

## Language and Reality in *Manon Lescaut*

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"Ce n'est pas une lecture simple que celle de *Manon Lescaut*."<sup>1</sup> That is undoubtedly why the subject of Prévost's narrative technique, with its inexhaustible ambiguities and conjoining complexities, has engaged so many scholars to date, especially with respect to the general credibility of Des Grieux and the accuracy of the presentation of Manon.<sup>2</sup> One tangential area that has eluded a detailed examination, however, is that of the basics of the relationship between the means by which the story is related and the events themselves. It is the process by which reality is portrayed and not the specific content of the reality which deserves emphasis.

It has been pointed out that we must take wholesale what Des Grieux says or else fall into an inextricable web of textual contradictions.<sup>3</sup> I, too, submit that we must take as a given Des Grieux's presentation, which forms the body of the text. In his presentational context, however, we must not attach to Des Grieux sole power of distortion of reality through language use, for what he very often relays is other characters' presentation of events.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, unlike other scholars, I do not wish to single out Des Grieux in my promotion of a critical stance.<sup>5</sup> Because the novel is not just a recounting of events, but also a recounting of a recounting of events, the *récit* calls for skepticism toward all characters.<sup>6</sup> It is the nature of Prévost's chosen narrative technique that the language is the action of the text.<sup>7</sup> While Raymond Picard asserts that we should not judge Manon and Des Grieux by what they do but by what they are,<sup>8</sup> neither their behavior nor their essence nor that of any other character is revealed except through single or double hearsay. Herein lies, in macrotextual terms, Prévost's comment on reality that is extensively and consistently demonstrated throughout the *récit*: the reality of human existence interplays with the dependability of the word and its permutations.

It is the intention of this study to examine selected moments of *Manon Lescaut* from this perspective in order to demonstrate the way in which the purview of the whole novel is not one of events but rather one of interpretation, where objective reality is subsumed into subjectivity, where internal reality is the only reality. In other words, outside of language, there is nothing.

The power of language in this novel is introduced along with Manon. As Des Grieux recounts their first meeting, we learn, according to Manon, "qu'elle y était envoyée [à Amiens] par ses parents pour être religieuse" and "qu'elle ne prévoyait que trop qu'elle allait être malheureuse, mais que c'était apparemment la volonté du Ciel, puisqu'il ne lui laissait nul moyen de l'éviter."<sup>9</sup> Be these statements fact or invention, they are taken as true, as real, and subsequent action is chosen on that basis. Out of her words is built the opening scenario, or reality. But aside from the credibility or reality of the details of her story, we learn a reality of linguistic force. So we can concur with Des Grieux when he pronounces Manon "beaucoup plus expérimentée que moi" (p. 40). That experience is seen in the subtlety with which she uses language to gain an end through indirect implication rather than direct request. By creating the idea of an inevitable imprisonment and, hence, of her own impotence, she exerts, through words, the power she supposedly lacks, and makes of Des Grieux her savior only because he arrives at the conclusion she wants him to embrace. The reality he presents, that he is the active agent and she, the oppressed victim, is the converse of the reality indicated by the dynamics of the situation, and it is a reality that has been constructed by language. From the stability of Des Grieux's seminary life, a reality he personally and directly experienced, he has passed in a few short moments of conversational exchange into a universe of fluid reality where language replaces direct contact and thereby literally fabricates experience, or reality, out of the air.

In order to pursue Manon, Des Grieux must detach himself from Tiberge, a prospect for the success of which he, in turn, relies on language. Instead of communication, language will be, in this instance, an instrument of subterfuge to apply a cosmetic film over what Tiberge would find an unpalatable truth. Through language, Des Grieux will seem to confirm the relations he enjoyed with Tiberge before the encounter with Manon. That is, language represents an un-reality and shields the as yet unspoken reality from Tiberge. So, Des Grieux asserts:

[J]'ai cru jusqu'à présent que vous étiez mon ami, et j'ai voulu vous éprouver par cette confidence. Il est vrai que j'aime, je ne vous ai pas trompé, mais, pour ce qui regarde ma fuite, ce n'est point une entreprise à former au hasard. Venez me prendre demain à neuf heures; je vous ferai voir, s'il se peut, ma maîtresse, et vous jugerez si elle mérite que je fasse cette démarche pour elle. (p. 43)

Beneath words of friendly confidence is the intention of betrayal, and Des Grieux uses language to create a reality for Tiberge that no longer exists.

From this moment on, the connection between Des Grieux and Tiberge will be one of linguistic digression and conflict. While a surface appraisal supports the view that their exchanges are metaphorical meetings of virtue and vice, of *ordre* and *désordre*, their communications are more fundamentally about the word and its relationship to reality. The subject of the language of both Des Grieux and Tiberge is rooted in their vision of life, of truth, of reality. Hence, the vehemence of their debates on moral issues derives from their respective beliefs in the reality they espouse. The triumph of word equals the victory of that interlocutor's reality, and that is why they are so profoundly engaged in polemics. That is why Tiberge refuses to slam shut the door of verbal interaction. The language that predominates is the reality that prevails.

Once alone with Manon, Des Grieux perceives emotional reciprocity through her caresses, but more emphatically through her words. At first, her language seconds her actions. As we know, that is a tenuous alliance at best since their affair is characterized by the antithetical juxtaposition of Manon's action and her words. Des Grieux, and everyone else with whom she is in contact, for that matter, are constantly challenged to judge the extent to which her language is a reliable barometer of her thoughts and intentions, of the meaning of her actions, that is, of the reality of Manon.

Des Grieux is quickly subjected to this challenge after he and Manon settle in an apartment in Paris, and he is confronted with her first infidelity. His unproven suspicions begin to take the form of reality through the contradictory and flustered responses of the maid from whom he learns of M. de B . . . 's visit and the reason for the locked door. Through language, he manages to dissuade himself of the reality her words indicate. That is, because, as he says, "Je n'osais rappeler ce que je venais d'entendre. Je voulais le considérer comme une illusion" (p. 46), he does indeed will himself to redesign his perception of events through language into something acceptable to the reality he desires.<sup>10</sup> This recreation lasts only temporarily, for Des Grieux, shortly after returning to their lodging, is kidnapped. Thus, the reality of Manon's innocence, of which he has verbally convinced himself, is soon countered and colored by another perception offered in his father's account.<sup>11</sup> Des Grieux's kidnapping, then, floats in a limbo awaiting the attachment of another meaning and substance, of another reality, that language will bring.

Over dinner, Des Grieux's father says that M. de B . . . said that Manon said that Des Grieux was the son of M. de B . . . 's friend. So, reality, according to Des Grieux's father, is as follows: "Il [M. de B . . .] s'est offert de me faciliter les moyens de te saisir au collet, et c'est par sa direction et celle de ta maîtresse même que ton frère a trouvé le moment de te prendre sans

vert" (pp. 51-52). We see the role that language played in both the foundation of an action and its elucidation. Noteworthy in this instance is the transposition of action and understanding. By following the kidnapping with the explanation of its possible linguistic genesis, the linear structure of the *récit* is broken as the story line is dislocated.<sup>12</sup> This shift of textual ground effected through language reflects the psychological imbalance felt by both Des Grieux and the reader in their appreciation of reality. Uncertainty is injected into Des Grieux's credence in the reality he finds admissible creating an almost palpable instability.<sup>13</sup> It is totally unclear whom or what to believe, and to Des Grieux's verbal insistence that the reality of his father cannot be, the latter rebuts, "Comment pouvez-vous vous aveugler jusqu'à ce point après ce que je vous ai raconté d'elle [Manon]?" (p. 54). It is word against word, and the equivalence of language and reality is, in fact, here stated by his father.

Yet this is not the end of the episode. True, Des Grieux, encouraged by Tiberge, returns to his ecclesiastical life and excels. But that is just an intermission of sorts in the same dramatic moment. Des Grieux's publicized speech and its success draw Manon back to him. She repents and confesses, and, most importantly, offers her rendition of the night of Des Grieux's abduction: that she associated herself with M. de B . . . so that she and Des Grieux could live comfortably; that she suffered terribly; that she drew no happiness from the association.<sup>14</sup> In short, in the reality fashioned by her word, she did not victimize Des Grieux. Rather, she was equally a victim of the same circumstances. Thus, we have opposing possibilities created by language. Whose word conveys reality? Perhaps neither, due to their respective vested interests, or perhaps both, due to the different orientation of their mentality. But that question is of secondary interest. What is paramount here is the process at work and the way in which Prévost has adroitly shown the reality-generating nature of language. As in the case of Tiberge, the winner of the language duel calls the reality of the moment. In this case, that victor is Manon. Des Grieux declares, "Elle me répondit des choses si touchantes sur son repentir, et elle s'engagea à la fidélité par tant de protestations et de serments, qu'elle m'attendrit à un degré inexprimable" and Des Grieux, in turn, promises her "un oubli général de ses fautes" (p. 61). Through language, the slate is wiped clean, the past is erased, and a new reality is created merely by the oral expression of a new beginning.

The tragedy of the fire leads into another infidelity conceived by Manon on the recommendation of her brother, Lescaut, involving M. de G . . . M . . . Des Grieux, because of his association with Manon and Lescaut, finds his own situation, his own reality, in flux once again, and he is called upon to decipher fact from fiction in the reality painted by Lescaut's words

in explanation of Manon's unannounced and secretive disappearance. "Il [Lescaut] me raconta que Manon, ne pouvant soutenir la crainte de la misère, et surtout l'idée d'être obligée tout d'un coup à la réforme de notre équipage, l'avait prié de lui procurer la connaissance de M. de G . . . M . . . qui passait pour un homme généreux" (p. 80). The veracity of Lescaut is certainly open to question, as is, therefore, the actual role of Manon in this decision. In any case, the reality for Des Grieux draws its existence from Lescaut's words which, in turn, assign Des Grieux his role, or identity, in the imminent scam. While Des Grieux seems to approach Lescaut's criminal project with hesitancy, his response to Lescaut confirms his acceptance of Lescaut's plan and of Lescaut's depiction of events as reality: "Vous auriez pu prendre une voie plus honnête; mais c'est une chose finie, n'est-ce pas? Ne pensons donc plus qu'à profiter de vos soins et à remplir votre projet" (p. 81). Moving from a moment when reality is determined by language, by joining with Lescaut on the basis of belief in the word, Des Grieux moves to act on Lescaut's words thereby, inversely, making language a reality. The result is a comedy of words in which realities and fictions are transposed in double entendres in a masterful exhibition, engineered by Prévost, that illustrates the chameleon-like character of reality with respect to language. Des Grieux becomes, by simple proclamation, "un écolier, frère de Manon", "un enfant fort neuf . . . bien éloigné . . . d'avoir les airs de Paris" (pp. 84-85). Des Grieux speaks of his desire "de me faire prêtre", declares that with regard to Manon, "nos deux chairs se touchent de bien proche", and takes the opportunity "de lui raconter [à M. de G . . . M . . .] sa propre histoire, et le mauvais sort qui le menaçait" as well as "[de lui faire] son portrait au naturel" (p. 85). And so, M. de G . . . M . . . believes the word he hears, he accepts the reality it presents. Language brings the plot to successful completion. Ironically, however, this reality is made to evaporate by a reality with which it coexists, the language of *le bruit qui court*, the reality of their past. What they say of themselves is eclipsed by what others say of them, allowing M. de G . . . M . . . to identify them and have them arrested.

Des Grieux finds himself once again a prisoner and in a relationship with the superior of Saint-Lazare not unlike the one he shares with Tiberge. It is in this enclosure that we see a highly accentuated linking of language in an effort to move on to a new reality. Language is, in fact, Des Grieux's most potent arm in his quest for release as he rotates events in the light of feeling: he tells his story to the superior whose acceptance of that reality prompts him to intercede verbally with the police, that is to use his word as confirmation of the reality of Des Grieux's word. However, the reality evoked by M. de G . . . M . . . 's word precedes him, aborting the imposition of Des Grieux's reality. Another channel is explored through

language when Tiberge visits, and while Des Grieux asserts, "Vous me revoyez tel que vous me laissâtes il y a quatre mois" (p. 95), he also says enough that, in the end, "Cette conversation servit du moins à renouveler la pitié de mon ami" (p. 98), and his words succeed in creating a reality in which Tiberge is his contact with Lescaut and his accomplice in spite of himself.

The escape is prepared, concealed and accomplished by means of language through which Des Grieux gains access to the superior through claims of illness, proceeds to an emotionally charged verbal plea for freedom, and ends with a verbal debate concerning Des Grieux's actions and intentions. It is the inefficacy of language that continually reduces Des Grieux's options so that when the superior screams for help, making real the action of this assault, Des Grieux is trapped and crime results. Language, at this point, accelerates the speed of the catastrophes produced by its cause and effect relationship with action. Now a murderer, Des Grieux will be the subject of talk that will, in turn, generate his pursuit that, in turn, creates the need for an accomplice to rescue Manon, an accomplice, in turn, is enlisted with the promise of a *louis d'or* which, in turn, cannot be paid, a default that, in turn, unleashes the word of the valet which increases pursuit of Des Grieux and Manon. Fugitives of this vicious circle of ever reshaped realities of increasing gravity, Des Grieux and Manon are delivered by the intervention of M. de T. who verbally protects them and offers them a means of flight. The success of language in convincing him of the reality of Des Grieux's verbal script once again offers the lovers a new slate with another new beginning in Chaillot.

So opens Part II where all is superficially different but fundamentally the same as verbal indications of a new impending infidelity are proffered. "Le seul valet qui composait notre domestique me prit un jour à l'écart pour me dire, avec beaucoup d'embarras, qu'il avait un secret d'importance à me communiquer. Je l'encourageai à parler librement" (p. 120). Once again, a familiar cycle is set into motion as Des Grieux's suspicions assume reality through the domestic's report, and he looks to Manon for confirmation or denial. From the tension created by the comparison of the valet's words and those of Manon is born the potency of the *toilette* scene. While the Italian prince arrives believing in the reality of the romantic reciprocity implicit in Manon's written invitation, Des Grieux, primped by Manon, awaits, ignorant of what is to follow, but buoyed by Manon's plea, "Cher amant, toi que j'adore, je demande un moment de complaisance, un moment, un seul moment. Je t'en aimerai mille fois plus" (p. 124). Through language, both men have been prepared and pre-assured of amorous acceptance, and both are cast in Manon's vignette. It is only when Manon speaks and so shatters the reality held by the prince that the ac-



tivities of these moments appear to make sense. "Voici l'homme que j'aime, et que j'ai juré d'aimer toute ma vie. Faites la comparaison vous-même . . . je vous déclare qu'aux yeux de votre servante très humble, tous les princes d'Italie ne valent pas un des cheveux que je tiens" (p. 124). And so, one reality is again replaced, through language, with another. Des Grieux's reality seems confirmed, and Manon's purpose seems explained. However, whether she is speaking from the heart or has simply delivered herself through linguistic cleverness from the brunt of Des Grieux's assumptions, her language only serves to complicate the question of reality, for, in fact, Manon's words elucidate nothing definitive.

Des Grieux seems to repeat his role as both *le trompé* and *le trompeur* in Manon's "dessein admirable" (p. 129) to take revenge on M. de G . . . M . . . through his son. That is, language will be used to create a reality of Manon's interest in the advances of young G . . . M . . . so that he may be duped. Manon appears to speak sincerely to both her potential lover and Des Grieux, and Des Grieux remarks on the *double jeu* after young G . . . M . . . is given the opportunity to verbalize privately his feeling to Manon, "Il était de la meilleure humeur du monde. J'affectai de le paraître aussi. Il riait intérieurement de ma simplicité, et moi de la sienne" (p. 130). The reality of that personal exchange is known to Des Grieux only through the hearsay of Manon who, in turn, "[lui] renouvela tous ses serments" (p. 132). Language has blanketed any uncertainty of either man in certainty. Yet, when Des Grieux arrives at the appointed rendez-vous at the appointed hour, he finds not Manon, but a lady unknown to him. Just as her presence is a substitute for that of Manon, Manon's word in the letter she delivers is a substitute for Manon's action, her arrival.

Reality has again changed configuration for Des Grieux, and he searches for meaning behind the action, for reality, in language. This he accomplishes by locating Manon in young G . . . M . . . 's house, arranging the kidnapping of the suitor, and gaining entry himself. Manon asks Des Grieux "que vous soyez mon juge, après que je vous aurai expliqué la vérité du fait", and "elle m'apprit alors tout ce qui lui était arrivé depuis qu'elle avait trouvé G . . . M . . ." (p. 141). The source and only bolster of this *vérité*, of this reality, will again be her word. Parallel to and concurrent with their *entretien* is the passing on of word from young G . . . M . . . 's vigilant valet to the elder G . . . M . . . , then, to the police, which results in the arrest of Manon and Des Grieux once again and in Manon's exile to America. Des Grieux manages to accompany her to this world of another new beginning, to this place where the language of past activities and relationships cannot follow them, to this setting where their reality is open to recreation.

It is recreated, and immediately, in the declaration to the ship's captain

that they are married. With no evidence or talk to challenge that revelation, language alone would suffice to maintain the reality in which Des Grieux and Manon rise to respectability in the new world. But when they change the language, they change the reality. They admit as illusion the situation their previous words created and make feasible a reorganization of the conditions of their life. With no background support, Des Grieux's words are useless and the Governor's word, omnipotent. As before, Des Grieux turns violent when his linguistic options evaporate, and from this proceeds the fateful duel with Synnelet. The flight to the desert is a meaningless gesture of desperation that only puts off whatever consequences are contingent on and determined by their words, for the end of the odyssey is prepared by both the physical impossibility of further displacement and by the linguistic vacuum in which they are caught.

The last show of the power of language in Des Grieux's life is the granting of clemency by Synnelet who has not died but through whose pronouncement Des Grieux ceases to be the criminal of rumor. For the last time, language wipes clean the slate and offers a new beginning. But it will be a recommencement of a life without Manon. Des Grieux returns home with Tiberge back to where he began not only in environmental terms but also in direct experiential terms.

In the demonstrated role of language in this *récit*, one can note three distinct patterns. The first incorporates a direct relationship with an idea and the words that relate it. Language is the signifier of reality, the signified. As such, language is the repository of reality, and the very act of one person relating to another an event or uttering a belief or feeling confers reality. In this pattern, the trust of the listener is tested and required, for the accuracy of the enunciation determines whether the reality is reported or reprocessed. The second pattern resembles the first, but is of a more indirect nature. It entails one person relating an event, belief or feeling to another who, in turn, relates the same content to a third party. Because of the added intermediary, it requires a double trust on the part of the listener who must determine the accuracy of a reality once removed. The third pattern consists of the presentation of an action the discussion or mention of which in the text by several characters follows the action itself. Unlike the previous two patterns, this one often includes several renditions, not passed along in linear fashion, but presented in contradictory terms that call into question previously held beliefs. Because full appreciation of the action is put on hold, one can say that reality is suspended.

Underscoring the relationship of language to reality in *Manon Lescaut* is the question of the use and abuse of trust. The fact is this: that when language corresponds to the reality the speaker believes to be accurate, it is truth; when it does not, it is a lie. What Prévost so delicately suggests in

this novel and his treatment of language and reality is the precariousness of our existence, well-being and happiness, like Des Grieux's, in a world where we are constantly called upon to trust and act based on words spoken by people many if not most of whom are untested and unproven to us. The corollary of that observation is that goodness, honesty and the almost automatic and unquestioned trust that emanates from upright character can be, in practice, a weakness, for we are then at the mercy of the unscrupulous who deal routinely in language as a free-floating reality. In the last analysis, the only difference between a truth and a lie, reality and illusion, is the sincerity of intention behind the words. That is something which is rarely verifiable. Such is the ultimate lesson of *Manon Lescaut* that Prévost teaches so well.

## • NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Creignou, "La Mauvaise foi dans *Manon Lescaut*," *Europe*, 549-50 (1974), 175.

<sup>2</sup> Relative to these approaches, see the following works for a closer look at a variety of recent studies appreciating the narrative and its possible ramifications: Patrick Coleman, "From the *Mémoires* to *Manon*: Mourning and Narrative Control in Prévost," *Nottingham French Studies*, 29, No. 2 (1990), 3-11; Vivienne Mylne, "Nous empêcher de réfléchir: An Aspect of Plausibility in Narrative Technique," in *Dilemmes du roman: Essays in Honor of Georges May*, ed. Catherine Lafarge (Saratoga, California: Anma Libri, 1989), pp. 133-45; C.J. Betts, "The Cyclical Pattern of the Narrative in *Manon Lescaut*," *French Studies*, 41, No. 4 (1987), 395-407; Bernadette Fort, "Manon's Suppressed Voice: The Uses of Reported Speech," *Romanic Review*, 76, No. 2 (March 1985), 172-191; Luc Rasson, "Le Roman clivé: Femme et maîtrise dans *Manon Lescaut*," in *Aufsätze zur Literatur - Geschichte in Frankreich, Belgien und Spanien* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1985), pp. 75-89; Jean-Paul Sermain, "Les Trois Figures du dialogisme dans *Manon Lescaut*," *Saggi e ricerche di letteratura francese*, 24 (1985), 373-401; Jeanne R. Monty, "Narrative Ambiguity in *Manon Lescaut*," in *Enlightenment Studies in Honour of Lester G. Crocker*, eds. Alfred J. Bingham and Virgil W. Topazio (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1979), pp. 151-61; Grahame Jones, "*Manon Lescaut*: An Exercise in Literary Persuasion," *Romanic Review*, 69, Nos. 1-2 (January-March 1978), 48-59; Patrick Brady, "Deceit and Self-Deceit in 'Manon Lescaut' and 'La Vie de Marianne': Extrinsic, Rhetorical, and Immanent Perspectives on First-Person Narration," *The Modern Language Review*, 72, No. 1 (January 1977), 46-52; Patrick Brady, "Other-Portrayal and Self-Betrayal in *Manon Lescaut* and *La Vie de*

*Marianne*," *Romanic Review*, 64, No. 2 (March 1973), 99-110; Richard L. Frautschi, "Narrative Voice in *Manon Lescaut*: Some Quantitative Observations," *L'Esprit Créateur*, 12, No. 2 (summer 1972), 103-17; Herbert Josephs, "*Manon Lescaut*: A Rhetoric of Intellectual Evasion," *Romanic Review*, 59, No. 3 (October 1968), 185-97.

<sup>3</sup> Fort refers to this tendency in recent criticism in "Manon's Suppressed Voice," p. 172. For the thoughts of one such critic, see Jean-Luc Jaccard, *Manon Lescaut: Le Personnage-Romancier* (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1975), pp. 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> This is significant for, as Naomi Segal notes in *The Unintended Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 80), approximately half of the novel is dialogue which, in turn, is indirectly reported.

<sup>5</sup> Two prominent examples of this perspective are Fort's article, "Manon's Suppressed Voice," which considers the reliability of what is reported with relation to Manon alone, and Grahame C. Jones' work, "Manon Lescaut: Morality and Style," *Essays in French Literature*, 9 (1972), 39, in which we are exhorted to be suspicious of Des Grieux.

<sup>6</sup> Speaking only of Des Grieux, Micheline Sakharoff poses a question that applies across the board: "A l'intérieur du portrait flou qu'il [Des Grieux] nous offre, où pourrions-nous tracer les frontières de son identité et cerner la vérité de son être" ("Des Grieux: Un Cas de double identité," *Revue des Sciences Humaines*, 36, No. 143 [juillet-septembre 1971]: 357).

Related to the same idea is Raymond Picard's reference to "[l]a réalité concrète et vivante" of *Manon Lescaut* as being "réduite au rang d'apparence trompeuse" ("L'Univers de <<Manon Lescaut>>," *Mercure de France*, 341 [avril 1961], 608).

<sup>7</sup> On this point, it is interesting to remark that Sermain states in his study of "le dialogisme" in *Manon Lescaut* (p. 398) that "la parole des personnages . . . prend valeur d'acte."

<sup>8</sup> pp. 619-20.

<sup>9</sup> *Manon Lescaut* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1967), p. 40. All subsequent references to this work will be noted in the text.

<sup>10</sup> For development of the role of subjectivity in Des Grieux's relationship with Manon, see Odile A. Kory, *Subjectivity and Sensitivity in the Novels of the abbé Prévost* (Paris: Didier, 1972): 106-07.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the oblique nature of the way in which Des Grieux learns of Manon's infidelities, see Rasson, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> For a related discussion of the textual discontinuity of the narrative and its relationship to the character of Des Grieux, seen in temporal and spatial terms, see Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. "The Double Register of Time and Character in *Manon Lescaut*," *Romance Notes*, 7, No. 2 (spring 1966): 149-50.

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that the vacillation of Des Grieux with respect to reality and the language that creates it mirrors a phenomenon noted by Jean Weisgerber in the swing-like "succession des mouvements - physiques et affectifs." See

"Aspects de l'espace romanesque: l'histoire du chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut," in *Etudes sur le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, II, eds. Roland Mortier and Hervé Hasquin (Bruxelles: Editions de l'université de Bruxelles, 1975), p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> The multiple versions of the same event typify the trait of deceptiveness different details of which C.J. Greshoff studies in "A Note on the Ambiguity of *Manon Lescaut*," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 3 (1967), 166.

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