Libertinage Et Marivaudage Ou l'EDUCATION Sentimentale Dans Marivaux: "Le Paysan Parvenu" Et Crebillon: "Les Egarements Du Coeur Et De L'esprit.".

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Libertinage et Marivaudage ou l'Éducation sentimentale
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Les Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit

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by

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Jacob, in *Le Paysan parvenu*, and Meilcour, in *Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit*, enter libertine society when they are about the same age. The peasant learns quicker than his aristocratic counterpart whose senses are dulled by his life-long proximity to the libertines. Although Jacob's education in libertinage is faster than Meilcour's, Jacob can never become a full member of the libertine world due to his peasant background. Marivaux, in a light and pleasant manner, inserts the problem of social class into the elite structure of libertinage.

In Chapter One, Jacob explores the possibilities which are open to him and, at the same time, discovers his limitations in the world of libertine men. The "libertines" provide the peasant the opportunities necessary for advancement. Manipulating his personal code of behavior to coincide with his actions, Jacob pleases the "libertines" and assures his success in the social and libertine world. He is fulfilling
his ambition for "fortune".

In Chapter Two, Meilcour's education is explored. Isolated from the libertine world by his thoughts, Meilcour cannot understand the actions of others. Meilcour believes that his novels provide a sufficient code of conduct which should be compatible with libertinage. His shallow knowledge in libertine standards prevents him from establishing contact with Hortense and retards the education which Mme de Lursay prepares for him.

In Chapter Three, the important aspects of libertinage, verbal and visual communication, are analyzed in Le Paysan parvenu and in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit. Jacob quickly learns many libertine techniques by watching others and also by using moments of silence to assess situations. Ignorant of this kind of education, Meilcour often misses his chance for instruction because he is inattentive. In contrast, Jacob is very sensitive to the reactions of others, which he uses to plan his verbal communication. The combination of the two techniques provides Jacob with success in his overtures. Meilcour, on the other hand, is thwarted by his slow comprehension of visual communication. The peasant and the aristocratic youth illustrate the possibilities open to men of different social backgrounds during the formative stages of eighteenth century libertinage.
INTRODUCTION

In the eighteenth century the novel still had not gained the prestige of poetry and drama. Crébillon in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit and Marivaux in Le Paysan Parvenu almost seem to be making an excuse for their works by insisting that they are telling a true story. This developing genre displays many traces of influence from the seventeenth century novels.

Michel Gillot, in the introduction to the Garnier-Flammarion edition of Le Paysan Parvenu, associates Jacob with the picaresque tradition: "Le nouveau roman s'inscrit dans la tradition picaresque, ou même comique, à la façon de Sorel ou de Scarron, et l'on en louera, non sans retard il est vrai, le superbe 'réalisme'." The peasant can be identified with the character who has to use his wit in order to survive in a hostile world which denies him a place. He learns about life through his experiences and must apply his sharp mind and his instincts to get him through a variety of experiences. The picaresque hero feels that he has no control over the tumultuous events which shape his life. Jacob, however, thinks that he can always rely upon providence and chance to be on his side.

Another strong influence in Le Paysan Parvenu and Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit is the seventeenth
century attitude towards love. In the early years of the reign of Louis XIV, the "précieux" met in "salons" and developed a language code which was known only to their elite group. The libertines also developed a code of signs which set them apart from others. However, the "précieux" devised an elaborate use of words to reject banality. In contrast, the libertines often use ordinary words which can have double meanings and imply sexual innuendoes.

With writers at the turn of the century such as Courtiz, Hamilton and Lesage, however, new tendencies had already tinged French thought during the closing years of the reign of Louis XIV. There is a slackening of the rigid moral code and conventions which in the seventeenth century attached man to society.

Wit rises gradually to the importance of birth and wealth as the novel becomes less aristocratic. The novelist exploits this theme, gradually plunging his hero lower in the social scale, in order to add interest to the story of his upward flight to fame or fortune. In French Novelists, Manners and Ideas, Frederick Green describes this trend:

A humanizing process is introduced into the novel... Abstract moralizings on men in general give way to a consideration of the life and adventures of an individual. In these narratives, a growing materialism echoes the spirit of the 'libertins'. The airy persiflage of Hamilton and the mordant wit of Lesage reveal a changing attitude towards
the vices and foibles of humanity...Their outlook, though not at all admirable from the standpoint of strict morality, is, however, immensely human. The unpardonable sin for them consists in deliberately running counter to nature, and here they join hands with the 'libertins'...Human experience and the observed facts of life form the material of the novelist's study...and lend variety and movement to the picture of manners. The dawning cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth century is foreshadowed in the sketches of English society. [There is an interest in travel.] Though still pandering to the old interest in Spain,...[Lesage] takes us to Central America and to Canada. The idealistic cult of woman, too, makes way for a more reasonable though more materialistic attitude...Altogether, the novel gains in breadth and in interest, since it becomes more representative of life.2

At Versailles, love and gallantry were in vogue. The example of the young monarch added to the general havoc which lasted until the arrival of Mme de Maintenon. With Mme de Lafayette's Princesse de Cleves, love changes in nature. The idealistic story and the precious heroine gradually fade away while the heroes capable of inspiring and feeling passion emerge. Tragic love, absent from the French novel since the sixteenth century, reappears in the form originally popularized in France by Boccaccio and Cervantes, that of the "nouvelle". In the meantime, other and greater influences are at work, for there is in La Princesse de Montpensier, as in the rest of Mme de Lafayette's work, much more than the narrative of a guilty love adventure. Led by Mme de Lafayette, the novelist
tries to give a probable picture of the sentiments and passions and later to reveal the hidden springs of human conduct.

Not distracted from their major preoccupation by the voyages, the tournaments and the long tests of courage, the characters of Mme de Lafayette find themselves constantly faced with the problem of love which they examine more closely than the personages of Gomberville or of La Calprenede. The love of the heroine is an obscure passion which engenders shame and remorse. The virtue of abnegation, which is essentially the triumph of will over passion, becomes a favorite subject with French writers, and it is obvious that sensibility originates in the novel with the advent of *La Princesse de Clèves*.

In this novel and in others, the rigorously virtuous heroines do not spend their time reading treatises; they frequent beautiful parks and magnificent balls and cultivate the art of conversation. The heroines of Mme de Lafayette, Mme de Villedieu and Mme de Fontaine are absorbed in these activities. The opposition of virtue to pleasure creates an unstable equilibrium. In this situation, the constant triumph of virtue is not guaranteed. The divergence between the character of the heroines and their actions seems to announce the search for happiness which is one of the major preoccupations in the eighteenth century. Little by little, debauchery becomes implanted in literature. In his book *Les Libertins au dix-septième siècle*, Georges
Poulet describes the evolution of the movement. He notes the decaying quality of libertinage in the eighteenth century. The epicurian trend of the seventeenth century:

... proposait une attitude nouvelle en face de la vie, une attitude moins tendue, l'art de détourner son attention de la tristesse et de la douleur pour se distraire par des images heureuses. Il appartenait aux générations suivantes de pousser plus loin, de demander à la doctrine épisturienne, non plus seulement une méthode d'insolence, mais les moyens de cultiver en soi la volupté.  

Ernest Sturm, in his book *Crebillon et le libertinage au dix-huitième siècle*, gives an analysis of the decline. Sturm states that the philosophical questions behind the revolt begin to disappear and only the desire for pleasure remains:

Petit à petit, 'libertin' en vint à prendre la signification plus large d'une personne passionnément éprise de liberté et s'applique à tous ceux qui résistaient aux formes admises d'autorité et de discipline. Au commencement du XVIIIe siècle survint une intéressante mutation philologique: 'libertin' fut privé de son sens philosophique pour ne garder que celui de 'débauché' et de 'dissolu.' Le terme 'philosophe' recueillit l'acceptation perdue par 'libertin,' confirmant ainsi sémantiquement le legs intellectuel reçu de leurs prédécesseurs du XIXe siècle par Voltaire, Helvétius, D'Holbach, Diderot, etc.

According to Sturm the eighteenth century libertines accepted the philosophical conclusions of their predecessors:

Si Crebillon n'aborde pas les questions religieuses, c'est que les solutions du XVIIe siècle avaient été assimilées et acceptées. Le libertin de Crebillon est visiblement insoucieux de ces problèmes spéculatifs qu'il considère résolus.
In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the libertines retained the carefree quality of libertinage:

qui avait eu, au départ, le désir justifié
d'introduire une nouvelle conception morale
des relations sexuelles, d'instaurer une ère
de joyeuse liberté et d'aimable badinage.6

Gradually, the desire to be free of restrictions is replaced by the wish to dominate. Versac in Les Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit wants to master his disguises in order to succeed in the libertine world. Later Valmont and Mme de Merteuil in Les Liaisons Dangereuses want to dominate others. Sturm believes that this is the end of the movement. Sturm places the decline after the publication of Les Liaisons Dangereuses. He believes that the novels written during the first part of the century still have an affinity with the beginning of the movement in the seventeenth century and he places Crébillon's Les Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit in this period. Marivaux's Le Paysan Parvenu is also to be placed in this category. Marivaux's novel appeared one year earlier than Crébillon's novel of 1736.

The superficial similarities in the plots may not be coincidental. Crébillon was a rival of the older writer, Marivaux, whose style he parodies in L'Ecumoire. Marivaux believed that Crébillon did not tastefully depict sexual behavior in libertine society. It is possible that Marivaux wrote his novel to instruct Crébillon on the technique to use in writing a novel on libertinage.
Clifton Cherpack, in *An Essay on Crébillon fils*, points out that "it is certainly Crébillon fils whom Marivaux is criticizing in *Le Paysan Parvenu* when he has the Chevalier de Saint-Louis, with whom the narrator is riding in a coach, discuss a recently published book with its young author, also a passenger". The Chevalier de Saint-Louis tells the author that his material is licentious. He advises him to deal with debauchery "honnêtement, avec des façons, et avec de la décente". Marivaux demonstrates this technique with the peasant's actions.

Marivaux provides a unique approach to the problem of libertinage by allowing a peasant to learn the libertine code of behavior. In Crébillon's novel only the aristocratic class is represented. In *The Novel of Worldliness*, Peter Brooks points out that the libertine society is a closed one; only certain persons are admitted to the group and they must conform to the signs developed by the group. Crébillon deals with the manner in a select fashion: he portrays libertinage only in its accepted milieu. Marivaux seems to be closer to the philosophical beginning of the movement when he introduces a representative from a lower social class into the structure of libertinage. The peasant wants to be free of the social stigma which accompanies his inferior social rank. The early libertines wanted to free themselves of the restraints placed on sexual behavior by the church. The peasant also has a desire to be free of the restrictions placed on him by society. Marivaux's novels
present many social problems which the Crébillon novel does not. Marivaux does not alter his character to fit the circumstances. He presents one of his typically light-hearted personages. The peasant must slightly twist his values to fit the libertine structure.

Our study will show the effect of social influences on the libertine structure. Two young men about the same age have the desire to become libertines. One is a peasant and the other is a member of the aristocratic class. We will demonstrate that the upper class status does not necessarily provide an advantage in learning libertine techniques. Further we will prove that the peasant acts in accordance with the role imposed upon him by the social and libertine structures. Critics usually look at Jacob's moral values. He is pronounced either sincere or selfish because the social and libertine influences which affect his personality are not taken into account. The chapters in our text will demonstrate that Jacob retains many of his peasant qualities and never completely enters the libertine world. On the other hand, Meilcour's class status permits him to successfully incorporate all of the libertine techniques into his character. This seems ironical because Meilcour enters the libertine world at a slower pace than Jacob. The peasant status makes Jacob more observant and ambitious, but prevents him from becoming a full member of the libertine society.
Our analysis will also provide an insight into the effect that the education of each social class has on libertinage. Jacob has very little education and he is willing to learn from many different people in society. Meilcour is assured that his education is superior and he is reluctant to accept advice. Meilcour is certain that the novels he has read provide him with a code of conduct. He expects others to conform to his code and searches within himself for reasons when others do not abide by his rules. Meilcour's confidence in his education makes him very introspective. He likes to analyze experiences but does not know how to react when he is in the situation. Jacob does not have any false sentiments about the validity of his education. He experiments and judges the effectiveness of his techniques by the reception that he gets.

In order to point out the main similarities and the essential differences in the educations of the two protagonists, each education will be first presented in relation to the range of experiences and their individual reactions. After the study of Jacob's education and Meilcour's limited learning experiences, their progress will be shown in their use of control either by verbal or silent communication; their situation will be evaluated in terms of the learning experiences and the actual learning process to indicate to what degree marivaudage and libertinage serve the same goal: the emerging of the new self-consciousness of the individual and his self-awareness.
Technically the two novels are presented in the same manner: they are both told from the point of view of an older narrator who recalls his life for the benefit of the reader. By doing so, the reader is made aware of the real intentions of the author-protagonist of the narration at the same time that he is informed of the changes in his personality, examined now by a more mature and experienced man looking back on his past. The difference in age of the narrator serves to slowly change these two novels from autobiographies into confessions.

Peter V. Conroy in "Crébillon fils: Techniques of the Novel" uses the term "Erleben Ich" to designate the narrator who is experiencing the events and "Erzählen Ich" for the narrator who has lived through them and recollects his past. We will refer to this technique by simply calling the mature narrator "the older Jacob" or "the older Meilcour".
NOTES


2. Federick Green, French Novelists; Manners and Ideas (New York: D. Appleton, 1931), 71-2.


5. Ibid., 55.

6. Ibid., 117.


CHAPTER ONE

JACOB'S EDUCATION

Jacob's education is quite different from Meilcour's because his social background will prove to be his main handicap and his learning process will depend on chance encounters and peoples' readiness to accept or reject him as much as his own aptitudes to study and then adopt society's rules.

Jacob's instinctive behavior is to illustrate a larger conflict: natural man versus corrupted civilization. It brings up a problem of moral judgment and value: to what extent can society destroy inborn innocence? Technically, Jacob's education by trial and error is assimilated to the development of the individual and his adaptation to the newly discovered rules of the games. In the Le Spectateur français, Marivaux expresses his views on the matter:

...nous avons très rarement le portrait de l'esprit humain dans sa figure naturelle: on ne nous le peint que dans un état de contorsion il ne va point son pas, pour ainsi dire; il a toujours une marche d'emprunt qui le détourne de ses voies, et qui le jette dans des routes stériles, à tout moment coupées, où il ne trouve de quoi se fournir qu'avec un travail pénible. S'il allait son droit chemin, il n'aurait d'autre soin à prendre que de développer ses pensées; au lieu qu'en se détournant, il faut qu'il les compose, les assujette à un certain ordre incompatible avec son feu, et qui écarte l'arrangement naturel qu'amènerait une vive attention sur elles.
His learning adventures are still in keeping with the picaresque tradition, but modified. Traveling is in itself an enriching experience because he is exposed to different worlds, customs and mores. His first journey from the countryside to a Parisian suburb, his exploration of the capital and finally his trip to Versailles cover the main aspect of a practical education based on experimentation, self-analysis and close observation in keeping with the eighteenth century philosophical ideas.

The picaresque tradition is, however, adapted to Marivaux's purpose as his novel is no longer truly picaresque but a "roman de moeurs", despite the fact that his protagonist shares a number of picaresque characteristics such as the feelings of isolation, difficulties in coping with a strange world, a variety of experiences when he is tossed about by Fate's irony, and instances where that which he has previously obtained is snatched away. Finally, love adventures are closely related to each journey: the mistress and Geneviève episodes pertain to his first trip; the Mlle Habert one to his exploration of Paris; the Mme de Ferval one to Versailles. His travels in space as well as in various social milieu have in common the passage from the familiar to the unfamiliar; his education will, therefore, be achieved by a series of psychological shocks and reactions to his environment. The pragmatic aspect of the learning process insures the continuity
of the education: what has been previously learned is to be profitable later on because Jacob becomes acquainted with man's psyche and idiosyncrasies represented by types: the frivolous mistress, the corrupted servant, the prudish old maid and the libertine lady of fashion.

Because of the gradual slow learning process, Jacob is not limited to the master-servant role which is largely a social role. At times he will assume with efficiency the role of the student—and when in control he will act as a teacher and a master. His education is facilitated by a great eagerness to acquire indispensable tools (reading, mathematics) but also by a greater desire to climb the social ladder: ambition coincides then with his high opinion of himself. Cunning and scheming, traditional attributes of the servants, are being used here as a means of control. To a certain extent, it can be said that Jacob has a split personality; never denying his rustic origins, he will exploit a far too obvious naivete typical of his background in order to acquire the social veneer required by higher social classes.

Due to his understanding of social rules and types, Jacob emerges slowly as a distinct individual and no longer as the representative of a social class, the peasant turned servant. This is symbolized in the novel by a change in identity and proud references to his family's genealogy.
As he slowly asserts himself as an individual, his claims for equal treatment become more convincing and forcible. Starting with a request to be treated as a human being, not as a refined servant, in the Habert-Alain conflict, Jacob will be put to the test when at last he has to deal with libertine men.

In our study of his education, we shall analyze the four main steps of his evolution: first, his social background; then his discoveries about society and learning; his self-assertion as an individual among men, and finally the use of the mask as the first effective result of self-control, of understanding the conflict between appearances and reality and control of others.

**Social Background**

The peasant arrives in Paris with a formidable impression of himself, but with little education. He takes advantage of the positive qualities associated with his rustic background. Jacob thinks that he merits a better place in society than his natural origins allow. He uses many of the observations he made while in the country to help him advance in society. Many traits in Jacob's personality are never negated and he uses them to his best advantage. Several times the peasant uses the common sense associated with his background.
Jacob is certain that he will progress. Jacob is delighted when the lady of the house suggests that he should stay in Paris because she thinks that he has the possibility of making progress in the social world. Her flattering conjecture concurs with his own image of himself. Jacob is aware of his natural attributes. Women enjoy looking at his face and servants like to get his opinions, which are filled with common sense. He gives the impression that his answers are spontaneous and none of the conventions of the city have affected his thinking. Even his face conveys frankness.

The peasant relies on observation for his education. Before he came to Paris, Jacob had learned to recognize people who are devout only for the sake of appearances. He later recognizes these qualities when he meets Mlle Habert and uses his knowledge to endear himself to her. Jacob is also quick to recognize that devotion is a mask which covers the libertine actions of Mme de Ferval. Jacob learns about the libertine life style from observations in the house of Madame. He listens to the gossip supplied by the servants and he closely watches the libertine behavior of the lady of the house.

Jacob assimilates rapidly some of the manners of the Parisian family. Consequently, he feels that his self-education in Paris has alienated him from his background. His former peers now appear too "grossier." Jacob has tried not to lose his straightforward, honest, rustic appeal, but
he has also added to these qualities. He has learned to write and to do arithmetic. Jacob has been enthusiastic about learning new skills. He was excited about his position as servant to the nephew of the "maîtresse"; he thought that it might offer educational opportunities for him. His desire to learn to read and to do arithmetic prompted him to accept the money from Geneviève with the theory that God would pardon him for this because of the way he used the money; Jacob accepts the idea that the ends usually justify the means. He can placate his conscience by concentrating on the benefits to himself. Being also a servant, Geneviève does not seem worth such consideration. The master of the house is using her, and at the same time she is trying to exploit Jacob, although she is not clever enough to realize that she is being abused nor does she understand when Jacob makes fun of her. Thus Jacob considers that he is the only person who is worthy to benefit from the triangle of entanglements. This fits well with the picaro's opportunism and is also part of the traditional servant's talent to use his master by outwitting him.

The peasant feels certain that he can use his natural attributes to secure a better future for himself than the one proposed by his master. Immediately after his arrival in Paris, Jacob realizes that his physical features please women. He lets women of importance know that his background
has not impaired his merit, but has not increased his fortune. Jacob will constantly try to project the positive qualities associated with his background. He leads the lady of the house into believing that he can write and he tells her that he will learn to say Mass. There is nothing but chance in the world, he says, and often one becomes a bishop or a vicar without knowing how it came about.

Because he is fully aware of the impossibility of controlling his life or others' lives, Jacob continues to rely heavily on chance and providence. When he leaves the house of "la maîtresse" Jacob is confident that providence will take care of his unemployment. His optimistic belief is a part of his present background which he never entirely loses. When imprisoned, he becomes melodramatic and the emotional appeal that he had been practicing with Mlle Habert seems to overcome him. At this very moment, he blames the devil for his misfortune and asks God to rescue him from the situation. Jacob outlines the unfairness of the situation. When Jacob recovers from his self-pity, he concentrates on thoughts that will help him get out of jail. He assures himself that divine providence is on his side. He has been careful to stretch his peasant values to cover all of his actions. Thus Jacob can be sure that the divine being will not leave him in this predicament. Before coming to Paris, Jacob
learned that he could rely on a divine power. His need to reassure himself on this point seems to bring him closer to his innocent, rustic origins. He consoles himself: "Dieu ne me délaissera pas."² The effect created by his plea is destroyed by the following sentence in which he associates his deliverance not only to divine providence but also to a woman. The lady of the house earlier had promised to rescue him from his dilemma. Jacob knows Mlle Habert will not hesitate to do the same. Jacob's beliefs which are a part of his background and his confidence in his ability with women give him solace when he is in jail.

The usual traits of the slow and carefully scheming servant are to give him poise: Jacob is reassured in difficult situations when he relies on this belief which is a part of his background. The president sends a servant to his house in order to question him about his relationship with Mlle Habert. Mlle Habert is very upset, but Jacob remains calm and he comforts Mlle Habert by telling her that he has only to give his explanation of the situation. Jacob explains that he is not worried because his conscience is clear and divine providence is on their side: "Sa Présidence me dira ses raisons, je lui dirai les miennes, nous sommes en pays de chrétiens, je lui porte une bonne conscience et Dieu par-dessus tout."³
Jacob is still too insecure to be completely defiant of the moral rules defined by divine providence. When Mlle Habert compliments Mme de Ferval's efforts to free Jacob, she calls Mme de Ferval a good Christian. Because Mme de Ferval earlier made advances to Jacob he hesitates to agree with Mlle Habert. Jacob does not want Mlle Habert to guess that Mme de Ferval is interested in him. Jacob agrees that she was kind to secure a lawyer for him, but he avoids making reference to Mlle Habert's comment about Mme de Ferval's Christianity. Jacob has not forgotten the lessons that he learned in the country. He thinks that he may suffer reprisal if he is deliberately insincere: "J'avais peur que Dieu ne me punît." These somber thoughts fade away when he leaves the prison.

While Jacob is in prison, Mlle Habert asks the jailer to bring him a good meal. Jacob's delight at the prospect of a good meal causes him to forget the bleak surroundings in the jail. Earlier, eating alone in the kitchen of the Habert sisters, Jacob was not depressed by the quarrels that he knew the sisters were having on his account. He felt that fortune was on his side and he intended to enjoy his meal despite the eternal circumstances. The association between peace of mind and a full stomach links Jacob with his peasant background, eating being one of the main pleasures for country people. All of the refinement which Jacob has learned disappears in this scene when he is by himself.
Jacob hopes to impress women with the naive, rustic aspects of his background. Mlle Habert is impressed by his "honnête origine" and compares it to her own; Jacob also hopes that Mme de Ferval will appreciate the naive speech that links him with his simple origins. Mme de Ferval is amused that by his effort to convey this impression. Mme de Ferval enjoys imitating his naive speech. "Oui-da, dit-elle, ha, ha, ha... ce gros garçon, il me répond cela avec une vivacité tout à fait plaisante." Having established his naïve background, Jacob proceeds to make bold compliments. His background provides him a mask under which he can operate more effectively.

Mme de Ferval never forgets Jacob's background. She tells him that her position in society would make his frequent visits to her home improper. Acting like a teacher she informs him that they can meet secretly in the home of Mme Remy. She is amused when an already more practical Jacob worries about the possibility of someone spying on them. He is pleased that Mme de Ferval does not pretend to ignore the difference in their backgrounds. She provides a challenge since he cannot anticipate all of her actions. He had guessed most of her reactions and planned his schemes accordingly. Jacob calls Mlle Habert "petite bougeoise"; their relationship started on the assumption that they were on the same social level. When Jacob was with her he was always experimenting or piecing together bits and pieces of information that would help him in his
courtship. Jacob was enraptured by his success; he is also often taken in by his own persuasive arguments. Jacob never had the time to reflect on anything except his successful maneuvers.

This relationship with Mme de Ferval started out differently; reflection is an integral part of it. Mme de Ferval quietly lets Jacob know that his position is inferior to hers. Thus Jacob cannot feel that he is in complete control of the situation. He must wait for her to make the initial moves before he responds. Jacob uses many of the techniques that worked well with Habert. He begins to have confidence in himself when these tactics have a similar effect on Mme de Ferval. However, Mme de Ferval is the first "grande dame" that he has encountered and his inexperience with the delicacies which she observes causes him to make a blunder at the end of their conversation. It delights Jacob that she becomes aloof. It gives him a chance to reflect on the tremendous advances he has made; he asks himself if before this he had realized his own importance: "...avais-je senti ce que c'était qu'amour propre?" He credits Mme de Ferval with providing the stimulus which made him reflect on his newly acquired prestige. Jacob realizes that Mlle Habert did not provide the necessary catalyst. The peasant needs more than wealth; he needs to know that his background does not impair his acceptance in higher social circles.
When Jacob and Mlle Habert moved to the new apartment, Jacob felt that he was negating a part of his background by calling himself M. de la Vallée. A new personality begins to emerge. Jacob even becomes defiant when questions are asked about his background. One of the witnesses at the wedding decides to leave when he learns of Jacob's origins. He only wants to be with people of his "sorte". Jacob asks Mme d'Alain what the witness meant by making the derogatory statement. Mme d'Alain indicates that the facts Doucin presented prejudice her toward the witness's point of view. She points out that the witness is a merchant, "un bourgeois de Paris...un homme qui est marquillier de sa paroisse".7 She states that Jacob does not have a comparable background. Jacob argues that his background is equal to the witness'. In an earlier discussion, the couple decided that Jacob could easily have been a well-established merchant if his family had left the country a few generations sooner. Jacob reasons in a similar way with Mme d'Alain: If he had stayed in his parish he would have been a "marquillier". He adds that his father is a "marquillier". His family are strong supporters of the church. Jacob lets her know that there can be no question about the integrity of his family. The older Habert sister also challenges Jacob's background and asks the president to question him. Addressing Jacob in the "tu" form, the president demonstrates that he considers Jacob to be socially inferior. Jacob points out that if the president had addressed Mlle Habert's sister in the same
manner she would have thought that she had been treated badly. Jacob says that he is not complaining because he is poor and that the poor are treated in this manner. Jacob says that this is not their fault. Jacob has shown the inequity of the treatment that he has received and he has not been offensive by inserting the "ce n'est pas votre faute". The president and his friends would not have any guilt feelings about the form of address if they were not directly attacked. Jacob had learned from his experience with Mlle Habert that, with only a little tact, he could make statements that otherwise would be impossible. Thus Jacob points out an apparent inequity to the president and his friends without offending them.

Jacob says that he only points out the difference in treatment he noticed to help establish a comparison between himself and the older Habert sister: he says that in his opinion she has little more right to the title of mademoiselle than he has to monsieur. She is completely baffled and protests. Jacob asks if her father was a "gredin". He points out that her father was the son of a farmer: "C'est déjà ferme pour ferme." He became a merchant and Jacob may also become one: "...ce sera encore boutique pour boutique". Jacob creates comic relief by repeating the words "boutique" and "ferme". He reasons that from the "boutique à la ferme" and from the "ferme à la boutique" there is not a great difference. Jacob says that the younger Habert is not delicate about "un étage" or a "boutique".
When she admits that she is the granddaughter of a farmer, Jacob pokes fun at what he considers to be Mlle Habert's one "étage" above him: "...ce n'est qu'un étage que vous avez de plus que moi; est-ce qu'on est miserable à cause d'un étage de moins? Est-ce que les gens qui servent Dieu comme vous, qui s'adonnent à l'humilité comme vous, comptent les étages, surtout quand il n'y en a qu'un à redire?" Jacob points out what he thinks the duty of a pious person should be. He is showing the apparent contradiction in her sister's statement that men are equal before God but not before other men, a situation which she says God approves. Jacob shows the fallacy of her reasoning but he does it in a humorous way and therefore avoids insulting any other members of the group. Jacob has successfully defended his background against the Habert sister's attacks.

Thus Jacob uses his wit to compensate for his lower social origins. He stresses the qualities in his background which impress women. Jacob thinks that his background has provided him with all the essentials necessary for advancement in the social world. The peasant never completely negate parts of his background: he enjoys the simple pleasure of eating and he relies on the religious values he learned in the country. Jacob incorporates the positive qualities of his background into his emerging personality and prepares to challenge others who consider his origins inferior.
Social Learning

In the very beginning, the peasant has no distinct personality because he is commonly accepted as a mere object, pleasant enough to be looked at. At the same time, he functions mainly as a passive observer, a tacit witness. The numerous descriptive scenes inserted in the plot reduce him to the role of a lens, often out of focus when the situation is too complex for him; as he matures, he acquires the ability to focus on specific and relevant details. Recording impressions through direct observation added to the repetitions of similar scenes and incidents help him retain a positive and practical knowledge of the world.

The first step in his education, learning to read, allows him to increase the frequency of meaningful verbal communication with others as his vocabulary improves; this gives him a means to exert control. The mathematical knowledge he acquires fulfills another function. Because he is being exposed to a multiplicity of experiences, his mind becomes more analytical. In a given situation, maturity and control will become more evident at the very moment he will show his capacity for synthesis. His conclusions derive both from practical observation, logic and statistics drawn from the actual experience.

Because Jacob learns quickly and retains his knowledge, his powers of observation compensate for his limited education. When Jacob leaves the countryside, he understands
the difference between the pious and those who only appear pious. The ability to pierce masks enables Jacob to easily grasp the principles of libertinage. Jacob attributes his change in values to the structure which libertinage imposes on society. His ability to circulate in higher social circles makes him feel superior to his former peers. However, the peasant feels that the change in his personality is often beneficial to those around him.

When the peasant arrives in Paris, he is awed by the society which provides a sharp contrast with his former life. Jacob instinctively has the desire to advance in social circles; he recognizes many of the qualities inherent in libertinage. The peasant boldly follows his intuition. When the "maitresse" speaks to him he is not filled with awe. He discovers rapidly what pleases her and he does not seek to avoid her questions. His self-education enables him to know how to handle the situation because he is using a formerly acquired knowledge.

In his native village, Jacob observed the differences between the pious and those who only appear pious. With this knowledge he can later on assess the situation and the diverse forms of hypocrisy in the Habert household. The women pretend to eat very little for the sake of appearances; their "directeur" is more concerned with keeping his power over the women than in their piety. Jacob suspects this to be the case when he sees the "directeur"; he slyly listens to his conversation with the sisters to confirm his suspicions.
When the "directeur" comes into the kitchen, Jacob lets him know that he has listened to the conversation and the reasons the "directeur" gives Jacob for leaving the household are not the ones that he gave the women. The "directeur" is shocked that the young man has outwitted him and he walks away dumb-founded. Jacob is in complete control of the situation; his quick perception and the knowledge that he had gained from previous experience made it possible for him to anticipate the actions of the characters.

When Jacob is indifferent to a person, he is very composed. The landlady's daughter, Agathe, enters Mlle Habert's room following a stormy scene between her mother and the couple. Jacob is no longer lost in his sentimental reveries. She arrives at an untimely moment in his talks with Mlle Halbert and Jacob is not pleased. Jacob is in better command of his feelings. He is not awed by Agathe. She is a part of the shopkeeper class structure which is a step above the peasant on the social ladder, but her advantage toppled with her amorous overtures to Jacob. Jacob knows that he is attractive to young girls and he realizes that he has power over them when they are responsive to his looks. Responsiveness is a great leveler in Jacob's thinking. Agathe becomes only another young girl for Jacob and he easily dismisses her when he wants to. She distresses Mlle Habert by telling them that she knows that her mother has gone to see the notary and she suspects that it is about marriage. The previous experience with her mother has prepared Jacob for this scene and he easily
lifts himself and Mlle Habert from this entanglement by dismissing Agathe with the excuse that he has pressing business matters he must attend to.

The confidence that Jacob displays in the scene with Agathe is a result of his social learning. After a short stay in Paris, Jacob began to feel superior to other members of the peasant class. Jacob feels that a new personality is being formed. The uneducated appear "grossier" to him. When he moves into his new residence with Mlle Habert he feels that M. de la Vallée is emerging and that his affairs become noble and important. However, Jacob does not hesitate to revert to his peasant expressions each time he thinks that it will contribute to his social advancement. When he is wrongly accused of murder, Jacob constructs a façade for his interrogators by summarizing his story in a naive fashion. Some of the sentimentality that he felt about his plight may have helped Jacob build his story, but at least part of the innocent expressions are for the benefit of his audience whose reaction he observes. Fully aware that his naive expressions make him appear innocent, he uses them to his best advantage. The assassin even laments Jacob's position and he assures the judge of the peasant's total innocence in the incident. Thus Jacob has successfully portrayed the image that worked best for him in this situation.

The shrewd peasant makes a point of assessing the personality of a person before employing his techniques. Since Mlle Habert considers herself a devout woman, Jacob
accordingly, flatters this image that she has of herself. He must work within the framework that her devotion will allow. Then, Jacob realizes that the seduction scenes will always end in a discussion of practical matters. His appraisal of the situation gives Jacob the opportunity to expound on his thoughts and develop what he plans to say. He does not have to be nervous about making blunders because these only endear him even more to Mlle Habert. Thus, Jacob can be very natural and at the same time practice new methods of seduction. His relationship with Mlle Habert provides a solid learning experience for him.

Jacob seems to understand how to motivate Mlle Habert. He knows that she is anxious to conclude the matter of the marriage but she is reluctant to take the final step. Jacob uses the dinner with the landlord and her daughter to help decide the matter. He makes Mlle Habert jealous when he shows response to the advances of the two ladies. Jacob tempers his actions in order not to upset Mlle Habert. He also knows that the conversations can be conducted with eyes. He and Agathe steal many furtive glances. Jacob understands that the young girl is flattering him and he cannot resist replying. Jacob is certain that it was done with a great deal of rapidity and they are the only two aware of the exchange. In any case, the matter helps Mlle Habert make her decision. She sets aside a time for Jacob to come to her room for a discussion. Jacob is not surprised; he has by this time mastered all the techniques that prove useful
to him in regard to Mlle Habert.

Jacob does hesitate to tell Mlle Habert that she is the only woman in the world for him. In *Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit*, Versac makes a similar statement when he informs his protégé that libertines often make meaningless statements to embellish the effect of passion. Both Marivaux and Crétillon agree on the power of verbal ingeniosity. But while libertinage stresses the skillful and dishonest deformation of language to serve one's immoral and amoral goals, marivaudage refers more specifically to the notion of propriety.

In *Le Cabinet du philosophe; Première feuille*, Marivaux states:

Allez dire à une femme que vous trouvez amiable et pour qui vous sentez de l'amour: Madame, je vous désire beaucoup, vous me feriez plaisir de m'accorder vos faveurs. Vous l'insulterez: elle vous appellera brutal. Mais dites-lui tendrement: Je vous aime, madame, vous avez mille charmes à mes yeux: elle vous écoute, vous la réjouissez, vous tenez le discours d'un homme galant. C'est pourtant lui dire la même chose: c'est précisément lui faire le même compliment: il n'y a que le tour de changer; et elle le sait bien, qui pis est.13

Gallantry in marivaudage is a question of manners and gradation in the use of language. It does not overlap the problem of intentions. Jacob's "lies" can be viewed as exaggerations of a true feeling—his liking for Mlle Habert.

Valmont and Mme de Merteuil in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* or Versac in *Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit* are expert in the art of expressing nonexistent feelings. Marivaudage is a means to please the interlocutor; libertinage, a way to convey falsehood in the most convincing manner.
In order to seduce a woman, the "libertin" assures the woman that she is the only object that he can contemplate and there will never be anyone else who is as captivating. He bases his vows on insincerity; he knows that he will be unfaithful. Jacob convinces Mlle Habert that he is sincere and also begins to believe what he is saying although Mlle Habert does not remain the only woman in Jacob's life for very long. It seems that she never was. Thus Jacob is almost insincere. When his insincerity is more evident later on, he shares this trait with the libertine men. Jacob, however, does not remain cold and dispassionate. He becomes involved in his emotions and is surprised by them: "...je me trouvai moi-même étonné de l'aimer tant." Jacob also remains kind to Habert even after he is disloyal. Jacob has used Mlle Habert as a testing ground. He has been able to develop libertine techniques but in a closed milieu.

Jacob's belief that he has learned enough to consider himself a suitor to Mme de Ferval permits him to enter the aristocratic world. Libertinage in the eighteenth century was, with few exceptions, the exclusive property of the noble class. Thus his courtship of Mme de Ferval makes Jacob feel that he is becoming a participant in the libertine world. Jacob counts on his instinctive feelings to sort out the proper conduct; however, he is a little self-conscious about the use of the suitable form. After he bows several times to Mme de Ferval, he notices that she does not share this concern about the correctness of his formality and feels
relieved when she calls him "gros garçon". She can see that the peasant is awed by her interest in him and takes advantage of the situation to confess bluntly her affection and what she expects in return. Jacob is flattered and grateful and goes as far as admitting to her that he will love her "trop" if he is not careful. Jacob then relies on the technique which had been valuable in their last meeting: he kisses her hand with ardor. Abandoning her hand to Jacob, she progresses to the "tu" form: "Parle donc, est-ce que tu m'aimes tant?" Jacob answers that he is afraid that he will love her in a manner that is not fitting for him. Mme de Ferval asks him twice if he is in love with her. She wants to make him feel that he is the one making the overture in a love relationship: "...voir un peu ce que nous ferons de cet amour que tu as pour moi." Jacob is following her lead; he is even afraid that he has offended her with his confession. The clever Mme de Ferval tells him that she is touched by his sentiments and he pleases her, but she never clearly states that she is in love with him. This gives her the upper hand in the relationship. In Les Égarements du coeur et de l'esprit, the "libertine" uses a similar technique with her young lover. In their next meeting she affects a distance from him. She must feel that her aloofness will entice the young man. While she is talking she contrives to make sexual appeals to Jacob by sitting in a seductive position. However, Jacob becomes
very direct: "Quel friand petit pied vous avez là, madame." Mme de Ferval realizes that the peasant may be advancing too quickly and that she must protect her reputation in case of an intrusion. She gives a command and takes the lead in their actions by establishing a distance between them. When she assures Jacob that he has not displeased her, Jacob has one more occasion to give her compliments.

Jacob thinks that he must convince Mme de Ferval of his innocence. She is afraid that he will be too overt with his feelings and that the servants will overhear him. She even advises him not to divulge his sentiments for her. When he assures her that he would have acted differently if Mlle Habert had been present, Jacob knows what he is doing. Mme de Ferval is not sure of the extent of his awareness; she has been partially fooled by his apparent naïveté and innocence. These are no longer genuine characteristics of Jacob's personality. He partly understands what is permissible in the libertine world. To participate in this world he must to some extent negate the traits too closely associated with his peasant background. A parallel can be drawn from Versac's statement in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit that the libertine will jeopardize his reputation and his fortune if he does not partially eradicate his virtues. Society permits the "libertine" to make advances to women other than fiancées. However, the overtures must be kept secret from the person who is being deceived. Jacob's fiancée is not a member of the libertine world. Thus his
feelings for another must be kept secret from her. Jacob understands the principles which govern her life and he understands the mechanisms of the libertine society. The two are in conflict and force Jacob into secrecy. Thus he can no longer strictly adhere to the rules of honesty and openness which are part of his background. Jacob can afford to sacrifice these qualities because his main interest is the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure which is the main rule of the libertine code. Thus he opts in part for the role of a libertine because he understands the need for secrecy. Mme de Ferval does not realize that Jacob has a clear perception of the situation. Jacob seems to have a clearer understanding of his goals after his encounter with Mme de Ferval. At the beginning of the book, Jacob thinks that his good fortune materializes when he makes progress with Mlle Habert. After his meeting with Mme de Ferval, Jacob realizes that his desires have not been satisfied. Jacob wants not only an advancement in society, but also someone who forces him to appreciate his progress. Mme de Ferval does this and she indirectly flatters his ego. Mlle Habert could not accomplish these results; she can only shower material goods on him. Jacob could not completely appreciate her generosity; he believes that these are the results of his productive maneuvers.

After his meetings with Mlle Habert he ponders over his actions and he often becomes lost in the sentiment that he was trying to convey. Jacob involves himself in what he is
saying. In his meeting with Mme de Ferval he is more detached from the situation. He is no longer leading the conversation; he is trying to respond to her advances in the correct manner. Due to the exhilarating feeling of progress, Jacob is not as uninhibited as he was in his encounters with Mlle Habert. He is more detached from what he is saying and he can make a less emotional assessment of the situation. Mme de Ferval encourages this attitude because she wants him to appreciate her higher social position. At the same time she bluntly lets him know of her interest in him so that Jacob will fully understand her desires. The distance that she puts between them gives Jacob the opportunity to reflect on her overtures and savor the situation. Always preoccupied with prompting Mlle Habert to accept a proposal of marriage and then in eliminating the barriers set up by her sister and Doucin, Jacob was denied the chance to do this in his relationship with Mlle Habert. There was never an obstacle that intimidated Jacob for very long. Using knowledge gained from his past experiences, Jacob quickly evaluated these situations and planned his moves. Jacob is successful because he knows how to incorporate his techniques into the world of people who want to believe that they are devout. Mme de Ferval is not a member of Mlle Habert's circle; she pretends to be for the sake of appearances. Jacob quickly perceives that she is not. Mme de Ferval responds to his eyes in a way that would not be proper for a devout woman to react to an engaged
man. Because Jacob is still in awe of Mme de Ferval's social rank, there is a degree of uncertainty in his encounter with her. This awe is part of an exciting challenge; he is passing a series of tests which will lead to his goal of marriage to Mlle Habert; his only concern is the gratuitous pleasure of the exchange. Jacob feels a little guilty that his conversation with Mme de Ferval induces him to be unfaithful to Mlle Habert and betray his peasant values. But Jacob must now evaluate his actions in reference to a libertine context.

Mme de Ferval is the first libertine to entice M. de la Vallée. Previously the "maîtresse" liked Jacob, but it was always in a servant and master role. Mme de Ferval lets Jacob know that she will receive his advances in the position of a suitor. Engaged to one and appealing to the other, Jacob can act for the first time in a libertine manner since the two women compete to share his charms. He stretches his ethics to include his behavior: "...j'étais ravi d'épouser l'une, et de plaire à l'autre." Prior to the scene with Mme de Ferval, Jacob thought his commitment to Mlle Habert would prevent any infidelity to her. Jacob quickly forgets his slight embarrassment and enjoys his talk with Mme de Ferval. Jacob learns from his experience that he enjoys cultivating a relationship in which he has no material or social gain for his goal. Many of Jacob's actions are libertine: Jacob has a commitment to one woman and he is interested in another. He deceives both women about his feelings for the
other. Also he enjoys the company of both women. Deception and pleasure are the basis for his relationships, although Jacob does not intend to hurt either of the women. Influenced by the libertine social structure, Jacob takes a lighthearted approach as he stretches his peasant values to sanction his actions.

When Mme de Ferval confides in Jacob that between them she will not keep up the pretense of being devout, Jacob reciprocates by telling her that his love for her is unaffected. He no longer tries to adhere to strict principles. His values have changed to the extent that he could easily include a little falsehood. In *Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit*, Versac explains to Meilcour that complete honesty can be a self-destructive force in the libertine world: "Il vaut mieux, encore un coup, prendre les erreurs de son siècle ou du moins s'y plier, que d'y montrer des vertus qui y paraîtraient étrangères."19 Jacob tries to soothe Mme de Ferval and himself by reminding her that man is not perfect: "Qu'est-ce qu'on fait dans cette vie? un peu de bien, un peu de mal; tantôt l'un, tantôt l'autre: on fait comme on peut, on n'est ni des saints ni des saintes."20 He even tries to eliminate any guilt feelings by adding that one doesn't go to confession without a reason. Jacob's new view of life allows him to reconcile his principles and his passionate desire to progress in the libertine world.

Mme de Ferval readily agrees that everyone has weaknesses.
Jacob tries to excuse any other feelings of culpability by repeating the phrase "ce n'est pas votre faute".\textsuperscript{21} The repetition of the statement spreads an aura of blamelessness over the participants. The libertine structure which imposes dishonest principles is at fault. Jacob emphasizes for her benefit the idea that they must accept their positions and make the best of them. Jacob slides from a justification of their relationship to his suggestive flattery: "...il faudrait [nous] laisser, et je n'en ai pas le courage depuis vos belles mains."\textsuperscript{22} Mme de Ferval admits that she finds him charming and more advanced in worldly arts than she had imagined.

Mme de Ferval arranges a secret rendezvous with Jacob and even gives him money to pay for his coach fare. He accepts the offer at her insistence but with mixed feelings: he is delighted that she thinks enough of him to offer the money, but his joy is spoiled by shame because he is reminded of the difference in their social status. This action again puts Mme de Ferval in a position of power. She reminds Jacob that he must not take advantage of the freedom that they will enjoy at Mme Remy's. She is setting the tone of their next meeting when she will begin by being coy. She pretends to be guided by her principles; "C'est que je voudrais bien n'avoir rien à me reprocher."\textsuperscript{23} She cannot afford to be an easy conquest for Jacob. Lursay, in \textit{Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit}, also hopes to give her young suitor
the initial impression that she is unattainable. Jacob is not duped by Mme de Ferval's reserved manner because he has noticed the effect that his compliments produced; Mme de Ferval almost lost control of her emotions. Thus after gaining confidence in his techniques Jacob looks forward to his next meeting. He knows that he can cope successfully with a "grande dame". Usually these libertine overtures are restricted to the nobility. Thus Jacob has proficiently broken the class barrier. His progress with Mme de Ferval is his first step into the libertine world. Jacob is aware of his accomplishment. It is not surprising that he will want to extend himself. When Mme de Fécourt shows an interest in the newcomer, he quickly reciprocates. Jacob has stretched his value system to include indulgences. After his first meeting with Mme de Ferval he was glad that he could marry Mlle Habert and please Mme de Ferval at the same time. After his conversation with Mme de Fécourt, Jacob could say that he is glad to be married to Mlle Habert and simultaneously please many women. The cultivation of numerous relationships is one of the basic tenants of libertinage and Jacob is enjoying his new obligation. Jacob is not malicious toward Mlle Habert, Mme de Ferval or Mme de Fécourt. He likes the freedom of not being confined to any one of them and he delights in the different way each woman flatters his ego.

When Jacob meets Mme de Fécourt he notices her interest in him without any surprise. She appears oblivious to the
differences in social status and never tries to intimidate anyone with her position. Jacob passes under her scrutiny and is embarrassed by her obvious stare. He is glad that she is pleased with his looks. In this instance, Jacob did not have to display any of his charms or techniques; Mme de Fécour immediately likes him and promises to help him find a job.

Jacob is also fascinated by Mme de Fécour's physique. She is slightly overweight and has a large throat. In the eighteenth century the throat was considered a very attractive feature. Jacob notices that she has a habit of throwing her throat forward to show approval. Her throat consumes Jacob's attention in the same manner that Mme de Ferval's leg occupied him earlier. He is stimulated by the voluptuous images that fill his mind. Mme de Ferval and Mme de Fécour have put Jacob in the mood to make love. He is glad to sleep with his wife; she is filled with fervor. Thus Jacob is enticed by two women and makes love to another. Mme de Ferval and Mme de Fécour increased his sexual desire for Mlle Habert; they also augmented his self-esteem. This is reflected in his behavior and makes Mme d'Alain respect him more than before. The results of his ventures into the libertine world have all been positive according to Jacob, who admits that he is "perdu de vanité". Consequently he is light-hearted and even gallant with his table companions. Jacob begins to feel that Mme d'Alain and Agathe are no match for him, but he will have to be content with their company for the time being.
Jacob is aware that Mme de Ferval has given him an education which has changed his personality: "...depuis ce jour-là je devins méconnaissable, tant j'acquis d'éducation et d'expérience." The noble women have introduced him into the sensual world and they have flattered his ego. For the first time, Jacob has known pleasure. He even attributes a positive effect to it: his spirit has been refined while being corrupted. He has been educated in the school of sentiment. This is another attempt to justify his entry into the libertine world. When Jacob was an observer and not a participant he was critical of the libertine women. Jacob's emphasis on the advantageous aspects of his experiences is another attempt to stretch his value system to include his actions. Jacob lists the sexual attractions used by Mme de Ferval and then he explains the benefits he derives. His description, in the form of an argument, is an attempt to persuade not only the reader but also himself. The description of the advantages is preceded by the imperative "voyez." Jacob commands the reader and himself into an understanding of a viewpoint which flatters him. Mme de Ferval's overtures have made him more sensitive; they have given his heart a clearer insight and they have educated him in the school of sentiment: "...voyez que de choses capables de débrouiller mon esprit et mon coeur, voyez quelle école de mollesse, de volupté, de corruption, et par conséquent de sentiment." Jacob wants the reader to believe that he has not been hardened by corruption:
the experiences have given him spiritual refinement. The libertine experiences have added a new dimension to his life. Jacob considered himself a sensitive person when he left the country, but he feels that his experiences with the noble women have added to his awareness. This is a contrast to his description of the "maîtresse" and Mme de Fécur; their perception seemed to be dulled by the multitude of encounters. Jacob's new relationships have heightened his appreciation of life. Although he becomes lost in his vanity it only makes him more cordial to others. Thus Jacob can enjoy his adventures and also be assured that his libertinage is beneficial for everyone concerned.

Closely observing the people around him, the peasant has managed to progress in social circles. His knowledge gives him a feeling of control and magnifies his self-image. Libertine techniques make Jacob's social advancement possible. He modifies his values in accordance with the principles which the libertine structure imposes. His social learning helps in the creation of a new personality, M. de la Vallée. The peasant associates only positive qualities with his newly acquired social knowledge.

**Self-Assertion**

Jacob's education would remain incomplete if he did not have to assert himself in a masculine circle. This will be another and more difficult obstacle to overcome because the men in the libertine society do not openly
accept Jacob. They are competitive and are concerned with success in their own affairs. The libertine men know that Jacob's inferior origins put him at a disadvantage and they address him in a condescending manner in order to remind him of his social position. Versac in *Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit* explains that the libertines consider it necessary to belittle other men in order to accentuate their own importance. "Tout homme qui vous blâme de trop parler de vous, ne le fait que parce que vous ne lui laissez pas toujours le temps de parler de lui: plus modeste, vous seriez martyr de sa vanité."26 The libertine must crush any opponent, male or female. The libertine men make it impossible for Jacob to resort to the techniques which work well with women. Jacob is helpless in these encounters and reverts to his previous subservient and meek behavior. His only defense against the annihilation of his personality is his confidence in the superiority of his moral character.

Jacob's first adversary is the master of the household in which he is a servant. The master tries to dictate his wishes to Jacob. The master would like for Jacob to marry one of the female servants. In compensation for occasionally sleeping with the woman, he offers Jacob material wealth. The peasant is tempted, but reluctant because he understands that the master has an ulterior motive. The master objects that even if this were his reason it should make no difference to Jacob. Any peasant would be glad to secure a position for himself in this manner. Jacob knows
from the agreeable manner in which he has been greeted by women that he has a reasonable hope for a better future than the one the master proposes. Jacob defends himself against the plan to marry the servant by using the only weapon available to him: Jacob argues that the honesty instilled in him during his life in the country will not permit the arrangement. He protests that it is a tradition in his family to marry only virgins and he would rather be the poorest of his peers than go against this precedent. The two men are still literally in a master-servant role and the master assumes that he can impose his wishes on Jacob. Infuriated by Jacob's resistance, which is based upon a superior code of ethics, he leaves no other choice than marriage or jail. Jacob's reaction is to feel sorry for himself. He loses control of his emotions when he is alone and he cries. The lady of the house sees him and promises her help. Jacob learns from this experience that women will always aid him when he is mistreated by men.

Later, when Jacob is mistakenly imprisoned, the men who arrest him are not sympathetic to his pleas. Jacob sees that his efforts are ineffective and knows that he must make a connection with women who are his supporters. There are no women present for him to entice and the "galant" side of his personality is absent. Jacob is helpless without his female friends. He is overwhelmed by his emotions and he cries. This experience does not give him confidence for his next encounter with men.
Jacob decides to take a coach to Versailles to ask Mme de Fécour's brother for a job. He is surrounded by men when he enters the conveyance. Almost immediately he has a feeling of insecurity. Jacob is afraid that his speech may reveal his peasant origins: he is careful to avoid saying anything that will reveal his past. He accomplishes his goal by talking as little as possible and agreeing with the group. By listening carefully Jacob thinks the other men will not notice his silence. He is making a serious attempt to be accepted by these men. None of the details of their conversation are overlooked. The talkative officer assumes that Jacob's reasons for going to Versailles are not serious ones. Jacob tries to assure him of the contrary and to make his business sound important. The officer jokingly tells him that if he is refused he can enlist the aid of women. The response is silence. Jacob is fully aware that the officer has given a just assessment of the situation, but he is irritated that his grave facade has been easily penetrated; he makes no attempt to persuade the officer to accept his viewpoint. Jacob has been eloquent with the women and argumentative with men who try to dictate his actions. However, Jacob has reached a new phase in his life. No longer satisfied with aristocratic women's acceptance, he desires recognition from noble men. At this point Jacob is certain that the only way to succeed is by assuming a serious demeanor, a very unnatural pose for him. The men in the carriage cannot believe his solemnity. Jacob gives the impression of a young
man more interested in women than in business. This is the first time that Jacob has failed to be convincing and his anxiety concerning men is increased.

Jacob immediately feels submissive when he meets M. de Fécour who makes everyone feel the gravity of his presence. Jacob approaches him in a humble manner and for the first time he is completely intimidated. This salutation reveals his inferior position: "...je lui fis mon compliment avec cette émotion qu'on a quand on est un petit personnage, et qu'on vient demander une grâce à quelqu'un d'important." Fécour ignores Jacob who is left holding his letter of introduction. Jacob feels that he is left in a laughable position; he does not move while three of four other men present in the room stare at him. The interview is a contrast to the one at the president's home. There are no female faces to offer him comfort. The men make him feel small; Jacob thinks that in spite of his "petite doublure de soie" he appears "si ravalé". For the first time Jacob is honest about his age. He easily deceives the women into thinking that he is almost twenty. The men strip away all pretension with their gazes and make him feel his young age of eighteen; his youth may also serve as an added article of embarrassment for him with these men "d'un certain âge". They scrutinize the young intruder and wonder what he proposes to do with his letter. Upset by the thought that he is an amusing distraction for the men, Jacob is at a loss for words and is unable to get out of the predicament; he simply stands. This is the first
time that Jacob has absolutely no control of the situation and he is confused: "Enfin j'étais pénétré d'une confusion intérieure."\(^{30}\)

Fécour ridicules the note from his sister who is referring another young man to him. Fécourt pokes fun at Jacob's meager education. The humiliating scene comes to an end as soon as two women are announced. Jacob will be able to communicate with them and regain his confidence. The women implore Fécourt not to dismiss the younger woman's sick husband from his job. Jacob is positive that the beautiful young woman's request will not be denied. Totally surprised by Fécourt's cold reply, he realizes the depth of his inexperience in the affairs of men: "...hélas, que j'étais neuf!"\(^{31}\)

Fécourt's reaction gives Jacob a chance to regain his self-confidence when he secretly blames Fécourt for his insensitivity. Fécourt has been rich for thirty years and cannot understand when another person talks to him about needs or indigence. His heart is "naturellement dur". Jacob is confident that he could never be accused of this negative trait. Thus he convinces Fécourt of his superiority at least on this point. Anything that he can do to counteract Fécourt's plan would be a noble act. Jacob seizes his chance when Fécourt offers him the sick man's job. After reassuring the woman with his eyes that he will not contribute to her misfortunes, he informs Fécourt that he would rather wait for another opening. Jacob confidently repeats the golden rule
of conduct to Fécour: "...si j'étais à sa place, et malade comme lui, je serais bien aise qu'on en usât envers moi comme j'en use envers lui." The man who a few minutes earlier had been a humble, laughable peasant is dictating a plan of action to Fécour. The young woman hopes that he will follow Jacob's example. Surprised and displeased by Jacob's speech, Fécour openly disapproves of the manner in which Jacob handles the situation. Certain that he is more sensitive than Fécour, Jacob conveys to the group his feeling that he is the more reasonable of the two. Fécour dismisses the women and Jacob. Although the prospect of Fécour's help looks dim, Jacob has however regained his self-confidence. Had Jacob left before the arrival of the two women, he would have left in humiliation while the men laughed about his meager education. Jacob gains the upper hand when he appears to be more sensible in the affair with the women. His self-esteem returns when his conduct meets with the two ladies' approval.

Fécour could not destroy Jacob's advantage because he knew little about his background. Jacob is less fortunate when a male intruder interrupts his secret meeting with Mme de Ferval. The man intimidates Jacob by revealing what he knows about his peasant background, despite his new name, M. de la Vallé. The intruder guesses from his elegant clothing that Jacob has advanced in the world, but he can still remember his peasant origins. The intruder wants to establish
clearly Jacob's inferior position in society: he repeatedly refers to the young man by his first name. The libertine man is proving his dominance over Jacob in order to eliminate a rival for the favors of the woman. He penetrates the façade of gentility that Jacob wishes to create. Jacob is completely disoriented when his mask is torn away and social origin works against him: "...son tutoiement, ce passage subit de l'état d'un homme en bonne fortune où il m'avait pris, à l'état de Jacob où il me remettait, tout cela m'avait renversé." 

Jacob cannot count on any help from Mme de Ferval, who is quite embarrassed at being caught in a secluded room with a man of inferior social status. The woman has been put in a compromising position. His defenses against the libertine man have been destroyed: Jacob retreats as quickly as possible. He is afraid that the intruder may resume his imitation of the peasant speech.

Jacob hopes that Mme de Ferval will remain faithful to him in his absence and stays in the adjoining room to make certain that she does not succumb to the other man's advances. Mme de Ferval is coy, but Jacob soon realizes that she is employing the same methods of encouragement that she used in their relationship. Jacob feels that he is being betrayed. Mme de Ferval joins with the man when she accepts his flattery. Jacob loses control of himself and out of anger he involuntarily utters a phrase which is overheard by the couple. Prompted by the desire to avoid a scene that would have
involved a return to the peasant side of his personality, Jacob quickly leaves the house despite his desire to stay. Jacob implies that he would have faced the intruder on equal grounds had not his inferior social class been known. Thus society has a part in controlling his actions. Jacob also blames the nobility of his feelings toward the lady for his inaction against the libertine man. Certain affronts that one who is born "avec du coeur" cannot abide, must be taken care of in a socially acceptable manner.

Jacob convinces himself that his sensitivity and his pleasing appearance constitute a nobility independent of and superior to class structure. Jacob comes to the aid of a young man who is outnumbered in a sword fight because he is moved by the unworthiness of the opponents' actions. The young man thanks Jacob and wants to become his friend. Jacob is impressed by the young man's high rank of nobility. Although Jacob likes his new friend, he is uneasy. He is not certain what he should do in matters of protocol. He reluctantly enters the coach in front of his friend, but is afraid to step aside. Jacob learns by observing his friend, Orsan. Since other men would not be very gracious about his mistakes, Jacob is still afraid that other men will guess his inferior social origins if betrayed by his ignorance of the aristocratic rules of behavior.

Jacob fears that the noble way that he thinks about himself will be torn apart by other men. When Orsan takes him to the theater Jacob again becomes confused. He imagines
that he is "si gauche" and not worthy to be in the company of the aristocratic young men. He again indirectly attributes his misery to society and his poor education: "...n'avais-je pas la subalterne éducation des messieurs de ma sorte." The male companions of his friend alternately compliment Jacob on his heroic deed because they enjoy receiving the bows which Jacob thinks are necessary. He realizes that he is becoming the butt of their joke. Unable to prevent it, Jacob gladly retreats into the theater and the beauty of the play.

Jacob is conscious of the fact that the libertine men will not make it easy for him to enter their society as they have nothing to gain from his induction. With the exception of a few friends, each male libertine thinks that other men are his rivals. Jacob feels that Orsan's friends and Mme de Fécour's brother are antagonistic toward him. The master of the household and the intruder use their knowledge of his humble origins to suppress his advancement. Only by reasserting a flattering self-image can Jacob shield himself against these attacks. He thinks that true nobility is connected with the feelings of the heart. At times the image is traced back to his simple peasant background. Jacob will not succeed in libertinage according to the way Versac describes it in Les Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit. He stresses the need for coldness and detachment: "...cacher sous un air inapliqué et étourdi, le penchant qui vous porte à la réflexion, et sacrifier votre vanité à vos intérêts."
These two qualities are indispensable to the libertine when penetrating the motivations of adversaries. The libertine man must always be on the offensive and never submissive to another male. His feeling of inferiority with other libertine men and his constant need to create a sentimental picture of himself prevent Jacob from applying Versac's principles and inhibit his success in this phase of libertinage.

**Costume and Mask**

Jacob perceives rapidly that he must disguise his peasant origins if he is to be accepted into aristocratic circles. Jacob attempts a metamorphosis first by improving his speech and then by changing his name to M. de la Vallée. The most pleasing aspect of the transformation is the acquisition of new clothes. Jacob is delighted with the tangible evidence of his rise in society. He is aware that the clothes hide his origins. Jacob likes to compare the way that he looked before with his new appearance in order to appreciate his mask. The experienced Versac, in *Les Egarèments du coeur et de l'esprit*, believes that it is necessary to understand the importance of a mask. The successful libertine must be adroit in wearing his disguise; it is essential that no one see beneath it: "...vous devez apprendre à déguiser si parfaitement votre caractère, que ce soit en vain qu'on s'étudie à le démêler." Jacob instinctively feels this need. He occasionally likes to
evaluate his progress by removing the mask in private. However, he would be humiliated if anyone else did this to him. Jacob hopes by improving his speech and his habits that his dress will not seem to be an unnatural part of his appearance. Jacob works hard to keep his mask secured. His natural inclination for wearing disguises helps Jacob penetrate the masks worn by others and gives him valuable insight into their personalities. Versac thinks that the ability to understand the motivations of others is crucial for existence in the libertine world.

Jacob is now able to equate the role that dress will play in his advancement in society. The first step toward his metamorphosis is when the lady of the house hires Jacob to be a servant for her nephew and she gives him new clothes. Pleased with his new appearance, he reflects on his good looks and refers to himself in the third person: "Jacob avait fort bonne façon." He admits that he enjoys looking at himself. He feels his inspection produces advantageous results: his face is more animated and he predicts a happy future for himself. Jacob wants to see what effect he will have on Geneviève. She approves of his new costume. The new clothes give him more confidence and increase his desire for social success.

The peasant quickly learns that his clothes can be used to deceive others. When Jacob accompanies Mlle Habert in a search for a new apartment, the landlady mistakes Jacob for a relative of Mlle Habert. He is not dressed in
the livery of a servant and the landlady has no way of recognizing his status. Jacob believes that his face helps make the deception possible. Mme de Ferval later tells Jacob that she could not possibly connect any negative traits with his physiognomy. She was won over to his side when she first saw him. Mlle Habert expresses a similar feeling. They give Jacob assurance that his costume is not incongruous with his personality.

Not only clothes, but other material goods serve to enhance Jacob's natural attributes. When Jacob is released from jail, Mme de Ferval and Mme de Lursay meet him. Jacob is delighted that Mme de Ferval wants to exonerate him in the neighborhood where the crime took place by escorting him there in her carriage. It is a magnificent conveyance and Jacob is impressed. The people who witnessed the event are glad to see Jacob in the elegant carriage. Doucin and Mlle Habert's sister are aghast when they see Mlle Habert and Jacob in such splendor. Jacob has his revenge on these two people who plotted against him. His conscience does not bother him because he did not plan the show of wealth. The positive effect "la pompe triomphante" creates in the neighborhood where the murder took place also helps to establish his innocence and his reputation. The doctor and his friends praise the innocent man and his worth is increased in the eyes of his women companions. Thus Jacob is avenged and
his esteem is restored as a result of the opportune show of opulence. It is not surprising that Jacob's interest in material goods is heightened.

Mlle Habert will provide for another set of new clothes; she suggests that more elegant clothing might be appropriate for him so that their social image would be identical. Jacob quickly lets her know of his desire for a sword as it will enhance the prestige of his new name: "Rien que d'une épée avec son ceinturon, lui dis-je, pour être M. de la Valée à forfait." Jacob is becoming materialistic. He associates luxury and pleasure. The new suit produces the same result that his acquaintance with the noble lady created: they both make him feel that he is transcending barriers. The wealth of the lady and the splendor of his new clothes make Jacob realize how far he has come in social circles. He enjoys comparing the affluence with the simplicity of his former peasant possessions. Nothing is lost in his appreciation.

Jacob is sensitive to the color and the material of his suit; the red silk flatters him. While Mme d'Alain handles the negotiations with the tailor, Jacob secretly enjoys his emotions: "...le coeur me battait sous la soie." Penetrated with "une gaîté", he inwardly exclaims his joy: "...quel plaisir et quelle magnificence pour un paysan!" Jacob calls himself a peasant in order to heighten the pleasure derived from the material proof of his success. He no longer considers himself a member of the peasantry, for spiritually, at least, he could no longer mingle with them.
His mental metamorphosis precedes his physical one. When Jacob accepts the new clothes from Mlle Habert, he breaks the tie with all that he considers crude in his past. He is glad to be rid of the clothing which he no longer finds suitable for himself. He feels that his natural attributes were impaired by his clothing: "...qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un beau garçon sous des habits grossiers? Il est bien enterré là-dessous." He is handsome but until he had the new clothes one had to pay attention to notice his good looks. Only the women with "le goût le plus essentiel" were not fooled. It is not surprising that Jacob feels liberated in his new attire. He noticed the positive way that others reacted to him when he was in the magnificent carriage. His new dress will serve as the means of drawing the eyes of others toward him. He is satisfied that they will not be disappointed with what they see.

When Mme d'Alain, Agathe and Mlle Habert have dinner with him, Jacob feels each of the women is absorbed in thoughts of him. Mme d'Alain is jealous of Mlle Habert, Agathe is again flirting with her eyes and Mlle Habert cannot look at any other object. The mother and daughter had been interested in Jacob when he first arrived, but their attention slackened when they were told of his engagement to Mlle Habert. Their renewed interest, he feels, is due to the enhancement of his natural attributes by material goods. Jacob watches their reactions, but he becomes increasingly
detached from them. His new clothes fired his ambitions. Although he is confident that he has been purged of his former rustic image, he would still like for a lady of a higher social order to give her approval. He is anxious to see Mme de Ferval: "...je mourais d'envie qu'elle me vît fait comme j'étais. Oh! comme je vais lui plaire." His clothes will enable him to meet her on equal ground. His dress is comparable to hers and makes Jacob feel less intimidated by Mme de Ferval's luxurious environment. Jacob can act as a suitor once he is certain that his clothes and his behavior no longer link him to his inferior social background. The positive responses of Mme d'Alain, Agathe and Mlle Habert give Jacob the confidence that Mme de Ferval will also be pleased. In his first meeting with Mme de Ferval, Jacob watched her reactions, in order to anticipate her moves and act in a manner which would meet her approval. Communication with the other women in his life did not require any planning. Their unconcealed admiration made Jacob feel that he was in control of the situation. Jacob anticipates that Mme de Ferval will also be awed by his appearance when he says that this time the circumstances of their meeting will be different.

Jacob is also very observant of Mme de Ferval's clothes. Her dress is modest but does not hide any of her natural charms. He is pleased that she is "intérieurement coquette" although her appearance creates at first the illusion of a devout woman. Jacob knows that other people will think that
his relationship with Mme de Ferval is respectable. Thus he can privately revel in the joy of having Mme de Ferval deign to give him attention. Jacob delights in the hidden yet revealing manner in which Mme de Ferval displays her charms: "...il y avait de petits ressorts secrets à y faire jouer pour la rendre aussi gracieuse que décente, et peut-être plus piquante que l'ajustement le plus déclaré."44 In their next meeting Jacob will discover the full import of her veiled charms. This meeting is crucial and prepares him for the following encounter. For the first time Jacob has met a "coquette" who has gone to a great deal of trouble to fool the public and Jacob almost seems to confuse her ruse and nobility. She is "une déesse" to him. Although her clothes indicate a critical and austere person, he quickly penetrates beneath her public facade.

Whenever he is free to contemplate his own disguise, Jacob thinks of himself in terms of two people, Jacob and M. de la Vallée. Refined by social lessons and good fortune M. de la Vallée can appreciate his success only when he unmasks Jacob: "...c'était de Jacob que M. de la Vallée empruntait toute sa joie."45 He enjoys the pleasure of suddenly being the master of a household. Jacob looks at his new clothing; he is touched when he thinks about his bathrobe and bedroom slippers. Jacob is aware that he is trying to assimilate the mask of respectability and keep it in place: "...je ne m'amusais que pour imiter la contenance d'un honnête homme chez soi."46
Jacob is a little embarrassed when the mask begins to stick. He explains to the reader that although he had never needed any transportation other than his legs, he cannot refuse the cabman when he hails M. de la Vallée. Jacob offers the excuse that the coach is another small source of joy for him.

The observant peasant understands less obvious motivations which are buried beneath appearances. Mme de Fécour is outwardly very severe and critical. She tries to convey an impression of austerity because she hopes to convince the public of the prudence of her habits. She does not want anyone to guess that she assumed the strict manners to protect her vanity: the sister is afraid that she is ugly and men will reject her. Thus she hides beneath an unpleasant appearance in order to avoid the insult and protect her pride.

Once confident that he can penetrate external characteristics, Jacob can control the situation. One of the witnesses for Mlle Habert's marriage scorns Jacob when he learns of his social origin. Jacob makes the man appear ridiculous by exposing his clumsily fitting wig. The peasant points out to the witness that they are equal except for the fact that Jacob has his own hair and the witness uses the hair of others. This is one of the few times that Jacob reveals his observations to his opponent. Usually Jacob stores the information for future reference. Versac, in _Les Egarerments du coeur et de l'esprit_, advises his young protégé to follow the same method: "Quoi qu'il en soit, il est plus sûr de subjuguer les autres, que de leur immoler sans cesse les intérêts de notre amour-propre."
Versac also warns Meilcour that he should hide his reflexions from others. Jacob instinctively follows this libertine rule when he evaluates his progress in society. He does not want to appear too surprised or elated. Jacob is afraid that others who had been born into wealth would treat him in a condescending manner. Masking his feelings, Jacob avoids any such degrading experiences. Society loses control of the peasant in this instance because he cleverly conceals his reflexions.

It is apparent that Jacob begins to assume the mask when he helps a young man defend himself in a sword fight against three opponents. Jacob will not accept the young man's thanks because he says that any "honnête homme" would have reacted in the same manner. He was indignant when he saw three men were against one. Jacob learned earlier that he could feel equal to or superior to men in the aristocratic class only if he associated noble thoughts and deeds with his peasant background. Thus his peasant values dictate his immediate outrage. The sword, the symbol of his nobility, has become a permanent part of Jacob's costume. He draws it without any clumsy hesitation. The sword ennobles his actions. Thus the new part of his costume unites with his peasant values and makes Jacob feel "un peu glorieux...de la noble posture" in which he finds himself. It is now possible because the peasant has disappeared and M. de la Vallée has taken over his personality: "...je me regardais moi-même moins familièrement." His peasant virtues have found their just
place in society and there is no longer a great disparity between himself and his fortune. His peasant values united with his noble action make Jacob reflect that he merits his new social position. He does not think of his costume in terms of a mask at this time. The sword is no longer the toy, the simple ornament it used to be. Jacob enjoys contemplating his new image of himself: he thinks that the beautiful Mme d'Orville must have been very surprised to see him in the street with the sword in his hand. Yet Jacob's flattering self-image is shattered as soon as he mixes with aristocratic men and realizes his education is inferior to theirs. Meeting new challenges, Jacob is fully aware that the mask is important for survival in the libertine world.

Jacob has discovered the function of costumes; socially they provide a cover and will satisfy his ambitious goals as he is admitted into higher social circles; at the same time, they have a psychological value: the secret enjoyment of wearing elegant clothes parallels the growth of his self-esteem and self-confidence; although he will feel less secure when he is with libertine men, he will meet the new challenge with optimism now that he is assured that ladies will always side with him because of his good looks. Finally, the physical transformation coincides with the development of his personality: his experimentation with appearances has given him the necessary understanding of the function of disguise.
NOTES


3 Ibid., 120.

4 Ibid., 148.

5 Ibid., 133.

6 Ibid., 135.

7 Ibid., 114.

8 Ibid., 127.

9 Ibid., 127.

10 Ibid., 127.

11 Ibid., 127.

12 Ibid., 127.


14 Marivaux, _Le Paysan_, 97.

15 Ibid., 162.

16 Ibid., 163.
17 Ibid., 163.

18 Ibid., 130.


20 Marivaux, Le Paysan, 165.

21 Ibid., 165.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., 167.

24 Ibid., 174.

25 Ibid.

26 Crébillon, Les Egarements, 269.

27 Marivaux, Le Paysan, 269.

28 Ibid., 188.

29 Ibid., 188.

30 Ibid., 188.

31 Ibid., 190.

32 Ibid., 191.

33 Ibid., 207.

34 Ibid., 240.

35 Crébillon, Les Egarements, 266.

36 Ibid.

37 Marivaux, Le Paysan, 32.
38 Ibid., 155.
39 Ibid., 157.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 158.
44 Ibid., 136.
45 Ibid., 226.
46 Ibid., 227.
47 Crébillon, Les Egarements, 269.
48 Marivaux, Le Paysan, 229.
49 Ibid.
CHAPTER TWO

MEILCOUR'S LIMITED EDUCATION

Because of his aristocratic background, Meilcour does not have to face the same problems that Jacob had to solve in the early stages of his practical education. Born into wealth, educated and accepted by society, Meilcour would seem at first to occupy a powerful position. And yet, his education will prove to be just as slow as Jacob's; the obstacles he encounters as he discovers libertinage and wishes to adopt it, will be equally formidable and the same method of trial-and-error will mark his progression into the world he had selected in order to escape ennui.

Like Jacob, Meilcour is fascinated by what is beyond his reach, namely the feminine circle of fashionable ladies. His desire to be included and accepted by other libertines stems from an unconscious rebellion against the moral standards he has been forced to adopt as part of his first education. Simultaneously, his desires grow stronger because he enters the realm of sin and corruption, and evil is more appealing to him mainly because he has found virtue unrewarding and lacking in emotional stimuli.

In this instance, the immature protagonist will conduct his investigation of appearances and reality with the aid
of teachers well versed in the art of seduction. His education will be based on observation, direct lessons and from time to time introspective evaluation of his goals in order to reestablish his motivation. Shyness, ignorance of what is expected from him, and hasty judgments will limit his vicariously acquired education. Discovering and applying the rules of the libertine games are, in his case, trying not always successful experiments although he will eventually reach a level of partial control.

**Indirect Learning**

When Meilcour decides to become a part of libertine society, he has no close friends who can enlighten him on the current code of conduct. Meilcour thinks that his education might be facilitated by courting a libertine member of society. Mme de Lursay tries to instruct Meilcour but he is not always receptive to her lessons and makes very slow progress. Meilcour's enlightenment comes when he overhears conversations of Versac, an expert at libertinage. Meilcour has a chance to evaluate Versac's remarks from a distance. Versac wants to help Meilcour become a member of the libertine world. He reveals his principles to Meilcour. Meilcour rejects many of his remarks, but Versac's statements cannot easily be forgotten. Meilcour has noticed too many coincidences between his observations and Versac's rules to completely reject them.
Meilcour has a suspicion that a few of his mother's friends are different from his mother in several respects, but he is not certain what they are. Meilcour also realizes that his mother is reluctant to accept all of her visitors but he does not completely understand her reasoning. Thus, Meilcour's desire is a quest for knowledge which he can use to obtain pleasure. His idea of pleasure is also slightly hazy.

Meilcour wishes to know about subjects which are forbidden knowledge. He wants to learn about the realm outside his mother's home. The questionable guests arouse Meilcour's curiosity. He is delighted when Versac, the paragon of libertinage, is introduced. Meilcour has concluded from his mother's reactions that Versac belongs to the portion of aristocratic society that she shuns. She feels obligated to receive him in her home but she resents the favorable impression he makes on Meilcour and forbids her son to associate with Versac. Meilcour guesses that Versac could help him in his desire to "faire une passion". His mother left a void in this part of his education.

The young man immediately desires to be Versac's pupil. He learns by watching Versac's mannerisms. Meilcour admires the way in which Versac makes a very affected manner seem natural: "Il s'était fait un jargon extraordinaire qui, tout apprêté qu'il était, avait cependant l'air naturel." In Meilcour's opinion Versac is successful in simulating a gallant pose: "...il avait l'air Seigneur, même lorsqu'il
Meilcour is so impressed that he never sees Versac without studying him because Versac has perfected his techniques into a unique form of art to the point that when others try to copy his style they fail miserably. Meilcour not only observes Versac's mannerisms, but also pays attention to his conversation. Versac gossips about the latest affairs. The still naive Meilcour is shocked when Versac refers to Mme de Lursay's lovers and he refuses to believe what he is hearing and almost feels that he should defend Mme de Lursay. However, Meilcour keeps these feelings to himself.

Meilcour revolts when he is confronted with ideas which do not fit into his world of fairytale. Although he is reluctant to doubt the word of his teacher, Meilcour keeps his private reservations about Versac's speech. He cannot believe that Mme de Lursay fits the description. For the first time Meilcour doubts his mental picture of the world when he begins to recognize himself in the portrait Versac paints of Mme de Lursay's young lovers. Versac says that Mme de Lursay follows the same pattern each time: she talks about Plato, arranges a secret rendezvous and Pretends that she has never previously indulged in her emotions. Many young men owe their introduction to libertine behavior to Mme de Lursay. Versac credits Mme de Lursay with his own initiation. The details convince Meilcour that Versac is not fabricating the account: "Ce portrait si vrai de ma..."
situation, dissipent entièrement le doute où j'avais été jusque-là sur les discours de Versac." Meilcour learns that Versac easily penetrates the facades used in the libertine world. Meilcour also finds out that his situation is not unique. The older Meilcour reflects that the techniques employed by Mme de Lursay are the same ones used by other women. He was duped less by her strategy than by his own ignorance. The young Meilcour does not have this impression. The older Meilcour believes that it would have been either too humiliating or beyond his grasp at the time.

However, he does gain practical knowledge about the libertine world by listening to Versac. His mother tries to persuade Versac that he is exaggerating. Versac will not retract his statements. Thus Meilcour must have another assurance that the story is not completely fabricated. Meilcour cannot think of society in general terms at this time. He has gained some self-awareness of his position with Mme de Lursay. Mme de Lursay immediately dominates his thoughts. The young Meilcour cannot put the situation in perspective. Mme de Lursay is the villain who has exploited his gullibility: "M'assurer que jamais elle n'a aimé que moi! Abuser aussi indignement de ma crédulité." Meilcour learns a hard lesson: libertine society does not place a premium on sincerity. Meilcour finds it difficult to accept this fact.
Versac takes an interest in Meilcour. When Meilcour arrives at Mme de Lursay's, he gives the young man another lesson in an indirect manner. Versac guesses that Meilcour has a rendezvous with Mme de Lursay. He begins a discussion of fidelity with Mme de Lursay to show Meilcour how devious Mme de Lursay can be in her speech. Mme de Lursay tells Versac that men often are indecent in their ending of a relationship. He replies that women also have a part in making the rupture public. Versac also takes advantage of the conversation to instruct Meilcour on the principles which guide libertine behavior: change is an essential part of life and pleasure can only be found in being unfaithful. To remain constant would negate the idea of pleasure: "tous les hommes ne cherchent que le plaisir; fixez-le toujours auprès du même objet, nous y serons fixés aussi."

Speaking to Meilcour in an indirect manner, Versac is able to instruct him on libertine behavior. Whereas Meilcour did not want to accept Mme de Lursay's ideas on a confession of love, he is more receptive to Versac's indirect manner of addressing him because he can observe from the sidelines and privately evaluate Versac's accurate portrayal of Mme de Lursay. Versac hopes to teach Meilcour that the confession of eternal love is considered a gallantry. Gallantry has a different connotation in libertine society than it does in Meilcour's books. Versac also points out that perception is essential. He scares Mme de Lursay when he
demonstrates his ability to go beyond the façade. Versac describes a hypothetical case which applies to Mme de Lursay and Meilcour. Versac notices the silent communication of the eyes, the alteration of the voices and the confusion of the young man. When Versac leaves, Mme de Lursay attempts to persuade Meilcour that she tolerates Versac only because of his position in society.

Meilcour understood Versac's language concerning Mme de Lursay. However, at the time Meilcour did not have enough experience to understand the significance of their superficially cordial speech: "L'air ricaneur et malin de Versac, et l'embarras de Madame de Lursay, me surprirent d'abord, moi qui n'étais au fait de rien." Versac persists in his conversation concerning Mme de Lursay and Pranzi. Mme de Lursay is confused and silent. Meilcour concludes that Pranzi must have been one of his predecessors.

Versac visits Meilcour and tries to make him put his thoughts in perspective. Assuming that Meilcour is upset because Mme de Senanges has not written him during her absence, Versac teaches him that according to the rules Mme de Senanges should have written to him because she is usually very direct about her feelings. Meilcour replies that her "candor" doesn't make her more interesting. From his point of view slight indecision in choosing a lover is more desirable than the unhesitating manner in which Mme de Senanges chooses her suitors. This is the first time
that Meilcour has expressed his opinion of women to anyone. Versac tends to take advantage of the occasion to educate Meilcour. He lets Meilcour know that his opinion would only be valid in a previous time period: "Autrefois, dit-il, on pensait comme vous, mais les temps sont changés." Meilcour had never realized that his ideas on behavior belonged to "autrefois". Versac also stuns Meilcour by telling him that he has given Mme de Senanges "des espérances" by appearing in public with her added to the fact that the exchange of correspondence indicate his interest. Meilcour is unaware that he has shown an interest in her and he naively reveals to Versac exactly what he thinks: "A propos de quoi peut-elle croire que je lui dois mon coeur?" Versac is surprised that Meilcour clings to the concepts that he has read about. He is abrupt in disillusioning Meilcour: "Votre coeur! dit-il: jargon de roman." Versac explains that the libertines separate love and "les sottes délicatesses" from pleasure which only resembles love. Versac tells Meilcour that when he advances in libertine reasoning he will learn to equate Mme de Senanges' advances with love.

Meilcour clings to his own ideas. He does not care what others think of him. This is undoubtedly another notion that he has gathered from his reading. Although the lover is tested by others he must never compromise his heart. Meilcour defiantly tells Versac that he will never have any
desire for Mme de Senanges. Versac repeats that reason will enlighten Meilcour. Versac tells Meilcour that he needs Mme de Senanges to educate him. It is his duty: "Vous êtes trop jeune, me répondit-il, pour ne pas avoir Madame de Senanges." Meilcour admits that Versac's outlook is completely alien to him and he cannot fully comprehend it. He tells Versac that his statements not only surprise him, but they seem unbelievable. Versac replies that he will be glad to clear away Meilcour's doubts; Versac wants to show Meilcour the world in the way he should see it.

Meilcour is reluctant to change his view of the world because references to behavior in novels reassure him. Meilcour was very tenacious with his ideas when Mme de Lursay tried to get him to modify them. Meilcour is still afraid to tamper with his ideas but he respects Versac and listens. The older Meilcour reflects that Versac's conversation had a tremendous impact on his actions. Versac plans to explain "la science du monde". It is a science which is not always compatible with honor and reason. It is composed of "un amas de minuties". Meilcour interrupts. He is surprised that Versac is very reflective. Versac explains that he has perfected his actions into a form of art, but he carefully hides his planning. He does not want anyone to know that he is pensive. Meilcour is amazed: his thoughts are more valuable to him than his actions. Meilcour cannot believe that Versac would conceal this talent. Versac
shows Meilcours that the ability to think is not considered an attribute in libertine society although it is necessary for success. Meilcours feels that his value system has been turned upside down.

Meilcours's favorite occupation is reflection. When he believes that others do not merit his thoughts, he simply shuts them out and retreats into his private world of fantasy. Versac is willing to help Meilcours eradicate some of the false ideas which a man in his social status should not have. He hopes to do this by exposing the principles that he follows: "...du moins ils affaibliront en vous des idées qui retarderaient longtemps vos lumières." The naive Meilcours is enticed by virtue and talent. Versac states that they must be disfigured in order to succeed. Their social position makes it imperative that they learn "les ridicules...qui sont en crédit". "Les ridicules" are the means used to please others in society. In order to use this method which he calls "l'art de tromper les autres", Versac disguises his own character. It is essential that this "art" be joined with the ability to see through the character of others. This gives Versac a feeling of control. He has learned to anticipate the moves of others. He can easily lead women to his desired goal because he will not let others discern his motivations.

First, he tricks women into believing that he is submissive to their wishes. In this way, he dominates them.
Next, Versac dazzles women with his self-confidence and does not give them time to think. He stresses the necessity to have a stock of frivolous ideas and affected mannerisms. His early entrance into society enabled him to grasp quickly the false notions that were in vogue. Versac confesses that his adaptation to the libertine code was not an easy one. He hopes that Meilcour will not only identify with him but will also understand the need for a change in his personality, although the decision to become a part of the libertine society is never an easy one. He contemplated the consequences of joining the libertine society before condemning himself to the continuous disguises necessary for success and he saw there was no alternative: "Sûr que je ne pourrais, sans me perdre, vouloir résister au torrent, je le suivis."\(^{19}\) Meilcour listens but he is reluctant to apply the lessons. Versac hopes to teach him, since he is not convinced he could ever adopt a system which makes him hide his virtues and encourages him to acquire vices. Meilcour is unwilling to relinquish the concepts he learned earlier. Versac tells Meilcour that his belief is "beau quant à la morale",\(^{20}\) but that morality is a strange concept to the century and to "les gens du bon ton". Meilcour relates better to the reference to "bon ton"; he has often heard people allude to it, but has never understood what they meant.

Meilcour is incredulous when Versac describes the frivolous habits of "les gens du bon ton".\(^{21}\) Meilcour's
doubts are increased when Versac reiterates Meilcour's need to have an affair with Mme de Senanges. Meilcour feels that he would be repulsed by Mme de Senanges. Despite his rejection of this proposal, Meilcour has doubts about his conception of behavior and his dream world can never be the same.

Meilcour rejects many of Versac's statements, but he cannot fail to observe Versac's principles when they are being used in libertine society. Meilcour notices that his romance with Mme de Lursay is not part of a fairytale-like existence. Meilcour sees that there is a difference between the real world and the way that he sees it. This marks a new point in Meilcour's life. He becomes more observant and he is ready to learn the rules of libertinage at a quicker pace.

**Limited Education**

The young couple, Meilcour and Hortense, will provide the best example of limited educations in conflict with a libertine context. They are both unable to voice the emotions they experience in a manner fit to establish real communication. Religion for Hortense and romanesque tendencies for Meilcour are so deeply rooted in their temperament that they become the most important obstacles to overcome. Because of the power of religion on the one hand and literature on the other, the gap between them will not be filled and they both escape the corrupting effect of libertinage in their relationship. The restrictive effect of former education cannot therefore be
viewed as a personal, moral sense of value. Libertinage could have its revenge if the young man has fully understood the true nature of these obstacles.

Meilcour's main ambition is to "faire une passion"22 in order to escape ennui. Hortense becomes the object of his desires when he sees her at the opera since she fits his romanesque definition of love. He is convinced that he fell in love with her at first sight. Despite their mutual attraction the couple cannot effectively communicate their feelings. Neither is skilled in the use of signs prevalent in the libertine world. Meilcour is too shy to express directly his sentiments to Hortense. Meilcour and Hortense each try to interpret the actions of the other by placing them in the context of their respective education. Hortense hopes that Meilcour will not be one of the unfaithful men that her older woman companion has warned her about. Hortense wants to prove to her that she can remain in control of her feelings.

She appears austere to Meilcour and her actions do not fit into the pattern that he associates with love. Meilcour's romanesque notions make him constantly misinterpret Hortense's reactions to him. Meilcour thinks that external obstacles impede their relationship. In a discussion concerning love in a novel, Hortense explains to Meilcour that she considers the obstacles to love internal ones. Meilcour, who cannot relate to her religious education, thinks that she is using a technique similar to one employed by Mme de Lursay. Hortense suspects Meilcour is a libertine and Mme de Lursay tries to encourage this idea. Meilcour does not deny the accusations
because he is afraid of jeopardizing his romanesque code of honor by incriminating Mme de Lursay with his explanation. Hortense and Meilcour each have a different frame of reference which dictates their actions and their judgments. Clinging to their beliefs, Hortense and Meilcour are blinded by them and cannot effectively convey their feelings.

Before he ever decided to become a libertine, Meilcour was constantly unsure of himself and relied on other people's reactions to determine his course of action. He was timid in the beginning of his relationship with Mme de Lursay who gave him encouragement. However, Hortense will not. Meilcour has to conquer his feelings without any help from Hortense. He notices that when they approach each other "un tremblement universel" overtakes him and he barely has enough strength to walk. Hortense avoids looking at him. Meilcour immediately searches for a fault in his character which could make her react in this manner: "...je les avais attribués à l'embarras où ma trop grande hardiesse l'avait mise, et peut-être à quelque sentiment d'aversion et de dégoût."  

Meilcour does not know that Hortense's actions are influenced by a religious friend's advice, who would prefer to see Hortense unhappy rather than with a broken heart. The older woman's attitude has an effect on Hortense who wishes to repress her true feelings whenever she meets Meilcour. She is not visibly pleased to see him. Hortense has almost a coldness about her in their encounters simply because she tries to follow the advice her friend has given
her and abstain from worldly pleasures. Hortense will not be in a position to make any overtures to Meilcour nor to encourage him in any way. Meilcour is obsessed with every move that Hortense makes. Hortense notices Meilcour but she tries to block out any pleasure that his presence might inspire. The older woman has convinced her that she must reject her sentiments or be led into evil.

Meilcour does not want to appear forward. When he passes Hortense in the park, he glances down to avoid any embarrassment for her. She ignores his presence. Meilcour is sad that his ploy does not work. This type of misunderstanding characterizes their relationship. Neither of the young people understands the libertine art of innuendoes and are deprived of any personal alternative. Meilcour is hurt when they do not establish any kind of contact: "Ce dédain me surprenit et m'affligea." 25 Meilcour explained to Mme de Lursay that he thought the woman should be the first to show her interest. Meilcour felt that he did not deserve the complete rejection of the young woman. In an effort to find an excuse for her behavior he attributes it to modesty.

Hortense wishes to prove to her older friend that she is insensitive to Meilcour. She avows that none of the young men have touched her heart. She discounts her age and expresses confidence in her knowledge of relationships: "Quoique jeune, je connais tout le danger d'un engagement." 26 Meilcour cannot function well in his relationship with Mme de Lursay because he refuses to comprehend what she is telling him.
Hortense also tries to shut out the voice of an older woman and makes excuses to show that she has her own opinion and a correct one. Although she argues with the older woman, Hortense does listen to her and eventually follows some of her suggestions. Despite her outward stubbornness, Hortense is more eager than Meilcour to learn from an experienced, older woman. She makes her viewpoint clear and presents arguments which the older woman contradicts by showing the inadequacy of Hortense's statements. The older woman insists that Hortense has been touched by a young man. Hortense protests but agrees to listen to her if the older woman can prove this to be true. Her confidant lists the reasons that show Hortense's preoccupation with the young man. Hortense counters with excuses for her actions. Hortense admits that the young man does not displease her, that she even likes to think about him, but she denies being "in love" simply because she demonstrates signs of interest. More pragmatic and hoping to have more concrete signs, Hortense does not share with Meilcour the theory of love at first sight. She is more concerned with protecting herself from an unhappy love than in enjoying her emotions. Her attitude is fostered by her more experienced friend.

Meilcour does not know about the advice given to Hortense and is unaware of her educational background. He hopes that she will follow his romanesque notion and fall in love at first
sight. Meilcourt secretly follows the women in their walk in the park. He makes an effort to pass them. He decides that he must take the initiative: "Je lui fis place respectueusement, et cette politesse m'attira de sa part une révérence qu'elle me fit sèchement et les yeux baissés." Meilcourt would like to perform a gallant deed to prove to her that he is worthy of her attention: he hopes that she will stumble or have a little accident from which he will be able to rescue her and start a conversation at the same time. But he is disappointed when nothing out of the ordinary happens and he sees her get into her carriage and ride away. In Marivaux's novels, the characters often have slight mishaps which provide a chance for the hero to give his services and begin a conversation simultaneously. For instance, Jacob rescued Mlle Habert when she thought she was going to faint while crossing the bridge.

Meilcourt is frustrated when there are no unusual occurrences which will enable him at least to establish a formal contact with the young woman. He would like to invent a pretext for a conversation, but his only frame of reference is the novels that he has read. He quickly reviews all of the scenes in which the men speak to women, but he cannot remember any scenes which would apply to his case. Meilcourt's shyness and his dependence on his romanesque education prevent him from taking any action. Meilcourt lacks Jacob's instructive boldness.
Meilcour tries to get an impression of Hortense's feelings by looking at her. Meilcour gets an opportunity when he goes to see Mme de Lursay.

Meilcour is surprised when the young lady he saw at the opera is introduced. Hortense's mother and Mme de Lursay exchange greetings, while Hortense and Meilcour remain silent, each lost in his thoughts. When Meilcour is introduced to Hortense he feels that the sensations he experiences confuse his thoughts. He pays Hortense a compliment, but he is not sure that he has made his statement clear. He senses that Hortense and her mother are giving him a cold reception.

Meilcour slowly began to realize that the facial gestures of Mme de Lursay have a special meaning and is not anxious to have Hortense confront him in hopes that there will be any signs that he can interpret in a positive manner. Meilcour has not guessed that Hortense will try to act in accordance with the older woman's wishes and will suppress her sentiments. Meilcour is slow to learn from his observations.

Hortense seems to be embarrassed and she exchanges sad looks with him. As soon as Meilcour is momentarily left alone with Hortense, the pleasure of being close to her makes him want to confess his love. He realizes this is an impossibility: "...rien dans cet instant n'en pouvait autoriser l'aveu."28 The scenes in novels and his
scanty education in the world of libertinage have not prepared Meilcour for his encounter with Hortense. The libertines and the women in the novels that Meilcour has read give encouragement to men who interest them. Hortense does not conform to this pattern and Meilcour assumes incorrectly that she has no feelings for him. He cannot justify her indifference or coldness toward him, he imagines that an anonymous lover is the reason for her disdain. Meilcour enjoys exploiting his emotions: "...je nourris dans la douleur une funeste passion privée à jamais de la douceur de l'espérance!" 29

The guests decide to play cards. Meilcour hopes that he will be placed beside Hortense. He is seated beside her mother, but he is glad that he is opposite Hortense. Meilcour is completely absorbed in his thoughts of her and is "pénétré du plaisir de la regarder, je ne sus pas un instant ce que je faisais". 30 Meilcour watches all of her movements. They surprise each other several times when they are looking at one another. They are both interested in guessing the sentiments of the other, yet neither is skilled in silent communication and they are too shy to approach the subject openly.

Meilcour is encouraged as soon as he sees Hortense reading a book for he is certain that the book will provide a pretext for a conversation. When he finds out that her book is about love, Meilcour is delighted to express
his romanesque idea on the subject: the lovers in her book would not be sad if they freely avowed their feelings. Hortense is not convinced and clings to her belief that a lover would make her miserable with his infidelity. Hortense has been taught that happiness is a transient state. She fears the consequences of succumbing to pleasure.

The older woman had instilled this fear in Hortense. Her adviser describes what she believes is Hortense's situation. She paints a dark picture of the dangers that await a girl in Hortense's position. Hortense does not admit that she was wrong in her previous statements: she pretends that she had the same opinion. Her confidant must have an effect on Hortense. Hortense is shy and reserved: the old woman's admonitions make her withdrawn. The more experienced woman tries to teach her to be skeptical of her own feelings and to distrust men; it is a rare occasion when love can bring happiness and she accentuates the pain connected with the ordinary experience. Convinced by the argument, Hortense comes to the conclusion that there is no man who deserves her attention. Her religious education has instilled in her the fear of evil. The confidant has reinforced the negative reaction by equating the feelings connected with love to vanity, tyranny and weakness.

Hortense informs Meilcour of her beliefs through her questions: "Pensez-vous donc, me demanda-t-elle, qu'il
suffise d'être aimé pour être heureux, et qu'une passion mutuelle ne soit pas le comble du malheur, lorsque tout s'oppose à sa félicité?"31

Meilcour has no frame of reference for judging Hortense's statements. Her religious fears are alien to him.

Meilcour does not understand that Hortense thinks the obstacle to the lovers is internal and not external and volunteers an explanation of how to get around the external impediments. Hortense has an opposite view: she is less afraid of the opposition posed by other people than of the actions of an unfaithful lover. Meilcour believes she is using a libertine technique similar to the one Mme de Lursay employed to convince him of her dangerous predicament.

Meilcour confuses libertine technique with religious principle. Meilcour is still ignorant of the libertine code of conduct and he has no appreciation of Hortense's religious background. In his opinion, Hortense is using a ploy similar to Mme de Lursay's. During their discussion on infidelity in general, Hortense says that she does not fit into the categories Meilcour describes. She could prove her fidelity, but she will not try to change his ideas on the subject. Meilcour replies that he would be very happy if he could alter her opinion of men. She says that he would have a difficult task. Hortense blushes and is
embarrassed because she feels an attraction for Meilcour; she knows that he might persuade her to modify her opinions. Hortense would like to clarify what she has learned by discussing it with Meilcour. He does not take advantage of her encouraging remarks. Meilcour is still shy and afraid he will appear bold.

Meilcour does not realize that the lack of communication is the inner obstacle which separates them. He imagines that the obstacles are in the form of other people. When he listened to the conversation between the two women, Meilcour could only concentrate on guessing the identity of the man who interested her. Hortense contains her feelings and Meilcour indulges in his. He is in "une inquiétude mortelle" when he contemplates that she was touched by an unidentified man. She is the lady of his fairy tales and her gestures honor others: "...quel était donc celui qu'elle honorait d'un souvenir si tendre!" He reviews the description of the man in his mind. After a positive analysis, the feeling that it could apply to him fades away as he perceives the other side of the argument: it could have been any one of a number of people or it could have been Germeuil. Meilcour has these disturbing thoughts when he realizes that he is going to pass Hortense on the pathway.

Later, at the Théville home, Meilcour is lost in his thoughts when Germeuil is announced. Germeuil abruptly brings
Meilcour out of his dreams. Madame de Théville and her daughter greet Germeuil warmly. Meilcour sees that Germeuil has established a rapport with the Théville women. He immediately discards his assumptions about Hortense's feelings for him. Meilcour even imagines that Hortense has guessed his love for her and enjoys tormenting him. This adds to Meilcour's suspicion that Hortense is a member of the libertine world. Meilcour makes the situation appear melodramatic.

Mme de Lursay questions Meilcour. He thinks that she is another obstacle. Her presence complicates his conversation with Hortense. Believing that Mme de Senanges is the reason for his gloom, Lursay ridicules Meilcour for his interest in Mme de Senanges. Meilcour's replies are abrupt. He is displeased by Mme de Lursay's interrogation and by Hortense's discussion with Germeuil when he leaves the Théville home. Meilcour is afraid to be left alone with his thoughts and he instructs his driver to take him to the Senanges home.

Meilcour does not meditate on the fact that the source of their confusion is their failure to understand each other. Speculating on the outcome of his conversation with Hortense, Meilcour feels that Hortense must have guessed how he feels about her from his slight indication. Meilcour told Hortense that lovers were finely attuned to the emotions of each other. Thus he assumes that Hortense understands his feelings
although he did not express them. Meilcour also hopes that Hortense will give some indication of her feelings. He fears that Germeuil has won her heart and he does not have a chance for her affections. Meilcour, of course, hopes that she will indicate that his assessment of the situation is wrong but the young woman doesn't understand this implication. Hortense also would like for Meilcour to respond to her overtures. During their discussions on love, she attempts to get Meilcour to express his position more clearly. She explains that she does not understand why he should want her to change her attitude toward men because it should make little difference to him. Hortense is embarrassed when she makes this challenging statement to Meilcour. She quickly adds that her impression of men will never be changed. Meilcour disregards the first part of her answer; he does not guess that she would like to hear a rebuttal to her viewpoint.

Hortense and Meilcour continually confuse the signals they exchange. Meilcour makes another attempt to communicate with her when they are at Mme de Lursay's. The guests prepare to leave and Meilcour knows that he must speak to Hortense if he hopes to see her again. He resolves to start a conversation by asking her about her luck in the card game. She replies that the game did not go well for her. Meilcour agrees that his luck was no better. Hortense almost seems to be asking for an explanation when she says
that she noticed his distraction. Hortense would like to know if another woman is occupying his thoughts. When Mme de Lursay comments that Hortense also did not have her mind on the cards, Hortense, embarrassed by this observation, blushes and makes an unconvincing excuse. Meilcour does not realize that he is the source of her confusion.

Hortense could attribute Meilcour's lack of perception to his indifference. Libertine men pursue many women with a minimum of emotion. Hortense does not understand Meilcour's romanesque frame of reference. She could easily believe that his actions are libertine ones. Meilcour appears indifferent because he does not try to persuade her that her opinion is of great importance to him. Meilcour simply states that she will change her attitudes at some point in the future. Hortense is happy to revert to a more general discussion and she laughs when she tells him that his predictions will never be realized. Meilcour has done little to persuade her to change the fundamental scruples which were instilled in her by her education. Meilcour does not have the knowledge or the experience to take advantage of the situation. Meilcour does not give her any alternative to contemplate.

The impression Meilcour gives of being a libertine is not erased by Mme de Lursay who interrupts the couple. Hortense states her doubts about what Meilcour has told her. She tells Mme de Lursay that they were not in agreement,
and Mme de Lursay agrees that Meilcour's ideas are singular. She says that they only apply to him. Mme de Lursay does this in an attempt to discredit Meilcour in front of Hortense. Without knowing it, Mme de Lursay accurately describes Meilcour's situation: he follows a code of ethics which is not understood or used by his contemporaries. Meilcour expects Hortense to comprehend his gestures. She has no frame of reference in which to evaluate them. Hortense is more confused by Mme de Lursay's remarks when she asserts that Meilcour is deceptive: "...avec l'air simple que vous lui voyez, il ne laisse pas d'avoir de la fausseté." Mme de Lursay implies that Meilcour is a veteran member of this group. Hortense knows that dishonesty is one of the evil traits that her mentors warned her to avoid. Hortense must remember the warnings that the older woman gave her about deception and infidelity. She knows that these qualities are prevalent in libertine society.

Meilcour is afraid to vindicate himself right away because Mme de Lursay would have the chance to discuss Mme de Senanges. He will explain the incident to Hortense later when they are alone. Thus Meilcour again avoids direct communication: Meilcour and Hortense have not made any progress in their relationship. Hortense clings to the ideas that she learned in the convent and Meilcour withdraws into reflection when he is challenged. There is still no understanding between them. Meilcour imagines that he
comprehends Hortense's feelings by looking at her eyes. At first he thinks that the anger in them dissolves. Accustomed to the pleasure of contemplating what he should do in the presence of Hortense, Meilcour has a hard time implementing his ideas when he is faced with the situation. His thoughts and sentiments are confused and prevent him from planning his strategy. Meilcour would like to interrupt Hortense's reverie, but he is incapable of finding a stimulating topic and since Hortense makes no overtures they walk to her carriage in silence. Meilcour has not learned how to express himself to Hortense. When he is alone he punishes himself with his thoughts: "...je passai toute la nuit à faire sur mon aventure les plus cruelles et les plus inutiles réflexions." 35

Meilcour's thoughts torture him when Germeuil is introduced at the Théville home. Meilcour becomes so pale that Mme de Lursay inquires about his health. The couple almost established communication when Hortense rushed to give him a remedy. Meilcour lets her know that the medicine will not help his illness. Hortense is embarrassed by the implication; she lowers her eyes, blushes and then leaves. Meilcour is afraid that the expression in his eyes makes her comprehend his statement. This is the first time that the young couple have effectively reached out to each other. Hortense has been taught to distrust her emotions and she retreats. Meilcour has not learned to be perceptive. Due to his belief that Hortense is in love with Germeuil he does not
probe Hortense's motive for her concern although he is momentarily pleased by Hortense's action before he again reverts to his sadness.

Meilcour decides to leave the Théville home. He later encounters Hortense and Mme de Lursay when he is with Mme de Senanges. Mme de Lursay demands an explanation. Blinded by his anger, Meilcour makes an effort to convince Mme de Lursay that he thinks Mme de Senanges is a beautiful young woman. But while he is obsessed with hurting Mme de Lursay he forgets that Hortense is also listening and does not realize that he is also harming his chances with Hortense: "Ce fut trop tard que je sentis ce qu'il m'allait coûter." 36

Becoming silent at last, Meilcour contemplates how to explain his actions to Hortense but he cannot justify his statements at Mme de Lursay's expense.

Meilcour would rather leave Hortense with the impression that he is a libertine than compromise the code of conduct described in his novels. In this dilemma he feels that he would no longer be worthy of his Hortense, his honor would not permit it: "Moi! à qui l'honneur imposait si sévèrement la loi de ne le laisser même jamais pénétrer?" 37

He must prove to Hortense that he is not at variance with the value system that he has read about. One day he may have to justify his actions to her. Noticing that Hortense also appears to be distracted he fears that Germeuil occupies her thoughts at this moment. Thus Meilcour's priority is
no longer to demonstrate to Hortense that he is not a deceptive libertine; he would rather concentrate on finding out what external object separates them. Finally Meilcour realizes that he can only resolve his doubt through direct discoveries: "Le moyen le plus simple de me délivrer des miennes, était sans doute de m'expliquer avec Hortense, et je le sentais bien." However, Meilcour does not talk to her. Meilcour tries to guess her sentiments by comparing the look in her eyes to his own eyes. They seem to convey a voluptuous melancholy which he attributes to the contemplation of a lover. Meilcour does not imagine that the sad expression may be caused by her disappointment; Hortense would like to think that Meilcour is an exceptional person who stands apart from the libertine world.

Her impression remains unchanged when she sees Meilcour with Mme de Senanges who has forced Meilcour to go to the Tuileries with her. She wants to confide her feelings to him. Meilcour says that he is "excédé d'impatience et d'ennui". Caught in this unpleasant situation he has the misfortune of seeing Hortense accompanied by Mme de Lursay and her mother. Powerless to stop Mme de Lursay from making derogatory remarks about him to Hortense, Meilcour is afraid that Hortense will be convinced that his relationship with Mme de Senanges is not an innocent one and that she may never want to speak to him again. Meilcour cannot hide his frustration. The libertine women have placed him in a
predicament which makes communication with Hortense impossible. As they pass without any exchange, Meilcour cannot read Hortense's eyes; they seem to convey neither pleasure nor pain. Meilcour again plans to explain his actions at a future date.

Meilcour is relieved when Mme de Senanges leaves him. This gives him the chance to look for Hortense and he finds her with Mme de Lursay. Meilcour tries again to get an indication of her feelings from her eyes. They appear neutral to him and he gets no response from Hortense. Meilcour relates to the hero of a novel when he describes his distress: "Les nouvelles preuves que je recevais de son indifférence, achevèrent de me percer le coeur." He still thinks that he must pass tests to have his lady's approbation.

Meilcour does not realize that the obstacles which block their understanding are internal and not external ones. Hortense and Meilcour constantly misinterpret the actions of the other. Each concludes that reactions which do not fit into the context of his education must be a part of the libertine world. Their ignorance of the outward manifestations of libertinage makes silent communication impossible. Hortense and Meilcour are hindered by their views of the world. Their limited knowledge interferes with their desire to communicate.
Love and Women

Due to his former education, Meilcour is the victim of his tendency to adhere to a code of love quite irrelevant to his social circle. Reading novels has warped his sense of reality and his ideals are obsolete. Yet the ideal of courtly love fulfills his deep need for security. Meilcour pictures himself as a lowly suitor who submits to the desires of his lady for a number of reasons: the idealization of women in his mind functions as a defense mechanism each time his attempts to break away from tradition meet with failure. The defense mechanism is very effective because he simply substitutes another lady for the one who rebuffed him and places her higher in his thoughts. The advantage of the substitution lies in the fact that his self-esteem cannot be endangered for long, although he has doubts about his ability to cope with the situations and with the feminine psyche. Meilcour knew that love was treated lightly in his society, but he felt that, in order to please women, a lover must be endowed with a superior merit. Although Meilcour has a high opinion of himself, he feels that he would never be worthy of being loved. Jacob uses the argument of his unworthiness when he is seducing women in order to make them appear more important. Meilcour actually feels there is a distance between himself and women. Unable to consult his mother or his inexperienced friends, Meilcour ponders over his questions for six months.
Meilcour will rely on Mme de Lursay to enlighten him in the affairs of love. At the same time he would like to be worthy of her. Worthiness is another idea that he draws from his reading. He told Mme de Lursay earlier that he knew there would be tests that he must undergo to prove himself to her. He understands that she can help to educate him in the necessary methods, but he has not yet realized that the final goal is at variance with the ideal portrayed in his novels. Meilcour's attitudes reflect the medieval concepts of "amour courtois" according to which the knight offers to undergo tests to prove his worthiness and the depth of his feeling for the lady. Meilcour hopes that the same methods will please Mme de Lursay and tells her: "...il n'est rien que je ne fisse pour vous plaire, point d'épreuves auxquelles je ne me soumisse." Meeting Hortense, Meilcour feels emotions resembling what he has read about in the adventure novels and romance. In his opinion, his passion resembles the "coup de surprise" that is frequent in adventure novels. The novels give Meilcour the impression that "l'amour coup de foudre" is the only manifestation of true love. This is Meilcour's unique education concerning love and he thinks that his instant appreciation of the young woman is proof of his passion. He should not try to resist his emotions because he has evidence that his passion is love and he should let it rule his emotions. In the middle of the disorder of his thoughts Mme de Lursay comes to mind. He is a little embarrassed by her memory. There was no "coup de surprise"
in their relationship and her charms are slight in comparison with those of Hortense.

Mielcour is delighted when he finds Hortense reading a novel about love. Both use literature as a substitute for actual experiences. He apologizes for interrupting her reading. Hortense tells him that her book is about an unhappy lover. This subject gives the young couple a chance to learn each other's viewpoints on love. According to Meilcour, the lover is unhappy only if his passion is unrequited. He believes that the lover can suffer through any trials if he is certain that he is loved. A glance from the lady can destroy the memory of unpleasant events and become the source of pleasure. Meilcour still thinks that the obstacles which serve as tests should be external.

Hortense disagrees with Meilcour, but he does not dispute her ideas. Meilcour puts her in the position of one of the aloof women he has read about, accepts the literal meaning of her statements, and agrees that he could not change her opinion. Meilcour is playing the part of a lowly suitor who must accept the wishes of his lady. Modifying her ideas seems out of his reach: "c'est un bonheur dont je ne me flatte pas." Meilcour's response also slightly reflects the tone of the rejected lover. When Meilcour is alone he enjoys thinking about the obstacles he must overcome. He becomes more determined when he thinks of the difficulties. He considers Germeuil, his mother and Mme de Lursay the opposition. Meilcour thinks they represent danger and add yet another dimension to his love.
His romanesque thoughts hamper his relationship with Mme de Lursay. Meilcour observes her outward actions but his understanding of her motivations is blurred by his pre­conceived ideas. Meilcour plays the part of a misunderstood lover who is destined to be rebuffed. He has, however, a better understanding of her actions when he thinks about them in retrospect. Resolved to act in a more decisive manner at the next opportunity, he blames his ineptitude on Mme de Lursay. She should have given him a better education. When he is alone the thought of Hortense returns. She must have been very displeased with him since she looked at him with "cet air dédaigneux". Meilcour analyzes the reasons for her action. He decided that either Germeuil has prejudiced her against him or she is antagonistic toward handsome men. Mme de Lursay has given him the confidence to make him feel that he belongs in the category of desirable men. Meilcour decides to combat the thoughts of the young woman with the idea of his "bonheur prochain" with Mme de Lursay. Meilcour would gladly have Hortense if her actions followed the pattern of Mme de Lursay's. According to what Meilcour has read, the woman should be distant but not unapproachable.

Meilcour often uses his contemplative powers for a purpose: he thinks of one woman in order to block out thoughts of another. Meilcour decides to evaluate his hopes of success with Hortense and Mme de Lursay. There is a possibility that his admiration for the young woman will be fruitless. He
already has a relationship in progress with Mme de Lursay. He hates to discard this because he has "l'esperance de reussir". His reasons are weak in comparison to his new passion. Meilcour would like to develop a fairy tale romance similar to the ones he has read about. However, he has learned from his observation of the libertines that the goal is to succeed with a woman. He has a hard time accepting the fact that love is not the most important objective; he would like to retain Mme de Lursay's sentiments for him but he is reluctant to see her. She would interrupt his thoughts of Hortense. Contrary to Jacob, Meilcour does not have the ability to move quickly from one event to another.

Meilcour is present when Hortense and her friend discuss Hortense's impression of an unidentified man. He must think about the conversation he overheard before he can do anything else. He does not want to keep the rendezvous that he had planned with Mme de Lursay. Meilcour had earlier been delighted that a woman of Mme de Lursay's stature would offer him this opportunity, but now his experience with Hortense and the older woman wipes out his desire for Mme de Lursay and the meeting. He is absorbed by his thoughts of Hortense and thinks that she is the only one that he loves. Mme de Lursay only inspires passing sentiments and those impressions would be absent except for the efforts she exerted to instill them in him. Meilcour knows that his
preoccupation with Hortense would dominate him if she gave him any hope.

Meilcour does not want to destroy completely his chances with Mme de Lursay. He decides that he must be practical and avoid a conflict of interest. His ambition was to "faire une passion" and he concentrates on Mme de Lursay because she is a more viable possibility. From his observations of the libertines in his social class, he understands enough about their actions to know that deception is not considered a negative trait. Although Meilcour does not know the libertine usages, he has learned the basic trait of deception. In order to be pleasing to Mme de Lursay he has to block the continuous thoughts of the young woman from his mind. Otherwise she dominates his mind and he feels that he is being unfaithful to her. He tries to destroy these feelings for fear that he might lose the chance to profit from "des bontés" that Mme de Lursay offers him.

Mme de Lursay is under the illusion that Meilcour is at the same psychological point and does not realize that a younger woman has diminished her charms in Meilcour's eyes. She resists Meilcour by accepting his compliment with "une hauteur, meme ridicule". Meilcour dislikes the
rules of her game and he is not in the right state of mind to share her libertine mood. Meilcour does not try to get Mme de Lursay to relent and she shows her disapproval of his conduct by continuing her coldness. Consequently, Meilcour is also dissatisfied because he counted on Mme de Lursay's affection. His preoccupation with the young woman makes him forget the few libertine rules he had learned. Searching for the young woman, Meilcour looks in all the places the aristocratic society frequents in hopes of seeing her again. Her absence heightens his concentration on her charms. For the first time, Meilcour experiences the voluptuous effects produced by a woman: "Je me retraçais sans cesse ses charmes avec une volupté que je n'avais encore jamais éprouvée."[^49] Meilcour reflects that she must be from the same social class. He even imagines that she has "cet air de noblesse et d'éducation qui distingue toujours les femmes d'un certain rang".[^50] He assures himself that his own social status would please her. This fantasy leads him to the conclusion that he can think of her in amorous terms.

In the meantime, Mme de Lursay hopes to bring Meilcour closer to her. Mme de Lursay tells him that they could understand each other better in private. Meilcour does not realize that she would like for him to arrange a rendez-vous. Reflecting on the event, Meilcour believes that Mme de Lursay was generous to make the arrangement herself. She
squeezes his hand when he helps her into a carriage; Meilcour
does not sense the consequences of this action. Mme de Lursay
becomes animated when she thanks him for his aid. Meilcour
continues in the same tone "pour ne pas manquer à la poli-
tesse". The older Meilcour comments that Mme de Lursay
sighs and she is persuaded that they have at last reached
an understanding. Mme de Lursay does not see that Meilcour's
interest in a young woman and his romanesque ideas have con-
tinued to frustrate his ability to learn the code of conduct
which she explicitly outlined. She imagines that Meilcour
has appreciated her overtures. The older Meilcour says:
"...au fond il n'y eût qu'elle qui se comprit." After she
leaves Meilcour reflects that a rendezvous makes the relation-
ship seem serious. He cannot believe that Mme de Lursay
would have meant it in this manner because he lacks any
understanding of her character. She has explained that she
must act in a reserved manner to satisfy the "bienséances",
which regulate behavior in libertine society. Meilcour
does not understand. A serious overture would not coincide
with his idea of the virtuous Mme de Lursay. Nevertheless,
Meilcour is pleased to have a rendezvous.

Meilcour reflects only a few seconds before he again
remembers that they have a rendezvous. Elevating her in his
memory, Meilcour succumbs to his imagination. He worries
that Hortense might give Germeuil a rendezvous and that they
may be together at that very moment. If this is the case,
he would like to wipe the idea of the young woman from his mind. He hopes to find Germeuil and ask him if he is in love with Hortense. Meilcour is timid and he has gained little confidence in his encounters with Mme de Lursay. Afraid of approaching women, he transfers this fear to Germeuil who may prevent him from getting near Hortense. His defense mechanism is now at work. He concentrates on the pleasure of the rendezvous. He hopes to lessen the impression the young woman has made by thinking of his good fortune with Mme de Lursay. He had envied men who arrange to have a rendezvous and feels that it is an achievement for him to have one at his age. Meilcour imagines about their meeting: "La nouveauté de la chose et les idées que je m'en faisais...[me tint] lieu du plus violent amour." This serves as a diversion from the thought that he might be rejected by Hortense. He resolves to go and see Germeuil the next day and settle the matter. The young woman is still dominant in his thoughts: "...je m'endormis donnant des désirs à Madame de Lursay, et je ne sais quel sentiment plus delicat à mon inconnue."

Thus Meilcour's code of love is a functional one. He can elevate women in his mind at will. When he feels that he has been mistreated by one woman, he simply thinks of another woman in more flattering terms. He also tries to block out the thoughts of one woman when he feels that it would be more practical to concentrate on another. Thus
Meilcour can continue to think of himself in terms of a lowly suitor. He simply chooses to direct his thoughts to the woman who can supply him with pleasurable reflections at a particular time. Meilcour has learned how to twist his code into a practical form.

Shyness and Infidelity

Meilcour is obsessed with his romanesque ideas on courtly behavior. Consequently he is often shy and reserved in his encounters with women. His shyness stems from his own natural tendencies and his youth as well as from the conflict he perceives between his illusions about the literary feminine behavior and actual conduct. The conflict is brought to his attention as soon as he becomes aware of the discrepancies: women do not conform to the code of conduct prescribed by the books he has read. If Jacob's temporary shyness is quickly overcome by his instinctive nature and his talent to derive conclusions from concrete observations, Meilcour's timidity has more lasting effects because it is not only rooted in his psychological make-up but also because it displays a lack of concern for others, a lack of comprehension of their intentions. Meilcour's idiosyncrasies disposed him to be at the center of a comedy of errors while the curious and observant peasant focussed his attention on all the various possibilities of gaining influence over
others through an accurate analysis of their reaction. While Meilcour's former education and ideals play against his desires and goals, Jacob acts in accordance with his evaluation of a given situation. This explains why his ambition drives him one step at a time towards the fulfillment of his goals as they are clarified and more defined after each incident.

Meilcour makes also the assumption that women are indifferent to him despite the fact that they manifest at times some interest. He constantly searches within himself to find the reason for an apparent rejection, grows increasingly introverted and his imagination turns out to be the main obstacle in establishing positive relationships as well as the source of many unnecessary fears.

The advantage of knowing that society does not condemn infidelity--one of Jacob's quick realizations--will help him overcome this basic insecurity. Confused in the beginning by his attraction and feelings for more than one woman, he finally accepts it and gradually assimilates the basic principles of libertinage. This is, however, a very slow and painful process. When he makes his debut into the world, Meilcour has strong fears and is deeply in need of a teacher. As soon as she realizes that he is timid, Mme de Lursay wishes to take over and control him in order to satisfy her own sensuality.

Mme de Lursay begins her education very slowly. She cannot progress at a fast rate for many reasons. First, her
previous involvement and participation in a scandal give her good grounds for caution: her prudence is motivated by her concern for her reputation, as she cannot afford to be shunned by her social peers. Secondly, even though her friendship with his mother provides ample opportunities and plausible excuses for an almost daily visit at his home, she must be careful not to frighten him. She must therefore flatter him and establish a familiarity with him until he feels at ease in her presence. As the first result of her tactics, Meilcour unconsciously develops a desire to please her and is continuously touched by her as she cleverly boosts his ego. Nevertheless, he is not persuaded that it will be easier to please her than any other woman despite the fact that she gives signs of her willingness and availability. Restrained by fear and ignorance, he is prevented from making advances to her and in desperation, he seeks other women. His failure justifies his return to Mme de Lursay. In the early stage of their relationship before Versac opens his eyes, his respect for her grows in proportion to his hope, but his timidity does not allow him to voice his feelings openly. Fully aware of his attention, Mme de Lursay jumps to the conclusion that it is possible to engage in a "liaison" and that she can impose her own terms.

Mme de Lursay becomes austere when they are in company. Meilcour is uncertain and unable to interpret her gestures. He does not seem to realize that she must deceive others about their relationship. Meilcour has learned how the "bienséances" affect their relationship.
Meilcour reverts to the state of mind that he was in before he talked to Mme de Lursay. Meilcour was afraid to choose among the women he met and he feared that his confession of love would not be listened to. Due to his lack of understanding that Mme de Lursay's coldness is for the benefit of others, he is again engulfed by his fear: "Quoique ce dehors de sévérité fût plus pour les autres que pour moi, il me rendit toute ma crainte." Meilcour does not regain his confidence even when Mme de Lursay becomes encouraging. She must make him appreciate her importance: "elle voulait établir son empire, et tourmenter mon cœur, avant de le rendre heureux." Meilcour is convinced that Mme de Lursay is enjoying the first phase of their adventure while he is in despair.

Mme de Lursay is in full command of the situation and can think of Meilcour in terms of conquest. Although he is inexperienced and easy prey, she cannot afford at her age to reject any success: "Il n'est point de conquêtes à mépriser." Also the older Meilcour reflects that any young man's attentions are flattering to her. An older, more experienced man would not be blind to her faults. Because he is filled with esteem and passion for Mme de Lursay: Meilcour trembles "au moindre caprice" and he is blind to "les défauts les plus choquants de la figure et du caractère". The older Meilcour offers two explanations for this behavior. It is possible that he is infatuated with her charms because he
has nothing to compare them with, or it could be that he needs to elevate her in his mind to increase his self-esteem. In any case, Meilcour is deeply involved now that his emotions cloud his judgments.

Mme de Lursay does not realize the extent of his confusion. She encourages Meilcour to make advances and becomes more affectionate in her speech. She looks at him tenderly and even reassures him that he can be more at ease with her. However, Mme de Lursay's mistake was to inspire Meilcour's respect and he is reluctant to do anything which she might consider improper. Even if he were to make a confession of love she would be obliged to react in a stern manner. An experienced man, Meilcour says, could have guessed Mme de Lursay's intentions from a look, a gesture or a word. His lack of experience makes him stupid in the libertine world and complicates Mme de Lursay's plans: Mme de Lursay dares not try to hasten Meilcour's confession of his sentiments; she fears the disastrous results. Meilcour is afraid of offending Mme de Lursay by telling her his thoughts. They both desire the same understanding but release their emotions privately: "...nous soupirions tous deux en secret." Meilcour will not break the rules which he has imagined and imposed on himself.

Looking back, the older Meilcour elaborates on the conduct prescribed by the code which Mme de Lursay adheres to: a woman who is interested rarely follows an amorous conversation
and she must appear virtuous in the first meeting. Because Mme de Lursay was as gentle as possible in her resistance, the young man cannot understand the complexity of her actions. He can only see that she resists him. His behavior is a contrast to the peasant's. Jacob is always attentive to the motivations of others. He learned how to please women by watching their reactions and interpreting their movements. This provided him with the knowledge necessary to be successful in his encounters. Meilcour is more introspective than Jacob. When Mme de Lursay does not act according to the plan in his mind he looks within himself to find the answer; he thinks that there must be a fault in his behavior. Meilcour has been taught to be receptive to the feelings of others and it is a hard lesson for him to learn at this point. He has been given every advantage and the small world at his home revolves around him. Meilcour has never had to reach out and understand what is going on in the world around him. When he does not get what he wants he simply withdraws within himself. He is sorry that he spoke to Mme de Lursay and resents her engaging him in the conversation. He reacts in the manner of a spoiled child.

Meanwhile, Mme de Lursay expects that Meilcour will react to her in the same manner that other men have and she will take advantage of this. Mme de Lursay fails to take into account that Meilcour's total lack of experience and his singular ideas make him an unusual suitor. He thinks that she is not
taking him seriously; Meilcour completely misunderstands and believes she is showing him her indifference. The older Meilcour reflects that she expected him to find ways to eliminate the impediments. He comments: "il était naturel qu'elle s'y attendît, mais elle avait à faire à quelqu'un qui ne connaissait pas les usages."60

Meilcour creates other fears in his mind. He wants to know the name of the woman he saw at the opera. He could easily ask Germeuil for the name of the young woman but he is afraid that Germeuil will guess his interest and he does not want Germeuil to know or guess his feelings in case Germeuil is also in love with the young woman. Meilcour believes Germeuil is in the country. This thought unleashes the imagination of the introverted Meilcour. He analyzes the situation from different events connected with her. However, with Hortense he begins by releasing his fears and fantasies. He says: "Mon imagination déjà blessée s'offensa de ce départ, et m'y fit voir les plus cruelles choses."61 He imagines that Hortense and Germeuil may be together.

Meilcour's thoughts often inhibit his actions. Meilcour knows that society does not shun infidelity. With this in mind, Meilcour broods over his love for Hortense. Gradually the basic libertine principles are incorporated into his reflections; Meilcour transfers his flattering thoughts from Mme de Lursay to Hortense. He is unfaithful to Mme de Lursay when he does this; he does not foresee that he will ever compromise his feelings for Hortense. Nevertheless,
he contemplated having affairs for diversions. This is a libertine practice, but devotion to one woman is not.

Valmont in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* tried to prove that he was not emotionally attached to one woman by having affairs with others. Meilcour wishes that Mme de Lursay could be a simple passing affair for him but he does not believe this is possible.

He did not question the difficulties espoused by Mme de Lursay. Meilcour would like to maintain their relationship because he has learned by the example of others that he can court the favors of several women at the same time. However, after Mme de Lursay gives her views on platonic love, Meilcour becomes convinced that he will never conquer her. He resolves to block out this futile effort from his mind. Meilcour decides that he will concentrate on the young woman. He enjoys daydreaming, conjures up the women in his novels and applies their attributes to the distant Hortense. In the meantime, the more pragmatic Mme de Lursay is reviewing her strategy. Her speech on platonic love was intended to show Meilcour that he must make an effort in order to win her affection. Mme de Lursay understands how the libertines operate and her explanation of platonic love was an attempt to introduce Meilcour into the libertine way of thinking. Meilcour does not have this knowledge of the libertine actions since he bases his judgments on a romanesque background. Mme de Lursay did not foresee that Meilcour
would consider her a hopeless quest. She can understand the romanesque side of Meilcour only to a certain extent: she exploited this aspect when she related the tale of the virtuous and noble woman, but she does not realize that Meilcour has not followed her to the conclusion to which she hoped to lead him and that he would think about it and exaggerate the distance between them. Mme de Lursay thought she could encourage Meilcour to be more aggressive by explaining the role of the woman in a relationship. Mme de Lursay cannot relate to this context and she cannot analyze Meilcour's reactions to her ploys. This creates a degree of uncertainty in her strategy. She thought that Meilcour was sure of his love: "...elle avait cru ma passion décidée." She would prefer to wait until he expressed his feelings, but his delay worries her. She must deviate from her usual plan. However, Mme de Lursay realized that Meilcour does not have the knowledge to understand the sentiments she hopes to convey to him through ambiguity. She does not want to destroy the image of decency, which she has worked to establish, by being more explicit.

In her opinion, Meilcour did not comprehend her amorous overtures and he must be brooding over his unfortunate situations. She is afraid to leave him in this state of mind because she thinks that another woman might profit from his unhappiness. Mme de Lursay does not consider that another woman could rival her charms in Meilcour's eyes. She cannot
conceive that Meilcour could have fallen in love with another woman at first sight. This is a romanesque idea and one which does not fit into Mme de Lursay's way of thinking. Mme de Lursay and Meilcour both would like to have an affair but they have different frames of reference and cannot understand each other.

In Le Paysan Parvenu Mme de Ferval and Jacob understood the motivations of the other. They both had a working knowledge of the libertine code of language and gestures. Jacob was uncertain about the rate at which Mme de Ferval wanted to progress, but he was positive about her goal. Later on when Jacob overheard the conversation between Mme de Ferval and the intruder, he knew that the couple had a more perfect understanding of the libertine language and that they had progressed toward the same conclusion that Jacob and Mme de Ferval were approaching but at a faster pace. Rapid advancement is impossible for Mme de Lursay and Meilcour: they do not relate to the same value system and therefore cannot communicate as well as the couples which understand one another. Meilcour is still an apprentice at this point. His relationship with Mme de Lursay will help him comprehend the practices of the libertines. He has the basic qualities necessary to be a part of the libertine world: he does not desire to be faithful to one woman and he is deceptive. The libertines build their principles on infidelity and deception. If
Meilcour had had the opportunity to observe the way libertines apply these principles in the same manner that Jacob did, he would be in a position to profit from his relationship with Mme de Lursay.

Meilcour's limited observations force him to use his imagination. He must rely on fiction for his answers. After reviewing his sentiments for the unknown woman, Meilcour establishes in his mind that he is not in love with Mme de Lursay. He says that he does not feel an emotion for her that he cannot master: "Ce n'était pas un sentiment d'amour, dont je ne fusse point le maître." At this point Meilcour is reverting to his ideas of love that he had read about in the adventure novels. He may feel that he doesn't act involuntarily, but Mme de Lursay still has considerable control over his actions. Meilcour does not realize that the libertine tactics can affect his emotions. Meilcour thinks that he has no strong interest in Mme de Lursay. He labels his sentiment for her "un désir passager" and says that his "gout" is commonly referred to in terms of love. Meilcour reevaluates his entire situation vis-à-vis Mme de Lursay. Her conquest no longer seems to be the answer to his problems: "Sa conquête, à laquelle il y avait si peu de temps, j'attachais mon bonheur ne me paraissait plus digne de me fixer." Thus, paradoxically, in relaxing his fixation on Mme de Lursay, Meilcour shows that he accepts the libertine principle of fluctuating among women.
Meilcour would like it if Mme de Lursay were an easy conquest who would amuse him for a few days and would disappear as quickly as she came. She provides a distraction while he pursues his fair lady. Valmont in Les Liaisons Dangereuses has the same motive when he goes to a prostitute. This is only one of numerous infidelities for Valmont. Meilcour is still learning about infidelity: he has not completely dispensed with the idea of fidelity.

In a libertine fashion, Meilcour evaluates the situation: he wants a solution which will not restrict his actions. Meilcour decides that he will forget Mme de Lursay entirely and let his "nouveau goût" dominate him. He expresses relief that Mme de Lursay did not return his affection. As soon as he declares his plan of action he begins to see the disadvantages and he reasons "d'un autre côté" he may not be loved by the Hortense. He may not see her again and Germeuil may be her suitor. Meilcour is forgetting the idyllic romances he has read about. He does not count on a fortuitous circumstance to bring them together and he does not immediately think of what he can do to prove his love to her. Instead Meilcour reacts in accordance with his desire to become a part of the libertine world.

Meilcour wants to conserve Mme de Lursay's sentiments for him. He is not certain how to proceed in the matter. While Meilcour is brooding he assimilates a few of the libertine ideas that Mme de Lursay kept emphasizing despite
the fact that he does not even realize that his thought is not original. Meilcour is excited by his new plan of action: "Quel bonheur pour moi, si je puis un jour la rendre sensible!"68 Meilcour is no longer contemplating the passage of tests in order to prove his love when he finally understands what she has been telling him: he will conquer the obstacles which Mme de Lursay places between them in order to enhance his respect. Meilcour comes to the conclusion that the more obstacles he eliminates the greater will be his "gloire," a typical libertine expression. Mme de Lursay wanted Meilcour to think of his achievement in a way that would magnify her in his eyes. Meilcour can only contemplate self-aggrandizement in connection with his projected accomplishment. In doing this, Meilcour shows one of the basic traits necessary for libertinage: he must think of himself first and the lover second; this facilitates moving from one person to another which is essential in the libertine world. Meilcour is overjoyed because he finally understands which direction he must take.

There are still dragons to slay but they are transformed and placed differently. This new insight makes Meilcour ambitious. He even thinks in monetary terms: "Un coeur, du prix dont est le sien, peut-il trop s'acheter?"69 He plans to inform Mme de Lursay of his feelings and let her be the arbitrator of his fate. The older Meilcour states that it was unfortunate for Mme de Lursay that she was not
at home when he arrived. It is ironical that Mme de Lursay missed her chance to see Meilcourt; she taught him all of the libertine rules which he is ready to put into practice. But Meilcourt still has only a scanty knowledge of what his role should be in the libertine society. At this moment Meilcourt is ready to take the initial move and unabashedly confess his love. The older Meilcourt believes that she misses a vital opportunity to form her protégé: "Malheureusement pour elle, je ne la trouvai pas." 70

So far we have seen that Meilcourt's former education was defective because he is unable to comprehend the validity of virtue. Consequently, his knowledge of vice and corruption is instilled with idyllic concepts about the nature of love. Whenever confronted by reality he seeks refuge in a poetic world where he indulges in daydreaming. Being out of touch with reality is part of his personal dilemma and he experiences difficulties in meeting both the libertine standards of behavior and his own. Youth and maturity and the inefficiency of his lady teachers keep him most of the time on the border of true libertinage. This explains why he cannot overcome his handicaps: shyness, limited observation, lack of understanding entirely what others are saying.

Thus Meilcourt's fear creates obstacles between himself and women. Mme de Lursay understands that he is shy but she does not realize the extent of his confusion. Meilcourt's
actions are often paralyzed by his inhibitions. He often torments himself with fears. He is afraid that Hortense is not faithful to him in their imaginary affair. Meilcour realizes that society does not shun infidelity. He decides to let his thoughts wander from one woman to another: Meilcour learns to be devious in his thoughts. He slowly incorporates libertine techniques into his reflections.
NOTES


2 Ibid., 119.

3 Ibid., 120.

4 Ibid., 124.

5 Ibid., 125.

6 Ibid., 129-30.

7 Ibid., 151.

8 Ibid., 256-7.

9 Ibid., 257.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 258.

13 Ibid., 259.

14 Ibid., 260.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 261-2.

17 Ibid., 262-3.

18 Ibid., 266.
19 Ibid., 271.
20 Ibid., 276.
21 Ibid., 279.
22 Ibid., 13.
23 Ibid., 85.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 77.
27 Ibid., 86.
28 Ibid., 143.
29 Ibid., 144.
30 Ibid., 172.
31 Ibid., 197.
32 Ibid., 83.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 201.
35 Ibid., 248.
36 Ibid., 245.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 247.
39 Ibid., 236.
40 Ibid., 242.
41 Ibid., 35.
42 Ibid., 199.
43 Ibid., 117.
44 Ibid., 118.
45 Ibid., 57.
46 Ibid., 13.
47 Ibid., 99.
48 Ibid., 54.
49 Ibid., 55.
50 Ibid., 55.
51 Ibid., 70.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 72.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 37.
57 Ibid., 38.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 23.
60 Ibid., 42.
61 Ibid., 73.
62 Ibid., 59.
63 Ibid., 56.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 53.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 46.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 47.
CHAPTER THREE

CONTROL AND SELF-AWARENESS

The notion of control is at the very basis of libertinage, whereas it is only one aspect of marivaudage. Yet it influences all human relationships, social as well as individual, and leads to a problem related to metaphysics; it implies a distinction between the behavior, the conduct adopted by the protagonists in agreement with a code imposed upon the individual by social mores, and "libre-arbitre" as the capacity to choose between good and evil.

The operation of control within society or by society will determine a code of ethics in marivaudage concording with virtue; while libertinage on the surface fulfills all the dictates of social "bienseâance" but in fact follows a reversed code of ethics—a satanic one—where evil will prevail. Consequently marivaudage will affect only personal relationships and libertinage will undermine society's basic principles, or as Antoine Adam points out in Les Libertins au XVIIe siècle: "ces hommes, intérieurement affranchis sont loin de vouloir répandre leurs idées, troubler les consciences, ébranler l'ordre public." Control must become a socially tolerated game reserved to an elite by the use of a number of masks dealing with communication: the verbal mask of innuendoes and corrupted language, the silent mask

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of eloquent looks, the theatrical mask of gestures and costumes.

Learning to control others will be part of the educational development of the two protagonists we are considering here. For that reason, we must consider the different steps of the learning process including both controlling others and being controlled, the efficiency of role-playing due to the masks, their limitations and their final results.

Silence and regard operate at different levels and in contrasting fashions. They both have dual and contrary values: silence may be a means of controlling others by refusing verbal communication or by signalling a pause during which the uncertainty of the interlocutor grows and forces him or her to initiate a conversation or to change the topic of discussion. At the same time, silence can express the reflective mood of the protagonist when controlled by a more clever person or when challenged by an unexpected twist in the situation. Silence may also reveal the lack of experience and understanding of spoken statements; in this instance, the protagonist feels alienated and quite unsuccessful in fulfilling his goals. Silence as an expression of a reflective mood hides the severe apprehension of the character whose illusions are shattered by reality.

Silence and regard are also weapons used to shield the true emotions. Glances and stares function as a mask when accompanied by a blank look; they can, therefore, hide the insecurity and shyness of the protagonist as well as punish
the audacity of those who dare upset his beliefs. Technically, there are necessary interruptions of the verbal communication as they offer the advantage of slowing the pace during an incident and make a change in attitude more plausible afterwards.

**VISUAL COMMUNICATION**

**Jacob: The Art of Silence and Visual Communication**

Claude Morhange in *Les Jeunes Filles dans les Comédies* de Marivaux points out that the young girls are dominated by their instinct for personal happiness: "Etre heureuse: tel est l'instinct dominant, le cri le plus spontané de ces personnages de jeunes filles. Leur pensée tourne autour du bonheur; leurs actions ne les poussent que vers ce but, ne dérivent que de lui."² Their thoughts revolve around this desire. Jacob is a typical Marivaux character and instincts also play a major role in his life. The preoccupation with happiness is less blatant in *Le Paysan Parvenu* but it is the motivating force behind Jacob's actions. Jacob equates happiness with success in society. He instinctively feels that he can advance in society by perfecting the use of the regard. The peasant is eager to learn and he quickly realizes that eyes can flatter, communicate and seduce. Jacob employs his techniques to please libertine women and other members of society who are crucial to his success. Silence is never devoid of meaning and it gives Jacob the opportunity to
progress with his ambitious plans. Silence is also an advantage for Jacob when he is confronted with obstacles created by others. Jacob uses his knowledge of the regard during the non-verbal intervals; he watches the faces of others, assesses the situation and formulates a plan of action. Silence also serves as a means of discovering facts about himself.

He notices that others like to look at him. Jacob begins to associate the regard with advancement opportunities. When he comes to Paris, the lady of the house wants to see Jacob. He is a curiosity for her; the servants have talked about him incessantly to her. The lady is quick to point out that Jacob is not bad looking. She advises him to stay in Paris because she is certain that he will be successful in his endeavors, and she offers Jacob a job. When the lady is in financial distress, Jacob again needs to secure employment. He meets Mlle Habert and immediately notices the tender way she looks at him. She enjoys his talk about his simple, honest background; Jacob accentuates these qualities for her benefit. Jacob is almost equating the rustic life with goodness. In response Mlle Habert looks at him with "un regard bénévole et dévotement languissant." She enjoys contemplating the image that he is projecting. She also likes to look at his face while he is giving her the physical support of his arm. Jacob hopes that she will be curious about his employment status. When she finally asks the crucial question, Jacob is delighted; he is not sure why, but he feels that her interest may be
to his advantage. Kindness fills her eyes when she looks at him. Jacob carefully manages to prolong her favorable impression of him. Mlle Habert promises him employment.

After his marriage to Mlle Habert, Jacob seeks work in aristocratic circles. Mme de Ferval is the first noble lady he encounters. When he is presenting his defense of his marriage, Mme de Ferval lets Jacob know of her approval with her eyes. She invites him into an adjoining room in order for her to write a letter to his betrothed. In that scene, she interrupts her writing to observe Jacob. Jacob hopes to please her by using the same techniques that he found effective with Mlle Habert. His response to her questions stresses again the fact that he is a simple, honest rustic. She finds his answers amusing but she is not displeased. In their next meeting, she promises to help him find a suitable job. Mme de Ferval also becomes bolder in her regards the second time she sees him. And she goes beyond the admiring glances which Mme d'Alain, Agathe and Mlle Habert earlier bestowed. She makes a full inspection. She compliments his figure, his face, his hair and his handsome legs and adds that he must learn to dance. She obviously thinks that his leg is very seductive. The blase' Versac in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit also wished to show his figure and his legs to their best advantage when he is seducing young women. Mme de Ferval is trying to instruct Jacob in worldly ways. In this indirect manner she reminds him of his inexperience. Jacob is willing to learn from the lessons that she gives.

Jacob's initiation into sensual pleasures begin when
the "maitresse" invited him into her toilette. Jacob enjoys what he sees and says that he was not born indifferent to feminine charms. He is absorbed by his vision of "la femme du seigneur" and his eyes "lorgnaient volontiers". Jacob has never been confronted with this type of situation and his verbal aplomb is shattered. The peasant says nothing but does establish visual contact with her. Seeing him looking at her, she smiles. To conceal his embarrassment Jacob can only manage to laugh. He is ashamed to be caught in the act of staring. He also seems to think that his self-conscious laugh makes her more tender toward him.

Once more Jacob has to rely on his instincts. He is not leading her into this scene in the manner in which he did in their initial encounter. The lady has the experience he lacks and she is introducing him to sensual pleasures. Jacob follows her lead. His desire to keep the relationship pleasant is realized in spite of his inexperience. Even Jacob's blunt manner of confessing to her that he enjoys looking at her was well received. She appreciates the admiration of his naive gaze. The way that a man of the world would look at her is nothing new to the lady. In retrospect, Jacob does not believe that his looks had any of the gallantry used by experienced men. Although he has refined his manner of speech to the point that madame has called him "galant", Jacob thinks that his reaction in this instance shows the simple appreciation of a peasant. He even equates his looks with truth: "...mes regards.... ils ne savaient
Être que vrais." He is only motivated by the pure pleasure of seeing her. He even adds that his glances were seasoned by a rustic ingenuity. The underlying motivation for his actions is his inexperience and his desire to learn. The lady was in a disarray "assez piquant". And she was "curieuse à voir". Jacob cannot fully satisfy his curiosity: as he leaves the room he continuously turns around to get another glimpse of the lady. He also notices that she is observing his antics and is not displeased.

Mme de Ferval gives Jacob a better visual education in sensuality; she prepares for their meeting by posing. Mme de Ferval strategically arranges herself on the sofa to achieve a flattering effect. She wears a deshabille negligently arranged. She was aware that Mlle Habert was the only woman Jacob had ever seriously courted and it would be out of character for Mlle Habert to dress in a casual manner. Thus Mme de Ferval can be certain that her appearance will have an unusual effect on Jacob. She knows the rules of seduction and realizes that his first sight of her exposed leg will be an overwhelming experience. In retrospect Jacob reflects that the first experience was also the most pleasurable.

During a few moments of silence, Jacob feasts his eyes on the spectacle before him. Mme de Ferval's skirt did not quite cover her feet and permitted Jacob to see a little of her leg. Ladies of fashion in the eighteenth century usually
kept their feet and legs covered. Thus when Jacob glimpses her foot, he esteems it a kind of nudity which he finds very charming. Jacob says that he only needs to have his senses when these parts of the female anatomy are displayed "à leur vrai point de vue"; he becomes completely absorbed in his visual appreciation of Mme de Ferval and he exclaims that she has the most beautiful legs in the world. When a slipper falls off one of her feet, he can only speculate that it was done intentionally; his glance descends from her ankle to the exposed foot. Before this encounter with Mme de Ferval, Jacob explains that he had only looked at the faces and figures of women. He learns that females are women "partout."

Jacob begins to realize how inexperienced he is in libertine techniques and admits that he is still only a peasant as long as he is guided by his instincts, but here again his admiring looks please Mme de Ferval. She notices that he continuously glances at her foot during their conversation. Without realizing what he is doing, Jacob instinctively adopts a familiar tone to tell Mme de Ferval that her foot is very "friand". Jacob is too straightforward about his observation: he does not preface his thoughts with libertine gallantries. Mme de Ferval quickly covers her foot and tries to change the subject. Overwhelmed by this display of a bare foot, Jacob loses some of his control of the situation.

Jacob hopes to seduce Mme de Ferval with his regard. In a secret rendezvous with Mme de Ferval Jacob conveys his desire to her with his eyes: "...je levais avidement les yeux
In another scene with Mme de Ferval, Jacob adds to his appreciation of the view of Mme de Ferval's physical charms a discussion of her beauty and a catalogue of the delights he experiences in contemplating each part of her body. He covers his visual audacity with flattery; he asks her if his eyes did not convey the impression of love at first sight when they met. Jacob becomes even bolder in his references to sensuous qualities; "je devinais que votre personne était charmante, plus blanche qu'un cygne.

Jacob understands that he must be overt in his visual and verbal compliments to Mlle Habert. When they go out to look for an apartment, Jacob conveys flattery to Mlle Habert with his eyes. He is acting in accordance with his instincts which provide him with the correct information about Mlle Habert's inclination for him. Jacob learned earlier that the prudish Mlle Habert had looked at him in a languishing manner. Thus Jacob is not rude in giving her endearing looks because he is only returning the gesture initiated by Mlle Habert. Jacob quickly understands matters of protocol. He is also very perceptive concerning the significance of his actions.

Jacob does not have any trouble interpreting the regards of others. The beautiful Mme de'Orville gives him many visual compliments. He dares to tell Mme de Ferval "je vous aime" and makes his statement meaningful when he looks at her eyes. Jacob is encouraged when the servants of the president's
household shower him with visual and verbal flattery. He understands that they like his appearance and he is convinced that he will succeed in his argument.

During moments of silence Jacob takes advantage of the time to assess situations and plan his course of action. When he meets the weak Mlle Habert on the bridge he does not like her clothing nor the station in life that he associates with it. However, he likes her face and decides that he will help her. Later, when Mlle Habert is talking to the landlady about renting an apartment, Jacob coldly observes Mlle Habert and decides on a plan of action. Jacob notices that Mlle Habert easily succumbs to the landlady's flattering remarks about her good manners and her religion. Mlle Habert is often acquiescent to the other woman's opinions. Jacob quickly realizes that it would not be hard to get Mlle Habert to agree with his plans. When they are alone Mlle Habert informs Jacob that no one at the new residence is aware that he is a servant and that he should follow her lead in the matter. Jacob is glad that Mlle Habert brings up the subject; since he has already devised a scheme it gives him the opportunity to divulge his plans to her. The observations made about Mlle Habert's conciliatory nature convince him that she will accept his proposals. Thus Jacob profits from the silence which was imposed upon him.

Jacob is also forced into silence when Mme d'Alain makes devastating remarks about his relationship with Mlle Habert.
He cannot relate to Mme d'Alain. Jacob's whole basis for talking to women on a higher social level is based on physical attraction. Mme d'Alain is a step above the peasant class. She states the facts in a forthright bourgeois manner. Jacob has never had to practice reasoning with a woman who defines the world in terms of clear cut values. This is a new experience for him and he is defenseless against her arguments. Jacob remains silent in the same way that he did when Mlle Habert was renting the apartment from Mme d'Alain. At that time Jacob was uncertain what role he should play and he still seems unsure about his position. This experience helps Jacob fortify himself and decide upon a stance in his encounter with others who try to destroy the illusion that he and Mlle Habert have created. The encounter with Mme d'Alain also makes Jacob aware of the discrepancies between his illusion and the obvious fact that he had duped himself in his speeches to Mlle Habert. Jacob has enjoyed making sentimental and emotional speeches. Secluded from the rest of the world, Jacob had only seen Mlle Habert and had no one to make comparisons with. The visible difference of the twenty-five to thirty year span between their ages became blurred in Jacob's as well as Mlle Habert's mind but Mme d'Alain brought these factors back into focus with her blunt remarks. Jacob was not ready for this abrupt change in his thoughts. Mme d'Alain upsets his strategy and he is not able to spontaneously improvise a new game plan. Jacob is forced to remain silent. He is defenseless
in this instance, but he learns from the experience and prepares himself for others who will not understand the illusion that he created for Mlle Habert and for himself.

However, Jacob does not react well when the element of surprise is introduced. Jacob and Mlle Habert are stunned when the priest who is to marry them turns out to be their old enemy, the "directeur". Jacob is afraid that he will be exposed as an imposter. The peasant is speechless. He blames his silence on this delicacy: one must have "un furieux fonds d'effronterie" to provide a good defense in this instance. Despite his embarrassment Jacob is not only able to assess the feelings of Mlle Habert but is also ready with an answer when one of the witnesses questions him about their acquaintance with the minister.

Pretending not to tell the witnesses anything about the past history of the couple, Mme d'Alain reveals all of her information while Mlle Habert becomes emotional. Jacob is shocked by the crass way in which Mme d'Alain describes their actions, but he is not completely overwhelmed. Jacob has learned from his previous experiences that he must try to remain calm and fight to retain his place in society as M. de la Vallée and challenges Mme d'Alain. Jacob must win his listeners with a plausible argument. He developed his methods during the time that he was quiet. Thus silence has again been beneficial for Jacob.

When the president summons Jacob to his house to clarify his relationship with Mlle Habert, Jacob's defense is ready.
When Mlle Habert's sister scorns him, the peasant exerts a tremendous amount of self-control during his silence. He keeps his composure and reminds himself that he must choose his words with care and that his language must reflect M. de la Vallée and not Jacob the peasant. He keeps an indifferent look on his face. This provides a contrast to the older Mlle Habert's contemptuous look. She cannot be quiet when Jacob presents his case. One of her interruptions is continued into a long, heated description of the matter from her point of view. This proves to be a fortunate interlude for Jacob. In order to control others, one must first control himself is the lesson that will sink in after this incident.

Jacob attempted to notice the others during his entrance but could only get glimpses of his audience. When Mlle Habert's sister began her long digression, Jacob had the time to survey his interrogators. While he was talking, Jacob noticed that the "parente de la maison" stopped her knitting periodically to give him a head-to-toe inspection. Jacob next stares at the "présidente" and starts a silent conversation with her. He is now adept at reading the thoughts of others in their eyes and he can successfully convey his own feelings with his glances. Jacob knows when to give flattering looks to women and when to provide earnest gazes which reflect his honesty. He chooses the latter method for the "présidente". Jacob erases the gallant, flirting expressions from his eyes. He is "humble et suppliant" when he looks at the "présidente". The peasant asks for her protection and she gives it to him.
Jacob also notices that the devout lady is secretly watching him, and her eyes remind him that he is handsome. His compliments to the devout lady become bolder. His glances tell her that she is pleasurable to regard. The lady is flattered and gives verbal support to Jacob's side of the argument when possible. In the meantime, Jacob has established silent communication with the Abbot who also promises his help. Thus when Jacob begins to defend himself, he feels that two-thirds of the witnesses are in his favor. This is due to his profitable combination of silence and regard.

Later Mme de Ferval asks Jacob into an adjoining room. She questions him about his love for Mlle Habert. She dictates the response she desires with her "ton badin". Although Jacob does not answer, he thinks that he loves Mlle Habert and he should promptly give an affirmative answer. Even in retrospect, Jacob considers his silence a weakness: "J'eus donc la faiblesse de manquer d'honneur et de sincérité ici." His alleged love for Mlle Habert and his sincerity in answering Mme de Ferval's question provide an impasse for him. Jacob acts in accordance with what he instinctively feels at the moment. He does not wish to irritate Mme de Ferval by giving a confession of his feelings for Mlle Habert and he does not want to completely betray his moral code by telling a lie. The best solution seems to be silence. In this instance silence is a sign of acceptance of his being controlled. Thus Jacob learns that silence has many uses. He is rarely introspective. The non-verbal intervals are
often filled with regards. The peasant succeeds when he encourages women's looks which he associates with advancement. Jacob can support the truth of his verbal statements, convince, flatter and communicate with others just by exchanging looks. The regards of others also instruct Jacob. He learns that the sense of vision can provide pleasurable experiences. None of the libertine aspects of silence and the regard are overlooked by Jacob.

**Meilcour: The Limitations of Visual Communications**

In his article "Visual Communication in *Les Égarements du coeur et de l'esprit,*" James Jones points out the importance of facial expression. He believes that the entire plot revolves around "being seen" or "seeing". A similar view is expressed by Peter Brooks in *The Novel of Worldliness.* Brooks states that social members "are both actors and spectators and must perform their social parts before the eyes of others". He also emphasizes that the ideal in the society is to know and to control others through knowledge. Both Brooks and Jones discuss the emphasis of sight in the novel. However, neither author analyzes the tremendous lack of communication between the characters when they employ the regard.

Meilcour almost systematically misinterprets the regards of others. Withdrawn and subjective, Meilcour does not understand how to convey visually his thoughts to
others. Mme de Lursay interprets his regard but she is not always correct.

Silence is rarely used effectively and is often filled with a void when the characters turn their eyes away. It is also a means of punishing others. Meilcour slowly learns the many functions of visual communication. When he begins his experiences in the libertine world, Meilcour is ignorant of the sensual pleasure connected with the regard. Meilcour has a private discussion with Mme de Lursay in her home. Although he realizes that Mme de Lursay is dressed in a less formal manner that evening, he does not take advantage of their proximity to observe her attire. In the similar scene with Mme de Ferval, Jacob could not remove his eyes from Mme de Ferval. He was impressed by the voluptuous effect she created with her manner of dressing. Mme de Lursay hoped that Meilcour would appreciate her deshabille and the languid way she was looking at him. Meilcour has the opposite reaction of Jacob. Meilcour would like to feel at ease with women, but having less experience than Jacob, he does not understand the effect that Mme de Lursay's eyes create when she promises him a rendezvous.

Others would not believe that she only permitted it because she was assured of his exemplary behavior: "Car personne ne peut être assurément plus respectueux que vous." Mme de Lursay does not realize at the time that her statement is not an exaggeration. After he kisses her hand to thank her for the confidence she has in him, she appears to be
troubled and sighs. Meilcour follows her lead and also sighs. He stops for a moment to look at her and feels seduced by the look in her eyes, although he does not completely understand why. He kisses her hand again. Mme de Lursay decides that she will not let him stumble into an affair and she pretends to hear his carriage approaching.

Meilcour realizes the full impact of his sense of vision when he sees the beautiful Hortense. The woman seated in the opera box absorbs his attention: "...j'y portai mes regards, et l'object qui s'y offrit, les fixa."^17 Meilcour can only contemplate her beauty; her presence makes him forget about missing Mme de Lursay. Looking at her pulls him out of his withdrawn state. However, his senses are (only momentarily) annihilated by her charms. He cannot control his feelings and he dreams. Noticing that the other spectators are surprised to see the young woman, he guesses that it is her first time in public and he wishes that he knew her.

Her presence destroys his ambition. Meilcour's main goal is to "faire une passion" regardless of whether or not a "coup de surprise" is involved, his leisure time, the example of others and the "faux air" led him to make this decision. His encounter with the young woman made him forget his goal while she was in his presence. However, when she is no longer before his eyes, all the libertine influences come back into play.
Later on, Meilcour is surprised when Mme de Lursay's presence has a similar effect. When Meilcour returns from the opera, he is glad that Mme de Lursay is not at his mother's house. However, she arrives shortly afterward. Her mere presence changes his thoughts: she has more power over him than he suspected. His resolutions to avoid her and no longer think of her dissolve. Meilcour feels that his sentiments are shared by two women. Mme de Lursay applies the libertine techniques to entice Meilcour. Meilcour is susceptible to her methods and he responds to the desires she has aroused in him. Her presence elicits this reaction: "...si Madame de Lursay l'eût voulu, dans ce moment même elle aurait remporté la victoire."\(^{18}\)

Hortense is responsible for Meilcour's heightened awareness. When he sees her at the opera he watches her eye movements and interprets them. He is afraid that she is waiting for a suitor to arrive. Meilcour does not stop looking at her. Finally their eyes meet and Meilcour cannot control the messages that he is sending with his eyes: "...dans le charme qui m'entraînait malgré moi-même, je ne sais ce que mes yeux lui dirent."\(^{19}\) But Hortense is not skilled in libertine overtures because she has just recently finished her education in the convent, and she gives him no encouragement in return. She is touched by Meilcour and she acts instinctively when she turns her eyes away and blushes. Both are artless in their overtures and remain separated in their boxes; the young woman resists turning
her eyes in Meilcour's direction and he is careful only to take glimpses of her. Meilcour does not want her to think he is too forward.

He hopes to establish a rapport with the young woman. Although he has established some communication, Meilcour's attempts are frustrated by his and the young woman's inability to exploit libertine techniques. He conducts a conversation with his companion for her benefit. She seems to be listening and privately enjoying his words. Meilcour says that he has an "esprit badin" naturally and his desire to impress the young woman makes him more elegant than usual. He thinks that she is more interested in what he is saying than in what is happening on the stage. Despite this silent approval, each is too shy to acknowledge the other. Meilcour lapses back into his subjective world when a mutual friend enters the young woman's box. He cannot imagine that anyone could see the young woman and not be touched by her: he concludes that his friend, Germeuil, must be in love with her. Although their conversation is about the opera, Meilcour believes there is a tenderness in their expression.

Although Meilcour cannot interpret Hortense's feelings, he is convinced that she cannot possibly misunderstand his regard. His embarrassment and the look in his eyes must instruct Hortense about his emotions and she must be aware of the sentiments she inspires.

Mme de Lursay is unsuccessful in her attempt to decipher Meilcour's regard. Certain that Meilcour's mother and
her friends do not suspect their retreat to another room out of the ordinary due to their long friendship; Mme de Lursay takes advantage of the privacy to try and decipher Meilcour's feelings with her searching glances: "Elle me regardait avec des yeux sévères."20 She hopes that she can get Meilcour to give her an explanation by fixing her eyes on him. When this does not work, she resorts to direct discourse. In an attempt to have a visual sign of Meilcour's feelings, she starts talking about a hypothetical case of love.

She is leading him to the point she has long hoped he would reach. Meilcour observes that she is becoming animated. For the first time she stares directly at him: "Mme de Lursay ... me regarda fixément."21 Asking him to tell her if he is planning a confession, Mme de Lursay places Meilcour in the position she desires. Meilcour is completely disconcerted and he responds with silence. Mme de Lursay again torments him by asking him to let her help decide on the merit of his choice. If it is only a fantasy, she will help him get rid of the sentiment. If the passion is one which "... ni l'honneur ni la raison ne puissent en murmurer,"22 she will give him instructions in how to please. Meilcour does not know how to react. She is speaking to him with her eyes in "le language le plus doux."23 Meilcour is unaccustomed to silent communications and in his embarrassment, his eyes wander aimlessly. He is afraid that Mme de Lursay notices his uneasiness and he sighs. Mme de Lursay
realizes that she is dealing with a defenseless young man.

Meilcour does not receive the messages Mme de Lursay conveys to him with her eyes because he has not yet learned the subtleties of silent communication used by the libertines. When Mme de Lursay asks him to guess her feelings, she looks at him "fixement" in order to betray her sentiments with the stare. Meilcour misses the significance of this gesture and he acts in the manner of a young boy when he reminds her that she told him not to theorize. She is surprised by his lack of comprehension: "Ah! s'écria-t-elle, je ne croyais pas vous en avoir tant dit. Mais, aussi ne vous en dirai-je pas davantage." Meilcour thinks that when she uses the verb "dire" she means verbal communication. The gap in their understanding widens and she lapses into silence, with the hope to convey her meaning by her constant regards. Meilcour reciprocates and holds her hand at the same time. Too inexperienced to comprehend the significance of the gesture, he does nothing to capitalize on the situation.

When Meilcour is sure of Mme de Lursay's amorous sentiments for him, he begins to understand her regard. Mme de Lursay acknowledges his confession with all the signs used by libertine women: in a mimicry of a virtuous woman, she sighs, she blushes and turns her eyes languidly toward Meilcour and then looks down. This produces the desired disturbing effect on Meilcour: "Pendant ce silence, mon
coeur était agité de mille mouvements." He is almost overwhelmed by the fear that he may be rejected.

In one rare instance, Meilcour establishes effective visual communication. When they rejoin the others, Meilcour chooses not to play cards. Instead he dreams of the "si belle conquête" and stares at Mme de Lursay. She reassures him of her approval with her tender glances and she indicates her desire with her voluptuous looks. Meilcour thinks he has accomplished his goal: Mme de Lursay's evident submission reflects favorably on him. He considers it a great feat: "Soumettre un coeur inaccessible, pouvais-je jouir jamais d'une plus grande gloire?"

Meilcour also learns to control his feelings by avoiding visual contact. Meilcour promises to accompany Mme de Lursay to Mme de Théville's house. When the couples leave Mme de Lursay's, Meilcour is the only person left to assist Hortense into the carriage. He gives her his hand, but is shaken when she touches him and barely has enough strength to walk. Deeply moved, Meilcour restrains his emotions by not looking at Hortense and not speaking to her. They arrive at her carriage "en gardant le plus profond silence".

Jacob followed the opposite method—he makes it a habit to observe even more closely whenever he is forced to remain silent. Observation helped him keep his mask of detached indifference.

Usually there is no contact between the characters during these periods of silence, because of their lack of
communication. Meilcour and Mme de Lursay both hesitate to convey their feelings. They remain in "ce ridicule état" for two months. They both abstain from playing the parlor game with the other guests. Meilcour contemplates admitting his feelings. Meilcour and Mme de Lursay are apart from the other guests and are sitting next to each other. Meilcour has his chance to express his sentiments but he loses his courage: "...cette espèce de tête-à-tête me fit frissonner, quoique souvent je le souhaitasse." As long as they are separated Meilcour doesn't imagine that there will be any impediments and he will easily confess his love. However, when Meilcour sits beside Mme de Lursay he thinks differently: "...je ne tremblasse de l'idée que j'en avais eue." The young man is apprehensive about being separated from the other company and needs support from others. Thus it is obvious that Meilcour will not take the initiative. Mme de Lursay follows his example and they sit silently for fifteen minutes, until she talks about a recent play to open a conversation. Meilcour is now in control.

Silence is a powerful weapon that Mme de Lursay will soon use against him. When she turns her eyes toward Meilcour, he turns his eyes downward in what he believes to be a respectful manner. Mme de Lursay has explained to Meilcour that in the libertine world the man should take the initiative in expressing his feelings. Meilcour understands
that Mme de Lursay is punishing him with her silence for not following her prescribed form of behavior: "...je crois qu'elle voulut attendre par méchanceté que je rompisse le silence."\(^{32}\)

When Meilcour misinterprets Mme de Lursay's feelings, he hopes to punish her with his silence: he will no longer refer to his love for her and he will be cold to her. His ego has been hurt. He sulks and withdraws into his own world; he still is incapable of understanding the compliments that Mme de Lursay pays him with her eyes.

The eyes were frequently used by the libertines for communication. Jacob did not need any education to understand their meaning; he attributed his quickness to his sensitivity. Meilcour's instinctive feelings are thwarted by his childish reactions. Meilcour only relates to people who fit into the value system he formed when he was a very young man. A participant of the libertine world which Meilcour has not yet learned about, Mme de Lursay does not fit into this context. Her smiles are out of context and meaningless according to his narrow set of rules. Her smiles and regards appear to be new insults to him: "...une joie douce éclatait dans ses yeux; tout, à quelqu'un plus instruit que moi, lui aurait appris combien il était aimé."\(^{33}\)

Despite his sketchy comprehension of the libertine world, Meilcour has one of the basic tenets of the libertines established in his thoughts: Mme de Lursay's conquest is his primary objective. At the time, he despairs of ever succeeding; "...je crus que je ne la vaincrais jamais."\(^{34}\)
He has gleaned from his observations that this is what a young man of fashion must aim for; however, he has not learned the methods used by the young libertines. By looking into his eyes, the more experienced Mme de Lursay, can sometimes recognize his feelings. He does not try to hide his feelings from her: he has an "air sombre" when she talks to him and he avoids her eyes. Mme de Lursay realizes that his sincerity is not feigned. She will eventually deliver him from his anxieties but she first wants to enjoy her superior position.

The correct interpretation to his regard is not a constant phenomenon. In these instances, Meilcour's regard serves as a mask. Meilcour successfully deceives her concerning his feelings for the young woman, but he lacks the necessary knowledge to advance in their relationship. Meilcour hides his feelings about the young woman by giving a noncommittal expression when he sees Mme de Lursay: "...je la saluai sans froideur et sans embarras." He admits that there may have been "une impression de chagrin" in his eyes due to his futile search for the unknown lady. Mme de Lursay, of course, could attribute his disappointed look to the hopelessness that she thinks Meilcour feels about their relationship. Meilcour would not like to see her, but he is afraid to avoid her.

Hoping to trick Meilcour into a confession of his love, she lists the reasons she is afraid of his sentiments.
First, his inexperience may cause him unwittingly to give them away because he doesn't know how to use the communication of the libertines. Then, she points out that his attention would be obvious: "jamais vous ne sauriez contraindre, ni vox yeux, ni vos discours." Even if he tried to restrain himself, he would reveal what they wished to hide and endanger her reputation. She pretends to be afraid that Meilcour was too ardent in his remarks and her company may have guessed his intentions. She admits to him that the easiest way to obtain information is to read the eyes. Since he had not learned that the libertines disguise their feelings when it is necessary, his eyes disclosed his feelings. Mme de Lursay informs him that the eyes are always a part of the persuasion in a declaration of love and his eyes appeared to have "plus de feu" than usual when they were in the presence of the other guests. Mme de Lursay states that his unveiled emotions convince her that he is sincere. She then changes the subject and states that she would be afraid for those women he tries to please. This is a ploy to extract compliments from Meilcour. She wants to give him a chance to talk and she feigns reluctance to express her thoughts.

The scene with Mme de Senanges repeats and reinforces the knowledge Meilcour has just gained from Mme de Lursay: the corrupt Mme de Senanges attempts to entice Meilcour with her libertine techniques. Mme de Lursay reacts and watches Meilcour. She is afraid that Mme de Senanges will
seduce him. Mme de Senanges is interested only in another conquest. Mme de Senanges does not hide her designs when she communicates visually with Meilcour. The forms of silent communication continue to escape him: "...les regards les plus marqués ne m'instruisaient point." Meilcour only politely acknowledges the repeated invitations to her home. Like Mme de Lursay, Mme de Senanges does not understand that Meilcour's ignorance is responsible for his failure to react. Mme de Senanges is less concerned with seducing Meilcour than in the image she conveys to others. Her tender looks are just other ploys to convince the onlookers of their rapport. When they are in the Tuileries, Mme de Senanges and her friend Mme de Mongennes compete for Meilcour's attention. Meilcour notices that Mme de Mongennes was more concerned that everyone think that she pleased him than in making a favorable impression on him. Using her fan, Mme de Senanges does her best to block Mme de Mongennes' efforts.

Mme de Senanges' overt glances only slightly enlighten Meilcour. Mme de Mongennes attributes Meilcour's curt manner to his dislike for Mme de Senanges and she believes that Meilcour is interested in her. Meilcour is now finally beginning to understand the power of the silent language: "Je jugeais de ses esperances ... de certains regards dont je commençais à comprendre la valeur." The experienced libertine, Versac, follows also the directives of visual seduction.
With the aid of Pranzi, Versac humiliates Mme de Lursay. Meilcour notices that Versac watches Hortense during the conversation. Hortense is prejudiced against Versac and she doesn't appear susceptible to his maneuvers. Meilcour carefully watches Versac's antics, and the results of his expert techniques. Versac tries the most prevalent form of communication among the libertines: he uses his eyes to make provocative statements. Yet Hortense remains insensitive to this visual communication. The older Meilcour points out that Versac seldom encounters a virtuous woman and he almost forgets that they exist. Hortense is a young "fille" and he must exert a greater effort to display his charms.

Thus the regard in *Les Égarements du coeur de l'esprit* is a constant source of misunderstanding. The libertines, Mme de Lursay and Versac, try to benefit from this knowledge of visual communication. They receive a very unreceptive response. Hortense and Meilcour are very shy. They look within themselves and do not communicate well when they try to extend the regard outward. Silence also creates a gap in understanding. At times it is used in the form of a weapon to punish others for lack of response. The limited effectiveness of visual communication accounts in part for the slow pace of Meilcour's libertine education.
VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Jacob: Verbal Communication With Women

When Jacob arrives in Paris, he is aware that his language is different from the other servants who are, however, surprised and impressed by his simple, forthright speech and enjoy listening to him. Because he becomes the center of attention, Jacob concludes instinctively that he will be able to exploit the peculiarities of his language to his advantage. Although he is new to Paris, he boldly starts a conversation with the lady of the house, "la maîtresse." She expects him to be a shy and backward servant. Consequently, after greeting him and asking him how he likes Paris, she does not wait for his answer and turns to her maids to express her reaction. Jacob answers the question with a "Bon! Madame" and he does not ignore the comment made to the women. He takes advantage of her remark to start a series of repartee characteristic of marivaudage. The peasant could not have learned this art in the country. He must have listened to the lady's conversations with her lovers. The servants' accounts of the trysts could have given him an idea of how to conduct himself. Jacob adapts quickly to the situation. His peasant expressions provide a perfect guise for his gallant remarks; he is allowed to experiment and develop his verbal skills. Eventually he perfects his
libertine language and his naive speech. He demonstrates one of the characteristics that Versac in *Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit* believes is essential in libertinage: Versac notes that libertines give serious comments and pleasantries in the same assured manner. The libertine never fears being labeled ridiculous although his statements may be.

Jacob is a servant and cannot be too bold with his overtures. Thus he masks his gallantries with "bêtises." Jacob is not ashamed of the "bêtises" when they are "plaisantes." Jacob entertains others when he is permitted the "bêtises" because he is a peasant. The lady realizes how swift his education has been: Jacob has successfully participated in a repartee and he has led the lady to the point that he needs a job and he has secured one. She tells the women that the peasant is "plaisant" but he will become dangerous. The peasant is delighted when she recognizes his verbal ability: he compliments all of the women servants. Their beauty is responsible for his education: "...ces demoiselles sont bien jolies, et cela forme bien un homme." He is completely "devenu" after seeing them. The sight of them makes him a native-born Parisian. These comments are bolder than his previous ones. His conversation with the lady was an attempt to get in her good graces. This time his remarks are an attempt at flattery. His self-education has not failed up to this point and he will push it even further. Flattery,
under the guise of sincerity, is one of the first steps of seduction for the libertine man.

Jacob has a chance to try his new techniques on the lady when she summons him to her toilette. The peasant is delighted that a lady of higher social rank shows an interest in him. Her response to him makes him feel that they are on more equal terms. He addresses her with sprightly marivaudage repartee, but he also includes exaggerations which are typical in libertinage. When Jacob tells her that he will be her eternal servant, he places little restraint on his speech. Their exchange, however, is brief.

The ingenue decides to test further his eloquence on Geneviève. In the small world of the servants' quarters, Jacob is allowed to experiment. His compliment to Geneviève produces the desired effects: she blushes and she smiles. Jacob realizes that she is pleased. This observation proves to be a useful lesson: Jacob understands that he is permitted to give pleasing compliments to women which would not seem appropriate if they were not made under the guise of a naive peasant. However, Jacob does not realize that he must be discreet in his flattery.

Geneviève is encouraged by his speeches and she reasons that they are members of the same social class and Jacob would make an attractive husband. The master of the household also views the possible marriage as a good arrangement. Jacob's
eloquence is worthless when he discusses the matter with the master. The peasant is saved by fate from the marriage when the master dies suddenly.

Jacob learns from this experience that he must first assess the situation by analyzing the background of the person that he is talking to. He decides that it is best not to use his exaggerated libertine speech with other servants. When Jacob meets Mlle Habert's cook, he is more discerning in his flattery. The peasant has learned that a few well-placed compliments may prove beneficial.

Jacob is also aware that he must modify his speech when he encounters other society members who are not libertine. When Jacob meets Mlle Habert he gathers that the lively marivaudage type of exchange would not be appropriate for her. Only slight fragments might be permissible. Jacob will project a flattering image of himself by telling her what she wants to hear. The peasant uses his language to hide part of his story: he does not tell Mlle Habert that he encouraged Geneviève's interest. Jacob congratulates himself on his verbal tactics when Mlle Habert offers him a good job.

Mlle Habert and her sister quarrel about giving the peasant a job in their household. After the sisters decide to separate, Mlle Habert takes Jacob with her. He begins to feel sure of their friendship and enlivens his speech with flattering remarks. He uses the exaggerated, libertine manner which he employed earlier with the lady. He tells
Mlle Habert that she will always be happy with his service. Jacob instantly picks up the tone of her conversation. In his reply he is careful to imply a sense of obligation and duty. He interjects flattery into his statements. He implies that she is his sole interest. Mlle Habert is the center of all his remarks: "Allons, mademoiselle, lui dis-je, il n'y a que vous qui êtes ma maîtresse ici, et vous serez contente de mon service assurément." These remarks could easily fit into the speech of a young libertine man courting his lady. He knows what the role of a servant in a household should be and he is careful not to make statements that are not in keeping with his position. However, he has learned from the gestures, the tone of voice and the actions of Mlle Habert that she might be receptive to an addition to his respectful response. This addition comes in the form of flattery. Jacob learned in the first household the effects that compliments produce on women. Thus, due to his previous experience, Jacob successfully masks his gallant speech under the guise of his servant position.

Jacob reverts to naive impressions: "...car on vous aimerait, quand on serait un Turc." He tries to make his exaggerations plausible: his happiest moment was when he saw her. These qualities make Jacob seem closer to his peasant origins; his comments are filled with a sense of awe. It seems appropriate that Jacob should use this
approach because it worked well in their first meeting. Mlle Habert is pleased with his compliments and even a little skeptical. "Tout de bon, Jacob?" Mlle Habert reminds him of his obligation to her. This mention seems to be a magical cue. Jacob resumes his previous declarations which were a mixture of subservient statements and gallantry. It is from this mock position of gratitude that Jacob can exaggerate her importance. She will be the source of all his pleasure. Jacob becomes progressively less inhibited with his remark: "Quel bonheur pour moi!" This is accompanied by his squeezing her arm a little while he is supporting her. She makes no protests and Jacob becomes more animated in his compliments. Jacob calls her "ma maîtresse." This implies that Jacob is a lowly servant or a lover and he watches his "maîtresse" with a sense of wonder. Jacob combines this sexual innuendo with a precious manner of speech: "Tenez, ma maîtresse, je vous demande pardon de mes paroles; mais il y a des gens qui ont une mine qui rend tous les passants leurs bons amis, et de ces mines-là, votre mère, de sa grâce, vous en a donné une." Using knowledge gained from experience, Jacob has been careful to mix a certain amount of gratitude and naïveté with his gallantry. He noticed earlier that his initial compliment to Geneviève had been accepted thanks to his artful blending of impressions. His compliments produce the same results with Mlle
Habert. By pretending that he is naive, Mlle Habert can accept the pleasurable effects of his language.

Mlle Habert is impressed by his "honnête origine" and compares her background to his. This puts them on a more equal footing. Jacob gains control of the situation. His compliments become bolder and he even dares to approach the subject of marriage: "Qui est-ce qui ne voudrait pas marier sa mine avec la vôtre." Jacob remembers that when he told Geneviève that if he were a king she would be queen, she took him seriously. Jacob makes a similar exaggerated comparison with Mlle Habert. However, it is not pure speculation. He begins by using Mlle Habert's background as a basis for his thoughts: he would be fortunate if his family had the same good luck that her forefathers had. This tends to bring them to the same level. Jacob says that if this had been the case she would not have escaped his serious attention. Jacob learned the hard way that he cannot safely make this kind statement in jest. The reader must assume that Jacob has enough knowledge of the situation to be in the process of developing a plan of action. He sees that Mlle Habert is completely at his mercy. Her only response is laughter and this laughter encourages his verbal overtures. Jacob demonstrates how he takes compliments and little by little molds them into a declaration of love without ever using the word. Mlle Habert does not reject his flattering speech. She shows her submission by her
silence and intermittent laughter. If Mlle Habert were a libertine this would be the seduction scene. Mlle Habert has listened to a confession of love and she still pretends that Jacob is a simple, naive rustic. In Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit, Versac tells his protégé that the libertine must overwhelm women and not give them time for reflection.

Jacob is positive of Mlle Habert's affection because she did not stop his compliments. He is almost unable to control his language: "Des tendresses étonnantes" escape from his lips. Jacob realizes that he must remain within certain boundaries with Mlle Habert. He will give his compliments an ardor that persuades her of his sincerity. This woman who appears to be devout must be given the illusion of truth. Jacob also enjoys trying to convince himself through his declarations. They both become absorbed in what Jacob is saying and forget about the search for an apartment.

Mlle Habert slows down their pace to make sure of Jacob's intentions. He is delighted to supply another eloquent speech. In the confident manner of a libertine, Jacob plays with the word "appetit": "...ce n'est pas votre parent que je voudrais être, non, j'aurais bien meilleur appetit que cela." Mlle Habert wants to talk seriously about the proposal and she invites him to come to her room.
Jacob arrives early to show his impatience. He tells her that she has occupied his thoughts since their separation. He tries to show his complete submission: "J'ai un coeur qui n'entend envers vous pas plus de raison qu'un enfant; et ce n'est pas ma faute." Jacob tries to retain the peasant flavor of his speech when he is talking to Mlle Habert because she likes it. Jacob is proud of the fact that he can revert at will to the rustic language of his youth, and does so now because he wants to please Mlle Habert. In Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit, Versac states that libertines must sacrifice their vanity to their interests.

Mlle Habert admonishes Jacob to be truthful in his remarks to her. Jacob is delighted that she questions him. Her doubt serves as a springboard for his performance. Jacob must feel that he is no longer an apprentice. He has acquired sufficient verbal skills to put his remarks into a theatrical context. He starts with an explanation of surprise: "Comment!" The effect is accentuated by his dramatic stop backwards. He appears shocked that she would doubt him. Jacob decides to use another trick. In Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit, Versac, the experienced libertine, states that men must pretend to be submissive to women in order to gain control over them. Jacob downgrades himself in order to enhance the image of Mlle Habert. He
exaggerates her importance. He would die for her and he
would die if she did not like him. Jacob makes his mes-
sage more urgent by using exclamatory remarks: "Hélas!"
"Comment!" and "Eh! pardi, oui." Jacob is duped by his
speech. He becomes too involved in his own words to seg-
regate his emotions from them. Jacob also convinces Mlle
Habert who asks him to pardon her doubt. A tender recon-
ciliation ensues.

Jacob is afraid that when Mlle Habert has time to re-
fect she will notice all the apparent advantages for him.
Jacob invents a verbal trick: he shows her the arguments
she could develop and he contradicts them. Jacob denies
interest in her money: "...mais Dieu le sait, ma parente,
ce n'est point pour l'amour de toutes ces provisions-là
que mon coeur se transporte." He even compiles a list of
objects which do not interest him. On the other hand, he
would not refuse these luxuries if they were offered. He
feels that it is necessary to assure her again that it is
not her material wealth that interests him. Jacob is try-
ing to sell himself to Mlle Habert. He has successfully
courted her and learned new techniques in the process. At
this crucial moment he is trying to pull together Mlle
Habert's positive feelings for him and erase her doubts
about him by presenting both sides of the arguments that
could be given and showing himself in an advantageous light.
Jacob's conversation is interspersed with "Dieu me pardonne," "mais Dieu le sait," and "un garçon que Dieu envoie". These expressions are used by his devout contemporaries and he knows that Mlle Habert enjoys hearing them. His references to divine providence shadow any libertine intent. Jacob must be careful that Mlle Habert does not suspect him of libertinage. Jacob successfully leads Mlle Habert to the proposal of marriage because he has watched her reactions to his verbal techniques and used only those which pleased her. He also understands her devout character because he had observed devout people in his native village. Thus, Jacob knows how to arrange his verbal techniques to fit into an inoffensive structure.

Jacob and Mlle Habert have remained almost isolated from the other characters in the novel until the engagement is announced. Jacob has not been sincere with Mlle Habert, but he has also not been honest with himself. He likes the image that he is building for Mlle Habert. Mlle Habert's appreciation of his self-projection endears her to him. He says that he is surprised about the extent of his feeling for her. However, after the scene in which Jacob has expended all of his newly acquired verbal skills more characters are introduced into the story. Jacob cannot use the same language that he used with Mlle Habert. They shatter the image that he and Mlle Habert have created. Jacob cannot help Mlle
Habert in difficult situations; their illusion of love becomes fragmented and is never fully restored.

Mme d'Alain's crass remarks about their age difference pulls the couple out of their dream existence. Mlle Habert is disappointed and hurt, but she will try to keep the dream. She hopes that she has not been damaged in Jacob's eyes by Mme d'Alain's comments. This provides an excellent opportunity for Jacob to slip back into the role that he had assumed before the disrupting scene with Mme d'Alain. He reverts to his old approach of exaggerated flattery and gallant advances. She is again placed on a pedestal and he looks to her for sustenance. Jacob perfects the techniques which will help him in his encounter with a libertine lady.

When Jacob meets Mme de Ferval he is awed by her social position. He feels that she condescends to speak to him. Jacob decides to observe her language. He lets her have the lead in their conversation and he makes no attempt to manipulate the situation. He tries to keep his remarks in a context that will please her. When he oversteps his boundaries he notices that Mme de Ferval blushes. She thinks that he is worth only a small blush. Mme de Ferval is afraid to commit herself to Jacob because he is young. His inexperience could lead him to unwittingly disclose her activities. Jacob assures her that he would not mistreat
her by revealing their relationship because he is an "honnête garçon" and he would not mistreat her. He is stretching his definition of "honnête garçon" to include secrecy and possibly insincerity. He ends by saying that he could not tolerate the modesty of a woman. This ending is incongruous with the innocent, naive image that Jacob has been creating with his words. Mme de Ferval instantly realizes the extent of his knowledge and she blushes. Jacob did not know how abrupt his statement seemed until he noticed Mme de Ferval's expression.

Jacob and Mme de Ferval spar for control of the situation. Mme de Ferval has the upper hand until she dresses in a seductive manner. Jacob gives a very graphic description of her charms. Mme de Ferval is moved by his words. She is afraid that she is about to lose control of her emotions. She frantically tries to stop Jacob by putting her hand on his mouth. Jacob is about to become the dominating person and she will not allow it. She must preserve her reputation and not let Jacob make an easy conquest of her.

Mme de Ferval changes the subject to one which will not excite her emotions. She asks Jacob sarcastic questions about his marriage and his love for Mlle Habert. Jacob turns the tables by saying that he would like it if Mme de Ferval were in Mlle Habert's place. Mme de Ferval is flattered: "Est-il vrai?" She quickly realizes that she is
again becoming the victim of Jacob's flattery and she abruptly tells him that they will not talk about it any longer and they need to put a little more physical distance between them. She suggests that they would be more at ease in her study. Jacob is delighted. Mme de Ferval hesitates; she attributes her reluctance to external circumstances.

Despite these protests, Mme de Ferval's problem is her internal conflict. If they were to move to more private quarters Jacob could continue his suggestive remarks which were producing a more dynamic effect than Mme de Ferval had anticipated. In a more secluded area she might not dominate their relationship. Her embarrassment is apparent when she makes excuses for her forgetfulness. She is indecisive. Jacob tries to control Mme de Ferval with his language. His firmness seems to help Mme de Ferval recover control of her sentiments. She rejects his pleas and Jacob realizes that she is cutting short an interview that was beginning to produce results for him. For the first time, Jacob felt that he had shed the "grossiers" parts of his language and he was successfully seducing a noble lady. Jacob feels that he is learning how to cope in the libertine world. Although his compliments have been more risque than the ones he gave Mlle Habert, he has not been rejected. His ability to tell Mme de Ferval "je devinais que votre personne était charmante, plus blanche qu'un cygne" and not be rebuffed indicates to Jacob that he has learned the language that is appreciated by a libertine
woman. He feels that he is being cut off in the middle of his act when she regains control of the conversation. Jacob pouts and tries to turn the conversation around. It is a futile attempt to transport them back to the psychological point reached a few minutes earlier.

Mme de Ferval smiles at his feeble effort. She is again in control of the situation and she treats him in the manner she would a child: she strokes his face and tells him that they will change the subject. She returns to her previous position of being coy. She pardons Jacob for saying he loves her and she predicts that she will be capable of a reciprocal emotion if he will keep their secret. Jacob follows her lead and begins to speak in a more veiled language. Nevertheless, he does not forget that he triumphed over her reticence and this seems to elevate him to an equal stance. He is now confident and speaks freely. He gives long explanations and philosophizes in the same way he did with Mlle Habert. Jacob assures Mme de Ferval that he can keep a secret. In *Les Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit*, Mme de Lursay expresses a similar distrust of her young suitor's age. Meilcour is less convincing in his reply than Jacob. Jacob learned the art of persuasion in his experiences with Mlle Habert.

Thus Jacob has learned to mold his speech into various techniques which help him to succeed with women. Jacob carefully observed the "petit libertinage" of the lady of the
house when he came to Paris. He instinctively put into practice his observations. Jacob understood that he must mask his gallant advances under the role of servant. The peasant quickly learned that he must twist his mask to assume many different shapes. His libertine language is successful but not always practical. Jacob learned to adapt his verbal skills to the various needs of different women. Manipulating language, Jacob practices the same method that Versac in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit espouses: he pretends to submit to the wishes of women in order to control them.

Mme de Lursay believes that in order to succeed with Meilcour she must be a difficult conquest. Reflecting back on his experiences, Meilcour describes Mme de Lursay's thoughts in terms of "victoire" and "conquête". Valmont and Merteuil in Les Liaisons Dangereuses employ the same terminology. These warlike words are almost absent in Le Paysan Parvenu, in which the conflict of interest between the sexes resembles a game. The clash in Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit is similar to a battle with each side planning its maneuvers. The philosophy is similar in Les Liaisons Dangereuses. Planning a number of tactical moves, Mme de Merteuil and Valmont battle to win. However, Mme de Merteuil and Valmont are cognizant of their goals and Meilcour is not. Remembering
his youthful experiences, Meilcour flinches when he thinks how susceptible he was to Mme de Lursay’s tactics.

Mme de Lursay is aware of her superior knowledge. Taking advantage of Meilcour’s ignorance, Mme de Lursay uses libertine language to control Meilcour. Meilcour does not easily learn the libertine language. He models his speech on the dialogues in novels. Meilcour’s romanesque ideas often provide unexpected obstacles for Mme de Lursay and slow her progress in verbal domination. Meilcour clings to the code of conduct that he learned in the novels that he read. Meilcour and Mme de Lursay have a battle of wits. Meilcour learns that his speech is not always effective and he depends on Mme de Lursay to supplement it. Mme de Lursay begins her domination by instructing Meilcour in the way libertines confess love. Mme de Lursay knows that Meilcour has led a sheltered life.

Eager to educate Meilcour, she begins by discussing a play with him. The discussion of love in the play provided a pretext for the couple to express their feelings. The debates gave him a chance to vent his own feelings of love and helped him learn by listening to Mme de Lursay, who knew that Meilcour liked the topic.

Meilcour has had a great deal of time by himself for reflection. He has conjured up difficulties which he believes could obstruct a successful relationship. Worried that a confession of love might be offensive, and filled with self-doubt, he is afraid that his confession would not be listened
to and he would be mortified. The older Meilcour looks back on his youth and contrasts his conception of love with the popular one of the day. His idealistic notions do not fit in. Mme de Lursay tells Meilcour that one does not have to intellectually understand the play to appreciate the emotions which affect the hearts of everyone. She brings him to the point to which she has been leading him when she asks his opinion of the confession of love.

By discussing the play, Mme de Lursay can censor Meilcour's attitude. This is the first time that Meilcour exposes his ideas on love to Mme de Lursay. His impressions appear naive and Mme de Lursay tries to enlighten him about the way matters are handled in their society.

Mme de Lursay pretends to let Meilcour express his opinions. While questioning him about his feelings, she gains control of the conversation. Meilcour does not disappoint her. He even begins to copy her coy manner: his response is a mixture of the speech which he is trying to imitate and his earnest feelings. He tells Mme de Lursay: "Oserais-je donc, Madame, vous dire que je ne suppose rien?"54

Mme de Lursay manipulates Meilcour into situations. Meilcour is afraid to be overt with his feelings. He pretends that he is talking about an imaginary situation. His words mask his motivation very little. Mme de Lursay immediately realizes that he wants her opinion. She decides to play with Meilcour and she continues the verbal hypocrisy. Meilcour takes her words literally. Mme de Lursay begins to realize
that she can exploit his ignorance.

Meilcour compliments the author of her book because he believes that it is hard to avow one's feelings. Mme de Lursay replies that it is done every day and the value of the confession is increased only by the fresh manner in which it is given. Meilcourt assures her that it is not easy to reveal one's feelings, but in her opinion he has nothing to risk in declaring his sentiments. When Meilcourt tells her that it is a humiliating action for a man, Mme de Lursay answers that it is a shame that his idea is ridiculous. Meilcourt does not understand that the libertine rules dictate that the man make the initial overture. Meilcourt had only his own reflections and his limited education. There was no one to counsel him and he was left to develop his own thoughts. Jacob was luckier because he at least had the opportunity to glimpse at the techniques which were used in an affair. Jacob always took the initiative, perceiving that this was the role of the man in his society.

Meilcourt employs a less direct approach. Meilcourt fantasizes about what he sees and convinces himself that he knows how to conduct himself. In his mind, the woman should be the first to let her suitor know of her feelings because it would save him the embarrassment of a possible rejection and he would be grateful for the avowal. The clever teacher, Mme de Lursay, explains the fashionable conduct for Meilcourt: a woman can only respond after the man has expressed his feelings. The man has nothing to lose. The woman in a
relationship must entice the man, but she must remain aloof or she will risk becoming less appreciated. Mme de Lursay bases all her notions on the idea that, in general, a woman must not be an easy conquest. If the woman were to reveal her feelings to him, Meilcour would immediately despise her as an easy conquest. This is alien to any of Meilcour's thoughts. In the libertine world, the men have more respect for the women who make them savor their accomplishment by remaining elusive for a certain period of time. The "bien­scéances" require that some time elapses before the affair if the woman wants to appear decent. Although Mme de Lursay explains the basic role of the man, Meilcour does not believe her.

Meilcour holds the opinion that the woman should take the initiative in confessing her love. This action would increase his affection; otherwise it would be uncomfortable for him because he would not find the right words. Unable to eradicate the fears that Meilcour has instilled in himself, Mme de Lursay cannot make him understand the way that the society operates. Thus, she settles for a discussion of his apprehensions. Concerning "une déclaration d'amour" she asks him "...qu'y voyez-vous donc de si effrayant?" Mme de Lursay also assures him that it is not reasonable that he should be ashamed to give a confession of love. She also makes it clear to him that his speech would not cause alarm; his difficulty would only prove his sincerity. Meilcour pursues the question: he wants to know if this is the only interpretation a woman
might give to uncertainty. Mme de Lursay admits that the man might be hesitant due to his little interest or his lack of wit. Mme de Lursay's answer reinforces Meilcour's doubts. He would rather be silent than risk rejection. Mme de Lursay again reminds him of his singular position: "Vous êtes le seul qui trouviez cela si incommode." She then tries to point out the positive aspect of the confession: he may lose the chance to be loved if he keeps silent and he can rid himself of his sentiments if he is not accepted. Mme de Lursay examines both sides of the coin. It must be his lack of trust in her. Meilcour assures her that is not the case and is goaded into asking another type of hypothetical question. He wants Mme de Lursay to tell him how she would respond to him: "...si c'était une personne telle que vous que j'aimasse, à quoi me servirait-il de lui dire?" She replies with her usual ambiguous answer and then suggests that they are getting away from the topic. Mme de Lursay pretends that Meilcour is the one who is evading the matter under discussion: "Vous éluidez ce que je demande avec plus d'adresse que je ne vous en croyais."

His actions are thwarted by his muddled illusions and he is unnerved by her suggestions. She sees that she is in control of the situation and softly gives him her impression: "Mais, que vous êtes jeune!" She encourages him into a confession by attributing his silence to his being in love, and further, that he may be loved more than he knows. All of
Meilcour's misgivings return and he trembles. However, he has received enough confidence to intimate to Mme de Lursay his feelings, although he hints that he would soon be punished if he told her who was the object of his affections. Reflecting on the scene, the older Meilcour discovers that Mme de Lursay enjoyed tormenting him by pretending not to have understood what he was saying.

Meilcour later becomes discouraged when Mme de Lursay does not openly avow her feelings. Mme de Lursay thinks she has done enough to satisfy the "bienséance". She also tries to be less verbal in order to encourage Meilcour to speak. She hopes that Meilcour will present arguments to the contrary. This scene resembles the one in _Les Liaisons Dangereuses_ when Mme de Merteuil sets the stage for Prévàin. Mme de Lursay is ready to receive Meilcour. However, she wants to convince him that he is responsible for their meeting. Mme de Lursay attempts to goad Meilcour into action by making controversial statements. Meilcour is ignorant of the "bienséance". He can only see that she has given him more encouragement but that she has not clearly explained herself. Meilcour is not sufficiently infatuated with Mme de Lursay to meditate on her actions. He only knows that he resented the scolding: "...elle m'avait étonné sans m'en toucher davantage." Meilcour would like for Mme de Lursay to be more encouraging, but he is not interested enough to pursue her. Mme de Lursay is very puzzled: she has explained the libertine plan of action several
times, and by now he should understand her. She reverts to her "système". The older Meilcour comments that she wants the young Meilcour to believe that he will succeed, but Mme de Lursay feigns to be afraid of his youth, while he is convinced that she is making excuses about his age because she does not love him. To taunt him, Mme de Lursay explains that he might be capricious and she would be the subject of his whims. She knows that he is not planning his infidelity in advance; he is not yet libertine. Meilcour completely misunderstands her motivations. He asks if there are any tests that he could pass to prove his love.

Meilcour does not realize that such tests have fallen out of usage in the eighteenth century. Mme de Lursay cannot relate to what he is saying. His requests only provide added evidence for her that he is young and will not be hard to manipulate. She flirts with him and talks about her sincerity to the naive young men who doubt her.

Still encouraging Meilcour to be more direct, Mme de Lursay reminds him that she will not participate in his fantasy. He will have to reassure her that his sentiments regard her and not an imaginary woman. Meilcour is serious about his feelings and he asks if she doubts his sincerity. It is obvious to Mme de Lursay that he is not accustomed to her worldly society. She gives him advice which she knows he will not heed. He must be insincere because his honesty will make him unhappy: "...plus vos sentiments seront vrais, plus ils vous rendront
malheureux."61 This is a truism that Mme de Lursay has observed. Meilcour is not skeptical enough to realize the importance of her words and views her remark as another challenge to his confession. Now angry, Mme de Lursay immediately switches from this reflection to a discussion of his youth. Evasiveness in order to create interest is not a major element in the literature Meilcour read in school. Meilcour understands the medieval code of conduct, but he has no reference point to use in judging Mme de Lursay's actions.

Later, Mme de Lursay is dismayed by Meilcour's lack of attention. She accuses him of not adopting the form she outlined for confessing love. Meilcour's fear returns: he is on the defensive in the argument. Mme de Lursay tries once again to teach Meilcour concerning his course of action and his language. She does not complain about his flattering remarks—an isolated confession of love makes little impression on her. She puts his remarks in perspective by explaining that a confession is a part of the libertine "usage" in a newly formed relationship. Although she knows that Meilcour is not familiar enough with the "usages" to employ them, she pretends that he is.

Since they have reached an impasse, she once more finds it is necessary to repeat that a woman does not quickly confess her sentiments despite the ease with which a man may avow his feelings and that he cannot hope to be instantly reimbursed for his efforts. She feels that the equation to
which he reduces their reactions is silly: "...vous parlez, et je dois me rendre." She must impress on Meilcour the importance of her submission. He treats her as if she were "brulant d'impatience d'etre vaincue". Convinced that if he were in love with her his emotion would have inspired him, she accuses him of lack of respect and esteem for her. She adds that she will not accept ignorance of the "usage" as an excuse. She hopes to have educated Meilcour on the question of "usages" and convinced him of the role that a man plays in the libertine society. The speech serves a cathartic effect on Mme de Lursay. She is quickly mollified by Meilcour who is silent through most of Mme de Lursay's lecture. Mme de Lursay promises to pardon him the moment that he again avows his love. Mme de Lursay is certain that she has educated Meilcour on the "usages" of society, punished him for his neglect by her remarks and rewarded him with her quick forgiveness. Her long speech seems to weary him. However, when she mentions her pleasure in his confession of love, Meilcour again becomes consumed by his passion. "Emporté par le moment" he falls on his knees and begs her to release him from "l'état horrible" by believing his confession. Mme de Lursay is afraid that other people will witness the scene and have harsh thoughts. Mme de Lursay pretends that she is on the verge of telling Meilcour that she is in love with him, but she stops herself short of saying it. Mme de Lursay rejoins the others
but she gives Meilcour a tender look when she leaves. The older Meilcour comments that he was too young at the time to realize the absurdity of the system she presented. Mme de Lursay's deceptive beliefs in platonic love would easily fit into a romanesque context and therefore are plausible to the young man with a predominately literary education. Meilcour revealed to Mme de Lursay that he thought the woman should present obstacles for the man to conquer, but he did not have any ideas on the sentiment of the woman who should remain aloof; however, Meilcour did not formulate an opinion on whether or not the women in the stories felt any remorse when they sent their lovers away. Meilcour relates his stories to the nobility of which he is a part while Mme de Lursay elaborates on the remark that when one is "bien née" that the senses have nothing to do with love. This explanation of passion must fit in well with Meilcour's concept of the aloof, fairy-tale lady.

Mme de Lursay, of course, has to modify her explanation of love. She cannot leave the noble lady in a position of never surrendering to her lover. She advises him that when a virtuous woman succumbs to her passion it is never a vice. Mme de Lursay is equating virtue with the woman who is "bien née". This is another ideal which coincides with what he learned earlier through his readings. Thus, Mme de Lursay is fitting her explanation of passion into a context which Meilcour can understand.
Mme de Lursay adds that a virtuous, noble woman surrenders to passion because of a weakness which is "le dérèglement de leur coeur". Beginning with a few roman-esque concepts, Mme de Lursay glides into the principles which are a part of libertine ethics. The woman must resist her passion with long and violent combats so that the suitor may have a full victory. By detailing platonic love, Mme de Lursay stresses the necessity for conforming to the behavior pattern that she prescribes: the virtuous woman can respond only by creating obstacles. When she is obligated to surrender, the memory of the struggle will console her. The noble woman must feel that she did her best to fight the passion.

The greater number of obstacles increases her feeling of accomplishment. She wages a long battle in order to have a decisive victory. Conscious that Meilcour's misunderstanding places them in a ludicrous position, she expresses her amusement. "Que je suis bonne, et que vous êtes fou! dit-elle enfin. Le beau personnage que nous jouons ici tous deux!" She decides to exploit his naïveté. Pretending to be afraid of youth and inexperience, Mme de Lursay explains that she will make a great sacrifice for Meilcour because she has "du goût" for him. She will avow her love. It will be the first time in her life that she has granted anyone this privilege: "Cet aveu, que je vous fais, me coûte. Il est, et vous pouvez m'en croire, le
premier de cette nature que j'ai fait de ma vie."  
Ironically, she tells Meilcour that she is being direct because she hates games.

The older Meilcour reflects that he did not know at the time that the "système" Mme de Lursay describes was obsolete, and that she could twist these principles to suit her own purposes. The older Meilcour comments that when he was younger, he did not understand the difference between a truly virtuous woman and a prude.

There is constant conflict in their courtship due to their lack of understanding. Mme de Lursay pretends to be cold toward Meilcour when he arrives at her house and Meilcour affects indifference, but she quickly breaks down his defenses with a fixed regard. She again informs him of the role she expects a lover to take. If he cannot understand and fit into the libertine rules of behavior he will be an "amant singulier": "Vous êtes, me dit-elle en souriant, un amant singulier, et si vous voulez que je juge de votre amour par vos empressements, vous ne prétendez pas sans doute que j'en prenne bonne opinion."  
Mme de Lursay pretends to be controlled by taking into account the singular ideas of Meilcour and by accepting them. She confesses her schemes to Meilcour in a light-hearted manner.

She lifts the mask from her language because her intentions are still obscure to him. Mme de Lursay is less vicious than Mme de Merteuil in Les Liaisons Dangereuses.
When Mme de Merteuil exposes her game plan about Prévan, she expects admiration and recognition of her superiority from Valmont. Mme de Lursay is less sophisticated. She simply enjoys knowing that her superiority enables her to play with Meilcour's emotions. Mme de Lursay is not lost in her thoughts. She is preparing Meilcour for the rendezvous. Mme de Lursay reminds him that they must get back to practical matters. "Mais ajouta-t-elle, toutes ces réflexions ne sont pas des expedients." She leads him to the point of making the suggestion that he should have his carriage come to her house at a later hour. She interrupts to advise that two in the morning would be the perfect time. Thus Mme de Lursay does not lose control of the conversation and she tries to flatter Meilcour's vanity at the same time. She pretends that he was responsible for the action. She wants to coax him into agreeing with her by exaggerating the effect his action has on her: "Ce pauvre Meilcour! N'allez pas au moins changer pour moi: vous me mettriez au désespoir." Meilcour reacts in the way a child would and Mme de Lursay continues to cajole him: "Je pense, à la mine que vous me faites, que vous n'en croyez rien. Nous devrions cependant être assez joliment ensemble." Meilcour resents being badly treated. Mme de Lursay pretends not to understand him and revels in her new technique. She pretends that she would have revealed her sentiments earlier had she known that he felt the woman
should be the first to disclose them. Overwhelmed by her
speech, he assumes she is ridiculing him and he is relieved
when some people join in the parlor game. The other people
impede Mme de Lursay's effort to reach a decisive under­
standing with Meilcour. He again appears cold. She
fluctuates between two attitudes: to show her feelings for
Meilcour or to be severe in order to give him an obstacle.

Meilcour is dependent on Mme de Lursay to supply him
with the correct language. Meilcour is unprepared when one
of the guests offers him his carriage. Meilcour had given
Mme de Lursay false assurance that he could handle the
situation. Meilcour enjoys daydreaming and he likes to
fantasize that he can resolve minor problems. However, he
does not have the practical experience and hesitates when he
is faced with the question. Meilcour states: "Je me
serais laissé reconduire, si Madame de Lursay, fertile en
expédients, et dont l'esprit ne se troublait pas aussi
aisément que le mien, ne fût venue à mon secours."72 Mme
de Lursay explains to the other guests that Meilcour must be
embarrassed because he is planning to go to a rendezvous
and does not desire to let them know his destination.
Completely baffled, he thanks Mme de Lursay: "Je la
remerciai en bégayant."73 Meilcour enjoyed contemplating
the meeting with Mme de Lursay.

Meilcour loses the control he has over his speech when
he is left alone with Mme de Lursay at the rendezvous which
she arranges. Mme de Lursay has the advantage in the battle of wits. Once left alone with Mme de Lursay, he is filled with "la plus horrible peur". Mme de Lursay notices his embarrassment and, trying to put him at ease, she asks him to sit opposite her. She arranges herself in a reclining position on the sofa. This is reminiscent of the scene in *Le Paysan Parvenu* when Jacob has his first rendezvous with Mme de Ferval. Mme de Ferval also tries to seduce Jacob with her attire and her suggestive placement on the sofa. Mme de Lursay wants the scene to appear natural in order not to shock Meilcour by her sudden change of behavior but she cannot pretend to be distant if she is too obvious in her overtures. She confides to Meilcour that she allows him to take liberties with her because he adheres to the same principles of respect that she does: "Je puis me flatter enfin d'avoir trouvé un cœur dans les principes du mien." During this speech, Mme de Lursay plays with his hair while he sits at her feet and holds and kisses her hand. Mme de Lursay is ready to succumb, but Meilcour completely misunderstands her verbal and physical overtures.

In *Le Paysan Parvenu*, Mme de Ferval and Mme de Fécour presented less elaborate arguments than Mme de Lursay. They were not considered prudes and therefore the reticent side of their character is developed in less dimension. Also Mme de Ferval and Mme de Fécour are dealing with a
more knowledgeable young man and would not have had the same success in scolding Jacob on his youthful actions. Jacob finds women less attractive when their age is discussed. He almost forgets that a woman is older when he is alone with her. However, when others point out the age difference, it diminishes the woman's charms in his eyes. Meilcour reacts in a different manner. He does not respond with a brilliant verbal rebuttal. He takes the abuse; he is not sure he does not merit it. Mme de Lursay takes advantage of his reticence to establish a tighter control over his actions. Telling him that she has made a special exception for him, Mme de Lursay wants him to appreciate her effort.

The older Meilcour comments that it is more important for Mme de Lursay to flatter his vanity than to touch his heart. The young man is more susceptible to experiences which coincide with his romanesque notions. He is about to receive the love of the distant, noble lady who has made him suffer through many trials. Mme de Lursay hoped that the tests she put him through would educate him in the libertine way of acting. Meilcour is too filled with his own ideas on behavior to be receptive to Mme de Lursay. The young man does not comprehend the sighs and the looks that she secretly directs toward him nor her speech.

By trial and error, Mme de Lursay learns how to make Meilcour respond to her. She is often surprised that
her actions do not prompt him to use libertine language. She sometimes amuses herself by taking advantage of his ignorance of the libertine code of conduct. Mme de Lursay must be careful. Meilcour slowly assumes the verbal mask of libertine language.

Meilcour's progress in learning the connotations connected with Mme de Lursay's language is painfully slow. Mme de Lursay tries to eradicate the romanesque notions in Meilcour's speech. Meilcour is reluctant to submit to her desire. He battles with Mme de Lursay in hopes that she will agree with his viewpoint. The language employed in the corrupt libertine world and the language used in the fairy-tale world of Meilcour's novels often clash. Meilcour and Mme de Lursay employ two different languages and do not always understand each other. Meilcour finally realizes that his language is not always sufficient and he becomes dependent on Mme de Lursay to help him learn the libertine language.

**Meilcour: Disjunction Between Action and Thought:**
**Beginning of Self-Awareness**

As long as he is simply playing the part of the slow but conscientious student, Meilcour has no way to put the actions of others into a meaningful context. Because he insists on inserting libertine techniques into his romanesque world or on applying outdated courtly concepts to reality, there is a contradiction between his thoughts and
the ploys of skilled female teachers. Meilcour cannot reach a strong position among the libertines until he meets Versac. The male teacher will be far more efficient than the female one because he forces him to open his eyes to reality.

Meilcour is by temperament a reflective young man and he allows his thoughts to dominate his actions. This tendency is responsible for his living in a state of desynchronization: he never realizes what is expected of him right away—mostly because he only knows the literal meaning of words and never questions statements which are ambiguously mixed with contradictory gestures, sighs and looks; he never foresees the consequences of his acts in the near future and does not always realize the full effects of his deeds until later, when he has missed his chance. Meilcour becomes absorbed in his pondering; he is almost oblivious to his actions and at times is completely overtaken by his daydreams. There is a great discrepancy between his thoughts and his actions. The learning experience which will give him control is founded on a reconciliation of purpose, intention and active participation. Meilcour concentrates on single incidents which he reviews in a romanesque context. Often Mme de Lursay's overtures do not have an impact on him. Meilcour isolated the incidents in their last meeting and he did not seem to be able to piece together what Mme de Lursay told
him about motivation and her subsequent statements. She reiterates her feeling that an admission would diminish his love. Mme de Lursay encourages him to guess her sentiments. Meilcour reminds Mme de Lursay that she forbade any conjectures. Meilcour took her statements literally. The libertines often say the opposite of what they mean. The young man hasn't completely realized this.

Mme de Lursay is ready to counsel Meilcour in points of behavior, but she mistakenly feels that he has sufficient knowledge of libertine patterns. In answer to her question how he would reply if anyone should offer him a ride home in his carriage, Meilcour smiles and squeezes Mme de Lursay's hand. Silent communication is perfected by the libertines. Mme de Lursay assumes that Meilcour uses these signs to assure her of his understanding of the libertine behavior that is required of him. Meilcour still understands only the literal meanings of behavior: when Mme de Lursay complains of a headache, Meilcour feels sorry for her. He does not comprehend that she is faking the condition to encourage the departure of the other guests.

Meilcour does not want his idealized concept of Mme de Lursay tarnished. He does not believe that she is capable of deception. Meilcour trusted her statement that she granted him the rendezvous only because she was confident of his respect. He was afraid that she would not pardon him if he overstepped his limits. Mme de Lursay's earlier
explanation to Meilcour that the man should take the ini-
tiative in confessing his love was meant to outline his
dominant role in their relationship. Meilcour takes her
words at face value. The older Meilcour understands that
his thoughts dominated him. They had no connection with
his present experience and prevent his action: "...je me fis
enfin tant et de si fortes illusions, qu'elles prévalurent
sur mes désirs, et sur l'envie que la délicate Madame de
Lursay avait de m'obliger." Offended, Mme de Lursay
decides to escape from a ridiculous situation and she
orders him to leave. The older Meilcour feels that she was
surprised at the extent of his ignorance.

Meilcour does not understand people who do not share
characteristics with his fictional types but instantly
reassures himself as to the validity of his position:
"j'étais le seul qu'elle eût aimé: Je triomphais de la
vertu! de Platon même!" Mme de Lursay is confident that
she has produced the desired results.

The ability to penetrate the character of others is a
basic quality necessary for survival in the libertine
world. Therefore, Mme de Lursay takes advantage of Meil-
cour's ignorance. She convinces him of his singular posi-
tion and he is uneasy in the situation. He responds to her
statements with simple smiles and awkward answers because
he needs to reflect on what is happening to him and to
enjoy what he considers his great conquest. There is a
disjunction between his thoughts and the events taking place around him. Mme de Lursay notices his confusion and attributes it to his inexperience because she doesn't imagine that Meilcour has learned enough to be deceptive: "Ma rêverie, mes distractions, et ma stupidité, n'étaient pour elle que des preuves plus incontestables que j'étais fortement épris." Mme de Lursay is unaware that she is competing with another woman for his affection.

Meilcour's contemplative moods impede his actions. He cannot effectively implement his ideas when he wants to take immediate actions. When Versac reveals Mme de Lursay's many affairs, Meilcour is angry. Anger and need for revenge are truly libertine traits: the offended male must destroy the challenging woman. The desire for revenge occupies Meilcour's thoughts and he goes immediately to Mme de Lursay's house. He formulates his plan of action along the way. He would like for the libertine world to know about his punishment of the hypocritical Mme de Lursay; this would be a brilliant way to make his debut in the libertine world. However, Meilcour decides to relinquish the plan because he doesn't feel he has the necessary experience. The most expedient way to achieve vengeance would be to reward Mme de Lursay's generosity with prompt infidelity. Meilcour becomes direct in his approach. He would like to "faire usage" of their time together. Meilcour would like to dispense with the ambiguities. Mme de
Lursay is surprised by the familiar way in which Meilcour treats her and wonders who has supplied Meilcour with "les limières". Meilcour fails in his attempt to direct her actions. Mme de Lursay silently contemplates what has happened. The older Meilcour knows that a few complimentary remarks from him would have facilitated a favorable reconciliation. The young man imitates Mme de Lursay's silence. She decides to ask Meilcour the reason for his change. The only explanation that he will give is that his love prompted his actions. He is now in control of the situation and can lie about being formerly naïve enough to believe everything that she had told him before Versac enlightened him.

At times Meilcour is completely lost in his contemplation. His actions are affected when he is preoccupied with thoughts of Hortense. After leaving Mme de Lursay, Meilcour can only think of Hortense. He is sure that she must have a secret lover. He does not flatter himself with the prospects of his conquests of Mme de Lursay and Mme de Senanges; he can only think of seeing Hortense again. Meilcour knows that he must plan his strategy. His mother and Mme de Théville are not on very friendly terms. Meilcour would like to avoid telling his mother about Hortense, but he decides that he must inform her of their meeting or she may suspect that he has reason to conceal from her his activities. The introspective youth creates fears within
himself. He is afraid that his mother will immediately guess his love for Hortense. Meilcour tells his mother nonchalantly about seeing Mme de Théville. His mother asks if he has seen Mme de Théville's daughter. Forgetting to whom he is talking, Meilcour naively confesses to his mother his sentiments for Hortense and his love dictates his praises. Meilcour is still too innocent to be deceptive with his mother. It is only when she says that he must be in love with Hortense that Meilcour realizes that he has betrayed his secret. His mother does not forbid him from seeing Hortense because she is afraid that her opposition might encourage his love.

Meilcour's thoughts also make him insensitive to Mme de Lursay. When, on the following day, Meilcour goes to pick up Mme de Lursay for the visit to the Théville home, his mind is filled with thoughts of Hortense, and Mme de Lursay mistakenly believes that Mme de Senanges is the reason for his preoccupation. Mme de Lursay reproaches him for his bad choice. Meilcour pretends that he did not notice Mme de Senanges' interest in him. Mme de Lursay becomes emotional in her arguments. Meilcour rejects her tender sentiments in order to punish her for duping him and ignores her emotions, although he notices that her voice is filled with sadness and anger now that she can no longer control his actions.

Meilcour isolates himself in his dream world. He is
absorbed in his thoughts of Hortense. Mme de Lursay is a slight diversion for him; he discusses the mundane details of a reconciliation between his mother and Mme de Théville with her in order to avoid a direct discussion of the main problem. This evasive action gives him control over her and he is ready to savor his vengeance. Mme de Lursay's feelings provide "un spectacle nouveau" for Meilcour on their way to the Théville home. She amuses him, but he is not touched by her. Mme de Lursay even becomes disagreeable to him when he mentions Pranzi and her other suitors. Soon she has the opportunity to make him suffer in return. Mme de Lursay hopes that she will have a chance to entice Meilcour to the country. Meilcour rudely rejects her invitation until he learns that Hortense is going with Mme de Lursay. Meilcour changes his answer, but Mme de Lursay does not accept his feeble attempt at reconciliation. Meilcour is afraid that he will tarnish his self-image if he insists. Once more he is absorbed in his thoughts and they block his actions. The older Meilcour reflects that he finally had enough presence of mind to return to his home. This is the place where he goes into deeper contemplation: "Revenu enfin à moi-même, je retournai chez moi, méditer profondément sur des minuties, penser faux sur tout ce qui m'arrivait, et m'affliger jusqu'au retour d'Hortense." 

Meilcour completely succumbs to his thoughts. He
fears that Hortense and Germeuil are together. He feels sorry for himself and obsessed with his thought of the young woman, he fancies that they know each other and she has treated him badly: "...je la traitais de perfide, comme si elle m'eût en effet donné des droits sur son coeur, et qu'elle les eût violés." He even makes plans to get her back from Germeuil. Meilcour chooses isolated paths in the Tuileries because he would like to savor his thoughts in private. He is the hero of the story that he is creating and he doesn't want to be interrupted. The outside world holds little interest for him at the time: "...occupé de moi-même comme je l'étais, il me restait peu de curiosité pour les autres." Meilcour has no desire to learn about the way the libertine world operates at this time. The mysterious woman—she could have come from a fairy tale—that he saw is the most beautiful person that he has ever seen. The hero of the story is always in quest of the fair damsel. Meilcour has the opportunity to fabricate the story in any way that he liked. He enjoys exploiting his fears and basking in self-pity: "Quelque cruelle que fût ma mélancolie, elle m'était chère, et je craignais tout ce que pouvait y faire diversion."  

Thus, Meilcour successfully creates a disjunction between his thoughts and actions. He escapes into his world of reflection. Others have difficulty making Meilcour understand their maneuvers. Meilcour sometimes
becomes oblivious to others; his verbal expressions are not necessarily related to his thoughts. His verbal ability completely dominates his thoughts at times. Meilcour cannot always prevent himself from saying what he thinks. Absorbed in contemplation, Meilcour cannot understand the schism between his reflections and the affairs of the world.

Meilcour's romanesque ideas on love are no longer in usage. His code of behavior and his shyness impair his relationships with women. Meilcour pretends he is a lowly suitor and submits himself to the desires of women whom he elevates in his mind. He amuses himself by alternating the women who occupy the place of prominence. By switching his thoughts from one woman to another, Meilcour learns that he can be devious. He slowly begins to assimilate the principles of libertinage. Meilcour's goals remain vague. He does not have a great amount of direction in his actions. His deeds are often disjoined from his reflections. Meilcour's thoughts cripple his actions and slow his entrance into the libertine world. However, his anger, his desire for active revenge and the sketchy outline of a course of action to obtain it show the extent of his progression into libertinage. The substitution of one feminine image for another in his mind completes the learning experience. Evasive actions, the ability to lie or wear a mask satisfy him with small victories - the evidence of his gaining control over women.
NOTES


4 Ibid., 32.

5 Ibid., 33.

6 Ibid., 32.

7 Ibid., 33.

8 Ibid., 161.

9 Ibid., 205.

10 Ibid., 163.

11 Ibid., 126.

12 Ibid., 131.

13 Ibid.


17 Ibid., 47.
18 Ibid., 54.
19 Ibid., 49.
20 Ibid., 61.
21 Ibid., 30.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 93.
25 Ibid., 33.
26 Ibid., 95.
27 Ibid., 97.
28 Ibid., 179.
29 Ibid., 23.
30 Ibid., 24.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 105-6.
33 Ibid., 36.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., 60.
36 Ibid., 35.
37 Ibid., 177.
38 Ibid., 192.
40 Ibid., 78.
41 Ibid., 80.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., 81
46 Ibid., 86.
47 Ibid., 95.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 97.
51 Ibid., 100.
52 Ibid., 163.
54 Ibid., 33.
55 Ibid., 28.
56 Ibid., 29.
57 Ibid., 31.
58 Ibid., 32.
59 Ibid., 31.
60 Ibid., 68.
61 Ibid., 34.
62 Ibid., 65.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 66.
65 Ibid., 57.
66 Ibid., 93.
67 Ibid., 94.
68 Ibid., 43.
69 Ibid., 102.
70 Ibid., 43.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., 104.
73 Ibid., 105.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., 113-4.
76 Ibid., 115.
77 Ibid., 95.
78 Ibid., 98.
79 Ibid., 195.
80 Ibid., 255.
81 Ibid., 74.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
CONCLUSION

Thus two young men enter the libertine world at about the same age but receive different receptions. This can be attributed in part to their different class positions. Their youth and good looks are considered advantages in the libertine world. However, for different reasons both men are sometimes reticent. Jacob quietly observes people in a higher social class because he is afraid that he may make mistakes in matters of protocol. Jacob is shy only until he is certain that he understands the form of behavior which should be used. Meilcour, on the other hand, is timid because he has had limited experiences with others and does not know how to interact socially. He becomes preoccupied by his own thoughts when he is with others and has little time left for observation.

Meilcour is almost isolated from society before his decision to enter the libertine world. His mother tries to shelter Meilcour and prevent him from learning the corrupt practices of their contemporaries. Fatherless, Meilcour has no one to turn to with his questions about love. He retreats to his books and they form the bulk of his education. Meilcour tries to apply the scenes in the novels to experiences in his life. He forms a code of conduct from reading the novels. Meilcour is helpless when
his code is not relevant to his experiences. Jacob is not blinded by romanesque ideas. He does not learn to read until he comes to Paris. His education in social behavior is more direct; he learns through observation. When he is in the country, Jacob can indifferently watch society members and evaluate their actions.

He notices the difference between the pious and those who wear the mask of devotion. Thus he becomes aware that the mask functions well in society. Meilcour's mother is a religious person and he becomes accustomed to her friends. He does not distinguish that there is any difference in their devotion. Meilcour is blinded by his proximity to the situation. The peasant has a better vantage point. He can also scrutinize other members of Meilcour's social class: the upper class often dispenses with pretenses when surrounded by servants. Thus Jacob observes many different social types and the necessity for a mask.

Jacob can easily assume a mask. Versac tells Meilcour that an effective disguise is crucial for survival in libertine society. Meilcour cannot accept Versac's comment. Meilcour objects when Versac suggests that he should mask his virtues and acquire vices. Meilcour believes that he could never do this; he is reluctant to degrade his self-image. In contrast, Jacob can acquire a disguise and keep a respectable image of himself. Jacob knows that he must mask his social origins to be accepted in libertine society, but he never relinquishes his basic virtues and he is content
with himself. Meilcour cannot make this kind of compromise. He is reluctant to admit that the guidelines for behavior in his novels do not work well in the libertine world. Meilcour has convinced himself that his value system is valid and he reacts defensively when he feels that it is threatened.

Jacob, on the other hand, has no illusions to defend. The peasant wants to progress in society and he is controlled by the social rules which make his success possible. Thus there is no disjunction between his thoughts and actions. Jacob makes his plans in accordance with his observations. Meilcour has the opposite reaction: he must reflect before he can act. Meilcour also alienates himself from his experiences by contemplating women who are not present. Jacob concentrates uniquely on women that he is with. When he is with Mlle Habert, he becomes dupe to the emotions that he is trying to convey to her. Mme de Ferval, Mme de Fécour and Mme d'Orville completely absorb his interest when he is with each of them.

Meilcour has a hard time focusing his attention on one woman because he is never certain that he has been accepted. When he feels that he has been rebuffed he retaliates by elevating another woman in his mind. This interferes in his relationship with women. At times his thoughts completely dominate him: Meilcour decides not to keep his rendezvous with Mme de Lursay because he would rather spend his time thinking of Hortense. Jacob's thoughts do not
inhibit his action in this manner. Jacob takes advantage of silence to assess situations and decide on a game plan. His thoughts serve to enhance his actions and prove beneficial in helping him assimilate libertine techniques.

The obstacles which impede Jacob's success are external: Mlle Habert's sister and the "directeur" try to prevent the marriage to Mlle Habert. Jacob realizes that he must learn how to eliminate their arguments. Meilcour, however, has no clear conception of the obstacles which impair his entrance into the libertine world. He unknowingly creates internal obstacles. Absorbed by his romanesque ideas, Meilcour does not reach out to others. He cannot understand that Hortense's conception of the world is different from his. Meilcour questions Hortense on her ideas about love. Hortense tries to allude to her value system, but Meilcour does not perceive what she is doing. Meilcour's lack of perception is an internal obstacle. Jacob tries to rid himself of thoughts that cripple his actions. When he is with Orsan, he prevents thoughts about his recent rise in society because he is afraid that his reflections might make him lose his confidence. Meilcour practices no restraint with his contemplation. His education and his social position have demanded little from him. Meilcour has little discipline imposed upon him. Free to do as he pleases, Meilcour becomes more reflective than observant. This quality is a liability in the libertine world. Meilcour often does not understand Mme de Lursay's overtures because he tries to place her
actions into the context of his romanesque thoughts. The sexual innuendoes escape his attention because he takes her words literally. Meilcour is sometimes uncertain and faltering in his speech and Mme de Lursay is surprised by the extent of his ignorance. Meilcour feels that his mastery of language should coincide with his superior social position. Thus Meilcour's desire for instant perfection inhibits his speech.

Jacob does not feel that his speech must coincide with a noble image of himself. He desires to move upward in society and he knows that he must perfect his speech in order to accomplish his goal. Jacob takes advantage of his low social status to test his language ability. Peppering his speech with peasant expressions, Jacob conveys the impression that he is naive and innocent. The lady of the house can accept his gallant remarks under this guise. Thus Jacob can experiment and develop his verbal skills. He also exploits his peasant status to compliment the lady by telling her that he will be her eternal servant. Jacob instinctively knows that words can have a double meaning. This knowledge enables him to seduce and propose to Mlle Habert without appearing audacious. He plays with words in order to convince others that his social status is equal to Mlle Habert's.

Meilcour is serious when he speaks; he does not toy with his language. Meilcour is afraid that his language might be offensive to Mme de Lursay: he must reflect before
he can express his sentiments. Mme de Lursay tells Meil­
cour that his fear of expressing his feelings is ludicrous.
He does not believe her and his speech remains stilted.
Meilcour cannot jokingly give Mme de Lursay compliments in
the same manner that Jacob extends his gallantries to the
lady of the house. His social position prevents any type
of familiarity with Mme de Lursay. He does not have an
effective disguise for experimentation with his speech and
he stumbles along in his attempt to learn libertine
language.

Meilcour does not understand the utility of a mask.
Jacob becomes very adept with his mask. He can twist it
into many shapes to please women. The peasant also pri-
vately enjoys removing his disguise. He likes to compare
M. de la Vallee to the peasant who is underneath the
polished exterior. When Jacob is rebuffed the peasant
receives the blame. M. de la Vallee is put aside until
the unpleasant experience has passed. This serves as a
defense mechanism; by letting the peasant be at fault,
Jacob can keep M. de la Vallee intact. When an intruder
interrupts his rendezvous with Mme de Ferval, Jacob leaves
because he is afraid of the scene that would take place
with the peasant. Meilcour has no comparable means of
protecting his personality. Meilcour learns that Mme de
Lursay has deceived him and he wants to take direct action
against the insult. She is damaging his noble self-image
and Meilcour will not allow it; he seeks revenge against
the insult. Meilcour begins to learn that libertinage is a power struggle and he does not want Mme de Lursay to get the upper hand. He is furious that Mme de Lursay has been successful in controlling his personality. Jacob is aware of the necessity of control in his relationships. He exploits his low social origin when he pretends to submit to the wishes of women. He does this to gain control. Versac tells Meilcour to use this method to dominate women. Jacob, however, wishes to control his relationships and not to dominate the women. The women flatter M. de la Vallée and make him realize how far he has progressed in social circles. He has no desire to hurt them; Jacob hopes Mlle Habert will never be aware of his infidelities. The women give him a greater appreciation of M. de la Vallée. Thus the mask serves to lighten the gravity of Jacob's motives. Meilcour has no similar device to protect him and he incorporates the libertine practice of revenge into his character.

Meilcour's entrance into the libertine world is slowed by his ignorance of the silent communication used by libertines. He does not understand the signs Mme de Lursay uses to convey her feelings. Meilcour usually misinterprets her regards. Jacob takes advantage of silent moments to survey the looks of women and assess their feelings for him. Meilcour is oblivious to this kind of instruction. Jacob often combines endearing words with his flattering speeches in order to convince women of his sentiments. Meilcour does not make the most of silent moments. He sometimes loses all
benefit of the moment by casting his eyes downward. Meilcour tries to control his feelings when he is with Hortense by looking the other way. Isolated in his dream world, Meilcour is afraid of their regard. He fears that he may reveal his feelings through his eyes and he may be rejected.

Meilcour's awakening to the significance of the libertine practices comes in an indirect manner: he hears Versac describe the techniques that Mme de Lursay uses to seduce young men and he recognizes himself in the portrait. Meilcour is reluctant to believe the unflattering remarks about Mme de Lursay until he recognizes the description of his own experiences. Versac later tries to explain other libertine methods to Meilcour. However, when Meilcour cannot relate Versac's statements to his own ventures, he is hesitant about believing them. Versac gives Meilcour an expose on the principles used in libertine society. Although Meilcour rejects many of Versac's comments, he cannot fail to gradually recognize the libertine usage of these principles. Exposing Mme de Lursay, Versac makes Meilcour realize that a difference exists between his conception of the world and the actual usages. Versac instructs Meilcour in the way that he should see the world. When Meilcour begins to realize the necessity of the libertine principles, he can easily assimilate them into his personality. Versac has given him the necessary knowledge for success in the game of libertinage. Meilcour has the possibility to advance in the graces of not only libertine women but also men.
Jacob is less fortunate. Despite his ability to master the libertine techniques of silent and verbal communication, Jacob can only have total success with women. The peasant cannot use his techniques with men; he cannot easily implement libertine practices to obscure his origins; he feels inferior when he is with men of a higher social class. The men take advantage of the situation. Versac explains to Meilcours that libertine men must always be on the offensive and never submissive to another male. Jacob tries to escape submission by creating a flattering image of himself; he adheres to a moral code which is superior to the one used by other libertine men. Jacob associates his high standards with his honest background. Proving to himself that his low social origin is not despicable, Jacob protects himself from annihilation by other men. He must constantly revive his favorable self-image. Jacob is always defending himself and he can never hope to dominate other men.

Jacob and Meilcours react differently in similar situations. Jacob joyfully enters libertinage. He succumbs to the deceptive principles of libertinage because he wants to escape the confinement of his low social origins. The Marivaux character is close to the philosophy behind the beginning of the libertine movement. Jacob wants to escape from restrictions placed on him by society. He wants to enjoy the freedom of movement that libertinage will afford him. In Les Egarements, Crébillon portrays a man who enters libertine society for the sole purpose of escaping his
ennui. Thus the philosophical problem of revolt against authority is present in the Marivaux novel, but is deleted in *Les Egarements*. The libertine characters in *Les Egarements* are more direct and vicious. Seduction is performed with less "décence" than in the Marivaux novel.

The spontaneous joy that Sturm connects with the beginning of the libertine movement is present in *Le Paysan* but is less prevalent in *Les Egarements*. Jacob is delighted when he is accepted by women of a higher social order. His new clothes also provide another proof for him that he is transcending barriers. Meilcour rarely feels that he is making any accomplishments and does not have the same joyful experiences. Meilcour is fearful of women and he is constantly referring to his romanesque code of conduct to instruct him on the proper form of behavior. On the other hand, Jacob enjoys his encounters with women. The feeling is reciprocal; the women think they can indulge in the peasant's interest without any fear of compromise to their positions.

The lack of domination is also typical of the early stages of libertinage. In *Le Paysan*, Mme de Ferval and Mme de Fécour are delighted that Jacob returns their interest. They do not mind sharing him with Mlle Habert. The women do not see any conflict of interest in their relationships. The opposite is true in *Les Egarements*: Mme de Lursay, Mme de Senanges and Mme de Mongennes vie for Meilcour's attentions and talk about each other in a very
unflattering manner. The women are more vicious in the Crébillon novel; they exhibit the beginning of the decadent qualities which Sturm associates with the latter part of libertinage.

Revenge is also absent from the carefree origins of libertinage. Versac desires revenge because Mme de Lursay made his domination of an inexperienced woman impossible. Meilcour also wants to avenge himself at Mme de Lursay's expense. This notion is absent in the character of Jacob. When he learns that Mme de Ferval has accepted the advances of another suitor, he simply reflects that their relationship has ended. Jacob muses on the inconstancy of fortune, but he does not have any desire to retaliate against Mme de Ferval. The libertine characters in Marivaux's novel are more generous.

Many of the reasons for this can be traced to Marivaux's use of a character from a lower social class. By inserting a personage who creates a social problem, Marivaux can concentrate on the carefree, lighter aspects of libertinage. He is also upholding the tradition of the seventeenth century libertines by including the philosophical question of freedom from restraint. Marivaux's character adapts quickly and instinctively to the problems posed by the social and libertine circles: he takes himself seriously and he must reflect privately before he can act. Meilcour would ask his friends to enlighten him on his questions about libertine behavior, but he is certain that they are also ignorant on the subject.
Crebillon explores the reactions of an aristocrat who is uninitiated in libertine practices.

The characters of Crebillon and Marivaux have different reactions to the libertine system which can be traced largely to their diverse social backgrounds. Jacob wants to progress in social circles and he acts in accordance with his desires. He quickly learns that his admittance by the aristocracy also includes induction into libertinage. Meilcour would like to keep the status quo and enter the libertine world with a minimum of effort.

Meilcour may easily become an expert in all the principles of libertinage which Versac reveals to him. Meilcour only needed a stimulus to extricate him from his dream world. His position in society and the education which is typical for a man of his social status prove inadequate preparation for induction into the libertine world. The peasant's vantage point enabled him to observe libertine society at a distance. He noticed that the mask is essential for success in society. Jacob desires to succeed and he quickly assumes a mask while he is learning libertine techniques. Jacob can only progress to a certain point; his success in the world of libertine men is limited. Jacob's low social origin is an advantage when the peasant is entering libertine society, but in the final analysis is a disadvantage. Meilcour's social position hampers him in the
beginning, but will later prove beneficial. The progress and success of Meilcour and Jacob can be traced to social origins. Social factors have a deciding influence on the libertine structure.
NOTES

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title of Thesis: dans Marivaux: Le Paysan parvenu et Crébillon: Les
Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

May 4, 1976