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CONTEMPORARY LIFE IN THE PLAYS AND NOVELS

OF

MARIVAUX

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A

Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements For the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of French,

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by

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INTRODUCTION

In literary history or criticism not only is it necessary to make an objective study of the particular work or works under discussion, but also it is desirable to gain a comprehensive insight into the author and his works as a whole. This insight may be obtained directly through perusal of the author's works and indirectly through a study of his particular environment. In addition one has access to a wealth of information garnered by contemporary and by later critics. These critics render great service to the student both by opening up new avenues of approach and by giving him the opportunity to assess the validity of his own personal judgment on questions already considered. The critic has also a negative value, for not only does he indicate by his omissions what aspects of a subject have not yet been discussed but also he suggests by his vague treatment of certain topics what aspects have not yet been fully developed. This negative value can be realized only if the word "critic" is understood to mean "all critics." However, since no critic worthy of the name is able to present an analysis of a single aspect without reference to the other aspects of a particular subject, it is not difficult to determine, even from the limited number of critics that I have been able to consult, that no complete study has yet been made of contemporary life in the novels and plays of Marivaux.

Contemporary critics of Marivaux, still very much under the influence of the classical writers of the seventeenth century, were quick to sense any deviation from the classical norm of simplicity in presentation of milieu, in psychological analysis and in expression. Dalember, for example, is shocked at the realistic depiction of the quarrel between
Mme Dutour and the coachman in Marianne. As Le Breton points out:

La querelle entre la lingère Mme Dutour et le cocher de fiacre qu'elle refuse de payer est demeurée longtemps célèbre. Elle fit grand bruit parmi les gens de lettres et D'Alembert en était encore tout scandalisé quand il prononça l'éloge funèbre de son confrère de l'Académie française.¹

It is perhaps worth noting that D'Alembert's reaction appears to be provoked by the literary representation of scenes with which he, in real life, must have been familiar. However, Ducros' comment on a Parisian street brawl would lead one to believe that Marivaux could have found material for scenes even more shockingly realistic:

If we wish to have some idea of what those brawls were like, we ought to read, not the oft-quoted scene of the cab-driver in Marivaux's La Vie de Marianne (a cabman who swears is no new thing) but rather those Bouquets poisards of Vadé, so beloved of the populace because it saw itself truly reflected therein.²

It was not, however, the social realism of Marivaux that drew the most fire from the critics of the day. Used to the pure and simple psychological analysis of Racine, and even to the more subtle and visual analysis of La Bruyère, the critic of the day was not at all prepared to appreciate the psychological finesse of Marivaux. Marivaux's study of the mind-soul relationship reminds one of Kant, and even of the "stream-of-consciousness" technique with which we are now familiar, but it does not appear that his contemporaries were conscious of this originality.³

¹ A. Le Breton, Le Roman au XVIIIe siècle, Paris, Lecâne, 1898, p.71.
³ Marivaux, Oeuvres Complètes, Edition Duriquet, Paris, 1825-30, IX, pp. 35-40. "Je me sens aujourd'hui dans un libertinage d'idées, qui ne peut s'accommoder d'un sujet fixe. Je viens de voir l'entrée de l'Infante...c'étaient là à peu près les idées qui me venaient successivement dans la tête, quand le roi a passé." See also Marianne, Editions Stock, Paris, Delamain et Boutelleau, 1947, pp. 138-139.
Grimm and Voltaire agree in their estimate of Marivaux's psychological finesse:

Il avait un genre à lui, très aisé à reconnaître, très minutieux, qui ne manque pas d'esprit ni parfois de vérité, mais qui est d'un goût bien mauvais et souvent faux. M. de Voltaire disait de lui qu'il passait sa vie à peser des riens dans des balances de toiles d'araignée; aussi le marivaudage a passé en proverbe en France.  

Hand in glove with criticism of his thought went criticism of his style. Voltaire speaks of "les drames bourgeois du néologue Marivaux" and D'Alembert of "l'étrange néologisme qui dépare même ses meilleures productions." Several of the leading authors of the day, Lesage, Prévost, Crébillon fils ... satirized in one way or another, and more often than not without justice, the "précieux" style of Marivaux. In vain did Marivaux in the Cabinet du Philosophe defend his style on the grounds that novel thought demands novel expression:

L'homme qui pense beaucoup approfondit les sujets qu'il traite; il les pénètre, il y remarque des choses d'une extrême finesse, que tout le monde sentira quand il les aura dites, mais qui, de tout temps, n'ont été remarquées que de très-peu de gens; et il ne pourra assurément les exprimer que par un assemblage et d'idées et de mots très rarement vus ensemble. Voilà combien de critiques profiteront contre lui de la singularité inévitale de style que cela va lui faire! Que son style sera précieux!

Attacks on "marivaudage," as Marivaux's preciosity of thought and expression was commonly called, were continued into the nineteenth century by critics like La Harpe and Geoffroy. Some of the blame for this

4. Oeuvres, 1X, lH.
long-continued criticism which was preventing a truer appraisal of Marivaux's works must rest, as Bray has pointed out, with the author himself:

Marivaux porte le poids de sa subtilité: il était trop intelligent, pourrait-on dire, du moins trop ingénieusement intelligent, trop amoureux des prouesses de l'intelligence.¹

By the end of the nineteenth century, serious criticism of Marivaux's preciosity had unmistakably abated and Larroumet, for one, could say with confidence that "Marivaux est un des auteurs du XVIIIe siècle qui ont le plus respecté et le moins gâté notre langue."² However, literary prejudice is difficult to uproot and Marcel Arland, the most recent critic of Marivaux, can still say with much truth that:

Le public, et, pour une part, la critique aussi, se sont formé de Marivaux une image qu'ils se refusent à modifier. S'il jouit d'une gloire plus vive que jamais, cette gloire ne va pas sans œillères.³

As Marivaux's style has come to be taken for granted, readers and critics have begun to develop a consciousness of the element of social realism in his work. Modern critics are no longer perturbed by the excesses that shocked the "bon goût" of D'Alembert and others of his day, but they are by no means agreed on the nature and the extent of his realism nor, indeed, have they made any diligent inquiry into it. The remainder of this Introduction will be devoted to a consideration of the opinions of a few modern critics with respect to contemporary life in the novels and plays of Marivaux in order to show that it represents an aspect which can still repay study.

². Larroumet, op. cit., p. 480.
With regard to the comedies many critics agree that the main interest of Marivaux lies in the analysis of nascent or declining love and that there is in them little or no social realism. These critics represent Marivaux as being midway between Racine and Musset, his preoccupation being with the psychological analysis of gentle emotion rather than with that of tragic passion. The psychological analysis is sometimes recognized to be more natural as well as more subtle than that of Racine, the main difference being that Marivaux's characters "are ordinary men and women placed in ordinary circumstances, which do not call for heroic action."\(^1\) However, Marivaux's introduction of stock characters and devices from the Théâtre Italien, the deep-rooted prejudice with regard to his style, the great variety of the plays themselves, ranging from those of intrigue to those of psychological analysis, and including those of a heroic, philosophical or allegorical nature with no apparent basis in reality, all these factors have conspired to keep Marivaux off the great classical highway from which he was early elbowed by contemporary critics. In short, according to many modern critics, the drama of Marivaux, although universal in its preoccupation with psychological analysis, lacks particular contact with eighteenth-century France.

In their introduction to *Eighteenth-Century French plays* (and such introductions may be accepted as indicating the general consensus of opinion) Brenner and Goodyear compare Marivaux with Watteau as presenting "an idealized and enchanted world."\(^2\) And although Tilley states that many of the comedies of Marivaux "faithfully reproduce the social milieu of his day,"\(^3\) he almost immediately contradicts himself by declaring that "the

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study of manners plays absolutely no part in them" and that "we must not look to them for any material details." Faguet, impatient perhaps with the type of hesitant criticism that professes to see and yet does not see social realism in the comedies of Marivaux, categorically declares that "Cette comédie n'emprunte presque rien — ayons le courage de dire rien du tout — à la vie courante,"¹ and, again speaking of the same comedy, that:

Tout cela est léger, capricieux, aérien, fait de rien, où d'un rêve bleu, qui vous emmène bien loin, loin des pays qui ont un nom, dans une contrée où l'on n'a jamais posé le pied.²

On further consideration, Faguet realized that this apparent world of illusion is more real than he had at first supposed, and he explains his first impression by the fact that Marivaux's real characters move about in a background almost devoid of material detail: "Il n'est fantaisiste que de première apparence, et parce qu'il supprime à peu près le support matériel et l'habitatce ordinaire des esprits humains."³ Brunetièrereveals just how wide-spread were critical reproaches of this kind when he defends Marivaux, not on the grounds that much of eighteenth-century life was actually depicted in the comedies but on the grounds that he had no intention of presenting his picture in a realistic setting. Noting a tendency among certain critics to sacrifice the demands of art to those of historical accuracy, Brunetièrere states:

C'est ce que l'on a fait plus d'une fois en notre temps quand on a, par exemple, reproché à l'auteur du Jeu de L'amour et du hasard . . . qu'on ne trouvait pas dans [son]

2. Ibid., p. 119.
3. Ibid., p. 120.
oeuvre de renseignements assez précis, assez nombreux, assez particuliers sur la répartition de la taille qu sur la situation de l'agriculture au XVIIIe siècle.  

Even Arland does not attempt to put into focus the actual extent of eighteenth-century life portrayed in the comedies of Marivaux which for him constitute the "monde de l'homme et de la femme dans le pur climat de l'amour et de la poésie."  

If we turn to the novels we find the critics in agreement that Marivaux's treatment of his subject is quite different. Larroumet appears to give the average opinion of Marivaux when he contrasts his manner as seen in the comedies with that as seen in the novels:

Dans ses comédies, il a idéalisé et embellı les moeurs de son temps, il les a faites plus pures ... qu'elles n'étaient en réalité ... Dans les romans, il a changé de manière: sans crudité de couleurs, sans grossissement, sans recherche du laid pour le laid, il a donné la première place à l'observation ..."  

Referring to the Pièces Détachées of Marivaux, Larroumet states that "Pour étudier le type si particulier du boutiquier parisien ...

Marivaux suit un provincial chez un drapier et note tous les manèges de l'acheteur et du marchand ..." It is true that Larroumet does not explicitly state that Marivaux applied this Zola-like technique to the novels, and, indeed, it is highly probable that he exaggerates even when ascribing this documentary zeal to the Spectateur Français, but the point to be made is that he considers observation of milieu to be the primary interest of Marivaux in the novels.

4. Ibid., p. 402.
Ruth Jamieson has a similar viewpoint. "Although Marivaux [she says] does not attempt Balzac's detailed reproduction of material surroundings, some of his descriptions, spare as they are, create as vivid a sense of atmosphere as that of the pension Vauquer."¹ Jamieson does not amplify this statement; indeed, since her primary consideration was a study of the sensibility of Marivaux, she was not concerned with elaborating remarks made by previous critics about Marivaux's treatment of milieu. Trahard, for example, in stating what Marivaux had himself stated in the Spectateur Français declares that he was, in the novels, a true painter of his epoch whether the milieu was considered in relation to the personages or considered in itself:

S'agit-il de faire vivre ses personnages, de les situer à leur époque et dans leur milieu, la scène est empreinte d'un excellent réalisme. S'agit-il enfin de brosser un tableau général des moeurs, de peindre la bourgeoisie ... c'est encore et toujours le souci réel et de la vérité qui inspire Marivaux.²

However, there are some critics who feel that the comparison and contrast between the novelist and the dramatist with stress being placed on the opposites of observation and non-observation of milieu has tended to over-emphasize the comparative importance of social realism in the novels. Faguet, for one, slashes his way through what he considers to be an illusion when he says:

Les romans renferment, nous le verrons, des parties d'observation très distinguées qu'il faut connaître; mais, en leur fond, ils ne procèdent pas de l'observation; ils n'ont point été conçus dans le réel; un peu de réel s'y est seulement ajouté. Ils procèdent chacun d'une idée, et un peu d'une


idée en l'air, d'une fantaisie séduisante, qui a amusé l'esprit de l'auteur.  

Faguet again questions the role of Marivaux as revealer of his epoch in the declaration:

Il me semble qu'il observe assez peu, et qu'on ne trouverait guère dans Marivaux de véritable étude de moeurs ni de copieux renseignements sur la société de son temps.

Finally, Arland, like Faguet, is unable to see in Marivaux "comme on le fit souvent, un vrai peintre de son époque" although he declares elsewhere with respect to le Paysan parvenu that Marivaux "s'aident de Jacob, comme Lesage de Gil Blas ... veut peindre une large part de son époque."

What is evident in this rapid and restricted survey of critical opinion is that contemporary critics, concerned mainly with "marivaudage" and little concerned with realism as we know it, paid scant attention to the social realism of Marivaux. Modern critics, though conscious of it, are uncertain about the extent of this realism. They feel that the comedies have a footing in the times but, wary of general observations of this sort, they make qualifications that are nothing less than contradictions. They know, too, that the representation of milieu in the novels is more extensive and more realistic, but they are not so sure now as once they were that Marivaux is essentially a painter of the exterior aspects of his epoch.

1. Faguet, op. cit., p. 93.
2. Ibid., p. 90.
4. Ibid., p. 79.
Because there is an apparent uncertainty as to the extent and the
wherefore of this realism, the primary purpose of this thesis is to in-
dicate how much of this reality is actually to be found in the plays and
novels of Marivaux and the secondary purpose is to show how Marivaux
fits this realism into the general pattern of his work. Using, then,
as the basis for discussion the twenty-nine comedies of Marivaux, the
novels, La Vie de Marianne, le Paysan parvenu, and, less extensively,
le Don Quichotte moderne, and referring when occasion arises to the
Spectateur Français, the Cabinet du Philosophe, the Indigent Philosophe
and other miscellaneous works, I propose to present in this essay,
Contemporary Life in the Novels and Plays of Marivaux, first, an analysis
of the comedies and novels with the detailed textual reference rendered
necessary by the nature of the subject, and, secondly, and by way of
conclusion, consideration of the results of this analysis in their re-
lation to other aspects of the work of Marivaux.
CHAPTER I

Contemporary Life in the Comedies of Marivaux

The Family

Perhaps the most noticeable gap in the institutions and manners of the eighteenth century revealed through the plays of Marivaux is to be found in the absence of any normal family life. The very old and the very young, for example, find no direct representation at all, and it is really only through the focal point of marriage, some looking forward to it, others looking back on it, that we know the birth-marriage-death cycle of humanity to be still operative in France. However, Marivaux realized that the vanity of man often reduces him to the level of the infant, and he frequently uses images relating to child life that leave us no doubt that dolls, rattles and toys were as much a part of family life then as they are today. In one instance the adult is "un enfant qui pleure après son hochet" or "après sa poupée," in another he is amused "comme un enfant avec un joujou." Sometimes the image is extended to give a more complete picture as with Fontignac, "secrétaire du courtisan" in l'ile de la Raison:

N'abiez-vous jamais bu d'enfant entré les vras dé sa nourricé? Connaitez-vous lé hochet dont elle agité les grélots pour réjouir lé poupon abéqué la chanssonneté? Què vous ressemblez vien à cé poupon, boû autres grand seigneurs! Regardez ceuz qui boû approchent, ils ont tous lé hochet à la main; il faut què lé grélot joue, et què la chanssonneté marche! 

2. L'île de la Raison, Oeuvres, 1, 270.
3. Le Dénouement imprévu, Oeuvres, 1, 163.
4. Oeuvres, 1, 304.
In the last of these images representing child life, there is reference to the practice of placing children in the care of foster parents.¹ It was not the custom among the noblesse, at least, for mothers to nurse their own children, and, indeed, Rousseau criticized this lack of maternal care in his Emile.² There is further evidence of this phenomenon in l'Heureux Stratagème. It seems obvious that if Blaise nursed the child in his arms: "J'ons barcé cette enfant-là ... une comtesse que j'ons vue marmotte,"³ it was because she was a foster child in their home.

An even greater paucity of information is to be noticed with regard to the age group ranging from infancy to adolescence. This is not surprising for even in Marianne where Marivaux had every justification for a fuller development, the heroine declares: "J'abrège; ... les minuties de mon bas âge vous ennuien."⁴ The images relating to childhood do not occur as frequently as those relating to infancy nor are they perhaps as picturesque as this one taken from l'Indigent Philosophe: "Les hommes, avec toutes leurs façons, ressemblent aux enfants. Les derniers s'imagine sont être à cheval, quand ils courent avec un bâton entre les jambes,"⁵ but nevertheless there are references to childhood in the comedies that would strike a familiar chord in any reader. Dorante, for example, in

"[Montesquieu] passa trois années en nourrice chez des paysans; il y fortifia sa constitution et apprit le patois. Il revint chez ses parents, en ce château de la Brède, auquel son souvenir reste attaché."


3. Œuvres, 4, 489.


5. Œuvres, x, 86.
les Sincères criticizes the marquise with all the unrestraint of a father telling his daughter to sit up straight at the table: "J'ai eu mille envies de vous dire comme aux enfants. Tenez-vous droite."

This use of imagery pertaining to family affairs is not in evidence when Marivaux enters his favorite sphere of action, namely, the analysis of the reaction of a young person to the first stimulus of love. The exposition becomes direct and is not confined solely to the lovers concerned. In les Serments indiscrets there is a splendid portrayal of strained relations between two sisters, relations which have become temporarily acrimonious only because the vanity of "ces jolis petits chats"² has been stroked the wrong way. In the following excerpt given at some length to show how well Marivaux succeeds in creating the atmosphere of sisterly rivalry, one must keep in mind that Phénice has no intention of marrying Damis who she knows is in love with her sister, Lucile.

Phénice:
   Si ma soeur le regrette, et que Damis la préfère, il est encore à elle; je le cède volontiers, et n'en murmurerai point.
Lucile (la soeur en question):
   Ayez, ma soeur, un peu moins de confiance; s'il vous entendaît, j'aurais peur qu'il ne vous prit au mot.
Phénice:
   Oh! non, je parle à coup sûr; il n'y a rien à craindre; je lui ai répété plus de vingt fois ce que je vous dis là.
Lucile:
   Ah! si vous n'avez rien risqué à lui tenir ce discours, vous m'en avez quelque obligation; mes manières n'ont pas nui à la constance qu'il a eue pour vous.
Phénice:
   Laissez-moi pourtant me flatter qu'il m'a choisie.

1. Oeuvres, v, h20.

2. La Surprise de l'amour, Oeuvres, 111, 67.
Lucile:
Et moi je vous dis qu'il est mieux que vous ne vous en flattiez pas, mademoiselle; vous en serez plus attentive à lui plaire, et son amour aura besoin de ce secours-là.

Orgon (leur père):
Qu'est-ce que c'est donc que cet air de dispute que vous prenez entre vous deux? Est-ce là comme vous répondez aux soins que je me donne pour vous voir unies?¹

Another instance of family relations may be found in _le Jeu de l'amour and du hasard_ where the interplay is this time between brother and sister. The badinage between Mario and Silvia becomes more and more incisive as Mario continues to "needle" Silvia by attributing to Bourguignon's influence her antipathy towards Dorante, his master:

Silvia:
... personne au monde que son maître ne m'a donné l'aversion naturelle que j'ai pour lui.

Mario:
Ma foi, tu as beau dire, ma soeur; elle est trop forte pour être naturelle, et quelqu'un y a aidé.

Silvia, avec vivacité:
Avec quel air mystérieux vous me dites cela, mon frère! Et qui est donc ce quelqu'un qui y a aidé? Voyons.

Mario:
Dans quelle humeur es-tu, ma soeur? Comme tu t'emportes!²

Mario, who knows the false Bourguignon is the real Dorante and is enjoying the joke, knows when enough is enough; he never carries his badinage to the point of hostility and, as he himself says, there is no rancour in it. When, for example, Silvia is so exasperated that she exclaims at one time "J'étouffe!" and asks at another, "Quand finira la comédie que vous vous donnez sur mon compte?"³ Mario knows that it is

¹ _Oeuvres_, II, 127.
² _Oeuvres_, IV, 246.
³ _Oeuvres_, IV, 250.
time to stop and, moreover, to show that it was all in fun. Certainly Mario is not "un homme qui n'a ni frère ni soeur, et qui ne sait pas combien ils sont chers"\(^1\) for throughout the play we sense the deep love he has for his sister, Silvia. Moreover, his "Adieu, adieu, ma soeur; sans rancune,"\(^2\) although a commonplace remark, guarantees, by the assurance given his sister that he was only teasing, that they part on good terms.

These snatches of family intimacy are rare in the comedies of Marivaux and, indeed, one would gather the impression that natural family relationships were rare in the eighteenth century, especially among the noblesse. In *l'Héritier de Village* Arlequin has been engaged to instruct the children of Blaise in the "bonnes magnifiques ... du biau monde," manners which demand a formal relationship between parent and offspring:

Colin:  
Papa, je n'irons donc pas trouver la compagnie.

Arlequin:  
Dites monsieur, et non papa.

Colin:  
Monsieur! est-ce que ce n'est pas mon père?

Blaise:  
N'importe, petit garçon; faites ce qu'on vous dit.

Colette who has listened to the lesson profits by it and remembers to correct her manners. Evidently further instruction will be necessary to correct her mistakes in grammar.

Colette:  
Et moi, papa ... dis-je, monsieur ... irons-je?\(^3\)

This impression of unnaturalness in parent-child relationships is further strengthened when we consider *l'Ecole des Mères*. Madame Argante

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is addressed by her daughter neither with a ceremonial "madame" nor with a familiar "maman" but rather with a formal "ma mère." She has neither the respect nor the love of her daughter, "une jeune et timide personne à qui jusqu'ici son éducation n'a rien appris qu'à obéir."\(^1\) Educated only by the precepts of her mother and by whatever books her mother considers will spoil "ni le coeur ni l'esprit,"\(^2\) and lacking entirely the personal experience gained through contact with the world, especially the world of men, Angélique can well declare that "Il y a des petites filles de sept ans qui sont plus avancées que moi."\(^3\) The fact that she feels herself an object of curiosity because of her childish and unusual clothes leads us to believe that households like the Argantes' were rare in the eighteenth century. One remembers however, the depiction by Marivaux in the Spectateur Français of a young girl dominated by her mother and forced against her will, to the outward practices of a "fausse dévotion," so much so that the sight of a "livre pieux" fills her "d'un ennu qui [lui] fait peur."\(^4\)

Just as unnatural an example of parent–child relationships, and presented by Marivaux with the same aim of stressing the need for a fuller development of the child through personal experience, and, thus, advocating for the child a greater freedom of action, is the relationship between Orgon and his son, Damon, in La Joie imprévue. Orgon has this to say of

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2. Ibid., p. 434.
3. Ibid., p. 444.
4. Oeuvres, IX, 114.
the son who has gambled away part of the money entrusted to him to establish himself in business:

J'avoue que jusqu'ici je n'ai rien vu que de louable en lui. Je voulais achever de le connaître; il est jeune, il a fait une faute, il n'y a rien d'étonnant, et je la lui pardonne, pourvu qu'il la sente; c'est ce qui décidera de son caractère. Ce sera un peu d'argent qu'il m'en coûtera; je ne me regretterai point, si son imprudence le corrige. 1

No one could believe customary such indulgence on the part of a bourgeois "père de famille" but one must recognize in the eighteenth century the growing awareness of the value of a sort of pragmatic education that was to find fuller advocacy in Rousseau.

These two examples, then, that of the despotic Madame Argante and that of the indulgent Monsieur Orgon, perhaps do represent extremes of parent-child relationships in the eighteenth century, and perhaps do indicate a trend away from the type of education symbolized by the pedantic Hortensius in the second Surprise de l'amour, but it is not the education itself that is the main interest of Marivaux but the purpose to which it is put. It is significant that Blaise in l'Héritier de Village should pose that very question: "Est pis cette éducation, à quoi ça sert-il? Est-ce qu'on en aime mieux?" 2

Does education, for example, add anything to the homely wisdom of Lisette's insight into love and marriage comically revealed in "vous me voulez, je vous veux, vitez un notaire! ... ou bien: m'aimez-vous? non; ni moi non plus; vite à cheval!" 3 Certainly, among the noblesse and some,

1. Oeuvres, V, 320.
at least, of the bourgeois, marriage was not primarily a matter of personal inclinations with the sole happiness of the participants in mind, but a matter of family interest where the parent might or might not pay heed to the wishes of the son or daughter when considering the general benefits to be derived from such a marriage. When Orgon says to his daughter in what was later to be good "père de famille" tradition "vous auriez entière liberté ... je te défends toute complaisance à mon égard. Si Dorante ne te convient point, tu n’as qu’à le dire, il repart; si tu ne lui convenais pas, il repart de même,"¹ we feel that the role of Orgon as father is an exemplary one even though Silvia has but power of veto with respect to a husband chosen by her father. In la Mère confidente Madame Argante yields, in still more exemplary fashion, to her daughter’s desire to marry Dorante: "J’accorde ma fille à Dorante [she says] ... Il n’est pas riche, mais il vient de me montrer un caractère qui me charme et qui fera le bonheur à elle."² That such acquiescences were not customary in the eighteenth century is suggested by Angélique’s query to Dorante inspired by her mother’s generous action: "En connaissez-vous qui lui ressemble?"³ Yes, even though the action of Mme Argante would arouse little comment in our own day where the sanction of the parent is often a mere formality, it was still much in advance of the customary marital procedure of Marivaux’s day. A more representative account of the actual state of affairs may be found in l’Ecole des Mères and in les Fausses

¹. Loc. cit.

². Oeuvres, V, 166.

³. Loc. cit.
Confidences where the two Mesdames Argante seek to impose their will upon their daughters, saved only by the grace of Marivaux.

Why should Félicie agree with Lucidor that it is "un très grand tort . . . [que nos] parens, en disposant de nous, ne s'embarrassent guère de nos coeurs"? Why should Mlle Argante be "au désespoir de [se] voir en danger d'épouser un homme [quelle n'a] jamais vu; et seulement parce qu'il est le fils de l'ami de [son] père"? Mme Argante of l'Ecole des Mères gives us one good reason why parents should take responsibility in such cases when she says with regard to the prospective husband of Angélique: "Je ne doute pas qu'elle n'approve mon choix; c'est un homme très riche, très raisonnable ...." Mme Argante of les Fausses Confidences gives us another when she declares that her daughter "n'a qu'un défaut: c'est que je ne lui trouve pas assez d'élévation. Le beau nom de Dorimont et le rang de comtesse ne la touchent pas assez; elle ne sent pas le désagrément qu'il y a de n'être qu'une bourgeoise." Ergaste the bourgeois has the disadvantage in a prospective husband of being sixty years of age, Dorimont the aristocrat lacks the temperament necessary to a husband and a father, yet the money of the one and the rank of the other are deemed of sufficient worth to neutralize any disinclination on the parts of Angélique and Araminte respectively.

1. Félicie, Oeuvres, II, 466.
2. Le Dénouement imprévu, Oeuvres, I, 164.
3. Oeuvres, IV, 434.
It is true that in La Mère confidente there is a sincere desire on the part of the mother for the marital happiness of her daughter. The advantages of class distinction based on wealth and rank are extolled only because they will benefit the daughter, not because they cater to the social aspirations of a grasping, despotic parent. In les Fausses Confidences, however, there is a strong suggestion that it is Mme Argante who will be the chief beneficiary, any happiness which may fall to Araminte being purely coincidental:

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 serais charmée moi-même d'être la mère de madame la Comtesse Dorimont, et de plus que cela peut-être; car monsieur le comte est en passe d'aller à tout.¹

Up to this point, we have studied the family of the eighteenth century in its aspects of infant and child life, the relationships within the family of brother and sister, the relationships between parent and offspring particularly with respect to general conduct, education and marriage, and, finally, the general background against which the family must be set, a background of social flux wherein some of the lesser bourgeoisie are seeking to move up into a higher bourgeois bracket through marriages of "money," and some of the higher bourgeoisie to move into the nobility through marriages of "rank." It would be ridiculous to assume, however, that the profit was all on the side of those seeking a higher social status. In les Fausses Confidences and in l'Héritier de Village we have evidence that the noblesse of both town and country were in dire need of money to maintain their social standing. Araminte has more than personal charm to attract the eye of Dorimont for she is the "veuve d'un mari qui avait

¹. Œuvres, V, 198.
une grande charge dans les finances,"¹ and Mme Damis has "besoin de beaucoup d'économie," her late husband having left her "un bien assez en désordre."² Thus her marriage to Colin, son of Blaise, the "nouveau-riche paysan" would have, as the Chevalier remarks, certain compensatory features: "D'un autre côté, voilà madame Damis, veuve de qualité, jeune et charmante. Ses facultés, vous les savez; bonne seigneurie, grand château, ancien comme les temps, un peu délabré; mais on le maçonne."³ Yes, "on le maçonne" but only through marriages with those who have the money and the inclination to carry out such repairs. Blaise best sums up, I think, the mutual benefits arising from these marriages of expediency common to the eighteenth century: "J'achèterons de la noblesse, elle sera toute neuve, elle en durera plus longtemps, et soutiendra la vôtre qui est un peu usée."⁴

It is to be noted, however, that although Marivaux deals quite extensively with marriages both of "vraie inclination" and of expediency, there is no direct exposition of married life in the comedies. Even in l'Héritier de Village, the only comedy where man, wife and children are seen together, and in la Nouvelle Colonie, the only other comedy featuring man and wife, there is no direct revelation of the relationships between them. In la Joie imprévue and in le Jeu de l'amour and du hasard there are "pères de famille," and in l'Ecole des Mères and la Mère confidente there are their feminine counterparts, but no insight is to

1. Oeuvres, V, p. 182.
2. Oeuvres, IV, 82.
3. Oeuvres, IV, 92.
be gained into married life of the eighteenth century except through the spoken words either of those facing the possibility of marriage for the first time or of those who have been married before, are able to look back on their past experience and can profit by it with respect to any future marriage. Silvia of *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* is a good example, among many, of the one, the Countess in the first *Surprise de l'amour* a good example of the other.

It is true, I think, that Silvia's pictures of Léandre as "une figure qui sort d'un cabinet, qui vient à table, et qui fait expirer de langueur, de froid et d'ennui, tout ce qui l'environne"¹ and of Ergaste "[cet homme au] visage sombre, brutal, farouche [qui] promène partout ailleurs cette physionomie si aimable que nous lui voyons, et qui n'est qu'un masque qu'il prend au sortir de chez lui"² are portraits which could be drawn in any era and perhaps at any social level. However, when these are coupled with the words of Angélique, "Ergaste, cet homme si sombre, si sérieux? Il n'est pas fait pour être un mari";³ or with those of the Countess, "Si vous les en croyez, il n'y a plus pour vous qu'un seul homme, qui doit composer tout votre univers";⁴ or even with Pierre's "Est-ce que toutes les filles n'aimont pas à devenir la femme d'un homme?" which evokes Jacqueline's sarcastic "Tredame! c'est donc un oiseau bien rare qu'un homme pour en être si envieux?"⁵ we sense a stirring on the part of women for a more equitable treatment in marriage.

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1. Oeuvres, IV, 190.
2. Ibid, p. 191.
3. La Mère confidente, Oeuvres, V, 96.
5. La Surprise de l'amour, Oeuvres, III, 57.
This disinclination to accept men as qualified for married life simply because they are men, and a similar disinclination to accept them as gods, suggests to us the influence of the salon. For, though the domination of wife by husband was perhaps common to all social levels we note among the enlightened noblesse and the enlightened bourgeoisie a growing awareness that women themselves are responsible for much of their marital misery. The Countess, married once, can well declare that it is disillusionment with respect to the perfection of the husband that shatters the "amour-propre" of the wife and destroys her love: "Cesser d'avoir de l'amour pour un homme, c'est à mon compte, connaître sa faute, s'en repentir, en avoir honte, sentir la misère de l'idole qu'on adorait, et rentrer dans le respect qu'une femme se doit à elle-même."¹ However, it is the "femme de qualité," Arthénice, and her bourgeois partner-in-arms, Mme Sorbin, who spearhead in the comedies of Marivaux the eighteenth-century "crusade" aimed at greater equality for women in marriage. Arthénice, for example, declares that "le mariage tel qu'il a été jusqu'ici, n'est plus ... qu'une pure servitude que nous abolissons,"² while the militant Mme Sorbin gives more emphatic and positive criticism of the existing state of affairs in her prophecy of better times to come: "Vous irez de niveau avec les hommes; ils seront vos camarades, et non pas vos maîtres."³ Among the common people, immune to the direct influence of the salon, there is no indication of this stirring for equality in marriage. Their practical, matter-of-fact outlook tells them "qu'on s'épouse de tous temps, [que]

¹. Ibid., p. 83.
². La Nouvelle Colonie, Théâtre Complet, p. 611.
³. Ibid., p. 612.
⁴. Le Legs, Oeuvres, II, 259.
c'est la coutume [qu'avec] une femme on a des enfants, [et] qu'un mari, c'est un mari.\(^2\) With them there is no dissatisfaction as yet with the dictum that what women are destined to "c'est à filer, c'est à la quenouille, c'est à l'économie de leur maison, c'est au misérable tracas d'un ménage ...."\(^3\)

With the "peuple," then, marriage as represented in Marivaux was relatively stable; the same may be said for the country noblesse and for the bourgeoisie. With the country noblesse in general, those at least who could keep up appearances without resort to bourgeois money, there was a rigid adherence to "bienséance" sufficient to keep intact the sanctity of marriage. This is indicated by the Marquise's comment to Dorante regarding the immoral Dorimène: "Vous êtes venu avec Dorimène, je la connais fort peu; vous êtes de ses amis, et je souhaiterais qu'elle ne souffrit pas que mon fils fût toujours auprès d'elle; en vérité, la bien-séance en souffre un peu ...."\(^4\) With the bourgeoisie there was a similar respect at least for conventional fidelity and, indeed, when Rosimond has a twinge of conscience with respect to his illicit relations with Dorimène, Dorante accuses him of bourgeois sentiments: "Quoi! tu crains les conséquences de l'amour d'une jolie femme, parce que tu te maries! Tu as de ces sentiments bourgeois, toi, marquis?"\(^5\) This stability of the bourgeois is further indicated in *La Nouvelle Colonie* where Mme Sorbin regards as

\(^1\) *Les Fausses Confidences, Oeuvres*, V, 185.
\(^2\) *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard, Oeuvres*, IV, 191.
\(^3\) *La Nouvelle Colonie, Théâtre Complet*, p. 614.
\(^4\) *Le Petit-Maître corrigé, Oeuvres*, II, 179.
a mark of superiority her ability to retain a husband: "Voyez-vous, vous autres petites femmes, nous ne changeons ni d'amant ni de mari, au lieu que des dames il n'est pas de même, elles se moquent de l'ordre et font comme les hommes."  

Marriages among the noblesse of Paris, especially among the "petits-maîtres" are shoddy, artificial affairs compared with those of the bourgeoisie or of the country gentry. As Frontin says, "en province, par exemple, un mari promet fidélité à sa femme ... mais la fidélité de Paris n'est point sauvage; c'est une fidélité galante, badine, qui entend raffinerie, et qui se permet toutes les petites commodités du savoir-vivre." This "savoir-vivre" permits the petit-maître to regard marriage as a mere "bagatelle," at best "une nouveauté curieuse." It permits him to affect a casual approach to the responsibilities of marriage and to the "amour-propre" of his wife, and, consequently, to indulge in "une demi-douzaine ... d'amourettes [dans lesquelles] on n'aime qu'en passant, par curiosité de goût ...." Marivaux, in Le Prince Travesti, pictures such a marriage as seen through the eyes of the wife noting, of course, the adverse psychological effect on her:

Quand nous fûmes mariés, j'eus peur [que mon mari] n'expiret de joie. Hélas! madame, il ne mourut ni avant ni après, il s'outint fort bien la joie. Le premier mois elle fut violente; le second elle devint plus calme, grâce à une de mes femmes qu'il trouva jolie; le troisième elle

1. Théâtre Complet, p. 621.

2. Le Petit-Maître corrigé, Œuvres, II, 149.

3. Ibid., p. 150.
baissa à vue d’œil, et le quatrième il n’y en avait plus ... la flatteuse conviction de vos charmes ... tout est perdu quand vous perdez cela.\(^1\)

Rosimond as a gallant of the eighteenth century typifies this non-chalant approach to marriage. Remark how off-handedly he broaches the subject of marriage to Hortense: "Aïe! merci-moi, vous êtes charmante, et je n’en dis presque rien; la parure la mieux entendue!Vous avez là de la dentelle d’un goût exquis ce me semble; passez-moi l’éloge de la dentelle. Quand nous marie-t-on?\(^2\) Certainly manners like these, flagrantly displayed as they are, are indications of a certain corruption in eighteenth-century society, but as we have shown there is no reason to believe that "les contrats de la moitié des mariages\(^3\) of Paris were broken or that "il n’y a plus de tranquillité dans le mariage.\(^4\) Rosimond, himself, in attributing his wretched mannerisms to "orgueil" clearly evinces a desire to break from the "petit-maître" tradition: "Oui, belle Hortense, cet amour que je ne méritais pas de sentir, je ne vous l’ai caché que par le plus misérable, par le plus incroyable orgueil qui fût jamais.\(^5\)

There is yet another aspect of eighteenth-century manners especially applicable to the noblesse that Marivaux considers worthy of note and possibly of correction. That aspect is the relationship between master and servant, and, indeed, \textit{l'Île des Esclaves} may be considered an object lesson.

\[\text{References}\]

4. \textit{Ibid.}
Arlequin indicates the lack of courtesy shown him by his master, Iphicrate, who apparently does not reflect that the man "qu'il appelle quelquefois Arlequin, quelquefois Hé"¹ might have a sensibility as great as or greater than his own. Cleanthis does the same for her mistress, Euphrosine, when she reveals that "sotte, ridicule, bête, butorde, imbécille ...."² are among the designations applied to her. However, that there was some tact and generosity in master-servant relations is suggested in le Legs where Lisette is rewarded for service to the Countess in a very practical, perhaps very characteristic fashion: "À propos, cette robe brune qui me déplait, l'as-tu prise? J'ai oublié de te dire que je te la donne."³

It is difficult in the comedies to ascertain what in the conduct of domestics was conventional to the theatre and what was characteristic of the eighteenth century. On the one hand there is a familiarity between master and servant which one may well attribute, as does Duviquet, to the conventions of the "Théâtre Italien," and on the other there is the almost complete lack of insight into the daily routine of the servant. Only an occasional indirect reference such as Lisette's "C'est moi qui l'ajuste et qui la coiffent⁴ permits us to make definite contact with the eighteenth century. However, there are indications that familiarity between masters and servants was not entirely owing to theatrical convention. Silvia in le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard voices a legitimate grievance against the

¹. Oeuvres, IV, 14.
². Ibid., p. 20.
³. Oeuvres, II, 315.
⁴. Les Sincères, Oeuvres, V, 373.
indiscretion of domestics when she declares that "les femmes de chambre de [son] pays n'entrent point qu'on ne les appelle." Constance in *la Joie imprévue* shows a similar irritation with regard to Lisette: "Elle abuse de vos bontés; il est indécent qu'un domestique se mêle de cela." And the Dorante of *les Sincères* in attesting to the indiscretion of Frontin ("l'opiniâtreté de cet imprudent m'a choqué,") merely corroborates Silvia's observations that "les valets sont naturellement indiscrets" and that "ces gens-là ne savent pas la conséquence d'un mot." Yet if one were to accept as true, as Duviquet himself does, Frontin's remark that "les conditions se confondent un peu à Paris; on n'y est pas scrupuleux sur les rangs," one must also accept as true that the indiscretion of the servant has been provoked by that of the master.

Possibly this laxity on the part of the master and this encroachment on the part of the servant were signs of a growing repugnance to the servile state of the "gentleman's gentleman", and a growing realization of his essential inutility. Trivelin in *la Fausse Suivante* decries the suggestion of personal ownership in the very word "valet": "Son valet, le terme est dur, il frappe mes oreilles d'un son désagréable; ne purgerait-on jamais le discours de tous ces noms odieux?" Arlequin in *la Double

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2. Oeuvres, V, 339.
3. Ibid., p. 395.
5. Le Petit-Maitre corrigé, Oeuvres, II, 149.
Inconstence at one time questions the utility of the valet, "Je rêve à quoi servent ces grands drôles bariolés qui nous accompagnent partout," and at another time declares, "Je ne trouverai pas de valet plus fidèle, plus affectionné à mon service que moi." 

It is true that these examples do not directly concern master-servant relations, but they help to explain the spirit behind the relations, especially that occasioned by the almost schizophrenia mentality of the domestic. Able to give freer rein to his personality, yet enslaved by a convention of servitude observed according to the whim of the master, desiring to please, gratified when pleasure is given, humiliated when it is not, the domestic, keeping a furtive weather-eye open, was ever liable to the charge that "les domestiques sont haïssables." Some like Silvia in le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard "[n'aimait pas du tout] l'esprit domestique." These always demand from their servants an attitude of respect. Others like the marquise in the second Surprise de l'amour relish familiarity, but only on occasion: "Je vous prie, Lisette, point de plaisanterie, vous me divertiessiez quelquefois; mais je ne suis pas à présent en situation de vous écouter." 

With regard to actual "domestic" conditions in Paris, the use of "précieux" language by many of the domestics in the comedies would suggest that there was some imitation of the preciosity in vogue. Probably

2. Ibid., p. 188.
this was most prevalent among the domestics attached to the "petits-maîtres" of the day. Frontin in *le Petit-Maître corrigé* declares in a remark recalling to mind the master-aping tactics of the valets in *Gil Blas* that servants of "quality" were known by the title of their masters: "[C'est] l'usage parmi[les] subalternes de qualité pour établir quelque subordination entre la livrée bourgeoise et nous."¹ However, such elegance was by no means widespread, for although much of the dialect in the comedies is spoken by the "paysans," enough dialect is spoken by peasants and provincials who have become servants to suggest not only that many domestics were "fresh" from the country but also that they were coming from widely-separated districts. A sample of the Gasconese of Fontignac in *l'Île de la Raison* has already been given. "V's" for "b's" and vice-versa, and a strong predilection for the closed "e" were the main characteristics. Lubin in *la Mère confidente*, "paysan au service de Mme Argante," has "queuque chose de l'aversion" for the letter "e" suggestive of the dialects of the north. The triphthong "eau" becomes "iau" as in "biau chapiau," and "e" before "l" or "r" becomes "a" as in "alle" or "parfaence." Moreover, if Marivaux has not been inconsistent in the use of dialect, there is an indication of a certain dialectal instability. "Bien," for example, sometimes remains "bien," but more often it becomes "bian," or even "bin" in the same way that "rien" becomes "rin!" Sometimes there is a verbal reference to provincial origin, no indication at all being given through the dialect itself. Frontin, a native of Maine, affirms his ability to imitate the Gasconese of the chevalier: "Car, comme il est Gascon, je

le deviens en ce moment, tout Manceau que je suis."¹

This dialectal evidence of rusticity among the servant class is perhaps rather meagre but there are other indications that domestics were not all of the polished Frontin type. Agis, for example, apologises to Phocion with respect to the "jardinier" Damis: "Je vous demande pardon, seigneur, de l'accueil rustique de cet homme,"² and Silvia in her reproach to Lisette comments on the brutality of Arlequin: "Je vous trouve admirable, de ne pas le renvoyer tout d'un coup, et de me faire essuyer les brutalités de cet animal-là."³ Significant, too, are the indications that any finesse of thought and expression among the domestics is readily noticeable. Thus it is that Silvia should exclaim to the false Bourguignon, "Vous avez le langage bien précieux pour un garçon de votre espèce."⁴ and that the Marquise should say of Arlequin, "C'est un garçon adroit et fin, tout valet qu'il est ...."⁵ In all probability there was a beaten path from country to city, the country-bumpkin, Arlequin, undergoing a period of apprenticeship to become a city-wise and superior Frontin. The following comic excerpt from la Méprise where Arlequin and Frontin are in the presence of Ergaste, Frontin's master, could well serve as an illustration for the first step in this process:

Frontin:
Où est ton chapeau?
Arlequin:
Sur ma tête.
Frontin (Faisant sauter le chapeau d'Arlequin):
Il n'y est plus.⁶

4. Ibid., p. 262.
CHAPTER II

Contemporary Life in the Comedies of Marivaux

Society in General

Although there are no direct references to farm life in the comedies of Marivaux, we are aware of the superiority felt by Parisians with regard to the farmer in particular, and country life in general. In l'Île de la Raison, for example, Electre reprimands Blaise for his inferiority complex regarding his agricultural vocation: "Comment, chétive condition! Vous n'aviez dit que vous étiez un laboureur .... Et ils vous mépriseraient!" Again, in le Dénouement imprévu, Lisette scornfully remarks that the social graces of Paris will not be found in the country: "Il n'y a là que de bon gros coeurs ... plus de toilette, plus de miroir, plus de boîte à mouches."2

Yet, even "un homme des champs" could say like Blaise, the rich farmer in l'Epreuve: "Stapendant j'ons mes préentions itou ...."3 For the "hobereau" the pretentions were of a higher order; there is a little of the Parisian "galanterie" in their manner as they aid over some country ditch their brides-to-be, "la petite canne à la main, le manteau troussé de peur des crottes,"4 Occasionally a hint of the old feudal structure of mutual service, of a stability not to be found in the turbulent Paris of the eighteenth century, may be gleaned here and there. In le Dénouement imprévu maître Pierre indicates the man-to-man relationship between vassal and overlord which permits the vassal, as an established right, to advise

his master: "Je nous traitons tous deux sans caronie, je suis son
farmier, et en cette qualité, j'ons le parvilège de l'assister de mes
avis." 1

Yet, even here there is evidence of the drift from country to city
that we previously noted with respect to domestics. In les Fausses Con-
fidences we get a glimpse of the "absentee landlordism" that Rousseau
was to combat with his Nouvelle Héloïse. 2 In the following excerpt the ar-
rival of a farmer to pay his rents to Araminte, an absentee landlord, pro-
vides Dorante with a last opportunity to win her love. There is here no
"man-to-man" contact between vassal and overlord; Araminte does not even
see the farmer who merely hands over the money to the intermediary, Dorante.

Dorante:
   Un de vos fermiers est venu tantôt, madame.

Araminte:
   Un de mes fermiers? ... cela se peut.

Dorante:
   Et j'ai de l'argent à vous remettre.

Araminte:
   Ah! de l'argent ... 3

Dorante was serving his apprenticeship in law by acting as intendant
in the household of Araminte. Probably he was earning a little money while
at the same time continuing his law studies. As he himself said, "mon père
étaït avocat, et je pourrais l'être moi-même." 4 Not unlike the "green"
employee of today, Dorante had to withstand the prejudice of those who didn't
realize that a fellow had to start somewhere, sometime. Mme Argante who has
had her plans thwarted by the arrival of Dorante as intendant is all the
more disposed to express incredulity that her daughter should take on a
"green" employee for such a responsible post. How unreasonable, yet how

1. Ibid., p. 156.
2. Rousseau, op. cit., p. 146.
3. Œuvres, V, 288.
4. Ibid., p. 191.
typical is Mme Argante's "[Vous êtes] de chez nous! Vous allez donc faire ici votre apprentissage?"¹

It is through the medium of the same Mme Argante that we get an inkling of increasing professional pride in the eighteenth century. Mme Argante spoke slightlyingly of the worthy procureur, "M. Remy, and met with an indignant "Comment donc! m'imposer silence! à moi, procureur! Savez-vous bien qu'il y a cinquante ans que je parle, Mme Argante."² A little later M. Remy makes further show of his importance by using his "langage à procureur" to show the irrelevance of Mme Argante's insinuations against Dorante: "Mauvaise parenthèse, avec votre permission; supposition injurieuse et tout-à-fait hors d'oeuvre."³

This, of course, is a comic scene, and it is mainly through comedy and through imagery, that we get a glimpse into the commercial life of the times. In l'Heureux Stratagème the eavesdropping Arlequin complains that "ce maudit serrurier ... a... fait le trou de la serrure si petit qu'on ne peut rien voir à travers;"⁴ and in so doing permits us to see the locksmith actually at work. In la Fausse Surname Trivelin in the course of a parody of anticomania refers to "les criuses de vieux chapeaux,"⁵ and thus calls up an image of a typical street ćrier. Actual across-the-table commercial transactions are not depicted but there are some references to them. In

¹. Ibíd., p. 197.
². Ibíd., p. 271.
⁴. Oeuvres, IV, 492.
⁵. Oeuvres, III, 434.
la Joie imprévue we have an indication of the eighteenth-century manner of buying and selling. Pasquin declares that one does not purchase a business as one purchases a ribbon and sketches for us a little commercial scene: "Quand tu fais l'emplette d'une étoffe, prends-tu le marchand au mot? On te surfaît, tu rabats; tu te retirès, on te rappelle; et à la fin, on lâche la main de part et d'autre." Again, in les Acteurs de bonne foi there is a revelation of business ethics through the determination of Merlin to hold Mme Amelin to her verbal agreement that he stage the play, a play decidedly non-professional in contrast with the business argot used: "J'ai déjà reçu des arrhes. Ma marchandise est vendue, il faut que je la livre; et vous ne sauriez, en conscience, rompre un marché conclu, madame." We also have some direct insight into the commercial practice of carrying trade to the customer. A domestic in les Fausses Confidences warns Araminte that her linen merchant has arrived: "Voici votre marchande qui vous apporte des étoffes, madame." And finally, in le Prince travesti, there is reference to the common practice of renting rooms. Arlequin is amazed at the great number of rooms in the palace, and wonders that one does not put them to a more useful purpose by renting them: "Il y a ici un si grand nombre de chambres que j'y voyage depuis une heure sans en trouver le bout. Par la mardi si vous louez tout cela, cela vous doit rapporter bien de l'argent." This remark could well apply to the noblesse of the day accustomed as they were to large apartments and many servants.

2. Oeuvres, II, 506.
3. Oeuvres, V, 194.
Indeed, it is through argot rather than through action that we see in the comedies anything at all of the world of finance. With the help of Duviquet, we know that "i' je prouverai sur table' ... est une façon de parler elliptique, et fort en usage dans la finance,"¹ that "i' contraire à faire' (dans l'expression 'cela n'est point contraire à faire fortune') ... n'est pas français ... c'est une épigramme décochée en passant aux financiers de l'époque,"² and that "i' quinze pour quatorze' est une façon de parler proverbiale [employée par] celui qui ferait signer à un créancier une quittance de quinze francs, et qui ne lui en aurait donné que quatorze,"³ There is, in l'Île de la Raison, a reference to the ups and downs characteristic of heavy investment in financial schemes like that of the Law bank. Blaise in l'Île de la Raison compares his fluctuations in size to that of an "agioteux": "je deviens grand tout d'un coup: me velà comme j'étais."⁴ The cursory nature of this reference to an "agioteux" is perhaps surprising for Marivaux more than any of his contemporaries had reason to rue financial schemes of this sort. Marivaux lost almost all his inheritance in the crash of the Law bank. The only other reference to contemporary monetary practices is that of Arlequin in le Prince travesti who says with respect to his money "Je le mettraï en rente, ou je le prêterai à usure."⁵

It might be pertinent here to note a general realization on the part of the people that wealth was a dominating factor in society and as such

¹. Oeuvres, IV, 148.
². Oeuvres, IV, 260.
³. Oeuvres, III, 389.
⁴. Oeuvres, I, 258.
⁵. Oeuvres, III, 357.
had to be accepted. Even those who professed scorn for money because of scorn for the bourgeois whose power rested on money had to admit at times that "le mépris [qu'ils croyaient] avoir pour les biens, n'est peut-être qu'un beau verbiage." However, the best example of this tendency to accept the inevitable in this new "âge d'or" is to be found not in La Fausse Suivante but in the "divertissement" to Le Triomphe de Plutus:

Dans ce séjour on met tout à l'enchère,
Rien ne se fait sans l'appât du salaire.
Valets, portiers,
Clercs et greffiers,
Commis, fermier,
Sont sans quartier;
On a beau gémir et crier;
Le temps n'y peut rien faire.

One wonders in vain if this "Rien ne se fait sans l'appât du salaire" is applicable to the Church. There is nothing in the comedies pertaining to religion except a few scattered references to the convent either as a prison or as a refuge. In l'Ecole des Mères Mme Argante threatens Angélique: "Éh bien! jeune extravagante, un couvent, plus austère que moi, me répondra des égarements de votre coeur." In Le Dénouement imprévu another Mme Argante voices similar sentiments when she declares: "Vous mériteriez que je vous misse dans un couvent ... fille ingrate!" On the other hand, another Angélique, not wishing to obey her father's dictates regarding marriage and "lasse apparemment de ses persécutions ... a renoncé au monde, et s'est liée par des noeuds qu'elle ne peut plus rompre." In les Sermens indiscrets Lucile

1. La Fausse Suivante, Œuvres, III, 428.
3. Œuvres, IV, 472.
4. Œuvres, I, 180.
5. La Surprise de l'amour, Œuvres, I, 362.
too has in mind the idea of the convent as a refuge when she states "J'ai été dédaignée, je le serai toujours, et une retraite éternelle est l'unique parti qui me reste à prendre."¹

Marivaux, in adopting this view of the convent as a bogey or a blessing, shows no inclination to reveal possible laxness within the church. He shows the same leniency with the military and even in the novels makes no mention of a need for army reform. That such reform was necessary, however, is indicated in the apocryphal part of Le Paysan parvenu where Jacob declares that "le service militaire dans notre patrie est le sentier où court la noblesse ... Dans le choix de deux personnes qui se seront également distinguées, le noble obtiendra la préférence sur vous."² One would, perhaps, be surprised at the scant attention paid to military matters especially at a time when France and Britain were engaged in a colonial struggle soon to culminate in the Seven Years War. Yet one has only to recall the words of Voltaire to realize how great was the complacency of the people of France, especially of Paris, in the eighteenth century. As Frontin declared in La Méprise, "Paris, c'est le monde; le reste de la terre n'en est que les faubourgs."³ No wonder Trivelin comically referred to "Québec ... quelque part dans cette Egypte!"⁴

¹. Oeuvres, II, 126.
³. Oeuvres, V, 49.
⁴. La Fausse Suivante, Oeuvres, III, 433.
Two or three conventional glimpses of army life are received through images and comic scenes such as, for example, the lovelorn Hortensiüs pictured as a discharged soldier, "un serviteur superflu, semblable à ces troupes qu’on entretient pendant la guerre, et que l’on casse à la paix," or the vain-glorious Lépine proud of his social status because he is "le fils d’un timbalier des armées du roi ... neveu d’un trompette, et frère aîné d’un tambour."

More enlightening are the references to the judicial practices of the day. In le Père prudent there is an allusion to the interminable delay encountered in settling law suits: "Mais vider des procès, c’est une mer à boire." In le Legs the inconvenience is indicated as well as the delay: "Tenez, Lisette, dites qu’on porte cette lettre à la poste: en voilà dix que j’écrits depuis trois semaines. La sotte chose qu’un procès. Que j’en suis lasse."

Finally, in le Préjugé vaincu not only is the delay further emphasized but also there is substantiation of the comment in the Spectateur Français that justice was not equal for all: "Il a gagné son maudit procès que l’on croyait immortel, qui ne devait jamais finir dans cent ans. Il l’a gagné par je ne sais quelle protection qu’on lui a procurée." Cases apparently were not always won on their "merits."

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1. La Surprise de l’amour, Oeuvres, I, 393.
2. Le Préjugé vaincu, Oeuvres, II, 386.
5. Oeuvres, IX, 35.
Frédéric in *le Prince travesti* exemplifies similar corrupt tendencies in politics. He considered that thirty years nominal service should be enough to qualify him for advancement in government and when the Princess stipulates that "la supériorité de mérite doit l'emporter en pareil cas sur l'ancienneté des services,"¹ Frédéric by bribery tries to evade her stipulation. Moreover, there is, in *la Double Inconstance*, a strong suggestion that arbitrary political action was depriving citizens of their individual liberty. Oblique references to this arbitrary procedure are the Prince's "Non, la loi, qui veut que j'épouse une de mes sujettes, me défend d'user de violence contre qui que ce soit,"² and Arlequin's "Allez, vous êtes mon prince, et je vous aime bien; mais je suis votre sujet, cela mérite quelque chose."³ The threat to liberty of speech and of thought is indicated both in Arlequin's "Est-il sûr qu'on est exilé quand on médit?"⁴ and in Fontignac's "Monsieur le philosophe nous a dit dans le bateau, qu'il abait quitté la France, dé peur dé loger à la Vastille."⁵ This is a transparent reference to the system of the "lettre de cachet."

We are not surprised that reform should be necessary in the economic as well as the political sphere of government, that some mention should be made to the unfair distribution of taxes in the eighteenth century. Notice, for example, Arlequin's amazement in *la Double Inconstance* at the very

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2. Oeuvres, III, 175.
3. Ibid., p. 278.
4. Ibid., p. 238.
5. L'île de la Raison, Oeuvres, I, 240.
idea that the noblesse were subject to taxation: "Diantre! Il y a donc bien des nobles qui paient la taille?"\(^1\) Frontin, too, because he pays taxes and perhaps has had personal contact with "les méchants bourriaux, les fermiers,"\(^2\) thinks, not unnaturally, that "tous les gouvernements sont lucratifs," including that of his native France.

Finance was a large item even in the entertainment world. Merlin, the amateur producer in *les Acteurs de bonne foi* comically indicates some of the hasards besetting his more professional colleagues as well as amateurs like himself. Faced with the cancellation of his comedy, Merlin declares that "il faudrait que je restituaasse, et j'ai pris des arrangements qui ne me le permettent plus."\(^3\) The amount of his outlay does not include the twelve sous expended for "un moucheur de chandeliers, .....
trois bouteilles de vin ... avancées aux menétriers du village pour former un orchestre ... et une demi-main de papier ... barbouillée pour mettre [le] canevas bien au net ...."\(^4\)

Certain unsavory aspects of the professional theatre were tending to keep it in disrepute. The actors themselves were hardly likely to heed "bienséances" not always observed in circles more elevated than theirs. Thus, when Merlin declares that "[ses] acteurs se sont brouillés dans l'intervalle de l'action; c'est la discorde qui est entrée dans la troupe," he also declares that "il n'y a rien là que de fort ordinaire."\(^5\) Consequently, there was a definite repugnance on the part of some to theatrical productions,

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especially comedy. Mme Argante, for example, exclaims that "la comédie chez une femme de [son] âge, cela serait ridicule"\(^1\) while Blaise states his mother's disapproval of the acting profession: "Ma mère m'a défendu de monter sur le théâtre."\(^2\)

However, that comedy was not the lowest in the scale of beaux-arts is indicated by Mme Argante's angry sacrifice to the welfare of her daughter: "Comment! une comédie de moins romprait un mariage, madame? Eh! qu'on la joue ... et si ce n'est pas assez, qu'on y joigne l'opéra, la foire, les marionnettes, et tout ce qu'il vous plaira, jusqu'aux parades."\(^3\) Mme Argante has little respect for opera, and if we are to believe Plutus, anyone was capable of composing an opera and of receiving the usual pittance in return. "Pour te consoler, [he says to Ergaste] va composer un opéra; cela te vaudra toujours quelque chose."\(^4\) Obviously in his eyes, opera with its "duos de tendresse"\(^5\) was not a work of art.

Indeed, there is a suggestion that literature in general was losing its artistic quality, that money rather than beauty of artistic form was becoming the prime incentive to composition. Plutus ridicules Apollon's criticism of his "style de douairière" and declares, "Je parle net et clair, et outre cela mes ducats ont un style qui vaut bien celui de l'Académie."\(^6\) This, is a distinct echo of Lesage: his Turcaret states that "[sa] prose [ses ducats] a son mérite; elle est signée et approuvée

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 519.
3. Ibid., p. 515.
4. Le Triomphe de Plutus, Oeuvres, IV, 165.
par quatre fermiers généraux," and Marine says in reply, "Cette aprobation vaut mieux que celle de l'Académie." The taint of professionalism in literature is even more strongly indicated in la Réunion des Amours where Apollon is ordered by Vérité to correct himself "de [son] métier vénal et mercenaire."²

However, other literary trends, aside from commercialism, are evident in the comedies. In la Fausse Suivante there are direct, comic references to the "Quarrel des anciens et des modernes" that racked the eighteenth century. Using antithesis and enumeration to satirize the cult of the ancients, Trivelin at one time cites "un honnête particulier ... qui passait sa vie à étudier des langues mortes,"³ and at another declares:

Pour gagner son amitié, je me mis à admirer tout ce qui me parassait ancien; j'aimais les vieux meubles, je louais les vieilles modes, les vieilles espèces, les médailles, les lunettes; je me coiffais chez les crieuses de vieux chapeaux; je n'avais commerce qu'avec des vieillards.⁴

Again, there is an indication of a waning "goût" for long "précieux" novels like those of La Calprenède. In l'Heureux Stratagème the countess declares that Dorante with his "cruelles réponses" would have made "un excellent héros de roman"⁵ but that now "ce style-là ne [la] corrigerà guère." In other words Dorante's romanesque manner, gone out of date

1. A. Lesage, Turcaret, Boston, Heath, 1905, p. 15.
2. Œuvres, I, 471.
3. Œuvres, III, 432.
4. Ibid., p. 434.
along with the novels, makes no impression on her. One wonders if the "pastorales" and "églogues" mentioned in *l'Héritier de Village* were not also out of date.

A reading of the plays of Marivaux creates the impression that painting was recognized more definitely as a profession than either acting or literature. From Marivaux we realize how great was the vogue of miniatures. Indeed, among the upper classes, at least, the portrait was a sort of eighteenth-century engagement ring, and the painter, consequently, in great demand. As Frontin remarks in *le Triomphe de l'amour*, "Donner son portrait, c'est donner son cœur." 2

In the same play, we have an excellent picture of the painter at work, holding in one hand "une coquille où il trempait sa plume." Arlequin defines the skill of Hermidas: "Rapetisser la face des gens ... diminuer la largeur de physionomie," and exclaims in comic anger to Hermocrate, "le nez que vous avez ordinairement, tient lui seul plus de place que vous tout entier dans ce moine." 3 Often the painter was engaged to make reproductions, and in this event he could always fall back on, "Il serait encore mieux, si j'avais travaillé d'après le modèle." 4 It is true that the painter, does not always succeed in living up to the expectations of vanity, but like the photographer of today he does his best with the subject at hand.

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Hermidas:
   Seigneur, un peu de côté, je vous prie; daignez m'envisager.
   ...
Levez un peu la tête, seigneur.
   ...
Tournez un peu à droite.
   ...

We notice by way of contrast with modern photographer sittings and possibly also with sittings for renowned painters of our day that it is Hermocrate who decides when he has had enough and who orders Hermidas to stop his work.

Hermocrate:
   Cessez: ... Sortez, Hermidas.¹

It might be well to note that, in reality, Hermidas who displays this professional manner is an amateur who "par amusement [avait] appris à peindre."² The suggestion is strong that one learned to paint or to compose a fugue³ as one learned to play cards -- simply because it was the thing to do. The "bon ton" decreed that "tout le monde joue après dîner." even when one had no "inclination pour le jeu,"⁴ that one possess "maison à ville, maison à la campagne."⁵ the one admirable for "bals masqués," the other suited to "parties de chasse," and that one patronize the makers of almanachs to have one's horoscope read and then declare, "Point de foi à l'astrologie!"⁶ One went to symphony concerts, to recitals, to

¹. Ibid., p. 382.
². Ibid., p. 300.
³. Le Triomphe de Plutus, Oeuvres, IV, 165.
⁴. La Joie imprévue, Oeuvres, V, 303.
⁵. La Double Inconstance, Oeuvres, III, 187.
⁶. Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard, Oeuvres, IV, 208.
the ballet, one played "à la boule toute la journée" or "au piquet," and to liven things up a bit, one duelled, but in defiance of the ordinances. Finally, one fell into "une certaine habitude de vivre avec trop de liberté," which perhaps provided the greatest entertainment of all.

Certainly for the women of the noblesse, many happy hours would be spent at their toilette about "une table ... bien dressée, avec tant de brimborions, où il y a des flambiaux, de petits bahuts d'argent et une couvarture sur un miroir." The mirror, incidentally, might be one of the latest models where "il n'y a qu'à presser [un certain] endroit pour l'ouvrir." Ribbons of every conceivable colour are scattered about the table while draped over the lid of a "petit bahut" full of "mouches galantes" is a masque of the type "[fort en] usage en été ... à cause du hâle et de la chaleur." If you were present at the toilette of Madame you would see, slowly but surely, storey by storey, "l'architecture de [la] tête" rising into the mirror until, "les bras [de Madame

1. La Double Inconstance, Oeuvres, III, 171.
2. La Surprise de l'amour, Oeuvres, III, 133.
3. La Fausse Suivante, Oeuvres, III, 521.
5. L'Île de la Raison, Oeuvres, I, 284.
6. La Dispute, Oeuvres, II, 343.
7. La Double Inconstance, Oeuvres, III, 177.
8. La Méprise, Oeuvres, V, 19.
tombant] de fatigue, ... voilà cette tête en état."¹

One could never estimate the outlay in "man and materials" that went into the construction of that particular head, but certainly it was one of the factors contributing to the high cost of living in Paris.² "Jupes étroites, jupes en lanterne, coiffure en clocher, coiffure sur le nez, capuchon sur la tête, et toutes les modes les plus extravagantes," including "le négligé [qui] va au coeur,"³ were making Paris the fashion centre of the world, and, for the modest country-dweller, a "[véritable] empire de la lune."⁴ Flaminia has this to say of Arlequin who had previously known only "les femmes de son village": "Oh! la modestie de ces femmes-là n'est pas faite comme la nôtre; nous avons des dispenses qui scandaliseraient [Arlequin]."⁵ That fashionable life in Paris, "dispenses" and all, was not for those of moderate means is indicated by Mme Damis who declares, "Le séjour de Paris me ruinerait."⁶

However, there were others living in this "empire de la lune" besides those who from under "un [beau] castor"⁷ were peering through lorgnettes, and who under these lorgnettes were sporting "déjà le plus beau brun du monde."⁸ These fingered no watch, sniffed no snuff up nose, engaged neither

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1. L'Île de la Raison, Oeuvres, I, 287.
2. Brenner and Goodyear, op. cit., p. 367. (Voltaire, Nanine) "Vive Paris pour avoir sur-le-champ Tout ce qu'on veut, quand on a de l'argent."
3. La Surprise de l'amour, Oeuvres, III, 67.
5. La Double Inconstance, Oeuvres, III, 178.
6. L'Héritier de Village, Oeuvres, IV, 82.
7. L'Héritier de Village, Oeuvres, IV, 75.
8. Arlequin poli par l'amour, Oeuvres, III, 12.
in "amourettes" nor spent long hours at their toilette. These, the common folk of Paris, receive no mention in the comedies of Marivaux, yet one feels their presence among the crowd on the Pont-Neuf, gaping amusedly at the "bamboches" and the "géantes" on display. One feels their presence, too, behind many of the public utilities of the day — the postal service, the customs service, the water service, and even institutions like the Petites-Maisons or the Incurables.

In the comedies of Marivaux where at one time "la scène est à Paris dans la maison de M.[un tel]" and at another "se passe chez la comtesse, à la campagne," and where there is indication of travel between city and province, it is understandable that some reference is made to communications. We learn that those living on country estates usually gathered together their out-going mail and sent it with a trusted servant at a fixed hour to meet the "courrier." In Le Legs the Countess sends Lisette to see if her guest, the Marquis, has "quelque paquet à mettre à la poste" and, then, enjoins Lisette to take special care of her own letters:

Lisette, c'est une lettre de conséquence, et vous me ferez plaisir de la porter vous-même, parce que, si le courrier est passé, vous me la rapporterez, et je l'enverrai par une autre voie.  

This other way could well be an "expres" for in Le Petit-Maître Frontin mentions to Rosimond the arrival of a letter by this means: "À propos de lettres, oui, monsieur, en voilà une qui est arrivée de quatre

lieues d'ici par un exprès." There is, in fact, an image in lièges de la Raison which may well represent a race between the express and the post, a race which would be of infinite amusement to the drivers but of considerable discomfort to the travellers. Blaise is possibly comparing the effort made by the courtier to regain his original stature with the effort put forth by the post to overtake the express:

Regardez aller sa taille, alle court la poste. Ah! encore un chiquet; courage! Que ces courtisans ont de peine à s'amender! Bon, le velâ à point; velâ le niviau.

Under normal conditions and at its customary sedate rate of speed, the post was little noted for its "smooth, air-flow drive." Just listen to Arlequin bewailing the discomforts of a trip to the provinces:

Puis nous voilà en voyage, courant la poste, qui est le train du diable; car, parlant par respect, j'ai été près d'un mois sans pouvoir m'asseoir. Ah! les mauvaises mazettes!

Presumably post horses were not of the best.

Other features of the postal service may be gleaned from the comedies of Marivaux. Letters bore neither stamp nor postmark; consequently it was easy to pass off a letter as coming by mail, and that is precisely what Orgon does with Pasquin's aid in la Joie imprévue: "Garde-toi, surtout, de dire à mon fils que je suis ici; je te le défends, et remets-lui cette lettre comme venant de la poste." As there was no regular mail service within Paris, local merchants sent their orders special delivery. Thus,

1. Oeuvres, II, 158.
2. Oeuvres, I, 313.
3. Le Prince travesti, Oeuvres, III, 316.
4. Oeuvres, V, 322.
in *les Fausses Confidences*, a merchant orders his son to make delivery of "une boîte de portrait" and to collect the amount due. The lad, persuaded to surrender the parcel to Marton, says he will return shortly to collect: "Il y a encore une bagatelle qu'il doit dessus; mais je tâcherai de repasser tantôt; et, s'il n'y était pas, vous auriez la bonté d'achever de payer."

Finally, we learn that payment of postage was made either on despatch or on receipt of a letter. Through a scene in *la Méprise* in which Arlequin and Frontin indulge in a duel of words, we see how Marivaux incorporates an incident of contemporary life into a bit of typical "marivaudage." Arlequin, valet of Hortense, declares insolently that Hortense has no respect for Ergaste. Frontin, valet of Ergaste, is ever ready to put Arlequin in his place, this despite Arlequin's insistence that it is "[sa] commission ... qui est insolente, et non pas [lui-même]":

Ergaste:
Sais-tu mon nom? Je l'ai dit à cette dame.

Arlequin:
Elle me l'a dit aussi ... un appelé Ergaste.

Ergaste:
C'est cela même.

Arlequin:
En bien! c'est vous qu'on n'estime pas. Vous voyez bien que le paquet est à votre adresse.

Frontin:
Ma foi! il n'y a plus qu'à lui en payer le port, monsieur.

Arlequin:
Non; c'est port payé.²

1. Oeuvres, V, 231.

2. Oeuvres, V, 43: This is an excellent example of the type of language mentioned by Angélique in *le Préjugé vaincu* (Oeuvres, II, 401): "Je parle votre langage; je réponds à vos exagérations par les miennes."
The sole reference in Marivaux to the Customs involves a com-
parable play of wits. Arlequin in le Triomphe de l'amour has just
discovered the true identity of Phocion and Hermidas and is deter-
mined despite their efforts at conciliation to reveal their secret to
his master:

Et par-dessus le marché [je suis] un honnête homme,
qui n'a jamais laisse passer de contrebande; ainsi
vous êtes une marchandise que j'arrête; je vais faire
fermer les portes.1

More comic, and just as spontaneous as the last two references to the post
or the customs, is the reference in le Prince travesti to the water supply
of Paris. I am taking the liberty here of quoting the entire passage for,
although this sprightly dramatic monologue is not completely relevant, it
is a splendid example of the comic genius of Marivaux which enables him to
call up sharp miniature pictures of contemporary life. Obviously, there
is little need to state that Arlequin was looking for the Frédéric to whom
he is now talking:

Oh! dame, cela [son haleine] ne se prend pas avec la
main. Oh! oh! Je vous ai été chercher au palais,
dans les salles, dans les cuisines; je trottais par
ci, je trottais par là, je trottais partout; et y
allons vite, et boute et gare .... N'avez-vous pas vu
le seigneur Frédéric? .... -- Eh! non, mon ami! ....
-- Où diable est-il donc? Que le peste l'étouffé! Et
puis je cours encore, patati; patata; je jure; je
rencontre un porteur d'eau, je renverse son eau;
N'avez-vous pas vu le seigneur Frédéric? .... -- At-
tends, attends, je vais te donner du seigneur Frédéric
par les oreilles .... Moi, je m'enfuis. Par la sambleu!
Morbleu! ne serait-il pas au cabaret? j'y entre, je
trouve du vin, je bois chopine; je m'apaise, et puis je
reviens; et puis vous voilà.2

1. Oeuvres, IV, 308.
2. Oeuvres, III, 384.
One is struck, too, by the numerous references in Marivaux to the Petites-Maisons and, although such remarks are made in jest, they reflect one of the sombre aspects of contemporary life. In l'île de la Maison, for example, Blaise declares that philosophers and poets are the scourge of society, and consequently should be placed in isolation: "C'est pis que la peste. Emmenez ce maréchal de carvelle, et fourrez-moi ça aux Petites-Maisons ou bien aux Incurables."¹ Most of the references to accidents and disease occur in the same play, often through forceful imagery. Fontignac establishes an analogy between the mental illness of the courtier and a physical illness such as a broken arm:

Quand un nommé a lé bras disloqué, ne faut-il pas lé remettre? Cela s'en ba-t-il sans douleur? et né ba-t-on pas son train? Ce n'est pas lé bras à bous, c'est la têté qu'il faut bous rémettré? têté dé courtisan, cadé-dis, que jé bous garantis aussi disloquée à sa façon, qu'aucun vras lé peut êtré.²

Again, in an ironic and conventional reference to the mercenary and ill-qualified doctor who has scant interest in the welfare of his patients, we note the devastating prevalence of smallpox in the eighteenth century. In this particular instance, the three children of the doctor all died from the disease.³ In still another example of "marivaudage" revealing contemporary manners, Fontignac sees himself in the same relationship to the courtier as the instrument that brings about a salutary blood-letting for the patient: "Monsieur a cru que jé l'abais piqué, quand jé né faisais

¹ Oeuvres, I, 319.
² Ibid., p. 305.
³ Ibid., p. 273.
encore qu’approcher ma lancette pour lui tirer le mauvais sang que vous lui connaissez.\textsuperscript{1} Finally, in a more fully developed metaphor in the Pièces Détachées Marivaux gives further insight into the skill of the surgeon:

Il me vient une pensée assez plaisante sur le babil obligeant des marchands .... Je les compare aux chirurgiens qui, avant de vous percer la veine, passent longtemps la main sur votre bras pour l’endormir. Les marchands, pour tirer l’argent de votre bourse, endorment ainsi votre intérêt à force d’empressmens et de discours flatteurs.\textsuperscript{2}

No one knows better than the merchant "[qu’on] a l’amitié de tout le monde quand on est aimable, et [que] l’amitié de tout le monde est utile et souhaitable."\textsuperscript{3} Cupidon, too, in la Réunion des Amours declares that "il faut que les hommes vivent un peu bourgeoiselement les uns avec les autres pour être en repos."\textsuperscript{4} Possibly the most significant social feature of the comedies of Marivaux is the revelation that French society of the eighteenth century was far from being "en repos." For behind an extensive portrayal of contemporary life, there is a good insight into some of its motivating forces. Thus we have noted a changing attitude in relationships between parent and child, between husband and wife, between master and servant, and even, though but slightly, between aristocrat and bourgeois, and between ruler and subject — all of which emphasize a growing awareness that civility is not servility. We have noted, too,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Ibid., p. 306.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Oeuvres, IX, 319.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Félicie, Oeuvres, II, 442.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Oeuvres, I, 480.
\end{itemize}
the visual aspects of contemporary life to be quite sufficient to give us a good mental picture, this despite the fact that in the main they are restricted to the age group of the young lovers and to the social group of the noblesse, and despite the fact that they are indicated largely by the use of images and comic touches, and by verbal reference rather than by direct depiction. Thus Marivaux, whom in the comedies one usually associates with poesy and fantasy, with psychological analysis and preciosity of expression, is seen to have presented both an external and an internal picture of a society that certainly was not a dream-world.
CHAPTER III

Contemporary Life in the Novels of Marivaux

The Family

In this analysis of contemporary life revealed through the novels of Marivaux, I propose to follow in the main the outline used in the chapters on the comedies, realizing, of course, that some duplication of material may occur. However, the risk is slight for, although we may sometimes find in the novels the same material treated in the same manner as in the comedies, more often than not the material is quite different or, if not different, it is treated in a different manner. By comparing and contrasting the novels with the comedies, I hope to present a fairly complete picture of contemporary life as revealed in Marivaux, and to pave the way for the analysis in chapter VII of the relationship between the social realism observed in the works under discussion and other aspects of the work.

In the comedies the references to infant and child life were made through imagery, in the novels the exposition, though meagre, is direct. In the story of the nun ("la belle Tervire") in Marianne there is a glimpse not only of actual baby care but also of the practice of farming babies out to foster parents. In this particular instance, the father-in-law of "la belle Tervire" had stopped by chance at the home of the peasant who was charged with the upbringing of the child and who, because of his wife's illness, was acting as the infant's nurse. Her father-in-law, relates la Tervire, was obliged, owing to a dizzy spell,

de s'arrêter un instant près de la maison d'un paysan, dont la femme était ma nourrice. M. de Tervire, qui connaissait cet homme, et qui entra chez lui pour s'asseoir, vit qu'il tâchait de faire avaler un peu de lait à un enfant qui paraissait fort faible, qui avait l'air pâle et comme mourant. Cet enfant, c'était moi."

There is a later picture of the same Tervire who, neglected by her mother and seated "à l'entrée de la cour du château ... en fort mauvais ordre ... les vêtements délabrés, ressemblait à quelque misérable orpheline." The only other scenes of childhood in the novels herein treated occur in le Don Quichotte moderne where the references are numerous, direct and extremely realistic. Cliton, for example, in recalling his boyhood days mentions being wounded in the arm when he and his chum had taken "deux pistolets pour aller tuer des moineaux sur des haies." Equally interesting is the apple-stealing incident in which Cliton breaks a leg and receives punishment to boot from the irate wife of Claude, the owner of the orchard. This image is frequently called up by the "mémoire involontaire" of Cliton: "Depuis ce jour il me semble voir la femme de Claude, avec un gros bâton pour me rosser, quand je vois des pommes." In le Don Quichotte moderne, Marivaux, speaking through Pharsamon, Cliton's master, takes the occasion to bemoan the apathy of his contemporaries towards children. Child life appeared to many authors to be beneath their dignity but we have some evidence that Marivaux realized that it was a subject pregnant with human interest. In the following, Marivaux sees the interest in the child as a child; any story can be told badly, but scenes from child life

1. Marianne, p. 420.
3. Ibid., p. 413.
seen in the proper perspective are not without their pleasurable aspects:

Quoi vous dirais-je, parce qu'il y a des pommes, des moineaux, et des enfants qui se divertissent, vous concluez de là que [l'histoire] est ennuyeuse: ce ne sont point les choses qui font le mal d'un récit: et l'historien le plus grave, en racontant la décadence d'un empire, en rangeant en bataille cent mille hommes de part et d'autre, et en faisant triompher l'une, tandis qu'il décrit la défaite de l'autre, ce grave historien, dis-je, n'en puis quelquefois pas moins que le pourrait faire le simple récit de deux enfants qui jouent, les yeux bandés, à s'attraper l'un l'autre. La manière de raconter est toujours l'unique cause du plaisir ou de l ennui qu'un récit inspire; et la naïveté de ces deux enfants, bien écrite, et d'une manière proportionnée aux sujets qu'on expose, ne divertira pas moins l'esprit, qu'un beau récit d'une histoire grande et tragique est capable de l'élever: une pomme n'est rien, des moineaux ne sont que des moineaux; mais chaque chose, dans la petitesse de son sujet, est susceptible de beautés, d'agrément; il n'y a plus que l'espèce de différente ....1

In the novels, unlike the comedies, there is no picture of brotherly or sisterly relationships unless, of course, we cite the elderly Miles Habert, the younger of whom resents the dominating tendencies of the other: "Je commence à me lasser de cette sujétion que je ne lui dois point."2 However, there are similarities in parent-child relationships such as, for example, the direct reference in *Le Paysan parvenu* to the formalism of address between father and son previously satirized in *l'Héritier de Village.*

Jacob comments on this practice as it applies to the two sons of his brother:

Je remarquai leur fatuité à la dernière visite qu'ils lui rendirent. Ils l'appelèrent "monsieur" dans la conversation. Le bonhomme à ce terme se retournat, s'imagineant qu'ils parlaient à quelqu'un qui venait et

2. *Le Paysan parvenu*, p. 64.
qu'il ne voyait pas.

Mon, non, lui dis-je alors; il ne vient personne, mon frère, et c'est à vous que l'on parle. — A moi! reprit-il. Ehi! pourquoi cela? Est-ce que vous ne me connaissez plus, mes enfants? Ne suis-je pas votre père? — Oh! leur père tant qu'il vous plaira, lui dis-je; mais il n'est pas décent qu'ils vous appel- lent de ce nom-là. — Est-ce donc qu'il est malhon- nête d'être le père de ses enfants? reprit-il; qu'est-ce que c'est que cette mode-là? — C'est, lui dis-je, que le terme de "mon père" est trop ignoble, trop grossier; il n'y a que les petites gens qui s'en servent, mais chez les personnes aussi distinguées que messieurs vos fils, on supprime dans le discours toutes ces qualités triviales que donne la nature; et, au lieu de dire rustiquement "mon père," comme le menu peuple, on dit "monsieur"; cela a plus de dignité.

Discord between parent and child with respect to marriage also occurs in the novels, or to be specific, in Marianne, and in two of the three given instances the opposition of the parent is relentless; the son, marrying against the dictates of the parent, is left destitute. M. de Tervire fils, "un assez riche héritier [désireux] d'épouser une cadette sans fortune (Mlle de Tresle) ... d'au
d'autre bonne maison que lui et ... pensionnaire d'un couvent," appealed in vain for the consent of a father "qui aimait tendrement ce fils et qui ... avait trouvé depuis quelques jours un très bon parti." The father, like Orgon with respect to Silvia in le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard, does not press his son to marry against his own inclinations but his fatherly solicitude inspires the grave warn-
ing he gives his son:

Je ne vous forcerai jamais à aucun mariage, mais je ne vous permettraï point celui dont vous me parlez ...

1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 4.
2. Marianne, p. 413.
vouznavez point assez de bien pour vous charger
d'une femme qui n'en a point; et si, malgré ce
que je vous dis là, Mlle de Tresle devient la
vôtre, je vous avertis que vous vous en repentirez. 1

Again, there is the case of M. Dursan fils,

un riche héritier ... [qui] était devenu amoureux de
la fille d'un petit artisan, fort vertueuse et fort
raisonnable mais ... [la] soeur ... d'une malheureuse
ainée qui n'avait de commun avec elle que la beauté,
et ... dont la conduite avait personnellement déshon-
noré [son] père et [sa] mère. 2

Mme Dursan "frémit d'indignation aux instances de son fils" and threat-
ened him with ruin if he persisted in his design to marry the woman he
loved.

In both these instances, the son sacrificed his fortune to his
passion, leading his wife into misery and leaving his parent deeply
grieved. The suggestion is strong that the parent was not entirely in
the wrong, and that the son, in setting aside the wishes of a parent
who had his best interests at heart and who had lavished much care and
money on his upbringing, was not only guilty of ingratitude and wilfulness
but also was compromising his own chance of future happiness. In the third
instance, that of Valville who succeeded in obtaining his mother's consent
to marry Marianne, the outcome is little less unhappy; Valville was guilty
not only of infidelity towards Marianne, but also of ingratitude towards
Mme de Miran, the mother who sacrificed social prestige to what she con-
sidered to be the happiness of her son. The situation is the same as that
in la Mère confidante and, indeed, Mme Argante might well have echoed

1. Marianne, p. 444.
2. Ibid., p. 465.
Mme de Miran's "Toute autre mère que moi n'en agirait pas de même."  

In the comedies, which generally seem favorable to the idea of the marriage of inclination, the lovers have right of way to a happy marriage. In _le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard_ and in _la Mère confidente_ where the parent has in mind only the welfare of the child, the child is either in complete accord with the parent from the outset or is eventually able to win the parent over to her way of thinking. In _l'Ecole des Mères_ and in _les Fausses Confidences_ where the parents have in mind social aspirations rather than the happiness of their offspring, the child either gains the consent of the parent because circumstances have catered to the wishes of both, or dispenses with the consent of the parent who is obviously in the wrong and of whom she is financially independent. However, in the story of the nun in _Marianne_ the relations between the Tervires, father and son, and between the Dursans, mother and son, are quite different. In both cases the son is completely dependent on the parent for financial support, and the parent in opposing the marriage inclinations of the son is not obviously in the wrong. In both cases the parent is extremely fond of the son, and is desirous of his welfare. With M. de Tervire the opposition is due to the penury of his son's beloved, and in making plans for his son's marriage his primary objective is the maintenance of the family estate in healthy financial condition. Mme Dursan's opposition was due to the shameful conduct of the sister of her son's beloved, and her main concern was to keep the family name without blemish. In both cases the family was considered greater than the individ-

1. _Marianne_, p. 201.
ual; the individual owed some consideration to his parents, and to the many parents behind these parents who had indirectly contributed to his welfare and to that of the family. He also owed some consideration to the generations still to come, and, more than this, by subordinating his immediate desire to the larger question, he is building a surer base for his personal happiness. Again, there is the suggestion, as in *la Nouvelle Héloïse*, that the responsibilities of marriage are greater than the rights of passion, that the person able to inspire passion is not necessarily able to create a good married life. It is not mere coincidence, perhaps, that both Mme Tervire and Mme Dursan, presumably beyond reproach before marriage and of whose marriages we know little except that they were not particularly happy, should reveal such serious flaws after the deaths of their husbands. Certainly, their hard-heartedness is little less shocking than that of the ungrateful daughters of King Lear.

There are many instances in the novels in which we see the results of parent-child relationships rather than the relationships themselves. Valville, the Marquise, wife of Marianne's step-brother, and the two sons of Jacob's brother are striking examples of ingratitude induced by the over-indulgence of the parent to the desires of the child. All these are, as Mme Riccoboni causes Mme de Miran to note with regard to her son, extremely spoiled:

À te dire la vérité, si Valville est étourdi, éventé, volontaire, c'est un peu ma faute; je veux bien en convenir avec toi, Marianne, j'ai gâté cet enfant-là. Je n'avais

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que lui, il était joli, je l'aimais; je suis bonne, trop bonne même; bien des gens me l'ont dit; mais que veux-tu? je suis née comme cela.

On the other hand, "la belle Tervire" has been shamefully neglected by her mother yet is the epitome of filial devotion.

We noticed that in the comedies marriage is presented through the eyes of those contemplating marriage as an unhappy union dominated by the husband who is likely to be unfaithful. In *l'Héritier de Village* and in *la Nouvelle Colonie*, the only two plays where man and wife appear together, there is no indication as to the happiness of the marriage unless one sees in Mme Sorbin's bid for equality a sign of domestic unhappiness. In the novels the only "complete" exposition of married life occurs in the apocryphal half of *le Paysan parvenu* where Jacob, his wife and his children lead what may be termed a model family life. In *Marianne* the relationships between the farmer Villot and his wife, between the prime minister and his wife and between Marianne's step-father and her mother may all be construed as happy although the idea is not elaborated. All that Tervire's mother had to say, for example, about her marriage to the marquis "[c'est qu'] elle avait été fort heureuse avec lui, et [que] leur union n'avait pas été altérée un instant, pendant près de vingt ans qu'ils avaient vécu ensemble."^2^ However, there is considerable development in the two cases of unhappy married life in *le Paysan parvenu*, although only one of them, that of the "plaideur," occurs in the portion recognized incontestably as Marivaux's.

The relationship between the "plaideur" and his wife is interesting, first, because in its courtship stage it reveals an analysis worthy of Musset or of Proust; second, because it shows the havoc created by "fausse dévotion" in family life; and, third, because in its stage of dissolution it indicates the facility with which in the eighteenth century a Frenchman, aware of the ins and outs of legal action, could provoke another into transgressing the law and make him liable to court action. The "plaideur" tells at some length the details of his "misérable amour d'habitude," tells them so well that the passage is worth quoting in detail:

Mon démon (c'est de ma femme que je parle) était parente d'un de mes juges; je la connaissais; visite en attire une autre, je lui en rendis de si fréquentes qu'à la fin je la voyais tous les jours sans trop savoir pourquoi, par habit-ude; nos familles se convenaient, elle avait du bien ce qu'il m'en fallait; le bruit courut que je l'épousais; nous en rîmes tous deux. "Il faudra pourtant nous voir moins souvent pour faire cesser ce bruit-là; à la fin on dirait pis," me dit-elle en riant. "Eh! pourquoi? repris-je; j'ai envie de vous aimer; qu'en dites-vous? Le voulez-vous bien." Elle ne me répondit ni oui ni non.

J'y retournai le lendemain, toujours en badinant de cet amour que je disais vouloir prendre, et qui, à ce que je crois, était tout pris, ou qui venait sans que je m'en aperçusse; je ne le sentais pas; je ne lui ai jamais dit: "Je vous aime." On n'a jamais rien vu d'égal à ce misé-rable amour d'habitude qui n'avertit point, et qui me met encore en colère toutes les fois que j'y songe."

The "plaideur," in the first place, was impelled towards marriage not by love but by pride, the deciding motive being the threat of a rival for the hand of his "beloved." It is not surprising, then, that he realized after three short months that even his consolatory remark after the cer-eemony had been without basis: "Du moins est-ce avec une personne fort

1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 203.
raisonnable, disais-je en moi-même.¹ Listen to the moans of this poor, disillusioned male, husband of a "fausse dévot" and host "à contre-coeur" to all the lesser dignitaries of the church:

Retenais-je un ami à dîner? madame ne voulait pas manger avec ce profane; elle était indisposée et désirait à part dans sa chambre, où elle demandait pardon à Dieu du libertinage de ma conduite.

Il fallait être moine, ou du moins prêtre, ou bigote comme elle, pour être convié chez moi; j'avais toujours quelque capuchon ou quelque soutane à ma table.²

The situation did not improve with time, and as the "plaideur" himself says in a master stroke of understatement; "L'union entre elle et moi n'était pas édifiante. Madame m'appelait sa croix, sa tribulation; moi, je l'appelais du premier nom qui me venait à la bouche, je ne choissais pas."³ However, realizing that "il faut être maître chez soi, surtout quand on a raison de l'être,"⁴ the "plaideur" dismisses his wife's clerk, and retains a "femme de chambre" (Nanette) whom his wife had dismissed in retaliation for his dismissal of the clerk. But then he commits the grave blunder of striking his wife, this despite his knowledge that she was provoking him to do so:

Malgré mes louables résolutions, elle m'excéda tant un jour, me dit dévotement des choses si piquantes, enfin le diable me tenta si bien qu'au souvenir de ses impertinences et du soufflet qu'elle avait donné à Nanette à cause de moi, il m'échappa de lui en donner un en présence de quelques témoins de ses amis. Cela partit plus vite qu'un éclair; elle sortit sur-le-champ, m'attaqua en justice, et depuis ce temps-là nous plaidons à mon grand regret.⁵

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¹ Le Paysan Parvenu., p. 206.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid., p. 208.
⁴ Ibid., p. 209.
The farcical strain running throughout this account of an unhappy marriage perhaps detracts from its realism, but there is another side of marriage depicted in *le Paysan parvenu* which, if not more edifying, and if no less comic, is certainly more natural. The sexual joys of marriage play a prominent part in the union between Jacob and Mlle Habert, so that, whereas in the comedies sex had an unsavory connotation when confined to the "amourettpes" of the petits-maîtres, here in *le Paysan parvenu* it acquires the status of legitimacy, and even, according to Mlle Habert, of holiness: "Quel plaisir de frustrer les droits du diable, et de pouvoir sans péché être aussi aise que les pécheurs!" This fervent expression of the facts of life reminds one of the mention in *le Don Quichotte moderne* of "une nouvelle mariée, qu'une fatigue légitime retenait encore au lit." However, it is not the piquant description of the first-night-and-every-night sexual avidity of Mlle Habert, thirty years dévote, that is the most entertaining feature of this "amour," rather it is the earthy, time-immemorial badinage of people like Mme d'Alain who give a homely dignity to the ceremony of marriage yet never let it be forgotten that marriage is not ceremony. How realistic is the entry of Mme d'Alain the morning after the wedding, how delightfully common-place are her remarks to the newlyweds?

*Sur ces entrefaites, dix heures sonnèrent; la tasse de café nous attendait. Mme d'Alain, qui nous la faisait porter, criait à notre porte et demandait à entrer avec un tapage qu'elle croyait la chose du monde la plus galante, vu que nous étions de nouveaux mariés ......


Là-dessus [ma femme] sortit du lit, mit une robe, et
ouvrit à notre bruyante hôtesse, qui lui dit en entrant:
"Venez-ca, que je vous embrasse, avec votre bel oeil
mourant: eh bien! qu'est-ce que c'est? le gros garçon,
s'en accommodera-t-on? Vous riez, c'est signe que oui;
tant mieux, je m'en serais bien doutée; le gaillard! je
pense qu'il fait bon vivre avec lui, n'est-ce pas? Debout,
debout, jeunesse, me dit-elle en venant à moi; quittez le
chevet, votre femme n'y est plus, et il sera nuit ce soir.

In the novels, too, although there is no depiction of an actual
marriage ceremony, we learn more of the details of the marriage ceremonies
than in the comedies. In les Sincères the "notaire" and the "contrat de
mariage"\(^2\) receive cursory mention and this comedy is typical in this res-
pect. In le Paysan parvenu the consent of his parent, the publishing of
the bans, the drawing-up of the marriage contract by the notary, and the
transferring of property from wife to husband are all preliminaries to
Jacob's marriage to Mlle Habert:

En un mot, toutes les mesures furent prises; nous eûmes
le surlendemain un ban de publié. L'après-midi du même
jour nous allâmes chez le notaire, où le contrat fut
dressé; Mlle Habert m'y donna tout ce qu'elle avait pour
en joir pendant ma vie. Le consentement de mon père ar-
riva quatre jours après.\(^3\)

It is interesting to note the speed with which the preliminaries could be
carried through. The wedding, a secret one, was to take place in the
church shortly after two o'clock in the morning, and was to be preceded
by a marriage supper at which the hostess, Mme d'Alain, her daughter,
Agathe, and the four witnesses would also be present.

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2. Oeuvres, V, 421.
However, with the arrival of the officiating priest, M. Doucin, who had the desire to thwart the marriage and the power to do it at least temporarily, the preparations fell through at the supper stage. No description is given of the wedding table, nor of the attire of any of the participants except that of one of the witnesses, a corner grocer, whose pettiness of character led to the breaking up of the party and put the finishing touches to the humiliation of Jacob and Mlle Habert. How well do we see through the eyes of Jacob this "petit bourgeois" dressed in his best for the wedding!

Cet honnête convive n'avait pas une mine fort imposante, malgré un habit de drap neuf qu'il avait pris; malgré une cravate bien blanche, bien longue, bien empeignée et bien roide, avec une perruque toute neuve aussi, qu'on voyait que sa tête portait avec respect, et dont elle était plus embarrassée que couverte parce qu'apparemment elle n'y était pas encore familiarisée et que cette perruque n'avait peut-être servi que deux ou trois dimanches.

Le bonhomme, épicer du coin, comme je le sus après, s'était mis dans cet'équipage pour honorer notre mariage et la fonction de témoin qu'il y devait faire. Je ne dis rien de ses manchettes, qui avaient leur gravité particulière; je n'en vis jamais de si droites.1

The worthy grocer need not have been so indignant that he was paying homage, not to a gentleman but to a lowly domestic for in the words of Mme d'Alain:

Si [Jacob] n'est pas encore un monsieur, peut-être qu'il le sera un jour: aujourd'hui serviteur, demain maître; il y a bien d'autres que lui qui ont été aux gages des gens, et puis qui ont eu des gens à leurs gages.2

As we well know Jacob went a long way towards fulfilling that prediction, but he made the first decisive step by becoming a valet in the household

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1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 114.
2. Ibid., p. 113.
of his seigneur, an absentee landlord, living in Paris. There in an atmosphere "d'un petit libertinage de la meilleure foi du monde,"¹ Jacob witnessed at first hand the nonchalant, dissipated type of married life suggested in Le Petit-Maître corrigé and in La Nouvelle Colonie. "Jeune, assez beau garçon," Jacob was not long in ingratiating himself with the mistress of the house:

Une dame qui passait sa vie dans toutes les dissipations du grand monde, qui allait aux spectacles, soupaient en ville, se couchait à quatre heures du matin, se levait à une heure après-midi; qui avait des amants, qui les recevait à sa toilette, qui y lisait les billets doux qu'on lui envoyait, et puis les laissait traîner partout; les lisait qui voulait; mais on n'en était point curieux; ses femmes ne trouvaient rien d'étrange à tout cela; le mari ne s'en scandalisait point. On eût dit que c'étaient là, pour une femme, des dépendances naturelles du mariage.²

It is, thus, not surprising that Jacob, "valet de chambre" in the household of the seigneur should gain admittance to the toilette of the seigneur's wife, "qui venait de se mettre à sa toilette, et [dort la] figure était dans un certain désordre assez piquant pour [sa] curiosité."³ It is not surprising, either, that Geneviève, "femme de chambre" of the seigneur's wife, should gain admittance to the inner sanctum of the seigneur, gain it with such facility that "un enfant de contrebande"⁴ is a very possible consequence. Far from being a subject of shame, especially when "l'amour de monsieur pour [la femme de chambre]"

¹. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 6.
². Ibid.
³. Ibid., p. 12.
⁴. Ibid., p. 31.
éclata un peu dans la maison," such adulterous practices were a common source of amusement. In this particular instance the seigneur's wife "apprenait ... l'infidélité de son mari; mais elle ne s'en souciait guère, ce n'était là qu'une matière à plaisanterie pour elle."

In such a lax milieu a domestic fresh from the country like Jacob very quickly gains the "savoir-vivre" compatible with his situation. Like Arlequin, he is measured "par le tailleur de la maison," fitted out "avec du linge et un chapeau, et tout le reste de [son] équipage," has his hair curled by "un laquais de la maison," and there he is "[son] teint un peu éclairci par [son] séjour à Paris," ready indeed, to step into the shoes of Frontin, his predecessor. Already Jacob has acquired a modicum of gallantry, "saluant d'un coup de chapeau qui avait plus de zèle que de bonne grâce" and uttering when the occasion presents itself a fervent though fictitious "votre serviteur éternel." Moreover, and just as important for his future welfare, Jacob is no longer obliged to beg other to write his letters nor to admit, "Je ne [sais] pas écrire." He puts to profit the money obtained from Geneviève "pour apprendre l'écriture et l'arithmétique." However, Jacob does not choose to, or is not able to rise to fortune in the manner of Geneviève, for the untimely

1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 18.
2. Ibid., p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 10.
4. Ibid., p. 11.
5. Ibid., p. 9.
6. Ibid., p. 20.
death of the seigneur hastened the disintegration of the household and left Jacob "sur le pavé."

Not all domestics had the same wit, beauty and sensitivity as Jacob, nor all his opportunities for advancement. Not all domestics were able to be on terms of intimacy with the master or the mistress of the house, and thus be under "moral" obligation to them. Not all domestics, like the "valet de chambre [du magistrat] qui avait l'épée au côté,"¹ had masters "pleine de raison et d'équité," who made it possible for their servants to hold their own position in respect. Not all domestics, like the "suisse"² footman in the household of the marquise, had masters so conscious of their rank and so scrupulous in the observance of class distinction, that they themselves could be proud of, and scrupulous in, the performance of their duties. No, most domestics were

des valets qui dans une maison ne tiennent jamais à rien qu'à leur gages et qu'à leurs profits et pour qui leur maître est toujours un étranger qui peut mourir, périr, prospérer sans qu'ils s'en soucient; tant temu, tant payé, et attrape qui peut.³

Accordingly, in the household of the profligate seigneur, as in that of the Rawdon Crawleys in Vanity Fair, where the wages of the domestics were somewhat in arrears, "les domestiques demandaient leurs gages et pillaient ce qu'ils pouvaient en attendant qu'ils en fussent payés."⁴

¹. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 127.
². Ibid., p. 525.
³. Ibid., p. 36.
⁴. Ibid., p. 37.
One of them, "un gros brutal" with little faith in formalities, made off with the "petit coffret" containing the hard-won earnings of Geneviève, and, as Marivaux in a typical understatement says with reference to the man and the money-box, "On ne les a jamais revus depuis; apparemment ils partirent ensemble."¹

It is this professional aspect of domestic life that receives fuller treatment in the novels than in the comedies. The classification is no longer limited to valet and "femme de chambre;" the lackey, the footman, and the cook all make appearances even if briefly. Yet, one is surprised that even with the valets and "femme de chambre" so little is indicated and so much suggested. We learn nothing, for example, of the duties of Jacob as domestic to the nephew in the household of the seigneur, yet we feel strongly his presence as domestic moving about among other domestics. With the Haberts, Jacob is probably right-hand man to Catherine the cook, for it is she who says, "Pendant que vous déjeunez, vos gages couraient; c'est moi qui ... ai conclu [l'affaire]."² Yet, the only function that Jacob seems to perform is the setting and clearing of the table for the hungry Haberts. On one occasion, Jacob lingers over his duties to avoid the questionings of the officious Catherine: "Là-dessus [Mlle Habert] monta à sa chambre, et j'allai mettre le couvert, pour me soustraire aux importunes interrogations de Catherine

¹ Le Paysan parvenu, p. 36.
² Ibid., p. 51.
... Je fus long dans mon service."

Again, in Marianne when the "femme de chambre" of Mlle de Fare comes to dress Marianne, the attention is so centred on the analysis of Marianne's "goûts naturels" that we have only the illusion of the actual dressing:

Je me levai entre dix et onze heures du matin; un quart d'heure après entra une femme de chambre qui venait pour m'habiller. Quelque inusité que fût pour moi le service qu'elle allait me rendre, je m'y prêtais, je pense, d'aussi bonne grâce que s'il m'avait été familier. Il fallait bien soutenir mon rang, et c'étaient là de ces choses que je saisissais on ne peut pas plus vite; j'avais un goût naturel, ou, si vous voulez, je ne sais quelle vanité délicate qui me les apprenait tout d'un coup, et ma femme de chambre ne me sentit point novice. A peine achevait-elle de m'habiller, que j'entendis la voix de Mlle de Fare qui approchait."

The same lack of material detail is evident in indications of the duties of Catherine the cook, for, although mention is made of "petits pains au lait ... pots de confitures, sèches et liquides ... ragoûts ... volailles froides ... potages ... rôtis ... bouillis ...," no indication at all is given of the actual preparation of the foods. Here, as in la Double Inconstance, Marivaux uses realistic detail to throw light on character, in these cases, the tendency to "gourmandise" of Mâles Habert and of Arlequin. The excellent characterization of Catherine as a self-considered indispensable member of the Habert household shows that her conceit is not without some justification for she is master of her craft and alert to all relevant details. How true to life in this respect are her questions

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1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 84.

The professional reserve of the "suisse" from whom Mlle Tervire learns that her mother is no longer with her daughter-in-law, the marquise, is in striking contrast with the ebullition of cook Catherine. It is evident that he has no concern whatsoever for household matters that are out of his jurisdiction: "Au surplus, je ne me mêle point de ces choses-là et je réponds seulement à ce que vous me demandez."\(^2\)

A little more insight, perhaps, is given into the functions of the lackey. Jacob in describing the transfer from the public conveyance to the private coach of the Comte de Dorsan reveals the lackey in his traditional role as opener of the door:

Nous sortîmes du fiacre; je vis le jeune homme parler à un grand laquais, qui ensuite ouvrit la portière d'un de ces carrosses. "Montez, mon cher ami," me dit aussitôt mon camarade. -- Où? lui dis-je. -- Dans ce carrosse, me répondit-il; c'est le mien.\(^3\)

Unlike his use of "un laquais de six pieds\(^4\)" in the Spectateur Français, Marivaux has here no intention of stressing the height of the lackey to suggest the impregnability of the seigneur. The lackey had other functions to perform, some as routine as opening coach doors, others of a more personal nature. It was the lackey, for example, who stood in line to purchase

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1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 84.
4. Œuvres, IX, 6.
theatre tickets for his master: "Suivez-moi, [dit le Comte de Dorsan à Jacob] après avoir donné à un laquais de quoi prendre les billets." ¹ It was also a lackey who to Marianne's chagrin followed her to Mme Dutour's on Valville's order: "La vue de ce domestique aposté réveilla toute ma sensibilité sur mon aventure, et me fit encore rougir; c'était un témoin de plus de la petitesse de mon état." ²

There is no dialect in the novels to indicate that many of the domestics were from the provinces, but Catherine, for example, attributes her "hot-headedness" to her Picardian ancestry: "Moi j'ai la tête trop près du bonnet; jamais les prêtres n'ont pu me guérir de cela, car je suis Picarde." ³ Again, Mme d'Alain speaks of a Champenoise cook that she has in mind for Mlle Habert, and indicates, perhaps, in mistaking Mlle Habert for a Champenoise that the Parisian dialect differed little from it:

À propos, vous me parlâtes hier d'une cuisinière; vous en aurez une tantôt. Javote me l'a dit, elle est allée ce matin l'avertir de venir; elle est de sa connaissance, elles sont toutes deux du même pays; ce sont des Champenoises, et moi aussi; c'est déjà trois, et cela fera quatre avec vous; car je vous crois de Champagne, n'est-ce pas? ajouta-t-elle en riant. — Non, c'est moi, lui dis-je; vous vous êtes méprise, madame. — Eh bien! oui, dit-elle, je savais bien qu'il y en avait un de vous deux du pays, n'importe qui. ⁴

Finally, we are rather surprised to find in Marianne an indication of a rapid turn-over of domestics. In the comedies we noted a growing disin-

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¹ Le Paysan parvenu, p. 281.
² Marianne, p. 100.
³ Le Paysan parvenu, p. 71.
⁴ Ibid., p. 107.
clination on the part of the domestic to put up with the discourtesies
of the master, but there was nothing to indicate a condition of flux
in household affairs. However, in the short time that elapsed between the
first and second visit of Marianne to the home of Mme de Miran, all but
one of the servants had been changed:

Une certaine gouvernante qui était dans la maison de
Mme de Miran quand on m'y porta après ma chute au sortir
de l'église, et que, si vous vous en souvenez, Valville
appela pour me déchausser, n'y était plus, et de tous les
domestiques, il ne restait plus qu'un laquais de Valville
qui me connût.

CHAPTER IV

Contemporary Life in the Novels of Marivaux

The Business World

The rapid turn-over of domestics would suggest that the business world was offering to the domestic what appeared to be a more independent means of livelihood. The leap is not great from lackey to public coachman and the lackey making such a leap was likely to know by heart the residences of the most important of the noblesse of Paris. Thus when the Comte de Dorsan ordered the cabman to drive him to the home of one of his friends he did not need to give the address:

Ô allons-nous? lui dit le cocher. — à tel endroit, répondit-il. Et ce ne fut point le nom d'une rue qu'on lui donna, mais seulement le nom d'une dame: Chez madame la marquise une telle. Et le cocher n'en demanda pas davantage, ce qui marquait que ce devait être une maison fort connue.

Moreover, a coachman's life was not without its pleasant surprises. On rare occasions the coachman had a chance to carry a pretty passenger like Marianne in his arms, and this particular coachman is typically eighteenth-century in his uninhibited enjoyment of the exploit:

Le cocher ouvrait la portière pendant que [j'appelais Mme Dutour]. Allez, allez, me dit-il, arrêtez; ne vous embarrassez pas, mademoiselle; pardi! je vous descendrai bien tout seul. Un bel enfant comme vous, qu'est-ce que cela pèse? C'est le plaisir. Venez, venez; jetez-vous hardiment: je vous porterais encore plus loin que vous n'irez sur vos jambes.

On the other hand, driving a "hack" had its drawbacks, and Mme Dutour was a drawback with a capital "D". In the well-known scene from Marianne

2. Marianne, p. 100.
the heroine is even more horrified than the coachman when she sees Mme Dutour come out of the shop with "hell" in her eye and an ell in her hand, all set to belabor him: "Mme Dutour n'avait qu'à pouvoir parvenir à frapper le cocher de l'aune qu'elle tenait, voyez ce qu'il en serait arrivé avec un fiacre."¹ This exposition shows the kind of situation that could arise when fares were not fixed and the cabby met a woman of determination like Mme Dutour with her mind made up to strike as hard a bargain as possible. Moreover, one might well draw from this scene a comparison with the taxi-driver of modern-day Paris, little noted for his elegance of manner and speech:

Le cocher s'enrouvait à prouver qu'on ne lui donnait pas son compte, qu'on voulait avoir sa course pour rien, témoin les douze sous qui n'allaiennent jamais sans avoir leur épithète: et des épithètes d'un cocher, on en soupçonne l'incivile élegance.²

The coachman was not necessarily confined within the limits of his native Paris. Public coach service was, like the modern-day bus and taxi service, of two main types; that proceeding to and from Paris, especially to centres like Versailles, and that operating within the city itself. In the first case, one boarded the coach at a local depot, in the second, one got a cab at a stand or in the street. Jacob in _Le Paysan parvenu_ makes use of both types. For his trip to Versailles to meet M. de Fécour, Jacob "[se rendit] donc à l'endroit où l'on prend les voitures; [il en trouva] une à quatre places, dont il y en avait déjà trois de remplies."³ More interesting

¹. Marianne, p. 105.
². Loc. cit.
is Jacob's first ride in a local "hack" for not only does it reveal the
technique of the cabby in drumming up business but also it marks another
stage in the growth of Jacob's self-esteem:

Tout M. de la Vallée que j'étais, moi qui n'avais
jamais eu d'autre voiture que mes jambes, ou que ma
charrette, quand j'avais mené à Paris le vin du
seigneur de notre village, je n'avais pas assurément
besoin de carrosse pour aller chez cette jeune dame,
et je ne songeais pas non plus à en prendre; mais un
fiacre qui m'arrêta sur une place que je traversais
me tenta: "Avez-vous affaire de moi, mon gentilhomme?"
me dit-il. Ma foi, "mon gentilhomme" me gagna, et je
lui dis, "approche."¹

In the novels there is a much greater insight into the commercial
life of the times than in the comedies where comic reference, imagery,
and the argot of the business world outweigh direct exposition as sources
of information. In le Prince travesti a tailor is mentioned, but the
reference is comic and misleading, and has little or no bearing on the
play: "le maudit tailleur qui m'a fait des poches percées."² In the novels
there is no such indirect information; a tailor, for example, is not men-
tioned unless he has himself a part, however slight, to play in the story.
Thus in le Paysan parvenu, M. Simon, tailor of Paris, is seen in actual
negociation with Mme d'Alain concerning the attire to be purchased for
Jacob. We learn more about the apprentice system than in the comedies and
more about the practice of carrying trade to the customer. We learn, also,
that businesses were established in dwelling places and that the business
premises frequently were not visible from the street. We know, too, that

¹. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 265.
². Œuvres, III, 404.
"cochers, propriétaires, tapissiers, rôtisseurs, épiciers, fourbis-
seurs, tailleurs, baigneurs, crocheteurs, archers, sergents, geôliers,
lingères, sollicteurs, médecins, chirurgiens, apothicaires," all appear
in the novels as contributing their share to the commercial life of the
great metropolis and to our picture of the life of the people in the
eighteenth century. Yet even in the novels, there is no detailed and
comprehensive picture; Marivaux, ever "schématique et ondoyant," gives
detail sufficient only for a skeleton outline. Ranging from a relatively
complex professional pattern down to mere mention of a particular profes-
sion, Marivaux's sketches sometimes give personal, realistic treatment
as in the case of Mme Dutour, sometimes impersonal, realistic treatment
as in the case of the "archers" and "sergents," sometimes detailed mention
as in the case of the "tapissier," and sometimes simple reference as in
the case of the "crocheteur." In all cases the reader has to form the pat-
tern himself; Marivaux was interested only in the realistic detail.

Marianne, preferring "le plus petit métier qu'il y ait et le plus
pénible, pourvu qu'elle soit libre, à l'état ... de domestique"¹ accepted
the offer of a "pension" to be paid by M. de Climal, and became an ap-
prentice in the linen shop of Mme Dutour. We do not see Marianne in the
linen shop as we see Nana, the "ouvrière fleuriste chez Titreville,"² but
there are just enough touches to enable one to get a good skeleton picture.

¹ Marianne, p. 44.
Marianne, for example, rooms with Mlle Toinon, a fellow worker whose "esprit ne passait pas son aune ... [mais] qui maniait sa toile avec tout le jugement et toute la décence possible," and who presented in so doing, a humiliating contrast with Marianne "si gauche à ce métier-là." Even more humiliating are the lessons given by Mlle Toinon in the evenings, lessons designed to overcome Marianne's lack of skill in mechanical work but which only serve to make her more awkward. Mme Dutour has no illusions about the capabilities of her new worker, and she consoles her with the fact that apprentices can not hope to set up in business for themselves without financial backing:

Car il ne faut pas vous flatter, vous n'êtes pas née pour être une lingère; ce n'est point une ressource pour vous que ce métier-là; vous n'y feriez aucun progrès, vous le sentez bien, j'en suis sûr; et, quand vous vous y rendriez habile, il faut de l'argent pour devenir maîtresse, et vous n'en avez pas; vous seriez donc toujours fille de boutique.  

Nothing is indicated of the actual work except what Marianne says with regard to the linen given her by M. de Climal; "Mon habit et mon linge furent donnés aux ouvrières, et la Dutour leur recommanda beaucoup de diligence .... Au bout de quatre jours on m'apporta mon habit et du linge." Little is known about the shop itself except that it had a sign outside and a counter within, the same counter from which Mme Dutour seized the "aune" during the quarrel with the coachman. The only real-

2. Ibid., p. 121.
3. Ibid., p. 63.
istic reference to the shop of Mme Dutour in this famous quarrel is made through the "aune." Of actual business conditions, we learn from Mme Dutour that times are bad, or if not bad, could certainly be better: "Le temps est mauvais, on ne vend rien, les loyers sont chers, et c'est tout ce qu'on peut faire que de vivre et d'attraper le jour de l'an; encore faut-il bien tirer pour y aller."\(^1\) We have already learned that the tradesmen were expected to carry their merchandise to the customers and we realize that they could not allow themselves at any time to forget their business. In that powerfully ironic and pathetic scene in which Mme Dutour reveals the true identity of Marianne to the de Fares, her business acumen is ever present even when "all about her are falling in ruins":

Adieu, Marianne, allez, mon enfant, je ne vous souhaite pas plus de mal qu'à moi, Dieu le sait; toutes sortes de bonheurs puissent-ils vous arriver! Si pourtant vous voulez voir ce que j'ai apporté dans mon carton, dit-elle encore en s'adressant à Mlle de Fare, peut-être prendriez-vous quelque chose.

Valville is irritated by the persistence of her business instincts and makes every effort to get rid of her.

Eh non, reprit Valville, non! vous dit-on; j'achèterai tout ce que vous avez, je le retiens, et vous le paierez demain chez moi. Ce fut en la poussant qu'il parla ainsi, et enfin elle sortit.\(^2\)

Mme Dutour rents her store and living quarters in which she puts up her apprentices. In other cases, the proprietor may have for rent

\(^1\) Marianne, p. 129.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 258.
in the same building both store space and separate apartments. Mme d'Alain in _Le Paysan parvenu_ is the proprietor of such an establishment, and Providence in the form of a traffic jam in the quartier Saint-Gervais leads Jacob and Mlle Habert to it:

Pendant cet embarras de rue, [Mlle Habert] vit à son tour un écrivain. "J'aime assez ce quartier-ci, me dit-elle (c'était du côté de Saint-Gervais); voici une maison à louer; allons voir ce que c'est." Nous y entrâmes effective-ment, et nous demandâmes à voir l'appartement qui était à louer. La propriétaire de cette maison y avait son logement; elle vint à nous. C'était la veuve d'un procureur qui lui avait laissé assez abandonnement de quoi vivre, et qui vivait à proportion de son bien. ¹

There is no specific description of the suite in question nor any detail regarding the actual negotiations for renting it. Condition of suite, number of rooms, price eventually agreed upon are details of little consequence to the story which at this point shows us the garrulous and ingratiating hostess, Mme d'Alain, taking leave of the visitors who are soon to become her tenants:

On parla encore assez longtemps debout; après quoi [Mlle Habert] s'approcha de la porte, où se fit une autre station qui enfin termina l'entretien, et pendant laquelle Mlle Habert, caressée, flattée sur son air doux et modeste, sur l'opinion qu'on avait de ses bonnes qualités morales et chrétiennes, de son aimable caractère, conclut aussitôt le marché de l'appartement. ²

However, we know that the suite is extensive, unfurnished, and self-contained. Mlle Habert making personal desire defer to "bienséance," relegates Jacob to a far corner of the suite there to live in propriety for the rest of his

¹. _Le Paysan parvenu_, p. 77.
². _Ibid._, p. 79.
unmarried life. "Dans l'appartement que je viens de prendre, il y a
e une chambre très éloignée de l'endroit que j'habiterai; tu seras là à
part et décemment sous le titre d'un parent qui vit avec moi." Before
they leave the old apartment, we see Mlle Habert sorting out the fur-
niture belonging to her and deputing Jacob to give orders to the "tapissier"
so that it may be quickly dismantled and moved to the new address. Even
in those days there were facilities to take care of the problem of moving;

Monsieur de la Vallée, me dit-elle en badinant, va demain,
le plus matin que tu pourras, me chercher un tapissier pour
déten dre mon cabinet et ma chambre, et dis-lui qu'il se
charge aussi des voitures nécessaires pour emporter tous
mes meubles; une journée suffira pour transporter tout, si
on veut aller un peu vite."

Finally, Mlle Habert, who for years has suffered under the tyrannical family
servant Catherine, asserts her new-found independence by enlisting the aid
of the resourceful Mme d'Alain in securing a new cook.

A self-contained suite shared with "un honnête homme, un esprit doux,
un bon caractère, voilà [thought Mlle Habert] du repos pour le reste de
mes jours." Very wisely she had rejected a previous notion of installing
herself in a boarding house — not enough privacy: "J'avais quelquefois
envie de me mettre en pension; mais cette façon de vivre a ses désagrément:
il faut le plus souvent sacrifier ce qu'on veut à ce que veulent les
autres, et cela m'en dégoûtait." Little did Mlle Habert realize that an
apartment in a house in which the landlady also lived could have its dis-

1. Le Paysan parcouru, p. 81.
2. Ibid., p. 84.
3. Ibid., p. 99.
4. Ibid.
agreeable aspects, and that her "J'aime cette femme-là" early applied to Mme d'Alain would soon be corrected to a less enthusiastic "Voilà une sotte femme."¹ One of the most attractive features of le Paysan parvenu is the character of this worthy proprietress, so insensitive that she wounds even when she helps, and with the greatest goodwill in the world. The habit of Mme d'Alain, extrovert to the core, of knowing all and saying all, was often annoying yet on occasion her knowledge was not without its advantages. One of these occasions was the outfitting of Jacob by the tailor, M. Simon.

M. Simon, "un tailleur à qui Mme d'Alain louait quelques chambres dans le fond de la maison, vint lui apporter un reste de terme qu'il lui devait."² It happened that some one had pawned "un habit tout battant neuf" only the day before so that, informed of Jacob's sartorial needs by Mme d'Alain, M. Simon was quick to suggest that this suit "sera comme de cire" and "pas si cher que chez le marchand."³ This was not all sales talk for the "habit, veste, culotte, d'un bel et bon drap fin, tout uni, doublé de soie rouge"⁴ fitted Jacob perfectly and pleased him immensely. However, a price was yet to be struck, and fortunately for Mlle Habert who admitted ignorance of bargaining tactics, Mme d'Alain was there to strike it: "Ne

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¹ Le Paysan parvenu, p. 107.
² Ibid., p. 175.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
vous mêlez point de cela, [dit-elle] c'est mon affaire.¹ Then follows a less violent, more effective bargaining procedure than that adopted by Mme Dutour with the coachman, although the pride in being able to handle tradesmen and the feeling that others are necessarily inept in such situations is the same in both cases.

Allons, M. Simon, peut-être que d'un an vous ne vendrez cette friperie-là si à propos; car il faut une taille, et en voilà une; c'est comme si Dieu vous l'envoyait; il n'y a peut-être que celle-là à Paris; lâchez la main; pour trop avoir, on n'a rien.²

This picture of a buyer exercising her skill on a merchant is particularly vivid.

Mme d'Alain, moreover, does not stop with M. Simon; she continues in the fray until Jacob is completely decked out in clothes befitting a gentleman:

Tous les marchands furent appelés, Mme d'Alain toujours présente, toujours marchandant, toujours tracassière; et avant le dîner j'eus la joie de voir Jacob métamorphosé en cavalier, avec la doublure de soie, avec le galant bord d'argent au chapeau, et l'ajustement d'une chevelure qui [lui] descendait jusqu'à la ceinture, et après laquelle le baigneur avait épuisé tout son savoir-faire.³

Jacob now rechristened "monsieur de la Vallée" and provided with "une épée avec son ceinturon [achetée chez] un fourbisseur près d'ici"⁴ was at last in a position to consider "tous les honnêtes gens ... [ses] pareils."⁵

¹ Le Paysan parvenu, p. 176.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., p. 173.
⁵ Ibid.
Jacob, "perdu de vanité," was soon to realize that pride goes before a fall and that a fine appearance meant little in the world of finance. The cold and casual reception given him by the financier, M. de Fécour, and his associates, jolted his "amour-propre" to the extent that there was no longer harmony between the outer and the inner man:

Enfin, j'étais pénétré d'une confusion intérieure. Je n'ai jamais oublié cette scène-là; je suis devenu riche aussi, et pour le moins autant qu'aucun de ces messieurs dont je parle, et je suis encore à comprendre qu'il y ait des hommes dont l'âme devienne aussi cavalière que je le dis là ...  

M. de Fécour yielded to Mme de Ferval's written request that Jacob be placed in advantageous employment but he did it so ungraciously that Jacob, the farm boy, who had been so suddenly transformed into a gentleman sees himself reduced to his original status and not even able to get any satisfaction from his recently-acquired ability to read and to calculate:

Fort bien, dit-il ... voilà le cinquième homme, depuis dix-huit mois, pour qui ma belle-soeur m'écrit ou me parle, et que je place; je ne sais où elle va chercher tous ceux qu'elle m'envoie, mais elle ne finit point et en voici un qui m'est encore plus recommandé que les autres ...

Vous êtes bien jeune, me dit-il; que savez-vous faire? Rien, je gage.

Je n'ai encore été dans aucun emploi, monsieur, lui répondis-je. — Oh! je m'en doutais bien, reprit-il; il ne m'en vient pas d'autre de sa part, et ce sera un grand bonheur si vous savez écrire.

Oui, monsieur, dis-je en rougissant; je sais même un peu d'arithmétique. — Comment donc! s'écria-t-il en plaisantant, vous nous faites trop de grâce. Allez, jusqu'à après-demain.

Sur quoi je me retirais, avec l'agrement de laisser ces messieurs riant de tout leur coeur de mon arithmétique et de mon écriture ...  

1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 216.
2. Ibid., p. 217.
There is here an indication of the same aversion to "inexperienced" applicants for employment that we noted in *Les Fausses Confidences*, an aversion here aggravated by the indiscriminate recommendations of Mme de Ferval. However, of the financier actually at work manipulating the strings of his enterprises we learn nothing; Turcaret is more revealing in this respect. In the comedies there are no financiers, but their presence is strongly felt. The power of the financiers is suggested in the novels, or to be more exact, in *Le Paysan parvenu*. A direct revelation of this power is to be found, however, only in the apocryphal part of *Le Paysan parvenu* where at a banquet given by the gluttonous but good-hearted financier, M. Bono, "On parle d'un comte, d'une marquise et de lui, sans y faire la moindre différence."¹ Jacob, too, in discussing with his wife his own vocational prospects, gives us a glimpse of this transitional figure between the bourgeois and the nobleman when he suggests:

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

The actual manner in which this seigneur "était parvenu" was related earlier in the novel by Jacob, who was then "valet de chambre" in the same household. The history of this seigneur must have been that of many of the new noble-men of the period preceding the revolution:

Il avait gagné son bien dans les affaires, s'était allié à d'illustres maisons par le mariage de deux de ses fils, dont l'un avait pris le parti de la robe, et l'autre celui de

¹. *Le Paysan parvenu*, p. 373.

l'épée. Le père et les fils vivaient magnifiquement; ils avaient pris des noms de terre; du véritable, je crois qu'ils ne s'en souvenaient plus eux-mêmes. Leur origine était comme ensevelie sous d'immenses richesses. On la connaissait bien, mais on n'en parlait plus. La noblesse de leurs alliances avait achevé d'étoilir l'imagination des autres sur leur compte; de sorte qu'ils étaient confondus avec tout ce qu'il y avait de meilleur à la cour et à la ville.

We have already seen enough of this seigneur to realize that what was best at court and in town was not necessarily of a high moral quality. The corrupt tendencies of M. de Fécour in the latter half of le Paysan parvenu cannot be presented as a reflection of Marivaux's observation, but those of Mme de Ferval can. Using her seductive powers to the full, Mme de Ferval was not long in awakening the latent sensuality of Jacob. When he presented himself, the day after his marriage to Mlle Habert, at Mme de Ferval's house, Jacob found her "qui lisait, couchée sur un sopha, la tête appuyée sur une main, et dans un déshabillé très propre, mais assez négligemment arrangé." This disarray was exposing to the avid eyes of Jacob "un peu de la plus belle jambe du monde ... [et un] pied mignon ... dont la mule était tombée et qui, dans cette espèce de nudité, avait fort bonne grâce."2 Jacob was to have an even more startling revelation of the morals of his superiors when Mme de Ferval arranged with him a rendez-vous "[chez] Mme Remy, femme commode, sujette à prêter sa maison."3 In his recital of the scene, Jacob gives us further insight into the engaging manners of the eighteenth century:

1. Ibid., p. 3.
2. Ibid., p. 179.
3. Ibid., p. 239.
Je levais avidement les yeux sur elle; elle était un peu moins enveloppée qu'à l'ordinaire. "Il n'y a rien de si friand que ce joli corset-là, m'écriai-je. — Allons, allons, petit garçon, ne songez point à cela; je ne le veux pas." dit-elle.

Là-dessus elle se raccommode assez mal. "Eh! ma gracieuse dame, repartis-je, cela est si bien arrangé, n'y touchez pas." Je lui pris les mains alors; elle avait les yeux pleins d'amour; elle soupira, me dit: "que me veux-tu, La Vallée? J'ai bien mal fait de ne pas retenir la Remy; une autre fois je la retiendrai, tu n'entends point raison; recule-toi un peu; voilà des fenêtres dont on peut nous voir."

En effet, il y avait de l'autre côté des vues sur nous. "Il n'y a qu'à rentrer dans la chambre, lui dis-je. — Il le faut bien, repart-elle; mais modère-toi, mon bel enfant, modère-toi; je suis venue ici de si bonne foi et tu m'inquiètes avec ton amour.

Je n'ai pourtant que celui que vous m'avez donné, répondis-je, mais nous voilà debout, cela fatigue, assyons-nous; tenez, remettez-vous à la place [le lit] où vous étiez quand je suis venu. — Quoi! là, dit-elle; oh! je n'oserais, j'y serais trop enfermée, à moins que tu n'appelles la Remy; appelle-la, je t'en prie;" ce qu'elle disait d'un ton qui n'avait rien d'opiniâtre. Et insensiblement nous nous approchions de l'endroit [encore le lit] où je l'avais tout d'abord trouvée. "Ô me mènes-tu donc?" dit-elle d'un air nonchalant et tendre. Cependant elle s'asseyait et je me jetais à ses genoux, quand nous entendîmes tout à coup parler dans la salle.

Le bruit devint plus fort; c'était comme une dispute.

"Ah! La Vallée, qu'est-ce que c'est que cela? Lève-toi, s'écria Mme de Ferval; le bruit augmente encore."1

Like the knock on the gate recalling Macbeth to reality, the entry of the Chevalier punctured the bliss of our lovers, and left them exposed to the mercies of fate. To Jacob fate was not kind; the Chevalier had known him of old, and a reference to his recent rusticity, quickly shattered his vulnerable self confidence. To Mme de Ferval fate was even less kind; the Chevalier knew her too, and what is more, knew "[qu'elle tenait] un état de dévote qui ne permet pas que pareille chose soit connue du monde."2

Now both Jacob and the Chevalier knew that the great lady goes into these

1. Ibid., p. 235.
2. Ibid., p. 184.
quarters not "pour différentes œuvres de charité" but with a very differerent motive. Mme de Ferval was a "fausse dévote."
CHAPTER V

Contemporary Life in the Novels of Marivaux

Religious Aspects

Yes, Mme de Ferval was a "fausse dévote." And M. de Climal though not so successfully seductive as Mme de Ferval was a "faux dévot." He, too, concealed a lustful heart behind a charitable exterior, and concealed it so well that Father Vincent felt no qualms in placing Marianne in his care: "Profitez [de sa charité] mademoiselle ... et comporvez-vous d'une manière qui récompense Monsieur des soins où sa piété l'engage pour vous."¹ M. de Climal like Mme de Ferval could put "la religion à part," but unlike Mme de Ferval he did not hesitate to call on Providence to sanction his unholy purposes: "Ne semble-t-il pas que c'est la Providence qui permet que je vous aime, et qui vous tire d'embarras à mes dépens?"² In fact, M. de Climal does not stop at the mere reference to Providence but in a vein suggestive of Leibnitz and Voltaire goes on to explain the existence of evil: "C'est un petit mal qui fait un grand bien, un bien infini: vous n'imaginez pas jusqu'où il va."³ However, "les mouvements d'un jeune petit coeur fier, vertueux et insulté" proved stronger than philosophy: M. de Climal failed in his base design, and left Marianne to the mercies of God, and Father Vincent to a consideration of this new demonstration of the baseness of humanity: "Un homme comme M. de Climal! Que Dieu nous soit en aide! Mais on ne sait qu'en dire: Hélas! la pauvre humanité, à quoi est-elle sujette? Quelle misère!"⁴

¹ Marianne, p. 44.
² Ibid., p. 119.
³ Ibid., p. 120.
⁴ Ibid., p. 117.
M. de Climal, like Mme de Ferval, belonged to the aristocracy, and their "fausse dévotion" is marked by the cynicism of those who maintain a certain code only for the form. Both were tartuffian in their out and out hypocrisy. However, we find in the novels another type of "fausse dévotion" which was not so frankly hypocritical nor so elevated in tone. The "fausse dévotion" of the Haberts had its basis not so much in cynicism as in ignorance and was in a sense more self-centred. Like M. de Climal they called on Providence, but unlike him they called on Providence at every turn, so much so that there developed in them a feeling that divine right sanctioned their every act.

This does not mean, however, that God was called upon to sanction their "gourmandise." Far from it. Declaring vehemently that they had no appetite and regarding their food with the utmost indifference, the Haberts were able to consider themselves such models of asceticism that their prayers went skyward with the full support of conscience:

Les deux sœurs, se levant de leur sièges avec un recueillement qui était de la meilleure foi du monde et qu'elles croyaient aussi méritoire que légitime, joignaient posément les mains pour faire une prière commune, où elles se répondaient par versets l'une à l'autre avec des tons que le sentiment de leur bien-être rendait extrêmement pathétique.\(^1\)

Jacob was not long in getting to the bottom of a mystery in which so much food was consumed in such ascetic company: "C'était de ces airs de dégoût que marquaient nos maîtresses et qui m'avaient caché la sourde activité de leurs dents."\(^2\)

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1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 53.
2. Loc. cit.
When Jacob first met Mlle Habert she was severely dressed, "écharpe de gros taffetas sans façon, ... cornette unie, ... habit de couleur à l'avenant ... le tout d'une propreté tirée à quatre épingles." Jacob recognized immediately that she was "une femme à directeur," and before long he was to know the "directeur" himself. Mlle Habert had long dreamed of a husband "d'un caractère ouvert et gai, et qui eût le coeur bon et sensible." Providence had seemingly placed such a husband, in the person of Jacob, on the Pont-Neuf and her director thus found himself unable to frustrate her long-standing desire.

It will be noticed that with "faux dévots" and "fausses dévots" like M. de Climal and Mme de Perval there were no attendant directors. Religious hypocrites of this stamp were too calculating, too worldly-wise to put up with the parasitic tendencies of directors like M. Doucin. In Marivaux, it is only the foolish, gullible lower-class types like the Haberts that the interested director is able to dominate, and there are signs that the domination was not unwelcome. The elder Mlle Habert indicates this receptivity by her readiness to comply with M. Doucin's request that Jacob be dismissed:

Pour moi, monsieur, dit l'aînée avec un entier abandon à ses volontés, je vous réponds que vous êtes le maître, et vous verrez quelle est ma soumission; car, dès cet instant, je m'engage à n'exiger aucun service du jeune homme en question et je ne doute pas que ma soeur ne m'imite.  

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1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 42.
2. Ibid., p. 99.
3. Ibid., p. 63.
The younger Mlle Habert did not follow this inspiring example, and her refusal to do so was no less humiliating to the director than the rebuff given him by Jacob. M. Doucin is not to be regarded as a typical director. When Jacob tries to avoid giving him the customary mark of respect, it is because he does not feel for him the respect that a man in M. Doucin's position should command: "Je voulus repousser la porte de la cuisine pour m'épargner le coup de chapeau qu'il aurait fallu lui donner en me montrant." And Marivaux, who takes a precaution in Marianne similar to Molière's in Tartuffe by distinguishing the good from the bad in "dévot" practices, is careful to indicate in Le Paysan parvenu that all "directeur-dévot" relationships are not subject to condemnation:

Cet usage est sans doute loubale et saint en lui-même; c'est bien fait de le suivre, quand on le suit comme il faut, et ce n'est pas de cela que je badine; mais il y a des minuties dont les directeurs ne devraient pas se mêler aussi sérieusement qu'ils le font, et je ris de ceux qui portent leur direction jusque-là.2

M. Doucin was definitely one of those directors who were exceeding the limits of their office. He was, as Catherine surreptitiously remarks to Jacob, responsible for the split in the Habert home:

C'est notre ménage qui se meurt, mon pauvre garçon, me dit-elle; le voilà qui s'en va. —Eh! qu'est-ce qui l'a tué? lui dis-je. —Hélas! replit-elle, c'est le scrupule qui s'est mis après, par le moyen d'une prédication de monsieur le directeur. Il y a longtemps que j'ai dit que cet homme-là internerait trop après les consciences.3

1. Ibid., p. 68.
2. Ibid., p. 57.
3. Ibid., p. 71.
Yet there were homes in which religious racketeers like M. Doucin
would make little or no headway. Just imagine, for example, a dir-
ector trying to make a personal profit out of the conscience of Mme
d'Alain! She would make short work of him:

C'est de la bougie, c'est du café, c'est du sucre,
Oui, oui, j'ai une de mes amies qui est dans la grande
dévotion, qui lui envoie de tout cela .... Faites comme
moi; je parle de Dieu tant qu'on veut, mais je ne donne
rien; ils sont trois ou quatre de sa robe qui fréquentent
ici: Je les reçois bien; bonjour, monsieur, bonjour,
madame; on prend du thé, quelquefois on dîne; la reprise
de quadrille ensuite, un petit mot d'édification par-ci
par-là, et puis je suis votre servante. 1

In the comedies there are no references to directors and "faux
dévots," and aside from one or two isolated comments concerning the
convent as a prison or a last resort, there is really no insight into
convent life in the eighteenth century. In the novels, especially in
Marianne, not only is there a good indication of the role played by the
convent in contemporary life but also there is a very good sketch of the
internal organization of the convent.

In the first place we learn that "une prieure, des religieuses, des
soeurs converses, des pensionnaires et une touirière" comprise the personnel
of the convent. Of these there is little reference to the nuns and the
lay sisters aside from a glimpse or two into their devotional practices.
Marianne, bewildered and disconsolate after her abduction, is left in
charge of a lay sister when the nuns are called to choir:

Les religieuses qui m'avaient reçue n'étaient plus
avec moi, la cloche les avait appelées au chœur. Une
soeur converse me tenait compagnie, et disait son

1. Ibid., p. 119.
chapelet pendant que je m'occupais de ces douloureuses réflexions ... Aux soupirs que je poussais, la bonne soeur converse, tout en continuant son chapelet et sans parler, levait quelquefois les épaules, de cet air qui signifie qu'on plaint les gens, et qu'ils nous font quelquefois compassion.¹

There is no indication at all of the nuns at work and at prayer, no insight whatsoever into habits of study and of holy office, and, indeed, little suggestion that the atmosphere of the convent is specifically a religious one. There is no indication, either, of lay-sisters whether at work scrubbing the floors or at table serving the nuns and, most surprising of all, there is no indication of a teacher-pupil relationship between nun and "pensionnaire."² No, "pensionnaire," lay sister, nun form a sort of nebulous background out of which one or another may step forward in conformance with the role of Marianne. The prioress and the "tourière" alone have clear cut functions in the convent portrayed by Marivaux, though here again there is no stress on religious duties.

Marivaux gives us two pictures of the prioress, commander-in-chief of the convent. The first, not flattering, features

une petite personne courte, ronde et blanche, à double menton et qui avait le teint frais et reposé ... un embonpoint tout différent de celui des autres, un embonpoint qui s'est formé plus à l'aise et plus méthodiquement, c'est-à-dire où il entre plus d'art, plus de façon, plus d'amour de soi-même que dans le nôtre.³

¹ Marianne, p. 285.

² The idea conveyed by the word "boarder" is somewhat different from that conveyed by "pensionnaire" and there is no concise English equivalent for "tourière."

³ Ibid., p. 151.
This prioress, gourmand and hypocrite no less than the Haberts, puts an affable foot forward when she senses in Marianne a prize addition to the convent:

Eh! ma belle enfant, que vous me touchez! ... Que je me félicite du choix que vous avez fait de ma maison! En vérité, quand je vous ai vue, j'ai eu comme un pressentiment de ce qui vous amène: votre modestie m'a frappée. Ne serait-ce pas une prédéstinée qui me vient? ai-je pensé en moi-même. Car il est certain que votre vocation est écrite sur votre visage.¹

However, when she learns that Marianne is a destitute orphan incapable of paying for her pension, she is less sure that predestination has marked her for the convent, and business becomes business:

Notre maison n'est pas riche: nous ne subsistons que par nos pensionnaires, dont le nombre est fort diminué depuis quelque temps. Aussi sommes-nous endettées, et si mal à notre aise! J'eus l'autre jour le chagrin de refuser une jeune fille, un fort bon sujet, qui se présentait pour être converse, parce que nous n'en recevons plus, quelque besoin que nous en ayons, et que, nous apportant peu, elles nous seraient à charge. Ainsi de tous côtés vous voyez notre impuissance, dont je suis vraiment mortifiée; car vous m'affligiez, ma pauvre enfant.²

Christian charity would not seem to have been one of the prioress's virtues, and to a far greater extent than the good-hearted Mme Dutour, she revealed a mercenary soul. One of the excuses given by the prioress for her inability to help Marianne was the regulation confining her within the convent. No longer interested in Marianne as a prospective nun, she had cited Father Vinçant, free to move about in society, as being

¹. Ibid., p. 153.
². Ibid., p. 156.
of more use in the rehabilitation of Marianne:

Il faut voir ce que ce religieux, que vous appelez
le père Saint Vincent, fera pour vous, reprit-elle
d'un air de compassion posée .... Il lui est bien
plus aisé de vous rendre service qu'à moi qui ne
sors point, et qui ne saurais agir.

A further reference to this cloisteral restriction is made by the prioress
of the second convent in which Marianne was placed. Marianne is now free
to come and go and is about to rejoin Mme de Miran who is awaiting her
outside:

Quoi! s'écria-t-elle, cette mère si tendre, cette
dame que j'estime tant, est ici! Mon Dieu, que
j'aurais de plaisir à la voir et à lui dire du
bien de vous! Allez, mademoiselle, retournez-
vous-en, mais tâchez de la déterminer à venir
un instant; si je pouvais sortir, je courrais à
elle; et supposons qu'il soit trop tard, dites-
lui que je la conjure de revenir encore une fois
avec vous: partez, ma chère enfant.

This prioress, who is quite free from the narrow, mercenary outlook of
the first, had a deep understanding of the social problems beyond the
confines of the convent. With tact and kindness, she presents to Marianne
the facts of social distinction and social prejudice, forces which exist
in all ages but which were perhaps particularly powerful under the old
régime:

S'il ne fallait que du mérite, vous auriez lieu
d'espérer que vous leur conviendriez mieux qu'une
autre; mais on ne se contente pas de cela dans le
monde. Tout estimable que vous êtes, ils n'en
rougiraient pas moins de vous voir entrer dans
leur alliance; vos bonnes qualités n'en rendraient

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 329.
pas votre mari plus excusable; on ne lui pardonnerait jamais une épouse comme vous; ce serait un homme perdu dans l'estime publique. 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 l'ordre, si on permettait des unions aussi inégales que le serait la vôtre, on peut dire même aussi monstrueuses, ma fille .... C'est souvent un malheur que d'être belle, un malheur pour le temps, un malheur pour l'éternité. Vous croirez que je vous parle en religieuse. Point du tout; je vous parle le langage de la raison, un langage dont la vérité se justifie tous les jours, et que la plus saine partie des gens du siècle vous tiendraient eux-mêmes.1

Not as influential as the prioress but just as essential to the proper functioning of the convent was the "tourière." We see the "tourière," "[son] trousseau de clefs à sa ceinture,"2 going about her various duties, receiving visitors, showing them into the convent parlor, calling the prioress when she is required, locking up the church, and carrying on the business of the convent. We have some idea of the importance of her position in the convent from the fact that investigation into the mystery of Marianne's disappearance from the convent is completely held up because routine duties have temporarily called the "tourière" away:

Toutes ces instructions-là, au reste, ils ne les reçoivent que le lendemain de mon enlèvement ....... Lorsque [Mère de Miran] vint, la tourière, qui était la seule de qui elle pût tirer quelques lumières, était absente pour différentes commissions de la maison, de façon qu'il fallut revenir le lendemain matin pour lui parler.3

1. Ibid., p. 287.
2. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 48.
Allusions to the habit of the nuns are very few. Even in the ceremony in which a young nun was taking her vows there is no allusion to dress except the remark "qu'en de pareilles fêtes les religieuses paraissent à découvert."\(^1\) The ceremony itself can be very briefly indicated: "Le service commença; il y eut un sermon qui fut beau ... la cérémonie [finit]."\(^2\) The relatives and friends of the prospective nun are all present in the church; among the latter are Mme de Miran, Valville and M. de Climal. The "pensionnaires" are behind the grille with the other members of the community and when "le rideau de la grille" connecting convent and church is drawn aside to reveal the fledgeling nun in all her angelic radiance, Marianne is able to look through the same grille at the assembly beyond. Instead, then, of focussing attention on the nun and on the lines of force set up between her and the spectators, the author turns his spotlight on that part of the audience of interest to Marianne. It is evident that the only "raison d'être" of the ceremony is its function in presenting Marianne in another dramatic setting.

The same type of oblique reference is noticeable with respect to the refectory and the garden of the convent. There is absolutely no material detail given. The refectory and the garden serve only as the setting for the quarrel between Marianne and the proud "pensionnaire," a quarrel of which the consequences according to Marianne are "assez

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1. Ibid., p. 198.
2. Ibid., p. 200.
instructives pour les jeunes gens¹ desirous of winning friends and
influencing people. Despite the fact that anyone seeking in Marianne
a visual image of the eighteenth-century convent would find himself in
the same sort of nebulous no-man's land as was noted with respect to
personnel, one does get a sharp if sketchy impression of certain of its
physical details. "Une église et un couvent sont à peu près la même
chose" and one enters through a door common to both. On the right is the
flight of stairs up which the "tourière" led Marianne to see the prioress.
Directly beneath the stairs to the right is the room of the "tourière," a
room into which we see a prospective "pensionnaire" being carried stricken
with grief at the thought of being separated from her mother, and being
given treatment suitable for a fainting-spell:

Les religieuses qui étaient à l'entrée du couvent, bien
effrayées, appelaient de leur côté une tourière, qui vint
en courant ouvrir un petit réduit, une espèce de petite
chambre où elle couchait, et qui, par bonheur, était à
côté de l'escalier du parloir. Ce fut là que l'on tâcha
de porter la demoiselle évanouie ... on y avait mis la
demoiselle sur le lit de la tourière, et nous la déclasons,
cette tourière et moi, pour lui faciliter la respiration.²

To the left of the stairs, and facing the church is the large grille, cov-
ered on the inside by a curtain, which we noticed in the ceremony of taking
the veil. The stairs themselves lead to the parlor of the convent, and
visitors in the parlor carry on conversations with sisters, who are, of
course, behind a grille. In the course of such a conversation Marianne
and Mme de Miran, after reading the letter written by the former to Mme

1. Ibid., p. 230.
2. Ibid., p. 337.
Dutour, hand it through the grille to the prioress: "Ensuite je présentai ce papier à ma future bienfaitrice, qui après l'avoir lu en riant . . . le donna à travers la grille à la prieure." ¹ These details will suffice, I think, to indicate once again the "schématique et ondoyante" technique of Marivaux. Zola would have followed in detail a plan of the convent in the same way that he described the Louvre in l'Assommoir. Hardy would have followed in bare outline a plan of the convent in the same way he outlined Egdon Heath in The Return of the Native. Marivaux followed no blueprint. He gave only as much detail as was absolutely necessary to the story, and he gave it without any idea of presenting a complete picture. There is the same economy of detail as in Hardy, but where Hardy is architectural, Marivaux is natural.

One final point of interest in connection with the eighteenth-century convent as depicted by Marivaux is the extreme liberty with respect to the movements in and out of the convent by the "pensionnaires." The life of the nuns themselves is ruled by rigid regulations, a formidable grille separates the sister from the world, but it is an easy matter for Mme de Miran to take Marianne away for dinner, or to send her for a couple of days to the country home of the de Fares. Indeed, the general impression given of the convent with respect to "pensionnaires" is that of a check room where parents deposited children to be picked up later on presentation of the stub. Thus it was with the mother of Mlle Varthon: "Une dame de grande distinction [qui] était venue la veille à mon couvent avec sa fille, qu'elle voulait y mettre en pension jusqu'à son retour d'un voyage qu'elle allait faire en Angleterre."² Arrangements are quickly

¹ Ibid., p. 158.
² Ibid., p. 336.
made for placing young women in the convent and the frequent comings and goings of the "pensionnaires" maintained constant contact between the convent and the world. The arrival of a new "pensionnaire" always created a stir of mundane interest: "C'est une espèce de spectacle qu'une fille ... qui arrive dans un couvent. Est-elle grande? est-elle petite? comment marche-t-elle? que dit-elle et quel habit, quelle contenance a-t-elle? tout en est intéressant."¹

So much for the convent. On only one occasion does Marivaux take us to church, and on that occasion not one word is said about the service, not one reference made to the beauty of stained glass windows or of statues. The impression is strong that one went to church to be worshipped rather than to worship, so that some of the younger and more attractive of the church-goers might have appeared to be participating in a beauty contest rather than in a religious exercise. Marianne, for one, was so intent on exciting the willing admiration of the "beau monde," and even the grudging admiration of other and less successful Mariannes seated about her that the service itself was of little significance for her:

Je vous ai dit que j'allais à l'église, à l'entrée de laquelle je trouvai de la foule; mais je n'y restai pas. Mon habit neuf et ma figure y auraient trop perdu; et je tâchai, en me glissant tout doucement, de gagner le haut de l'église, où j'apercevais de beau monde qui était à son aise. C'étaient des femmes extrêmement parées ... [et] aussi nombre de jeunes cavaliers bien faits, gens de robe et d'épée, ... qui prenaient sur le dos de leurs chaises de ces postures aises et galantes qui marquent qu'on est au fait des bons airs du monde ... Quelle fête! C'était la première fois que j'allais jouir un peu du mérite de ma petite figure. J'étais tout émue de plaisir de penser à ce qui allait m'en arriver, j'en

¹. Ibid., p. 226.
perdais presque haleine; car j'étais sûre du succès, et ma vanité voyait venir d'avance les regards qu'on allait jeter sur moi.

Mme Dutour's attendance at church, though not very punctual, would suggest that religious practices were at least a routine part of her life: "Moi je vais prendre ma coiffe, et sortir pour aller entendre un petit bout de vêpres; elles seront bien avancées: mais je ne perdrai pas tout, et j'en aurai toujours peu ou prou." Among the lower bourgeois religion was a very honorable element in daily life, and the churchwarden's position caused him to be greatly respected not only in the life of the church itself but in society. The corner grocer who had insulted Jacob by getting up from the marriage table felt quite justified in resenting what appeared to him to be a personal affront. A "marguillier de sa paroisse," a man of obvious distinction could not be expected to continue as witness at the wedding of a domestic, especially of one who had posed as a gentleman. Mme d'Alain quite understands the grocer's feelings:

Mais entre nous, monsieur de la Vallée, reprit-elle, a-t-il tant de tort? Voyons; c'est un marchand, un bourgeois de Paris, un homme bien établi. De bonne foi, êtes-vous son pareil? un homme qui est marguillier de sa paroisse!

Jacob naturally does not share these feelings and it seemed to him that the son of a churchwarden of Saint Jacques, and who could have been in turn a churchwarden of Saint Jacques, is quite worthy to sit down at the table with a churchwarden of Saint Gervais:

1. Ibid., p. 70.
2. Ibid., p. 113.
Qu'appelez-vous, madame, marguillier de sa paroisse? lui dis-je; est-ce que mon père ne l'a pas été de la sienne? Est-ce que je pouvais manquer à l'être aussi, moi, si j'étais resté dans notre village, au lieu de venir ici?

Ah! oui, dit-elle; mais il y a paroisse et paroisse, monsieur de la Vallée — Eh! pardi, lui dis-je, je pense que notre saint est autant que le vôtre, madame d'Alain; Saint Jacques vaut bien Saint Gervais.

1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 117.
CHAPTER VI
Contemporary Life in the Novels of Marivaux
Society in General

We have another confirmation of the fact that in the society depicted by Marivaux Christian equality and social equality were not synonymous terms. The elder Mlle Habert uses with the president the argument of equal inequality in her attempt to prevent the marriage of her sister to Jacob: "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." 1 Jacob replies that class distinction is relative and temporal, and that in due course he will be on a par with the Haberts, "boutique pour boutique." Meanwhile he suffers from the lack of consideration which persons of importance accord him and which is evident even in their way of addressing him. He makes this point in presenting his case to the judge whose aid has been enlisted by the elder Mlle Habert:

Voilà, par exemple, Mlle Habert, l'aînée, monsieur le président; si vous lui disiez comme à moi, toi par-ci, toi par-là, qui es-tu? qui n'es-tu pas? elle ne manquerait pas de trouver cela bien étrange; elle dirait; "Monsieur, vous me traitez mal"; et vous pensesiez en vous-même: "Elle a raison"; c'est "mademoiselle" qu'il faut dire: ainsi faites-vous; mademoiselle ici, mademoiselle là, toujours honnêtement mademoiselle et à moi toujours "tu" et "toi". 2

What is most significant in this episode between Jacob and the president is the revelation of the arbitrary nature of justice in the eighteenth century. The president, "un des premiers magistrats de Paris," has been

1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 135.
2. Ibid.
induced by the elder Mlle Habert to send for Jacob with the view to preventing his marriage to her sister. Jacob had committed no offence but, as the agent of the president warned, he was not able to refuse this peremptory invitation:

J'ai là-bas un fiacre qui nous attend, et vous ne pouvez vous dispenser de venir, car on vous y obligerait; ainsi ce n'est pas la peine de refuser; d'ailleurs on ne veut vous faire aucun mal, on ne veut que vous parler.

The younger Mlle Habert, warned not to speak to anyone about the "arrest," bursts out in religious indignation at this extra-judiciary procedure directed against one who has no power to defend himself:

M. le président passe pour un si honnête homme, on le dit si homme de bien! Comment se peut-il qu'il en use ainsi? Où est donc sa religion? Ne tient-il qu'à être président pour envoyer chercher un homme qui n'a que faire à lui? C'est comme un criminel qu'on envoie prendre; en vérité, je n'y comprends rien. Dieu n'approuve pas ce qu'il fait là, je suis d'avis qu'on n'y aille pas. Je m'intéresse à M. de la Vallée, je le déclare; il n'a ni charge, ni emploi, j'en conviens; mais c'est un sujet du roi comme un autre; et il n'est pas permis de maltraiter les sujets du roi, ni de les faire marcher comme cela sous prétexte qu'on est président et qu'ils ne sont rien; mon sentiment est qu'il reste.

In Marianne there is the same kind of arbitrary action on the part of a Prime Minister as there was in le Paysan parvenu on the part of the magistrate. In the comedies this arbitrary use of power had been indicated but not, as in the novels, by means of realistic action. It is possible that the Prime Minister in Marianne represents the ideal advocated by Destouches in his literary theory of contrasts ("un premier ministre doit

1. Ibid., p. 124.
2. Ibid., p. 125.
être le plus sage, le plus modéré et le plus discret de tous les hommes")1 or he may represent an actual Frenchman of the day, possibly "le ministre honnête homme, le doux, humain et nullement tyranique de Fleury."2 In any case, despite the abduction of Marianne "par un ordre supérieur" and the alternatives forced upon her "[de] prendre le voile ou [de] consentir à un autre mariage,"3 the Prime Minister honestly thinks he is assuring Marianne's future happiness as well as the stability of society. His aim as Minister is to advance the welfare of his fellow citizens rather than his personal glory; he is represented as "un génie sans ostentation ... un père de famille qui veille au bien, au repos et à la considération de ses enfants, qui les rend heureux sans leur vanter les soins qu'il se donne pour cela."4

One other item in the political affairs of the day is worth noting, and that is the sanctuary offered by France to English political exiles. M. Varthon was one of the Jacobite exiles who established themselves and their families in France, and his wife, after returning to England to settle his estate, came back to France which had become her home:

C'était un seigneur anglais, qu'à l'exemple de beaucoup d'autres, son zèle et sa fidélité pour son roi avaient obligé de sortir de son pays; et sa veuve, dont le bien avait fait toute sa ressource, partait pour le vendre et pour recueillir cette succession, dont elle voulait se défaire aussi, dans le dessein de revenir en France, où elle avait fixé son séjour.5

2. Larroumet, op. cit., p. 387.
4. Ibid., p. 305.
5. Ibid., p. 337.
There is nothing in the novels, properly Marivaux's, relating to the military service in France. As was mentioned in chapter II, the only direct references to the army in Marivaux will be found in the apocryphal part of *le Paysan parvenu*.

The same dearth of material is evident with reference to the educational facilities of the day and they likewise receive their fullest treatment in the apocryphal part of *le Paysan parvenu*. However, we do learn on the authority of Marivaux that education was held in great esteem. Jacob mentions an aunt who became village schoolmistress and whose situation was greatly respected in the eyes both of the family and of the village. In another passage he sketches a portrait of the tutor, a characteristic figure of the well-to-do family under the old régime. This one is particularly anxious that his young charge should distinguish himself, both so that he may bring credit to his tutor and so that the tutor may be sure of retaining a lucrative post:

[Je rejoignis] mon jeune maître qui faisait un thème, ou plutôt à qui son précepteur le faisait, afin que la science de son écolier lui fit honneur, et que cet honneur lui conservât son poste de précepteur qui était fort lucratif.  

Moreover, in the scorn of M. de Fécour for Jacob's lack of business training, there is a suggestion of an increasing demand for a pragmatic type of education. Jacob, himself, perhaps best represents this pragmatic ideal.

There is little indication of the beaux-arts in the novels and what

little there is occurs in le Paysan parvenu. There is a direct reference to the "Opéra", and Jacob sees an actual performance at the "Comédie": "C'était une tragédie qu'on jouait, Mithridate, s'il m'en souvient. Ah! la grande actrice que celle qui jouait Monime."¹ As for literature itself, there is in the literary criticism made by the Chevalier for the young author's benefit reference to Crébillon fils who had previously attacked in Tanzaï et Néadarné the style of Marivaux. The Chevalier in condemning in particular the prolixity and the licentiousness of the author, gives us some idea of what constitutes Marivaux's ideal of literary style.

Mention of the amusements of the age is also less frequent in the novels than in the comedies. The only mention of dancing, for example, is through Mme de Fécour's appreciation of Jacob's leg: "[Vous avez] la jambe parfaite avec cela; il faut apprendre à danser, La Vallée."² The other accomplishment to be acquired by Jacob and equally inspired by the sensual appreciation of Mme de Fécour has already been referred to in the incident at Mme Remy's. In Marianne there is reference to "une partie de pêche"³ to which Tervire was invited and which was probably the feminine counterpart of that more manly pursuit, "la chasse". On a less elevated plane are the amusements of the "peuple." Mme Dutour, enlarging upon her sententious remark, "Dans le monde, on est ce qu'on peut, et non pas ce qu'on veut," ⁴

¹. Ibid., p. 283.
². Ibid., p. 180.
³. Marianne, p. 475.
⁴. Ibid., p. 108.
advises Marianne to accept the money of M. de Climal and to lavish it, if she so desires, on such gala occasions as birthdays and saints’-days but not to throw it away on the crowds at carnival time:

Voilà que ma fête arrive; quand ce viendra la vôtre, celle de Toinon, dépensez alors, qu'on se régale; à la bonne heure! chacun en profite! mais hors cela, et dans les jours de carnaval, où tout le monde se réjouit, gardez-moi votre petit fait.

Mme Dutour's garrulous explanation why no one will disturb the interview between M. de Climal and Marianne makes us realize that fairs, weddings and family visits are the great events or the spice to the humdrum existence of the common people and also that frequent visiting is not encouraged by employers:

Tenez, Marianne et moi, nous étions encore à table, il n'y a que nous deux ici. Jeannot [c'était son fils] est avec sa tante, qui doit le mener tantôt à la foire; car il faut toujours que cet enfant soit fourré chez elle, surtout les fêtes. Madelon (c'était sa servante) est à la noce d'un cousin qu'elle a, et je lui ai dit: Va-t'en, cela n'arrive pas tous les jours, et en voilà pour long-temps. D'un autre côté, Toinon est allée voir sa mère, qui ne la voit pas souvent, la pauvre femme; elle demeure si loin! c'est au faubourg Saint Marceau; imaginez-vous s'il y a à trotter; et tant mieux, j'en suis bien aise, moi; cela fait que la fille ne sort guère.2

However, what was an event of great moment to Toinon was merely routine to the noblesse. Social calls were not made in the mornings, "le temps le moins sujet aux visites,"3 and sometimes when made at their proper hour were not altogether appreciated, and might be discouraged by the

1. Ibid., p. 109.
2. Ibid., p. 112.
3. Ibid., p. 310.
polite and popular fiction "not at home":

[Soudain] un coup de sifflet nous avertit qu'il venait une visite.
Ah! Mon Dieu, s'écria Mme de Miran, que je suis fâchée! J'allais sonner pour donner ordre de dire que je n'y étais pas; retournons chez moi. Nous nous y rendîmes.
Un laquais entra, qui nous annonça deux dames que je ne connaissais pas, qui n'avaient point entendu parler de moi non plus .... Elles venaient rendre elles-mêmes une de ces visites indifférentes, qui, entre femmes, n'aboutissent qu'à se voir une demi-heure, qu'à se dire quelques bagatelles ennuyeuses et qu'à se laisser là sans se soucier les unes des autres.¹

Public utilities too receive less attention in the novels than in the comedies. There is little or no reference to the postal service, the customs or the water supply and only an oblique reference to the Petites-Maisons. However, in the rather insipid mental debate between passion and honor which poses as alternatives marriage to Geneviève or residence in a poor-house, Jacob gives us indirect insight into an institution not mentioned in the comedies:

Va, tu as raison; va te gîter à l'hôpital, ton honneur et toi; vous y aurez tous deux fort bonne grâce .... Pas si bonne grâce, répondais-je en moi-même .... C'est avoir de l'honneur en pure perte que de l'avoir à l'hôpital ...²

Infinitely more interesting and more realistic is the reference to the police department of Paris. Jacob, protesting vigorously, is arrested on suspicion of murder and told by the "archer" in charge, in a manner very like that of the modern "Hollywood cop," to "tell it to the judge"!

Je crus alors pouvoir parler; mais à peine commençais-je à m'expliquer, que l'archer, qui avait le premier pris

¹. Ibid., p. 333.
². Le Paysan parvenu, p. 25.
Transportation facilities other than the "patrol wagon" are mentioned in the novels. We learn, for example, that travellers have to sign a register for the transportation company when setting out on a voyage. One of the reasons for the obscurity regarding Marianne's parentage is that the parents' names as written on the register were not recognizable. It was supposed that the names given were assumed, and thus the identity of the persons giving them could not be traced:

On eut beau recourir au registre qui est toujours chargé du nom des voyageurs, cela ne servit de rien; on sut bien par là qui ils étaient tous, à l'exception de deux personnes, d'une dame et d'un cavalier, dont le nom assez étranger n'instruisit de rien, et peut-être qu'ils n'avaient pas dit le véritable.

From the same incident we learn that banditry was a transportation hazard in the eighteenth century, a hazard so great that it was perhaps necessary to have "cinq ou six officiers ... [qui] couraient la poste." Further, personal discomfort of the traveller was not entirely due to the "mauvaises mazettes" mentioned in the comedies, but owed something to the dismal condition of the roads, especially bad after rains. Mme de Sainte-Hermières' death was due to an accident on such roads: "Il avait plu beaucoup la veille, les chemins étaient rompus; son carrosse versa dans un profond et

1. Ibid., p. 153.
2. Marianne, p. 29.
3. Ibid., p. 28.
large fossé, dont on ne la retira qu'évanouie et à moitié brisée.\textsuperscript{1}

Even when the journey was over there was still one difficulty facing the 
traveller -- that of hotel accommodation. Mme Darcire, with whom Tervire 
was travelling, knew how to take care of that difficulty:

Nous n'étions plus le lendemain qu'à une lieue de 
Paris, quand nous vîmes un équipage s'arrêter près 
de notre voiture, et que nous entendîmes quelqu'un 
qui demandait si Mme Darcire n'était pas là. C'était 
umhomme d'affaires à qui elle avait écrit de venir au-
devant d'elle, et de lui chercher un hôtel où elle pût 
avoir un logement convenable.\textsuperscript{2}

Tervire, who was staying in this hotel "si convenable," was but two 
doors distant from her mother established in "une auberge ... qui ne 
pouvait guère être que l'asile de gens de peu de chose."\textsuperscript{3} Both of these 
residences being in "le faubourg Saint-Germain"\textsuperscript{4} and so close to each 
other, it was ironical that Tervire should go all the way over to "la rue 
Saint-Honoré, vis-à-vis les Capucins"\textsuperscript{5} to look for her mother. These 
references to actual streets in Paris are almost entirely confined to the 
last chapter or two of Marianne. However, there is in \textit{le Paysan parvenu} 
reference to "la rue de la Monnaie,"\textsuperscript{6} a reference, incidentally, which drew 
the following commentary from Abel Farges: "C'est la seule rue que Marivaux 
désigne par son nom dans ce roman. Il est d'une grande discrétion sur les

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., p. 461.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., p. 522.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 542.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p. 531.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p. 523.
\textsuperscript{6} Le Paysan parvenu, p. 42.
adresses de ses personnages." The same critic also indicates that the
"cheval de bronze" mentioned by Jacob was "la statue équestre d'Henri
IV," the famous Henri IV of the Pont-Neuf.

Marivaux, ever discreet with respect to descriptive detail, gives
us little insight into the dress, the furniture and the food of the day.
With respect to dress, Marivaux might at first seem quite lavish in his
description. However, none of this description is gratuitous; the
"uniforme" of Mlle Habert contrasts the outward show of ascetic practices
with the inward reality of "gourmandise" and voluptuousness; the wedding
attire of the corner grocer is in perfect harmony with the starchiness of
his character; and the "costume de chevalier" of Jacob contributes to the
attractive appearance considered as an asset to the "social climber" and
gives a tremendous boost to his rustic "amour-propre"; "Cette soie rouge
me flatta; une doublure de soie! quel plaisir et quelle magnificence
pour un paysan." Marianne, a "coquette naturelle," is very conscious of
the power of dress. Giving an account of the scene in which she ostensibly
dismisses her lover, Valville, she recalls to the reader the studied neg-
ligence of her attire. She would like to give Mme de Miran the impression
of sincerity, but actually this ostentatious simplicity further ennobled
her in the eyes of Valville:

J'allais soutenir une terrible scène; je craignais
de manquer de courage; je me craignais moi-même; j'avais
peur que mon coeur ne servît lâchement ma bienfaitrice.

1. Ibid., p. 41.
2. Ibid., p. 175.
J'oubliais encore de vous parler d'un article qui me faisait honneur.

C'est que j'étais restée dans mon négligé, je dis dans le négligé où je m'étais laissée en me levant; point d'autre linge que celui avec lequel je m'étais couchée: linge assez blanc, mais toujours flétri; qui ne vous pare point quand vous êtes aimable, et qui vous dépasse un peu quand vous ne l'êtes pas.

Joignez-y une robe à l'avenant, et qui me servait le matin dans ma chambre.

A similar use of the négligé is made by Marianne and Mlle Varthon in that powerful scene in which they, as rivals for the love of Valville, are seen together at the convent just prior to departing for Mme de Miran's. Mlle Varthon obviously does not wish to take advantage of poor Marianne understandably "horrid" after her illness, and Marianne is obviously in no condition to bother with such trifles as fine clothes, even could such clothes put her back on an even physical footing with Mlle Varthon. In spite of the meagreness of descriptive detail, the scene presents an excellent example of sartorial "marivaudage":

... Mlle Varthon entra dans un négligé fort décent et fort bien entendu.

Comme elle avait prévu que, malgré mes chagrins, je pourrais être de la partie du dîner, elle s'était sans doute abstenue, à cause de moi, de se parer davantage, et s'était contentée d'un ajustement fort simple, qui semblait exclure tout dessein de plaire, ou qui, raisonnablement parlant, ne me laissait aucun sujet de l'accuser de ce dessein ... mais je n'en fus pas la dupe ... son négligé ne m'en imposa pas. Je vis au premier coup d'œil qu'il n'était pas de bonne foi, et qu'elle avait tâché de n'y rien perdre ...

Et moi, qui m'étais laissée comme je m'étais mise en me levant, qui n'avais précisément songé qu'à jeter sur moi une mauvaise robe; moi, changée, si maigre, avec deux yeux éteints, avec un visage tel qu'on l'a quand on sort de maladie ....

1. Marianne, p. 189.

2. Ibid., p. 385.
Articles of furniture like those of dress appear only when their presence is really significant. Thus Marianne is visibly disturbed by the sight of the box which had followed her from the first convent to the second and to which she had since given no thought. What a shock to realize from this tangible evidence that she was there for good!

En entrant sur le soir dans ma chambre ... je vis mon coffre (car je n'avais point encore d'autre meuble) qui était sur une chaise, et qu'on avait apporté de mon autre convent.
Vous ne sauriez croire de quel nouveau trouble ce coffre me frappa. Mon enlèvement m'avait, je pense, moins consternée ....

Marivaux, like the Zola who describes the effect of a similar "coffre" on Gervaise Macquart, realizes how powerful can be on occasion the psychological reaction to material details ordinarily insignificant:

Dans les circonstances où j'étais, il y a des choses qui ne sont point importantes en elles-mêmes, mais qui sont tristes à voir au premier coup d'œil, et qui ont une apparence effrayante; c'est par là qu'on les saisit quand on a l'âme déjà disposée à la crainte.  

In _Le Paysan parvenu_ Marivaux (and this time he resembles Balzac) uses furniture in the same manner as he uses food to heighten the impression of the "gourmandise" of the Haberts. After supper, for example, the Haberts, gorged to the full, "se laissaient aller dans un fauteuil, dont la mollesse et la profondeur invitaient au repos." His use of such reference is sparing, and rides under the same restraint as that applied to foods:

1. Ibid., p. 294.
4. _Le Paysan parvenu_, p. 54.
Les débris du déjeuner étaient là sur une petite table; il avait été composé d'une demi-bouteille de vin de Bourgogne presque tout bue, de deux œufs frais, et d'un petit pain au lait.

Je crois que ce détail n'ennuiera point; il entre dans le portrait de la personne dont je parle.  

It is not known if the Haberts, like M. Bono, carried their "gourmandise" to the graceful extent of picking their teeth. That is of no consequence to us. What is important is the use (apologetic though it is) that Marivaux makes of a simple item like a tooth pick to reveal the character not only of M. Bono but also of the bourgeois financier. There is something nonchalant about the use of a tooth pick; there was something nonchalant about M. Bono, something in his gesture of the unconcern with which an American oil magnate might, perhaps, chew gum in the presence of a peer of the realm:  

Il vint quelques instants après, un cure-dent à la main; je parle du cure-dent, parce qu'il sert à caractériser la réception qu'il nous fit ...  

Il s'avança vers la jeune dame avec le cure-dent, qui, comme vous voyez, accompagnaît fort bien la simplicité de son accueil.

Perhaps in the eighteenth century the tooth pick was the most efficient way to clean one's teeth. However, there is a reference in _le Paysan parvenu_ which might possibly allude to the more modern way of keeping that "Colgate" smile. Jacob completes an ironical description of the director's visage by referring to his beautiful teeth:  

Du reste, imaginez-vous de courts cheveux dont l'un ne passe pas l'autre, qui s'entort on ne peut mieux, et qui se relèvent en demi-boucles autour des joues par

1. Ibid., p. 45.  
2. Ibid., p. 224.
un tour qu'ils prennent naturellement, lequel ne doit rien au soin de celui qui les porte; joignez à cela des lèvres assez vermeilles, avec de belles dents qui ne sont belles et blanches à leur tour que parce qu'elles se trouvent heureusement ainsi sans qu'on y touche. 1

In the foregoing reference one may well see another allusion to the practice of curling manly locks, and perhaps even of tinting manly lips. Yet in the novels there is surprisingly little said about toilet preparations, especially those of the women. In _Le Paysan parvenu_, for example, where Jacob is permitted to witness the toilette of the Seigneur's wife, there is not a single material reference. In contrast with the relative wealth of information given in this respect in the comedies, all we learn is that "dans ce temps, on se coiffait en cheveux." 2

However, there is one privilege reserved for us in the novels, and that is the insight given us by Marivaux into the contemporary lady's handbag. Marivaux does not explicitly say that the ladies carried handbags, but where else could they have put all that paraphernalia seemingly at their disposal? Fashionable women, like the men, were in the habit of taking snuff and consequently had frequent resort to the snuff-box. 3 Even Mlle Habert, the ascetic, was a snuff-sniffer like Mme de Fécour and, indeed, on one occasion unknowingly helped to a pinch of snuff one of the women bent on stealing her husband:

_Or, j'avais [dit Jacob] par mégarde emporté la tabatière de Mme de la Vallée; je la sentis dans ma poche, et, pour occuper mes mains, je me mis à l'ouvrir et à prendre du tabac._

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1. Ibid., p. 58.
3. Lesage, op. cit., p. 66: "Les jolies manières! Tu verras une femme vive, pétulante, distraite, étourdie, dissipée, et toujours barbouillée de tabac. On ne la prendrait pas pour une femme de province."
A peine l'eus-je ouverte, que Mme de Fécourt, qui
jetait sur moi de fréquents regards qu'on jette sur
quelqu'un qu'on aime à voir, que Mme de Fécourt, dis-je,
s'écria: "Ah! monsieur, vous avez du tabac; donnez-m'en,
je vous prie; j'ai oublié ma tabatière; il y a une demi-
heure que je ne sais que devenir."

This practice of taking snuff was also indicated in the comedies;
in les Sincères, for example, there was "une grosse dame ... [qui] prit
longtemps du tabac" and in l'Heureux Stratagème there was even the same
suggestion that taking snuff was admirable for covering up the awkward or
the irksome moments in daily life. However, it is in le Paysan parvenu
that is offered the most striking analogy with modern-day smoking habits.
Mme de Fécourt in the tone of the typical dissuader from the "terrible"
cigarette habit warns Jacob that he will be sorry:

Vous êtes bien jeune pour vous accoutumer au tabac, me
dit-elle; quelque jour vous en serez fâché, monsieur; il
n'y a rien de si incommode, je le dis à tout le monde, et
surtout aux jeunes messieurs de votre âge à qui j'en vois
prendre .......

Yet the tender age of Marianne did not deter the self-conscious M. Villot
from offering her a pinch of snuff:

Et puis la conversation tomba; je ne m'embarasses
guère de ce qu'elle deviendrait.
Apparemment qu'il cherchait comment il la relèverait,
et le seul moyen dont il s'avisait pour cela, ce fut de
tirer sa tabatière, et puis, me la présentant ouverte;
Mademoiselle en use-t-elle?

1. Le Paysan Parvenu, p. 191.
2. Oeuvres, V, 387.
Even the watches that jostle with the snuff-box for a position in the handbag are means of revealing psychological traits. Mme de la Vallée, eager for the evening to finish, and little interested in the wedding social, "tira sa montre à plusieurs reprises, et dit l'heure qu'il était, pour conseiller honnêtement la retraite à nos convives." The guests took the hint. It never fails.

No, it never fails. Having gotten well into the eighteenth-century handbag, we now find that perhaps there were not any handbags after all. Never mind, Whether it is a handbag or a pocket that we are "nosing" into, we are very likely to get a whiff of "une eau souveraine" more potent than perfums. Apparently fashionable people of the day never went far without their "flacon," so that when Mme de Miran, faced with an emergency, found that she had forgotten hers, Valville was quick to fill the breach and to revive Mlle Varthon:

Mme de Miran cherchait dans sa poche un flacon plein d'une eau souveraine en pareils accidents, et elle l'avait oublie chez elle.
Valville qui en avait un pareil au sien s'approcha tout d'un coup avec vivacité, nous écarta tous, pour ainsi dire, et, se mettant à genoux devant elle, tâcha de lui faire respirer de cette liqueur qui était dans le flacon, et lui en versa dans la bouche.²

Tervire rendered the same sort of assistance to M. Dursan père: "Je tenais un flacon dont je lui faisais respirer la vapeur; enfin son étoffement diminua."³ A more graphic example of first aid and a more interesting use of this "eau souveraine" will be found in the episode in which the "chirurgien" gives expert attention to the sprained ankle of Marianne:

1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 199.
3. Ibid., p. 496.
Dans quel endroit sentez-vous du mal? me disait le chirurgien en me tâtant. Est-ce là? Oui, lui répondis-je, en cet endroit même. Aussi est-il un peu enflé, ajoutait Valville en y mettant le doigt d'un air de bonne foi. Allons, ce n'est rien que cela, dit le chirurgien; il n'y a qu'à ne pas marcher aujourd'hui; un linge trempé dans l'eau-de-vie et un peu de repos vous guériront. Aussitôt le linge fut apporté avec le reste, la compresse fut mise, on me chaussa, le chirurgien sortit.¹

In the comedies there is no such direct exposition of a doctor at work and even the reference to the "médecin" in l'Île de la Raison is satire in the Dr. Sangrado vein. The maladies themselves receive in the comedies no extensive mention, and in l'Île de la Raison they are cited either for comic purposes or for the sake of imagery. In the novels, on the other hand, there is frequent resort to the "médecin" and, indeed, one can readily see why "il y a de ces messieurs-là dans tous les quartiers ... [prêts à venir] presque sur-le-champ."² "Apoplexie, gravelle, colique, tuberculeuse, petite vérole, rhumatisme, asthme, insomnie, migraine, hydropsie, paralysie" are among the ailments tending to give a symbolic significance to the black garb of the "médecin."³ There is even reference to the prevalence of the common cold. Villot, the self-conscious bourgeois advanced as a possible husband for Marianne, and absolutely incapable of stimulating intelligent conversation, succeeds in uttering some commonplace remarks on Marianne's commonplace cough:

Et le voilà encore à ne savoir que dire. Les monosyllabes dont j'usais pour parler comme lui n'étaient d'aucune

¹ Ibid., p. 79.
² Le Paysan parvenu, p. 267.
³ Le Dénouement imprévu, Œuvres, I, 187.
ressource. Comment faire?
Je toussai. Mademoiselle est-elle enrhumée?
Ce temps-ci cause beaucoup de rhumes; hier il faisait
froid, aujourd'hui il fait chaud, et ces changements de
temps n'accordent pas la santé. Cela est vrai, lui
dis-je.
Pour moi, reprit-il, quelque temps qu'il fasse, je ne
suis pas sujet aux rhumes; je ne connais pas ma poitrine;
rien ne m'incommode.1

Once again Marivaux the psychologist has seized upon a minor detail
to give a humorous glimpse into human society. Sometimes the analysis
goes deeper and the humor becomes more cruel, for Marivaux, having con-
sidered the role of the senses in relationship to sensibility places
Mme de Fécour, "une femme qui n'avait que des sens, et point de sentiments,"
not much higher than the animal in his scale of sensibility. She has,
reports Jacob, "une des plus furieuses gorges [que j'aie] jamais vues"2
and in her love-making is "quelquefois indécente et non pas coquette":

Quand vous lui plaisiez, par exemple, cette gorge dont
j'ai parlé, il semblait qu'elle vous la présentât, c'était
moins pour tenter votre coeur que pour dire que vous touchiez
le sien; c'était une manière de déclaration d'amour.3

The question might well arise as to whether Marivaux, psychologist
always and abnormal psychologist on occasion, has not in the novels given
an abnormal picture of eighteenth-century society. Such is, for instance,
the opinion of Faguet:

Voici deux romans de moeurs, formellement et de profes-
sion romans de moeurs, qui se passent dans le temps où
l'auteur écrit, dans la société où il vit, des romans où

2. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 188.
3. Ibid., p. 189.
le petit détail des actions humaines a sa place, des "romans où l'on mange" comme on a dit spirituellement, enfin des romans de moeurs. Eh bien, j'en vois un où il n'y a guère que des gens parfaits, et un autre où il n'y a guère de plats gueux et des femmes perdues. Je ne sais pas lequel est le plus faux.\footnote{1}

But although the reader of Marianne and le Paysan parvenu may feel that he meets in this world presented by Marivaux a great many widows and orphans, "faux dévots," financiers, and women too perfect to be true, still he carries away from it an impression of a very real and robust society. In neither the comedies nor the novels, does Marivaux make any pretense that all the situations treated by him are normal. On the contrary, he takes very great care to let the reader know that he, himself, knows that a particular scene or particular society is "étrange, bizarre ou hétéroclite." In les Sermens indiscrets, for example, the word "bizarre" or its synonym "hétéroclite" occurs at least three times in forty pages, and "Quelle bizarre situation que la mienne,"\footnote{2} is a familiar refrain that could equally well be taken up by Jacob or by Marianne. However, our examination of the novels has shown that the portrayal of society in them is generally more extensive and more realistic than that in the comedies, and, consequently, more easily recognizable as French and eighteenth-century.

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] Faguet, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 92.
\item[2.] Oeuvres, II, 92.
\end{itemize}}
CHAPTER VII

Contemporary Life in the Plays and Novels of Marivaux

The General Picture

(i)

The Comedies

In the "Avertissement" to les Sermens indiscrets Marivaux states that he has tried to create in the comedies "le langage des conversations, et la tournure des idées familières et variées qui y viennent." He also states that "c'est le ton de la conversation en général [qu'il a] tâché de prendre" and Brunetière, for one, considers that he has come close to realizing his objective: "Il a approché plus que personne du ton de la conversation d'alors, et ses comédies ont ainsi une certaine valeur documentaire." It is through language, its variety and its tone, that Marivaux brings to life the people of eighteenth-century France both as members of a social group and as individuals. The variety of the language gives us indirect insight into the components of the social order considered in themselves, and the tone combined with the actual verbal expression gives us direct insight into the individual considered in conjunction with other individuals. The straightforward diction and the good idiom of the noblesse, the preciosity of the "petit-maître" and its imitation by many of the domestics, the colloquialisms and the occasional rusticity of other domestics together with the proverbial expressions and the


2. Ibid., p. 6.

homely speech of the peasants, the extensive use made of dialect and
the occasional use of business clichés, all these serve to indicate
diverse elements of French society in Marivaux's day. What an insight
do we get into contemporary manners from a mere "Touche-là" or a "Gage
que non, gage qui si"? How much would be revealed to us of our own day
from an enthusiastic "Shake on it, pal!" or the ever familiar and pro-
vocative "I'll bet you!" Such obvious colloquialisms suggest not only the
tone of the voice but also its inflexion, and even the accompanying gesture
and facial expression.

It is this combination of tone and verbal expression that gives us
direct insight into real-life relationships not only between brother Mario
and sister Silvia in \textit{le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard}, between mother Argante
and daughter Angélique in \textit{la Mère confidente}, between mistress la Marquise
and servant Lisette in the second \textit{Surprise de l'amour} but also between the
many lovers who are the centre of attraction in Marivaux's comedies. Only
occasionally, as with "procureur" Remy or painter Hermidas, do we see dir-
ectly beyond this person to person relationship into institutions other
than that of the family. Only occasionally, too, do we get direct insight
into some of the customs of the day such as, for example, the collection of
mail to be sent by the "poste" or the procedure to be followed when claiming

\footnote{\textit{Oeuvres}, IV, 340.}
a lost article. Direct insight into material detail is even more scarce and it is only rarely that the characters themselves handle anything more formidable than a letter, a portrait or a snuff-box.

Most of the contemporary life that we have glimpsed through the comedies is revealed indirectly: graphic description of a primping coquette or portrait of a surly husband, verbal reference to "une partie de piquet" or to "une bamboche" on the Pont-Neuf, comic reference to a "crieuse de vieux chapeaux" or to a "maudit serrurier," figurative reference to infant life or to the postal or customs service, isolated reference through language of the business world to finance and commercial dealings. In none of these cases is the object referred to observed at first-hand. Only through words, and through the mental image behind those words, do we see the panorama of contemporary life that lies beyond the immediate environment of the person speaking. What we have done, then, in the chapters on the comedies, is to reverse the order of Marivaux's own procedure when forming critical judgment on a particular author:

J'adopte seulement, le plus qu'il m'est possible, les usages, les moeurs, le goût de son siècle, et la

1. La Surprise de l'amour, Oeuvres, III, 144:
Arlequin:
Madame, mon maître m'a dit que vous aviez perdu une boîte de portrait; je sais un homme qui l'a trouvée. De quelle couleur est-elle? Combien y a-t-il de diamans? Sont-ils gros ou petits?
Colombine:
Montre, nigaud; te méfies-tu de madame? Tu fais là d'impertinentes questions.
Arlequin:
Mais c'est la coutume d'interroger le monde pour plus grande sûreté; je ne pense point à mal.
However, these physical and these intangible details of milieu were not the only aspects of contemporary life to be registered on the minds and expressed in the words of Marivaux's characters. Revealed thereby were some of the forces underlying and undermining this society, and we noted unmistakable symptoms of conflict between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, aristocrat and non-aristocrat and even between king and commoner. Implicit in these conflicts, and treated not only by Marivaux but by Voltaire, Diderot, Nivelle de la Chaussée, Beaumarchais and other pre-revolutionary writers were many of the "préjugés" responsible for the Revolution and its plea for "liberté, égalité et fraternité." These prejudices made difficult the recognition of merit and hindered the free development of society and of the individual.

Some of the comedies of Marivaux are based solely on these prejudices; in them it is society alone that is analysed. In *La Nouvelle Colonie*, for example, where Arthénice and Mme Sorbin make a bid to place women on an equal footing with their husbands though not on an equal footing with other women of different class levels the prejudices are twofold; first, the prejudice on the part of man that women are useful only in the home and, second, the prejudice on the part of the noblesse that birth is the only legitimate basis for social prestige. In *L'Île des Esclaves* there is a further accent on the prejudice of birth, this time in the sense that civility may be dispensed with in dealings with social inferiors.

In other comedies the social prejudices are external to the psychological analysis of love. In _les Fausses Confidences_ Mme Argante tries in vain to persuade her daughter, Araminte, to marry Dorimont whose only distinction is his noble birth. In _l'Ecole des Mères_ Mme Argante has the same lack of success in her effort to persuade her daughter to marry the aged Damis, a prospective husband whose only qualification is money.

In yet other comedies the social prejudices are an integral part of the psychological complex. In _le Petit-Maître corrigé_ the internal struggle racking Rosimond is based on the one hand on his love for Hortense and on the other on his prejudice against marriage on the grounds that it is too "bourgeois." As we have previously noted, Rosimond apologizes to Hortense for his "orgueil." In _le Préjugé vaincu_ the obstacle to love is the prejudice of birth, this time maintained by the child and opposed by the parent who recognizes that the bourgeois, Dorante, lacks only birth to be generally esteemed a suitable husband for Angélique. Dorante has proposed himself as a husband but under an assumed name:

**Le Marquis:**

_Ah! vous voilà, Dorante? Vous avez sans doute proposé à ma fille le mariage dont vous m'avez parlé? L'acceptez-vous, Angélique?

Angélique:

_Non, mon père; vous m'avez laissé la liberté d'en décider, à ce que m'a dit monsieur; et vous avez bien prévu, je pense, que je ne l'accepterais pas._

**Le Marquis:**

_Point du tout, ma fille; j'espère tout le contraire. Dès que c'est Dorante qui le propose, ce ne peut être qu'un de ses amis, et, par conséquent, un homme très-estimable, qui doit d'ailleurs avoir un rang et que vous auriez pu épouser avec l'approbation de tout le monde._

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1. See p. 16.

2. _Oeuvres_, II, 405.
Once again, there is, in Angélique's eventual acceptance of Dorante, an indication that "orgueil" had to be overcome before love could hold away: "Levez-vous, Dorante. Vous avez triomphé d'une fierté que je désavoue, et mon coeur vous en venge."

It is in le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard, however, that the struggle between love and prejudice is most skilfully portrayed. Not only is Silvia prejudiced against marriage in general because too many husbands of her acquaintance are of too surly a disposition to create a happy married life but also she finds herself faced, like her Dorante, with love for one beneath her station. Fortunately for Silvia, she is informed of Dorante's true identity and is saved from making the humiliating gesture of sacrificing self-respect to love. Dorante who does not know Silvia's identity is forced to make a really difficult decision and thanks to Silvia's wiles, pride goes down before love:

Je t'adore, je te respecte. Il n'est ni rang, ni naissance, ni fortune, qui ne disparaisse devant une âme comme la tienne. J'aurais honte que mon orgueil tint encore contre toi, et mon coeur et ma main t'ap-partiennent."

Sainte-Beuve cites les Sermens indiscrets and la Double Inconstance as justification for his remark that "Marivaux, au théâtre, aime surtout à démêler et à poursuivre les effets et les conséquences de l'amour-propre

1. Ibid., p. 431.
2. Tilley, Three French Dramatists, p. 100: "The play never stands still, in order that the audience may applaud the author's 'esprit' or learn wisdom from his social or philosophical opinions."
3. Œuvres, IV, 288.
dans l'amour,"\(^1\) and it is true that in many cases Marivaux does study "les conséquences de l'amour-propre dans l'amour." Silvia, for example, in forcing Dorante to overcome his pride wants him to take her at "face value," and Lucile, after having kept her self-respect by refusing to let herself be married off by her father to "un homme dont le caractère [lui] est tout-à-fait inconnu,"\(^2\) makes a vow of non-marriage which is almost immediately seen in conflict with love, in this case the offspring of "amour-propre" and of Damis' indifference to her. Sainte-Beuve, however, does not seem to make a distinction between "orgueil" and "amour-propre" nor does he show their relationship to the life of the times. The internal conflict of Dorante in le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard is based on the impact made by love on an "orgueil" induced by social prejudices, and in the two cases where we have seen "amour-propre", we have seen it working in conjunction with love in opposition to "orgueil."

La Double Inconstance was one of the plays considered by Marivaux to be his best. Here there is no rude clash between love and pride; Silvia's love for Arlequin and her promise made to marry him dissolve gradually and naturally into thin air as Silvia's love for the Prince makes its presence more and more felt. Convention plays no part in the life of Silvia, and there is not even lip-service to an honor which would hold her to her promise to marry Arlequin:

Lorsque je l'ai aimé, c'était un amour qui m'était venu; à cette heure je ne l'aime plus, c'est un amour qui s'en est allé; je ne crois pas être blâmable.\(^3\)

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1. C.-A. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du Lundi, 2\(^\text{e}\) édition, Paris, Garnier, 1856, IX, 297.
2. Œuvres, II, 16.
3. Œuvres, III, 287.
The Prince, too, attests to Silvia's spontaneity and to the charm that results from it:

Il n'y a que l'amour de Silvia qui soit véritablement de l'amour. Les autres femmes qui aiment ont l'esprit cultivé; elles ont une certaine éducation, un certain usage, et tout cela chez elles falsifie la nature. Ici c'est le coeur tout pur qui me parle; comme ses sentiments viennent, il me les montre, sa naïveté en fait tout l'art. 1

Of some interest in this play is the growth of Silvia's "amour-propre" when placed in a new and more elevated environment. Silvia, satisfied at first with her love for Arlequin and afraid that the Prince by bribery is trying to bring about a change in her affections, refuses to wear the fine clothes offered her by Flaminia: "Tenez, l'étoffe est belle; elle m'ira bien; mais je ne veux point de tous ces habits-là; car le prince me veut en truc." 2 A little later, however, we see Silvia reveling in her fine appearance:

Bonjour, Arlequin. Ah! que je viens d'essayer un bel habit! Si vous me voyiez, en vérité, vous me trouveriez jolie; demandez à Flaminia. Ah! Ah! si je portais ces habits-là, les femmes d'ici seraient bien attrapées; elle ne dirait pas que j'ai l'air gauche. 3

The growth of Silvia's "amour-propre" may be said to be in direct proportion to her love for the Prince and in indirect proportion to her love for Arlequin. The interaction of the two is the basis for an extremely skilful piece of psychological analysis by Marivaux. At one stage in the analysis we are reminded of le Paysan parvenu. Jacob's "amour-propre" no longer permits him to relish association "avec des voituriers qui [lui]

1. Ibid., p. 258.
2. Ibid., p. 225.
3. Ibid., p. 242.
parurent très grossiers." ¹ Silvia's "amour-propre" prompts her to
tacit agreement with Flaminia who says with respect to her and Arlequin:
"Vous me paraissez mal assortis ensemble. Vous avez du goûî, de l'esprit,
l'air fin et distingué; il a l'air pesant, les manières grossières."² In
a sense Silvia may be considered a "première ébauche" of Jacob, but
whereas the "amour-propre" of Silvia is in natural and continuous growth,
the progress of Jacob's "amour-propre" is interrupted by ups and downs.

It is thus evident that even in plays where there is no "orgueil"
influenced by the social prejudices of eighteenth-century France, there
is at least some influence from society in general. There is one play,
however, and perhaps two if we were to take into consideration Arlequin
poli par l'amour, where social influences count for little. In la Dispute
there is no society in evidence either to create or to maintain prejudices
or to aid in the development of "amour-propre" by its different social
levels. In this play written ostensibly to determine who was the first to
be unfaithful in love, man or woman, it is not the analysis itself upon
which we wish to comment, but the manner in which Marivaux, through the
characters, prepares the stage for this analysis. Nowhere does he show
more clearly than here the scientific element in his work.³ Four new-born

¹ Le Paysan parvenu, p. 40.
² Œuvres, III, 249.
³ Fleury and Le Breton, to name two, have recognized this scientific
element in the work of Marivaux. Fleury (op. cit., p. 3) attributes the
increasing popularity of Marivaux to an affinity with the current scientific
spirit. Le Breton (op. cit., p. 78) comments on Marivaux's almost
Montesquieu-like analysis of society: "Cette nature humaine, savamment
modifiée ou pervertie par les moeurs du siècle, il a excellé à en analyser
les finesse acquises. Il fallait une vue perçante, une main légère; il
n'y était pas besoin de génie. La vie entendue devient une science et
l'observateur en peut sans trop de peine découvrir les lois."
infants are placed in separate domiciles in an isolated forest, and for eighteen years kept from all contact with each other and with society except for the necessary association with the primitive negro couple responsible for their physical needs. They are then released and led into each other's company so that the Prince and Hermiane may observe the ways of love and thus try to solve the problem of infidelity.

In the words of the Prince:

Les hommes et les femmes de ce temps-là, le monde et ses premières amours vont reparaître à nos yeux tels qu'ils étaient, ou du moins tels qu'ils ont dû être; ce ne seront peut-être pas les mêmes aventures, mais ce seront les mêmes caractères; vous allez voir le même état de coeur, des âmes tout aussi neuves que les premières, encore plus neuves s'il est possible.

In this play Marivaux comes as close as he possibly could to placing the naked soul in all its awful sensitivity in juxtaposition with other naked souls. The soul here is not bodyless and exposed to all environment as in Rimbaud's "Bateau Ivre," but rigidly controlled in the best scientific manner to permit only that person to person interaction necessary to the experiment. It is not surprising, then, that in other plays Marivaux should have revealed this propensity of the imagination for picking up the sensitive soul and placing it in a particular environment to note the reactions. Duviquet protests when Marivaux places in the mouth of Lucile in les Sermens indiscrets the following "incoherent metaphor": "Une âme tendre et douce a des sentiments, elle en demande; elle a besoin d'être aimée parce

qu'elle aime, et une âme de cette espèce-là entre les mains d'un
mari n'a jamais son nécessaire."¹ This is Duviquet's indignant protest:

"Une âme de cette espèce-là entre les mains d'un mari."
Une âme entre des mains! Voilà ce qu'il est impossible
de ne point blâmer. Cette métaphore incohérente est
déplacée dans la bouche d'une jeune fille qui, comme
Lucile, est "tendre" et à des "sentimens."²

Whether or not Duviquet's criticism is justified, the fact remains
that such a metaphor was not at all incoherent to the Marivaux who kept
such speculative company as Fontenelle, Montesquieu, or Diderot.

From the foregoing study of the contemporary life revealed in the
comedies of Marivaux when considered in its relationship to other aspects
of his work, we have noticed three main spheres of interest. First, there
is the rather astonishing amount of detail related to eighteenth-century
milieu, detail revealed to some extent directly but for the most part in-
directly in a cross-section of the language of the day. Second, there is
a good indication of some of the undercurrents of this society, and in many
plays the resultant social prejudices are an integral part. Third, the
most obvious feature of Marivaux's work and by far the best known, is the
psychological analysis which in many cases comprises a study of the conflict
between love and an "orgueil" which is itself closely linked with these
social prejudices. The comedies, then, considered in their entirety give
us a fairly good insight into life in eighteenth-century France, but owing

¹. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
². Ibid., p. 18, n.1.
to the fact that milieu is thrown out of focus by the indirectness of its presentation and by the lack of pattern in any one play, and owing to the fact that the social prejudices are not readily seen as integral parts of the analysis of love, it is not surprising that the casual reader tends to see in Marivaux's comedies first and foremost a lovers' world. As Phocion says to his beloved in *Le Triomphe de l'amour*: "Je ne veux plus appeler le monde, que les lieux où vous serez vous-même."¹

(ii)

**La Vie de Marianne**

The illusory world of love which is that of the comedies is not to be found in *Marianne*. In the first place the milieu is more sharply brought into focus and in the second place the social forces that were indicated in the comedies, though all present in *Marianne*, are subordinated to the major source of antagonism of the day, namely, the prejudice of birth. In *Marianne* there are two worlds, both very real and very much a part of eighteenth-century France; first, the world of the noblesse, the world of Saint-Simon, "duc et pair" and of Mme de Miran, and, second, the world of the non-noblesse, the world of Rousseau and of Mme Dutour.

It is between these two worlds, the heaven and the hell of society insofar as Marianne is concerned, that hangs suspended, like the earth in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the convent which forms so great a part of the milieu in *Marianne*. We have previously noticed that the convent's function with respect to the rest of society was very much like that of a check-room.

¹ *Œuvres*, IV, 348.
This is precisely its function with respect to Marianne, for it is there that she is placed by Mme de Miran until class prejudice is sufficiently overcome to permit Marianne to continue her passage from the world of the non-noblesse to that of the noblesse where she so obviously belongs. Indeed, the convent may be looked upon as a sort of dramatic device used by Marivaux to further the ends of his story.

We have noticed also that actual insight into the physical attributes and the personnel of the convent is confined to the movements and the observations of Marianne. No attempt is made to show the influence of the convent on Marianne. The presentation of milieu is direct and realistic, and is just sufficient to indicate that it is a real convent in a real world.

The world of the non-noblesse is represented in Marianne by the shop of Mme Dutour. Here again, although the presentation of milieu is direct and realistic, there is given only enough detail to indicate that Marianne is not in her natural environment. The sojourn at Mme Dutour's represents a "point de départ" in Marianne's progress towards the place in society to which her merit entitles her and which she actually finds in the "salon" of Mme Dorsin.

The "salon" of Mme Dorsin together with the home of Mme de Miran to which, as we have seen, Marianne was also permitted access may be said to represent one aspect of the world of the noblesse, the only world suited to Marianne, "née pour avoir du goût." Although she experienced an awkwardness not unlike that with which she handled "sa toile" at Mme Dutour's, Marianne felt at home in this milieu and was pleasantly surprised
at the gracious manner in which she was accepted:

Il n'y avait rien ici qui ressemblât à ce que j'avais pensé, rien qui dît embarrasser mon esprit ni ma figure, rien qui me fit craindre de parler, rien au contraire qui n'encourageât ma petite raison à oser se familiariser avec la leur; j'y sentis même une chose qui m'était fort commode, c'est que leur bon esprit suppléait aux tournures obscures et maladroites du mien. Ce que je ne disais qu'imparfaitement, ils achevaient de le penser et de l'exprimer pour moi, sans qu'ils y prissent garde; et puis ils m'en donnaient tout l'honneur ... Il me semblait que cette politesse était celle que toute âme honnête, que tout esprit bien fait trouve qu'il a en lui dès qu'on la lui montre.

Not all among the noblesse were as enlightened as these nor as ready to recognize and encourage merit wherever it was to be found. Accordingly the first part of Marianne may be said to constitute the struggle between the merit implicit in the amiability and virtue of Marianne and the class prejudice resulting from the undue stress placed on noble birth by some of the aristocracy. The class prejudice of Valville, in love with Marianne at first sight, flares up momentarily when he learns that she is in "pension" at Mme Dutour's: "Quoi! mademoiselle, est-ce que vous logez chez Mme Dutour?"2 However, by the end of the third section of the novel, it is evident that Valville's love for Marianne will pay no heed to existing tenets of class distinction. Mme de Miran makes a firm bid to break theattachment between her son and Marianne, but her deter-

1. Marianne, p. 207.
2. Ibid., p. 92.
mination melts away before his importunate pleadings:

Ma mère, lui dit-il, vous voyez ce que c'est que Marianne; mettez-vous à ma place, jugez de mon coeur par le vôtre. Ai-je eu tort de l'aimer? me sera-t-il possible de ne l'aimer plus? ... Que de vertus, ma mère! et il faut que je la quitte; j'en épouserai une autre; je serai malheureux, j'y consens, mais je ne le serai pas longtemps.

By the end of part four we find that Mme de Miran has acknowledged the presumed happiness of her son to be greater than the demands of society, and once again the merit of Marianne has triumphed:

Ce sont tes affaires, mon fils; tu es d'une famille considérable, on ne connaît point celle de Marianne; l'orgueil et l'intérêt ne veulent point que tu l'épouses; tu ne les écoutes pas, tu n'en crois que ton amour. Je ne suis à mon tour ni assez orgueilleuse ni assez intéressée pour être inexorable, et je n'en crois que ma bonté. Tu m'y forces par la crainte de te rendre malheureux; je serais réduite à être ton tyran, et je crois qu'il vaut mieux être ta mère. Je prie le ciel de bénir les motifs qui font que je te cède.  

Mme de Miran tries to evade the wrath of society by letting it be supposed that Marianne is the daughter of one of her country friends and hopes in this way to bring about among her acquaintances the gradual acceptance of Marianne. However, the untimely arrival of Mme Dutour at the De Fares' leads to the unmasking of Marianne and we know by the end of part five that a storm is about to break. In part six Marianne is spirited away to a second convent on orders of the Prime Minister and faced with the alternatives of taking the veil or of marrying the bourgeois

1. Ibid., p. 195.
2. Ibid., p. 201.
M. Villot. In part seven Marianne is seen before the bar of society, the society based on distinction by birth which she is charged with plotting to overthrow. Mme de Miran, stressing the "goût naturel" of Marianne, first undertakes her defense:

Je suis fâchée qu'elle soit présente, mais vous me forcez de vous dire que sa figure, qui vous paraît jolie, est en vérité ce qui la distingue le moins; et je puis vous assurer que, par son bon esprit, par les qualités de l'âme, et par la noblesse des procédés, elle est demoiselle autant qu'aucune fille, de quelque rang qu'elle soit, puisse l'être. Oh! vous m'avouerez que cela impose, du moins c'est ainsi que j'en juge; et ce que je vous dis là, elle ne le doit ni à l'usage du monde, ni à l'éducation qu'elle a eue, et qui a été fort simple. Il faut que cela soit dans le sang, et voilà à mon gré l'essentiel.¹

Marianne then steps into the box and clinches the case, not by asserting her merit but by exemplifying it through the renunciation of her love for Valville:

Non, madame, non, ma généreuse mère; non, M. de Valville, vous m'êtes trop chers tous les deux; je ne serai jamais la cause des reproches que vous souffririez si je restais, ni de la honte qu'on dit que je vous attirerais. Le monde me dédaigne, il me rejette; nous ne changerons pas le monde, et il faut s'accorder à ce qu'il veut.²

Is it any wonder that Mme de Miran and Valville should see in this exemplary act further evidence of Marianne's merit and that society at large, represented here by the Prime Minister, should pay hommage to the superiority of merit, or, at least, to the element of virtue in merit? He addresses himself to the relatives of Mme de Miran anxious to prevent a misalliance:

Mesdames ... savez-vous quelque réponse à ce que nous venons d'entendre? Pour moi, je n'y en sais point, et je

¹. Ibid., p. 317.
². Ibid., p. 324.
vous déclare que je ne m'en mâle plus. A quoi voulez-vous qu'on remédie? A l'estime que Mme de Miran a pour la vertu, à l'estime qu'assurement nous en avons tous? Empêcherons-nous la vertu de plaire? Vous ne serez pas de cet avis-là, ni moi non plus, et l'autorité n'a que faire ici.

Theoretically, at least, Marianne has made the crossing from the world of the non-noblesse to that of the noblesse. However, like Blaise in l'Héritier de Village who makes a similar crossing and who says, "Je ne sommes pas encore assez naturalisé gros monsieur," Marianne cannot lay claim to citizenship among the noblesse until she has signed the marriage contract with Valville. This does not come to pass in the eleven sections authentically Marivaux's, and after having read seven and one half sections in which the theme may be said to be the overcoming of class prejudice by merit, we find that Marivaux in the latter half of section seven and in all of section eight has turned to another aspect of contemporary life likewise dealt with in the comedies, namely, that of libertinage as a menace to marriage.

Even before Valville met Mlle Varthon with whom he was to fall in love, there were unmistakable signs that he had wearied of Marianne. At the beginning of section eight we learn from Marivaux not only the reason for Valville's sudden change of heart, namely, the temporary satiation of his love for Marianne, but also why the author, himself, wished to introduce this particular twist to the story. Valville, unlike the faithful lover of the "précieux" novel, exemplifies the libertinage indicated in la Nouvelle.

1. Ibid., p. 325.
2. Œuvres, IV, 81.
Colonie or le Petit-Maitre corrigé, and suggested as characteristic of the age:

Je vous récite ici des faits qui vont comme il plaît à l'instabilité des choses humaines, et non pas des aventures d'imagination qui vont comme on veut. Je vous peins, non pas un coeur fait à plaisir, mais le coeur d'un homme, d'un Français qui a réellement existé de nos jours. Homme, Français, et contemporain des amants de notre temps, voilà ce qu'il était.  

In this section and even more so in the three sections dealing with the story of the nun where, against a background theme of love proof against parental neglect and of ingratitude born of over-indulgence, there is stress on the idea that the well-being of the family is superior to the passions of its individual members, and where also there are references to the husband seen as a master rather than as a partner and to the snobbishness of the "haute noblesse" with respect to the country noblesse, in these sections there is less interest in psychological analysis than in those preceding. In chapters one to three there is much of the psychological realism that we noticed in the comedies. Valville, by the attention he has paid to the mysterious girl whom he believes to be "une femme de qualité," has flattered the ego of Marianne, long conscious that an unfair fate has deprived her of her place among the social élite. Marianne, however, is afraid that Valville's esteem for her will be lowered when he learns that she

2. Ibid., p. 450.
3. Ibid., p. 547.
is in residence at Mme Dutour's. The struggle within her to maintain her integrity and at the same time the flattering attention of the first person who has in any way recognized her true worth is the direct result of class distinction through social prejudice and is the basis of one of the most delightful episodes in the novel.

From here on the psychological analysis loses its firm footing in reality, even despite the fact that the "merit" of which "vertu" is the supreme quality is pitted against the prejudice of birth characteristic of the eighteenth century, and, we may add, despite the fact that, as Marivaux himself states, "Cette vertu, il faut qu'on nous la donne; c'est en partie une affaire d'acquisition."¹ We have previously noted with respect to la Dispute the tendency of Marivaux towards the methods of experimental science. In Marianne he has taken an unknown seed of presumed good quality, brought it to maturity under the best of conditions, and then placed the plant in two very different soils. In the cabbage patch of Mme Dutour the plant was observed to be in soil unsuitable for its natural growth whereas in the soil of the salon it thrived — a beautiful, sweet-smelling narcissus.²

It is the analysis of the virtuous acts of Marianne, for example her renunciation of Valville before Mme de Miran and later before Mme de Miran

¹. Ibid., p. 96.

². Jamieson, op. cit., pp. 61-62: "This narcissism or, as Rousseau called it, "contentement de soi-même," is perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the 'amour-propre' of the sensitive heart .... In adequate expression of her 'beautiful soul', Marianne finds the greatest satisfaction to her 'amour-propre'."
and the Prime Minister that constitutes the chief psychological interest of the middle section of the novel. Marianne is not perfect nor is she unnatural; she is merely "bizarre" in her relative excess of sensibility, and the resultant stress on virtue. Able to divine both the immediate cause and the immediate effect of a particular virtuous word or deed, Marianne finds herself in much the same position as an actor on stage except that in her case artifice and naïveté are more nearly one. It is the instinctive embellishment of her "amour-propre" by "vertu" and the resultant self-satisfaction obtained from the approval mirrored in the eyes of Mme de Miran and others that constitute the "orgueil" of Marianne. Pride in virtue is the only one permissible to man if he is ever to reach the stage of ultimate virtue, for it is the only kind that will not wound the sensibilities of others, and that will prevent the antagonism so prejudicial to development of self. However, delicacy of feeling such as Marianne's where self was seen in the light of the ideal, was possible only in the case of the individual who was not at grips with harsh realities, and, as Jamieson points out, the salon of the eighteenth century presented such conditions:

In an idle and effeminate society with no great issues to occupy its energies, "amour-propre" may afford a motive for the cultivation of sensibility. The history of salon

1. Arland, op. cit., p. 59: "[Elle est] toute spontanée, mais à l'instant qu'elle agit, elle connaît la cause, elle devine le résultat de son action. Elle sait tout sans avoir rien appris."

2. F. C. Green, Minuet, London, Dent, 1935, p. 376: "One might, indeed, say that in Marianne virtue and 'amour-propre' are identical."
society in seventeenth and eighteenth-century France might be written from the point of view of successive fictions of the ideal man, more or less consciously formulated, more or less successfully practiced ... There can be little doubt that in the social life of the eighteenth century the appearance of being an "âme sensible" often passed for the reality, and that the vanity of pleasing played a part in establishing the mode."

Marianne, "la dernière de toutes les créatures de la terre en naissance" was an "âme sensible." In the story of her life we see how this "âme sensible" radiating from behind a beautiful exterior the virtues of nobility, generosity and chastity which were to overcome finally the prejudice of class distinction based on birth, passed via the convent from the petit bourgeois milieu of Mme Dutour to the salon society of Mme de Miran and Mme Dorsin. We saw directly through the eyes of Marianne much of the milieu through which she was passing, but because of the "romanesque" nature of the story which permitted Marianne to be moved upward through society by virtue of a ready-made "amour-propre", we do not feel any vital interaction between her and society.

(iii)

Le Paysan parvenu

More surprising than Faguet's dogmatic outburst with respect to the essential falsity of Marianne and Le Paysan parvenu is Le Breton's statement that "Jacob et Marianne entrent dans la vie et dans le roman

tut formés et ne varient plus."\textsuperscript{1} It is true that Marianne is graced with an "amour-propre" sufficiently well-developed to make with relative ease the transition to the world of the noblesse, but the statement certainly does not apply in Jacob's case for the story of the "paysan parvenu" is for Marivaux the story of the growth of "amour-propre".

The first three parts of \textit{le Paysan parvenu} came out in 1735, the year in which the third part of Marianne was published. Parts four and five of \textit{le Paysan parvenu}, the last to be officially credited to Marivaux, came out in 1736, the same year as parts four, five and six of \textit{Marianne}. It is difficult to say why Marivaux interrupted his work on \textit{Marianne} to write \textit{le Paysan parvenu}, but from the fact that the final portion of \textit{Gil Blas} made its appearance in 1735 as did \textit{la Paysanne parvenue} of de Mouhy and \textit{le Soldat parvenu} of Mauvillon,\textsuperscript{2} it is feasible to infer that Marivaux wished to treat in his own psychological manner a subject very much in vogue.

Actually, the fundamental issue of class distinction forms the central episode of both novels. In \textit{Marianne}, as we have noticed, the heroine had to overcome prejudice on the part of the noblesse before assuming what she considered to be her rightful place in society. In \textit{le Paysan parvenu} the centre of gravity is lowered, and we find Jacob, one of the "peuple," advancing eloquently his argument of "boutique pour boutique" as he seeks to overcome bourgeois prejudice endangering his proposed marriage with Mlle Habert. The scene before the President in \textit{le Paysan parvenu} parallels

\textsuperscript{1} Le Breton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{2} F. C. Green, \textit{French Novelists, Manners and Ideas}, London, Dent, 1928, pp. 121-124.
very closely the scene before the Prime Minister in Marianne, the main difference being that the issue in one case is prejudice due to wealth and in the other prejudice due to birth.

Here, however, the essential similarities end; for, whereas in Marianne there were really only two worlds, that of the noblesse and that of the non-noblesse, with the convent forming a sort of refuge in between, in le Paysan parvenu there is a series of worlds ranging all the way from that of the "paysan" to that of the noblesse, the main centre of interest (in the five parts left us by Marivaux) being the bourgeois world of Mile Habert and of Mme d'Alain. As in Marianne, it is the passage from one social sphere to a higher that is responsible for our insight into life of the times but in le Paysan parvenu the insight is greater because the scope is larger. In addition, we learn a great deal about the manners of the day for Jacob was soon to realize, as does Angélique in le Préjugé vaincu, that "l'honnête homme d'un certain état n'est pas l'honnête homme du [sien]. Ce sont d'autres façons, d'autres sentiments, d'autres moeurs, presqu'un autre honneur, c'est un autre monde."¹ It is the acquisition by Jacob of these manners and the adjustment of himself to each successive "monde" that forms the core of le Paysan parvenu and permits Marivaux to trace the growth of "amour-propre" from an initial stage not far removed from the "l'âme nue" in la Dispute to the highly-developed stage of "l'âme délicate."

¹. Œuvres, II, 403.
As Jacob himself says when sharing the ill-gotten gains of Geneviève, "je ne savais pas encore faire des réflexions si délicates; mes principes de probité étaient encore fort courts."

What Jacob lacked in the way of "vertu" was more than compensated for by his energy and we find him making use of every opportunity to acquire the "savoir-vivre" necessary for advancement in society. Like Marianne, Jacob through his youth and beauty could please without trying, and thus found half the battle won when pushing himself forward into a new milieu: "On se sent bien fort à son aise, quand c'est par la figure qu'on plaît; car c'est un mérite qu'on n'a point de peine à soutenir ni à faire durer." Indeed, Jacob had the kind of face that could remove all envy from the heart of a social equal like Geneviève: "Va, Jacob, tu feras fortune, et je le souhaite de tout mon coeur;" that could call up in the minds of spinsters like Catherine sad but rosy images of lovers dead but not forgotten: "Hélas, tenez, vous ressemblez comme deux gouttes d'eau à défunt Baptiste que j'ai pensé épouser ... beau garçon comme vous";

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1. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 20.

2. The ideal character represented by Mme Dorsin may be said to be a composite of the characters of Marianne and Jacob: "À l'égard de l'esprit, ce sera toute la force de celui des hommes, mêlée avec toute la délicatesse de celui des femmes." (Marianne, p. 170).

3. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 140.

4. Ibid., p. 10.

5. Ibid., p. 49.
and that could make an immediate impression on women with much wealth and few morals like Mme de Ferval: "Je fais grand cas de monsieur, seulement à le voir." ¹ In addition, four or five months in Paris have toned down the "brick-red" country complexion, so obviously to the city dweller a mark of low caste, and have left him with "le plus beau teint du monde." However, Brunetières is perhaps not quite justified in stating that Jacob and Marianne owe their success only to their pretty faces:

Et si [Marivaux] n'est pas absolument immoral, son roman est presque toujours peu moral. Sa conception fondamentale, sa philosophie de la vie n'est rien moins qu'édifiante; ses héros, ses personnages, c'est toujours et uniquement à leur figure qu'ils doivent tous leurs succès et toute leur fortune.²

This is very much like saying that a chef-d'oeuvre owes everything to genius and nothing to hard work, for there is not much doubt that Jacob worked hard to acquire the social status to which Marianne progressed without any effort on her part.

It is while Jacob is serving as valet in the household of the licentious seigneur that we note the initial stages of the growth of his "amour-propre." There, in addition to losing his rustic appearance and his rustic illiteracy, Jacob learned to bow low to a lady with a flourish of his hat and to set his hat jauntily on a head carried firmly erect: "Je portais bien ma tête, et je mettais mon chapeau en garçon qui n'était pas un sot."³ At the time of his discharge from the seigneur's service, Jacob had gleaned all that was to be gleaned from the domestic world in

1. Ibid., p. 194.
which he had lived and he could now add this knowledge to his natural endowment of a handsome appearance:

Enfin j'avais déjà la petite oie de ce qu'on appelle usage du monde; je dis du monde de mon espèce, et c'en est un; mais c'étaient là tous mes talents; ajoutez cette physionomie assez avenante que le ciel m'avait donnée, et qui jouait sa partie avec le reste.¹

Indeed, the growth of his self-esteem is well indicated by the fact that he can no longer feel at ease among the "voituriers" who were once his companions.

With Mlle Habert, thanks to whom he acquired the name and the dress of a gentleman, circumstances which permit us to get direct insight into certain commercial dealings of the day, Jacob gives further evidence of his growing mastery of the manners of the "bourgeois"; "Je profitai [d'un] moment[opportun] pour lui baiser la main, galanterie que j'avais déjà vu faire et qu'on apprend aisément."² In addition, Jacob took considerable pains to overcome an accent and expressions which smacked of his country upbringing:

Jusqu'ici donc mes discours avaient toujours eu une petite tournerue champêtre; mais il y avait plus d'un mois que je m'en corrigais assez bien, quand je voulais y prendre garde ... il est certain que je parlais meilleur français quand je voulais.³

However, new speech habits are not learned in a day, so that we find Jacob during the journey to Versailles watching very carefully his

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1. Le Pavisân parvenu, p. 40.
2. Ibid., p. 123.
3. Ibid., p. 87.
speech and using it sparingly:

Comme je n'étais pas là avec des madames d'Alain, ni aved des femmes qui m'aimaient, je m'observai beaucoup sur mon langage, et tâchai de ne rien dire qui sentit le fils de fermier de campagne.¹

This trip to Versailles which Jacob made to obtain a position from M. de Fécour and which gives us a glimpse into the world of finance was made under the auspices of Mme de Ferval. As Jacob says, Mme de Ferval was the first person to give him assurance of his own worth:

[Mme de Ferval] nous tirait, mon orgueil et moi, du néant où nous étions encore; car avant ce temps-là m'étais-je estimé quelque chose? Avais-je senti ce que c'était qu'amour-propre?²

An interesting indication of the growth of this "amour-propre" and a good example of "bienséance interne, bienséance externe" is the natural evolution of Jacob's references to his peasant ancestry. Without altering the essential facts of his birth, Jacob instinctively puts them in a better light when forced to make reference to them in the presence of Mme de Ferval: "J'aurais dit tout net 'Je suis le fils d'un paysan,' si le mot de 'fils d'un homme à la campagne' ne m'était pas venu."³ As we have already noted, Jacob's undue insistence on his ability to write and to calculate resulted in his "amour-propre" receiving a rude jolt from the scoffings of M. de Ferval and his associates. Even Jacob's confident request to have the ailing husband of Mme de Dorville rehired by M. de

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1. Ibid., p. 201.
2. Ibid., p. 146.
3. Ibid., p. 230.
Ferval meets with a cold reception and he is forced to admit "Hélas, que j'étais néuf!"

However, setbacks like these and the even more crushing one suffered at the hands of the Chevalier who had recognized Jacob for what he was at Mme Remy's, impede only temporarily his onward march. Jacob is well aware that Mme de Ferval and her kind are not of his calibre, and are but stepping-stones to bigger things ahead: "Ce sont là de bonnes gens que ne sont pas de ma force, mais avec qui il faut que je m'accommode pour le présent." Meanwhile, Jacob's store of "savoir-vivre" increases and we find him helping Mme de Dorville to descend from a carriage: "Je présentais la main à la fille pour l'aider à descendre (car j'avais déjà appris cette petite politesse, et on se fait honneur de ce qu'on sait)." As is often the case with the "parvenu" there are occasions when he is rendered decidedly uncomfortable by not knowing at all what to do or by being uncertain how to go about it. Basking in the gratitude of Mme de Dorville and her mother whom he had served so generously at M. de Pécour's, and patting himself on the back "en [se] disant intérieurement: '[je suis] un honnête homme,'" Jacob nevertheless did not feel too much like an "honnête homme" when he sat down with them to table and observed Mme de

1. Ibid., p. 219.
2. Ibid., p. 238: "Cette assommante époque de [ma] connaissance en bonne Fortune où il m'avait pris à l'état de Jacob, où il me remettait, tout cela m'avait renversé."
3. Ibid., p. 198.
4. Ibid., p. 221.
Dorville mère ordering the lunch:

Je remarquai que la mère dit quelques mots à part à l'hôtesse, pour ordonner sans doute quelque apprêt; je n'osai lui montrer que je soupçonnais son intention, ni m'y opposer; j'eus peur que ce ne fût pas savoir-vivre.¹

Again, when entering the carriage of M. Dorsan en route to the "Comédie," Jacob had qualms as to whether or not he was to get in first:

Et puis je montai en carrosse, incertain si je devais y montrer le premier, et n'osant en même temps faire des compliments là-dessus. Le savoir-vivre veut-il que j'aille en avant, ou bien veut-il que je recule, me disais-je en montant.²

The episode in which Jacob saves the Comte de Dorsan from assassination is an almost symbolical act confirming his right to be known as Monsieur de la Vallée. He has won by the sword what he and many others of the day had previously merely usurped and, in so doing, has proved to himself that he is "un homme de mérite":

Je m'estimais digne de quelques égards, et ... je me regardais moins familièrement et avec plus de distinction qu'à l'ordinaire .... Je n'étais plus ce petit poisson surpris de son bonheur, et qui trouvait tant de disproportion entre son aventure et lui. Ma foi! j'étais un homme de mérite, à qui la fortune commençait à rendre justice.

However, the world of the noblesse is not the world of Mlle Habert or even of Mme de Ferval; it is a new world with new graces to be

1. Ibid., p. 222.
2. Ibid., p. 278.
3. Ibid., p. 267.
acquired and a new self-confidence to be gained. As Jacob says, "les airs et les façons de ce pays-là me confondirent et m'épouvantèrent." And well they might for it soon becomes obvious that the dress and manners of which he had been so proud cut a very sorry figure in circles where "politesse" was not a formula but a natural grace. How Jacob suffers when the Comte de Dorsan turns the spotlight on him by praising his valiant action! How miserable is his plight as he tries to squirm out of the light!

"Autre fatigue pour La Vallée, sur qui ce discours attirait l'attention de ces messieurs. Ils parcouraient donc mon hétéroclite figure; et je pense qu'il n'y avait rien de si sot que moi, ni de si plaisant à voir. Plus le comte Dorsan me louait, plus il m'embarrassait. Il fallait pourtant répondre, avec mon petit habit de soie et ma petite propreté bourgeoise, dont je ne faisais plus d'estime depuis que je voyais tant d'habits magnifiques autour de moi. Mais que répondre? "Oh! point du tout, monsieur; vous vous moquez"; et puis: "C'est une bagatelle, il n'y a pas de quoi; cela se devait; je suis votre serviteur."

Voilà de mes réponses, que j'accompagnais civillement de courbettes de corps courtes et fréquentes auxquelles apparemment, ces messieurs prirent goût, car il n'y en eut pas un qui ne me fit des compliments pour avoir la sienne.

Un d'entre eux que je vis se retourner pour rire me mit au fait de la plaisanterie, et acheva de m'anéantir. Il n'y eut plus de courbettes; ma figure alla comme elle put, et mes réponses de même."

It is on this naturalistic note that Marivaux drops the story of le Paysan parvenu. Gifted with a keen sensibility which exposes him in his early, animal stage to all the dangers of sensuality but which through the growth of "amour-propre," and through the grace of Marivaux,

1. Ibid., p. 281.
2. Ibid., p. 283.
keeps him to the path of virtue, and fired at the same time with an ambition that makes him take advantage of every opportunity for advancement, Jacob, the "parvenu," may be said to exemplify a phenomenon common to the eighteenth century. In his passage from one social stratum to the next Jacob gives us direct insight into much of contemporary life. However, the transition is not smooth, for lacking the "goût naturel" of Marianne and thrusting himself too rapidly from milieu to milieu, Jacob finds himself in constant disharmony with society. At one time we find him reveling in his new status as a man of property, "[se délectant] dans le plaisir de [se] trouver tout à coup un maître de maison ... [possesseur] de pantoufles et [d'1]une robe de chambre," and at another we find him in fear and trembling that his peasant origins may be reflected in his manners and in his visage:

J'y avais sauté trop vite; je venais d'être fait monsieur; encore n'avais-je pas la subalterne éducation des messieurs de ma sorte, et je tremblai qu'on ne connût à ma mine que ce monsieur-là avait été Jacob.

It is this alternation of over-confidence and lack of confidence as self-esteem seeks to keep pace with social esteem that forms the psychological interest of le Paysan parvenu; they are the core about which are wound the social graces acquired by Jacob de la Vallée, as he becomes "honnête

1. Sainte-Beuve, op. cit., p. 294: "Son paysan parvenu n'est point un paysan perverti."

2. Le Paysan parvenu, p. 263.

3. Ibid., p. 282.
homme" of each particular milieu through which he passes and, finally, the "honnête homme, par excellence [qui], un peu moins dupe des distinctions que l'orgueil a mis dans les choses de ce monde,"¹ has learned by experience that true nobility is not a matter of outward form but a matter of natural emanations from a "soul" that does not pride itself even on "vertu."

¹. Marianne, p. 68.
CONCLUSION

In this study, Contemporary Life in the Plays and Novels of Marivaux, I have attempted not only to reveal the extent of Marivaux's social realism and the manner in which he presents it but also to show its relationship to other aspects of his work. In chapters I and II and the first section of chapter VII I have indicated how much of eighteenth-century French society is revealed in the comedies, noting in so doing Marivaux's preoccupation with love and marriage and the conditions in which they assure family happiness: "Voilà [says one of his characters] ce qu'on appelle une véritable union de coeurs, un vrai mariage d'inclination, et jamais on n'en devrait faire d'autres."¹ I have indicated also that much of the actual milieu is revealed indirectly through the realistic use of language, and that underlying this milieu were many of the social forces apparent in the "préjugés" of the day. On some occasions these "préjugés" comprised alone the subject matter of the plays, on other occasions they formed an integral part of the psychological complex analysed by Marivaux. In any case, enough insight into the comedies of Marivaux has been gained to believe critical judgement of the kind that could state, for example, that "the study of manners plays absolutely no part in them" and that "we must not look to them for any material details."²

¹ Les Sermens indiscrets, Oeuvres, II, 73.
² See Introduction, p. vi.
In chapters III to VI and the last two sections of chapter VII a similar analysis was made of Marianne and le Paysan parvenu with occasional reference to le Don Quichotte moderne. The depiction of milieu, though less aristocratic in tone, was found to be more extensive than in the comedies; this was especially noticeable with respect to certain social aspects of religion and to the business world. In addition, the representation was found to be more direct, milieu forming an inseparable though subsidiary part of the account of Jacob's and Marianne's ascent through society and playing its part in the development of their personalities. Occasionally we noted use of material detail foreshadowing Balzac or Zola, but the use of such material detail is sparing and is never Marivaux's prime objective in the novels.

This magnified picture of the contemporary life revealed in the plays and novels and its subsequent reduction to proper proportions when placed alongside other aspects of Marivaux's work form the content of this thesis. However, in the constant references to "amour-propre ... orgueil ... sensibilité" we have glimpsed some of the fundamental ideas of Marivaux himself, and since no study of this "honnête homme par excellence" of the eighteenth century can be considered in any way complete without some attempt to draw together these "à peu près" into a coherent whole, we shall conclude this essay by relating the ideas of the author to the works of which we have studied only one aspect.

First let us consider briefly Marivaux's ideas on heredity and environment for it is there that we find the basis for his concept of sensibility. Marivaux knew that the body through the senses is the
controlling factor in the relationship of soul to environment. We have already noted how high in the Marivaudian scale of sensibility was Marianne whose "qualités de l'âme ... [étaient] dans le sang" and how low was Mme de Pécour, she of the massive bosom symbolic of the predominance in her of "sens" over "sentiment." Marivaux well knew that there were many like Mme de Pécour "qui ne sentent rien, qui n'ont point d'âme," but he also knew, and from experience, that heavy features do not imply low sensibility. Engaged in what promised to be an extremely dull conversation with a man whom he had met during a walk, Marivaux was astounded that this man with "l'air pesant et taciturne" could possess so much "esprit," and he vowed henceforth to be "sur le qui-vive avec les physionomies massives." Marianne, in the rather tiresome digression on Mme Dorsin, gives us an inkling of the relation between body and soul as she visualizes it to be:

Quand quelqu'un a peu d'esprit et de sentiment, on dit d'ordinaire qu'il a les organes épais; et un de mes amis, à qui je demandai ce que cela signifiait, me dit gravement et en termes savants: C'est que notre âme est plus ou moins bornée, plus ou moins embarrassée, suivant la conformation des organes auxquels elle est unie.

For Marivaux the ideal person of this world is the "personne tout unie," the person in whom mind and feeling are in complete harmony. To bring out this point, he gives his own definition of the "bel-esprit:

Le bel-esprit, en un mot, par l'effet d'une heureuse conformation d'organes, possède un sentiment fin et exact de toutes les choses qu'il voit ou qu'il imagine;

1. Le Spectateur Français, Oeuvres, IX, 264.
2. Ibid., p. 88.
il y a entre ses organes et son esprit un heureux accord.\footnote{1}

Again, in the \textit{Spectateur Français}, he tells us exactly what he means by "sentiment":

C'est un instinct qui nous conduit et qui nous fait agir sans réflexion, en nous présentant quelque chose qui nous touche, qui n'est pas développé dans de certaines gens, et qui l'est dans d'autres.\footnote{2}

So much then for the relationship between body and soul. Fleury in a reference to the \textit{Miroir} indicates that Marivaux was well aware of the reaction of mind to impulses from environment once they were transmitted by the senses:

Marivaux nous raconte qu'il a vu un jour un miroir double sur lequel se peignaient d'un côté la Nature sensible avec ses propriétés connues et inconnues, et de l'autre l'Esprit humain avec les manifestations successives et progressives de son activité. Les images qui se réfléchissaient dans ces deux glaces étaient dans un mouvement continu et se transformaient sans cesse.\footnote{3}

In some cases, however, especially in matters of religion, contact had first to be made with "heart" before the transformation took place in mind. Marivaux, to whom the study of soul was a "furieuse affaire" and who allied himself with La Bruyère as "\textit{[un penseur]} sur l'âme, matière pleine de choses singulières,"\footnote{4} suggests in these cases the relationship between soul and environment by the image of a flower "qui s'épanouit à l'ardeur du soleil." In the following passage Marivaux indicates that the "heart" receiving the truths from environ-

\begin{enumerate}
\item Pièces Détachées, \textit{Oeuvres}, IX, 344.\footnote{1}
\item Le \textit{Spectateur Français}, \textit{Oeuvres}, IX, 247.\footnote{2}
\item Fleury, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 267.\footnote{3}
\item Le \textit{Cabinet du Philosophe}, \textit{Oeuvres}, IX, 447.\footnote{4}
\end{enumerate}
ment is reacting in turn upon mind:

Il les échauffe et il s'en échauffe, puis il com-
munique sa chaleur à l'esprit même ... et lui ôte
une roideur qui bornait sa capacité, et empêchait
que ces vérités ne le pénètressent.¹

It is the persuasive force of love brought to bear on the
"roideur" of "orgueil" that commences the new experience often analysed
by Marivaux, love completing the "softening-up" process of converting
an unnatural and hardened "orgueil" to a natural and flexible "amour-
propre." However, as Marianne suggests in her remark, "l'âme s'ac-
coutume à tout, sa sensibilité s'use, je me familiarisais avec mes
espérances et mes inquiétudes,"² the emotion of new experience is soon
incorporated into "amour-propre", and the mind is open for yet more new
experience.³ It is this continuous flexibility of "amour-propre" permit-
ting no hardening into "orgueil" of any kind that, it seems to me, con-

¹. Ibid., p. 389: Marivaux's concept could scarcely be called a just
compromise between those of Descartes and Locke for he does not state that
all knowledge is latent in "heart." Nor is his "naturalism" quite the
same as Gide's with whom he has much in common and who believes that "Tout
a toujours été dans l'homme, d'une manière plus ou moins couverte ou
 cachée — et ce que les temps nouveaux y découvrent, éclôt sous le regard,
mais y sommeillait de tout temps." (A. Gide, Morceaux choisis, Paris,
Galimard, 1921, p. 65). The actual relationship between "heart" and mind
Marivaux does not profess to know although he comes exceedingly close to
what may be termed the "atomic concept" of mind: "Il faut bien qu'il
passe alors entre l'esprit et le coeur un mouvement dont Dieu seul sache
le mystère. Pourquoi ne croirait-on que la persuasion de l'un est la
source des lumières de l'autre?"

². Marianne, p. 204.

³. Pièces Detachées, Oeuvres, IX, 345: L'amour-propre est à peu près
à l'esprit ce qu'est la forme à la matière; l'un suppose l'autre. Tout
esprit a donc de l'amour-propre, comme toute portion de matière a sa
forme. De même aussi que toute portion de matière est susceptible de
prendre un forme plus ou moins fine et variée, suivant qu'elle est plus
ou moins fine et délicate elle-même, de même notre amour-propre est
plus ou moins subtil, suivant que notre esprit a lui-même plus ou moins
de finesse.
stitutes the naturalism of Marivaux and provides the ideal against
which must be set both his psychological analysis and his analysis
of society.

Marivaux, like Swift in Gulliver's Travels but with none of his
morbidity, envisaged the possibility of society in free and easy
evolution towards perfection, the possibility of complete harmony
between the "transitoire" and the absolute. Class distinction in
this society would be based on sensibility and the hierarchy itself
would resemble that of the army with "grands beaux-esprits,"\(^1\) like
"officiers-généraux," at the top. As Jamieson says, "The good hearts
form an "élite, an aristocracy based on fineness of feeling rather
than on intellect or birth."\(^2\) This society is not a perfect society
but it is as perfect as it could be at a particular time or place. In
Marianne and le Paysan parvenu where we see the beginnings of such a
society as it could possibly exist in eighteenth-century France, Marianne
and Jacob, possible real characters in a real world, rise to the top like
bubbles in water being brought to the boil.

These conceptions constitute, in part, what Faguet would call "une
idée en l'air ... une fantaisie séduisante qui a amusé l'esprit de
l'auteur."\(^3\) The very fact, however, that for many critics this idea
has remained "en l'air" says a good deal for the man who realized that

\[\text{l'art d'employer les idées pour des ouvrages d'esprit}
\text{peut se perdre: [que] les lettres tombent, la critique}\]

\(1. \text{Ibid., p. 342. (see p. 150 for Marivaux's definition of "bel-esprit").}\)

\(2. \text{Jamieson, op. cit., p. 122.}\)

\(3. \text{See Introduction, p. ix.}\)
et le goût disparaissent, les auteurs deviennent ridicules ou grossiers, pendant que le fond de l'esprit humain va toujours croissant parmi les hommes.1

Imbued with the conviction that the author is as useful to society as the philosopher or the scientist,2 and living in a century in which ideas were rampant and artistic quality at a low ebb, Marivaux in his works has combined originality with art and given enduring expression to his belief in the progress of man.

1. Vial et Denise, op. cit., p. 68.
2. Grimm-Diderot, Correspondance, 1, 354.
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