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A study of Madame De Duras

Rosalie Ophelia Whitmore

Atlanta University

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A STUDY OF
MADAME DE DURAS

A THESIS
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BY

ROSALE OPHELIA WHITMORE

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PREFACE

There has always been a tendency to place emphasis on those things with which one comes in contact most often, and to neglect the minor factors which play a very definite part in bringing into existence these more important things. Without a doubt this same situation exists in literature. The usual recourse is to emphasize the contributions of the major writers, whom the world knows and recognizes as such, neglecting those who are not so well known, but who did contribute something to the success of these better known writers.

The value of this study, then, lies in the fact that it gives the reader an acquaintance with, and an appreciation for Madame de Duras, whose literary talent has lain in relative obscurity; it reveals to the reader the part she has played in the development of French literature, as well as her role in the political and social activities during the Restoration.

The method of procedure employed is to give, in the first place, a biographical study of Madame de Duras, emphasizing her relationship with Chateaubriand, since it was through him, as well as for him, that she played her greatest political role. Through this medium one gains an insight into the political and social conditions of her time. The second step is to analyze the works of Madame de Duras, to justify the statement that she possessed literary talent, by showing that her writings were of unusual quality. Through this analysis one also gains a better understanding of her own character.
The study is divided, then, into two parts. The first part is entirely biographical, including a detailed account of Madame de Duras' relationship with Chateaubriand, and excerpts from their correspondence. The parts of letters cited in this study are not taken from the original, but are quoted from Bardoux: *La Duchesse de Duras*, the main source of all biographical materials. The writer gratefully acknowledges the efforts of Professor Mercer Cook for making access to this book possible, and for the help he gave, which was of inestimable value in making the study. Sincere appreciation is also extended to Mrs. William Geter Thomas, whose suggestions and discussions proved very beneficial.

The second part of the study consists of the analysis of Madame de Duras' published works, the two novels, *Carica* and *Edouard*; and diverse comments on her other works. Included in this part is a brief discussion of the evolution of the conception of the Negro in French literature until the abolition of slavery in the colonies, and the writer's interpretation of Madame de Duras' conception of the Negro.

It is hoped that this study will inspire others to bring into the light other writers whose genius would otherwise be like the flower of which Thomas Gray speaks in his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*:

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, And waste its sweetness in the desert air."
PART I

THE LIFE OF MADAME DE DURAS.

A STUDY OF HER RELATIONSHIP WITH CHATEAUBRIAND

Madame de Duras was born Claire-Louise-Rose Bonne de Kersaint on March 22, 1777. Her father was Admiral Guy de Coëtquidan, count of Kersaint, one of the most highly esteemed naval officers of his time. Her mother was Claire-Louise-Françoise de Paul d'Alessio d'Eragny, niece of the governor of Martinique, under whom Monsieur de Kersaint was assigned his naval duties. However, the union of these two was not successful; Monsieur and Madame de Kersaint separated in 1792.

When the young Claire was twelve years old, she was placed in the convent of Panthémont, where most young girls of the French aristocracy were sent. She spent two years here, and they were probably the most care-free years of her life. At the age of fourteen, she left the convent, only to meet the Revolution, which, as we shall see later, left a deep impression on her.

While Monsieur de Kersaint kept up his stormy life on the sea, Claire and her mother remained in Paris. Madame de Kersaint owned some property in Martinique, and after the Revolution, there was the matter of collecting the remains of a fortune that had been confiscated as a result of her

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1 There is some controversy as to this date. In this instance, the writer cites Bardoux: La Duchesse de Duras. The Nouvelle Biographie Générale gives 1778. The same controversy surrounds the date of Madame de Duras' death, Bardoux giving 1828, and the aforementioned encyclopedia 1829. The writer still cites Bardoux.
emigration. But after having gone through so many misfortunes, Madame de Kersaint's mind had been weakened, and she was unable to manage the property. Thus, the young Claire had to count on herself alone. So in 1793, she and her mother went to Bordeaux, and obtained passports for America. While at Bordeaux, they received news of Monsieur de Kersaint's death. In addition to his life on the sea, he had been very active in politics, and had played a commendable role at the Convention. He was always protesting against the unjust actions of the government, and defending the innocent. During this period of disorder following the Revolution, he, along with many others of his group, was tried and condemned to die on the guillotine. On December 5, 1793, he was executed.

This was a crushing blow to Claire, who adored her father. But in spite of her despair, she and her mother left for America, arriving in June, 1794; later they went to Martinique. It was during this time that she came in contact with the Negro race, about which she was to write later in one of her novels.

After having arranged the business concerning Madame de Kersaint's property, they returned to Europe. They went first to Switzerland, where they spent several weeks; from there, they went to London.

In London, Claire met Amédée Bretagne-Malo Dufort de Duras, a scion of one of the most illustrious families of France. His father had been commander-in-chief of the National Guards at Guyenne; his mother was the daughter of the Duke of Noailles-Mouchy, Marshal of France. It was most

1 Emigration of the nobles was caused by the Revolution, and those nobles who sought refuge in other countries were called "émigrés". Madame de Kersaint was one of those who had emigrated during this time.
likely the intelligence of Claire de Kersaint that attracted Amédée de Duras. It has been suggested, however, that her fortune added something to her attraction. At any rate, after a courtship of several months, they were married in London, in 1797. For the next few years, Madame de Duras devoted herself to her home, and to her own intellectual development; she learned English, Italian and Latin. In the meantime, she was hoping for a son; but it was a daughter instead, to whom she gave birth, and whom she named Félicie. Two years later, her second daughter, Clara, was born.

In 1800, Madame de Duras returned to Paris, to see her mother-in-law. After spending several months there, she returned to England, in 1801. Later she made several trips to southern France, where she was joined by Monsieur de Duras; since he was also one of the "émigrés", they had to be discreet about their meetings. He remained on the list until 1807; they did not make permanent residence in France until 1808, after having bought the estate and castle of Ussé in Touraine. Madame de Duras led a quiet life, devoting herself for the most part to the education of her daughters, and to her salon.

This salon became one of the most brilliant of the century; its importance was accentuated because of the opposing factions in the

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1 Both Édouard Bardoux, in La Duchesse de Duras (Paris, 1898), p. 65, and André Maurois, in his Chateaubriand (Paris, 1938), p. 228, suggest this idea.

2 See Pailhès, La Duchesse de Duras et Chateaubriand (Paris, 1910), p. 35. In this reference, Pailhès says that Bardoux cites the wrong date, an error that is important to correct, because it might lead one to think that marital relations were slightly disturbed. Date above is taken from Bardoux.
society. The Restoration presented an interesting situation: there were the two Frances, the old and the new, in opposing positions. And a combination of all the conditions of society during the Restoration was found in Madame de Duras' salon.

In 1808, Madame de Duras met René-François de Chateaubriand, the beginning of a friendship which lasted twenty years, "surviving all the bitternesses and injustices which were the 'monnaie courante' of the friendships and loves of René."¹ They met at Méréville, at the home of Nathalie de Noailles-Mouchy, a cousin of Madame de Duras. They had assembled here for the reading of Les Aventures du Dernier Abencérage and of the first volume of Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem.² At that time, Chateaubriand was passionately interested in Nathalie;³ and it was she who introduced René to Madame de Duras. From this moment a strange feeling was born in Madame de Duras' heart. But one of her friends, Madame de La Tour du Pin, advised her to avoid Chateaubriand:

Pourquoi dites-vous que je le déteste? Je ne le fais qu'autant qu'il est dangereux pour vous... Bannissez, comme une mauvaise pensée, l'ennui et le dégoût d'être chez vous! Calmez cette tête trop vive qui fait votre malheur! Faites-vous des occupations utiles! Otez de dessus votre table cet étranger, cet Itinéraire que vous savez par cœur! Quand on a lu tout cela une ou deux fois, on ne le lit pas tous les jours.⁴

²Works of Chateaubriand.
³Victor Giraud, op. cit., p. 793.
⁴Bardoux, op. cit., pp. 91-92.
Ah! laissez-le, ma chère, à cette Nathalie. Elle est
digne de lui, puisqu'il s'en accommode si bien. Pourquoi
voudriez-vous qu'il ne fût pas à elle? Quel mal cela vous
fait-il? Et que de noircourns ne vous ferait-elle pas, si
elle savait que vous l'aimez comme je le sais. Adieu, ayez
soin de mon bonheur: il est entre vos mains.1

However, this friendship continued; Chateaubriand saw Madame de Duras
every day, seeking her advice and encouragement on any question that arose.

In the meantime, Madame de la Tour du Pin increased her letters of advice
to Madame de Duras: "...L'amitié ne ressemble pas du tout à ce que vous
ressentez: fuyez à Ussé, ...et évitez les adieux."2 Madame de Duras' affection for Chateaubriand is best characterized by the following lines
taken from a letter to Madame de la Tour du Pin from one of her friends:

...Elle est heureuse, passionnée, ne se l'avouant pas, et
goûtant tout le charme d'un sentiment exalté, sans y mêler une
seule inquiétude, ni un seul reproche; c'est un aveuglement qui
la sauve de tous scrupules, et cette profonde ignorance assure
à la fois son repos et son bonheur.3

When Chateaubriand returned from Méréville, he wrote Madame de Duras
the following note, which was the beginning of their correspondence:

Il y a environ huit jours que j'eus l'honneur de chercher
Madame Amélie de Duras, dans tous les hôtels de la rue de
Varennes. Je crus bien de m'être trompé, d'avoir laissé ma
carte chez Madame de Duras, la mère, à qui ma visite aura paru
fort extraordinaire. Madame Amélie se souvient-elle encore de
mon nom, et voudrait-elle me permettre d'aller aujourd'hui lui
présenter mes respectueux hommages?4

1Faiditès, op. cit., p. 90.
2Giraud, op. cit., p. 900.
3Ibid.
In response to this note, Madame de Duras arranged a dinner to present Chateaubriand to several friends. But he refused the invitation, explaining that he had no taste for society. However, he did accept an invitation to lunch, and finally they became better acquainted: Chateaubriand was permitted to call her "ma sœur", and he called himself "votre frère". Madame de Duras visited the Vallée-au-Loup, his country home, and Chateaubriand visited Usse.

Then, Madame de Duras began to wonder if, in accepting Chateaubriand's friendship, she did not encroach upon another affection that she respected. She had reference, of course, to Madame de Mouchy. She confided her thoughts to Chateaubriand, who replied:

Quelle folie, chère sœur! Madame de Mouchy sait que je l'aime, que rien ne peut me détacher d'elle... Et quelles amitiés ont été d'intelligence sur tous les points et n'ont pas été exposées à quelques orages? Sûre ainsi de moi, Madame de Mouchy ne me défend ni de vous voir, ni de vous écrire, ni même d'aller à Usse, avec ou sans elle. Si elle me le commandait, sans doute elle serait aussitôt obéie, comme je vous l'ai dit cent fois... Je sens véritablement le prix de l'estime et de l'amitié que vous daignez m'accorder. Je ne les dédaigne pas... Si vous voulez être ma véritable sœur je voudrais être aussi votre véritable frère. Vos sentiments élevés, la chaleur de vos attaches me font croire que je serais un frère très heureux, et qui s'entendrait à merveille avec vous.¹

Thus, one can see the exalted place each held in the sentiments of the other. Chateaubriand became more and more dependent on the help he received from Madame de Duras, and for many years, during the latter part of his literary career, she was his support. His writing exhausted him,

¹ Bardoux, op. cit., pp. 103-104.
and he suffered from the incurable "illness of René".¹ To make matters worse, financial affairs began to trouble him; for he had many debts, which he saw no possible way of meeting. During this time Madame de Duran remained devoted to him, helping him in every way possible. He was so careless in managing his affairs that his debts increased incessantly. But Madame de Duran forced him to accept the necessary aid, fighting against his stubborn pride and objections.

In the meantime, Chateaubriand was thinking of another way of earning some money; he decided to compose a tragedy. In his letters to Madame de Duran, he spoke of his *Moïse*:

...Si ma tragédie n'est pas un chef-d'œuvre, si elle ne me place au premier rang, je la jettotai au feu sans hésiter, puisque, pour tout, ce n'est pas la que j'ai placé ma gloire. Vous voilà rassurée. Au reste j'ai fait des vers vingt ans de ma vie, avant d'avoir écrit une ligne de prose.²

However, before he had completed it, he was called to Paris to serve as a member of the jury: "Au lieu de fairemourir mon Arzane, il faut que j'aille condamner quelques malheureuses de Palais-Royal à la Salpêtrière."³

While Chateaubriand was in Paris, Madame de Duran joined him for some three or four months. They would take long walks in the mornings, spending together moments that both would never forget. When she returned to Touraine, their correspondence was resumed. In René's letters, one sees

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¹ A sort of melancholy, or spiritual illness which characterized Chateaubriand, and which he described in detail in his novel entitled *René*.

² Bardoux, op. cit., pp. 123-129.

³ Ibid., p. 131.
the melancholia of his spirit and the bitterness with which he accepted life:

Ces peuprres jours, voilà comme on les pousse! ne croirait-on pas qu'ils ne finissent pas, qu'ils dureront toujours? Et pourtant mon front devient chauve, Je commence à râcler; j'ennuie les autres; je m'ennuie moi-même. La fièvre arrivera et, un beau matin, on m'emportera à Chastenay. Qui se souviendra de moi? Le savez-vous, chère sœur? Quelques vieux bouquins que j'aurai laissés et qu'on ne lira plus, exciteront, au moment où je disparaitrai, une petite controverse. On dira qu'ils ne valent rien du tout; et qu'ils sont morts avec moi... La Vallée [du-Loups] sera vendue à un bourgeois de Sceaux qui fera du vin de Sceauxnes, où j'ai planté des pins, et voilà l'histoire de tous les hommes! Bonjour, chère sœur! Je suis tombé dans le noir; toutes ces idées s'évanouissent en pensant que je vous écris, que vous m'aimez un peu, et que mon attachement pour vous est aussi profond que durable.

Meanwhile, Napoleon was carrying on his campaigns; foreign soldiers were penetrating deeper into France. At the first news of the invasion, Madame de Duras had left Usse for Paris. From there, she wrote her husband, who had remained at Usse, and in her letters to him during this time of disorder, she gave very vivid accounts of the current events:

...Vous recevrez le Bulletin et vous jugerez aisément que les affaires dont on rend compte ont été sanglantes. Le général Terrier a la cuisse emportée; M. de Bellune est aussi grièvement blessé. Comment pouvait-il en être autrement dans une affaire où l'on a attaqué quatre fois de front soixante pièces de canon à mitraille. Ney a été renouvelé les deux premières fois; M. de Grouchy les deux autres; il reçoit là se blessure; deux soldats se dépouillent sur leurs fusils en travers, pour l'emporter du champ de bataille. Ils sont tués tous les deux au même moment. Enfin on a voulu tourner la position; alors l'ennemi a enlevé ses canons et a pris un autre poste à Cerny. À Bray-le-Senois, on s'est battu le 8 et le 9; enfin le 10, on a voulu faire une attaque sur Leon qui a été malheureuse; on a été rejeté à Chavignon; de

1Cirauld, op. cit., p. 813.
la, le reste de l'armée est revenu hier à Soissons. Les forces sont trop inégales.

Voici le rapport du général Mansouty, qui est arrivé ce matin avec une fluxion de poitrine. À Lon, il y a trente mille hommes de Bernadotte et cinquante mille du prince de Condé. C'est ce Bernadotte qui s'est battu à Grammont, à travers la mitraille. M. de Souchy voulait le faire retirer, et il lui a répondu: "Les jours des hommes sont comptés!" On mange au cheval à l'armée comme pendant la campagne de Russie. Enfin on se désespère si le fréquent passage des courriers ne donnait pas des espérances de paix.¹

During the entire campaign, Madame de Duras continued to write her
countryman, like the foregoing one. She, as many others, felt sure
that the enemy would not enter Paris. But things happened quickly. The
Bourbons found support in England. Suddenly, there was no longer an
Empire, and the Allied Armies filed down the streets of Paris.²

Monsieur de Duras hastened before Louis XVI to fill his duties as
first gentleman of the Chamber. He met the King at Compiègne. Of course,
Madame de Duras accompanied her husband, to greet the prince when the
people called "Louis-le-Désiré".³ In her letters to Clara, she gave a
detailed description of the society during the first hours of the return
of the princes:

...Ton père a un très bel appartement... Tout le château est rempli de personnes venues de Paris et qui se font chauffer, éclairer et nourrir aux frais du roi... et ce qui m'afflige, c'est que tous les gens du château, accoutumés à y voir régner la plus grand ordre, ont l'air stupéfait de ce pillage...

...L'arrivée du roi est un moment que je n'oublierai jamais. Des chers princes étaient comme des fers de famille qu'on a cru perdre et qui reviennent tout à coup après une longue absence.

¹Bardoux, op. cit., pp. 145-150.
²Ibid., p. 155.
³Ibid., p. 156.
Le roi a été presque porté jusque dans le salon, avec des cris et des transports de joie. Les maréchaux étaient à ses portières et tenaient la voiture de tous côtés. Le roi nous a parlé à toutes avec une bonté extrême, ensuite aux maréchaux. Il a pris les mains de ma belle-mère et l'a embrassée. Il est revenu plusieurs fois à elle. Il a été charmant pour moi.

Madame de Duras' position was raised with that of her husband. He took his place in the organization of the Chamber of Peers. As first gentleman of the Chamber, he had one residence in the Tuileries and another at Saint-Cloud. In this society so difficult to penetrate, Madame de Duras knew how to acquire the precious friendships which would prove beneficial to both her husband and to Chateaubriand. It was in this way, that is, politically, that Madame de Duras exercised her greatest influence on Chateaubriand's life.

Monsieur and Madame de Duras did all they could to obtain a position for Chateaubriand at the court. Madame de Duras succeeded in having him appointed ambassador to Sweden. Later, he became one of the Ministers of State; he was designated to preside over the electoral college of Loiret; and the insistence of Madame de Duras was rewarded by his being called to the Chamber of Peers.

In the meantime, the egotistic René dreamed of becoming ambassador to Rome. But when the "Chambre Intouchable" was dissolved (September 5, 1816), and he wrote the post-scriptum to his La Monarchie selon la Charte, expressing his discontent with the actions of the government, he lost the friendship not only of Richelieu and Décazes,² but even of Louis XVIII.

¹Bardoux, op. cit., pp. 157-158.

²Ministers during the Restoration.
himself. A little later, his name was crossed from the list of Ministers of State, and his pension was discontinued. This was quite a blow to Réné; he had to sell his library, and leave his dear Valloës-en-Loup. From day to day he became more and more discouraged; he wrote Madame de Duras:

"...Je suis malade et las, comme un chien, de la vie. Je finis ce billet, ne me sentant pas le courage d'écrire un mot de plus." 2

Madame de Duras received a note from Richelieu, a sort of admonition about the people whom she received as friends, a reference, of course, to Chateaubriand. Nevertheless, she continued to work in his favor at the court. She succeeded in having him appointed ambassador to Berlin. Chateaubriand accepted at once.

At this time, an incident happened to cause disension in the relationship between these two friends. Chateaubriand no longer came to see her every morning, and Madame de Duras could not understand what had happened to bring about such a change in her friend, to whom she was so devoted. Instinct made her guess, however, that another was taking her place; but she could not understand how she could fall from the position that she had held for such a long time in Chateaubriand’s affections. She had not aspired to love, and it was because of this state of fraternité, because she had placed herself above the passions of love, that she believed she deserved first place: "Ah! mon Dieu! tout ce qui vous aime n’est-il pas quelque chose pour moi? Mais je ne veux pas qu’on prenne toute ma

1Meurois, op. cit., p. 292.

place, parce que j'ai la certitude que personne ne la mérite.\textsuperscript{1}

Of this "first place", Pailhès says:

Si exigeante, si jalouse même que fut l'amitié de Madame de Duras pour Chateaubriand, — et certes, après avoir été influencée, tour à tour offerte et sollicitée, protection affi-
cace autant que nécessaire, dévouement passionné de toutes les
heures, elle avait tous les droits à la première place, — on
voit assez qu'elle s'arrêtait où commence l'amour... La preuve
en est dans la correspondance des deux. On y voit Madame de
Duras très attentive et très sévère, mais libre et fière dans
cet lien, restant le droit de critique, de blâmer, de se
pleindre...\textsuperscript{2}

Chateaubriand's new passion was for Madame Récamier.\textsuperscript{3} However, he
kept up his friendly relationship with Madame de Duras; their correspond-
ence continued, but all the political letters he wrote to Madame de Duras
did not in any way equal the tender notes he wrote to Madame Récamier.

Of course, Madame de Duras was hurt by this treatment. She wrote Chateau-
бриand, penetrating the depth of his character, and showing him what
friendship should be:

\textit{Ces deux forces... pour cette maîtresse dont je devine le nom, à la bonne heure... Mon pauvre frère,}
cela est bien jeune pour un vieux diplomate. Le tour de
l'amitié ne viendra donc jamais? Vous croyez que d'autres
soignent mieux vos intérêts? Mettez-vous dans la tête que
vous n'avez que moi d'amie, moi seule! Et c'est encore beau-
coup! qui donc possède un ami dans la vie? Un ami capable
d'aimer, de défendre, de soutenir, de servir, pour qu'il soit
egal de se tromper et de se compromettre! Il n'y en a
aucun, croyez-moi; et dans toute ma vieille expérience, je
n'en ai point encore trouvé. Mais vous êtes comme la poule,
vous jetez la perle et profitez le grain de sel... Voilà
comment je vous accuse!\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}Giraud, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 818.

\textsuperscript{2}Pailhès, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{3}For further details of this friendship, see Maurois, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 302-307.

\textsuperscript{4}Bardoux, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 238-239.
But still, she cherished this friendship, and his absence only increased her devotion. While waiting for his return, she amused herself by making a collection of the "pensées" of Louis XIV, extracts from his letters, and "mémoires". In the meantime, she succeeded in having offered to Chateaubriand the presidency of a royalist society, called the Société des hommes lettres, and he readily accepted the post. She also obtained his re-instatement on the list of Ministers of State.

So he returned to Paris. "Le vent souffle dans mes voiles... Ménera-t-il au port? Peu importe, s'il me conduit près de vous." Madame de Duras still guided this restless spirit of René, who felt that he satisfied no one, and was "ready to return to a desert, where he could find once again good-will and peace." But thanks to her guidance, he did not break the alliance between himself and this society.

At this time, a political crisis arose within the Ministry: it was a question of changing ten members. Of course, Chateaubriand was mixed in all the political negotiations, and even threatened to send in his resignation. At the outcome of the disturbance, he was named ambassador to London.

More and more, his letters to Madame de Duras lost their first characteristics. His absence served only to tighten the bond between him and Madame Récamier, and to increase the suffering of Madame de Duras. She wrote him:

...Savez-vous ce que c'est que l'amitié? Ce que c'est que de passer une longue matinée sans voir arriver l'ami avec lequel on a l'habitude d'espécher son coeur, auquel on raconte et de qui on écoute toutes les misères qui remplissent la vie?

1 Bardoux, op. cit., p. 272.

2 Ibid., p. 273.
In spite of her courage, Madame de Duras could not overcome her state of sadness. To make matters worse, tactless friends came to tell her gossip about Chateaubriand, saying that his interest in Madame Beausier dominated practically all of his thoughts and actions. Madame de Duras sought diversion in writing, which resulted in her two novels, *Quirka* and *Mogard*; but they only increased her sadness, awakening old memories. They reflect not only the "mal du siècle" characteristic of Chateaubriand's "Esme", but also Madame de Duras' personal emotions, and, as later discussion will show, one sees quite definitely the lyricism of the romantic writers, her sadness in spirit, instigated by the fact that she believed Chateaubriand to be faithless to their friendship.

These novels, which will be discussed in detail later, comprise the sole connection between Madame de Duras and the literary world. *Quirka* was published in 1824, followed by *Mogard* in 1826. Because Madame de Duras based her novels on a theme that was then popular, they gained and held the interest of the reader, and they were readily accepted and considered by her public as truly literary successes. And since Chateaubriand was uppermost in her mind, and his actions had instigated her to search for diversion in writing, one sees distinctly the influence of both his actions and his literary works on Madame de Duras' novels.

As another means of diversion, Madame de Duras turned again to politics.

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1 Giraud, *op. cit.*, p. 316.
She persuaded Villèle to appoint Chateaubriand as representative of France at the "Congrès de Vérone". She insisted that he was more suited than anyone else for the position, because of his widespread acquaintance with the sovereigns and ministers. At the same time, she was burdened with another great sadness. An anonymous pamphlet printed in England, entitled La Correspondance privée, published pages of malicious gossip, which slandered Madame de Duras and Chateaubriand violently. During this time, her letters are examples of a calmness of spirit which is indeed remarkable. She forced herself to give the news as usual, from one event to another; but at the end, stifled by an emotion that she could no longer withhold, she stopped: "Je suis attristée et tourmentée, je ne puis écrire davantage."

This time, Chateaubriand was moved by such firmness in the midst of so much suffering:

"J'admire, chère et tendre amie, votre bonté d'avoir eu le courage de me parler de nouvelles, après avoir parcouru le recueil de ces calomnies... Chère soeur, je n'ai pas le coeur dur; je ne suis point glacé, je ne suis point faux. Je sens que je donnerais un million de fois ma vie pour vous, et que vous serez, tant que mon cœur battra, le premier chanteur et le grand attachement de ma misérable vie. Je voulrais au bout de la terre pour vous épargner un chagrin. Je me sens capable de tout pour vous. Je vais être bien heureux pendant tout le temps que vous allez souffrir."

Chateaubriand wrote few letters as touching as this one. Madame de Duras' answer was: "...Avec des lettres comme la dernière, je braverais toute La Correspondance privée."
During this time, Madame de Duras' health had gradually deteriorated, as could only be expected as a result of her suffering. Her last years were scarcely more than a long martyrdom, physical and spiritual. She continued to receive her friends in her salon, in addition to her activities in politics. But at the same time, her spirit was undergoing religious changes. She had never been what one might call a "devout person"; she merely sought escape in spirit from a world of so many disillusionments. These passions began to struggle, so to speak, with each other, resulting in her Réflexions chrétiennes. In describing her sentiments, Sainte-Beuve says:

Au milieu de cet éclat extérieur du monde, la santé de Madame de Duras était depuis plusieurs années, altérée... Son âme avait gardé une fraîcheur de sensibilité, une pureté de passion qu'elle portait dans tout; elle accrut cette constante ardeur en présence de la maladie et des souffrances, elle s'appliqua à les subir, elle les voulut, elle les aimait...

Ses souffrances physiques étaient devenues par moments atroces, insupportables; elle les acceptait patiemment, elle s'appliquait de tout son cœur à souffrir, elle y mettait presque de la passion, si l'on ose dire, une passion dernière et sublime.

And still her devotion to Chateaubriand survived, in spite of the obstacles that an ordinary friendship would not have overcome. In 1823, she wrote to one of her friends, Rosalie de Constant:

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1Giraud, op. cit., p. 823.


3Ibid., pp. 69, 75–76.
Non, ma chère Rosalie, M. de Chateaubriand ne m'a point abandonnée. Son amitié n'a toujours été fidèle, et la mienne l'a suivi dans toutes ses fortunes. Depuis quinze ans, je le vois tous les jours; il n'a jamais cessé de m'être attaché, et son affection est aussi une consolation dans ma vie, un adoucissement à mes peines.¹

Despite her illness, Madame de Duras continued to interest herself in the activities of her "cher frère". It can perhaps be said that she experienced also the unhappiness that can be caused by jealousy and lack of appreciation.²

In 1836, Madame de Duras had a stroke of paralysis; then she acquired a serious liver complaint, from which she never recovered.³ She wrote to Rosalie:

J'ai été si malade que je n'ai pu écrire depuis trois semaines... M. de Chateaubriand oublie tout, et surtout ceux qu'il aimes... Il faut l'aime quand même, mais ne jamais compter sur ce qui exige un sacrifice. À Paris, il vient tous les jours, je suis sa promenade et son habitude. Ici, il faut une journée, et chaque jour il dit: Demain. Voilà l'homme...⁴

Giraud says that this judgment is somewhat unjust. Granting the fact that he was forgetful, somewhat egotistical, Chateaubriand must have had some good qualities, or Madame de Duras would not have retained for him this devotion, capable of any sacrifice. During the last years of Madame de Duras' life, he gave her as much of his time as he possibly could, and

¹Giraud, op. cit., p. 824.
²Ibid., p. 825.
³Maurois, op. cit., p. 229.
⁴Giraud, op. cit., pp. 826-827.
tried to divert her by his visits, his conversations, and the walks they
took together. 1

On New Year's Day, he wrote her:

Ma vie ne sera pas bien longue, mais ce qui m'en reste est à vous. Je ne sais pourquoi je suis si sensible aux nouvelles années. Qu'y a-t-il de différent entre hier et aujourd'hui? Apparemment qu'un 1er janvier est un jour où l'on tourne la tête et où l'on regarde derrière soi sur le chemin qu'on a parcouru. Je vois que j'ai marché avec vous, et j'achèverai avec vous le voyage. 2

The following is probably the last, or at least one of the last letters that Madame de Duras received from her "cher frère", written in December, 1827:

Cette lettre vous arrivera le 1er janvier pour vous souhaiter la bonne année. Elle le sera pour nous, car enfin vous nous reviendrez. Vous cesserez d'avoir vos amis en antipathie, et comme le temps vous aura prouvé que votre maladie, pour avoir été longue, n'a rien cependant de grave, rassurée sur l'avenir, vous voudrez le passer au milieu de ceux qui vous aiment...

Quand vous reviendrez, vous retrouverez tous les orages passés, toutes les questions politiques décidées. Quand on ne contestera plus nos institutions, on n'en parlera plus; les journaux redeviendront ce qu'ils doivent être; ils periront ce ton passionné qui produisent l'irritation et les contestations vives. On s'occupera de littérature et d'art. Vous reprendrez votre sceptre, et je passerai auprès de vous mes vieux et mes derniers jours. 3

But Madame de Duras did not recover. She withdrew from society, went to Paris, then to Saint-Germain, and finally to Nice. On January 15, Chateaubriand wrote the following to a friend, Madame de Cottens:

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1 Giraud, op. cit., p. 327.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., pp. 327-328.
Je suis menacé d'un grand malheur: Madame de Duras meurt à Nice... Au moment où je vous écris, j'ai envoyé savoir des nouvelles de mon admirable et ancienne amie, et peut-être vous apprendrai-je avant de fermer cette lettre, l'arrêt-fatal.  

On the 18th of January, 1823, Madame de Duras died. She bequeathed to her "cher frère" a copy of Raphael's Sainte Famille by Mignard, a copy of her portrait, and her clock that she had stopped back in 1822, in order not to hear it sound the hours that he was not there.  

In 1839, Chateaubriand wrote in his Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe:  

Depuis que j'ai perdu cette personne si généreuse, d'une âme si noble, d'un esprit qui réunissait quelque chose de la force de la pensée de madame de Staël à la grâce du talent de madame de La Fayette, je n'ai cessé, en la pleurant, de me reprocher les inégalités dont j'ai pu affligir quelquefois des cœurs qui m'étaient dévoués. Veillons bien sur notre caractère! Songeons que nous pouvons, avec un attachement profond, n'en pas moins empoisonner des jours que nous rachèterions au prix de tout notre sang. Quand nos amis sont descendus dans la tombe, quel moyen avons-nous de réparer nos torts? Nos inutiles regrets, nos vains repentirs, sont-ils un remède aux peines que nous leur avons faites? Ils auraient mieux aimé de nous un sourire pendant leur vie que toutes nos larmes après leur mort.  

If Madame de Duras could have read these lines, she would have gladly forgiven René for all the unhappiness he had caused her.  


2 See page 14 of this thesis.  
In the words of Sainte-Beuve, "thus is crowned a life, one of the most brilliant and complete that one can imagine, wherein competed the Revolution and the 'Ancien Régime', a life of simplicity, with an ending such as one reads of in the histories of the illustrious women of the Seventeenth Century."

One can conclude from the foregoing pages that the great influence she had in bringing about the political success of Chateaubriand, as well as the influence she had on his literary career, and the importance of her own literary works, though few in number, justify the perpetuation of the memory of Madame de Duras in French letters.

\[1\] Sainte-Beuve, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
Madame de Duras' debut into the literary world was purely accidental. This woman of the world of society and politics had shown no inclination at all toward writing. One day she told in her salon the supposedly true story of a young Negro girl, and her friends asked her to write it. The result was *Ourika*.

*Ourika* is the story of a Negro girl, brought from Senegal at the age of two years, and adopted by Madame de Beauvau, a friend of Madame de Duras. As a young girl, Ourika spent much of her time in Madame de B.'s salon, just as any young girl of the French aristocracy might have done. Later, she had the misfortune of falling in love with Madame de B.'s grandson. The whole novel is built around this central theme: Ourika's love for Charles. In the published works of Madame de Duras, the motivating idea is one of inequality, either by nature or by social position; there is an obstacle which stands between a person and his soul's desire, and that rouses within the reader a feeling of compassion for the victim of these circumstances. In Ourika's case, the obstacle is a natural one, -- her color; it is the obstacle that bars her from the one great desire of her heart, from the object of this "amour fatal". This "fatal love" is the romantic type. It is unrequited, and doomed at the beginning to remain so, because of the color problem. It is the color problem, in some opinions, that helped the novel to success, due to its originality.

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1 Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits de femmes*, p. 69.
Moreover, the success of the novel is due, in a large measure, to the impressive theme of Ourika’s "amour fatal", in that it presents a situation that is pathetic, that arouses pity in the heart of every reader.

On each page of this novel, there is a strong undercurrent of emotion. This is a striking characteristic of Madame de Duras, and it comes from her own experience. Naturally, the Revolution left its effects on Madame de Duras, just as on others. Having been subjected to the horrors of this period of disorder, she had kept from that time on, an emotional disturbance which crept within her thoughts and feelings she had never known before, her own "mal du siècle". And the society that she dominated was no less susceptible to the same emotional disturbance, which resulted in a taste for reading this type of literature. And in addition to this emotional disturbance, the importance of romanticism itself must be mentioned. The literary world at this time was definitely interested in romanticism, in lyricism and personal emotions. It might be said, perhaps, that this was one of the principal reasons for the novel’s success, that is, the fact that it was a romantic work, and conformed to the literary taste of the period.

In describing Madame de Duras’ character, Sainte-Beuve says:

_Tandis que dans l’extérieur du monde, Madame de Duras ne se présentait que par l’accord convenable et l’accommodement des opinions, là, dans ses écrits, elle se plaît à retracer l’antagonisme douloureux et le déchirement. C’est qu’au fond tout était lutte, souffrance, obstacle et désir dans cette belle âme, ardente comme les climats des tropiques où avait mûri sa jeunesse, orageuse comme les mers sillonnées par Kersaint; c’est qu’elle était une de celles qui ont des instincts infinis, des essors violents, impétueux, ..._
et qui ingénument immodérées qu'elles sont, se portent, ... d'une ardeur étonnante de sentiment vers un objet qui leur est incertain pour elles-mêmes; qui aspirent au bonheur d'aimer sans bornes et sans mesure; en qui chaque douleur trouve une proie facile; une de ces âmes énâées qui se heurtent sans cesse aux barreaux de la cage dans cette prison de chair.1

In Ourika the romantic element of her "amour fatal", her solitude and unhappiness, added much to the popularity and success of the novel. She was a creature who moved the heart to pity, whose life from beginning to end was a series of unhappy events. A careful analysis of the entire novel will justify this observation.

Ourika, like René, represented a type of "mal du siècle". Her first misfortune was the death of her mother, when Ourika was two years of age, and she narrowly escaped being taken away on board a slave ship. Then, a few years later, she encountered unhappiness for the first time. It was when Charles went away to school:

Charles, le cadet, était à peu près de mon âge. Élevé avec moi, il était mon protecteur, mon conseil et mon soutien dans toutes mes petites fautes. À sept ans, il alla au collège; je pleurai en le quittant; ce fut ma première peine.2

This was her first realization of the fact that she felt an unexplainable sentiment for Charles. But at that time, she felt toward him as she might have felt toward a brother. It is, however, the first stage of her love for Charles.

Then, something happened to change the smooth course of events in Ourika’s life: she became conscious of her color by overhearing a con-

1 Sainte-Baure, op. cit., p. 70.

2 Duras, Claire de, Ourika (Paris, 1824), p. 34.
versation between Madame de B. and one of her friends. When asked what
was to become of Ourika, Madame de B. had replied:

Hélas! cette pensée m'occupe souvent, et, je vous l'avoue,
toujours avec tristesse: Je l'aime comme si elle était ma fille;
j'essaie tout pour la rendre heureuse; et cependant, lorsque je
réfléchis à sa position, je la trouve sans remède. Pauvre Ourika!
je la vois seule, pour toujours seule, dans la vie!1

Ourika's reaction is best described in her own words:

Il me serait impossible de vous peindre l'effet que pro-
duisirent en moi ce peu de paroles; l'éclair n'est pas plus
prompt: je vis tout; je me vis noigrée, dépendante, mé-
prisée, sans fortune, sans appui, sans un âtre de mon coeur à
qui unir mon sort, jusqu'ici un jouet, un amusement pour
ma bienfaitrice, bientôt rejetée d'un monde où je n'étais
pas faite pour être seule. Une affreuse palpitation me
saisit, mes yeux s'obscurcirent, le battement de mon cœur
m'était un instant la faculté d'échapper encore; ... je m'échappai;
je courus à ma chambre où un déluge de larmes soulagea un
instant mon pauvre cœur.2

Naturally, this brought about a great change in Ourika:

Dans la confusion des nouvelles idées qui m'assaillaient,
je ne retrouvais plus rien de ce qui m'avait occupée jusqu'alors;
c'était un abîme avec toutes ses terres. Ce repris dont je me
voyais poursuivie; cette société où j'étais déplacée; cet homme
qui, à prix d'argent, consentirait peut-être que ses enfants
 fussent noirs! Toutes ces pensées s'élevaient successivement
comme des fantasmes et s'attachaient sur moi comme des furies;
il'isolement surtout; cette conviction que j'étais seule, pour
toujours seule dans la vie... Seule! pour toujours seule!3

This event marked the beginning of a strange illness that no one, not
even Ourika herself, could understand. Her thoughts tormented her during

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1 Duras, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

2 Ibid., pp. 46-47, 52.

3 Ibid., pp. 52-55.
the day, and she spent whole nights in weeping. She pitied herself; she had even become repulsive to herself:

...Ma figure me faisait horreur, je n'osais plus me regarder dans une glace; lorsque mes yeux se portaient sur mes mains noires, je croyais voir celles d'un singe; je m'exagérais ma laideur, et cette couleur me paraissait comme le signe de ma réprobation; c'est elle qui me séparait de tous les êtres de mon espèce, qui me condamnait à être seule, toujours seule! jamais aimée!¹

In the preceding passages, solitude is the dominating characteristic; realizing that she belonged nowhere, and believing that she was a stranger to the human race itself, Ourika fell into despair. Passages like these awaken within the reader a feeling of compassion for this poor creature who so obviously is suffering. In this loneliness of Ourika, one might recognize Claire de Kerseint in the first part of the novel, particularly because of the discontent between her parents, forcing Claire to grow up without the attention of parental care. Being an only child, she was, like the orphan Ourika, "seule, toujours seule".²

Then, the Revolution brought a ray of hope to Ourika:

J'entrevis donc que, dans ce grand désordre, je pourrais trouver ma place; que toutes les fortunes renversées, tous les rangs confondus, tous les préjugés évanouis, pourraient peut-être un état de choses où je serais moins étrangère; et que si j'avais quelque supériorité d'âme, quelque qualité cachée, on l'apprécierait lorsque ma couleur ne m'isolait plus au milieu du monde, comme elle avait fait jusqu'alors.³

¹Duras, op. cit., pp. 57-58.
²Pailhès, La Duchesse de Duras et Chateaubriand, p. 304.
³Duras, op. cit., pp. 70-72.
But after some reflection, she realized the futility even of this faint ray of hope.

At this time the question arose concerning the freedom of Negroes in the colonies, a question which naturally affected Ourika. She realized then that somewhere there were beings like her, and she felt a pity toward this unfortunate group which suffered. But once more she was to be disillusioned:

Réalisant que ses pensées étaient déçues, les massacres de Saint-Domingue causèrent une douleur nouvelle et déchirante; jusqu'ici je m'étais affligée d'appartenir à une race proscrite; maintenant j'étais honte d'appartenir à une race de barbares et d'assassins.

The Reign of Terror had a psychological effect on Ourika: she felt that she was no longer isolated in her suffering, that this Revolutionary aftermath rendered practically everyone else unhappy too. So, probably, she would no longer be out of place in this society, since both, having met with unhappiness and misfortune, had something in common. But only in Madame de Duras did she find any consolation: "...J'avais senti que là, au moins, je n'étais pas étrangère."

Madame de Duras describes this part of Ourika's life with much finesse, and detailed analysis of the emotional effect that the horrors of the Revolution had on Ourika, and her reaction to these events. This is so because Madame de Duras herself had lived through the dark days of the Revolution, and its aftermath, which left an impression on her heart that time would

1Duras, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

2Ibid., p. 90.
never erase. And when she describes the immense relief that Ourika felt when Robespierre's death ended the Terror, one can well understand the peace of mind it brought to Madame de Duras herself.

When Charles returned to Paris, he and Ourika again resumed their friendship. In the meantime she made a conscious effort to forget the existence of the color barrier:

...Je tâchais d'y penser le moins que je pouvais; j'avais ôté de ma chambre tous les miroirs, je portais toujours des gants; mes vêtements cachetaient mon cou et mes bras, et j'avais adopté, pour sortir, un grand chapeau avec un voile, que souvent même je gardais dans la maison. Néanmoins je me trompais ainsi moi-même: comme les enfants, je fermais les yeux et je croyais qu'on ne me voyait pas.

But after the disturbances of the Revolution were over, she realized more than ever before her predicament. "Ma position était si fausse dans le monde, que plus la société restrait dans son ordre naturel, plus je m'en sentais déshors." She believed herself to be the topic of every conversation; that people were surprised to see her, a Negro girl, admitted into the intimate society of Madame de B's salon. She sought refuge in Charles. This was the beginning of the second stage of Ourika's love for Charles: the love of a mother for her son.

J'avais cru autrefois aimer Charles comme un frère; mais depuis que j'étais toujours souffrante, il me semblait que j'étais vieille, et que ma tendresse pour lui ressemblait plutôt à celle d'une mère. Une mère, en effet, pouvait seule

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1Duras, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

2Ibid., p. 103.

3Paillès suggests that Madame de Duras was thinking of Chateaubriand when she wrote these lines. See page 4 of his book.
éprouver ce désir passionné de son bonheur, de ses succès; j’aurais volontiers donné ma vie pour lui épargner un moment de peine.¹

Then came Ourika’s greatest unhappiness: Charles fell in love; and he recounted to Ourika every incident that happened, and every feeling he had for the beautiful Angele de Thémines. Each incident he told was like a knife in Ourika’s heart and she became more and more dejected; overwhelmed by solitude, she asked God to relieve her of this suffering:

Grand Dieu! vous êtes témoin que j’étais heureuse du bonheur de Charles, mais pourquoi avez-vous donné la vie à la pauvre Ourika? Pourquoi n’est-elle pas morte sur ce bâtiment négrier d’où elle fut arrachée, ou sur le sein de sa mère? Un peu de sable d’Afrique eût recouvert son corps, et ce fardeau eût été bien léger! Qu’importait au monde qu’Ourika vécût? Pourquoi était-elle condamnée à la vie? C’était donc pour vivre seule, toujours seule, jamais aimée! O mon Dieu! ne le permettez pas! Retirez de la terre la pauvre Ourika! Personne n’a besoin d’elle; n’est-elle pas seule dans la vie?²

One of the most touching scenes of the entire novel followed this reflection, when Ourika fainted, and Charles carried her to the house in his arms. All the attentions and kindnesses that Charles and Madame de B. lavished on her served only to increase her suffering; they showed such a tender affection for her without even understanding the cause of her illness, which became worse from day to day. She found herself in the deepest despair:

...Je mourais loin de ce que j’aimais, et mes tristes gémissements ne parvenaient pas même à leurs oreilles;
...Je les voyais, s’abandonnant à toute l’ivresse du bonheur,

¹ Duras, op. cit., p. 108.
² Ibid., pp. 122-124.
loin d'Ourika mourante... Je souhaitais sincèrement mourir de la maladie dont j'étais attaquée... Cette seule pensée était bien distincte en moi: je voudrais mourir...

...Je passerai sur la terre comme une ombre; mais dans le tombeau, j'aurai la paix. O mon Dieu! ils sont déjà bien heureux; oh bien! donnez-leur encore la part d'Ourika, et laissez-la mourir comme la feuille tombée en automne.

N'ai-je donc pas assez souffert?1

Ourika was gradually wasting away; she suffered even more when Charles was near her. The birth of a son marked the summit of happiness for Charles and his wife; but Ourika accepted the news with bitterness. Then she regretted the fact that she wasn't a slave; at least, she would have had, she said, "une humble cabane pour me retirer le soin; j'aurais un compagnon de ma vie, et des enfants de ma couleur, qui m'appelleraient: Ma mère."2

Finally she was enlightened as to the cause of her suffering: she became conscious of the final stage of her love for Charles. The same friend of Madame de B. from whom she learned of the barrier her color presented, showed her the light: "...Tous vos regrets, toutes vos douleurs ne viennent que d'une passion malheureuse, d'une passion insensée; et si vous n'étiez pas folle d'amour pour Charles, vous prendriez fort bien votre parti d'être Négresse."3 Ourika's reaction is best given in her own words:

Je demeurai angoissé... Que venait-elle de me révéler? Quelle lumière affreuse avait-elle jetée sur l'abîme de mes douleurs! Grand Dieu! c'était comme le lumière qui pénètre une fois au fond des enfers, et qui fit regretter les ténèbres à ses malheureux habitants. Quoi! j'avais une passion criminelle! c'est elle qui, jusqu'ici dévorait mon cœur! Ce désir

1Dur, op. cit., pp. 132-133.
2Ibid., p. 145.
3Ibid., p. 156.
de tenir ma place dans la chaîne des êtres, ce besoin des affect-
ions de la nature, cette douleur de l'isolement, c'étaient les
regrets d'un amour coupable...

Pourquoi donc ne pourrais-je aimer ainsi Charles, le com-
pagnon de mon enfance, le protecteur de ma jeunesse? Et ce-
pendant, je ne sais quelle voix crie au fond de moi-même qu'on
a raison, et que je suis criminelle... Il faut qu'Ourika con-
naisse tous les genres d'amertume, qu'elle connaisse toutes
les douleurs!

Ourika then felt that the tears she had shed for Charles were guilty
tears because she had not the right to do so, that her love for him was a
sin, and these torturing thoughts cast her into a state of languor like
death itself. She was overcome by the fever of this "amour fatal", and
every one expected her to die. Eventually, however, she recovered to some
extent, and found a semblance of relief in God. After this, calmness re-
turned to her heart, and she was astonished at the peace she experienced.
"On avait ouvert une fissure à ce torrent qui dévastait ses rivages, et main-
tenant il portait ses flots apaisés dans une mer tranquille."¹ Her final
decision was made in the direction of religion, — she sought refuge in a
convent. And eventually, as an answer to her prayer, "elle tombe avec les
dernières feuilles de l'automne."²

The role of religion is a dominating feature which added to the popu-
larlity and success of Ourika. One sees, in this, the influence of Chateau-
briand's Génie de Christianisme. At first, Ourika looked upon religion as

² Ibid., p. 170.
³ Ibid., p. 172.
something to be accepted like the ordinary things of life. She felt that her sorrows were not sins, so there was no need to see the priest more than two or three times a year. Later, however, she began to think about religion. Her first serious reflection was made after she had realized that her color was a barrier between her and the society in which she was living. She was haunted incessantly by her own countenance: "Hélas! elle était celle des chimères dont je me laissais obséder. Vous ne m'aviez pas encore appris, Ô mon Dieu! à conjurer ces fantômes; je ne savais pas qu'il n'y a de repos qu'en vous." And from that time on, she did not hesitate to address such prayers to God in her despair. As the novel advances, one notes a tendency to use the expression "Mon Dieu!" instead of "Hélas!", as in the first few pages of the novel. Towards the end, Ourika became definitely assured that it was God to whom she must turn. "Je ne sais quel mouvement me portait vers Dieu, et me donnait le besoin de me jeter dans ses bras et d'y chercher le repos." The words of the priest were soothing to her soul. He assured her of the purity of her heart; the only wrong she had done was to sacrifice her happiness, and that wrong was done to herself alone: "Dieu est le but de l'homme: quel a été le vôtre? Mais ne perdez pas courage; priez Dieu, Ourika: il est là, il vous tend les bras; il n'y a pour lui ni Noirs ni Blancs; tous les coeurs sont égaux devant ses yeux, et le vôtre mérite de devenir digne de lui." Ourika describes

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2 Ibid., p. 163.
3 Ibid., p. 165.
the effect of these words:

Ces paroles simples portaient dans mon âme je ne sais quelle paix que je n'avais jamais connue; je les méditais sans cesse... Je vis qu'en effet je n'avais point connu mes devoirs; Dieu en a prescrit aux personnes isolées comme à celles qui tiennent au monde...

...Dieu, en me jetant sur cette terre étrangère, voulut peut-être me prédestiner à lui; il m'arracha à la barbarie, à l'ignorance; par un miracle de sa bonté, il me déroba aux vices de l'esclavage, et me fit connaître sa loi: cette loi me montra tous mes devoirs; elle m'enseigne ma route: je la suivrai, ô mon Dieu! Je ne me servirai plus de vos bienfaits pour vous offenser, je ne vous accuserai plus de mes fautes.1

There are several striking examples of antithesis in Ourika. The situation surrounding Ourika herself is the first instance. She was a young African girl, brought into French society, and reared amidst the luxury of the aristocracy; she was admitted into the salon of Madame de B.; she was given the same formal education as the grandson of her benefactress; she was given dancing lessons and voice training; a famous artist gave her lessons in painting; she learned English and Italian. And all these accomplishments of this African girl are not ordinarily associated with one of her race, who by chance had barely escaped slavery. Then, there was the difference to be considered between these two people who loved Charles. Anaïs de Thémines was as beautiful as the day itself, possessing all the advantages of birth, fortune and education, while Ourika, on the other hand, was a Negro. And in spite of the fact that she was intelligent, talented, and well-educated, the fact remained that she was a Negro.

The historical background of Ourika might be cited as one cause for the

popularity of the novel. Madame de Duras describes the horrors of the Revolution, and its effect upon the people, including the confiscation of the property of the "émigrés", the Reign of Terror, and the disintegrated society during the Restoration. She mentions the abolition of slavery in the colonies, and the massacres of Saint Domingue. All this lends local color to the novel.

Another consideration which probably added to the popularity of Ourika was the fact that it falls under the classification of literature known as "Littérature Negrophile". Until the time of the Haitian Revolution, the Negro had been presented as the "bon sauvage". The Code Noir back in 1685 had attempted to place slavery on a Christian basis. During the Eighteenth Century most of the literary figures opposed slavery; most outstanding among these writers was Montesquieu, who is generally acknowledged as the first of the great French writers to attack slavery, in the famous chapter of Book XV of his Esprit des Lois.¹ Eventually the abolition of slavery in the colonies became a political issue. In 1788, the Société des Amis des Noirs was formed in Paris, to protect the political and civil rights of the free Negroes, and to work toward abolition.² This society was founded by Brissot de Warville, Condorcet, La Rochefoucauld, Lacépède, La Fayette, and Siéyès, together with several "gens de couleur" originally from Saint Domingue.³


Then, in 1791, soon after the news of the Declaration of the Rights of Man had reached the colonies, the first great insurrection of the Negroes took place, having been prefaced by minor local revolts among the oppressed classes. And the years between 1791 and 1804 were those of the Haitian Revolution, when thousands of Negroes and whites were massacred. Slavery had been abolished by the National Convention in 1794, but was restored in some of the colonies by Napoleon in 1802.1

After the Haitian Revolution, the "bon sauvage" literature went into eclipse, and for a period of about twenty years the Negro was not portrayed in such a favorable light. The writers presented the Negro as a vile brute, "who by his nature belonged, as other savages, to the family of ferocious beasts."2

Then, in 1823, there was another change in the general attitude toward the Negro, resulting in an abundance of literature in his favor. This was reflected in the fact that the Academy proposed as a subject for the contestants for the poetry prize, Abolition de la traite des Noirs.3 The contestants were inspired particularly by two incidents that Clarkson, in his Cri des Africains, had taken from the Voyages of Mungo-Park, an explorer. The first incident relates how Mungo-Park, on the point of starvation, had been saved by a Negro woman; the second tells of the

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1Mercer Cook and Guichard Parris, op. cit., p. 13.
2Servais Etienne, Les Sources de "Hug-Jargel" (Bruxelles, 1923), p. 64.
3Ibid., p. 87.
treatment a slave woman received from the hands of a cruel master. So, as a central theme, the contestants emphasized the generosity and virtue of the Negro, the cruelty of the merchants, and the deplorable misery of the black race. Several poems were submitted, but the writer who succeeded in presenting the most vivid picture of the Negro's plight, and who showed most clearly the inhuman treatment he received was Chauvet, author of Néoli on La traite des Negres. The nature of these poems showed that there was a tendency to re-instate the Negro in the minds of the people as an oppressed race, in need of sympathy and relief from its misery. Thus, one can easily understand the wide popularity of Ourika.

In Ourika, Madame de Duras presents a favorable picture of the Negro. This young African girl, reared in the midst of aristocratic French society, is strikingly intelligent. Having known this unfortunate race during her sojourn in the New World, Madame de Duras firmly believed it capable of intellectual development.¹ Ourika reacted intelligently to both the French Revolution and the Haitian Revolution, and the point of view she expressed was the same as that of the average aristocratic Frenchman.²

Madame de Duras also shows the dominant role religion plays in the life of Ourika, and what great influence it had over her actions, thus dispelling any idea of paganism, and destroying the hypothesis that Negroes were such monsters and stupid creatures, as they had been portrayed in the literature after the Haitian Revolution. Once Ourika realized that

¹Lucas, op. cit., p. 20.
²Mercer Cook and Guichard Parris, op. cit., p. 13.
probably there was a reality in believing in God, she did not cease to be
drawn in that direction, without understanding the reason, until finally
she became definitely convinced that religion offered a "refuge where
peace and liberty reigned, and where she could find rest."¹

Madame de Duras' second work was *Édouard*, which appeared in 1825. It
is regarded by some critics as a much better work than *Curika*, and much
more developed.² Others hold that it is preferable to *Curika* because of
the choice of subject, and because the characters are more adapted to
their social customs.³ Pailhès says: "Le roman d'Édouard a plus de con-
sistance que le premier. On s'intéresse à l'amour romanesque du jeune
homme: on se passionne avec lui et pour lui, à mesure que se dresse
l'obstacle."⁴ Nevertheless, *Édouard* did not obtain nearly so much success
as did *Curika*, because *Curika* had established Madame de Duras' reputation
as a writer.

In *Édouard*, as in *Curika*, one again encounters the idea of inequality,
of an obstacle between a person and his heart's desire. In this case,
however, the inequality lies in social position. It is the story of a
young man who fell in love with a woman above his social class. But un-
like *Curika*, *Édouard* was loved in return by the beautiful widow, Madame de
Nevers, daughter of his father's friend.

¹ Lucas, op. cit., p. 20.

² Sainte-Beuve says that *Édouard* is really Madame de Duras' claim to
literary fame. See Portraits de Femmes, p. 71.

³ Didot Frères, M. Finan, Nouvelle Biographie Générale (Paris, 1868),

⁴ Pailhès, op. cit., p. 357.
At the outset, Édouard was permeated by solitude. Always a dreamer, he felt early in life an incompleteness deep within him, a sense of something that was lacking. Then an incident happened which changed him, to an extent: he risked his life to save a little boy from drowning. This gave him a sort of temporary relief from his solitude, which he called his "maladie de l'âme". He realized that perhaps, after all, there was some purpose in life, since he had proved to himself that he could be of benefit to some one.

One notes an element of antithesis in the fact that his mother died the same year he was to take up clerical duties at the home of Marshal d'Orlonne, the father of Madame de Nevers. "C'était donc seulement au prix de la plus amère des douleurs que je devais sentir la plus douce de toutes les joies."

When Édouard saw Nathalie de Nevers, he loved her with an intense passion. Nothing was more completely satisfying to him than to be near her, to listen to her voice. At first, she seemed interested enough in him. Then she took a trip to visit one of her friends; and after her return, she was apparently a different person. Naturally, this caused Édouard no end of pain. He fell into an impenetrable despair, searching his mind for the least thing that he could have done to cause her to turn so obviously against him. He underwent the same sufferings of the soul as did Ourika, sincere in his belief that it was not meant for him to be

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2 Ibid., p. 176.
happy, because he was a "héros romantique", singled out by the fates to suffer. “Le bonheur n'est pas fait pour moi.”

However, Étouard finally learned that his love for Madame de Nevers was reciprocated, that her attitude of aloofness had been an attempt to divert her mind. Words could not express the supreme joy that he felt on learning this. But alas! This joy was short-lived. The barrier of social conventions arose between them, and throughout the rest of the novel, there is an eternal struggle against this obstacle. There are really two centuries portrayed in this struggle, two distinct conceptions of society. Étouard represented that conception of society which held that there should be definite distinctions between classes of people, and he was sincere and dogmatic in this belief. He was a common man, and was not ashamed of his situation. It was his fate to fall desperately in love with someone, whom, according to his belief, he could never marry. He felt that if he should marry her, he would be breaking a sacred tradition.

On the other hand, Madame de Nevers, representing just the opposite conception, saw no barrier between them that could not be overcome. She realized, however, that it would be an intense struggle, considering the society by which they were predominantly surrounded.

Étouard realized the futility of a struggle against such odds. At the same time he admired her courage, and his heart was uplifted by the realization that she loved him enough to sacrifice so much for the sake of his

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1 Duras, op. cit., p. 55.
2 Sainte-Beuve, op. cit., p. 72.
happiness. The fact that they loved each other, however, did not carry enough force to warrant an attempted battle against this obstacle of social status. Édouard then made a decision which broke his heart: he decided to leave Madame de Nevers and all of France. He went to America, and joined the Armed Forces. After some time, Madame de Nevers died, and Édouard was killed on the battle field, thus ending the struggle of these two people who loved so vainly.

The idea of Édouard, just as that of Corika, came from a real situation. There was a young man, M. Benois, son of the Counsellor of State, who showed a marked interest in Clara, the youngest daughter of Madame de Duras. He was a nice young man, possessing some very good qualities; but although he was accepted wholeheartedly into Clara's circle of friends, he most certainly could never have become her husband.¹

In a letter to Chateaubriand, Madame de Duras recounts an incident which happened in connection with Édouard, "la plus mauvaise petite action qu'elle ait commise."² She lent her novel to one of her friends, Madame de Montcalm, who wanted to read it. Madame de Montcalm returned the manuscript with a little note which contained some type of ridiculous advice.

J'avais gardé ce billet, parce que je le trouvais bête, je ne suis contentée d'en rire avec Clara; mais il m'est revenu que, comme une ingrate, madame de Montcalm disait du mal d'Édouard, dont elle m'avait promis de ne plus parler, et hier soir, me trouvant seule avec Madame de Swetchine, Humboldt et Madame de Saint-Maure, j'ai succombé et leur ai montré le

¹Sainte-Beuve, op. cit., p. 72.
²Bardoux, op. cit., p. 316.
petit papier. C'était une vengeance, c'était vilain... J'en ai eu des remords toute la nuit. Voilà ce que je n'aurais jamais fait, si je n'avais jamais écrit.\(^1\)

After the success of Ourika and Edouard, Madame de Duras wrote another novelette entitled Olivier, which was never published. However, diverse comments have been made as to the central theme of this novelette.\(^2\) In the two previous works she described situations where happiness is impossible. She seems reluctant to draw herself away from this theme, and uses the same background in Olivier, "whose profound depth was equally an insurmountable obstacle drawn from the physical state of the hero."\(^3\) "The hero loved a young woman, and was loved by her; however, he went away, although she was free to marry him. Whence came this secret obstacle to the happiness of Olivier? ...The final explanation that Madame de Duras gave at the end of the novel was perfectly simple and in accordance with the scruples of morality..."\(^4\)

An interesting incident happened in connection with this novelette.

The Olivier of Madame de Duras was never published. However, an Olivier appeared in 1826 which was attributed to her, since she had read a novelette by that title in her salon, and since the published Olivier was published anonymously. However, the plot of this work was somewhat exaggerated,

\(^1\)Bardoux, op. cit., p. 317.

\(^2\)The comments on Olivier are taken from the Nouvelle Biographie Générale, and Sainte-Beuve's Causeries du Lundi.

\(^3\)MM. Didot Frères, op. cit., Vol. 15, p. 465.

and more than one reader wondered if it were possible that Madame de Duras had chosen such a plot. But those who had heard Madame de Duras read her novellette knew that there was a work "full of purity and delicacy that could not be otherwise, since it came from Madame de Duras."  

The explanation of this misunderstanding is that following the reading of Madame de Duras' *Olivier*, a series of mocking imitations were started. M. de Latouche, a contemporary writer, was one of the first. And thanks to his knowledge of Madame de Duras' style, he dared take possession of the fundamental idea expressed in her *Olivier*, and publish a work under the same title, in exactly the same form of printing as the other novels of Madame de Duras, "thus making this woman of rare distinction, one of the purest novelists of French literature, responsible for a long time for a licentious novellette."  

Unfortunately, Madame de Duras did not rectify this mistake, and her *Olivier* remained unpublished.

Another work of Madame de Duras which must be considered is her *Réflexions Chrétiennes*, which were inspired by the resignation of the soul to the sufferings of the body. The following quotations are excerpts taken from Sainte-Beuve:

Presque toutes ces douleurs morales, ces déchirements de cœur qui bouleversent notre vie, auraient été prévenus, si nousussions veillé; alors nous n'aurions pas donné entrée dans notre âme à ces passions qui toutes, même les plus légitimes, sont la mort du corps

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3Sainte-Beuve says that they were partially printed in 1839. Comments and quotations are taken from his book, *Portraits de femmes.*
et de l'âme... Veiller, c'est soumettre l'involontaire...
Aimer Dieu, c'est adorer à leur source les perfections que
nous espérions trouver dans les créatures et que nous y avons
vainement cherchées. Ce peu de bien qui se rencontre quelque-
fois dans l'homme, c'est en Dieu que nous aurions de l'aime.

In this excerpt, entitled Veillez et Priez, it seems that Madame de
Durans is trying to convince the reader of the absolute peace that can be
found through prayer, that the unhappy things of life happen because of
failure to watch. Therefore, it is necessary to watch as well as pray.

Pardonnez-leur, mon Dieu, car ils ne savent ce qu'ils font!

Cette parole donne à la fois le précepte et la raison de l'indul-
gence. Il y a plusieurs manières de pardonner; toutes sont bonnes,
pour que toutes sont chrétiennes; mais ces pardons diffèrent entre
eux comme les vertus qui les ont produits. On pardonne pour être
pardonné; on pardonne parce qu'on se reconnaît digne de souffrir,
c'est le pardon de l'humilité; on pardonne pour obéir au précepte
de rendre le bien pour le mal: mais aucun de ces pardons ne com-
prend l'excuse des peines qu'on nous a faites. Le pardon de Jésus-
Christ est le vrai pardon chrétien: "Ils ne savent ce qu'ils font."
Il y a, dans ces touchantes paroles, l'excuse de l'offenseur et la
consolation de l'offensé, la seule consolation possible de ces dou-
leurs morales, où le mal qu'on nous a fait n'est, pour ainsi dire,
que secondaire.

Donner l'affection à ceux qui ne la sentent pas, c'est vouloir
donner la vue aux aveugles, l'ouïe aux sourds. Pardonnez-leur,
mon Dieu, ils ne savent ce qu'ils font; pardonnez-leur sans qu'ils
soient à faire retour sur eux-mêmes, sans que ce pardon ne soit
compté pour une vertu, puisqu'il n'est qu'une justice; mais ayez
pitié de moi, et enseignez-moi à n'aimer que vous, et donnez-moi
le repos. Ainsi soit-il.

In the above passage, a meditation entitled l'Indulgence, Madame de
Durans explains forgiveness by interpreting the words of Christ, when he

1 Sainte-Beuve, Portraits de femmes, p. 76.
2 Ibid., pp. 77-78.
prayed for the pardon of those who crucified him, because they did not know what they were doing.

In both of these citations, one senses a tone of melancholia, a feeling of humble submission of the soul to God, praying for strength to do His will.

Other unpublished works of Madame de Duras are Le Frère ingé and Mémoires de Sophie.1

The style of Madame de Duras deserves commendation. Although she began her writing comparatively late, there is no obvious indication of it in her work. It is characterized by simplicity and naturalness, "uniting the force of thought of Madame de Staël with the grace of talent of Madame de La Fayette."2 First of all, she is a story teller, and is able to hold the interest of the reader. This art of story telling was discovered and developed in her salon, where she and her friends gathered for literary discussions. Her style is not what one might call literary, but is more natural, as in conversation. This is accounted for by the fact that both her novels are written in the first person, thereby lending a more personal feeling to the novel, because the reader feels that he is closer to the unfortunate victim of circumstances who is telling of the events which caused his unhappiness. Her method of introducing the hero is interesting, in that she allows the reader to become acquainted with the person who is to

1Sainte-Beuve, Portraits de femmes, p. 69.

2Chateaubriand, Pages choisies, p. 275.
tell his story. In Durika, the young Negro woman who has become a man, is telling the story of her life to her physician; in Michel, the young man writes the story of his life to explain his sadness to a man whom he has befriended on the boat coming to America.

One sees a force, an intellectual elevation, an undercurrent of philosophy in her works, and even in her correspondence with Chateaubriand. This is evidenced by the following excerpt from one of her letters to him, announcing the death of the Duke of Richelieu:

C'est une perte pour la France! Sa vie était une sécurité; dans une crise, c'est autour de lui que les opinions se fussent ralliées; il n'était pas l'homme de tous les jours, il l'a trop prouvé, mais il était l'homme des grandes circonstances, parce que sa droiture et sa loyauté n'étaient contestées par personne.

Vous jugez de l'état de ses soucis. Elles perdent tout en le perdant... Il semble, quand la mort se montre aussi ménagante, qu'elle va atteindre tout ce qu'on aime! Soignez-vous bien.

Il y a une force dans un homme dont les qualités morales sont assez incontestables pour qu'elles soient reconnues par tous. Il appartient à la vieille France par les qualités de son âme et à la nouvelle par les travers de son esprit. Mais qu'importe? on se fait à lui, et aux yeux des étrangers, il était un homme. C'était un trésor dont on se serait servi au besoin, et au jour de danger, il aurait encore prêté à son pays l'autorité de son honneur. Lorsqu'on voit les secrets de la Providence, on est tenté de lui dire: Mais que voulez-vous donc? Quel est le triste mystère dont cette mort va être le moyen? Comme Dieu ne fait rien en vain, on est éproncé quand on le voit frapper de grands coups... qui perd à la mort du duc de Richelieu? C'est tout le parti de l'ancien ministère; il était le seul lien de ce faiseau...¹

In these words one sees an example of the eloquence and force of her writing, interspersed with her philosophic reflections. And although this

¹Hardoux, op. cit., pp. 318-320.
is merely personal correspondence, the style is almost that of a literary work. In reading this passage, one readily sees that she reaches oratorical heights, and the letter seems almost like a eulogy. Her choice of words, such as "crise", "loyauté", "l'homme des grandes circonstances", "qualités morales", "qualité de son âme", "l'autorité de son honneur", all lend an air of oratorical elevation to this correspondence.

The tendency to be philosophical is further evidenced in Ourika. One of the most striking examples is the following: "...La philosophie nous place au-dessus des jeux de la fortune, mais elle ne peut rien contre les maux qui viennent d'avoir brisé l'ordre de la nature. Ourika n'a pas rempli sa destinée: elle s'est placée dans la société sans sa permission; la société se vengerait." Madame de Duras wants the reader to understand, through Ourika's situation, that when certain natural laws and social conventions are not observed, one must expect to suffer the consequences which result therefrom. The fundamental idea itself is relatively simple and easily grasped without a great degree of reflection, but her art of expression carries with it the force that is necessary to make the reader see the philosophical depth of these words. Her technique of securing effectiveness lies in her choice of words that are simple, appropriate, and expressive, words that possess, in addition to their literal meaning, the power of suggestion that will stimulate the reader's mind. For example, in the simple statement of the fact that Ourika was placed in society "sans sa

1 Duras, Ourika, pp. 50-51.
permission”, one sees behind these words the history of Gurika’s past. One sees this Negro girl taken from her native land and thrust upon a society that neither understands nor sympathizes with her; and Gurika herself has no control over the course of events that result from this situation. The statement that “la société se vengera” carries a force that is striking. One immediately feels that it is a sort of forewarning of some impending disaster that will be the climax of Gurika’s unhappy fate.

In addition to her choice of words, Madame de Bums arranges her phrases and clauses so that, for the most part, there is a continuity in the flow of ideas, leading from one sentence to the next, without a break in the train of thought, thus obtaining coherence. This effectiveness is further enhanced by the smooth transitions between the paragraphs.

Both novels are psychological; the author makes a penetrating study of the characters, analyzing every thought and reaction. The force of her analysis is all the more striking because the works are written in the first person, thus allowing the person who tells the story to penetrate the depths of his own thought, through the art of introspection.

However, here and there, one finds a repetition of ideas. This is due to the fact that the style is conversational. But through these repetitions, Madame de Duras manages to give vivid psychological analyses of different reactions. For example, when Gurika hears Madame de B.’s friend say that perhaps some man would consent to marry her (Gurika),

1Duras, *Gurika*, p. 54.
would be willing to be the father of Negro children, if he were paid,
Ourika's first reaction is self-pity, realizing her complete isolation
from this society: "...Cet homme qui, à prix d'argent, consentirait
peut-être que ses enfants fussent Noirs! ...Toutes ces pensées...
s'attachaient sur moi comme des furies... et à chaque instant je me
répétais: Seule! pour toujours seule dans la vie..."1 Then, after
several days have passed, Ourika returns to the same idea, but this time
her reaction is entirely different from her first reaction:

"...Mais à présent, mes yeux étaient ouverts, et le
meilleur avait déjà fait entrer la défiance dans mon âme...
Un homme, à prix d'argent, consentirait peut-être que ses
enfants fussent Noirs! Tout mon sang se soulevait d'in-
dignation à cette pensée! J'eus un moment l'idée de de-
mander à madame de B. de me renvoyer dans mon pays!  

This repetition follows naturally as a result of the confusion of
Ourika's state of mind. It emphasizes her solitude and dejection, the
central theme of the novel itself. Her perplexity is further evidenced
in the next reflection of Ourika, following her outburst of defiance:
"...Mais là encore, j'aurais été isolée: qui m'aurait compris? Hélas!
je n'appartenais plus à personne; j'étais étrangère à la race humaine
tout entière!"3

In these three situations, one of the most brilliant analyses of
Ourika's reactions, Madame de Duras presents Ourika first as dejected,

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1 Duras, Ourika, pp. 53-54.
2 Ibid., pp. 54, 58.
3 Ibid., pp. 58-59.
deep in self pity; then she raises her from this state of mind through the idea of defiance and indignation; finally, she pictures Ourika again in despair, as she realizes that she would be out of place, even in her native land. Through these fluctuations of Ourika's reactions, the effect that is given is truly dramatic.

Madame de Duras employs figures of speech which make the expressions of her thoughts more clear and forceful, and at the same time render them attractive to the reader. For example, when Ourika, in the depth of despair, as she realizes her situation, wishes to die, she expresses that wish as follows: "O mon Dieu! ...Donnez-leur encore la part d'Ourika, et laissez-la mourir comme la feuille tombe en automne." In another instance, when she tells the priest of the sufferings she has undergone, she marvels at the calmness with which he receives her confession: "Le prêtre... ne fut point effrayé de l'état de mon âme. Comme un vieux matelot, il connaissait toutes ces tempêtes." A third example is when Édouard, overwhelmed by solitude, and his "maladie de l'âme", says: "Je me sentais accablé sous le fardeau de mon existence comme sous un manteau de plomb."

These figures of speech, by their very simplicity, further exemplify her ability to secure effectiveness through choice of words. In them, there is all the poetic charm and impressiveness necessary to give clarity and

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2 Ibid., pp. 163-164.
3 Duras, Édouard, p. 196.
force, and to enrich the meaning of the idea.

This method of securing effectiveness, however, is by no means particular to Madame de Duras alone. This is characteristic of all the romantics. In fact, the use of figures of speech constitutes a very important part of the technique of the romantics. The poetic prose used by Madame de Duras is typical of the language of the romantic writers.

It could probably be said that Madame de Duras' style is somewhat depressive, inasmuch as the reader gets an impression of the impossibility of happiness for any length of time, of the vain struggle against odds that are too great to be overcome by mere human beings, and of a final acknowledgement of defeat, with the victim seeking consolation elsewhere. One cannot help but notice the constant mentioning of death in Edouard. Pailhès comments that it was "encore la traduction d'un état d'âme, l'aveu tout ensemble d'une épouvante très grande et parfois d'un désir obsédant..."

The following quotations are examples:

"Maurier, lui dis-je un jour, est-il donc impossible de vous faire du bien?" Les lames lui vinrent aux yeux. "Laissez-moi, dit-il, je ne veux pas me rattacher à la vie."

...Vous êtes mauvais juge de ce que je souffre, lui dis-je, et je ne veux pas vous l'apprendre. Le bonheur n'est pas fait pour moi, je n'y prétends pas; mais dites-moi seulement, dites-moi une fois que vous me regretterez quand je ne serai plus, que ce tombeau qui me renfermera bientôt attirera quelquefois vos pas.

...Ah! que la mort me sera douce! Je bénirais celui qui me donnait en ce moment.

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1 Pailhès, op. cit., p. 359.

2 Quotations are taken from Pailhès, pp. 360-361.
Madame de Duras' style might also be characterized as personal or subjective; throughout her works is seen the veiled emotion which is within her, and which finds expression in these writings, the lyricism of the romantics.

These last two characteristics of Madame de Duras' style, depressive and subjective, are easily understood, after the reader has acquired an acquaintance with the unhappy events and the sufferings, both physical and spiritual, that she experienced. Pailhès says: "Le fond de ses romans n'est autre que son histoire; non point un méthodique et minutieux récit, en suivant les jours, les mois, et les années, mais sa vie de coeur et d'âme, vie plus réelle que l'autre, l'analyse de ses affections, de ses sentiments et de ses impressions."

Ourika's situation is to some extent comparable to Madame de Duras' own situation, with reference to her relationship with Chateaubriand. Perhaps one would not go so far as to say that Madame de Duras was in love with Chateaubriand, but her correspondence with him shows that she was very deeply interested in him, and she suffered almost as much for him as did Ourika for Charles. Of this relationship, Pailhès says:

"Celle-ci fut l'amie, et non l'amante de Chateaubriand; amie très passionnée, parce qu'un caractère comme le sien, qui était déjà vivacité, entraînement, tout feu et tout flamme, ne pouvait se tenir en contact habituel avec cette nature orageuse et troublante de René, sans y perdre le peu qui lui restait de modération et d'équilibre dans le sentiment."

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1 Pailhès, op. cit., p. 232.

2 Ibid., p. 19.
However, from a general observation, one could say that the situations are similar, in that both go through the same sufferings of the soul, so many misfortunes, and situations where complete happiness is impossible. Pailhès goes on to say:

Les récits d'Ouija, ce sont les mémoires de l'auteur, sous une forme indirecte, et d'autant plus sincère. Les faits sont mêlés à dessein de détails étrangers. Mais les sentiments et les impressions, enfardis et comme libérés par le séduít du roman, s'y montrent à nu, sans déguisement ni fausse honte.

Sous le voile transparent des fictions, on avait senti battre le cœur de l'écrivain, et on en avait fait la remarque, mais d'une manière vague, et sans aucune des précisions qui révèlent le fond des choses.  

The same comparison could, in some measure, be made with Édouard. Again we may quote Pailhès:

La encore, repliée sur soi, elle s'étudie et s'analyse dans ses plus secrètes intimités. Sous le voile des fictions, elle ne craint pas d'évoquer ses souvenirs et ses affections et de leur imprimer une ressemblance plus saisissante; elle leur rend le rythme et les couleurs de la vie.

...Édouard nous dévoile le cœur et l'âme de Madame de Duras tout autant qu'Ouija, mais autrement, diversément. Il nous montre encore ses tristesses, ses désolations, ses luttes, son désespoir...  

Therefore, after having read Madame de Duras' novels, one feels that one has had an insight into the depth of her own soul, through the simple and natural expressions which imply so much more than they say. It is the memory of her own loneliness which suggested the fundamental idea of all her novels. "Ouija, une isolée; Édouard, un isolé; Olivier, encore un isolé... Ils forment une série qui pourrait avoir pour titre général:

1Pailhès, op. cit., p. 293.

2Ibid., pp. 337, 355.
The following quotation concerning Madame de Duras and her works is taken from Pailhès:

Si ces romans n'étaient que fictions et oeuvres d'art, on pourrait s'en tenir à l'arrêt du grand critique... Mais le nom de Madame de Duras est de ceux que l'histoire littéraire veut ajouter à son trésor. Ses œuvres si délicates, et d'ailleurs peu encombrantes, nous restituent, avec les noms d'une très noble famille, la physionomie d'un régime, d'une société, d'un milieu qu'il convient de ne pas oublier. C'est la vieille France resuscitée dans sa grâce, son langage, son accent, avec ses habitudes d'élégance et quelques-uns de ses préjugés, en une période de transition et de tristes préséntiments, et qui achève de mourir.  

Using the foregoing discussion of Madame de Duras' works as a criterion, one can conclude that although, quantitatively, her contribution to the literary world was not so great, qualitatively, her works secure for her an honored place among literary figures.
CONCLUSION

Although Madame de Duras' name is not so widely acclaimed in French literature, the writer feels that an extensive study of her life and works is justified in the fact that she has played a definite role in its development. The first part of this study is devoted to Madame de Duras' life; at least half of it deals with her relationship with Chateaubriand. So much space is allotted to this particular phase of her life because it is through this friendship that one gains a broader comprehension of her character, as well as an insight into the French society and politics of the Restoration. In the second part, the writer has studied the personality of Madame de Duras by analyzing her works, drawing from her "Ourika" a conclusion as to the place the Negro held in her estimation.

The novelists before Madame de Duras who had shown themselves favorable to the Negro had presented him as a "bon sauvage", emphasizing the love, devotion, and sacrifice that the Negro was willing to exhibit for his white masters. In her "Ourika", Madame de Duras depicts a much more significant character, in presenting the problem brought about by racial distinction. One would hardly say that Madame de Duras had any intention of being an abolitionist; she was more interested in showing how social customs and obligations can be such a determining factor in the destiny of people. But unconsciously, she did contribute to the abolitionist movement; she presented a young Negro woman, equal to the white society around her through

her superior intellect, reinforced by the advantages of education. Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that Madame de Duras believed that the Negro race could be raised to the level of the white race through the medium of education.

But in spite of the fact that Madame de Duras presented a very favorable picture of one Negro, it can be said perhaps that she realized that there were certain limitations to be observed. Ourika must understand that even if the members of Madame de B.'s social circle were friendly toward her, she should not expect to be accepted into their society as they would accept one of their own race in a similar situation. From this observation, one might draw the conclusion that even though Madame de Duras places the Negro on a high level, she acknowledges, at the same time, that there are certain restrictions that must be adhered to, because of the customs of racial distinction set up by society.

Madame de Duras was known to the literary world only by her two novels, Ourika and Murmure; but she gave to her contemporaries a very high opinion of her intellect, her talent, and her character. Her works have inspired more than one writer. After the appearance of Ourika, the novel, there were several dramatic interpretations given in the theaters of Paris in 1824, with alterations in the details, but having the same central theme. In the same year, Madame Emile de Girardin, who wrote under the name Delphine Gay, and who was a frequent visitor to Madame de Duras' salon, published a poem entitled Ourika, wherein is found in all its poetic beauty the expression of Ourika's unhappiness, of her unrequited love, of the suffering this love caused her, of her bewilderment, and finally, of the
consolation in realizing that if she had been allowed to remain on her natal soil, she would have been merely happy, while here, she can die a Christian.

Madame de Duras' Olivier served as a model for the great Stendhal when he wrote his *Arome ou quelques scènes d'un salon de Paris*; however, Stendhal's novel was unsuccessful because it was not understood; in addition to that, he did not describe the salons accurately, for the simple reason that he did not know them.

Her novelettes gave rise to a "petit genre", among which one finds M. de Guizot's *Cloye*, M. Valéry's *Sainte-Ferrine*, and M. de Barante's *Marguerite*.

Madame de Duras took an active part in politics as well as in society. Besides being the focus of the attention of her social circle, she made the political fortune of Chateaubriand, facilitating his ascension to political glory. She never sought fame for herself; she had no thought of becoming either a literary figure or a renowned politician. Her main desire was to please her friends, this little group of intellectuals whom she admired so greatly, including her "cher frère", for whom she sacrificed so much.

When one understands the important place that her salon held in French

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2 *Sainte-Beuve, Portraits de femmes*, p. 69.
society, the dominant role she played in the politics of that time, the limited but nevertheless important influence of her works, and finally, the courage with which she faced the sufferings of her last years, one feels justified in saying that Madame de Duras deserves a high rank among those illustrious women who have done honor to France.
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