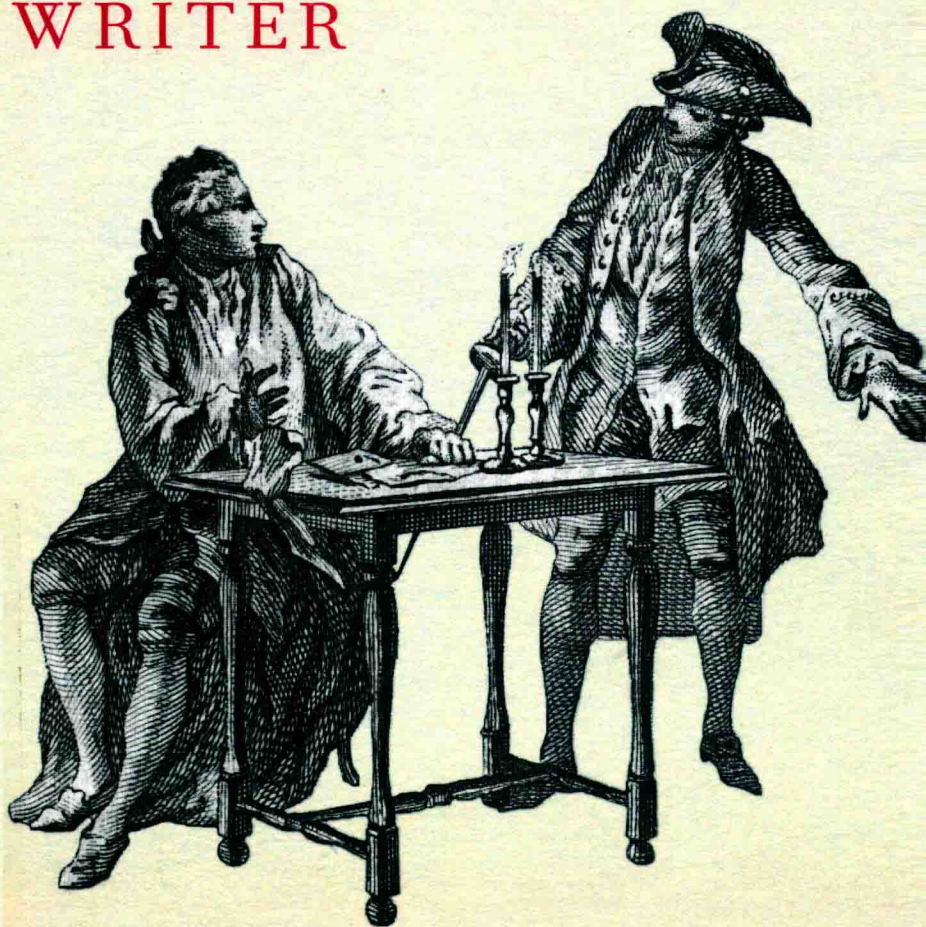


OXFORD

ANGER, GRATITUDE,
AND THE
ENLIGHTENMENT
WRITER



PATRICK COLEMAN

Anger, Gratitude, and the Enlightenment Writer

PATRICK COLEMAN



OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi

Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi

New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece

Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore

South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

© Patrick Coleman 2011

The moral rights of the author have been asserted
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 2011

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose the same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010936877

Typeset by SPI Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India

Printed in Great Britain

on acid-free paper by

MPG Books Group, Bodmin and King's Lynn

ISBN 978-0-19-958934-0

3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

ANGER, GRATITUDE, AND THE
ENLIGHTENMENT WRITER

Preface

This book offers a new perspective on Enlightenment conceptions of sociability by exploring the ways eighteenth-century French writers define, express, and critique the two emotions of anger and gratitude. When is anger condemned as a failure of self-control, and when is it praised as a vindication of human dignity? Who is entitled to get angry, and at whom? Who is expected to be grateful, and is it always right to think of gratitude as a kind of obligation? Answers to such questions tell us much about how feelings are socialized and how social expectations shape emotional dispositions. They also provide a path to understanding a fundamental tension in modern culture: how the aspiration to personal independence may be reconciled—or not—with the recognition that the benevolence or hostility of other people, indeed, of the world itself, plays an essential role in the constitution of the self.

Conflicting judgments about the appropriateness of anger and gratitude also reveal a fundamental ambivalence in Enlightenment thinking about the kind of norms that should regulate human interaction. Should social life be based solely on legal rights and duties, applicable impersonally to all? Or should it be shaped by informal and more flexible rules of personal acknowledgment, backed by the pressure of opinion rather than the power of law? By eliminating occasions for personal slight or favor, the first of these schemes would provide welcome relief from the burdens of anger and gratitude. According to the second view, some readiness to give and take offense, and to grant and return a favor, is assumed to be a crucial dimension of human dignity, of what one owes to oneself or to others, and should be cultivated rather than curtailed. This dilemma is no less acute in contemporary thinking about managing human interactions in a globalized culture than it was to writers of the French Enlightenment.

Providing a comprehensive treatment of these topics would require marshaling a range of documentary and material evidence much wider than I can handle here. This book focuses more particularly on emotional transactions involving anger and gratitude—and the possibility or desirability of transcending such emotions—as they are dramatized in the work of four great eighteenth-century French writers, and especially of the one in whose person all these transactions find a symbolic focus,

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Like Rousseau, Challe, Marivaux, and Diderot deploy the rhetoric of emotion to praise or to criticize, to urge their readers to protest against what they judge to be wrong or to foster appreciation for what they think is right. These writers enjoyed no official status as ministers of church or state, and so they navigated a perilous course between the prickliness of political authorities and the fickle expectations of their readers. As they did so, they also found in the language of and about anger and gratitude a resource for affirming in plausible ways the dignity of their vocation and the value of their work. The interplay between these two layers of their discourse gives their use of 'emotion' language a special richness and heuristic value for approaching the role of that language in the period as a whole.

Earlier versions of Chapters 3 and 5 were published as 'The Intelligence of Mind and Heart: *Reconnaissance* in *La Vie de Marianne*', in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18.1 (2005–6), and 'Rousseau's Quarrel with Gratitude', in Victoria Kahn, Neil Saccamano, and Daniela Coli, eds, *Politics and the Passions, 1500–1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). I wish to thank the editors for their hospitality and the publishers for their permission to reprint. An early version of Chapter 2 was presented in 2005 at a conference sponsored by the Centre d'Étude de la Langue et de la Littérature Françaises des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles at the Université de Paris-Sorbonne Paris IV; I am grateful to its director at the time, Sylvain Menant, as well as to Geneviève Artigas-Menant, an authority on Robert Challe, for their welcome and useful suggestions. I wish also to thank the Huntington Library, and its curator of rare books, Stephen Tabor, for the jacket illustration. It is the third of the set of engravings supervised by Rousseau for *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, and it seemed to me to be particularly apt, since the scene to which it refers (Part II, letter 10) is one which moves from anger to gratitude. Thanks also to Bruce Whiteman of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library for his advice, and to Michelle Lee for her work in compiling the bibliography.

This book would not have been completed without the help of many people. In my own academic field, Felicity Baker, Michel Delon, Bernadette Fort, Victoria Kahn, Judith A. Miller, Philip Stewart, and especially Benoît Melançon and Stephen Werner have provided me with encouragement and insightful comments; Peter Reill, as Director of the UCLA Center for 17th and 18th Century Studies, has been a constant source of support; and Julie Hayes has been a particularly attentive reader over many years. I am thankful to other friends, including Linda Leith, Gabriel Moyal, and Nancey Murphy, for expanding my

literary, philosophical, and theological horizons. It has been a pleasure to work with the staff at Oxford University Press, and I especially appreciate the support I have received from my editor, Jacqueline Baker, as well as from Judith Luna at World's Classics. Above all, I am grateful more than I can say to my wife Susan and my daughter Judy, as well as to my brother John, my sister Veronica, and their families, for all their love.

P.C.

Abbreviations

- C Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, tr. Angela Scholar and ed. Patrick Coleman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
- CW *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, 12 vols to date (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1990–)
- D Robert Challe, *Difficultés sur la religion proposées au père Malebranche*, ed. Frédéric Deloffre and François Moureau (Geneva: Droz, 2000)
- E Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, tr. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979)
- G 1 *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. and tr. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- G 2 *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. and tr. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- IF Robert Challe, *Les Illustres Françaises*, ed. Jacques Cormier and Frédéric Deloffre (Paris: Livre de poche, 1996)
- LLL A. W. Preston, *Life, Love, and Laughter in the Reign of Louis XIV: A New Translation of Robert Challe's Novel 'Les Illustres Françaises'* (Brighton: Book Guild, 2008)
- OC Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969–95)
- RHLF Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France
- SVEC Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century
- V Denis Diderot, *Œuvres*, ed. Laurent Versini, 5 vols (Paris: Laffont, 1994–7)

Note: In selecting translations of Rousseau for use in this book, I have considered both quality and wide accessibility. With the exception of *Émile*, all the works cited here are available in the *Collected Writings*, and since this translation is keyed to the pages of the French 'Pléiade' edition, readers using it should have no trouble locating particular passages. Translations of other authors that are not specifically credited are my own.

Contents

<i>Abbreviations</i>	xi
1. Anger, Gratitude, and Enlightenment Sociability	1
Anger and cultural status	5
Gratitude as burden and gift	16
Emotions as relations and judgments	23
2. Anger and Reconciliation in Robert Challe	33
<i>Difficultés sur la religion</i>	35
<i>Les Illustres Françaises</i>	45
A hard-won harmony	51
The moral relief of clear judgment	58
Anxiety about answers	62
Anger and integration	67
3. <i>Reconnaissance</i> in <i>La Vie de Marianne</i>	72
Marianne and gratitude as success story	75
Tervire's failed dramaturgy of recognition	86
Gratitude and authorship	91
4. Anger and Authorship in Rousseau	95
Anger good and bad	96
Anger and the writing self	103
From Vincennes to the two <i>Discours</i>	108
<i>Lettre à d'Alembert</i> : comic, tragic, and melancholy anger	123
<i>Julie</i> and the containment of anger	133
<i>Émile</i> and the 'Profession de foi'	137
5. Rousseau's Quarrel with Gratitude	155
<i>Discours sur l'inégalité</i>	159
<i>Du contrat social</i>	166
<i>Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse</i>	175
Émile, the tutor, and the Vicaire savoyard	182
Unfinished business	189

6. Resentment and Reflection in <i>Le Neveu de Rameau</i>	191
Anger and satiric dignity	198
The <i>pacte tacite</i>	203
The rights of genius	207
Admiration, obligation, and envy	210
Beyond anger and gratitude: the sublime	216
Conclusion	226
<i>Bibliography</i>	232
<i>Index</i>	245

1

Anger, Gratitude, and Enlightenment Sociability

This book started with some questions about Rousseau. Did he think anger was ever an appropriate emotion, one it was good to feel and right to express? His writings present two diametrically opposed positions on the subject. The educational treatise *Émile* cites with approval Seneca's definition of anger as a disease of the soul and the enemy of reason.¹ By detaching himself from external goods and cultivating self-sufficiency, the Stoic sage limits his vulnerability to frustration and insult. Impervious to offense, he will not succumb to anger but rather maintain the equanimity of a rational being. Yet, Rousseau adopted as his motto a line from one of Juvenal's angriest satires.² Appealing in the *Lettre à d'Alembert* to the authority of the Roman satirist, he declared that in a corrupt society only righteous indignation proves the writer's personal commitment to truth and justice. To call for philosophical calm was to excuse complacency. As I explored the contexts in which these declarations are made and the intellectual traditions on which they draw I was intrigued by the ways in which the tension between them illuminates other aspects of Rousseau's thought. Indeed, looking at the ways anger is

¹ See the title page of *Émile*, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969–95), iv. 239. See also *Emile, or On Education*, tr. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 31. References to these editions will henceforth be abbreviated as *OC* and *E*. The reference is to Seneca, *De ira*, II.13, which declares that anger is a curable illness. See Seneca, *Moral and Political Essays*, ed. John M. Cooper and J. F. Procopé (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 53.

² 'Vitam impendere vero' (to risk one's life on the truth), Juvenal, *Satires* IV.91. The poet is attacking the courtier Crispus, 'who never swam against the flood; he was not the kind of patriot who could speak his mind freely and risk his life for the truth'. *Juvenal and Persius*, ed. and tr. Susanna Morton Braund (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 205. Rousseau first publicly identified this phrase as his motto in his *Lettre à d'Alembert*, *OC* v. 120 n. He also placed it on the title page of his *Lettres écrites de la montagne* (1764), *OC* iii. 682.

discussed and dramatized by Rousseau and other writers of his day opened up fresh perspectives on conceptions of self and sociability in the broader French Enlightenment.

Important insights might be gained from a similar study of other passions or emotions, but in this study I have selected only one, the positive counterpart to anger that is gratitude. If, as de Jaucourt writes in the *Encyclopédie* article 'Passions', 'la haine que nous sentons envers ceux qui nous font du tort, c'est la colère' (the hatred we feel toward those who do us wrong, is anger), the opposite of anger is 'reconnaissance', or 'l'amour que nous avons pour quelqu'un, à cause du bien qu'il nous a fait, ou qu'il a l'intention de nous faire' (the love we have for someone because of the good he has done us or that he intends to do us).³ As we shall see, Enlightenment writers take positions on gratitude that are as richly ambivalent as those they adopt on anger. Placing discussions of gratitude alongside those of anger gives us, I believe, a focused and economical way of framing what is new in Enlightenment debates about human interaction. Declarations of anger and gratitude often do more than illustrate a range of reactions to specific situations. They include judgments about whether the world as a whole favors or frustrates human happiness. In the face of evils offensive to reason, can the universe still be understood as the creation of a benevolent personal divinity to which we owe gratitude? Does it make sense, do we in fact owe it to our dignity as moral beings, to get angry with the world as it is? Or should we free ourselves from anger or gratitude altogether and dismiss such questions as reflecting a fundamental mistake about the nature and origin of the universe?

This debate has a long history, of course, as we can see from the Book of Job, and more generally from the tension between the wisdom and the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. Contrasting assessments of emotion and equanimity also feature prominently in classical antiquity. 'Anger' is the first word of the *Iliad*, and discussions of anger and

³ Lists of contrary emotions have varied widely over the centuries, indeed what counts as an emotion or passion, of the body or of the soul, is a longstanding subject of dispute. For the discussion in early modern France, see Anthony Levi, *French Moralists: The Theory of the Passions 1585 to 1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). Most emotions are probably too multi-dimensional to have simple opposites. See Robert C. Solomon, *True to our Feelings: What our Emotions Are Really Telling Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 176. Yet, anger and gratitude are often paired, beginning with Epicurus in his 'Letter to Herodotus'. See *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, tr. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson (2nd edn, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 13. In terms of our relationships with other people, at least, there is a good case for viewing anger and gratitude as opposites. Another pair of emotional dispositions that would be relevant for the kind of study I propose would be trust and suspicion.

gratitude are a recurring feature in Greek and Roman writers, of whom Lucretius is perhaps the most important for the French Enlightenment.⁴ However, the philosophers of antiquity focused primarily on helping thoughtful individuals come to terms with their anxieties, not on changing the practices of society at large. Hellenistic thinking about emotions, for example, for all its conceptual boldness, never challenged the system of benefaction and gratitude pervasive in Mediterranean civilization, nor did it undermine the role of honor and status-consciousness in defining and defending social hierarchies. There were resources for such a challenge in Christian scripture and tradition,⁵ but these were blunted by the church's political establishment, and counterbalanced by the otherworldly emphasis of its spirituality. In the cultural situation of Enlightenment Europe, however, insulating the inner lives of privileged souls from the general life of the world seemed a less appealing ideal, and one which in any case was proving difficult to sustain. The confessional wars that followed the Reformation had fostered widespread skepticism about religious certainties. Late seventeenth-century debates over theodicy, for example, engaged a broad section of the reading public. Scientific advances made large-scale transformations of the world conceivable, while the emergence of new conceptions of human association based on natural rights, consent, and contract invited—at least potentially—the involvement of all men in the legitimization and critique of political associations. Enlightenment analyses of emotions in individuals are thus often colored by questions about the religious or metaphysical underpinnings of human interaction, and concerns about the implications for social and political practices of unleashing or disciplining the emotions.

As a literary scholar, I am interested in the ways the resources of form, language, and genre of a text shape the articulation, illustration, and

⁴ For Homer, see Leonard Charles Muellner, *The Anger of Achilles: Mēnis in Greek Epic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996). For an over view of Lucretius' influence on the *philosophes*, see Eric Baker, 'Lucretius in the European Enlightenment', in Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 274–88, and Silvine Albertan-Coppola, 'L'Anti-épcurianisme: l'épcurianisme des Lumières', *Dix-huitième siècle* 35 (2003), 309–18. In addition to the more general discussions of emotion in Greek and Roman antiquity cited below, see *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4*, translated and with commentary by Margaret Graver (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002) and Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007).

⁵ For an overview, see David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2000).

imaginative testing of ideas in the text as what might be called a structure of feeling.⁶ This book does not, therefore, seek to present a comprehensive account of Enlightenment philosophies of emotion.⁷ Nor does it focus on the historical patterns of gift-giving or other forms of symbolic exchange that called for grateful or (in the case of failure or misfire) angry response. There is a burgeoning literature on these topics, and I can only refer the reader to some works I have found to be particularly relevant to this study.⁸ Instead, I examine the ways in which the themes of anger and gratitude are presented in some key texts of the French eighteenth century. I also look at the role of these emotions in writers' reflections on the resources (literary, cultural, or social) available to them as authors, and on the public for which they write. I argue that because writers in eighteenth-century France were gaining new importance as public intellectuals and representative cultural figures, the exploration of anger and gratitude as themes in their works also reflects evolving attitudes toward the society that nurtures or frustrates their status claims. The way these emotions are appropriated, denounced, or transcended, I would argue, is more than a matter of individual psychology. It engages larger questions about the cultural life of their time. Sustained attention to key works of literature, broadly defined as including any work displaying a concern for shaping its material and the reader's response to it, can, I believe, offer a distinctive contribution to historical understanding.

⁶ The term 'structures of feeling' comes from Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128–35.

⁷ Scholarship on this question has until recently focused mostly on the Enlightenment's 'rehabilitation' of the passions in general, in opposition to Augustinian critiques of the irrationality of emotion as a sign of humanity's fallen state. See Roger Mercier, *La Réhabilitation de la nature humaine 1700–1750* (Villemonble: La Balance, 1960). As mentioned below, we do not find French equivalents to Hume's or Smith's reflective analysis of particular passions as part of an overall moral philosophy.

⁸ These include Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000); Maurice Godelier, *L'Enigme du don* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), which reconsiders the legacy of Marcel Mauss's *Essai sur le don* (1924); Aafke E. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jacques Derrida, *Donner le temps* (Paris: Galilée, 1989) and *Donner la mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1999); Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant donné: essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1997); John Milbank, 'Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic', *Modern Theology* 11 (1995), 119–61. A good brief survey of this literature, secular as well as theological, may be found in Risto Saarinen, *God and the Gift: An Ecumenical Theology of Giving* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005).

The chapters that follow look at writings in a variety of genres: narrative fiction, satirical dialogue, philosophical treatise, and polemical discourse. In each case, I have focused on the relationship between the discussion of anger or gratitude in the text, and the dramatization of these emotions in the rhetorical stance of the work as a whole. The emphasis throughout is on the singularity of each text, but my readings have naturally been prompted by a number of initial hypotheses about the contexts—historical and philosophical—within which the text might best be understood. The framing of these contexts has in turn been influenced by the work of reading, and so in what follows I sketch the approach to Enlightenment anger and gratitude that I have found fruitful in the work of interpretation. I hope it will show how attending to the discourse about emotions can be a valuable heuristic tool in studying aspects of eighteenth-century French culture which continue to shape the ways we understand our own.

ANGER AND CULTURAL STATUS

When is anger justified, and who may claim the right to be angry? Slightings may be ignored or overlooked, wrongs may be redressed through negotiation, and either may be forgiven, but what makes them offensive in the first place, such that anger becomes an expected and appropriate emotional response? The answers to such questions as these tell us a lot about the ethos of a particular society. How the questions themselves are formulated, and whether the answers given are themselves matters of consensus or contest, can be important indicators of cultural self-understanding. The same is true for a related but different question: when and for whom is anger thought to be a good in itself and not merely a circumstantially justified emotion? The capacity to experience and express anger, on another's behalf, but also on one's own, might be a desirable feature of the kind of personality a society admires, at least in some of its members—a warrior nobility, for example—or, in an agonistic society like that of ancient Athens, in the citizen body as a whole.⁹ On the other hand, and even in that same culture, the ability to resist or transcend anger may be made a marker of spiritual status; it may be viewed as a crucial qualification for a ruler, a judge—or a writer,

⁹ See David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

as illustrated by the famous *sine ira et studio* in Tacitus' preface to his *Histories*.¹⁰

In eighteenth-century France, the terms in which anger was discussed were inherited from a variety of sources. These included the poets and philosophers of classical antiquity, as well as the Bible and Christian tradition. The traditional vocabulary of the humors continued to play a role alongside the language of the new natural sciences, as we see in a work such as Descartes's *Passions de l'âme*.¹¹ However, 'enlightened' writing presents a number of distinctive features in its reflections on the relationship between emotion and sociability. The first is a growing tendency to give significant moral weight to the anger expressed by people of inferior status: to commoners, to women, even occasionally to children. This trend was by no means comprehensive. In literature, the anger of peasants, servants, and the like was still largely confined to comedy, since it was a traditional target for mockery. That such people might have the right to take offense, especially at the behavior of their betters, was still seen as absurd. For all their ironic questioning of social attitudes, Diderot's novel *Jacques le fataliste* and his satirical dialogue *Le Neveu de Rameau* continue to reflect this assumption in their depiction of the lower classes. Women's anger, too, was a longstanding object for derision, and it is still presented as such in the Mme Dutour episode of Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne*, although here, as in other instances, it is the character's social status more than her gender that makes her anger comic. There was one important exception to the treatment of female anger: in noble heroines whose love was spurned anger took on tragic grandeur. Yet, if the heroine's anger led her to become implacable in revenge, pathos could easily shade into horror. Traditionally, the depiction of such horrors was mostly confined to theatrical tragedy, as in Corneille's *Médée*, where it is kept at a distance by strict conventions of speech and decorum. In the eighteenth century, however, it finds more contemporary and unfettered expression in novels such as Laclos's *Liaisons dangereuses* or Sade's *Juliette*, where the frustrations of women's

¹⁰ Tacitus, *Histories* I.1, variously translated as 'without hatred or affection' or 'without either bitterness or partiality'. The Latin *ira* has of course a somewhat different range of meanings than does the modern *anger* or *colère*, and the same may be said for the Greek *thumos* or *orgē*, but these complexities of historical semantics (and the vexed question of how they were understood by French writers in our period) cannot be pursued here.

¹¹ Carole Talon-Hugon, *Les Passions rêvées par la raison: essai sur la théorie des passions de Descartes et de quelques-uns de ses contemporains* (Paris: Vrin, 2002).

lives were portrayed in more familiar domestic and social settings. In these works the woman's anger is directed not only at an unfaithful lover but at anyone who limits the scope of her action or the fulfillment of her desires, whatever form they take. Such novels represented a more direct challenge to readers' assumptions about gender roles than did tragedy or opera. Yet their subversive intentions only confirmed the longstanding view that female anger threatened the very fabric of society—a prospect that delighted Sade even as it made Laclos shudder. The exceptions to this paradigm are not always found where one would expect them. In his *Émile*, Rousseau, often decried as an anti-feminist, gave his ideal woman Sophie a legitimate claim to anger.¹²

The main novelty of the period, however, was to pay serious attention to the anger of men who believed their intelligence and sensibility entitled them to social recognition above and beyond what was warranted by their birth. Rousseau, again, is the outstanding case. His angry response to perceived slight, even on the part of those who offered to be his patrons and friends, and even more, his claim to determine for himself what *counted* as a slight, offended many people in return, but it also puzzled and intrigued them by the force of its conviction. Rousseau's protest at being wronged spoke to a slowly developing appreciation among traditional elites for the social, and not just the intellectual or artistic, dignity of talented commoners. Just as important was a corresponding shift in the attitude of the reading public. By virtue of their own felt capacity to respond with sensitivity and sympathy to the works of writers like Rousseau, ordinary readers saw themselves as sharing in the author's status—a claim manifested in their decision to take up the pen themselves and write to the author.¹³ In their identification with the writer, they also appropriated for themselves his new-found entitlement to anger. In the generation of Robespierre which grew up reading Rousseau, this sense of justified indignation at the circumstances that blocked the careers of a growing class of educated but underemployed young men helped transform a revolt into a revolution. Anger at slights to the self and indignation at injustice done to the people as a whole were fused into one great emotion endowed with quasi-sacred significance. In the past, only a traditional authority figure

¹² Rousseau, *Émile*, in *OC* iv. 754.

¹³ See Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Claude Labrosse, *Lire au XVIII^e siècle: 'La Nouvelle Héloïse' et ses lecteurs* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1985).