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THE REFLECTION OF MONEY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH  
LITERATURE:  
A STUDY OF LESAGE, PRÉVOST, MARIVAUX, VOLTAIRE, AND  
ROUSSEAU

by

JANE TUCKER VASILIOU

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in  
French Literature in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The  
City University of New York.

1998

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## Abstract

THE REFLECTION OF MONEY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH  
LITERATURE:  
A STUDY OF LESAGE, PRÉVOST, MARIVAUX, VOLTAIRE, AND  
ROUSSEAU

by

Jane Tucker Vasilicu

Adviser: Professor Renée Waldinger

Money is a major component of all the major texts of the eighteenth century, and its depiction in both microeconomic and macroeconomic terms adds greatly to the literary quality and intellectual dynamism of the fictional and philosophical works. The study of money and finance also offers insight into the society and new perspectives on French culture and civilization. This dissertation studies the reflection of money in representative works of Alain René Lesage, L'abbé Prévost, Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux,

Voltaire, and Rousseau. The depiction of money, fluctuating social values towards it, and the contrasting semiotic values of money as demonstrated by these five authors furnish a prism through which the historical as well as economic events of the time may be viewed. Over the course of the century, money became the wedge which altered the balance of power, and this crucial change is mirrored in the literature of the time.

Lesage continued the seventeenth century traditional degradation of the financier with Turcaret, while Gil Blas offered a primer on both wealth accumulation and social climbing. Prévost created the title character of Manon Lescaut as a creature of both her economic time and circumstance, and she could only have existed during the implementation of the Law System. Marivaux upheld the traditional place of money as the province of the nobility, with the accumulation of wealth acceptably attributed to marriage and inheritance. Voltaire advocated a radical departure from traditional attitudes towards money, and his theory developed the dual necessity of a strong economy and tolerance as the foundation for a flourishing society. Rousseau's theory of wealth was revolutionary in its egalitarian goals. He depicted the ideal of enlightened self-interest in Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse.

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## Introduction

"Argenti pallesbat amore."<sup>1</sup> This citation from Horace in Book II of Gil Blas symbolizes the strong emphasis placed on money and the economy by the writers of the eighteenth century. Money is an important component of all the major texts of the century, and its depiction in both microeconomic and macroeconomic terms adds greatly to the literary quality and intellectual dynamism of the fictional and philosophical works. The study of money and finance offers insight into the society and new perspectives on French culture and civilization. This dissertation will study the reflection of money in representative works of Alain René Lesage, L'abbé Prévost, Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux, Voltaire, and Rousseau. The depiction of money, fluctuating social values towards it, and the contrasting semiotic values of money as demonstrated by these five authors furnish a prism through which the historical as well as economic events of the time may be viewed. Over the course of the century, money became the wedge which altered the balance of power, and this crucial change is mirrored in the literature of the time.

## A. Literary background

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<sup>1</sup> Alain René Lesage, Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962) 127. Note 460, p. 374: "Il était obsédé de la passion de l'argent." Souvenir d'Horace, Satires, II, iii, 78.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, money regularly appears in the literature, and it is usually infused with either good or evil; money in the hands of the nobility is often described in a positive light, while in the possession of others it is negative. The money supply was not great at the time, and specie was not readily available (see section B), but individuals were able to accumulate wealth despite clear lines of social demarcation. These men were often portrayed in the literature as financiers, or lenders, and they were mocked for their money. A brief glance at some of the most famous literary works furnishes a contemporary view of money.

Questions regarding money are usually found in comedies in the seventeenth century, and money also plays a major role in Molière's plays. While permitting his young lovers to be together in the end, Molière usually also has their finances in alignment, and intra-class marriages are celebrated. Concerning single, older men, however, Molière individualizes the relationships, and he often uses money to reveal unbecoming personality traits; he introduces an emotional dynamic between the men and their money. In Dom Juan (1665), he offers three characters to whom Don Juan either owes or offers money. Don Juan himself is a libertine nobleman, who disdains those who want his money, which, like his nobility, is his birthright. He aggressively uses money to compromise those around him; it is the signifier of the power he so rashly abuses. He scandalously

(unsuccessfully) attempts to make the poor man choose the "louis d'or" over his faith in God by insisting that he swear in order to receive it, "tiens, il faut jurer."<sup>2</sup> The survival of the body (the money can buy the bread the poor man desperately needs) is placed in competition with the survival of the soul with this offer. His relationship with his creditor, M. Dimanche is complicated by their differing social ranks; he uses the power of his rank to awe the man, all the while refusing to pay his debt. The creditor has as much respect for Don Juan's nobility as for the money he is owed, and the nobleman has an inverse lack of respect for both the creditor and his money. Sganarelle is at once Don Juan's valet and alter ego, and their financial-philosophical rapport is strong. At the time of Don Juan's death, there is a confluence of these relationships, resulting in the ambiguous exclamation, "Mes gages! mes gages! mes gages!" Sganarelle needs his wages, while at the same time he may be lamenting the bets his master made during his lifetime.

In L'Avare (1668), Molière couples Harpagon with his money, and the plot revolves around it. When his "caisse" is stolen, Harpagon responds as if it had been animate; he shows more emotion for this money than for any living person. In Act IV, scene vii, he cries, "Hélas! mon pauvre argent, mon pauvre argent, mon cher ami! on m'a privé de

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<sup>2</sup> Molière, Oeuvres complètes, tome I (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1989) 747.

toi; et puisque tu m'es enlevé, j'ai perdu mon support, ma consolation, ma joie [...] sans toi, il m'est impossible de vivre [...] mon cher argent..."<sup>3</sup> Like Harpagon, Argan in Le Malade Imaginaire (1673) is deeply involved with his money, and he counts in Act I, scene 1 with relish, as he adds up the cost of his medical treatments. The money he pays his doctors is integral with his procedures; his payments amount to ablutions of the financial sort.

La Fontaine derides financiers in Book 8, Fable II, "Le Savetier et le financier" (1678-9). The happy cobbler has a neighbor, "tout cousu d'or, [...] C'était un homme de finance." When the money man gives the cobbler 100 écus, he feels he has all the money on earth in his possession, but this money causes him to lose all happiness:

Il retourne chez lui: dans sa cave il enserre  
 L'argent et sa joie à la fois.  
 Plus de chant; il perdit la voix  
 Du moment qu'il gagna ce qui cause nos peines.  
 Le sommeil quitta son logis,  
 Il eut pour hôtes les soucis,  
 Les soupçons, les alarmes vaines.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Molière, Oeuvres complètes, Tome II (Paris: Éditions Garnier, 1962) 302.

<sup>4</sup> La Fontaine, Fables choisies, mises en vers (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1990) 208.

Money is thus the cause of all problems, and it cannot coexist with happiness.

Money and its evils surface in the writing of social philosophers and Church fathers and those we call moralists as well. In La Rochefoucauld's Maximes, first published in 1665, the language of money enters into the realm of personal relationships. The author's tone is critical of the commerce of friendship,

Ce que les hommes ont nommé amitié n'est qu'une société, qu'un ménagement réciproque d'intérêts, et qu'un échange de bons offices; ce n'est enfin qu'un commerce où l'amour-propre se propose toujours quelque chose à gagner.<sup>5</sup>

He also comments on the rapid accumulation of wealth by undeserving individuals, and he hints that this easy money (and easy luck) cannot last,

Lorsque la fortune nous surprend en nous donnant une grande place sans nous y avoir conduits par degrés, ou sans que nous nous y soyons élevés par nos espérances, il est presque impossible de s'y bien soutenir, et de paraître digne de l'occuper.<sup>6</sup>

In La Bruyère's Les Caractères ou les Moeurs de ce siècle, 1688, a section is devoted to "Des biens de fortune." The author scorns money and its resultant effects

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<sup>5</sup> La Rochefoucauld, Maximes (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1967) Maxime 83: 26.

<sup>6</sup> La Rochefoucauld, Maxime 449: 103.

on men, and his observations are richly succinct revelations into character. He observes, "Si le financier manque son coup, les courtisans disent de lui: 'C'est un bourgeois, un homme de rien, un malotru'; s'il réussit, ils lui demandent sa fille."<sup>7</sup> The money was certainly an attraction for the courtiers, though the financier himself repulsed them. The rapid accumulation of wealth, made possible by the rights purchased to collect certain taxes, was a subject of derision. La Bruyère condemns this money: "Son mari est entré dans le huitième denier: quelle monstrueuse fortune en moins de six années!" (184). In other observations, La Bruyère comments on the elegance of the households of the newly rich, on their work ethic, which forces them to concentrate solely on their fortunes, on the changing attitudes of others towards new fortunes, and on the self image of the money man himself, "Il a commencé par dire de soi-même: *un homme de ma sorte*; il passe à dire: *un homme de ma qualité...*" (185). The financier is selfish and metaphorically gorged on money, even insatiable, and is viewed as physically obese, "et quoi qu'il en puisse coûter aux autres, pourvoir à lui seule, grossir sa fortune, et regorger de bien" (190).

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<sup>7</sup> La Bruyère, Les Caractères de Théophraste traduits du grec avec Les Caractères ou les Mœurs de ce siècle (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962) VII, 181. Further references will be to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

Pascal's "Huitième lettre écrite à un Provincial" dated May 28, 1656, deals with ethical problems caused by money. In a clever discussion with a Church Father, he presents the official Church position against usury, but then mocks it by showing how the Church rationalizes its own practice of usury by means of sophisticated casuistry. In this conversation, the Father lumps together "les juges corrompus, les usuriers, les banqueroutiers, les larrons, les femmes perdues et les sorciers."<sup>8</sup> He discusses businessmen, and declares their practice of usury a sin; their profit is ill gotten,

Parlons maintenant des gens d'affaires. Vous savez que la plus grande peine qu'on ait avec eux est de les détourner de l'usure; et c'est aussi à quoi nos Pères ont pris un soin particulier; car ils détestent si fort ce vice[...]. Et notre Père Bauny [...] remplit plusieurs pages des peines dues aux usuriers.[...] on n'est attiré à l'usure que par le désir du gain.<sup>9</sup>

The above literary samples indicate the thrust of popular notions concerning money just before the eighteenth century, yet the negative views of the financiers notwithstanding, attitudes began to change even before the death of Louis XIV, and the reality of upward mobility

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<sup>8</sup> Pascal, Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1963) 402.

<sup>9</sup> Pascal 403

started to appear in the literature. Lesage continued the denigration of the financier with Turcaret, but Gil Bias offered a primer on both wealth accumulation and social climbing. Prévost created the title character of Manon Lescaut as a creature of both her economic time and circumstance, and she could only have existed during the implementation of the Law System. Marivaux upheld the traditional place of money as the province of the nobility, with the accumulation of wealth acceptably attributed to marriage and inheritance. Voltaire advocated a radical departure from traditional attitudes towards money, and his theory developed the dual necessity of a strong economy and tolerance as the foundation for a flourishing society. Rousseau's theory of wealth was revolutionary in its egalitarian goals, yet he was inconsistent and anachronistic in his demand for the elimination of money and property rights.

#### B. Economic Background

France was engaged in war both abroad and at home for fifty-three of the eighty years between 1635 and 1715. The combat efforts were costly in both financial and human terms. During the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the army was comprised of 250,000 men. The troop statistics for the war of the Ligue d'Augsbourg (1686-1697) were recorded at 21,145 officers and 432,739 soldiers. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) employed approximately 400,000 men of

which 360,000 were in the royal army.<sup>11</sup> During this time the Controller General Nicolas Desmarets was called upon to provide 2 billion livres to the king.<sup>12</sup> Each of the men in each of these efforts had to be clothed, mounted, armed, and fed. The royal tax revenues were largely used to pay these expenses. In the early part of the seventeenth century, 18 percent of the revenues went to war efforts. By 1630, the number rose to 56.54 per cent, and by the end of the seventeenth century, it was constant at an astonishing 79 per cent.<sup>13</sup> After the death of Louis XIV, the peacetime amount settled around 35 per cent. Tax receipts increased dramatically during the seventeenth century from 17,653,164 livres, or the equivalent of 208 tons of silver in 1599, to 40 million livres or 458 tons in 1628, to 200 million livres in 1682, to a high of 431 million livres (1,100 tons) in 1699. The increases were erratic, and there were periods of decrease, but the requirements of the government increased with the size of the military operations, and tax collection could not keep up with the royal demand.<sup>13</sup>

The tax collection system of the "Ancien Régime" was both extremely complicated and corrupt. There were

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel Dessert, Argent, pouvoir et société au Grand Siècle (Paris: Fayard, 1984) 156-157.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Harsin, Les Doctrines Monétaires et Financières en France du XVIIe au XVIIIe siècle (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1928) 134.

<sup>13</sup> Françoise Bayard and Philippe Guignet, L'économie française aux XVIIe, XVIIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Paris: Éditions Ophrys, 1991) 75.

<sup>13</sup> Dessert 117.

essentially two sorts of taxes, the direct and indirect, and in addition there was the "corvée," which consisted of free days of labor owed by the peasants and tenant farmers to the lord of the domain, for the maintenance and creation of roads. The "impôts directs" included the "taille," the "capitation," a poll tax, and a quota tax, either of one-tenth (ten per cent) or one-twentieth (five per cent) of income. The indirect taxes were levied on use, and included the "gabelle," the "aides," and the "traites." The "taille" was levied arbitrarily; those in the military were originally exempt from paying it, and their descendents were members of the nobility, thus also exempt.<sup>14</sup> It was essentially a tax on the poor. The "capitation" was intended to be the first universal tax, with each individual paying his fair share, but by the eighteenth century the tax had been changed and discriminated against the lower classes, and arbitrarily imposed.<sup>15</sup> The "dixième" and "vingtième" taxes were designed to reduce the budget deficits and were usually levied on property, thus they were paid by the nobility.<sup>16</sup> However, both the nobility and the clergy were exempt from most of the direct taxes, and this immunity created difficulty in the royal Treasury.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> Marguerite Goubard, Voltaire et l'Impôt (Paris: Presses Modernes, 1931) 17.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 4, Section B. for historical detail of these taxes.

<sup>16</sup> Goubard 27.

<sup>17</sup> Simon Schama, Citizens, A Chronicle of the French Revolution (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1989) 68.

"gabelle," was the famous salt tax. The "aides" were taxes on commodities, most importantly wine, but also including soap, leather, and iron. The "traites" were import and export duties levied on merchandise moved within France.

Tax collection was handled by the centralized system of "fermes générales," manned by a few financiers, or farmers general, and instituted under Colbert.<sup>18</sup> In 1681 Colbert organized all the farms into one company comprised of forty financiers picked by the Controller General of Finance. The organizational hierarchy beneath these men included tax collectors and accountants who reconciled the receipts. The king would enter into contracts with the "fermiers généraux," who would bid on the "bail," or lease, for the rights to collect, or farm, the indirect taxes for a six year period. The king would receive the rent (4,000 livres annually) from the financiers, and they in turn would extract the taxes from the citizens, and keep the difference (after paying both the rent and their "sous-fermiers'" salaries) as their profit. The "traitants" would be free to extract the taxes as effectively as they could, and they also had the right to lend money at usurious rates.<sup>19</sup> Their collection methods were extremely efficient, assuring them the hatred of all the tax payers.<sup>20</sup> This system was beneficial to the king, who could count on a fixed income

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<sup>18</sup> Goubard 46.

<sup>19</sup> Lesage, Turcaret (Paris: Larousse, 1973) 138.

<sup>20</sup> Schama 72-3.

to the treasury, and to the farmers general who could improve their tax collecting efforts and thus increase their profits. Their profits grew exponentially while the peasants were driven further into poverty, and the budget deficit burgeoned. The "fermiers généraux" took immediate advantage of the situation, and loaned money to the king, who granted them a form of "aristocratie d'argent,"<sup>21</sup> and thus a more honorable position; the crown and the tax farmers enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship. Both the nobility and the peasantry were wary of the close ties between the king and the financiers.

In the early eighteenth century the revenues fell to 116 million livres (1700) and stood at 147 million livres in 1715. The "fermes générales" could not produce enough income so other "fermes" were added during the course of the seventeenth century to increase revenue. The new taxes on tobacco, mail, mortgages, notaries, wigmakers, oil, lace, cards and oysters, among others, were not adequate.<sup>22</sup> The devaluations of the livre were significant but not sufficient; the livre had a value of 8.33 grams of fine silver in 1688, 4.702 grams in 1700, and 3.71 grams in the spring of 1718 (44.5 per cent).<sup>23</sup> Even the famous financier Samuel Bernard, despised for the respect he earned from the

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<sup>21</sup> Goubard 47.

<sup>22</sup> Dessert 161.

<sup>23</sup> René Pillorget and Suzanne Pillorget, France Baroque, France Classique: 1589-1715 (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1995) 1136.

king during the fiscal crisis of 1708, was bankrupt by 1709. The lack of specie was one of the putative causes.<sup>24</sup>

In 1701 the state debt stood at approximately 1.45 billion livres. This number increased by 550 million livres by 1715. Shortly after the death of Louis XIV, the number was calculated at over 2 billion livres: France was essentially bankrupt. Between December 17, 1715 and April 5, 1716, 600 million worth of debt was reorganized into 250 million in state notes with an interest rate of 4 per cent; thus, 350 million of debt was repudiated. Additional notes at various interest rates totaled 1.49 billion. There was 238 million debt on which no interest was due, and an additional 84.2 million charged as the personal debt of the king, for secret payments (5.1 million) and royal household expenses (50 million), as well as debt service (20 million). The total public debt in 1716 was thus 2,062,138,001 livres.<sup>25</sup> Economic activity was depressed due to the high debt, the high interest rates on the debt, the high taxes, and the scarcity of currency.

The French monetary system was based on precious metals, and specie was in short supply due to the huge national debt. Physical payments had to be exported to satisfy allied demands, there was widespread hoarding of money, and new mines were not exploited quickly enough to supply a chrysohedonist culture. The banking system did not

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<sup>24</sup> Harsin 122.

<sup>25</sup> Harsin 194-195.

operate on credit, so specie was necessary for payment. Economic writings in the seventeenth century articulated a need for the free flow of money for a prosperous society. The author of a work entitled "De la science et connoissance que doit un conseiller d'Etat au faict des monnoyes" wrote in 1608:

Comme la viande est la nourriture du corps, les nerfs la ligature qui le fait mouvoir et le sang qui luy donne vie pour user de ses fonctions, de mesme le fait des monnoyes, en un Estat, est la viande qui le nourrit, les nerfs qui le font mouvoir et le sang qui luy donne vie et le fait vegeter en tous ses membres, par le moyen du prix, cours et exposition des especes.<sup>26</sup>

The use of the metaphor of money as the lifeblood of the society became the standard tool of subsequent economists. Vauban, mercantilist author of the Dîme royal (1707) wrote:

Le commerce du pays sert à faciliter la circulation et le mouvement de l'argent, non moins nécessaire au corps politique que celle du sang au corps humain, à l'entretien et subsistance des peuples, et empêche que l'argent ne demeure oisif ou ne sorte du royaume pour passer chez les étrangers...<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Harsin 54.

<sup>27</sup> Harsin 98

Jean le Pottier de la Hestroy composed a mercantilist thesis at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in which he stated,

L'argent et l'or [doivent] estre regardés dans un estat comme le sang dans le corps de l'homme, qui est l'agent de la vie, sans lequel il ne pourroit pas subsister...<sup>18</sup>

John Law emphasized the problems caused by the scarcity of specie in his second Mémoire sur les banques in 1715-1716. France lagged behind the rest of Europe by refusing to introduce credit into the banking system. He argues that the use of credit is necessary for commerce, and paper money facilitates trade at all levels. The weight of metal currency alone is a deterrent to its use and circulation. Money must circulate; paper money encourages commerce. Law states:

La monnaie est dans l'État ce que le sang est au corps humain; sans l'un on ne saurait vivre, sans l'autre on ne saurait agir. La circulation est nécessaire à l'un et à l'autre, et le crédit figure dans le commerce comme les esprits ou la partie la plus subtile du sang.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Harsin 126

<sup>19</sup> John Law, "Second mémoire sur les banques," Économistes-Financiers du XVIIIe siècle, ed. Eugène Daire (Paris: Chez Guillaumin, 1843) 605.

The economist lobbied to implement his economic program in France; his timing was perfect, as Voltaire notes:

... il trouva tout favorable sous la régence du duc d'Orléans: deux milliards de dettes à éteindre, une paix qui laissait du loisir au gouvernement, un prince et un peuple amoureux des nouveautés.<sup>30</sup>

### C. John Law

John Law wrote Money and Trade Considered; with a Proposal for Supplying the Nation with Money in 1705. As a Scotsman, he first tried to convince the government of Scotland to permit him to implement his plan there, but was rejected. He then applied to the Lord Treasurer of England, but was again unsuccessful; he was also denied a pardon for a murder he had committed in England years before. Law was forced to flee to Europe and finally found an audience in France, where he was allowed to execute his plan. Law was convinced of the validity of his theory; he was angered that his own countrymen had rejected him. The introduction to the second edition of his proposal printed in the beginning of 1720 (at the height of his success, just before the bubble burst) exposes his sentiment, with an ironic twist on the metaphor of blood:

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<sup>30</sup> Voltaire, "Précis du siècle de Louis XV," Voltaire: Oeuvres Historiques, ed. René Pomeau (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1957) 1308.

He now has no Enemies but those who are so to all Mankind; and many who some Months ago thirsted after his Blood, now eat his Bread; for he has appeared incapable of any other Species of Vengeance, but that of laying his Enemies under the Shame and Confusion of receiving their fortunes from him.<sup>31</sup>

Law was born in 1671 to a goldsmith and his wife in Edinburgh. By 1694 he was in London where he observed the formation of the Bank of England, and shortly thereafter he went to Holland to study the banking system there. He returned to Scotland by the end of the century and wrote on economic reform. In Proposals and Reasons for Constituting a Council of Trade in Scotland (1701), he proposed a total revision of the tax system: a consolidation of taxes, a simplification of tax collection, increased stature for the revenues administrator. He advocated removing the barriers to commerce and economic development.<sup>32</sup>

Money and Trade Considered, written a few years later, underlines the importance of the issuance of paper money guaranteed by the land assets of the state. The assets are unexploited resources which could assure the value of the currency. Paper money would spur an increase in commerce, which in its turn could create enough demand for new

<sup>31</sup> John Law, Money and Trade Considered; with a Proposal for Supplying the Nation with Money, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: W. Lewis, 1720) 2.

<sup>32</sup> Harsin 140.

currency and maintain price stability, while utilizing previously underemployed resources.<sup>33</sup> Commerce depends upon the availability of cash. Land will become more valuable as it is improved and as demand for it increases, while silver (or any other precious metal) is subject to changes in valuation based on supply and demand.<sup>34</sup> The creation of a bank is the most expedient way to create and distribute money. Law details the use of banks in Italy, Sweden, Amsterdam, England, and Scotland.<sup>35</sup> The goals of the plan are fourfold: Law expects to create confidence through his system to facilitate economic growth, he must disguise the lack of true credit (and the lack of intrinsic value in paper currency), he plans to clean up the State debt with paper money, and he expects to eliminate the appeal of the financiers.<sup>36</sup> After the death of Louis XIV, in an environment of high debt, reduced tax revenues, and a scarce currency, the Regent was inclined to allow Law to create a state bank; however the finance council prevailed and granted permission only for a private bank. On May 2, 1716, Law received approval for the bank, and authorization,

... d'augmenter la circulation de l'argent, faire cesser l'usure, supl er aux voitures des esp ces entre Paris et les provinces, donner aux  trangers

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<sup>33</sup> Peter M. Garber, "Famous First Bubbles," Journal of Economic Perspectives, Spring 1990, vol.4, no.2: 41

<sup>34</sup> Law, Money and Trade, 57.

<sup>35</sup> Law 30-34.

<sup>36</sup> Bayard and Guignet 154.

le moyen de faire des fonds avec sûreté dans notre royaume, et faciliter à nos peuples le débit de leurs denrées et le paiement de leurs impositions.<sup>37</sup>

Law's grand mission was financed through a stock offering of 1,200 shares at 5,000 livres each, for a modest initial capital base of 6 million livres. One year later, the success of the bank was evident: Law had issued 66 million livres in paper currency against metal coin.

The merchant Antoine Crozat had obtained the monopoly on commerce in Louisiana in 1712. Crozat had the rights to develop business in the French territories which included virtually half of the North American continent. The properties were known as Louisiana, even though they extended north into Canada. After several unsuccessful attempts to turn a profit, Crozat requested a transfer of the privilege, and in 1717 Law seized the opportunity and negotiated a 25 year contract for a 2 million livre investment in the colonies. Letters of permission dated August 21, 1717 created a new company called the Compagnie d'Occident<sup>38</sup>, also referred to as the Compagnie du Mississippi. In addition the Compagnie received the rights

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<sup>37</sup> Marcel Marion, Histoire Financière de la France depuis 1715, tome I : 1715-1789 (Paris: Rousseau et Cie, 1927) 93.  
<sup>38</sup> Jean-Marie Thiveaud, Histoire de la finance en France; 1. Des origines jusqu'en 1775 (Paris: Éditions P.A.U., 1995) 274.

for the beaver trade in Canada.<sup>39</sup> Funding for the Compagnie came from the sale of 200,000 shares sold at a price of 500 livres, payable in state bills (at 4 per cent interest), or a total capitalization of 100 million livres.<sup>40</sup> The state interest furnished 4 million livres annually.

Law achieved his goal of establishing a state bank when his Banque Générale was renamed the Banque Royale on December 4, 1718. At its inception, Law issued 50 million livres in bank notes. Within three months, the bank issued 71 million notes. In order to guarantee the circulation of the new notes, Law received a judgment on January 1, 1719, which prohibited payments in coin on any amount over 500 livres, and on all large commercial transactions.<sup>41</sup> The Compagnie purchased the rights to collect tobacco tax for 4 million livres per year and in 1719 acquired the entire asset base of the Compagnie du Sénégal. The share prices doubled in value.<sup>42</sup> In May, 1719 Law gained control of both the Compagnie des Indes and the Compagnie de la Chine, and he incorporated all his ventures into the Compagnie des Indes, which had the monopoly on all offshore French trade.<sup>43</sup>

Law issued 50,000 shares at a price of 1,000 livres per share in July, 1719 to cover the purchase, at 50 million

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<sup>39</sup> Harsin 161.

<sup>40</sup> Marion 94.

<sup>41</sup> Thiveaud 278.

<sup>42</sup> Harsin 161.

<sup>43</sup> Garber 42.

livres, of the right to mint new money. Payment for the new shares (the "filles") had to include five shares from a previous issue (the "mères"). In August 1719, he bought the right to collect the indirect taxes at an annual rate of 52 million livres. Law secured the rights to collect direct taxes in October. He reorganized and streamlined tax collection. Law had, in three years, transformed the French monetary system. Share prices reached 3,000 livres. Law sought to rehaul the entire French fiscal system. He also devised a plan to reduce the public debt, financed with stock offerings by the Compagnie totaling 324,000 shares with a nominal value of 500 livres and a premium of 4,500 livres (called a "souscription") payable in ten payments of 500 livres each, largely in bank notes, which the bank was printing to keep up with the demands of circulation. The public was so infatuated with the shares that in November and December of 1719, prices jumped to between 10,000 and 18,000 livres.<sup>44</sup> There was no stock market in Paris at the time, and all trading activity took place in and around Law's bank, which was located in the Hôtel de Beaufort at number 65, rue Quincampoix. Shareholders, known as "Mississippiens," and speculators gathered on the street daily to buy and sell. The crowd was unmanageably large, and it was necessary to place guards at each end of the

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<sup>44</sup> Marion states the higher figure. 96.  
Harsin uses the lower figure. 173.

street. Daily opening (7:00 a.m.) and closing (dark) were announced by bell.<sup>45</sup>

Law was essentially in control of all monetary activity in France when he was named Controller General and Superintendent General of Finance in January 1720. He was responsible for government spending, finance, and the creation of money by the royal bank. He was the head of the Compagnie des Indes, which gave him the authority over all trade and colonial development overseas, as well as the rights to tax collection, and the mint. Shareholders were getting paid and his Compagnie had the blessing of the crown; the king was a major shareholder<sup>46</sup> (he held 100,000 shares, as did Law). Tax collection had been simplified and now only needed 1,000 people to manage the revenue service, and the "traitants" were no longer necessary, as the bank could make advances to the treasury without taking a profit. Law's profit from this enterprise helped pay the shareholders.

The decision to finance the operations through stock issuance and simultaneous printing of bank notes would lead to the end of the success of Law's System. There had been 159 million livres in notes issued by the bank prior to July 1719. On July 25, 1719, the bank received permission to print notes totaling 240 million livres. The September and

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<sup>45</sup> Dictionnaire de Paris (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1964) 69.

<sup>46</sup> Garber 43.

October stock issue was accompanied by an additional 240 million livre issue, and supplemental issues totaling 560 million livres were printed by February 6, 1720. Inflation of this order led to the failure of the entire system. What has come to be known as the Mississippi Bubble, was about to burst. (A bubble is an insubstantial, groundless scheme that comes to nothing, and Law's System joins the long list of such exercises. The Dutch Tulipmania frenzy in the seventeenth century and the South Sea Bubble of 1720, a scheme to refinance British government debt, patterned after Law's success, are two examples.)

Share prices rose in January 1720 from 10,000 to 12,000; each share had originally cost 2,000 livres. Of the 640,000 shares issued, 424,000 remained in the public. The income from tax collections, the mint, and other business dealings could not cover the interest due on the shares.<sup>47</sup> Inflation reached 23%<sup>48</sup>, and share prices fell to 9,000 as speculators sold and tried to convert the paper money into gold. The King sold his 100,000 shares back to the Compagnie for 900 million (or 9,000 per share) in February 1720<sup>49</sup> and Law proposed a deflation plan to reduce the share prices from 9,000 to 5,000 in seven stages between May and December. The deflation resulted in a share price of 2,000

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<sup>47</sup> Harsin 174.

<sup>48</sup> Garber 45.

<sup>49</sup> Harsin 179.

livres in September and 1,000 livres by December.<sup>50</sup> An anonymous song wafted through Paris at the time,

Lundi, j'achetai des actions,  
 Mardi, je gagnai des millions,  
 Mercredi, j'ornai mon ménage,  
 Jeudi, je pris un équipage,  
 Vendredi, je m'en fus au bal,  
 Et samedi à l'hôpital.<sup>51</sup>

This song may represent the viewpoint of a member of the lower class who got rich in the flurry of trading, and then found himself impoverished again after the deflation (the "hôpital" was the poor house). Engravings depicting speculation were common at the time. In one, a lackey enters the market and quickly becomes rich upon speculation, under the heading, "L'Agioteur élevé par la Fortune au plus haut degré de la richesse et de l'abondance."<sup>52</sup> In another, the rue Quincampoix is teeming with speculators shouting and gesturing in the street and out of the windows; paper is flying and a scuffle is being settled by a raised sword.<sup>53</sup> Members of the upper classes also participated in the trading. They also lost, as is reflected in an anonymous

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<sup>50</sup> Garber 46.

<sup>51</sup> F. Bloch and A. Mercklein, Les Rues de Paris (Paris: Librairie Nadaud et Cie., 1889) 131.

<sup>52</sup> Thiveaud 284.

<sup>53</sup> Dictionnaire de Paris (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1964) 69.

poem entitled, "Adieux d'un Actionnaire qui a déposé ses actions à la Banque." The first stanza summarizes his experience:

Trésor de mes aïeux, chers parchemins antiques,  
 Qui vintes dans mes mains par droit d'hérédité,  
 Vous êtes transformés sur papiers fantastiques,  
 Vous touchez au moment de votre nullité.<sup>54</sup>

The language of the market entered the language of daily life as members of all classes came together to speculate in the stock of the Compagnie des Indes. The share prices rose with the increase of the money supply; Law's System infatuated the public. The action was shortlived, and was especially hectic between 1717 and 1720. The period that followed was a time of devaluation and evaluation, richly reflected in the literature of the time.

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<sup>54</sup> Thiveaud 281.

## Chapter One: Alain-René Lesage (1668-1747)

Money is central to Lesage's works. He furnishes an intense introduction to the mechanics of usury, loans, and pawnbroking as well as an inventory of merchandise available at the turn of the century. He focuses on usurers and opportunists, their role in the marketplace, and the seamier side of the accumulation of wealth. Money is a catalyst in the changing social relationships he depicts.

## A. Biographical information

Alain-René Lesage was born on May 3, 1668, in the town of Sarzeau in Brittany. His father, Claude Lesage was a lawyer, notary, and clerk of the royal court of Rhuys.<sup>1</sup> The family appeared wealthy, and young Alain-René was enrolled at the collège de Vannes when he was orphaned at fourteen by the death of his father in 1682. He was placed under the guardianship of his uncle Gabriel Lesage, who lost his fortune(4). Young Lesage finished his studies and went to Paris to study philosophy and law, and on August 17, 1694 he received the banns from the archbishop of Paris to marry Marie-Élisabeth Huyard, daughter of a Parisian bourgeois(5). The first of their four children was born in July of 1695,

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<sup>1</sup> P.Hthe.J.J.B. Audiffret, "Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Le Sage," in Oeuvres de Lesage (Paris: Antoine Augustin Renouard, 1821) 3. All biographical descriptions of Lesage (to which I had access) cite Audiffret exclusively. Subsequent biographical information will refer to this work and page numbers will appear in parentheses in the text.

and their marriage was officially celebrated on September 28 of the same year. Lesage did not shine in the law, and he did not live well: "... il vécut quelque temps dans un état au-dessous de la médiocrité, parce qu'il n'était ni intrigant, ni pressant dans ses sollicitations" (6). He worked for a time as the secretary to a "fermier général," helping to collect the "aides" taxes for the monarchy and the "gabelle" taxes on salt. He left this position voluntarily; no reason was given (7):

Quoi qu'il en soit, la haine et le mépris de Le Sage pour un métier qu'il avoit exercé avec répugnance, ou quelque ressentiment personnel contre l'un des hommes dont il avoit été le subalterne, germèrent long-temps dans son cœur, et produisirent enfin Turcaret. (8)

The family left Paris in 1695, and returned in 1698. Lesage left the bar and worked as a translator before he commenced his career as a writer. His earliest work was under the patronage of the abbé de Lyonne, who guaranteed him a yearly pension of 600 livres. The abbé taught Lesage Spanish, and instilled in him a passion for Spanish literature (9).

As stated in the Introduction, by the beginning of the eighteenth century the finances of France had been severely depleted by the costly wars of Louis XIV. In 1708, one year before the first production of Turcaret, the government had only 20 million livres in the treasury and a debt of 700

million livres, leading to what Michelet called "le Niagra de la banqueroute."<sup>2</sup> This cascading bankruptcy was averted thanks to the contributions of the financial community:

Sans l'industrie hardie de quelques négociants, et surtout ceux de Saint-Malo, qui allèrent au Pérou, et rapportèrent trente millions, dont ils prêtèrent la moitié à l'État, Louis XIV n'aurait pas eu de quoi payer ses troupes. La guerre avait ruiné la France, et des marchands la sauvèrent.<sup>3</sup>

Louis XIV showed deference to the financiers who helped save France from financial ruin, as described by Saint-Simon in "La promenade de Marly," which details with great irony the king's veneration of Samuel Bernard, a "traitant":

"J'admirais, et je n'étais pas le seul, cette espèce de prostitution du Roi, si avare de ses paroles, à un homme de l'espèce de Bernard. . . . j'admirai alors où les plus grands rois se trouvent quelquefois réduits."<sup>4</sup> The relationship between the king and the merchants was necessary and mutually beneficial, Saint-Simon's obvious disdain of the financier notwithstanding. At the time Lesage was writing Turcaret, there was what Lintilhac calls a "trésor de haine" (56) against the "traitants." Pamphlets were widely circulated calling for the destruction of these "misérables laquais revêtus" (59). In 1707, Vauban closed

<sup>2</sup> Eugène Lintilhac, Lesage (Paris: Hachette, 1893) 52.

<sup>3</sup> Voltaire, Le siècle de Louis XIV in Oeuvres historiques (Paris: Gallimard, 1957) 856-7.

<sup>4</sup> Lesage, Turcaret (Paris: Larousse, 1973) 139.

the eleventh chapter of the second part of his Dime royale with a contemptuous harangue against the "traitants" and the arbitrary taxes they levied on the people of France:

...des armées de traitants et de sous-traitants, avec leurs commis de toutes espèces; sangsues d'État dont le nombre sera suffisant pour remplir les galères, mais qui, après mille friponneries punissables, marchent la tête levée dans Paris, parés des dépouilles de leurs concitoyens, avec autant d'orgueil que s'ils avaient sauvé l'État.<sup>5</sup>

The financier, in sucking the money from the populace in order to fill the state's coffers as well as his own pockets, was never free from scorn. In making money, he altered the traditional balance of power. If power can be considered a zero sum game, then the nobility, which used to hold it all, was losing to the rising bourgeoisie. The nature of power was also changing from the social to the financial. Money could buy some respectability, even nobility, whereas nobles without money had the most to lose. Until the establishment of the official Bourse by the Conseil du 24 septembre 1724, the Parisian market moved from street to street. At various times merchants, agents, and traders met at the Pont-au-Change, the Palais de Justice, the rue Quincampoix, and after the collapse of Law's System, at the place Vendôme. In 1708, the rue Quincampoix served

<sup>5</sup> In Stoyan Tzoneff, L'homme d'argent au théâtre français jusqu'à la Révolution (Paris: Louis Jean, 1934) 149.

as the forum for trading. Located in the third and fourth arrondissements, parallel to the boulevard de Sébastopol, between the rue Aubry-le-Boucher and the rue aux Urs (expanded in 1851 to the rue des Lombards), the narrow street has a history of trade. An inscription on a plaque between numbers 38 and 40 indicates that the office of the Merciers-Joalliers of Paris had been situated there since the fourteenth century. This organization, extant since the twelfth century, was created in order to give its members the right to trade merchandise made by others, thus the old proverb, "Merciers marchands de tout, faiseurs de rien." By the early eighteenth century the rue Quincampoix was home to more than twenty classes of merchants with rights to sell wool, fabrics, and gilded wares as well as the merciers-joalliers who sold all sorts of jewellery and precious stones. John Law would affirm the rue Quincampoix as the center of trade when he moved his bank to number 65 in 1719 from the hôtel de Montmorency.

Despite heavy taxation, the French economy grew with the increase of specie thanks in large part to the discovery of new European mines as well as mines in the new world.<sup>5</sup> The increase in the money supply was accompanied by an

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Hillairet, Dictionnaire historique des rues de Paris (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979) 311-312.

Isser Woloch, Eighteenth Century Europe: Tradition and Progress 1715-1789 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982) 122.

increase in trade at all levels, and the merchants began to crowd the street.

### B. Turcaret (1709)

This is the first play where the entire action is based on financial transactions and it reflects the tenor of the time. The character of French society was changing as a result of the greater importance of money in all social relations. What is particularly notable is that Lesage was so well informed about the intricate role money played. Let us trace this role in the details of the play.

Lesage decided to situate Turcaret in the atmosphere of jingling coin and flashy wares at the moment of exchange, actually referring to the rue Quincampoix, the only street mentioned (III, vii).<sup>8</sup> The play was written in 1708, and its protagonist is a "traitant", historically a financier who had made a treaty with the king in order to have the right to collect certain fees and taxes. By 1637 the traitants gained the right to collect direct (as well, as indirect) taxes.<sup>9</sup> Turcaret has increased his income by becoming a usurer. The fluidity of the marketplace is reflected by and infuses the play. Money is the locus around which all activity evolves, and most of the

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<sup>8</sup>Alain-René Lesage, Turcaret (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1973) 79. All further citations regarding this play will be from this edition and will appear in the text in parentheses.

<sup>9</sup>Françoise Bayard and Philippe Guignet, l'Économie française aux XVIIe, XVIIIe et XIXe siècles (Paris: Ophrys, 1991) 82, 118.

characters are trying to get it. The valet Frontin recounts the action: "J'admire le train de la vie humaine! Nous plumons une coquette; la coquette mange un homme d'affaires; l'homme d'affaires en pille d'autres: cela fait un ricochet de fourberies le plus plaisant du monde" (I, x, p.48). Lesage underscores this illusion by inserting three objects that actually do ricochet through the baroness's salon. First there is a diamond ring that the Marquis pawned through Turcaret, who in turn gave it to the Baroness (immediately after the expiration date of the claim). The Baroness promptly gave the ring to Frontin, the valet of her boyfriend the Chevalier, to pawn in order to pay his gambling debts. The ring is returned to the Baroness just in time to prove to Turcaret that his suspicions of the aforementioned were untrue. Finally the Marquis arrives to discover his family ring on the hand of the Baroness.

The second object to arrive is the portrait of Madame Turcaret, which comes into the possession of the Chevalier, but which had been given to the Marquis; evidently both had received the favors of the supposed comtesse.

The "billet au porteur" also ricochets throughout. It is mentioned a total of fifteen times. The billet, worth a staggering 10,000 écus,<sup>10</sup> is first given to the Baroness by

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<sup>10</sup>The values for currency as fixed in 1726 were: 1 louis = 24 livres(francs), 1 écu = 3 livres, 1 pistole = 10 livres, 1 sol = 1/20th livre. See Jean Sgard, "L'Échelle des

Turcaret as a token of his affection. The Baroness is thankful, but she immediately gives it to the Chevalier to repay his debts, for she wants the diamond ring back. The Chevalier gives it to Frontin to exchange, and finally Frontin states that Turcaret's lenders took it from him when they had the financier arrested, but in fact the valet had kept it, and is planning to start his new life in comfort, using the 10,000 écus as the foundation for marital bliss. All three of these objects represent money, and money swirls through the dialogue as well. The opening line of the play, "Encore hier deux cents pistoles!" sets the tone. The vocabulary of the market is used: "douaire", "traitant", "bourse", "profiter", "billet au porteur", "homme d'affaires", "fermier-général", "ruine", "bon marché", "gage", "escompter", "présents", "dépense", "fraudes", "or", "fortune", "agent de change". Theatrical articulation of trade has never before been as explicit. The case of the diamond is a striking example of Turcaret's business dealings. The Marquis pawns the ring worth 500 louis (12,000 livres) for 1,132 livres and change, only a ten percent loan!(III, iv, 73). Turcaret gives the Marquis a clear date of expiration, which passes. The Marquis is "pas fort exact" regarding the date, the time passes, and he loses the ring.

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Revenus," in Dix-Huitième Siècle, revue annuelle, No. 14 (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1982) 425.

Turcaret, the opera regular (IV, v, 95) who is so free with his gifts to his intended, was not always a man of power. He started his employment as a lackey, rising from poverty thanks to a shrewd sense of business and more than a little thievery. Lesage paints the portrait of a valet on the financial rise in Crispin, rival de son maître, a one act comedy that preceded Turcaret by one year. Crispin's fealty is not to his employer; rather to his own fortune. Alone, Crispin muses, "Que je suis las d'être valet! ah! Crispin, c'est ta faute; tu as toujours donné dans la bagatelle: tu devrois présentement briller dans la finance. Avec l'esprit que j'ai, morbleu! J'aurais déjà fait plus d'une banqueroute" (ii)<sup>11</sup>. Lesage's disdain for money men is evident in the determination and in the disregard his valet displays. Crispin will attempt anything to get rich, even going so far as to impersonate another in order to marry (and then abscond with) a dowry. Lesage sketches the players in the incipient financier's world: the noble who gambles his inheritance, and the valet whose "industrie" (101) he needs. Money, bankruptcy, loans, and lawsuits pepper this short play, presaging the creation of Turcaret himself. Marriage, in the legal sense and in the author's cynical eye, is a financial transaction. For Crispin, the dowry is all; for the creditors, a good union can assure that they will be paid, "...ses créanciers font des vœux

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<sup>11</sup>Lesage, Oeuvres (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1879) 104.

très-ardens pour la prospérité de ce mariage" (145). Lesage selects only a few details to describe the financiers : their houses are lavish and expensive, costing in one case 50,000 écus, and they owe their prosperity to the misfortune, or rather to the mismanagement of the nobility, whose members were not allowed to work. The valet has the opportunity to get rich precisely because the noble is prevented from participating in the emerging market economy. Historically, nobles were prohibited from working; this caused financial problems for many, and led to a conflict with the rising bourgeoisie. A noble would lose his "noblesse" if "he adopted any manual craft save the famous exception of glassmaking or if he entered 'for sordid gain' into either retail commerce or the exploitation of another party's land."<sup>12</sup> This fact is reflected in Lesage's play. Thus, according to Lesage, nobles played a static role in the economy, dependent upon inheritance or a profitable marriage for financial gain, while those of humble birth with business sense became the dynamic players; they both financed the economy and created the demand for goods and services. Turcaret is a mature Crispin, an evolved financier. Lesage studies how he acquired his wealth, his business practices, and how he spends his money. He also observes the manner in which those around him try to take

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<sup>12</sup>Franklin L. Ford, Robe and Sword: The Regrouping of the French Aristocracy After Louis XIV (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968) 25-26.

his money. A social commentary is implicit in the reactions of each to the other. Turcaret's money may allow him the opportunity to court the poor Baroness, but the Marquis quickly puts him down socially in declaring, "Il était le laquais de mon grand-père; il me portait sur ses bras. Nous jouions tous les jours ensemble; nous ne nous quittions presque point. Le petit ingrat ne s'en souvient plus." (74). The marquis must be telling the truth, for, as the baroness notes, he is today exhibiting an "excès de sobriété" (74). Turcaret, the son of a maréchal de Domfront, quickly revises his past, claiming that he was not a lackey but rather: "je n'ai jamais été que son homme d'affaires" (III, v, 76). Lesage issues a two-pronged attack on the financier: first, he demonstrates a close link between Turcaret and Molière's atheist Don Juan, and second, he lets fly the first of a series of virulent attacks aimed directly at usurers which will gain momentum during the succeeding publications of Gil Blas de Santillane. The precedent models for Turcaret may have included Molière's Monsieur Harpin in the Comtesse d'Escarbagnas and more obviously Harpagon in L'Avare (there is no evidence that Shakespeare's Shylock of 1695 was a model). La Bruyère showed contempt for the financiers also. Noland de Fatouville's Le Banqueroutier provided even the name of M. Rafle, and the living financier Samuel Bernard may have also

contributed to the character.<sup>13</sup> Turcaret is to be disdained for his usurious practices and for his blatant attempt to climb to a higher social level, one which Lesage evidently believes is above him.

Described by his abandoned sister Madame Jacob as "...un vieux fou qui a toujours aimé toutes les femmes, hors la sienne" (IV, x, 106), Turcaret, in promising to marry all of them, is a clumsy Don Juan. He lacks the finesse displayed by Mozart's protagonist, especially in the art of seduction; his aria is no "Là ci darem la mano," rather it is the crass gift of money and the description of the hôtel particulier that he will build. "J'ai déjà acheté la place, qui contient quatre arpents, six perches, neuf toises, trois pieds et onze pouces." The enormous property has approximately 6,000 square meters. Turcaret seduces with a diamond ring, a "billet au porteur" worth 10,000 écus, the promise of a new house. His poetry is inept, along the order of that of Cronte in the Misanthrope, whereas his prose is excellent: "Il est vrai que ma prose a son mérite; elle est signée par quatre fermiers généraux" (I, v, 38). The language he alludes to is the language of business, spoken and understood by those fluent in it. Later, when asked to read the papers presented by M. Furet, Lisette declines, because she cannot understand the language: "...je n'y

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<sup>13</sup>For the precedents to Turcaret, see for example Eugène Lintilhac, Lesage (Paris: Hachette, 1893) 49-77 and Frédéric Dillaye, Oeuvres de Lesage (Paris: Lemerre, 1879) iv-vi.

connais rien; je ne sais lire que des billets doux..." (IV, vii, 98). Turcaret fancies himself a poet, and at the end of his quatrain he alludes to Don Juan: "Comme il est certain que trois et trois font six" (I, iv, 36). When Sganarelle asks Don Juan to discuss what he believes (implying his view of God), Don Juan says, "Je crois que deux et deux sont quatre, Sganarelle, et que quatre et quatre sont huit."<sup>14</sup> Don Juan does not respond with a belief in God. Perhaps this mathematical equation referred to the couples Don Juan created; for each person he seduced, another couple was betrayed - both his spouse and the intended of his prey. Done Elvire had promised herself to God, Charlotte had promised herself to Pierrot, Don Juan finds himself promised on both sides of the equation. In Turcaret's case, the deception continues (perhaps Lesage has Turcaret use the higher numbers because he has more, and wants to elevate himself before Don Juan, or perhaps because in addition to the people involved, Turcaret's money is the added element). He is married, although his wife is not pious. Madame Turcaret has come to Paris in a new incarnation - "requinquée" (V, viii, 117). She has recreated herself as a comtesse, but Madame Jacob, her sister-in-law (Turcaret's sister), reminds her that she is the daughter of a "pâtissier" from Falaise. Madame is here to collect from Turcaret. Her relationship, like all others

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<sup>14</sup>Molière, Oeuvres complètes, Tome I (Paris: Classiques Garnier) III, i, 745.

with Turcaret is strictly financial, and Turcaret has failed to pay her what he must in order to keep her out of town. She is due five payments, and she will not leave until he tenders them (V, ix, 120). For Turcaret love, or rather passion, is expressed through giving money: "Il jette tout par les fenêtres dès qu'il est amoureux: c'est un panier percé" (IV, x, 106). He wants the Baroness, so he gives to her generously; he has no further use for his wife so he denies her, thus becoming a spousal maintenance scofflaw. His refusal to be faithful financially has an ironic correlation to Don Juan's moral infidelity. Even his anger takes on a financial turn. Turcaret's violent destruction of the Baroness's property is reduced to its monetary worth. After breaking a large mirror and a number of porcelain figurines, he declares, "voilà ce que vous coûtent vos folies. . . . Tout ce que j'ai cassé ne valait pas plus de trois cents pistoles" (II, iii, 57-58). Turcaret's editorial comments on the poor condition of the objects evidently leads him to conclude that they are not worth much. Reparations are made later: "Je viens, madame, de vous acheter pour dix mille francs de glace, de porcelaines et de bureaux. Ils sont d'un goût exquis: je les ai choisis moi-même" (III, iii, 70).

Madame Turcaret is as unfaithful as her husband. During the dialogue of this play she is said to have slept with both the Chevalier and the Marquis. Her only continuing attraction to Turcaret is to his money. The

Baroness is also attracted to the financier's well-lined purse. She flatters him shamelessly: "En m'accablant tous les jours de présents, il semble que vous vous imaginiez avoir besoin de ces liens-là pour m'attacher à vous" (I, v, 39). This after she has agreed with the advice her sensible maid Marine gave in the first scene: "Il faut s'attacher à M. Turcaret, pour l'épouser ou pour le ruiner. Vous tirerez du moins des débris de sa fortune de quoi vous mettre en équipage...." (I, i, 29). The Baroness is a consumer: during the course of this play she is given a diamond ring, financial instruments, a large mirror, and she is in want of a well padded coach of her own. She is a true "croqueuse de diamants," willing to compromise her modest nobility (through marriage), for Turcaret's wealth. She flatters and cajoles him, using her status to elevate his, "Et vous avez trop l'air et les manières d'une personne de condition, pour pouvoir être soupçonné de ne l'être pas" (III, v, 77). Just when the Baroness starts to feel the onset of some misgivings regarding what she has done to Turcaret, Lisette tells her to put them out of her mind: "...il vaut mieux sentir quelque jour des remords pour avoir ruiné un homme d'affaires, que le regret d'en avoir manqué l'occasion" (IV, viii, 102). This is an opportunity they cannot pass up.

The Baroness is attracted to the Chevalier, and she is liberal in her gifts to him. The Chevalier and the Marquis represent the nobility in caricature. The Chevalier is an

inveterate gambler and womanizer. He loses at every turn; in one night we learn that he lost not only the 200 écus mentioned at the start of the play, but also an additional 1,000 écus bet on his word (I, ii, 31). He has slept with Madame Turcaret, who gave him a portrait of herself, and he is using the Baroness to get to Turcaret's riches. The diamond ring she gives him is not all he is after: "Je serais un grand malheureux de m'exposer à rompre avec elle à si bon marché .... Si jamais je me brouille, ce ne sera qu'après la ruine totale de M. Turcaret" (I, ix, 47). Even Madame Jacob, Turcaret's sister, wants to see him ruined. He refused to give her husband employment, so Madame is reduced to matchmaking and selling jewelry and second-hand clothing to ladies for a living as a "revendeuse à la toilette." Although she later has a change of heart, she is the most vituperative of those who wish Turcaret harm: "Si je connaissais sa maîtresse, j'irais lui conseiller de le piller, de le manger, de le ronger, de l'abîmer" (IV, x, 107).

Why does everyone want to see Turcaret destroyed financially? His business dealings are despicable, and until his downfall he is able to extract his due. The legal interest rate may be five per cent ("denier vingt"), but in at least one instance he charges 300 per cent; "... cet enfant de famille à qui nous prêtâmes l'année passée trois mille livres, et à qui je fis faire un billet de neuf" (III, vii, 78). Lesage is in effect explaining a discount note,

cousin of today's C.I.D., or Original Issue Discount and zero-coupon instruments. These notes indicate that Turcaret is risk-averse and that he may not have the right to his client's property as collateral. He is essentially attaching his note to the income stream of his borrower; he does not have the option of taking an equity position in the holdings of a nobleman. However, he can count on his client's income; rents generated from property of an "enfant de famille" provide great credit, not unlike municipal bonds. As a "traitant," Turcaret is well informed as to the rents of his borrowers.

Turcaret's greed may be remarkable, but all of the principal players are ruthless, disloyal, and immoral. The Baroness is willing to prostitute herself for a well padded coach and more, the Chevalier steals from the Baroness while professing his love, the Marquis passes his time drinking and moving from affair to affair while he awaits his inheritance, Frontin steals his fortune from his employer. Lesage does not condemn these characters; it is Turcaret he is after. The Marquis speaks for Lesage in spitting his contempt for the way in which Turcaret got rich in the first place. He portrays the financier as the typical despised Jewish opportunist who takes advantage of the problems of others. The idea of the "maudit juif" may have been pervasive in the literature of the early eighteenth century, and it may have been a coincidence or custom that Lesage has him so addressed, but there is some evidence that he

intended to berate the financier because of his religion. The name Turcaret is neither Christian nor Jewish; it is fictitious. Turcaret's sister, Madame Jacob does have a Jewish name, and it may be assumed that she would not have married a Jew unless she herself were Jewish. The conclusion may be drawn that the financier, too is Jewish. Bernard Blanc states:

--Mme Jacob: son nom précise qu'elle est juive. Juifs et Turcs sont traditionnellement, dans la farce classique, des usuriers, fourbes entremetteurs douteux, etc.<sup>15</sup>

Lesage clearly helps develop the anti-semitic stereotype, whether or not he so intended. Upon encountering Turcaret at the Baroness's, the Marquis, who once had a "commerce d'amitié" with the financier, hisses,

Que faites-vous de cet homme-là, madame? Vous le connaissez? Vous empruntez sur gages? Palsambleu! il vous ruinera. ... Il vous pillera, il vous écorchera; je vous en avertis. C'est l'usurier le plus juif: il vend son argent au poids de l'or. (III, iv, 72)

Lesage appears to paint a moral judgment on the Jewish practice of usury, so long interdicted in both Church writings and social practice. It is a subject Lesage studies throughout his writing. He lambasts usury, usually

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<sup>15</sup>Lesage, Turcaret 17.

with an epithet against the financier, who is invariably called a Jew. It is difficult to determine whether Lesage was actually anti-semitic, or whether his "type" was easier to create as a Jew. In the Diabre boiteux (1707), what Audiffret calls the first "roman de caractère,"<sup>16</sup> Lesage creates a Christian usurer, Seigneur Sanguisuela, a name that rings of the French "sang-sue", or bloodsucker (the Spanish word is "sanguisuela"), reminiscent of the harangue against the "traitants" by Vauban in the Dîme Royale. Like Turcaret, Seigneur Sanguisuela knows his illicit business well; he arranges for a loan to a captain of 360 ducats and gives him a note for 1000 ducats<sup>17</sup> (277 per cent). When the captain complains of the usury, the Seigneur replies with sang-froid that he is not forcing the loan, that the captain may take it of his own free will. When the borrower returns the next morning, Sanguisuela forces him to accompany him to mass and the following sermon; it is his custom to go to mass prior to commencing any business transaction. Lesage underscores the irony: "le prédicateur paroît, et prêche contre l'usure" (109). The usurer approves of the sermon; his personality can accept the paradox of what he believes and what he practices. The captain derides the Christian lender: "si ce juif pouvoit se laisser toucher; s'il me donnoit seulement six cents ducats, je partiroid content de

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<sup>16</sup> Audiffret 13.

<sup>17</sup> Lesage, Oeuvres de Lesage, vol. 1 (Paris: Antoine Augustin Renouard, 1821) 108. Future page references will be given in parentheses in the text.

lui"(109). Thus, even a Christian usurer is disparaged as a Jew.

In Gil Blas, the usurer is first "un petit vieillard qui prête à grosse usure,"<sup>18</sup> then a bald headed "mal nécessaire" (147), named Seigneur Descomulgado: the excommunicated (148). At the beginning of Book 6, Lesage tells the story of a merchant, Samuel Simon, who refused to give credit to a tailor ("un artisan solvable") (340), whereas he would readily extend it to a member of the nobility. He is derided as a "maudit juif" (340): "c'est un Juif qui s'est fait catholique; mais, dans le fond de l'âme, il est encore juif comme Pilate; car on dit qu'il a fait abjuration par intérêt" (340). A plan is devised to give Simon a mock inquisition, with Gil Blas playing the role of an alguazil. Gil rather reluctantly goes along. Neighbors are asked if they have ever seen Simon in church, and when they do not remember seeing him the "clerk" notes that he does not attend services. Simon's servant Gaspard is called, and the inquisitor tells him that he has been called to give information about Simon, "que l'on accuse de judaïser" (343). He is asked whether pork is eaten in the household. When he responds in the negative, he is asked about lamb, which elicits a yes, for "Pâques," or Easter. The inquisitor immediately demands that the clerk write that

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<sup>18</sup>Lesage, Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane, vol. 1 (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962) 146. Further pages references will be given in parentheses in the text.

Simon observes "Pâque," or Passover. Simon is then accused of "caresser de petits enfants ... d'attirer chez lui les enfants des chrétiens pour les égorger" (344). The Tribunal decides that Simon is a false Catholic and that he is still a practicing Jew. The private time he spends in his study is proof that he observes the fast of the sabbath. All of Gaspard's testimony is molded to prove that Simon is devoted to judaism, "Ce que vient de déposer le véridique Gaspard suffirait pour faire brûler toute une juiverie" (345). The group demands entry into Simon's office, and promptly steals all of his money. Gil and the others fill their pockets (and everything else) with ducats; bags of silver are also taken. A lock is placed on the door of the office, and Simon is barred from entering. Curiously, Gil has second thoughts about the robbery, and later don Alphonse sends Gil back to Samuel Simon to make restitution. Gil returns all the money that was stolen.

The history of this particular anti-semitism can be traced back, starting with the Old and New Testaments. Jacques Le Goff gives a detailed listing of the biblical prohibitions against usury<sup>19</sup>: Exodus XXII, 24; Leviticus XXV, 35-37; Deuteronomy XXIII, 20; Psalm XV; Ezekiel XVIII, 13; and in the New Testament Luke VI, 34-35.

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<sup>19</sup>Jacques Le Goff, La bourse et la vie: Économie et religion au Moyen Age (Paris: Hachette, 1986) 21-34.

Aristotle also scorned usury in his Ethics. In a French edition of Aristotle from the fourteenth century, Maître Nicole Oresme translates,

Aucuns sont illiberalz et superhabondent // en prenant de toutes pars et tout ce que il peuvent prendre, comme sont ceulz qui pour gaaignier font operacions illiberales, vilaines et laides. (...) Et semblablement, usuriers et tous telz qui veulent par tout gaaignier et ou grant et ou petit. Et tous ceulz ici prennent de la ou il n'appartient pas et plus que il n'appartient. Et a tous ceulz ici une chose leur est commune, c'est assavoir, laide gaaigne ou gaaignier vilainement et laidement; car ilz font toutes teles viles operacions afin de gaaignier. . . ."

The decrees of the Lateran councils also articulated a prohibition of usury, specifically as practiced by Jews. In both the second (1139) and third (1179) councils, the sacraments of the Church were to be denied anyone practicing usury. In the decree of the fourth council, dated November 30, 1215, Christians were to cease all commerce with Jews who practiced usury, and the Jews were told to return money taken from Christians to the churches. The decree also demands that Jews distinguish themselves from Christians by

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<sup>20</sup>Maistre Nicole Oresme, Le livre de Éthiques d'Aristote, Published from the text of MS. 2902, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique (New York: G.E. Stechert, 1940) 240.

wearing special clothing, and that they not appear in public on certain religious days.<sup>22</sup> There were strong currents of anti-semitism in the seventeenth century, and as late as 1671, the parliament of Metz condemned Raphaël Levy to death based on an accusation of the ritual murder of Christian children.<sup>23</sup>

Despite his disapproval of their religious practices, Colbert praised the business acumen of the Jews, and encouraged the French to follow their lead. He admired the ripple effect their profession had in France, and observed that as business increased wherever there were Jews, it would be inadvisable to argue for their expulsion. Regarding this issue in Marseilles, he restated his credo that increased business is good for the nation, thus he accepted the Jewish participation.<sup>24</sup> After Colbert's death in 1683, his brother, Colbert de Croissy was the secretary of state for foreign affairs, and he followed his brother's mercantilist lead regarding the development of business. He drafted decrees in 1686 and 1687 which encouraged all foreigners, "of whatever quality, condition, or religion that they might be" to come to engage in trade in France.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Raymonde Foreville, Latran I, II, III et Latran IV (Paris: L'Orante, 1965) 190-191, 221-222, 380-382.

<sup>23</sup> R. Mousnier, Les Institutions de la France sous la monarchie absolue: 1598-1789, vol. 1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990) 324.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, The French Enlightenment and the Jews, the Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism (New York: Columbia UP, 1990) 23-4.

<sup>24</sup> Hertzberg 24.

The reactions to this change in attitude were divided along class lines. The government and the nobility tolerated the Jews because of their helpfulness in making much needed monetary loans, while the Christian merchants were threatened by their business acumen, and the population as a whole, goaded by the clergy, hated them.<sup>25</sup>

Lesage must have been in agreement with the attitudes of his day, and perhaps with the Church's writings, for he portrays Turcaret as corrupt. He is to be despised and destroyed, and Lesage creates the company eager to carry out the mission. His thievery is to be punished and he is never to achieve the social respectability he seeks; for Lesage has firmly made him the other. He does not deserve to marry even a lesser baroness, he does not deserve a faithful staff, his house should not be grand, his friends should not be noble. The thievery of the Christians is comical and of course acceptable, for they are attempting to maintain proper social and religious order in their circle. Turcaret is trying to penetrate their society and he is unworthy. He may have money, but he is nothing more than a "laquais revêtu." In Act 1, scene v Turcaret opposed the membership application of a man who wanted to join his club: "...Je vais à une de nos assemblées, pour m'opposer à la réception d'un pied-plat, d'un homme de rien, qu'on veut faire entrer

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<sup>25</sup> Léon Poliakov, The History of Anti-Semitism, From Voltaire to Wagner, vol. 3 (New York: Vanguard Press, 1975) 26-33.

dans notre compagnie" (39-40). The tables are now turned, and it is Turcaret who is the rejected commoner. His illegally usurious practices create the demand for revenge, and it is revenge of his purse which is appropriate. That Turcaret should suffer the humiliation of bankruptcy is the most fitting punishment that could be meted out. He is brought down by his own business practices. Not only do his clients want him ruined, but he made the mistake of guaranteeing a "caissier" who went bankrupt for 200,000 écus. It is M. Rafle who brings him this news, and Turcaret thinks he has everything under control, because he interrupts M. Rafle with, "C'est par mon ordre qu'il...Je sais où il est" (79). Lesage has the financier appear confident that the matter will be resolved, but he does not explain what his order is. Would Turcaret have purposely bankrupted the man he has guaranteed? When Turcaret is seized, it is because he can not pay the guarantee to the cashier's creditors. It is curious that Turcaret would have made such a guarantee in the first place, particularly because he normally deals in much smaller sums and he is meticulous in his accounting. The largest amount mentioned elsewhere in the play is the 10,000 écu "billet au porteur." M. Rafle is clearly disturbed by the bankruptcy, but Turcaret assures him that it will all be taken care of in the morning. He is able to borrow 5,000 francs from an honest locksmith at "denier quatorze," or 7.6 per cent, and he is confident of raising the rest (III, vii, 80). Here

Lesage creates an impossible scenario in order to decimate Turcaret completely: the sum must be insurmountable even for a professional financier. The problem in Lesage's play is that his character would not get himself into a financial mess; he has worked too hard and is too careful in his practice of usury to expose himself to the risk of bankruptcy. It is implausible, given what Lesage has created up to this point. Does the author really understand the financial practices of the character he has molded, or is he relying on the character's greed to make this guarantee credible? While Lesage evidently does, the audience most probably does not understand the economic machinations. The higher status people would scorn Turcaret and the others would think his profit possible; all would laugh at him. If Turcaret presumes that he could marry into the nobility (regardless of his current marital status), then perhaps he is arrogant enough to presume that he is infallible where money is concerned. Lesage must destroy him, and the destruction must be plausible to the audience. Order is maintained by Turcaret's downfall. In Gil Blas, Lesage appears to reflect upon Turcaret in Book 3 in an incident related by Centellés, an acquaintance of Gil's employer, don Mathias:

Un de mes amis m'entraîna chez un de ces seigneurs qui lèvent les impôts, et font leurs affaires avec celles de l'État. J'y vis de la magnificence, du bon goût, et le repas me parut assez bien entendu;

mais je trouvais dans les maîtres du logis un ridicule qui me réjouit. Le partisan, quoique des plus roturiers de sa compagnie, tranchait du grand; et sa femme, bien qu'horriblement laide, faisait l'adorable et disait mille sottises assaisonnées d'un accent biscayen qui leur donnait du relief... (I, 149-150)

The seigneurs continue their discussion regarding "quelques discourtois créanciers" (151). Later, Centellés asks don Mathias to help him ruin the son of a rich jeweler. Don Mathias wholeheartedly agrees:

J'y consens, répondit mon maître; aussi bien j'aime à voir renverser la fortune de ces petits seigneurs roturiers, qui s'imaginent qu'on les confond avec nous. Rien, par exemple, ne me divertit tant que la disgrâce de ce fils de publicain, à qui le jeu et la vanité de figurer avec les grands ont fait vendre jusqu'à sa maison. Oh! pour celui-là, reprit don Antonio, il ne mérite pas qu'on le plaigne: il n'est pas moins fat dans sa misère qu'il l'était dans sa prospérité. (154)

It must have been a pleasure for Lesage to create Turcaret, and a great amusement to ruin him.

The cycle appears to be starting over, for like Crispin and Turcaret before him, Frontin, Turcaret's lackey, has

high-level intentions and a larcenous heart. Frontin is set to take financial advantage of his employment: ". . . la fortune t'appelle. . . . Je m'imagine que toutes les choses que je vais toucher vont se convertir en or. . ." (II, vi, 63). He is right. By the end of the play, Frontin has managed to steal a decent fortune in order to marry Lisette. The money is a necessary ingredient for their plan, which includes social aspirations. Frontin discusses the future with Lisette:

J'en ai déjà touché l'argent; il est en sûreté;  
 j'ai quarante mille francs. Si ton ambition veut  
 se borner à cette petite fortune, nous allons  
 faire souche d'honnêtes gens. . . . Voilà le règne  
 de M. Turcaret fini; le mien va commencer. (V,  
 xiv, 126)

Lesage would not let this larcenous lackey rise socially, in view of Crispin's and Turcaret's past adventures. The author will not change his viewpoint until he creates the character of Gil Blas, and he is a lackey who, at first, is marked in his lack of social ambition.

Lesage may have been particularly pleased to create a character he would so gleefully destroy, as money was a considerable problem to him. He understood finances, for as a young man he had been the secretary to a "fermier général." Lesage may have been the first great French author to have earned his entire living by writing without

the benefit of a pension" (other than that of the abbé de Lyonne early in his career). The receipts of the Comédie française reveal that he did rather well, however not as well as he would have had he accepted the 100,000 francs purportedly offered to him by the financiers of Paris to burn his play.<sup>27</sup> The first performance of Crispin rival de son maître, paired with another Lesage play, César Ursin, on March 15, 1707, was presented to 1,305 spectators and took in 2,368.10 livres, of which the actors each received 65 and the author 225.11.<sup>28</sup> The first performance of Turcaret (February 14, 1709) compares favorably at 1,249 spectators and receipts of 2,320 livres, netting Lesage 181 livres. The box office revenue for the seven performances through March 1, 1709 totaled 8,135.08 livres, of which the author received 598.62.<sup>29</sup> Lesage produced the high money maker for the month; the next highest one day receipts were for the double bill of Amphitryon and Le Grondeur on February 10, 1709 at 1,168 spectators and 1,947.18 livres. After March 1, Turcaret was not played again until May 13, 1730.

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<sup>27</sup>Dillaye i.

<sup>28</sup> Dillaye vii.

<sup>28</sup>H. Carrington Lancaster, "The Comédie française 1701-1774: Plays, actors, spectators, finances", Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, vol.41, part 4, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, Dec. 1951) 618.

<sup>29</sup> Lancaster 624.

C. Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane (published in three parts: Books 1-6 in 1715, Books 7-9 in 1724, and Books 10-12 in 1735).

In Le Siècle de Louis XIV, Voltaire tersely writes:

Lesage, né en 1677. Son roman de Gil Blas est demeuré, parce qu'il y a du naturel; il est entièrement pris du roman espagnol intitulé la Vida del escudero don Marcos de Obregón. Mort en 1747.<sup>30</sup>

Voltaire may have chosen this moment to express posthumous revenge against Lesage; the two appear to have traded barbs at various points during their careers.<sup>31</sup> Lesage even took the opportunity to create a character based on Voltaire in Gil Blas, in Book 10. In chapter V, Don Gabriel Triaquero (charlatan in Spanish), is lauded at the opening night of his latest tragedy. The theater is packed and the public response is overwhelming. Don Alphonse is not moved by the public adulation; he states, ". . .il faut être en garde contre la prévention; le public s'aveugle quelquefois sur des pièces où il y a de faux brillants, et il n'en connaît le prix qu'après l'impression" (II, 203). The audience starts applauding even as the play begins, and there is a constant brouhaha (which was presumably positive). Following

<sup>30</sup> Voltaire, Oeuvres historiques (Paris: Gallimard, 1957) 1182.

<sup>31</sup> Audiffret 48.

the performance, the author is crowned with laurels. According to F. de Neufchâteau, this description would have been appropriate for the openings of *Saïre* (1732) and *Adélaïde Du Guesclin* (1734) (II, 385, note 693). At dinner later, the discussion centers on the play, and in counterpoint to the praise, the Castillian gentleman states, "Loin de la regarder comme un chef-d'oeuvre, je la trouve fort défectueuse" (204).

Sainte-Beuve sees Voltaire's accusation as a reaction to his depiction in the novel. Regarding the character of Don Gabriel Triaquero, he states,

Ce chapitre de Lesage est tout satirique et à l'adresse de Voltaire, qui est évidemment don Gabriel. Lesage était un classique du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, peu favorable aux nouveautés, et probablement il avait, un jour ou l'autre, rencontré le jeune auteur d'*Oedipe* dans la première ivresse de son succès; lui, le plus simple des gens d'esprit, il l'avait trouvé un peu fat et pas assez bon enfant. Voltaire, à son tour, retrouvant Lesage sur son chemin, prit sa revanche de la satire par un éloge épigrammatique et une assertion mensongère.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Sainte-Beuve, Les Grands Écrivains français (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1930) 26. Future page number references to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.

However, there is indeed a problem of plagiarism in Gil Blas. Lintilhac demonstrates that Lesage uses three sources for Gil Blas, none of them the work cited by Voltaire. The first is a French translation of an Italian satire entitled, la Disgrazia del conte d'Olivarès,<sup>33</sup> written in Spain for an Italian prince. This pamphlet was so popular that it engendered two French translations, one in 1644 and the other in 1650. The second source appeared in France in 1722 and is also translated from its Italian original: Anecdotes du comte-duc d'Olivarès, tirées et traduites de l'italien du Mercurio-Siry (sic). The last work is an apology from the start of the ministry of Olivarès: le Ministre parfait ou le Comte-Duc: Histoire du Comte-Duc avec des réflexions politiques et curieuses, Cologne, 1683. Lintilhac establishes the correlation between these works and the text, especially regarding books 8, 11, and 12. A number of Spanish plays also served as models for various episodes. In contrast, Audiffret discounts what he calls Lesage's "légers emprunts,"<sup>34</sup> and he meticulously addresses all contemporary accusations of plagiarism, which he believes are baseless and detract from the appreciation of Gil Blas as a true novel. He discusses the novel in great detail, even using as proof of authorship, for example, the history of the coffee bean. He notes that the author of Gil Blas believed

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<sup>33</sup>Lintilhac 80-85.

<sup>34</sup>Audiffret 46. Future references to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.

that there were cafés in Spain during the reign of Phillip III and the ministry of the Duke de Lerme, who effectively governed Spain until he was disgraced in 1618; however, at that time the coffee bean was still unknown in Spain. In a note, Audiffret relates that coffee was not introduced to Paris until 1657 and cafés were not established in Madrid until the 1670s (54). Thus, Lesage could not have plagiarized an earlier author. He believes Lesage to be the author of the first French novel: "Cet ouvrage n'est qu'un roman, mais c'est le premier des romans, si Télémaque n'en est pas un" (46). His argument centers on the identifiable Frenchness of his characters, simply "revêtus de manteaux espagnols" (47). His response to Voltaire is that only approximately ten passages were taken from the novel by Vincent Espinel entitled Relaciones de la Vida del escudero don Marcos de Obregon, the correct title of the book. He sites the dissertation of François de Neufchâteau, which refutes Voltaire's charge, and establishes Lesage as the sole creator of Gil Blas (50). Audiffret also rejects the accusations of thievery from the Spanish launched by Don Juan Antonio Llorente (57-71). It is Audiffret's conclusion that the novel is original, that it depicts all aspects of contemporary life, and that Lesage is a great author: "Lesage y peint les hommes tels qu'ils sont, capables de faute et de repentir, de foiblesse et de retour" (73). Sainte-Beuve concurs, "Gil Blas, . . . c'est vous, c'est moi, c'est tout le monde" (11-12).

Lesage owes a stylistic debt to the picaresque Spanish novels. Malcolm Cook defines picaresque:

There are certain expectations in the picaresque novel, but the most significant are related to the nature of the main character, the "picaro." The "picaro" is often a rogue relating his adventures; he is born of poor and dishonest parents who are often unmarried; he has to serve to survive and flits from master to master, each of whom he outwits and describes in the interests of satire.<sup>35</sup>

Cook believes that Lesage chose the Spanish form as a backdrop for what is essentially a discussion about France (19). The organization certainly contributes to the novel, and while Lesage may begin by borrowing more than just a few ideas from other authors, his own talent develops and takes over. His style demonstrates, according to Lintilhac, "l'agencement d'une foule de détails qui contribuent délicieusement à la vérité, au pittoresque et au dramatique de l'ensemble" (85).

Many of these realistic details involve the depiction of money. The novel develops as Gil moves from job to job, fifteen positions in all before he receives his "lettres de noblesse." In the description of these positions, much

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<sup>35</sup>Malcolm Cook, Lesage: Gil Blas (London: Grant & Cutler, Ltd., 1988) 15. See also H. Sieber, "The Picaresque" in The Critical Idiom (London: Methuen, 1977) 33. Future page number references will be given in parentheses in the text.

attention is paid to the setting in which Gil finds himself. Clothing, furnishings, and manners reflect their owner's financial position and social status. The author stresses Gil's awareness of the power implications of his surroundings. As Gil rises financially and socially, he comes into contact with a cross section of contemporary society and receives an education, as does the reader, about the concrete settings in which each segment of society moves.

In the notice to the reader, Lesage relates a story of two students en route to Salamanca. They come across a stone with an inscription stating that under the stone lies the soul of one Pierre Garcias. One student finds the epitaph ridiculous, and leaves. The other remains and recovers 100 ducats<sup>36</sup> from underneath the stone. Lesage states that, in analogously, the stories the reader is about to uncover contain practical knowledge and lessons in addition to amusement. He equates pieces of gold with information; he furnishes the reader with a literary gold standard.

Money becomes a focal point in the first few pages; Lesage grabs the attention of the reader at once by featuring the allure of gold. Gil's uncle discusses the financial needs of the student in specific terms: enough

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<sup>36</sup> According to note 7 on p. 354, a ducat was worth seven to eight francs. Note 22 on the same page defines a pistole as worth ten francs in France and nine francs in the sixteenth century to twenty-one francs, eighty centimes under the reign of Philip IV in Spain (1621-1665). Note 25 on page 355 defines a réal as the equivalent of 25 centimes.

ducats for the voyage to Salamanca and a mule worth ten to twelve pistoles which Gil is to sell in order to support himself when he arrives at the university. Later, Lesage states that the total amount is forty ducats (45). The value of the mule is a universal standard, established by Lesage in order to furnish the French reader with a basis to understand the finances of the novel. In addition to the forty ducats he is given, Gil steals several reals from his uncle, and as a student Gil is already quite a thief. His thoughts center not on his upcoming studies; rather he is in awe of his own fortune. Gil encounters a number of characters along the way who want something, usually money, from him. The beggar asks for several pieces of silver; the "honnête maquignon" (17), an oxymoron also in this case, pays Gil three ducats (twenty-one to twenty-four francs) instead of the ten to twelve pistoles (100 to 120 francs) predicted by his uncle; the panegyrist flatters Gil for an expensive dinner; the mule driver, whom Gil has already paid, accuses Gil of stealing, forcing the student to flee. It is in the forest that Gil is inducted into his first occupation as servant and wine pourer for a group of thieves in their subterranean hideout. The merchandise in the den of thieves constitutes a catalogue of foodstuffs and housewares available to the wealthy at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Everything has been stolen, often at human cost, so it must be considered valuable to the thieves and to Lesage. The storage rooms hold fine wines, cloth, wool,

silk, gold, silver, and dishes bearing various coats of arms (15). The most recent crime nets sugar, cinnamon, pepper, figs, almonds, and raisins from a spice merchant (16). The table is set with silver cups and decanted wine. Dinner consists of two stews and a platter of roasted meats (17). Over dinner, with Gil pouring wine, the men discuss how they became thieves, and captain Rolando articulates an apology for his profession to Gil:

. . . tous les hommes aiment à s'appropriier le bien d'autrui; c'est un sentiment général, la manière seule de le faire en est différente. Les conquérants, par exemple, s'emparent des États de leurs voisins. Les personnes de qualité empruntent, et ne rendent point. Les banquiers, tréscriers, agents de change, commis, et tous les marchands, tant gros que petits, ne sont pas fort scrupuleux. (22)

Lesage evidently believes that the criminals are no different from those in power, or conversely, that those in power are criminals themselves. Money is an integral component of power. Gil is kept in his job of server for more than six months (27) before being allowed to join the thieves in their work outside. He finally escapes with a horse and as many pistoles and double pistoles as will fit in his pockets (36-37); enough evidently to pay for a hotel room and a dinner of partridge and rabbit for Gil and Doña

Mencia. This comfort is short-lived; Gil is soon imprisoned and his money is taken from him. Upon his release, Doña Mencia gives him a ring worth thirty pistoles (300 francs and 1000 ducats which, after another brief moment of enjoyment, is stolen (62)). A lapidary gives him only three ducats (twenty-one to twenty-four francs) for the ring. Lesage has yet to depict an honest businessman.

After a discussion with his friend Fabrice, Gil is convinced that he must find a position as a valet. Job placement in Lesage's day was no different from modern times; the applicant must present himself to a recruiter. After a short introduction, the bespectacled Seigneur Arias looks up from his writing table, accepts the fee of two ducats from Gil, and begins to read the list of openings. Gil settles on the elderly gout-stricken canon who is about to do his will: "il y a un legs à espérer" (69). Book II finds Gil in the employ of the canon, but not for long; the old man dies soon, thanks to the medical expertise of Docteur Sangrado. Gil is mentioned in the will: he receives the books, manuscripts, and bookcase of the deceased (80).

Gil's third job is as assistant to Docteur Sangrado. He quickly understands the business of medicine, and money becomes his inspiration. The finances are more complicated than the cures, for Gil receives an abridged course in the medical arts: "Sache, mon ami, qu'il ne faut que saigner et faire boire de l'eau chaude: voilà le secret de guérir

toutes les maladies du monde" (83). He treats a gout-stricken pastry cook and receives 12 reals (3 francs) (84) for his prescriptions; he spends four reals on wine and renders eight reals to Dr. Sangrado, who keeps six and gives Gil two (86). Lesage paints an unregulated medical fee structure, and a market inefficient enough for a young student to charge as he wishes. The patients do not question his charges. During his short tenure with the doctor, Gil keeps a quarter of what the patients pay him, and Dr. Sangrado pays him a quarter of what he receives. Gil's ardor for the practice of medicine has a financial basis, as does the doctor's: "Tu seras bientôt riche, mon ami; car il y aura, s'il plaît à Dieu, bien des maladies cette année" (86). His sudden departure from the field is without regret, for he is aware that he hastened the end for many of his patients. The "salaire de mes assassinats" (100) totaled five ducats, which he has in his pockets as he leaves. This is a rare admission of guilt from Gil; he appears to have respect for human life, but not for property.

In Book III, Gil next finds a job as a valet to a cavalier in Madrid; at first he does not know the name of his employer. He is paid six reals per day, plus some "petits profits" (132). Gil has a room with the cavalier, though his personal maintenance is covered by the salary. Don Bernard de Castil Blazo has converted his entire inheritance into gold, totaling 50,000 ducats (137). He has no income: no rents, no land, no houses (which would have

been expected of a man of great wealth. . He spends less than 1,000 ducats per year, so he has enough to last even if he lives to be 100 years old. He converted his patrimony perhaps in order to avoid the problems of management. His stance is entirely risk-averse; he evidently believes in the gold standard. Gil receives severance pay totaling six ducats when he is dismissed (because of the company he keeps' .

Mathias de Silva becomes Gil's fifth employer. He is a nobleman who apparently does not have a lot of money. He is described by his merchant:

C'est un homme de la première qualité, un de ces jeunes seigneurs qu'on appelle petits-maitres. J'ai l'honneur d'être son marchand. Il prend chez moi des étoffes, à crédit à la vérité; mais il n'y a rien à perdre avec ces seigneurs: ils épousent souvent de riches héritières qui payent leurs dettes; et, quand cela n'arrive pas, un marchand qui entend son métier leur vend toujours si cher, qu'il se sauve en ne touchant même que le quart de ses parties. (143-4)

Money is evidently the determinant for a good match; as Lesage articulated in Crispin, there are other interested parties aside from the intendeds when a marriage is made. The creditor has a stake in the financial well-being of his

borrower; in this case the merchant determines that Mathias is a good risk as he is young and could marry well.

Mathias is not prudent in his expenses, and he squanders more than he has on gambling. Lesage indicates that the punishment for not paying one's debts is severe, and that gambling credits must be paid immediately. After losing the 100 pistoles that he had as well as an additional 200 pistoles on his word, don Mathias turns to his head domestic, Gregorio Rodriguez,

Vous savez de quelle conséquence il est, pour des personnes de condition, de s'aquitter de cette sorte de dette. C'est proprement la seule que le point d'honneur nous oblige à payer avec exactitude. Aussi ne payons-nous pas les autres religieusement. (145-146)

The note must be paid immediately, "tout à l'heure." Lesage has not specified the payment schedule of other sorts of debts, but gamblers must pay the next day or they will be dishonored within the gaming community.

Gil learns from Rodriguez, a valet who had had nothing other than a genius for business and "qui s'est enrichi dans deux maisons ruinées, dont il a été l'intendant" (144). A large part of Rodriguez' job consists of arranging for loans for his employer, in addition to running the household and managing its staff. Gil also enjoys his first experience posing as a gentleman while in this position, though he is

subsequently terminated after the death of his employer. He is well paid, and in no rush to find his next position.

At the end of Book III Gil finds work as a business manager (178) for Arsénie and her troupe of actors. Having read Aristotle's Économiques, he considers himself qualified to do so. During his monthlong tenure, Gil is responsible for maintaining the books and lists of expenditures for the comediennes. The household is extravagantly run; in addition to Gil there are a cook, a coachman, and a lackey. The table is set with silver plates and gold vases, with fine wines and meats (182). The women are proud and seek financial independence on their own terms. As Laure explains, marriage to a wealthy man has its drawbacks: "Pourquoi se donner un maître? Il vaut mieux gagner sou à sou un équipage, que de l'avoir tout d'un coup à ce prix-là" (183). Here Lesage creates a counterpoint to the Baroness in Turcaret, who will do anything to obtain a coach of her own. The comediennes are the only successful business persons Lesage appears to condone; they are not only business persons, they are artists. In Book VII, Arsénie will purchase land in Zamora with "monnaies étrangères" (II,28), demonstrating her participation in the currency markets; she is astute in foreign exchange (she needs to be, to survive).

Gil finds his seventh position, at the beginning of Book IV, through Rodriguez, who is friendly with the intendant of don Vincent de Guzman. The don is rich, he has

lived for many years without lawsuits against him, and he is raising his daughter alone (he is a widower, thanks to the local doctors) (192-3). Don Vincent himself dies in a similar fashion shortly after Gil's arrival (201). Gil is eventually given a severance of 100 pistoles, and the offer of employment in the household of don Gonzale Pacheco (243).

Job number eight is that of manservant to Don Gonzale, an old asthmatic in love with Eufrasie. The young woman advises Gil: "Écoute, Gil Blas, . . . il ne tiendra qu'à toi de faire ta fortune" (246), hoping that Gil will help her hasten the end of his employer. Gil warns don Gonzale, and he is promptly dismissed with a final payment of fifty ducats (252).

Gil next finds employment as the valet of the Marquise de Chaves, a widow with an annual revenue of 10,000 ducats, and no children. Such wealth affords the Marquise a life of comfort and the pleasure of a salon which resounds of poetry, discussion, and drama (252). Gil prepares the room for company; he arranges the chairs, footrests, cushions, and he announces and introduces the guests. The jealousy of another valet in the house causes Gil to leave this ninth position, but he is well-dressed enough to pass as a "cavalier d'importance" (257) on his way to Toledo.

Lesage repeatedly makes the point that matters related to money are indicators of character and behavior. Following the travesty involving the robbing of the maligned Samuel Simon, the falsely converted Jew, discussed earlier,

Gil is hired by don Alphonse as his intendant in Book VII. At the don's request, he returns the 3,000 ducats stolen from the usurer; this is the first act of financial restitution Lesage describes<sup>37</sup>, which signals a change in Gil's behavior. Even though Gil does not return the money he has personally pocketed, the Don gives him enough to make a full repayment<sup>38</sup>. In his new position, he comports himself honestly, settling all accounts with farmers, making purchases for the household, overseeing the valets. He does not abuse his position (2); he is loyal to don Alphonse and to his father, don César, and he is fair to the staff. Gil leaves this post in order to maintain harmony in the house after the elderly Lorença Sephora demonstrates her passion for him. In his parting conversation, he tells don Alphonse: "Seigneur, je suis né pour être le jouet de la fortune" (7). Lesage plays on the double meaning of "fortune" as both chance, or luck, and material prosperity. He leaves with 200 pistoles.

Don Fernand de Leyva, the son-in-law of Don Alphonse, helps place Gil in his eleventh position with the Archbishop of Grenada. The work involves copying the writings of the prelate (9). The elegance of the furnishings impresses Gil; the beauty of the architecture, the richness of the furniture, the statues, the paintings cause the valet to

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<sup>37</sup> Lesage, Gil Blas, tome II (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962) 1. All future page references will be to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

compare the residence to the palace of the king (9). All of the staff, including the laymen, are dressed exquisitely. Lesage makes an exception to his usual concise manner of describing the background here in order to impress upon the reader the opulence Gil encounters. As if to underscore the cost of the surroundings, Lesage has the archbishop declare to his new hire, "Je vous retiens à mon service; vous êtes une bonne acquisition pour moi" (10-11). At dinner with the visiting clergymen, Gil regards the saintly exteriors of the guests as "la fausse monnaie" (11). He is discharged when he honestly criticizes the archbishop's homily, and he receives 100 ducats from the treasurer (20).

Gil soon begins his climb to financial success. He gains a position with the Marquis de Marialva after posing as the brother of Laure (now known as Estelle). The marquis hires Gil to be his secretary and confidant, and promises 400 ducats in salary (27). Gil maintains the charade, for he must be with Laure. For her part, Laure is reminiscent of Lisette in Turcaret, and she is as conniving. She states: "Tu seras mon mari, mais il faut nous enrichir auparavant" (48). She believes that it will take three or four more affairs to be comfortable. When Gil is discovered, the marquis, in Turcaret fashion, breaks everything at Laure's home, and physically abuses her: ". . . je voyais le marquis furieux qui meurtrissait de coups le beau visage de Laure, et brisait tout chez elle ..." (50).

Gil arrives in Madrid, and passes each morning at Court, observing the flow of nobles in and out of the offices of the king (58). His old friend Fabrice has become an author and has chosen a life of genteel poverty over the pursuit of wealth (59-60). Gil finds a new post with the Sicilian Count Galiano. The count is rich, but his expenditures exceed his revenues (70), clearly leading him towards bankruptcy. It is up to Gil to observe the staff and put a stop to the embezzlement. As the superintendant of the house, Gil is dressed magnificently by the count's tailor; he wants for nothing. He announces to the servants that: "j'étais ennemi de toute malversation" (70) and he commences his inspection of the property. He researches the provisions, visits the wine cellar, and inventories everything in the house, from the foodstuffs to the silver and linens. He manages to save, while the opulence remains undiminished. He discovers, for example, that wine is being wasted by the staff. After serving half to the count, the other half is taken to the kitchen; twelve cavaliers would appear to consume fifty to sixty bottles. He learns that the price paid for fish is twice its worth, the surplus being split with the cook (73). After four months of service, Gil cuts the waste and renders a profit, or rather a savings, of 3,000 ducats to the count (74). Despite his performance, when Gil becomes ill the count abandons him (77). He is left with only fifty pistoles of the 260 he had had before he became sick.

In Book VIII, Gil Blas attains his fourteenth post in the employ of the prime minister the Duke de Lerme. He rents an apartment worthy of his new station, as if he already had 2-3,000 ducats of rent (90), but the job does not pay very well, and Gil must adjust his expectations. The other secretaries in the office rent simple rooms at the house of an honest widow who also furnishes them with board for the price of 100 pistoles per year (91). Gil learns that the noble life he appears to lead during the day is not accompanied by the wealth he seeks; he gives up his apartment, sells his possessions, rents a small room, and eats only the bread and finger of wine offered by the minister (98). The duke takes pity on his young charge, and grants him an annual ordonnance for 1,500 ducats, to be counted before Gil by the royal treasurer (102). In addition, the secretary has the right to collect lobbying fees: ". . . quand des personnes riches et généreuses te prieront de leur rendre service, je ne te défends pas de me parler en leur faveur" (102). Gil flies over to the treasury, seizes his money, and his life changes at once; he rerents his luxurious apartment, has the tailor outfit him elegantly, and he acquires a valet of his own. He lives for money: "J'éprouvai la vérité du proverbe que l'appétit vient en mangeant..." (114). This proverb, from the fifth chapter of Gargantua<sup>38</sup> describes Gil's susceptibility to the

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<sup>38</sup> François Rabelais, Oeuvres complètes, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1962) 27.

temptations of acquisition. The duke splits the lobbying income with Gil, and requests that only large favors (such as may be desired by governments or other large entities), and hence large fees, be requested (114). Gil complies and exerts his influence on behalf of anyone with 1,000 pistoles to spend. He confers royal orders indiscriminately:

Je ne me contentai pas de faire des gouverneurs, je donnai des ordres de Chevalerie, je convertis quelques bons roturiers en mauvais gentilshommes par d'excellentes lettres de noblesse . . . nous ressemblions aux avarés qui se consolent des huées du peuple en revoyant leur or. (115)

Gil's wealth quickly grows to 30,000 ducats with the prospect of perhaps ten times that figure, and he adjusts his living arrangements accordingly. He rents a mansion and furnishes it properly, he purchases a carriage and hires a coachman and three lackeys. He elevates his houseman to the position of valet, hires a cook, fills his wine cellar, and begins to entertain (115-6). Gil will do anything for money, and in the blindness of this desire he loses whatever judgement he has left. When Bertrand Moscada, the son of the spice merchant who is friendly with Gil's uncle, approaches Gil to ask him to send his parents a yearly pension of 200 pistoles in order that they might have some comfort and happiness, he is rejected summarily (133-4). Scipion the valet hopes to marry his employer to the

daughter of a silversmith, and Gil is uninterested until he learns that she has a dowry of 100,000 ducats. The girl's father only insists that Gil be able to prove that he is in the good graces of the minister, and he seems up to the task. The silversmith hosts a dinner party and with a backdrop of silver ("moins d'argent dans les mines du Pérou"), the assembled businessmen discuss nothing but commerce (138). Gil has become an embodiment of the corruption of wealth and power, and he hosts a dinner for his new family, also, but the marriage is not achieved after Gil is arrested and thrown in jail for having arranged an improper tryst for the prince. While in jail, all he has is pillaged and stolen, save the two sacks of double pistols saved by Scipion. Demonstrating a change of heart, he directs one sack to his parents, and the other to his valet.

Gil resolves to live simply in a cottage in the country; he will no longer be "le jouet de la fortune" (177). He receives property and the promise of an annual pension of 2,000 ducats from Don Alphonse, but he refuses the pension, not wishing to be corrupted again (178). He accepts the land in Lirias and its 500 ducats in rents, and lives well within his means.

After the death of his wife in the first chapter of Book XI (269), Gil encounters the prince and the Count Olivarès, who offers him his fifteenth position as public advocate for his policies. Gil is to apprise the court and the citizens of the condition to which the monarchy has

fallen, and to gain support for the strict economic measures which must be implemented. Gil writes his dissertation carefully, articulating the dissipation of the finances of the State, as well as the ruin of the navy. He paints Count Olivarès as a person sent by heaven to restore the nation. The propaganda centers on repairing the economy, "sans incommoder les sujets" (285), a tactic still used in modern political strategy. Lesage takes the opportunity to once again deride the "traitants", forcing them to make restitution to the government of funds collected: "Quand il eut tiré de ces sangsues le sang qu'elles avaient sucé, et qu'il en eut rempli les coffres du roi..." (286). He also has Gil outline a strict, conservative fiscal policy in which money does not leave the state's coffers except to benefit the state. Favors could still be granted without direct monetary compensation: military positions, orders of chivalry, vice-royalties, and government posts are among the awards Gil mentions. A healthy treasury is necessary to command sufficient respect from the enemies of Spain. Gil receives 500 écus for his work. He feels the payment is appropriate for the honest work he has done (287).

Lesage delivers a precise accounting of foreign trade while Gil is still in the company of the prime minister Olivarès:

Lorsque les vaisseaux du roi partent de Séville ou de Lisbonne pour ce pays-là [les Indes], il y fait embarquer du vin, de l'huile et des grains, que

lui fournit sa comté d'Olivarès; il ne paye point de port. Avec cela il vend dans les Indes ces marchandises quatre fois plus qu'elles ne valent en Espagne; ensuite il emploie l'argent à acheter des épiceries, des couleurs, et d'autres choses qu'on a presque pour rien dans le Nouveau Monde, et qui se vendent fort cher en Europe. Il a déjà par ce trafic gagné plusieurs millions sans faire le moindre tort au roi. (299-300)

The duke is thus able to profit handsomely at no expense to the king; Lesage does not appear to criticize the method, and does not suggest that the importers pay a fee to the crown. Gil Blas chooses to participate in trade with Scipion, and he gives his valet 1,000 écus to pay for Andalusian wine and oil to sell in the Indies (300). When Scipion returns from Mexico, he has 3,000 ducats in cash and two times that amount in merchandise. His fortune will soon be assured (331). The return on investment is quite substantial; the equivalent of 3,000 francs counted by Gil nets 21-24,000 francs in cash and 42-48,000 francs in merchandise that is easily sold. The risk of ruin, namely the physical risks to the merchandise during the voyages, and the danger and hardship to the valet obviously contribute to the inefficiency of the market.

Gil finally receives his "lettres de noblesse" (332), and the former poor student is known as Don Gil Blas.

Forced out of the government and escaping with Olivarès by the kitchen door, Gil stays with the duke until his death. Gil is remembered in the will (with 10,000 pistoles), along with the servants, hospitals, and convents. Don Gil returns to his property, remarries, and no longer concerns himself with money.

Lesage may not have intended to create a catalogue of the effects of money on members of all strata of contemporary society, but Gil Blas serves as an economic model. Representatives from all walks of life are portrayed, underscoring the importance and role of money in the society. Money unites and divides; a rich thief may steal from the treasury instead of from the traveler, but he will be able to afford food and lodging. Money does not allow him to shed his corrupt nature.

In specific terms, Lesage furnishes the reader with a scale of revenues and the purchasing power at each level on the scale. Gil himself experiences so many different financial situations on his way from student to noble that he really is a representative of all walks of life. France had a concrete two-tier society during Lesage's day, yet the ease with which Gil is able to move from valet to don demonstrates a growing flexibility in attitudes toward social rank, at least among the peers portrayed. His salaries, which range from the food he is fed and the few ducats he receives early on to great wealth at the end of the novel, reflect the growing ease with which the

bourgeoisie acquired wealth. The rents of the nobility appear static in comparison to the income of the lenders and officials of the court. The picture that emerges provides a rich tapestry of French life during the first third of the eighteenth century. The former king, Louis XIV, veiled as Phillip III, did in fact deplete the treasury and the army, and was therefore dependent upon the "traitants" to help resuscitate the wealth of the state. Lesage seizes upon the growing role of the moneymen and devotes a large part of his literary career to exposing their usury. He also derides embezzlers of all sorts, each of whom reflects with varying intensity the corruption of the highest officials of the land. From common thieves to valets who snatch wine to usurers to prime ministers who accept payments in return for favors, Lesage sees an endemic problem. That Gil Blas can learn to understand the corruption of money, and can grow to be able to resist it, makes felt the author's hope. Lesage depicts each relationship in its monetary terms: salaries, rents, dowries, scams, ordonnances; each sum commands certain rights.

Jean Sgard reports the specific amounts of money workers earned at each level of eighteenth century society: unskilled laborers and servants, 100 to 300 livres (francs) per year<sup>39</sup>; skilled laborers, teachers, middle level workers, 300 to 1,000 livres per year; staff and professors,

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<sup>39</sup> Sgard, "L'Échelle," 425-8.

tutors, secretaries, from 1,000 to 3,000 livres per year; bourgeois from 5,000 to 20,000 livres; nobles from 40,000 to 100,000 livres; and princes from 100,000 to more than 400,000 per year. Lesage demonstrates exactly what these revenues could purchase; he takes the money from the abstract to the specific, and furnishes the reader with a clear picture through the many lives Gil, as everyman, leads. He gives numerous examples, which depict not only what the money can concretely purchase, but also current economic trends, such as the potential rewards of risk-taking in foreign trade, or more specifically commodity arbitrage, and the conservatism of the noble cavalier of Madrid, who converts all his assets to gold. The payoffs of the local fish merchant to the cook only differ in magnitude from the graft of senior government officials. At all levels, Lesage presents an image of a world organized and driven by the desire for wealth and the power it bestows.

Chapter Two: Antoine-François Prévost d'Exiles (1697-1763)

The action of Prévost's Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut occurs from 1717 to 1719, at height of speculation in the scheme of John Law. An understanding of contemporary events, and especially the economic history, as stated in the Introduction, is necessary in order to comprehend the characters and their actions.

A. Abbé Prévost or Prévost d'Exiles

Prévost was born in the town of Hesdin in Artois on April 1, 1697, the second son of a bourgeois family that had been established in the region since the fifteenth century. The family had risen to the ranks of the "noblesse de robe" through the magistrature.<sup>1</sup> Most of the facts regarding Prévost's life are unclear and there are many gaps. Jean Sgard has compiled a contradictory sequence of events described in nineteen contemporary sources.<sup>2</sup> It is generally acknowledged that Prévost received an excellent education and entered the Jesuit order between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Shortly thereafter he left to join the army, where he participated in the ill fated battle of

<sup>1</sup> Frédéric Deloffre and Raymond Picard, introduction, Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut, by Abbé Prévost (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1965) xiii-xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Sgard, Vingt études sur Prévost d'Exiles (Grenoble: ELLUG, 1995) 26-29.

Exilles, a small town in the Briançonnais ceded to Savoy in 1713.<sup>3</sup> He left the army two years after a peace treaty was signed. In 1719, Prévost tried to reenter the Jesuit order, but his request was refused and he went back to the army. He set out for Rome to ask the general for authorization to reenter the noviciate, but he became ill on the way, was hospitalized, and was forced to re-enlist by an officer who helped him during his illness. Prévost deserted and fled to Holland.<sup>4</sup> He returned to France at the end of October 1720, when he was admitted into the Benedictine order at Saint-Maur, near Rouen, and on November 9, 1721, at the age of twenty-four, he made a profession of faith.<sup>5</sup> The return to religious life apparently offered Prévost a time of reflection after the end of a love affair.<sup>6</sup> He devoted himself to his studies; Prévost was torn between his passions and his sense of duty. He wrote a letter to Liévin-Norbert shortly after taking his vows in which he discusses the importance of his religious mission, and the attraction of distractions:

Qu'on a de peine, mon cher frère, à reprendre un peu de vigueur, quand on s'est fait une habitude de sa faiblesse; et qu'il en coûte à combattre

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<sup>3</sup> Sgard 16.

<sup>4</sup> Henry HARRISSE, L'Abbé Prévost: Histoire de sa vie et de ses oeuvres (1896; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970) 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> HARRISSE, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Richard A. SMERNOFF, L'Abbé Prévost (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985) 4.

pour la victoire, quand on a trouvé longtemps de  
la douceur à se laisser vaincre.<sup>7</sup>

Prévost stayed at Saint-Maur until 1723, then went to the Abbey de Notre-Dame-du-Bec for theological studies. In 1726 he was ordained and accepted a position at the Collège de Saint-Germer teaching humanities. He also spent time at the abbey of Sées. At Sées, Prévost had the opportunity to work on the Histoire de M. de Thou, a book left unfinished when the canon at the abbey died; the Benedictines were not pleased with the result.<sup>8</sup> He went to Paris at the end of 1727 or the beginning of 1728<sup>9</sup> and stayed at Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where he most probably wrote the first four volumes of the Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité.<sup>10</sup> Prévost requested permission to transfer to another Benedictine monastery where he would have more freedom, but he left Saint-Germain before the authorization had been granted, and found himself on the wrong side of the law, the putative reason being some scandalous writings left in his monastic cell.<sup>11</sup> He escaped to England for two years where he was employed as the tutor of the son of John Eyles, a member of Parliament, a former director of the Bank of England and a former Lord Mayor of London. Eyles was also an assistant governor of the South Sea Company, which had

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<sup>7</sup> HARRISSE 15.

<sup>8</sup> SMERNOFF 6.

<sup>9</sup> HARRISSE 117.

<sup>10</sup> HARRISSE 19.

<sup>11</sup> HARRISSE 134-140.

been patterned after Law's Compagnie des Indes.<sup>12</sup> (The British scheme was less grandiose than Law's, and did not include the control of the mint, the printing of money, or the collection of taxes. British debt in 1720 was nearly 50 million pounds; the South Sea Company acquired the rights to refinance it and to increase the number of shares outstanding. The government interest rate on the debt was set at five per cent annually until 1727, then reduced to four per cent.<sup>13</sup> Share prices rose from 100 pounds per share to 950 pounds on July 1, 1720; by August 31 prices dropped to 775, by October 1 to 290. The total market value of all shares outstanding on August 31 was 164 million pounds, and of that total, 103 million pounds were lost in the month of September.)<sup>14</sup> Prévost had an opportunity to learn about the workings of the company while residing in the Eyles home. He was treated as an adopted son by this great British family, and sat with them at the dinner table.<sup>15</sup> He stayed until he was fired for having secretly proposed to the daughter of his employer; then he returned to Holland at the end of 1730.<sup>16</sup> Manon Lescaut was published in late 1731 in Holland as the seventh volume of

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<sup>12</sup> Henri Coulet, chronology, Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut, by Antoine-François Prévost d'Exiles (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1967) 7.

<sup>13</sup> Garber 47-48.

<sup>14</sup> Garber 51.

<sup>15</sup> Jean Sgard, Prévost romancier (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1968) 122.

<sup>16</sup> Vivienne Mylne, Prévost: Manon Lescaut (London: Edward Arnold, 1972) 8.

the Mémoires d'un homme de qualité. The first French edition appeared in 1733.

Antoine François Prévost changed his name to the noble sounding Prévost d'Exiles by 1731. The name may refer to his foreign status at the time, or perhaps to the battle where he had fought as a young man.<sup>17</sup> The student, soldier, deserter, abbot, ex-tutor, ex-patriot finally settled on a career as an author, and his pen name reflected both his past and present status.

Prévost's financial situation is not well documented between the time he left his family until he had his first works published, though as a man of the cloth, he certainly had no wealth. His decision to add the manuscript of Manon Lescaut to the Mémoires d'un homme de qualité does appear to have been financially motivated, as he was in need of money at the time.<sup>18</sup> Authors were paid by the page; the greater the number of pages the higher the payment, thus the inclusion of Manon would have been a prudent consideration.

Prévost was not in Paris at the time of the speculation in the shares of Law's Compagnie, yet he had a thorough understanding of the effect the increase in the money supply had on the city. He also knew the exact prices of goods and services, the costs of living at various levels of poverty and luxury in hotels, houses, and apartments, and the amounts typically won and lost gambling. He is explicit in

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<sup>17</sup> Sgard, Vingt études 13-16.

<sup>18</sup> Mylne 12.

his accounting, and goes well beyond Lesage in the articulation of money in his writing. Money is as important an element in Manon Lescaut as any of the characters; in fact, the characters may be defined by the manners with which they relate to money.

B. Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut  
(1731)

Prévost's relationship with the reader is financially based (the reader must pay for his words), and each narrator and character in the novel has a financial tie to the others. The structure of Manon Lescaut could be described as an accountant's balance sheet, a list of debtors and creditors. In addition to debts legally borrowed, there could be a mirror sheet of illegally obtained money and goods. In the author's notice, Prévost explains that this novel, if introduced separately from his Mémoires, would have interrupted the history. He describes his young protagonist, des Grieux as a man driven by his passions; in so doing, Prévost uses a number of monetary terms such as "infortunes," "fortune," "profiter," "aventures de fortune."<sup>19</sup> These words are not chosen for their specific financial sense; rather the language of finance slides

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<sup>19</sup> Antoine-François Prévost d'Exiles, Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1967) 29-31. All subsequent references to the text will refer to this edition. Page numbers will hereafter be given in parentheses in the text.

easily into the vocabulary of the author. The author commands money for his words, which in turn are signifiers for money.

#### 1. Renoncour

The first narrator Prévost introduces is the "homme de qualité," Renoncour, who himself is astute in business by virtue of his inheritances. His social and financial standing go back at least three generations, for he finds himself in Pacy en route home from Rouen, where he made an appeal to the parliament of Normandy on his daughter's behalf regarding some land he inherited from his maternal grandfather (33). He soon learns that the commotion in this town is caused by the presence of a dozen young "filles de joie," or prostitutes being taken to Havre-de-Grâce to be deported to America. This was a fairly common sight in the eighteenth century:

... elles s'en vont deux à deux, accouplées, le pied léger, essayant de danser, lançant des drôleries qui font rire le public et les soldats aux gardes, usant largement de la liberté qu'on laisse à la dernière récréation des condamnés. Voilà l'allure et le spectacle d'une exécution de police au dix-huitième siècle: cela, c'est le départ des filles, mariées aux voleurs, pour le Mississippi.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, La Femme au dix-huitième siècle (Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1896) 311.

Thus, in the first paragraph, the reader is acquainted with both a wealthy upper class narrator and the lowest society of prostitutes; one comes by his money nobly, the others illegally. The narrator notices that one of the girls is more beautiful than her condition might indicate, a girl he would have taken "pour une personne du premier rang" (34), and he ironically indicates: "... qu'elle vaut un peu mieux que ses compagnes" (34). The choice of the verb "valoir" to describe a beautiful prostitute is ambiguous; is she worth more than the going rate for a prostitute, or does she appear to have a greater value as a person, due to her beauty and carriage? In this instance, it would appear that Renoncour is casually implying that she is a better person than her station would allow; value, a monetary term of measurement, is also an indication of quality. During Law's tenure, Prévost's narrator can put a value on anything and anyone. Money immediately becomes the first topic of conversation in the novel, as Renoncour meets des Grieux. The young man, in wanting to guard his anonymity, states that his passion for the girl has made him the most "infortuné" (35) of all men. "Fortune," which can mean both "luck" and the modern "fortune," is often mentioned in Manon, and often encompasses both; in this instance des Grieux is both out of luck and out of money. His attempt to free Manon has failed, due to the larceny of his hired rescuers, and he has had to give his remaining money to the archers taking her to the embarkation point. The bowmen

have, in fact , made him pay for his time with Manon; they are procuring her time with des Grieux in reflection of her trade as a prostitute, only now the agents are participating in the profit. Renoncour feels sorry for des Grieux, and secretly offers him four louis of gold.<sup>21</sup> While this gift is freely made by Renoncour to an upper class young man in distress, a gift of far less to the head guard is made with disdain: "Il eut l'audace de me demander deux louis" (36). This second amount is viewed as a bribe by Renoncour even though it is he who is bribing the guards to permit the visits, while the first is an offer of assistance to a fellow traveler in a difficult situation. Renoncour speaks in an accountant's voice when he recapitulates his total expenditure later in the same paragraph, "Il m'en coûta six louis d'or"(37). Two years later, while returning from London, Renoncour stays at the appropriately named Lion d'Or in Calais (Prévost makes it clear that money is the issue here), and he encounters des Grieux again, in distress. In their first moments together, the narrator remarks on des Grieux's appearance in terms of financial discomfort, "Vous me paraissez pas fort bien en argent..."(37). He sends the youth to the Lion d'Or, and prepares the reader for a change of narrator. In stating that his recounting of the young man's words is precise and exact, he acts as an accountant giving notice on an annual report. There is no reason for

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<sup>21</sup> Sgard, "L'Échelle," 425. See note 10, p. 22.

the reader to believe differently; up to this point the narrator has been meticulous on his record.

## 2. Des Grieux and Manon

The young man finally introduces himself as the chevalier des Grieux, and the triple narrative begins: Prévost speaks through Renoncour who in turn speaks through des Grieux. The story of the ruination of his fortune commences with his first encounter with Manon, and his desire to save her from the life her parents intended for her in a convent. Her first words include a reference to a debt to be owed: "elle me confessa que, si je voyais quelque jour à la pouvoir mettre en liberté, elle croirait m'être redevable de quelque chose de plus cher que la vie" (40). Des Grieux has been the receiver of favors and money up to this point, and now he shows himself as the provider, the lender to whom a favor will be owed. Manon, as the reader will become aware, understands debt and obligation well. She repeats her debt, "Elle me confessa qu'elle me trouvait aimable et qu'elle serait ravie de m'avoir obligation de sa liberté" (41). After escaping, the couple runs off toward Paris, where they intend to marry. Des Grieux states that he had approximately 50 écus and Manon had almost double that amount; their life together would be funded with 150 écus (42). At the time, this amount seems enormous: "Nous nous imaginâmes, comme des enfants sans expérience, que cette somme ne finirait jamais, et nous ne comptâmes pas moins sur le succès de nos autres mesures" (42).

In Paris both their illicit activities and their money would multiply. They settle in an apartment in the rue V..., which is doubtless the rue Vivienne in the financial quarter: "Si la rue V... est la rue Vivienne, les voilà au centre même de la vie financière et commerciale, et près des magnifiques demeures des fermiers généraux."<sup>22</sup> Today the rue Vivienne remains central to the financial district as the street fronting the Paris Bourse in the second arrondissement (running between the rue des Petits Champs and the Boulevard Montmartre). The apartment is furnished, although Prévost does not give a description of the interiors; the most alarming detail concerns a neighbor, M. de B..., a famous "fermier général" (44). Des Grieux realizes quickly that the funds they brought to Paris will not sustain them for long, and he decides to turn to his family for help:

Je résolu de me réconcilier, s'il était possible, avec mon père. Ma maîtresse était si aimable que je ne doutai point qu'elle ne pût lui plaire, si je trouvais moyen de lui faire connaître sa sagesse et son mérite: en un mot, je me flattai d'obtenir de lui la liberté de l'épouser, ayant été désabusé de l'espérance sans son consentement. Je communiquai ce projet à Manon, et je lui fis

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Hazard et ses étudiants américains, Études critiques sur Manon Lescaut (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929) 39.

entendre qu'outre les motifs de l'amour et du devoir, celui de la nécessité pouvait y entrer aussi pour quelque chose, car nos fonds étaient extrêmement altérés, et je commençais à revenir de l'opinion qu'ils étaient inépuisables. (45)

The chevalier is in financial crisis, and his thoughts would of necessity turn to his father, source of familial funds. He realizes he would have to play on his duties as a son, of love and honor, in order to take care of his needs. He is willing to be a hypocrite to finance his love for Manon; he does not hesitate to betray his family. Des Grieux is willing to destroy the traditional relationship between father and son; he transgresses the law of the father to satisfy his desires. The aristocratic system excludes Manon, and des Grieux is eager to leave the oppression of his father and duties to be with Manon, apart from the society into which he was born. Manon and his father are in direct competition with each other; he knows he should obey his father on moral, ethical, and economic grounds, but he turns to Manon.<sup>23</sup> Father and the object of desire are diametrically opposed to each other, and the manner in which they dispense money characterises them. The father's law is highly delineated, and money is not forthcoming without the

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<sup>23</sup> Catherine Cusset-Jenkins, "The law of the father in Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*," Transactions of the Eighth International Congress on the Enlightenment, II (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1992) 1284-1286.

demonstration and fulfillment of duty; thus in the future. Manon gives herself and her money freely in the present. The father represents structure and stability, which are reflected in the maintenance of a family and its fortune. Prévost has already given the reader an indication of the careful husbanding of assets by the "homme de qualité" in the first paragraph of the novel. Renoncour is continuing the family tradition of managing his investments; he has given land he inherited to his daughter, and he is returning from a trip to the Normandy parliament, where he had to file an appeal on her behalf. Asset management and an orderly transfer of property require time and care, and des Grieux does not understand this responsibility. He only knows his desperation to satisfy Manon. For Manon, money is to be enjoyed, spent, and earned with abandon and for pleasure. She cannot constrict herself at all, for she lives through her needs to consume. Des Grieux stands at the point of intersection of these two worlds, and he chooses to betray the established system for his passion. As Prévost states in the *Avis de l'auteur*, "J'ai à peindre un jeune aveugle, . . . qui, avec toutes les qualités dont se forme le plus brillant mérite, préfère, par choix, une vie obscure et vagabonde, à tous les avantages de la fortune et de la nature..." (29).

Manon knows a meeting with the elder des Grieux will end her pleasure, and she suggests they have enough to live on for a few more weeks, after which she can call on her own

relatives to help. Des Grieux turns the money management duties over to Manon, who handles them brilliantly. The table is luxuriously set, there is more opulence in their lives, even a servant; des Grieux cannot understand how Manon succeeds with so little, twelve to fifteen pistoles by his account (45). Manon amazes him with "petites acquisitions" (47) which seem to surpass their means. Then one night at dinner by candlelight, des Grieux's brother comes to take him home. Prévost has set the scene with the impression of wealth, without furnishing the reader with detail. M. B... has been hovering in the monologue, even in the apartment, up to this point as "un homme qui fait de grosses affaires, et qui a de grandes relations" (47), the young man mistakenly believes that the financier might even give him some money, thanks to an unspecified relationship with Manon's relatives; he does not hear of the neighbor's communications with the elder des Grieux until later. M. B... has evidently been paying Manon within two weeks of their arrival in Paris. The luxury he and Manon have enjoyed has come not from Manon's brilliant thriftiness, but from payments from the wealthy "fermier général" to Manon for sexual favors. Des Grieux's father takes him back to the family home, to reflect and study in a controlled environment.

More than two years later, des Grieux has decided to pursue his religious studies, rather than the sword, and he finds himself in Paris once again. Manon, now eighteen

years old, visits him and his reaction underscores their previous financial arrangement: "Ah! Manon, lui dis-je en la regardant d'un oeil triste, je ne m'étais pas attendu à la noire trahison dont vous avez payé mon coeur" (60). All communications, as well as all relationships with Manon concern the notion of payment. Nevertheless, des Grieux is willing to give up his fortune and his family to be with Manon again. He asks her how B... was able to seduce her, and she responds that,

... il avait fait sa déclaration en fermier général, c'est-à-dire en lui marquant dans une lettre que le payement serait proportionné aux faveurs; qu'elle avait capitulé d'abord, mais sans autre dessein que de tirer de lui quelque somme considérable qui pût servir à nous faire vivre commodément.... (61)

The seduction was a contract, a financial arrangement of payment for services rendered. Manon is comfortable with the terms. The financier has been extremely generous, for Manon is now astonishingly well off; she has learned a great deal about business from B... She has in her possession furniture, jewelry, and nearly 60,000 francs from her two years under B...'s contract (62). It would be impossible to comprehend the fluctuation in Manon's financial condition if it were taken out of the context of the term of John Law, Controller General and the Compagnie des Indes. Penniless

servants could become rich overnight during his tenure; a hunchback named Bombario rented his hunch out as a desk for the speculators and earned 150,000 livres in a few days.<sup>24</sup> A prostitute could join the bourgeoisie; a "fermier général" could make enough money to support a prostitute in grand fashion. Prévost depicts the great financial fluidity and flux which characterized the time. He uses the example of a pretty girl (fascinated by luxury and willing to sell herself) to demonstrate what could happen during this wild period, when there were no rules in the marketplace. According to Jean Sgard, 30,000 livres or (francs) per year income in the eighteenth century would place Manon in the upper bourgeoisie range, just under the income of the nobility. This sum is spectacular, even incredible, particularly since Prévost will state the going rate for a prostitute in Paris as only one écu per hour, later in the novel, according to a guard accompanying Manon (168). As a means of comparison, it cost a noblewoman approximately 36,000 livres per year to present a "bonne figure" in Paris during the Regency. Manual labor brought between 100 and 300 livres annually; specialized workers, college lecturers, and clerks earned between 300 and 1,000 livres; university professors, private tutors, editors earned from 1,000 to 3,000; bourgeois professions brought 5,000 to 20,000. A

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Lacroix, XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, institutions, usages et costumes (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1885) engraving of Bombario, 203.

nobleman's income of between 40,000 and 100,000 livres was also expected by bishops and other high ranking clerics, while an income of 100,000 to 400,000 and higher would be considered a princely amount. Philippe-Egalité, who was the richest man in France during his lifetime, enjoyed a revenue of 7,000,000 livres in 1789.<sup>25</sup> The eighteen-year-old Manon must have worked astoundingly hard during this period, for her income was proportional to the favors rendered, according to her contract with B... (This sum contrasts vividly with the careful accounting by Renoncour in the first pages of the novel, where he takes note of the six louis he gives to des Grieux and to the guard.)

In contrast with Manon's riches, des Grieux leaves the seminary to be with her without the means to support her, "j'étais sans un sou" (62). His condition remains unchanged from their first cohabitation. He considers Manon rather rich, and together they decide to leave the furnishings B... has given her; she will take the jewelry and the 60,000 francs, which she feels is fair. The couple goes to Chaillot to find lodging. Des Grieux contemplates their financial situation as well as Manon's spending habits:

La première vertu de Manon, non plus que la mienne, n'était pas l'économie. Voici le plan que je me proposai: Soixante mille francs, lui dis-je, peuvent nous soutenir pendant dix ans. Deux mille

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<sup>25</sup> Sgard, "l'Échelle," 426-428.

écus nous suffiront chaque année, si nous continuons de vivre à Chaillot. Nous y mènerons une vie honnête, mais simple. Notre unique dépense sera l'entretien d'un carrosse, et pour les spectacles. Nous nous régierons. Vous aimez l'Opéra: nous irons deux fois la semaine. Pour le jeu, nous nous bornerons tellement que nos pertes ne passeront jamais deux pistoles. Il est impossible que, dans l'espace de dix ans, il n'arrive point de changement dans ma famille; mon père est âgé, il peut mourir. Je me trouverai du bien, et nous serons alors au-dessus de toutes nos autres craintes. (63-64)

Des Grieux believes in Manon's fidelity during this projected ten year period, as well as her ability to live within a budget. His plan, which would give them 6,000 francs per year (2,000 écus are equivalent to 6,000 francs), would afford them quite a modest, bourgeois living. Des Grieux assumes Manon can adjust her spending accordingly. He views their situation as temporary, and feels he can count on a generous inheritance from his father (despite his flagrant betrayal of family honor), which would guarantee them a comfortable life style. Des Grieux is always aware of his future income. [Later, he will comment, ". . . mon père ne ferait pas difficulté de me donner de quoi vivre honorablement à Paris, parce qu'étant dans ma vingtième

année, j'entrerais en droit d'exiger ma part du bien de ma mère" (119)]. His views of the future contrast with Manon's past. She cannot settle into an honest, simple life waiting for him to receive his inheritance; during the previous two years she was certainly not in a casual housekeeping arrangement with B..., and she evidently enjoys the luxuries she has earned, and she is not ashamed of her activities. Manon is a consumer of the first order and she is incapable of honoring limits: "Manon était passionnée pour le plaisir" (64). The arrangement des Grieux envisions lasts only one month (64) before Manon's needs lead them to revise their plans. In addition to their residence in Chaillot, Manon insists on a second, a furnished apartment in Paris. Prévost places Manon's brother on the same street, and soon the young man is spending his time with Manon and des Grieux, making himself at home in both their residences. He also convinces them to pay his debts, which are considerable (66) due to his gambling habit. Prévost paints Lescaut as a financial leech; his money habits define him.

A fire at their house in Chaillot destroys everything, but it is their safe that most concerns des Grieux, and rightly so. Prévost concocts the worst possible scenario for the couple; not only has fire destroyed the house, but the box containing their money is gone. John Law uses an analogous example in discussing the importance of the establishment of banks, in Chapter III of Money and Trade Considered:

Besides the Convenience of easier and quicker Payments, these Banks [in Amsterdam and Sweden] saves [sic] the Expence of Casheers, the expence of Bags and Carriage, Losses by bad Money, and the Money is safer than in the Merchant's Houses; for 'tis less liable to Fire and Robbery, the necessary Measures being taken to prevent them."

Prévost may moralise in this instance, regarding ill gotten gains and illicit activities, but he may also be demonstrating the necessity of banks, in light of the time he spent at the home of John Eyles. (A robbery will occur at their next residence.)

Des Grieux is visibly upset over the loss of his money, as his response demonstrates:

Je tremblai pour notre argent, qui était renfermé dans une petite caisse. Je me rendis promptement à Chaillot. Diligence inutile; la caisse avait déjà disparu. J'éprouvai alors qu'on peut aimer l'argent sans être avare. (66)

The physical reaction, the fearful trembling des Grieux experiences when thinking of his money recalls Molière's "l'Avare," and underlines the importance of his cash. In Act IV, scene 7, when Harpagon discovers his money missing, he cries, "Hélas! Mon pauvre agent, mon pauvre argent, mon cher ami, on m'a privé de toi; et, puisque tu m'es enlevé,

<sup>26</sup> Law, Money and Trade, 30.

j'ai perdu mon support, ma consolation, ma joie; tout est fini pour moi..."<sup>27</sup> While Harpagon and his money form a physical couple, des Grieux is more in love with what his money can do, but his response is no less physical. In order to love Manon, des Grieux must have money; he loves the money he has, for it will permit him to afford Manon. Money is a requirement for her attachment, because des Grieux knows she will leave him if he does not have enough: "Elle aimait trop l'abondance et les plaisirs pour me les sacrifier: Je la perdrai, m'écriai-je" (66). Des Grieux is faithful, constant in his passion for Manon, yet he knows Manon's fidelity is not reciprocal without money.

Their plans changed, des Grieux turns to gambling, with the help of Lescaut, at the hôtel de Transylvanie. Des Grieux is incapable of earning money. He has no skills, his only training is in religious studies, and as a member of the upper class he may not work.<sup>28</sup> Whereas Manon is an active, physical earner, des Grieux represents the nobility, which may only receive money passively through marriage or inheritance. Inheritance is the traditional path of the transmission of funds.<sup>29</sup> Des Grieux still believes income will come to him in this way, but Manon cannot wait, so the

<sup>27</sup> Molière, *L'Avare*, (Paris: Bordas, 1985) 98.

<sup>28</sup> Franklin Ford, *Robe and Sword* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968) 25-26.

<sup>29</sup> Henri Lafon, "Problèmes d'argent dans le roman français du XVIIIe siècle," *Roman et Société: Actes du colloque international de Valenciennes. Mai 1983* (Valenciennes: Cahiers de l'Uer Froissart, No. 8 Hiver 1983) 24-25.

only course of action open to him is offered by Lescaut. Gambling was an illicit activity in the eighteenth century, prohibited by thirty-two edicts between 1643 and 1777.<sup>30</sup> Despite the laws, gambling was common in society at all levels. Louis XIV permitted it at the royal châteaux. Gambling was so prevalent it may be considered a primary characteristic of the Regency period<sup>31</sup> when money circulated freely. Between 1715 and 1720 gambling was tolerated even publicly, after which the players were less open.<sup>32</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century, there were approximately 250 clandestine gambling houses in Paris, with the largest concentration in the sixth arrondissement. The hôtel de Transylvanie, mentioned in Manon Lescaut, actually existed and was located at 9, quai Malaquais at the rue Bonaparte in the sixth.<sup>33</sup> John Law's takeover of the French mint, and the subsequent increase in the money supply diffused specie throughout Paris; the easy extra cash found its way to the tables. Law's name was even pronounced "Lass" or "l'as": the ace.<sup>34</sup> His great gamble with the French economic system was reflected in the widespread gambling in Paris. Law's banking scheme resulted in what can be called gambling's

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas M. Kavanagh, Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 30.

<sup>31</sup> Jean-Louis Bory, "Manon, l'Amour et l'Argent," La Revue de Paris, Avril 1958: 86.

<sup>32</sup> Olivier Grussi, La vie quotidienne des joueurs sous l'ancien régime à Paris et à la cour (Paris: Hachette, 1985) 40.

<sup>33</sup> Bory, 86.

<sup>34</sup> Voltaire, Précis, 1308.

golden age, when investing and betting were essentially interchangeable; the investors in the Mississippi shares enjoyed great profits during that period, and losses from gambling were simply deducted from the profits.<sup>35</sup>

Des Grieux finds success at the tables (his chosen game is Pharaoh), and becomes adept as a cheat, which he finds, "hâta si fort les progrès de ma fortune" (74). Prévost allows for both meanings of "fortune" here; des Grieux improves both his fortune and his luck by cheating. He is able to afford a leased furnished home, and he and Manon enjoy a life of pleasure and love: "L'augmentation de nos richesses redoubla notre affection; Vénus et la Fortune n'avaient d'esclaves plus heureux et plus tendres" (76). Here Prévost physically couples love and money. Manon as Venus loves des Grieux as the provider of money (and the recipient of luck while cheating at cards). She repays his money with affection, and the payment is in direct proportion to the sum. This relationship is based on the same equation that has characterized Manon's past encounter, even though she does seem to have feelings for des Grieux. Her contract with B... was for payment to be contingent upon services rendered, and here des Grieux similarly receives double her love as his income rises. This happiness is short lived, for their money is stolen by the valet and the maid. While des Grieux files a complaint with the police,

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<sup>35</sup> Kavanagh, 86.

Lescaut introduces his sister to M. de G... M..., and they soon have an agreement, to des Grieux's chagrin, "Cet honorable marché fut conclu avant mon retour" (77). The purchase of Manon's services is a transaction, a deal like any other in the marketplace; the reader knows that Manon is well versed in contracts, for she had described her arrangement with B... as typical of a "fermier général." In this case, she knows what she is worth, that she can command a hefty price, and, though she loves des Grieux, she is more capable of handling their finances. She writes, "...laisse-moi, pour quelque temps, le ménagement de notre fortune" (78). The deal she has worked out involves a gift of 200 pistoles and the promise to care for her "orphaned younger brother," namely des Grieux. Des Grieux is willing to play the part for the money; he accepts this figurative desexualization to make it easier for Manon to earn. He must act the part of the brother in order to let her make enough money to restore him as her lover. G... M... has agreed to furnish an apartment for Manon and for him, as well as pay her 4,800 livres annually (80). This sum is considerable, though it may not seem as extravagant as the contract Manon had with B..., however, this amount is guaranteed in advance, and Manon can count on much more. In fact, G... M... is generous from the start of their arrangement, and promises to bring her jewels, a pearl necklace, and half of her annual remuneration once the deal is agreed. Manon calculates that she will earn much more, for he must pay for his pleasure, "Il est vrai qu'il m'a

baisé plus d'un million de fois les mains; il est juste qu'il paye ce plaisir, et ce ne sera point trop que cinq ou six mille francs, en proportionnant le prix à ses richesses et à son âge" (83). Manon is not disappointed when G... M... arrives and gives her the promised necklace, bracelets, and pearl pendants, worth at least 1,000 écus (3,000 livres), as well as 2,400 livres. The old man realizes soon that he has been duped, and there is an abrupt end to their relations, thanks to the intervention of the police. Both are sent to prison; Manon goes to the dreaded "hôpital," while des Grieux goes to Saint-Lazare. Prévost thus establishes a pattern of punishment which delineates the belief that illicit love may not be sustained by ill-gotten gains. The money the couple earns is as tainted as their affair, and the great sums they accumulate through prostitution and gambling (actually, cheating on gambling), is also tainted. The money takes on a personality of its own here, for it "behaves" differently from the money in the hands of Renoncour or the elder des Grieux. The money of the "hommes de qualité" stays within the families and grows, supporting subsequent generations. It is proper money, and it underlines and supports the legal, moral, ethical, and social structure of the society. The money of Manon and des Grieux has opposing characteristics; it dissipates, almost evaporates as soon as it is garnered. Their money cannot sustain them, there is never enough. It is as legally, morally, ethically, and socially doomed as is their

relationship. Prévost will continue to punish the couple, using money as his instrument; the wages of sin may not be rewarded. The author underscores the importance of the laws by creating des Grieux as the wayward scion of a fine family; if he were a boy with no family, the story would lose its poignance. Prévost depicts him as a tangent leaving one circular field for another, an example of a paradigm shift that is unsustainable. He can neither return to his origins nor survive in Manon's sphere.

Des Grieux cannot live without Manon, and he asks her brother to bring a gun to him in prison. Lescaut asks if he intends to kill anyone with it, and des Grieux responds, "...j'avais si peu dessein de tuer qu'il n'était pas même nécessaire que le pistolet fût chargé" (99). Lescaut brings him a loaded gun anyway, and des Grieux unwittingly kills the Father who has the keys; he never wanted to kill him, just to scare him. Des Grieux escapes from prison after the murder and his thoughts turn to Manon. He buys her freedom with one louis of gold paid to the valet assigned to Manon (107), and the promise of another to the driver of the coach. They arrive in Chaillot at eleven o'clock at night, and even though des Grieux believes that love is greater than treasures and riches, he is concerned that he has not told Manon of his financial situation, "Elle ignorait que je fusse mal en argent; je me gardai bien de lui en rien apprendre, étant résolu de retourner seul à Paris, le lendemain, pour chercher quelque remède à cette fâcheuse

espèce de maladie" (111). This is the second time Prévost has used the expression "mal en argent" (the first was uttered by Renoncour upon seeing des Grieux again after a two year absence), and now it has physical implications. If the first use indicated a shoddy appearance, des Grieux now considers it a true sickness, one curable by an infusion of money. If he trembled for for his money when it disappeared, he once again aches for its absence. Manon also suffers from this illness, for she appears pale and thin (111), and she says it is not because of the death of her brother, who has been killed by a fellow card player who had lost all his money (100 écus) to Lescaut in less than an hour (115). Prévost could not allow Lescaut to live, and a death over money won at cards is an expedient end.

Des Grieux is now twenty years old and in possession of 100 pistoles, and an unsteady promise of fidelity from Manon. His happiness dissipates when Manon finds her own cure for her money malady: the son of G... M... The deal is brokered by M. de T..., who relates the wishes of his friend. The son is far more generous than his father, for he guarantees her a huge present and 10,000 livres annually (127). Des Grieux listens intently of Manon's plans regarding the son of their nemesis:

Il me vient un dessin admirable, s'écria-t-elle,  
 et je suis toute glorieuse de l'invention. G... M...  
 est le fils de notre plus cruel ennemi; il faut  
 nous venger du père, non pas sur le fils, mais sur

sa bourse. Je veux l'écouter, accepter ses présents, et me moquer de lui. . . . La résolution fut prise de faire une dupe de G... M..., et par un tour bizarre de mon sort, il arriva que je devins la sienne. (129)

Manon lives through the wallets of others, so it is logical that she would also take revenge on the man's money. This metonym is full of symbolism for Manon and for des Grieux, as well as for the reader. Revenge on the purse of a financier would be justified, so Manon's argument is that thievery in this case would be warranted. Manon is able to remove the illegality from the act, and des Grieux follows her logic easily. [Prévost has given an earlier indication of the contempt for financiers in describing M. de B..., and he also extends the scorn to merchants, for when des Grieux purchases fabrics at the end of the first part of the novel, M. de T... , "défendit absolument aux marchands de recevoir un sou de moi"] (117). Des Grieux wants what she wants, and if she has the resources to get the money, he will not try to stop her. A declaration of love is soon proffered by the young G... M... and he offers to share his 40,000 livres income with her. This is just the start, for he can count on more after his father dies (130). In addition to the money, he promises, "un carrosse, un hôtel meublé, une femme de chambre, trois laquais et un cuisinier" (130). The lifestyle he describes places Manon beyond the bourgeoisie,

and into the income level of the lower nobility. Des Grieux fears she is seduced by the riches, and her promises of fidelity to him may fade. They make plans to meet near the Comédie (which was on the rue neuve des Fossées-Saint-Germain, now known as the rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie), on the rue Saint-André-des-Arcs [sic] (132), in the sixth arrondissement; Manon would bring the money and presents to the theater for her assignation with G... M..., she would excuse herself, leave the loge, meet des Grieux, and the two would then be off. The plan is aborted by Manon, who cannot leave G... M..., for, as she explains in a letter to des Grieux that, "G... M... l'avait reçue avec une politesse et une magnificence au-delà de toutes ses idées. Il l'avait comblée de présents; il lui faisait envisager un sort de reine" (133). Manon cannot resist such riches. In consolation, Manon offers des Grieux a girl in her place, "elle avait trouvé le moyen de me procurer une des plus jolies filles de Paris, qui serait la porteuse de son billet. Signé, votre fidèle amante, Manon Lescaut" (133). Manon replaces herself with another; she is procured and can now afford to procure for des Grieux; he can only give her love, and she needs furnished homes and coaches. This substitution emphasizes Manon's role as prostitute; she considers her person fungible, despite her professions of love and fidelity. For Manon, fidelity is a signifier that is in contrast with des Grieux's concept of the signified, and he is insulted, angry, and sad. Her fidelity is of another order; she can

only be faithful to her passion for money. As an expression of love, she purchases the time of another for des Grieux, as her own time and affection are purchased. Her actions underscore her value system, for she does what she knows best, and she does not think her gift is an insult. Des Grieux rejects the offer, and, despite his hurt [expressed in financial terms, "C'est donc le parjure qui est récompensé!" (139)], he cannot stay angry with Manon for long. She relates that G... M... has given her 10,000 livres in cash, and jewels, including the necklace and the pearl bracelets that his father had given her earlier (141-142). Manon does not want to leave empty handed; she feels it would be a shame to give up such riches, and she relates an illegal scheme to steal them. The precautions are not sufficient, they are caught, and land in prison once again. The punishment is mitigated for des Grieux this time because he has enough money to pay for better treatment, "Mon argent eut un fort bon effet. On me mit dans une chambre proprement meublée, et l'on m'assura que Manon en avait une pareille" (153). Des Grieux's father arrives and settles matters with G... M... and his son, and together they apprise the police of their agreement; des Grieux is to be freed and Manon is either to be imprisoned for life or sent to America. The two fathers represent the established social structure, and they can negotiate with the police. Their sons are not members of the order yet, and Manon has no family to negotiate for her, so she is without paternal

protection.<sup>36</sup> The lieutenant general of the police assures them she will be on the next boat for Mississippi (158). Des Grieux cannot return home with his father, he cannot live without Manon, so he accompanies the group bound for the port, with only fifteen pistoles in his wallet (168). He soon learns he must pay one écu per hour to be with Manon, the price for a prostitute in Paris (168), in great contrast with the riches offered Manon by her various financiers.

In New Orleans, Manon changes dramatically; she undergoes a complete metamorphosis. Her passions are heartfelt, and she no longer needs luxury. She is content with their humble accommodations, and happy with the love des Grieux offers. He is captivated by her, and by the happiness she radiates: "Et puis, tu es une chimiste admirable, ajoutai-je en l'embrassant, tu transformes tout en or" (176). Manon's own transformation is reflected in the transformation of her relation to money. In Paris, she was a consumer, a user of money. Her consumption was based on her ability to steal it, and her appetite was insatiable. She wanted to feel like a queen, and happily prostituted her body to fuel her desires. Paris had been the locus amoenus for her illicit activities, and her beauty thrived on all she could get. Manon and des Grieux had been happy in Paris, despite their flagrant neglect of the law and

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<sup>36</sup> Sgard, Vingt études 145.

conscience; Manon's material needs superceded any social structure. Prévost creates in New Orleans an environment in which Manon cannot seek riches, for there are only bare necessities. It is an ideal location for Manon's conversion to perfect citizen, and des Grieux expresses her new personality in terms of her old. She is now an alchemist, for she can generate gold by her touch. She is no longer a consumer, she is a producer of gold, and she is faithful and loving toward des Grieux. The converted Manon must pay for her past sins, however, and Prévost has her die away from all corrupt civilization (and all worldly goods) as the French know it. She cannot survive away from the luxury that motivates her; fidelity and simplicity lead to her death. Manon's redemption from prostitution dictates her end.

### 3. Tiberge

Tiberge is des Grieux's loyal friend and dupe; he is an earnest young man who obeys the laws of God, country, and family. He respects and reveres his friend, to his detriment. Tiberge is witness to des Grieux's activities, from the first encounter with Manon (where Tiberge is deceived by the couple) to des Grieux's return from New Orleans after her death. His is the voice of reason and honor, he never wavers in his good advice to his friend. Tiberge is also not deceived by Manon's occupation. He searches furtively for his friend after his initial trip to Paris, and after six weeks, he encounters Manon at the

theater, "[...] qu'elle y était dans une parure si éclatante qu'il s'était imaginé qu'elle devait cette fortune à un nouvel amant" (56). When he relates this des Grieux is steady in his love for Manon, despite hearing the truth from his friend. He does not accept Tiberge's counsel until after Manon's death.

Tiberge learns quickly to trade what little money he has for information from des Grieux, in an effort to return him to the proper path. Des Grieux agrees to meet him in the gardens of the Palais Royal during his gambling days in Paris (after the fire destroyed his house and money), but not out of friendship. Des Grieux reflects, "Je n'osais lui déclarer que c'était de sa bourse que j'avais besoin" (72). Tiberge listens, and demands information, specifically, des Grieux's and Manon's address before he gives him 100 pistoles, borrowed on his future income. Tiberge is not rich, he is a man devoted to his religious studies, and only receives a benefice from the Church of 1,000 écus per year, and he freely offers his friend ten per cent of the first year's living (72). This is a huge gift, considering 1,000 livres were just enough to live on, but no more.<sup>37</sup> Though des Grieux comprehends "tout le prix de sa générosité" (73), he shuns his good advice.

Prévost uses Tiberge as the voice of reason throughout the novel, and has the young man appear at times of crisis

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<sup>37</sup> Sgard, "l'Échelle," 427.

in des Grieux's life. Tiberge consistently demonstrates the right path with dignity, but des Grieux just as consistently ignores him. Tiberge may be a cleric, but he is not unaware of the city around him. His speech is characterized by references to finance. His furor over des Grieux's opulent lifestyle reflects the illicit manner in which it was earned, and he peppers his threats of divine castigation with words des Grieux can understand,

" Il est impossible, me dit-il, que les richesses qui servent à l'entretien de vos désordres vous soient venues par des voies légitimes. [...] La plus terrible punition de Dieu serait de vous en laisser jouir tranquillement. [...] Adieu, ingrat et faible ami. [...] je romps aujourd'hui tout commerce avec vous, et je déteste la vie que vous menez.

(75-76)

"Commerce" explains the nature of their relationship; des Grieux wants money and will tolerate a modicum of moralizing to get it, and Tiberge pays for the opportunity to communicate with his friend. Despite his protestations, he remains faithful throughout, and travels to New Orleans, arriving after Manon's death. He accompanies des Grieux on the voyage back to France. Money is as unnecessary to his happiness as it is essential to des Grieux's. His morality dictates his actions, just as des Grieux is directed by his passion. Des Grieux regards money with the same sanctity

that Tiberge reveres God. Des Grieux cannot appreciate and accept his friend until after his experiences in the New World.

Prévost has created a fascinating story of lust, passion, crime, betrayal, love and death infused with the scent of money. Each person may be characterized by his actions with, and reactions to, money. Renoncour and des Grieux, Senior behave as "hommes de qualité," and their financial dealings are conducted accordingly. Both men are mindful of their duty to protect their assets and provide for future generations. Tiberge may be led to his profession because he is not wealthy, but the Church provides a proper path for honorable young men. B... and G... M... are less entrenched in the social system, having earned vast sums relatively quickly during their lifetimes. They have taken advantage of financial opportunities open to them, and are now rich. B... finances his pleasure as does G...M..., but the latter must also protect his son and seek punishment for Manon. The Mississippi bubble created by Law provided such an advantageous set of circumstances for anyone investing in the shares between 1717 and 1719, that the two financiers likely owe a large part of their fortunes to the dramatic rise in share prices. In contrast, Renoncour and des Grieux, Senior probably receive their incomes based upon rents received from property, so their financial dealings would be conservative and not influenced

by the market. Their incomes are probably affected by the high rate of inflation, which they could not protect against without investing in the shares. It would be unlikely that they would trust Law's scheme, for they are accustomed to real assets and rent contracts. Prévost dramatizes the establishment through the "hommes de qualité," and at the same time he gives the later reader a key to the problems caused by the existing economic system. Law's project caused huge shifts in the marketplace, and in the distribution of wealth in France. The wealthy were no longer exclusively of the noble classes; anyone, even a prostitute could get rich. Prévost has the father of des Grieux and G... M... working together to send Manon away, so he is not aware of the problems that will come, but the examples he gives of the way these men deal with money may be seen as presaging the economic problems of the French Revolution. The huge financial swings he describes with regard to Manon and des Grieux reflect the explosive marketplace as well as the changing social structure the redistribution of funds effects. The young man leaves the class into which he is born; his disrespect is mirrored in his disregard for his family's money. He would give it all to Manon, which would destroy his family. The coupling of Manon and des Grieux represents the clash of the classes, (and his willingness to leave his class indicates that social fluidity is not only from the bottom up, but also from the top down) but Prévost furnishes other examples of

social collisions. The corruption of the guards who demand money from des Grieux and Renoncour during the voyage to le Havre may be stereotypical, but also indicative of low pay. Manon's willing corruption by rich men underscores her desire to be rich herself, while the theft of money by the servants points to a lack of guilt; in a society where almost anything goes, the explosion in the money supply supercedes the law. Money talks, even in jail. Only in the New World, with its nascent social structure, can des Grieux and Manon be a couple. Money is not an issue there, so they may live removed from the desire it generates, but for just a short time, for Manon cannot survive away from the pull of riches.

Chapter Three: Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux  
(1688-1763)

While most studies of Marivaux's work focus on his treatment of love and language, especially his "marivaudage," in fact there is a tremendous amount of social commentary, not criticism, but description in his work focussing particularly on the role of money in social relations. Marivaux studies the rich noble class and its mechanism for self-preservation by which marriage and inheritance preserve and engender wealth. He also studies impoverishment and fortune from a feminine perspective.

A. Background

Marivaux was born on February 4, 1688 in the Saint-Gervais parish of Paris to Nicolas Carlet and his wife, Marie-Anne Bulet. The match was not even; his mother's family was rich and socially prominent, while his father's family was losing social standing, his father even lowering himself into finance. His mother's brother was a member of the Académie d'Architecture and an "architecte des bâtiments du roi."<sup>1</sup> His father's family had originally lived in Normandy where a number of his forefathers had been members

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Gilot, Les Journaux de Marivaux, Itinéraire moral et accomplissement esthétique, Tome 1, (Lille: Production des Thèses, Université de Lille III, 1975) 22.

of the Parliament. The family, which had been part of the "noblesse de robe," then,

[...] était descendue de la robe à la finance, et le père de Marivaux avait possédé quelque temps un emploi pécuniaire à Riom en Auvergne. Le fils ne voulut être magistrat, ni financier; mais sans autre fortune et sans autre titre que ses talents, il a donné plus d'existence à son nom, que tous les financiers et les magistrats ses ancêtres.<sup>2</sup>

Marivaux's father accepted the position as Director of the mint in Riom in 1699 (the same year his wife's brother was chosen to design a plan for the Place Vendôme)<sup>3</sup>, when his son was a young boy. This position was only moderately lucrative, and cost approximately 9,000 livres, which places the post between that of the Director of Salt (cost: 7,000 livres) and President of the Election (12,000 livres). In contrast, the post of "Premier Président de la Cour des Aides" brought 100,000 livres, and the "Conseillers" brought 50,000.<sup>4</sup> Nicolas Carlet did not get rich in Riom; his annual revenue totaled 1,228 livres, plus rights on the

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<sup>2</sup> Jean le Rond d'Alembert, "Éloge de Marivaux," Oeuvres complètes de D'Alembert, tome III, 1er Partie, (Paris: Belin, 1821-2; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1967) 577-578. It should be noted that subsequent scholars have been unable to confirm whether the Carlet family had been members of the "noblesse de robe."

<sup>3</sup> Gilot 24.

<sup>4</sup> Marie-Jeanne Durry, À propos de Marivaux (Paris: S.E.D.E.S., 1960) 14-15.

money coined.<sup>5</sup> He probably stayed at Riom until his death in 1719<sup>6</sup>, (though other reports state that he later transferred to Limoges, where he may have held a similar job at the Hôtel des Monnaies).<sup>7</sup> In contrast, between 1699 and 1710, the Bullet family built more than a dozen "hôtels particuliers" in the Place Vendôme, including the hôtel de Pennautier, the hôtel Crozat (now the Ritz Hotel), the hôtel de Bourvalais (the Ministry of Justice), and the hôtel Villemaré.<sup>8</sup>

Marivaux enjoyed a comfortable childhood and proved himself to be a good student:

Son enfance fut comme celle de presque tous les grands hommes: il annonça de bonne heure, par des progrès rapides dans ses études, la finesse d'esprit qui lui était propre & qui caractérise ses ouvrages. [...] Son père [...] ne négligea rien pour faire donner à son fils une belle éducation. [...] Il fut admiré de ses Maîtres, & il a fait les délices de tous ceux qui l'ont connu. [...] Il ne chercha point à devenir Auteur, il fut étonné de l'être devenu.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Durry 15.

<sup>6</sup> Durry 14.

<sup>7</sup> Gustave Larroumet, Marivaux, sa vie et ses oeuvres (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882) 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Gilot 25.

<sup>9</sup> Lesbros de la Versane, "Vie ou Éloge historique de M. de Marivaux," Esprit de Marivaux, ou analectes de ses ouvrages, Précédés de la vie historique de l'auteur (Paris: Chez la Veuve Pierres, 1769) 5-6.

On November 30, 1710, Marivaux went to Paris to study law. He re-enrolled on April 25, 1711, and again on April 30, 1712 after satisfying Parisian residency requirements. He was last enrolled in 1713.<sup>10</sup>

It is not clear when his name changed from Carlet to Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux. By 1710, the future writer added "de" to Carlet on the official registers, then an "M" was added by 1712 in the dedication of Le Père prudent et équitable.<sup>11</sup> In 1716 he may have borrowed the "de Chamblain" from a relative on his mother's side, Jean-Baptiste Bullet de Chamblain.<sup>12</sup> It may have been borrowed elsewhere, as "le nom de Chamblain se trouva malheureusement pris aussi par d'autres, et dans ce monde de financiers, qui pis est."<sup>13</sup> Marivaux was not a family name; it was added around the same time, and first appears in the Iliade travestie (1717) in the dedication to the duc de Noailles, signed Carlet de Marivaux.

Marivaux was registered with the "Faculté de Droit" again in 1721, and he was designated "avocat au Parlement" in 1722.<sup>14</sup> Between 1720 and 1755, he wrote no fewer than thirty comedies for both the Comédiens Français and the Comédiens Italiens. The Marquis d'Argens characterises his

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<sup>10</sup> Durry 19-26.

<sup>11</sup> Durry 11.

<sup>12</sup> Gilot 25.

<sup>13</sup> Édouard Fournier in Larroumet, note 3, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Frédéric Deloffre and Michel Gilot, introduction, Journaux et Oeuvres diverses, by Marivaux (Paris: Garnier, 1988) viii-ix.

plays: "[...] on pourrait donner à toutes les pièces de notre Auteur le titre de la surprise de l'amour."<sup>15</sup> In addition, Marivaux wrote two unfinished novels: La Vie de Marianne (1731-1741) and Le Paysan parvenu (1736), as well as the collected stories and articles of Le Spectateur Français (1722), L'Indigent Philosophe (1728), and Le Cabinet du Philosophe (1734). He became a member of the Académie française in 1743. In a letter to Berger in February 1736, Voltaire critiques Marivaux's style:

Je lui reprocherai au contraire de trop détailler les passions et de manquer quelquefois le chemin du coeur, en prenant des routes un peu trop détournées. J'aime d'autant plus son esprit que je le prierais de le moins prodiguer!<sup>16</sup>

Marivaux married Colombe Bollogne, a wealthy bourgeoise, on July 7, 1717.<sup>17</sup> Colombe was five years older than her husband (she was 34, he was 29), and comparatively quite wealthy. She entered the marriage,

[...] suivie de ses soixante corsets, de 480 chemises, de 500 mouchoirs, d'on ne sait combien de robes en toile à fleurs doublées de taffetas, en soie blanche, en velours noirs, en damas de

<sup>15</sup> Lesbros de la Versane 11-12.

<sup>16</sup> Voltaire, The Complete Works of Voltaire, ed. Theodore Besterman, vol.87, "Correspondence IV", Institut et Musée Voltaire, Genève (Toronto, U of Toronto P, 1969) Letter D1000, 334-5.

<sup>17</sup> Frédéric Deloffre and Michel Gilot, reproduction of the marriage contract, after title page.

Lyon, en satin à bouquets, en dentelles, escortée aussi de 40.000 livres de rente, ce qui n'est pas négligeable.<sup>16</sup>

She also had,

[...] 4 douzaines de chemises de toile d'Hollande, assez de coiffes de dentelle de Malines ou d'Angleterre, de guarnitures négligées, de guarnitures de nuit, de manches, de tours, de fichus, de franges, pour qu'on les estimât 2.025 livres.<sup>17</sup>

Other elegant clothing was valued at 500 livres. Her jewelry was also admired: a ring with seven small diamonds, a cross made of diamonds, a pair of diamond earrings, a small emerald cross, and red earrings, with a combined value of 2.000 livres.<sup>18</sup> Roy states above that Colombe had an income of "40.000 livres de rente," yet Durry states her dowry as 40,000 livres, not income, divided as follows: 10,000 in furniture and her trousseau, 7,500 in cash, 6,000 in paper money ("billets d'État"), 16,500 in notes of various individuals.<sup>19</sup> If Colombe placed 30,000 livres at four per cent, she would have realized an income of 1,200 livres annually, which would have provided them with an

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<sup>16</sup> Claude Roy, Lire Marivaux, Les Cahiers du Rhône, avril, 1947, no. 66 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1947) 37-38.

<sup>19</sup> Durry 45.

<sup>20</sup> Durry 46.

<sup>21</sup> Durry 49.

income just below bourgeois.<sup>22</sup> Marivaux thus married well; he gained an income and a social position with Colombe. Marivaux's father died in April 1719, and two months later he requested the rights to assume his father's post.<sup>23</sup> He renounced his rights of succession to his father's position in 1722, stating that the charge was "plus oiseuse que profitable,"<sup>24</sup> (also underscoring the difference in the wealth of the two families).

The Marivaux family included a daughter, Colombe-Prospère, born during the short marriage, which ended with the death of Madame de Marivaux in 1723.

Marivaux decided to sell his wife's "rentes" in the fall of 1719 in order to acquire shares in Law's Compagnie d'Occident. He chose to invest at the end of the rise in the market, and he doubled his fortune in a short time, but he soon lost everything;<sup>25</sup> the entire system would collapse in 1720 [see Introduction, section C]. The bankruptcy of Law's System resulted in the bankruptcy of the Marivaux fortune, and Marivaux was left, after the subsequent death of his wife, with a young child to raise. Colombe-Prospère received an annuity of 55 livres from her maternal great-uncle (from the Compagnie des Indes) by 1725.<sup>26</sup> By the time Mademoiselle de Marivaux became a nun at the Abbaye du

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<sup>22</sup> Sgard, "l'Échelle," 427.

<sup>23</sup> Gilot 91

<sup>24</sup> Deloffre and Gilot ix.

<sup>25</sup> Larroumet 75-76.

<sup>26</sup> Durry 58.

Thr sor in 1746, she was poor, but thanks to the generosity of an admirer of her father, she was able to stay at the abbey:

[...] feu M. le Duc d'Orl ans, qui connoissoit la m diocrit  de la fortune de notre Auteur & qui l'honcroit de sa bienveillance, dota Mademoiselle de Marivaux, & fournit avec g n rosit    tous les frais de la profession.<sup>27</sup>

Marivaux eventually received a pension from the king of approximately 4,000 livres annually. He could have lived comfortably on this sum, but he was generous to those less fortunate than he; he lived on only 1,500 livres, and spent the rest on others:<sup>28</sup> "Avec une fortune tr s-born e, et que beaucoup d'autres auraient appel e indigence, il se d pouillait de tout en faveur des malheureux."<sup>29</sup>

Marivaux remained clearly stung by his experiences as an investor, and felt his misfortune was caused by his decision to act rather than to remain passive. In his "Lettre sur la Paresse," written in 1740, he reflects on the incidents leading to his financial ruin. Laziness, in fact is a good and reasonable trait:

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<sup>27</sup> Lesbros de la Versane 27. Durry states the annuity given by the Duke as 110 livres. 59.

<sup>28</sup> Lesbros de la Versane 27. Durry contradicts the sums here; her research shows an annual pension of only "800 livres sur la cassette du roi." 83.

<sup>29</sup> D'Alembert 598.

[...] je suis paresseux et je jouis de ce bien-là, en dépit de la fortune qui n'a pu me l'enlever et qui m'a réduit à très peu de chose sur tout le reste: et ce qui est fort plaisant, ce qui prouve combien la paresse est raisonnable, combien elle est innocente de tous les blâmes dont on la charge, c'est que je n'aurais rien perdu des autres biens si des gens, qu'on appelait sages à force de me gronder, ne m'avaient pas fait cesser un instant d'être paresseux. Je n'avais que rester comme j'étais, m'en tenir à ce que j'avais, et ce que j'avais m'appartiendrait encore: mais ils voulaient, disaient-ils, doubler, tripler, quadrupler mon patrimoine à cause de la commodité du temps [of Law's System], et moitié honte de paraître un sot en ne faisant rien, moitié bêtise d'adolescence et adhérence de petit garçon au conseil de ces gens sensés, dont l'autorité était regardée comme respectable, je les laissai disposer, vendre pour acheter, et ils me menaient comme ils vouloient. [...] Ah! Sainte paresse! Salutaire indolence! [...] Mon ami, le repos ne vous rend pas plus riche que vous ne l'êtes; mais il ne vous rend pas plus pauvre: avec lui vous conservez ce que vous n'augmentez pas, encore ne sais-je si l'augmentation ne vient pas quelquefois

récompenser la vertueuse insensibilité pour la fortune.<sup>30</sup>

Marivaux's decision to buy the shares was motivated by the pressure of those he respected, and the opportunities realized by others during the early frenzy of the trading must have also had an influence. The resulting loss was not total; he gained the insights he would later demonstrate in his writing, for he seems fascinated by money, and often describes financial transactions in detail. Two continuing themes are inheritance and marriage. Marivaux does give examples of working people's finances, but as the counterpoint to the transactions of the wealthy. He often describes the experiences of individuals who undergo enormous reversals in fortune (common in France during the time of Law's System) and are thus elevated or destroyed financially and occasionally socially, (here once again the double meanings of wealth and luck are applicable), and he concentrates on the financial situation of his characters. Unlike his own investment debacle, Marivaux is most interested in inheritance and marriage as sources of wealth, perhaps because they are more predictable though no less subject to market whimsy. Despite his praise of laziness, Marivaux demonstrates that these traditional means of the accumulation of wealth involve serious work. He treats inheritance and marriage with an active rather than passive

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<sup>30</sup> Marivaux, Journaux et Oeuvres diverses, 443.

approach; he takes his investment experience and refocuses on custom with a new perspective.

Marivaux developed a unique style of writing, coined "le marivaudage," a new "préciosité," which involves long, reflective descriptions, characterized as "dissserter à perte de vue sur de menus problèmes."<sup>31</sup> La Harpe offered a definition: "Marivaux se fit un style si particulier qu'il a eu l'honneur de lui donner son nom; on l'appela marivaudage: c'est le mélange le plus bizarre de métaphysique subtile et de locutions triviales, de sentiments alambiqués et de dictions [sic] populaires."<sup>32</sup> This charming characteristic manner dissipates, however in his discussion of financial matters. Marivaux treats money in great detail, but more in the technique of an accountant than an author. The romantic approach to affairs of the heart gives way to clear, factual records and reports. There is a stark contrast between the two styles; emotions and analysis of love are treated with imagination and sensitivity, while finances are described with sober reality.

Marivaux died on February 11, 1763. As befits an author fascinated with inheritance, he left a will, written several years earlier in Paris. It is simple, clear, and in order. He was not a rich man:

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<sup>31</sup> Frédéric Deloffre, Une Préciosité nouvelle, Marivaux et le Marivaudage (Paris: Armand Colin, 1971) 6.

<sup>32</sup> Deloffre 7.

Ceci est mon testament:

Je lègue soixante livres aux pauvres de ma paroisse.

Je désire être enterré avec le moins de dépense et le plus simplement qu'il sera possible.

Je veux et demande qu'on fasse dire cinquante messes basses le jour de mon enterrement.

Je fais et j'institue ma légataire universelle Mademoiselle Angélique Gabrielle Anquetin de la Chapelle Saint-Jean, et la nomme exécutrice testamentaire.

Je révoque tout testament et codicille que j'ai pu faire avant ce présent testament.

À Paris ce vingt janvier mil sept cent cinquante-huit.

Pierre Carlet de Marivaux de l'Académie française.<sup>33</sup>

Marivaux's final moments were accompanied by a series of macabre financial deathbed transactions: 42 livres to Dr. Casamajor, 6 livres to the surgeon, M. Barret, 12 livres to the nurse on duty, 6 to the priest. The 50 masses cost 25 livres, and his interment cost 305 livres, 6 sols.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Marivaux, Oeuvres diverses 552.

<sup>34</sup> Durry 87.

### B. Inheritance

Inheritance is the traditional, orderly method by which money is transferred. French custom directed the practice, tied to the possessions and the lineage of the noble families, and increasingly adopted by the burgeoning bourgeoisie.<sup>35</sup> The normal pattern of transferral is by blood, from parents to children, and Marivaux illustrates many such examples, but he seems most interested in cases where the customary pattern is broken, either from the lack of a logical heir or because of extenuating circumstances. Marivaux is fascinated with fortune received as inheritance. Wills provoke much social interest, for a generous inheritance can favorably change a person's position; thus one of his earliest plays focuses on that subject.

L'Héritier de Village is a one-act play written by Marivaux in 1725. The intrigue of this play is an outgrowth of Marivaux's concerns regarding inheritance, which reflect the social attitudes of the time. Money can make the inheritor attractive to others. It can also change the behavior and disposition of the receiver, particularly when he is poor to begin with, as is the case in this play. The protagonist, Blaise, is a peasant who has just witnessed his brother's death following a long illness. This avaricious

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<sup>35</sup> Henri Lafon, "Problèmes d'argent dans le roman français du XVIIIe siècle," Roman et société, Actes du colloque international de Valenciennes, May 1983 (Valenciennes: Université de Valenciennes, 1983) 24.

brother had made a lot of money during his life: "Il faut considérer qu'il était bien vieux qu'il avait beaucoup travaillé, bien épargné, bien chipoté sa pauvre vie."<sup>36</sup> Blaise's wife Claudine gets straight to the point: "T'es son unique héritier; qu'as-tu trouvé?" (553). Blaise's brother evidently had neither a wife nor children, for he is the sole heir. The discussion of money thus begins in the first scene of the play. After the skirmish over a 5 sol tip for Arlequin, and Claudine's sensible fiscal anger over an extravagant carriage ride, Blaise states that his inheritance is 100,000 francs; an enormous sum which is repeated four times with glee. This is indeed a lot of money for a peasant, for if Blaise could realize four per cent return on his money, he would have an income of 4,000 francs, a bourgeois revenue.<sup>37</sup> He sees himself as an investor almost immediately; it seems the money spontaneously empowers Blaise with a new vocabulary, as well as a new set of advisors. He has already discussed his monies and investment theory with his "parsonnes:"

[...] j'ons été chez le maltôtier qui les avait de mon frère, et qui les fait aller et venir pour notre profit, et je les ons laissés là: car, par le moyen de son tricotage, ils rapportont encore d'autres écus; et ces autres écus, qui venont de

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<sup>36</sup> Marivaux, Théâtre complet, Tome 1er (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1996) 554. Subsequent page references to this play will be given in parentheses in the text.

<sup>37</sup> Sgard, "l'Échelle," 427.

la manigance, engendront d'autres petits magots d'argent qu'il boutra avec le grand magot, qui, par ce moyen, devianra encore plus grand; et j'apportons le papier comme quoi ce monciau du petit et du grand m'appartiant, et comme quoi il me fera délivrance, à ma volonté, du principal et de la rente de tout ça, dont il a été parlé dans le papier qui en rend témoignage en la présence de mon procureur, qui m'assistait pour agencer l'affaire. (554-5)

This response may summarize Marivaux's own investment experience at the hands of the "sages" who jarred him out of his investment laziness in 1719. Blaise's peasant patter may underscore the wonder and amazement Marivaux may have felt at the time he decided to invest away his wife's inheritance. The biblical "engendrer," or "beget" implies a tie from money to money, as blood ties imply inheritance. Blaise also demonstrates the ease with which anyone and everyone adjusted to favorable financial situations. Blaise is comfortable discussing investments and profits, stacks of écus, contracts, interest and principal, the notary and the attorney; this peasant has become a sophisticated investor overnight. Money may not be the great equalizer, and Blaise may still be a peasant, but he now commands the respect, support, and attention of the financial community. By putting the money into circulation, it will grow by

attracting more money through various schemes and manipulations. The power of money to pull other money to it is magnetic, and highlights the basic truism that it takes money to make money. Profit comes after investment; investment requires work, maneuvering and oversight. [As discussed in Chapter 2, Prévost also demonstrates this principle in the first paragraph of Manon Lescaut, however Renoncour is a savvy investor who shies away from speculation.] Marivaux's concept of laziness implies a satisfaction with the status quo, while Blaise's desire for profits requires the money be put to work. Blaise has not understood what lies ahead; he may be conversant in investment, but he has no idea of the risk he runs in search of great profits. Marivaux has created Blaise in his own image, willing to accept great profit, yet ignorant of the risk. The system Law spawned did not at first require investors to understand fiscal theory and the relationship between risk and reward because the market was strong until the collapse. In addition, Law provided the public the first opportunity for the purchase of shares; there had been no pre-existing stock market, and thus no memory of a bad market in the minds of the investors. Blaise, like Marivaux, does not consider the possibility of bankruptcy at the time of his investment. His only concern is to facilitate the joining of little piles of money to his new large pile.

New money spawns new expenses. Blaise and Claudine need a lackey as well as a tutor for their daughter. Claudine needs to, "... m'habiller de brocard, acheter des bijoux et un collier de perles" (556). Blaise must also upgrade his wardrobe, "J'avons déjà acheté un castor avec un casaquin de friperie, que je boutrons en attendant que j'ayons tout mon équipage à forfait," (556) and he awaits the arrival of the merchant and the tailor to organize him. His choice of a beaver hat appears to place emphasis on the ties to Law's System, for the Compagnie d'Occident received rights to the beaver trade in Canada by August 21, 1717.<sup>36</sup>

The inheritance also changes the way Claudine and Blaise see themselves; Claudine demands the Chevalier and Madame Damis treat her with the respect she deserves, "Boutez-vous à votre devoir, honorez ma parsonne, traitez-moi de Madame, demandez-moi comment se porte ma santé, mettez au bout queuque coup de chapiau..." (560). Blaise follows suit, "Parsonne ne salue. (À Claudine) Leur as-tu dit l'héritage du biau-frère?" (561). Both see an upward evaluation of their status with the change in their bottom line, but it takes others a bit of convincing. It is only with great pain and after the careful reading of the will and investment documents that the Chevalier and Madame Damis change their attitude. The Chevalier recognizes the name of official, Rapin, on the documents, repeats the amount of

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<sup>36</sup> Harsin 161.

100,000 francs, and states, "... je les honore beaucoup, et cela change la thèse" (562). Quickly the Chevalier and his cousin Madame Damis accept Blaise as the father of their potential suitors, for each of these children will one day inherit 50,000 francs. The impoverished nobles must secure their own financial futures, even if it means marrying beneath their rank. In a scene of great irony, the Chevalier must convince Blaise that he will some day be worthy of their daughter, Colette, by discussing his own future inheritance prospects. He also favorably describes Madame Damis' situation, and how her inheritance would bring honor to their son Colin:

J'ai l'honneur d'être gentilhomme, estimé, personne n'en doute [...] Je n'ai qu'un aîné, le baron de Lydas, un seigneur languissant, un casanier incommodé du poumon; il faut qu'il meure, et point de lignée; j'aurai son bien, cela est net. D'un autre côté, voilà Madame Damis, veuve de qualité, jeune et charmante; ses facultés, vous les savez; bonne seigneurie, grand château, ancien comme le temps, un peu délabré, mais on le maçonne. (565)

The Chevalier is so lucky to have a benefactor languishing near death, housebound and weak, sure to die soon and provide the Chevalier and his prospective bride with income. Evidently he is lying, for if his brother were really rich,

he would not have to lower himself to consider marrying a peasant girl; or perhaps his brother is rich, but in perfect health, so the prospect of an inheritance may not be so proximate. [Marivaux revisits this subject later in Les Fausses Confidences (1737). The young Marton is from a good family but she finds herself in reduced circumstances. Her prospects for the future are not bad: "Marton a d'ailleurs une vieille parente asmathique dont elle hérite, et qui est à son aise."<sup>39</sup> In the same scene, Monsieur Remy reduces Dorante's expectations for inheriting soon, for not only is he in fine health, he may decide to marry one day, and change or add to his heirs:

Vous êtes mon héritier; mais je me porte bien, et je ferai durer cela le plus longtemps que je pourrai, sans compter que je puis me marier [...] prenez toujours vos petites précautions, et vous mettez en état de vous passer de mon bien, que je vous destine aujourd'hui, et que je vous ôterai demain peut-être.<sup>40</sup>]

Madame Damis has inherited property, and she cannot afford to keep it up. Her grand château is in need of repair, and probably crumbling, and she would expect her husband's family to provide the money necessary for the stone mason. She is a member of the landed nobility,

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<sup>39</sup> Marivaux, Théâtre, 362.

<sup>40</sup> Marivaux, Théâtre, 362.

strapped for cash, and she must swallow her pride in order to maintain her holdings.

The attorney handling the fiscal affairs of the nouveaux riches is also impressed by the changes the money brings. Upon seeing Blaise, he remarks, "votre fortune a haussé vos qualités" (568). The "fiscal" then demands repayment of a fifty franc loan, and Blaise mimics the rich he has seen before in refusing to pay. Marivaux provides a quick lesson in loan procedure, and the debtor remains unpaid before the smiling creditor: "... vous me l'avez baillé, je l'ons reçu, je vous le dois; je vous ai baillé mon écrit, vous n'avez que le garder; venez de jour à autre me demander votre dû, je ne l'empêche point; [...] velà comme ça se fait" (568). The "fiscal" recalls M. Dimanche in Molière's Dom Juan, not only unpaid, but continually unpayable. The debtor finally beats Blaise at his own game, borrowing money from him, then tearing up the original contract, declaring himself paid.

Blaise's wealth is fleeting, for Monsieur Rapin, who has invested on Blaise's behalf, is soon bankrupt and flees the country. Rapin had many creditors and left nothing behind, so Blaise, too, loses everything. The Chevalier and Madame Damis have no interest where there is no money, and even Arlequin will not stay. Blaise bids adieu to the "biau monde" he wanted to live in and drowns his sorrows in the wine before him.

The bankruptcy creates a tidy ending for this short play, and Marivaux could not let the peasants triumph in their new roles. It was their good fortune to receive the money from their relative, and it is their bad fortune to lose it. Marivaux does not allow money to stay with those he considers undeserving; by contrast, he allows other poor characters to attract and keep it.

Marivaux furnishes another example of an inheritor who tries to maximize his inheritance in Le Legs, a one-act comedy first performed on June 11, 1736. The Marquis and Hortense have a relative who has just died, leaving an estate of 600,000 francs. The will stipulates that the Marquis may either marry Hortense and keep the entire sum, or he may marry someone else, and give Hortense 200,000 francs. The two are not attracted to each other, and each is in love with someone else, but Hortense feels, despite the Marquis' other substantial wealth, "[...] plutôt que s'en distraire deux cent mille, il aimera mieux m'épouser, moi qui lui suis indifférente, pendant qu'il a de l'amour pour la Comtesse, qui peut-être ne le hait pas [...]" (303). Hortense is in love with the poor Chevalier, and she would like to marry him, but she would not be able afford to do so without the 200,000 franc inheritance. For his part, the Marquis does want to marry the Comtesse, but he also refuses to give up the money, so he hesitates, "n'y aurait-il pas moyen de me sauver les deux cent mille francs?" (316). He then devises a scheme to keep the money, "Je n'ai donc qu'à

faire semblant de vouloir épouser; elle me refusera, et je ne lui devrai plus rien; son refus me servira de quittance" (316). When the Marquis and Hortense meet, their discussion centers on the will and its unusual provision. Hortense quickly offers her hand, and the Marquis accepts it without hesitation, saying, "il y a un testament, vous le savez bien; je ne peux pas faire autrement" (321). Thus the will dictates the match. The wedding contract must be drawn up by a notary; curiously each says his notary has died, probably to postpone the inevitable. The Marquis schemes to rid himself of Hortense, and he tells the Comtesse he will offer her 100,000 francs to go away, but he does not have that much cash readily available. The Comtesse does have it, in Paris, and she can get it immediately. The Comtesse must be quite wealthy to be able to have such easy access to such a large sum, and she must want to rid the Marquis of Hortense badly enough to be willing to make such a loan. Marivaux would not write his "Lettre sur la paresse" until 1740, but the Comtesse's wealth may be attributed to passive investment. She freely admits, "je suis une paresseuse," so it may be implied she did not lose a fortune at the hands of Law's System; her wealth has remained intact. At the heirs' next meeting, Hortense admits she does not love the Marquis, but she will (probably given her new riches). The Marquis wants to deal, and offers her a proposition: "Partageons le différend en deux; il y a deux cent mille francs sur le testament; prenez-en la moitié, quoique vous ne m'aimiez

pas, et laissons là tous les notaires, tant vivants que morts" (326). Hortense stands her ground: "cent mille francs ne peuvent entrer en comparaison avec l'avantage de vous épouser, et vous ne vous évaluez pas ce que vous valez" (326). She knows she is worth more as his wife than the 100,000 offered, and he is worth more to her as her husband. The Marquis cannot permit his affairs of the heart to dominate; the preservation of his wealth initially seems more important than his love for the Comtesse. His heart wins in the end, however, when he regretfully hands Hortense a note for 200,000 francs, and the two couples will marry.

There are numerous wills in La Vie de Marianne, the unfinished novel written in phases between 1731 and 1741. There are so many, in fact, the reader comes upon "un héritage toutes les cinquante pages."<sup>41</sup> [The wills to be discussed here concern Marianne and Valville.] The first will is not concrete; after Marianne is orphaned in Part I, she is taken in and raised by a kind couple, a sister and her brother, who is a priest. The sister and brother are from a fine family, though they live in reduced circumstances because they lost their money in a lawsuit. As a teenager Marianne and the woman travel to Paris to visit an ailing relative; the priest and his sister are the sole heirs. When their relative dies, his assets are sealed

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<sup>41</sup> Jean Erhard, "L'Argent dans *La Vie de Marianne*," Marivaux e il Teatro Italiano, ed. Mario Matucci, Atti del Colloquio Internazionale (Cortona 6-8 settembre 1990), (Pisa: Pacini, 1992) 39.

by officials, as there are liens against his property. There is no hope for an inheritance for the sister and brother, and their money is diminishing. After her brother falls and is incapacitated, and the sister becomes ill, she makes plans for Marianne, willing her a good education:

Je n'oserais vous donner l'argent qui me reste; vous êtes trop jeune, et l'on pourrait vous tromper: je veux le remettre entre les mains du religieux qui vient me voir; je le prierai d'en disposer sagement pour vous [...] Je vous ai élevée dans l'amour de la vertu; si vous gardez votre éducation, tenez, Marianne, vous serez héritière du plus grand trésor qu'on puisse vous laisser: car avec lui, ce sera vous, ce sera votre âme qui sera riche.<sup>42</sup>

When the sister dies, Marianne is left alone at fifteen. She is given the remaining money, half of which has been stolen, so Marianne's inheritance is only 200 livres. She must find employment.

M. Climal is an "homme de condition" who places the orphaned and then displaced Marianne with Mme Dutour in the linen shop in Part I, and his advances repulse the young girl. Despite his accusations of ingratitude, "il me mit

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<sup>42</sup> Marivaux, La Vie de Marianne (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1963) 19.

quelques louis d'or dans la main,"<sup>43</sup> which Marianne tries to refuse, saying she still has some money left from the late woman who had cared for her, but Climal forces her to take the louis. "Je les pris donc avec honte, car cela m'humiliait" (35); her response demonstrates her disgust. Money for Marianne is infused with moral implications, and she only grudgingly accepts it from Climal. [Marivaux gives a similar example of corrupt money in Le Paysan parvenu, an unfinished novel written during 1734 and 1735. Jacob, the protagonist, is given money by Geneviève, a maid in the household where they are both employed. Geneviève earns this money through her relations, presumably sexual, with their employer; he is quite generous with her. Admittedly, Jacob is not in love with Geneviève, and even though Jacob has found a great "appétit de fortune"<sup>44</sup> in Paris, he is uncomfortable with the six louis she first gives him. He accepts it, but thinks, "cet argent qu'elle m'offrait n'était pas chrétien."<sup>45</sup> Money is infused with morality, and for Jacob, this becomes "cette honteuse richesse"<sup>46</sup>.] Marianne is otherwise unaffected by money in contrast with others in her financial situation. Her employer at the shop, Mme Dutour, is more experienced and more concerned

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<sup>43</sup> Marivaux, La Vie de Marianne 35. The pages numbers to all subsequent references to this novel will be given in parentheses in the text.

<sup>44</sup> Marivaux, Le Paysan parvenu (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1992) 12.

<sup>45</sup> Marivaux, Paysan, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Marivaux, Paysan, 23.

with her payments. The example of the paying of the coachman, which caused an outcry upon the novel's publication, is a study in contrast; upon arriving home at the shop Marianne takes out the money to pay the coachman, but Mme Dutour decides to take charge of the payment, for she feels Marianne is too young and inexperienced in these matters. She gives the driver a few pieces of money, which he returns with "un dédain brutal" (92), and accuses her of offering the twelve sols as a starting point in their negotiation, as if they were at the market: "Elle marchande cela comme une botte d'herbes" (93). She demands he take or leave the money, and he demands to be paid properly, while Marianne also wants him paid. Much screaming ensues regarding the twelve sols, and this leads to some physical interaction; violence is avoided only when Marianne gives the coachman twenty sols. Mme Dutour is still furious, and turns her anger towards Marianne, calling her "une petite sottie" (97) and vowing to never forgive her this ungrateful extravagance: "c'est votre argent que j'épargne" (97). Marianne returns her twelve sols and the argument continues inside the boutique. Mme Dutour is incensed that Marianne can be so cavalier with her money, but the thriftiness and ability to bargain for everything which comes so naturally to Mme Dutour is not ingrained in Marianne. She acts as if she were rich in her financial affairs, despite her poverty. This indicates Marianne's superiority; her ancestry is unknown, but she is convinced that she belongs to the

nobility. Mme Dutour would always have the mentality of a trader, even if she were to become rich.

Despite his earlier unwelcome advances, in Part V (published in September 1736), Climal, who is Valville's maternal uncle, does not create any problem for Marianne and Valville. Madame de Miran has plans to discuss the young couple with her brother, but he is quite ill, and suffers from a fever (210). Marianne expects Valville to be Climal's sole heir, and she feels that his increased riches will make her even less worthy of being his bride: "Si M. de Climal meurt à présent, disais-je, Valville, qui en hérite et qui est déjà riche, va le devenir davantage [...] Sera-t-il possible qu'un héritier si considérable m'épouse?" (240). On his deathbed, Climal attends to his affairs and rights past indiscretions: "Permettez donc que je profite d'une honte qui me punit" (249). His choice of "profiter" has negative, positive, and temporal implications. He has previously tried to profit from Marianne's difficult position, by compromising her with his money; he now wishes to correct his behavior, and increase his own position not only with Marianne but also with his family, and perhaps before God; as an investor, Climal speaks for Marivaux in choosing a financial term, for thanks to Law's System the French vocabulary became infused with words of investment. Climal had tried to offer Marianne an income if she had been willing to compromise herself, and now he once again uses his money, but as a means of honoring, rather than

disgracing, her; this time he doubles the amount. He understands the relation between "infortune" and virtue; her virtue would have been destroyed had she accepted his previous offer. She would have only accepted the offer because of her "infortune." He now wishes to repay Marianne:

Vous savez, mademoiselle, ajouta M. de Climal, ce que je vous offris alors: ce fut, je pense, un contrat de cinq ou six cents livres de rente; je vous laisse aujourd'hui un de douze cents dans mon testament. Vous refusâtes avec horreur ces six cents livres, quand je vous les proposai comme la récompense d'un crime; acceptez les douze cents francs, à présent qu'ils ne sont plus que la récompense de votre sagesse [...] Mon neveu, que voici, est mon principal héritier, je le fais mon légataire; il est né généreux, et je suis persuadé qu'il ne regrettera point ce que je vous laisse.  
(250).

Climal's earlier proposition would not have made Marianne rich, and neither will the income he leaves her in his will, but this inheritance will give her the means to maintain a respectable living. Valville praises his uncle's reparation, and Marianne expresses feelings of admiration for Climal. He uses his will successfully to make amends.

Part VI, published in November 1736, refers again to this will after Climal's death. Mme de Miran visits Marianne with the papers, and Climal has kept his word. Mme de Miran says, "voici un contrat de douze cents livres de rente qui vous appartient, et que je vous apporte; il est en bonne forme. . . mon fils, qui est son héritier, n'y perd rien, puisque vous devez l'épouser, et que cela lui revient" (280-281). Mme de Miran does not object to the will, for her son will not lose any of the money. Curiously, a woman as rich as Mme de Miran would remark that her son will keep control of such a small amount, for it must be an insignificant part of Valville's total inheritance; the money may not be as important as the control. All is in order and Marianne may do as she pleases with the contract; it is up to her whether she will keep the papers or give them to Valville. The contract is written on parchment, and the first quarter's income is included, in the form of "un petit rouleau de louis d'or" (286). Marianne refuses the money and asks Mme de Miran to keep it for her, insisting she already has enough money left from the sum Mme de Miran had given her previously as well as from the small inheritance she had received from the woman who raised her. It is quite surprising how little money Marianne has had during her life, and how little she seems to care about it; she is more affected by the manner in which money is offered than by what she can do with it, and she is never concerned for her own needs. Marianne is poor but never without.

Climal's contract resurfaces again in Part VII (February 1737), when Marianne, after suffering from fever and dizziness for several days, regains her senses and decides to write her own will. She states,

"Je donne à Mme de Miran, à qui je dois tout, le contrat que défunt M. de Climal son frère a eu la charité de me laisser. Je donne aussi à la même dame tout ce que j'ai en ma possession, pour en disposer à sa volonté." Je signai ensuite Marianne, et je gardai le billet que je mis sous mon chevet... (360)

Marianne's attitude is quite serious, and she is alarmed when Mme de Miran laughs upon seeing the document. Miran is amused to find the young woman contemplating her demise, while she is in good health again, and perhaps she finds Marianne's will amusing because it is so small, hardly an inheritance worthy of such an august attitude, and hardly capable of affecting Miran's lifestyle. She also knows Valville will control Marianne's estate once they are married. [Marivaux later details the financial requirements of a wife, see Section B.] For her part, Marianne demonstrates both her affection and her loyalty to the woman who saved her; she wants Miran to understand her admiration and the logical way to express herself is with her money.

The disorder of the death of the woman who cared for Marianne when she was a child is mirrored and amplified in

the financial ramifications of the death of the former employer of Jacob in Le Paysan parvenu. Madame, his widow, has been accustomed to a life of great abundance and wealth, and she was ignorant of her husband's dealings. The late Monsieur had been a financier. The morning after his death, "mille créanciers fondirent chez elle avec des commissaires et toute leur séquelle. Ce fut un désordre épouvantable."<sup>47</sup> The domestics demand their wages and pillage whatever they can, and the late man's reputation is tarnished; "nombre de personnes ne lui épargnaient pas l'épithète de fripon. L'un disait: Il m'a trompé; l'autre: Je lui ai confié de l'argent; qu'en a-t-il fait?" (38). The man's fortune is ruined, all the money has been dissipated; his widow is impoverished and enters a convent. The money had been clearly of corrupt provenance; Marivaux only states that his wife did not follow his financial dealings, but there was a lot of cash in the house (for payments for Geneviève and for Jacob had he agreed to marry Geneviève). Monsieur was a businessman, not an inheritor, and his dealings leave his wife bankrupt. "Maître, maîtresse, valets, rivalisent de sans-gêne moral, de corruption, presque ingénue à force de laisser-aller inconscient."<sup>48</sup> The master's corruption can only lead to the corruption of his employees and business associates; the money cannot stay intact. The marriage is

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<sup>47</sup> Marivaux, Paysan, 38. All subsequent references to this work will appear in parentheses in the text.

<sup>48</sup> Larroumet 432.

not one of love, Monsieur has engaged in illicit activities, the money may not be legitimate, so Marivaux has it scatter, rather than allow it to be passed on as an inheritance. The continuity of money appears to have ethical meaning to the author; the disappearance of money implies it to have been unethical, illegitimate. The money of the "gens d'affaires," "est souvent trop vite acquise pour être durable."<sup>49</sup>

Jacob soon finds himself at the home of the Habert sisters, located (perhaps ironically) on the rue de la Monnaie (43). Fortune is never far from Jacob's mind, and money is before him. After he relates his family history, he soon learns theirs. Mademoiselle says, "Notre père était le fils d'un gros fermier dans la Beauce, qui lui laissa de quoi faire un grand négoce, et nous sommes restées, ma soeur et moi, fort à notre aise" (75). Marivaux points out here that social respectability can now be gained in three generations; the Haberts' grandfather was a farmer, their father was a businessman, and they are comfortable and established in Paris. By contrast, it would have been difficult to imagine the children or grandchildren of Turcaret gaining respectability, for he was considered despicable and unacceptable when Lesage created him in 1709; no amount of money would have made him a "bon bourgeois," just as no amount of money would have made Manon acceptable

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<sup>49</sup> Erhard 38.

to the family of des Grieux. Social attitudes changed considerably in the intervening years, particularly after the Law System. Money could buy respectability as the bourgeois started to behave more like their noble counterparts; the Habert sisters are proud of their ancestors' hard work. The economic upheaval of the Law years and the fortunes won and lost in all social classes created the opening for this change. Earlier exclusivism gave way to acceptance,

... the rich bourgeois who was willing to invest in prestige for his prosperity three or four generations hence and who wished to buy himself the immediate privileges and exemptions of legal noblesse could do so without difficulty. Between 1732 and 1748, in the Paris area alone, there were 1,207 payments of finances for ennoblement or confirmation ...<sup>50</sup>

Rousseau would emphasize the blurring of outward class differences in Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse, written between 1756-8. In letter XXI of the second part, Saint-Preux describes the Parisian women, "On voit les mêmes étoffes dans tous les états, et l'on aurait peine à distinguer une duchesse d'une bourgeoise..."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ford 208.

<sup>51</sup> Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse (Paris: Garnier, 1988) 244-5.

In the Paysan parvenu, Jacob is ready to take the first step; he envisions himself a merchant. Marivaux gives emphasis to this mobility in having Jacob repeat and then continue the Habert family history considering Jacob's future children,

Est-ce que M. Habert votre père, et devant Dieu soit son âme, était un gredin, mademoiselle? Il était fils d'un bon fermier de Beauce, moi fils d'un bon fermier de Champagne; c'est déjà ferme pour ferme; nous voilà déjà, monsieur votre père et moi, aussi gredins l'un que l'autre; il se fit marchand, n'est-ce pas? Je le serai peut-être; ce sera encore boutique pour boutique. Vous autres demoiselles qui êtes ses filles, ce n'est donc qu'un boutique que vous valez mieux que moi; mais cette boutique, si je la prends, mon fils dira: Mon père l'avait; et par là mon fils sera au niveau de vous. . . . il n'y a pas grande différence; ce n'est qu'un étage que vous avez de plus que moi; est-ce qu'on est misérable à cause d'un étage de moins? (131)

The Habert sisters are not of the upper class, but they are wealthy and highly esteemed. Jacob estimates Mlle Habert's wealth as 4,000 livres annually (85); though later Madame de Ferval states the figure to be 4,000 to 5,000 livres annually (183). Madame d'Alain, the proprietor of

the building in which Mlle Habert and Jacob will live, asserts, while discussing the possibility of their marriage, "Vous qui êtes si pieuse, si raisonnable, qui êtes de famille, qui êtes riche;" (108) for to this gossip, Mlle Habert is a member of the upper class. The inheritance Mlle Habert receives assures her a place in the society, and to Mme d'Alain, the money determines her social standing.

In the one-act comedy, La Commère (1741), Marivaux reconsiders Jacob and Mlle Habert's first unsuccessful attempt at marriage. The characters are somewhat changed (Mlle Habert is only thirty-five instead of in her late forties), though the names appear the same, and Marivaux has added a nephew who would lose his inheritance if Mlle Habert were to marry M. de la Vallée (Jacob). Before the marriage is cancelled, Mme Alain, "la commère," questions La Vallée as to his own possible inheritance. Their exchange,

Mme Alain.- Est-ce que vous n'avez pas au moins quelque héritage?

La Vallée.- Oh! Si fait. J'ai sept ou huit parents robustes et en bonne santé, dont j'aurai infailliblement la succession quand ils seront morts.

Mme Alain.- Il faudrait une furieuse mortalité, Monsieur de la Vallée, et cela sera bien long à mourir, à moins qu'on ne les tue.<sup>52</sup>

Madame Alain reveals a murderous streak; she accepts the idea of taking action in order to effect an inheritance, and clearly does not believe it necessary to wait until the relatives die of natural causes.

### B. Marriage

In the eighteenth century, a young woman was usually married immediately upon leaving the convent. Her husband was chosen and approved by her family, for a marriage,

... était avant tout une affaire de famille, un arrangement au gré des parents, que décidaient des considérations de position et d'argent, des convenances de rang et de fortune. Le choix était fait d'avance pour la jeune personne, qui n'était pas consultée ....<sup>53</sup>

Love comes (if at all) after the parents of the couple conclude the financial transaction. In an example given by the Goncourts, the marquis d'Houdetot agrees to give his son 18,000 livres income from Normandy and the cavalry company he had purchased for him a year earlier, while the marquise d'Houdetot gives her beautiful diamonds. As for the bride's

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<sup>52</sup> Marivaux, Théâtre complet, Tome second (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1968) 562.

<sup>53</sup> Edmond and Jules de Goncourt 22.

parents, M. de Bellegarde promises a dowry of 300,000 livres, and his daughter's part of her parents' succession. Upon approval of the terms, a contract is drawn up by the notary and signed (immediately) by the parties; the banns, (the announcement in a church of an intended marriage) is published by the following Sunday, and the marriage concluded by Monday.<sup>54</sup> The marriage is an open event, with invitations sent to family and friends. The first printed, as opposed to hand written, invitations were sent in 1734, and appear similar to their modern counterparts. The typical text provides the necessary information:

M.

M.

l'honneur de vous faire part du Mariage de M.  
avec<sup>55</sup>

Once the parents reached agreement, the Church saw to all canonical details. The main obstacles to Church approval were: age (the couple had to have reached puberty, though this was not strictly upheld), infidelity to the Church, impotence, a preexisting marriage, and previously given priestly vows.<sup>56</sup>

Money is the determining factor of prospective spousal suitability; with enough money, a good match can be made.

<sup>54</sup> Edmond and Jules de Goncourt 24-25.

<sup>55</sup> Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, note 1, 27.

<sup>56</sup> A. Esmein, Le Mariage en Droit Canonique, Tome 1er (1891; New York: Burt Franklin, 1968) 211.

Marriage contracts are usually based upon close inspection of the financial situation of the couple (by the parents if the intendeds are young, or by the man and woman themselves, if they are adults), and the money most frequently comes from inheritance; inheritance and marriage are therefore closely linked. Marivaux provides many examples of couples with unequal legacies; love or other extenuating circumstances may overcome a lack of money, but an insufficient income or dowry remains a great obstacle in the couples' relationships.

Les Fausses Confidences (March 16, 1737) furnishes a marriage paradigm; Marivaux addresses questions of social and financial rank in this three-act play. Araminte is an attractive widow, made even more so by the wealth she inherited from her late financier husband. Her income is stated as greater than 50,000 livres, giving her a noble revenue.<sup>57</sup> Dorante is secretly in love with her, but he has no income, though he has other attributes, as his former valet Dubois recounts with a delightful play on words, "votre bonne mine est un Pérou"<sup>58</sup> ("mine" meaning both his attractive appearance and "gold mine," and Pérou meaning "fortune," for that was where the mines were) and later, "il n'est riche qu'en mérite" (393). Dorante's uncle, Monsieur Remy, gives him little assurance of an early inheritance

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<sup>57</sup> Sgard, "L'Échelle," 428.

<sup>58</sup> Marivaux, Théâtre, Tome 2, 360. Future page references to this play will be given in parentheses in the text.

when he discusses his robust health and the possibility that he may once again marry. Remy wants to help, and he tries to arrange a marriage between Marton, Araminte's maid and friend (Marton's reduced circumstances led her to this position), and Dorante. Marton stands to inherit from an elderly, asthmatic relative, so the match would be favorable to Dorante. Remy is content with the idea and, without consulting the couple, he states, "je vous fiance, en attendant mieux" (363). The verb is usually reflexive, "se fiancer," but as an elder relative, Remy must be exercising his prerogative, and the possibility of a change, for someone better will come along. Araminte is quite open-minded for a woman in her position, and feels that money does not determine worth: "Il est vrai que je suis toujours fâchée de voir d'honnêtes gens sans fortune, tandis qu'une infinité de gens de rien et sans mérite en ont une éclatante" (365). Her mother, Madame Argante (whose name closely resembles "argent"), is not so tolerant, particularly where her daughter's future is concerned. Mme Argante oversees Araminte's affairs closely, and first appears to express her dismay at Araminte's choice of intendant, or administrator. Mme Argante has allied herself with the nobleman Comte Dorimont, and she intends him as her future son-in-law, as she relates to Dorante during their first encounter:

Connaissez-vous Monsieur le comte Dorimont? C'est un homme d'un beau nom; ma fille et lui allaient

avoir un procès ensemble au sujet d'une terre considérable, il ne s'agissait pas moins que de savoir à qui elle resterait, et on a songé à les marier, pour empêcher qu'ils ne plaident. Ma fille est veuve d'un homme qui était fort considéré dans le monde, et qui l'a laissée fort riche. Mais Madame la comtesse Dorimont aurait un rang si élevé, irait de pair avec des personnes d'une si grande distinction, qu'il me tarde de voir ce mariage conclu; et, je l'avoue, je serai charmée moi-même d'être la mère de Madame la comtesse Dorimont, et de plus que cela peut-être; car Monsieur le comte Dorimont est en passe d'aller à tout. (368)

Mme Argante is more than willing to use her daughter's financial position to further her social rank, and she hopes to take advantage of a business altercation, involving a property dispute, to effect the marriage. She is also clearly savoring her new reflected elevated status as the future mother of the future countess. She maneuvers to trick her daughter into believing she may not have a strong case in the lawsuit; by this artifice she can solve Araminte's only fault, her lesser status, and see her enjoy the perquisites of a countess. Dorante does not go along with the plan, however, and he assures Araminte her position is sound, and she has a good case to litigate, thus, "si

vous n'avez que le motif dont vous parlez pour épouser Monsieur le Comte, rien ne vous oblige à ce mariage" (378). Madame Argante cannot control Dorante, so she wants him dismissed.

Monsieur Remy works tirelessly throughout the play to assure his nephew's financial security, so when a marriage prospect appears with real income, he is quick to de-"fiance" Dorante and Marton, and encourage Dorante to marry someone else. The second woman he targets is an attractive thirty-five year old, whose main attribute is her 15,000 livre annual income (Remy is her attorney, so he is privvy to such matters). Dorante is not interested, for his heart is with Araminte. (Money is not Dorante's motive; even the count is mistaken to believe he can be bought off.) Later, Remy is especially pleased with the prospect of Dorante marrying Araminte.

Each of the characters is driven to action by money. Araminte considers marrying the count in order to avoid a lawsuit. Dorante feels he is unworthy of Araminte because he has no money. Madame Argante wants to use her daughter's money to change her status, for the money is inherited from a financier. The count is willing to marry Araminte because, though his financial situation may be fine, he can barter a position of nobility for Araminte's substantial wealth; he also must be aware that he may not be as able to afford the litigation costs involved with the dispute. Monsieur Remy is the uncle who wishes the best for Dorante,

for he knows his inheritance is not assured. The interfering parents and their strong-willed progeny are as closely linked by money as by blood.

In La Vie de Marianne, Marivaux presents a different set of obstacles to a young couple; the author here creates a girl with neither family nor money. Marianne, the narrator, is an adult, comfortably married and titled (she is a countess)<sup>59</sup>. She recounts the story of her life, yet she is uncertain of her origins, for at two or three years of age her family was attacked by thieves as they traveled by coach en route to Bordeaux. She assumes she was of noble birth, and the description of the murder scene bears this out; at least eight people lost their lives, among them a man, a lady, a maid and a valet. Marianne must have been the lady's daughter, for, "j'étais vêtue d'une manière trop distinguée pour n'être que la fille d'une femme de chambre" (11). No records remain, no money is found; the girl has no family, and even her name is unknown. She is called Marianne by those who find her (79); she is only given a first name.

As a young adult Marianne is the victim of an accident and she injures her foot. A young nobleman, Valville, comes to her rescue and they are instantly smitten with each other. Marianne is ashamed to admit where she lives, because, "une fille de mon état, me disais-je, ne pouvait

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<sup>59</sup> Marivaux, La Vie de Marianne, 8. All future references to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.

pas conserver la tendresse de Valville, ni une fille suspecte mériter qu'il l'aimât" (79). When Marianne learns that Climal is Valville's uncle, she shamefully decides to return his gifts, leave the employ of Mme Dutour, and then enter a convent. With no money, even the convent cannot accept her, as the prioress states, "Aussi sommes-nous endettées, et si mal à notre aise, que j'eus l'autre jour le chagrin de refuser une jeune fille, un fort bon sujet ...." (153). Fortunately, Madame de Miran becomes Marianne's benefactor, and she may enter the convent. Before her move, she arranges for a package (containing a dress, a gift from Climal) and a note of explanation to be delivered to Valville. As Marianne becomes acquainted with Mme de Miran, she learns she has a son, who has caused her some concern. Her son should have been married by now, "On veut le marier, il se présente un parti très avantageux pour lui. Il est question d'une fille riche, aimable, fille de condition, dont les parents paraissent souhaiter que le mariage se fasse ...." (174). Marianne soon recognizes Valville in the description, and she also realizes she is the reason the marriage has not taken place. Valville and the unnamed intended would have made a perfect match; the families were in agreement, both the prospective bride and groom are from noble families and, most importantly, both families are rich. This would be the union his mother would hope for, it would have honored and strengthened both families, and she is vexed by her son's inaction. He had agreed to the

marriage on principle, and had met with the young woman more than once, but it has been several weeks and the union has not been concluded. Mme de Miran's discussion of the proposed marriage reveals that there is no love between her son and his former intended, but the marriage would have been ideal in theory; love is not an essential element in her eyes. This scene follows closely the description of a typical marriage offered by the Goncourts, where all the arrangements are made before the man and woman meet.<sup>60</sup>

Marianne realizes she is the "grisette" (175), the "petite aventurière" (176) who turned Valville's head when she hurt her foot. Mme de Miran and Mme Dorsin are impressed with Marianne's tearful admission, but her character and beauty are not enough to make her a good wife for Valville. As Mme de Miran states:

Hélas! Cependant que vous manque-t-il? Ce n'est ni la beauté, ni les grâces, ni la vertu, ni le bel esprit, ni l'excellent coeur; et voilà pourtant tout ce qu'il y a de plus rare, de plus précieux; voilà les vraies richesses d'une femme dans le mariage, et vous les avez à profusion: mais vous n'avez pas vingt mille livres de rentes, on ne ferait aucune alliance en vous épousant; on ne connaît point vos parents, qui nous feraient peut-être beaucoup d'honneur; et les hommes, qui

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<sup>60</sup> Edmond and Jules de Goncourt 22-28.

sont sots, qui pensent mal, et à qui pourtant je dois compte de mes actions là-dessus, ne pardonnent point aux disgrâces dont vous souffrez, et qu'ils appellent des défauts. (184)

Marianne cannot satisfy the basic requirement of an income of at least 20,000 livres annually. She would bring nothing to the marriage, and would take Valville's honor as well as his money. She has nothing but her beauty, grace, and excellent heart, worthless without either money or rank. Marriage to Mme de Miran is separate from the marriage contract. Her concern is to assure her son of an honorable alliance, and perhaps she would hope for his happiness, but happiness must be secondary to the contract, which must be seen to fortify the family name and fortune.

Mme de Miran does change her mind about Marianne, but other relatives do not. The union so alarms the family, they are determined to keep her from Valville. She is taken to a convent and learns that another marriage has been arranged for her. The abbess explains why she cannot marry Valville:

... on ne lui pardonnerait jamais une épouse comme vous; ce serait un homme perdu dans l'estime public. J'avoue qu'il est fâcheux que le monde pense ainsi; mais dans le fond on n'a pas tant de tort; la différence des conditions est une chose nécessaire dans la vie, et elle ne subsisterait

plus, il n'y aurait plus d'ordre, si on permettait des unions aussi inégales que le serait la vôtre, on peut dire même aussi monstrueuses, ma fille.

(297-298)

Marianne's love, which seems so pure and innocent, threatens not only to disgrace Valville's family, but to destroy the very foundations of French society. The marked difference of social and financial conditions would lead to a monstrous union, which would cause shame to all Valville's relatives. (Presumably Marianne would have had a chance had she been either rich or titled. Araminte in Les Fausses Confidences is desirable because of her vast wealth, while the comte Dorimont offers the prestige of a "beau nom" and its accompanying social rank.)

Marianne, the writer, is an adult, a countess, who reflects on her life as Marianne the foundling. In her descriptive narrative she is always aware of who she must have been: a girl of noble birth. The young Marianne knows she has no family, but longs to know who her family is, for she knows, she feels, she must be a "fille de condition." The countess tells the (unfinished) tale of how she has regained what was most probably her rightful place in society. (Presumably, she finally married Valville, but Marivaux does not state this.) Both Mariannes are sympathetic, but the elder Marianne is capable, thanks to her experience and perspective, of a psychological analysis

of the emotions and passions of the young Marianne. The reader recognizes both in the narrative, and the dual voices enrich each other. The result is a detailed (though unfinished) picture of a complicated life of a noble girl who finds her rightful place in love and in society.

At first glance, Le Paysan parvenu appears to be a pendant novel to La Vie de Marianne. Both are narratives by established, comfortable chroniclers, yet there is one major difference. Jacob, who becomes M. de la Vallée, knows who he is, who his family is, and what his station is. There is no question, Jacob is a peasant, the son of a farmer in Champagne, and M. de la Vallée, the man Jacob becomes, will always remain aware of his roots.

Jacob's first marriage prospect is Geneviève, the maid of his first employer in Paris. The proposal mocks the established pattern; the financier wishes to set Geneviève behind a respectable front, so he may continue an affair with her (he never admits this, he says instead he has taken the responsibility for her future), though it is true Geneviève is smitten with Jacob. The financier comes to Jacob with the terms of the trade. He acts as a substitute father for her:

... tu n'as encore rien, je lui aurais ménagé un mariage plus avantageux; mais enfin elle t'aime et ne veut que toi, à la bonne heure. Je songe que mes bienfaits peuvent remplacer ce qui te manque, et te tenir au lieu de patrimoine. Je lui ai déjà

fait présent d'une bonne somme d'argent dont je vous indiquerai l'emploi; je ferai plus, je vous meublerai une petite maison, dont je payerai les loyers. . . . je te promets des commissions lucratives. . . . n'oublie jamais que tu as pour le moins la moitié de part à tout ce que je fais dans cette occurrence-ci."<sup>61</sup>

Jacob remains silent during the financier's enunciation of the terms, and he resists taking the "petit rouleau d'argent" (26) offered to seal the deal. He is fascinated and tempted by the offer of instant wealth and an established future, but he cannot abide the thought of being a cuckold; after mulling over the ramifications from this union, his honor winning over his greed, Jacob refuses. Monsieur dies shortly thereafter, and Jacob leaves in search of employment.

Jacob's future is sealed when he encounters the distraught Mademoiselle Habert on the Pont Neuf (41). Jacob calms her and deduces she is around forty years old, but he learns she has reached fifty (42). He is not yet twenty (43), yet in possession of an honest and attractive "physionomie" (44). The Haberts soon hire him, but their priest warns them he is too young, for, "la racine du péché est toujours en nous" (64); their affection for him may not always be so innocent. The sisters argue over whether or

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<sup>61</sup> Marivaux, Paysan, 25-26.

not to keep Jacob in their employ, and in the end the younger Mlle Habert decides to move and to take Jacob with her. She has affection for Jacob, and will not accede to the wishes of the priest. Jacob recognizes her feelings, and reflects, "J'ouvris alors les yeux sur ma bonne fortune" (76). The two look for an appropriate residence to rent together, and they meet the proprietor of a house near Saint-Gervais (77). Once the price is agreed upon ("après que nous eûmes vu l'appartement en question, et en attendant que nous convinssions du prix sur lequel il y avait dispute") (77), the transaction is sealed, and the new tenants will move in in three days. Madame d'Alain could not discern Jacob's status during this meeting, and he is concerned how to explain his position, so Mlle Habert decides to give Jacob the name of M. de la Vallée, and explain that he is a relative of hers, "... tu seras là à part, et décemment sous le titre d'un parent qui vit avec moi, et qui me secourt dans mes affaires" (80). The narrator reflects that, once settled in their new home, "... c'est d'ici qu'on va voir mes aventures devenir plus nobles et plus importantes; c'est ici où ma fortune commence: serviteur au nom de Jacob, il ne sera plus question que de monsieur de la Vallée ...." (84). He soon learns Mlle Habert enjoys an income of 4,000 livres per year, as well as a "bon bourgeois" status (85). Jacob's opportunistic passion for the older woman is aroused before long, yet he knows he has nothing he can offer her; he has no income, nothing to sell

for profit. Mlle Habert is also smitten, and presently promises herself to him. Jacob's emotional response is rooted correctly in the financial question regarding the proposed marriage, "Tout le profit en est à moi, et toute la charité à vous" (97).

Their decision to marry requires the usual paper work of the notary and the priest, the banns must be published, and Jacob's father must give his permission (presumably because of his youth). Mlle Habert wishes to keep the marriage quiet at first especially from her sister. The age difference between the intendeds is now stated as twenty-five years, instead of thirty (Jacob still is under twenty, while Mlle Habert is now apparently forty-five) (101). The next day, the banns is published, and the contract is agreed upon: "Mlle Habert m'y donna tout ce qu'elle avait pour en jouir pendant ma vie" (103); Jacob's father's consent arrives four days later. They make the arrangements to marry at 2:00 a.m., before four witnesses. The priest, at first unknown to the couple, is M. Doucin, chosen because he owes Mme d'Alain a favor. He blocks the wedding: he is the same priest who had warned the Habert sisters against hiring Jacob in the first place, and for this very reason. Mouths agape, the couple realize their plans have been foiled. Mme d'Alain points out to Mlle Habert that she has been too hasty; Mademoiselle is so reasonable, from a good family, rich, and they have only just met six days earlier, and Jacob is a servant who would become a "maître." She does

not mention the age difference, for that is not the problem. It is Jacob's lack of funds and status that makes him unacceptable.

Thereupon a meeting is called where M. le président, one of the leading magistrates of Paris, wishes to speak to Jacob, and he goes to the conference, where everyone (especially the women,) remarks favorably on Jacob's "figure" (123). Once again, it is Jacob's station and lack of money that elicit the strongest comment to the "Président," made by the elder sister of the bride. She emphatically reveals the paradox of equality; all men may be equal before God, but not before each other:

Oui, monsieur le président, répondit notre aînée, ce n'est pas les années que je regarde à cela, c'est l'état du mari qu'elle prend; c'est la bassesse de son choix; voyez quel affront ce sera pour la famille. Je sais bien que nous sommes tous égaux devant Dieu, mais devant les hommes ce n'est pas de même, et Dieu veut qu'on ait égard aux coutumes établies parmi eux, il nous défend de nous déshonorer, et les hommes diront que ma soeur aura épousé un gredin .... (129)

Mlle Habert's statement may seem humorous, and Marivaux is not attempting to point out social problems that need to be fixed; he is simply stating a truth, that in fact men are not equal. The author accepts the status quo, and though he

reveals himself to be a humanitarian, he is not trying to change it.<sup>60</sup> For his part, Jacob responds pointedly that he is no more a "gredin" than Mlle Habert's father, for they both were farmers. He does not understand why their marriage would be an affront. The Président eventually agrees, and the marriage is back on.

After Jacob's arrest due to mistaken identity, he and Mlle Habert are finally married, and she comments they will have between 4,000 and 5,000 livres income. She then asks him what he will do to occupy himself. He responds,

... faisons-nous financiers par quelque emploi qui ne nous coûte guère, et qui rende beaucoup, comme c'est la coutume du métier. Le seigneur de notre village, qui est mort riche comme un coffre, était parvenu par ce moyen, parvenons de même. (164)

Like Blaise in L'Héritier de village, Jacob is ignorant of finance, but he has a plan to get rich, and finance appears to him the most expedient way to achieve his goal. He is enamored with the idea of becoming a parvenu.

He enjoys his marriage, for, though he is not faithful to his wife, he certainly relishes his new status. Mme de la Vallée is happy with him. The older M. de la Vallée is never far from Jacob, the handsome young peasant recently arrived in Paris. The narrator describes the joy Jacob

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<sup>60</sup> Valentini Papadopoulou Brady, Love in the Theatre of Marivaux (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1970) 146.

feels with his wealth; he is full of the pleasure it has given him:

Je restai le lendemain toute la matinée chez moi; je ne m'y ennuyai pas; je m'y délectai dans le plaisir de me trouver tout à coup un maître de maison; j'y savourai ma fortune, j'y goûtai mes aises, je me regardai dans mon appartement; j'y marchai, je m'y assis, j'y souris à mes meubles, j'y rêvai à ma cuisinière, qu'il ne tenait qu'à moi de faire venir, et que je crois que j'appelai pour la voir; enfin j'y contemplai ma robe de chambre et mes pantoufles; et je vous assure que ce ne furent pas là les deux articles qui me touchèrent le moins; de combien de petits bonheurs l'homme du monde est-il entouré et qu'il ne sent point, parce qu'il est né avec eux? (248)

Monsieur de la Vallée borrows all his pleasure and joy from Jacob, who understands the contrasts in his life. Marriage has given him this opportunity; his offer in the contract was not his wealth, but his youth, beauty, and honesty (though not his faithfulness). He describes the happiness money has given him with greater admiration than any he demonstrates for his wife. He is pleased with his wife; he is in love with his money.

Jacob deserves riches on his own merit, and Marivaux provides the means. His own fortune originates from an act

of valor: he unselfishly saves the life of the nephew of the prime minister. The comte d'Orsan is thankful and after the two become better acquainted, the count assures Jacob's financial future: "Mon cher la Vallée, votre fortune n'est plus votre affaire, c'est la mienne, c'est l'affaire de votre ami; car je suis le vôtre, et je veux que vous soyez le mien" (264). Perhaps Marivaux gives this fortune to Jacob to compensate for his own lack of financial success. Jacob always deserves his luck, and he is most appreciative. Marianne is also humbled by her good fortune, but she always knows she must have deserved it. Only Jacob can savor what he has, for he knows where he comes from. He is a parvenu and delighted and proud of it.

In financial matters, Marivaux addresses the changes in the established order, most probably due to the financial upheavals caused by Law's System, increasing foreign trade, and the attendant increasing money supply. The nobility no longer controls the wealth of the nation, and the bourgeois are becoming accepted in the society. During the Regency period, merchants began to use their wealth, accumulated over time with hard work and parsimonious habits. Their money could buy some respectability:

De cette époque date le luxe de quelques marchands enrichis, qui oublièrent les mœurs de leurs ancêtres et qui voulaient imiter les financiers et les gros bourgeois: 'Chaque bourgeois commerçant, artisan même un peu aisé, écrivait le Marquis de

Mirabeau en 1755, a sa maison de campagne où tout va par écuelles, comme l'on dit.<sup>63</sup>

Marivaux creates examples of individuals who succeed in rising from poverty to the bourgeoisie, from the bourgeoisie to the nobility. His writing amplifies the trend in the society, and underlines the importance of money in the social order. Marivaux never intended to be a social critic, yet his work so clearly reflects the social changes occurring in France. Matches made between the impoverished nobility and the bourgeoisie were not new, but they were becoming increasingly frequent. Madame Damis in L'Héritier de village is not unique; she represents the landed gentry. Her château may be magnificent and a special inheritance from her late husband, but she cannot maintain it, it is deteriorating and needs to be rebuilt. Her willingness to marry the child of a peasant reveals her desperation for money. The comte Dorimont in Les Fausses confidences, while not desperate for money, could certainly increase his patrimony in taking the enormously wealthy Araminte as his bride. The marriage contract is just that: a legal document between two families or two individuals, without regard to love. Marivaux is always concerned that the order must be followed, if in a modified form. Each party must bring something to the marriage, for the families insist on making a good match. Something must be gained.

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<sup>63</sup> Lacroix 237.

A good inheritance can assure a good marriage, and an heir or heiress is always desirable. Marianne, or Jacob, however, have no such lure. Each is beautiful and kind, though both use their good looks and wiles to their own advantage, and both mature narrators admit to having done so in their youth. The scheming, in Marianne's case, is to make her more attractive to Valville, or more appealing to Mme de Miran. Jacob takes advantage of the opportunity before him to become a parvenu. He loves money and what it can do for him more than he admires his wife.

Marivaux is no revolutionary, but the couples he creates emphasize the subtle changes occurring in contemporary French society. The greater acceptance of the bourgeoisie, the downgrading of the nobility, the occasional upgrading of the peasantry (thanks to the inheritance from distant relatives), are all indications of a more democratic society in the future. The fear expressed by the elder Mlle Habert, "Nous sommes tous égaux devant Dieu, mais devant les hommes ce n'est pas de même" (129), predicts the conflicts to come. A title is no longer enough, and does not afford the holder a lifestyle; it takes a lot of money to live well. Conversely, money is not enough, it takes a title to be accepted in the society. Expedient deals are made. All the while the bourgeoisie is gaining respectability, as in the case of Mlle Habert, and even Araminte. Marianne, Jacob, and Dorante are exceptions to the rule, for they have no concrete financial holdings to offer their respective

spouses, yet they succeed in marrying and improving their own financial and social standings. These couples prevail, yet their own happiness is predicated on what the abbess describes to Marianne as "unions inégales" (297), which bring shame on good families. Although Marivaux is most respectful of the established order, his couples reflect how that order is changing.

## Chapter Four: Voltaire (1694-1778)

This chapter will focus on Voltaire's economic theory as related through his literary works, and will address more specifically the role tolerance plays as a foundation for a strong economy and thus a strong society. The three previous authors furnished insights into microeconomic situations and the management of personal funds in literary contexts. Voltaire contrasts these depictions with a macroeconomic theory developed throughout his writing, while, through his correspondence, he furnishes detail on his own personal finances.

A. François-Marie Arouet becomes Voltaire: the impact of financial considerations.

Louis XIV was on the throne when François-Marie Arouet was born on November 21, 1694 to François Arouet and his wife Marguerite d'Aumard.<sup>1</sup> Her father Nicolas d'Aumard was a nobleman from Poitou, and served as a clerk in the criminal division of the Parliament, while her brother,

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<sup>1</sup> J.G. Prod'homme, Voltaire raconté par ceux qui l'ont vu (Paris: Librairie Stock, Delamain et Boutelleau, 1929) 4. There was some apparent controversy as to the date of Voltaire's birth, however, a letter from Pierre Bailly, a cousin of the Arouet family, to his father on November 24, 1694, states that the child was born three days earlier. His baptism had taken place the day prior to the writing of the letter. The notarized certificate of baptism is dated Monday, November 22, 1694, and states that the baby was born "le jour précédent." 3.

Simphorien, served as comptroller to the royal police.<sup>2</sup> Prior to their marriage in 1682, Mr. Arouet had inherited an estate from his father and, after an apprenticeship as a young man, had paid 10,000 francs in 1675 to secure the position of notary to the Châtelet, the court of the city of Paris.<sup>3</sup> The post came with an apartment on the Ile de la Cité (rue Jérusalem) comprising ten rooms with stables, attic, and cellar. The socially ascending Arouets would also acquire a fourteen room house at Châtenay in 1707. Their residences were furnished lavishly, including tapestries, marble-topped tables, 800 ounces of silver tableware and forty dozen napkins.<sup>4</sup> By 1692 Arouet had moved on to a senior post within the tax department as "receveur alternatif et triennal des épices."<sup>5</sup> It is documented that this post cost a staggering 240,000 livres in 1696, by which time Arouet had two houses in Paris, one on the rue Saint-Denis and the other on the rue Maubué, as well as another in Gentilly, which he sold in 1707 to purchase Châtenay.<sup>6</sup> His last, and most lucrative position

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<sup>2</sup> Gustave Desnoiresterres, Voltaire et la société au XVIIIe siècle, (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1871) 9.

<sup>3</sup> James Parton, Life of Voltaire, Vol. 1, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1881) 16.

<sup>4</sup> Theodore Besterman, Voltaire, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1969) 26.

<sup>5</sup> Édouard Marie Lèpan, Vie politique, littéraire et morale de Voltaire, (Paris: Société reproductrice des bons livres, 1858) 5.

<sup>6</sup> René Pomeau, D'Arouet à Voltaire, 1694-1734 vol.I of Voltaire en son temps, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, Taylor Institution, 1985) 30.

was as treasurer of the Chamber of Accounts.<sup>7</sup> Arouet met many prominent Parisians through his work, and he and his wife entertained, among others, his clients Saint-Simon and Richelieu; he had also known Corneille and Boileau, and often went to the Comédie française.<sup>8</sup>

François-Marie was the fifth child born to the Arouets. Voltaire himself had questions about his paternity. He believed his biological father may have been a close family friend, the Abbé Rochebrune. Voltaire wrote a letter to the Duc de Richelieu on June 8, 1744 which began with a quatrain:

Je crains bien qu'en cherchant de l'esprit et des  
traits,

Le bâtard de Rochebrune

Ne fatigue et n'importune

Le successeur d'Armand et les esprits bien faits.<sup>9</sup>

He later attributed his own ailments to a possible hereditary factor. In a letter to Marie-Louise Denis dated July 25, 1753, he states, "Mais il n'en est point du tout de même de la colique, et du commencement d'une hydropisie. Je me souviens que Rochebrune dans cet état ne pouvait pas

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<sup>7</sup> Théophile Imarigeon Duvernet, Vie de Voltaire, (Paris: Chez F. Buisson, 1797) 17.

<sup>8</sup> Gustave Lanson, Voltaire (Paris: Hachette, 1960) 10.

<sup>9</sup> Voltaire, The Complete Works of Voltaire, ed. Theodore Besterman, vol.93 (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1970) letter D2988, 129.

seulement faire une chanson."<sup>10</sup> A few weeks later, in another letter to Marie-Louise Denis, he again mentions his possible hereditary connection to dropsy, "Vous savez que Rochebrune en est mort [hydropisie], et que j'ai quelques raisons de prétendre à son tempérament."<sup>11</sup> The Abbé Rochebrune, an "aimable chansonnier," hailed from an ancient noble family from the Auvergne region, and is said to have been extremely attentive to him when he was a child.<sup>12</sup>

Madame Arouet died when her youngest son was seven years old; his father kept him at home until he was ten. Young Arouet was already developing his writing skills in competition with his older brother. Their epigrams amused their father's friends, among them Ninon de Lenclos, who left François-Marie 2,000 livres in her will (1705) for him to start a library.<sup>13</sup> His godfather (and Ninon's last lover) the Abbé de Châteauneuf instructed him at home.<sup>14</sup> The Abbé incited a passion for literature in his young student. Voltaire remembered their conversations all his life; in 1764 he wrote, "Il y a quelque soixante ans que l'abbé de Châteauneuf me disait: mon enfant, laisser crier le monde, Racine gagnera tous les jours et Corneille perdra."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 98, letter D5451, 183.

<sup>11</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 98, letter D5475, 206.

<sup>12</sup> Desnoiresterres 11.

<sup>13</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 97, letter D4867 to Jean-Henri-Samuel Formey, April 15, 1752, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Parton 29.

<sup>15</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 111, letter D11945 to Étienne-Noël Damilaville, June 22, 1764, 442.

Arouet entered the Louis-le-Grand school, now known as a "lycée," in 1704. The basic tuition there was 400 livres annually, with additional charges for the services of a prefect.<sup>16</sup> The school was run by the Jesuits and the students learned latin as well as literature. The Jesuit fathers encouraged their charges to think, and François-Marie was a fine student. One day, after a lengthy discussion, père Lejay, not his favorite professor, proclaimed, "Malheureux, tu seras un jour l'étendard du déisme en France,"<sup>17</sup> a prediction his already impious student would indeed fulfill. In 1706 Châteauneuf brought his protégé into the society of the Temple where he would spend many of his free days during his school years. After he left the "lycée" the young man would frequently attend dinners in the company of the free thinking, libertine Templars; he relished the conversations as well as the elegant settings, and their characteristic disdain of the most respectable institutions and people in France.<sup>18</sup> The young man accumulated liabilities in the libertine society he kept, and when he was thirteen, he signed a bill of debt to a Madame Thomas for 500 livres (a large amount for a student, for it is more than his annual tuition), to be repaid when he reached his majority.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Desnoiresterres 16.

<sup>17</sup> Lepan 7.

<sup>18</sup> Desnoiresterres 40.

<sup>19</sup> Pomeau 49.

When he turned sixteen, his father asked to discuss his future plans with him, and this conversation took place just prior to the young man's forced enrollment in law school:

Je n'en veux pas d'autre, s'écria le futur auteur de *Zaïre*, que celui d'homme de lettres. - C'est, lui répondit le payeur de la chambre des comptes, l'état d'un homme qui veut être inutile à la société, à charge à ses parents, et qui veut mourir de faim.<sup>20</sup>

His father only wished for an appropriate career for him: lawyer to the Court. Such a position would have helped the young man advance socially, however, fortunately, he would not fulfill his father's wishes after law school.

The young writer soon learned that words could get him arrested, and by 1716 he was exiled (for some lines he composed concerning the duc d'Orleans and the duchesse de Berry) by royal decree to Sully-sur-Loire, "où il a quelques parents dont les instructions et les exemples pourront corriger son imprudence et tempérer sa vivacité."<sup>21</sup> He spent his first incarceration in the Bastille in 1717. He entered on May 17 (for a similar offense), and had on his person, according to the "procès verbal," six louis of gold

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<sup>20</sup> Duvernet, *Vie de Voltaire*, (Genève, 1786) 22. In Desnoiresterres, 41. I have cited this earlier edition of Duvernet through Desnoiresterres because it is slightly more forceful than the quote in the later Paris edition, on page 28 (see note 6).

<sup>21</sup> Prod'homme 5.

worth 30 livres each, one ten-sous coin, ten sou coins, three liards, a pair of glasses, a pair of scissors, some keys, a writing tablet, and some papers written and signed "Arouet."<sup>22</sup> He was not released until April 14, 1718, by order of the king on the advice of his uncle, the duc d'Orléans.<sup>23</sup>

On November 18, 1718, Arouet presented his first play, Oedipe, and it was greeted with approbation. He received a gold medal and 675 livres and 10 sous from the King and the Regent.<sup>24</sup> He began calling himself Voltaire, an anagram of his name, and it first appeared in his correspondence as "Arouet de Voltaire" in letter D62, dated June 12, 1718.<sup>25</sup> He first used "Voltaire" alone in a letter to the duc d'Orléans in November 1718.<sup>26</sup>

In 1719, Voltaire was aware of the volatility of the market due to Law's System. He found the paper stocks and the assessment of their value incomprehensible, and was shocked at the trading frenzy in Paris, as he comments to Nicolas-Anne Lefèvre de la Faluère,

Êtes vous réellement devenus tous fous à Paris?  
Je n'entends parler que de millions. On dit que  
tout ce qui était à son aise est dans la misère et  
tout ce qui était dans la mendicité nage dans

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<sup>22</sup> Prod'homme 13.

<sup>23</sup> Prod'homme 23.

<sup>24</sup> Prod'homme 24.

<sup>25</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 85, letter D62, 73.

<sup>26</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 85, letter D70, 77.

l'opulence. Est ce une réalité? Est ce une chimère? La moitié de la nation a-t-elle trouvé la pierre philosophale dans les moulins à papier? Law est il un dieu, un fripon, ou un charlatan qui s'empoisonne de la drogue qu'il distribue à tout le monde? M. le R... est il de bonne foi, ou s'est-il trompé? Veut-il avoir tout l'argent du royaume, ou se contenter de richesses imaginaires? C'est un chaos que je ne puis débrouiller et auquel je m'imagine que vous n'entendez rien.<sup>27</sup>

He continues with a poem about the "Écossais malin" and his "feuilletés volants."

Voltaire began earning money from his writing with the production of his second play, Artemire. Opening night, February 13, 1720, came at a time of economic strife in Paris, as Law's System was in total ruin. Despite the bad financial tidings, the play took in receipts that night of 5,167 francs as well as a favorable, though not overwhelming, critical response.<sup>28</sup>

Voltaire's father died on January 1, 1722 and left his eldest son, Armand, his position in the Chamber of Accounts, which produced an income of 13,000 francs per year.<sup>29</sup> Armand was also to have provided some funds generated from the estate for his siblings. Arouet left his youngest son

<sup>27</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 85, letter D84, c. July 1719, 95.

<sup>28</sup> Parton 136.

<sup>29</sup> Parton 139.

François-Marie an income reported alternately as 5,000 to 6,000 livres annually,<sup>30</sup> or, 4,250 livres.<sup>31</sup> Shortly after Arouet's death, an announcement appeared in the January *Mercure de France*: "M. Arouet de Voltaire, de qui le père est mort depuis peu, a obtenu du roi, par la protection de M. le duc d'Orléans, une pension de 2,000 livres."<sup>32</sup>

At the beginning of October 1722 Voltaire traveled to Holland, where he was pleased to observe a society very different from the French; the industrious Dutch were most concerned with business, and they emphasized harmony over uniformity. A new theme emerges, one that Voltaire will develop from the Lettres Philosophiques through Candide (where the perfect society exists in the "earthly paradise" of Eldorado) will be the fundamental necessity of tolerance as a basis for economic progress. Tolerance moves business, business is constructive, intolerance is destructive. Voltaire seems to map out this template on his trip to Holland. In a letter to the Marquise de Bernières, he interprets what he has seen:

... c'est un paradis terrestre depuis La Haye à Amsterdam; j'ai vu avec respect cette ville qui est le magasin de l'univers. Il y avait plus de mille vaisseaux dans le port. De cinq cent mille

<sup>30</sup> Marguerite Goubard, Voltaire et l'impôt, diss., (Paris: les Presses modernes, 1931) 102.

<sup>31</sup> Lanson 21.

<sup>32</sup> Louis Nicolardot, Ménage et finances de Voltaire, vol. I, (Paris: Dentu et Cie., 1887) 46.

hommes qui habitent Amsterdam, il n'y en a pas un d'oisif, pas un pauvre, pas un petit maître, pas un homme insolent. Nous rencomtrâmes le pensionnaire à pied sans laquais au milieu de la populace. On ne voit là personne qui ait de cour à faire, on ne se met point en haie pour voir passer un prince, on ne connaît que le travail et la modestie. Il y a à La Haye plus de magnificence et plus de société par le concours des ambassadeurs. J'y passe ma vie entre le travail et le plaisir et je vis ainsi à la hollandaise et à la française. Nous avons ici un opéra détestable mais en revanche je vois des ministres calvinistes, des arminiens [sic], des sociniens, des rabbins, des anabaptistes qui parlent tous à merveille et qui en vérité ont tous raison.<sup>33</sup>

The highly acclaimed epic, la Henriade (first published in France as la Ligue), was written in 1723, and assured Voltaire's status as a writer. The subscriptions for the work brought him approximately 10,000 francs.<sup>34</sup> In November 1725 he received an annuity of 1,500 francs from the queen.<sup>35</sup> Mathieu Marais writes on November 24, 1725, "... Voltaire vient d'obtenir une pension de 15.000 l. sur la

<sup>33</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol.85, letter D128 from October 1722, 138.

<sup>34</sup> Nicolardot 67.

<sup>35</sup> Lanson 21.

cassette de la reine: il suit la Cour et en mange les chapons!"<sup>35</sup> Voltaire presumably had enough money to be comfortable, but he was not rich. Jean Sgard indicates that a revenue of 5,000 to 20,000 livres would have been considered adequate to maintain a bourgeois lifestyle,<sup>37</sup> and Voltaire needed a continuing income. He began to make financial commitments as early as 1722 with the guidance and advice of several well-known financiers: Caumartin, Dupin, Delahante, and the Pâris brothers.<sup>38</sup> His close friend Nicolas-Claude Thieriot also sought financial advice, as is evident in a letter from November 1722. Voltaire writes, "Je vous pardonnerais votre négligence par le plaisir que j'aurais d'apprendre que MM. Pâris auraient enfin fait quelque chose pour vous. Écrivez-moi donc un peu touchant vos affaires et les miennes. Vous savez qu'elles nous sont communes."<sup>39</sup> Voltaire was not comfortable with his finances, and he contested his father's will in 1725, "... une foule d'affaires m'est survenue. La moindre est le procès que je renouvelle contre le testament de mon père ..."<sup>40</sup> His letters regarding his financial situation become more furtive, desperate, and almost tortured, as if he did not have enough to live on. Regarding his "fortune," he writes

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<sup>35</sup> Prod'homme 40. Taken from M. Marais, Correspondance inédite, (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale Mss. Fr. 24.475, fol.113 ro.) 376

<sup>37</sup> Sgard, "l'Échelle," 427.

<sup>38</sup> Goubard 102.

<sup>39</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 85, letter D133, 142.

<sup>40</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 85, letter D243, 258.

to the Marquise de Bernières (in September 1724), "La mienne prend un tour si diabolique à la chambre des comptes que je serai peut-être obligé de travailler pour vivre après avoir vécu pour travailler."<sup>41</sup> In October of that same year, he laments again to the Marquise, this time regarding his inability to retain his staff, "Je me trouve, je ne sais comment, chargé de trois domestiques que je n'ai pas le pouvoir de garder, et que je n'ai pas la force de renvoyer."<sup>42</sup> Subsequent letters discuss his "souffrances" and his "maux."

Voltaire's public life did not run any more smoothly than his finances, and he found himself incarcerated in the Bastille once again in April 1726,<sup>43</sup> as the result of an insulting exchange with the Chevalier de Rohan-Chabot. The putative grievance was an inappropriate response to the Chevalier, regarding Voltaire's name. The two met at the opera one evening in February 1726 and, according to a letter written by Mathieu Marais to Président Bouhier,

Voici le fait. Le cheualier de Rohan le trouve à l'Opéra et luy dit Mons de Voltaire, Mons Arouet comment vous appelez-vous, l'autre dit je ne sçay quoy sur le nom de Chabot. Cela en reste là. Deux jours après, à la Comedie au chauffoir, le cheualier recommence. Le poete luy dit qu'il luy

<sup>41</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol.85, letter D212, 227.

<sup>42</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol.85, letter D216, 232.

<sup>43</sup> Prod'homme 52 from the Journal of the King's lieutenant at the Bastille.

avoit fait sa reponse a l'Opéra. Le cheualier leua sa canne, ne le frappa pas et dit qu'on ne deuroit luy repondre qu'a coups de baston.<sup>44</sup>

The chevalier would have his opportunity a few days later, when he had Voltaire believe he was invited to dinner at the house of the duc de Sully. Chabot's men attacked and beat Voltaire. A different version of the exchange sets the date as December 1725, with the chevalier asking Voltaire who he was, and Voltaire responding insolently, "Je suis le premier de mon nom, et vous le dernier du vôtre."<sup>45</sup> Voltaire was overwhelmed by the attack of the men as well as the chevalier's cowardice, as he writes in a letter from the Bastille on April 20, 1726, "Je remontre très humblement que j'ai été assassiné par le brave chevalier de Rohan assisté de six coupe-jarrets derrière lesquels il était hardiment posté."<sup>46</sup> Voltaire believed he had been wrongly incarcerated and immediately sought permission to leave for England.<sup>47</sup> By April 30, Voltaire received permission to go, and he was in Calais by May 5, on his way to England. He would stay there for two years, studying English, philosophy, and science and enjoying the company of Lord and Lady Bolingbroke, friends of the Marquise de Bernières, whom

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<sup>44</sup> Prod'homme 48.

<sup>45</sup> Lepan 19.

<sup>46</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol.85, letter D271 to Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, the Comte de Maurepas, 287.

<sup>47</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 85, letter D284 to René Hérault, May 1, 1726, 294.

Voltaire had met when they were in France earlier. Voltaire was impressed with Lord Bolingbroke's accomplishments as a statesman, a writer, and a philosopher.

Voltaire's finances were in disrepair, and he had to make arrangements to support himself in England. He had to resort to seeking the services of a financier (who evidently had gone into bankruptcy before Voltaire's return), as he writes, in English, to his friend Thieriot, on October 26, 1726:

... let me acquaint you with an account of my for ever cursed fortune. I came again into England in the latter end of July very much dissatisfied with my secret voiage into France both unsuccessful and expensive.<sup>48</sup> I had about me onely some bills of exchange upon a Jew called Medina for the sum of about eight or nine thousand French livres, rekoning all. At my coming to London I found my damned Jew was broken. I was without a penny, sick to death of a violent agüe, a stranger, alone, helpless, in the midst of a city, wherein I was known to nobody.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Voltaire had remained bitter towards the Chevalier de Rohan and had returned secretly to France for a few days to retaliate. He did not meet with the Chevalier. See Hayden Mason, Voltaire, a Biography, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981) 13.

<sup>49</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 85, letter D303, 309.

He still complains to Thieriot in February 1727, for his situation has not improved, "Vous savez peut-être que les banqueroutes sans ressource que j'ai essuyées en Angleterre, le retranchement de mes rentes, la perte de mes pensions, et les dépenses que m'ont coûté les maladies dont j'ai été accablé ici m'ont réduit à un état bien dur."<sup>50</sup> Despite his lack of funds, Voltaire's visit would prove to enrich him philosophically, if not greatly financially, though he would publish la Henriade by subscription there.

His financial situation improved after his return from England, when he placed his money in the lottery established by the comptroller general, M. Desforts, for the purpose of liquidating the debts of the city of Paris. Voltaire won the bulk of the 1,000,000 franc prize; he only received it after Desforts refused to pay and a judge ruled in favor of Voltaire.<sup>51</sup> Fearful of retribution, Voltaire left Paris for a while, and did not return until Desforts lost his position.<sup>52</sup> Voltaire was well on his way to making his fortune.

The young Voltaire clearly understood the limitations of a fixed income during inflationary times, a lesson he learned during the downfall of Law's System, and he was acutely aware of the relationship between the actions of the politicians running the government and their ensuing

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<sup>50</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 85, letter D308, 315.

<sup>51</sup> Nicolardot 67-68.

<sup>52</sup> Lepan 24.

economic effects. Voltaire acted on his instincts and was well rewarded financially: he took pride and profit in discovering inefficiencies in different markets, creating his own, personal and individual system. He took risks in commodities at price levels he could afford. He participated heavily in the trade in Cadiz and in the wheat trade with the Barbary Coast, while the financiers, so reviled in much of the literature of the century (even by Voltaire), provided him his greatest wealth: "le fonds qu'il fit entre les mains des Paris-Duverney et Mont-Martre pour les vivres de l'armée d'Italie furent une source encore plus abondante de richesses."<sup>53</sup> Profit was his motivation: though later, during the Seven Years War (1756-1763), "Si l'infanterie de Rosbach n'avait ni subsistances, ni souliers,' si la cavalerie manquait de bottes et si l'armée ne vivait enfin que de maraudes exécrables,' n'est-il pas plaisant d'apprendre que Voltaire en a sa part de responsabilité?"<sup>54</sup>

In his Mémoires, Voltaire would summarize his personal financial motivations and his actions:

Il faut être, en France, enclume ou marteau:  
j'étais né enclume. Un patrimoine court devient  
tous les jours plus court, parce que tout augmente  
de prix à la longue, et que souvent le

<sup>53</sup> Duvernet (Paris) 80.

<sup>54</sup> Brunetière, Études critiques sur la littérature française, t. I, p. 264, in Goubard 103.

gouvernement a touché aux rentes et aux espèces. Il faut être attentif à toutes les opérations que le ministère, toujours obéré et toujours inconstant, fait dans les finances de l'État. Il y en a toujours quelqu'une dont un particulier peut profiter, sans avoir obligation à personne; et rien n'est si doux que de faire sa fortune par soi-même: le premier pas coûte quelques peines; les autres sont aisés. Il faut être économe dans sa jeunesse; on se trouve, dans sa vieillesse, un fonds dont on est surpris. C'est le temps où la fortune est le plus nécessaire; c'est celui où je jouis; et, après avoir vécu chez des rois, je me suis fait roi chez moi malgré des pertes immenses.<sup>55</sup>

Voltaire glosses modestly over the energy level required for his investments; he was an active trader throughout his life, and by the 1750s would own both "les Délices" in Geneva and the estate in Ferney, in France, just outside Geneva. His correspondence, (particularly the letters to his banker and merchant, Jean-Robert Tronchin), includes great detail on his financial wins and losses, as well as his rising expenses; Voltaire always concerned himself with the management of his funds, and he never thought he had enough. There was virtually no financial activity, legal or

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<sup>55</sup> Voltaire, Mémoires, (Paris: Seuil, 1993) 93-94.

otherwise, in which he did not participate. He made (and lost money) from many sources: the Royal Treasury, lotteries, the diamond trade, the purchase and sale of paintings, the wheat trade, dealings with booksellers in France, England, Holland, Switzerland, and Germany, the sale of provisions and supplies to armies, stock, maritime loans, contracts, promissory notes, rental income, mortgages, money exchange, diplomatic trade, leases, land clearing, farming of three large "domaines," tithes, manufacturing, sale of real estate, gambling, and various forms of exploitation, all in the pursuit of becoming a rich man.<sup>56</sup> Voltaire's curiosity and imagination were as expansive in the world of finance as in the world of arts and letters, and he devoted seemingly endless energy to both.

B. Lettres philosophiques (first titled Lettres anglaises or Sur les Anglais) (1734)

Montesquieu's scandalous Lettres Persanes was published in Amsterdam in 1721. The epistolary form of the novel, ostensibly the correspondence between a pair of Persians who have traveled to France and family members and acquaintances back home, written between March 1711 and November 1720, affords Montesquieu as "translator" the opportunity to criticize French society as seen through the eyes of the travelers. Many institutions are covered, from the

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<sup>56</sup> Nicolardot, vol.II, 269-270.

aristocracy to the Church, and the overwhelming theme of intolerance and lack of freedom of the French is contrasted with the necessity for tolerance and liberty in a successful society. Tyranny of any kind deprives the citizens of happiness; freedom is essential to a dynamic civilization. In letter CXVII from Usbek to Rhédi, Montesquieu discusses the detrimental effects of the tyranny of the existing church-crown system on the economy. He contrasts the stranglehold of the Catholic church with the encouragement, freedom, strength, and resultant riches of the more tolerant Protestant ethic:

Ce n'est pas tout: les dervis ont en leurs mains presque toutes les richesses de l'État; c'est une société de gens avarés, qui prennent toujours et ne rendent jamais; ils accumulent sans cesse des revenus pour acquérir des capitaux. Tant de richesses tombent, pour ainsi dire, en paralysie: plus de circulation, plus de commerce, plus d'arts, plus de manufactures.

Il n'y a point de prince protestant qui ne lève sur ses peuples beaucoup plus d'impôts que le Pape n'en lève sur ses sujets; cependant ces derniers sont pauvres, pendant que les autres vivent dans l'opulence. Le commerce ranime tout chez les uns,

et le monarchisme porte la mort partout chez les autres.<sup>57</sup>

Voltaire continues not only the epistolary tradition but also the criticism of entrenched institutions in France in his Lettres philosophiques of 1734. In this case, the letters are written from England to France, supposedly from Voltaire to his friend Thieriot<sup>58</sup>, and concern the institutions of English society. Voltaire describes an exciting, thriving scene which, by its apparent contrast, is a sharp, critical analysis of France. According to Voltaire, tolerance, freedom, and a strong economy are the building blocks of a great society, and the last is impossible to achieve without the first two.

It is evident from the first letter that Voltaire finds England exciting, prosperous, free and tolerant. He writes as a man who is both curious and reasonable, and the first person he introduces to his readers is a successful, retired Quaker businessman. Certainly this description would have caught the attention of a French reader; religious intolerance in France would not have permitted a Huguenot, much less a Quaker, from flourishing in business, and a member of such a fringe group would not have been chosen as a sage guide to the country. The Quaker is described as prudent, for he knew that there were limits to

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<sup>57</sup> Montesquieu, Lettres Persanes, (Paris: Éditions Garnier, 1975) 248-249.

<sup>58</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 86, letter D545, 261.

both his fortune and his desires, so, after thirty profitable years, he retired. This man has lived frugally, soberly, and maintains a noble air. He dresses simply and neatly, without adornment, as is the custom of his religion. Despite the obvious differences between his religion and Catholicism (which Voltaire satirizes with mock seriousness), he is depicted as humble, intelligent, honest, and Christian.

The second letter introduces the idea of religious tolerance as a way of life, for the Quakers must permit anyone to speak in church, for the word of God could come through anyone. There is no hierarchy in the Quaker church; no one is closer to God than any other, all are equal, in contrast with the Catholic church. The Quaker criticizes the business aspect of the Catholic church:

Irons-nous après cette parole marchander  
l'Évangile, vendre l'Esprit Saint, et faire d'une  
assemblée de Chrétiens une boutique de marchands?  
Nous ne donnons point d'argent à des hommes vêtus  
de noir pour assister nos pauvres, pour enterrer  
nos morts, pour prêcher les fidèles; ces saints  
emplois nous sont trop chers pour nous en  
décharger sur d'autres.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Voltaire, Lettres philosophiques ou Lettres anglaises, (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1964) 9. Subsequent references will be to this edition and page numbers will be given in the text in parentheses.

Voltaire compares the Catholic religious leaders to a group of petty merchants selling their services for a profit; the profane mixing with the sacred. The mercenaries run the Church. He also pointedly remarks that intolerance is ingrained in the structure of the Church. Inequality marks the clergy, for from the priests up to the Pope, all are higher in the hierarchy than the parishioners; all stand elevated before God above the peasant. By the fourth letter, Voltaire is quite explicit on the importance of religious tolerance. He relates one of the laws (and specifically the first) of the new country of Pennsylvania, in America, "La première est de ne maltraiter personne au sujet de la Religion, et de regarder comme frères tous ceux qui croient un Dieu" (19). He points out that the Anglican Church retains most of the Catholic customs, especially the right to tithe the parishioners, but at least the ministers are all well educated at Oxford or Cambridge, and they do not enter the ministry until later than their Catholic counterparts.

The connection between tolerance and prosperity is again explicit in the sixth letter, on the Presbyterians, which contains a joyous portrayal of the harmonious interaction of a mixed group of businessmen who work in harmony for great profit despite intractable differences in their religious beliefs. Voltaire speaks of the London Stock Exchange, the engine which moves and promotes the British economy, with reverence:

Entrez dans la Bourse de Londres, cette Place plus respectable que bien des Cours; vous y voyez rassemblés les députés de toutes les Nations pour l'utilité des hommes. Là, le Juif, le Mahométan et le Chrétien traitent l'un avec l'autre comme s'ils étaient de la même Religion, et ne donnent le nom d'infidèles qu'à ceux qui font banqueroute; là, le Presbytérien se fie à l'Anabaptiste, et l'Anglican reçoit la promesse du Quaker. Au sortir de ces pacifiques et libres assemblées, les uns vont à la Synagogue, les autres vont boire; celui-ci va se faire baptiser dans une grande cuve au nom du Père par le Fils au Saint-Esprit; celui-là fait couper le prépuce de son fils et fait marmotter sur l'Enfant des paroles hébraïques qu'il n'entend point; ces autres vont dans leur Eglise attendre l'inspiration de Dieu, leur chapeau sur la tête, et tous sont contents.

S'il n'y avait en Angleterre qu'une Religion, le despotisme serait à craindre; s'il y en avait deux, elles se couperaient la gorge; mais il y en a trente, et elles vivent en paix et heureuses.

(29)

In France, the two Christian religions did almost wipe each other out. The Catholics and the Huguenots would not live in harmony; much blood was spilled, and those Protestants

who could, fled. Voltaire contrasts the harmony, which must be present for there to be prosperity, with the destruction and economic laceration implied when he graphically states that two religions cannot coexist without cutting each other's throats. This bloodletting also recalls the image of blood as the metaphore for the life force of the economy of Vauban's Dime royal from the early part of the eighteenth century (see Introduction, section B). The Stock Exchange may be more respectable than many royal courts because the money that comes into the Exchange is cycled back into the economy, while conversely the money pouring into the coffers of the king of France and into the Church flows only one way, and does not benefit the citizens in any way. Voltaire will tie the idea of tolerance and economic prosperity throughout his writing. In the Traité sur la Tolérance written in 1763, in Chapter IV, entitled "Si la tolérance est dangereuse, et chez quels peuples elle est permise," he states,

Allez dans l'Inde, dans la Perse, dans la Tartarie, vous y verrez la même tolérance et la même tranquillité. Pierre le Grand a favorisé tous les cultes dans son vaste empire; le commerce et l'agriculture y ont gagné, et le corps politique n'en a jamais souffert.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Voltaire, Traité sur la Tolérance, (Paris: Flammarion, 1989) 50-51.

Voltaire repeats much of his description of the Stock exchange in the Dictionnaire philosophique, published in 1764. Under the entry "Tolérance," he articulates the evil results of the first council of Nicea, which served to promote religious intolerance, and he states,

Qu'à la bourse d'Amsterdam, de Londres, ou de Surate, ou de Bassora, le guèbre, le banian, le juif, le mahométan, le déicole chinois, le bramin, le chrétien grec, le chrétien romain, le chrétien protestant, le chrétien quaker trafiquent ensemble: ils ne lèveront pas le poignard les uns sur les autres pour gagner âmes à leur religion. Pourquoi donc nous sommes-nous égorgés presque sans interruption depuis le premier concile de Nicée? . . . On vous l'a déjà dit, et on n'a autre chose à vous dire: si vous avez deux religions chez vous, elles se couperont la gorge: si vous en avez trente, elles vivront en paix.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, in section V of Pot-pourri, published in 1765, Voltaire depicts the Ferraran Roginante and his companion in Amsterdam, where they are shocked to see so many men of so many different sects working together. Their first reaction is to flee, for they fear a blood-letting,

Ils furent bien étonnés quand ils virent toutes ces bonnes gens-là sortir de leurs maisons avec

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<sup>61</sup> Voltaire, Dictionnaire philosophique, (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1964) 363 and 365.

leurs commis, se saluer civilement, et aller à la bourse de compagnie. Il y avait ce jour-là, de compte fait, cinquante-trois religions sur la place, en comptant les Arméniens et les jansénistes. On fit pour cinquante-trois millions d'affaires le plus paisiblement du monde, et le Ferrarois retourna dans son pays, où il trouva plus d'*Agnus Dei* que de lettres de change.<sup>62</sup>

Such concrete examples of the necessity of tolerance to promote business and the emphasis on the importance of business in promoting the general welfare and wealth of a country recur repeatedly in Voltaire's works. In the concise "Réflexions pour les sots" of 1760, the "sots" are the men of the cloth who accuse, persecute, and tyrannize. Voltaire restates the financial benefits of religious tolerance, and the destructive price paid for intolerance:

Il est ridicule de penser qu'une nation éclairée ne soit pas plus heureuse qu'une nation ignorante.

Il est affreux d'insinuer que la tolérance est dangereuse, quand nous voyons à nos portes l'Angleterre et la Hollande peuplées et enrichies par cette tolérance, et de beaux royaumes dépeuplés et incultes par l'opinion contraire.

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<sup>62</sup> Voltaire, Romans et Contes, 411.

. . . car il est plus beau et plus difficile d'arracher des hommes civilisés à leurs préjugés que de civiliser des hommes grossiers, plus rare de corriger que d'instituer.<sup>63</sup>

The connection Voltaire stresses between commerce and tolerance as the essential path to prosperity is clearly one of the major themes of his propaganda campaign. In fact, the intolerance of this champion of tolerance has received much critical attention. His well-documented anti-semitism, for instance, would appear to negate his argument for religious tolerance. It cannot be denied that a consistent denigration of Jews, and especially Jewish businessmen, is present in his work. The "Lettre de M. Clopicre à M. Eratou, sur la question si les Juifs ont mangé de la chair humaine et comment ils l'apprêtaient?" (1761), for example seems to refute the assertion implied above that Voltaire was a champion of tolerance. The title alone of this essay is offensive, and Voltaire perpetuates the prevailing eighteenth century image of Jews as usurers (see Chapter 1), before discussing the preparation of human flesh.<sup>64</sup> [However, let us note that it also recalls two other instances of the "cooking" of humans in non anti-semitic circumstances, both in Candide, and both of which also ridicule the "cooks." The first is the auto-da-fé

<sup>63</sup> Voltaire, les Facéties, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973) 127.

<sup>64</sup> Voltaire, Facéties, 146.

(admittedly, not an act of cannibalism) after the earthquake (Chapter 6), which is normally achieved by fire, for, "... le spectacle de quelques personnes brûlées à petit feu, en grande cérémonie, est un secret infaillible pour empêcher la terre de trembler."<sup>65</sup> The second in Chapter 16, when Candide and Pangloss are in danger of being eaten by the Oreillons, "nous allons certainement être rôtis ou bouillis."<sup>66</sup>] Despite his apparent and consistent anti-semitism, Voltaire was convinced that it is important to keep prejudice out of the workplace, for the economy demands it. He was thus forcing a moral aspect to his design for economic strength. Voltaire was a committed believer in the importance of a powerful financial base, and he believed that religious tolerance is a necessary means to that end. His mordant criticism is not limited to Jews; it has numerous targets, though his anti-semitic remarks strike today's reader with powerful poignancy. He is also equally severely critical of the Catholic Church. Voltaire's consistent writing on religious tolerance as a necessary and fundamental basis for a great society must be taken as outweighing his personal inclination to contribute to the current of anti-semitism of his time. Peter Gay's judgment

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<sup>65</sup> Voltaire, Candide, in Romans et Contes (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1960) 149.

<sup>66</sup> Voltaire, Candide, 172-173.

that "Voltaire struck at the Jews to strike at the Christians"<sup>67</sup> still stands.

Let us return to the Lettres philosophiques which so clearly demonstrate the importance Voltaire attributes to the linkage between commerce and tolerance to achieve general prosperity. The eighth letter, on the English Parliament, emphasizes the importance of freedom in promoting a successful society. The English leader works for the benefit of the people, not only to fill his own coffers. Slavery stifles the populace, while freedom encourages creativity. The sovereign's power must be checked, and the English system appears to work. The fruit of the Roman civil wars was slavery (a parallel may be drawn to the French revocation of the Edict of Nantes), while the English strife produced freedom. Voltaire praises the balance achieved between the monarch, the Parliament, and especially the House of Commons:

La Nation Anglaise est la seule de la terre qui soit parvenue à régler le pouvoir des Rois en leur résistant, et qui, d'efforts en efforts, ait enfin établi ce gouvernement sage où le Prince, tout-puissant pour faire du bien, a les mains liées pour faire le mal, où les Seigneurs sont Grands

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<sup>67</sup> Peter Gay, Voltaire's Politics: The Poet as Realist (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) 353.

sans insolence et sans Vassaux, et où le peuple partage le gouvernement sans confusion.<sup>68</sup>

In the ninth letter, on government, Voltaire addresses the tax issue, and he emphasizes the importance of a fair tax system based solely on revenue. In England, no one, whether he is a nobleman or a priest, is exempt from certain taxes. All taxes are regulated by the House of Commons. The tax bill is prepared and presented by the Commons, then:

Quand le Bill est confirmé par les Lords et approuvé par le Roi, alors, tout le monde paie. Chacun donne, non selon sa qualité (ce qui est absurde), mais selon son revenu; il n'y a point de Taille ni de Capitation arbitraire, mais une Taxe réelle sur les terres.

. . . La Taxe subsiste toujours la même, quoique les revenus des terres aient augmenté; ainsi personne n'est foulé, et personne ne plaint. Le Paysan n'a point les pieds meurtris par des sabots, il mange du pain blanc, il est bien vêtu, il ne craint point d'augmenter le nombre de ses bestiaux ni de couvrir son toit de tuiles, de peur qu'on ne hausse ses impôts l'année d'après. Il y a ici beaucoup de Paysans qui ont environ deux cent mille francs de bien, et qui ne dédaignent

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<sup>68</sup> Voltaire, Lettres philosophiques, 34.

pas de continuer à cultiver la terre qui les a enrichis, et dans laquelle ils vivrent libres.<sup>69</sup>

This praise of the English system is an attack on the stranglehold of the French tax, which works against progress; it stymies and impoverishes its subjects. Voltaire mentions two of his most hated taxes by name, the "taille" and the "capitation;" they are direct taxes he reviled for being arbitrary and especially unfair to the working poor of France. The "taille", which was imposed as early as the twelfth century, was originally levied to cover the costs of war. By the fifteenth century, Charles VII levied the tax to cover the administration of a permanent army, and it was intended to be paid by all citizens, regardless of social or religious rank. From an initial capitalization of 1.2 million livres in the fifteenth century, the sum the king needed was raised to 4.7 million livres under Louis XI (second half of the fifteenth century), to 16 million livres early in the seventeenth century, to an enormous 40-43 million under Mazarin.<sup>70</sup> Not only did the amount needed to fund military operations increase with each conflict, but the tax was essentially an arbitrary toll extracted by the collectors, with no real basis on income, for there was no formalized way to determine income. The aristocracy and the clergy were exempt, so with increased demand and a decreased tax base,

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<sup>69</sup> Voltaire, Lettres philosophiques, 43-44.

<sup>70</sup> Goubard 19.

visits from the collectors to those who were taxable were frequent. The workers were forced to feign poverty in order to avoid paying too much tax. This tax had the effect of discouraging any enhancement in the cultivation of land, any improvement to homes or barns, for the appearance of increased income would incite the tax collectors to extract a larger amount.<sup>71</sup> The "capitation" was originally to be paid by everyone, but it quickly became similarly arbitrary, with the aristocracy exempt, and the clergy agreeing to pay a sum total of 24 million livres as of 1710 (while still tithing the French populace with the Church "dime"). The working poor, already over stressed by the talliage, had to deal with the capitation as well. Voltaire was not opposed to taxation in principle; in this letter he concisely demonstrates the benefit of fair taxation on even the poorest of the English; the peasant lives comfortably, and can improve his condition without fear of retribution from the tax collectors. He can eat well (as alluded to by "white bread"), dress well, build his livestock, and make repairs and improvements to his home; he is not destined to remain in poverty. Voltaire emphasizes the excitement generated by the possibility of an upwardly mobile society, where citizens are treated with respect and allowed the freedom to better their living conditions. The French

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<sup>71</sup> Goubard 20.

peasant's hands are tied, while the Englishman is rewarded for and enriched by his work.

Voltaire marches methodically through each component of the society, and the tenth letter is written in similar praise of British commerce. In fact, the first sentence of this letter is a partial repetition of the last sentence of the ninth: "Le Commerce, qui a enrichi les Citoyens en Angleterre, a contribué à les rendre libres, et cette liberté a étendu le Commerce à son tour; de là s'est formée la grandeur de l'État" (45). This sentence in turn reinforces a similar statement Voltaire made on the role commerce plays in forming the "grandeur de l'État" in his dedication to Zaire a year earlier, in 1733. He took the unusual step of honoring an English businessman; the "épître dédicatoire" reads, "À M. Falkener, Marchand Anglais" and he explains his choice,

Je jouis en même temps du plaisir de pouvoir dire à ma nation de quel oeil les négociants sont regardés chez vous; quelle estime on sait avoir en Angleterre pour une profession qui fait la grandeur de l'État, et avec quelle supériorité quelques-uns d'entre vous représentent leur patrie dans le parlement, et sont au rang des législateurs. . . . Je sais bien que cette profession est méprisée de nos petits-mâtres; mais vous savez aussi que nos petits-mâtres et

les vôtres sont l'espèce la plus ridicule qui rampe avec orgueil sur la surface de la terre.<sup>72</sup>

Business is the engine on which this society runs; freedom is the fuel for continued success. The State is made great by the success of its business. Voltaire quantifies the riches: 200 naval war ships. He is surprised that the island nation, which has no great natural resources other than a bit of lead, tin, and wool could send three flotillas to three separate parts of the world in 1723 (45). This military might is compared to the problems Louis XIV faced during the conflict with Italy. The French king did not have the necessary funds available to support the army, and had to turn to English merchants to fund the campaign. In thirty minutes, the merchants were able to loan him 50 million francs (46).<sup>73</sup> In England, the merchants have pride in their work, and the profession is an honorable one; "Aussi le Cadet d'un Pair du Royaume ne dédaigne point le Négoce" (46). In France, the merchant is reviled and scorned; Voltaire tries to change this prevailing prejudice. He criticizes the aristocracy and the maintenance of the caste system in France, for he would realign the classes. The business class would certainly gain, while the

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<sup>72</sup> Voltaire, Zaïre, in The Complete Works of Voltaire, ed. Theodore Besterman, vol. 8 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1988) 392-3.

<sup>73</sup> The reporting of amounts is often imprecise, and often differs by a factor of 10, in this case, note 82 reads "Vulg: cinq millions - Ceci est plus exact." 215.

aristocracy, which aims for stasis, would lose, in this revolutionary shift toward a meritocracy:

Je ne sais pourtant lequel est le plus utile à un État, ou un Seigneur bien poudré qui sait précisément à quelle heure le Roi se lève, à quelle heure il se couche, et qui se donne des airs de Grandeur en jouant le rôle d'esclave dans l'antichambre d'un Ministre, ou un Négociant qui enrichit son Pays, donne de son Cabinet des ordres à Surate et au Caire, et contribue au bonheur du monde. (47)

Voltaire's method of selecting the few traits that make the nobleman appear most ridiculous piques the entire class system. He also begins to redefine the idea of citizenship; in his paradigm of an earthly paradise all men would contribute to the betterment of the society. The businessman, in this case a man who engages in foreign trade for the betterment of his nation, has a secure place in his vision. He would replace the static aristocracy with a more democratic capitalist meritocracy.

The eleventh letter underscores the importance of the confluence of tolerance and commerce through the example of the English practice of inserting active small pox blisters into the skin of small children, thus giving them the disease. The English were open-minded enough to learn about this practice from the Circassians, who understood that the

infection is much weaker for a child than for an adult, and that it leaves virtually no scars on a child's face. By contrast, the adult survival rate from small pox is low, and the recuperation, for those who survive, is long and painful. Voltaire couches this story as a praise of English commerce; it is good business to have a healthy workforce, with no threat from long term absences or losses due to small pox. He says, "Une Nation commerçante est toujours fort alerte sur ses intérêts, et ne néglige rien des connaissances qui peuvent être utiles à son négoce" (50). The British learned of this practice from Mrs. Wortley-Montaigu, wife of the ambassador to Constantinople. She tried it on her own child, despite her priest's admonition that it was not a Christian practice. Mrs. Wortley-Montaigu took a risk in adopting a custom learned from infidels; this brave defiance of Catholic tradition became the basis for the British practice. She related her experience to the former Princess of Wales, a true philosopher who was receptive to the idea and who initiated tests and, with success, the nation followed. Had a French ambassador's wife been curious enough to report this to the French Court, Voltaire muses that perhaps the Duc de Villequier would not have died from the disease at such an early age; thousands of Frenchmen could have been saved. Voltaire uses this one clear, concrete example of lives saved and work not interrupted by illness to highlight the importance of tolerance, in this case both religious and ethnic, as the

keystone element to a strong commercial base. French intolerance costs lives and money. The priest who advised Mrs. Wortley-Montaigu against trying this custom would deny her the freedom to choose a proven solution to a deadly problem. Voltaire makes each point with precision: the French monarchy and Catholic Church suck the wealth from the citizens and the land for their own benefit, while the English society is open, free, receptive, creative, and thus enriched by and for all its citizens. This is an example of dynamic criticism: Voltaire not only articulates the cost of intolerance, he also enlightens his reader to a beneficial medical practice. He diffuses the information concisely to his readers.

The subsequent letters continue to demonstrate how the freedom and wealth in England create an atmosphere conducive to thought and study and philosophy; the great English thinkers have surpassed their French counterparts because they live and work in an open, unrestrained, and optimistic forum. Freedom and the easy circulation of money and goods creates the environment which promotes the development of ideas; a restrictive, overtaxed society restricts thought and progress.

#### C. Le Mondain (1736)

Le Mondain was probably written in July 1736, and Madame de Châtelet said Voltaire worked on it in a "chaise

de poste" en route from Paris to Cirey.<sup>74</sup> This scandalous poem was in circulation by September 1736, and Voltaire was uncertain he would be able to remain in France.<sup>75</sup> Inspired by Mandeville's The Fable of the Bees (1706), Voltaire composed a poem in praise of luxury, and the benefits luxury goods and services provide for the State. In a letter to Pierre-Robert le Cornier de Cideville, Voltaire explains that Paris furnished the inspiration: "Cette vie de Paris dont vous verrez la description dans Le Mondain est assez selon le goût de votre philosophie. La vie que je mène à Cirey serait bien au-dessus, si j'avais plus de santé, et si je pouvais embrasser mon cher Cideville."<sup>76</sup> The outrage concerning the poem centered on the depiction of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden; they had been customarily portrayed as pure, and here Voltaire ironically states they were dirty. The implication in the poem is that they lived in ignorance, that the golden age was not the "bon vieux temps"<sup>77</sup> (Fénelon was wrong), and that the modern times were inherently better. The author exclaims,

Ce temps profane est tout fait pour mes moeurs.

<sup>74</sup> Hayden Mason, "Voltaire and Luxury," Studi Filosofici, vol. II, 1979, Istituto Universitario Orientale Annali (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore) 184.

<sup>75</sup> André Morize, L'Apologie du Luxe au XVIIIe Siècle et "Le Mondain" de Voltaire, (Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1970) 8. In fact he would leave for several months at the end of the year.

<sup>76</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 88, letter D1154, 66.

<sup>77</sup> Voltaire, Le Mondain, in Mélanges, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1961) 203. All subsequent references to this poem will be to this edition of the poem and page numbers will be given in the text in parentheses.

J'aime le luxe, et même la mollesse,  
 Tous les plaisirs, les arts de toute espèce  
 La propreté, le goût, les ornements:  
 Tout honnête homme a de tels sentiments. (203)

This delectation in pleasure and comfort, beauty and style, appears in direct contrast with the praise Voltaire gave to the simplicity of the Quaker businessman in the first of the Lettres philosophiques, and to all that is British. It also gives approbation rather than censure to French business. The poem is a song created by the delight of the pleasures of Paris, and despite the obvious difference in perspective from the Lettres, it is also written to underscore the importance of industry, the development of business, and foreign trade. While the Lettres philosophiques is a sober, careful examination of the English system and critique of the French policies, Le Mondain joyously exposes the positive aspects of French products, and Voltaire revels in the pleasure they bring to French, and especially Parisian life. Voltaire does not strive for simplicity: "Le superflu, chose très nécessaire" (203), summarizes the poem. He encourages the French to seek out the finest materials in the world, purchase them through trade, and bring them back to France. Bordeaux wines could be traded with the sultans, for example. Adam and Eve were not innocents, they had nothing, they were naked, and thus had no need for commerce.

They lived in ignorance, not virtue, they were unkempt, with dirty, long fingernails; they did not enjoy love, rather, "c'est un besoin honteux" (204). Nature in its most basic form is inelegant.

Voltaire was highly criticized for this characterization of the life of Adam and Eve, and he felt the authorities would soon be after him. In a letter to his close friend Thieriot, dated November 24, 1736, he feigns that his original was copied incorrectly, and satirically mocks the critique,

Il est triste de passer pour un hétérodoxe et de se voir encore tronqué, estropié, mutilé comme un auteur ancien. Je trouve qu'on a grande raison de s'emporter contre l'auteur dangereux de cet abominable ouvrage dans lequel on ose dire qu'Adam ne se faisait point la barbe, que ses ongles étaient un peu trop longs, et que son teint était hâlé. Cela mènerait tout droit à penser qu'il n'y avait ni ciseaux ni rasoir ni savonnette dans le paradis terrestre, ce qui serait une hérésie aussi criante qu'il y en ait.<sup>78</sup>

Voltaire would create a modern "paradis terrestre" and he offers his reader a vision, almost in catalog form, of sumptuous luxury. The ships that sail from Holland, London, and Bordeaux would go as far as India ("les sources du

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<sup>78</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 88, letter D1207, 127.

Gange") (203) for raw materials , and French workshops would create merchandise for today's honest man. His home would brim with beauty and symmetry, created by "mille mains" (204). He would have paintings by Corregio and Poussin framed in gold, Germain silver, Gobelins tapestry, and brilliant mirrors in his living room. His garden would be exquisitely tended, and accented with fountains (205). His carriage would be gilded, and ornately fitted out, pulled by two well trained horses. Love would be in the air of this paradise, and poetry, music, and dance would be the occupations. Dinners would be created by divine chefs, the wine would flow and its sparkling bubbles would punctuate the conversation; perfume would scent the air. Abstinence would be unheard of; abundance would be the rule. This paradise exists, though Voltaire would change the location. In the first version of Le Mondain, he states, "Le Paradis terrestre est à Paris," while in subsequent versions, it becomes, "Le Paradis terrestre est où je suis" (206)<sup>79</sup>, perhaps in deference to his life at Cirey.

Voltaire does not detail the effects on the economy in this poem, though he may have had Montesquieu in mind when he composed it. In Letter CVI of the Lettres Persanes, Montesquieu soberly explains,

Paris est peut-être la ville du monde la plus  
sensuelle, et où l'on raffine le plus sur les

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<sup>79</sup> Voltaire, Mélanges, (note 3 for p. 206), 1420.

plaisirs; mais s'est peut-être celle où l'on mène une vie plus dure. Pour qu'un homme vive délicieusement, il faut que cent autres travaillent sans relâche. Une femme s'est mis dans la tête qu'elle devait paraître à une assemblée avec une certaine parure; il faut que, dès ce moment, cinquante artisans ne dorment plus et n'aient plus le loisir de boire et de manger: elle commande, et elle est obéie plus promptement que ne serait notre monarque, parce que l'intérêt est le plus grand monarque de la terre.

Cette ardeur pour le travail, cette passion de s'enrichir, passe de condition en condition, depuis les artisans jusques aux grands.<sup>80</sup>

Unlike Usbek, Voltaire does not express concern with the physical effects of the demand for luxury goods on the workers in this poem (he will address this issue later, notably in Candide, especially Chapter 19); here he delights in the pleasure of the goods and services, with a positive subtext that these elements promote trade and commerce.

The negative reaction to Le Mondain prompted Voltaire to defend his work, and he explains his purpose in a letter to Prince Frederick of Prussia around January 10, 1737,

En attendant si Votre Altesse Royale veut s'amuser par une petite suite du Mondain, j'aurai l'honneur

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<sup>80</sup> Montesquieu, Lettres Persanes, 221-2.

de l'envoyer incessamment; c'est un petit essai de morale mondaine où je tâche de prouver avec quelque gaieté, que le luxe, la magnificence, les gal[as], tous les beaux-arts, tout ce qui fait la splendeur d'un état en fait la richesse, et que ceux qui crient contre ce qu'on appelle le luxe ne sont guère que des pauvres de mauvaise humeur. Je crois qu'on peut enrichir un état en donnant beaucoup de plaisir à ses sujets.<sup>81</sup>

He takes the opportunity to clarify the effects of industry and foreign trade in the Défense du Mondain ou L'Apologie du Luxe in 1737, when he regales the reader with images of raw products from all over the world imported to France, then sold as finished products again in foreign ports. Countries mentioned include Arabia, China, and the New World. Porcelain from China would be baked, rebaked, glazed, and mottled; silver from Bolivia would be chiseled and sculpted into elegant platters, vases and bowls, all accomplished with the working hands of French craftsmen. Jobs are created by the luxury industry, and the workmen and artisans can become rich themselves. He states,

Sachez surtout que le luxe enrichit

Un grand État, s'il en perd un petit.

Cette splendeur, cette pompe mondaine,

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<sup>81</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 88, letter D1251, 190.

d'un règne heureux est la marque certaine.

. . . . .

Ainsi l'on voit en Angleterre, en France,

Par cent canaux circuler l'abondance.

Le goût du luxe entre dans tous les rangs;

Le pauvre y vit des vanités des grands;

Et le travail, gagé par la mollesse,

S'ouvre à pas lents la route à la richesse. (208)

The Défense is more specific than the original, not only in the commercial aspects of the concept of "luxe," but also in paying tribute to Colbert, the seventeenth century minister who espoused and encouraged mercantilism. Voltaire summarizes Colbert's contributions and theory,

Oh! Que Colbert était un esprit sage!

Certain butor conseillait, par ménage,

Qu'on abolit ces travaux précieux,

Des Lyonnais ouvrage industriel.

Du conseiller l'absurde prud'homme

Eût tout perdu par pure économie;

Mais le ministre, utile avec éclat,

Sut par le luxe enrichir notre État.

De tous nos arts il agrandit la source;  
 Et du midi, du levant et de l'Ourse,  
 Nos fiers voisins, de nos progrès jaloux,  
 Payaient l'esprit qu'ils admiraient en nous. (209)

In a memorandum from 1664, Colbert summarized his belief in the strength of the money supply as indication of the power of the State: "Je crois que l'on demeurera facilement d'accord de ce principe qu'il n'y a que l'abondance d'argent dans un Etat qui fasse la différence de sa grandeur et de sa puissance," and, "C'est dans l'abondance d'argent que consiste la puissance de l'état et la magnificence du roi, par toutes les dépenses que les grands revenus donnent occasion de faire."<sup>82</sup> Colbert thought that foreign trade was the key to increasing the money supply. While Voltaire will disagree with the emphasis on a gold dependent economy in Candide (notably in Eldorado), he adopted the main thrust of Colbert's theory, centered on foreign trade. Colbert felt that business practices should favor trade, especially the exportation of French made goods, and discourage the importation of foreign goods; there should be tax-reduction incentives for exports, while imports should be taxed. He emphasized an increase in the gross national product, and believed the main incentive of a competitive work force is the ability to earn money. He wanted to see a uniform

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<sup>82</sup> Harsin 85-6.

currency policy, not unlike the current campaign for the European "euro." Most importantly, Colbert believed in fair taxation, with the tax paid proportional to the wealth of the taxpayer.<sup>83</sup> Voltaire's theory will evolve later in Candide and L'Homme aux quarante écus, however, there will be a consistent emphasis on the importance of commerce and trade.

Voltaire also addressed the positive financial aspect of foreign trade issues, perhaps as a response to Montesquieu and in support of his Colbertian theme, through the voice of a merchant in a conversation with Babouc in Le Monde comme il va (1748). When Babouc is overcharged for some trinkets, the merchant readily agrees he paid ten times what they are worth, and if Bacbuc were to want to return them, he would perhaps receive only one-tenth their value. The merchant explains,

Mais rien n'est plus juste; c'est la fantaisie des hommes qui met le prix à ces choses frivoles; c'est cette fantaisie qui fait vivre cent ouvriers que j'emploie; c'est elle qui me donne une belle maison, un char commode, des chevaux; c'est elle qui excite l'industrie, qui entretient le goût, la circulation, et l'abondance. Je vends aux nations

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<sup>83</sup> Harsin 88.

voisines les mêmes bagatelles plus chèrement qu'à vous, et par là je suis utile à l'empire.<sup>84</sup>

Voltaire repeated his praise of "luxe" in 1738 in a short essay entitled, "Observations sur MM. Jean Lass, Melon et Dutot sur le commerce, le luxe, les monnaies, et les impôts." After evaluating the disaster of the Law System as in fact beneficial to France in the long term (after the fallout, the Compagnie des Indes survived with funds totaling 50,000 livres, France had 300 large merchant vessels before Law as opposed to 1800 after), he discussed the benefits of "luxe" on the economy as a whole, and the role it plays in the circulation of money. He stated,

La dépense doit être le thermomètre de la fortune d'un particulier, et le luxe général est la marque infaillible d'un empire puissant et respectable. . . . L'argent est fait pour circuler, pour faire éclore tous les arts, pour acheter l'industrie des hommes. Qui le garde est mauvais citoyen, et même mauvais ménager. C'est en ne le gardant pas qu'on se rend utile à la patrie et à soi-même.<sup>85</sup>

Voltaire will change his unadultered praise of the life of the "mondain;" later he will mollify it, but his belief in the benefits of commerce and trade, and in the necessity of

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<sup>84</sup> Voltaire, Le Monde comme il va, in Romans et Contes (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1960) 73.

<sup>85</sup> Voltaire, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Louis Moland, "Mélanges," tome I (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1879) 364.

the circulation of money to economic as well as philosophical growth, will remain unflagging.

Reaction to Voltaire's poem was widespread, and continued for many years. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire's "frère ennemi" entered the debate on "luxe" in 1751, with his Discours sur les Sciences et les arts, which was highly critical of the corruption of morals caused by the desire for "luxe." Man in his natural state is innocent and pure; civilization and its luxuries destroy the natural good. Whereas Voltaire's poem addressed a practical, economic issue with joy and excitement, Rousseau was concerned with the morality of the nation as its source of strength; he did not consider the economic necessities of modern society. The idea of "luxe" is detrimental to the society as a whole, for it undermines the moral foundation of the civilization. The desire for money, which Voltaire praises, is in Rousseau's mind the source of inequality which is detrimental to the balance. In the second part of the Discours, he states,

C'est un grand mal que l'abus du tems. D'autres maux pires encore suivent les Lettres et les Arts. Tel est le luxe, né comme eux de l'oisiveté et de la vanité des hommes. Le luxe va rarement sans les sciences et les arts, et jamais ils ne vont sans lui. Je sais que notre Philosophie, toujours féconde en maximes singulières, prétend, contre l'expérience de tous les siècles, que le luxe fait

la splendeur des États; mais, après avoir oublié la nécessité des lois somptuaires, osera-t-elle nier encore que les bonnes moeurs ne soient essentielles à la durée des Empires, et que le luxe ne soit diamétralement opposé aux bonnes moeurs? Que le luxe soit un signe certain des richesses; qu'il serve même si l'on veut à les multiplier: Que faudra-t-il conclure de ce paradoxe si digne d'être né de nos jours? Et que deviendra la vertu quand il faudra s'enrichir à quelque prix que ce soit? Les anciens politiques parlaient sans cesse de moeurs et de vertu: les nôtres ne parlent que de commerce et d'argent.<sup>86</sup>

This section of the Discours, at least, is clearly aimed at Voltaire, for Rousseau refers to him a few paragraphs later, perhaps insultingly, as "célèbre Arouët."

Voltaire would modify his stand on "luxe" over the years, though he consistently supports the enjoyment of French products. In the entry entitled "Luxe" in the Dictionnaire philosophique, written in 1764, he defined his position,

Si par luxe vous entendez l'excès, on sait que l'excès est pernicieux en tout genre: dans l'abstinence comme dans la gourmandise, dans l'économie comme dans la libéralité. Je ne sais

<sup>86</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts, seconde partie (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1964) 43.

comment il est arrivé que dans mes villages, où la terre est ingrate, les impôts lourds, la défense d'exporter le blé qu'on a semé intolérable, il n'y a guère pourtant de colon qui n'ait un bon habit de drap et qui ne soit bien chaussé et bien nourri. Si ce colon laboure avec son bel habit, avec du linge blanc, les cheveux frisés et poudrés, voilà certainement le plus grand luxe, et le plus impertinent; mais qu'un bourgeois de Paris ou de Londres paraisse au spectacle vêtu comme ce paysan, voilà la lésine la plus grossière et la plus ridicule.<sup>87</sup>

The men who worked on his farm in Ferney achieved the level of comfort Voltaire described in the ninth letter of the Lettres philosophiques; their hard work afforded them a degree of ease and deserved luxury. Like their English counterparts, Voltaire's farmers continued to cultivate the land that had provided them with a bit of prosperity.

D. Candide, ou l'Optimisme (1759)

Voltaire was at "les Délices," his home in Geneva, in late November 1755, when he learned of the terrible earthquake that had destroyed Lisbon on November 1st. In the first letter he wrote regarding this horrific disaster, he assembles three elements which will become central to the

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<sup>87</sup> Voltaire, Dictionnaire philosophique, 271.

philosophical tale of Candide. The letter was written on November 24, 1755, to his banker, Jean-Robert Tronchin, with whom he had a continuing correspondance concerning his business affairs. Voltaire questioned the optimism of Leibnitz via Pope, the meaning of natural disasters, and the importance of the human strife inflicted by the Church. He also pointed to the economic ruin such disasters impose upon the country. He wrote:

Voilà Monsieur une physique bien cruelle. On sera bien embarrassé à deviner comment les lois du mouvement opèrent des désastres si effroyables dans le *meilleur des mondes possibles*. Cent mille fourmis, notre prochain, écrasées tout d'un coup dans notre fourmilière, et la moitié périssant sans doute dans des angoisses inexprimables au milieu des débris dont on ne peut les tirer: des familles ruinées aux bouts de l'Europe, la fortune de cent commerçants de votre patrie abîmée dans les ruines de Lisbonne. Quel triste jeu de hasard que le jeu de la vie humaine! Que diront les prédicateurs, surtout si le palais de l'inquisition est demeuré debout? Je me flatte qu'au moins les révérends pères inquisiteurs auront été écrasés comme les autres. Cela devrait apprendre aux hommes à ne point persécuter les hommes, car tandis que quelques sacrés coquins

brûlent quelques fanatiques la terre engloutit les uns et les autres.<sup>86</sup>

Voltaire continued to question the validity of Pope's philosophy in a letter to Élie Bertrand on November 28, "Si Pope avait été à Lisbonne aurait-il osé dire, tout est bien?"<sup>89</sup> And again, on November 30, also to Bertrand, "La ville de Lisbonne engloutie par un tremblement de terre; cent mille âmes ensevelies sous les ruines: Séville endommagé, Cadix submergé pendant quelques minutes par le même tremblement: voilà un terrible argument contre l'optimisme."<sup>90</sup> Voltaire's correspondence during this time displays a tone of sadness and brooding; he only discusses his personal business with regret, and repeats that this time is so terrible, it is not a time for laughter. Despite his sentiment, he does manage to continue directing his investments, and thanks his banker for purchasing his lottery tickets for him (letter D6620). On December 10, 1755, Voltaire relays, again to his banker Jean-Robert Tronchin, that he has been touched by the earthquake; evidently an aftershock reached as far as "les Délices." He recounts the moment as a genre scene,

... nous avons été honorés aussi d'un petit tremblement de terre. Nous en sommes pour une bouteille de vin muscat qui est tombée d'une

<sup>86</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 100, letter D6597, 401.

<sup>89</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 100, letter D6603, 407.

<sup>90</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 100, letter D6605, 409.

table, et qui a payé pour tout le territoire. Il est heureux d'en être quitte à si bon marché. . . . Il était deux heures et vingt minutes; nous étions à table dans nos petites Délices, et le dîner n'en a pas été dérangé. Le peuple de Genève a été un peu effarouché; il prétend que les cloches ont sonné d'elles-mêmes, mais je ne les ai pas entendues.<sup>91</sup>

Voltaire was communicating with his banker, but it is significant that he would react with a comment that the price of the quake was cheap. Perhaps it refers not only the immediate cost of a bottle of Muscat wine, but it also underscores the contrast of such a minor incident with the enormous human loss in Lisbon. This juxtaposition both personalizes Voltaire's comfort at "les Délices" and defines the enormity of the tragedy in Lisbon. The letter continues with a discussion of the salt seller and the issue of gilded nails for Voltaire's chairs.

The striking confluence of the optimism of Pope's Essay on Man, published in 1734, and summarized by "tout est bien," and the disaster of Lisbon, (in addition to his preoccupation with his deteriorating health), dominated Voltaire's thoughts and correspondence during early December, and shortly thereafter he composed his Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne, ou l'Examen de cet axiome: "Tout

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<sup>91</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 100, letter D6623, 423.

est bien." This tormented description of the effects of the natural disaster, of innocent lives lost, and the total destruction of the city, establishes Voltaire's argument that all is not good; "Il le faut avouer, le mal est sur la terre."<sup>92</sup> The poem practically cries with sadness and loss; loss of human life and of optimism.

Voltaire also modifies his stance on "luxe" at this time, and refers to his earlier argument in le Mondain in the penultimate section:

Sur un ton moins lugubre on me vit autrefois  
Chanter des doux plaisirs les séduisantes lois:  
D'autres temps, d'autres moeurs: instruit par la  
vieillesse ...<sup>93</sup>

Rousseau received the poem, and responded to it on August 18, 1756. His letter has come to be known as the Lettre sur la Providence, though it had no title. Rousseau is a believer; he writes in support of the optimism Voltaire decries. The letter is almost a catechism of his belief, and of his support for the Pope and Leibnitz optimism Voltaire refutes. Rousseau is consoled, comforted, and soothed by his convictions. He recounts in his Confessions (Book 9) that he feels that Voltaire only believes in the

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<sup>92</sup> Voltaire, Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne, in Mélanges (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1961) 307.

<sup>93</sup> Voltaire, Lisbonne, 309.

Devil, because the God he describes is evil and seems to only take pleasure in destruction. Rousseau takes it upon himself to enlighten Voltaire,

Frappé de voir ce pauvre homme accablé, pour ainsi dire, de prospérités et de gloire déclamer toutefois amèrement contre les misères de cette vie et trouver toujours que tout étoit mal, je formai l'insensé projet de le faire rentrer en lui-même et de lui prouver que tout étoit bien.<sup>94</sup>

Rousseau includes in his reasoning the admonition that much of the evil is man's doing, and, as an example, he points implausibly to the inhabitants of Lisbon as the literal architects of their own destruction. He does not consider the economic constraints of building housing and offices in a city, and he absurdly observes,

Sans quitter votre sujet de Lisbonne, convenez, par exemple, que la nature n'avoit point rassemblé là vingt mille maisons de six à sept étages, et que si les habitants de cette grande ville eussent été dispersés plus également, et plus légèrement logés, le dégât eût été beaucoup moindre, et peut être nul.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Les Confessions, in Oeuvres complètes, vol.I (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1959) 429.

<sup>95</sup> Rousseau. Lettre de J.J. Rousseau à Monsieur de Voltaire, in Oeuvres complètes, vol.IV, 1061.

He ignites this scene by asking if the loss of life were not made greater by the desire, on the part of those who survived the actual quake, to retrieve their clothing, papers, and of course, their money, which is the natural reaction to great loss, but in Rousseau's scheme, is a frailty. Rousseau, in his praise of Leibnitz and Pope, and in the nature of his unwavering position, sounds almost Panglossian "avant la lettre;" his conclusion testifies to his strong, unflagging belief,

Non: j'ai trop souffert en cette vie pour n'en pas attendre une autre. Toutes les subtilités de la Métaphysique ne me feront pas douter un moment de l'immortalité de l'ame, et d'une Providence bienfaisante. Je la sens, je la crois, je la veux, je l'espere, je la défendrai jusqu'à mon dernier soupir; et ce sera, de toutes les disputes que j'aurai soutenues, la seule où mon intérêt ne sera pas oublié.<sup>36</sup>

Voltaire's Candide ou l'optimisme. Traduit de l'Allemand de M. le Docteur Ralph did not appear until February 1759. Rousseau was certain this "conte philosophique" was the response to his Letter on Providence. In the Confessions he states pointedly and succinctly, and with uncharacteristic curtness regarding a response, "Depuis lors Voltaire a publié cette réponse qu'il m'avoit promise,

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<sup>36</sup> Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, vol. IV, 1075.

mais qu'il ne m'a pas envoyée. Elle n'est autre que le Roman de *Candide*, dont je ne puis parler, parce que je ne l'ai pas lu."<sup>97</sup>

The war which would become known as the Seven Years War (1756-1763) was raging across Europe when Voltaire wrote *Candide*, and the horror of the Lisbonne earthquake was still fresh in his memory. Voltaire was also preoccupied with a major financial loss sustained through an investment with Samuel Bernard's son in 1758. The young Bernard was a financier like his father, and he, too went into bankruptcy, practically taking Voltaire with him. Voltaire describes both the affair and his reaction to it with ire and disbelief; he had expected the financier to repair the damages, and the government to help, rather than profit at his loss. He writes:

Il y a huit ans que Mme Denis et moi nous sommes très négligés dans une affaire plus grave que celle de MM. de Douglas. Mon émerveillement dure toujours que le fils de Samuel nous ait fait banqueroute six mois après avoir pris notre argent, et qu'il ait trouvé le secret de fricasser huit millions obscurément et sans plaisir. Votre premier président son beau-frère ne serait-il, entre nous, un peu engagé par son honneur et par celui de sa place à faire finir une affaire si

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<sup>97</sup> Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, vol. I, 430.

odieuse? Le fils d'un banqueroutier dans notre Suisse ne peut jamais parvenir à aucun emploi à moins d'avoir payé les dettes de son père. Mais c'est que nous sommes des barbares, et vous autres gens polis vous donnez vite une belle charge d'avocat général au fils d'un banqueroutier frauduleux. Cependant une partie de la succession entre dans les coffres du receveur des consignations qui prend d'abord cinq pour cent par an pour garder l'argent, et qui gagne six pour cent à le faire valoir; le tout pendant vingt années!

. . . Pardon, je suis un peu en colère parce que j'ai perdu environ le quart de mon bien en opérations de cette espèce.<sup>98</sup>

Voltaire was also obsessed with his expenses at "les Délices," his beloved if unprofitable home. During the summer of 1758, he says, "Mes Délices n'ont que 60 arpents, coûtent fort cher et ne rapportent rien du tout. . . . Je ne peux abandonner absolument mes Délices, qui sont, révérence parler, ce qu'il y a de plus joli au monde pour la situation."<sup>99</sup> Despite his financial concerns, by October of 1758, he has decided to keep "les Délices," and to purchase

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<sup>98</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 103, letter D7735 to the comte d'Argental, May 15, 1758, 37.

<sup>99</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 103, letter D7795 to Saint-Lambert, 93.

his property at Ferney, which will be more productive. He writes his banker, Jean-Robert Tronchin, "je viens d'acheter une terre. N'en dites mot et gardez-moi 130 mille livres pour la payer."<sup>100</sup> The closing occurred on February 9, 1759, and the price recorded by the notary, M. Girod, was 89,000 livres, "soit 49,000 pour le seigneurie et 40,000 pour les fonds et biens ruraux," and an additional 16,150 livres for neighboring pasture land.<sup>101</sup> During this busy time, he wrote Candide.

Candide is the brilliant, concise, informative, humorous, satirical, ironic, pessimistic, epigrammatic, yet also moderately optimistic synthesis of Voltaire's preoccupations in 1758. The humorous perspective of the "conte philosophique" relates the horrors of the day with comic description, and depicts the adventures of a young man as he gains knowledge through travels and life experiences. Candide is the protagonist who grows and learns to think clearly in an absurd world. Voltaire's unique style can be described as a literary extension of the theatrical "Commedia dell'arte," for he takes the grand comic gesture and translates the theatrical sentiment into words. The reader-friendly, almost slapstick manner of presentation (particularly in the early chapters), permits Voltaire to disseminate his reactions to the abominations caused by war,

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<sup>100</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 103, letter D7896, 204.

<sup>101</sup> Erica Deuber-Pauli and Jean-Daniel Candaux, eds., Voltaire chez lui, Genève et Ferney (Genève: Skira, 1994) 48.

the Church, and nature. He also includes a utopian model civilization, as well as a more realistic version of a healthy society.

Candide is not primarily concerned with money, yet financial issues are always at the root of the entire action. Money, or the lack of it, plays a major role in both the dystopian reality of the world as Voltaire knew it as well as in the utopian vision he develops. Voltaire pairs contrasting opposites to effectively underscore his ideals, thus, for example, the horrors of the Seven Years War are followed by the harmony of industrious Amsterdam; the wealth, freedom, and enlightenment of the society of Eldorado is followed by the abomination of slavery in Surinam. Throughout Voltaire stresses the importance of tolerance and a strong economy as the foundations of a great society.

Let us first examine the elements and economic effects Voltaire criticizes as being detrimental and incompatible with his ideal vision.

War. Upon his expulsion from the "paradis terrestre"<sup>102</sup> of the Baron Thunder-ten-tronckh, Candide is easy prey for the soldiers of the Bulgar army. He is defenseless, "n'ayant point d'argent, mourant de faim et de lassitude" (139). In this condition, he is easily conscripted; the

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<sup>102</sup> Voltaire, Candide, ou l'Optimisme, in Romans et Contes (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1960) 139. All future references to this work will be to this edition and the page numbers will be given in parentheses in the text.

soldiers offer him several "écus" and tell him that in his new position as defender of the King of the Bulgares, "votre fortune est faite..."(140). Candide is beaten as a result of his ignorance regarding the rules of the army, and after he recovers his wounds he is thrown into the horrors of war. He observes the "boucherie héroïque" (142) in which both sides literally eviscerate each other in a scorched earth battle. The war between the Bulgars and the Abars presents a clear picture of economic destruction as well as bloodshed. The two armies, each comprised of thousands of men, are well equipped and well armed, "Les trompettes, les fifres, les hautbois, les tambours, les canons, formaient une harmonie telle qu'il n'y en eut jamais en enfer"(141). The armaments, uniforms, and matériel of war are expensive, and the troops must be fed. This sentence permits the reader to conclude that this war drains the coffers of both armies, in addition to the bloodshed. Candide witnesses the total destruction of two towns, one from each side. There is nothing left, only the dead and the dying; even the towns are reduced to ashes. This war effort leads to annihilation at great financial as well as human cost. The society is abolished. No one can survive in this environment, and Candide flees in order to save his life.

Voltaire again discusses war in Chapter 18 on Eldorado. The sage retiree who guides Candide and Cacambo offers some historical perspective on the evolution of the nation, which had belonged to the Incan empire. He states, "Le royaume où

nous sommes est l'ancienne patrie des Incas, qui sortirent très imprudemment pour aller subjuguier une partie du monde et qui furent enfin détruits par les Espagnols" (177-178); ruination breeds ruination. Those who stayed behind were far wiser, and organized their land for the benefit and well being of the inhabitants; it is understood that no citizen would ever leave. They must always fear the outside world, for to this day they remain, "à l'abri de la rapacité des nations de l'Europe, qui ont une fureur inconcevable pour les cailloux et pour la fange de notre terre, et qui, pour en avoir, nous tueraient tous jusqu'au dernier" (178). The rapacious Europeans would destroy this civilization for her gold.

Natural Disaster. The earthquake in Lisbon has results similar to the war Candide has seen. Voltaire describes the catastrophic tremors of 1755 which took the lives of 30,000 citizens. He may have chosen to illustrate this example not only because it was so fresh in his memory, but also to underscore the senseless destruction of the war he has already described; the annihilation of a city by natural disaster elicits universal sympathy and the realization of great loss. Lisbon was a thriving city and a center of international trade. The Anabaptist Jacques regularly traveled there from his home in Amsterdam, "pour les affaires de son commerce" (145), and Voltaire alludes to its diversity and wealth, not only in the port, but also the city. The architecture of Lisbon included many beautiful

"places publiques" (147), and "fontaines"(148), as well as buildings and homes to the 30,000 inhabitants. Food is plentiful despite the disaster, and Candide and Pangloss are offered port wine to drink. The sailor who had watched as Jacques drowned is eager to take advantage of the catastrophe, and his first reaction is, "Il y aura quelque chose à gagner ici"(147). He immediately ravages the first victims he sees for money,

Le matelot court incontinent au milieu des débris, affronte la mort pour trouver de l'argent, en trouve, s'en empare, s'enivre, et, ayant cuvé son vin, achète les faveurs de la première fille de bonne volonté qu'il rencontre sur les ruines des maisons détruites, et au milieu des mourants et des morts. (147)

It is ironic that a city in ruins still runs on a cash based economy. Even though decimated, the economy, like the society, resists total destruction, and here is an example of profit and loss in its simplest form. In its most fundamental state, it facilitates transactions and fosters trade. The money the sailor steals is no longer based on the economy that flourished moments before the quake, but it is accepted by the survivors nonetheless. The sailor is readily able to buy wine and the favors of a prostitute. Lisbon will rebuild and money will once again facilitate trade; these purchases represent the economy at the start of

its reincarnation. Voltaire is horrified by the obliteration of a great city by the hand of nature; this example serves to emphasize his astonishment to similar results in times of war. Man is equally capable of destroying a society.

Religious oppression. Candide and Pangloss suffer at the hands of the inquisitors; they are selected to be tortured during the "auto-da fé" after the earthquake in Lisbon, because "le spectacle de quelques personnes brûlées à petit feu, en grande cérémonie, est un secret infaillible pour empêcher la terre de trembler"(149). It would appear at first that they are selected at random, but their rank, and more importantly their lack of money, make them easy prey for the clergy. Pangloss makes the mistake of discussing his philosophy regarding original sin with one of the priests, and Candide does not disagree with him, making them perfect candidates for the "auto-da-fé." The financial aspect of this torture is clarified later in Eldorado, when Candide realizes how powerful money is; he tells Cacambo that if they could take some of the local gold and stones with them back to the world they know, they would be, "plus riches que tous les rois ensemble, nous n'aurons plus d'inquisiteurs à craindre, et nous pourrions aisément reprendre mademoiselle Cunégonde"(180). Candide is well aware that money makes a difference in the Church; its hierarchy reflects French society, and the wealthy receive different treatment. Rather than helping the ailing, the

Church willingly adds bloodshed to the destruction of war, the tempest and the earthquake.

In the New World Candide and Cacambo flee the justice system of Buenos Aires (for Candide will be arrested for the murder of the inquisitor) and soon find themselves in the realm of the Jesuits, a colony founded on the social architecture of the Catholic Church: "Los Padres y ont tout, et les peuples rien; c'est le chef-d'oeuvre de la raison et de la justice" (167). Voltaire has criticized the Church for taking too much money from the people and returning nothing, and for the hierarchy which is based on inequality, with the clergy always above the parishioners, and he places the familiar dystopian European-based model practically outside the gates of Eldorado. True to form, the money, or in this case the gold in this society flows in only one direction: to the coffers of the Jesuits. There is no free circulation within the empire: riches come in and rules emanate out. The basis of the dogma is intolerance; this is a tyrannical community that cannot grow, and is marked by repression. Candide's lunch is thus presented to him on "vases d'or" (168), and Cunégonde's brother is the ranking Father, in charge of carrying out the bloody battles of the Church in his territory. As he is ingrained in the tradition of the Church, he has not relinquished his ideas regarding social class structure. [Even in the Americas Candide is not good enough for his sister; he attacks him as insolent and impudent, and Candide kills him (or so he thinks).]

Gold is the powerful symbol of repression here, and the gold platters may represent what the wise man in Eldorado called "la rapacité des nations de l'Europe" (178), for the Jesuits are participating in the plundering and subjugation of native Americans. The intolerance and rapaciousness of the Jesuits cannot foster a strong economy or society. Voltaire evidently sees little difference between the repression practiced by the religious leaders and that by invading armies. In fact, he feels they are often in league with each other. In the résumé (chapter CXCVII) of the Essai sur les moeurs (1756), Voltaire reiterates this sentiment,

... et quand la religion se joint à la guerre, ce mélange est le plus horrible des fléaux. Je dis seulement que jamais on n'a vu aucune société religieuse, aucune rite institué dans la vue d'encourager les hommes aux vices. On s'est servi dans toute la terre de la religion pour faire le mal, mais elle est partout instituée pour porter au bien; et si le dogme apporte le fanatisme et la guerre, la morale inspire partout la concorde.<sup>103</sup>

Slavery. The first civilization Candide and Cacambo visit after Eldorado forms a pendant of destruction and tyranny with the Jesuits of Paraguay. Just outside the Dutch colony of Surinam, they see a black man lying on the ground, partially clothed in a pair of blue shorts. The man

<sup>103</sup> Voltaire, Essai sur les moeurs, tome II (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1963) 810.

is missing his left leg and right hand. Candide asks him in Dutch how he ended up in this horrible state, and the man unself-consciously responds that he is waiting for his master, Mr. Vanderdendur, the famous merchant. Candide asks if Vanderdendur treated him this way, and the black man responds simply that yes, such is the custom:

On nous donne un caleçon de toile pour toute  
vêtement deux fois l'année. Quand nous  
travaillons aux sucreries, et que la meule nous  
attrape le doigt, on nous coupe la main; quand  
nous voulons nous enfuir, on nous coupe la jambe;  
je me suis trouvé dans les deux cas. C'est à ce  
prix que vous mangez du sucre en Europe. (182)

The word "prix" is highly charged here, and infused with financial and physical significance. Voltaire so economically and succinctly sours the taste of the sweetener and clearly points to the Europeans as the oppressors: men are turned into slaves and cut apart literally, physically, and they are also ripped from their families and customs and religion. A commodity may be exploited, but a society cannot be enhanced by such subjugation. We learn that this man "cost" only ten "écus patagons," (182) a shockingly small amount, and his mother expected him to make the family fortune as a slave to the white merchants. The price of sugar is low, the price on his head is low, yet the cost to him is his entire life. He cries that animals are happier

than he is, and the Church into which the Dutch have converted him has lied in telling him that blacks and whites alike are the children of Adam, for,

Je ne suis pas généalogiste; mais si ces prédicateurs disent vrai, nous sommes tous cousins issus de germain. Or vous m'avouerez qu'on ne peut pas en user avec ses parents d'une manière plus horrible.

(183)

Slavery has been used to artificially keep commodity prices depressed in Europe, and the Church, while not in this specific case the Catholic Church (though it certainly closely resembles the Catholic Church), has played a role in the tyranny. In the French colonies, on which this example may be based, the slaves were governed by the "code noir," an edict composed of sixty articles dated March 1685, which served as a legal charter for the French West Indian slave system. The slaves were to be baptized and well inculcated into the Catholic religion. Owners had to provide them a minimal standard of living (this requirement would doubtless evolve into the "lois d'airan" of the nineteenth century) and they had to feed and clothe them properly. The edict despicably organizes all aspects of slavery, and article 25 may have been familiar to Voltaire. It states that each slave was to be furnished with two outfits each year, to be

made using four aulnes of cloth.<sup>104</sup> Voltaire has constantly maintained that a strong society must be based on tolerance, and here he is demonstrating that a strong economy cannot be based on tyranny. The tyranny of the Church is as destructive as the tyranny of slavery, and Voltaire has effectively coupled them in his example of Surinam. The sugar business provides a heinous model for the economic, physical, and emotional destruction a closed hierarchical structure provides. The poor farmers in England portrayed in the Lettres philosophiques are able to afford good food and shelter and clothing, and they are encouraged to work for the benefit of the nation as well as themselves. The slaves of the sugar plantations have no comfort and no hope for the future; sugar bowls are filled by the sweat of their brows, at a far greater cost than any price per kilo. Subjugation of any kind, whether religious or involuntary servitude, destroys the foundation of the society. Sugar, along with gold, represents the rapacity exhibited in the colonies of the New World. Sugar is such a delightful treat, an affordable, if expensive luxury enjoyed in the comfort of the French "foyers," and Voltaire has effectively explained the criminal complicity of both the merchants and the Church in procuring this commodity to the readers of this tale. The actual price for sugar in France is reported

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<sup>104</sup> Robert Louis Stein, The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) 52-53.

at five livres for two kilos in 1786, despite taxes and transportation costs; national consumption rose, thanks to the slave trade, from 25,000,000 pounds in 1730, to a high of 80,000,000 pounds in 1770, before leveling at 57,000,000 pounds between 1770 and 1780.<sup>105</sup>

Voltaire uses the negative examples given above as counterpoints for his schema for a flourishing society. They represent the reality of the eighteenth century; nothing imagined could be worse for the victims of war, disaster, repression, or slavery. Each of these elements is destructive, and particularly devastating to the economic foundations of any country. Each acts to suppress, rather than to expand the society.

Let us now focus on Voltaire's utopian vision, and the foundations for the realization of an ideal, strong society. Each of these components fosters a strong economy, which in turn permits a civilization to thrive. Voltaire proffers four "paradis terrestres" in Candide, and viewed together they create a whole. The anti-utopian castle of the Baron de Thunder-ten-tronckh is Candide's touchstone for measuring other societies, and it stands apart from the ideals Voltaire praises in the real, industrious society of Amsterdam, the paragon Eldorado, and the possible, attainable garden in Turkey; Candide's initial positive reaction changes as he travels, observes, and finally

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<sup>105</sup> Stein 163.

participates in different cultures. Economic components form the basis for success in each of these examples.

Thunder-ten-tronckh. The château in Westphalia is Candide's first eden, and Voltaire humorously describes the baron as wealthy because his castle has a door and windows, as well as a tapestry. This detail may be used as a benchmark in Candide's later adventures by which to measure other conceptions of earthly paradise. The source of the baron's income is unclear, thus possibly inherited. In offering the description of the castle, Voltaire may be alluding to the French tax system he criticized in the Lettres philosophiques; the French citizens were so afraid of appearing to have money they refused to maintain or upgrade their domiciles (especially with windows, which were signs of wealth) for fear of retribution, in the form of higher taxes, from the local "fermier général," or tax collector. The castle represents the highest standard of living in Westphalia, and Candide will compare it to others as he travels.

Amsterdam. When Candide escapes the war in Westphalia, he leaves the smoldering remains and escapes to Holland, "ayant entendu dire que tout le monde était riche dans ce pays-là ..." (142), a clear reference to Voltaire's trips to Amsterdam and his experiences there. Candide is convinced of the importance of money early on. He is not aware of the industrious nature of the Dutch, and at first begs for charity until he is threatened with incarceration and

reeducation. This society demands that its citizens work, and Candide is fortunately taken in by the kindly Anabaptist Jacques. He gives the young man two florins and offers to teach him to work in his fabric manufacturing operation. Though the early Anabaptists were portrayed as dangerous fanatics, in the Essai sur les mœurs, the Dutch successors are representative of Voltaire's ideal citizens: "les successeurs de ces fanatiques sanguinaires sont les plus paisibles de tous les hommes, occupés de leurs manufactures et de leur négoce, laborieux, charitables."<sup>106</sup> Voltaire succinctly describes a nation of hard-working, profitable, tolerant, helpful citizens. Jacques is typical, and conducts his business efficiently; he is even willing to pay medical expenses for Pangloss, perhaps because he has the foresight to provide care for a future employee. He travels extensively for his business, and even takes Candide and Pangloss with him, "étant obligé d'aller à Lisbonne pour les affaires de son commerce" (145). This trip, while disastrously timed, is not incidental; through it Voltaire demonstrates the mobility necessary to run a business on an international scale. The Anabaptist regularly leaves his homeland to procure and ship goods, and he has no difficulty traveling from Holland to Portugal and back. Presumably communication and foreign exchange are not concerns, nor do the religious beliefs of either party constrict business.

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<sup>106</sup> Voltaire, Moeurs, tome II, 240.

Voltaire does not mention France as a trading partner; he is both offering a realistic view of commerce in the eighteenth century, for Lisbon was a thriving port, and omitting his country, which lagged behind in creating an atmosphere of free trade.

The only complaint Jacques expresses concerns the justice system in its handling of bankruptcies, which echoes Voltaire's letter to the Count d'Argental. Jacques says, "Je pourrais mettre en ligne de compte les banqueroutes, et la justice, qui s'empare des biens des banqueroutiers pour en frustrer les créanciers" (146). It makes no sense to him that the Court should be permitted to worsen the lender's loss due to the debtor's bankruptcy. Voltaire is justified in inserting this point here, for Amsterdam is a real, working economy, and bankruptcies do occur in business. That the French government has profited from Voltaire's own loss is evident here.

Eldorado. Upon entering this golden utopia, Candide states, "Voilà pourtant. . . un pays qui vaut mieux que la Westphalie" (175). He is, of course, correct, for the economy, and thus the standard of living, are far greater and stronger in Eldorado than in the country where he was born. The stark contrast between the castle of the baron of Thunder-ten-tronckh and the humble abode of the retired wise man demonstrate great differences of scale; the baron's rather simple castle was considered spectacular in the ravaged and war torn Westphalia, while the old man in

Eldorado enjoys unimaginable luxury that only peace and prosperity can provide. Voltaire emphasizes the following necessary and fundamental elements for his ideal civilization:

1. Peace. Voltaire has effectively shown the financial drain of war on Westphalia; the gross national product goes largely into armament, uniforms, trumpets, food, and matériel. The castle of the baron reflects the economy. In stark contrast, the economy of Eldorado grows during peace, and the cultivation of land symbolizes the order which comes with it. The scorched earth and decimated villages of Westphalia are in Candide's mind when he enters Eldorado, and sees the land cultivated, "pour le plaisir comme pour le besoin" (175). Voltaire emphasizes the bounty in his description of the dinner served to Candide and Cacambo; the food is elegant and plentiful. The image of Candide begging in Amsterdam after escaping the Bulgarian army contraposes with his welcoming reception in Eldorado. The notion of poor in this country is in opposition with Candide's own experience.

In Westphalia all able bodied men were conscripted into the army, and Candide saw thousands die in battle (141). In Eldorado, there is no army, the economy is good, and the king can encourage his citizens in positive pursuits; he can afford an army of scientists. Money is invested in the development of sciences, mathematics, and physics; thus as many as 3,000 engineers are employed to help construct a

mechanism to facilitate the departure of Candide and Cacambo from Eldorado (181).

2. Pro-business environment. The sovereignty of Eldorado cultivates business as carefully as the land, and Candide and his companion are welcomed as businessmen. They are invited to dine elegantly in an inn, one of many "établies pour la commodité du commerce" (177), where all expenses are paid by the government. This policy appears to foster free trade, for they are joined at dinner by a polite group, comprised "des marchands et des voituriers" (176), enjoying a meal at the end of a busy day of travel. This free flow of travelers, both domestic and foreign, appears to magnify and enhance the Dutch model of the Anabaptist Jacques, who traveled frequently to Portugal to facilitate his business. Business persons are considered important, and the managers of the restaurant apologize for the unworthy meal they have served, for this is considered a poor village. Again Voltaire emphasizes the higher standard of living here, for the dinner is comprised of seven enormous courses.

Voltaire continuously stresses production and industry as the source of a society's wealth, as well as the importance of providing the citizens with a decent living. Industry, both farming and business, form the basis for a strong economy; yet Voltaire does not highlight the importance of precious metals, and he even appears to reject the gold standard. In Eldorado, everyone from school

children, to teachers, to innkeepers all laugh when Candide tries to pay with gold, which is the dirt of the country. The natives have no interest in it, while the visitors want to take it home with them. Gold and stones are not edible, and they have no intrinsic value in Eldorado; it is the cultivated land that is utilitarian and thus beautiful. Voltaire mentions the local currency, the "livres sterling du pays" (181) though it is not defined; the reader does not know if it is metal, paper, or another material, and it is certainly not based on the local "dirt." The money supply is evidently huge, (another symbol of a strong economy) as is indicated by the cost of designing and executing the machine to facilitate the departure of Candide and Cacambo from Eldorado. The king puts 3,000 physicists to work at what would appear to be an enormous price, but Voltaire casually says that it , "ne coûtait pas plus de vingt millions" (181). This number is gargantuan (and may be referential to the hyper-inflationary times under Law's System), and probably is designed to shock the French reader; it would be impossible to imagine a similar scenario carried out by the king of France. Voltaire again stresses the conditions necessary for the evolution of a great power: tolerance, the devotion of enormous funds for the development of new products, and the educated and enlightened population of scientists and businessmen creating the capital and the ideas. Voltaire may also be advocating a retreat from a gold standard based on the events surrounding the debacle of

Law's System in France, when both shares and money underwent enormous price fluctuations. There is no intrinsic value of gold ore, a nation cannot exist on it, for it yields nothing, while the diligently farmed land of Eldorado represents a concrete, positive, nation-sustaining asset. It is curious that in the late twentieth century many nations around the world are selling their once-coveted gold reserves, and the price of gold is currently hovering around \$300 per ounce (as of the first week of February, 1998). Centuries after Voltaire, the world economy has decided that gold is no longer valuable, and a lead article in a recent Financial Times is entitled, "Death of Gold."<sup>107</sup>

3. "Luxe." Voltaire has not abandoned his taste for "luxe," so well documented in the Mondain, and he continues to delight in beautifully crafted functional objects. The interior descriptions of the handiwork made by the artisans in Eldorado imply that the economy has afforded them the time to develop their skills, as well as the resources necessary to create the works of art. The home of the retired wise man would be the envy of any Parisian "mondain," as it is appointed with silver, gold, rubies, and emeralds. It is described as simple, for these materials are plentiful in his country. He receives his guests on a beautiful hummingbird feather sofa, and offers them drinks from diamond vases. Such luxury reflects and encourages the

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<sup>107</sup> Kenneth Gooding, "Death of Gold," Financial Times 13-14 Dec. 1997: 1

the development of the local crafts business; it creates jobs within Eldorado and facilitates the circulation of currency.

4. Religious tolerance. As opposed to the Catholicism of the Jesuits, the religion practiced by the inhabitants of Eldorado is a kinder, gentler, humanist form of Deism; the citizens adore and thank God, they do not ask anything of him, and there is no formalized church organization setting rules and levels of intolerance. The religion is not unlike that of the Quaker sect of the Lettres philosophiques in terms of the equality of the parishioners, with no hierarchy of leaders. They all sing hymns of grace each morning, accompanied by five to six thousand musicians; this number of artists may be an additional counterpoint to the thousands of men in the armies of Westphalia. In a peaceful climate the sovereign may encourage the arts.

5. A humanist, humanized monarch. The king of Eldorado is happy to receive his visitors, and it is the custom of the land to kiss the king on both cheeks (179). The king is thus a citizen first, and he welcomes Candide and Cacambo with grace and dignity, not unlike a modern day head of the local chamber of commerce. He works for his people; he facilitates business, farming, and industry as well as the sciences and the arts. The hierarchy of his country is not strict. The monarch is a man first, and he welcomes all travelers, especially businessmen, in a similar fashion. (This reception contrasts markedly with the

twenty-four hostile guards who surrounded and disarmed Candide and Cacambo when they arrived at the Jesuit realm in Chapter 14) (167). He is a perfect host and tour guide, sending his honored guests to see the sights of his country, and even receiving them in his own home. The magnificent, columned public buildings of Eldorado are devoted to the sciences and filled with instruments for the study of mathematics and physics. The nation's wealth is symbolized by the grandeur of the exploration of the sciences, and in this regard it is reminiscent of London as described by Voltaire in the Lettres philosophiques.

6. Freedom. The nation of Eldorado is the former site of the Incan empire, and the descendants have learned and incorporated the lesson of their ancestors, "qui en sortirent très imprudemment pour aller subjuguier une partie du monde et qui furent enfin détruits par les Espagnols" (178-9). Subjugation leads to destruction, and the royals who stayed behind determined, by consent, that no one would ever leave the kingdom again (179). When Candide decides he must leave, for this paradise is missing Cunégonde, the one person he cannot live without, the king understands, though he feels they should stay. He does not have the right to compel them to remain, however, for this is not a tyrannical land. Regarding their decision,

Vous faites une sottise, leur dit le roi; je sais bien que mon pays est peu de chose; mais, quand on est passablement quelque part, il faut y rester.

Je n'ai pas assurément le droit de retenir des étrangers; c'est une tyrannie qui n'est ni dans nos moeurs ni dans nos lois: tous les hommes sont libres... (180)

Freedom permeates this society, from religious freedom to personal freedom to free trade, and while the king insists it is an insignificant land, he has succeeded in encouraging his citizens to enjoy the highest standard of living depicted in Candide. The free environment is necessary for the development of the economy, the free flow of business generates enormous capital, which in turn is essential to the development of the sciences and the arts. The free flow of capital permits the free flow of ideas, and creates an enlightened and prosperous society.

Candide's garden. Candide has transported enormous wealth in gold and precious stones which starts to dissipate almost immediately upon his departure from Eldorado. It is difficult to assess the amount of his riches, for the references to money are not based on a French standard and his wealth is not mimetic of French examples. The "conte philosophique" is not designed to present a clear picture or example or mirror of life in France, and Voltaire is loose in his depiction of money. He often gives sums in different currencies (livres sterling, piastres), and the amounts appear staggering, probably reflecting the high value associated with Eldorado. For Candide, money is useful, and

he intends to spend it to buy back Cunégonde and her elderly companion, who are slaves. No amount is specified for their liberation; Candide evidently pays what he must for their freedom. He finds Cunégonde near Constantinople; no longer lovely, she has not only become quite ugly during her ordeals, she has also become "acariâtre et insupportable" (218). Candide is serious about his responsibilities, he has promised to take care of them and he remains true to his word. The group stays in Turkey primarily because Candide has run out of money and diamonds, "friponné par les juifs" (218), and all that remains is the farm he has purchased on the good advice of the old woman. Candide also listens to an old man he meets; farming, trade, and hard work appeal to him. The disparate characters inhabiting his farm work together to create a "paradis terrestre" on an affordable, human scale, sharing many of the same elements with Eldorado. The farm is located in Turkey, and whereas there is political turmoil in Constantinople, peace reigns in the countryside. Voltaire did not choose to place this utopia in Europe; the distopian images of the war in Westphalia, the rapacity of the conquering colonialists, and the religious tortures would have precluded it. Despite the differing opinions of the farm's inhabitants, they all work together. Each member of this small society exercises his or her skills for the benefit of the group: the men farm the land; Cunégonde is never again a great beauty, but she becomes an excellent

pastry baker; Paquette embroiders; the old lady takes care of the laundry, Père Giroflée becomes a cabinet maker. (Cunégonde had been enslaved almost continuously from the time of the war in Westphalia until Candide liberated her. She had been stripped entirely of her personhood, and her nobility, so cherished by her family, was of no value to her. The loss of her beauty and personality are due to her masters; in Eldorado she reclaims her life. Despite the horrors of her life, she is once again able to be a creative, and more importantly, productive member of the farm.) The business climate is good and the garden maintains the group; they eat the produce and sell or trade the surplus in Constantinople, following the example of the elderly man whose lifestyle they have adopted. They enjoy certain luxuries, such as pastry, cabinetry, and embroidery. They represent different religions and philosophies, yet they live and work in harmony. Candide, as the leader of the commune, is a humanist; after all his travels and travails, he concludes gently and realistically, "Je sais aussi, dit Candide, qu'il faut cultiver notre jardin" (221). All citizens are free to leave, yet like the Eldoradans, they choose to stay.

Candide's garden may be considered the lyrical equivalent of the social and economic ideals Voltaire first expressed regarding England and Holland in his early correspondence and especially in the Lettres philosophiques. Voltaire's encomium of Colbert, in le Siècle de Louis XIV

(1756), describes the utopic vision of the finance minister in similar terms,

Il fut emporté hors de ses mesures: car, par toutes les instructions qui restent de lui, on voit qu'il était persuadé que la richesse d'un pays ne consiste que dans le nombre des habitants, la culture des terres, le travail industriel, et le commerce; on voit que le roi, possédant très peu de domaines particuliers, et n'étant que l'administrateur des biens de ses sujets, ne peut être véritablement riche que par des impôts aisés à percevoir et également répartis.<sup>108</sup>

Candide's garden may also be a more practical representation of Eldorado, for all the elements are there; the citizens have agreed to stay and work together for their common good, they have learned to tolerate each other, and they all work hard to their economic advantage. They are all free, as Voltaire emphasizes when he has Candide purchase the freedom of Cunégonde and the elderly lady, and they put their efforts into the cultivation of their resources. Gold and diamonds do not play a role in their economy; their work is their capital.

Voltaire did not only theorize about a model for an ideal society in Candide; he diligently attempted to fashion his own Ferney into a utopian self-sufficient community,

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<sup>108</sup> Voltaire, Oeuvres historiques, 987.

using his philosophy as a guide. The property which had been derelict when he purchased it in 1758-9 (he started living there before the actual closing in 1759) was systematically rebuilt and expanded over the years. The renovation of the château would cost 50,000 livres<sup>109</sup> and it would be several months before he would ask Jean-Robert Tronchin, "J'ai pris la liberté, Monsieur, de vous demander de quoi peindre en vert mon château de Ferney."<sup>110</sup> After the house was in order, Voltaire began working the land, and the initial projects included draining the marshland, developing an efficient fertilization program, and the replacement of ploughing implements. He then set about establishing several businesses, in order to help the economy of the region; he considered tile manufacture, a tanning enterprise, and the raising of silk worms, as the climate was temperate.<sup>111</sup> By February 1, 1765, there were 70 residents in Ferney, and his cultivation program was being implemented. He deftly even managed to criticize Rousseau as he wrote to Damilaville about his work on that day; he paints Rousseau as out of touch, while he himself is the practical philosopher,

Jean-Jacques n'est chargé que de sa seule  
personne, et moi je suis chargé d'en nourrir

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<sup>109</sup> Deuber-Pauli and Candaux, 51.

<sup>110</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 106, letter D9143 dated August 13, 1760, 51.

<sup>111</sup> J. Étienne, "Voltaire et l'horlogerie ou un philosophe dans les affaires," Technica, Bruxelles, 11, 1957, 139.

soixante et dix, cela fait que quelquefois je suis obligé d'écrire à M. de Laleu des mémoires qui ne sont point du tout philosophiques. Vous ne savez pas ce que c'est que la manutention d'une terre qu'on fait valoir. Je rends service à l'État sans qu'on en sache rien. Je défriche des terrains incultes, je bâtis des maisons pour attirer des étrangers; je borde les grands chemins d'arbres à mes dépens...<sup>112</sup>

Voltaire encouraged artisans to move to the region, and acted as landlord and banker for them. In 1770 there was an uprising by the Genevan watchmakers against the austere Calvinist regime, which had recently imposed stricter rules on them. Three men died, and eight watchmakers were banished; many of the others sought exile.<sup>113</sup> Voltaire invited them to Ferney and immediately established the watchmaking business there; the intolerance of the Genevans provided him a profitable economic opportunity. By April 25, 1770,

J'ai recueilli chez moi des horlogers français établis ci-devant à Genève. J'ai rendu une cinquantaine de familles à la patrie; j'ai établi une manufacture de montres. J'ai prêté de l'argent à tous ces ouvriers pour les aider à

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<sup>112</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 112, letter D12367, 364.

<sup>113</sup> Étienne, 140.

travailler; ils ont en six semaines de temps rempli de montres une boîte pour Cadix.<sup>114</sup>

Voltaire proudly touted his accomplishments to the comte d'Argental on September 20, 1771:

Figurez-vous que nous avons fait un lieu considérable d'un méchant hameau où il n'y avait que quarante misérable dévorés de pauvreté et d'écrouelles. Il a fallu bâtir vingt maisons nouvelles de fond en comble. Nous avons actuellement quatre fabriques de montres, et trois autres petites manufactures. . . . Le simple historique d'un désert affreux changé en une habitation florissante, et animée, est un sujet de conversation avec des ministres.<sup>115</sup>

The revenue from the watch business grew exponentially, and what had been a cash drain on Voltaire's finances, proved to be a prudent investment. Voltaire spent approximately 100,000 écus (or 300,000 livres) annually on Ferney, and by 1773 his business had gross sales (thanks to export agreements with Spain, Italy, Russia, Holland, Turkey, Marocco, and America) of 100,000 livres; by 1774, the inventory grew to 450,000 livres, and by 1776 to 600,000 livres,<sup>116</sup> with a workforce approaching 600.<sup>117</sup> Voltaire

<sup>114</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 120, letter D16313, 171-2.

<sup>115</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 122, letter D17375, 84.

<sup>116</sup> Nicolardot, vol. II, 146-7.

<sup>117</sup> Nicolardot, vol. II, 140.

implemented his ideas in his own back yard, and prosperously demonstrated how to "cultiver notre jardin," if on a small scale. His personal utopia required enormous work and investment, and his diligence was rewarded with financial success and satisfaction.

E. L'Homme aux quarante écus (1768)

In this "conte philosophique," Voltaire assumes once again the style of the "bildungsroman" tale of learning through life experiences, as in Candide, in order to launch a full frontal attack on both the French taxation system as well as prevailing French economic theory, with additional attacks on the Church. His frustration with both the tax structure and tax collection has been previously demonstrated in the ninth letter ("Sur le gouvernement") of the Lettres philosophiques, where he praised the non-arbitrary method of the British, and it also reappears in 1764 in Jeannot et Colin, where he describes the unglamorous and physically daunting life of Colin's father,

Jeannot était fils d'un marchand de mulets très renommé, et Colin devait le jour à un brave laboureur des environs, qui cultivait la terre avec quatre mulets, et qui, après avoir payé la taille, le taillon, les aides et gabelles, le sou pour livre, la capitation et les vingtièmes, ne se

trouvait pas puissamment riche au bout de  
l'année.<sup>118</sup>

Colin's father is a laborer, yet he pays an inordinately large number of taxes; he is extremely poor to begin with, and after being subjected unfairly to such extensive taxation, he is indeed not terribly rich at year's end.

Voltaire may not offer solutions to the tax issues, though he enumerates the problems with precision and clear examples in this satirical "conte." (This is one of the more difficult tales to read, and it is neither as cohesive nor as engaging - and certainly not as humorous - as Voltaire's more well-known stories.) The tale begins with a conversation between an elderly man and an unnamed "moi" (the man with an income of 40 écus<sup>119</sup>) with the older man decrying the present in favor of the past, specifically, the reign of Henri IV. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes has left France void of necessary workers, especially farmers, while filling the country with clerics and beggars. In addition, French tastes for foreign made goods have led to a deficit in the balance of payments,

Il faut payer à nos voisins quatre millions d'un  
article, et cinq ou six d'un autre, pour mettre  
dans notre nez une poudre puante venue de  
l'Amérique; le café, le thé, le chocolat, la

<sup>118</sup> Voltaire, Romans et Contes, 129.

<sup>119</sup> The relative value of money did not change between 1726 and 1790. The écu was fixed at 3 livres, or francs. See Sgard, "l'Échelle," 425.

cochenille, l'indigo, les épicereries, nous coûtent plus de soixante millions par an. . . . Nous brûlons cent fois plus de bougie, et nous tirons plus de la moitié de notre cire de l'étranger, parce que nous négligeons les ruches. Nous voyons cent fois plus de diamants aux oreilles, au cou, aux mains de nos citoyennes de Paris et de nos grandes villes qu'il n'y en avait chez toutes les dames de la cour de Henri IV, en comptant la reine. Il a fallu payer presque toutes ces superfluités argent comptant.<sup>120</sup>

While this complaint may at first seem to be a refutation of Voltaire's earlier praise of luxury, the superfluties mentioned here are not made in France. In Le Mondain, Voltaire focused on French industry, and he promoted the luxuries manufactured by French workers. Here he castigates the fashion and food trends that call for foreign goods. [It is also curious that modern day connoisseurs have developed similar tastes in imported coffees and diamonds; little has changed from the eighteenth century.] He underscores the cash flow out of France by stating that these imports are paid for with cash; there are insufficient compensating exports. In addition, wars have cost France nearly "la moitié de notre argent" (285). France is thus in dire

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<sup>120</sup> Voltaire, L'Homme aux quarante écus, in Romans et Contes, 284-285. Subsequent page references to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.

financial straits, yet stylish: "Nous sommes pauvres avec goût" (285), and only the financiers, merchants, and entrepreneurs have become rich.

François Quesnay, former doctor of the Madame de Pompadour, is the founding father of the group of economists known as the physiocrats, who developed an early model of a complete economic system, based on a desire to implement a total overhaul to the French tax system and collection. His Droit naturel was first published in 1765, and in 1767 he wrote the Maximes générales du gouvernement économique d'un royaume agricole, in which he stresses that the nation's wealth is in the cultivation of the land, and that high crop yields and corresponding high prices of farm goods are beneficial to foreign trade and maintain the nation's prosperity. Agriculture is productive, creative, while commerce and industry are "sterile," for they only transform or displace agricultural products. Agriculture is thus the source of all the wealth of the nation. The physiocrats view the farmers as the proud leaders of the nation, they see the merchants and industry as necessary for facilitating trade, and they believe in the complete freedom of foreign and domestic trade; businessmen would be given "carte blanche" to trade whatever they can wherever they would like.<sup>121</sup> Quesnay writes, in Maxime IX,

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<sup>121</sup> Roger Charbonnaud, Les Idées économiques de Voltaire (Angoulême: M. Despoujols, 1907) 111.

Qu'une nation qui a un grand territoire à cultiver et la facilité d'exercer un grand commerce des denrées du cru, n'étende pas trop l'emploi de l'argent et des hommes aux manufactures et au commerce de luxe, au préjudice des travaux et des dépenses de l'agriculture; car préférablement à tout; LE ROYAUME DOIT ÊTRE BIEN PEUPLÉ DE RICHES CULTIVATEURS.<sup>122</sup>

Lemercier de la Rivière articulates the physiocratic tax theory based on Quesnay's work in L'Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques, also published in 1767. Voltaire cites him in the second section of the L'Homme aux quarante écus, as one of the economists governing the state "au coin de leur feu" (286). Voltaire paraphrases the preamble of his work when he has the man state that the power, "législatrice et exécutrice est née de droit divin copropriétaire de ma terre" (286). Lemercier de la Rivière also states that only the production of the land should be taxed, for any additional taxes would be paramount to a double taxation of both the landowners and the monarch, as "copropriétaire."<sup>123</sup> Voltaire, while at times agreeing with other aspects of the physiocratic system, particularly the need to overhaul the tax system, is diametrically opposed to the concept of a single tax on agricultural income, to the

<sup>122</sup> François Quesnay, Physiocratie (Paris: Flammarion, 1991) 240.

<sup>123</sup> Nuçi Kotta, "L'Homme aux quarante écus", a Study of Voltarian Themes (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966) 53.

exclusion of all other sources of revenue, and to the extreme detriment of the farmers, especially those with poor, small properties. As Voltaire sees it, the farmers are over taxed on one side of the equation, while on the other side are the rich business people who enjoy a tax-free income, as long as they own no land. The inequity of the poorest, who contribute so much to the cultivation of land, and who could only get poorer under Lemercier de la Rivière's system, contrasted with the richest who are happily getting even richer, forms the basis for the satire of this tale. In a letter to Étienne-Noël Damilaville dated October 16, 1767, Voltaire first discusses the status of his research for a memoir on "mon cher Henri IV" and in the next paragraph, he states,

J'ai lu une grande partie de *L'Ordre essentiel des sociétés*; cette essence m'a porté quelquefois à la tête et m'a mis de mauvaise humeur. Il est bien certain que la terre paye tout; quel homme n'est pas convaincu de cette vérité? Mais qu'un seul homme soit le propriétaire de toutes les terres, c'est une idée monstrueuse, et ce n'est pas la seule de cette espèce dans ce livre qui d'ailleurs est profond, méthodique, et d'une sécheresse désagréable.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 116, letter D14490, 378.

In December, he writes to Daniel-Marc-Antoine Chardon, "J'ai lu le livre de M. de la Rivière; je ne sais si c'est parce que je cultive quelques arpents de terre, que je n'aime point que les terres soient seules chargées d'impôts."<sup>125</sup> He writes to Catherine II, Empress of Russia in January 1768, "Je ne suis pas en tout de l'avis du respectable auteur de *L'Ordre essentiel des sociétés*: je vous avoue, Madame, qu'en qualité de voisin de deux républiques, je ne crois point du tout que la puissance législative soit de droit divin copropriétaire de mes petites chaumières...;"<sup>126</sup> Voltaire quotes his own letter to Catherine II in the "conte."

In this satirical tale, he assumes a 50 per cent rate, (though Lemer cier does not state the ideal rate) probably because of the idea of "copropriétaire," and his example underlines the inequity of this tax, especially on the poor farmer, who, like Colin's father, will never have the opportunity to become a quesnaysian "riche cultivateur" (nor even a comfortable farmer, as in the English example of the Lettres philosophiques); for he can barely afford to eat. Voltaire also chooses this moment to criticize the existing tax policy which ignores the non-producing businessmen, who become rich at the expense of others and do not owe anything to the government. The protagonist owns land that generates 40 écus annually, and his tax burden has been 12 livres, which he is able to pay, though with difficulty, thanks to

<sup>125</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 116, letter D14618, 505.

<sup>126</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 117, letter D14704, 71.

his supplementary income from the manufacture of willow baskets. He explains that he has been unable to pay half of his entire income to the war effort; a war in which his country had nothing to gain and much to lose. He says, "Comme je n'avais alors ni blé, ni fèves, ni argent, la puissance législatrice et exécutrice me fit trainer en prison, et on fit la guerre comme on put"(286). Here Voltaire easily demonstrates not only the impossible tax burden proposed by the physiocrats, but also the utility of the man working the field, in contrast with the waste of both land and human resources when he is incarcerated.

The man soon encounters a rich, chubby man with Tartuffe-pink ("vermeil") cheeks and a carriage with six horses and six lackeys, each of whom earns double our man's income. This man pays his mistress 40,000 écus in six months. Our farmer knew him before, when he had less than 40 écus in income; he now earns 400,000 livres. Our man assumes he must pay half of the income to the state, as he does. He learns, to the contrary, that this man's riches are not derived from the land, so they are not subject to taxation. The absurdity of the situation is clearly stated;

Moi, dit-il, que je contribue aux besoins de l'État! Vous voulez rire, mon ami; j'ai hérité d'un oncle qui avait gagné huit millions à Cadix et à Surate; je n'ai pas un pouce de terre, tout mon bien est en contrats, en billets sur la place: je ne dois rien à l'État; c'est à vous de donner

la moitié de votre subsistance, vous qui êtes un seigneur terrien. . . . Si, après avoir mis l'*impôt unique* sur ces denrées, on venait encore me demander de l'argent, ne voyez-vous pas que ce serait un double emploi? (287)

The double injustice is in the taxation of the man with 40 écus, and in the non-taxation of the merchant who makes millions in business. This proposed plan would punish the producers, who make the least to begin with, and permit the intermediate and end users to add and enjoy huge profits with no contribution to the State. The example Voltaire gives may exaggerate the contrast of the income of the two men on one transaction, yet he cleverly articulates the example. The plump man proudly declares his uncle's cunning trading ability; he can take advantage of the man with 40 écus when he buys his produce cheaply and then turns around and trades it and other goods without incurring any tax liability. He states: "ce que mon oncle achetait dix sous de vous, il le revendait plus de cinquante francs au Mexique; et, tous frais faits, il est revenu avec huit millions" (287). While there is no evidence that these numbers bear any resemblance to reality, their example is shocking, and plausible, given the physiocrats' theory.

In the following section, Voltaire presents a dialogue between the man with 40 écus and a mathematician-philosopher; he furnishes basic information about the

sources of the French revenue, then the men launch into a discussion of the equity of the proposed new tax policies. The geometer first estimates the population of France at around 20 million, and the arable land at approximately 75-80 million acres. The land produces a revenue of roughly 2 billion, 400 million livres; presumably the amount of money in circulation is 900 million, or 40 écus per capita (290). If our man must pay 20 écus for the four acres he has under production under the new rate, a rich man with 400 acres would have to pay 2,000 écus, and the total revenue for the 80 million acres in France would furnish the government with 400 million écus per annum (295); the men conclude that the reasoning of the new ministers, or physiocrats, is thus faulty. The man with 40 écus asks why he pays so much and the end users are not taxed,

N'y a-t-il pas aussi une prodigieuse injustice démontrée à me prendre la moitié de mon blé, de mon chanvre, de la laine de mes moutons, etc., et de n'exiger aucun secours de ceux qui auront gagné dix ou vingt, ou trente mille livres de rente avec mon chanvre, dont ils ont tissu de la toile; avec ma laine, dont ils ont fabriqué des draps; avec mon blé, qu'ils auront vendu plus cher qu'ils ne l'ont acheté? (296)

Voltaire agrees that industry must be given favorable treatment, but that industry must also help the State.

Manufacturers also owe the farmer:

Le manufacturier, qui s'est enrichi à vos dépens, a, je l'avoue, donné un salaire à ses ouvriers, qui n'avaient rien par eux-mêmes; mais il a retenu pour lui, chaque année, une somme qui lui a valu enfin trente mille livres de rente: il a donc acquis cette fortune à vos dépens; vous ne pourrez jamais lui vendre vos denrées assez cher pour vous rembourser de ce qu'il a gagné sur vous: car, si vous tentiez ce surhaussement, il en ferait venir de l'étranger à meilleur prix. (296)

The farmer's income is thus restricted to what the domestic market will bear, for the manufacturer is free to import raw materials from abroad. He is also free to mark up the price of the finished product and, after paying his own workers, enjoy the profit. His income has the potential to increase exponentially, while the farmer's will always be maintained at a minimum level. The man with 40 écus can not only not get rich, he must pay more in taxes under the proposed new system, from his previous 12 francs, to 20 écus. While the manufacturer gets richer and richer, our man can only make more money by marrying well, by working even harder, and by trying to increase the production of his small land holdings. The mathematician-philosopher then states that

there is no nation in the world that flourishes under the single tax plan, and to stress the point, he comments that the British, who have no sense of humor, had a hearty laugh when they heard about the proposal for such a plan in France (298). Upon learning that the Swiss have no taxes at all, our man declares that he wants to be Swiss, and he decries the sole tax, "Le maudit impôt que l'impôt unique et inique qui m'a réduit à demander l'aumône!" (299). Voltaire has been criticizing the physiocrats up to this point, and now he attacks the existing unfair and complicated system with gusto. There are far too many taxes in France, and tax collection by the "fermiers généraux" and their army of thugs make life miserable for French citizens. The system must be reinvented, yet the single tax is clearly not the answer to all these issues. Our farmer's frustration continues,

Mais trois ou quatre cents impôts, dont les noms même me sont impossibles à retenir et à prononcer, sont-ils plus justes et honnêtes? Y a-t-il jamais eu un législateur qui, en fondant un État, ait imaginé de créer des conseillers du roi mesureurs de charbons, jaugeurs de vin, mouleurs de bois, langueyeurs de porcs, contrôleurs de beurre salé? D'entretenir une armée de faquins deux fois plus nombreuse que celle d'Alexandre, commandée par soixante généraux qui mettent le pays à contribution, qui remportent des victoires

signalées tous les jours, qui font des prisonniers, et qui quelquefois les sacrifient en l'air ou sur un petit théâtre de planches... (300)

Voltaire successfully highlights the shortcomings of both the old and the proposed systems. Though he has been critical of the physiocrat proposal, claiming that as "copropriétaire," the government would take half of the farmer's income, he now concludes that the old system with all the confusing taxes was perhaps even worse, for, "J'ai peur qu'à bien compter on ne m'en prit en détail les trois quarts sous l'ancienne finance" (300).

The farmer is even more disheartened when he learns that the priests pay no taxes to the State. The Carmelite monastery is exquisite, our man is hungry, and he assumes that these shoeless servants of God will offer him dinner. When he asks the priest for some bread, he learns that begging for charity is the occupation of these monks, despite their opulent home. They do not give to others, they receive. The income of this Carmelite order is 100,000 livres per year, from rent from several houses on the street; with such a magnificent revenue, they were easily able to build such a structure. Our starving farmer cannot understand why they will not help him, with such riches pouring in. He asks if they pay half of their income to the government, as he is forced to do. The response: "Dieu nous préserve de payer une obole!" (302). They do not have to

pay, for taxes have already been paid on their income by the farmers who labor the fields, and it would constitute a double tax. They become rich thanks to the faithful who become poorer with their donations.

The farmer decides to pay for an audience with the comptroller general, and learns that he and his cohorts, notably the "fermier général," are satisfied to extract their financial due from the poor, even to the point of bankrupting working peasants, in order to satisfy the payment of taxes due. Taxes on wine production and various inheritance regulations occupy the day's docket. One of Lemercier de la Rivière's assistants appears, and the farmer recognizes him as the man who ordered him imprisoned when he could not pay his taxes. Upon hearing the farmer's story, the comptroller first assures him that Lemercier had played a joke on him, and he pays the poor man 100 écus in compensation, and exempts him from paying the "taille" for the rest of his life (304).

Voltaire continues to criticize the Church, and discusses the drain of the large number of monks on the workforce. He asks what would become of England if there were 40,000 monks instead of 40,000 sailors. He feels talent is wasted behind cloister walls, "il y a certainement dans les cloîtres beaucoup de talents ensevelis qui sont perdus pour l'État. Il faut, pour fleurir un royaume, le moins de prêtres possible, et le plus d'artisans possible" (318). Later in the tale he discusses the money

sent by the French to the Pope in Rome as a foreign tax in the section titled, "Des impôts payés à l'étranger." Even the king is not exempt from this tax, and for more than 250 years the French have been funding the Church. France sends 400,000 livres annually to Rome, which equals a total of 80 million during the years of Catholic domination. Our farmer implies that this is a form of slavery, "Cet Italien-là nous subjuga donc, il y a deux siècles et demi?" (321). The intolerance of the Church demands a financial drain on the workers. This contrasts markedly with the image of the stock exchange in Amsterdam Voltaire has developed and then repeated in subsequent works from the Lettres philosophiques, where men of many religions work together without subjugation. The ideal model brings money, goods, and services into the country, as opposed to the Church, which drains money and talent (considering the revocation of the Edict of Nantes). Voltaire may not give such a complete example here, but he is certainly making the argument that the Church imports intolerance and exports money to Rome.

The conversation with M. André recalls Candide's discussion with the older man near Constantinople. André is intelligent, he has a library and is a voracious reader. Today he chooses to chat about the state of European affairs, and he is not pleased with France's development. He feels that,

la Raison voyage à petites journées, du nord au midi, avec ses deux intimes amies, l'Expérience et

la Tolérance. L'Agriculture et le Commerce  
 l'accompagnent. . . . Elle a de temps en temps de  
 cruels ennemis en France; mais elle y a tant  
 d'amis qu'il faudra bien à la fin qu'elle y soit  
 premier ministre. (337)

This short passage summarizes Voltaire's life-long beliefs. For Voltaire, the north refers to both England and Holland, and he has furnished examples of the enlightenment of those governments which have taken advantage of the confluence of reason, tolerance, agriculture, and commerce. France has certainly not been as receptive, and continues to suffer the consequences, as the absurd taxation policies and plans and the abuses of the Church have shown. Reason encourages tolerance, which in turn encourages both agriculture and commerce; society thus flourishes. Voltaire tirelessly, continuously stresses his formula for a successful society: tolerance must be the foundation upon which to build wealth. Tolerance permits harmony, which creates the basis for a strong economy, which creates a wealthy society. Throughout his life, he never wavers, and he disseminates his principles to the reading public using a variety of styles and forms; he articulates his ideas in letter form, in poetry, and in the brilliantly simple, succinct, epigrammatic "conte philosophique." He speaks from many different perspectives and cajoles, satirizes, attacks, criticizes, praises, and pleads. He articulates the

absurdities of government policies; he is at times controlled or uncontrollably frustrated, as he cries to force the government to usher France into an efficient, tolerant operating mode. His message does not waver while he circles the issues and brings all arguments to light with his verbal dexterity. Through all his writing, Voltaire's love of France shines through. His philosophy addresses the difficult issues that would lead to the French revolution, and his ideas were certainly revolutionary; the government was not inclined to implement them. Voltaire advocates a society based on a meritocracy, rather than the long established aristocracy; he is a strong supporter of capitalism and free trade; he feels that government must simplify the tax structure and collection, and create a fair means of taxation; he also believes the government should encourage business, and permit all citizens to earn a fair and decent living. He would modernize France, and the monarchy and its institutions were too entrenched and had too much self-interest to advocate a change for the greater good of the society. Voltaire felt the static status quo was strangling France; he would impose dynamic change.

#### F. Post Mortem

Voltaire died a wealthy man in late spring 1778. He left a handwritten will which had not been filed with a notary. The will was written in September 1776, and is surprising in its simplicity. Voltaire was an eloquent,

articulate man, and the will is dry and direct, and is not a reflection of the dynamic character of the philosopher who reveals himself to the readers of his work. The Mémoires de Bachaumont describes the reading on June 12, 1778,

Le testament de M. de Voltaire, à son ouverture, a étonné tout le monde. On comptait y trouver des dispositions qui feraient honneur à son esprit et à son coeur. Rien de tout cela; il est très plat et sent l'homme dur qui ne songe à personne et n'est capable d'aucune reconnaissance. Ce qui augmente l'indignation, c'est qu'il a deux ans de date et a été fait conséquemment avec toute la maturité de jugement possible.<sup>127</sup>

He left 8,000 livres to his secretary, A.M. Wagnière, "son bras droit, dont il ne pouvait se passer"; one year's wages to his domestic Lavigne, who had served him loyally for 33 years; 800 livres to Barbara, his housekeeper; 300 livres to the poor of Ferney, curiously "s'il y a des pauvres;" 6 British pounds to a M. Durieu; 80,000 livres income and 400,000 livres in cash to Mme Denis, his sole heir; 100,000 livres each to M. l'abbé Mignot and M. d'Hornoy.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Nicolardot, vol.II, 305-7.

<sup>128</sup> Nicolardot, vol.II, 307.

## Chapter Five: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

Money is infused throughout Rousseau's writing; it is a strong negative force which detracts "civilized" man. His concise arguments against luxury are morally based; his stinging attacks on the inequalities money causes are passionate, moralistic, and heartfelt. His utopian vision is based on an economy in which autarky is a goal, and where money plays a decidedly diminished role.

A. Rousseau's financial Confessions.

Suzanne Bernard and Isaac Rousseau were married on June 2, 1704. The finances of the couple were not matched, which led to some pre-marital uncertainties. Suzanne was the daughter of a wealthy Genevan family, and she inherited 6,000 florins from her uncle, the pastor Samuel Bernard, and would enjoy the income from an additional 10,000 upon the death of her mother.<sup>1</sup> Isaac was a watch maker whose entire wealth was 1500 florins. It was no larger because he had to share his inheritance with his enormous family, which consisted of fifteen siblings, thus making his marriage to Suzanne more difficult. The couple had a son named François in 1705, and Isaac left his new family almost immediately.<sup>2</sup> As Rousseau writes in the autobiographical Confessions, "Mon

<sup>1</sup> Raymond Trousson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, vol.1 (Paris: Tallandier, 1988) 29.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Seillière, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1921) 6.

pere, après la naissance de mon frere unique partit pour Constantinople où il étoit appelé, et devint horloger du serrail." He stayed away for several years, until his wife pressed him to return. Rousseau was born in Geneva in 1712, ten months after his father rejoined his family. He reflects on his birth and the resulting death of his mother in financial terms, "Dix mois après, je naquis infirme et malade; je coûtai la vie à ma mere, et ma naissance fut le premier de mes malheurs" (7).

Though his mother had been from a wealthy family, Rousseau did not receive a large inheritance from her estate, and he was forced to leave school and consider a career at a young age,

Cependant on deliberoit si l'on me feroit horloger, procureur, ou ministre. J'aimois mieux être Ministre, car je trouvais bien beau de prêcher. Mais le petit revenu du bien de ma mere à partager entre mon frere et moi ne suffisoit pas pour pousser mes études. (25)

It was decided that his first position would be as apprentice to M. Masseron, an engraver. The young man did not dislike the work, and in fact stayed on after hours to

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<sup>3</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Les Confessions," Oeuvres complètes, vol.1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1959) 6. All future references to this work will be to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text. The spelling will be given as it appears in the Gallimard edition. Please note that accents are often omitted or incorrect.

make medals for his friends. Unfortunately, he etched the coat of arms of the Republic on the metal, and his employer immediately accused him of making counterfeit money.

Rousseau confesses to his readers, "Je puis bien vous jurer que je n'avois nulle idée de la fausse moncy, et très peu de la véritable"(31). Thus, from an early age, Rousseau had an uncomfortable relationship with money. The two Rousseaus, both the young man described as well as the mature writer of the Confessions, share this trait.

Rousseau may be discussing an incident from his childhood, but it is clear this sentence is written by the author regarding his life's experience. Money will be discussed throughout the autobiographical work, and whereas most other incidents are related in the past tense, money occupies a space between the present and the past; Rousseau the writer and Rousseau the subject both comment on money.<sup>4</sup> The malaise felt by the young man would grow with him.

Despite insisting that he knows very little about money, in Book I the author quickly reveals an early intimate repulsion of it as well as a well developed disdain for money as a symbol of wealth. Shortly after the above declaration, he states, "Ajoutez qu'aucun de mes goûts dominans ne consiste en choses qui s'achettent. Il ne me faut que des plaisirs purs, et l'argent les empoisonne tous"

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<sup>4</sup> Veronica Cody, "Money and Writing in Rousseau's *Premier Discours and Confessions*," Romance Studies, 24, Autumn 1994: 33.

(36). Regarding the first sentence, in Book IV, Rousseau offers an example of a lyrically idyllic afternoon that is remarkable not only because of the delight experienced but also because of the pleasure Rousseau takes in the fact that no money was spent. When he was in his late teens, the young man had occasion to spend time with Mademoiselle Galley and Mademoiselle Graffenried in Toune:

Après le diné nous fimes une économie. Au lieu de prendre le caffè qui nous restoit du déjeuné nous le gardames pour le gouté avec de la crème et des gâteaux qu'elles avoient apportés, et pour tenir notre appetit en haleine nous allames dans le verger achever notre dessert avec des cerises. . . . Douze heures passées ensemble nous valloient des siècles de familiarité. Le doux souvenir de cette journée ne coûtoit rien à ces aimables filles...

(137-138)

There is almost as much joy in the economy of the found dessert as in the pleasant time spent. Rousseau clearly opposes such gratis natural enjoyment with the poisoning effects of money mentioned in the earlier quote. He despises the very notion of money, even as signifier. Again in Book I,

Jamais l'argent ne me parut une chose aussi précieuse qu'on la trouve. Bien plus; il ne m'a même jamais paru fort commode; il n'est bon à rien

par lui même; il faut le transformer pour en  
jouir; il faut acheter, marchander, souvent être  
dupe, bien payer, être mal servi. Je voudrais une  
chose bonne dans sa qualité; avec mon argent je  
suis sûr de l'avoir mauvaise. . . . Chez un  
marchand de vin: Comme je fasse il m'empoisonnera.  
. . . Que de peine avec mon argent! Je le crains  
plus que je n'aime le bon vin. (36-37)

Money poisons both figuratively and literally; it taints all  
transactions, and even facilitates the poisoning of the  
purchaser of a bottle of wine.

Despite this contraposition, Rousseau admits that money  
is necessary to the individual's freedom, though that very  
freedom has its own price. He is often ashamed to have any  
cash in his possession, though he must,

Tant que dure l'argent que j'ai dans ma bourse, il  
assure mon indépendance, il me dispense de  
m'intriguer pour en trouver d'autre; nécessité que  
j'eus toujours en horreur: mais de peur de le voir  
finir je le choye: l'argent qu'on possède est  
l'instrument de la liberté; celui qu'on pourchasse  
est celui de la servitude. (38)

The theme of financially induced oppression and slavery runs  
throughout Rousseau's theory of wealth, and it will be  
discussed in Section B. Rousseau's constant personal need  
for money is also juxtaposed with his horror of it. This

reaches a climax in Book VIII, when he describes an incident from the time when he was living at the home of Madame Dupin (in 1746), who also took an interest in Rousseau's financial needs. M. de Francueil was Receiver General of Finance (taxes), and his assistant, M. Dudoyer, the Cashier, "étoit vieux, riche, et vouloit se retirer" (360), and Rousseau was to be considered for the job. Dudoyer correctly surmised that Rousseau was not properly qualified for the position, and he did not train the young man well. Rousseau started carrying out the functions; he maintained the ledgers and the till, giving and receiving money and receipts and, "quoique j'eusse aussi peu de gout que de talent pour ce métier, la maturité des ans commençant à me rendre sage, j'étois déterminé à vaincre ma répugnance pour me livrer tout entier à mon emploi" (361). Then one day, M. Francueil had to take a short trip, leaving Rousseau in charge of the till and a strongbox containing between 25,000 and 30,000 francs. The money itself caused him extreme emotional and even physical distress; he traces his violent illness, which he describes almost as a poisoning, to the money, "Les soucis, l'inquiétude d'esprit que me donna ce dépôt me firent sentir que je n'étois point fait pour être Caissier, et je ne doute point que le mauvais sang que je fis durant cette absence n'ait contribué à la maladie où je tombai après son retour" (361). He repeats his early comment on his birth here, "j'étois né mourant" (361), and explains his health problems in specific terms, and the fatigue he

suffers because of the money causes his ailment to resurface. After remaining in bed for five or six weeks, due to this "maudite caisse" (361), Rousseau understands the cause of his fever; he cannot reconcile his work with his principles. The author's voice reflects on the moral ramifications of the cashier's illness, "D'ailleurs comment accorder les sévères principes que je venois d'adopter avec un état qui s'y rapportoit si peu, et n'aurois-je pas bonne grace, Caissier d'un Receveur général des finances à prêcher le desintéressement et la pauvreté?" (362-3). As he becomes stronger, his convictions gel,

... durant ma convalescence je me confirmai de sens froid dans les résolutions que j'avois prises dans mon délire. Je renonçai pour jamais à tout projet de fortune et d'avancement. Déterminé à passer dans l'indépendance et la pauvreté le peu de tems qui me restoit à vivre...(362)

This decision had cathartic ramifications for Rousseau, and he decided to leave his position and become a music transcriber; his ledgers would contain figures of art rather than money. He alerted his employer and Mme Dupin, and immediately shed all artifacts of wealth and society that his post had both afforded him and required of him, including his finery, gold decorations, white stockings, sword, and his watch, over which he mused, "Grace au Ciel, je n'aurai plus besoin de savoir l'heure qu'il est"(363).

He would slowly begin to earn his living through his transcribing and his writing.

In October 1749, Rousseau read the announcement of the contest sponsored by the Académie des Sciences et Belles-Lettres de Dijon; the prize would be the prix de Morale de 1750, which was a gold medal with a monetary value of 30 pistoles.<sup>5</sup> His Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts won the award. In 1753, he wrote the Discours sur l'Origine et les fondements de l'inégalité, again for the academy in Dijon; this time he did not win the prize, though his entry was widely circulated and read. Book IX of the Confessions begins with Rousseau's decision to live in the country, away from the city, for he describes Paris as "le tourbillon de la grande société" (401). He announces his net worth and his prospects:

Je n'avois pas un sou de rente, mais j'avois un nom, des talens, j'étois sobre, et je m'étois ôté les besoins les plus dispendieux, tous ceux de l'opinion. . . . Mon métier de copiste de musique n'étoit ni brillant ni lucratif, mais il étoit sûr. . . . Je pouvois compter que l'ouvrage ne me manqueroit pas et il pouvoit me suffire pour vivre en bien travaillant. Deux mille francs qui me restoit du produit du *Devin du Village* [1752] et mes autres écrits me faisoient une avance pour

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<sup>5</sup> Rousseau, O.C., III, note 1, 1237-1238.

n'être pas à l'étroit, et plusieurs ouvrages que j'avois sur le métier me promettoient sans rançonner les libraires des suppléments suffisans pour travailler à mon aise, sans m'excéder, et même en mettant à profit les loisirs de la promenade. (401-2)

Thus by the spring of 1756 Rousseau, his partner Thérèse, and her mother Mme Le Vasseur were ensconced at the Hermitage in the Montmorency forest north of Paris, thanks to the generosity of Mme d'Épinay. Thérèse would not become his wife until 1768 (414), and Rousseau's descriptions of her and her family often contain comments on spending. She is a "pauvre fille" known for "épuisant ma bourse" (415), while her mother, "avait fait à mon insçu plusieurs dettes au nom de Therese qui le savoit et qui ne m'en avoit rien dit" (428). By Book XI, Rousseau loses patience with her habits, and he is frustrated by her spendthrift ways. He states he has always shared all he has with her, while never taking any money from her; yet she has no regard for money and spends it too easily. His censure of her underscores his continuing malaise regarding money and his need to accumulate enough of it to live comfortably,

Malheureusement elle est peu entendue en économie à tous égards, peu soigneuse et fort dépensière, non par vanité ni par gourmandise, mais par négligence uniquement. Nul n'est parfait ici bas,

et puisqu'il faut que ses excellentes qualités soient rachetées, j'aime mieux qu'elle ait des défauts que des vices; quoique ces défauts nous fassent peut-être encor plus de mal à tous deux.

(562)

By the late 1750s Rousseau's financial situation improved dramatically. He established a relationship with the publisher Rey, and earned 720 livres for the Lettre à d'Alembert, 2,160 livres for La Nouvelle Héloïse, and 1,320 livres for his collected works (in four volumes); he was paid an additional 3,000 livres from the publisher Robin.<sup>6</sup> Musing about his income and his future, he wrote, "Je forme le projet de placer ce fond de manière à me faire une petite rente viagère qui put avec ma copie me faire subsister sans plus écrire" (516). Rousseau writes about his desire not to write in a curiously circular fashion, for it is one of the preoccupations of the Confessions. In Book XI, he repeats his wish to retire from his occupation and the world he knows; he again takes stock of his assets and his plans, which include a leisurely meditation on his *mémoires*. His words comprise those assets, which he turns into currency,

Je comptois que tous ces productions rassemblées me vaudroient au moins tous frais faits un capital de huit à dix mille francs, que je voulois placer en rente viagere tant sur ma tête que sur celle de

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<sup>6</sup> Rousseau, O.C., vol. I, note 1, 1524.

Therese; après quoi nous irions, comme je l'ai dit, vivre ensemble au fond de quelque Province sans plus occuper le public de moi... (560)

This idyllic life was not to be, due not only to Thérèse's prodigality, but also to the negative reception of Émile (1762). Rousseau had hoped that the publication of this book would assure his future, "j'attendois la publication pour executer la retraite que je méditois" (562). He writes with great understatement, or "litote" regarding the public outcry against Émile, "Jamais ouvrage n'eut de si grands éloges particuliers, ni si peu d'approbation public" (573). In fact, by June 1762 the work had been burned in Paris and Geneva.<sup>7</sup> His financial situation was deteriorating, and he despaired over his prospects and his writing in Book XII, during his visit to Môtiers,

...j'avois vu renverser tous mes anciens projets par la dissolution de mon ménage, par l'établissement d'un nouveau, par la vente ou dissipation de tous mes meubles, et par les dépenses qu'il m'avoit fallu faire depuis mon départ de Montmorency. Je voyois diminuer journellement le petit capital que j'avois devant moi. Deux ou trois ans suffisoient pour en consumer le reste, sans que je visse aucun moyen de le renouveler, à moins de recommencer à

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, "Chronologie de J.-J. Rousseau", Oeuvres complètes, vol. I, by Rousseau (Paris: Gallimard, 1959) cxi.

faire des livres; métier funeste auquel j'avois déjà renoncé. (606)

Rousseau found financial peace during his exile from France, thanks to both his continuing work and the beneficence of his friends. In December 1764 he entered into an agreement with Duschesne publishers on the rue Saint-Jacques in Paris to publish his Dictionnaire de Musique. The initial agreement stipulated that he would receive three equal payments of 1,600 francs upon the receipt of the manuscript and for each of the two succeeding years, but Rousseau changed the terms in order to assure himself an income<sup>3</sup>, "il m'avoit valu cent Louis comptant et cent écus de rente viagère; mais encore devoit-on voir bientôt la fin de cent Louis quand on en dépensoit annuellement plus de soixante..." (622). He received 100 louis, or 2,400 francs when he submitted the transcript, then an annual pension of 100 écus, or 300 francs. He planned a second edition for six volumes in quarto with Samuel Fauche from Neuchâtel and expected to receive 1,600 francs and an additional 1,000 écus, or 3,000 francs after sales (623). These sums are quite extraordinary in light of Rousseau's above confession that he normally spends only sixty louis (1,440 francs) per year. In addition to the 300 franc annuity from Duschesne, Rousseau became the beneficiary of an additional 600 francs from the estate of

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<sup>3</sup> Rousseau, O.C., vol. I, note 3, 1589.

George Keith, 10<sup>th</sup> Earl Marischal.<sup>9</sup> He finally had financial security,

Joignant donc mon traité avec Du Peyrou, la pension de Mylord Maréchal dont les deux tiers étoient reversibles à Therese après ma mort, et la rente de 300 francs que j'avois sur Duchesne, je pouvois compter sur une subsistance honnête, et pour moi, et après moi pour Therese à qui je laissois sept cents francs de rente, tant de la pension de Rey, que de celle de Mylord Maréchal: ainsi je n'avois plus à craindre que le pain lui manquât non plus qu'à moi. Mais il étoit écrit que l'honneur me forceroit de repousser toutes les ressources que la fortune et mon travail mettroient à ma portée, et que je mourrois aussi pauvre que j'ai vécu. (639)

Rousseau repeated this last sentiment in his second will, dated January 29, 1763. He changed the above conditional tense to the present: "J'espère mourir aussi pauvre que j'ai vécu" (1224). He left most of his money, books and possessions to Thérèse Le Vasseur, "bien fâché de ne pouvoir mieux payer vingt ans de services" (1224); he did not say this inheritance was out of love. An aunt and a cousin each received five sols. Curiously, he directed his legators to have an autopsy performed on him by "d'habiles gens" (1225),

<sup>9</sup> Rousseau, O.C., vol. I, 619 and 639. The Earl is referred to by Rousseau as Milord Maréchal. See Index: 1944.

and he included a detailed note for the surgeons regarding his maladies; the expenses of this operation were to be paid by his estate.

### B. L'Esclavage

In his article entitled "Tout le mal vient de l'inégalité," Jean Starobinski describes Rousseau's reaction to his short lived financial career as the cashier in the office of the Receiver General of Finance, "il tombe malade, et tout se passe comme si son corps même protestait à la seule perspective de manipuler de l'argent et de devenir un bénéficiaire de l'inégalité."<sup>10</sup> Rousseau's Discourses on the origins of inequality and wealth establish his belief that money is the cause of this social imbalance. Both the rich and the poor participate in a form of slavery; the rich man controlling the poor, while the poor man readily sells his only asset, his freedom. Rousseau was influenced by the work of Thomas Hobbes, and agreed with the premise that the failures with modern social contracts stem from civilized man's self-interest; natural law cannot compete with such strong motivation. Hobbes believed that this self-interest is part of human nature; Rousseau's moralistic theory is based on his insistence that it is civilized society that is

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<sup>10</sup> Jean Starobinski, "Tout le mal vient de l'inégalité," Europe 391-392, Nov.-Déc. 1961: 139.

to blame, that man in his natural state is honest, just, and fair."<sup>11</sup>

Rousseau developed his theory by the time the "citoyen de Genève" wrote the Discours sur l'Origine et les fondements de l'inégalité in response to the question posed by the Académie of Dijon in 1754, "Quelle est l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, et si elle est autorisée par la Loi naturelle."<sup>12</sup> Rousseau felt that primitive man had been free and self-sufficient, while civilized man suffered as a result of the idea of property. Civilization started with property, "Le premier qui ayant enclos un terrain, s'avisa de dire ceci est à moi, et trouva des gens assés simples pour le croire, fut le vrai fondateur de la société civile" (164). What followed as the result of the appropriation of property was disastrous; wars, crimes, murders, misery and horrors. This appropriation is the foundation of Rousseau's theory of inequality. He discusses the problems endured by man in society, or, what Malcolm Jack refers to as the "poverty of progress."<sup>13</sup> Rousseau directs his attention to the disparity of lifestyles between rich and poor,

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<sup>11</sup> J. MacAdam, "Rousseau: The Moral Dimensions of Property," Theories of Property, Aristotle to the Present, ed. Anthony Parel and Thomas Flanagan (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1979) 181.

<sup>12</sup> Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) 129. All future references to this work will be to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

<sup>13</sup> Malcolm Jack, Corruption & Progress, the Eighteenth Century Debate (New York: A M S Press, 1989) 65.

L'extrême inégalité dans la manière de vivre,  
 l'excès d'oisiveté dans les uns, l'excès de  
 travail dans les autres, la facilité d'irriter et  
 de satisfaire nos appetits et notre sensualité,  
 les alimens trop recherchés des riches, qui les  
 nourrissent de sucs échauffants et les accablent  
 d'indigestions, la mauvaise nourriture des  
 Pauvres... (138)

Once again Rousseau associates physical malady with money; in this case the cause is the rich food only the wealthy can afford; it is not an emotional reaction as Rousseau himself experienced in the description in the Confessions. The poor, conversely, suffer from inadequate nutrition, also due to money, or rather, their lack of it. Food is a basic necessity and he strengthens the argument in the second part of the discourse with the metaphor of subsistence; the poor, "furent obligés de recevoir ou de ravir leur subsistance de la main des riches, et de là commencèrent à naître, selon les divers caractères des uns et des autres, la domination et la servitude, ou la violence et les rapines" (175). The rich learned to dominate and subjugate, claiming rights to their property: "l'égalité rompue fut suivie du plus affreux désordre: c'est ainsi que les usurpations des riches, les Brigandages des Pauvres, les passions effrénées de tous étouffant la pitié naturelle, et la voix encore foible de la justice, rendirent les hommes avarés, ambitieux, et méchans"

(176). Rousseau offers evidence of the weakening voice of justice, or rather judicial inequality, in a note describing an encounter between the duc de Villars, maréchal de France and an "entrepreneur de vivres," a military provisions contractor. He specifically singles out a corrupt businessman; he does not offer the example of a wealthy nobleman. Evidently the supplier furnished the army with insufficient food, causing much suffering and groaning. This was a serious offense. When the maréchal threatened to hang him, the scoundrel was not concerned, "Cette menace ne me regarde pas, lui repondit hardiment le fripon, et je suis bien aise de vous dire qu'on ne pend point un homme qui dispose de cent mille écus" (XVIII, 222). The example of a rich man with no scruples, who places the army in jeopardy to increase his profit, strongly illustrates Rousseau's theory of inequality. This man is immune to the justice system because of his wealth.

Man in his natural state enjoys his freedom, and Rousseau stresses its value, "l'homme barbare ne plie point sa tête au joug que l'homme civilisé porte sans murmure, et il préfère la plus orageuse liberté à un assujettissement tranquille" (181). Such slavery has no part in Rousseau's concept of good government. In society, the happiness of the rich is not independent; in fact it is based on the misery of the poor; happiness as well as money for Rousseau is a zero sum game:

Je prouverois enfin que si l'on voit une poignée de puissans et de riches au faite des grandeurs et de la fortune, tandis que la foule rampe dans l'obscurité et dans la misère, c'est que les premiers n'estiment les choses dont ils jouissent qu'autant que les autres en sont privés, et que, sans changer d'état, ils cesseroient d'être heureux, si le Peuple cessoit d'être misérable.

(189)

Rousseau effectively paints the picture of a few rich obesely controlling the hungry masses, and his language becomes increasingly forceful. He sees no advantage to being wealthy, and he willingly gave up his own "parure" upon his decision to leave M. Francueil's employ. At the end of the Discourse, he explains that inequality is manifestly against the law of nature, just as it is wrong that "une poignée de gens regorge de superfluités, tandis que la multitude affamée manque du nécessaire" (194).

This Discourse is diametrically opposed to Voltaire's praise of progress and wealth in Le Mondain. Voltaire had criticized natural man in mockingly describing Adam and Eve as dirty; he lauded industry and encouraged spending as a means of supporting the economy. His Défense du Mondain extolled Colbert's monetary theory and the importance of trade in maintaining strong financial markets. Voltaire's response to Rousseau's Discourse was written at les Délices

on August 30, 1755. He pithily comments, "J'ay reçu, Monsieur, votre nouveau livre contre le genre humain; je vous en remercie; vous plairez aux hommes à qui vous dites Leurs vérités, et vous ne les corrigerez pas."<sup>14</sup>

Rousseau continues his argument against wealth in the unfinished Discours sur les richesses, probably also written in the mid 1750s.<sup>15</sup> The moral tone he had adopted in the second Discourse is developed and strengthened in this more personal, intimate approach to the subject. Rousseau presents his case in the form of a dialogue with his poor, but honest fictional friend Chrysophile (the gold lover), and he systematically attacks all reasons offered in favor of wealth. He portrays money as an immoral force of corruption.

Rousseau first informs the reader that his friend wants to become rich to help others, "Oui, me dis-tu d'un ton qui me penetra, j'aspire à la fortune, mais c'est pour réparer ses injustices."<sup>16</sup> Chrysophile has apparently noble intentions for his wealth; he does not intend to spend it all on himself. Rousseau has cleverly associated money with injustice, yet the reader is immediately sympathetic to this proposed charity, and the narrator takes advantage by asking the apparently benign question of how Chrysophile will

<sup>14</sup> Voltaire, Complete Works, vol. 100, letter D6451, 259.

<sup>15</sup> John C. O'Neal, "Rousseau's Theory of Wealth," History of European Ideas, vol. 7, No. 5, 1986: 453.

<sup>16</sup> Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, vol. V (Paris: Gallimard, 1995) 469. All future references to this work will be to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

become wealthy. He exposes a gulf between the poor friend and his future wealth, "La première chose que j'aperçois dans cet examen c'est un intervalle immense entre la richesse et la pauvreté, sans savoir de quoi remplir cet espace: car tu m'as bien parlé de ta conduite étant riche, mais tu ne m'as rien dit de ce que tu ferois en t'enrichissant"(470). Wealth can only be accumulated at the expense of others, for Rousseau continues to believe it is a zero sum game, and "civilized" human nature will compel him to be greedy. He asks, "Comment est-il possible de s'enrichir sans contribuer à appauvrir autrui, et que droit-on d'un homme charitable qui commenceroit par dépouiller tous ses voisins pour avoir ensuite le plaisir de leur faire l'aumône"(472). Chrysophile's honest persona will change when he is rich; Rousseau accuses him of future hypocrisy, his avarice cloaked in the appearance of humanity (473). Rousseau says that the rich never have enough, that there will be no point at which Chrysophile will stop accumulating money and start distributing it; his philanthropy will be overcome by his greed. He foresees his friend's personality changed by the money, his current plans for charity drowned in his cupidity. He continues, "... je te vois, insatiable et dur jusqu'à la fin de tes jours, accumuler sans cesse faute d'avoir assés à repandre et mourir accablé d'or, d'années et d'avarice sans avoir jamais trouvé le tems ni les moyens de faire du bien à personne"(473).

Rousseau states that it would be far better to change the "vil argent" (473) into good deeds; Chrysophile could live peacefully rather than locked away and guarded out of fear for his money. He justifies stealing from the rich and vilifies stealing from the poor in updated Robin Hood fashion, "Attirez, payés sans cesse de nouveaux ecrivains pour rendre le vol du pauvre encore plus infame et celui du riche encore plus respecté" (476). As Rousseau himself is one of the writers, he is perhaps curiously demanding to be paid for his work which of course denounces money; as noted earlier, Rousseau was concerned about his own finances.

Rousseau vividly portrays the extremes of wealth and poverty that he had discussed in the Discours sur l'inégalité. The rich are not innocent, rather they are corrupt thieves, who have barbarically destroyed the people they have robbed. They are lazy, fat, and reprobate. Rousseau tells his friend, "Crains surtout cette cangréne des coeurs corrompus, cet avilissement honteux et abominable, dernier terme de l'abrutissement et dernier fruit des combats qu'un riche stupide et barbare est forcé de livrer sans cesse à la sensibilité naturelle" (478). There are no honest, good rich men, only those who "succent charitablement le sang du peuple" (478).

Having exposed charity as incompatible with wealth, and wealth incompatible with honesty, Rousseau proposes a change in focus. He suggests, "Loin d'aspirer à la fortune apprends à te passer d'elle; méprise l'arrogance du riche et

aprends [sic] aux h[ommes] par ton desinterressement à chercher le bonheur dans de plus nobles objets" (480). This Discourse polarizes Rousseau's theory of wealth, for it represents money as an agent of corruption. Unlike Voltaire who believed that a strong economy is the basis for a strong society, Rousseau cannot ignore the moral implications associated with money, and he is passionate that it destroys the poor and robs him of his freedom. Morality can only be found in the absence of money. Rousseau has demonstrated that money and charity cannot live together. His strong insistence on the immorality of money, written in mid-century, appears to be out of step with the times, and especially with the burgeoning economy.<sup>17</sup> His portrayal of wealth as a sin is hard to reconcile with increasingly frequent upward mobility. There are other major inconsistencies which make his theory difficult to assess. In the Discours sur l'Économie politique (1755), Rousseau even states that his contradictions are hard to resolve, then he writes, "Il est certain que le droit de propriété est le plus sacré de tous les droits des citoyens, et plus important à certains égards que la liberté même..."<sup>18</sup> In his later writings, especially in Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse, Rousseau contraposes himself again; he portrays a wealthy family in a positive light, though he insists they treat

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<sup>17</sup> O'Neal 462.

<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, O.C., vol.III, 262-3.

their servants well. This inconsistency will be discussed in Section D.

Rousseau continued to attack inequality throughout his political writing, focusing mainly on the disadvantages of the poor. His case points to the polarization which results. In the Discours sur l'économie politique, he fervently directs his focus to the cause for the extreme inequality in a society where agriculture is sacrificed to commerce, "enfin la vénalité poussée à tel excès, que la considération se compte avec les pistoles, et que les vertus mêmes se vendent à prix d'argent: telles sont les causes les plus sensibles de l'opulence et de la misere..."<sup>19</sup> Later, he reduces the argument to its most elemental state, that of slavery, in the first version of Du Contrat social (1762). In Chapter VI, entitled "Des divers systèmes de législation," he discusses civil liberty and his definition of equality, "... quand à la puissance, elle soit au dessous de toute violence et ne s'exerce jamais qu'en vertu du rang et des loix, et quand à la richesse, que nul Citoyen ne soit assés opulent pour en pouvoir acheter un autre, et nul assés pauvre pour être contraint de se vendre."<sup>20</sup>

Rousseau did realistically accept the need for money in society, as demonstrated by his own personal example in the Confessions, though he continued to depict money as evil and

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<sup>19</sup> Rousseau, O.C., vol.III, 259.

<sup>20</sup> Rousseau, Oeuvres Complètes, vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1964) 332.

failed to see it as necessary as the basis for exchange in the economy in his Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne, written in 1771 and in circulation the next year. This template for a good government, with agriculture as its economic foundation, contains several pages dedicated to money in Chapter XI, "Système économique." He writes mockingly that Poland must decide her course, and copy the examples of others she admires, and in so doing he condemns the ideals emulated by the emerging European economies,

Cultivez les sciences, les arts, le commerce, l'industrie, ayez des troupes réglées, des places fortes, des Académies, surtout un bon système de finances qui fasse bien circuler l'argent, qui par là multiplie, qui vous en procure beaucoup; travaillez à le rendre très nécessaire, afin de tenir le peuple dans une grande dépendance, et pour cela fomentez et le luxe matériel, et le luxe de l'esprit, qui en est inséparable. De cette manière vous formerez un peuple intrigant, ardent, avide, ambitieux, servile et fripon comme les autres, toujours sans aucun milieu à l'un des deux extrêmes de la misère ou de l'opulence, de la licence ou de l'esclavage: mais on vous comptera parmi les grandes puissances de l'Europe....<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Rousseau, O.C., vol.III, 1003. Further page references to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.

Rousseau suggests instead that the government concentrate on agriculture, for wealth to him is in the fields, and other necessities, in order to diminish the importance of money, his goal: "rendre l'argent méprisable, et s'il se peut inutile..." (1004). This approach is astonishingly naïve to the modern reader, and probably was anachronistic, and certainly unrealistic to the eighteenth century audience. He further suggests paying people in the primitive method of barter. When citizens performed functions for the common good, they could be thanked with wine, food, or wood, for example (1006). Rousseau's logic is based on the principle that man cannot be productive under the corrupting influence of money. He rejects the signifier, and seeks a different type of signified wealth, "Au fond l'argent n'est pas la richesse, il n'en est que le signe; ce n'est pas le signe qu'il faut multiplier, mais la chose représentée" (1008). Rousseau does not realistically advocate the elimination of money, rather he uses the example of pre-civilized society as a device with which to criticize contemporary society. He was a visionary who understood that the evolution of society took a long time, and he would hope that the slow evolution forward would lead to a more egalitarian, productive community.

The idea of equality, in a time when the possibility existed for the bourgeois to have the appearance of nobility and at least some lines were being blurred, was in fact revolutionary. While Rousseau railed against the thievery

of the rich, he proposed a society in which no one was born of a different rank from any other, where people were fair to each other, and where respect reigned. Money, property, and luxury were the foundations for inequality. While Rousseau impractically argued for their disappearance, he championed a free and equal society, and takes his place as a revolutionary "avant la lettre."

### C. "Le Luxe"

In De l'Esprit des Lois, written in 1748, Montesquieu states, "L'amour de la république, dans une démocratie, est celui de la démocratie; l'amour de la démocratie est celui de l'égalité" and further, concerning wealth and the luxury it provides, "Les richesses donnent une puissance dont un citoyen ne peut pas user pour lui; car il ne serait pas égal. Elles procurent des délices dont il ne doit pas jouir non plus parce qu'elles choqueraient l'égalité tout de même."<sup>22</sup> He is careful to state that all must be able to share equally, or there will be a social imbalance. In Book VII, he asserts that luxury is in direct proportion to the inequality of fortunes; if wealth were evenly distributed, there would be no luxury. He defines "luxe:" "Pour que les richesses restent également partagées, il faut que la loi ne donne à chacun que le nécessaire physique" (105). He does

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<sup>22</sup> Montesquieu, De l'Esprit des Lois, vol.I (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1973) Book V, Chap. iii, 49. Further page references to this work will be given in the text in parentheses.

not characterize the physical necessities, but his ideal government would maintain its citizens on an equal level. Wealth permits distinctions among citizens, for their vanity demands it, "Plus il y a d'hommes ensemble, plus ils sont vains et sentent naître en eux l'envie de se signaler par de petites choses. . . . Le Luxe donne cette espérance; chacun prend les marques de la condition qui précède la sienne"(106-7). He feels that "luxe" is detrimental to the state, while maintaining equality is paramount, "... dans les républiques où les richesses sont également partagées, il ne peut point y avoir de luxe; et comme on a vu au livre cinquième, que cette égalité de distribution faisait l'excellence d'une république, il suit que moins il y a de luxe dans une république, plus elle est parfaite"(107).

Prior to the eighteenth century, luxury had been the province of the nobility, but with the introduction of currency and the increasing money supply, the rising bourgeoisie could afford objects of elegance and extravagance. During the century, the crafts praised by Voltaire in Le Mondain flourished, and those with money were the new consumers. Philippe Perrot points to the famous scene at Marly early in the century (also discussed in Section A of Chapter 1), described with contempt by Saint Simon, where Louis XIV graciously, publicly received the despised banker-financier Samuel Bernard in order to ask him for a loan, as the defining moment of change, when luxury became associated with wealth rather than class. He states,

C'est de plus en plus l'argent, autant que la naissance, qui autorise le luxe. Et c'est donc la richesse mobilière que ce luxe va de plus en plus manifester, autant que la richesse immobilière, en ces temps où celle-là commence précisément à supplanter celle-ci, en ces temps où les droits sur la terre n'accompagnent plus, comme auparavant, le pouvoir sur les hommes; en ces temps où le prestige de la race se laisse entamer par celui de l'opulence marchande ou financière.<sup>23</sup>

The rich bourgeoisie could take advantage of the vanishing financial line between their rank and that of the nobility. They were not interested in the ideal of equality, for it would threaten their hard-earned wealth. Renato Galliani explains that political lines were drawn according to wealth, and the luxuries it afforded,

La bourgeoisie riche s'accommode de la confusion des rangs causée par le luxe, parce qu'elle s'égale à la noblesse, mais elle est opposée à l'idéale égalitaire parce qu'il menace la richesse. C'est ainsi que dans la condamnation du luxe, les arguments de la bourgeoisie peu fortunée

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<sup>23</sup> Philippe Perrot, Le Luxe, Une richesse entre faste et confort, XVIIIe-XIXe siècle (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995) 53.

finissent par coïncider avec ceux de la noblesse indigente.<sup>24</sup>

Rousseau was aware of the widespread upward mobility, and he infused his writing with morality. He detested the inequality caused by changing fortunes; and he agreed with Montesquieu's definition and reasoning, and wrote against "luxure" in his first Discourse, the Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts in 1750. (R. Galliani points out that A. Adam and others have demonstrated that Rousseau was inspired by De l'Esprit des Lois, and in fact sections of his first Discourse were largely paraphrased from it.)<sup>25</sup> Rousseau begins historically, noting that the riches acquired from the spoils of war permitted the victors luxuries that honest, peaceful life could not, and Rousseau recognized in the more simply decorated men their robust, healthy nature:

La richesse de la parure peut annoncer un homme opulent, et son élégance un homme de goût; l'homme sain et robuste se reconnoit à d'autres marques: c'est sous l'habit rustique d'un Laboureur, et non sous la dorure d'un Courtisan, qu'on trouvera le force et la vigueur du corps. La parure n'est pas

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<sup>24</sup> R. Galliani, "Le Débat en France sur le luxe: Voltaire ou Rousseau," Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, vol. CLXI (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1976) 206.

<sup>25</sup> Renato Galliani, Rousseau, le luxe, et l'idéologie nobiliaire, étude socio-historique, SVEC, vol. 268 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1989) Chapter 16, 278-286.

moins étrangère à la vertu qui est la force et la vigueur de l'âme.<sup>26</sup>

According to Rousseau, money, and the luxuries it can buy, is the cause of the decline of morals in civilized society. In the second part of the Discourse, Rousseau declares it evil. He states, "Tel est le luxe, né comme eux [les lettres et les arts] de l'oisiveté et de la vanité des hommes. . . . Que le luxe soit un signe certain des richesses..."(19), and "C'est ainsi que la dissolution des mœurs, suite nécessaire du luxe, entraîne à son tour la corruption du goût"(21).

Rousseau was introduced to luxury by the aristocrats he met throughout his life. He was invited into many households and was received in wealthy society; thus he gained insight into the luxury of his time. He offers a glimpse of worldly things in his observations, known as the "Réponse à Stanislas." He defines and denounces in this response,

Le luxe corrompt tout; et le riche qui en jouit, et le misérable qui le convoite. On ne sauroit dire que ce soit un mal en soi de porter des manchettes de point, un habit brodé, et une boîte émaillée. Mais c'en est un très-grand de faire

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<sup>26</sup> Rousseau, O.C., vol. III, 8. All future page references to this work and to the responses will be to this edition and will be given in the text in parentheses.

quelque cas de ces colifichets, et d'estimer  
heureux le peuple qui les porte... (51)

Such items did not appeal to Rousseau personally, though he did express a desire for certain luxuries, and even permitted himself to comment on some of them in Part IV of Émile. His musings of what he would do if he became rich are in character with his political writings, and he condemns his imagined wealth, but he does reveal a streak of epicurism; just as he denounces imports and travel, he would seek out the finer foods where they were cultivated, for he knows they do not travel well. He says,

Enfin je ferois de ma fortune l'instrument de mes  
plaisirs dont je serois uniquement occupé; et  
jusques là, je serois comme tous les autres. . .  
.Mais. . . je me livrerois au luxe de mollesse bien  
plus qu'au luxe d'ostentation. . . je chercherois  
ce qui m'est le plus agréable et que je puis le  
mieux m'approprier: pour cela le premier usage de  
ma richesse seroit d'en acheter du loisir et la  
liberté, à quoi j'ajouterois la santé. . . dans  
les mets je voudrois toujours ceux dont elle fait  
le meilleur apprêt, et qui passent par le moins de  
mains pour parvenir sur nos tables. . . je  
prodiguerois ma propre peine pour satisfaire ma  
sensualité. . . Si je voulois gouter un mets du  
bout du monde j'irois comme Apicius plustot l'y

chercher que de l'en faire venir. Car les mets les plus exquis manquent toujours d'un assaisonnement qu'on n'apporte pas avec eux et qu'aucun cuisinier ne leur donne: l'air du climat qui les a produits."

Rousseau honed his depiction of "luxure" as evil in April 1752 in the "Dernière réponse de J.-J. Rousseau [à Bordes]." He further decried the concept of property as the cause of all inequality and injustice, and once again he uses the example of food to reinforce his argument: "8. Le luxe peut être nécessaire pour donner du pain aux pauvres: mais s'il n'y avoit point de luxe, il n'y auroit point de pauvres" (79). (This sentiment would be expressed more eloquently in the discussion with Chrysophile in the Discours sur les richesses). He includes a note of clarification, in which he aggressively illustrates the cost of wealth in terms of the lives of the poor. His numbers are insubstantiated and most probably exaggerated, and his attack is relentless on all aspects of "luxure,"

Le luxe nourrit cent pauvres dans nos villes, et en fait périr cent mille dans nos campagnes: l'argent qui circule entre les mains des riches et des Artistes pour fournir à leurs superfluités est perdu pour la subsistance du Laboureur; et celui-ci n'a point d'habit précisément parce qu'il faut

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<sup>27</sup> Rousseau, O.C., IV, 678-9.

du galon aux autres. Le gaspillage des matieres qui servent à la nourriture des hommes suffit seul pour rendre le luxe odieux à l'humanité. Mes adversaires sont bienheureux que la coupable délicatesse de notre langue m'empêche d'entrer là dessus dans des détails qui les feroient rougir de la cause qu'ils osent défendre. Il faut des jus dans nos cuisines; voilà pourtant tant de malades manquent de bouillon. Il faut des liqueurs sur nos tables; voilà pourquoi le paysan ne boit que l'eau. Il faut de la poudre à nos perruques; voilà pourquoi tant de pauvres n'ont point de pain. 179

This is a highly polarized presentation of the specific negative effects of money. Rousseau offers no proof that 100,000 men have died, that gravy on the meat of the rich denies the poor his bouillon, that liqueur denies the poor his drink, or that the powder from the wigs could or would provide the poor his bread, but they are convincing simplistic statements. He will not concede that any good comes from money. He continues to attach evil to money and the luxury it can buy throughout his writing, and in Part III of Émile (1762), he offers an even greater exaggeration of "luxe" and its attendant destruction. He writes,

Nous allons diner dans une maison opulente; nous trouvons les apprets d'un festin, beaucoup de

monde, beaucoup de laquais, beaucoup de plats, un service élégant et fin. . . . Je pressens l'effet de tout cela sur mon jeune élève. Tandis que le repas se prolonge, tandis que les services se succèdent, tandis qu'autour de la table régneront mille propos bruyants je m'approche de son oreille et je lui dis: Par combien de mains estimeriez-vous bien qu'ait passé tout ce que vous voyez sur cette table, avant que d'y arriver? . . . Avec un jugement sain que rien n'a pu corrompre, que pensera-t-il du luxe quand il trouvera que toutes les régions du monde ont été mises à contribution, que vingt millions de mains, peut-être, ont longtemps travaillé, qu'il en a coûté la vie, peut-être à des milliers d'hommes, et tout cela pour lui présenter en pompe à midi ce qu'il va déposer le soir dans sa garde-robe?<sup>26</sup>

The price for the dinner is not only money, but thousands of lives as well. Rousseau effectively denounces the preparation of the foodstuffs and service as being too far removed from the farm and unnecessary, and he alarms the reader with the murders he recounts caused by the demand for such luxury on the part of the rich.

Returning to the response to Bordes, Rousseau attacks the disparity in salaries between the craftsmen in the

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<sup>26</sup> Rousseau, O.C., vol. IV, 463.

cities and the laborers in the fields. He specifically condemns the large amount of money paid to the creators of many items of "luxure" and he names the most famous, "Un Hébert, un Lafrenaye, un Dulac, un Martin gagnent plus d'argent en un jour, que tous les laboureurs d'une Province ne scauroient faire en un mois" (93). Hébert was a court jeweler, while the Martin brothers were well known cabinetmakers.<sup>23</sup> Rousseau is appalled that work he considers of paramount importance, such as farming and agricultural pursuits, would offer lower remuneration to its employees than work he deems unimportant to the society, namely craftsmanship. This imbalance is illogical to him. Luxury and its attendant services are to be despised, as he emphatically states, echoing Montesquieu, "... à quel point il faut borner le luxe? Mon sentiment est qu'il n'en faut point du tout. Tout est source de mal au-delà du nécessaire physique" (95).

In his musings for the ideal state, he offers a resolution to the conundrum that luxury creates poverty. Happiness is to be found in working for the common good. He states, in the Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne, "Le luxe et l'indigence disparaîtront ensemble insensiblement, et les Citoyens, guéris des goûts frivoles que donne l'opulence, et des vices attachés à la misère,

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<sup>23</sup> Rousseau, O.C., vol. III, (note 1), 1278.

mettront leurs soins et leur gloire à bien servir la patrie et trouveront leur bonheur dans leurs devoirs" (1009).

#### D. Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse

Having denounced money, inequality, and luxury throughout his political writings, Rousseau offered a definition of his ideal state, as well as commentary on the subject of wealth and "luxure," in Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse, written in 1761. This epistolary novel relates the love story of the well born Julie and the poor but honest and honorable Saint-Preux; the letters between this mismatched couple form the backdrop which enables Rousseau to articulate his theory of wealth to a wider audience. He had been adamantly against money in his political writings; here he demonstrates both good and evil uses of it and he furnishes examples of his utopian and dystopian visions. Rousseau enumerates the social, political, and moral impacts of money in this novel.

Social impact: Marriage. Two components, rank and money, were the primary determinants to the suitability of marriage prospects. Robe-épée marriages were not uncommon in the eighteenth century, and they were usually the outcome of a barter that satisfied both: rank married money, money married rank. In La Nouvelle Héloïse, Rousseau creates a triangular architecture of power, with the Baron d'Étange at the base, guarding his rank and money, and Julie and Saint-Preux on each side. He regards Saint-Preux as fungible, and

will replace him with another, more appropriate element to complete the triangle. Saint-Preux, an honorable young man only of "honnête" birth, having neither rank nor money, could not have received serious consideration as a son-in-law from the baron d'Étange. The "hobereaux," or poor but proud, were not considered by the higher ranks as acceptable.<sup>30</sup> Let us examine each of the proponents in this triangle.

Julie's naiveté and her financial generosity reveal her sweet disposition and admiration for Saint-Preux. She understands the difference in their economic situations, and she easily offers the solution; this difference is not a hindrance to her feelings for Saint-Preux. Julie freely offers him money for a trip from her purse, as she writes in letter XV,

Vous n'avez jamais voulu me parler de l'état de vos affaires; mais vous n'êtes pas dans votre patrie; je sais que vous y avez peu de fortune, et que vous ne faites que la déranger ici, où vous ne resteriez pas sans moi. Je puis donc supposer qu'une partie de votre bourse est dans la mienne, et je vous envoie un léger acompte dans celle que renferme cette boîte...<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ford 142-4.

<sup>31</sup> Rousseau, Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse (Paris: Garnier, 1988) 39. All further page references to this work will be to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

Julie's purse is not as large as her generosity and her love, but it represents the Baron's wealth. Saint-Preux at first refuses such a gift, but Julie convinces him to take it and he leaves. Julie soon realizes that her sentiments are not important to her father, and she is angry that he can control her future. She feels her father is making her a slave, and in a letter to Claire she laments her father's decision concerning her marriage prospects. She feels he has turned her into an asset to be sold, "Enfin mon père m'a donc vendue! Il fait de sa fille une marchandise, une esclave! Il s'acquitte à mes dépens! Il paye sa vie de la mienne!" (68-9). Here Rousseau shows that contemporary society furnishes the father the power to conclude the marriage contract, thus turning marriage into slavery. He does this to emphasize his personal view, rather than for factual effect. He makes a point of making the reader conscious of the convention which gives the nobleman the right to choose his daughter's husband. Rousseau effectively turns the reader's attention to this custom when he offers Julie's emotional response and her outrage in the above quote. The daughter's lament is penetrating. Later, when a husband is chosen for her, Julie repeats her feelings of misfortune, "L'infortune de mes jours était assurée..." (322).

For his part, Saint-Preux is aware of the reality of his situation, though he cannot bear the restrictions his inadequate social standing and poverty place on him, and he

decries his unreconcilable love and financial situation in letter XXVI to Julie, "Sans toi, beauté fatale, je n'aurais jamais senti ce contraste insupportable de grandeur au fond de mon âme et de bassesse dans ma fortune; j'aurais vécu tranquille et serais mort content, sans daigner remarquer quel rang j'avais occupé sur la terre" (64). He begs Julie to defy her rank and family, and run away with him, even placing a price on their love, "Soyons heureux et pauvres, ah! Quel trésor nous aurons acquis!" (67). He curiously does not state "happy but poor," rather "happy and poor," as if they were two necessary, equal elements. This is again a reflection on Rousseau's personal view (while poor, the young couple could have no plans, so they could be happy; conversely, when they are no longer poor, they would have plans, and thus would no longer be happy). Their happiness could only be realized through poverty; their love would be the treasure this poverty would purchase. For Rousseau, poverty was an essential element to happiness, for as he demonstrated in the Discourses, wealth only comes at the expense of, and enslavement of others.

The Baron's actions are forceful and direct; his mission is to place his daughter in an advantageous marriage, thus preserving both his lineage and his wealth. Sentiment is not a concern of his. Rousseau emphasizes the active role a member of the nobility would take in such a case. The author creates a work of fiction, though he also reveals his personal philosophy in convincing the reader of

the zeal of a father in protecting his assets. The Baron's impersonal actions are in counterpoint with Julie's innocent adoration. While Julie is offering her love to Saint-Preux, the Baron conducts a thorough background search of the young tutor's family and finances. Julie is aware of her father's investigation, and she discloses it to Saint-Preux in letter XXII,

Ensuite, il s'est informé de votre fortune: on lui a dit qu'elle était médiocre; de votre naissance; on lui a dit qu'elle était honnête. Ce mot honnête est fort équivoque à l'oreille d'un gentilhomme, et a excité des soupçons que l'éclaircissement a confirmés. Dès qu'il a su que vous n'étiez pas noble, il a demandé ce qu'on vous donnait par mois. (49)

It is remarkable that such detailed personal, economic, and social information would have been so readily available to the Baron; his influence is evidently widespread. Rousseau reveals the importance of this data to the families of the nobility. The foundation of the Baron's power is his money, which doubtless makes the information easier to obtain. The nobleman's illustrious daughter will not be compromised, and it would be impossible to think that, as he later states, "le dernier rejeton d'une famille illustre aille éteindre ou dégrader son nom dans celui d'un quidam sans asile et réduit à vivre d'aumônes" (143). Rousseau's choice of the

impersonal here permits him to state the generality as specific fact; in addition, this decision is not based on emotion, rather on convention. Saint-Preux is unworthy of his daughter; he is no one, and he should be ignored. The reference to Saint-Preux's poverty illustrates Rousseau's realistic understanding of the mores of the time. It would lead the reader to conclude that if he had had substantial means, along with his "honnête" birth, he might have had sufficient qualifications. In fact, a shift in attitude occurred during the eighteenth century, and that shift is reflected in the above quote. Prior to that time, Saint Preux's rank alone would have been considered, but the Baron follows through on his inquiry, and learns that the tutor has neither money nor rank. Rousseau emphasizes this change and allows the reader to conclude that rank is indeed more important than money. He underscores tradition when he has the Baron state to Julie, "qu'il aurait toutes les guinées d'Angleterre, soyez sûre que je n'accepterais jamais un tel gendre" (151).

After effectively blocking Saint-Preux from entry into his family, the Baron works to assure the future of his lineage, and he concludes negotiations with his friend of twenty years, M. de Wolmar. He treats his friend and future son-in-law with warmth, in contrast with his admonition to Julie to accept the marriage without complaint. In Part III Julie writes Saint-Preux of the agreement,

M. de Wolmar avançait en âge; et, quoique riche et de grande naissance, il ne trouvait point de femme qui lui convînt. Mon père lui avait parlé de sa fille en homme qui souhaitait se faire un gendre de son ami; . . . Mon destin voulut que je plusse à M. de Wolmar, qui n'avait jamais rien aimé. Ils se donnèrent secrètement leur parole; et M. de Wolmar, ayant beaucoup d'affaires à régler dans une cour du Nord où étaient sa famille et sa fortune, il en demanda le temps, et partit sur cet engagement mutuel. Après son départ, mon père nous déclara à ma mère et à moi qu'il me l'avait destiné pour époux, et m'ordonna d'un ton qui ne laissait point de réplique à ma timidité de me disposer à recevoir sa main. (321-2)

Wolmar is the perfect choice, for he is both rich and a nobleman, and has close ties to the Baron. Rousseau paints him as an astute businessman who, like Renoncour in Manon Lescaut, carefully husbands his fortune and his land holdings. He conscientiously handles disagreements in the courts, as indicated above, and he tends to his family and his money; his proposed marriage is yet another transaction. In Part 6, letter XI, when Julie dies, there is a detailed description of the fabric with which her body is wrapped, "un voile d'or brodé de perles que vous [Wolmar] lui aviez apporté des Indes" (725). This import implies that Wolmar is

indeed a successful man of commerce, that his farm is not his sole source of income, and that he has traveled at least as far as the Indies since his marriage to Julie. The Indies became famous in the eighteenth century during the time of the Law System; Law procured the Compagnie des Indes early on in his scheme. Wolmar would have traveled there to facilitate commerce and trade.

The marriage of Julie and Wolmar creates a wealthy household which has a financial ripple effect throughout the county. Rousseau demonstrates the positive force of money through this example, a rare shift in focus for him. He also reveals a contradiction in his position against "luxe" in the enthusiastic description of Julie's new home.

Rousseau praises the home itself as peaceful and pastoral, and run with charm and grace by Julie. It is marked by,

une économie domestique qui annonce la félicité des maîtres de la maison, et la fait partager à ceux qui l'habitent. . . . Tout y est agréable et riant, tout y respire l'abondance et la propreté, rien n'y sent la richesse et le luxe. (423)

However, though this abundance and tidiness may not give the appearance of wealth, the creation of this atmosphere is not inexpensive, and Rousseau recounts the large scale of work the Wolmars have done to the premises in order to have it reflect the lovely simplicity he so praises. Without

indicating the cost of the renovations, he states that walls were moved, doors were changed, furniture was refitted and created for the space, and all the antique furniture was replaced with pieces that were more rustic and comfortable. Every room was redone, and the result is, "Il n'y a pas une chambre où l'on ne se reconnaisse à la campagne, et où l'on ne se retrouve toutes les commodités de la ville" (423). That Rousseau would praise the urban conveniences this home affords is in contradiction with its rustic country spirit. This bucolic lifestyle is both luxurious and expensive; the Wolmars employ eight servants and a valet to run the residence. Among the servants are Julie's personal retinue, "Les trois femmes sont la femme de chambre, la gouvernante des enfants et la cuisinière" (430).

The farm was also completely rebuilt; the lower courtyard was enlarged, a wine press was installed, and a dairy was constructed (423). The vegetable garden was expanded in a pleasing manner, decorative yew trees were replaced with fruit-bearing espaliers, and mulberries were substituted for non-producing horse chestnut trees. The vineyards were personally overseen by Wolmar and were prolific. Rousseau lauds all these changes as creating a working, useful home and farm out of a nonproductive private mansion. Wolmar has used his wealth well; this is money used to good end. Rousseau highlights the new purpose he infuses into this farm by comparing it to Julie's father's estate, "La baronnie d'Étange n'a que des prés, des champs,

et du bois" (424); thus it does not support the community of owners and workers as does Wolmar's. Despite this seemingly new simplicity, however, there is an underlying cost to all the construction projects mentioned, none of which could have been achieved without large sums of specie.

In this ideal example Rousseau accepts the inequality of the classes and offers Wolmar as the model master. He directs this community with respect, and he works as hard as the peasants. It represents Rousseau's vision of a self-sustaining community, with emphasis on autarky as a goal; money is a tool to further this end. The wealth of this society lies in its mutual assets, not in its fiscal reserves. Rousseau offers specific examples of the operation of this agribusiness.

Julie's marriage to Wolmar unites her with this large business enterprise. Wolmar runs an efficient farm. He is the patriarchal head of the operation, and his goal is to increase productivity while at the same time ensuring his workers and servants a good life. The farm employs "un grand nombre d'ouvriers à la journée" (424), and Wolmar prefers to hire local residents whenever possible, thus ensuring a positive effect on the neighboring economy. They receive two compensations, "le prix courant du pays, qu'on s'oblige à leur payer pour les avoir employés. L'autre, un peu plus fort, est un prix de bienfaisance [bienfaisance], qu'on ne leur paye qu'autant qu'on est content d'eux" (425). The servants are treated well and with respect, and Rousseau

comments on the "libéralité des maîtres" (436); they furnish entertainment, food and wine, and the Wolmars participate in all aspects of farm life. They are a benevolent, paternalistic force, and their servants return the respect with dignity and hard work. Rousseau highlights Julie's contribution in Part 4, letter X from Saint-Preux to Milord Édouard, "Fondée sur la confiance et l'attachement, la familiarité qui régnait entre les servantes et la maîtresse ne faisait qu'affermir le respect et l'autorité; et les services rendus et reçus ne semblaient être que des témoignages d'amitié réciproque" (434-5). Later in the same letter Rousseau discusses wealth, and he explains some of the contradictions which have been apparent up to this point. Saint-Preux states,

Richesse ne fait pas riche, dit le *Roman de la Rose*. Les biens d'un homme ne sont point dans ses coffres, mais dans l'usage de ce qu'il en tire; car on ne s'approprie les choses qu'on possède que par leur emploi, et les abus sont toujours plus inépuisables que les richesses: ce qui fait qu'on ne jouit pas à proportion de sa dépense, mais en proportion qu'on la sait mieux ordonner. . . .

L'ordre et la règle, qui multiplient et perpétuent l'usage des biens, peuvent seuls transformer le plaisir en bonheur. . . . Les lambris dorés, le luxe et la magnificence n'annoncent que la vanité de celui qui les étale; au lieu que partout où

vous verrez régner la règle sans tristesse, la paix sans esclavage, l'abondance sans profusion, dites avec confiance: "C'est un être heureux qui commande ici." (448-9)

He continues this letter to Milord Édouard, describing the ideal home environment, and speaking indirectly of Wolmar; he encapsulates his theory of the best use of wealth. The master can only enjoy his riches as he works in concert with his servants; they labor hard for him and he cares for them in return. Discussing the "père de famille," he states,

...s'il ne s'enrichit pas par le nouvelles acquisitions, il s'enrichit en possédant mieux ce qu'il a. Il ne jouissait que du revenu de ses terres; il jouit encore de ses terres mêmes en présidant à leur culture et les parcourant sans cesse. Son domestique lui était étranger; il en fait son bien, son enfant, il se l'approprie. . . . Il n'était maître qu'à prix d'argent; il le devient par l'empire sacré de l'estime et des bienfaits. Que la fortune le dépouille de ses richesses, elle ne saurait lui ôter les coeurs qu'il s'est attachés; elle n'ôtera point des enfants à leur père: toute la différence est qu'il les nourrissait hier, et qu'il sera demain nourri par eux. (449)

Wolmar has a trusting, nurturing relationship with his servants; he represents the ideal. Julie's marriage to him reinforces the benefits to both family and servants (if Julie had married Saint-Preux, she would not have been part of this utopian society). Rousseau demonstrates here that, contrary to his insistence in the Discourses and his political writings, he does not wish to see the eradication of money, rather he hopes for an economy in which the assets are self-sustaining, and wealth is used to foster independence. Jean Starobinski articulates the moral and social aspects of Rousseau's theory of wealth in terms of the common good,

Il ne s'agit de s'enrichir que pour se rendre indépendant. . . . Rousseau a constamment lié les problèmes de la conscience aux problèmes économiques: selon lui, il ne peut y avoir d'indépendance de la conscience qu'appuyée et assurée par une indépendance économique. . . . À Clarens, l'idéal moral de l'autarcie, transposé sur le plan économique, prend la forme d'une société fermée, qui subvient par elle-même à son existence matérielle.<sup>32</sup>

The self-sufficient farming operations of the estate furnish the food, comfort, and independence Rousseau so highly esteems. The example of Wolmar's farm reveals that Rousseau

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<sup>32</sup> Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La transparence et l'obstacle (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1957) 130.

is indeed an ally of his Enlightenment contemporaries. The ideals of management are not unlike the operations instituted at Voltaire's Ferney. Rousseau is also philosophically close to Montesquieu's discussion of the Troglodytes in the Lettres Persanes, for, though there are definite class distinctions at Clarens, all the members of this effort work together and thus prosper together. In letter XII Montesquieu discusses the two men who escaped the "malheurs de la Nation:" they succeeded because "ils avaient de l'humanité; ils connaissaient la justice; ils aimaient la vertu."<sup>33</sup> These men were not seeking prosperity; rather they hoped to survive, and they discovered that they could if they worked for the common good. Their wealth would be their endurance. Montesquieu gives resonance to the idea of enlightened self-interest. Regarding these two men, he states:

... ils leur [leurs enfants] faisaient surtout sentir que l'intérêt des particuliers se trouve toujours dans l'intérêt commun; que vouloir s'en séparer, c'est vouloir se perdre; que la vertu n'est point une chose qui doive nous coûter; qu'il ne faut point la regarder comme un exercice pénible; et que la justice pour autrui est une charité pour nous.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Montesquieu, Lettres, 32.

<sup>34</sup> Montesquieu, Lettres, 32.

Wolmar is Rousseau's enlightened man. He is paternalistic, but he ensures that all in his organization do well; the servants as well as the master do well because they all work together.

Social impact: Luxury and Leisure in Paris. Rousseau juxtaposes the bucolic ideal of Clarens with a sharp critique of the city, and he is especially judgmental regarding life in Paris. He uses Paris as the focus of his critique of urban society; he carries out the attack with enthusiasm. Before introducing the reader to the order and harmony of Wolmar's farm, he takes Saint-Preux to Paris, where he is appalled that, "comme tout n'est que vaine apparence, et que tout change à chaque instant, je n'ai le temps d'être ému de rien, ni celui de rien examiner" (222). In fact, he closely examines this vain life, focusing special interest on women and the theater (a subject familiar to the readers of his first Discourse). The prodigality of the women and the spectacle of the theater are both made possible by great wealth and free time. In the first Discourse, Rousseau treated the theater more formally; here he dramatizes his argument in a more descriptive fashion. The non-productive extravagance of the Parisians forms an opposing pendant with Wolmar's prudent investments; money is wasted with immorality in the city, while it is spent correctly in the country.

The "Parisiennes" do not lead the simple life of the Valaisanes. They also have different personality traits,

"les femmes de ce pays auraient trop à s'en plaindre: elles ont un extérieur de caractère aussi bien que de visage" (243). They do not present themselves in a natural fashion: they are trussed up and rouged, but, "Quoiqu'elles prétendent les animer à force de rouge, l'expression qu'elles leur donnent par ce moyen tient plus du feu de la colère que de celui de l'amour" (244). They spend both time and money on their make-up and fashion; this is a central preoccupation of the Parisian women. Rousseau describes their style,

Leur parure est plus recherchée que magnifique; il y règne plus d'élégance que de richesse. La rapidité des modes, qui vieillit tout d'une année à l'autre, la propreté qui leur fait aimer à changer souvent d'ajustement, les préservent d'une somptuosité ridicule: elles n'en dépensent pas moins, mais leur dépense est mieux entendue; au lieu d'habits râpés et superbes comme en Italie, on voit ici des habits plus simples et toujours frais. (244)

The changing fashion dictates in Paris require these women to continually purchase new clothes and to have them fitted to conform to the new styles. The women Rousseau describes have enough money to indulge in this luxury, and even though he describes the "mode" as simple, with an eye to moderation, the necessity of constant change requires close

attention and implies the cultivation of friendships with dressmakers. It would appear that these Parisians could only be of the wealthy upper class or the bourgeoisie, for they would be able to treat themselves to such privilege. In fact, even less fortunate women try to imitate the wealthy, and they insist on the same fabrics for their clothing. Because of this slavery to fashion, Saint-Preux says, "On voit les mêmes étoffes dans tous les états, et l'on aurait peine à distinguer une duchesse d'une bourgeoise, si la première n'avait l'art de trouver des distinctions que l'autre n'oserait imiter" (244-5).

In addition to the fashion industry, Rousseau reveals the fiscal requirements of the theater when he describes the workforce necessary to mount a production, the elegance of the sets, and the preparations and expectations of the audience. Saint-Preux introduces the luxurious atmosphere in a letter to Mme d'Orbe, "L'Opéra de Paris passe à Paris pour le spectacle le plus pompeux, le plus voluptueux, le plus admirable qu'inventa jamais l'art humain. C'est, dit-on, le plus superbe monument de la magnificence de Louis XIV" (259). The paying public demands to be entertained, and the sets are elaborate; there are lanterns, chariots, complicated joists, trap doors, special effects, machinery, and numerous stage hands to help with scene changes (262). In fact each theatrical production requires huge labor support; each person demands payment:

Le nombre des gens occupés au service de l'Opéra est inconcevable. L'orchestre et les chœurs composent ensemble près de cent personnes: il y a des multitudes de danseurs; tous les rôles sont doubles et triples: c'est-à-dire qu'il y a toujours un ou deux acteurs subalternes prêts à remplacer l'acteur principal, et payés pour ne rien faire jusqu'à ce qu'il lui plaise de ne plus rien faire à son tour; ce qui ne tarde jamais beaucoup d'arriver. (263)

The audience comes not only to be entertained, but to participate in the entertainment, "pour en être vu" (231). Despite the excitement of the show, Saint-Preux is bored. He comments, "La Bruyère ne concevait pas comment un spectacle aussi superbe que l'Opéra pouvait l'ennuyer à si grands frais" (267). The Parisians have enough leisure time to be bored and to indulge in lengthy critiques after the curtain has drawn. Rousseau makes the point that the theater is not only a huge drain on the economy, but it also requires enormous manpower to mount the entertainment that serves no purpose for society. His praise of Wolmar's farm is its counterpoint.

It is in Paris that Saint Preux also experiences his moral downfall, though he has difficulty believing his guilt. He places the blame on the white wine he assumes is water, with which he makes his "vin fort trempé" (275). In

his inebriated state, he spends the night with a prostitute, "Je fus surpris, en revenant à moi, de me trouver dans un cabinet reculé, entre les bras d'une de ces créatures..." (276). The leisure time and the easy funds of the burgeoning monied classes have evidently encouraged the flourishing of prostitution in the city of Paris, and the innocent and unsuspecting tutor has encountered one of these creatures. Money rules the Paris he has described, so it is fitting Saint-Preux would find himself in the company of such an earner. The prostitute adds symbolism to the lack of productivity for the common good that Rousseau views as essential to a successful society. In addition to the illicit sexual activity, the money demanded by and paid to prostitutes is a destructive social element.

Political impact: Utopia vs. Distopia. Rousseau constructs his utopian vision in the mountains of the Haut-Valais as well as in Wolmar's realistically idealistic working farm. In addition to Paris, he describes the Bas-Valais and Geneva in distopian terms.

Rousseau introduces the perfection of the Haut-Valais early in the novel, in Part 1, letter XXIII, from Saint-Preux to Julie. His trip there has been made possible, as stated earlier, by the money from Julie's purse, and his praise of the mountain community reflects his disappointment at his personal financial and social standing. Rousseau uses the young man's voice to relate his vision; it is the embodiment of the ideals described in his political

writings. Moderation is the rule for the people who live in the "bains de l'aire salubre et bienfaisant des montagnes" (52). Saint-Preux is struck by the people, so different from any other village, and the gentle "commerce des habitants" (53). They enjoy a simple, tranquil, egalitarian, agrarian life, and they are gracious hosts welcoming travelers into their homes. Saint-Preux knows no one there, yet many offer him lodging. He kindly accepts the generosity of one, and is shocked when he tries to pay, "il refusa le lendemain mon argent, s'offensant même de ma proposition, et il en été partout de même" (53). In fact, money never appears: "dans tout le voyage je n'ai pu trouver à placer un patagon" (53). The absence of money is depicted in a positive light, for there is no need for it in a place where food is bountiful and accessible to all,

En effet, à quoi dépenser de l'argent dans un pays où les maîtres ne reçoivent point le prix de leurs frais, ni les domestiques celui de leurs soins, et où ne trouve aucun mendiant? Cependant l'argent est fort rare dans le Haut-Valais; mais c'est pour cela que les habitants sont à leur aise; car les denrées y sont abondantes sans aucun débouché au dehors, sans consommation de luxe au dedans, et sans que le cultivateur montagnard, dont les travaux sont les plaisirs, devienne moins laborieux. Si jamais ils ont plus d'argent, ils seront infailliblement plus pauvres: ils ont la

sagesse de le sentir, et il y a dans le pays des mines d'or qu'il n'est pas permis d'exploiter.

(53-4)

The Haut-Valais is a self-sufficient agrarian society. In this short passage Rousseau glorifies the apparent cooperation between the proprietors and their servants. He also denounces the symbols of evil in contemporary society: there are no beggars and there is no poverty. He points to money as the source of the problems of civilization, and underlines his argument by insisting that the inhabitants of the Haut-Valais refuse to mine their gold resources. He offers that money would impoverish them; presumably the manpower necessary to mine the gold would be taken off farming duties. The citizens' attention is better focused on the common good. This is not an egalitarian society, yet all the inhabitants work together. Rousseau gives greater detail on his utopian community in his depiction of Wolmar's farm, as discussed earlier.

The Bas-Valais is offered in juxtaposition to the mountain village, and Rousseau continues to deride the society through its economy: here visitors are routinely fleeced, and business is the order of the day. Rousseau has placed this community lower both physically and morally than his utopia, and it is a more realistic commentary of contemporary life. The locals treat the travelers with the disrespect their work merits, "les étrangers qui passent

sont des marchands, et d'autres gens uniquement occupés de leur négoce et de leur gain: il est juste qu'ils nous laissent une partie de leur profit et nous les traitons comme ils traitent les autres" (54). Money and business, and the desire for "gain," cause immoral behavior.

Rousseau expands his denigration of money in his description of the Genevans in Part 6. This portrayal could serve for the citizens of any trade based international economy, for once again he sees only social loss due to money. Money is infused with political overtones, and it takes on meanings that transcend the signifier of value. It can act like a virus, spreading cupidity to all in its path, and all are susceptible. The lure of the "silver chains" overpowers the rustic life of other times. In letter V, from Mme d'Orbe to Julie, she states,

[Le Genevois] a de la générosité, du sens, de la pénétration; mais il aime trop l'argent: défaut que j'attribue à sa situation qui le lui rend nécessaire, car le territoire ne suffirait pas pour nourrir les habitants. . . . Il arrive de là que les Genevois, épars dans l'Europe pour s'enrichir, imitent les grands airs des étrangers, et après avoir pris les vices des pays où ils ont vécu, les rapportent chez eux en triomphe avec leurs trésors. Ainsi le luxe des autres peuples leur fait mépriser leur antique simplicité: la fière liberté leur paraît ignoble; ils se forgent

des fers d'argent, non comme une chaîne, mais  
comme un ornement. (646)

Rousseau had denounced money and inequality in his political writings, and in this novel he demonstrates that both can be put to good or evil use. Money well spent fosters production and a good life for servants and masters, while wealth in and of itself leads a society into decline. Rousseau's economic theory plays a significant role in underscoring his social critique.

## Conclusion

In Chapter 2 of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas S. Kuhn defines "paradigms" as "accepted examples of scientific practice - examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together- [which] provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research."<sup>35</sup> These models serve as templates for existing accepted patterns in science. A paradigm will remain in place until it is shifted during a transition period, or scientific revolution, when it must adjust to accommodate a new model. The new paradigm is accepted following this period of crisis and adjustment. Kuhn states that there is a parallel between scientific and political revolutions, which "are inaugurated by a growing sense, often restricted to a segment of the political community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created."<sup>36</sup> The existing political institutions prohibit change, and a period of crisis develops to effect the change, during which time the society is divided by competing groups. The polarization is caused by the party trying to maintain the original paradigm, and the party instituting a new one.

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1967) 10.

<sup>36</sup> Kuhn 91.

It is possible to relate Kuhn's theory to the economic climate in France. The paradigm of wealth and power in France experienced a parallel shift from the seventeenth century into the eighteenth century. The existing traditions in the seventeenth century and earlier were based on wealth and power residing with the nobility. Philippe Perrot refers to the landed gentry as the "richesse immobilière," and states that the "richesse mobilière," or monied bourgeoisie, began to supplant the wealth, and thus the power of the nobility by the beginning of the eighteenth century (he selects the famous "Promenade de Marly" as the moment of change).<sup>37</sup> The money forced a shift in the existing class structure, and to the traditional seat of supremacy. Money, rather than land, began to influence and alter the source of political authority. This economic paradigm shift and its resultant social and political effects rippled through France, and contributed to the pre-revolutionary atmosphere. These changes are reflected in the literary and philosophical texts of the eighteenth century.

Lesage, Prévost, Marivaux, Voltaire, and Rousseau may be placed on an economic as well as a chronological and literary continuum from the beginning of the century. The writings of each not only demonstrate the effects of the changing economic climate, but also enhance and clarify the

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<sup>37</sup> Perrot 53.

authors' reactions to these effects. The reading audience grew substantially and by the late eighteenth century, literacy rates were high. Schama has shown that in Montmartre, 40 percent of the wills were written by members of the artisan or salaried classes, and of those 74 percent of the men and 64 percent of the women could write their signatures; in the rue Saint-Honoré, the literacy rate was 93 percent; in the rue Saint-Denis, home to many artisans, 86 percent of the men and 73 percent of the women could sign their marriage contracts.<sup>36</sup> Thus, along with the spreading economic changes, the authors enjoyed a wider readership, and a greater diffusion of their ideas.

Lesage's work encompasses both the old paradigm and the start of the new in Turcaret and Gil Blas. The despised financier Turcaret follows the tradition of the seventeenth century representations of money men. He is the symbolic threat to the established social order, and the power of his money underscores the danger. Lesage's audience was evidently not comprised of many "laquais revêtus;" the nobility enjoyed laughing at the financier's ruin and misfortune. Turcaret could not have been created at any other moment in (economic) time; he is mimetic of the "fermiers généraux" who loaned money to Louis XIV, thus enjoying slightly elevated status. Because of this favorable relationship between the financiers and the crown,

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<sup>36</sup> Schama 180.

Turcaret is more of a symbolic menace to the upper classes than his predecessors. Lesage echoes the scorn with which these men were treated, and he creates the character in order to use the "trésor de haine"<sup>39</sup> already built up in the society against the "traitants" and their usurious practices and destroy him with pleasure.

By the time Lesage started to write Gil Blas, and increasingly during the years of its publication, the prejudices against upward mobility were already starting to weaken, thanks to the increase in specie and business activity. Gil holds fifteen jobs before he receives his "lettres de noblesse," and each position represents a station on the economic and social scale. The money he earns (regardless of the method, licit or illicit) determines his lifestyle, and Lesage furnishes clear images of all standards of living. Books 1 through 6 were published in 1715, the year Louis XIV died, and they portray Gil as young and impoverished. This clever young man works as a thief, servant, assistant, business manager, and valet in the first books. He is able to rise among the service ranks, though he is unable to accumulate money. By the publication of Books 7-9 in 1724, the French economy had been buttressed and inflated by the burgeoning money supply created by Law's System, and Gil's finances reflect these changes. He is able to accumulate real wealth of 30,000

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<sup>39</sup> Lintilhac 56.

ducats with much greater prospects (and even become engaged to a girl with a dowry of 100,000 ducats), rent a mansion, and have his own valet and staff; he grows into a thief of a higher order. In the first publication, there had never been a mention of sums so large. These are fictional works, but the depictions of money are representative of the economy and monetary policy of the time.

Prévost deliberately set Manon Lescaut in 1717-19, in the atmosphere of trading frenzy caused by John Law. Huge sums were won and lost in the market, which was as volatile as any gambling table. Manon lives for, with, and through money; it is her life force. Her interpersonal relationships are based on money; she is a true prostitute as long as she remains in or near Paris. To the establishment, Manon could only represent the worst, most base form of the "richesse mobilière," the bipolar opposite of the stability so carefully husbanded by the father of des Grieux. She is at once a vision of the future and a warning from the past, and her currency highlights her symbolism. When their money runs out, Manon and the young des Grieux experience what Erich Auerbach refers to as a "mute tension,"<sup>40</sup> which is not only a reference to their financial difficulties, but also to the social barriers their improper relationship occasions. Manon is capable of destroying the young chevalier, and the tension between the classes caused by the

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<sup>40</sup> Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, the Representation of Reality in Western Literature (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974) 397.

explosion of the money supply will not remain silent for long. Curiously, as a literary incarnation, Manon is profitable not only for herself, but also for Prévost, whose words brought him fame and money.

Marivaux's writing appears atavistic given the changing economic and social environment in post-Law France. His traditional renderings of the accumulation of wealth through inheritance and marriage are reminiscent of the seventeenth century paradigm. While the economic developments had not eradicated the social class distinctions, Marivaux stresses the correctness of maintaining them. He cannot ignore the increasing instances of upward social mobility, however, by the mid-1730s, when he wrote his novels. Marianne does become a countess, despite her uncertain origins; though unfinished, the full title of the work states this fact: La Vie de Marianne ou les aventures de Madame la comtesse de \*\*\*. In the Paysan parvenu, the Habert sisters enjoy the respectability in Paris that their grandparents could not; Marivaux thus contributes to the articulation of the new economic and social paradigm by furnishing a precise image of this major change. As if to highlight this new model, he unites Jacob with Mlle Habert, and continues the acceptance of such unequal marriage. The wealth of the time may also be reflected in his rich language; the healthy environment may have helped in the development of the well-crafted and artisanal "marivaudage."

While Lesage, Prévost, and Marivaux have incorporated their reactions to money into their writings and reflected the delicate balance it keeps with the social structure, Voltaire develops a dynamic monetary theory, a new paradigm, which can be called Voltaire's economics of tolerance. For Voltaire, money is not infused with symbolic attitudes of good and evil; all money is good, it is the foundation for a strong society, and a strong economy can only grow in concert with a parallel commitment to tolerance. Voltaire used his literary skills to diffuse, or "vulgarize" his philosophy, and much of it concerns fiscal policy. In France he found an example of a choked society, and the strangulation extended to all areas, from religious prosecution, to the fitful circulation of foodstuffs, to past innovations in science, to unfair taxation, to a staggering budget deficit. Voltaire looked to Amsterdam and England first in his correspondence and the Lettres philosophiques for a model state, and over the years he fused the finest elements of the best societies into his utopian vision. He admires the London Exchange, and he depicts it as a place where members of thirty religions work peacefully, harmoniously together during the day, and at night resume their respective religious practices. Their differences do not keep them from fueling the strong economy; they may not understand each others' beliefs, but they understand the language of business. Where the French self destruct in a restrictive society, the English are free

and rich. He rejects the existing French paradigm and offers Eldorado in Candide, a land organized and marked by peace, tolerance, hard work, beauty, strong academics, and agriculture. The economy is the the wheel that turns this mythic place. Voltaire advocates the abandonment of the gold standard, the elimination of trade barriers, the encouragement of business (all is geared to the "commodité du commerce"<sup>41</sup>). Even Candide's small garden is a microeconomic model of perfection, where everyone works for the common good, and trade assures the affluence of all.

Rousseau also rejects the existing socio-economic structure, but his ideal is in opposition to that of Voltaire. Money is infused with evil, and in Rousseau's perfect paradigm, it would be eliminated. Money represents a meta inequality; it is the cause of nutritional, judicial, social, physical, and moral injustices. It is a poison that destroys those who have it and those who do not. The rich man is portrayed as obese and reprobate, a glutton who can never accumulate enough, and who uses his money to deprive others of their freedom. The poor man is starving and weak, a slave to his needs and thus to anyone who holds the money he might earn. For Rousseau, equality without luxury would serve as a guide to the citizens of his simple ideal society. In Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse, Rousseau reveals himself as an eighteenth century thinker when he expresses

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<sup>41</sup> Voltaire, Romans et Contes, 177.

the ideals of the Enlightenment, particularly in the discussion of Wolmar's farm at Clarens. He pleads for the better treatment of laborers; his depiction of the Wolmar household acknowledges the wealth of the proprietors while demonstrating the dignity they have for the peasants. Rousseau shows the model patriarchal relationship between the master and his servants. They are all extremely productive, they all work hard together for the common good, and the master demonstrates his appreciation and his respect by ensuring his servants a good life.

France in the eighteenth century was a nation in flux, due in large part to the incipient bankruptcy at the turn of the century, followed by the exploding economic expansion in the time of Law's System, and the emerging trading markets. Money in print may be viewed as a touchstone, reflecting the dynamics of the changing society as well as the attitude shifts in both the economic and social circles. It adds an element of realism to each of these author's works, and crystallizes the authors' social perceptions.

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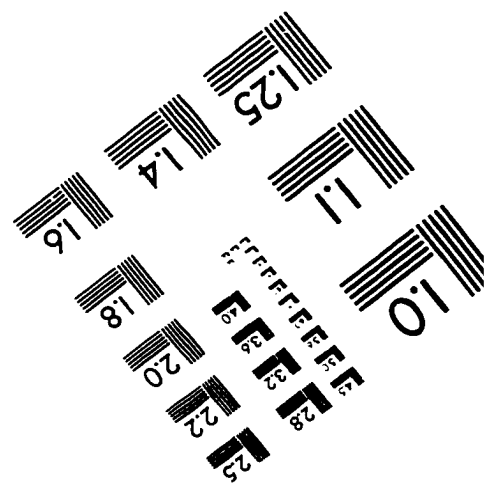
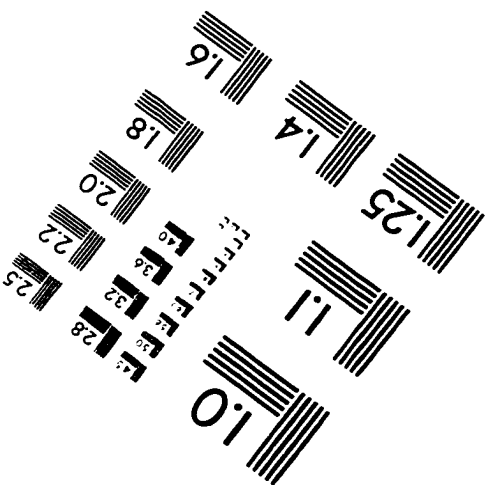
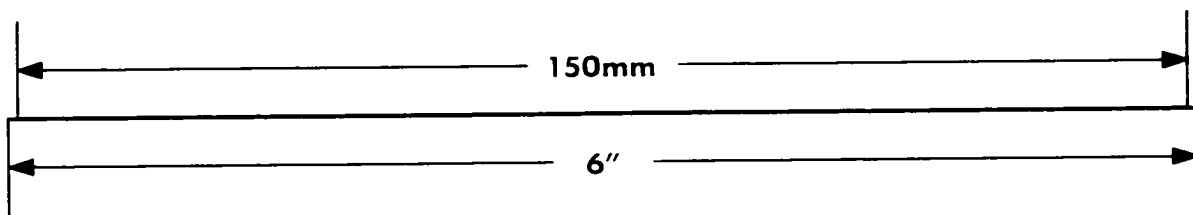
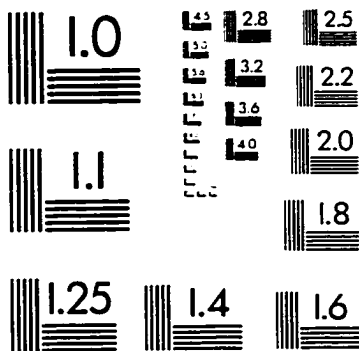
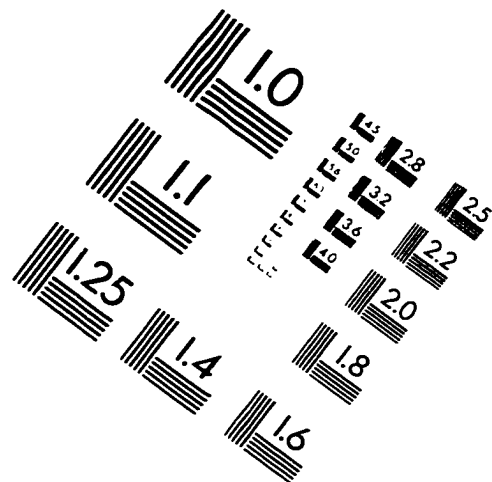
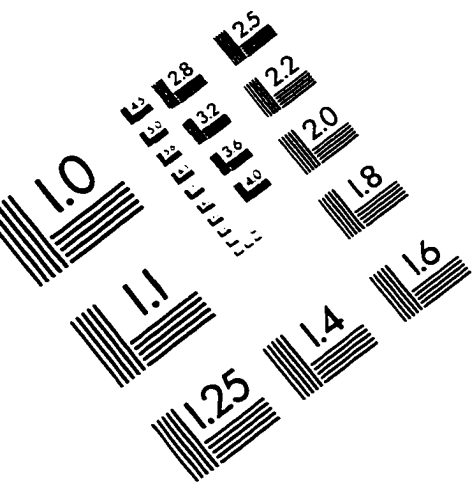
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