

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT: REEVALUATING ROCOCO AND  
ROUSSEAUIAN LOVE IN THE WORK OF JEAN-HONORÉ FRAGONARD

By

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To my parents, Joyce Menigoz and Dennis Lowery

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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Rococo paintings in early eighteenth century France generally depicted two types of love: gallant and libertine. While gallant paintings represented love as a playful game of eternal courtship, libertinage focused on physical eroticism. These two types of rococo love began to decline with the rise of Rousseauian love that emerged during the mid-eighteenth century. "Rousseauian love" is an ideal of everlasting love based on emotions, and consisted of two types: passionate romance and tempered, conjugal love. Ideally, Rousseauian love would combine the elements of these two types, allowing passion and reason to intermingle. According to Enlightenment thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot, these types of love were superior to the gallantry and libertinage associated with the French aristocracy. They presented rococo and Rousseauian love as incompatible. Yet, despite these claims, Jean-Honoré Fragonard unexpectedly used the rococo style and compositions to portray Rousseauian concepts throughout the mid- to late eighteenth century. By providing examples of this practice, I demonstrate that rococo and Rousseauian love were in a transitional period in eighteenth century France. This meant that the use of the rococo style did not automatically contradict the Rousseauian values within the paintings.

Instead, I view these paintings as having a spectrum of different styles and concepts associated with rococo and Rousseauian love that can ambiguously coexist in a single painting.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### Summary of Thesis

Love was the reigning preoccupation in rococo paintings during the early eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The subject of love in these artworks, which I am labeling as “rococo love,” supported the elite values of arranged marriages and extra-marital affairs. During this period, members of the nobility married for social, political, and economic reasons rather than for emotions. They found their “love” through extra-marital affairs, which was more about recreational pleasure than family duty, lineage and procreation. Rococo love consists of two intertwining categories, gallantry and libertinage. Gallant paintings show a playful game of eternal courtship that involved a highly coded system of interactions, such as in Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s *Blindman’s Bluff* (1755) (Figure A-1). In this image, a blindfolded woman reaches out to touch her male companion who sneaks behind her and playfully touches her cheek with a strand of straw. The composition places the woman front and center in a garden setting typical of rococo gallant paintings. The pastel, painterly brushstrokes emphasizes the playful nature of the figures’ courtship. In contrast, libertine images focused on physical eroticism that had been calculated and planned with little thought for emotions such as in *The Useless Resistance* (1764-68) (Figure A-2). Rather than having limited physical contact as in *Blindman’s Bluff*, *The Useless Resistance* is purely about the physical interaction of a woman who playfully attempts to prevent her male companion from moving further sexually. To enhance the eroticism in libertine scenes, painters often set them in an

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<sup>1</sup> In our society, “love” typically signifies a strong emotional bond with another person. In this thesis, I use the term “love” in a broader sense to refer to a connection, whether physical, emotional, playful, etc., (primarily) between opposite sexes.



intimate, interior and used extremely loose brushwork, the significance of which I will discuss in a later chapter. The rococo style was inextricably linked with gallantry, libertinage and the aristocracy. As the Revolution neared, the ancien regime heavily came under attack, and by association, so did rococo love and style.

As rococo love declined during the mid-eighteenth century, “Rousseauian love” popularized.<sup>2</sup> “Rousseauian love” is an ideal of everlasting love based on emotions. Rousseauian love consists of two categories, passionate romance and conjugal love that coexisted in literature and artworks. The differences in these two categories can be found in Rousseau’s *Julie, or the New Heloise* (1761). The novel details the life of Julie, a woman of the nobility who falls in love with her tutor, Saint-Preux. She has a passionate love affair with him, which is both spiritual and physical, until societal pressures cause her to turn towards virtue and marry the socially acceptable Baron de Wolmar. The second half of Rousseau’s novel details her domestic bliss at Clarens, Wolmar’s country estate and farm. Rousseau outlines in his educational treatise, *Emile or On Education* (1762) an ideal version of love that combines elements of the passionate romance between Julie and Saint-Preux and the conjugal love between Julie and Baron de Wolmar. Although I use the term “Rousseauian love” and will focus on Rousseau’s works, these ideas were in other eighteenth century literary works from novels, plays and encyclopedia entries.<sup>3</sup> Unlike rococo love, no one art movement is

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<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, I will focus on the supporters of Rousseauian love. Although Rousseauian love was popular, it was not the consensus. Suzanne Desan examines critics of Rousseauian love such as women who wanted more rights outside of the private sphere. See *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup>Allan Pasco examines numerous literary sources that promoted passionate romance throughout the eighteenth century. See *Revolutionary Love in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century France* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009). Besides literature, encyclopedia entries reinforced the difference between gallantry as a superficial vice and (Rousseauian) love as authentic and virtuous. For

associated with concepts of Rousseauian love. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I will use Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *The Marriage Contract* (1761) (Figure A-3) to exemplify one kind of painting associated with Rousseauian love.<sup>4</sup> In this painting, a young woman and man link arms as her family gathers around to officiate their marriage. The composition is similar to a theater scene with each member in their place and somber colors to fit the seriousness of the subject matter. Rather than depicting elite culture, artists such as Greuze often painted the humble abodes of the figures in Rousseauian paintings such as in the sparsely decorated home of *The Marriage Contract*. In contrast to the elite associations of the rococo, Rousseauian ideals became linked with the values of the bourgeoisie.

The rise of Rousseauian love and the decline of rococo love were demonstrated through the criticisms of moralists and art critics associated with the Enlightenment such as Denis Diderot. Rococo was condemned as fictitious, frivolous and inferior to Rousseauian love's true emotions, casting them in terms of mutual exclusivity. Yet, despite these claims, Jean-Honoré Fragonard unexpectedly used the rococo style and compositions to portray Rousseauian concepts throughout the mid- to late eighteenth-century, as in *The Oath of Love* (1780-85) (Figure A-4). This painting exemplifies a Rousseauian subject full of true emotion, passion and commitment. In the image, a

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an example of an encyclopedia entry, see Louis chevalier de Jaucourt, "Love, Gallantry," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Lyn Thompson Lemaire (Ann Arbor: Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan Library, 2004) <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.309> (accessed October 14, 2010) Originally published as "Amour, Galanterie," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 17:754–755 (Paris, 1765).

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, I will be using Emma Barker's interpretation of *The Marriage Contract* as Rousseauian. Bernadette Fort argues against a Rousseauian reading, stating that the bride is eroticized and not in line with Rousseauian moralists. See "Framing the Wife: Jean-Baptiste Greuze's Sexual Contract," in *Framing Women: Changing Frames of Representation from the Enlightenment to Postmodernism*, ed. Sandra Carroll, et. al (Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2003), 89-124.

young man and women passionately embrace and proclaim their undying devotion to one another. Judging by their appearance, the couple and setting could have easily been transported from one of Fragonard's gallant paintings. Fragonard altered these elements to enhance the subject matter. His darkening of the setting draws attention to the couple's love and commitment and suggests passion rather than playfulness.

Despite critics constructing competitive concepts of love as static categories, Fragonard created these works during a transitional period when rococo love ceded to Rousseauian love. I use a range of Fragonard's work to argue that rococo and Rousseauian love and their respective artistic styles were malleable, fluid categories.

### **Scholarship on Jean-Honoré Fragonard in Relation to Rousseauian Concepts**

Fragonard's use of the rococo style to depict Rousseauian concepts has not gone unnoticed by previous scholars such as Mary Sheriff, Emma Barker, Andrei Molotiu, and Jennifer Milam.<sup>5</sup> Their studies on this subject have created a basic framework that I will flesh out in this thesis. While this summary of their scholarship will explain their opinions further, I also want to bring a discrepancy between their arguments to the forefront. As mentioned earlier, Rousseauian love includes both passionate romance and tempered, conjugal love. When discussing Rousseauian love, scholars often fall into one camp or the other without considering how these two categories could coexist. Rather than solely focusing on one aspect of Rousseauian love, I will provide a close

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<sup>5</sup> I will not elaborate on Jennifer Milam's argument in this section from her work *Fragonard's playful paintings* (Manchester University Press, 2006). She primarily uses Rousseau's literature to provide new insight on Fragonard's paintings of rococo love. For these scholars' complete arguments of Fragonard in relation to Rousseau and the rococo, see Mary D. Sheriff, "Fragonard's Erotic Mothers and the Politics of Reproduction," in *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. by Lynn Hunt (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 14-40; Emma Barker, "Fragonard's family scenes: L'Heureuse fécondité," in *Greuze and the Painting of Sentiment* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 115-145; and Andrei Molotiu, *Fragonard's Allegories of Love* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007).

analysis of love in Rousseau's literary works, paying attention to how these two categories overlap. In this thesis, I will not be arguing that Fragonard's artworks have a one to one relationship with Rousseau's literary works, or that he was purposefully referencing his literature. Instead, I will be using Rousseau's work as indicative of a cultural shift that influenced the subject matter in Fragonard's paintings. This allows for a broader interpretation of what can be considered "Rousseauian" about the subject matter in Fragonard's painting.

Both Mary Sheriff and Emma Barker focus on the concept of domestic bliss in their analysis of Fragonard's family scenes. Their definition of "Rousseauian" encompasses the philosophers' theories of domesticity, primarily from his treatise *Emile*. Although their discussions were not solely on conjugal love, theories of domesticity were often tied to the ideal of a tempered, conjugal union, as exemplified by the relationship between Julie and Baron de Wolmar in *Julie*. Both Sheriff and Barker are reacting to previous scholarship such as Carol Duncan's "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art" that equated Fragonard's happily family scenes with Rousseauian ideals.<sup>6</sup> They argue that the rococo style and content in these images problematizes the idea that these images are of Rousseauian happy families. Sheriff states that these types of paintings have a more ambiguous meaning than being purely rococo or Rousseauian. She demonstrates this by analyzing Fragonard's *A Visit to the Wet Nurse* (1775) (Figure A-5), which shows an urban couple from a privileged background watching over their newborn in a rural interior. An elderly woman sits in the left-hand corner, and is presumably the child's wet nurse.

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<sup>6</sup> Carol Duncan, "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art," *The Art Bulletin* 55, no. 4 (1973): 570-583.

The subject matter of *A Visit to the Wet Nurse* differs from the Rousseauian ideal, because Rousseau frowned upon hiring wet nurses and encouraged women to breast feed themselves. Hiring a wet nurse was a practice of higher society and part of the culture of the rococo. Besides having what could be deemed as rococo content, Sheriff found the composition of the painting contradictory to Rousseauian beliefs. According to her, the positioning of the man and woman diverges from the ideal of conjugal love and family described in *Emile*. The man cuddles against the bosom of the woman, highlighting her as the center of the painting. The composition echoes that of Fragonard's gallant imagery in *The Musical Contest* (Figure A-6) in which the woman dominates the desperate men in the painting. This contradicts Rousseauian concepts of conjugal love in which the father is supposed to be the head of the family, especially when children are involved.

His position also alludes to the sexual tension between him and his wife. Elite women commonly used wet nurses to preserve their breasts for "recreational" purposes and so that they could produce more children. However, Rousseau believed that women should not have sexual relations with their husbands while breast feeding in order to preserve their milk. Therefore, this painting contradicts Rousseauian philosophy based on the man's position. In other words, instead of satisfying the needs of her husband as suggested by their positions, she should be breast feeding her child. Despite the supposed contradictory elements to Rousseauian ideals, Sheriff does not dismiss it as purely non-Rousseauian. Instead, she argues that it is uncertain whether

or not these images were condemned or praised, or if “the work is cautionary, preaches Rousseauian morality, or was designed to justify specific continuing [rococo] practices.”<sup>7</sup>

Emma Barker echoes Sheriff’s argument that Fragonard’s family scenes cannot receive a simple Rousseauian reading. She admits the ambivalent meanings in the paintings, stating that the patrons could have been “moved by a scene of simple domesticity...[or] be subtly reassured by the witty irreverence of its treatment.”<sup>8</sup> Despite these claims of ambiguity, her primary aim is to demonstrate how Fragonard’s works are “implicitly subversive and even directly paradoxical” in relation to Rousseauian ideals.<sup>9</sup> For example, she argues that the rococo styling in *The Good Mother* (1773) (Figure A-7), which had a setting similar to the rococo painting *The Swing* (1767) (Figure A-8), was associated with non-serious, “comic and erotic subjects” that did not align with moral meaning.<sup>10</sup> The subject shows a mother in a garden looking after children. Barker points out the signs of sexuality that contradict her supposed role of breast feeding including the white cat (symbolic of female sexuality), unlaced, low-cut bodice, and sly glance. As discussed with Sheriff, this sexuality was frowned upon while a mother was nursing. Barker also accounts for Fragonard’s clientele to indicate how his paintings are subversive. His patrons consisted of the wealthy upper-class who was associated with rococo art and culture. As demonstrated by their lifestyle, she argues that they would not have requested moralizing subjects with pure conviction.

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<sup>7</sup> Sheriff, “Fragonard’s Erotic Mothers,” 27.

<sup>8</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 145.

<sup>9</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 116.

<sup>10</sup> This work will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Barker, *Greuze*, 119-120.

My thesis aligns with Sheriff's and Barker's viewing of Fragonard's paintings as complex entities. For the most part, they point out (especially Barker) how Fragonard's technique and subject matter contradict the previously conceived happy family scenes. While I acknowledge these contradictions, I concentrate on how these elements were also used to enhance the Rousseauian subject matter rather than be merely subversive to it. Furthermore, rather than focusing my attention on solely the conjugal and maternal theories from *Emile*, I use the term Rousseauian to refer to a broader and more inclusive range of concepts. In this thesis, Rousseauian love also refers to true emotion that ideally, but not necessarily, leads to marriage and children. Passion and sexuality as being considered Rousseauian is left out when discussing Fragonard's domestic scenes. However, this aspect of Rousseauian love is not absent from the scholarship of Andrei Molotiu.

In contrast to the discussion on domesticity and family scenes in Sheriff's and Barker's works, Andrei Molotiu analyzes Rousseau's novel *Julie* and Fragonard's allegorical paintings such as *The Fountain of Love* (1785) (Figure A-9) and *The Oath of Love* (Figure A-4) as pre-Romantic. He states that during the 1770s and 1780s, a new movement in literature promoting Romantic love emerged. Romantic love was full of emotion and passion, in comparison to the empty rococo love of previous centuries. Molotiu connects images of passion to Fragonard's rococo paintings as well as his family scenes. He notes that Fragonard certainly used the compositional and stylistic elements of his previous gallant and libertine images in his allegorical paintings. The difference is that the allegories "transcended" those of the rococo model, because the rococo used representation and anecdote, while the allegories used embodiment and

mood.<sup>11</sup> His exploration of these similarities between rococo and Rousseauian models will be further detailed in this thesis. However, I will not treat the allegories as if they “transcended” the rococo style. This is a loaded term and presumes that the Rousseauian model is clearly the superior choice.

Molotiu acknowledges the connection between Fragonard’s paintings of family scenes and Romantic love. He argues that romantic, passionate love fed into the more grounded concept of happy families. However, romantic love was inherently more unstable because of its passionate nature in comparison to tempered, conjugal love. To rectify this, Fragonard arrests time in the allegorical scenes in order to present them as everlasting.<sup>12</sup> Molotiu argues that unreasoned passion is the stark contrast between the promotion of rationality found in the morality of encyclopédistes and “the cool reasoning of rococo libertinage.”<sup>13</sup> This is an interesting interpretation in terms of Rousseau. Although Rousseau inspired passionate romance, he also is commonly viewed as the champion of tempered, conjugal love. Furthermore, moralists such as Rousseau argued that passionate love could exist concurrently with reason rather than be its enemy.

As detailed above, scholars’ use of Rousseau in relation to concepts of love has ranged depending upon the subject matter in Fragonard’s painting. Even within Molotiu’s own study of passionate romance, he neglects to elaborate on the fact that Rousseau also supported the concept of reasoned passion that could ideally lead to a long lasting marriage. This staggered definition of the term “Rousseauian”

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<sup>11</sup> Molotiu, 58-67.

<sup>12</sup> Molotiu, 79-83.

<sup>13</sup> Molotiu, 71.



demonstrates its complexity. Rather than choosing one concept over another, the various strands of “Rousseauian” (passionate romance, conjugal bliss, and all those in between) will be examined in relation to a selection of Fragonard’s paintings. What is deemed as “non-Rousseauian” in Fragonard’s paintings by other scholars may not be as subversive as previously thought. Although no painting can be purely Rousseauian, clearly they can be influenced by these concepts that had emerged by the early eighteenth century.

### **Organization of Chapters**

As outlined above, the main purpose of this thesis is to describe how Fragonard used rococo imagery and style in his Rousseauian paintings in order to demonstrate that rococo and Rousseauian love are fluid rather than static categories. The next chapter gives examples of the rococo style, composition, and subject matter in Fragonard’s gallant and libertine paintings. Fragonard’s gallant paintings portray courtship as an endless cycle, while libertine paintings have more overtly sexual subject matter. Fragonard adapted his painting style and settings based on subject matter. In gallant paintings such as *The Progress of Love* series, trees enclose the figures in intimate, garden settings filled with statues of Venus and cupids. Fragonard used pastel colors and painterly brushstrokes, except on the porcelain-like skin of the figures. In contrast, libertine scenes are often set in an intimate interior such as a bedroom, which aligns with its more erotic subject matter. Fragonard’s physical handling of the paint is thicker and sketchier. Gallant and libertine paintings came under attack during the mid-eighteenth century. The second half of the chapter details Rousseau’s and Diderot’s criticism of rococo love. Rousseau constructed it as having false emotion with its highly coded witticisms and elaborately made up women. In certain respects, Diderot’s art

criticism correlate with Rousseau's remarks. I analyze his comments on François Boucher and Pierre Antoine Baudouin, which represents Diderot's opinions on gallantry and libertinage respectively. Diderot often feminized Boucher's work relating him to the gallant women that he portrayed, while he criticized Baudouin for including ambiguous sexuality in paintings of supposed moral subjects.

While the second chapter defines rococo love and its faults according to eighteenth century moralists, the third chapter defines the term Rousseauian love and how it became the moral alternative to rococo love. As mentioned earlier, the term Rousseauian in relation to Fragonard's paintings having multiple meanings. I intend to flesh out these different layers of the term by extrapolating the various concepts from Rousseau's literary works. The first type is romantic passion that is present in the love letters between Julie and her lover Saint-Preux, while the second type is a tempered, conjugal love exemplified by Julie and her husband Baron de Wolmar. Passionate love is characterized by the uniting of two souls, relation to the theological realm, loss of reason, hyperbolic comparisons to their situation as life or death, and the threat of temporality. In contrast, Julie's marriage to Baron de Wolmar was based on her parent's decision. Although they had mutual affection for one another, the marriage was based on creating productive members' of society. These types of love are featured in *Julie*, a novel filled with complex characters and imperfect relations between them. Rather than evaluating one type more pertinent than the other one, I use *Emile* in order to understand Rousseau's idealized love. In *Emile*, Rousseau combines elements of romantic passion and tempered, conjugal love from *Julie*. The ideal couple has passion and mutual affection that continues throughout the marriage. The husband and

wife choose each other based on these emotions rather than having their parents choose based on economic and social status. These characteristics of the three concepts of love in Rousseau's literary works were indicative of other trends in literature and art works. The second half of the chapter relates Rousseauian concepts to Diderot's praise of Jean-Baptiste Greuze. While Diderot criticized artists such as Baudouin for his treatment of marriage scenes, he considered Greuze as the painter of morality. Specifically, I use *The Marriage Contract* in order to understand how it illustrates Rousseauian concepts such as the separation of gender roles.

The next two chapters discuss the rococo and Rousseauian love separately. Although Rousseau expressed disdain for those following rococo love, he also believed that the worldly (elite) people could reform. It is clear that wealthy elites incorporated Rousseauian aspects in their life, while still maintaining their overall rococo culture.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Fragonard incorporated rococo elements into Rousseauian subject matter, creating a range of combinations between the two concepts in his paintings. In chapter four, I argue that Fragonard's use of rococo imagery to portray these Rousseauian ideologies demonstrates that the mutual exclusivity constructed by moralists was more complicated than they were made to appear. Broadly, Fragonard's "Rousseauian" works can be separated into family scenes and allegories. The family scenes touch upon the domestic theories of Rousseau, but use the gallant rococo mode to portray them. The allegories show an everlasting, romantic love that emphasizes passion and

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<sup>14</sup> Sara Maza and Meredith Martin have shown how aristocrats combined their old customs from the rococo culture with new Rousseauian ideals. They use rose festivals and pleasure diaries as their examples, respectively. For more information, see Sarah Maza, *Public Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (University of California Press: 1993); and Meredith Martin, *Dairy Queens: The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine de' Medici to Marie-Antoinette* (Harvard University Press, 2011).

represent the most diluted connections to rococo love. These images need to be examined as having several different meanings that were influenced by the different theories of love circulating during this time. By discussing the fluidity of the meanings behind these images, it becomes clear that unlike the myth created by eighteenth century moralists, Rousseauian and rococo concepts of love were not mutually exclusive.

## CHAPTER 2 OVERVIEW OF ROCOCO LOVE AND ITS CRITICS

As mentioned in the introduction, rococo love emerged in literature and art during the early eighteenth-century. These works primarily depicted the aristocracy in the acts of gallantry (eternal courtship) and libertinage (reasoned seduction with a physical end). Since the aristocracy and upper-classes married for economic and political reasons, men and women alike found their emotional and physical pleasure from ephemeral extra-marital affairs. Consequently, love was regarded as a fleeting fling rather than eternal. In representations of gallantry, this meant picturing courtship as a game or as having an uncertain end in the sequence of events. Libertinage consisted of fleeting moments in physical pleasure that would not last beyond the bedroom.

Images of gallantry and libertinage depicted in the rococo style became popular during the early eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Similar to their conceptual differences, the aesthetics of Fragonard's gallant and libertine paintings diverge from one another while still being stylistically rococo. Both categories often are depicted in light, pastel colors, but have different types of settings and brushstrokes. Paintings of gallantry have brighter, pastel tones echoing the lighter metaphor of love as a fleeting game, such as in the previously discussed *Blindman's Bluff*. The figures wear ornate clothing, even when they are presumably from the countryside. Fragonard set his gallant paintings in elaborate, intimate garden settings where the overgrown greenery encapsulates the figures. Statues of Venus and cupid in these gardens reinforce the subjects of the scene. Fragonard used sweeping brushstrokes, creating movement and sensuality. In

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<sup>1</sup> Katie Scott, "Paris—Versailles: The Eclipse of the Heroic Decorative Mode," in *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth Century Paris* (Yale University Press: 1995), 117-212.

contrast, libertine images emphasize the physical eroticism. The figures are seen in various stages of undress. Libertine images primarily are placed in the interior settings, creating an even more private sphere for the physical actions of the figures. Chaotic brushstrokes are featured heavily in libertine scenes, insinuating a physicality that enhances the subject matter. Mary Sheriff has provided a basis for these descriptions. She argues that an artist's seemingly hasty and loose brushwork contributes to the eroticism of the painting by emphasizing the disarrayed subject matter.<sup>2</sup> The analysis of gallant and libertine paintings will provide a basis for the last section of this chapter, which outlines Jean-Jacques Rousseau's and Denis Diderot's critiques of rococo love and its associated paintings.

Rousseau's main criticisms derived from the "worldly" society that practiced rococo love, which he portrayed as containing false sentiment due to its witticisms and artificial, highly adorned women. Diderot used art criticism to espouse his view of rococo paintings as immoral because of their treatment of love. Since Fragonard did not participate in the Salons after 1767, I use Diderot's criticism of rococo artists François Boucher and Pierre Antoine Baudouin to exemplify the opinions of art critics in terms of rococo love. These artists have fairly similar styles, as Boucher was Fragonard's and Baudouin's teacher. Fragonard's pastoral scenes mirrored those of Boucher's paintings of gallantry. Diderot disapproved of Boucher's figures calculating their next move in love rather than truly feeling emotion. Diderot also compared Boucher to the worldly women when discussing his style of painting. In contrast, Diderot labeled Baudouin as a libertine due to his sexualized depictions of moral subject matter. Although moralists

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<sup>2</sup> Mary D. Sheriff, "Art and Eroticism," in *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 185-205.

constructed rococo love negatively, the production of rococo paintings did not disappear and continued throughout the eighteenth century.

### **Gallantry: The Endless Chase**

Before delving into Fragonard's artworks, it is important to briefly discuss eighteenth century gallant literature in order to understand the concepts behind the painting. Eighteenth century novels and plays had connections to the seventeenth century novella, as they often reacted against or perpetuated its Christian values of ideal love as "platonic, sublime, and spiritual."<sup>3</sup> According to Katharine Jenson, seventeenth century salon culture began to perform gallantry, a system of codes that focused on a "spiritual love that transcends carnal desire and is in harmony with honor and reason."<sup>4</sup> A more "corrupted" version of gallantry evolved during the eighteenth century in the salons. Rather than focusing on a transcendent, spiritual love, this new gallantry concentrated on love as an endless game. The latter type of gallantry is most commonly found in Fragonard's paintings, because he focuses on the playful aspects rather than the honorable system of codes described by Jenson. Eighteenth century literary works, both serious and comedic, incorporated the traditional morals of seventeenth century Christian love and gallantry, but in more relaxed terms.

Although "gallantry" is not a distinguishable category in literature, Marivaux's comedic plays and dramatic novels have the closest connection to the rococo paintings

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<sup>3</sup> Warren Roberts, *Morality and Social Class in Eighteenth-Century French Literature and Painting* (University of Toronto Press, 1974), 21.

<sup>4</sup> Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho, 1546-1937* (University of Chicago Press, 1989); and Katharine Ann Jenson, *Writing Love: Letters, Women, and the Novel in France, 1605-1776* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 13.

exemplifying this practice.<sup>5</sup> Marivaux's closest counterpart in painting is Watteau, as both portray the conversational aspects of courtship.<sup>6</sup> Marivaux was famous for his witty, spirited banter in his comedic plays, while Watteau painted countless *fête galantes* such as *L'Embarquement pour Cythère* (1717) (Figure A-10) that depicted young elite couples conversing outdoors.<sup>7</sup> These paintings did not show the overt sexual figures as found in libertine images, but exhibited civilized conversations with erotic undertones. Similarly, Marivaux's plays do not have the overt eroticism of libertinage, but include subtle sexuality.<sup>8</sup> Marivaux did not support libertinage, and disputed the libertine idea that love was equated with sexual fulfillment.<sup>9</sup> Sarah Cohen argues that the movement of Watteau's figures derived from dances that elites performed.<sup>10</sup> These dances had coded sexual undertones similar to Marivaux's writings. This allowed elites to have physical interaction without moving away from their coded verbal and non-verbal communications. Watteau influenced later generations of rococo artists, including Fragonard. Fragonard also highlighted the physical interaction between the figures, despite the fact that the sexual tension is never consummated (at least in the painting).

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<sup>5</sup> See Daniel Gerould, *Gallant and Libertine: Eighteenth-Century French Divertissements and Parades* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983); Peter Lang, *The rococo and Eighteenth-Century French Literature: a study through Marivaux's theater* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1987); and Robert Tomlinson, *La Fête Galante: Watteau et Marivaux* (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art Literature and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (Yale University, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Gerould, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Culpin, D.J. *Marivaux and Reason: A Study in Early Enlightenment Thought*. (New York: Peter Lang Inc., 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Culpin, 36.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Cohen, "Un bal continuel: Watteau's Cythera Paintings and Aristocratic Dancing in the 1710s," *Art History* 17 (June 1994): 160-181.



Beginning in the 1750s, Fragonard began creating conventional rococo works that can easily be identified as gallantry personified. The majority of these works equated courtship with society games that the aristocracy would play in the gardens at their estates. *Blindman's Bluff* (1755) (Figure A-1) provides one of the best examples of how these common society games became a metaphor for love.<sup>11</sup> Blindman's bluff was a game that related to the senses. The blindfolded player not only had to physically touch the other players in order to play, but also had to rely on their other senses besides sight to find them.<sup>12</sup> In Fragonard's work, a blindfolded woman reaches out as her male suitor gently brushes her cheek with a strand of straw. Both are dressed in fantasized peasant clothing, a reference to the members of high society who would dress themselves as shepherds and shepherdesses during their leisure entertainments. For example, the aristocracy dressed up to enact passages from popular plays such as Guarini's *Il pastor fido* that included scenes of blindman's bluff.<sup>13</sup> In Fragonard's painting, two children appear at the bottom, with one touching the woman's hand with a thin stick, presumably to mislead the woman to her partner's location. These children most likely represent *amorini* that aid the love affairs between the two main figures.<sup>14</sup>

*Blindman's Bluff* represented both love as a game of chance and the blind passion that love can cause. According to Charles Sorel in *Recreation gallants* (published in 1671 and throughout the eighteenth century), "blindfolding [the eyes] represents the

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<sup>11</sup>Jennifer Milam argues that *Blindman's Bluff* could have had a Rousseauian association later in the century. Since the woman can see despite the blindfold, she controls her movement with a level of reason. Reason was a key element in Rousseauian love. Milam, 24-26.

<sup>12</sup> Milam, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Milam, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Milam 24.

blindness of lovers and the disorder of passions and diverse affections that are excited by those of love.”<sup>15</sup> As hinted in this statement, passionate love was compared to a sickness of physical passion that could spring up at a moment’s notice. Although the game alludes to an out of control, destructive passion, Fragonard’s painting is controlled by the female figure. As Jennifer Milam observes, the woman looks from her blindfold indicating “her consciousness of the game as an artifice.”<sup>16</sup> Diderot, who argued that artworks needed to fulfill a moral obligation, would have disapproved of Fragonard’s pastorals because his figures seemingly knew the exact outcome of the situation.<sup>17</sup> Rousseau echoed these sentiments as he argued that members of high society acted in an extremely coded manner, causing the spontaneity of true love to be stifled.<sup>18</sup>

Stylistically, *Blindman’s Bluff* embodies the rococo style and represents the beginnings of Fragonard’s standard rococo setting. In terms of composition, the woman is the center focus with her body illuminated from an unknown light source. The light plays off the folds in her dress and highlights her heaving breasts. Rather than presenting the robust country women of Rousseauian literature, her body conforms to those of the aristocrats with a delicate figure. She appears to be posing, as even her fingers have an air of intentionality and self-consciousness. The setting is a garden scene in which the trees and architecture frame the couple. The little children will transform to more direct references of cupids in his later paintings.

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<sup>15</sup> Milam, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Milam, 26.

<sup>17</sup> Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art, Volume 1: The Salon of 1765 and Notes on Painting*, trans. John Goodman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 28.

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997), 196-205.

Fragonard was known for his loose brushstrokes. These are most visible in the folds of the woman's clothing. However, Fragonard tightened his brushwork to depict the delicate porcelain skin of the woman. As Sheriff has shown, these painterly touches on the work related to theories on art and society during the period. The Renaissance concepts of *sprezzatura* (ease), *facilité* (ease of execution), *négligence* (planned imperfections), and *légèreté* (light touches to hide the labor) became important to the execution of the painting and were also concepts linked to French courtiers' performances.<sup>19</sup> The touches of white paint over the folds in her dress create a sense of ease and grace resulting from the painter's hand. The construction of this false elegance relates to the painting's content. The couple in the painting produces a perceived chaos, but as discussed earlier, the woman looks from under the blindfold indicating her control over the situation. This common motif in gallant scenes, in which everything is scripted despite the appearance of chaos, relates to Fragonard's style of painting. His brushstrokes appear to be loose and unplanned, but they were intended by the artist.

Fragonard polished the elements of *Blindman's Bluff* in *The Progress of Love* series, which has become an example of quintessential rococo gallant painting. Madame du Barry commissioned the series of four paintings, *The Pursuit* (Figure A-11), *The Lover Crowned* (Figure A-12), *The Meeting* (Figure A-13), and *The Love Letters* (Figure A-14) (1771-1772), for her pavilion at Louveciennes.<sup>20</sup> Pavilions were known as

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<sup>19</sup> Mary D. Sheriff, "Easel Painting and the Aesthetics of Brushwork," in *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 117-152.

<sup>20</sup> Several scholars have written on *The Progress of Love* series, specifically the order in which the paintings should be viewed. See Colin B. Bailey, *Fragonard's Progress of Love at the Frick Collection* (D. Giles Ltd., 2011); Lynn Kirby, "Fragonard's *The Pursuit of Love*," *Rutgers Art Review* (1982): 58-79; Donald Posner, "The True Path of Fragonard's 'Progress of Love,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 114, no. 833

the “sanctuary of pleasure” (sanctuaire de volupté) and were used for smaller, private gatherings.<sup>21</sup> This informal atmosphere meant that guest’s movement around the room would not have dictated the interpretation of the paintings. Although the doors circulated the traffic to an extent, the paintings had no viewing pattern that guests would have followed. Furthermore, no continuous iconographic motifs or figures allude to a connected narrative.<sup>22</sup> As in the paintings, the game of gallant love never had a set ending such as marriage or sexual consummation. Gallant paintings concentrated more on the endless chase rather than the end.

Although no sequential order can be determined, the positioning of the paintings in relation to the openings and closings of the pavilion influenced how they would be read. *The Pursuit* and *The Meeting* would have been first seen when entering the pavilion from the Salon du Roi, while *The Love Letters* and *The Lover Crowned* would have been seen when entering from the garden.<sup>23</sup> The backdrop of *The Meeting* and *The Pursuit* would have been a garden, a site known for this type of gallant behavior.<sup>24</sup> As Sheriff argues, this created an “interplay between the actual garden and the fictive one.”<sup>25</sup> Not only does this merge artifice and natural elements, it also creates a parallel between the figures and actions in the painting to those at the social gathering.<sup>26</sup> The

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(1972): 526-534; and Sheriff, “The Dynamics of Decoration,” in *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 58-94;

<sup>21</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 71, 72.

<sup>22</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 68.

<sup>23</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 72.

<sup>24</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 73.

<sup>25</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 73.

<sup>26</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 73.

audience for this series would have been the guests of Mme du Barry, or nobility and social elites. This type of patronage linked the rococo style with the “worldly” who were attacked during the mid- to late eighteenth century. However, the paintings were briefly installed at the Louveciennes until Mme Du Barry replaced it with Joseph-Marie Vien’s (1773-4) *Two Young Grecian Girls Promise Never to Fall in Love* (Figure A-15), *Two Young Girls Meet with Sleeping Cupid* (Figure A-16), *The Lover Crowning His Mistress* (Figure A-17), and *Two Lovers Who Swear Eternal Affection* (Figure A-18). Lynn Kirby attributes this change in the commission to the ideological shifts in attitudes towards love during the period.<sup>27</sup> In contrast to the circular teasing of the rococo model, Vien’s work firmly establishes the narrative and the goals of eternal love that exists between the figures.

As mentioned earlier, *The Meeting* and *The Pursuit* would most likely have been viewed together since they were on the same wall. *The Meeting* shows a girl and boy during a secret rendezvous at the moment when they realize that someone might be approaching. Since the person threatening to end the meeting was outside of the scene, guests could imagine that they or others were intruding on the figures’ tryst. In *The Pursuit*, a man presents a rose to a woman who dashes away from him almost trampling her female companion on the ground. Similar to *Blindman’s Bluff*, the central female figure could have been plucked from the ballet as she leaps in a pose fit for a dancer.<sup>28</sup> These dance-like movements were common in Watteau’s and Fragonard’s paintings, as being a member of high society meant the ability to move with ease and

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<sup>27</sup> Kirby, 58.

<sup>28</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 76.

grace at all times. The desperate male lover in *The Pursuit* was a common motif in paintings of gallantry, and is repeated in *The Love Letters* and *The Lover Crowned*. In *The Love Letters*, a woman reads a love letter, presumably written by her lover who nuzzles against the crevice between her neck and shoulder. *The Love Letters* illustrates the most overt affection out of the series and suggests “real” emotion, while the adjacent painting (*The Lover Crowned*) presents the most artficed construction of love.

The crowning of a lover was already a common motif in Fragonard’s rococo works from the 1750s including *The Musical Contest*, a painting of a woman who playfully decides who will win the competition for her heart. In *The Musical Contest* (1754) (Figure A-6), the woman stretches her arm with the crown of flowers to the man holding the bagpipes, while her upper body in opposition sways towards the man who wraps his arms around her. These musical instruments, as well as fruits and vegetables in other pastorals, were coded with sexual innuendos.<sup>29</sup> The woman’s gaze does not indicate who she chooses, as she looks in the direction of the crown rather than the men staring up at her. The two men gaze up toward her in desperation, as she holds their fate in her hands. She is eternally in a suspended state wavering between two men with no decision in sight. This frozen state is echoed in *The Lover Crowned*, as the couple holds their pose purposefully for the artist in the left hand corner to paint them. The artificiality of the situation reinforces the perceived notion of gallantry as being specious because of the highly coded system that masked emotions.

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<sup>29</sup> Sheriff, “The Erotics of Decoration,” in *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 95-116.

Stylistically, the Du Barry paintings solidified Fragonard's rococo style that began in the 1750s with *Blindman's Bluff*. Similar to *Blindman's Bluff*, greenery encapsulates the scene to create a private, intimate effect, and statues of Venus and/or cupids reinforce the subject matter of the scenes. However, the figures in *The Progress of Love* series are further away and the background is more expansive. The painting style is light, pastel tones with painterly brushstrokes. The brushstrokes create a movement in the figures such as in *The Pursuit* in which the motion of the woman who leaps forward is emphasized by the dynamic tonal brushstrokes. Each stroke moves in a different direction, meeting each other and creating the illusion of a body in motion. In addition, Fragonard delicately placed white highlights throughout the paintings, suggesting an ease and simplicity of execution. As mentioned earlier, this related to gallantry in which all participants' interactions, despite their complexity, would appear as though little effort was involved. Unlike *Blindman's Bluff*, the men in this series are feminized and enact similar characteristics as their female counterparts.<sup>30</sup> For example, the man in *The Pursuit* has similar rosy cheeks, ruby lips, porcelain skin and gentle eyes analogous to the woman that leaps from him. His gestures are delicate and precise. For example, he holds a rose delicately between his thumb and pointer finger with his pinky finger gently lifted above the others. This delicate detail demonstrates that his poses are just as fabricated as the woman's. As will be discussed later, critics argued that the predominance of women in the public sphere caused the men to adopt feminine characteristics, which is detrimental to society.

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<sup>30</sup> They are feminized by today's standards. The construction of feminine characteristics in these paintings began with Rousseau's and others' critiques. See Madelyn Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolution* (Rutgers University Press, 1994); and Melissa Hyde, "Confounding Conventions: Gender Ambiguity and François Boucher's Painted Pastorals," *ECS* (Fall 1996): 25-58.

## Libertinage: Pure Physical Pleasure

To a lesser extent, Fragonard also represented libertinage in his paintings. Similar to gallantry, libertinage is still about the chase but it had an end in terms of the physical act of pleasure. Libertine images showed more overtly sexual subjects and the physical act instead of the courtship. Libertinage in literature reached its zenith between 1740 and 1760, but the term became associated with the “licentious ways of the declining French aristocracy” beginning in 1715.<sup>31</sup> The libertine novel reacted against the seventeenth century Christian version of love, perpetuating an anti-romantic view that mocked the values of the *novella*. Libertine literature primarily depicted devious characters who found physical pleasure in reasoned seduction.<sup>32</sup> It is difficult to analyze libertine literature as faithfully illustrating the actions of the aristocrats, because authors used this literature to criticize the *ancien regime*, purposefully portraying them as lewd and treacherous. For example, authors such as Crébillon fils and Choderlos de Laclos denied that they were libertines or condoned the behavior of their characters.<sup>33</sup> However, memoirs of the aristocracy reveal themes featured in libertine literature, including the erotic chase and sexual freedom.<sup>34</sup>

One image that crosses the boundaries from gallantry to libertinage is *The Swing* (Figure A-8). Painting in the rococo style described earlier with the enclosed garden, statue of cupid, and painterly pastel brushstrokes, *The Swing* (1767) shows a secret affair between a privileged young woman and man. Similar to *The Musical Contest*, the

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<sup>31</sup> Michel Feher, *The Libertine Reader: Eroticism and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Feher, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Feher, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Roberts, 53-57.



woman is the unattainable goal of the male, desperate lovers. Fragonard uses the direction of the light, the figures' gazes, and a triangular composition to draw attention her. She is fully illuminated in the middle of a light source which emerges from a break in the trees. The surrounding figures, including the men and the cupid statues, match the viewer's gaze toward the woman. Fragonard uses a triangular composition with the two men at the base and the woman at the top. The men's gestures reinforce this triangular composition as the young man points towards her with his hand and the older man holds the ropes connected to the swing. Baron de Saint-Julien commissioned *The Swing* from Fragonard after Gabriel-Francois Doyen turned the commission down. Charles Collé wrote a journal entry describing an anecdote by Doyen who described Saint-Julien's request. Doyen recounted that Saint-Julien asked him to "paint Madame (pointing to his mistress) on a swing that a bishop would set going...You will place me in such a way that I would be able to see the legs of this lovely girl."<sup>35</sup> Swinging was an actual pastime for young people in the court. It allowed for a moment of abandoning social norms as it put women in "uninhibited positions [that] revealed their bodies" to spectators.<sup>36</sup> In the image, the man hidden in the bushes looks up the woman's dress as the woman, who presumably knows exactly what she is exposing, kicks off her shoe towards him. Furthermore, the rhythmic motion of the swing metaphorically relates to sexual intercourse. Despite the first suggestion that this painting is about the extracurricular activity of swinging, this image is centered more on sexual relations between the young woman and man than the gallant images of playful games.

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<sup>35</sup> Donald Posner, "The Swinging Women of Watteau and Fragonard," *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982): 83.

<sup>36</sup> Milam, 54; and Thomas M. Kavanagh, "Boucher, Fragonard, and the Seductions of the Moment," in *Esthetics of the Moment: Literature and Art in the French Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 224.

Although there is no consummation in the actual image, the fact that they have had, or will have, sexual relations is implied through the code of swinging. Therefore, the painting combines the hidden codes of gallantry with the physical sexuality of libertinage.

Libertine scenes were often placed in the interior, specifically the bedrooms of the aristocracy. Fragonard painted several useless resistance scenes that can be considered images of libertinage. For example, *The Useless Resistance* (1764-68) (Figure A-2) setting is a bedroom, specifically the mattress and blanket that the man and woman cavort for their sexual exploits. In the image, a worldly woman grabs a man's hair in an attempt to stop him from sexually exploiting her. Although the woman shows resistance through her body language, they both have pleased looks that allude to their equal enjoyment in this game of cat and mouse. The audience can also sexually exploit the woman who is compositionally center and highlighted. The man pulls on the woman's dress, exposing her thighs not only to him but to the audience. The positioning of her body with her arms spread wide exposes her breasts and enhances her vulnerability to the viewers. The *negligence* and *facilité* in the brushwork enhances the erotic subject matter.<sup>37</sup> *Negligence* refers to the presumed inattention of the artist's brushstroke. For example, the clothing dissolves into bundles of brushstrokes when the figure's grasp at each other. This type of brushwork accentuates the disheveled subject matter of two lovers in a physical tryst. Rather than having the fairly polished porcelain skin of gallant paintings, Fragonard reveals the direction of each stroke. This exemplifies *facilité* or appearing to be effortless through a

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<sup>37</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 193-198.

loose handling of the paint. Fragonard uses the painterly techniques to promote the image of a sensual woman rather than to create an anatomical correct one. Overall, the physical handling of his brushstrokes mirrors the erotic touching between the man and woman.

The second image of libertinage that I will discuss is *The New Model* (c. 1770) (Figure A-19). The painting shows a female model posing for an artist with her breasts exposed. Another woman ambiguously holds the model's clothing, wavering between exposing the model's breasts and attempting to hide her nakedness. However, all three partners have slight smirks that allude to their willing participation. The artist lifts the model's skirt with his maulstick, decidedly a phallic reference, as she half-heartedly attempts to lower it. Rather than a connection between two people seen in the previous gallant and libertine paintings, *The New Model* is all about the eroticism between the three characters, but especially the model and the artist. Aesthetically, this work mirrors the painting style found in *The Useless Resistance*. The *negligence* and *facilité* create sensuous characters and a disheveled atmosphere perfect for their sexual adventures.<sup>38</sup> For example, the woman appears to be only grasping at thin strips of cloth rather than a solid form. At some points, Fragonard accentuates the sketchy atmosphere from *The Useless Resistance* by painting just enough detail for the audience to recognize the object. He does this particularly with the figure's faces, as the model's eyes are barely fleshed out. This painting will come into play later when I discuss art criticism of a similar subject matter by Fragonard's contemporary Baudouin.

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<sup>38</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 193-198.

## Rousseau's and Diderot's Critiques

During the mid-eighteenth century, moralists such as Rousseau and Diderot harshly criticized rococo love, labeling it as corrupt and immoral. The next section outlines their criticisms, specifically with references to Rousseau's *Emile* and *Julie*, and Diderot's art criticisms. Rousseau did not comment on specific artworks, but did attack the general concept of art because of its ties to wealth and luxury.<sup>39</sup> However, his comments are still important in understanding how gallant and libertine paintings, as well as the general rococo culture, were received. Eighteenth century art criticism, especially by Denis Diderot, took into account the paintings moral value. Therefore, Rousseau's commentary and Diderot's critiques often coincided in their viewpoints on rococo love.

As the Revolution neared, rococo love was increasingly criticized because moralists such as Rousseau linked it with the aristocracy, which itself was under attack. In *Emile* and *Julie*, Rousseau connected rococo love with the wealthy elites living in the city, specifically Paris. Fragonard's paintings implicitly reinforced this association because the figures in his gallant paintings were often dressed in fashionably expensive clothing. Furthermore, wealthy women such as Madame du Barry commissioned rococo paintings during the early to mid-eighteenth century. In *Julie*, Rousseau states that the "fashionable ladies, the high and mighty...of the Court" (i.e. rococo culture) provoke "false virtues [that] tarnishes the luster of genuine ones."<sup>40</sup> These "fashionable ladies" often live in the city. This is a common theme in literature and paintings. While

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<sup>39</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 14.

the “Women of Paris and London” “feign modesty,” those from the countryside exude moral values.<sup>41</sup>

Another theme that he expresses relates to my earlier discussion of Marivaux and Watteau. In a series of letters, Saint-Preux recounts to Julie his experiences in Paris and the women that he encountered. He continually opposes the customs in Paris to those that he feels in his own life. One of the differences between true love and that of the worldly people of Paris is the complicated codes that they adopt in contrast to the simple declarations of those in love. Historically, the aristocracy, nobility and culture elites created a system of codes, verbal and non-verbal, that only society members could decipher and perform. Saint-Preux argued that these lovers relied on the “florid jargon of gallantry” that primarily consists of “witticisms.”<sup>42</sup> The simple tone of true sentiment contrasts with the falsity of dressing up a phrase that results in gallantry.<sup>43</sup> In groups, the jargon becomes unintelligible for outsiders such as Saint-Preux who argued that their conversations “cannot be understood without possession of the key.”<sup>44</sup> Despite the constant chatter about sentiments, the wealthy never truly understand real love because sentiment cannot survive in a society where everything is “regulated, measured and weighted.”<sup>45</sup> Saint-Preux proposes moving from the city to the countryside. During the eighteenth century, the country had the reputation of nurturing a healthier lifestyle, physically and emotionally, for its residents. He argues that “the

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<sup>41</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1979), 389.

<sup>42</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 196.

<sup>43</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 196.

<sup>44</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 204.

<sup>45</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 205.

heart's sweetest sentiments can animate a more agreeable society there [the country] than the contrived language of worldly circles."<sup>46</sup>

The customs in Paris not only affected the way that society evoked love through language but also through actions. In terms of marriage, Saint-Preux characterizes Paris as a land of adultery that allows its citizens to commit sinful acts without consequence. Marriage for Parisians was merely a minor civil contract that "seem[ed] to be no more than the consent of two free persons who agree to live together, to bear the same name, to recognize the same children: but who have, other than that no sort of claim to each other."<sup>47</sup> Love is not necessary in such relationships. Consequently, spouses become "bachelors and maidens who live together in order to enjoy greater freedom," while

lovers are passing acquaintances who get together for amusement, for show, out of habit, or for the needs of the moment. The heart has nothing to do with these liaisons, only convenience and certain surface formalities are considered. They consist, if you will, in knowing each other, being together, making arrangements, meeting, even less if that is possible. A liaison on the gallant type lasts a little longer than a social call; it is a collection of pretty conversation and pretty letters filled with portraits maxims, philosophy and wit. With respect to the physical, nothing so mysterious is called for; they have never cleverly discovered the need to make the moment of desire coincide with the means of satisfying it.<sup>48</sup>

This passage summarizes Rousseau's concerns with "love" in high society, the part of society that is depicted, commissioned, and most associated with rococo paintings. According to this interpretation, gallantry and libertinage (as what he describes is not merely courtship with no physicality) is not love at all, but merely the

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<sup>46</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 222.

<sup>48</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 222.

pretense of emotions. It is not an intimate experience between two people but rather a fleeting social event. Rousseau places blame on the women as the leaders of how relationships between couples and families unfold. Although both men and women of high society participate in the rococo language and actions, it is the women who determine the outcome.

Rousseau's analysis worldly women correlate with the women in rococo paintings. According to him, high society women are adorned with an excess of clothing and makeup, which merely hides one faults rather than allowing their true beauty to shine.<sup>49</sup> One difference between these women and ideal ones is body type. Worldly women have an "extreme softness" that is suitable for their luxurious lifestyle. The aristocratic women in the *Progress of Love* fit this worldly type. They have small frames created by their corset that emphasize their miniscule waists and heaving breasts. They have porcelain-like skin that is adorned with makeup especially on their cheeks. Lastly, the women all move with the lightness of dancers, such as in *The Pursuit*. Although the main woman appears to be briskly leaving her suitor, she leaps gracefully landing on one foot as her other leg extends in a delicate pose. In contrast, proper women are more robust, which is suitable for the life in the countryside. Worldly women's body types reinforce that they live a life of luxury, while more robust women use their bodies for utilitarian purposes. This is also a class issue, as robust women most likely came from the bourgeoisie rather than the luxurious life of the aristocracy.

Rousseau expresses the idea that the domination of women in rococo love (and culture more generally) cause men to become effeminate and women to act as men.

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<sup>49</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, 372.

He champions separate spheres between men and women, especially in the realm of love. In order for a relationship to work, women should remain subordinate to men. In gallantry, women have the power.<sup>50</sup> Saint-Preux mentions several times that the Parisian women's tones are not "sweet and dainty," but are "stronger than a man's."<sup>51</sup> The cause for this is partly due to the fact that Paris encourages the sexes to intermingle. In gallant paintings, women are the center of attention as they have control over the men who fawn over them such as in *The Swing*. From Rousseau's perspective, the male figures in Fragonard's gallant paintings are effeminate, and the sexual difference between men and women are lacking.<sup>52</sup> In *The Progress of Love* series, the men mirror the delicate positioning and appearance of the woman. This interpretation levels the playing field between men and women, allowing for the women to at least appear to dominate.

As mentioned earlier, Rousseau did not comment on specific artworks, but his discourse still has value for understanding others art criticism. Eighteenth century art criticism paid attention to both aesthetic and moral values. A critic who used morals to weigh the worth of the painting was Denis Diderot. Around the time that Rousseau was writing his critiques on love, Denis Diderot stated that artists should "make virtue attractive, vice odious, and ridicule effective."<sup>53</sup> His notion of virtue is connected to Rousseauian ideals of love, while gallantry and libertinage is the epitome of vice. Diderot did not comment on Fragonard's paintings as thoroughly as his contemporaries,

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<sup>50</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 221.

<sup>51</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 220.

<sup>52</sup> Melissa Hyde, "Confounding Conventions," 72.

<sup>53</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 1 (1765), 225.



because Fragonard left the Académie shortly after the Salon of 1767 to work on private commissions.<sup>54</sup> Diderot disapproved of this decision, stating that “instead of working for glory and posterity he is content to shine today in the boudoirs and dressing rooms.”<sup>55</sup> This is significant because the boudoir was a space of libertinage and gallantry and was associated with wealthy women.

Since Diderot’s comments on the gallant and libertine paintings of Fragonard are scant, I focus on François Boucher and Pierre Antoine Baudouin in order to demonstrate how Diderot would have hypothetically reacted to Fragonard’s gallant paintings. Both Boucher and Baudouin created paintings that could be classified as gallant and/or libertine. Their work shares important traits, as both Fragonard and Baudouin were mentored by Boucher and painters acknowledged by Diderot. When Fragonard exhibited *The Infant Hercules Strangling the Serpents* in the Salon of 1767, Diderot remarked that “he brought back from Rome the same taste, negligence, and mannerisms of [rococo artist] Boucher.”<sup>56</sup> Fragonard’s earlier paintings of gallantry echoed Boucher’s paintings: *The Musical Contest* was confused for a Boucher during the nineteenth century. Diderot’s commentary on Baudouin sheds light on how Fragonard’s genre scenes would have been viewed if he had shown them in the Salons,

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<sup>54</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 8-9.

<sup>55</sup> Denis Diderot, *Mémoires secrets*, vol. 13 (London: J. Adamson, 1780-89): 32-33, quoted in Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art, Volume 2: Salon of 1767*, trans. by John Goodman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 260.

because he was a contemporary of Fragonard painting similar subject matter throughout the 1760s.<sup>57</sup>

Diderot had harsh words for Boucher's gallant pastorals (that are currently unknown) at the Salon of 1765. An example of Boucher's pastorals is *Autumn* (1755) (Figure A-20) from *The Four Season* series. In this image, a young man holds a bundle of grapes on the lap of a young woman who looks at him with a sly expression. Grapes and other fruit had both sexual and fertility connotations that added an implicit eroticism to the painting.<sup>58</sup> Fragonard created similar types of gallant imagery such as *The Happy Lovers* (1760-65) (Figure A-21). In *The Happy Lovers*, a boy and girl gaze lovingly at one another. He holds a dove (phallic symbol), while she lifts the carrier for her lover's bird. Diderot critiqued these types of pastorals stating that in a good pastoral a "shepherd and shepherdess would have done everything that these do, but they wouldn't have been able to anticipate the outcome where as these know exactly what will happen in advance, which I find irritating, given that its not handled with candor."<sup>59</sup> Gallantry was known for its staged mannerisms, where even the most spontaneous action is planned and perfected. In this comment, Diderot sets up the contrast between rococo love and real (Rousseauian) love. Rococo love is predetermined by the players in the game of love and devoid of love's spontaneous nature rather than felt wholeheartedly.

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<sup>57</sup> Colin B. Bailey, et al., *The Age of Watteau, Chardin and Fragonard*, ed. Colin B. Bailey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 240.

<sup>58</sup> Sheriff, "The Erotics of Decoration," *Fragonard*, 95-116.

<sup>59</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 1 (1765), 28.

*Autumn* and *The Happy Lovers* are set in the countryside and ostensibly depict the poorer populations such as shepherds and shepherdesses. However, their mannerisms, clothing and appearance relate more to the aristocratic and wealthy patrons than those in the countryside. Although the women are supposedly from the countryside, their small delicate frames, ornate clothing and made up faces relate to aristocracy ideals of beauty. In Boucher's painting, the woman is clothed not too differently from those in *The Progress of Love* series. Her dress is created with luxurious material and adorned with two pink flowers on her right breast. She accessorizes with a small hat tilted to the side of her coiffure. Her face, clearly rouged, gives her a rosy appearance. Rousseau criticized coquettes, or women who use their wiles to seduce men. He specifically targeted the fashionable women who were known for their false appearances. Diderot made similar comments as Rousseau, stating that Boucher "makes the prettiest marionettes in the world" as his women have "too many little pinched faces, too many mannerisms."<sup>60</sup> As mentioned earlier in *The Progress of Love* series, Fragonard's gallant paintings often showed the figures in carefully posed positions. Diderot commented that Boucher "can show me all the nudes he likes, I'll always see in them the rouge, the beauty spots, the powder puffs, and all the little vials of the make-up table."<sup>61</sup> As discussed by Melissa Hyde, Boucher's critics would often draw comparisons between Boucher's painting and women's cosmetics. This also implied that his paintings have little substance and are all appearance, a criticism similar

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<sup>60</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 1 (1765), 24.

<sup>61</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 1 (1765), 23.

to that of gallantry and its coquettes.<sup>62</sup> As mentioned earlier, Rousseau criticized women as having the power in society and creating effeminate men. In these pastorals, both men and women have ruby red lips and cheeks with delicate skin and curled hair. The men are not only feminine in appearance but in their actions, as they take the subordinate position. In *Autumn*, the woman places her hand on the man's arm and reaches for a grape. She appears to be the knowing, powerful one in comparison to the seemingly clueless man. Fragonard's *The Happy Lover* exaggerates these features in Boucher's painting, as the man lies in the woman's lap and gazes up at her while she dangles the bird cage over his head.

While Boucher represented gallantry that plagued French society, Diderot labeled Baudouin as "a bit of a libertine" and compared his works to "a libertine book."<sup>63</sup> During the Salon of 1767, Diderot named Baudouin as the artist who created "little pictures, little ideas, frivolous compositions, appropriate for the bedroom of a little mistress" with his audience of "little Abbés, little lawyers, substantial financiers, and other persons without scruples and with a taste for the trivial."<sup>64</sup> Similar to Baudouin, many of Fragonard's paintings were not necessarily for the aristocratic audience but for the nouveau riche. The worldly society that Rousseau consistently mentions is made up of both these classes. Furthermore, Fragonard's paintings were often for intimate affairs and on the smaller scale in comparison to the commanding history paintings. Diderot's perception of Fragonard would hypothetically be very similar to his concept of Baudouin.

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<sup>62</sup> Melissa Hyde, "The 'Makeup' of the Marquise: Boucher's Portrait of Pompadour at Her Toilette," *The Art Bulletin* 82 no. 3 (September 2000): 455-458.

<sup>63</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 1 (1765), 88.

<sup>64</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 2 (1767), 164.

In order to further understand how Diderot would have viewed Fragonard, I use his comments on Baudouin's *The Honest Model* (1769) (Figure A-22), which shares the subject matter of Fragonard's *The New Model*.

In Fragonard's *The New Model* a model, an artist and an unknown woman engage in erotic behavior. All three of them appear to have no guilt or shame, but elicit pleasure out of their behavior. In comparison, Baudouin attempts to create a moral message. In the work, a model hides her face in shame with one arm and turns her eyes toward the floor. She does not try to cover her nude breasts, and her only cover is a white sheet draped over her thighs. An older woman attempts to drape parts of her clothing over the younger women in an effort to cover her. The artist watches this scene and throws his hands in protest. A white cat sits between the artist and the women, possibly indicating the sexuality present in the image. The style is similar to Fragonard's with its sketchy brushstrokes that show the physicality of the artist. As mentioned earlier, this presence of the artist's hand reinforces the sensuality of the scene.

The painting was ill-received because of the ambiguity of the moral message with the undercurrent of sexual tension.<sup>65</sup> Although the model hides her face in shame, the painting in the background is almost complete, meaning that she had been posing for him for quite some time. The motivation and identity of the older women was also challenged, as Diderot argued that she "isn't a mother, she is an ignoble creature who engages in some vile business."<sup>66</sup> Despite a gesture at a moral message, the image was still considered as having libertine subject matter. Baron Grimm stated that

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<sup>65</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 189.

<sup>66</sup> Denis Diderot, *Salons*, vol. 4 (1769), ed. Jean Seznec and Jean Adhémar (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957 -67), 95. "cette femme n'est pas une mère, c'est une ignoble créature."

Baudouin is “as libertine in his brush as he [was] in his morals.”<sup>67</sup> This criticism linked the artist’s state of being to his style of painting. Fragonard’s version of the subject emphasizes sexuality more than the moral message. The females are willing participants, and even perpetuate the situation. If Diderot’s reaction against Baudouin’s was negative toward his attempt at virtue, hypothetically his attack on Fragonard’s would have been worse.

As demonstrated in this chapter, the rococo style and model of love came under attack both in Rousseau’s literature and Diderot’s art criticism. Their primary issues with this type of love had to do with its false appearance, its lack of true emotions, and women as the leaders. The congruity between Rousseau’s and Diderot’s criticisms signifies that these new morals were becoming more widespread. However, paintings and prints of gallantry and libertinage continued throughout the late eighteenth-century. Despite the moralists’ disapproval of rococo love, patrons still enjoyed viewing and owning these works. Concurrently, artists created works inspired by Rousseauian concepts, particularly during and after the 1760s. Similar to how Rousseau and Diderot constructed rococo love as morally wrong, they established Rousseauian love as the morally right alternative. According to Diderot, Rousseauian subject matter had to be painted in a way that highlighted moral values. Libertine artists created images such as Baudouin’s *The Honest Model* or *The Marriage Bed* (which will be discussed in the third chapter because of its complicated relations to “proper,” Rousseauian marriage) that Diderot received poorly. Even though Baudouin attempted a moral subject matter, the execution including the composition and the chosen scene in the narrative did not

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<sup>67</sup> Diderot, *Salons*, vol. 4 (1769), 95. “Baudouin, libertin dans son pinceau comme dans ses mœurs.”

match Diderot's expectation of a proper painting. As I will demonstrate in the next chapters, works by Baudouin or Fragonard are not simply rococo or Rousseauian, but has a myriad of meanings and associations.

### CHAPTER 3 ROUSSEAUIAN CONCEPTS OF LOVE

In contrast to the criticisms of rococo love discussed in the previous chapter, Rousseauian love was praised by moralists. Rousseauian love is a long lasting emotional-based relationship that can have varying degrees of passion. Moralists presented Rousseauian love as the true alternative to false, frivolous rococo love. In this chapter, I examine the term Rousseauian and how it was constructed as the proper way to love during the mid- to late eighteenth century. First, I explain the variations in the term Rousseauian in relation to love. As mentioned in the introduction, scholars have presented contradictory meanings of the term, which I intend to examine in this chapter. For example, Mary Sheriff and Emma Barker discuss his paintings based on Rousseau's theories of conjugal love, particularly the role of motherhood. In contrast, Andrei Molotiu uses Rousseau as a precursor to Romanticism. While both of these concepts fall under the term Rousseauian, it is possible to bridge the gap between them. In this section, I dissect Rousseauian love into three separate categories. First is the passionate romance that is best exemplified by the relationship between Julie and Saint-Preux from the first half of *Julie*. The second is a tempered, conjugal love between Julie and Baron de Wolmar from the second half of *Julie*. The third is Rousseau's concept of ideal love that he lays out in his educational treatise, *Emile*. This treatise promotes a compromise between the two types of love in *Julie* by promoting conjugal love that can have passion between the couple. The last section will explain how Rousseau constructed these types of love as ideal in contrast to the rococo love mentioned earlier. Diderot also championed Rousseauian love, praising representations of love and family in Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *The Marriage Contract*.



For the purposes of this study, I will use Rousseau's representations of love in *Julie* and *Emile*. Both were published in the early 1660s preceding Fragonard's artworks of Rousseauian subject matter. However, these works represent two different genres and should be treated accordingly. *Julie* was a bestselling novel in the eighteenth century. Since *Julie* is a work of fiction, Rousseau created complex characters that continually make mistakes and redeem themselves. Rather than recounting an idealized portrait of love, Rousseau concocts a messy, complex view of love in which a woman can have several different emotions throughout her lifetime. The novel begins with the passionate love affair between noblewoman Julie and her tutor Saint-Preux. At the beginning of their courtship, Saint-Preux admits to loving Julie with all his being and pleads her to respond. She eventually reciprocates his feelings and they begin a string of letters expressing their love. Julie continually questions the purity of their romance. In order to temper their passion and test their love, she encourages Saint-Preux to travel with their friend Milton Edward. Because of their separation, Julie becomes violently ill causing Saint-Preux to return. After consummating their love, Julie becomes pregnant but miscarries. She eventually follows her parent's wishes and marries Baron de Wolmar. At this point, she forgoes a virtuous transformation, and becomes the ideal mother. However, she never obtains the passion that she had with Saint-Preux, and she admits her feelings for Saint-Preux on her death bed.

Neither passionate romance nor conjugal love appears to be the ideal in *Julie*, but the educational treatise *Emile* does offer an ideal vision of love. Since *Emile* is an educational treatise, it is important to treat this text differently than *Julie*. In *Emile*, a tutor provides detailed instructions on how to properly rear children. In the first four

books, the tutor writes about Emile and how to nurture the male gender, while the fifth book focuses on the rearing of Sophie, Emile's counterpart and eventual marriage partner. The entering of Sophie in this theoretical work begins the extensive discussion of love. Mary Seidman Trouille argues that it is "not really a novel at all, but a fictionalized treatise on education...The characters appear superficial and contrived, mere straw figures designed to illustrate Rousseau's educational theories and his sexual politics, puppets dancing on a string manipulated by the omniscient and omnipresent tutor."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this treatise comes closer to articulating Rousseau's ideal concept of love.

Although my analysis strictly comprises of Rousseau's literary works, these characteristics should be considered as indicative of larger trends during the eighteenth century. Specifically, scholars have studied the affect that *Julie* had on its readers and late eighteenth century literature and artworks. *Julie* was a best seller of the eighteenth century with at least seventy editions published before 1800.<sup>2</sup> The novel caused strong emotions among its readers, as fan letters for Rousseau continually mentioned the novel bringing them to tears. In terms of love, the women often wrote fan letters to Rousseau that were inspired the letters of passionate love in *Julie*. Although the story of forbidden love affected his readers, *Julie*'s story of virtue inspired others to follow the same path. Merchant Jean Ranson admitted in a letter that he imitated both the model of Clarens in *Julie* as well as the instructions in how to rear children in *Emile*.<sup>3</sup> On a

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1997), 39.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 242.

<sup>3</sup> Darnton, 241.

more widespread level, the latter half of the eighteenth century saw an increase of both romantic and sentimental novels and others that combined the two concepts.

Revolutionaries pushed for divorce laws so that citizens could choose their partners and marry for love.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the themes and motifs in the following discussion are important when analyzing Fragonard's paintings. Although it cannot be proven whether or not Fragonard's paintings have any direct connection to Rousseau's writings, they can be connected to an overall culture ideology that was perpetuated by Rousseau's literature.

### **Passionate Love and Tempered, Conjugal Love**

Passionate romance was featured in the first half of *Julie* with the love letters between Julie and Saint-Preux. In "Conversations about Novels," Rousseau makes the case that he did not write these letters, but found and decided to publish them. He argues that the love between them is real, as the letters are written in an unpolished style. According to him, the style of writing is "desultory, diffuse, full of verbose, disconnected, repetitious passages," and most importantly, caused by a heart "filled with an overflowing sentiment."<sup>5</sup> This contrasts the polished and calculated witticisms in gallantry. In contrast to the coded sexuality in rococo love, Julie and Saint-Preux could not control their flirtations and feelings, or the outcome of their passion. This wording leads to a repetition of several themes and motifs in their letters including the uniting of two souls, relation to the theological realm, loss of reason, hyperbolic comparisons to their situation as life or death, and the threat of temporality. These themes

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<sup>4</sup> Pasco, 121-148.

<sup>5</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 10.

characterized the motifs in eighteenth century literary works from the passionate romance movement.

The first major theme in these letters is the uniting of two souls for eternity. The theme of two souls uniting is the primary way that passionate love is described by all the characters. For example, Julie states that their souls could “never again be separated” or “live apart, except as two parts of a whole,” Saint-Preux generalizes that “human souls need to be coupled to realize their full value...like that of the blades of an artificial magnet” and Milton Edward labels Julie and Saint Preux as “two beautiful souls” that “came forth one for the other from the hands of nature.”<sup>6</sup> This transcendent bond is often construed in religious terms. Rousseau argues in his “Conversation about Novels” that “when passion is at the fullest, it perceives its object as perfect; makes it into its idol; places it in Heaven; and just as the enthusiasm of devoutness borrows the language of love so does the enthusiasm of love borrow also the language of devoutness.”<sup>7</sup> This is seen consistently in the letters, particularly with Saint-Preux who describes Julie as an “angelic beauty, celestial soul” and mentions the “altar where Julie once was worshipped.”<sup>8</sup>

Another major theme in the romantic passion movement is the loss of reason. Throughout the novel Julie and Saint-Preux compared their loss of reason as having the same effects as “poison,” intoxication and becoming insane.<sup>9</sup> All their physical senses are heightened in this state of delirium. For example, Saint-Preux stated that that he

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<sup>6</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 173, 188, 159.

<sup>7</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 32.

<sup>9</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 32.

“find[s] the countryside more cheerful...the air more pure...the bird sing seems more tender and ecstatic...the vine blossoms in the distance give off sweeter perfumes,” etc.<sup>10</sup> As their senses are heightened so are the stakes in the relationship, and they compare their state of affairs to life and death situations. After their first kiss sent him into a state of delirium, Saint-Preux said that he could “live no longer in a present state, and sense that I must ultimately expire at your feet...or in [her] arms.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Julie became violently ill after she sent Saint-Preux away to travel as a test of their love, and when her father told her that she was to marry his friend. Afraid that Julie would perish, Julie’s cousin Claire writes to Saint-Preux explaining that his last letter “moved her [Julie] so violently that after spending a night in frightful struggles, yesterday, she fell into a burning fever that only increased until finally it gave her transports.”<sup>12</sup> Julie and Saint-Preux eventually succumb to their loss of reason after reuniting with one another.

This progression to sexual intercourse is the downside to passionate love. Passion leads to an overflowing of emotions, desire and lust leading to premarital sex. The threat of indulging in the pleasures of passionate love is a constant motif in the letters of Julie who warns Saint-Preux that they need to calm their emotions before their relationship turns physical. In this narrative, sexual intercourse could lead to pregnancy with a man who her family would not approve of as well as the loss of her virtue. As the passionate romance movement continued, premarital sex was not seen as much of a threat as earlier in the century. Instead, marriage was deemed inconsequential to true lovers. In *Julie*, the only element standing in their way to marriage was her parents who

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<sup>10</sup> Rousseau, *Julie* 95.

<sup>11</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 52.

<sup>12</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 76-77.

did not approve of his social standing. If she had defied her parents, they could have had a successful life together of conjugal love.

The progression to sexual intercourse relates to a more substantial issue with passionate love, temporality. Since passion is characterized as a potential violent emotion, it also has the threat of being fleeting. Julie continually laments about this after they have sexual intercourse. She argues that their “ecstasy used to be tranquil and lasting; now we merely have transports: this insane happiness is more like fits of madness than tender caresses.”<sup>13</sup> Aligning “tender caresses” and “tranquil” emotions with a “lasting” relationship, she insinuates that moderation leads to a long lasting union. Since the goal was passion and permanence, authors created tests that lovers would put each other through to prove their love. Although this was present in works during the 1730s, it became a main element during the 1780s and 1790s. Julie tested Saint-Preux’s love by asking him to travel to separate themselves from one another. Since Julie marries Baron de Wolmar, it would seem that Saint-Preux’s and Julie’s love was short-lived. However, on her deathbed Saint-Preux was the last words on her lips. She writes to Saint-Preux that “the virtue that separated on earth shall unite us in the eternal abode.”<sup>14</sup> If it was not for societal standards, their passionate romance could have hypothetically lasted on earth.

In contrast to the love affair with Saint-Preux, Julie’s affection for her husband Baron de Wolmar lacked the passion and emotion that she had with Saint-Preux. The significance of the second half of the novel was not the conjugal love between her and

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<sup>13</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 83.

<sup>14</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 609-10.

Wolmar, but her conversion to becoming a virtuous woman. Rousseau was part of a lineage of authors that focused on women, especially the mother, as the instiller of virtue to society. In the past, virtue was used as a descriptive word, but Rousseau used virtue as a narrative in and of itself, as the main character had to overcome obstacles to become virtuous.<sup>15</sup> Although Rousseau defines the love between Julie and Saint-Preux as real, he champions Julie's marriage with Baron de Wolmar over her love affair with Saint-Preux. He argues in "Conversations about Novel" that the first half is not the true message, and those that are persuaded by the beginning of *Julie* were already corrupt.

Her marriage to Baron de Wolmar is marked with tempered emotions. In letters to Saint-Preux, she starkly contrasts the love between them with the reasoned marriage she has with her husband. Emphasizing her pleas earlier in the novel for them to calm their emotions, she characterizes the love between Julie and Saint-Preux as a path to destruction because eventually they would have discovered each other as they are in reality, not as who they worshiped. This will inevitably lead to disaster in a marriage, as the hands of time will age the partners and their type of love was made for youths. In contrast, she delineates the love she has for Baron de Wolmar in this passage:

As for Monsieur de Wolmar, no illusion prepossesses us for each other; we see each other such as we are; the sentiment that joins us is not the blind transport of passionate hearts, but the immobile and constant attachment of two honest and reasonable persons who, destined to spend the rest of their lives together are content with their lot and try to make it pleasurable for each other. It seems that if we had been created expressively to be joined together it could not have been done more satisfactorily. If his heart were as tender as mine, it would be impossible to prevent so much sensibility on both sides from clashing occasionally, and nothing but quarrels ensuing. If I

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<sup>15</sup> Lesley H. Walker, *A Mother's Love: Crafting Feminine Virtue in Enlightenment France* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008), 33.

were as tranquil as he, there would be too much coldness between us, and it would make company less agreeable and pleasing. If he had not loved me, we would get along badly; if he had loved me too much, I would have found him importune. Each of us is precisely what the other requires; he enlightens me and I enliven him; we are enhanced by being together and it seems we are destined to constitute but a single soul between us, of which he is the intellect and I the will.<sup>16</sup>

The portrayal of her marriage seems idyllic, blissful and everlasting. This passage illustrates a couple that is guaranteed to last through time because they have mutual affection for one another, and overall is content with their life together. Not only do they have affection for one another, but their children strengthen their bonds as they are a loving mother and father. If the novel had ended with this concept of love, then there would be no issue about where Julie's heart truly lies and who should be her life partner. However, her death scene in the final letters reveals that Saint-Preux never left her heart. During her death, she expresses to Baron de Wolmar that he was "the only one, perhaps, with whom I could form a good couple, and become a good woman!"<sup>17</sup> As exemplified by this statement, the love between them fulfills a purpose. They successfully functioned as a couple because their marriage and children made her into a useful member of society. However, the love between them did not compare to the emotions between Julie and Saint-Preux.

The different categories of Rousseauian love represented in *Julie* are indicative of overall trends in literature and the arts during the mid- to late eighteenth century. In order to understand how these characteristics described in *Julie* manifest themselves in art, I analyze two paintings with similar subject matters, Fragonard's *The Invocation to*

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<sup>16</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 307.

<sup>17</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 591.



*Love* (1780-85) (Figure A-23) and Greuze's *Votive Offering to Cupid* (1769) (Figure A-24). Fragonard was influenced by the passionate romance movement and Greuze's resembles characteristics of the sentimental (tempered, conjugal love) movement. The paintings show a woman interacting with a statue of cupid in the hopes to obtain love. Both of these women are dressed in antiquity clothing in an intimate setting. The contrast resides in the women's expressions and movements. In Fragonard's painting, the woman clearly has lost her reason as she flings herself onto the statue with such force that her toes barely touch in the ground. Fragonard emphasizes the force of her movement by painting her dress with thick sweeping brushstrokes. In Julie's letter to Saint-Preux, she writes that the love between her and Saint-Preux is the "blind transport of passionate hearts."<sup>18</sup> In Fragonard's image, the woman closes her eyes, placing one arm on her head and one thrusting towards the statue. She is guided only by her sense of touch as she drives full force to it. In contrast, the woman in Greuze's painting is more sensible. She gently kneels on the ground, with both knees on the pedestal of the statue and her right toe touching the ground. She clasps her hand in a prayer stance with a control that is lacking in Fragonard's painting. Just as Julie states that she became a "reasonable" person after marriage, this woman is controlled by reason. She does not thrust herself blindly into love as the woman in *The Invocation of Love*, but looks peacefully at the statue of cupid with her body planted on the ground.

### **Ideal Love in *Emile***

Although Rousseau intended to portray a woman's journey to virtue, he also created shades of grey for his readers, as some became enthralled with the love affair

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<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 307.

and others focused on the example of virtue. In order to understand the term “Rousseauian” in terms of love, it is necessary to explain this discrepancy in *Julie*. A comparison of the novel to his educational treatise, *Emile* aids in this analysis. As mentioned earlier, this treatise hypothetically represents Rousseau’s ideal concept of love. Similar to the previous types of love in *Julie*, Rousseau constructs this type of love as honest and true in comparison to rococo love.

Rather than the arranged marriage by Julie’s parents, Sophie’s parents do not condone arranged marriages and allows Sophie to choose her own partner. The philosophy behind this is that marriage should be based on personal happiness and mutual affection rather than on wealth and title. Otherwise, it is a marriage of the two families’ statuses rather than a marriage between two individuals. Her mother leads Sophie in how to choose stating that “mutual inclination ought to be their first bond. Their eyes and their hearts ought to be their first guide. Their first duty once they are united is to have loved each other.”<sup>19</sup> After meeting each other several times, the tutor tells Emile that he is becoming unnaturally attached to Sophie, and they must travel in order to rectify the situation. If the love between them is still there when they come back, then he is free to marry her. Of course, both Sophie and Emile remain faithful and at the end of the treatise they are married and expecting their first child. This is a similar motif to the story of his parents in Rousseau’s autobiography *Confessions*. In *Confessions*, he describes the strength of his parent’s love stating that

Their love had begun almost with their life: from the age of eight or nine they walked together every night on the Treille, at ten they could no longer be separated. Sympathy, the harmony of souls, strengthened the feeling produced in them by habit. Both, born tender and sensitive, were only

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<sup>19</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, 400.

waiting for the moment to find the same disposition in someone else, or rather this moment was waiting for them, and each of them threw his heart into the first which opened to receive it. Fate, which seemed to thwart their passion, only enlivened it. Not being able to win his mistress, the young lover was consumed with sorrow; she advised him to travel in order to forget her. He traveled fruitlessly and returned more in love than ever. He found the one he loved still tender and faithful. After this test nothing remained but for to love each all their lives; they swore to do so, and Heaven blessed their vow...Forty years after having lost her, he died in the arms of a second wife, but with the name of the first on his lips, and her image at the bottom of his heart.<sup>20</sup>

This paragraph sheds light on his portrayal of the ideal love in *Emile* and the lack of idealism in *Julie*. The description of his parents mirrors that of Sophie and Emile's love story in *Emile*. More importantly, both *Confessions* and *Emile* align with the story of Julie and Saint-Preux until the decision about marriage. They all feature a couple who immediately had mutual affection for one another and the man travels in order to test their love. Paralleling Julie's death, Rousseau's father dies with the name of his first wife as his last words despite his marriage to another woman. The main difference between the narratives in *Emile* and *Confessions*, and the story of Julie and Saint-Preux is the fact that the former couples eventually happily married.

Although the novel *Julie* seemingly separates passionate romance and conjugal love, *Emile* allows for both to coexist. As mentioned in the above passage of Rousseau's parents, the tutor describes the importance of passion in love and its eventual disappearance:

Now he is intoxicated by a nascent passion. His heart opens itself to the first fires of love. Its sweet illusions make him a new universe of delight and enjoyment. He loves a lovable object who is even more lovable for her character than for her person. He hopes for, he expects a return that the

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions and Correspondence, Including the Letters to Malesherbes*, trans. Christopher Kelly, ed. Christopher Kelly, et al. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995), 6.

feels is his due. It is from the similarity of their hearts, from the conjunction of decent sentiments that their first inclination was formed. This inclination ought to be durable...O good Emile, love and be loved! Enjoy a long time before possessing. Enjoy love and innocence at the same time...Alas, it has to end, and end soon. But I shall at least make it last forever in your memory and make you never repent having tasting it.<sup>21</sup>

This passage indicates that Emile did feel passion for Sophie similar to the beginning of Saint-Preux and Julie's love affair, as he even compares it to feeling "intoxicated." Although passion certainly can corrupt one's judgment and only allow the person to see illusions, *Emile* indicates that passion is inevitable and can be enjoyed in moderation.<sup>22</sup> As he mentions in the passage, those that had intense feelings at the beginning can have a successful marriage, but the passion eventually disappears. Even if this passion fades, the memory of it will last. When analyzing Fragonard's paintings, a number of subject matters can be considered Rousseauian. This means that varying degrees of sexuality, passion, conjugal love and parenthood can be acceptable under the label of "Rousseauian." Since the term itself has multiple meanings, my aim is not to determine a one to one relationship between Fragonard's paintings and Rousseau's writings. Instead, I understand them as being influenced by Rousseauian concepts that have multiple variations.

### **Diderot and Rousseauian Art**

In the previous chapter, I outlined Diderot's criticism of the artists Boucher and Baudouin who created gallant and libertine paintings. Even when artists such as Baudouin created a painting with a seemingly moral statement such as in *The Honest Model*, Diderot and others criticized it for its ambiguity. Baudouin created a work

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<sup>21</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, 419.

<sup>22</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, 416.

entitled *The Marriage Bed* (1767) (Figure A-25) that showed a woman getting ready to consummate her marriage.<sup>23</sup> In the work, a woman appears to be on the verge of fainting as her husband desperately clings to her. His desperation recalls the gallant men in Fragonard's *The Musical Contest*. The new wife is "half nude" with her bosom exposed and in an ungraceful pose with "one knee on the bed."<sup>24</sup> She is surrounded by women getting the room ready by either lighting the candles, preparing the fire, or pulling the bed covers. One woman holds onto both the husband and the woman, coaxing the wife to get into the bed. The couple is from the elite culture as indicated by the lavish setting with elaborate printed fabric that extends from the floor to the ceiling. Diderot argues that this moment is "false," and sees nothing more than "a courtesan objecting to the caresses of an ordinary rake and who dreads the very threat about which her unfortunate companions seek to reassure her."<sup>25</sup> Rather than viewing this as a proper marriage subject, he expresses that the woman is "alone, at the mercy of her young husband's desire and impatience."<sup>26</sup> According to his interpretation, the subject does not reflect the devotion between Julie and Saint-Preux, nor a tempered conjugal love. Instead, he interprets it as wrongly sexual. Diderot does not disagree with portraying the consummation of a marriage, as he argues that a better scene would

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<sup>23</sup> Diderot may have deemed certain sexual practices as wrong, but he explored taboo sexuality in his own novels such as *Les Indiscreet Jewels*. Erica Rand examines the duality of Diderot, his disdain and fascination or delight in "immoral" sexual practices, specifically with *The Marriage Bed*. As Rand argues, Diderot did not have objections to the sexual voyeurism in painting, but preferred to have it in a proper, Rousseauian context of the bourgeois family. One of the main issues of the painting was the predominance of women, especially those near the bride that controlled the scene rather than the husband. See "Diderot and Girl-Group Erotics," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25, no. 4 (1992): 495-516.

<sup>24</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 2 (1767), 164.

<sup>25</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 2 (1767), 165.

<sup>26</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 2 (1767), 164.

have been when “the young husband is alone with his wife.”<sup>27</sup> His primary issues are the chambermaids who cloud the sacred bond of marriage, the unwillingness of the wife, and the desperate pleas of the husband. He argues that

Greuze would have selected the preceding moment, in which the father and mother send their daughter to her husband. What tenderness! What decency! What delicacy! That a range of acting and expression in the brothers, sisters, parents and friends; how moving would be such a scene! A man who in such circumstances can imagine only a troop of chambermaids is wretched indeed!<sup>28</sup>

This comment is significant because he singles out Greuze as the artist he would expect to create a proper, moral subject matter. Diderot also had a similar sentiment in his criticism of *The Honest Model*, stating that Baudouin should “abandon these sorts of subjects to Greuze.”<sup>29</sup> Diderot consistently compared the debauchery of Boucher and Baudouin with the morality of Greuze. For example, in the Salon of 1765 he labeled Boucher as “morally defective and never endearing,” Baudouin as “a painter-preacher of bad morals” and “a painter of rakes and houses of ill repute,” and Greuze as a “painter-preacher of good morals...of the family and of respectable people.”<sup>30</sup> These statements reinforce how Diderot based his criticisms on the morals of the painting, not just the aesthetics. He championed Greuze for his expression of proper morals that promoted Rousseauian conjugal love.

The quintessential example of a Greuze painting with Rousseauian subject matter is *The Marriage Contract* (Figure A-3) from the Salon of 1761. *The Marriage Contract*

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<sup>27</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 2 (1767), 165.

<sup>28</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 2 (1767), 165.

<sup>29</sup> Diderot, *Salons*, vol. 4 (1769), 95. “croyez-moi, abandonnez ces sortes de sujets à Greuze.”

<sup>30</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 1 (1765), 92, 224.

shows a betrothal scene, which involved exchanging the dowry, signing the marriage contract, and formalizing the couple's union.<sup>31</sup> Although the setting is fairly rustic and sparse, most likely depicts a prosperous farming family because the marriage contract was a common practice of all but the very poor.<sup>32</sup> This countryside setting conformed to Rousseauian ideals, as Rousseau urged his readers to move to the country in *Emile*. Furthermore, Julie and Baron de Wolmar moved to Clarens, a blissful countryside home. The lengthy, seductive descriptions of Clarens were meant to persuade readers to similarly experience the country. Aesthetically, the painting differs from those of Fragonard, Baudouin, and Boucher. Rather than pastel colors, the colors are fairly muted besides a strong red on the fiancé's undercoat. The mood is more somber than the playful atmospheres in the paintings of gallantry and libertinage. Although the colors differ, Greuze uses painterly brushstrokes to create the highlights and details especially within the clothing. However, Greuze is harsher and less delicate in his brushstrokes, especially when it comes to the figure's skin. Fragonard often blended his figure's skin, giving them a porcelain appearance. In contrast, Greuze uses visible brushstrokes when painting the figures' flesh, especially on the older characters that gives their skin a rugged texture. This could relate to the life of living in the countryside that is a harder, but a more rewarding, life than the shallow life of the "worldly."

Greuze's bride also differs from the females in Fragonard's gallant paintings. Although she has a petite frame, her body is not as small as those in Fragonard's rococo love paintings. Rousseau urged women to move to the countryside and obtain a

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<sup>31</sup> Bailey, 262.

<sup>32</sup> Bailey, 262; and Barker, *Greuze*, 50.

more robust figure. The clothing in *The Marriage Contract* is simplified in comparison to the “country” figures in *Blindman’s Bluff* or the aristocratic figures in *The Progress of Love*. The women’s dresses are less restricting because the material hangs flat against their body rather than extend out like the elaborate costumes of aristocratic women. The composition is similar to a theater stage with each figure in its specific spot. Diderot admired this aspect of the painting stating that “there are twelve figures; each one has its place.”<sup>33</sup> Diderot’s portrayal of Boucher’s composition is the opposite, as he states that “there’s such a confusion of objects piled one on top of the other, so poorly disposed, so mostly that we’re dealing not so much with the pictures of a rational being as the dreams of a madman.”<sup>34</sup> When comparing Greuze’s austere background to Fragonard’s settings in *The Progress of Love* series, Diderot’s criticism becomes clear. Fragonard’s background combines a plethora of trees that curves and sways in a variety of direction. In comparison, Greuze’s setting consists of monochrome grays and browns and a flat wall as the backdrop. These compositions relate not only to the state of the artist’s mind, rational versus madman, but also to the subject matter itself. When Diderot mentions that the figures all have their own place, he hypothetically is commenting on the societal positions of the figures.

Emma Barker summarizes the subject matter as a “utopian vision of an enlightened social order” that involves every member of a family having a specific place in society primary based on gender.<sup>35</sup> In the painting, the genders are primarily separated with the women on the left and the men on the right. This separation of

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<sup>33</sup>Diderot, *Salons*, vol. 1 (1761), 141. “il y a douze figures; chacune est à sa place.”

<sup>34</sup> Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, vol. 1 (1765), 23.

<sup>35</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 46.



genders was a pertinent part to the theories on family in *Emile*. After marriage, the woman had the responsibility of raising the children to become productive members of society and take care of the private sphere, while the husband worked in the public sphere. Although women seemingly ruled over the private sphere, the man would actually be in charge of the family. This image illustrates these concepts as the women are on the side of the maids who belong in the private sphere, while the father and fiancé reside closer to the notary, a public figure. The father is the head of the household as he commands the attention of the room with his expressive outstretched hands. However, he does not reign over the household in a tyrannical fashion, but supports the couple's decision to marry. A common trend in literary works was the tyrannical father who would not allow his daughter to marry her true love, such as in *Julie*. As in *Emile*, Rousseau and other moralists preferred fathers who supported their child's decision to marry for love. In comparison to the father, the mother and sister melt with extreme emotion as they cling onto the future bride. According to Rousseau and other moralists, the family became a microcosm for society. Fixing the structure of the family meant restoring society itself. Rather than purely aesthetic, Diderot's comment on each figure "having their own place" also alludes to the roles of the family being stable and proper according to gender.

Barker argues that Greuze's composition develops this message in a manner similar to Rousseau's representation of Julie's journey to virtue.<sup>36</sup> Greuze's frontal composition caused audience members to view the painting like a theater scene. Each individual character's emotion caused the audience to feel similar emotions. For

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<sup>36</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 46, 49-53.

example, Diderot stated that he felt “sweet emotion while looking at it.”<sup>37</sup> *Julie’s* success was due to the audience emotional connection with the characters. When Julie went through her virtuous journey, the readers followed suit whether through empathy or mimicry. In *The Marriage Contract*, the young bride represents a “Julie” type who shows love towards her husband by linking her arm with his and delicately pressing her fingers against his hand. The slight touch of the hand and her downturn gaze alludes to her modesty, as she would not overtly project her love for him but implicitly hint at their passion.<sup>38</sup> Her sexuality has been channeled into the productive social function of marriage. This journey of virtue became a purpose of the painting. A poem inspired by the painting told the story of how a financier who only knew loveless marriages in the worldly society changed his ways after viewing the love in this painting.<sup>39</sup>

*The Marriage Contract* provides a visual model for Rousseauian love, especially the more tempered, conjugal variety, to compare with Fragonard’s Rousseauian paintings in the next chapter. My discussion of rococo and Rousseauian love in chapters two and three constructed them as opposites, similar to Rousseau and Diderot. In the next chapter, I will analyze Fragonard’s paintings with the rococo style and Rousseauian subject matter. Through this exercise, I demonstrate that rococo and Rousseauian love were in flux. Instead of understanding these categories as separate entities, I argue that rococo and Rousseauian love should be considered as fluid categories, in which elements whether stylistically or conceptually can intermingle in a variety of combinations.

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<sup>37</sup> Diderot, *Salons*, vol. 1 (1761), 141. “une émotion douce en le regardant.”

<sup>38</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 52.

<sup>39</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 52-3.

## CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF FRAGONARD'S PAINTINGS

To summarize the previous chapters, rococo love and its artistic manifestations came under attack during the eighteenth century. In its place, moralists constructed “Rousseauian” love as its better alternative. Similar to how gallantry and libertinage are different types of rococo love, Rousseauian love had variations that consisted of passionate romance and a tempered, conjugal love. These categories consistently overlapped in artworks and literature, creating a variety of works that can be considered Rousseauian. Despite rococo and Rousseauian love having conceptual differences, Fragonard used the rococo style to portray (ambiguous) Rousseauian concepts throughout his career.<sup>1</sup> By providing examples of this trend in Fragonard’s paintings, I will demonstrate that rococo and Rousseauian love were in a transitional period in eighteenth century France. This transition period meant that the use of the rococo style did not automatically contradict the Rousseauian values within the paintings.

### **Patronage and Social Class**

Before delving into specific works, the issue of patronage and social class needs to be addressed to understand how these paintings would have been viewed by their patrons. As mentioned in the introduction, Emma Barker argues that the elite classes buying Fragonard’s domestic scenes would most likely have viewed them as irreverent. Her argument falls in with the traditional view that contrasts the tastes of the aristocracy (rococo) with those of the bourgeoisie (Rousseauian). According to this interpretation, bourgeois values starkly contrasted with and usurped the values of the aristocracy

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<sup>1</sup> As Sheriff argues in “Fragonard’s Erotic Mothers and the Politics of Reproduction,” Fragonard’s paintings cannot be considered as fully “Rousseauian” or “non-Rousseauian.” When I describe “Rousseauian” subject matter, I mean that the painting has a clear influence of Rousseauian concepts whether or not they adhere purely to Rousseau’s writings.

during the mid to late eighteenth century. Beginning in the 1970s, scholars began complicate this viewpoint. For example, Warren Roberts argued that literary works associated with aristocratic values had parallels with those consisting of bourgeois morals. Traditionally, Rousseau's work has been characterized as exuded bourgeois values. Warrens states that Marivaux's dramatic novels such as *La Vie de Marianne* and *Le Payson parvenu* (1734) had qualities similar to *Julie*. For example, these types of novels portrayed love as a conversation between the heart and mind, elements that Rousseau emphasized when it came to the moral side of love.<sup>2</sup> Sara Maza expands on this, asserting that the sentimental movement promoting conjugal love did not derive solely from the bourgeoisie.<sup>3</sup> Sentimental literature portrayed different classes from the middle-class to the aristocracy. In other words, the chance to obtain the "happy family" associated with Rousseauian love was not just obtainable to the bourgeoisie, but any social class could reform and live a moral life. In *Julie*, Rousseau described a noblewoman's passionate love affair and her virtuous transformation into a wife and mother. Although Rousseau showed disdain for the wealthy and "fashionable women," he believed that they could reform. The criticisms of Rousseau and Diderot also had origins within the aristocracy itself. Anne Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcelles, marquise de Lambert declared that the tradition of seventeenth century "honnêteté" and "galanterie" had been degraded during regency society. Women leaned on their

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<sup>2</sup> Roberts, 75.

<sup>3</sup>Sara Maza, "The 'Bourgeois' Family Revisited: Sentimentalism and Social Class in Prerevolutionary French Culture," in *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in French Painting of the Eighteenth-Century*, ed. R. Rand (The Trustees of Dartmouth College, 1997), 29-48.

superficial charms, while the men had become callous. She wanted to reestablish distinction, virtue and refinement in the aristocratic circles.<sup>4</sup>

The social classes that bought Fragonard's paintings (including rococo and "Rousseauian" paintings) ranged from the aristocracy to wealthy non-nobles. This was also the demographic who bought Greuze's works, which was the prime example of an artist who successfully depicted Rousseauian subject matter. Both were also the top sellers of prints, whose primary buyers were fashionable bourgeois and aristocratic collectors. The bourgeoisie bought prints of traditional rococo subject matter, the aristocracy bought Rousseauian subject matter, and vice versa. For example, Abel-François Poisson, marquis de Marigny commissioned Greuze's *The Marriage Contract*, which was praised by Diderot for his approach of the betrothal scene.<sup>5</sup> In addition, a poem inspired by the painting described a worldly man who saw it and was influenced by its morality.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Fragonard's artworks with rococo and Rousseauian elements could be commissioned by the wealthy without irony, because both concepts and styles had similar audiences. Instead of viewing the mid- to late eighteenth century as elite versus bourgeoisie, or rococo versus Rousseauian, I argue to understand the period as a transitional moment in which class lines and their associated concepts of love blurred. This line of thinking will be applied throughout this chapter.

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<sup>4</sup> Virginia E. Swain, "Hidden from View: French Women Authors and the Language of Rights," 1727-1792," in *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in French Painting of the Eighteenth-Century*, ed. R Rand (The Trustees of Dartmouth College, 1997), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 46-48.

<sup>6</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 52-3.

## Rococo Styling of Rousseauian Subjects

The first image that I examine is *A Visit to the Wet Nurse* (Figure A-5), an image that has been a subject of study by Sheriff and Barker. In this image, Fragonard shows an urban couple from a privileged background gazing at their newborn in a rural interior.<sup>7</sup> The work originally belonged to Jean-Francois Leroy de Senneville, a tax farmer and secretary to the king. When he sold the painting in 1780, the sales catalogue identified it as a scene from the novel of *Miss Sara* by M. de Saint-Lambert. Of course, this does not mean that it was the original intention of Fragonard or de Senneville for this painting to reference this literature, but it does indicate that it was associated with the narrative of the novel shortly after Fragonard created it. The novel is the story of a privileged English woman, Sara who falls in love with Phillips, an educated Scottish farmer. She marries him despite her parent's wishes, and they live together happily on a farm.<sup>8</sup> The painting most likely depicts the scene in the novel where Sara and Phillip take turns "looking at the child and each other, all the while holding hands and smiling," which is described as a "spectacle of conjugal love and paternal tenderness."<sup>9</sup> This is clearly a scene that fits into the criteria of Rousseauian concepts.

Aesthetically, the painting also incorporates elements found in Greuze's *The Marriage Contract*. The setting is a fairly sparse room in the countryside. As mentioned earlier, this is a common feature in Rousseauian literature and artworks, as the country had physical and mental benefits that the city corrupted. The frontal positioning of the

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Sheriff, "Fragonard's Erotic Mothers," 22.

<sup>8</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 143.

<sup>9</sup> Saint-Lambert, *Les Saisons* (volume includes *Sarah Th...*), 196, quoted in Barker, *Greuze*, 139-40.

figures and the relatively flatness of the room gives a theatricality to the image, similar to *The Marriage Contract*. However, the figures do not have the exaggerated positioning and emotive expressions of Greuze's painting. The couple has a serene expression, while the older woman and children remain ambiguous in their position in the scene. In Greuze's painting, every figure had a special place in the family and a role to take on in terms of gender. As argued by Mary Sheriff, the woman in the corner could be the wet nurse but is older than the ideal. The children presumably belong to the couple, but no obvious bond exists between them. Rather than the porcelain skin of Fragonard's gallant paintings, his brushwork creates texture on the face similar to Greuze. The older woman's face is barely sketched in with blocks of color indicating shadows. The man's face is more defined and illuminated, but viewers can see the staggering direction of the brushwork especially in the highlights in the forehead, chin, and his blushing cheeks. This type of brushwork is less present in the woman's facial features. As mentioned with Greuze's artworks, the roughness of the brushwork relates to the simplified rural interior, as the painting is not set in a pristine, high society setting that calls for a polished tone.

Although Rousseauian elements in subject matter and style are present throughout the painting, it still has close ties with the rococo style. The loose brushstrokes and lighter, golden hues with red tones are rococo in nature. They are not as sketchy as Fragonard's more erotic works, but he does incorporate sensual lines to emphasize the woman's breasts. Fragonard uses a layer of paint to flesh out the breasts under the dress, but uses thick, curving strokes to outline her body and draw the audience's attention to her chest. According to Sheriff, this layering of paint is

necessary in using *negligence* and *facilité* as part of erotic brushwork.<sup>10</sup> Besides having connections to libertine paintings, Fragonard also used the composition of his gallant paintings such as *The Musical Contest* (Figure A-6). The position of the woman and man reflect the position of gallantry in which the woman becomes the center and rules over the men in the painting. In *A Visit to the Wet Nurse*, the man cuddles against the arm of the woman as his head rests just below her breasts. In this pyramidal composition, the woman is the top and center. This contradicts the Rousseauian concept of father as head of the family. Sheriff states that this is also problematic in relation to eighteenth century wet nurse practices. During the mid-eighteenth century women increasingly became criticized for neglecting their womanly duties if they choose to send their child to a wet nurse.<sup>11</sup> A “new mother was faced with the choice of nursing her child or fulfilling her conjugal duty; she could not do both, for sexual intercourse, opinion held, would spoil or dry up her milk.”<sup>12</sup> In order to have sexual relations with her husband and have more heirs, mothers would send their children to wet nurses. Having the male cuddle against the breast of the woman suggests that he is not only the lover but he displaces the child, a decidedly non-Rousseauian ideal.<sup>13</sup>

The composition of the husband and wife can also represent Rousseauian love. In the love letters of Julie and Saint-Preux, Rousseau used the language of coquetry in the framework of proper, emotional love. At the beginning of *Julie*, Saint-Preux’s letters reveal him to be the desperate male who would do anything his object of love would

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<sup>10</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 192-199.

<sup>11</sup> Sheriff, “Fragonard’s Erotic Mothers,” 21.

<sup>12</sup> Sheriff, “Fragonard’s Erotic Mothers,” 21.

<sup>13</sup> Sheriff, “Fragonard’s Erotic Mothers,” 27.



request. Julie mistakes these letters as gallantry because she was “reared in accordance with maxims so severe that the purest love appeared to [her] the height of dishonor.”<sup>14</sup> She believed Saint-Preux was making gallant declarations, because coquets often pretended to be sincere to get their prey. As Rousseau argued, “insinuating coquetry will feign the language of tenderness.”<sup>15</sup> However, Saint-Preux was not merely “insinuating coquetry,” he was sincerely expressing his feelings to Julie but she mistook them as false sentiments. This reinforces that gallantry and Rousseauian love can share appearances but not substance. Fragonard has taken the basic composition of gallantry in which the woman is the top of the pyramidal composition and the man clings to her, and has transformed it into the proper stance of conjugal love. The man is not desperately clinging on to her, but they both remain calm, collected, but still affectionate. The endless cycle of courtship becomes a clear decision that the man and woman love one another, and they join together to gaze intently on their newborn. As argued by Sheriff, this painting does not purely conform to Rousseauian ideals, as it ambiguously references an elderly woman as the wet nurse. However, the painting does exemplify how Fragonard used the style and composition of the rococo to broadly convey Rousseauian love between mother and father.

Sheriff claims that *The Return Home* (c. 1776-78) (Figure A-26) is the Rousseauian alternative to *The Visit to the Wet Nurse*. In *The Return Home*, a woman happily greets her husband as their child tugs on his arm and their newborn sleeps peacefully in the crib. An unknown, young woman stands in the background, and could

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<sup>14</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 186.

be a wet nurse. Her age, unlike the older woman in the previous painting, would make her appropriate for the job. Fragonard's handling of the subject matter certainly conforms more to Rousseauian concepts. The figures are in clothing more appropriate for the sparse, countryside setting. In *The Visit to the Wet Nurse*, the woman wears an expensive dress that expands out. In *The Return Home*, the woman's dress fits loose around her body. The bodies themselves differ as the former's frame is significantly smaller and more delicate, paralleling the aristocratic women in Fragonard's gallant paintings. In contrast, the latter woman's frame, especially her arms, are solid and robust. Her loose clothing and robust body conforms to the Rousseauian standard of proper motherhood.

Although the woman's frame is more robust, she remains subordinate to the man. She leans back and is compositionally lower than her partner who leans in her direction. He is the dominating figure in the scene, which conforms to Rousseau's argument that men should be the leader in the family. Their positions to the outside world also correspond to Rousseau's concept of separate spheres. The man is returning from the outside, public world presumably from his occupation. The woman leans toward the crib and is within the private sphere. This theme is more obviously present in Fragonard's *Happy Fertility* (1776-7) (Figure A-27). In this work, a mother plays with her children in a humble interior setting. All of them act like children by playing with the dog, lying on her legs and wiggling within her arms. This was an important part of Rousseau's philosophy of raising children, as they should not be considered tiny adults. The mother is clearly raising her children correctly and has a control over the private

sphere. The father sticks his head through the window outside of their home. Literally, the father is in the public sphere while the mother is in the private sphere.

The couples in *The Visit to the Wet Nurse* and *The Return Home* also have different degrees of passion in their relationship. The former has a more tempered, conjugal love as they both lovingly gaze at their newborn in a complacent manner. The latter couple shows more enthusiasm for their reunion. Both have a smiling disposition as the woman grasps his hand. His movement adds a passionate element to their love, as he is in a hurry to greet his wife. This passion, and the woman's heaving breasts, alludes to a sexual element in their marriage. Emotional and physical connection was an important factor in Rousseauian love, and was necessary for a marriage to continue. Although sexual intercourse may have been bad for the child's milk as mentioned by Sheriff, it was understood by Rousseau as a healthy part of marriage. Therefore, this element in the paintings cannot be considered purely contradictory.

If I analyzed the paintings as having a one to one relationship with Rousseau's literary works, then they could be considered as having non-Rousseauian elements. However, my aim is not to determine a one to one relationship between Fragonard's paintings and Rousseau's works. Instead, I use the term Rousseauian to understand the basic constructs of love during the latter half of the eighteenth century. These paintings were clearly influenced by these concepts whether or not they closely adhere to all the policies in *Emile*. They present couples that not only have an emotional and physical connection, but also a long-lasting one. The presence of children alludes to the couple's lasting power, as presumably they have been together for years considering the older children. They determine that the couple is not in a continual

courtship or that the relationship is purely physical. Instead, the couple has reached a place of stability with a determinate end of marriage and children.

Later in his career, Fragonard created works that focused on the passion and sexuality hinted at in the family scenes. One of these images, *The Oath of Love* (1780-85) (Figure A-4), though thoroughly rococo stylistically, has a darkened rococo palette, setting and figures with a Rousseauian message. In this image, a youthful couple passionately kisses, as the man extends his arm to touch a plaque engraved with the phrase, SERMENT D'AIME[R] TOUTE SA VIE (Oath to love for one's entire life). His other arm reaches around the woman's lower back, sweeping her into him. In reaction, she flings her arm back as her other arm reaches to touch the plaque, indicating her undying devotion to him. Her reaction correlates with Saint-Preux's response to Julie and his first kiss. He described his state of mind as impairing his senses and deranging all his faculties. The actual kiss was "too acrid, too penetrating, they pierce, they burn to the marrow."<sup>16</sup> The kiss in *The Oath of Love* caused the girl to uncontrollably fling her hands in the air. Another parallel is that their luscious golden and cream colored clothing blend together, melding their bodies as one. As mentioned in the second chapter, all the characters described pure love as when two souls meld together. The image physically embodies this statement. This type of love certainly conforms to the passionate, undying love in Rousseau's writings.

Aesthetically, this painting borrows from rococo imagery, especially in terms of scenery and figures. Fragonard created several different versions of *The Oath of Love*, one in a private English collection (1780) (Figure A-28) and the other in the Fragonard

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<sup>16</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 51.

Museum in Grasse (Figure A-4). The latter presents a darker, more unpolished version, but is also in worse condition which could have affected its appearance. The former was most likely the basis of the print version (Figure A-29) which will be discussed later.<sup>17</sup> When comparing *The Oath of Love* to Fragonard's gallant painting *The Pursuit* from *The Progress of Love* series, the painting turns the rococo elements into a style that enhances the passion and spontaneity of the situation. The backdrop of the painting has cupid statues and a suggestion of a garden setting. However, Fragonard painted the normally vibrant green trees in a darkened and diluted manner. The dark atmosphere highlights the couple and their relationship. The cupids' faces and bodies are in various states of finish, as small black lines delineate the top of one's eyes. The couple is dressed in fashionable clothing, but is not as detailed or polished as the couple in *The Pursuit*. The man's pants and woman's dress seem to be merely sketched in as they reach the ground. The man's and woman's skin still remain fairly polished, as the light illuminates its porcelain quality. However, their hands disappear into the plaque, making them almost indistinguishable in the Grasse version. Although it echoes some details of *The Pursuit*, the simplification of its elements creates a more unpolished appearance. In *Julie*, the style of the love letters between Julie and Saint-Preux were unpolished and continually repeated the same sentiments. This style, as Rousseau explained, indicated to the reader that the love between them was true and real as they cannot control themselves to write eloquently.

Fragonard's paintings were often made into prints during the eighteenth century. Fragonard did not have a hand in the actual creation of the prints, but the prints

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<sup>17</sup> Molotiu, 22.

remained faithful for the most part to the general design. For *The Oath of Love*, the print version increases the rococo elements stylistically by brightening and sharpening the image, emphasizing the lighter colors and rococo garden background. In contrast to the dark atmosphere in Fragonard's painting, the print is illuminated with every element clearly visible. Therefore, the print version is indistinguishable from Fragonard's representations of gallantry. The print's pendant (Figure A-30) is a version of Fragonard's *The Good Mother* (1773). In *The Good Mother*, a woman takes care of her children as a cat cradles her neck in a familiar rococo setting. One child sleeps next to her in the crib, the other stands beside the mother as she gently pats his head and the last one pours water from a pitcher. Unlike other Fragonard's family scenes, no wet nurse is present, and it is presumed that the woman is breast feeding her child. Fragonard himself did not connect these two paintings together, but those selling and creating the prints saw a connection. When viewing these works as pendants, the link is that a passionate, committed love can lead to children, and it can be achieved in a rococo atmosphere.

Barker argues that the sexuality in *The Good Mother* interferes with the proper concept of Rousseauian motherhood. According to Barker, the mother is "seductive rather than virtuous" as "there is no sign of maternal breast-feeding; the central figures most direct physical contact is not with the infant asleep in the cradle but with a white cat, symbolic of female sexuality."<sup>18</sup> Although the woman does not have contact with the sleeping child, she does appear to be washing the little girl's face at her side, as she pulls back her hair and wets a washcloth. Her breasts are prominent, and could either

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<sup>18</sup> Barker, *Greuze*, 120-121.

be referencing her sexuality or her nursing capabilities. As mentioned with *A Visit to the Wet Nurse* and *The Return Home*, the mixing of sexuality and nursing is not necessarily contradictory. Carol Duncan argued that the motherhood and sexual satisfaction was not uncommon, as exemplified by the couple in *The Return Home* who indicate sexual fulfillment through their lovingly glance and body contact.<sup>19</sup> Although Rousseau frowned upon sexual relations during nursing, they were both an important part of motherhood and marriage. Instead of viewing it as contradictory, it could have been understood as conflating the two roles of being a wife and mother. This sexuality is often considered a part of rococo imagery rather than a Rousseauian element in the painting.

The print was titled *The Good Mother*, meaning that it was sold as an image of proper motherhood. The pendant prints of *The Oath of Love* and *The Good Mother* brought together the concepts of passion, sexuality, marriage, and motherhood in a rococo setting normally associated with fleeting courtships and sexual relations. Although rococo settings have these associations, it does not mean that the subject matter adopts the connotations. *The Oath of Love* quite literally spells out that these two individuals are pledging their love together forever. This is the opposite of the short-lived flings of the aristocratic figures from Fragonard's gallantry paintings. Despite *The Good Mother's* rococo setting and allusions to sexuality, it can have Rousseauian subject matter without irony or subversion. In other words, a market audience exists for paintings and prints under the same stylistic umbrella.

*The Fountain of Love* (1785) (Figure A-9 and Figure A-31), starkly differs in tone and appearance from the previous examples that had canonical rococo elements. In

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<sup>19</sup> Duncan, "Happy Mothers," 570-72.

this work, a man and woman rush in unison towards a fountain that consists of several living cupids who aid in holding a chalice. Similar to *The Oath of Love*, the painting had two versions (one currently in the Getty and the other in the Wallace collection) and a print version (Figure A-32).<sup>20</sup> In terms of references to the rococo, Fragonard's placed the figures in overgrown trees and an abundance of cupids. However, he darkened the palette, making the leaves less noticeable as they disappear into the darkness. The greenery blends in with the clouds, creating a mystical atmosphere around the figures. The cupids themselves are alive rather than statues, reemphasizing this allegorical fantastical land. The figures in *The Fountain of Love* add to this atmosphere, as they both wear classical garb which starkly contrasts with the contemporary garb of the previous images. Stylistically, the smooth skin, classical garb and more muscular women are characteristics borrowed from the Neoclassical style that emerged during the latter half of the eighteenth century. These elements place the scene in a timeless realm, which fits the subject matter.

The subject matter combines the Rousseauian themes of passion, sexuality and marriage as discussed in the previous Fragonard's paintings. Molotiu and Sheriff both discuss this image in terms of physical sex and conjugal love.<sup>21</sup> The fountain could symbolize angels and the offering cup could represent the chalice that the "bride and groom drink at the nuptials."<sup>22</sup> It also had sexual connotations, as it could represent the moment of orgasm in which the fountain often symbolized female sex and the

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<sup>20</sup> Molotiu, 37.

<sup>21</sup> Molotiu. 41.

<sup>22</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 19.



overflowing water symbolized seminal fluid (*eau de vie*).<sup>23</sup> As I noted earlier, marriage and sexuality had a dependency on each other in Rousseau's writing and could coexist. Therefore, these concepts could coincide and still be socially acceptable. In either case, the couple certainly represents passionate love, as a sales catalogue a decade later described the scene as "amorous frenzy."<sup>24</sup>

As mentioned in the second chapter, the major themes in passionate romantic literature were the uniting of two souls, relation to the theological realm, loss of reason, hyperbolic comparisons to their situation as life or death, and the threat of temporality. Fragonard represents all these elements within *The Fountain of Love* through his visual language. The chalice and the cupids (which could represent angels) have theological associations. The concepts of uniting two souls and the loss of reason are presented physically in their bodies. In the image, the man and woman act as one movement rushing towards the fountain. They mirror each other's posture as they both lean forward, staring at the cup with only the tip of their feet on the ground. Saint-Preux illustrated a similar concept in a letter to Julie. He wrote that "our souls have, so to speak, touched at every point and have everywhere felt the same cohesion...Fate may well separate us, but not disunite us...and like the magnets you told me about, which is said move the same way in different locations, we would feel the same things as opposite extremities of the earth."<sup>25</sup> Visually, Fragonard has presented the audience with a couple who are connected physically and emotionally.

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<sup>23</sup> Sheriff, *Fragonard*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Molotiu, 37.

<sup>25</sup> Rousseau, *Julie*, 44.

Fragonard emphasized their cohesion and their loss of reason by using extremely wispy brushwork on their clothing and the man's upper body. He used painterly brushwork throughout the painting, but his wispy handling of the paint in the figures creates cohesion between them. The woman's garb is created by long strings of brushstrokes of different intensities. The strands holding her dress is made of a few thin brushes of white paint that does not even connect to the back of her shoulders. Fragonard also used this technique for parts of the man's garb and body, including his hand that reaches behind the woman. His fingers meld into the strands of her dress, accenting their unity as one. Fragonard's brushwork harks back to his libertine work in *The New Model* where the model's dress and her helper's hand disappear into one another. In this case, the loose brushwork shows their loss of reason by accentuating their speed and their urgency to drink from the fountain. For example, the man's face and upper body dissolves into thinner and haphazard brushwork the closer he comes to drinking from the chalice. He is visually losing himself on his way to the fountain.

The last theme of romantic passion is the threat of temporality, which Andrei Molotiu discusses at length in his study of this painting. As mentioned earlier, Fragonard's other paintings primarily were set in contemporary times. In contrast, the figures have antiquity clothing and reside in a mystical place that features living cupids tumbling in the clouds. As mentioned earlier, Fragonard borrows from Neoclassical imagery such as the smooth, statue-like texture of the couple's flesh. In addition, the setting is devoid of having a true time and place. Consummating a relationship before marriage was a threat posed by passionate love. However, this conflict subsided near the close of the eighteenth century. Instead, the main threat of passionate love was its

temporality. Julie and Saint-Preux as well as Emile and Sophie tested their love by sending their men away to travel the world. These tests were to ensure that the feelings between them were true, and therefore long lasting. Molotiu argues that this arresting of time and space settled this problem of passionate love. By arresting time, Fragonard is also preventing any possibility of the love to deteriorate.

### **Rococo or Rousseauian Subject Matter**

The paintings that I have focused on had Rousseauian subject matter with influences of the rococo aesthetic. However, these types of combinations also appeared in paintings with rococo subject matter. Rococo love, including gallantry and libertinage, continued to be featured in paintings and prints throughout the eighteenth century. Fragonard created paintings such as *The New Model* and *The Progress of Love* series during the 1770s, and the last painting of *The Progress of Love* series, *Reverie*, (Figure A-33) in the 1790s. Another example of a libertine painting is *The Bolt* (1778) (Figure A-34). In *The Bolt*, a man pulls a woman towards his body as she attempts to stop him from physically accosting her. She pushes his face with her hand and tries to prevent him from locking the door. Her stance is one of action as only the tip of her toe remains on the floor. Both the man's feet remain planted on the floor, as he is clearly the stronger of the two. Traditionally, this subject matter would be an example of a libertine scene, belonging in the same category as *The Useless Resistance*. The focus is on the sexual interaction between the two, and they appear to have no emotional connection. She does not match his intense look, but throws her head back in protest. Aesthetically, the highlights, especially in the woman's dress are visible, but are exponentially more blended than those of earlier rococo paintings. This is especially exemplified in the red drapery in which Fragonard creates dramatic folds

but with more delicate highlights. Although the bedroom is sparsely decorated, it is certainly more detailed than *The Useless Resistance* as indicated by the smaller details such as the apple near the bedside. Rather than having the lighter pastel tones of previous paintings, dark luscious colors of red and gold are used to create a more dramatic effect.

Jennifer Milam compares the subject matter to the popular libertine novel, *Dangerous Liaisons* by Choderlos de Laclos. In the novel, the older Merteuil encourages the naive Cecile to feign resistance and virtue as a strategy in the libertine world of sexual exploits.<sup>26</sup> However, the work was created during the 1780s, after Rousseauian ideals had become current. Milam argues that the artwork itself can be considered as having a Rousseauian subject matter, as women feigning interest was a common theme in Rousseau's literature. In *Emile*, Rousseau urged women to feign resistance in order to please men. This is also present in the passionate love narrative, as Julie is the nobler one of the couple who often resisted Saint-Preux's advances despite her feelings. Of course, the reasons behind these scenarios vary. In *Dangerous Liaisons*, Merteuil is concerned with maintaining appearances and gaining an upper hand in the game of seduction, one that will not lead to an emotional connection but a physical one. Rousseau's advice in *Emile* was to aid in the courtship of a couple that will lead to marriage, while the example in *Julie* was Julie's attempt to remain virtuous and not succumb to a passionate love. Although the reasoning for women feigning resistance had different motives and outcomes, the appearance of these actions still appear the same when painted. This duality indicates that although

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<sup>26</sup> Milam, 120.

moralists and art critics may have presented these different types of sexualities as incompatible, compromises and similarities existed.

In sum, Fragonard used his rococo style in paintings to portray Rousseauian subject matter. Although this is important, a broader, ideological point should be made about these paintings. The rococo style and model of love was primarily associated with the aristocracy and nobility, while the Rousseauian concepts of love were associated with the bourgeoisie. Most patrons of Fragonard's paintings consisted primarily of the new nobility and those associated with rococo culture. Furthermore, prints of these paintings also became popular. The buyers were not necessarily the bourgeoisie but primarily wealthy ones. Despite the fact that the paintings discussed in this chapter display various influences of the rococo and Rousseauian concepts, they all catered to the same crowd. Unlike Barker, I argue that this indicates that the rococo and Rousseauian elements could coexist without being "comical" or ironic. Instead, it demonstrates a transition period in which the rococo style and concepts of love still survived while the Rousseauian model became popular.

Fragonard did not merely place Rousseauian subject matter into a rococo style of painting. He adapted the rococo style depending upon the subject matter. In the family scenes, he created a more rustic atmosphere with harsher brushstrokes that reflected Greuze's *The Marriage Contract*. In *The Visit to the Wet Nurse*, he transformed the gallant composition of the desperate man and coquette women into a complacent, affectionate couple. By changing the expression and the motions of the couple from desperation and coy to calm and caring, he transformed the rococo style to enhance the scene of conjugal love. The scenes of passionate love transformed the rococo settings

with dark tonalities to mirror the serious, passionate love between the characters. By *The Fountain of Love*, Fragonard had transformed the rococo into a style that was no longer one that can be easily labeled as such. Yet, the influence of the libertine brushwork and an extremely diluted version of the rococo setting remained. The complexities of these works indicate that the concepts of love were also complex and should no longer be viewed as rococo versus Rousseauian. Instead, I propose that these works should be analyzed as if they were on a spectrum. In other words, layers of the rococo style and Rousseauian subject matter overlay one another to create a unique artwork that was influenced by the different discourses of the time.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The beginning of this thesis discussed two different concepts of love: rococo and Rousseauian. Rococo love consisted of gallantry and libertinage, the former focused on an endless courtship and the latter on brief, sexual encounters. Paintings of gallantry depicted the aristocracy frolicking in an intimate garden setting. The painterly brushwork and pastel colors reinforced the playful tone of the painting. Libertine scenes were set in the interior accentuating the private, erotic subject matter, and the brushwork was sketchier, emphasizing the physical and disheveled nature of the subject. Ideally, Rousseauian love was defined as having an undying passion that would lead to a successful marriage and rearing productive members of society. Its basis was a deep emotional and physical connection that would last for eternity. The “ideal” painter of Rousseauian love according to critics was Greuze who painted scenes as though they were a theater production with a stark setting and every member having a specific family role to fulfill. During the mid-eighteenth century, moralists and art critics praised Rousseauian love as being the solution against the debauchery of rococo love. According to them, rococo love was a shallow game that the aristocracy played to pass the time. In contrast, Rousseauian love consisted of true emotions that the couple could not help but feel. Consequently, the concept of rococo and Rousseauian love became constructed as mutually exclusive.

In contrast, the career of Jean-Honoré Fragonard exemplifies that these two concepts were more complex. Despite Rousseau constructing rococo and Rousseauian love as opposites, he felt that the wealthy could change their ways and love purely and properly. Fragonard’s patrons were from the upper-classes and they

commissioned both rococo and Rousseauian subject matters. Barker argued that the combination of the rococo style and the Rousseauian subject matter would create a subversive meaning. In contrast, I have demonstrated that Fragonard tailored the rococo style depending upon the Rousseauian subject matter. In the family scenes, scholars presented the combination of sexuality and motherhood as problematic. I argue that these painting should not be viewed as having a one to one relationship with Rousseauian literature. Instead, the paintings are manifestations of the passionate romance and sentimental movements that Rousseau influenced. In the case of combining sexuality and motherhood, sexuality was needed in a marriage for it to continue successfully. Therefore, collapsing the timing of these roles indicates the ideal situation before, during and after the child is born and raised. In the passionate scenes, Fragonard uses a diluted version of rococo elements to indicate the passion between the figures. These paintings signify that rococo and Rousseauian love should be considered as having the ability interweave without being contradictory to one another.



APPENDIX  
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