financial situation:

vous me dirés peut être mais vos ouvrages vous rapporteront. d’abord si je n’ai pas un prê sur lequel je puisse débrouiller toutes mes feuilles il me sera impossible de m’y reconnoître. de plus quand il en sortiroit un ouvrage aussi beau que le télémaque, ou l’énide quel est le Ministre qui le payeroit comme sorti de son département. ce ne sont pas les libraires non plus. un indouze qui auroit coute toute la vie d’un homme et qui auroit été inspiré par le genie d’homere n’est pas payé plus de deux mille francs. mais nai je pas encore une malheureuse sœur à aider. et si moi meme je voulois me marier. […] (BSP_0441a)

Our first correspondent is Jane Dalton. Five letters from her to Bernardin survive but none of his replies seem to exist, but we do know that he responded. The first letter is undated but probably dates from 1788. The next is probably another undated one (again of 1788); it would seem that Bernardin has replied to her previous letter and offered to meet her. She says, somewhat enigmatically: ‘je serois trés flaté du plaisir de vous voir, & d’autant plus que je ne sai [sic] pas si ce que vous me dites feroit une objection a la traduction’. What, one wonders, did Bernardin say to her? What must be the next letter is an
apology. In the previous letter she had given Bernardin some indication of her
daily routine and asked him specifically to let her know when he might call:

Je déjeune à huit heures & je sors rarement avant dix; mais il me seroit plus
agréable de savoir le moment qui vous seroit le plus commode & de vous
attendre à l’heure que vous me nommerez.

However, it seems that Bernardin, who had carefully noted her address on the
first letter he received from her, decided to visit her unannounced and she was
out. She responds:

J’apprends avec un vrai chagrin que vous m’avez fait l’honneur de passer chez
moi aujourd’hui durant mon absence. Je n’avois point de réponse a mon 2e billet,
& je n’osai me flatter que vous auriez cette complaisance. Si j’eusse pu le
deviner, rien ne m’auroit engager à sortir.

We know therefore that our sequence of letters is correct – that the description
of her routine comes in her second letter to him – and we learn something about
the nature of the individuals. Bernardin had just turned up, without warning,
although the distance was not great.10 Jane is disappointed to have missed him –
is there a rebuke in her expression ‘Si jeusse pu le deviner, rien ne m’auroit
engager a sortir’ and what does the final paragraph mean:

Il me fait une peine sensible de croire que j’ai été coupable d’un [sic]
impertinence a vos yeux, dont jeusse été incapable envers qui que ce soit, a plus
forte raison vis a vis de vous monsieur, pour qui je suis penetree d’estime.

Has Bernardin pointed out to her that her letters to him were inappropriate? Has
she been too forward in writing to him? What can be the problem? What is she
implying by the use of the word ‘impertinence’?11

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10 Bernardin had purchased a house in the rue de la Reine Blanche in the 13th
arrondissement in 1786, with the proceeds of his Études. Jane Dalton was living in the 6th
arrondissement at the time of writing, a distance of some two to three miles.

11 The word ‘impertinence’ had a slightly different meaning in French in the eighteenth
century, as the Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française of 1798 makes clear in the
definition of the adjective, ‘impertinent’: ‘Qui parle ou qui agit contre le jugement, contre
la bienséance, contre les égards […] Il se dit aussi Des actions des discours contraires à la
raison, à la bienséance’. The meaning of ‘Des paroles et des actions offensantes’ is not
recorded until the 1832 edition of the Academy dictionary. The context of the letter and
the use of the word ‘coupable’ suggest that Jane Dalton is using the word in the modern
English sense, perhaps in a manner which might be described as slightly flirtatious.
The next letter which we have is dated 1 September 1789 and it describes the translation she has done of Bernardin’s novel. She is now back in England and writes from Guildford. This is the first translation into English and has been overlooked by critics because she changed the title, preferring *Paul and Mary, an Indian Story*. The translation was anonymous and a copy survives in the British Library. The same translation with the same title is published in the same year in Dublin. Again, a copy survives in the British Library but the copy there has a pencil attribution: to Daniel Malthus. This same Malthus is referred to in Jane’s letter and it is he who seems to have undertaken research on behalf of Bernardin, seeking to find out information from the London booksellers about the sales of the *Études de la nature* in London. It is possible that Jane used Malthus to negotiate on her behalf since he was clearly a family friend. And another story begins to open up. This is the same Daniel Malthus who was a correspondent of Rousseau’s and a friend of Hume’s. Jane is writing from Guildford and we learn that Thomas Malthus, author of *An Essay on the Principle of Population, as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers*, published anonymously in London, 1798, is the son of Daniel and was born in Guildford. In the translation Jane changes the name of the heroine to Mary, the name of the female slave to Frances (she could hardly keep ‘Marie’ as that was now the name of the young heroine) and the name of the dog, ‘Fidèle’, to

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12 Although published anonymously, this is certainly Dalton’s translation as she refers to the printer Dodsley in the same letter, complaining that while she gave the translation to the printer for nothing and that she was expecting the novel to contain illustrations, it eventually appeared without the illustrations but for as much money as if there were some (6 francs, unbound). The novel appeared in two volumes which is somewhat surprising given its length. (BSP_01066).


14 (Dublin: Byrne, Grueber and McAlister, J. Jones, J. Moore and William Jones, 1789). The novel appears in only one volume with xi + 288 pages.

15 She writes: ‘M. Malthus s’est adressé l’année passée (comme vous vous rappellerez peut être) a m. Elmsly, qui fait le commerce le plus considérable de livres Francois, pour lui consulter sur le debit des Études de la Nature mais on rencontre toujours des obstacles de la part des libraires, qui ont leurs conventions & leurs arrangements ensemble, & ils naiment pas trop que ceux qui ne sont du métier s’en mêlent – il faut du moins être plus auteur que je ne le suis pour traiter avec ceux de mon païs. Vous vous en formerez quelque idée quand je vous dis qu’ayant fait present de ma traduction a Dodsley & ayant compté avoir des figures, ce qui pourrait bien en avoir augmenté le prix, elle est non seulement sans figures, mais il la vend aussi chere que s’il y en avoir – six francs sans relieure’ (BSP_01066).
‘Tayo’. Why ‘Tayo’ – is there a cultural significance to the name?16 She explains the changes to Bernardin:

Pour complaire a cette fantaisie nationale qu’on ne peut pas expliquer, j’ai changé le nom de V. – il n’est pas assez simple pour nous – c’est comme Lucrèce, Hypermèste – enfin trop dans le grand tragique. Il falloit aprè cela changer le nom de la Nègresse. A l’égard du Chien, c’etoit ma fantaisie a moi, qui ne voulois pas donner au chien de V. le nom de tous nos chiens à Londres.

The changes are a little surprising and will be commented upon, as we shall see, by the next English correspondent whose letters we shall be considering.

With Jane Dalton we have a young woman who is able to make the first translation (of many) into English and who maintains friendly contact with a man who clearly sees that she can be of use in a foreign environment about which he knows nothing. The common link is surely Malthus but more work needs to be done in that area in order to establish the chronology and whether any possible meetings might have taken place between Bernardin and Malthus, because of the Rousseau connection, and whether it was indeed through Malthus that Jane Dalton first made contact with Bernardin.17 It is clear that Jane keeps in touch with Bernardin, receives copies of his works from him (letter of 6 December 1789) and explains to him the changes she has made to his masterpiece. She says that the translation is a literal one and that it conforms to English taste (‘par rapport a ces gouts national [sic] dont on ne peut guere rendre raison’). The major and best known translator of Bernardin’s novel, Helen Maria Williams, who was living in Paris during the Revolution but who does not seem to have made contact with Bernardin, saw no need to change the names – but she did think the prose needed spicing up with poetry. Her first translation appears in 1795. But that is another story.18

16 She makes the explanation in a letter to Bernardin of 6 December 1789 but, as we shall see, she makes a curious mistake, saying that she could not give Virginie’s dog the same name as all the dogs in London. The novel makes it very clear that the dog, Fidèle, belongs to Paul: ‘Pour le pauvre Fidèle, il était mort de languer à peu près dans le même temps que son maître’ (Paul et Virginie, ed. by Jean-Michel Racault (Paris: Librairie Générale d’Édition, Livre de Poche 4166, 1999, p. 263). Bernardin refers to a dog of his own, Favori, that he would have liked to bring back to France from the Ile de France but he says, in Letter XIX of the Voyage à l’Ile de France, ‘quelques mois avant mon départ on me prit mon chien; je perdis en lui un ami fidèle que j’ai souvent regretté’.

17 As we have seen above, Jane makes no introduction of Malthus in her letter to Bernardin, suggesting that none was needed (BSP_01066).

Let us turn now to the second correspondent, Lucette Chappell. The letters seem to date from July 1789 to 1791 and a total of sixteen have survived in the archives in Le Havre. We also have the draft in very rough form of a reply to Lucette from Bernardin, which we will consider at the end of this study.

It is possible that Lucette first came to Bernardin’s acquaintance as she wrote to him, like so many other correspondents, praising the novel *Paul et Virginie*. The first letter with a clear dating is from 7 July 1789, in which she explains that she is sending somebody to collect the books he has offered to lend her, so there is obviously some form of contact before this. The loan and return of books is a theme of the exchanges and we can learn a lot about what Bernardin was suggesting his young correspondent should read – and also appreciate the generosity with which he loaned books from his collection. We discover that he never lent an entire work at once, perhaps because he felt that an incomplete set was more likely to be returned to him, being of little use by itself. In this first letter she explains that she is looking forward to reading the ‘Etude de la nature’ (with the wrong title, she uses the singular rather than the plural ‘Études’, suggesting perhaps that she read the novel *Paul et Virginie* in the separate edition of March/April 1789 before reading the longer work to which it was appended). She writes of the novel, in a letter of 7 July 1789:

> Que j’ai été enchantée de votre Paul, et Virginie quel charme il y a dans votre Style! et avec quelle vérité vous peignez la Nature; j’en ai encore lu plusieurs morceaux hier au soir, et j’en ai expliqué à ces demoiselles qui n’entendent pas le Francois, elles en ont été enchantées, mais qu’elles le seroient encore davantage si elles pouvoient lire l’Original, et sentir toute la beauté du style qui est si délicieux. (BSP_01051)

Like so many readers she is extravagant in her praise of the novel. But who are these ‘demoiselles’ to whom she has ‘explained’ the novel? We can only surmise that Lucette was living in some form of *pension* with other young women, perhaps as a ‘pensionnaire’ or perhaps in some paid function.19 For the moment the question goes unanswered. We know that Lucette Chappell was staying with a certain Madame Grivet and that she had sisters with her. It is possible that she is working in a form of *pension*, although the presence of her sisters may make that seem unlikely. Bernardin has possibly met her through his contact with Mme Grivet – but at the moment we know next to nothing about this woman so any ideas must remain speculative. What we do know is that

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19 The *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* of 1798 defines a ‘pension’ as: ‘Une maison où l’on est nourri et logé pour un certain prix […]. se dit aussi d’Une maison où de jeunes enfans sont logés, nourris et instruits, moyennant une certaine somme qui se paye par quartier’.
Lucette was an avid reader for she borrows books regularly from Bernardin and she reads them quickly. She is not convinced by the change of title in the English translation by Jane Dalton: ‘Je blame la demoiselle qui a traduit votre Paul et Virginie, d’avoir changé le nom charmant que vous avez donné à la première’. The preference which the translator seems to have had for an ‘English’ name shows a certain presumption, she claims. It is clear from this that Lucette had not met and did not know Jane Dalton. They were no doubt of different ages.

Lucette is ever conscious of the difference in status between herself and the writer who was willing to receive her letters. She constantly apologises for her poor French and, as we shall see, Bernardin is not slow to correct her. She may well write incorrect French but she writes with fluency and energy and she reads with remarkable haste. In the letter of 7 July 1789 she explains that she is sending somebody to collect the books Bernardin has offered to lend her and by the 13 August she has read the first two volumes of the Études since she returns them saying that she was ‘enchanteée’ by the text. In the same letter she says that she is returning a collection of moral tales by Mme de Genlis, the Veillées du Château of 1784 and asks for the further volumes (the Veillées appeared in 4 volumes) saying that she is looking forward to seeing him again to say in person how much she was ‘enchanteée’ (she uses the same term again) by her reading of Bernardin’s work. Bernardin is obviously seeing Lucette regularly, suggesting perhaps that he was a regular visitor to the pension in which she lived. The lending of books continues through 1789. On 22 November 1789 she asks for the last two volumes of Mme de Genlis’s Adèle et Théodore (of 1782) and any ‘Voyage’ which might be of interest to her and just five days later she is returning them.20 The 1782 edition, in three volumes (460, 430 and 464 pages) would have represented a major challenge even to a French native speaker. She makes no comments, in the letter, about her interpretation of the novel, keeping her praise solely for Bernardin. In the same letter (of 27 November 1789 (BSP_01082)) she asks Bernardin whether she can borrow the ‘Eloise de Rousseau’. Rousseau’s major novel of 1761 was, again, a substantial challenge to a non-native speaker. The first edition appeared in seven volumes but there is no indication in the letters which edition Bernardin was lending Lucette. By the

20 This letter begins with a translation into French of Gay’s Fable, ‘The Shepherd and the Philosopher’. It arrives with no explanation and the conclusion of the letter simply says, ‘Voici Monsieur, la Fable que je vous ai promise depuis long temps. Puissiez vous trouver en la lisant une partie du plaisir que J’ai éprouvé en la traduisant pour vous’. The fable, which clearly would have pleased Bernardin, is the story of a shepherd who found truth not in books or in society but in nature. One is reminded of the conclusion of the later short novel, La Chaumière indienne of 1791: ‘Il faut chercher la vérité avec un cœur simple; on ne la trouve que dans la nature’.
22 December she has finished the novel and returns it to Bernardin without
comment.

We can only speculate about the relationship Bernardin had with his young
English correspondents. It is clear that they held him in high esteem and valued
his friendship. What is less clear is why Bernardin should have continued to
write to them even when he was complaining of being overburdened by
correspondence.21 Is there an ulterior motive to his contacts and visits? Was he
considering the possibility of finding a future wife through this activity? How
did he find the time to visit them and why was he so willing to lend them his
books? Is there a generous side to Bernardin that is not much visible in most of
the correspondence? Or were there other reasons for continuing these
exchanges?

There were some difficult moments in the epistolary exchanges and some
obvious misunderstandings. On 27 July 1789 Lucette writes to Bernardin saying
that she is astonished to receive a note from him accusing her, unjustly, of
writing a letter to him which was both full of compliments and which also
deceived him. She exclaims:

Je ne vous ai pas Monsieur, ni écrit, ni trompé, et Je ne consois pas qui cest qui a
pu prendre la liberté de vous écrire en mon nom. Je n’ai montré votre lettre a
personne et il est vrai que J’ai dis a mes sœurs que J’avoirs reçu une Lettre de
vous; et Je leur ai dis a peu près ce qu’elle contenoi, et l’embarras dans le quel Je
me trouvez pour y ‘répondre’ […] (BSP_01065)

Lucette fears that she has lost Bernardin’s friendship but is adamant that she
knows nothing about the mysterious letter. The letter seems not to have survived
and we may never know what it contained. But it is clear that it upset Bernardin
and it seems to have upset Lucette too. The matter was soon resolved,
nevertheless, though the correspondence fails to show us how. By 13 August
Lucette is writing as if nothing had happened; the letters are formal but not more
so than would be expected of a young person writing to a respected elder. By 27
November she is complaining that Bernardin is neglecting his English friends
but she supposes that this is due either to constraints of work or the bitterly cold
weather. She asks him to wrap himself up in his coat and to call on her during
the evening, something she says she would not do if they were in Margate (‘de
peur que le vent ne vous enlève dans le Ciel, et ne nous priva d’une personne
aussi nécessaire à l’humanité mais le vent d’ici ne souffle pas avec autant
d’impétuosité’ (BSP_01082). So did Lucette come from Margate? Could this

21For example, he writes in a letter to Hennin of 20 January 1789 (BSP_01021): ‘je vous
prie d’excuser la brieve de la presente par le nombre considerable de billets et de lettres
d’envoy que je suis obligé de faire à l’occasion de mes presents.’
Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s English Contacts during the French Revolution

explain why, when Monsieur and Madame de Boisguilbert left France in the early days of the Revolution, they emigrated to Margate? It is certain that Bernardin spoke to her about the Boiguilberts’ emigration to Margate as Lucette refers to the fact in one of her last letters to him: ‘Vous trouverez sans doute mes Lettres bien maussades , et bien ennuyeuse [sic] auprès de celles que vous recevrez de vos charmantes Dames de Montpellier et de Margate.’ Another letter, one of despair, of 27 July 1790, explains that she feels she must return home to England – her father has had a series of misfortunes (financial ones) and her mother is unwell, but she is also told that she should not go to Cornwall where her mother is, for reasons which are not explained to her. She is in evident anguish and she asks Bernardin for support:

J’ai besoin dans cet instant ci de toute votre philosophie, pour supporter mes malheurs. Lorsque Je n’avois que des petits désagrémens, J’avois la resource de vos conseils, vous me consoliez, et vous dissipiez ces petits nouages qui n’étoient rien en comparaison de ceux qui me menaces actuellement.

A correspondence can raise more questions than it can resolve but a sequence of letters can provide evidence of a reality which is rarely found elsewhere. In the letters between Bernardin and Lucette there is a genuine exchange and we do get the impression that Lucette’s words of praise are sincere and well considered. Bernardin had a reputation for being misanthropic and selfish and the exchanges over many years with his major correspondent, Hennin, a diplomat whom he first met in Poland, would tend to support that view. We see Bernardin seeking ways of securing his fortune and sometimes being petulant to a faithful friend. Here we get the impression that he has an interest in the welfare of his young English friends and that he is doing what he can to educate and improve them. Of course there might also be selfish motives in that he undertook much the same process with his young wife to be, Félicité Didot. If Bernardin had other motives other than generous assistance we may never know as the correspondence remains silent on a number of issues.

By July 1790 Lucette wrote to Bernardin asking if she could quote his name in support of an application she was making for a post with a certain marquise

22 See the letter from Mme de Boisguilbert (with a possible date of October 1789), Le Havre, 132:37-38 (BSP_01171).
23 The reference to Montpellier is to Mme de Krüdener who writes to Bernardin from that city in the early 1790s. This passage is from the letter of 14 October 1790 (BSP_01169).
24 Lucette makes a number of French errors in this letter written, no doubt, in some distress (BSP_01053).
25 See, for example, the letter he wrote to her complaining about the way she had done her hair (BSP_01325).
de Taluit (actually Mme de Talhouët). She is requesting a post as a ‘demoiselle de compagnie’ a term which is not in the Academy dictionary of 1798 and yet which is clearly understood by both parties. We must assume that Bernardin agreed to support her for by October of the same year she is working for the marquise and writing a substantial letter from Brittany. She is delighted with her new position and she describes her situation and life in the provinces. Rennes is a fine town, she says, but all the nobility seems to have left, either to go to their estates or to emigrate. This seems to be the first explicit mention of a Revolution that was taking place as these letters were being written and exchanged. She delights in the pleasures of the countryside, writing words which no doubt found sympathy with the recipient: ‘Je puis vous assurer que Je vois l’humble Chaumière d’un Paysan avec plus de satisfaction que le superbe, et magnifique bâtiment des Lamarque.’

1791 finds Lucette back in Paris but we know nothing of the circumstances of her return. An undated letter, probably of 1791, seems to be the last: ‘Mes momens désormais seront bien courts en france, et ceux que Je pourris avoir l’honneur de passer avec vous me seront doublement precieux quoiqu’ils augmenteroient mes regrets’ (BSP_01191). This is almost certainly the last of the letters she sent – we presume she returned to England and disappeared from Bernardin’s consciousness. And with a name like Chappell there is little chance of us being able to identify her.

As I said at the beginning, it is not easy to interpret the sense of some these letters nor always to understand the motivations of those writing them. We do have one very rough draft of a letter which Bernardin prepared for Lucette and which we can presume that he sent. It is undated but her name is clearly visible on the manuscript. He is making comments about her French and particularly about her use of the term ‘Mon cher monsieur’. This is a term she uses three times in the letters we have, all of which date from 1790. The draft, reproduced below, is extremely difficult to read in places. However, we see the following:

je prendrai la liberté de vous faire quelques observations qui concernent la langue. vous m’apellés, Mon cher monsieur. Cela ne veut pas dire comme vous le

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26 Letter of 27 July 1790 (BSP_01053).
27 For a discussion of the role of ‘demoiselle de compagnie’ see my ‘Writing for Charity: Mme de Genlis and Thérésina’ in Eighteenth-Century Fiction, 17 (2005), 537-50.
28 The reference is obscure and the name itself is difficult to decipher, but the sense is clear. Is this a reference to François Lamarque (1753-1839), a member of the Convention?
29 The expression is found in BSP_01189 which is undated, BSP_01053 of 27 July 1790 and in BSP_01169 of 14 October 1790.
pensés Monsieur, qui metes cher, on dit bien mon cher ami, mon cher amant, le mot de cher ajoute a lamitié, mais pas devant Monsieur, il signifie moins que Monsieur tout seul ce nest pas une bizarrie de la langue, jen crois trouver la raison, cest que toutes les fois quon accepterait cela monsieur est jointe a une expression de lame le compliment tue le sentiment de sorte que dans ce cas mon cher monsieur ne signifie rien du tout, de la vient que les gens a protection sen servent frequemment, il signifie une sorte de protection, par ce quill ny a que la protection qui se permete daborder[?] des gens de mots, cest ainsi que lon dit mon maître, mon ami, mon cher monsieur, ma chere demoiselle. je vous previens de cela parce que vous etes ètrangere, et parce quetant sensible vous ne devés parler quavec votre ame. [see Fig. 1-1]

Whether Lucette was able to grasp the subtlety of the message is not clear – but it is true that in 1791 we never find her using the expression again.

The rest of the letter is extremely difficult to decipher with any sense of accuracy and we must do more work on it. What we can see is that Bernardin is indeed replying to her letters and offering advice, attempting to improve her French language in the manner of a gentle educator.

What can we conclude from this rapid survey of a small corpus of letters? That Bernardin is being generous with his time and offering assistance to young women. There may have been ulterior motives but the letters do not tell us that. What we get too is the evidence of a friendly exchange of books, of ideas, with suggestions about how to conduct oneself, evidence of busy social engagement from a figure who was supposed to be distant and misanthropic. We also get a real sense of the esteem in which Bernardin was held – two Englishwomen make contact with him because of his literary reputation and they are not disappointed by his response. We get the impression that in 1789 and 1790 life is going on much as normal, with only the slightest consideration of the revolutionary events taking place around the correspondents. There are tracks to be followed, of which the Malthus one might be the most profitable. Jane Dalton was well connected and probably quite wealthy, with a house in the country (Guildford) and in London. Lucette Chappell seems to have returned to England in 1791, perhaps to Margate, perhaps to Cornwall, and we never get a glimpse of her again. There are printing practices evoked in the letters which are of interest and which need to be studied – but these are considered elsewhere.30

Studying other people’s letters is a fascinating occupation but it has its frustrations. The letters are written for particular recipients, not us, and no concessions are made. It is supposed and expected that the reader will understand the allusions and the references, and this is no doubt true for the intended recipient. Why, when Paris was so small and the people were able to

see and visit each other with some ease were letters sent at all? We have seen, I think, that letters have a function and a status that other forms of discourse do not. They do constitute ‘preuves écrites’, even if it is not not always easy to see what is being proved and whether the evidence is reliable; they do at least signify presence and awareness and they bring alive people who have disappeared from our consciousness.

Fig. 1-1. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to Lucette Chappell [1791], Le Havre, 145:B40 (BSP_01098) [1790 ?]
Beginning with the translation of the *Henriade* by John Lockman in 1732, Voltaire’s works have never lacked an interested English translator and an eager audience. Thus it was not surprising when a two-volume translation of *La Pucelle* appeared in London in 1758 (see Appendix A). In twenty-four cantos, the translation would appear to be based on the 1757 unauthorized or pirate Geneva edition likewise in twenty-four cantos. According to André Michel Rousseau, the British seem to have been unaware of the many manuscripts of the mock-epic dating back to the 1730s. The first mentions in the British periodical press date from the 1758 publication notices of the translation in the *Critical Review* (1758, vi.346-47) and the *Monthly Review* (1758, xix.309). While some decried the ‘profaneness of the most flagitious dissolute scenes’, others found the *Pucelle* to be ‘the wittiest poem I ever read’ (Wilkes in Rousseau, *L’Angleterre et Voltaire*, 1976, iii, 644). Written in quite pedestrian prose, this anonymous first translation captures little of the malicious wit and ribald incongruities of the original.

The next translation was of the additional canto (to become the eighteenth) inserted by Voltaire in the *Contes de Guillaume Vadé*, first published in 1764. The translation was included in volume XXV of the edition of *The Works* by Tobias Smollett in 1765 with the title ‘Canto of an Epic Poem. Composed by Jerome Carre. Found amongst his papers after his decease’. In octosyllabic

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1 We are grateful to Louise Lee and T. E. D. Braun for sending us copies of the paper presented by Pat Lee at ASECS in Montreal on 1 April 2006. His two handouts are printed here as Appendix A (Bibliography of English Translations of Voltaire’s *La Pucelle*) and Appendix B (Samples of English Translations of *La Pucelle*). We have not altered the version of the paper found in his files except to adapt the text to the style of the present collection and to correct a few typographical errors; we have also left indications of parenthetical remarks that were made during the presentation.
verse, this version approximates much more closely the rhythms and sprightliness of Voltaire’s decasyllables. It is regrettable that the unknown poet who undertook this canto for Smollett did not tackle the entire poem. Perhaps it would have been too risky for the English publishers to include the entire *Pucelle*, although the ‘authorized’ version had been available since 1762.

The 1780s saw the publication of two anonymous verse translations of the first cantos. In 1780, a translation of the first canto was published by George Kearsly in Fleet Street. It imitated the decasyllabic verse of Voltaire and showed some promise but was taken no further. Instead, five years later, another translation of the first canto was published by George and Thomas Wilkie in St. Paul’s Church-Yard. In octosyllabic verse, the poem is preceded by a translator’s preface in which he muses about the difficulties of translating satiric verse from the French wherein ‘the style […] is close, comprest, and abrupt’ (vi). Describing himself as a ‘writer of amusement, and not of profession’ (v), he begs the indulgence of his reader for any latitude he has taken in the hope that he has

neither been so frequent, nor so licentious in the use of it, as to destroy the general sense, and spirit of the author, to amplify his compression into weakness, or overlay the character of his wit with superfluous ornament. (vi)

He states that, depending on the reception of this first canto, others will follow to the press. And indeed the next year we find the second, third, fourth and fifth cantos published by R. Faulder in New-Bond Street. The whole was reissued in 1789 as a ‘Second Edition’ by three London booksellers, E. and T. Williams, C. Stalker, and T. Hookham. The choice of octosyllabic verse and perhaps a certain similarity of style beg the question if this translator is not the same as the poet who tried the translation of the additional canto found in the *Tales of William Vade* in 1765. Perhaps it’s just the rhythm of the eight syllables which breathlessly race on in exorable fashion from line to line.

The next translation, the last of the eighteenth century, has been repeatedly attributed over the years to Catherine Maria Dawson Bury, known to history as Lady Charleville. Several years ago I debunked the attribution of a 1797 translation of the *Henriade* to the same Lady Charleville (it was in reality by the Irish poet Patrick Lattin). Today it is my duty to deprive her likewise of the honor of this translation of *La Pucelle*. Catherine Maria Dawson (1762-1851) had been educated in a French convent along with her sister, Louisa-Adelaide, who married a French nobleman, the count de Seissan, in Languedoc. (Parenthetical remarks on the story of this sister, a true Gothic novel). Catherine Maria returned to Ireland where she married first James Tisdale (also Tisdall) who died on 14 November 1797, probably as a result of an epileptic seizure. Catherine then married, on 4 June 1798, a family friend and the co-executor of