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Robert Arthur Foster :- A Study of the Evolution  
of the Text of Diderot's Jacques le fataliste

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts,  
September 1975.

The aim of the present thesis is twofold: firstly, to supplement existing textual criticism of Jacques le fataliste by providing a more detailed study than has heretofore been attempted of the development of the text, and secondly to analyse what new light such a study may shed on some of the major areas of critical debate surrounding the novel.

The basis of the study is the text of Jacques given in the Correspondance littéraire, in which it was serialised between Nov. 1778 and June 1780, with two sets of addenda appearing in the July 1780 and April 1786 issues respectively.

An attempt is made to state which of the addenda indeed comprised new material incorporated after the completion of an earlier text and which merely represent restitution of suppressed material. Further, a study is made of the literary mechanisms employed in the process of addition and of the changes in the novel's substance brought about by the new material. The 1778-80 text is then studied in its turn in an attempt to trace the same processes of addition at work at an earlier date, so that a fuller picture may be obtained of the evolution of Jacques le fataliste from its initial conception to completion.

The findings of this textual study are then applied in turn to the critical issues most affected by them. These are: the rôle of the narrator/"author"/"editor"; and the question of literary satire; the position of Diderot with regard to the philosophy of "fatalism"; the relationship between the principal and subsidiary narratives; and the sources and importance of the humour of the work.

In conclusion it is demonstrated that the changing character of the novel may be seen to correspond to a number of widely differing experiments in literature.

A Study of the Evolution of the Text of

Diderot's Jacques le fataliste

by

Robert Arthur Foster

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Master of Arts in French  
University of Durham

September 1975

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I should also like to offer my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Dr. G.E. Rodmell, my typist, Mrs. P.E. Brooksbank and my wife, Elizabeth, for the great help which they have all provided in the preparation of this study.

#### N O T E

The manuscript source on which the present thesis is based is the Gotha copy of the Correspondance littéraire housed in the Landesbibliothek, Schloss Friedenstein, Gotha (cotes B 1138 A - Z and 1279 - 1280, 27 vols., 1754 - 1813). Quotations from this source, however, have been confined to cases where a comparison was necessitated between the manuscript and printed editions of Jacques le fataliste. In all other cases, quotations both of Jacques and of Diderot's other works are taken from the Oeuvres complètes, ed. J. Assézat and M. Tourneux, Paris, Garnier, 1875 - 77, 20 vols.

Orthography and punctuation are as given by Assézat and Tourneux, with the exceptions that, in the case of Jacques le fataliste, the names of speakers have been brought down to the line of the speech, and, in one or two instances, obvious printing errors have been corrected.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is perhaps inevitable that, in a period of renewed interest in Denis Diderot, Jacques le fataliste et son maître, at once the most complex and the most enigmatic of the Encyclopédiste's fictional<sup>(1)</sup> works, should have been the recipient of a great deal of scholarly attention. Despite a wealth of interpretative criticism, however, little real attempt has been made to analyse the history of the work, or even to apply what little is known for certain about that history to a study of the author's intentions. This neglect is both surprising and unfortunate. It will be the aim of the present thesis to throw some new light on certain important aspects of the creation of Jacques, and to consider what significance a clearer view of the development of the work may have for certain key aspects of its interpretation.

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(1) The word is used guardedly but deliberately, In Jacques le fataliste, as elsewhere in Diderot's works, the line between fiction and fact - or between "history" and "romance", narrative and treatise, casual conversation and philosophical dialogue - may be impossible to draw, and a variety of alternatives to the definition "roman" may suggest themselves. But the fact remains that this work (like La Religieuse and certain of the contes) is dressed very much like a piece of contemporary fiction. Moreover, the persistence with which the author returns to the concept of the novel - even if it is merely to state that Jacques le fataliste is "not a novel" - must surely indicate his concern that we should view Jacques (whatever kind of work it may be intended to be) at least in terms of the novel. It is not therefore likely to be at variance with Diderot's wishes that we should apply to Jacques (if perhaps only provisionally) the appellation "novel" or "roman". Indeed, the paradox (a novel that is not a novel) can only really be approached from this point of view, and by the avoidance of the potential bias inherent in more interpretative nomenclature. It is to be hoped that the present thesis will go some way towards explaining the paradox. In the meantime the term "novel" will be employed unashamedly.



Before proceeding to detail the precise methodology of this study, it would seem appropriate to provide a summary of textual criticism of Jacques le fataliste published to date together with an analysis of the deficiencies of that criticism.

Modern research on Jacques le fataliste may best be dated from 1959, when Jack Undank<sup>(1)</sup> and Paul Vernière<sup>(2)</sup> independently published articles based, wholly or in part, on the discovery of a letter from Henri Meister to Bodmer. This letter, dated 12th September 1771, concerns Pierre Meister's activities in Paris and contains the following remark:

"Diderot n'a pas encore commencé son traité De vita bona et beata, mais il a fait un conte charmant, Jacques le fataliste. L'auteur en a lu à notre homme pendant deux heures."<sup>(3)</sup>

This discovery inevitably caused a certain amount of fresh speculation, since almost all critics had previously agreed in ascribing the composition of Jacques to the years 1772-74, some favouring the earlier part of this time-span, some the later, but all tending to see November 4th, 1771, the date of the performance of Goldoni's Bourru bienfaisant, as the terminus a quo - and an extreme one at that. The only other direct evidence previously in existence, and used by Assézat in his attempts to date the work (as Undank points out<sup>(4)</sup>), was a passage from Mme de

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- (1) Jack Undank, "A New Date for Jacques le Fataliste", Modern Language Notes, LXXIV, May 1959, pp.433-37.
- (2) Paul Vernière, "Diderot et l'invention littéraire, à propos de Jacques le Fataliste", Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France, 59, avril-juin 1959, pp.153-167.
- (3) Lettres inédites de Mme de Stael à Meister, Paris, Hachette, 1903, p.24, quoted by Vernière (p.153) and Undank (p.436).
- (4) Undank, op.cit., pp.433-34.

Vandeul's Mémoires concerning her father's literary activities and reading as follows:

"Depuis son retour (from Russia, 1774) il s'est occupé de divers petits ouvrages qu'il n'a point imprimés. Il s'était amusé à La Haye à réfuter l'ouvrage d'Helvétius. Il fit deux petits romans, Jacques le Fataliste, la Religieuse, et quelques petits contes; mais ce qui ruina, détruisit le reste de ses forces, fut L'Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron, et une besogne dont il fut chargé par un de ses amis." (1)

It will be realised that very little value can be attached to this remark. For one thing, the time-span dealt with is one of ten years (up to Diderot's death in 1784); for another, even if none of La Religieuse existed before the practical joke played on the Marquis de Croismare in 1760 (and this is by no means certain), the majority of this work is not later than this date, though some revision did take place around 1780-81. Rosenkranz<sup>(2)</sup> has discounted the remark altogether, and Assézat came near to doing the same, though, by "an unexplained, baffling conjectural leap",<sup>(3)</sup> he came to the conclusion that "c'est pendant son séjour en Hollande et en Russie que Diderot a écrit ce livre [Jacques]".<sup>(4)</sup>

More doubtful evidence, quoted by Undank,<sup>(5)</sup> is provided by two letters written from the Hague in 1773 -

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- (1) Assézat-Tourneux, I, liv, quoted by Undank (p.434). (This edition will henceforth be referred to as A.-T.)
- (2) Karl Rosenkranz, Diderots Leben und Werke, Leipzig, 1866, II, p.316.
- (3) Undank, op.cit., p.434.
- (4) A.-T. VI, p.8.
- (5) Undank, op.cit., p.435.

the first to Sophie Volland, the second to Mme d'Epinaÿ - in which Diderot tells his two correspondents respectively:

"J'ai fait deux ou trois ouvrages assez gais..." and

"Je me suis amusé à écrire une petite satyre dont j'avois le projet lorque je quittai Paris. Je vous fournirois, je crois, de quoi soutenir la Correspondance de Grimm pendant deux ou trois mois." (1)

Before Undank's and Vernière's studies of Jacques, internal evidence had proved very difficult to analyse, largely because of the timeless atmosphere deliberately given to the work. Comparison of the Mme de La Pommeraye tale with the short story Mme de La Carlière (Sur l'inconséquence du jugement public) had tended, however, to locate the work around 1772.

Undank's theory is that the section of the novel around the "Bourru bienfaisant" scene was written contemporaneously with the performance of Goldoni's play, and that the Pommeraye story, already half-introduced, therefore antedates the Mme de La Carlière tale. He draws considerable significance from this, assigning Jacques to a "pessimistic" period in the author's creative life.

Vernière also weighs all this evidence, further pointing out that Jacques appeared in serial form in the Correspondance littéraire between 1778 and 1780, and goes on to ask whether the dates 1771 and 1778 can really be considered as a terminus a quo

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(1) See Diderot, Correspondance, ed. G. Roth, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1955-70, 16 vols., Vol.XIII, pp.31-33, Letter 800 "Aux Dames Volland", dated The Hague, 22nd July 1773 (p.33), and pp.45-48, Letter 804, "A Madame d'Epinaÿ", dated The Hague, 18th August 1773 (pp.46-47).

and a terminus ante quem respectively:

"Nous ne saurions l'assurer. Diderot, postérieurement à la publication de la Correspondance littéraire, a pu retoucher les deux manuscrits de Jacques dont il disposait : celui que nous retrouverons dans le fonds Vandeul et celui qu'il destine à Catherine II et que conserve le fonds de Léninegrad. Qui nous a dit enfin que le texte de 1771, lu à Meister, n'avait pas été précédé de premières moutures?

"Ne faudrait-il donc pas d'emblée élargir le concept de "genèse" d'une oeuvre? Puisqu'il s'agit de Jacques, oeuvre non publiée du vivant de l'auteur, ne faudrait-il pas admettre qu'elle est en constant "devenir", tant que l'auteur vit? Et que l'important, dès lors, est de retrouver l'idée de manoeuvre originelle qui est la véritable date de naissance de l'oeuvre, lui assurant cohérence, organisation, structure?" (1)

Taking as a new terminus a quo June 1765, when the Baron d'Holbach received from Sterne volumes VII and VIII of Tristram Shandy, and as his only definite terminus ante quem the death of Diderot in 1784, Vernière concludes :

"Si nous appliquons donc à Jacques le concept élargi de "genèse", il faut assigner à notre roman, qu'il soit virtuel, ébauché ou en voie de correction définitive, un "devenir" de près de vingt ans, de 1765 à 1784, année de la mort de Diderot." (2)

Vernière then proceeds to list apparent references in Jacques le fataliste to real-life events or locations. These may be listed here without much comment. The first two are basically geographical and the chronological link is admittedly tenuous.

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(1) Vernière, op.cit., p.154.

(2) ibid., p.155.

The others are more obviously historical.

- (i) Lieutenant-Général de Conches: (1)  
Diderot endeavoured to obtain a forge-operating privilege for Caroillon de Vandeul in Conches, so this episode may well postdate the latter's marriage to Angélique in September 1772;
- (ii) château de Desglans: probably inspired by Diderot's trip to Bourbonne, July-September 1770;
- (iii) death of the Infanta, Princess of Parma, 1759; (2)
- (iv) publication of Tissot's Avis au peuple sur sa santé, 1761; (3)
- (v) Rousseau's Emile and judgement on La Fontaine's Fables, 1762; (4)
- (vi) Voltaire's Dictionnaire philosophique, 1764; (5)
- (vii) elevation of Pitt to the peerage, August 1766, commented on in the Correspondance littéraire of October of the same year; (6)
- (viii) appearance of the abbé Dulaurens' Compère Matthieu, begun in 1766; (7)
- (ix) death of the abbé Vatry, 16th December 1769. (8)

On the other hand, Diderot seems unaware of the death of the Duc de Chevreuse, on the 8th October 1771, and even of M. de Guerchy's appointment as Ambassador to London in 1763 and his death in 1768.

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- (1) A.-T. VI, p.35.
  - (2) *ibid.*, p.196.
  - (3) *ibid.*, p.166.
  - (4) *ibid.*, p.264.
  - (5) *ibid.*, p.88.
  - (6) *ibid.*, p.210.
  - (7) *ibid.*, p.283.
  - (8) *ibid.*, p.192.

Vernière also shows a number of anecdotes and comments to be re-workings of old Correspondance littéraire material: the Dufouart-Louis quarrel (1766);<sup>(1)</sup> Jacques's and the Master's comments on the prolific child-production of the poor (1766);<sup>(2)</sup> the anecdote of the Pondicherry poet and the Ventriloque/Engastrimute joke reported in the Correspondance littéraire of July 1771 and July 1772 respectively. Other episodes are re-tellings of stories recounted in the Sophie Volland correspondence, and these include the famous "estampe du carrosse cassé" which was originally composed (as autobiographical!) in 1760, and re-appeared as a subject for Baudouin in the Salon de 1765; the story of the love-sick dog, and that of Nacques's attempt at seducing Denise (which appears to be based on Margency's affair with Mme de Verdelin, learned from Mme d'Épinay by November 1760, and appearing in her Mémoires which Diderot revised in November 1770).

On the basis of all this, Vernière concludes that there were at least three stages in the production of Jacques:

(i) from 1765 to September 1771; this stage presumably contained the main thèmes of the work as it now appears, he claims, and: "Deux séries d'anecdotes s'y accrochent, issues non pas de souvenirs, mais de lectures, celle de la chronique du Grandval des années 1760 et 1762, celle de la Correspondance littéraire de 1766".<sup>(3)</sup>

(ii) a second series of anecdotes added around 1773-74, inspired by literary news and by Diderot's work on the Correspondance littéraire, 1771-73. Vernière also points out that since the Supplément, "écrit en automne de 1772", mentions Tanié, Mlle de la Chaux and Mme de la Carlière but not Mme de La Pommeraye, the Pommeraye story may not yet have been written at this date.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.23.

(2) *ibid.*, p.28.

(3) Vernière, *op.cit.*, p.165.

(iii) a third series of anecdotes which do not appear in the Vandeuil MS, and figure in the Leningrad MS only on feuilles volantes slotted into the text. He describes these as: "une page sur le thème de l'inutile prudence, l'histoire de M. Le Pelletier d'Orléans, la fable de la gaine et du coutelet, l'estampe du carrosse cassé, l'histoire impudique de Suzon, l'éloge de l'obscénité", adding: "Ces interpolations existant dans le texte classique édité par Buisson, en 1796, et issu de la Correspondance littéraire, il faut donc admettre une troisième version et d'ultimes retouches, antérieures à 1787, date des premières livraisons du journal de Grimm et Meister". (1)

Vernière was mistaken on two major points: firstly, the relationship of the Leningrad and Vandeuil MSS; and, secondly, the manner and form in which Jacques actually appeared in the Correspondance littéraire. Two subsequent articles have thrown clearer light on each of these points in turn.

The first of these articles, by Richard T. Arndt, (2) in fact covers rather more ground than the title would seem to imply, since it deals with both the Vandeuil and the Leningrad MSS. (3) His examination of the latter brought out the fact that there were in reality twelve sheets of intercalations (Vernière's "feuilles volantes"), and not merely the four that Tourneux had counted. The passages concerned are the following, all references being to Vol. VI of the

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(1) Vernière, p.166. In the last sentence, "1787" (for "1778") would seem to be a printer's error, though Varloot takes Vernière up on this point - see below, p.11.

(2) R.T. Arndt: "The Vandeuil Manuscript Copy of Jacques le Fataliste", Diderot Studies, 3, 1961, pp.17-25.

(3) Henceforth "FV" and "L" respectively.

Assézat Tourneux edition:

- (i) from p.20, "JACQUES.- Mon capitaine croyait..." to p.21, "... Quel diable d'homme! ..." ("l'inutile prudence");
- (ii) from p.60, "JACQUES. - Si l'on ne dit presque rien ..." to p.62, "Parle donc ..." (the sheets noted by Tourneux which contain the anecdote of M. Le Pelletier);
- (iii) from 118, " ... Jacques n'eût dit à son maître: ..." to p.119, "... mais elle est gaie." (knife/sheath fable);
- (iv) from p.193, "Jacques, en déshabillant son maître ..." to p.194, "JACQUES. - Il est vrai." ("estampe du carrosse cassé");
- (v) from p.217, "LE MAITRE. - Et tu n'as pas revu ..." to p.221, "... le maître, s'adressant à Jacques, lui dit: ..." (Suzanne and the curate);

Arndt comments:

"Clearly the copist(of L) worked from a model which, without the twelve inserted pages and without the final paragraph added in L by Diderot's own hand, weaving around the word "FIN", emerges as the earliest form of Jacques which can be posited from available materials, earlier by definition than any version which contains these additions." (1)

From the point of view of presentation and correctness L is very much FV's superior. (2) As far as material is concerned, it is obvious that much of Jacques was not present (or was deleted) in the version which the FV copist was transcribing. One group of omissions corresponds exactly to the passages which appear in L on feuilles volantes, as Vernière had pointed out - though he was wrong in

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(1) Arndt, op.cit., p.20.

(2) L's scribe (though Arndt is apparently unaware of this) is Roland Girbal, who, we now know, was entrusted by Diderot (in the author's last years) with the preparation of fair copies of all of his works, in the intention that there should be two copies of each of them, one for Catherine the Great, the other to serve as a basis for his own projected "Oeuvres complètes". See Paul Vernière: Diderot: ses manuscrits et ses copistes, Essai d'introduction à une édition moderne de ses oeuvres, Paris, Klincksieck, 1967. See also Jean de Booy, "Diderot et son copiste Roland Girbal", French Studies, XVI, No.4, Oct.1962, pp.324-33.



including the so-called "éloge de l'obscénité" among these. A second group of omissions can obviously be attributed to "editorial prudishness":<sup>(1)</sup> this takes the form of abridgement of the Dame Suzanne and Dame Marguerite seduction stories, as of the "oreille" episode and the "éloge de l'obscénité". Here there seems to be no doubt that the passages concerned were already in existence. The fact that many proper names have been changed in FV, by Vandeul himself as well as by the copyist, and that changes of a stylistic nature are also made to avoid grossness, lends weight to this view. Arndt concludes:

"Unless it were argued that Diderot, in his dotage perhaps, methodically added, to an earlier version of Jacques, a whole series of elements calculated to shock readers like his son-in-law, FV must be assumed to present a bowdlerized transcription of the model from which it was copied."<sup>(2)</sup>

As for the model(s) for the two manuscripts, in comparison with the printed editions, with the Stockholm fragments of the *Correspondance littéraire* and with Schiller's translation of the Pommeraye episode, "FV and L show an extremely high coefficient of identity".<sup>(3)</sup> One may conclude, then, that their sources were similar, if not identical. As regards relative dating, Arndt notes that, in the final paragraph of FV, the following words of L and the printed editions fail to appear: "... au contraire ..."; "... dors donc, mon ami ...". From this he deduces that in this instance FV represents an earlier state of the text. (We shall see later that this is not likely to be the case.)<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Arndt, op.cit., p.21.

(2) *ibid.*, p.22.

(3) Arndt, op.cit., p.23.

(4) See below, p. 13.

Arndt well states the relative importance of the two MSS:

"We may rule out the possibility that this copy (FV) was ordered and edited under authorization from Diderot if we remember that L, with the author's stamp of approval at the end, was in his possession at his death and that it therefore speaks for the Philosophe with considerable authority." (1)

Evidence would seem to suggest that FV in fact represents a copy intended by the Vandeuls for publication, very probably the copy of a manuscript now lost. (2)

Arndt adds:

"Finally, because motives for permitting such extensive revision cannot be reconciled with Diderot's own practice, it is possible that FV may not even have come into existence until after his death in 1784." (3)

The other article throwing light on the composition of Jacques deals with the novel's appearance in the Correspondance littéraire - which makes it most directly relevant to this study - and is by Jean Varloot. (4) Varloot summarises Vernière's findings and notes his 1778/1787 error of dating. He then goes on to point out that, in July 1780, the Correspondance littéraire "published" four "Additions faites à Jacques le Fataliste depuis la copie que nous avens eu l'honneur de vous envoyer". These are precisely the first four of the five additions made to the Leningrad MS. Again, in April 1786, there

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(1) Arndt, op.cit., p.24.

(2) See Dieckmann, Inventaire du Fonds Vandeul et inédits de Diderot, Genève, Droz; Lille, Girard, 1951.

(3) Arndt, op.cit., p.24.

(4) Jean Varloot, "Jacques le fataliste et la Correspondance littéraire", Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France, 65, 1965, pp.629-636.

appeared, under the heading "Lacune de Jacques le fataliste", <sup>(1)</sup> the following passages to be inserted into the text (reference once again are to Vol. VI of Assézat-Tourneux):

- (i) from p.40, "Allons, commère, ..."  
to p.41, "... ma blessure à découvert.";
- (ii) from p.43, "Telle fut à la lettre ..."  
to p.45, "C'est bien mon projet.";
- (iii) from p.49, "Un autre que moi, ..." to  
"ces fourches étaient vacantes.";
- (iv) from p.66, "Vous voyez, lecteur, ..."  
to "... continua son récit.";
- (v) from p.80, "LE MAITRE. - Je ne saurais  
te le dissimuler; ..." to p.110, "Voyez  
sur le coin de la cheminée";
- (vi) from p.111, "Madame? - Qu'est-ce?"  
to "... voyez au coffre.";
- (vii) from p.112, "Madame? - Qu'est-ce?" to  
"... servez-le à l'ordinaire.";
- (viii) from p.112, "Madame? - Qu'est-ce?" to  
"... les autres chambres.";
- (ix) from p.113, "Madame? - Qu'est-ce?" to  
"... les deux pièces de vin.";
- (x) from p.113, "Madame? - J'y vais, ..."  
to "... les faire cesser.";
- (xi) from p.114, "Madame? Madame? ..." to  
"... et reprenant son récit.";
- (xii) from p.115, "Ma femme? -" to "... une  
bête de mari!";
- (xiii) from p.116, "Ma femme? -" to "... reste,  
reste, je l'ai.";
- (xiv) from p.117, "JACQUES - Il est vrai."  
to "LE MAITRE. - Et moi aussi.";
- (xv) p.125, the underlined phrase (which does  
not appear in A.-T.): "la physionomie  
ouverte, vive et gaie, une poitrine à s'y  
rouler pendant deux jours, les bras un peu  
forts...";

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(1) The term "Lacunes" is, of course, imprecise: what the editor of the Correspondance littéraire is offering (supposedly) is material intended to fill previously existing lacunae. From the point of view of the present study, however, it will prove convenient to use this term in order to distinguish between the July 1780 material (henceforth "Additions") and the April 1786 material (henceforth "Lacunes"). (Where the word "additions(s)" appears without underlining or capital, it is used in a non-specific sense, and with its usual meaning.)

(xvi) p.154, the underlined phrase (again not appearing in A.-T.): "MADAME DE LA POMMERAYE. - D'accord; mais si le mien était infidèle je serais peut-être assez (1786, "un peu") bizarre pour m'en offenser; ...";

(xvii) from p.164, "Et tout en balbutiant, ..." to "... du verre à la bouche.";

(xviii) from p.166, "JACQUES. - M'y voilà;" to "Son verre de tisane bu, Jacques continua: ...";

(xix) from p.197, "LE MAITRE. - J'entends ..." to p.226 " ... et reprenne l'histoire de ses amours ...";

(xx) from p.238, "JACQUES. - Vous êtes bien heureux, ..." to p.239 " ... laissons parler son maître.";

Of these twenty addenda, which Varloot takes to be more recently composed passages rather than the rectification of a series of omissions (deliberate or otherwise), only the sixteenth is absent from FV. From this fact, Varloot concludes that FV is post-July 1780, and does NOT represent a second stage in the development of the work. This sixteenth "addition" does, however, appear in L, though in the author's own hand (like the final paragraph). The conclusion would seem to be that L and FV were both based on the same model "postérieur à juin 1780",<sup>(1)</sup> which showed nineteen of the twenty addenda of 1786, and that the editor of the Correspondance littéraire was familiar with both this model and the Leningrad MS where he would have seen Diderot's correction. The Vandeuil copyist had NOT seen L, however, and it is to be assumed that FV is the latest of all the copies, probably post-dating the death of Diderot.

The omission, in both FV and L (initially), of the four episodes published in the July 1780 number

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(1) Varloot, op.cit., p.632.

of the Correspondance littéraire requires some justification.

"S'était-il contenté, en reprenant la version de 1778-1780, d'y ajouter en marge et sur feuilles ses additions? Dans ce cas, les quatre de 1780, qui devaient en faire partie, ont pu être omises, et rajoutées seulement au dernier moment, sur feuilles volantes, pour Catherine II. De toute façon, leur caractère de "hors-texte" les prédisposait à être exclues à nouveau, ou omises sans difficulté apparente." (1)

The two other passages stated by Vernière to be absent from FV and present in L only on feuilles volantes, the "histoire impudique de Suzon" and the "éloge de l'obscénité" (only the former of which really comes into this category - see above, p.8), present a greater problem. Varloot is only able to suggest:

"Dans l'état actuel des recherches, il faut encore, pour ces deux épisodes, adopter le principe de M. Vernière: ne pas distinguer les épisodes absents des épisodes exclus; sans conjecturer cependant qu'ils n'étaient pas composés à la date d'établissement des copies, puisque c'est faux pour les quatre épisodes rajoutés." (2)

Of the final paragraph of the Leningrad MSS, Varloot says:

"Diderot a sans doute voulu, tout en le remaniant, apporter comme sa signature à la belle copie qu'il destinait à sa bienfaitrice." (3)

Stressing once again that the 1786 Lacunes are in reality new material, he goes on to trace three stages in the development of the text:

- (i) the "conte" read to Meister in September 1771; "le terme employé (bien qu'au XVIIIe siècle il ne soit pas très différent d'emploi du mot roman) et la durée de la lecture (deux heures)

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(1) Varloot, op.cit., pp.632-33.

(2) ibid., p.633.

(3) ibid.,

font croire, après un essai sommaire, que le texte ne devait pas alors avoir plus de 125 pages de l'édition Assézat-Tourneux"; (1)

- (ii) the 1778-80 Correspondance littéraire text: - possibly involving two separate stages of composition, 1773-74 and around Diderot's trip to Holland in 1778;
- (iii) between 1780 and 1782, after which date Diderot seems to have lost his creative faculties.

Varloot's next point is that it is impossible to date Jacques by reference to "deux gerbes d'anecdotes", as Vernière had attempted to do, since many of those enumerated by Vernière only figure in the 1786 text.

"Sans doute le premier texte devait-il déjà comporter le thème des amours de Jacques, mais ne doit-on pas prendre comme une leçon de prudence le fait que toute l'histoire des premières amours du héros n'apparaît qu'après 1780? Diderot n'avait pas d'abord songé à reprendre dans Jacques le tableau du carrosse renversé, déjà deux fois peint, ni l'histoire du chien du meunier, deux fois racontée. ... Il est donc nécessaire d'avoir sans cesse à la pensée que c'est un vieillard qui, en remuant ses souvenirs, et surtout en relisant ses papiers, sans doute pour les classer ou même les éditer, a songé à insérer des faits et anecdotes de dates très diverses dans un ouvrage qui déjà se situait hors du temps." (2)

The anecdote of the Pondicherry poet provides a good illustration of this point, for, although it appeared in the July 1780 number of the Correspondance littéraire, it did not figure there as one of the additions to Jacques, but as a separate piece. Only in the Lacunes of April 1786 does it appear as part

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(1) Varloot, pp.633-34.

(2) *ibid.*, p.634.

of the novel (after some minor re-working).

This, then, is the state of published textual research. The weaknesses of some of Vernière's arguments have already been indicated. Moreover, the picture painted by Arndt and Varloot is far from complete, and, in several respects, is inaccurate. Arndt was, of course, labouring under the misapprehension that Jacques appeared in complete form in the Correspondance littéraire:

"From November 1778 to June 1780 the novel, apparently complete, circulated to Grimm's subscribers in various parts of Europe."(1)

We are referred to the following footnote:

"One minor excision, visible in a fragment of the Correspondance littéraire copy in the Royal Library of Stockholm, leads to the suspicion that Grimm's copies were in some measure edited."(2)

Without access to the Gotha copy of the Correspondance littéraire, Arndt was unable to verify how complete the novel was at this stage. Nevertheless, the comment on editing would appear to be valid, and, as we shall see, stands in contrast to Varloot's position on this point.

Again, it is only with the aid of the Correspondance littéraire text that one is able to judge the validity of Arndt's hypothesis concerning the final paragraph of the novel. Arndt, to be sure of his point, would have needed to ascertain whether the last paragraph of the Correspondance littéraire copy bore closer resemblance to L or to FV.

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(1) Arndt, p.18.

(2) *ibid.*, n.3. (It is to be noted that, by the dates in question, the Correspondance littéraire was being edited, no longer by Grimm himself, but by Meister.)

It is perhaps to be regretted that Varloot's otherwise very useful study does not contain a closer examination of the Correspondance littéraire text about which he provides so much information. Such an examination would have cleared up any need for conjecture over L's version of the final paragraph, and might well have led him to question his premise that the Lacunés must be thought of as new material. Indeed, even a cursory reading of the printed text, omitting these Lacunés, will make it apparent that the 1778-80 state of the text, far from offering a shorter "complete" version, was not even coherent. Of the twenty addenda only one, in fact, poses any obvious problem, but in this case it is a problem crucial enough to demand very close scrutiny.

The passage in question is Lacune no.5, (A.-T. VI, pp.80-110). Before this passage Jacques and his Master are en route from the town where Jacques had made the acquaintance of the local hangman, and are busy discussing what value may be attached to premonitions. If one now skips the thirty pages under consideration, one suddenly finds the two travellers being addressed by the landlady of the Grand-Cerf who immediately launches into the story of Mme de La Pommeraye. Not only has much of the outer framework (i.e. the journey of Jacques and the Master) disappeared, however, and references like that made on p.177 to Nicole (who appears in the course of these thirty pages) rendered meaningless: for Jacques's love-story is also made incoherent, in this case by the omission of all the episodes of the surgeon, the jar of oil and the robbers. A closer study of this section of the novel will be made at a later stage, but enough has been said at the moment to indicate that there is no case for assuming out of hand that the Lacunés must all be additions.



Varloot justifies his attitude on this subject in a footnote, and since he raises there two points of major importance with which we shall have to take issue, the note is quoted here in full:

"A qui serait tenté d'y voir des coupures dues à l'éditeur de la Correspondance littéraire, la réponse est facile: il est impensable que Meister ait osé corriger le texte du grand auteur de la maison, il est contradictoire qu'il ait écourté l'oeuvre en juin 1780 et publié en juillet des additions, d'autant plus qu'il allait consacrer sa revue au Voyage de Hollande et à la Religieuse. Cependant, le terme de lacune est employé par Diderot lui-même (A.-T., p.226) pour désigner tout le récit des amours de Jacques (c'est-à-dire la lacune no.19) fictivement perdu d'un manuscrit, mais existant dans un autre, que détiennent les "descendants de Jacques ou de son maître!". Il n'est donc pas exclu que cette "lacune" soit une omission provisoire, mais due à l'auteur. Aurait-il alors, par malice, amputé Jacques du sujet annoncé à la première page et toujours retardé? Tout est possible de la part d'un Diderot. Mais la "genèse" deviendrait alors l'histoire des versions successives d'un texte d'emblée presque complet, et l'omission demanderait tout autant à être expliqué que l'addition."(1)

Firstly, if, in the case of Lacune no.5, we are really faced with a case of cutting, we are not obliged to think that Meister was in any sense attempting to "correct" the text. Since we are well aware from later reactions to the publication of Jacques<sup>(2)</sup> that the work did not on the whole appeal to popular taste, but that, on the other hand, the Pommeraye story could be regarded as a minor masterpiece, we can well imagine the editor being more than a little

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(1) Jean Varloot, op.cit., p.633, n.4.

(2) See A.J. Freer, "Jacques le Fataliste" et "La Religieuse" devant la critique révolutionnaire; Geneva, Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1955.

impatient to set this particular delicacy before his readers, and suggesting to the author some abridgement of the text; <sup>(1)</sup> Diderot might very well have washed his hands of the whole matter. Moreover, the passage in question occurs long before the June 1780 instalment - in fact, as a later article was to indicate, <sup>(2)</sup> it falls between the April and May numbers of 1779; a change of plan is by no means inconceivable over such a period of time. Again the July 1780 Additions are all short, never representing more than three pages of the Assézat-Tourneux edition, whereas the Lacunes accounts for thirty - or probably two monthly instalments. If the earliest indications of the reception Jacques was enjoying were in any way unfavourable, it is not unthinkable that Meister would be impatient to hurry on to a story offering sure success, skipping if necessary a couple of instalments in the process (since, by accepted literary values, Jacques could, even when intact, be regarded as "incoherent").

Indeed evidence that Jacques may somehow have been reworked (though perhaps inadequately) in order to allow the omission of unwanted material is, in fact, provided by de Booy's article, just mentioned. In his list of the instalments of Jacques le fataliste appearing in the Correspondance littéraire, <sup>(3)</sup> the instalment for April 1779 is described as ending with the words " ... la mort du philosophe" (A.-T. VI, p.80). It will be noticed that the words immediately following these in the A.-T. edition ("LE MAITRE. - Je ne saurais te le dissimuler ...") form the opening sentence of the 1786 Lacune no. 5. What is curious is that M. de Booy

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- (1) In fact, it would appear that Jacques was better received among his subscribers than Meister imagined - see below, pp. 29.
- (2) Jean de BOOY, "Inventaire provisoire des contributions de Diderot à la Correspondance littéraire", Dix-huitième siècle, No.1, 1969, pp.353-397.
- (3) Since such a list is already in existence, and since little can be argued on the basis of it, beyond the fact that the novel was not apparently conceived in episodic form, there seems no point in repeating it here.

describes the May 1779 instalment as follows:

' "Suite de Jacques le Fataliste et son maître. (Jacques reprend par intervalles ... la plus perfide des confidences.)" '(1)

For page references he gives A.-T. VI, pp.80-126. Now the words "Jacques reprend par intervalles" do not occur on p.80, nor on p.110 (after the 1786 Lacune), nor indeed anywhere else within these forty-six pages. Clearly some modification has been made.

As regards Lacune no.5, then, the case is obviously not as simple as Varloot would have us believe. Indeed, in this instance and in general, careful consideration is needed before deciding what Meister, perhaps in active collaboration with Diderot, would or would not be capable of.

Secondly, it is very tempting to see, as Varloot apparently does, the paragraph immediately following the other thirty-page Lacune (no. 19, A.-T. VI, pp.197-226), and beginning "Il y a ici une lacune vraiment déplorable dans la conversation de Jacques et de son maître",<sup>(2)</sup> as referring to an omission which this addendum would serve to fill. However, Varloot's argument completely misconstrues the sense of the expression "les amours de Jacques", and the importance of the stories of Jacques's early physical conquests recounted in these thirty pages: "les amours de Jacques" is most certainly NOT used by the author to refer to the scandals of Jacques's youth, and Jacques himself states, before embarking upon these tales:

"Tenez, mon maître, je devine, au coin de votre lèvre droite qui se relève, et à votre marine gauche qui se crispe, qu'il vaut autant que je fasse la chose de bonne grâce, que d'en être prié; d'autant que

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(1) De Booy, "Inventaire provisoire", p.388.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.226.

je sens augmenter mon mal de gorge,  
 que la suite de mes amours sera  
 longue, et que je n'ai guère de  
 courage que pour un ou deux petits  
 contes." (1)

"Amours", despite its plurality, is only used throughout the novel to designate Jacques's pursuit of Denise, and the long series of events leading up to this romance, and, apart from the section which falls in Lacune No.5, already mentioned, the whole of this story does come into the 1778-80 text.

One further point perhaps deserves mention. Varloot, on the basis of Henri Meister's letter, (2) attempts to obtain some notion of the length of the work from Meister's comments. However, the manner of expression which Meister employs - "L'auteur en a lu ... pendant deux heures" - could well be interpreted as designed to stress the fact that this is a work of some considerable length, representing upwards of two hours' reading.

In view of so much textual uncertainty it was clear that the genesis of Jacques le fataliste would remain a matter for conjecture until such time as a close study of the Correspondance littéraire text had been carried out and a genuine attempt made to assess which (if any) of the 1780 Additions and 1786 Lacunes consisted of new material (or newly included material from another source), and which merely represented the restitution of sections of the novel previously suppressed. In any event, of course, an intriguing picture could be expected to emerge of the relationship between the philosophe, Grimm's "boutique" and the readership of the Correspondance littéraire. But if it were found that new material was indeed introduced at a date (or dates)

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.199.

(2) quoted above, p.2.

not only long after the initial composition of the novel but also well into the old age of the author, then clearly not only would a number of very important points be raised concerning Diderot's methods of working, the literary ambitions of his last years and his attitude towards his own creations, but also (and more pertinent to the present study) considerable re-appraisal would be required of the author's intentions in Jacques le fataliste.

It was decided, then, to consult a manuscript copy of the Correspondance littéraire (since the Buisson edition does not provide narrative material published elsewhere). Fortunately, for some time now - thanks largely to the efforts of Herbert Dieckmann - the Gotha collection of the Correspondance has been available on microfilm, and the Landesbibliothek of Gotha was obliging enough to furnish the author of the present thesis with microfilm of each of the episodes of Jacques, as well as of the 1780 Additions and the 1786 Lacunés.<sup>(1)</sup>

The remainder of the present thesis is based on a study of the Gotha MS, and is divided up as follows:-

Chapter I - a survey of the significant variants between the Gotha MS and Assézat-Tourneux, followed by an analysis of the Additions and Lacunés in an effort to determine which really constitute new material and which do not.

Chapter II - a study of the order of insertion of new material, and of the structural techniques employed to permit such insertion, followed by an analysis of the significance of the additions and an attempt to pinpoint trends in the novel's development.

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(1) According to de Booy's inventory (and contrary to what has been commonly thought) the Zurich collection would also seem to contain all of these parts of the novel, though the date-classification has become muddled.

Chapter III - in the light of the techniques seen in Chapter II, a study of the homogeneity of the 1778-80 text in an endeavour to trace earlier modifications in Diderot's approach.

Chapters IV - VII - a study, in turn, of each of the major areas of change, which will be found to be (respectively):

- (IV) the "author/reader" debate
- (V) the "fatalism" issue
- (VI) the rôle of the subsidiary narratives
- (VII) humour. <sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) See below, pp. 91-92.

## CHAPTER I

'JACQUES' IN THE 'CORRESPONDANCE LITTÉRAIRE'

It is not the aim of the present thesis to offer a complete list of variants between the Gotha manuscript and other copies or printed editions. Rather, it is proposed to study the instances where the Correspondance littéraire text is seen to differ from the complete Jacques le fataliste as we know it (represented by the Assézat-Tourneux edition) in a manner which seems to have some bearing on the order of composition of the work. It will, of course, be necessary to make reference to the "authorised" manuscript copy, L. (Independently of what Arndt has to say on the subject - see above pp.8-11 - it is clear from Vernière's and de Booy's studies of Diderot's MSS and his relations with his copyist, Roland Girbal<sup>(1)</sup> that a copy made in Girbal's hand, revised and corrected by Diderot himself and sent to his benefactress must be regarded as the author's final statement.)

Jacques le fataliste, as has been stated, appeared in the Correspondance littéraire more or less continuously from November 1778 to March 1780.<sup>(2)</sup> Generally speaking, there is little remarkable in the manner of its presentation, and certainly no correlation between episodes of the novel proper and instalments of its serialisation (though this was hardly to be expected). Instalments are of approximately equal length (equivalent to upwards of fifteen pages of A.-T.), and while some end at natural divisions of the novel - of which there are in any case so many that little contrivance is required - on many occasions the stopping-point is purely arbitrary.

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(1) See J. de Booy, 'Diderot et son copiste Roland Girbal', mentioned above, p.11, and P. Vernière, 'Diderot, ses manuscrits et ses copistes', see above, p.9.

(2) It did not appear in the following months: December 1778, August 1779, January and May 1780.

Not unexpectedly, in the light of de Booy's study of Diderot's contributions to the Correspondance littéraire,<sup>(1)</sup> the most interesting passage lies at the beginning of the instalment for May 1779. Beneath the heading: "Suite de Jacques le Fataliste et son Maître", and separated from this title and from the ensuing text by lines ruled across the page, there occurs the following paragraph:

"Jacques reprend par intervalles le récit de ses amours. Nous craignons que ce récit coupé par beaucoup d'incidens plus bizarres qu'intéressans ne finisse par fatiguer nos lecteurs; et passant sur grand nombre de détails qui pourraient paraître trop minutieux, nous nous hâtons d'arriver avec Jacques et son Maître dans une auberge où l'hôtesse fait à nos voyageurs l'histoire qui suit."

The text which is thus announced begins with the passage which, in A.-T.(VI, pp.110-11), immediately follows the 1786 Lacune (no.5), except for a modification of the opening words, which, in this case, read:

"Les deux hommes que vous venez de voir sont bons gentilshommes;..."

(A.-T.: "Ces deux hommes sont....")

We would appear at first sight, then, to be faced with editorial interference with Diderot's text. (Possible motivation for such interference has already been suggested - see above, pp. 17-18) If we now refer to the 1786 Lacune which we have been discussing, we find that it finishes thus:

" - Voyez sur le coin de la cheminée. -  
Ces deux hommes sont bons gentilshommes etc."

Here, as with all the other Lacunes, underlined words - taken, supposedly, from the 1778-80 text - are given before and after the addendum to indicate at what point it is to be inserted. It will be noticed that in this case the

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(1) See above, pp.19-20.



underlined words of the 1786 number show the same reading as A.-T., whereas the May 1779 number does not. Assuming editorial intervention, this would seem to indicate that the editor decided to take up the text at the latest possible point at which the Mme de La Pommeraye tale would retain full coherence, that is to say with the introduction of the Marquis Des Arcis (the editor himself providing a cursory introduction to the narrator of this story). The modification of the first few words can thus be seen as a rather clumsy attempt to attenuate the abruptness of the opening. <sup>(1)</sup>

From the October 1779 number onwards, there occurs a series of four omissions - as compared with the A.-T. edition, that is - each of some length and which are not filled in 1786. Two of these seem to be scribal errors; these are quoted here from A.-T., the underlined words being those which fail to appear in the Gotha copy.

- (i) October 1779; A.-T.VI, p.180: "C'est ainsi que Jacques raisonnait d'après le système de son capitaine. La distinction d'un monde physique et d'un monde moral lui semblait vide de sens. Son capitaine lui avait fourré .."

(Here the mistake has apparently been noticed, and "qui" inserted between "capitaine" and "lui".)

- (ii) February 1780; A.-T.VI, p.252: "Je tourne par le petit corridor qui est à droite; la première porte à gauche dans ce corridor est la sienne, comme vous savez. J'ouvre cette porte avec cette grande clef, je passe dans la petite garde-robe qui est à droite, là je trouve ..."

It seems probable that in these two cases the copyist took up the text at the wrong point, being tripped up by the repetition of the word-groups "son capitaine" and

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(1) A full discussion of this Lacune, and of the way in which it ties in with the surrounding text, will be given later (see below, pp. 37-39). For the moment we are chiefly concerned with establishing textual data.

"qui est à droite" respectively. In the following two examples, however, there is no such reason apparent. It is perhaps coincidental that they fall in the same monthly instalments as the two omissions just discussed.

(i) October, 1779; A.-T.VI, p.170:

"JACQUES. - J'en suis fâché, c'était un galant homme.

LE MAITRE. - Comment va la gorge?

JACQUES. - Mal.

LE MAITRE. - C'est que tu parles trop et que tu ne bois pas assez.

JACQUES. - C'est que je n'aime pas la tisane et que j'aime à parler.

LE MAITRE. - Eh bien! Jacques, te voilà chez Desglands..."

(ii) February 1780; A.-T.VI, p.250:

"Tirez-moi, tirez-vous bien vite vous-même de cette auberge et de la compagnie de cet homme-là ...

Ici Jacques reprit sa gourde, oubliant qu'il n'y avait ni tisane ni vin. Son maître tira sa montre et sa tabatière, et continua son histoire que j'interromprai, si cela vous convient; ne fût-ce que pour faire enrager Jacques, en lui prouvant qu'il n'était pas écrit là-haut, comme il le croyait, qu'il serait toujours interrompu et que son maître ne le serait jamais.

LE MAITRE, au chevalier. "Après..."

It is undoubtedly significant that in Assézat-Tourneux both of these passages are reproduced between square brackets with the following footnotes appended:

"Le passage renfermé entre deux crochets ne se trouve pas dans l'édition originale. (BR.) - Il manque en effet à la copie et il nous paraît d'ailleurs assez

peu motivé." (1)

"Le passage renfermé entre deux crochets ne se trouve pas dans l'édition originale. (BR.) - Il manque en effet à notre copie." (2)

The absence of these passages in the manuscript version employed by Assézat and Tourneux - which one may assume to have been otherwise complete, since no other statements of this nature are made by the editors - makes it quite clear that we are not dealing here with scribal errors involving the Gotha MS alone. Moreover, the length of the passages, coupled with the total absence in them of the kind of "trap" which appears to account for the two omissions previously discussed, makes it highly improbable that they were excluded accidentally from any hypothetical model or models for the Correspondence littéraire and other copies.

On the face of it, much the most likely explanation is that these two passages entered the novel at a fairly late date, but were not added to all of the copies in existence by that time - and in particular were not passed over to Meister for inclusion in either set of addenda. Such a view is supported by their similarity in nature and content: both stand quite apart from the conversations surrounding them, and both deal, wholly or in part, with the tisane/vin blanc theme. More will be made of this later in the present chapter.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.170, n.l. "BR." refers to the Brière edition (Diderot, Oeuvres complètes, Paris, Brière, 1821-22, 21 vols.), while the copy referred to is described thus in the 'Notice préliminaire': "M. Dubrunfaut possède de ce roman une fort belle copie qui paraît avoir servi à l'impression de la première édition. Il a bien voulu nous la confier, et nous l'avons suivie de préférence dans les cas douteux, ..." (A.-T.VI, p.8).

(2) *ibid.*, p.250, n.l.

The Additions of July 1780 are preceded by an introduction of some considerable interest. Since Varloot did not reproduce this, it appears here in full:

"Additions  
faites à Jacques le Fataliste depuis la copie que nous avons eu l'honneur de vous envoyer.

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"Nous osons présumer que détachés même de la livraison où il convenait de les placer, ces fragmens ne paraîtront pas sans intérêt; on y reconnaîtra toujours la touche originale de l'homme célèbre à qui nous devons ce précieux manuscrit. Il ne le fit dans l'origine que pour remplir le vuide de nos nouveautés littéraires, et lorsqu'il en écrivit la première ligne il ne savait pas encore ce qu'il dirait dans la seconde; la seule loi qu'il crut devoir s'imposer fut de ne rien inventer et de ne rien peindre qui ne lui parût de la plus extrême vérité. C'est aux lecteurs qu'il a désiré d'amuser à juger comment lui a réussi un projet qui semblait si propre à développer toute la verve et toute la liberté de son génie."

It will be noticed in what contrast this passage stands to the editorial paragraph of May 1779. Here there is no longer any talk of boring the reader, and Jacques has become "ce précieux manuscrit". Can it be that the novel enjoyed a much better reception among Meister's readers than the earliest indications seemed to predict? Indeed, in a footnote, Arndt<sup>(1)</sup> states:

"Writing to Meister in September 1780 about the forthcoming serialization of La Religieuse, he commented: 'Je suis bien sûr qu'il affligera plus vos lecteurs que Jacques ne les a fait rire, d'où il pourrait arriver qu'ils en désireront plus tôt la fin.'" (2)

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(1) R.T. Arndt, op.cit., p.24, n.1.

(2) Arndt does not give his source, but the letter in question appears in Diderot's Correspondance (ed. Roth), Vol.XV, pp.190-91 (Letter 917, 'A. Meister'), and is dated 27th September 1780. Arndt's spellings are, of course, modernised.

Even so, if we accept that there was an omission of some thirty pages due to editorial intervention, it is hard to see why the pages in question were not given along with these later "additions". This might perhaps be for reasons of length: the editor may, for example, have been willing to devote a small part of one more number to completing Jacques, but not the best part of three numbers. Or perhaps it seemed to him inappropriate, or frankly embarrassing, to include a section of the novel which he himself had seen fit to exclude at an earlier date. Or perhaps it was sheer oversight. It is, of course, arguable that the passage "omitted" in 1779 did not exist at that date, and that we are faced here with a joke on the part of the author. However, this does not seem to accord either with the explanation given or (as we shall see in the next chapter) with the nature of the surrounding text.

Returning to the paragraph serving as introduction to the Additions we find a claim that Jacques was originally composed for the readers of the Correspondance littéraire. This claim may not unreasonably be interpreted as little more than flattery of the journal's clientèle. On the other hand, we might do well to remember that the first mention made of Jacques in correspondence still extant occurs in a letter dated 12th September 1771,<sup>(1)</sup> and that at that time Diderot and Mme d'Epinaÿ had recently taken over the editorship of the Correspondance littéraire, Grimm having left for England on the 17th August.<sup>(2)</sup> Though the Luneau de Boisjermain case was at its height at this time, and may have left Diderot little time for other things, it is by no means inconceivable that this was

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(1) See above, p.2.

(2) See Diderot, Correspondance, ed. Roth, Vol.XI, pp.83-84, 'Mme d'Epinaÿ à l'abbé Galiani', dated Paris, 3rd August 1771 (p.83).

the period of initial composition of the novel, and that, at that time, he did have the Correspondance littéraire in mind. It is to be noted in this context that the editor uses the expression, "Il ne le fit dans l'origine que ...", and that this implies either subsequent reworking - though whether such revision is supposed to have occurred before or after the novel's actual appearance in the Correspondance is not made clear - or, alternatively, that either author or editor decided (temporarily, at least) against serialisation.

While we are on this subject, it may be as well to consider one point which does tend to support the dating suggested above. In a letter to Doctor Antoine Petit, dated by Roth as "mi-juillet 1771", Diderot asks the eminent physician to describe the probable effects of different modes of existence upon a man's physical appearance. Petit's reply, dated "22 juillet 1771", contains the following:

"Je vous citerai un second exemple:  
Un homme a perdu un bras, une jambe;  
un autre est boiteux. Le premier est  
gros et lourd; en général sa physionomie  
perd ce qu'elle avait de saillant et  
d'animé. Le second est ordinairement  
maigre, et son visage a quelque chose  
de singulier, pour ne pas dire de  
comique et d'original; les gestes de  
cet homme ont le même caractère."<sup>(1)</sup>

Is it reading too much into this description to see it as a possible source for the character of Jacques himself? The most obvious model remains, of course, Corporal Trim of Tristram Shandy, on whose amours those of Diderot's hero are deliberately based. But it is perhaps remarkable that Trim differs from Jacques in exactly the same way that common English acceptance of the term "originality" differs from the sense which Diderot and Petit ascribe to "originalité":

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(1) Diderot, Correspondance, ed. Roth, Vol. XI, pp. 70-72, Letter 681, 'Au Docteur Antoine Petit', dated mid-July 1771.

for Jacques is "original" because he is forceful - a characteristic implicit in Petit's description of the boiteux; the same could hardly be said of Corporal Trim.

One more point emerges from the editorial paragraph which we have been considering, and that is the question of the manner of composition of Jacques and the author's objectives. Discussion of this, however, falls more within the province of a later chapter of this thesis, and will not therefore be attempted here. (1)

As for the "additions" thus announced by Meister, it is to be noted that in three cases no indication other than the pagination is given as to where they are to be inserted into the text. In the fourth case, that of the knife/sheath fable, precise indications are given. Before the addition was made, the surrounding text read:

"... jusqu'au retour de l'hôtesse,  
si le maître n'eût dit à Jacques:  
Tu ne sais pas la singulière idée..." (2)

The manner in which the Pondicherry poet story is told in this number is again of some interest. In July 1771, Grimm had given his own version of this story, in the last number which he was able to edit before his trip to England. (3) It is therefore very likely that Diderot was well aware that this brief anecdote had been included in the Correspondance, since one must assume that he would wish to keep abreast of the recent contents of the journal when he came to assist with its production. Diderot's 1780 version of the anecdote - which, unlike the Additions made

(1) For a discussion of the meaning of "la vérité", as employed here by Meister, see below, pp. 155-62.

(2) cf, 1786 text (as A.-T., VI, pp.118-119).

(3) Grimm, Correspondance littéraire, ed. Tourneux, Paris Garnier, 1877-82, 16 vols, Vol.IX, p.350.

to Jacques, is included in the Buisson edition of the Correspondance littéraire<sup>(1)</sup> - offers a number of variants as compared with the 1786 version and the A.-T. text. It begins with the words, "Un jour, ..." <sup>(2)</sup> and continues to "C'est bien mon projet ..." <sup>(3)</sup> with a number of omissions, underlined here.

- (i) " ... tous les jours ... Mais, lecteur, quel rapport cela a-t-il avec le voyage de Jacques le Fataliste et de son maître? ... - L'histoire du poète de Pondichéry. - Après les compliments ..."
- (ii) "Oui, monsieur; et je vous la demande."
- (iii) " ... je suis entraîné malgré moi ... Ici Jacques aurait dit: Mais cela est écrit là-haut.) Avez-vous des parents?"
- (iv) "C'est moi, monsieur, me dit-il, que vous avez ..." <sup>(4)</sup>

Two other variants occur, again as compared with the 1786 text and with A.-T.:

- (i) " ... le ménagement le mieux apprécié ne serait ..." (1786: "apprêté")
- (ii) " ... les vers du jeune poète ..." '1786: "de mon") <sup>(5)</sup>

The identity of the 1786 text to the printed versions, while there are six variants in the 1780 text, may prove significant to the study of the relationship of the texts. From our point of view in this study, however, what matters above all is that, even in July 1780, there was no intention to include this anecdote in the novel (unless the decision to keep it a separate anecdote were Meister's and not Diderot's, which scarcely seems probable, in view of the apparent popularity of Jacques among the subscribers). Subsequent to this date, the story seems to have undergone re-working designed to make its inclusion into the novel stylistically satisfactory. The inference is that, whatever we may have

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(1) Grimm, Correspondance littéraire, Deuxième-Partie, ed. J.-B. Salgues, Paris, Buisson, 1812, 5 vols, Vol.V, pp.147-149.

(2) A.-T.VI, p.43.

(3) *ibid.*, p.45.

(4) *ibid.*, pp.43-45.

(5) *ibid.*, p.44.



said about Lacune no.5, Diderot did take a fresh look at Jacques after July 1780 - and it may not be unreasonable to suggest that he would be unlikely to do this merely for the sake of one short anecdote, so that we must consider the other Lacunes very carefully before attempting to date them. With the textual data established, we are now in a position to do this.

As regards the 1780 Additions not a great deal needs to be added to what Varloot had to say.<sup>(1)</sup> Each of them does stand apart from the text surrounding it, and no subsequent reference is made to any part of any of them in the main body of the novel, at least not in any very definite sense. However, as we shall see, some reservations on this point do need to be made.

Since what difficulties there are derive chiefly from the first of the Additions, we might do well to consider the simpler cases before returning to tackle this one.

The second of the Additions, concerning M. Le Pelletier of Orléans,<sup>(2)</sup> presents few problems, forming as it does a fairly obvious hors-texte. Its link with what has gone before - the famous discussion on quiproquos - is somewhat tenuous even on the "philosophical" plane, turning on the analogy made by Jacques in the first speech of the passage to be inserted:

"Si l'on ne dit presque rien dans ce monde, qui soit entendu comme on le dit, il y a bien pis, c'est qu'on n'y fait presque rien, qui soit jugé comme on l'a fait."<sup>(3)</sup>

Of course, the specious nature of this pretext for launching into yet another anecdote can be seen to fit in well with the general character of the novel. On the other hand, it can equally well be seen as an attempt

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(1) Varloot, op. cit., see above, pp.11-16.

(2) A.-T. VI, pp.60-62.

(3) *ibid.*, p.60.

to jam in a story which was not originally meant to be included, at least not at this point - particularly since the surrounding text makes rather better stylistic sense without it. In the "complete" text Jacques's remark reproduced above and the whole of the Le Pelletier story separate the Master's speech quoted below from the ensuing narrative:

"LE MAITRE. - Eh! laisse là ces quiproquo, et tâche de t'apercevoir que c'est en faire un grossier que de t'embarquer dans un chapitre de morale, lorsqu'il s'agit d'un fait historique. L'histoire de ton capitaine?"

"( ... ) Jacques allait commencer l'histoire de son capitaine, lorsque, pour la seconde fois, ..." (1)

The third Addition, the rustic fable, (2) is again completely self-contained, except insofar as its introduction (or omission) necessitates slight restructuring of the text, as already mentioned. (3) The only real clue as to whether or not the passage in question is an addition is offered by the abrupt change in theme in the Master's speech which follows the fable: the words "Ici le maître dit à Jacques: ..." (4) seem to indicate an immediate change of subject, whereas, in fact, the Master gives us one sentence of his reactions to Jacques's story before proceeding to marry Jacques and the Landlady, thus making a mental leap astounding even in him. This would at least appear to indicate that the paragraph was not all composed of a piece, but it is "evidence" of the very vaguest kind.

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.60 and 63.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.118-119.

(3) see above, p.32.

(4) A.-T. VI, p.119.

Less still need be said of the fourth Addition - Jacques's tableau<sup>(1)</sup> - since this can be included or excluded without the least disturbance to the main body of the text.

Returning to the first of the Additions, however, we find a rather more complex situation. One may very well have thought the previous debate (on the authorship of the "Grand rouleau") already completed by the Master's remark: "Il y a beaucoup de choses à dire là-dessus ...".<sup>(2)</sup> Suspension marks are by no means uncommon in Jacques, but here their use seems to accord peculiarly well with what follows in the 1778-80 text: "Comme ils en étaient là ...",<sup>(3)</sup> whereas those concluding the Addition have little sense syntactically or stylistically, since it is apparent that the final sentence ("C'est bien de lui que vous vous seriez écrié: "Quel diable d'homme! ..." ")<sup>(4)</sup> is intended to round off Jacques's speech.

From the point of view of philosophical sense, however, it is quite clear that the addendum does belong in this place. Moreover, only a few lines later,<sup>(5)</sup> Jacques will be heard to say between his teeth:

"Maudites soient les clefs et la fantaisie ou la raison qui me les fit emporter! Maudite soit la prudence! etc. etc."

Now, "La fantaisie ou la raison" refers us directly back Jacques's remark:

"C'est que, faute de savoir ce qui est écrit là-haut, on ne sait ni ce qu'on veut ni ce qu'on fait, et qu'on suit sa fantaisie qu'on appelle raison, ou sa raison qui n'est souvent qu'une dangereuse fantaisie qui tourne tantôt bien, tantôt mal." (6)

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.193-94.

(2) *ibid.*, p.20.

(3) *ibid.*, p.20.

(4) *ibid.*, p.21.

(5) *ibid.*, p.21.

(6) *ibid.*, p.19.

By contrast, it is intriguing that the only explicit use of the word "prudence" for this exclamation to refer back to occurs in the added passage. Thus the full meaning of Jacques's remark does not appear until the 1780 "addition" is made. One may well wonder whether the Addition was prompted by a feeling that greater balance would be obtained if "prudence" too referred back to a recent discussion, or if there may not have existed in some more primitive state of the text a discussion on the value of prudence - perhaps even this one.

Though this case does demonstrate that a certain amount of caution is required, it seems reasonable to conclude that at least three, and possibly all four, of the Additions are exactly what they are described as. Not only is there no real textual basis for the opposite point of view, but it would also be very hard to find any motivation for the exclusion of such short passages from the serialised novel.

That much said, it is now time to turn to the 1786 Lacunes de Jacques le fataliste et son maître. Since much mention has already been made of the fifth of these Lacunes, it may be as well to deal with this, fully before moving on to the other cases. Now all the evidence points to Lacune no.5 being a passage already in existence in 1779, and probably in its entirety at that.

Firstly, as has been mentioned, <sup>(1)</sup> the outer framework of Jacques - the narrative relating the journey of Jacques and his Master - is seriously confused by the omission of these thirty pages. This "omission" could, of course, be interpreted as capriciousness on the part of the author, were it not for the fact that a series of cross-references definitely ties the section in with the text surrounding it. For example,

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(1) see above, p.17.

the Pommeraye story, which immediately follows the Lacune, is promised by the Landlady on p.102, that is towards the end of the thirty pages in question. Again, the Nicole incident, which occurs within these thirty pages, is subsequently referred to in the following terms:

"Nos quatre voyageurs allèrent de compagnie, s'entretenant de la pluie, du beau temps, de l'hôtesse, de l'hôte, de la querelle du marquis des Arcis, au sujet de Nicole. Cette chienne affamée et malpropre venait sans cesse s'essuyer à ses bas; après l'avoir inutilement chassée plusieurs fois avec sa serviette, d'impatience il lui avait détaché un assez violent coup de pied..."(1)

The whole tone of this passage indicates that the reader is assumed to know all about the incident as seen through the eyes of Jacques and his Master. Of course, the Correspondance littéraire reader would not know anything of it, but no play is made of his ignorance, as one might perhaps expect were one faced with deliberate withholding of part of the narrative. Moreover, it is within these thirty pages - on pp.99 - 100, in fact - that we are given the excuse for the travellers' protracted stay at the Hôtel du Grand-Cerf, and the whole time-scale of this episode disappears when the section under consideration is omitted.

Other aspects of the narrative also tend to support the view that these pages - or the greater part of them, at least - were already in existence in 1779. It will be remembered, for example, that Diderot has already begun (before this point in the novel) to sketch the character of Gousse, by means of a few anecdotes, and he has left us in mid-air:

"Mais c'est l'histoire de Gousse avec sa femme qui est excellente... Je vous entends; vous en avez assez, et votre avis serait que nous allussions rejoindre nos deux voyageurs..."(2)

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.177.

(2) *ibid.*, p.71.

The story of Gousse and his wife, announced here (like the story told by Gousse of one of his fellow prisoners) occurs within the thirty pages which we are considering. Above all, it is Jacques's story itself which is most damaged by the exclusion of this section of the novel. It is not until p.166 that he takes up the tale again, after these words of the Master's:

"Parle donc, puisque cela nous fait plaisir à tous deux. Tu en étais à je ne sais quelle proposition malhonnête de la femme du chirurgien; il s'agissait, je crois, d'expulser celui qui servait<sup>(1)</sup> au château et d'y installer son mari."

It will be noted that the part of the tale thus referred to occurs within our thirty pages. Moreover, Jacques's words: "Vous rapelleriez-vous une certaine femme à la cruche d'huile?",<sup>(2)</sup> could hardly allude to any episode other than that recounted there.

We are left then with little possibility for doubt: this is not an addition, as Varloot thought, but indeed a "lacune" as described by the editor of the Correspondance littéraire. In the preceding discussion we have tied almost all of the principal episodes of these pages to the surrounding text, sufficiently well to be moderately sure that the whole, or almost the whole, of this section was in existence in 1779.<sup>(3)</sup>

By contrast, that this was not the case with all the Lacunes is amply illustrated by another case, that of the "Pondicherry poet". As has been demonstrated this anecdote could not have been envisaged even in 1780 as part of Jacques.<sup>(4)</sup> Thus it will be obvious

(1) A.-T. VI, pp.165-66.

(2) *ibid.*, p.166.

(3) One episode recounted in these pages which is totally independent, however, is the scene in which Diderot provides his own conclusion to Goldoni's Le Bourru bienfaisant. See below pp. 99-101.

(4) see above, pp.32-33.

that all the Lacunes cannot be placed in the same category, and that each must be examined individually.

The reworking of this anecdote, employed in order to fit it into the novel, has already been discussed; what is of greater significance here, however, is the early section of the addendum in which the story is placed.<sup>(1)</sup> This takes the form of a discussion between the "author" and his "reader" on the relative literary merits of le vrai and l'intéressant, in which the following words are put into the mouth of the "reader":

"... par exemple, votre dernier récit du pansement de Jacques est vrai, mais qu'y a-t-il d'intéressant? Rien."<sup>(2)</sup>

Now, the significant point is that most of the description referred to here exists in another Lacune, (the first, in fact), and not in the main body of the text, which presents a much-shortened version of the operation, scarcely calling for any comment on the part of author or reader. This first Lacune, indeed, is wholly devoted to the comic surgical proceedings, and its significance must surely lie in its down-to-earth approach, precisely the approach to which the "reader" objects here. It is surely reasonable to see here a fairly strong chronological link between the two addenda: Diderot's motivation in inserting the first must surely be connected with the discussion of it occurring in the second. Since this discussion in turn serves as an introduction to the Pondicherry poet story, and cannot be satisfactorily terminated at any point before it, we must regard the insertion of both passages, and the composition of the second at least, as contemporary with, or as postdating, the decision to include the anecdote.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.43.

(2) *ibid.*

On the other hand, there is nothing to indicate that the material of the first Lacune was not already in existence at this date. It may, for example have been omitted, by Diderot or by Meister, to comply with supposed good taste - its re-insertion would then have sparked off the discussion to be found in the second Lacune. There is some very slender textual evidence to support this view: Lacune no.1 is devoted to the undressing of Jacques's wound in preparation for the surgeon's examination, and ends thus:

"Voilà les coutures coupées, les bandes déroulées, l'appareil levé et ma blessure à découvert."(1)

The passage which follows, that is the continuation of the 1778-80 text, deals very briefly with the examination of the wound, and then recounts at some length the ensuing conversation between Jacques and the surgeon, finally concluding with this paragraph:

"Il boit: on apporte le vin chaud, on m'étuve, on remet l'appareil, on m'étend dans mon lit, on m'exhorte à dormir si je puis, on ferme les rideaux, on finit la bouteille entamée, on en remonte une autre, et la conférence reprend entre le chirurgien, l'hôte et l'hôtesse."(2)

Thus what takes place in the inserted passage is, theoretically speaking, necessary to what follows. Moreover, the words "on remet l'appareil" definitely seem to echo "l'appareil levé" in the first quotation. If we now look at what precedes the Lacune, we find the surgeon uttering these words:

"Il est éveillé; compère, descendez à la cave, nous boirons un coup, cela rend la main sûre; je lèverai ensuite mon appareil, puis nous aviserons au reste."(3)

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.40-41.

(2) *ibid.*, p.41.

(3) *ibid.*, p.40.



In other words, the passage in question relates a piece of action which has, as it were, been promised. Certainly its presence makes better sense than its absence. Are we then to infer that Lacune no.1 did, in fact, exist in 1778, but had been excluded from the Correspondance littéraire text?

However, the whole argument can be reversed to demonstrate that Diderot had seized upon a slight crack in Jacques's story, seeing it as an opportunity to insert a page or so of low farce, and had set about writing such a page to tie in with the surrounding narrative. The surgeon's failure, in the 1778-80 version, to undress the wound before he examines it is hardly noticeable on any but the most critical reading, and this "omission" could well be an unintentional slip.

One thing, however, remains clear: the decision to insert or re-insert this page, together with the discussion of it (in Lacune no.2), almost certainly belongs to the same stage of the novel's development as the decision to work in the Pondicherry anecdote.

The next two Lacunes (nos.3 and 4)<sup>(1)</sup> can also be grouped together. Both take the form of author's comments on the art of story-telling. What is of particular significance in this context is that the two paragraphs in question follow an almost identical line of development, despite the disparity in length and subject-matter:

Lacune no.3

1. "Un autre que moi, lecteur ne manquerait pas de garnir ces fourches de leur gibier et de ménager à Jacques une triste reconnaissance.

Lacune no.4

"Vous voyez, lecteur, combien je suis obligé; il ne tiendrait qu'à moi de donner ici un coup de fouet aux chevaux qui traînent le carrosse drapé de noir, d'assembler, à

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.49 and 66.

la porte du gîte prochain,  
Jacques, son maître, les  
gardes des Fermes ou les  
cavaliers de maréchaussée  
avec le reste de leur  
cortège; d'interrompre  
l'histoire du capitaine de  
Jacques et de vous  
impatiemment à mon aise;

(Reader apostrophised, and possibilities facing author enumerated);

2. Si je vous le disais, mais pour cela il faudrait  
vous le croiriez peut- mentir, et je n'aime pas  
être, car il y a des le mensonge, à moins qu'il  
hasards plus (1) singu- ne soit utile et forcé.  
liers mais la chose  
n'en serait pas plus  
vraie;

(Dislike for, and avoidance of fictitiousness in  
fiction, though qualified in Lacune no.4);

3. ces fourches étaient Le fait est que Jacques et  
vacantes." (2) son maître ne virent plus  
le carrosse drapé, et que  
Jacques, toujours inquiet  
de l'allure de son cheval,  
continua son récit:..." (3)

(What really happened).

Without this similarity of development, there would be very little sound basis for any hypothesis concerning the dating of these two paragraphs. Both are easily detached from their surroundings, but this could mean either that they are insertions, or, equally well, that they were passages suitable for omission by an author or editor anxious about the reception the work would enjoy. (4)

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(1) Not in A.-T.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.49.

(3) *ibid.*, p.66.

(4) Indeed, the fact that the two passages under consideration both fall in the early part of the novel - before Meister has had a chance to judge how the novel is being received - might be thought significant. On the other hand, this argument would be somewhat contradicted by the presence, in the second instalment, of the very long aside which follows the arrival of the three surgeons (A.-T. VI, pp.23-24).

However, having established such similarity between the two paragraphs, one has fairly strong grounds for regarding them as being connected in the author's mind. We have already seen how the anecdote of the Pondicherry poet was introduced by a discussion of the relationship of the true and the interesting in literature. It may not be unreasonable to see in these two passages dealing with the artistic function of truth a connection with the first two Lacunes. All would then belong to a period in which Diderot was busy re-reading and revising the text and was anxious to make more explicit certain of the literary questions at issue, and to exploit more fully the various paradoxes created by the "illogical" omniscient-narrator convention. Such a view must, of course, be treated with some caution, since it presumes to analyse the author's motives, but, in the light of what little evidence is available, this seems the most reasonable conclusion that can be drawn.

It is now the moment to look at the long strings of insertions into the Mme de La Pommeraye story.<sup>(1)</sup> All of these are interruptions and, with one exception, are in no way "necessary" to the 1778-80 text. Their only connections, in fact, are with each other and with the section of the novel which precedes the Pommeraye tale and in which life at the inn is depicted. Now, it is to be remembered that this was precisely the section of the novel which in May 1779, someone - author or editor - saw fit to omit in order to launch more promptly into the pièce de résistance which the story of Mme de La Pommeraye and the Marquis Des Arcis undoubtedly was. Could it not be, then, that these interruptions were omitted for much the same reason, namely to speed the flow of the conte (at the expense of the signification of the novel as a whole)?

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(1) Lacunes 6 - 14, A.-T. VI, pp.111-117.

The last of this group of Lacunes does seem to relate more directly to the main body of the text. It appears here underlined.

"L'hôtesse partie, le maître dit à son valet: Jacques, as-tu remarqué une chose?

JACQUES.- Quelle?

LE MAITRE.- C'est que cette femme raconte beaucoup mieux qu'il ne convient à une femme d'auberge.

JACQUES.- Il est vrai. Les fréquentes interruptions des gens de cette maison m'ont impatienté plusieurs fois.

LA MAITRE.- Et moi aussi."

Et vous, lecteur, parlez sans dissimulation; car vous voyez que nous sommes en beau train de franchise; voulez-vous que nous laissions là cette élégante et prolix bavarde d'hôtesse, et que nous reprenions les amours de Jacques?" (1)

It could, of course, be argued that the word "franchise" in the section following the Lacune refers to the Master's remark about the Landlady's skill in the art of story-telling - all, in fact, that there was for it to refer to in the 1778-80 text. On the other hand, the same word has far more meaning when it is used (as it is in the "complete" version) to refer to the impatience of both Jacques and his Master regarding all the interruptions to the story, especially since it is the reader's patience which is here being called into question. Thus there is some loss of sense sustained by the main body of the text when these few lines are omitted, which would seem to indicate that they always did belong at this point. It is to be noted that tying this passage to the 1778-80 text automatically ties the other interruptions since these are mentioned in it.

Again, this is far from conclusive, but what little evidence there is would tend to suggest that these

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(1) A.-T., VI, p.117.

interruptions did exist in 1779 and were omitted from the Correspondance littéraire text. Of course, once the thirty pages preceding the Pommeraye story had been excluded, the omission of these passages in their turn would have become something of a necessity, since they lose all point when the situation of the two travellers and the Landlady, surrounded by all the chaos of a busy hostelry, is no longer made clear. <sup>(1)</sup>

The next two cases, Lacunes nos.15 and 16, are rather curious in that neither appears in A.-T., which merely reproduces the 1778-80 version. For reasons of clarity, both are given here (underlined) in context.

(15) "L'hôtesse n'était pas de la première jeunesse; c'était une femme grande et replète, ingambe, de bonne mine, pleine d'embonpoint, la bouche un peu grande, mais de belles dents, des joues larges, des yeux à fleur de tête, le front carré, la plus belle peau, la physionomie ouverte, vive et gaie, une poitrine à s'y rouler pendant deux jours, les bras un peu forts, mais les mains superbes, des mains à peindre ou à modeler." (2)

(16) LE MARQUIS. - Non; mais il me semble qu'on se passe aisément de la fidélité d'un mari.

MADAME DE LA POMMERAYE.- D'accord; mais si le mien était infidèle, je serais peutetre assez bizarre pour m'en offenser; et je suis vindicative."(3)

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- (1) It should be remembered, however, that interruptions to the Pommeraye tale by Jacques and his Master are not suppressed. This fact could be explained either by the assumption that their removal would have involved the copyist in some re-working (though the excision would have been quite straightforward), or - more probably - by the editor's reluctance to banish the two principal characters from a whole series of issues.
- (2) A.-T. VI, p.124.
- (3) *ibid.*, p.154. Note that the second change noted by Varloot ("un peu bizarre" for "assez bizarre") does not appear in the Gotha copy. (It was, in any case, a somewhat mystifying alteration, probably due more to error than to intention.)

In the first case one can understand the stylistic motivation for omitting or adding a phrase which immediately gives a more "colourful" tone to the description of the Landlady. The second modification, however, can only be motivated by a desire to clarify the text. Here, of course, the 1778-80 version shows a rather unfortunate grammatical error: "m'en offenseur" can only refer to "la fidélité d'un mari" - which is not exactly the sense which Madame de La Pommeraye wished to convey. This mistake can hardly have been made in transcribing the Gotha copy alone, since no one (other than the recipient) would be likely to have any means of detecting such an error once the number had been despatched; nor would this explain why the rectification fails to appear in the printed editions. Presumably, then, the error must have occurred either in composition or in an earlier transcription. The 1786 version, then, almost certainly represents an attempt to correct an error of carelessness on the part of author or scribe. It is to be noted that this modification does not appear in FV and that in L it appears as a correction made in author's own hand. It may very well be that it was on reading through the Leningrad copy that Diderot decided to change the text in this manner.

The fact that neither of these modifications occurs in A.-T. tends to link them together - perhaps, indeed, both represent an attempt to bring the Correspondance text in line with some other version(L?). Certainly there is some case for regarding both as author's improvements made on reading through the text. There may, however, be some grounds for linking the extra item of description of the Hôtesse to another group of Lacunes.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) See below, p. 88.

A single theme (in the very broadest sense) links all the passages remaining for consideration. This is the theme of drink and the importance of liquid intake to Jacques's existence.

Omissions from the 1778-80 text dealing with the subject of drink effectively fall into two groups. The first of these consists of two Lacunés <sup>(1)</sup> and one complete omission. <sup>(2)</sup> The first of the addenda, painting a very brief but vivid picture of Jacques knocking back glass after glass of champagne, would in itself tell us little. Since there can be no obvious reason for any deliberate exclusion of so short a passage, however, one must assume that we are faced here either with a correction of a deficient text or with an addition made for some deliberate effect.

The second addendum, on the other hand, has more obvious significance. Jacques, suffering from the combined effects of a hangover, a sore throat, the result of an "uncomfortable" night, has already ordered his medicine:

"Il demanda qu'on fît du feu dans la chambre, car il ressentait du frisson; qu'on lui préparât de la tisane et qu'on lui apportât une bouteille de vin blanc: ce qui fut exécuté sur-le-champ."<sup>(3)</sup>

The addendum, in describing M. Tissot's recipe, seems to fulfil the need to explain why Jacques should have chosen to order such a strange combination of beverages. Had Diderot forgotten to give this explanation before, or had it been given initially and subsequently omitted and re-inserted? In any case, it is hard to find any possible reason for excluding such a delicious little set-piece, unless it were by accident, and if it was an accidental omission, it was strangely

(1) Nos.17 (A.-T.VI, p.164) and 18 (ibid., p.166).

(2) A.-T.VI, p.170, see above p.27.

(3) ibid., p.166.

fortuitous that nothing of consequence to the surrounding text was lost. On the whole, it seems more reasonable to look upon this as an addition made with the purpose of expounding Jacques's remedy, explaining the ordering of the wine and the tisane, and raising a laugh at the expense of M. Tissot - not a savage one, however, since Diderot probably approved of Tissot's attempts at dissemination of medical knowledge.

It is only four pages later in A.-T. (1) that there occur a number of lines on the same subject which failed to appear either in the 1778-80 text or among the Lacunes. Now, if we regard the passage on the salutary effects of drinking a mixture of white wine and tisane as an addition, then its thematic link with this omitted passage may perhaps persuade us that both postdate the 1778-80 version.

One reference to the tisane IS made in this section of the main body of the novel, however, though there is no mention of white wine. Jacques asks: (2)

"Mais qu'est-ce donc est arrivé à M. Desglands? dites-moi cela, tandis que je m'appreterai un coup de tisane."

At this point, Jacques and his Master are still in the hostelry, and therefore Jacques is still supposed (according to the 1786 addendum) to be drinking not tisane alone, but tisane mixed with wine. While this fact might perhaps be thought to lend weight to the view that the addendum dealing with M. Tissot's recipe is a late insertion, it must nevertheless be pointed out that the omitted passage discussed above, and

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(1) A.-T., VI, p.170 quoted above, p.27.

(2) *ibid.*, p.169.



which we have attempted to link with the addendum in question, makes no direct mention of wine either. In any case, it is to be noted that tisane constitutes the greater proportion of the medicinal mixture, so it is not unreasonable that Jacques should refer to the drink as tisane - the "problem" then being merely a question of terminology. It is to be noted that, in the 18th addendum itself, Diderot says:

"Jacques remplit un grand gobelet de tisane, y versa un peu de vin blanc et l'avalala. C'était une recette... Son verre de tisane bu, Jacques continua:...." (1)

The fact remains that there is a strong thematic link between Lacune no.18 and the p.170 omission, and a weaker one between these two and Lacune no.17. Moreover, there is no obvious reason for the deliberate exclusion of any of these passages. This should be borne in mind, since we shall be returning to this subject when we have discussed the final group of Lacunes.

The first of this final group<sup>(2)</sup> is of similar length to the troublesome Lacune no.5, but is not so obviously an integral part of the text. Some mention has already been made<sup>(3)</sup> of the two paragraphs which follow this addendum. It has been demonstrated that the 1786 passage is in no way intended to bridge the "lacune" referred to in the first of these paragraphs, since neither Jacques's love story nor the Master's figures in the thirty pages at issue. On the other hand, it might be arguable that the use of the word "lacunes" as a title for the addenda owes something to its use here.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.166.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.197-226.

(3) see above, pp.20-21.

Whether, in the case of Lacune no.19, we are faced with old material or new is by no means obvious at first sight. Textually there are perhaps fewer inconsistencies when these pages are omitted than when they are included. Thus the conversation before the Lacune runs:

"LE MAITRE.- Cette dame s'y était pourtant bien prise... et tes amours?

JACQUES.- Et la condition que vous avez acceptée?"(1)

which fits quite well with what follows the Lacune:

"Il y a ici une lacune vraiment déplorable dans la conversation de Jacques et de son maître. ...

Il paraît que Jacques, réduit au silence par son mal de gorge, suspendit l'histoire de ses amours; et que son maître commença l'histoire des siennes."(2)

In the 1786 passage, by contrast, there is no conversation between the two travellers for three pages before the end, and even then we are told that:

"Jacques et son maître passèrent le reste de la journée sans desserrer les dents."(3)

This would seem to support the view that these thirty pages are, in fact, a late addition.

It must be borne in mind, however, that the addendum itself divides into three sections: in the Leningrad MS, the first and last appear as a continuous part of the text, the second as an insertion on a separate slip of paper; in the Fonds Vandeul MS, the second does not figure at all while the others suffer fairly severe censoring. (4)

There follows a list of the subject matter of these three sections, page references again being

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.197.

(2) *ibid.*, p.226.

(3) *ibid.*, p.223.

(4) There is some confusion on this point; see above, pp.9-10.

taken from A.-T.

- (i) Jacques is brought around to the subject of the losing of his pucelage, and decides (for reasons of brevity, perhaps) to tell these one or two "petits contes" on the subject rather than continue with his more voluminous love-story, since he is suffering from a sore throat (198-99). The Master attempts to guess who Jacques's first conquest was, with his usual lack of success (200). Story of Bigre and Justine (200-209). Discussion of the utility of such tales (209-10). Discussion on the name "Bigre" (210-11). Dame Suzanne (211-12). Dame Marguerite (213-17). Jacques complains that his throat is getting worse, the stories having perhaps been less brief than he had anticipated!
- (ii) Conversation between Jacques and the Master on the relationship of Dames Suzanne and Marguerite (217). Jacques remembers the "petit homme criant, jurant, écumant, ...", and the Master begs to hear the story (217-18). Story of the curate (218-221).
- (iii) Jacques refuses to start on his love-story (221). "Eloge de l'obscénité" (221-23). Jacques's cough (223), Jacques's habit of carrying and consulting, a gourd (223-24), Jacques's treatise (224-25). "Engastrimute" discussion (225). Narrator proposes to relate the life of Bacbuc while we wait for Jacques's health to improve and for him to pick up the tale of his amours (225-26).

It would seem that the second of these sections is indeed a later addition. The evidence of the Leningrad and Fonds Vandeul MSS alone, of course, must weigh heavily in the scales, but there also exist (albeit slender) grounds for this interpretation from the reading of the text. To begin with, when this section is omitted, the first and third sections run together extremely well:

"JACQUES.- ... Le fait est que mon mal de gorge est fort augmenté, et

qu'il n'y a pas d'apparence que je  
puisse parler de quinze jours." (1)

"... 'Et l'histoire de tes amours?' -  
Jacques hocha de la tête et ne répondit  
pas." (2)

Moreover, these last lines are immediately  
followed by the "reader's" objection:

"Comment un homme de sens, qui a des  
moeurs, qui se pique de philosophie,  
peut-il s'amuser à débiter des contes  
de cette obscénité?" (3)

Now one might perhaps be justified in thinking this  
objection better placed after the two tales of  
seduction (as it would have been at some stage, if  
sections (i) and (iii) are indeed earlier than  
section (ii)) than after the story of the curate,  
which, while betraying the same ribald sense of  
humour as the other stories, is not in itself quite  
so obscene. The "reader" makes no charge of anti-  
clericalism, nor is any mention made of the vicaire  
in the following pages. Again, while mention is  
made of the two women as early as p.198 (when Jacques  
is unwittingly whetting his Master's appetite for  
these tales), no reference is made to the curate  
before (or after) the section in question.

On the other hand, it is quite apparent that,  
if this passage is a later composition than the rest  
of the Lacune, it was written specifically to be  
included at this point. Not only does the story of  
the curate follow logically upon the others, the  
ending of the section is also quite clearly contrived  
to lead into the ensuing text:

"Après quelques moments de silence  
ou de toux de la part de Jacques,  
disent les uns, ou après avoir encore

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.217.

(2) *ibid.*, p.221.

(3) *ibid.*

ri, disent les autres, le maître s'adressant à Jacques, lui dit:  
 "Et l'histoire de tes amours?" -  
 Jacques hocha de la tête et ne répondit pas." (1)

To argue that the second section belongs to the same date as the rest of the Lacune, it would be necessary not only to ignore the textual evidence just presented but also to justify its exclusion from the model for the Leningrad copy. It is hard to see any possible motivation for censorship of this particular passage, in view of the bawdy and scathingly anti-clerical episodes which at this stage already formed part of the novel.

However, this does not help us to decide whether or not the first and third sections are themselves an addition to the text. We have already seen that an analysis of the textual setting of the Lacune favours very slightly the view that we are here faced with an addition. Perhaps, though, more certainty can be obtained by considering Diderot's treatment of subject-matter inside and outside these thirty pages.

First of all, the very fact that these pages contain the only decidedly risqué tales in the whole novel (and following each other in rapid succession!) immediately singles them out from the rest of the work. If we now extend this further to compare two discussions of the use of improper language, the first taken from only a few pages before the Lacune, the second from the "éloge de l'obscénité" within it, we will find a very marked difference of approach:

"Hudson, impatienté de ces questions, et bien convaincu que Richard ne le prendrait pas pour un saint, lui dit brusquement: 'Mon cher Richard, vous vous f..... de moi, et vous avez raison.'

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.221.

"Mon cher lecteur, pardonnez-moi la propriété de cette expression; et convenez qu'ici comme dans une infinité de bons contes, tels, par exemple, que celui de la conversation de Piron et de feu l'abbé Vatri, le mot honnête gêterait tout."(1)

"Vilains hypocrites, laissez-moi en repos. F..tez comme des ânes débâtés; mais permettez-moi que je dise f..tre; je vous passe l'action, passez-moi le mot. Vous prononcez hardiment tuer, voler, trahir, et l'autre-vous ne l'oseriez qu'entre les dents! Est-ce que moins vous exhalez de ces prétendues impuretés en paroles, plus il vous en reste dans la pensée?" (2)

The scatological nature of the stories in this Lacune might lead one to think in terms of exclusion (for reasons of propriety) and subsequent re-insertion. However, the difference in approach between the two passages just quoted seems to indicate a considerable change in avowed attitude towards the relationship of literature and morality, as well as in Diderot's "personal" relationship with his reader. The anti-censorship outburst of the second passage stands as far apart from the tongue-in-cheek apology of the first as its violently abusive language does from the first passage's mocking deference. How far this borrowing from Montaigne<sup>(3)</sup> marks a real shift in Diderot's attitudes is not the subject of the present chapter, but clearly there is a sufficient change in tone and manner to suggest a different date of composition - particularly since the final sixty pages of the novel continue in much the same vein as before this outburst.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.192.

(2) *ibid.*, p.222.

(3) See Jerome Schwartz, Diderot and Montaigne: The 'Essais and the Shaping of Diderot's Humanism', Geneva, Droz, 1966, pp.51-53.

(4) If the detail added to the description of the Landlady (Lac. no.15) is indeed an addition and not a rectification, then motivation for it may be linked with motivation for this Lacune. See above, pp.46-47, and below, p. 88.

A complication is presented, however, by the description<sup>(1)</sup> of Jacques's treatise on prophecy, since this is referred to much later in the following terms:

"JACQUES.- Je ne sais pas bien précisément ce que c'est qu'un augure, ni ne me soucie de le savoir.

"LE MAITRE.- C'est un des chapitres importants de ton traité de la divination.

"JACQUES.- Il est vrai; mais il y a si longtemps qu'il est écrit, que je ne m'en rappelle pas un mot. Monsieur, tenez, voilà qui en sait plus que tous les augures, oies fatidiques et poulets sacrés de la république; c'est la gourde. Interrogeons la gourde." (2)

This reference seems to imply that the reader is expected already to know of the treatise, and the only previous mention of it is the one we have in Lacune no. 19.

It could be, however, that the treatment of this theme in the Lacune is an expansion upon an idea already in existence. This hypothesis would appear to be borne out by the evidence of the last of the Lacunes,<sup>(3)</sup> and of the second of the seemingly significant omissions from both the 1778-80 text and the 1786 material.<sup>(4)</sup> Both of these deal, in part, with the gourd theme, and, when taken alongside the long Lacune (no.19), provide fairly conclusive grounds for thinking that new material is being worked into the novel.

Before this point, however, reference to Jacques's gourd is to be found on p.181 (i.e. in the 1778-80 text). It is interesting to compare this mention with the way the same subject is treated in the long Lacune.

(1) A.-T. VI, pp.224-25.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.275-76.

(3) Lacune no.20, A.-T.VI, pp.238-39.

(4) A.-T. VI, p.250; see above, pp. 27-28.

"D'ailleurs, je le vois, ce pauvre Jacques, le cou entortillé d'un large mouchoir; sa gourde, ci-devant pleine de bon vin, ne contenant que de la tisane; toussant, jurant contre l'hôtesse qu'ils ont quittée, et contre son vin de Champagne, ce qu'il ne ferait pas s'il se ressouvenait que tout est écrit là-haut, même son rhume." (1)

"J'ai oublié de vous dire, lecteur, que Jacques n'allait jamais sans une gourde remplie du meilleur; elle était suspendue à l'arçon de sa selle. A chaque fois que son maître interrompait son récit par quelque question un peu longue, il détachait sa gourde, en buvait un coup à la régalade, et ne la remettait à sa place que quand son maître avait cessé de parler. J'avais encore oublié de vous dire que, dans les cas qui demandaient de la réflexion, son premier mouvement était d'interroger sa gourde." (2)

If, at the moment of composing the first of these passages, Diderot had had any clear notion of making Jacques a real disciple of the gourd - as he has become by the second - one might well have thought this the ideal moment to do so. In fact, far from there being any question of Diderot's stressing the spiritual significance of the wine, in this first passage, it is evident that he is portraying Jacques's physical discomfort, which is heightened by the absence of his customary beverage. The very term "bon vin" implies an Epicurean, rather than a pseudo-mystic, approach to the matter.

The significance of the gourd in the 1786 Lacune, then, is completely different from its significance in the 1778-80 text, at least from its significance at this point in it. The obvious inference is that Diderot has seized upon an idea - of distinctly Rabelaisian inspiration - which he himself had already

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.181.

(2) *ibid.*, p.223.



half-expressed in the earlier state of the novel,<sup>(1)</sup> and exploited it to the full for comic effect. (That this comedy is in many ways different from that of the 1778-80 text will be demonstrated in the final chapter of the present thesis.)

Now, in the last Lacune,<sup>(2)</sup> we find the following conversation:

"LE MAITRE.- Et ton avis est que je continue l'histoire des miennes?

"JACQUES.- C'est mon avis de faire une pause, et de hausser la gourde.

"LE MAITRE.- Comment! avec ton mal de gorge tu as fait remplir ta gourde?

"JACQUES.- Oui; mais, de par tous les diables, c'est de tisane; aussi je n'ai point d'idées, je suis bête; et tant qu'il n'y aura dans la gourde que de la tisane, je serai bête.

"LE MAITRE.- Que fais-tu?

"JACQUES.- Je verse la tisane à terre; je crains qu'elle ne nous porte malheur.

"LE MAITRE.- Tu es fou.

"JACQUES.- Sage ou fou, il n'en restera pas la valeur d'une larme dans la gourde.

Tandis que Jacques vide à terre sa gourde, ..." <sup>(3)</sup>

It will immediately be noticed that this section is linked with the prophetic theory given in the long Lacune (rather than with the few brief remarks of pp.224-25). Still more significant, on p.250 of the A.-T. edition we find the last of the four passages not included in the Correspondance littéraire text at any stage, which begins thus:

"Ici Jacques reprit sa gourde, oubliant qu'il n'y avait ni tisane ni vin. Son maître se mit à rire." <sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.275-76; quoted above, p.56.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.238-39.

(3) *ibid.*, p.238.

(4) *ibid.*, p.250. See above, pp.27-28.

This paragraph, in turn, is obviously dependent upon the account of Jacques's pouring away of the tisane given in the last Lacune. Whatever the reason for the failure of these lines to appear in the April 1786 number, there is every reason to link them chronologically with Lacunes nos.19 and 20, especially since the only reference made to the gourd, after p.181 (in the 1778-80 version) is the one on pp.224-25 already discussed.

Thus one may reasonably conclude that the writing of the last two Lacunes, along with this last omitted passage, postdates the composition of the novel as a whole. It seems far too much of a coincidence that the prophecy theme should appear only in sections of the novel not included in the 1778-80 text. It may not be going too far to surmise that it was his own re-reading of the novel - and in particular of the passage on pp.224-25, where both gourd and treatise are briefly mentioned - that gave Diderot the idea of developing an aside into a whole new theme.

Indeed, the gourd theme, like the "obscenity" theme previously discussed, stands in such marked contrast to the rest of the novel, - particularly to the free-will/determinism debate - that one must certainly stop to consider whether these last two Lacunes (and the omitted passages) might not represent a totally new approach to Jacques as a novel, and in particular to the humour of the work.

The connection between Lacunes 19 and 20 is further confirmed by one sentence in the "literary discussion" of Lacune no.20 :

"Pourquoi la jeune paysanne ne serait-elle pas ou la dame Suzon, ou la dame Marguerite, ou l'hôtesse du Grand-Cerf, ou la mère Jeanne, ou même Denise sa fille?"(1)

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.239.

Dame Suzon and Dame Marguerite, of course, only appear in Lacune no.19, so we must assume that this discussion was either composed or reworked after the writing of the scurrilous tales in which they appear.

Furthermore, the nature of the discussion just mentioned is rather different from that of any of the other "anti-novel" passages to be found in Jacques, and it undoubtedly has a far more final ring about it. Firstly, the very fact that so many of the incidental characters are mentioned suggests the notion of a "summing up". So does the perfect tense employed in the following sentence:

"Mon projet est d'être vrai, je  
l'ai rempli." (1)

Again, the sentence with which the "author" caps this discussion could even be regarded as a statement of one prise de position which the very writing of Jacques was designed to illustrate:

"Il ne tiendrait qu'à moi d'arrêter ce cabriolet, et d'en faire sortir avec le prier et sa compagne de voyage une suite d'événements en conséquence desquels vous ne sauriez ni les amours de Jacques, ni celles de son maître; mais je dédaigne toutes ces ressources-là, je vois seulement qu'avec un peu d'imagination et de style, rien n'est plus aisé que de filer un roman."(2)

The very fact that literary issues are called into question again in this addendum suggests a possible link with Lacunes nos. 1 - 4, which, as we have seen,<sup>(3)</sup> revolve around the same question. All might well belong to a period when Diderot was anxious to develop the "self-conscious narrator" aspect of the work.<sup>(4)</sup>

(1) A.-T. VI, p.239.

(2) *ibid.*

(3) see above, pp.39-44.

(4) see above, p.44.

The tone of finality in this passage would then be explained by the fact that it is the last such apostrophe of the reader prepared for insertion, and is meant to carry the full weight of the author's feelings on the subject - or to be the one last forceful indication to the reader as to how he should set about the task of reading Jacques le fataliste.

There remains to be discussed the relationship between this final cluster of omissions from the 1778-80 text and the other group dealing with Jacques's liquid consumption.<sup>(1)</sup> This earlier cluster provides three ideas:

- (i) Jacques's fondness for strong drink--  
Lacune no.17 (depicted rather than stated!)
- (ii) the medicinal value of tisane -  
Lacune no.18.
- (iii) Jacques's dislike of tisane - omitted passage.

Now all of these ideas are taken up in the last two addenda, though (i) and (ii) have been extended somewhat; Jacques's liking for alcohol becomes, as we have seen, a search for inspiration, while his dislike of tisane becomes, in Lacune no.20, repugnance for the infusion's total lack of inspirational qualities, and fear of the possible consequences.<sup>(2)</sup>

We have already seen that the gourd theme, as it appears in Lacunes nos. 19 and 20, appears to represent a development upon ideas to be found in the earlier state of the text. It might well be argued that it also draws on the ideas expressed in this other group of additions, and that Lacunes 19 and 20 therefore post-date Lacunes 17 and 18. However, dependence of one group upon the other is by no means proved by this argument. Ultimately one is left with the choice of seeing one group as representing a development of the other or with seeing both as more or less parallel

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(1) see above, pp.48-50.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.238.

developments of the 1778-80 text. In the second view divergence of treatment would be explained quite simply by difference of intention.

In conclusion, then, the Lacunes appear to fall into two groups. On the one hand there is Lacune no.5, virtually all the material of which must have existed by May 1779, when the editor of the Correspondance littéraire chose to pass on hurriedly to the more certain ground of the Pommeraye story, and Lacunes nos.6-14, which in all probability were also in existence in 1779 and were excluded as a result of the same editorial decision. On the other hand there are Lacunes nos.1-4 and 15-20, where there is no evidence to suggest that they formed part of the model for the original Correspondance littéraire text, and some evidence to the contrary - particularly strong in the case of Lacune no.2 (recounted as an independent anecdote as late as July 1780) and Lacune no.16 and the central section of Lacune no.19 (both of which were apparently missing from the model for L). From the structural point of view, all of this second group are clearly independent of their surroundings. And from the point of view of context they can be shown to have more in common with one another than with the main body of the text, and, in several respects, to represent a considerable departure from the main themes of the 1778-80 version. Since the 1780 Additions also seem to have been composed after the establishment of the text originally passed over to Grimm or Meister (and presumably before the composition of Lacunes 1-4 and 15-20), it will be apparent that the last year's of Diderot's working life saw a very major re-appraisal of Jacques le fataliste.

Thus far we have been concerned with examining the different stages of the Correspondance littéraire text in an effort to determine which of the Additions and Lacunes do, and which do not, represent late additions

to the text. It will be the rôle of Chapter II to correlate our findings here and so to determine just how much one can be really sure of (and how much it is reasonable to postulate) concerning the order of the novel's composition. Going beyond this, however, an analysis will be made of the manner in which new material was added to Jacques, as the basis for a detailed look at the structure of the work as a whole, and of the significance of the new material (in terms of content), as the basis for a study of Diderot's changing attitudes towards his creation.

CHAPTER II

A NEW APPROACH TO 'JACQUES'

The purpose of the present chapter is three-fold. The first and most obvious requirement is to obtain some more accurate notion of the order of incorporation of the various passages not appearing in the 1778-80 Correspondance littéraire text. If, however, a study of the genesis of a work is to be of any value, it must set out to examine not merely the order of composition (or of incorporation) of different sections of the work, but the manner in which new material was inserted and above all the function of the new insertions, so as to provide a new perspective on the author's techniques and conception (be it static or evolving) of his creation.

In consequence, this study falls into three sections: the first sets out to provide, on the basis of the foregoing discussion of the Correspondance littéraire text, what it is hoped will be a reasonably accurate dating of the later stages of the novel's development; the second will assess the methods employed by Diderot in order to permit the further growth of an already complex work; and the third will consider the content of the new additions, and ~~their~~ function with regard to the novel's overall signification.

On the strength of the study, contained in Chapter I, of the different stages of the Correspondance littéraire text, it will be apparent that the picture is a fairly complex one. For, if it is quite possible that the four Additions were composed at much the same time, it is indisputable that the same is not true of the Lacunés. On the one hand there is one long passage (Lacune no.5) which almost certainly existed by the time that serialisation of the surrounding areas of the novel was taking place, and another nine, brief

passages which are more likely than not to have been in existence at this time. On the other hand, there is at least one passage (Lacune no.2) which, as late as July 1780, the author was not contemplating including in the novel. Moreover, there is one Lacune (no.19) - almost certainly a late addition - which itself served as the framework for a further addition, and two more (nos. 15 and 16) which appear to date from a very late, "final" revision of a manuscript copy.

One thing is fairly clear. Although there may be every reason to suppose that even in 1778 the text as it stood was a composite of various earlier ébauches, it may safely be assumed that there existed by November of that year - or perhaps rather later, if Diderot was still at work on the novel while serialisation was actually taking place - a "finished product" (albeit a provisional one) with which the author could be well pleased. It is, after all, unlikely that Diderot would hand over a text that he considered to be incomplete.

An equally clear fact, however, is that this point in the novel's evolution does not correspond exactly with the 1778-80 Correspondance littéraire text, since it has already been demonstrated that this text only becomes coherent when the thirty pages preceding the Pommeraye tale (i.e. Lacune no.5) are restored. Most probably, too, the series of short interruptions to the Pommeraye story (Lacunes nos. 6 - 14) also belong, properly speaking, to the 1778 stage of development. Again it seems safe to assume that the model for the Correspondance littéraire version did in fact incorporate these passages.

If Diderot had once considered this "1778 text" (1) (that is, the model, rather than Meister's abridged version)

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(1) The term "1778 text" will henceforth be used to refer to this hypothetical model.



to be a complete entity, then it is not surprising that the 1780 Additions took the form which they did take: short, largely illustrative anecdotes, designed to amplify (and presumably to perfect) without substantial interference a text which the author had already thought sufficient in itself. It is improbable that, if Diderot were contemplating further revision of Jacques, he would have handed over to Meister four passages of this length. Meister's attitude (which must surely, for once, reflect Diderot's) is that he is "publishing" these Additions for the sake of completeness.

Such an interpretation suggests that at some point between January 1779 (the date of the number in which the first of the four Additions was due to appear) and July 1780, Diderot undertook what was intended to be a final revision of the work, perhaps with the deliberate intention of including the anecdotes related in the Additions.

The composition of the passages concerned is unlikely to have taken him any great length of time, and it may reasonably be thought that the four were written at much the same time. In that case, since Diderot could have forwarded new material to Meister at any moment, it is very probable that the revision was carried out after November 1779 (the date of the issue in which the fourth Addition would have appeared, had it been complete).

It seems improbable that, in adding these four passages, Diderot had any idea of making further changes to his novel. Firstly, as we have seen, there is an air of finality to the presentation of the Additions. Secondly, and more conclusively, there is the fact that in July 1780 the "Pondicherry poet" episode (Lacune no.2) was clearly not envisaged as part of Jacques, which makes it unlikely that the material of Lacune no.1 (linked to no.2) was even in existence - or if it was and had been deleted,<sup>(1)</sup> that there was any question of re-inserting

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(1) See above, pp.39 - 42.

it. Moreover, if Jacques had enjoyed popularity among Grimm's subscribers (despite early indications, perhaps) sufficient to justify the space devoted in the July 1780 issue to the Additions as well as a run of nearly two years, it is to be assumed that Meister would be happy to include any new additions in existence, subject perhaps to the censorship of "good taste". Meister, indeed, appears deliberately to be bringing his readers' text up to date - individually the four Additions have little intrinsic interest: their importance lies in the way they enrich the earlier text. Since the 1786 Lacunes (with the exception of no.5 - already discounted - and no.19) are of comparable length and no less "amusing", one must assume that in July 1780 they were not in Meister's possession and, in all probability, not even in existence - those, that is, which had not been deliberately excluded from the original Correspondance littéraire text.

The 1786 Lacunes appear to fall into three main groups:-

1. Those which are not additions at all, but, as the name implies, restitution of old material - deliberately omitted rather than "lost" (Lacunes 5 - 14).
2. Those which we have every reason to consider to be new material, introduced (but not necessarily composed) between July 1780 and the date of completion of the model for the Leningrad copy. Into this group fall Lacunes nos. 1 - 4 and 17 - 20, with the exception of the central section (b) of Lacune no.19.
3. Those which seem to represent additions or corrections made after the Leningrad MS had been begun, and, very probably, some time after its completion, - since Diderot seems to have been able to contact his master-copyist Roland Girbal without undue difficulty, and could have had his late additions inserted at any time had they been ready. (1) (Lacunes 15, 16 and 19(b)). No.19(b) is perhaps the only addition Diderot intended to make at this stage: it is known that he was busy revising his MSS

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(1) See also J. de Booy, 'Diderot et son copiste Roland Girbal' (referred to above, p.11, n.4), and P.Vernière, Diderot, ses manuscrits et ses copistes, etc.(see above p.9, n.2).

in the last years of his life, and 15 and 16 probably sprang out of his attempts to bring the different copies into line.

It will be noted that, in fact, only a fairly short time-span is involved here. If it is correct to assume that Diderot's creative faculties did not survive the year 1782, then all of the new material contained in the Lacunes (both that preceding and that following the establishment of the Leningrad copy) must have been incorporated within the space of about two years (Autumn 1780 - 1782). Moreover, if all four 1780 Additions derive from the same period of revision, this cannot have been completed earlier than November 1779, the date of the instalment into which the last of the Additions was to be inserted. This means that the three sets of new material were composed over a space of no more than three years - and possibly considerably less.

All the available evidence, then, suggests the following time-scheme:-

1. Before November 1778, establishment of text as it appears in Corr. Litt., plus Lacunes nos. 5 - 14. (Modification and re-working may, of course, have taken place as the "publication" of the serial progressed.)
2. After November 1779, completion of the four Additions.
3. After July 1780, incorporation of Lacunes 1 - 4, 17 - 18, 19(a), 19(c), 20.
4. 1781 or 1782, final revision, with incorporation of Lacunes 19(b) (intended addition) and 15 and 16 (minor amendments).

Such a time-scheme helps to explain the failure of the Additions to appear in the Leningrad copy except as intercalations on "feuilles volantes". It is to be assumed that Girbal was provided with a copy of the text as it stood in 1778, and a set of more recent additions (those figuring in the Lacunes), and that the 1780 Additions were forgotten. When Diderot came to revise

his MSS and add the episode of the curate and the élogé de l'obscénité (Lac. 19(b)), the absence of the four passages would be noticed and rectified.

Next we must examine the technique employed by Diderot in the adding of all this new material. This is not only of interest in itself, but - taken alongside the nature of the new additions - will be found to provide a useful guide to the manner in which the "1778 text" may itself have grown up.

Perhaps the most striking fact is that only two of the late additions (Addition no.3 and Lacune no.16) involve any actual reworking of the "original" text - and even these modifications are of a very minor nature.<sup>(1)</sup> Each new passage is deliberately contrived in such a manner as to avoid the necessity of any such reworking.<sup>(2)</sup>

In many cases, little contrivance is actually required. Simple authorial interruptions, like Lacunes nos. 3 and 4 can, of course, be slotted in at will, and even the longer passage constituting Lacune no.2 (which incorporates the "Pondicherry poet" episode), though very complex internally, again takes the form of an interruption, requiring no modelling to fit it into the surrounding text. Again, some of the addenda simply extend the narrative or discussion into which they are inserted. This is the case with Lacunes nos.15 and 18, which add brief details to the main narrative, Lacune no.1, which provides the scene of Jacques's "operation", previously glossed over, and Addition no.1, which appends the "prudence" issue to the "fatality" debate. Here the new material, being of a similar nature to the old, can be inserted with no difficulty.

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(1) See above, pp.32 and 46. The Lacune is, in any case, almost certainly an instance of simple grammatical revision and need concern us no longer here.

(2) This is, of course, totally consistent with the fact that the novel had already seen the light of day, With copies of Jacques already in existence, Diderot would presumably have been particularly unwilling to interfere unnecessarily with the text.

The process is not always so simple, however. Addition no.3, as we have observed, involves some minor re-working of the surrounding text. But perhaps of greater significance is the fact that, although the author's intention is clearly to offer us the gem of peasant wisdom which Jacques's fable may be seen to constitute, in order to justify the new insertion he has to provide a suitable conversational framework - in other words he has to extend slightly the section of the principal narrative into which it is to be set. This pattern (without, however, the modification of the surrounding text) is also to be found in Additions nos. 2 and 4, where again an extension to the conversation between Jacques and his Master is provided to serve as a framework for new anecdotal material (if Jacques's description of the coach-crash may be so described). An identical process is used in the case of Lacune no.19, where a continuation of the two characters' conversation leads to the Master's interrogation of Jacques on the loss of his virginity, which in turn leads to the stories of our hero's youth. And finally Lacune no.20 follows a not dissimilar line of development, with an addition, and a twist, to an already existing conversation (used to re-assert the "gourd" theme), but in this case there is the further addition of a straightforward authorial interruption.

The process of addition, then, as employed by Diderot, is on occasions rather more than the simple insertion of a remark, episode or anecdote. This applies particularly to the new anecdotal material: indeed all such anecdotes are to be found within the context of a "justifying" conversation, be it between Jacques and his Master, or the "author" and his "reader". If the "1778" text grew up in a similar way, then one may expect the location of interpolated passages to be a relatively difficult process. On the other hand, it

must be remembered that virtually all these addenda, however complex, however skilfully contrived to merge with the surrounding text, are nonetheless quite independent: the problem is to locate the point at which the course of the conversation is deflected.

As regards the substance of the new material, it will be clear that there is a very heavy preponderance of subsidiary narratives (recounted by Jacques or by the "author") and other direct authorial contributions. Though all of the former (with the exception of the Pondicherry poet story, narrated by the author) require some addition to one of the principal narratives, the purpose of the whole exercise, on each occasion, is clearly the inclusion of the new anecdote. Indeed, the extensions to the two principal narratives thus necessitated rarely provide anything more than a point of detail and certainly do not significantly advance either of them, still less the "fatality" debate. Other, more direct additions to the journey narrative or Jacques's story - with the exception of the wound-dressing episode (Lacune no.1) - are of an equally minor nature.

All of this confirms what reason would lead one to suspect. It seems somewhat improbable that Diderot would have been in a position to make any significant alteration to the principal narratives without major re-writing of the novel, which he was plainly unwilling to undertake. Indeed, Jacques is clearly inconceivable without at least major elements of the journey narrative; as for Jacques's story, and indeed his Master's, both are absolutely essential to the novel, and it is hard to see how either of them could have existed in much shorter form, so one may well be justified in speculating that any additions made before the establishment of the "1778 text" likewise had little effect on these three basic narratives. Our attempt to trace the pre-1778 history of the text will

therefore have to concentrate very largely on interventions by the "author" and on subsidiary narratives, seeking to apply the test of "detachability" employed in Chapter I.

There remains to discuss the significance of the later additions to Jacques, in an effort to determine how Diderot's attitude to, and concept of, his novel altered in the last years of his life. In this respect one very general observation relates to what has already been said about Diderot's (and Meister's) intentions firstly in serialising Jacques and secondly in appending the Additions. To all appearances, Diderot considered (for some time at least) the "1778" state of the text to represent a complete novel. Even when he came to revise it, he saw the need for four brief additions only. Then, sometime after July 1780, he apparently began to see the possibility, and indeed the desirability, of including a whole new series of passages which, as we shall see, substantially alter the flavour of the novel as a whole.

Connected with this is the purely negative point that, although Diderot seems at several stages to have regarded Jacques as a completed novel; at no point did he contemplate providing a conclusion to Jacques's story, or eradicating the ambiguity of the final pages: though the novel may give the appearance of having been hurriedly abandoned, this is clearly not what happened.

That said, we must now take each series of additions in turn and endeavour to establish precisely which aspects of Jacques they tend to emphasise. An overall change of emphasis over the few years at issue is the most one can expect to find, but a change of emphasis can be crucial.

On the surface, the 1780 Additions do not betray a very radical change in Diderot's approach, but the very fact of their incorporation makes a number of points clear.

Firstly, as has been indicated, Diderot seems to have regarded these passages as providing the finishing touches to the novel, but clearly he felt that these "finishing touches" were needed. To believe that Diderot regarded Jacques as a useful receptacle for odd jottings and anecdotes which defied classification - an attractive enough theory which Varloot goes a long way towards evincing - is to ignore the fact that the fourth Addition (the "estampe du carrosse cassé") is - as Vernière points out<sup>(1)</sup> - already to be found in the Salon of 1765, and scarcely needs more than one home. It is also to ignore the fact that the introduction of the discussion on the value of prudence (Addition no.1) is patently intended to modify the opinions of Jacques and his other "master", the captain.

Conversely, at this stage the author was apparently concerned with points of detail: all of the Additions are too short fundamentally to affect the main lines of the novel's development - though some of the changes heralded here will prove to be fairly major ones.

The discussion on prudence is the only one of any of the sets of later additions directly concerned with Jacques's fatalistic philosophy. It is therefore self-evident that this aspect of the novel (the explicit exposition of "fatalism" as a philosophy) occupied a greater proportion of the work in 1778 than at Diderot's death.

In this context it is perhaps significant that the 1780 Addition presents not a reiteration of the Captain's basic philosophy, but a description of his seemingly successful attempts to wrestle with one of the fundamental dilemmas of his "fatalism" (or of any deterministic system which does not recognise the dialectic

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(1) Vernière: 'Diderot et l'invention littéraire', p.159.



nature of the relationship between the individual and his environment): the extent to which a man's intelligence can be of any use to him. Are we meant to accept the Captain's arguments or to see the fundamental contradiction contained in them? (Either intelligence is itself a determining factor or it is not.) If we are meant to see through the argument, then from what point of view is the criticism being levelled? Is Diderot attacking determinism as a philosophy or merely those who see it in terms of extra-human Fates, or a Great Scroll written on high? To answer these questions is not within the scope of the present chapter. For the moment we must be content to state that Diderot, in his first revision of Jacques after the novel's appearance in the Correspondance littéraire, has chosen to show the way in which the Captain's philosophy "resolves" (or avoids) the dilemma besetting it - that is, Diderot has pushed this philosophy to its own limits.

The second and third Additions move to a less theoretical examination of human behaviour. The story of M. Le Pelletier d'Orléans takes up the theme of Sur l'inconséquence du jugement public - in Jacques's own words:

"Si l'on ne dit presque rien dans ce monde, qui soit entendu comme on le dit, il y a bien pis, c'est qu'on n'y fait presque rien, qui soit jugé comme on l'a fait." (1)

The point here, though, is not that the public leaps to over-hasty, and unjust, conclusions, but that different sections of the public employ different yardsticks for evaluating behaviour.

Reactions to M. Le Pelletier's actions are shown in opposites: the rich regard him as criminally insane for parting with his fortune, the poor see him

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.60.

as a great benefactor; the Christian respects him for accepting Aubertot's blow and still persisting in his entreaties, the military man sees him as a dishonourable coward. What is emphasised here, then - and only here is the issue made so explicit - is the existence of different moral codes to be found within different sections of the same society.

It is to be noted too that this story is a self-contained entity, capable of being included at any point in the novel. The very fact that Diderot chose to insert it at a point where the "principal" story-line, and so many of the subsidiary anecdotes, revolve around the theme of justice lends weight to Francis Pruner's theories on the development of thought in Jacques.<sup>(1)</sup>

Again, the tale is an example of the instructive parabolic anecdote. The importance of this technique will become more evident in the light of later additions.

The most salient point concerning Jacques's folk-fable of the knife and sheath is that it is inserted in an already existing interruption to the Pommeraye story, and immediately following an unreported debate between Jacques and his Master on (one must assume) the theme of sexual constancy. Diderot's attitudes towards vows of fidelity, particularly those incorporated into the marriage service, are well known,<sup>(2)</sup> and there is no lack of expression given to them in Jacques. In this respect the "widow" who becomes Desglants' mistress is interesting.

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(1) Francis Pruner, L'Unité secrète de Uacques le fataliste!, Situation no.20, Paris, Minard, 1970.

(2) For an analysis of the origin of vows of constancy, which is linked with the growth of one of the major causes of infidelity, namely the sense of insecurity produced by incipient social organisations, see Diderot's Correspondance, ed. Roth, Vol.IX, p.160, Letter 560, 'A Madame de Maux(?)', date unknown.

"Sage par raison, libertine par tempérament, se désolant le lendemain de la sottise de la veille, elle a passé toute sa vie en allant du plaisir au remords et du remords au plaisir, sans que l'habitude du plaisir ait étouffé le remords, sans que l'habitude du remords ait étouffé le goût du plaisir. Je l'ai connue dans ses derniers instants; elle disait qu'enfin elle échappait à deux grands ennemis." (1)

She is caught between two fires: her own highly-sexed temperament, which she is not able to amend (because it is part of her natural make-up), and an inbred sense of guilt which leads to violent attacks of remorse. Nature is responsible for the first of these "grands ennemis", which is, in fact, only an enemy as long as society forbids the individual to live peacefully with it, and forces upon him a sense of guilt about something he is in no position to alter.

To some extent she is fortunate in that both she and her husband are reconciled to the inevitable - though this does not spare her from the ravages of a guilty conscience - and she has learned not to expect too much of herself:

"Comme elle connaissait sa légèreté, elle ne s'engageait point à être fidèle. 'Je n'ai fait, disait-elle, qu'un faux serment en ma vie, c'est le premier'." (2)

In the case of Mme de La Pommeraye, the fidelity issue is clouded somewhat by the fact that, in order to gain Des Arcis' undying love, she has sacrificed her most treasured possession - her reputation - so that, despite the horror supposedly inspired by her "monstrous" resolution in pursuing her goal, the reader is undoubtedly meant to feel sympathy for the initial injury. In his "summing-up" of the case, the author makes this clear! But would her position have been so embarrassing and her fury so intense if society had expected less in the way of sexual constancy? Is this what the insertion of Jacques's fable is meant to imply?

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.256.

(2) *ibid.*

The sententious tone of the words preceding the fable:

" !Le premier serment que se firent deux êtres de chair, ce fut au pied d'un rocher qui tombait en poussière; ils attestèrent de leur constance un ciel qui n'est pas un instant le même; tout passait en eux et autour d'eux, et ils croyaient leurs coeurs affranchis de vicissitudes. O enfants! toujours enfants! ...! " (1)

together with the "author's" uncertainty as to who has uttered them, may be deliberately comic, but that their meaning is to be taken more seriously is hinted at in the "author's" admission that they may be his own words. (2)

The fable itself provides us with just the same lesson, though better taught, as Jacques asserts.

"Tenez, monsieur, toutes ces grandes sentences que vous venez de débiter à propos de botte, ne valent pas une vieille fable des écaignes de mon village." (3)

The succinct and unambiguous expression - aided by less than subtle imagery-of the meaninglessness of vows of constancy, that is what Jacques's fable offers. Its indelicate imagery makes it eminently memorable, and the moral is inescapable from the first.

Indeed, there is little comparable with this fable in the 1778-80 text, where the only humour anything like so suggestive comes in the "oreille" episode, and there is no notion of "peasant wisdom" seeing the inevitable for what it is. Thus the insertion of this brief passage represents a slight shift in Diderot's line of attack. It will be seen that the same kind of technique will figure among the subsequent series of additions.

The fourth Addition is rather more puzzling. Enough has been said about the history of Jacques's "sketch" of the coach-crash, (4) but no obvious motivation

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.117.

(2) *ibid.*

(3) *ibid.*, p.118.

(4) see above, p.7.

for its inclusion is suggested by its origins. Perhaps the best explanation is to be found in the change of mood which it produces when set in contrast to the Hudson story. Arguably this function was originally intended to be fulfilled by the brief "epilogue" (in reality a separate story) in which Richard and Hudson meet again and Richard is able to exact some small measure of revenge. Undoubtedly, though, Jacques's sketch does more to restore the vital tone of joviality at the end of another "day" in the novel's progress. The literary public of the latter half of the eighteenth century was familiar enough with the abuses of the regular clergy, and the evils of the monastic system, but the character of Hudson is so striking as to transcend this issue, and the overall effect the story must be intended to leave on the reader is one of mild shock. The "sketch", then, by showing Hudson in a more comic light, can be seen to have the effect of shaking the reader out of his involvement in the Hudson story (after all, the reader's involvement in what he is reading is one of the main points at issue) and preparing him for what is to come.

Arguably too, it is not only Hudson but the clergy in general whom we are meant to see in a more comic light. The whole issue of the clergy is turned to ridicule when clerics allow themselves to be the object of public mockery. To discredit them, therefore, it is sufficient to draw attention to their behaviour. There are numerous literary precedents for this scurrilous technique,<sup>(1)</sup> but the appeal is essentially a popular one. Just as the sketch represents a change of mood, it also represents a change of attack from the intellectual's reasoned criticism to the ridicule of the populace.

Perhaps there is a parallel here between this "sketch" and the knife-sheath fable, both being contrasted with the stories to which they serve as commentaries

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(1) For a consideration of the probable sources of this technique, see below, pp.233-39.

(the Hudson and Pommeraye tales respectively) in three ways: the style and tone of their narration; their more popular inspiration; and the lower level of their aim.

The first group of new material figuring among the 1786 Lacunes strikes a very different note. Lacunes nos. 2 - 4 are, as we have seen,<sup>(1)</sup> largely concerned with the writer and his work, and the function of Lacune No.1 seems partly to provide a subject for the discussion with the reader to be found in no.2.

However, the "reader's" accusation:

"La vérité ... est souvent froide, commune et plate; par exemple, votre dernier récit du pansement de Jacques est vrai, mais qu'y a-t-il d'intéressant? Rien" (2)

is less than just. For, although the passage in question offers a fair amount of "realistic" detail holding little interest for the reader brought up in a tradition which considered medical matters and the like to be quite inappropriate to a work of fiction, there is also considerable humour, designed to please any but the literary snob. The scene is, of course, a farcical one (in the most theatrical sense), and its humour lies chiefly in the chaotic action which we read between the lines of the dialogue. The peasant-woman's modesty is another source of amusement, however (cf. the "oreille" episode, pp.28-29) and Diderot also indulges in a certain amount of satire at the expense of the surgeon's intemperate drinking.

The theatrical nature of a large number of episodes in Diderot's fictional writing has received much comment,<sup>(3)</sup> but the rôle of farce in Jacques le fataliste seems largely to have escaped treatment.

(1) See above, pp.39-44.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.43.

(3) In particular, Niklaus's study 'Tableaux mouvants as a Technical Innovation in Diderot's experimental novel Jacques le Fataliste', Eighteenth Century French Studies, Literature and the Arts, presented to Norman Suckling, ed. Dubois et al., Oriel, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1969, pp.71-82.

The very fact that it appears both here and in another addition<sup>(1)</sup> suggests that farce began to assume an increasing importance in the author's view of Jacques.

Again, while the different "realisms" of Jacques have provided Smietanski with the subject of a very interesting documentary study,<sup>(2)</sup> little attempt has been made to relate Diderot's frequently minute attention to detail to the "truth" theme of the author-reader debate. Lacune no.2 makes it clear that the reader (the real one, that is) is meant to consider the question of what is relevant and appropriate to a novel. (The truth, the whole truth ...?)

"Truth", too, is the subject of Lacunes nos.3 and 4, which, as has been demonstrated,<sup>(3)</sup> show almost identical lines of development. Why is Diderot insisting still more on a line of attack he has already exploited so fully? The whole question of the meanings of "la vérité" in Jacques will have to be considered.<sup>(4)</sup>

As an introduction to the story of the Pondicherry poet, the debate on "truth" and what is interesting in fiction is patently irrelevant. It is the "author" who forces a change in the subject of the "conversation":

"(Reader) S'il faut être vrai, c'est comme Molière, Regnard, Richardson, Sedaine; la vérité a ses côtés piquants, qu'on saisit quand on a du génie. - Oui, quand on a du génie;<sup>(5)</sup> mais quand on en manque? - Quand on en manque, il ne faut pas écrire. - Et si par malheur on ressemblait à un certain poète que j'envoyai à Pondichéry?"<sup>(6)</sup>

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(1) See below, pp.88-90.

(2) J.Smietanski: Le réalisme dans Jacques le Fataliste, Paris, Nizet, 1965.

(3) See above, pp.42-43.

(4) This will be the function of Chapter IV of the present thesis.

(5) Underlined words omitted in A.-T.

(6) A.-T. VI, p.43.

Indeed, despite its setting and its characters, the anecdote has little to do with the "literary" theme of the novel. What is this anecdote, in fact, but a lesson in deterministic wisdom in coming to terms with one's own impulses and limitations? As such it may be linked directly with the discussion on prudence, though several points are radically different: firstly, the "lesson" here is Diderot's own advice and predictions which have been borne out by events; secondly, the lesson is taught by means of an example (a true-life parable, in fact) and without further theorising; thirdly, there is no trace of fatalistic jargon, and so no trace of tongue in the author's cheek. This is a lesson in the application of common-sense determinism. Diderot's decision, at a late date, to insert this tale as a commentary on the fatality theme must be of considerable significance in assessing how much of the author there is in Jacques.

The obvious didacticism of the anecdote of the Pondicherry poet tends to link it with the knife-sheath fable. (Ironically, both allegory and parable are biblical methods of teaching.) There has yet to appear a study of the differing didactic rôles of discussion and anecdote in Jacques; but the fact that Diderot, at this stage in the development of Jacques, was tending to use anecdote rather than abstract reasoning to make known his own position on certain issues tends to suggest that the real arguments lie where the reader least expects to find them. After all, Diderot is at pains to warn his reader to beware:

"Je vous le répète donc pour ce moment et pour la suite: soyez circonspect si vous ne voulez pas prendre dans cet entretien de Jacques et de son maître le vrai pour le faux, le faux pour le vrai. Vous voilà bien averti, et je m'en lave les mains."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.68.



Critics have tended either to separate the "literary" and the "philosophical" themes of Jacques, or to dismiss the former as little more than a red herring designed to attract inimical attention from the latter. Perhaps it is more reasonable to see the author's comments on "truth" as offering a guide to the careful reader on where to look for the real debate. Certainly the issue will need to be examined more closely. (1)

Lacunes nos.17 - 20 and the two "omitted" passages again form a broad group. Some stress has already been laid on the fact that they are connected by the theme of Jacques's drinking habits. (2) Indeed, with the exception of M. Tissot's remedy, all help to build up a picture of Jacques which is very different in its emphasis from the Jacques of the 1778-80 version. The two characters of Jacques's past around whom, in the earlier state of the novel, his monologues most often revolve - Denise and the Captain - both yield pride of place in the additions: Jacques's timorous pursuit of Denise gives way to an account of the far-from-timorous conquests of his youth, while the importance of the Captain to Jacques's view of the world is overshadowed by the emergence of inspiration as a driving force in his behaviour.

Lacune no.17 and the first "omission" do no more than emphasise what has already become obvious, namely Jacques's fondness for alcohol and his dislike of non-alcoholic beverages. At the end of Lacune no.19 the Master attacks Jacques for his excessive drinking, and the author, by way of commentary, explains that Jacques always carries a gourd of good wine which he consults whenever the occasion demands. (3) This is where the change in emphasis becomes a change in direction, as we learn about Jacques's opinions on oracles and inspiration. Whatever other significance it may have, this new aspect

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(1) See below, pp. 155-64.

(2) See above, pp.48-50.

(3) A.-T. VI, p.223.

of Jacques's character must throw fresh light on his "fatalism", especially since we are told, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, that the Captain too was a follower of Bacbuc.<sup>(1)</sup>

The contrast between Jacques's pursuit of Denise and his earlier sexual adventures is still more vivid than that between his apparently rational fatalism and his prophetic enthusiasm. The author's motivation in inserting Jacques's bawdy account of his seduction of Justine, Dame Suzanne and Dame Marguerite is, of course, largely bound up with the defence of his own author's rights contained in the "éloge de l'obscénité". In other words, Diderot is being deliberately provocative. Other moral issues come into question, however. Sexual mores were always an obsession with Diderot, from Les Bijoux indiscrets onwards, and many of the anecdotes contained in Jacques le fataliste deal with specifically sexual behaviour. Jacques's affairs introduce a new note, however: in the earlier state of the text we saw only the sexual chaos of ultra-civilised society; now, as in the Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville, we are presented with the other side of the coin - the simplicity of things in a more "primitive" society. Because here the approach is a humorous one, though, Diderot does not need to look as far afield as Tahiti - he has merely to exaggerate the behaviour of the peasant classes of France. No doubt in a more serious mood Diderot would have been slightly more sceptical of the willingness of Dames Suzanne and Marguerite to reconcile themselves to a triangular relationship with Jacques,<sup>(2)</sup> but in this context slight incongruities

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.225.

(2) In fact, this agreement is mentioned only in the later, middle section of Lacune no.19, but the mood of the earlier sections is totally consistent with the attitudes seen here. Dame Suzanne's delight when the initial deception is explained to her makes it clear how far she is from having any pretensions to "ownership" of her lover.

are unimportant, since the underlying ideas are unlikely to be submitted to critical evaluation. This means that the author is able to describe a society whose values are more or less devoid of "hypocrisy", irrespective of whether he himself (much less the reader) is able to believe in the existence of such a society.

By "civilised" standards, Jacques is a rapist - but apparently Justine was quick enough to comply with the old Chinese proverb and accept the inevitable with a good grace. She certainly bore him no resentment afterwards. Again, although it was only by trickery that he came into the arms of Dames Suzanne and Marguerite, neither of them complained!

"Il est vrai; mais Suzanne ne s'y méprit pas, et de sourire et de me dire: 'Tu en as donné d'une bonne à garder à notre homme; et tu es un fripon.

- Que voulez-vous dire, madame Suzanne?

- Rien, rien; tu m'entends de reste. Trompe-moi encore quelquefois de même, et je te le pardonne ...' " (1)

"Le fait est que, tout en se moquant d'elle-même, de Suzon, des deux maris, et qu'en me disant de petites injures, je me trouvai sur elle, ..." (2)

The relationship between humour and morality in Jacques le fataliste, then, is probably best approached from the point of view of technique. To argue that the "gaieté" of Jacques is no more than the sugar coating on a deterministic pill is to miss the point that a humorous work can, by its nature, deal with a wider range of human experience than a "serious" treatise of similar length, since no formal arguments or proofs are required of it, and even grave inconsistencies are pardonable. It is also to fail to appreciate that laughter fundamentally modifies any issue under discussion, immediately challenging the relevance of the whole argument.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.212.

(2) *ibid.*, p.217.

What remains to be established, therefore, is the way humour and ideas are related in different stages of development of Jacques le fataliste. Chapter VII of the present thesis will consider this aspect of the novel.

Like Lacunés nos. 1 - 4, nos. 19 and 20 also contain some pointed clues as to where the significance of the novel lies. When Jacques has finished the story of Justine, he challenges the Master to tell him what profit it has been to him to listen to this tale.

"Et voilà le commencement, le milieu et la fin de la perte de mon pucelage. A présent, monsieur, je voudrais bien que vous m'appriessiez le but moral de cette impertinente histoire." (1)

The debate to which this question gives rise is a curious one:

LE MAITRE. - A mieux connaître les femmes.

JACQUES. - Et vous aviez besoin de cette leçon?

LE MAITRE. - A mieux connaître les amis.

JACQUES. - Et vous avez jamais cru qu'il y en eût un seul qui tint rigueur à votre femme ou à votre fille, si elle s'était proposé sa défaite?

LE MAITRE. - A mieux connaître les pères et les enfants.

JACQUES. - Allez, monsieur, ils ont été de tout temps, et seront à jamais, alternativement dupes les uns des autres.

LE MAITRE. - Ce que tu dis là sont autant de vérités éternelles, mais sur lesquelles on ne saurait trop insister. Quel que soit le récit que tu m'as promis après celui-ci, sois sûr qu'il ne sera vide d'instruction que pour un sot; et continue."

Lecteur, il me vient un scrupule, c'est d'avoir fait honneur à Jacques ou à son maître de quelques réflexions qui vous appartiennent de droit; si cela est, vous pouvez les reprendre sans qu'ils s'en formalisent." (2)

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.209.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.209-210.

An apparent dilemma enters here, and one that Diderot may seem not to have resolved for himself. Jacques's point is that his story has told the Master nothing which he did not already know concerning individual human relationships. By implication, any "histoire" - history of fiction - can only permutate given data, the basic données of human character, which will already be known to the adult reader. This logic might seem to condemn the very idea of a work like Jacques le fataliste! But one very basic lesson of the novel may be (must be, if, as some maintain, Diderot is expressing, rather than analysing, his own philosophic tendencies) that, given a group of human beings, each with known characteristics, any change in their relationships will produce a chain of reactions which will be determinable - if all the facts are taken into account, that is.

In the case of the outcome of Jacques's escapade with Justine, after all, it was to be expected that she, not being of particularly chaste temperament, would not put up too much of a struggle, and that Bigre, being besotted with her, would not need persuading overmuch that there was no cause for offence.

"LE MAITRE. - Et quelle fut la fin de l'aventure entre Bigre ton ami et Justine?

JACQUES. - Comme elle devait être. ..." (1)

Whatever interpretation is to be put upon this debate, its very appearance links the author/reader theme yet again with the more obviously "philosophical" aspect of the novel. The reader has been challenged to decide what relevance there is to moral philosophy in Jacques le fataliste.

In his own exchanges with the "reader", in Lacune no.19, the "author" himself, for the greater part, avoids the major issues. His monologue on the name

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.209.

"Bigre" is first and foremost a comic one, and the most serious message emerging from it is a plea that we should call a spade a spade. The same message emerges too from the "éloge de l'obscénité", though expressed in somewhat less docile terms. ... These passages must be taken into consideration in an analysis of the relationship of humour, obscenity and philosophical intention in Jacques, but they are not central to the author/reader question. More significant from this point of view is the "author's" final outburst contained in Lacune no.20. Despite the comment which brings the interruption to an end:

"Demeurons dans le vrai, et en attendant que le mal de gorge de Jacques se passe, laissons parler son maître."<sup>(1)</sup>

there can be little doubt that the "author" is half-admitting the fictitiousness of Jacques:

"Il (l'abbé Hudson) est donc mort ou vivant, comme il me plaira. Il ne tiendrait qu'à moi d'arrêter ce cabriolet, et d'en faire sortir avec le prieur et sa compagne de voyage une suite d'événements en conséquence desquels vous ne sauriez ni les amours de Jacques, ni celles de son maître; mais je dédaigne toutes ces ressources-là, je vois seulement qu'avec un peu d'imagination et de style, rien n'est plus aisé que de filer un roman."<sup>(2)</sup>

On the other hand, the author boasts of the truth of what he has written:

"Je fais l'histoire, cette histoire intéressera ou n'intéressera pas: c'est le moindre de mes soucis. Mon projet est d'être vrai, je l'ai rempli."<sup>(3)</sup>

This statement seems to echo the words of the editorial statement introducing the 1780 Additions:

" ... la seule loi qu'il crût devoir s'imposer fut de ne rien inventer et de ne rien peindre qui ne lui parût de la plus extrême vérité."<sup>(4)</sup>

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- (1) A.-T. VI, p.239.  
 (2) *ibid.*  
 (3) *ibid.*  
 (4) see above, pp.29-32.

Here "la plus extrême vérité" obviously has little to do with literal truth, and presumably Diderot's "être vrai" must be interpreted similarly. Diderot's expression, however, is deliberately ambiguous - as it is throughout the novel. Nevertheless, the contradiction which arises here is a good indication to the reader that he should think hard about the whole question of truth in Jacques.

As for the last series of additions, little need be said of Lacunes nos.15 and 16, except to note how vividly the new phrase "une poitrine à s'y rouler pendant deux jours"<sup>(1)</sup> transforms a very placid description of the Landlady's charms! This, of course, ties in with the new emphasis on rather more suggestive humour, begun with Jacques's fable and coming into its own with the account of his adolescent frolics.

The central section of Lacune no.19 is altogether more significant. At first sight it may seem to do no more than continue the boisterous mood of the earlier section of the addendum. However, it will be seen that this new section does serve to make a number of points rather clearer.

Firstly, the conversation which begins the new section emphasises the "Utopian" aspect of primitive society. That Dames Suzanne and Marguerite are both able to accept the triangular nature of their relationship with Jacques seems at first to surprise the Master, but it is he who generalises the lesson:

"JACQUES. - Utiles l'une à l'autre, elles s'en sont aimées davantage.

LE MAITRE. - Les nôtres en auraient bien fait autant, mais chacune avait son chacun..."<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.124. See above, pp.46-47.

(2) *ibid.*, p.217.

This is a reiteration of the principal ideas expressed in the Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville, namely that sexual jealousy is the result not of the basic psychological characteristics of mankind but of social, religious and legal attitudes which make husband and wife each other's property. This psychological habit which society inculcates into the individual is automatically extended to include lover and mistress as well as legitimate spouse.

But the marked contrast between this bald statement of fact (or opinion) and the reasoned tone of the Supplément demonstrates how different Diderot's approach is in Jacques from that employed in his own more formal writings. Once again, the pedagogical methods of Jacques come to the forefront.

If the Master has revealed some astuteness in his brief observation on sexual attitudes, when it comes to guessing the identity of the "petit homme criant, jurant, écumant, se débattant de la tête, des pieds, des mains, de tout le corps, et prêt à se jeter du haut du fenil en bas, au hasard de se tuer, ...", <sup>(1)</sup> he shows his customary lack of prophetic ability. In the earlier section of the addendum he had attempted, again totally unsuccessfully, to guess how Jacques had lost his virginity. Why is so much emphasis being placed on this defect of the Master's? The answer must lie in the contrast between the two characters - particularly since much play is made of Jacques's prophetic ability in Lacune no.19. This contrast must be central to any interpretation of Jacques.

Jacques's story of the curate is, above all, scurrilous. We have already seen how, in Jacques's "sketch", Diderot appears to be following a "popular" line of attack upon the clergy. Here the attack becomes more violent and altogether more cruel.

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.217-218.



The portrait Jacques paints of the curate is a singularly unflattering one:

"C'était une espèce de nain, bossu, crochu, bègue, borgne, jaloux, paillard, amoureux et peut-être aimé de Suzon. C'était le vicaire du village."(1)

What makes it even nastier is that in this catalogue there is no way of telling where physical qualities end and moral ones begin ...

Again it is the Master who generalises the attack:

"JACQUES. - Et voilà le mari que nous croyions loin qui accourt.

LE MAITRE.- J'en suis fâché: je n'aime pas les prêtres.

JACQUES. - Et vous auriez été enchanté que sous les yeux de celui-ci...

LE MAITRE.- J'en conviens."(2)

The malicious glee which overwhelms both Jacques and his Master leaves little room for any sympathy for the curate.

Perhaps the most significant sentence of this new story of Jacques is the one which concludes it:

"Ce fut peu de temps après cette aventure, qui vint aux oreilles de mon père et qui en rit aussi, que je m'engageai, comme je vous ai dit..." (3)

The suspension marks here are not accidental - they invite the reader to supply the continuation of the story himself. In other words, Jacques's causal chain has been extended back beyond the shot from which he received his knee-wound. Jacques himself is not trying to demonstrate any causal connection here, but the reader is bound to associate the scandal aroused by the affair of Suzon and the curate with Jacques's prompt departure from the village.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.218.

(2) *ibid.*, p.220.

(3) *ibid.*, p.221.

Structurally, of course, this device serves to tie the new additions more firmly to the earlier text. Its significance, however, does not stop there: if Jacques's enlistment was no accident, then the point at which Jacques chose to begin the story of his love for Denise becomes irrelevant - and deliberately misleading. The "knee" device was, after all, borrowed from Sterne, and this debt is made clear in the second of the three paragraphs of "memoirs" which collectively provide a kind of epilogue to the novel.

The very fact that Diderot chooses to point out the fictitiousness of Jacques's story (albeit in an ambiguous manner) should warn the reader to avoid identifying too closely the arguments of character and author. The fact that Jacques's story really begins further back in time than even he (or the fictional structure of the work) will admit should help the reader to come closer to finding the author's "truth".

In the foregoing discussion, there have emerged certain common characteristics shared by various of the late additions. These common characteristics in fact provide stronger links between the additions than may appear at first sight. Broadly they fall into four groups.

Firstly, within the context of the "author/reader" debate, new emphasis is placed upon the question of "truth". Lacunes nos. 2, 3 and 4 and the "author's" declaration in Lacune no. 20 draw the reader's attention specifically to this question, but it emerges too (in less direct fashion) in a variety of unlikely places.

Secondly, there is the question of the relationship between Jacques's fatalism and the author's own philosophy. The modifications to Jacques's philosophical position which are represented by the "prudence" discussion and the description of his prophetic talents must

be of considerable importance here. So too is the deterministic wisdom contained in the author's advice to the young poet whom he dispatched to Pondicherry. The connection between this question and the search for truth is self-evident - for it is precisely the author's "truth" which is at issue.

The third characteristic is a movement towards a less reasoned, more direct, and often more "popular" line of attack involving anecdote in preference to direct argument. This takes a variety of forms - from allegory (in Jacques's fable) and parable (in the Pondicherry poet and M. Le Pelletier stories), via the description of a rustic Utopia, to a joyful attack on the clergy. In most cases the new anecdote takes up the theme of material already in existence, but in much more forthright manner.

The fourth characteristic, closely linked to the third, is the emergence of a new kind of humour, strongly associated with the uninhibited nature of peasant "life in the raw". The humour varies somewhat - from the innocent farce of the scene where Jacques's wound is dressed, through the merry rollicking of the hero's early sexual exploits, to the cruel farce of the curate's forking - but shares a common boisterousness which distinguishes it from the humour of the earlier stage of the novel.

A separate study will be made of each of these areas of development (Chapters IV - VII). The immediate task, however, is to obtain further evidence on the evolution of the novel by a close analysis of the structure of the "1778 text". This evidence will, in fact, be found to be of considerable significance to each of the areas in question.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUCTURE OF THE 1778-80 TEXT

Despite the valuable work of Vernière,<sup>(1)</sup> the earlier history of Jacques remains, and probably will continue to remain, something of a mystery. Vernière's study of source material, while it throws some considerable light on the creative processes at work in Jacques, does not provide much of a guide to the order of the novel's composition.

A possible approach to this problem is suggested by the type of material constituting the later additions. Since most of these are largely unconnected with either the outer framework of the novel or with Jacques's principal narration, it is certainly arguable that Diderot saw Jacques as a work capable of considerable expansion from within, but expansion along apparently divergent lines. In other words, there is evidence of a movement towards increased complexity. It is surely not unreasonable to suppose that the early history of the work may be similar, and that, at the original date of composition, it may have been an appreciably less complex structure than in 1778. A close examination of the 1778 text may help to test the validity of this supposition.

Two main elements of Jacques - the hero's account of his amours and at least the basic outline of the journey - must be assumed to have existed since the work's initial conception, not least because both are intimately bound up with the question of "fatalism" (at its more superficial level), and even in 1771 the work bore its present title. Of course, that is not to say that both may not have been subject to some modification,

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(1) Vernière: 'Diderot et l'invention littéraire'. See above, pp.2-8.

particularly the "journey" which could be lengthened at will by the introduction of new incidents. In the main, unfortunately, any re-working on this plane will be hard to detect, though there are definite traces of change in that section of the novel where the travellers are at the Grand-Cerf inn.<sup>(1)</sup>

This apart, it is reasonable to suppose that the bulk of any additions will have been made (like the majority of the 1780 and 1786 material) in such a way as to leave the surrounding text more or less undisturbed. The two levels on which such interpolation is most easily executed are those of "incidental" narratives (i.e. those not contributing to either the "journey" theme, or Jacques's or the Master's love-stories) and of "author's" interruptions to the main narratives - although there is not, in fact, a clear line of demarcation between the two (the "author's" interruptions sometimes incorporating some sort of instructive anecdote). It must be borne in mind, however, that, as in Additions nos. 2-4 and Lacunés nos. 19 and 20, some material (usually in the form of conversation between Jacques and his Master) may be added to the main narrative specifically to facilitate the inclusion of a new anecdote.

To some extent, in attempting to locate interpolated material, it will be necessary to apply the test of independence or "detachability" employed in the first chapter. Clearly one must assume that later additions will tend to be less well integrated into the work as a whole than earlier sections of the text, and will therefore tend to be more readily detachable from the main body of the text - like, for example, Lacune no. 19. That this is not always the case, however, is demonstrated by Jacques's fable, where some minor re-structuring has been performed, so that the passage does not show any immediately apparent traces of containing a late addition.

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(1) See below, pp. 98-107.

Moreover, after 1778, when Jacques had, in a manner of speaking, gone to press, there would obviously be less opportunity for major re-structuring than before that date, so earlier additions may perhaps have involved more modification to the surrounding text. And even the late additions bear witness to the fact that where an anecdote is to be inserted, Diderot may choose to insert rather more than just the anecdote, thus making the change of theme difficult to spot.

It will be obvious too that factors other than the date of insertion must be at work in establishing the degree of independence of a particular section of the novel. Indeed, it has already been indicated that there is greater scope for expansion at the levels of author/reader debate and "incidental" narrative precisely because any additions made at these levels need not affect the surrounding text. If one is not to be in danger of falling into a circular argument, therefore, it is clear that, in addition to the "detachability" of a particular authorial remark, episode or anecdote, some other indication as to its possibly late origins must be found before we have any real reason to suspect it of being an addition to the text. Such additional indications may be of a structural nature, in which case they will be dealt with in the present chapter. Or they may be based on the substance of the passage in question. In the latter case, the issue will be left open for the moment - with a statement to the effect that the passage, being "detachable", is possibly suspect - and further discussion taken up in the appropriate subsequent chapter (i.e. the one dealing with the kind of issues raised by the passage).

Indeed, it is in this second manner that it will be necessary to treat most of the shorter of the "author's" interruptions - that is to say those in which he dwells principally on the "literary" theme and in which no anecdotal illustration is provided. Here the very

brevity of the passages largely precludes any structural assessment, beyond a simple statement of their "detachability".

It will be realised, of course, that the author/reader element must already have existed (at least in some incipient form) when Diderot first embarked upon Jacques, since the first paragraph - which immediately severs all ties with outside reality (apparently!) and sets the scene for the whole work - is itself a discussion between author and reader constructed in such a manner that comment and narrative are so interwoven as to be inseparable. And indeed this is the case for approximately half of the briefer author/reader debates of the novel.<sup>(1)</sup> The remainder stand clearly apart from their narrative surroundings, and are therefore that much more likely to have been composed at a later date. Of these, some (forming part of longer interruptions to the main narratives) will be dealt with in the present chapter. Discussion of the remainder of these "detachable" comments, listed below, will be deferred until Chapter IV.

- (1) p.15, from "Vous concevez, lecteur..." to "... de ce que je ne vous dis pas."
- (2) p.21, from "Comme ils en étaient..." to "... et qui débuta par le refrain accoutumé:"  
(This interruption is part narrative, part discussion, based on the pursuit - or non-pursuit - of Jacques and his Master by a band of rustics. Despite the narrative content, it leads nowhere and is quite independent of the journey story as a whole.)
- (3) p.164, from "Il y a deux versions..." to "... celle qui vous conviendra le mieux."
- (4) p.192, from "Mon cher lecteur..." to "... pour vous la dire."
- (5) p.194, from "Lecteur, tandis que ces bonnes gens dorment,..." to "Vous me direz cela demain matin."

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(1) See below, pp. 129-37.

- (6) p.237, from "Vous ne croirez pas cela, ..." to "... on les conduit à l'hôpital."
- (7) p.245, from "Lecteur, est-ce que vous ne craignez pas..." to "... répondit modestement à son maître:"
- (8) p.246, from "Mais c'est La Vérité dans le vin, ..." to "... je vous en demande pardon."
- (9) p.269, from "Ah! hydrophobe?" to "... mais plus court." (1)

The remainder of this review of "detachable" material involves a study, in turn, of each episode or anecdote falling into this category, irrespective (in the case of subsidiary narratives) of whether they are recounted by the "author" or by one of "his" characters.

The first anecdote to stand quite apart from the surrounding text is the story of Aesop's arrest, related by the author as an illustration of the question he puts to the reader: "Mais, pour Dieu, lecteur, ... est-ce qu'on sait où l'on va?" This is followed by some remarks on Jacques's Master and on his masters. (2)

Here the main narrative is left in suspense while the author "chats" to his reader, and is then abruptly resumed when the "conversation" is over. This same technique can be seen on a considerably larger scale in a series of digressions beginning on p.68, and centering firstly around a discussion of the strange behaviour of the two captains, in which the famous "original", Gousse, appears and then around the imprisonment of Gousse and his 'cello-playing cell-mate, the intendant. In the case of the first of these digressions, the moment of interruption is carefully chosen: it is the moment when Jacques has just been carried off once more by the hangman's horse, and the Master is left laughing. Moreover, the "digressions" are carefully and deliberately introduced when Diderot

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(1) See below, pp.143-60 for an analysis of these remarks in comparison with the "non-detachable" remarks previously mentioned.

(2) See below, pp. 180-81.



declares:

"Et puisque Jacques et son maître ne sont bons qu'ensemble et ne valent rien séparés non plus que Don Quichotte sans Sancho et Richardet sans Ferragus, ce que le continuateur de Cervantès et l'imitateur de l'Arioste, monsignor Forti-Guerra, n'ont pas assez compris, lecteur, causons ensemble jusqu'à ce qu'ils se soient rejoints." (1)

The fact that the passage in question - down to p.73, "... et la honte d'avoir succombé devant elles ne s'oublie guère" - is intended to represent an interruption to the main narrative is made clear by the way in which the thread of the story is taken up again. Omitting these five pages we are left with:

"Le cheval de Jacques ne permit pas à son maître d'achever; il part comme un éclair, ne s'écartant ni à droite ni à gauche, suivant la grande route. On ne vit plus Jacques; et son maître, persuadé que le chemin aboutissait à des fourches patibulaires, se tenait les côtés de rire...

Et Jacques? ... Jacques avait franchi les portes de la ville, ..." (2)

The next "interruption" in this series occurs within the troublesome Lacune no.5, which we have discounted from our list of late additions. It begins abruptly, and the author, far from offering an apology for interrupting the flow of Jacques's narrative, challenges the reader on the point.

"Lecteur, si je faisais ici une pause, et que je reprissel'histoire de l'homme à une seule chemise, parce qu'il n'avait qu'un corps à la fois, je voudrais bien savoir ce que vous en penseriez? Que je me suis fourré dans une impasse à la Voltaire, ou vulgairement dans un cul-de-sac, d'où je ne sais comment sortir, et que je me jette dans un conte fait à plaisir, pour gagner du temps et chercher quelque moyen de sortir de celui que j'ai commencé. Eh bien! lecteur, vous vous abusez de tout point." (3)

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.68.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.68 and 73.

(3) *ibid.*, pp.88-89.

Repeating once again that the story of Gousse is the absolute truth, he proceeds to relate the episode of Gousse's imprisonment, and to tell us what crime he and two of his cell-mates had committed, ending with the promise of the story of the third of these fellow-prisoners, "l'homme à la livrée qui raclait de la basse".<sup>(1)</sup>

The third and last "interruption" in this series recounts, as promised, the story of the 'cello-player. (From p.96, "Tandis que Jacques et son maître reposent, ..." to p.99, "... qu'en pensez-vous?") The "opportunity" seized on for the recounting of this tale is quite simply the fact that it is night, and Jacques and his Master are asleep - when the story is complete the travellers are allowed to wake up.

The question then arises: at what point in the novel's development was the "intrusive" material inserted? Strictly speaking, there is no reason why all of the interruptions mentioned so far should not have formed part of Jacques from the beginning. However, as we shall see, there is evidence that Jacques underwent some fairly major revision on at least one occasion before the appearance of the 1778-80 version, which in turn suggests that the 1778 text itself may well be far from homogeneous in terms of date of composition. If the novel did grow up by stages then the passages we have been discussing would appear to belong quite probably to a fairly late stage of this evolution - though for reasons of theme rather than of structure.<sup>(2)</sup>

The pages devoted to the travellers' stay at the Grand-Cerf are characterised above all by the dominance of the Landlady and of "her" character, Mme de La Pommeraye. One scene which the Landlady does not dominate, however, is that of the "Bourru bienfaisant", which constitutes a completely separate case - a scene enacted before the principal characters in which they themselves play no part,

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(1) The interruption is logically terminated by the words: - "...mais permettez que je revienne à Jacques et à son maître" (A.-T., VI, p.91).

(2) See below, pp.193-94.

and in which their presence is scarcely required (since, apart from Jacques's words "Voilà un singulier homme!",<sup>(1)</sup> they do not so much as comment upon what they see!) for any reason other than the purely formal one of providing the eyes through which we are supposed to see the action. Structurally, moreover, the inclusion of this scene seems somewhat forced. If we omit from p.102, "Son mari, las de crier..." (at which point the Hôtesse was about to go downstairs, whereas she is, in fact, made to witness the scene in the room of Jacques and his Master), to p.105 "... que tu te trouves bien..." (i.e. the scene itself), and from p.106, "Je vous entends, lecteur, ..." to p.107, "... pour en tirer bon parti" (i.e. the commentary), we have removed all trace of the episode with no loss of coherence whatsoever, apart from the following paragraph, which by its untidiness seems to suggest not only that the scene was inserted late, but that it was worked in rather hastily!

"La femme et le compère descendirent; l'hôte resta encore un moment; et lorsqu'il s'en fut allé, Jacques dit à son maître: 'Voilà un singulier homme! Le ciel qui avait envoyé ce mauvais temps qui nous retient ici, parce qu'il voulait que vous entendissiez mes amours, que veut-il à présent?'" (2)

It seems rather surprising that Jacques and his Master, accustomed to discuss at length all that they see or hear, should pass so rapidly over such a dramatic scene! It is also surprising that Jacques should make such a perplexingly rapid change of subject, and, impressed as he apparently was by what he had witnessed, should immediately begin speaking of something else.

Now it is to be noted that this paragraph, if the Bourru bienfaisant scene were omitted, would follow on directly from the promise, by the hôte, to tell them the

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.105.

(2) *ibid.*

story of the guest's "mariage saugrenu" as soon as she returns:

"LE MAITRE.- Et qu'a donc de si singulier le mariage de cet homme?

A cette question du maître de Jacques, l'hôtesse dit: 'J'entends du bruit là-bas, je vais donner mes ordres, et je reviens vous conter tout cela...!'"(1)

It is almost as though our "untidy" paragraph might originally have read:

"Lorsqu'elle s'en fut allée, Jacques dit à son maître: 'Voilà une singulière femme! Le ciel qui avait envoyé ce mauvais temps, etc.'?"

If this were the case there would have been no change of subject, since Jacques's fear that he would not be allowed to continue his tale would be directly connected with the effect made on both travellers by the imposing character of the Landlady. Whatever the "original" version of this paragraph may have been, however, it would certainly appear to have been the object of rather hasty re-working. This, together with the confusion of the beginning of the scene - when the hôtesse is already on her way downstairs as the hôte, hotly pursued by the peasant, comes upstairs to find her, thus allowing the scene to be enacted (somewhat improbably!) in the room of an aristocratic guest - would tend to suggest that the whole episode represents not merely a "detachable" segment of the novel, but, in fact, a late interpolation. This fact alone renders highly suspect any attempt to relate the period of composition of Jacques to the date of the performance of Goldoni's play.

It is to be noted too that the Pommeraye story itself begins in the most peculiar of ways, thanks to the intrusion of an argument between Jacques and his Master. This argument, moreover, masks an incongruity

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.102.

so startling as to demand some attention. After promising her guests a fine lunch, the hôtesse takes a chair.

"La voilà assise, et son récit qui commence.

L'HOTESSE.- Il faut se méfier des valets; (1)  
les maîtres n'ont point de pires ennemis."

These are the words which spark off the argument, but what have valets to do with her "récit"? The real beginning of the story comes half a page later, when the "author" has speculated on what profit he might make of the incident, but decides to let it drop.

"Rassurez-vous, je n'en ferai rien.  
L'hôtesse reprit donc: 'Il faut convenir  
que s'il y a de méchants hommes, il y a  
de bien méchantes femmes.' " (2)

Again, an incongruity appears. Who are the "bien méchants hommes" to whom she refers?

It is definitely arguable that the words "Il faut se méfier des valets..." appear to introduce a story which is never told, just as the words "... s'il y a de méchants hommes" appear to refer back to a story which has not been told.

Perhaps this should be linked with the other startling incongruity of this section of Jacques - the different versions of the identity of the two guests who maltreat Nicole. When the Master first enquires who these two men are, the Landlady replies:

"Deux bourgeois de la ville prochaine. ...  
La belle-mère du plus jeune des deux a  
passé par ici il n'y a pas plus de trois  
mois; elle s'en allait assez malgré elle  
dans un couvent de province où elle n'a pas  
fait de vieux os; elle y est morte; et  
voilà pourquoi nos deux jeunes gens sont  
en deuil..." (3)

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.107.

(2) *ibid.*, p.108.

(3) *ibid.*, pp.95-96.

The next statement by the Landlady on this subject does not appear to conflict with the first:

L'HOTESSE.- Oh! c'est un mariage.

JACQUES.- Peut-être que oui, peut-être que non.

L'HOTESSE.- Messieurs, prenez-y garde. Cet homme qui est là-bas, et qui a si rudement traité ma pauvre Nicole, en a fait un bien saugrenu..." (1)

Once she embarks upon the story, however, the identity of the two men appears to change rather radically:

"Les deux hommes que vous venez de voir (A.-T. "Ces deux hommes...") sont bons gentilshommes; ils viennent de Paris et s'en vont à la terre du plus âgé..."

"Le plus âgé des deux s'appelle le Marquis des Arcis. C'était un homme de plaisir, très-aimable, croyant peu à la vertu des femmes." (2)

Few critics express much surprise at these inconsistencies: most are content to see them merely as an example of Diderot's tendency towards carelessness in composition. And yet such an assumption presupposes that Diderot had only the vaguest notion of the characters of the story he was about to relate even at a point when he was sure enough of the plot to be able to predict one aspect of its conclusion (the banishment of the mother-in-law). Some explanation is surely required.

From what elements of the tale of the younger bourgeois the Landlady has already mentioned (odd circumstances of marriage, cloistering of mother-in-law), it would indeed be reasonable to conclude that his story and that of the marquis Des Arcis are one and the same. But that must surely mean that the story was originally conceived as a "bourgeois" rather than an

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.102.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.110-111.

"aristocratic" one. If such a tale had existed in written form (within the novel or without), then the problem of language, style and relationships of characters are such that in order to raise it to the aristocratic plane complete re-writing would have been necessary. It is perhaps somewhat unlikely that this took place.

Alternatively, it may be that the bourgeois version never existed on paper, but only in the author's mind - or indeed that the model for Mme de La Pommeraye (if there was one) was not herself of noble birth. When the time came to translate this conception (or model) into written form, the increased possibility offered by setting the story at a higher social level may have become more evident. Diderot would have adapted the point of entry accordingly, but have forgotten the earlier promise of the story.

Such an explanation, however, leaves unanswered two questions. Firstly, what is the significance of the valets/méchants hommes references? Secondly, why, if the Pommeraye tale was composed specifically to be included at this point in the novel, is there so marked a change of tense and style in the Landlady's speech as she launches into it?<sup>(1)</sup>

Perhaps it is more reasonable to suggest that the unexplained references are to a story - presumably that of the younger bourgeois - which has since been suppressed. As long as this story existed, the introduction of the Pommeraye tale - whether at or after the original date of composition of the novel - would have been justified by the méchants hommes/méchants femmes opposition. Once the story was suppressed, however, justification would have been required for relating the story of Mme de La Pommeraye - hence the device of making the Marquis one of the guests of the hostelry.

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(1) See second quotation p. 103 above.

This explanation is entirely consistent with the pre-existence (in written form) of the Pommeraye tale which the style of its narration suggests. The only problem is that of the apparent similarity of the two stories which would, at some stage, have been juxtaposed - both seemingly involving a doubtful "mother-in-law" in a shameful exile. Or perhaps the extraordinarily romanesque turn of events at the end of the nouvelle was only added at a later stage - and the outcome of events was originally the "logical" one. The Pommeraye story may indeed have "borrowed" elements of the earlier tale.

Whatever the validity of these theories, enough has been said to make it clear that some re-working - or, at the very least, some change of conception - has taken place. On the face of it, the most complicated explanation (that of the co-existence of two separate stories) seems the most probable. Moreover, it is startlingly consistent with Pruner's theory (discussed below, p.113 ) that Des Arcis' tale of Richard and the abbé Hudson may originally have been the Master's: the introduction of Des Arcis as a character of the main narrative would have enabled him, in his turn, to become a story-teller. Moreover, that the Pommeraye tale may not have formed part of the earliest state of the novel (or indeed have been in existence at that time) is suggested by the fact that Mme de La Pommeraye, alone among the heroines of Diderot's contes, is not mentioned in the Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville, composed in 1772. <sup>(1)</sup>

Breaking up the Pommeraye tale, of course, is the whole series of interruptions by the inn staff requesting instructions from the Landlady. These constitute Lacunes 6 - 14, and, as we have seen, may belong either to the period of insertion of the Pommeraye story itself or to a later period of revision. <sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) See above, p.7.

(2) See above, pp.44-46.



In contrast, Jacques's and the Master's interruptions to the Landlady's story almost certainly entered the novel at the same time as the story itself, for they represent the principal means by which it is integrated into the work as a whole. On the other hand, none of them is structurally intertwined with it in any way: each interruption completed, the narrative resumes where it left off and reverts immediately to the same formal style. This fact certainly tends to suggest that the Pommeraye story existed in written form before its inclusion in Jacques le fataliste.<sup>(1)</sup>

Two more substantial passages - equally extraneous to it structurally - interrupt the Landlady's account. The first of these (from p.108, "L'Hôtesse, encouragée par ce propos..." to p.110, "JACQUES.- Vous n'avez encore rien dit," i.e. before the story is properly under way) contains the incident of the dropping of the unfortunate Nicole, followed by a discussion of the hôtesse's passion for dogs. Together with the argument which has just ensued from the remark, "Il faut se méfier des valets; les maîtres n'ont pas de pires ennemis", this incident succeeds in delaying the opening of the story for some considerable length of time.

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(1) The stylistic contrast between story and interruptions does have a positive role to play - see below pp.138-139.

For a study of the fluctuations of style employed in the early part of the "Pommeraye" section, see pp.236-241 of David Berry's lengthy article, 'The Technique of Literary Digression in the Fiction of Diderot', Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, CXVIII, 1974, pp.115-272. Here is his conclusion to the section: "From the familiar, colloquial use of language in the tavern the style tightens, becomes more controlled, treading lightly through a network of subtle refinements, which gradually reveal a growing psychological anxiety. This is punctuated by the parenthetical snatches of dialogue, anchoring the story of mme de La Pommeraye in a lower-class reality. The author's comments then introduce a more explicit verbal humour, sharply counterpointed by the semi-poetic prose of the lament, which in turn is balanced by a gay, licentious interlude, before proceeding to the uncomplicated comedy of the childhood story." (David Berry, op.cit., pp.240-41.)

A whole series of anecdotes and discussions occurs when the Landlady is finally obliged to postpone the continuation of her story and attend to the running of her inn. (from p.117, "L'hôtesse partie..." to p.124, "... et mit fin au récit de Jacques".) First the two principal characters comment upon the Landlady's talent as a raconteuse. Then the reader is asked to choose whether he wishes to hear the continuation of her story or of Jacques's. There follow some brief reflections on the inconstancy of human nature, by Jacques, his Master or the author, which in their turn are followed - in the "complete" version - by the knife-sheath fable. Jacques then provides two anecdotes, the first on the subject of his early years at his grand-parents' house, the second on the duelling exploits of his captain's friend - and of M. de Guerchy who happens to have undergone almost precisely the same adventure... All of these little tales are, structurally speaking, completely self-contained, and unconnected with the rest of the novel, except insofar as the duelling story has been "promised" some 55 pages earlier.<sup>(1)</sup>

Much more curious, however, is the abrupt, apparently unmotivated and totally irrelevant appearance in the Pommeraye story of the description of a particularly pernicious priest.<sup>(2)</sup> Technically, he is mentioned because he was connected with Mlle d'Aison's misfortunes, but his presence in the tale is patently spurious. Her lack of success in her profession is, after all, readily explained by her lack of enthusiasm for it: that she should fall in love with this nasty specimen is neither here nor there. All reference to him is easily omitted<sup>(3)</sup> without the narrative sustaining

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- (1) A.-T. VI, p.67. This rather interesting phenomenon of the grouping of intrusive material will be discussed below, pp.118-119.
- (2) A.-T. VI, p.128.
- (3) *ibid.*, p.128, from "Mais ce qui nous a le plus nui,..." to "... du plus faux des hommes."

any loss. Moreover, when he is subsequently referred to by the Master and Jacques, it is in an interruption to their own line of conversation.<sup>(1)</sup> A third mention is equally independent - being tacked on to the Master's promise (never fulfilled) to provide a defence of Mme de La Pommeraye in face of Jacques's accusations.<sup>(2)</sup>

It seems highly probable that the priest was only included in order to provide ammunition for Jacques's attack. If this is the case, the "detachability" of all three references to him surely suggests that he may belong not even to the period of integration of the Pommeraye tale into the novel, but to a subsequent period of revision.

The Pommeraye story ends with a discussion between the Landlady, Jacques and the Master on the unity (or lack of unity) of character of Mlle d'Aison, and the "author's" own comments on the subject. These reflections, like most of the interruptions we have been discussing, belong not so much to the story itself as to the integration of the story into the novel - though, since they are not structurally necessary, they may have entered at a later date than the story. On the "philosophical" level, some "interpretation" is required if a story of this kind is to be included in a lengthier work, albeit one largely concerned with the complexities of human nature. As regards structure, the Pommeraye story is carefully linked to the succeeding (if not, as we have seen, to the preceding) episodes of the novel, and the "author's" moral analysis is of some service in this respect too. A "bridge" of a very simple nature may be seen in the following paragraph, which marks the resumption of the principal narrative:

"Tandis que je disserte, le maître  
de Jacques ronfle comme s'il m'avait

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- (1) A.-T.VI, p.130. Omitting from "JACQUES.- Puisqu'il n'y paraîtra pas demain..." to "... ni vous non plus..." we are left with a coherent conversation about the Landlord.
- (2) *ibid.*, p.149.

écouté; et Jacques, à qui les muscles des jambes refusaient le service, rôde dans la chambre, en chemise et pieds nus,..."<sup>(1)</sup>

Two rather more intricate devices are used to connect the Pommeraye story with the remainder of the novel. The first is Jacques's cold and sore throat resulting from a poor night (on chairs or on the floor), itself the consequence of the large quantities of champagne which he consumed in order to render more tolerable the Landlady's usurpation of his function as raconteur. A number of subsequent references are made to this illness.<sup>(2)</sup> Second, it is the Marquis Des Arcis himself who will relate the Hudson story, and one of the chief characters of that story will be his travelling-companion - a device which again is extremely contrived and "literary".

The Pommeraye tale and the circumstances of its narration thus become necessary to some of the major episodes of the thirty pages following it. The structure of these thirty pages is particularly interesting and merits fairly close study.

At first, Jacques's story is resumed (with the hero in somewhat subdued mood as a result of his cold). The episode he recounts is a key one, since it provides an overlap between his past and the Master's (they have both, it transpires, sought to win the affections of Denise, with apparently unequal degrees of success), and an underlying reason (perhaps) for the symptoms of rivalry which can be distinguished in their behaviour.

When Jacques appears to be reaching the climax of the story, however - with Denise under instructions to visit him at least four times a day<sup>(1)</sup> - the Master interrupts to ask if Jacques knows what became of Desglands, and Jacques replies in the negative,

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.164.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.181, 227, 244, 255, 262, 274.

adding that if his wishes for Desglonds's prosperity have not been granted, they were none the less sincere. For it was Desglonds who set him up in the employ of the commander of La Boulaye, the first of his long series of masters and mistresses, whom our hero goes on to list. This provokes some discussion between the two characters, until the Master asks if Jacques has never heard the tale of Desglonds's patch, and promises to recount it when they are on the road. For the moment he relates the shorter story of Desglonds's gambling - at which he made and lost his fortune - and of the lady who left him because he was unable totally to abandon the vice. (1)

Following immediately upon the story of Desglonds's gambling, a major row breaks out between the two characters, presumably motivated by the Master's jealousy over Denise. This row, with the Landlady's resolution of it (pp.170-176), forms a totally independent scene, having no direct bearing on the ensuing narrative. The only subsequent reference to it (A.-T.VI, p.245) is in an author's aside, itself part of a "detachable" passage.

Even when the journey theme is resumed (p.176), it is by no means certain that we are dealing with an "original" text. Certainly Jacques's story and the fatalism discussion are both forgotten at this point. The sole object of this part of the narrative seems to be to provide a context for the telling of the Hudson story (and perhaps some of its "satellite" anecdotes - see below pp.111-113), by the none-too-subtle device of making Des Arcis and Richard the travelling companions of Jacques and his Master, and by pairing them up for supper.

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(1) This interruption will be seen to herald a later group of interruptions again revolving around Desglonds, although on this second occasion it is the Master's tale which will suffer. See below, pp. 117-118.

Having once set up a suitable story-telling situation, however, the "author" feels free to go into a long and complicated aside in which he comments on a wide variety of issues.<sup>(1)</sup> This interruption, by nature of its total independence, could well be a late interpolation to a relatively late section of text.

The Marquis's tale of Richard and the abbé Hudson begins with an extremely literary preamble (the "author" underlines this by referring to it as "le préambule du marquis des Arcis") on the psychological attraction of the cloisters for the adolescent. This is followed by a few disparaging remarks by the Master and Des Arcis about the morals of the prémontrés. Finally, Des Arcis embarks upon the story, and once he does so, he is allowed the singular honour of proceeding without any kind of interruption. The Hudson story is thus a complete entity, which could have existed independently of the novel as a whole - though the section of Jacques into which it is set is, as we have observed, plainly built around it.

A whole series of anecdotes and discussions follows the Hudson tale.<sup>(2)</sup> The first of these (Hudson's meeting with Richard some time after the latter's disgrace) is told by the Marquis as a sequel to the tale but has little obvious connection with it. In the "final" version of the novel there then appears Jacques's sketch of the coach-crash. This, in turn, is followed - once Jacques and his Master have been separated from the Marquis Des Arcis and Richard - by a discussion on the life to come and by Jacques's anecdote, told to him by Richard, of an old man's refusal to take the last sacraments. Structurally this whole episode stands quite apart, being completely self-contained except for a rather surprising reference by Jacques to the Hudson story, which is supposed to have been related in his absence.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) See below, pp. 140-41 and 184-86.

(2) A.-T. VI, pp. 191-97.

(3) *ibid.*, p. 169.

We have now arrived (in the completed novel) at the point at which 1786 Lacune no.19 begins (p.197) and still there has been no advance whatever since p.168 in either the "fatalism" debate or Jacques's love-story. Rather we have been faced with a whole series of independent and detachable passages having no bearing (in terms of composition) on the remainder of the novel. Indeed the "author's" remark:

"Il y a ici une lacune vraiment déplorable dans la conversation de Jacques et de son maître" (1)

would seem to belong as much at the point at which Jacques seems to be approaching the most interesting part of his story (p.169) as after the passage which it follows in either the 1778-80 or 1786 versions (pp.198 and 226 respectively). Is it mere coincidence that both the central philosophical debate and the hero's story of love and fate fail to appear in these thirty pages? Or might it not reasonably be argued that some or all of this section (from p.168 to p.198) consists of new material added to an earlier text? A single long addition might possibly have been made, being written and inserted as a piece, or more likely (in view of the variety of, and lack of connections between, the episodes and anecdotes concerned) smaller additions might have been made on a number of occasions.

It is even arguable that Diderot was exploiting a kind of "natural break" between Jacques's story (deliberately left in suspension) and the Master's (beginning in mid-course and leading inevitably to the conclusion of the novel) to insert a whole range of new material. The addition of Lacune no.19 may thus be no more than the logical extension of a process which had begun some years earlier.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.226.

It was indicated earlier that the "Pommeraye" section of the novel appears to be the product of a period of fairly major re-writing. In view of what has now been said about the thirty pages which, in the 1778-80 text, lead on from this tale, via Des Arcis's story, to the Master's, it will be apparent that the bulk of the central hundred pages may very well consist of material which did not form part of the earliest state of the novel.

Two promises by the Master, both of which he fails to fulfil, lend weight to the notion that the central section of the work had, by 1778, already been subjected to considerable alteration. The first, noted by Pruner,<sup>(1)</sup> occurs early in the novel, during a conversation on the wickedness of monks.

"LE MAITRE.- Ah! les moines! les moines!  
 JACQUES.- Le meilleur ne vaut pas grand argent.  
 LE MAITRE.- Je le sais mieux que toi.  
 JACQUES.- Est-ce que vous avez passé par  
 leurs mains?  
 LE MAITRE.- Une autre fois je te dirai cela."<sup>(2)</sup>

Pruner suggests that, at some stage in the novel's development, Des Arcis' tale of Richard's misfortunes may have been the Master's story. It has already been noted that this theory complements the one advanced earlier in this chapter, namely that the Marquis only became a character of the main narrative when an earlier story was omitted. Such a change would have allowed Diderot to reduce what may have become the over-dominant rôle of the Master. If this is indeed what happened, it will be clear that a very considerable amount of re-working must have taken place.

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(1) Pruner, op.cit., pp.10-11.

(2) A.-T. VI, pp.51-52.

Again, in reply to Jacques's peremptory remark: "Votre Mme de La Pommeraye est une méchante femme," the Master promises:

"Quand nous serons en route, tu l'accuseras, et je me chargerai de la défendre." (1)

Was the debate thus promised merely forgotten, or did it exist before being omitted during a period of re-writing (possibly when the Marquis and Richard appeared in the "journey" narrative)?

The structure of the last sixty pages of Jacques centres very largely on the Master's account of his own amorous exploits. That this story is an integral part of the basic structure is ably demonstrated by the novel's very conclusion - for it is the existence of Agathe's illegitimate son, fathered by the chevalier de Saint-Ouin and maintained by the Master, which provides both the "secondary" reason for the journey (logically the reason for it) and the motivation (or rather the chain of causality) leading to the Master's duel and Jacques's imprisonment.

Stylistically too, the Master's story belongs to the novel as a whole. Not only is the overall style of the narration fairly well in keeping with that of an oral account (literary conventions being what they are) - in contrast to the Pommeraye story - it also reflects the Master's character in the way it unfolds: his delivery is factual and non-committal, not seeking to demonstrate causal links or to point out moral precepts so much as to arouse, and ultimately to satisfy, the curiosity of his audience - curiosity

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.149.

being one of his own predominating characteristics. (1)  
 Above all, the conversational aspect is emphasised by Jacques's frequent interruptions, which constitute a kind of running commentary. Again, this is quite unlike the case of the Pommeraye tale, where, as we have said, a very strong contrast emerges between the "literary" character of the story and the somewhat farcical circumstances of its narration, and where, technically speaking, the interruptions only impede the smooth flow of the narrative. Here, Jacques's questioning and conjectures frequently direct the

- (1) It is ironic that it is the Master's dealings with Agathe and the Chevalier which provide the cause for all that happens to the two characters throughout the course of the journey (by refusing to discuss the "primary" reason for the journey, Diderot obliges his reader to regard it as spurious), thereby demonstrating that very universal determinism about which he (the Master) is so sceptical.

For a brief review of the theme of destination in the novel, see Irwin L. Greenberg, 'Destination in Jacques le fataliste', Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, CXX, 1974, pp.223-226. This article was written in an attempt to correct a tendency among recent critics to deny the importance of the concept of destination. Cf. the remark made by David Berry in his otherwise highly illuminating (and well-researched) article, 'The Technique of Literary Digression in the Fiction of Diderot', (see above p.106) "From the start Diderot has emphasized the universal climate rather than the particular locality of the setting. It is the journey itself rather than the point of departure or the destination that is more important for the artist." (p.233)

narrative. The following is typical.

"JACQUES.- Et vous couchâtes là.

LE MAITRE.- Non.

JACQUES.- Ce fut donc le chevalier?

LE MAITRE.- Je le crois.

JACQUES.- Du train dont on vous menait, vos cinquante louis ne durèrent pas longtemps.

LE MAITRE.- Non. Au bout de huit jours nous nous rendîmes chez Le Brun pour voir ce que le reste de nos effets avaient produit.

JACQUES.- Rien, ou peu de chose. Le Brun fut triste, il se déchaîna contre le Merval et la demoiselle aux révérences, les appela gueux, infâmes, fripons, jura derechef de n'avoir jamais rien à démêler avec eux, et vous remit sept à huit cents francs.

LE MAITRE.- A peu près; huit cent soixante et dix livres." (1)

Most of the hero's interruptions, initially at least, are intended to show how well he is grasping the machinations which the Master is depicting from the point of view of the naive victims.<sup>(2)</sup> (On one occasion, however, he takes advantage of his privileged position of listener to upbraid the Master for ignoring the advice of all fathers, keeping bad company and even signing lettres de change.<sup>(3)</sup>) For the most part, these interruptions, like the example given above, themselves actually continue the story. Though this is not always the case,<sup>(4)</sup> the two narratives are, generally speaking, so closely intertwined as to suggest contemporaneity.

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- (1) A.-T.VI, pp.235-36. Other examples of this technique are to be found on pp.237, 246 and 273.
- (2) *ibid.*, pp.227, 230 and 234 (first interruption).
- (3) *ibid.*, p.234 (second interruption).
- (4) Jacques's remonstrance with his Master on the point of lettres de change is an example of a more "static" interruption.

On two occasions, Jacques deliberately sabotages his Master's attempts as a raconteur. On the first, <sup>(1)</sup> he is only successful in delaying the narration the space of a brief quarrel. A little later, though, he employs a very skilful - and underhand - trick in order to avenge his storyteller's pride: he falls asleep at the most interesting point in the story. <sup>(2)</sup> This ploy is more successful, and it is some considerable time before the Master is allowed to continue.

The lengthy interruption thus heralded is, in fact, of extremely complex structure. Having brought the tale of the Master's inglorious pursuit of Agathe to a sickening halt, Jacques, admitting that he is motivated by no more than a desire for revenge, blackmails his Master into leaving his love-story in suspense and recounting the tale of Desglands's patch, promised while the two travellers were still at the Grand-Cerf. (Jacques's drowsiness will only permit him to listen to the story of his choice...) The Master, unfortunately, begins this tale with an inordinately long word-portrait of Desglands's mistress (the widow who was mourned by her husband...). This prompts Jacques to interrupt again with an anecdote concerning the son of Desglands and the widow - intentionally as monotonous as the description of the widow. (Jacques also makes it clear how little love he has for the word-portrait as a reliable guide to character, apart from anything else.) So we now have the interruption of an interruption, a story within a story within a story (told within the framework of another story...), like a set of Russian dolls.

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.244-45.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.254-55.

The interruption to the Master's love-story does not end with the completion of his tale of Desglands's patch, however. Jacques insists that they dismount and sit in the shade. There then follows a long and complex conversation, revolving around the purpose of gnats in the scheme of things, and then La Fontaine's fable of Garo, "Le Gland et la citrouille", before one final return to the discussion of the existence or non-existence of free will (in which Jacques promises a proof - which will only be given a page or so before the end of the novel proper when he engineers the Master's fall.) After this we have a description of Jacques's enormous hat, and finally the episode of the rediscovery of the Master's horse.

Unless there has been a considerable amount of re-working, either the whole of this interruption is a late addition or none of it is. Since it is somewhat improbable on the face of it that both the promise of a proof of the unreality of free will and the resolution of the "horse" theme (both of which are crucial to the final dénouement) should only have been inserted at a late stage in the novel's development, perhaps we must accept that the whole of the passage in question is "original". This would of course mean that the earlier passage in which Desglands was first introduced (part of the "suspect" thirty pages following the Pommeraye tale) must also belong to a primitive state of the novel. Such a supposition is perfectly consistent with the hypothesis that these thirty pages have been re-worked - the "Desglands" passage (and perhaps the ensuing row between Jacques and his Master) could simply have been re-inserted along with new material.

On the other hand, it is very noticeable that this interruption has one significant point in common with other incidental narrative material previously discussed, in that it comprises a cluster of brief anecdotes. As

has been indicated, <sup>(1)</sup> the Pommeraye story attracts a similar cluster, and the Hudson tale is actually part of a long string of incidental material. Now it is worthy of note that in the case of Lacune no.19, which we know to be a late addition, precisely this technique - of the grouping together of a variety of anecdotes unconnected with any of the main narratives, and of discussions not directly concerned with "fatalism" - has been employed. The structure of this Lacune illustrates how simple a matter it is for Diderot to introduce whole new sections of very heterogeneous material once these sections have been pieced together in themselves. Obviously, by grouping all his new material together, he would economise considerably on the task of working it in. Arguably, the very grouping of intrusive material is the most convincing reason for suspecting that it was introduced at a relatively late date. It is surely unlikely to be mere co-incidence that so large a proportion of the subsidiary narratives of Jacques should fall into very clear groups. (Moreover it is possible to use the appearance of Desglants in two of the three "cluster" discussed to argue that the intrusive material belongs to a common period of revision and addition.)

In the case of the "Desglants" group, however, one must probably accept that the balance of the structural evidence tends to suggest that these anecdotes and discussions did in fact belong to the "original" state of the text, or at least that there is insufficient evidence to come to any other conclusion concerning them. And one must therefore also accept the likelihood that the earlier "Desglants" series (A.-T.VI, pp.167-70) (together with the row between Jacques and his Master following directly upon it) is equally "original".

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(1) See above p.107 and pp.109-112.



That the Desglands stories were composed at an early date is in fact suggested by Vernière's linking of them with Diderot's visit to Bourbonne in July-September 1770.<sup>(1)</sup> It is to be noted, moreover, that, with the exception of the Desglands stories themselves, all of this material is closely connected thematically with the master/servant and freewill/determinism issues of the main narratives, and, for that reason too, so much the less likely to be a late addition.

This last argument can in fact be taken considerably further. Leon Schwartz<sup>(2)</sup> has ably demonstrated that the horse, throughout Jacques, is used as a symbol of Fate, or as the instrument of Fate. Now the pages we have been considering contain, if not the climax of the principal (and underlying) horse/Fate theme (which is, as we shall see,<sup>(3)</sup> Jacques's inability to join his Master in flight after the slaying of Saint-Ouin - the result of a snapped bridle and the consequent escape of his horse), then at least the prelude to that climax (which is the rediscovery of the Master's horse, and the swapping of mounts which ensues). In similar manner we have the prelude to another more apparent horse/Fate theme, that of the discussion of the workings of Fate, when Jacques promises his Master a proof which will be seen to involve the Master's steed. It appears improbable that these incidents should not have formed part of the original "Fatalism" story/debate, especially as none of the other fairly numerous "horse" episodes has been found to be detachable from it.

There remains to be discussed that strange series of author's postscripts which terminates Jacques le fataliste. To point out that Jacques, as a philosophical work, really ends with the hero's imprisonment,

(1) See above, p.6.

(2) Leon Schwartz, 'Jacques le Fataliste and Diderot's Equine Symbolism', Diderot Studies, 16, 1973, pp.241-51.

(3) See below, pp.177-79.

and that the last few pages are spurious<sup>(1)</sup> is to miss the point that the author himself goes out of his way to emphasise that these pages are mere sops to his public - which alone makes them of very great importance to the fact/fiction aspect of the novel.<sup>(2)</sup> But as regards the dating of this final section, nothing can be said with any degree of certainty. Of course, these passages have an extremely strong link with the very basis of Jacques's story - plagiarism. If the consequences of Jacques's knee-wound are borrowed from Corporal Trim's account of his wartime exploits, the "paragraph" in which Denise massages the hero's knee is a more direct crib - and the source is made perfectly explicit, lest there be any doubt. It is perhaps arguable, therefore, that these last pages belong to a period when Diderot first conceived of the idea of Jacques le fataliste. It is equally arguable, on the other hand, that they belong to a period when he was revising the novel with a view to bringing some of the issues more into the open. The deliberately, patently spurious nature of the "conclusion" means that once again there is insufficient evidence to consider it to be anything other than "original". And once again Vernière's research (linking the seduction attempt of the first "paragraph" with Diderot's revision, in November 1770, of Mme d'Epinaÿ's Mémoires, which recount the model for this tale - the story of Margency and Mme de Verdelin) tends to support this "conservative" view.<sup>(3)</sup>

However, that Diderot did undertake some major re-structuring of Jacques before its 1778 appearance must be largely beyond dispute, despite the

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(1) See Pruner, op.cit., Ch.XI, pp.300-21, 'Les deux dénouements de Jacques le fataliste'.

(2) This question will be the subject of a later chapter. (see below, 150-54)

(3) See above, p.7.

existence of some subsidiary narrative material (Jacques's tale of his brother Jean and Frère Ange, and of his Captain, and the Master's of the wedding ring and the octogenarian's wife) which are impossible to separate from the surrounding text, and are therefore that much more likely to have been included at an early stage (though this neither excludes the possibility that some or all of them may belong to a later stage of the novel's development, nor means that other stories not forming part of the "framework" may not have been as early or earlier).

To begin with, one whole episode of the novel (following the arrival of the two travellers at the Hôtel du Grand-Cerf) shows very definite signs of considerable alteration. For one thing, the whole of the "Bourru bienfaisant" scene (together with the "author's" commentary upon it) is in all probability a late addition to this section of the novel. More importantly, perhaps, there is also considerable confusion a little later surrounding the identity of the other two travellers staying at the inn, and the moral debate out of which the Pommeraye story appears to spring. This fact, coupled with the Master's failure to give the promised account of his own sufferings at the hands of the regular clergy (has this become the Hudson story?), suggests wholesale re-writing of the middle third of the novel, in the course of which the Pommeraye and Hudson stories might either have made their first appearance or else have undergone significant modification, particularly as regards the identity of their narrators and principal characters and the circumstances of their narration. Moreover, it is very probable that one or more moral tales were suppressed at some point in this process.

It is not possible to determine any precise notion either of what this section of the novel originally comprised or of the order in which changes were made, but a few points do suggest themselves.

Firstly, both the Pommeraye and Hudson stories are complete in themselves and their links with the remainder of Jacques le fataliste (at least in terms of structure and narrative content) both tenuous and of a deliberately "contrived" nature. Either could have existed independently of the novel as a whole, and the author apparently wishes us to assume that they did. One might well wonder whether others of his short stories might not have been equally suitable to figure in Jacques - indeed, the strange "méchants hommes/méchantes femmes" controversy which paves the way for the Pommeraye story would appear to have much more relevance to Ceci n'est pas un conte. This "story which is not a story" is in fact two stories! The first concerns the unfortunate Tanié, "victim" of the beautiful but hard-hearted Mme Reymer, the second Mlle de La Chaux, "victim" of the unscrupulous exploitation of Gardeil. It will be seen how the Landlady's prefatory remark: "Il faut convenir que s'il y a de bien méchants hommes, il y a de bien méchantes femmes", would be appropriate to these tales.

Moreover, the origins of Ceci n'est pas un conte are particularly interesting: the title undoubtedly refers to the second tale - which is apparently a true story, as the title suggests, and which appeared alone under that title in the April 1773 number of the Correspondance littéraire. The other story was added at a subsequent date and only saw the light of day in the Naigeon edition of 1798. One is tempted to think that Diderot was in some considerable doubt as to which of these three moral tales - of Mme de La Pommeraye, Mme Reymer and Mlle de La Chaux - should appear in which context.

Secondly, much of the basic structure of the Grand-Cerf section (interruptions included) clearly belongs to the period in which the Pommeraye story was included in the rest of the novel. Certainly it is hard to imagine that Diderot would have given full rein to the

Landlady without at least some interruptions to remind the reader that he was reading the history of Jacques the fatalist and his Master. If, as seems most probable, the Pommeraye story did not figure in the "original" state of the text (at least, in the form which we know), then the quantity of re-structuring which must have taken place upon its inclusion would have been considerable.

Some narrative elements of the central hundred pages could, however, belong to a different, later period. The references in the Pommeraye tale to Mlle Duquênôis's pernicious priest may well have been interpolated. Nor is the "author's" postscript to the Landlady's story - structurally at least - an integral part of that story: it could, indeed, have been appended at any time. The same is true of the thirty pages which follow, consisting of a hotch-potch of barely related material (including the Hudson story), all of which might well have been grouped together for insertion for reasons of economy of effort. Precisely the same argument could be applied to the group of stories interrupting the Pommeraye tale (Jacques's gag, and his Captain's friend's duelling exploits), which would therefore postdate the inclusion of the Pommeraye story. It is quite probable then, that these various additions were made to the central third of the novel after the Pommeraye tale (as we know it) made its appearance - even if that appearance was a fairly late one.

It would appear, on the other hand, that the final "cluster" of anecdoted material interrupting the Master's tale (A.-T.VI, pp.254-69) must be regarded - for the most part, at least - as belonging to the original state of the text. That apart, however, there do seem to be very reasonable grounds for detecting at least two phases of revision of, and addition to, Jacques le fataliste before the 1780 Additions. To the

first of these phases would belong the Pommeraye story (in its present form and circumstances at any rate), to the second the group of anecdotes interrupting it, and possibly the Hudson story, the cluster of anecdotes following the Hudson story and the journey narrative which serves as an introduction to it. The "Bourru bienfaisant" episode could have been added at any time, though it is likely to be of relatively late date.

Another group of narrative interpolations - all totally independent of the surrounding text - it has not been possible to attribute, on structural grounds, to any particular period of the novel's development. The stories concerned are of Aesop's arrest and the various adventures of Gousse and his cell-mate. It is to be noted that all of these tales are recounted by the "author" himself, and will therefore be considered, from a thematic point of view, in the course of our study of the "author's" rôle in his "history", to be contained in the following two chapters. These chapters will also contain an analysis of the "author's" briefer interpolations, which again it has not been possible to consider adequately in the present chapter. Finally, as a conclusion to Chapter V, an attempt will be made to present an approximate notion of the order of insertion of the material contributed by the "author", as a parallel to what has just been concluded with regard to the other subsidiary narrative material.

## CHAPTER IV

THE "AUTHOR" AND HIS "HISTORY."

On a first reading of Jacques le fataliste, the reader is perhaps most impressed by two features of the novel: firstly, the incredible (and frustrating!) complexity of its structure; secondly, the extensive use of the "self-conscious narrator" technique. It is indeed these aspects of Jacques which have attracted the attention of the historians of the novel. Not that there is, from the purely literary viewpoint, at least, anything outstandingly original in Diderot's contribution in either domain - indeed, his indebtedness to Laurence Sterne is both obvious in itself and made doubly explicit in the postscripts by the "author". (Nor was Sterne himself quite as much of an innovator as has sometimes been claimed, as the well-researched article of Wayne C. Booth demonstrates.<sup>(1)</sup> Diderot plagiarised Sterne: perhaps the single most important question concerning the Encyclopedist's intentions in Jacques le fataliste is why Diderot plagiarised Sterne.

To some extent, the answer to this question is bound up with Diderot's attitudes towards the novel, and in particular towards the roman d'aventures. The opening words of the Eloge de Richardson express his feelings unambiguously:

"Par un roman, on a entendu jusqu'à ce jour un tissu d'événements chimériques et frivoles, dont la lecture était dangereuse pour le goût et pour les moeurs."<sup>(2)</sup>

The novel can (and should) be something better than this, of course - as the Eloge swiftly goes on

(1) Wayne C. Booth, 'The self-conscious narrator in comic fiction before Tristram Shandy', Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, 67, 1952, March, pp.163-85.

(2) A.-T. V, pp.212-13.

to demonstrate - but the fact remains that the artistic and moral effect of the vast majority of fiction set before the public can only be pernicious. The writer is obliged to pander to the depraved whims of his reader, as literature becomes little more than an act of prostitution, while the reader's discernment is corrupted beyond redemption. This depressing situation does, however, contain one fascinating paradox - and therein lies hope, perhaps: for the novelist while he may be a slave to his reader is nevertheless free of all trammels of fact or morality, which makes his task absurdly easy; while the reader is not as free as he might suppose, being a slave to his own illogical and absurd compulsion to read stories which he knows to be fictitious and devoid of moral significance.

Jacques le fataliste clearly attempts to exploit this paradox to the full. Most critics deal in general terms with this question, and there is at least one penetrating study devoted exclusively to it.<sup>(1)</sup> It will not be the function of the present chapter to rehearse the arguments of these critics, but rather to seek to throw some light on the question, through an attempt at an "evolutionary" study of the intrusions by the "author".<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Robert Mauzi, 'Le Parodie romanesque dans Jacques le Fataliste', Diderot Studies 6, 1964, pp.89-132.

(2) To speak of "intrusions", of course, is in a sense to pre-judge the issue. Let it be remembered that the whole question of the relationship of the "author" to "his" work can be turned on its head. As Ernest Simon ('Fatalism, the Hobby-Horse and the Esthetics of the Novel', Diderot Studies, 16, 1973, pp.253-74) remarks: "But the sheer frequency of these personal appearances of the narrator, and the fact that he interrupts all levels of the novel - his own narrative, his characters' conversation, the conversations of characters within stories - impose the view that the narrator's activity is indeed the main business of the novel. We can no longer say, then, that the narrator intrudes, but rather, we must admit that he sometimes graciously consents to fade into the background." (p.271). Again, it is a matter of some difficulty to state when exactly the "author" is on stage and when he is off, particularly since the narrative is riddled throughout with remarks such as, "Vous allez croire que...". "Je voudrais bien savoir...". For the purpose of the present study, it seems appropriate to consider only those instances where the apostrophe of the "reader" lasts long enough for the "author" to make some kind of statement.



When the "author" appears on the scene, of course, it is not always to comment (in the tradition of Cervantes, Fielding and Sterne among many others) upon the development of his narrative. On some occasions (in lengthier interruptions) he deals with wider issues - in particular with Jacques's "fatalism" and with various more practical aspects of morality. It is not proposed to study these longer interruptions in the present chapter - they will be dealt with in Chapter VI (in the case of those reflecting the standpoint on fatalism taken by the "author") and Chapter VII (for those treating other moral issues). It will, however, be indicated in this chapter at what point all authorial interruptions occur, even when discussion of them has to be deferred.

The question of date of composition is in fact of considerable importance to the whole question of the "author"<sup>(1)</sup> and his "history". The preponderant part which the "author" plays in the later additions not only stresses the importance of this aspect of the work, but also suggests a possible modification of his rôle during the course of the evolution of the novel as a whole. (This suspicion seems to be borne out by the structural facts, as we shall see.)

Between the new material included in the 1780 Additions and the 1786 Lacunae, which obviously represent the final point in the evolutionary process, and those comments by the "author" which form the framework of the story - which we may therefore for practical purposes regard as a starting point - there is also that series of interventions by the "author" which are included in the 1778-80 text but easily detachable from it; these we must view as representing possible intermediate stages in the process.

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(1) The word "author" (with inverted commas) will normally be used to refer to the character as portrayed in the novel. The inverted commas will be dropped, however, where it seems inadvisable to attempt to distinguish between the real-life Diderot and his fictional alter ego. The same system will be used for the "reader".

Let us begin by considering those passages which are well worked into the two main threads of narrative, and which one may reasonably assume to have formed part of Jacques from an early stage. All of these passages, by definition, involve a mixture of commentary and narrative, rather than a simple commentary logically and grammatically distinct from surrounding narrative.

In the early pages, the greatest preoccupation of the "author" appears to be to flaunt literary convention and to banish from the work even the remotest pretence that what he is recounting is historical fact. The opening paragraph sets the scene perfectly:

"Comment s'étaient-ils rencontrés? Par hasard, comme tout le monde. Comment s'appelaient-ils? Que vous importe? D'où venaient-ils? Du lieu le plus prochain. Où allaient-ils? Est-ce que l'on sait où l'on va? que disaient-ils? Le maître ne disait rien; et Jacques disait que son capitaine disait que tout ce qui nous arrive de bien et de mal ici-bas était écrit là-haut."(1)

We are to be told no more than the "author" thinks we need to know - a kind of literary dictatorship has been established.

A mere two pages later the power of the "author" is again emphasised.

"Vous voyez, lecteur, que je suis en beau chemin, et qu'il ne tiendrait qu'à moi de vous faire attendre un an, deux ans, trois ans, le récit des amours de Jacques, ..." (2)

At this point Diderot gives the impression of toying with the novel as a genre in a deliberately provocative manner. This impression is reinforced by the commentary on the unseating of the peasant-woman by the surgeon

(1) A.-T. VI, p.9.

(2) *ibid.*, p.11.

determined to prove something about knee-wounds. (1)  
 This commentary again emphasises the author's power to develop the incident (and by extension the whole narrative) according to his own whim and fancy.

In like vein, the "author" halts the flow of the narrative yet again to discuss the fictional possibilities offered by the presence of the three surgeons, dismissing them all with the curious statement:

"Je vous fais grâce de toutes ces choses, que vous trouverez dans les romans, dans la comédie ancienne et dans la société." (2)

The next interruption (p.24) comes from the "reader", who objects in advance when he fears he may be subjected to a description of a surgical operation. The "author" generously agrees to spare him such an account.

In all of these interruptions, one element is conspicuous by its absence - the notion of truth, which in the later additions was to become so predominant. All of the emphasis here is on the omnipotence of the "author", the very opposite concept to that of his subservience to "truth". The only reference to "le vrai" in the passages just discussed occurs in a situation which leaves little room for doubt that it is not literal truth (or any simulation of it) which is at issue:

"Et je conçus qu'il ne s'agissait pas seulement d'être vrai, mais qu'il fallait encore être plaisant; et que c'était la raison pour laquelle on dirait à jamais: Qu'allait-il faire dans cette galère? et que le mot de mon paysan, Que faisait-elle à sa porte? ne passerait pas en proverbe." (3)

This is a far cry from the "truth" insisted upon in the later additions, for the implication here is that the "author" can choose what he is to write.

(1) A.-T. VI, p.13.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.23-24.

(3) *ibid.*, p.24.

The "author" again gives expression to his own views in a fairly lengthy aside beginning on p.29. This starts off as a commentary on Jacques's dispute with his Master over the nature of women, in which both make such broad generalisations that they cannot but be right. A storm disturbs their argument and the placidity of the "author", however.

"En suivant cette dispute sur laquelle ils auraient pu faire le tour du globe sans déparler un moment et sans s'accorder, ils furent accueillis par un orage qui les contraignit de s'acheminer... - Où? - Où? lecteur, vous êtes d'une curiosité bien incommode!" (1)

He now begins to list all the places where the two travellers might have spent the night. (Again, it is to be noted how far removed this is from any notion of subservience to inviolable truth.) Finally he decides:

"Si vous insistez, je vous dirai qu'ils s'acheminèrent vers ... oui; pourquoi pas? ... vers un château immense, au frontispice duquel on lisait: 'Je n'appartiens à personne et j'appartiens à tout le monde. Vous y étiez avant que d'y entrer, et vous y serez encore quand vous en sortirez'." (2)

Pruner<sup>(3)</sup> regards the description of the "château immense" as a key passage. For although the "author" "renounces" the allegory he has embarked upon, it is not before he has exploited it sufficiently well to make his point (that the world - the "château immense" - belongs to all but has been misappropriated by a few with the aid of their hired thugs), or before the reader's suspicions of an allegory underlying the whole work have had time to be aroused. If the "hint" is an intentional one, though, it is only offered to those astute enough to spot the implications of the passage. (This reticence, needless to say, is easily

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.29-30.

(2) *ibid.*, p.30.

(3) Pruner, *op.cit.*, pp.22-24.

enough "justified" by Diderot's unwillingness to undergo persecution for the expression of the dangerously radical views around which Jacques, according to Pruner's thesis, is built.)<sup>(1)</sup>

After abandoning his allegory (the avowed one, that is), the "author" kindly invites the reader to choose for himself where the travellers might have spent the night - an interesting suggestion, but not one which would tend to persuade the reader of the literal truth of the work. The "author" himself offers a few more suggestions, taking advantage of the opportunity to make some rather pointed remarks about social inequalities.<sup>(2)</sup>

Finally, the whole argument is brought back to the "fatalism" issue:

"... car, quoique tout cela vous paraisse également possible, Jacques n'était pas de cet avis: il n'y avait réellement de possible que la chose qui était écrite en haut."<sup>(3)</sup>

The whole episode now appears to have been contrived simply to allow the author to quote Jacques's philosophy at us again. Jacques, of course, misstates the argument, insofar as he uses the language of superstition to express the "scientific" truth of determinism, but the point (presumably) remains none the less valid - on the general philosophic plane, that is.

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- (1) Few critics now interpret in these terms Diderot's reluctance to publish, of course, and at least one (Aram Vartanian, in his 'Jacques le Fataliste: A Journey into the Ramifications of a Dilemma', Essays on Diderot and the Enlightenment in Honour of Otis Fellows, ed. J. Pappas, Geneva, Droz, 1974, pp.325-47) takes marked exception to the idea that the Encyclopedist might have taken to writing in something very like code.
- (2) This is something of particular importance for Smietanski's approach. See Smietanski, op. cit., pp.79-115, 'La Peinture de la Société'.
- (3) A.-T. VI, p.31.

On the purely literary level, however, it stands out by its patent irrelevance: how can there be only one possible "truth" when the author is allowed to choose for himself the outcome of events, is accountable to no one, and actually invites the reader to partake of the creative apple? What this restatement of Jacques's beliefs does emphasise - again, only by implication - is the patent fictitiousness of the story being narrated. When, a little later, <sup>(1)</sup> the "author" remembers at last where the two spent the night, fictional normality is as it were restored, but not before the foundations of the novel as a meaningful genre have been shaken.

The arrival of the two travellers at the Grand-Cerf inn is marked by two curious interventions on the part of the "author". The first, in fact, consists of two "slips" as he "accidentally" lapses into the use of the first person and is upbraided for it by his diligent "reader":

"Il était tard; la porte de la ville était fermée, et ils avaient été obligés de s'arrêter dans le faubourg. Là, j'entends un vacarme... - Vous entendez! Vous n'y étiez pas; il ne s'agit pas de vous. - Il est vrai. Eh bien! Jacques... son maître... On entend un vacarme effroyable. Je vois deux hommes... Vous ne voyez rien; il ne s'agit pas de vous, vous n'y étiez pas. - Il est vrai." (2)

Similarly, on the second occasion, the "author" makes an unexpected appearance on his own stage:

"Le lendemain Jacques se leva de grand matin, mit la tête à la fenêtre pour voir quel temps il faisait, vit qu'il faisait un temps détestable, se recoucha, et nous laissa dormir son maître et moi, tant qu'il nous plut." (3)

Neither of the incursions helps greatly to maintain suspension of disbelief.

(1) A.-T. VI, p.35.

(2) *ibid.*, p.91.

(3) *ibid.*, p.99.

If we leave aside for the moment the central sections of Jacques (the structure of which, as has been shown, suggests that considerable modifications have taken place) and resume our quest for the "author" on the more certain ground of the last sixty pages of the novel, there emerges a very interesting similarity to the interventions of the "author" so far discussed.

Conveniently for our purpose, this last section of the work (after the long Lacune no.19) begins with an appearance of the "author", though this time in the guise of the editor of an already existing manuscript.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus a new note is added - no previous mention having been made of the relation being at second hand. The "manuscript" theme will be taken up again at the end of the novel. This is the closest Diderot approaches in the "framework" passages to an insistence on any kind of objective truth, and then it is in a manner which makes it clear he is merely toying with literary convention. The attempt to make Jacques and his Master appear more authentic by speaking of their descendants is an interesting move, however!

The familiar theme of power emerges yet again in one of the interruptions by the "author" to the Master's tale:

"Lecteur, qui m'empêcherait de jeter ici le cocher, les chevaux, la voiture, les maîtres et les valets dans une fondrière?"<sup>(2)</sup>

Other possibilities suggest themselves, but the "author" concludes:

"Mais il n'y eut rien de tout cela. Le chevalier et le Maître de Jacques arrivèrent à Paris."

And now it is the "author" who continues the Master's tale for a while, until he decides to hand over again:

(1) A.-T. VI, p.226.

(2) *ibid.*, p.254.

"Ils s'approchent de la porte, le chevalier l'ouvre, introduit le maître de Jacques, garde le passe-partout de la rue, lui donne la clef du corridor, referme la porte d'entrée, s'éloigne, et après ce petit détail fait avec laconisme, le maître de Jacques reprit la parole et dit:..."

The final interruption forming part of the "framework" takes the form of an exchange between the "author" and his "reader".<sup>(1)</sup> This marks a return to the original nature of the relationship between the two, with the "reader" attempting to prise as much information as he can out of an unyielding "author". Since the "reader" is concerned here with the Master's primary object in undertaking the journey, and his primary destination, the passage is an exact counterpart to the debate which opens the novel.

Thus a fair degree of consistency appears in those remarks of the "author" which belong to the basic structure of the novel. Only the suggestion of an underlying allegory and the reference to a manuscript source disturb the general picture of an author made conscious of the problems of his narrative by the probings and objections of his reader, but refusing to meet them save in terms of his own power over his material (and indeed over his reader). We have already observed, however, a clash between the notion of "truth" as applied to external reality and "truth" as applied to the novel. (It will be noted too that it has not been necessary to defer for discussion in the succeeding chapter any of these "framework" comments: all belong to the "literary" theme.)

As for the contribution of the "author" to the central hundred pages, in the light of what has been said in the previous chapter<sup>(2)</sup> it would appear appropriate to divide these into three series: passages constituting part of the basic structure of the section of the novel built around the Pommeraye tale; "detachable" interruptions

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.254.

(2) See above, pp.99-114.



to that section; and elements ("framework" or otherwise) of the thirty pages of heterogeneous material which follow the completion of the Landlady's account.

The first passage for consideration, though it appears to be mere interpolation, does in fact contain a narrative element - the calming of Jacques's and the Landlady's tempers. Again the theme is that of power.

"Eh bien! lecteur, à quoi tient-il que je n'élève une violente querelle entre ces trois personnages? Que l'hôtesse ne soit prise par les épaules, et jetée hors de la chambre par Jacques; que Jacques ne soit pris par les épaules, et chassé par son maître; que l'un ne s'en aille d'un côté, l'autre d'un autre; et que vous n'entendiez ni l'histoire de l'hôtesse, ni la suite des amours de Jacques? Rassurez-vous, je n'en ferai rien. L'hôtesse reprit donc: ...". (1)

The "author" clearly intends to make the most of the fact that he now has two compelling stories with which to tease the reader's curiosity.

The next two passages continue this theme, and - when taken together - can be shown to represent an equally subtle continuation of the thread of the history. Although they are separated by some six pages of the A.-T. text, it has already been suggested that the six pages in question may well represent a relatively late addition.<sup>(2)</sup> If that is the case, then they may well, at some stage in the novel's development, have followed one another.

"Et vous, lecteur, parlez sans dissimulation; car vous voyez que nous sommes en beau train de franchise; voulez-vous que nous laissons là cette élégante et prolixe bavarde d'hôtesse, et que nous reprenions les amours de Jacques? Pour moi je ne tiens à rien." (3)

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.107-108.

(2) See above, pp.107 and 118-119.

(3) A.-T. VI, p.117.

"La voilà remontée, et je vous préviens, lecteur, qu'il n'est plus en mon pouvoir de la renvoyer. - Pourquoi donc? - C'est qu'elle se présente avec deux bouteilles de champagne, une dans chaque main, et qu'il est écrit là-haut que tout orateur qui s'adressera à Jacques avec cet exorde s'en fera nécessairement écouter." (1)

The sequential link between the two is quite clear: the "reader" has been invited to choose between two stories, but demurs - and now it is too late. The first passage (posing the question) is thus essential to the second (furnishing an answer - of a kind!), which in turn sets the scene for the Landlady's narration and provides, in the two bottles of champagne, a causative factor which will operate throughout much of the remainder of the novel.

The argument here is as subtle as the narrative technique - for, although the "author" may appear to be admitting his own weakness in the face of Fate, it will readily be seen that in reality he is stressing his own power: The "reader" has made no decision because no decision has been written for him; the Landlady arrives with champagne because the author decides she shall arrive with champagne. And so the taunt continues.

These are the only authorial remarks involved in the framework of the "Pommeraye" episode, and clearly continue the "power" theme. The same is not true, however, of the three passages interrupting this section of the narrative. The first of these (pp.106-107) is a reply by the "author" to the remark by the "reader" (à propos of the scene just witnessed between the Landlord and his debtor): "voilà ... le vrai dénouement du Bourru bienfaisant". We have already seen that this lengthy aside, like the scene to which it refers, probably entered the novel at quite a late date. (2) What is interesting about its content is that it is literary criticism offered from what is clearly a moral

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.124.

(2) See above, pp.99-101.

standpoint.

The second interruption in this series again shows this new moral preoccupation. It is the discourse on fidelity beginning with the words "Le premier serment que se firent deux êtres de chair..." (though the "author" is unclear whether this discourse was pronounced by himself or by one of his characters), which in fact introduces the six-page series of possible late additions to this section, and therefore (in the completed state of the text) follows the second of the three "framework" passages just discussed. (1)

The other interruption made by the "author" to this section of the novel occurs when he abruptly stops the Landlady in her tracks in order to compose his "theatrical" description of the disposition of the three characters. (2)

Much has already been said in the previous chapter (3) about the manner of integration of the Pommeraye story into the novel as a whole. In the context of what has been said earlier in the present chapter concerning the effect of the interruptions by the "author" upon the credibility of the main narrative, it needs to be pointed out that the interruptions to the Pommeraye tale do not have quite the same effect, or, presumably, intentions. For the story of Jacques and his Master is, in the best picaresque tradition, a highly improbable kind of narration, the vraisemblance of which is not aided by constant re-iterations of its truthfulness; the Pommeraye tale, on the other hand, though probably fictional, is constructed so carefully as to comply implicitly with conventional notions of credibility. Now the interruptions serve to heighten the contrast

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- (1) For a discussion of the moral arguments of this interruption and of the "Bourru bienfaisant" commentary, see below, pp.215-19 and 208-12 respectively.
- (2) A.-T. VI, p.135.
- (3) See above, pp.105-109.and

between the two narratives, and this has the effect of underlining the artificiality of a genre which allows so stylised a piece of narration as the Pommeraye story to be put into the mouth of one of the characters of another narrative. No harm befalls the Pommeraye tale, of course - its "truthfulness" (in any sense) is never called into question - and literary illusion, though deliberately shaken, is certainly not destroyed. (To become a very forceful piece of conventional literature, the tale has merely to be lifted from the novel as a whole, and this, of course, was the fate which befell it.)

The decision of the "author" to describe how his characters are positioned has much the same effect as their own interruptions, but it goes further towards emphasising the artificiality of it all by the perfect speciousness of the justification for yet another interruption to the story.

The contributions by the "author" to the thirty pages which follow the completion of the Pommeraye story constitute a mixture of moral and "literary" commentary. It is not the function of the present chapter to analyse the implications of the moral arguments voiced,<sup>(1)</sup> but it is clearly arguable that the very existence of such arguments - both here and in the interruptions to the narrative before and during the Landlady's story - denotes a marked change of approach from that seen in the remarks of the "author" studied up to this point.

The first interruption in this series is the lengthy apology by the "author" for the conduct firstly of Mlle Duquênôis, then of Mme de La Pommeraye herself. This is a passage of considerable importance, the moral issues of which will need to receive close examination.<sup>(2)</sup> On the formal plane, the commentary again emphasises the fictitiousness of the narrative framework in which the

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(1) For an analysis of these arguments, see Chapter VI, passim.

(2) See below, p. 199-200.

tale is somewhat incongruously set. This is done rather obliquely, though on a number of occasions.

Thus:

"Il vous aurait été peut-être plus agréable d'entendre là-dessus Jacques et son maître; mais ils avaient à parler de tant d'autres choses plus intéressantes, qu'ils auraient vraisemblablement négligé celle-ci. Permettez donc que je m'en occupe un moment." (1)

Similarly, a little later:

"On ne vous a pas dit qu'elle avait jeté au nez du marquis le beau diamant dont il lui avait fait présent; mais elle le fit: je le sais par les voies les plus sûres." (2)

Again, in the same vein, the "author" goes on to tell us considerably more than his character has told us concerning the financial dependence of Des Arcis upon his mistress, and about her good reputation and its importance. Clearly it is the "author's" story which the Landlady has recounted.

The justification of Mlle Duquênoi and Mme de La Pommeraye completed, and his spleen thoroughly vented, the "author" returns to his narrative, but it is not long before he intrudes upon the scene again, this time through an invitation to the "reader" to choose which of two versions of the episode (how the champagne-besotted Jacques spent the night, whether on chairs or on the floor) he prefers.<sup>(3)</sup> This is a return to the variation on the "power" theme presented by the "allegory" of the "château immense".

Des Arcis's story of the abbé Hudson is preceded by a long and complex intervention by the "author", the greater part of which will be dealt with in the next chapter. For the moment it is the "literary" aspect - again a variation on the "power" theme - which concerns us.

(1) A.-T. VI, p.162.

(2) *ibid.*

(3) *ibid.*, p.164.

It will therefore suffice to consider the argument which forms the beginning and the end of the interruption, namely that the "reader" will have to be content with the Marquis Des Arcis's tale, especially as Jacques is in no condition (or mood) to take up his story. Then the "author" launches into a protest at being obliged either to forego the "reader's" acclaim or serve him up with one long series of love-stories - for is this not all that "literature" consists of? Unfortunately, however, the story told by Des Arcis is not of this type.

"Tant pis pour le marquis des Arcis,  
pour le maître de Jacques, pour vous,  
lecteur, et pour moi." (1)

If this interruption shows the "author" in aggressive mood, in his next two appearances we see a more deferential attitude: firstly his apology for the improper language used by Hudson in his retort to Richard's mockery (which has already been mentioned in another context);<sup>(2)</sup> and secondly, a couple of pages later,<sup>(3)</sup> his invitation to the reader to meditate upon the possible outcome of a union between Mme de La Pommeraye and the abbé Hudson.

Though there may be a difference in tone, however, the "author's" remarks on his "reader's" obsession with love-stories and his "apology" for Hudson's language both herald the 1786 addenda, particularly the "éloge de l'obscénité", where the public is taken to task in much more certain terms. Here we see the beginnings of an attack upon the "reader" which apparently has less to do with his interpretation of events than with his attitude to life and literature. It will become clear later, however, that a definite link exists between the two.

(1) A.-T. VI, p.182.

(2) *ibid.*, p.192 (see also above, pp.54-55).

(3) *ibid.*, p.194.

One last brief intervention by the "author" in these thirty pages - made in response to the reader's question: "Nous allons donc reprendre la suite des amours de Jacques?" - returns to the theme of the uncertainty of the "author" as to the outcome of events. ("Je l'espère; ...")<sup>(1)</sup> Again, although the "author" may claim that the progress of the hero's love-story is a matter for the Fates, it is obvious that in a novel the Fates owe allegiance to a higher agency - namely the novelist himself. Thus, by implication, this avowal of uncertainty is a re-statement of the author's power over his reader.

By and large, then, the general theme of the comments of the "author" on literary issues in the central hundred pages of Jacques follows much the same line as in the "framework" passages of the rest of the novel, though with minor variations. There are two real exceptions to this trend, occurring in three interruptions all of which belong to the thirty pages following the Pommeraye tale - precisely that section of the novel which one may suspect consisting of an accumulation of interpolated material.<sup>(2)</sup>

The first new departure (contained in the commentary by the "author" upon the Pommeraye tale) is the inference that the story, though put into the mouth of the Landlady, is in fact already known, and in greater detail, to the "author". Such an admission, even if half-concealed, does little for the credibility of the fictional structure into which the nouvelle is set, but it does provide a kind of guarantee of both the authenticity and the moral significance of the tale.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.194.

(2) See above pp.109-112.

(3) This technique of allowing the reader to see the importance which the "author" attaches to his characters' narrations is employed in more direct fashion à propos of Jacques's tale of the duelling captains (A.-T. VI, p.68), and it will receive fuller treatment. (See below, pp. 145-46).

Certainly we are a long way from the "power" theme's apparent insistence on Jacques as the improvisations of a virtuoso.

The second new aspect is the emergence of a critique of the literary tastes of the reader, and of his moral prejudices with regard to literature. This is a near reversal of the "power" theme - with the emphasis now on the reader's power over the author, the latter being under constraint to provide material that is entertaining (i.e. love-stories) in language which is decent.

Apart from these adaptations made to the commentary by the "author" on the writing of his "history", moreover, we are faced with a "new" interest in moral issues. This is again to be found only in passages - the six-page interruption to the Landlady's narration, and the final thirty pages of the central section - which may have entered the novel after the period of integration of the Pommeraye story.

Following through our list of "detachable" passages, <sup>(1)</sup> a rather different picture immediately begins to emerge. A very few pages from the opening of the novel, when the author intervenes in a discussion between his two principal characters on the theme of the "grand rouleau", a rather more fundamental note is struck. This passage is important enough to warrant quoting in full:

"Vous concevez, lecteur, jusqu'où je pourrais pousser cette conversation sur un sujet dont on tant parlé, tant écrit depuis deux mille ans, sans en être d'un pas plus avancé. Si vous me savez peu de gré de ce que je vous dis, sachez-<sup>(2)</sup> m'en beaucoup de ce que je ne vous dis pas."

Again the stress is on the author's power - in this case to prolong at will a discussion which can lead nowhere. But if the discussion can lead nowhere, what

(1) See above, pp.96-97.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.15.



is the purpose of a work like Jacques? Are we to infer that Diderot himself considered the free-will/determinism problem, as an intellectual brain-teaser, to be insoluble? If so, then those parts of Jacques in which the issue is discussed in this way must be regarded as either satirical or deliberately spurious - or both.

The strange episode of the "troupe d'hommes armés de gaules et de fourches" - or rather the non-episode (for Jacques and his Master, we learn, were not really followed at all) - must be regarded, despite appearances, as a fairly significant passage. On the surface it is merely a case of the "author" toying with his reader, and the ironic tone of the penultimate comment:

"Il est bien évident que je ne fais pas un roman, puisque je néglige ce qu'un (1) romancier ne manquerait pas d'employer"

seems to support this view. The "author's" protest: "mais adieu la vérité de l'histoire" can be dismissed as blatant tomfoolery, especially as it is uttered in the same breath as "adieu le récit des amours de Jacques" which tends to suggest that there is a choice between the two stories rather than between truth and fiction.

However, the final sentence of the commentary forces us to take a more serious look.

"Celui qui prendrait ce que j'écris pour la vérité, serait peut-être moins dans l'erreur que celui qui le prendrait pour une fable." (2)

On the face of it we have been warned not to expect the author to behave like a mere novelist when he is writing a factual work. But this warning must be seen in the light of the frequent attempts by the "author" to shake us out of our all-too-willing suspension of disbelief. A

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.21.

(2) *ibid.*

novelist may be "lying", but, to the best of his powers and the literary conventions of the culture within which he is writing, he will endeavour to cloak the "lie" in a semblance of reality, in deference to the reader's sensibilities.<sup>(1)</sup> Diderot would appear to be trying to claim that Jacques is constructed on an exactly opposite basis - a straight truth cloaked in the guise of a "fable".

Another interruption emphasising that Jacques le fataliste et son maître is "not a novel" occurs on p.45.

"Vous allez croire, lecteur, que ce cheval est celui qu'on a volé au maître de Jacques: et vous vous tromperez. C'est ainsi que cela arriverait dans un roman, un peu plus tôt ou un peu plus tard, de cette manière ou autrement; mais ceci n'est point un roman, je vous l'ai déjà dit, je crois, et je vous le répète encore."<sup>(2)</sup>

The disavowal is a particularly intriguing one, since, of course, the Master's horse is restored to him rather later in the course of the "history" and in a rather different manner. In other words, the careful reader has been warned that Diderot - whatever his intentions may be - is deliberately using all the devices of a novelist, deliberately satisfying the conventions of the novel (albeit in a convoluted manner) and deliberately causing his reader to view his work at all times in terms of the novel.

Five successive "interruptions" by the author raise issues which go beyond the "truth" theme, and so, in the main, will be discussed in the following chapter. They are the tale of Aesop's arrest (pp.53-54), the "Gousse" sequence (pp.68-73, 88-90, 96-99) and the discussion of the "Bourru bienfaisant" scene. (pp.106-107).

The introduction to the first of the "Gousse" digressions does, however, centre around the "truth" theme

(1) It is, of course, precisely to this kind of falsehood and hypocrisy that Diderot objects - see above, pp. 126-27.

(2) A.-T.VI,p.65.

and is particularly pertinent to what has been said about the author's pretensions to be writing something other than a novel. The digression begins, in fact, with an affirmation of the truth of the story: the author heard it, so he tells us, related by an officer - apparently of very serious disposition - at the Invalides, before a number of his fellow-officers. (But the tale, as it appears in the novel, is related by Jacques, not by the author directly ...) The reader is then given a warning - of the kind to which we have begun to grow accustomed, though the tone here is more final:

"Je vous le répète donc pour ce moment et pour la suite: soyez circonspect si vous ne voulez pas prendre dans cet entretien de Jacques et de son maître le vrai pour le faux, le faux pour le vrai. Vous voilà bien averti, et je m'en lave les mains." (1)

A striking implication lies beneath this argument. If Jacques tells a story which Diderot heard recounted at the Invalides, then we may very well accept the authenticity of the story, but we have been reminded very sharply of the fictitiousness of Jacques himself and therefore of the literary conventions in which the work is set.

And there, suddenly, in a nutshell, is the intended methodology of Jacques le fataliste: a complete reversal (in intention at least) of the novelist's approach. A novelist tries to create an illusion of truth, even to the point of relating his invented stories and imaginary characters to true historical events and real people. Diderot scorns such contrivance by setting his story in timelessness, by depriving his characters of any individual identity (hence the uninformative appellations employed), but he goes much further than this: for does he not, by persistent interruption, deliberately and repeatedly set out to destroy the illusion of truth, and so emphasise the fictitiousness of what he is writing?

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.68.

A novelist seeks to disguise fiction as truth. Diderot's object is to disguise "truth" (we shall see shortly what significance this term has) as fiction. He has included much that is improbable but "true" in a framework which is improbable and deliberately underlined as false. Caveat lector. (1)

Like Jacques, the "author" provides a running commentary - consisting of six interruptions following

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- (1) The idea that Diderot sets out deliberately to destroy the illusion of reality is emphasised by Irwin L. Greenberg in his 'Narrative Technique and Literary Intent in Diderot's Les Bijoux indiscrets and Jacques le fataliste', Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, 79, 1971, pp.93-101: "In both novels, then, the narrator suddenly becomes an editor (and in the Bijoux a translator as well), points out omissions in his manuscript, forms conjectures about them, and claims he is writing truth rather than fiction. Clearly, Diderot is satirizing the practice of many eighteenth-century authors of memoir novels who typically claimed in their prefaces that they were merely editing or translating authentic manuscripts. At the same time, and more importantly, by reminding us that his characters are the literary inventions of another author, Diderot intentionally destroys the conventional illusion of reality in fiction, which has been described as 'the illusion that the characters are made of flesh and blood with wills of their own'." (p.97. The quotation is taken from Katherine Lever, The Novel and the Reader, New York (n.d.), p.40.)

each other in fairly rapid succession - on the Master's story.<sup>(1)</sup> The first of the six is little more than an attack upon the legal and juridical system of France. In support of the Master's seemingly incredible figures concerning the cost of law suits, the "author" offers another staggering instance of the same abuse - which in turn provokes the astonished horror of the Master and Jacques.<sup>(2)</sup>

The second interruption in this series returns to a well-worn theme - that of the power of the "author" to expose his reader to any tiresome material he may choose - in this case a possible renewal of the fierce row between the two characters which took place at the Grand-Cerf inn.<sup>(3)</sup>

Only a page later the "author" intervenes again: he has (by some strange intelligence!) discovered that the "reader" has stopped reading. The "reader" would like to see the letter written by Agathe to the Master, as, perhaps, he would have liked to see the one dictated by Mme de La Pommeraye to her accomplices, but to comply with his wish would be to destroy literary illusion, for:

"Un historien, qui suppose à ses personnages des discours qu'ils n'ont pas tenus, peut aussi leur supposer des actions qu'ils n'ont pas faites. Je vous supplie donc de vouloir bien vous passer de ces deux lettres, et de continuer votre lecture."<sup>(4)</sup>

And the story continues where it was left off.

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- (1) One of these, the fifth, (p.254) belongs as we have already seen (above, pp.134-135) to the framework of this section of the novel. It is a restatement of the familiar theme of the power of the "author", in the course of which he himself relates the Master's tale for a while.
- (2) A.-T. VI, p.237.
- (3) *ibid.*, p.245.
- (4) *ibid.*, p.246.

The point, as applied to factual or pseudo-factual literature in general, is clearly valid enough. Applied to Jacques le fataliste it may perhaps seem rather less so, for the opening words of the interruption ("Lecteur, vous suspendez ici votre lecture; ...") themselves do little to aid literary illusion.

It is necessary, however, to differentiate between the different planes of narrative in Jacques. All the comments by the "author" about truth, his own power and so on have tended to call into question only two of these planes, albeit the central ones - the journey and Jacques's amours - the planes, in other words, upon which Jacques himself exists. Nothing has been said to call into doubt the authenticity of the intervening stories and anecdotes (whether in reality they are factual or not), and the Master's tale and the story of Mme de La Pommeraye, which the "author" also brings into the argument, are no exceptions to the rule. In both of these stories, the reader's attention is continually distracted by all manner of interruptions, all literary conventions are thrown to the wind and superficial illusion is repeatedly shattered - but nothing ever challenges the "truth" of the story which is being told in such improbable circumstances.

Thus, even within the context of a notion of "truth" which comprises at once literal truth, fictional illusion and probability, and a less easily-defined idea approaching the much-abused "meaningfulness", it is possible to take some of Diderot's claims to authenticity a little more seriously. Once we begin to untangle the threads a little a clearer picture of the pretensions of the "author" will emerge.

The fourth interruption to the Master's tale takes the form of a somewhat unbridled attack upon the "reader" who has leapt to an over-hasty conclusion concerning Saint-Ouin's "confession".<sup>(1)</sup> This will receive

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.248-49.

separate treatment in the next chapter. After this vigorous castigation, the "author" remains in the background for a while, apart from the "framework" passage already discussed,<sup>(1)</sup> until Jacques's words: "Est-ce que vous ne vous êtes pas aperçu que j'étais hydrophobe?" provoke a critical reaction from the "reader". Would Jacques use such a word as "hydrophobe"? The "author" admits that he would not, and that the word is his own, but defies the "reader" to find any piece of literature in which the words of the "author" are not to be found in the mouth of his character. Comparison of this remark with the earlier one concerning the folly of historians' putting their own words in the mouths of historical characters reflects badly on Jacques, but the "author" ignores the possibility of attack and concludes:

"Jacques a dit: "Monsieur, est-ce que vous ne vous êtes pas encore aperçu qu'à la vue de l'eau, la rage me prend? ..."  
Eh bien? en disant autrement que lui, j'ai été moins vrai, mais plus court." (2)

The abbreviation turns out to be rather lengthy, perhaps.

As for the concluding four pages of the novel, fittingly it is the "author" who dominates them. The Master has killed the Chevalier de Saint-Ouin - thus bringing to an end the chain of causality in which the journey represents the last few links - and fled. Jacques's horse has broken its bridle and made off, thus completing another such chain: for it turns out that his destiny is bound up, not with the hangman's horse, but with his own trusty steed. Jacques's arrest represents the logical end of his relationship with the Master, to whom, in the last resort, he was of less importance than life and freedom. Thus the "first" ending is sudden, unexpected, bizarre - but above all a logical conclusion.

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(1) *ibid.*, p.254. See above pp.134-35 and p.148, n.1.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.269. This passage occurs at the end of the long series of incidental material constituting the second "Desglans" cluster. (see above, pp. 117-118).

Now, along comes the "author" to throw sand in the reader's (the real reader's) face.

"Et moi, je m'arrête, parce que je vous ai dit de ces deux personnages tout ce que j'en sais." (1)

The declaration is reasonable enough. And when the "reader" objects that he has not heard the end of Jacques's love-story, he has an answer at hand:

"Jacques a dit cent fois qu'il était écrit là-haut qu'il ne finirait pas l'histoire, et je vois que Jacques avait raison." (2)

But that is not enough: the "reader" grows angry; an ending must be found. At first the "author" remains arrogant:

"eh bien, reprenez son récit où il l'a laissé, et continuez-le à votre fantaisie, ou bien faites une visite à Mlle Agathe, sachez le nom du village où Jacques est emprisonné; voyez Jacques, questionnez-le: il ne se fera pas tirer l'oreille pour vous satisfaire; cela le désennuiera." (3)

(The two suggestions are mutually incompatible, of course: either the story is true, in which case the reader is not in a position to provide his own ending, or fictitious, in which case Jacques will prove rather hard to locate.)

Now, though, the "author" begins to unbend a little.

"D'après des mémoires que j'ai de bonnes raisons de tenir pour suspects, je pourrais peut-être suppléer ce qui manque ici; mais à quoi bon? on ne peut s'intéresser qu'à ce qu'on croit vrai." (4)

He will read through these memoirs (despite his reservations as to their authenticity) and, within a week, let us know his opinion of them.

(1) A.-T. VI, p.283.

(2) *ibid.*

(3) *ibid.*

(4) *ibid.*



There is no need to delve very deeply beneath the surface here to realise that what the "author" is saying is, quite simply: if you really want an ending, I can easily supply you with one. In fact he does better than that: he provides three conclusions, mutually compatible, perhaps, but each sufficient in its own way. The first and third paragraphs (i.e. versions), he says, appear to him to be original (whatever that may mean!), the second clearly interpolated. Again (by implication only, of course) he goes out of his way to stress their fictitiousness.

"Voici le premier, qui suppose une seconde lacune dans l'entretien de Jacques et son maître." (1)

Here Jacques's imprisonment is not allowed to pose too much of a problem! To make the point clearer still, the story (of the result of Jacques's bitter words, "C'est que vous ne m'aimez pas ...") is not even an original one, <sup>(2)</sup> a fact which Grimm's readers would probably not be slow to appreciate.

The second "paragraph", whose theft from Sterne the "author" (or rather, the "editor", as he has now become) readily admits, and which again ignores the question of Jacques's imprisonment, shows us Jacques overcome by passion as Denise rubs his afflicted parts. Its ending is striking:

"Mais ce qui ne laisse aucun doute sur le plagiat, c'est ce qui suit. Le plagiaire ajoute: "Si vous n'êtes pas satisfait de ce que je vous révèle des amours de Jacques, lecteur, faites mieux, j'y consens. De quelque manière que vous vous y preniez, je suis sûr que vous finirez comme moi. - Tu te trompes, insigne calomniateur, je ne finirai point comme toi. Denise fut sage." (3)

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.283.

(2) See above, p.7.

(3) A.-T. VI, p.285.

A fierce battle is struck up between the "plagiarist" and his "reader", which has all the marks of the accustomed battles between the "author"/"editor" and his "reader". Thus a gentle hint is given as to the identity of the "plagiarist".

So far the "author" has given us two plagiarised conclusions to Jacques's story to match its plagiarised beginning. In the third "paragraph" he provides his own ending, not just to Jacques's story, but to his relationship with the Master and with Denise: the Master is imprisoned but freed; Jacques is freed by the Mandrins, and joins them until they attack Desglonds's château, where the Master is now living; he is able to intervene to save both the château and its occupants, and is thus reunited with his Master and able to marry Denise.

This conclusion, of course, is highly satisfying for its success, within the context of a complete subservience to a romanesque code of logicity, at tying up all the remaining loose ends, and tying them up together at that. Diderot has kept us waiting for what is, in a sense, his pièce de résistance: a conclusion which, for the reader obsessed with "des contes d'amour", must be near perfect.

9 But "romanesque" logic - not to mention the need to keep his reader supplied with a long stream of love stories - is precisely what the "author" has been objecting to throughout the length of the novel. What the public looks for in print is quite simply "literature" - in the "author's" restrictive and derogatory sense of the word. It wants a good, satisfying plot and as many love-stories as possible. Moreover, the love-stories ought to be of a chaste variety - it is to be noted that the "author" has already been obliged to apologise for Hudson's vocabulary and that in the version of the second "paragraph", given by the "reader", "Denise fut sage". In the former instance the "author" merely

hints at the reader's hypocrisy; in the latter the "plâgiarist" takes him severely to task for misconstruing the words: "et la baisa". It is thus partly as a continuation of this attack that one must view the introduction of the highly risqué material of Lacune no.19, in which the reading public's hypocritical standpoint is shaken by "love" stories of a very different kind, and directly challenged by the "author" in very unambiguous language.

On the other hand, and despite all his protests to the contrary, the decision by the "author" to produce the three "suspect paragraphs" makes it clear that he has set out to give the public precisely what it wants - a novel. All of his remarks about his own power to put the story together as he pleases must therefore be seen in terms of the need to satisfy a public whose tastes are far from catholic. Theoretically, the reader is in a position of strength, because he can choose what he reads, so that the onus is on the writer to please him. But the reader's tastes are so simple [ and so predictable (and so corrupt!) that the burden is a very light one. The last of the 1786 Lacunes puts the whole "power" issue into perspective:

"Mais l'abbé Hudson est mort! - Vous le croyez? Avez-vous assisté à ses obsèques? - Non. - Vous ne l'avez point vu mettre en terre? - Non. - Il est donc mort ou vivant, comme il me plaira..... mais je dédaigne toutes ces ressources-là, je vois seulement qu'avec un peu d'imagination et de style, rien n'est plus aisé que de filer un roman." (1)

If to satisfy the reader is a simple task, then the "author" endowed with more than a little imagination and style will be able to accomplish more than a simple gratification of his literary lusts. The "reader", after all, is easily hooked, and once in the captivity of the "author", he can be made to swallow any diet of the "author's" choice. So there is a place for "truth" - the "author's" truth - within the confines of fiction.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.239.

Interestingly, the 1786 Lacunes combine the "power" and "truth" themes which appeared separately in the 1778-80 text. As we have seen, <sup>(1)</sup> Lacunes nos. 3 and 4 begin with the "author" listing the choices of action before him, and end with him telling us what really happened. Lacune no. 2 begins in an exactly similar way, until the "reader" brings the debate round to an opposition of what is "true" and what is interesting, and so paves the way for the "author" to launch into the tale of the would-be poet whom he sent off to Pondicherry. And the contribution by the "author" to Lacune no. 20 also begins with a re-affirmation of his own power. He lists all the characters whom he could suddenly cause to re-appear upon the scene (even if they are supposedly dead), but concludes:

"Un faiseur de roman n'y manquerait pas; mais je n'aime pas les romans, à moins que ce ne soient ceux de Richardson. Je fais l'histoire, cette histoire intéressera ou n'intéressera pas: c'est le moindre de mes soucis. Mon projet est d'être vrai, je l'ai rempli. Ainsi, je ne ferai point revenir frère Jean de Lisbonne; ce gros prieur qui vient à nous dans un cabriolet, à côté d'une jeune et jolie femme, ce ne sera point l'abbé Hudson."<sup>(2)</sup>

The implication of all these passages would seem at first sight to be that Jacques was right, and that only one outcome of a given situation is possible. But we know very well, and the "author" himself has left us in little doubt, that the twin bases of the framework of the novel, the journey and Jacques's love-story, are pure romance designed to satisfy the reader. Something very different, then, is implied on the words: "Mon projet est d'être vrai, je l'ai rempli."

For an understanding of the full implications of the word "truth" in Jacques, three allusions are of particular importance. The first and second of these belong to "detachable" sections of the novel, and the

(1) See above, pp. 42-43.

(2) A.-T., VI, p. 239 (This passage leads into the one previously quoted.)

third to a known late addition (Lacune no.4). If it is fair to assume that Diderot, in the later stages of the development of Jacques, deliberately introduced "clues" to guide his reader through the maze, then (depending on dating) one of these passages, and possibly two or even all three, could be said to fall into this category. All have received some treatment above. They are as follows:-

1. "Il est bien évident que je ne fais pas un roman, puisque je néglige ce qu'un romancier ne manquerait pas d'employer. Celui qui prendrait ce que j'écris pour la vérité, serait peut-être moins dans l'erreur que celui qui le prendrait pour une fable." (1)

2. "Je vous le répète donc pour ce moment et pour la suite: soyez circonspect si vous ne voulez pas prendre dans cet entretien de Jacques et de son maître le vrai pour le faux, le faux pour le vrai. Vous voilà bien averti, et je m'en lave les mains." (2)

3. "mais pour cela, il faudrait mentir, et je n'aime pas le mensonge, à moins qu'il ne soit utile et forcé." (3)

This last occurs within the context of an affirmation of the truth of the "journey" narrative. But it offers, somewhat obliquely, the hint of a different criterion for establishing what should or should not enter the novel: its usefulness to the author's purpose.

It has already been argued, à propos of the first and second quotations, that Jacques is intended to represent a reversal of what is assumed to be the novelist's technique, and to be instead a portrayal of truth in the guise of fiction.

But why all the warnings? If Diderot is merely

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.21. See above, pp.144-45.

(2) *ibid.*, p.68. See above, pp.145-46.

(3) *ibid.*, p.66. See above, pp.42-43.

saying that the reader may easily be mistaken as to which of the various narrative material of Jacques is likely to be factual, or factually-based, then he is not crediting him with a great deal of intelligence.

At this point it is worth recalling the preface to the 1780 Additions:

"Il ne le fit dans l'origine que pour remplir le vuide de nos nouveautés littéraires, et lorsqu'il en écrivit la première ligne il ne savait pas encore ce qu'il dirait dans la seconde; la seule loi qu'il crut devoir s'imposer fut de ne rien inventer et de ne rien peindre qui ne lui parût de la plus extrême vérité. C'est aux lecteurs qu'il a désiré d'amuser à juger comment lui a réussi un projet qui semblait si propre à développer toute la verve et toute la liberté de son génie."<sup>(1)</sup>

Some of these claims are, admittedly, extreme. That the whole of Jacques is unlikely to have been created for the Correspondance littéraire - at least at the time of its appearance in that journal - has already been demonstrated.<sup>(2)</sup> This fact, coupled with what we know or may reasonably surmise about the integrity of the 1778-80 text, suggests that the manner of creation of the novel was nothing like as spontaneous as Meister would have us believe.

On the other hand, Meister's attitude to "la vérité" is an interesting one. What he is speaking about, quite obviously, is not "factuality", but what is true, in a subjective sense, to the author - in other words a fairly conventional literary notion of accurate portrayal of the outside world.

Or is it? Diderot, after all, is a philosopher concerned at all times with the communication of ideas. What matters to him is not the event but the explanation of the event. The "truth" of a situation, for Diderot, is surely not the accurate recording of it, but an accurate

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(1) See above, pp.29-32.

(2) *ibid.* pp.30-31.

assessment of its origins and implications. Everywhere there lurks an argument. Again, we have seen that Diderot, through the "author", admits to employing the criterion of usefulness. If his purpose is analytical, illustrative or didactic, then the material he is to use will be chosen accordingly: the material must be pertinent to the argument. What matters is the argument and what is relevant to it.

Seen in this light, the reiterated warnings by the "author" take on a new significance. What we are dealing with is "truth" at the level of ideas. If we are to look for the "truth" of the work, does this not mean that we have to seek out the arguments, and, therefore, what is relevant to them? <sup>(1)</sup>

If one is to locate the real arguments, the first requirement is to weed out the false ones - for things, we know, are not what they seem. It may reasonably be assumed that these tend to go hand in hand with the obviously fictional in the narrative. Thus Jacques's amours, since their whole framework is so evidently contrived (a fact heavily underlined by their blatant plagiarism and the obviously "romanesque")

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(1) One aspect of the "realism" of Richardson's novels which Diderot most admired was, after all, their psychological validity, which he again referred to as "la vérité": "O Richardson! j'oserai dire que l'histoire la plus vraie est pleine de mensonges et que ton roman est plein de vérités. L'histoire peint quelques individus; tu peins l'espèce humaine: l'histoire attribue à quelques individus ce qu'ils n'ont ni dit, ni fait; tout ce que tu attribues à l'homme, il l'a dit et fait: l'histoire n'embrasse qu'une portion de la durée, qu'un point de la surface du globe; tu as embrassé tous les lieux et tous les temps. Le coeur humain, qui a été, est et sera toujours le même, est le modèle d'après lequel tu copies. Si l'on appliquait au meilleur historien une critique sévère, y en a-t-il aucun qui la soutînt comme toi? Sous ce point de vue, j'oserai dire que souvent l'histoire est un mauvais roman; et que le roman, comme tu l'as fait, est une bonne histoire. O peintre de la nature! c'est toi qui ne mens jamais."  
(A.-T.-V, p.221).

nature of their final dénouement) can, in themselves, hardly stand as proof of anything. In any case, what could they be a proof of? That, in the life and loves of a man, one event is consequent upon another is scarcely a world-shattering observation, and gains little from illustration by a piece of plagiarised fiction. Unless, that is, the whole picture were to be presented, so that the reader might judge for himself how far every move in the game had been determined, or unless unexpected links were to be established. But Jacques imposes upon himself a limited scope which renders impossible the realisation of either of these aims, so that what he proposes as a "chain of causality" is little more than a sequence of events.

In the 1778-80 text, the remoteness of Jacques's amorous past from his present situation is underlined by the long catalogue he gives of his rapid changes of Master. This same list, however, taken alongside the story of the enforced silence of his childhood at his grandfather Jason's (which, as we have seen, may be a relatively late addition) does establish a real causal relationship in his life. For the gag has made him irrepressibly loquacious, a characteristic appreciated by none of his former Masters - but it is appreciated by his present master, hence the situation in which he now finds himself (and the fate which will be his ...). A further link is added by the addition, within the 1786 Lacunés, of the story of his scandalous behaviour in the village, which appears to be another, perhaps more substantial, reason for his father's anger and his own hasty departure and enlistment. However, this is a reason in which le hasard has no place. All of this further emphasises that Jacques's account is selective, particularly as regards its point of departure.

Causality, as we have said, becomes a more interesting case for study where the links are less obvious. Apart



from Jacques's own past, we see several examples of this appearing in Jacques le fataliste, not the least concerning the hero himself. For Jacques, ultimately, is caught up in his Master's love-story, which proves to have been the cause for the journey itself, and, unhappily, is soon to be the cause of Jacques's imprisonment. Thus, in the last resort, and despite all his references with regard to Fate, it is not his own amours but the Master's which are bound up with Jacques's ultimate destiny.

Jacques's love-story therefore turns out to have been something of a red herring, but it is far from being the only one. The question of the hero's horse has already been mentioned, but merits closer study. When the Master loses his own steed and they unwittingly buy a hangman's horse to replace it - the Master mounting Jacques's animal and allowing the valet the doubtful pleasure of experimenting with the unknown - Destiny suddenly appears to make an entrance, as Jacques is repeatedly carried off to every gibbet in the province. Much play is made of this, and of the significance of the kiss bestowed by Jacques upon the executioner, but in the end it is his own horse which, by breaking its bridle and taking flight at the crucial moment, seals his fate.

And is not "timelessness" itself a red herring? For the two characters are not mere antagonists in a debate, as the opening page would have us believe, but have pasts of their own, pasts which impinge on one another and which are the causes of their present behaviour and attitudes. Despite all appearances, the journey does have both a motivation and a destination, and, despite the reluctance of the "author" to admit the fact it does involve a stay (of one or two nights, depending on whether Jacques's use of "avant hier"<sup>(1)</sup> is accidental or intentional) at a named place: the town of Conches.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.35.

Thus the main narrative, though it is fiction, is no mere romance, for things turn out to have been very different from what they seemed to be. Events have operated according to Jacques's laws, but not the events which Jacques and his Master have been discussing. The characters' significance is altered too: at first sight they appear to be observers and commentators, but ultimately they are seen as actors in a destiny game of which they have always been part. The "truth" of the narrative therefore lies not in the discussion which takes place, as the reader might expect, but in the action itself.

There is another aspect of "truth" to be found in the novel (in general and Jacques's story in particular. Most of Jacques's troubles, in fact, spring from the poverty of the people surrounding him - the peasant couple who can ill afford another mouth to feed, the commissionnaire who will be paying for months to come for the vat of oil which she has broken, even the robbers driven to desperation by the prospect of the punishment they face as a result of giving in to want.

Enough has been said elsewhere<sup>(1)</sup> about the state of the French countryside at this time, and the picture which Diderot paints of it in Jacques. What matters for the present purpose is to demonstrate how reality is to be found in the midst of fiction. What is "true" in this series of episodes is not so much the logicality of the outcome of events (the choice of which is purely arbitrary) as the human problems (economic, social or psychological) which underlie the events themselves, for here the author is recording something which exists outside his own fictional world. He is offering not proofs (as it appeared) but statements of fact.

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(1) See Smietanski, op.cit., pp.80-90, 'La peinture du monde paysan et de la campagne'.

If the ostensible purpose of Jacques's story is a false one, then what of Jacques's philosophy, his "fatalism"? Close attention will have to be paid to this question, with reference to the "truth" theme, to the author's own contributions and to the changing emphases of the novel. (1)

Clearly, when the "author" tells us that the "truth" of the novel is not where we would expect to find it, he is not merely jesting. There is a sequential logic in Jacques's life, but it goes much deeper than he would have us believe; there is a sequential logic in the main narrative too, although the author would prefer us to think there is none; the characters do have pasts, and their present situation does have its cause. (2) And the two principal actions do take place in a very real situation - the impoverished French countryside.

As for the "evolution" of the work, it is to be noted that all of these hidden elements existed in what one must assume to be the oldest parts of it. All that is really in doubt is the extent of the contribution by the "author" at different stages, and at what point the concluding four pages were appended - that is to say, the clues rather than the brain-teaser itself.

However, since we have been able to detect a marked difference of theme between those remarks of the "author" which are worked into the framework of the novel and those which form detachable interruptions to it, it seems not unreasonable to infer a different date of composition for the two series. The issue is somewhat clouded by the question of the role of the "author" in the central hundred pages of the novel. These present, in

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(1) This will be the function of the following chapter.

(2) Other determined aspects of their behaviour will come to light in the next chapter.

those passages forming part of the basic structure of the "Pommeraye" section, a continuation of the "power" theme, and in detachable interruptions to that section, as well as in the thirty pages built around the Hudson story, a combination of the "power" theme and a variety of new attacks upon the literary taste and moral judgement of the "reader". Although there is no direct relationship to the "truth" theme here, it seems fair to talk in terms of a development (as well as a divergence) of the line of attack, with an association of morality and literature not to be found in the seemingly "original" sections of the work.

The central section apart, we are left with two basic series of commentaries (dating from different periods), the one stressing the power vested in the writer, the other his subservience to "truth" and the need for care on the reader's part. Viewed in terms of these, the motives of the "author" for including yet another series of such commentaries among the 1786 addenda become a little clearer. For Lacunae nos. 3, 4 and 20, by combining the two themes, serve as a bridge between them, and oblige us to see the "power" of the "author" in terms of his subservience to a reality lying outside his novel. Power to develop his narrative as he sees fit is, in fact, we are now brought to realise, the prerogative of the writer of fiction: our author is determined to be bound by something greater than the need to please his reader and to string together a series of events in such a manner as to create the maximum number of astonishing situations (though within the context of plausibility).

Thus, there is every indication of a progression towards a commentary upon the novel which is not only more explicit but also more meaningful than that which had preceded it. Beginning with an attack on the literary conventions within which the work appears to be set - though to which, it is claimed, it does not belong -

Diderot has moved on to provide the reader with a positive (if, at times, veiled) guide to the task confronting him. How well this ties in with the contribution by the "author" to the "fatalism" debate will be seen in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER V

THE "AUTHOR" AND "FATALISM"

Before embarking on a study of the "fatalism" of Jacques le fataliste, one might do well to reflect upon the diversity of critical opinion on this matter and upon the possible causes of so much uncertainty. The following quotations between them reflect most of the prevalent arguments and viewpoints:-

"... il ne retient la définition leibnizienne du possible - ce dont le contraire est impossible (A.-T. XV, p.502) - que pour la retourner contre la thèse de la contingence: la croyance en d'autres possibles n'est qu'un effet de l'ignorance, et tout est nécessaire. Ignorance et passion nous font invoquer le hasard, lorsque notre attente est déçue: mais cette déception - nous retrouvons ici la remarque de Rosenkranz - devrait plutôt convaincre de la nécessité des choses." (Yvon Belaval)(1)

"Athée, il l'était à la ville, mais à la campagne, sous le ciel étoilé, il se sentait déiste. Il était contradictoire, il était double, il était partagé entre deux tendances, dont l'une le portait à penser le monde scientifiquement, c'est-à-dire inhumainement, et l'autre à reconnaître en chacun de nous une essence personnelle, unique, indépendante, susceptible d'amélioration et d'enrichissement par un libre effort du coeur et de la volonté." (André Billy) (2)

"Both directly, and indirectly through Jacques himself, Diderot supplies the "proof" in action which cannot be given in terms of discursive logic, that life is arbitrary and not mechanical." (Lester G. Crocker) (3)

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- (1) Yvon Belaval, 'Quelques mots d'accompagnement', pp.1-23 of his edition of Jacques le fataliste, Paris, Club français du livre, 1953 (p.23).
- (2) André Billy, 'Ce Génial Jacques le Fataliste', preface (pp.7-22) to Jacques le fataliste in Collection Dilecta Series (8), Paris, Editions Albin Michel (p.15).
- (3) L.G. Crocker, 'Jacques le Fataliste, an "Expérience Morale"', Diderot Studies 3, 1961, pp.73-99(p.80).

"In the early 1770's, naturalism and materialism loosen their grip on Diderot's thought. After 1772, the only piece that fits into this category is the Eléments de physiologie, most of which was perhaps written in the late 1760's or early 1770's. It would be too much to expect Diderot to take a final stand on one side or the other. But the moralistic current, which had remained strong through the "naturalistic period" (as if in a separate compartment), at last comes to grips with his materialistic determinism, in Jacques le Fataliste (1773-4) and the Réfutation d'Helvétius (1773-5). The decreasing influence of the Holbachian milieu was perhaps one factor in this final shift." (L.G. Crocker) (1)

"Pour la raison pratique jumelée malicieusement avec la raison pure dans le couple de Jacques et de son maître, le hasard prend un sens et l'expérience de l'absurde suggère et fortifie cet existentialisme allègre, généreux et confiant que Diderot propose à tous comme une viatique sur le chemin venant d'on ne sait où, allant on ne sait où, que suivent Jacques et son maître, et qui est pour tout homme le chemin de sa vie." (Jean Fabre) (2)

"According to him, the average reader runs the risk of identifying the artificiality of certain art-forms with the reality they purport to represent, just as many philosophers are liable to be deceived by the ambitious claims of a particular metaphysical "system"; but both these attitudes imply a rigid viewpoint which is essentially sterile. ...

The principle of "transformism" or "evolution" allows reality to "mind", not as a distinct substance, but as a highly developed and refined form of that "matter" which constitutes the ultimate reality of the universe." (Ronald Grimsley) (3)

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- (1) L.G. Crocker, Two Diderot Studies, Ethics and Esthetics, in The John Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures and Languages, Extra Volume XXVII, John Hopkins Press, 1952 (p.35).
  - (2) Jean Fabre, 'Jacques le fataliste: problèmes et recherches', Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Vol. LVI, pp.485-99, (p.497).
  - (3) Ronald Grimsley, 'Morality and Imagination in Jacques le Fataliste', Modern Language Quarterly, 19 (No.4), Dec. 1958, (pp.283-93 (p.285)).

"Materialism was less a matter of inner conviction for Diderot, to shape his thoughts and actions, than an external attitude characteristic of the pragmatist or the scientific researcher. ... He sets, on the one hand, the simple statement of one's supposed allegiance, an intellectual matter, not unlike adherence to a political party, and, on the other hand, the record of his actions and the expression of his personal feelings in thought, speech and writing.

It is in this sense that Diderot is a materialist. He adopts a materialistic picture and tries to contain his philosophic and scientific speculations within a materialistic framework. He tries even to analyze human behaviour and human personality in these terms. But he also quite freely admits the weaknesses and inadequacy of materialism in his letters, in Jacques le fataliste, in the Réfutation. Because his adoption of or conversion to materialism was conscious and deliberate, he is ready and able to look beyond it when it fails to account for reality as he experiences it, when his philosophic creed is at variance with his personal experience." (Emita Hill)(1)

"Le maître, sachant qu'il commande, se croit libre, mais aussi parce qu'il commande, n'agit pas. Le valet, sachant qu'il obéit, se croit déterminé, mais aussi parce qu'il obéit, agit. Le valet est donc, en style hégélien, le lieu de la liberté du maître, le maître celui de la détermination du valet." (Roger Laufer) (2)

"However fixed the effects of prior determinants, cannot a man act on the present effect, even slightly, with his volonté, so as to veer the slightest from the present direction by the mere addition of his momentary will? With enough such changes the determinant becomes changed and the individual collection of matter called mind or will power has become a determining part of the determinant. In short, the will which, up to now, was effect and necessary as a natural consequence of prior backlog, is now cause and free as part of the causal agent for the future." (J. Robert Loy) (3)

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- (1) Emita Hill, 'Materialism and Monsters in Le Rêve de d'Alembert', Diderot Studies 10, 1966, pp.67-93 (pp.69-70).
- (2) Roger Laufer, 'La structure et la signification de Jacques le Fataliste', Revue des sciences humaines, 112, Oct.-Dec. 1963, pp.517-535 (p.521).
- (3) J. Robert Loy, Diderot's Determined Fatalist, A Critical Appreciation of Jacques le Fataliste, New York, King's Crown Press, 1950, 234 pp. (p.131).



"Rien n'est hasard - tout ce qui est, est nécessairement: telle est la pensée maîtresse que Diderot prouve - à sa façon si personnelle (mais peut-il être autre qu'il n'est?) - dans son Jacques le fataliste: Comme il est écrit dans l'article 'FORTUIT' de l'Encyclopédie: 'L'idée de hasard n'a d'autre fondement que l'ignorance où nous sommes de la totalité des liaisons causales'." (Francis Pruner) (1)

"Dans notre conception du destin, du fatalisme, la notion de causalité s'estompe, elle est au contraire au centre même de la notion de déterminisme. Celle-ci est sûrement présente dans Jacques le Fataliste, mais elle n'y tient pas la place essentielle. Diderot croit certes au caractère rigoureux et universel de l'action des lois. Mais il s'attache surtout à un domaine particulier, au monde moral, et c'est la négation de la liberté humaine qui l'intéresse d'abord." (Guy Robert) (2)

"The confrontation with the views of Helvétius did not impair Diderot's belief in determinism. He continued to take for granted that the multitudinous factors of nature and nurture, if they could all be known, would reveal a being absolutely determined by the sum total of the previous influences bearing upon him. Such a being, however, was at the same time a human organism endowed with the potentiality of self-knowledge. Diderot's interpretation of human nature conceived of man as being energetic and activist within the framework of a rigorous determinism. Consequently, his determinism is more bracing than the somewhat flaccid environmentalism of Helvétius. The large role given by Helvétius to chance and accident leads to a passive conception of man, very unlike Diderot's." (Arthur M. Wilson) (3)

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(1) Francis Pruner, op.cit., p.18.

(2) Guy Robert, 'Le destin et les lois dans Jacques le Fataliste', L'Information littéraire, 3e année, No. 4, juillet-octobre 1951, pp.127-29 (p.128).

(3) Arthur M. Wilson, Diderot, New York, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp.665-66.

It will be observed that, apart from a certain unanimity among those who see Jacques as being (solely or in part) an exercise to prove the validity of universal determinism (Belaval, Pruner, Robert), there tend to be almost as many points of view on the question as there are critics. Was Diderot applying uncompromisingly to le monde des actions morales the "truths" of scientific determinism? Or are the ambiguities of the work a reflection of contradictory attitudes within the mind of the author, as Billy would have us believe - a question of temperament, in fact? Or are we faced rather with a testing-out of the philosophy of "fatalism" or "determinism" in the experience of reality, as Crocker believes? Or is Jacques an attempt to contain human experience within the overall concept of determinism, while admitting the weaknesses of the theory, as Emta Hall suggests? Or ought one to lean more towards the arguments of Loy and Grimsley (and, to some extent, Wilson), who agree in asserting that mind (or will) has now, for Diderot, become a determining factor in its own right? Is the notion of "le hasard" (if not that of "le libre arbitre") refuted once and for all (despite appearances), as Belaval and Pruner assert categorically and others imply, or is Diderot observing, and actually underlining, the random nature of human life, and drawing Camusque conclusions (as Fabre appears to indicate)?

Three quotations, the first from a letter to Mme de Maux, the others from the Réfutation d'Helvétius, should suffice to show the difficulty of assessing Diderot's position from his own statements.

"J'enrage d'être empêtré d'une diable  
de philosophie que mon esprit ne peut

s'empêcher d'approuver, et mon coeur de démentir." (1)

"Est-il bien vrai que la douleur et le plaisir physique, peut-être les seuls principes de l'action de l'animal, soient aussi les seuls principes des actions des hommes?" (2)

"On est fataliste, et à chaque instant on pense, on parle, on écrit comme si l'on persévérerait dans le préjugé de la liberté, préjugé dont on a été bercé, qui a institué la langue vulgaire qu'on a balbutiée et dont on continue de se servir, sans s'en apercevoir qu'elle ne convient plus à nos opinions." (3)

The first remark appears to lend weight to Billy's view that the determinism/free-will conflict in Diderot's writings is a reflection of an inner conflict between speculative theory and moral temperament, while the second suggests that the rebellion against the rigidity of materialist determinism might be a more reasoned one (though here, as elsewhere, it is precisely these reasons which are lacking). The third quotation, on the other hand, while restating the temperament v. theory conflict, pours scorn on the philosopher who has not yet learned to live with his own philosophy - and there is no suggestion that it is the latter that is at fault!

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- (1) Diderot, Correspondance, ed. Roth, Vol. IX, pp.154-55, Letter 558, "A Madame de Maux", dated "Fin septembre 1769?" (p.154). This letter, which appears in Babelon among the 'Fragments sans date' (See Diderot, Lettres à Sophie Volland, ed. A. Babelon, Paris, Gallimard, 1930, 3 vols., Vol.III, pp.282-83). was traditionally considered to have been written to Sophie Volland. Jean Pommier's researches (published in his Dialogues avec le passé, Paris, Nizet, 1967, pp.260-67, 'Diderot et Mme de Maux') have, however, thrown fresh light on the situation, and it is now generally considered that Mme de Maux was the recipient of this letter, together with many others - if not virtually all - of the 'Fragments sans date'. Certainly Roth's policy is to attribute them to the Mme de Maux correspondence, though sometimes with a query. There is still, however, some tendency among critics to ascribe this letter at least to Diderot's correspondence with Sophie Volland.
- (2) A.-T. II, p.302.
- (3) *ibid.*, p.373.

Faced with such a wealth of conflicting statements and opinions, we are still left to find an answer ourselves to three broad questions: 1) What exactly is the relationship of Jacques's fatalism to materialist determinism? 2) What is Diderot's position with regard to both? 3) What is the function of fatalism in Jacques?

What is most striking about Jacques's philosophy is its vocabulary. Jacques always mis-states the arguments, enveloping what might be fundamentally true in the language of superstition and all that is patently false. His philosophical jargon is basically a traditional Christian one (though this is mingled with elements of pre-Christian classical paganism), and this aspect is brought out in the very first paragraph of the work:

"... et Jacques disait que son capitaine disait que tout ce qui nous arrive de bien et de mal ici-bas était écrit là-haut." (1)

The underlined expressions, like the other recurrent terms of Jacques's vocabulary - "le grand rouleau", "le ciel", "le destin" - are based on notions deriving from a personalised view of the forces of the universe. However we may interpret Diderot's love-hate relationship with materialist determinism, such a vocabulary can hardly be said to be his. Clearly, at the purely linguistic level, we are faced with parody, with a materialist philosophy raised to the level of a religion.

Relatively little critical attention has been paid to this question of vocabulary. In a recent article, however, Maurice Roehlens has this to say on the subject:

"Il conviendrait ... de préciser les conditions philosophiques, politiques, idéologiques, linguistiques, propres au

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.9.

matérialisme de la deuxième moitié du dix-huitième siècle et à celui de Diderot, qui permettent cette présence théologique au coeur d'un matérialisme athée. Esquissons rapidement une réponse, parmi d'autres possibles: on sait l'importance, mais aussi les ambiguïtés, de la notion du Tout comme celle de l'ordre dans la pensée philosophique, politique, morale et esthétique de Diderot, qui constituent, à ses yeux, les conditions mêmes de la pensée et fournissent sans doute les deux mots-clés de son idéologie. Or la pensée du Tout (en tant que tel, nécessairement unifié et ordonné, fût-ce dans l'instant et de manière ponctuelle) est une pensée de Dieu, même absent ou inconnu, au moins une pensée au point de vue de Dieu. Le matérialisme de Diderot, si critique soit-il à l'égard des idées de Dieu, de spiritualité, de liberté ou de finalité, reste un matérialisme d'obédience théologique; entendons par là qu'il persiste à formuler ses questions (fût-ce pour n'y point répondre ou montrer qu'on n'y peut répondre) dans les cadres et les termes de la pensée déiste, où théologie et téléologie ont constamment partie liée, dans les catégories de l'idéologie dominante: Jacques repose tout entier sur la supposition qu'il y a un texte, idéalement ou théoriquement lisible, là où il n'y a pas de texte. Fausse question en un sens, mais question centrale, autour de laquelle tourne l'oeuvre, sans que jamais la contradiction soit aperçue ou assumée: Jacques n'est possible que dans la tension qui s'établit, à tous les niveaux du texte, entre un projet matérialiste et la présence obsédante des catégories, des problèmes, des figures et du langage de l'idéologie déiste." (1)

This assessment of the "theological" question seems in many ways to be a very valid one. But it must be emphasised that Diderot's use of theological vocabulary is both deliberate and conscious, and a clear parody. If the terms of reference of a materialist of the eighteenth century were necessarily confused, as Roehlens suggest - and there appears to be little reason to context this affirmation - then it is important to note that Diderot was himself aware of the paradoxical nature of his predicament.

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(1) Maurice Roehlens, 'Jacques le fataliste et la critique contemporaine', Dix-huitième siècle, no.5, 1973, pp.119-37 (p.135).

But which materialist philosophy is it which we see here treated in terms of a religion? Jacques never lays claim to any originality for his ideas, which he attributes to his Captain. His Captain, in turn (it is later revealed) is a good disciple of Spinoza. Spinoza's Ethics, then, would seem to be at the heart of the parody.

At the suggestion of satire or parody, of course, the Voltairean analogy screams for attention. Just as Candide presented a satire of Leibnizian optimism, so Jacques will show us the shortcomings of an over-mechanistic approach to life - thus runs the argument of those who prefer to see Diderot moving towards a position of somewhat moralising liberalism.

That an analogy is intended to be drawn is hardly disputable. The very title, after all, echoes the title and sub-title of Voltaire's tale, with the name of a character followed by that of a philosophy. But whether such an approach can be fruitful is another matter. (We have already seen something of Diderot's delight in leading the reader a series of wild-goose chases.) Firstly the relationship of the two characters to their respective philosophies is entirely different: Candide (for the greater part of the tale) is little more than the embodiment of an "optimistic" view of life; Jacques, on the other hand - though he is an enthusiastic convert to his Captain's philosophy - finds great personal difficulty in accepting all its implications. Secondly, Jacques's fatalism is arguably more complex than the "optimism" of Pangloss. At one level it is a psychological attitude - of resignation to one's lot (since things cannot be otherwise than as they are). At another level it is - despite the language in which it is couched - a materialistic approach to causality which, logically, must lead to a profoundly amoral view of human behaviour (since men cannot act

otherwise than as they do). The arguments may owe much to Spinoza, but Hobbes, La Mettrie and Helvétius, among others, are evidently implicated by extension. There is, too, a fairly obvious overlap with much that Diderot himself had written on the subject.

The precise position of Diderot vis-à-vis a mechanistic interpretation of human behaviour merits much fuller study than has been devoted to it by scholars so far or it is possible to devote to it in the present study. The enormity of the task involved will have been made clear by the diversity of views put forward in the review of current criticism which prefaces this chapter.

Emotionally, it is arguable, Diderot tended to rebel against the implications of determinism (as Jacques did). Intellectually, however, he accepted the argument with at least some of its implications, because it was impossible to refute. The resulting conflict could hardly be resolved at the emotional level, for Diderot was no "fatalist" who could resign himself to accepting all human nature as inevitable and washing his hands of it. If there was to be a solution to the conflict, then it had to be through some modification of the intellectual argument.

Now it is very tempting to believe that, in his later works, Diderot was outlining a "new determinism" in which thought itself became a determining, as well as a determined, factor, and which took into account not only the complexity, but also the dialectical nature, of an individual's relationship with his environment. Obviously, only by an approach of this kind could he hope to reconcile materialist determinism with individual responsibility. It is, however, extremely difficult to find any evidence to suggest that, in terms of abstract reasoning at least, Diderot ever succeeded in making this "breakthrough". One may very well imagine that he could not have made a secret of a "discovery" which would

have enabled him to create a considerably more harmonious system of thought. (That is not to say that the artist may not have come closer to a solution than the philosopher. What matters, after all, is the resolution of the intellectual problem at the conscious level.)

Nor, given his terms of reference, is it easy to see how he could have arrived at this "new determinism". Diderot's view of mind was a strictly materialist one - simply the brain (a physical part of a physical body) at work. The products of this mind are therefore determined from the first by physical factors. He never gives us to believe that consciousness can in any way alter things. (Jacques's Captain, of course, is convinced that it cannot: a snowball hurtling down a mountainside, even if it were conscious of itself, would be able to alter its course not one jot.)<sup>(1)</sup>

Significantly, however, the impasse did not prevent Diderot from investigating moral issues. The Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville demonstrates that a materialist viewpoint can yield results, while the contes show him tackling the question of human judgement.<sup>(2)</sup> What Diderot does in these other fictional works is to sidestep the determinism/free-will issue, and to tackle the problems of human behaviour from other points of view. Though determinism may provide an underlying explanation, its theoretical discussion is of little use when coming to grips with human beings.

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(1) Cf. Crocker's uncompromising statement: "These scholars (seeing "a new kind of determinism that admits of self-determination") tend to confuse mechanistic materialism with fatalism, and set these together against a "determinism" that allows the individual to act as the determining cause. But the only other possible kind of determinism would be that of psychic causes, and Diderot denies that the mind is anything but the brain in function. The brain, or will, is a causative factor; but it is none the less the result of necessary determinants and therefore a mechanical factor." (Lester G. Crocker, op.cit., pp.37-38.)

(2) For a comparison of the different moral techniques of Diderot's fiction, see below, pp.



Seen in this context, the parody of "fatalism" takes on a different aspect. There is no need to suppose that Diderot was attempting to demolish part, or all, of the Captain's system. Indeed, it is to be noted that no refutation, either theoretical or (as in the case of Candide) experimental, is offered. (This is the other main point of divergence of the two works.) What is in the line of fire is not the ideas expressed in the debate, but the debate itself.<sup>(1)</sup>

We are reminded of two comments by the author occurring very early in the novel - one as part of the "framework", the other a definite interruption to it. Referring to the two characters' dispute over the nature of women, the author says:

"En suivant cette dispute sur laquelle ils auraient pu faire le tour du globe sans déparler un moment et sans s'accorder, ils furent accueillis par un orage qui les contraignit de s'acheminer..."<sup>(2)</sup>

And, on the "fatalism" question itself, he has this to say:

"Vous concevez, lecteur, jusqu'où je pourrais pousser cette conversation sur un sujet dont on a tant parlé, tant écrit depuis deux mille ans, sans en être d'un pas plus avancé. Si vous me savez peu de gré de ce que je vous dis, sachez-m'en beaucoup de ce que je ne vous dis pas."<sup>(3)</sup>

The two disputes have much in common. In the fatality debate, as much as in the debate on women, no solution is possible. For where are the common points of reference, where the faults of logic of either party? Where is there anything that can prove or disprove either point of view? If no solution is possible at the level of theoretical dispute, then why remain there?

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- (1) Billy's comments on this point are very pertinent: "S'il y a quelque chose à prendre au sérieux dans sa philosophie, c'est, avant tout, le manque de sérieux de la philosophie. Spinoza? Leibniz? Diderot en use, comme Valéry protestait user des mots philosophiques - pour leur coloris, pour leur ton - en poète et non plus en spécialiste." (André Billy, op.cit., pp.25-26.)
- (2) A.-T. VI, pp.29-30.
- (3) *ibid.*, p.15.

The second quotation also brings home the fact that the free-will/predetermination issue has been imported lock, stock and barrel from Christianity. Of what use is it to reject the religion if one remains bound by one of its fundamental dilemmas?

Diderot's use of satire is thus very different from Voltaire's. Far from attempting to discredit a philosophical system, Diderot wishes to point to the irresolvability of the single major issue which plagues him. But the buoyancy of his humour makes it clear that there is no defeatism involved. The reason for this is quite simply that though philosophy (or rather, "philosophising") cannot provide an answer, life can.

Jacques's story is plagiarised, proves nothing, and (despite its pretensions) is not even the real chain of causality around which the novel is centred. Jacques's philosophy is expressed in absurd terms, and, in any case, since it cannot be proved or disproved, and since it remains a speculative theory on the metaphysical plane, it is not worth wasting time on.

But once we come to look at events themselves - if we look deep enough! - we notice that they appear to obey the very laws which Jacques has outlined, though in no case are they the events mentioned by Jacques. If the theory cannot be proved or disproved, it is at least corroborated by events. And since the "events" are of the author's invention, then the view of life on which the theory is based (though not the compulsion to prove it at all costs) has the author's (tacit) approval.

A particularly startling demonstration of the disparity between the apparent and the underlying "proofs" offered by the novel is to be seen in the linking of Fate with the horse.<sup>(1)</sup> At the superficial level, this theme (the totality or near-totality of which appears to have been in the novel from the outset)<sup>(2)</sup> is brought to a head by Jacques's "proof" of the non-existence of

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(1) See Leon Schwartz, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

(2) See above, p.120.

the Master's free-will - in which there is, in addition, an evident demonstration of the existence, and effectiveness of Jacques's will! Clearly the proof is spurious. At the level of underlying causes, however, the whole of Jacques's and his Master's fortunes can be seen to be bound up with the chance events which lead them twice to exchange mounts - for, had the Master's horse not been rediscovered, he would have continued his journey on Jacques's mount, and it would have been he, and not Jacques, who would have been caught as a result of its escape.

In other words, our attempts to perceive, or to explain, the workings of Fate may (and perhaps must) come to naught, but for all that every event in our lives will continue to be predetermined by a given set of circumstances and of previous events. Perhaps the best demonstration of this concerns another horse, this time the one purchased to replace the Master's lost steed. The persistence with which this animal bears Jacques off at a gallop in the direction of the nearest gibbet seems (in the Fatalistic interpretation) to offer an indication that Jacques will meet with a scoundrel's death. In fact it merely demonstrates that a horse conditioned to bear its master to every gibbet in the province will, in all probability, continue to do so. The action is determined by past events and circumstances: it also determines, to some extent, the future course of the heroes' journey. And if its causes can only be seen when all the facts are at our disposal, then its consequences can never be foretold with any degree of certainty - simply because all the relevant facts are not (and cannot be) at our disposal.

Ernest Simon, is, of course, justified in noting that Jacques's philosophy can offer only an a posteriori explanation of events:

"Jacques thus possesses in his dictum a delaying mechanism that allows him to postpone the interpretation of reality until current

events have become past history and can be interpreted in relation to other past events that are already meaningful. Fatalism, therefore, becomes an actual philosophy only when applied to the past as a structuring of reality in terms of a teleologically directed causal chain." (1)

In Jacques and his philosophy, however, we are considering human perception of the workings of universal determinism (or of "Fate"), which - if a valid proposition - will continue to function whether man perceives it or not. The intellectual reconstruction of a given sequence of events may only be possible when the causal chain is complete, but the actual forging of the chain is a steady, continuous process independent of the activities of the human mind. (2)

Again, all of this is present in what one must assume to be the earliest state of the text. Only the "clue" (the author's comment about the vast lengths of time wasted discussing predetermination) may perhaps belong to a later date. This is the only reference to fatalism in the author's brief interruptions to the main narrative, and, significantly perhaps, it is

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(1) Ernest Simon, op.cit., p.263.

(2) Simon in fact goes on to show how this a posteriori restructuring of causal sequences constitutes a key feature of the novel's structure: "A quite conventional plot is thus reconstructed - in retrospect, for the master's tale of woe is pointedly delayed until very late in the book. The master thus introduces into the structure of the novel the same kind of artificial, contrived, arbitrary, but perhaps necessary order that, as a master, he introduces into Jacques's life. And such an order can only be admitted when viewed in an ironical light. Just as the ironic truth, "Jacques mène son maître", makes the conventional mastership acceptable, so the realization that the master, while telling his story, reveals his own inability to perceive the causal connections of a plot makes his story acceptable as "history". Within the story, only the chevalier de Saint-Ouin understands the intrigue; within the novel, Jacques readily perceives the causal connections, which he articulates mostly in ironical smiles, whistles and anticipations of the plot." (ibid., p.266.)

wrapped up in a re-statement of the "power" theme.<sup>(1)</sup> None of the author's comments belonging to the "framework" and, with this and one other exception, none of his short but "detachable" interruptions to the principal narrative goes beyond an attack on the reader's interpretation of what is being put before him.

When we come to consider those remarks of the "author's" which do go beyond such an attack, an interesting fact emerges: almost all either contain an anecdote or arise out of an anecdote or an "incidental" scene, particularly out of those which we have the greatest reason to suspect of being late additions. Arguably, therefore, we have doubly strong reason to consider them as belonging to a relatively late stage in the novel's evolution. Certainly they belong to a very different aspect of the work. It will be seen too that the theory of determinism, though it is touched upon, is not allowed to pose such a problem here as it does in the discussion between Jacques and his Master.

The first such passage for discussion in fact contains an illustrative anecdote. It is the "author's" interruption (pp.53-54) in which he endeavours to answer the reader's question: "Mais, pour Dieu, l'auteur, .... où allaient-ils?" The first stage of his argument is to pose in turn the question: "Mais, pour Dieu, lecteur, ..., est-ce qu'on sait où l'on va?" He then reminds us of the story of Aesop's arrest. Aesop is sent by his Master, Xantippe, to find out whether the baths are sufficiently uncrowded to merit a visit, but en route he meets up with the patrol and is asked where he is going; he replies that he has no idea and is promptly arrested.

" - Eh bien! reprit Esope, ne l'avais-je pas bien dit que je ne savais où j'allais? je voulais aller au bain, et voilà que je vais en prison..." (2)

The author's point having thus been proved to his own satis-

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(1) See above, pp.143-144.

(2) A.-T., VI, p.54.

faction, he explains that Jacques followed his Master, and that his Master followed his master. The reader's curiosity about this last allows the author to launch into a satire of the fickleness and curiosity of the educated public.

"Bon, est-ce qu'on manque de maître dans ce monde? Le maître de Jacques en avait cent pour un, comme vous. Mais parmi tant de maîtres du maître de Jacques, il fallait qu'il n'y en eût pas un bon; car d'un jour à l'autre il en changeait." (1)

The illustration, however, "proof" though it may be of the vanity of human certainty, itself raises an important question concerning the fatalism/free-will issue, and one which receives no answer, or even acknowledgement, from the "author". For is it "Fate" or is it Aesop's reply which is responsible for his arrest? Or, more to the point, is Aesop himself not at least partially instrumental in creating his own destiny? One wonders whether Diderot had this ambivalence in mind in choosing the anecdote. (2)

Despite this ambivalence, the theme of the "unpredictability" of the future is one which will be taken up again and again by the "author", particularly in his discussion of some of the subsidiary narratives. It would not therefore be wise to treat the matter too lightly.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.54.

(2) It is, however, to be noted, as Irwin L. Greenberg points out ('Destination in Jacques le fataliste' that this anecdote must ultimately be seen in relation to the statement made by Jacques almost immediately afterwards with regard to what appears to be the funeral procession of his beloved captain: "Mon pauvre capitaine! Il s'en va où nous allons tous, et où il est bien extraordinaire qu'il ne soit pas arrivé plus tôt." "Jacques's statement (despite the subsequent confusion as to whether his captain is really dead), coming almost immediately after the narrator's insistence that we do not know where we are going, indicates that death is our ultimate, and only sure, destination."

A link must exist here with Jacques's theories on the inevitability of events. In this respect, an interesting point lies concealed beneath the author's fourth interruption to the Master's story.<sup>(1)</sup> This consists of a few very sharp words addressed to the reader, followed by a prompt, but brief, apology:

"Mais c'est La Vérité dans le vin, de Collé... Lecteur, vous ne savez ce que vous dites; à force de vouloir montrer de l'esprit, vous n'êtes qu'une bête. C'est si peu la vérité dans le vin, que tout au contraire, c'est la fausseté dans le vin. Je vous ai dit une grossièreté, j'en suis fâché, et je vous en demande pardon." (2)

Now, it is to be noted in what marked contrast this castigation stands to Jacques's remark barely a page later:

"Et voilà pourquoi je conseille aux femmes de ne jamais coucher avec des gens qui s'enivrent. Je ne méprise guère moins votre chevalier pour son indiscretion en amour que pour sa perfidie en amitié. Que diable! il n'avait qu'à ... être un honnête homme, et vous parler d'abord! ..." (3)

The "author", it will be seen, is in a position to understand Saint-Ouin's motivation, while Jacques is not, and, for once, our hero's powers of "divination" appear to desert him. The Master has succeeded in reversing the rôles and setting his servant guessing. The "author's" comment not only demonstrates that the "reader" has been leaping to over-hasty conclusions, it also warns him that Saint-Ouin is still lying, even in his drunken "confessions", and enables him to see that Jacques too is mistaken in viewing the Chevalier's avowal as rank indiscretion. Those who see Jacques as the proponent of a positive deterministic philosophy, in which a search for causality allies with

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(1) See above, pp. 149-50. As this is a brief interruption to an "original" part of the novel, it might equally well have been discussed in the previous chapter. However, it will be apparent that, though it deals with interpretation, it has implications which go well beyond the "literary" theme.

(2) A.-T. VI, pp. 248-49.

(3) *ibid.*

deliberate observation of human behaviour to produce above-average powers of deduction - "divination", however one looks at the question, is an obvious and intentional misnomer<sup>(1)</sup> - will argue that Diderot has given them a negative proof of the validity of their argument: for Jacques, placed in a position of ignorance of the complete "originalité" of the character of Saint-Ouin, lacks the necessary data to predict his next move.

Certainly, up to this point, Jacques has had a very fair grasp of what is going on, and has not yet put a foot wrong in his running commentary on the scheming of the Chevalier, Le Brun, Mathieu de Fourgeot (or Fourgeot de Mathieu) and Merval, and on the triangular relationship of Saint-Ouin, the Master and Agathe. Now, though, he has followed the wrong trail and admits a few pages later that he is lost:

"JACQUES. - Votre chevalier bouleverse toutes mes idées. J'imaginai...

LE MAITRE.- Tu imaginai?

JACQUES. - Non, monsieur, vous pouvez continuer."<sup>(2)</sup>

Significantly, Jacques has shown great enthusiasm for "seeing through" the Master's characters, and great pride in his success at this:

"JACQUES. - Eh bien! mon maître, Jacques a-t-il du nez?"<sup>(3)</sup>

His enthusiasm for the game, however, appears to wane in proportion to his success at it - for it is shortly after his admission of defeat quoted above that he "falls asleep". Thus Jacques's "sabotage" is partly due to his own increasing sense of frustration and pique at the Master's success at keeping him in suspense. It is arguable that

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(1) Though "divination", of course, only enters the work in the 1786 Lacunes.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.253.

(3) *ibid.*, p.240.



there is always an underlying cause for the Master's fits of anger, as well as the apparent one. Here the same would appear to be true of Jacques. More important from the point of view of this study, however, is the way in which the "author" leads us to see where Jacques is going wrong - teaches us, in fact, a blunt lesson in practical determinism.

The point about insufficient information is of a general validity on the planes both of morality and of the philosophy of determinism. Morally speaking, the case for obtaining all information before coming to conclusions is easily demonstrated, <sup>(1)</sup> but we know too that in Jacques's philosophy the concept takes on a special significance. In his résumé of Jacques's ideas contained in the long interruption on pages 179 - 82, the author has this to say:

"Il croyait qu'un homme s'acheminait aussi nécessairement à la gloire ou à l'ignominie, qu'une boule qui aurait la conscience d'elle-même suit la pente d'une montagne; et que, si l'enchaînement des causes et des effets qui forment la vie d'un homme depuis le premier instant de sa naissance jusqu'à son dernier soupir nous était connu, nous resterions convaincus qu'il n'a fait que ce qu'il était nécessaire de faire." (2)

The standpoint of the "author" on "Jacques's" ideas appears in a rather strange light in the interruption from which this last quotation was taken. For this reason, and also because of its curious construction (changing subject with disconcerting rapidity) this interruption, which precedes Des Arcis's account of the abbé Hudson, merits closer examination. It begins and ends as a kind of admission of powerlessness on the

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(1) That it is easily demonstrated does not mean, however, that it is not worthy of repeated emphasis - cf. Sur l'inconséquence du jugement public.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.180.

part of the author and of Jacques to return to the hero's love-story. <sup>(1)</sup> In between, however, we are treated to a discourse on the common people's love of talking and of public spectacles (themselves an ideal subject on which to hold forth), all of which explains the popular taste for public executions. For the populace is not cruel:

"Le peuple est terrible dans sa fureur; mais elle ne dure pas. Sa misère propre l'a rendu compatissant; il détourne les yeux du spectacle d'horreur qu'il est allé chercher; <sup>(2)</sup> il s'attendrit, il s'en retourne en pleurant..."

This is one of the rare instances in Jacques where the social-commentary aspect of the work becomes really explicit. <sup>(3)</sup> But the "author" hastens to deny any responsibility for the lines he has just penned:

"Tout ce que je vous débite là, lecteur, je le tiens de Jacques, je vous l'avoue, parce que je n'aime pas à me faire honneur de l'esprit d'autrui. Jacques ne connaissait ni le nom de vice, ni le nom de vertu; il prétendait qu'on était heureusement ou malheureusement né." <sup>(4)</sup>

The subject has thus been changed again, and we are treated to a fairly lengthy restatement of Jacques's philosophy, but one interspersed - for the only occasion in the duration of the work - with the "author's" own comments on the subject. After Jacques's simile likening man to a snowball hurtling down a mountainside (the only difference lying in man's consciousness of what is happening), the "author" confesses:

"Je l'ai plusieurs fois contredit, mais sans avantage et sans fruit. En effet, que répliquer à celui qui vous dit: "Quelle que soit la somme des éléments dont je suis composé, je suis un; or, une cause n'a qu'un effet; j'ai toujours été une cause une; je n'ai donc jamais eu qu'un effet à produire; ma durée n'est donc qu'une suite d'effets nécessaires." <sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) See above, pp.140-41.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.180.

(3) Another is the "author's" brief remark on legal abuses which interrupts the Master's tale, see above pp.147-48.

(4) A.-T. VI, p.180.

(5) *ibid.*

There follows a list of examples of Jacques's inconsistencies on this score (temperamental rather than philosophical, perhaps), but the fact remains that the "author" has, however briefly, taken sides on the issue, just as, only a few lines above, he has come to the defence of the lower orders. In both cases he has sought to cover his tracks - in the earlier instance by insisting that the words are Jacques's and not his own, in the second by turning the issue to one of argumentum ad hominem, by ridiculing Jacques's inability to live according to his own philosophy (though on careful examination, of course, this is but a further confirmation of its validity, in that he can never be free to control his instinctive reactions to a given situation).

But to what extent has the "author" really taken sides? Philosophically, Jacques's argument is unassailable, perhaps (though we may well be intended to see that this depends on one's acceptance of the twin, "scientifically"-expressed premises: "je suis un"; "une cause n'a qu'un effet"), but the fact remains that he has tried to assail it. Emotionally, in other words, the "author" (like the Diderot of the Correspondance) finds it hard to swallow.

Again, we have been warned to beware of speculative theorising. None of this is susceptible of proof or disproof, not even Jacques's remark about the revelation that complete knowledge of the chain of cause and effect in one man's life will bring: we may assume that no one is likely to possess all the relevant data; even if such information were available, the conclusion would be interpretative rather than totally unavoidable (innous resterions convaincus...).

However, a better analysis of the way people function, at least a partial study of cause and effect in their lives, is the only course of action left. Time and time again (in Jacques as in all his later fiction),

Diderot attempts to shake his reader out of his complacent, conditioned attitudes to other people's behaviour, and to make him look much harder at their motivations. Complete knowledge may be unattainable, but it is the absolute goal. (1)

It is in this context that we must view the commentary by the "author" on the Pommeraye story, his new conclusion to Goldoni's play, his "explanation" of the bizarre behaviour of the two captains and his anecdotes of Gousse and his cell-mate. It will be more appropriate to discuss these in terms of Diderot's fictional approaches to human behaviour on the more general plane, and this will be undertaken in the following chapter.

Almost all of the comments by the "author" discussed in the present chapter have dealt with the predictability of events. It is thus particularly interesting that, as part of Lacune no.19, Diderot should choose to give us a picture of Jacques as disciple of Bacbuc and of the drinking-gourd and author of a long treatise on prophecy. Much of the significance of this addition has to do with the search for a more jovial philosophy of life, and as such will be dealt with in the final chapter (on Humour). As regards Jacques's own powers of prediction, the notion of "divination" appears to be a misrepresentation, not to say wilful obscurantism, for Jacques's gift seems to have a great deal to do with logical deduction. Diderot himself gives us a clear enough indication of this in his description of Richard's appearance, which makes it obvious why Jacques has so little difficulty in declaring him to have been a monk, and rather hard to see why the Master and Des Arcis are both so amazed at his astuteness. (2)

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(1) See below, pp.199-203.

(2) His understanding of the Master's story provides another good example of this ability. See above, pp.182-84.

But the 1786 Lacunes also contain the story of Pondicherry poet, which is of some considerable interest with regard to the study of predictability. For this is the tale of a series of accurate "predictions". The author is convinced that the young man will never write good poetry; the "poet" is convinced that he has no choice but to go on versifying for the rest of his life ("... je suis entraîné malgré moi."). Both predictions are borne out, for both are based on predetermined characteristics of the young man's nature; his lack of poetic ability and his passion for writing.

Now these same characteristics will also be determining factors in his existence. Indeed, taken together with a third factor - his poverty - they seem to condemn him to a life of abject misery. But the third factor is susceptible of change: on the author's instructions, the would-be poet prevails upon his parents (who are jewellers) to finance him on a trip to the flourishing colony of Pondicherry, where he succeeds in making his fortune. On his return to France, he is able to devote the remainder of his life to the shameful career of bad poet, but spared the further shame of poverty.

The story, in fact - despite the literary theme which purports to introduce it - turns out to be an object lesson in learning to reconcile predetermined factors of one's own character, to make the best of oneself. It is to be noted that no attempt is ever made to amend or "improve" the poet's character. The morality which the author hints at here is one which will take account of people as they are, and endeavour to suggest the right course of action accordingly.

Moreover, the "deterministic" nature of the story is brought out by a reference to Jacques's philosophy (a reference which, of course, does not occur in the anecdote as first related in the Correspondance littéraire). This takes the form of a "gloss" on the poet's words (previously quoted): "je suis entraîné malgré moi".

"(Ici Jacques aurait dit: Mais cela est écrit là-haut.)" (1)

In reality, of course, the gloss is on Jacques's words, for it is clear enough from the context that what is at issue is psychological predetermination. Quoting Jacques's terminology only serves to indicate that his "fatalism" embraces determination from within - whatever language he may use to express this idea. Yet again we have confirmation that it is Jacques's language (and, by extension, the act of philosophising) which is absurd, rather than the ideas of which his language represents a caricature.

The anecdote thus brings to a head the "prediction" theme, and ties it down very firmly both to Jacques's metaphysics and to a moral philosophy which is based upon the recognition, and best use, of predetermined characteristics. Diderot's decision to include the story as part of Jacques le fataliste makes it evident that he saw the opportunity, and possibly the need, to tie together these different strands. It also shows that he was more prepared, at this late stage, to come out into the open and make reasonably clear the positive side to "fatalism".

It is noteworthy that, in a recently published article, Aram Vartanian seizes on the ambiguity of the term "fatalism", and in so doing brings to the fore the question of predictability, which our "evolutionary" study of Jacques has shown to have held increasing significance as the novel developed:

"The novel taken as a whole consists of a dialectical play within a polarized reality, whose two aspects may be described as le déterminé and l'indéterminé. The opening paragraph reveals the author's method: ... The unfolding of the work illustrates in depth the contrast neatly adumbrated in these few sentences between what is ascribed, on the one hand, to le hasard - a notion synonymous

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.44.

with the unforeseen - and what Jacques, on the other hand, attributes to the écriture là-haut - a metaphor of the pre-ordained. Diderot exploits semantically, in this respect, the ambiguity of the term "fatalism" which, given his purpose, could not have been better selected. For fatalism can pertain either to a necessary concatenation of events, hence implying their predictability; or, contrariwise, to a fortuitous series of events, with the suggestion of their unpredictability." (1)

His interpretation also places considerable weight upon the concept of "truth" in the novel, as the meeting-point of the "literary" and the "philosophical":

"Diderot realized, of course, that his aim of creating a fictional world of discontinuous events would have little in common with the established art of the novel. He felt, obliged, therefore, to justify in theory the sort of anti-roman that he was bent on inventing. Jacques le fataliste is not merely, at many points, a realistic novel in the ordinary sense, but also an experimental study of the philosophical problem of "truth" in fiction." (2)

A close parallel will be seen to the arguments thus far proposed in the present thesis. Vartanian does not distinguish, however (as his emphasis on the ambiguity of "fatalism" might have led him to do), between that which, in terms of deterministic logic, is patently spurious and that which we are given no reason to question:

"Unless (the reader) possesses rare powers of attention and memory, he does not manage to follow the extraordinarily tortuous thread of the narrative. In short, Diderot has taken care to organize - or rather "disorganize" - his novel in such a way as to prevent us from obtaining at any stage of its development a connected and coherent picture of the whole, of knowing "where we are going" or what might reasonably be expected to occur next. The impression that we are least likely to receive from a perusal of Jacques le Fataliste is that

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- (1) Aram Vartanian, 'Jacques le Fataliste: A Journey into the Ramifications of a Dilemma', Essays on Diderot and the Enlightenment in Honor of Otis Fellows, ed. J. Pappas, Geneva, Droz, 1974, pp.325-47 (pp.331-32).
- (2) *ibid.*, p.334.

of witnessing between its covers an enchaînement nécessaire des causes et des effets. To the contrary, the narrative structure peculiar to it is one of interruption and contingency. The reader is kept in a state of mystification arising from the novel's unrelenting theme of universal determinism on the one hand, and the absence in it, on the other, of anything that even remotely confirms or resembles such a philosophical vision." (1)

Failure to distinguish between Diderot and his "author" leads him to draw somewhat dramatically far-reaching consequences from his "unpredictability" theme:

"Conversely, in the "truthful" creation of Jacques le fataliste, from which fictional illusion has presumably been banished, the author needs no longer to play the part of a God who orders all things as his prescience dictates. Diderot consents to share epistemologically the same condition in which the characters he has portrayed struggle, fatefully, under the limitation of the supreme law of unpredictability." (2)

With these reservations, Vartanian's article clearly represents an overall appraisal of Jacques of very considerable importance.

Not only the "life" of the novel, then, but also the author's own experience, tends to corroborate certain aspects of Jacques's thought. Since most of the more "positive" contributions of the "author" discussed in this chapter can be connected with incidental narrative material, it may well be argued that some, possibly the majority, of them belong to a "middle" period in the evolution of the work as a whole. Indisputably, they represent a very different line of approach from that of the main narrative and the "framework" contributions to them by the "author". Equally indisputably, there is a close parallel between the "truth" theme of the shorter "detachable" interruptions and

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(1) Aram Vartanian, op.cit., p.333.

(2) ibid., p.337.



the "prediction" theme of the passages just discussed: each represents a definite guide to the reader, the former as to where to look for the signification of the work, the latter as to how seriously to take Jacques's philosophy - the "two" issues being, to all intents and purposes, one and the same. (1)

This fact further corroborates the time-scheme which was sketched briefly in the conclusion to the previous chapter, and which we are now in a better position to expound more fully. On the strength of the structural and thematic evidence discussed so far, then, the following schema suggests itself.

1. Period of initial composition, involving author/reader debate centered around "power" theme.
2. Period of reconstruction of at least part of "Pommeraye" section, though author's commentary still concerned with "power".

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(1) We have just seen (p. , n.2) Aram Vartanian's insistence on the relationship between "fictional truth" and philosophy. The same point is considered by Maurice Roehlens: "The choice of events is made with respect to the conversation, not with respect to the lives of Jacques and his master. On the level of the reader and narrator, the choice is justified insofar as it contributes to the discussion on esthetics, and by the narrator's defence of it as vérité in contrast to false novelistic possibilities. In the context of Jacques's life, however, the choice appears random, capricious, contingent - an instance of the mysterious workings of fate. Thus, the same events appear as elements in a logical order on the superior level of the narrator and as elements of an unfathomable chaos in the present of Jacques's existence. ...

Such a scheme means, of course, that "ce qui est écrit là-haut" is exactly what the narrator writes. And here the central philosophical theme of fatalism rejoins the inclusive theme of the esthetics of realism in a final, triumphant assertion of unity." (Maurice Roehlens, op. cit., pp.272-73).

This interpretation has the added merit of putting the epistemological position of the author into a more rational perspective.)

3. a) Emergence (in "Hudson" section) of interruptions linking literary taste with moral judgement.

b) Emergence of short interruptions concerned with the approach required of the reader ("truth").

c) Emergence of longer interruptions (largely bound up with anecdotal material) in which the "predictability" aspect of Jacques's philosophy is fairly comprehensively treated.

4. Period of late additions (itself subdividing - see above, pp.64-69) in which loose ends are tied up: in particular, the "power" and "truth" themes are bound together; the rôle which "prediction" (and therefore determinism) has to play in moral philosophy is made clear, so that an explanation has been given for the inclusion of the moral tales; at the same time, through Jacques's theory of divination (albeit in itself a red herring) attention is drawn to this issue; finally, in the "éloge de l'obscenité", the question of the relationship of literary taste and moral judgement is much more decisively tackled.

It will be noted that this time-scheme for the interpolations by the "author" tends to confirm our conclusions concerning the order of entry (or re-entry) of other anecdotal material.<sup>(1)</sup> For, if the later series of authorial interruptions do postdate the inclusion of the Pommeraye story (as seems almost certain), then there is good reason to assume that many of the incidental anecdotes may do so too.

Moreover, since we have attributed the more "positive" of the asides by the "author", as well as the bulk of the subsidiary narrative material, to a "post-Pommeraye" stage in the novel's evolution, it seems not unreasonable to surmise that the longer, narrative digressions (the tale of Aesop's slave and the "Gousse" trilogy) by the "author" may well belong to a similar period, since they contain the elements of both new developments. There are no textual grounds for placing these digressions at any particular point in the history of the novel's development - though they are all, as we

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(1) See above, pp.121-125.

have seen, <sup>(1)</sup> totally detachable from the surrounding text - but the double evidence of their content ("positive" authorial remarks, coupled with illustrative moral anecdote) must weigh heavily in the balance. All things considered, it seems very unlikely that they formed part of the earliest state of the text, and very much more likely that they entered the novel after the revision of the "Pommeraye" section.

It would therefore appear probable that what was said in conclusion to Chapter III about the existence of at least two periods of major revision of Jacques before the appearance of the novel in the Correspondance littéraire (the first consisting of the re-writing of the "Pommeraye" section, the second of the introduction of much of the subsidiary narrative material) holds good; and that to the second period (or periods) may be added not only the contributions by the "author" arguing the "truth" of his work, but also all those in which he discusses wider issues or recounts anecdotes of his own.

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(1) See above, pp.97-99.

## CHAPTER VI

THE "SUBSIDIARY" NARRATIVES

The principal narratives of Jacques le fataliste (defined as the account of the journey itself, plus Jacques's and the Master's love-stories) are interspersed with a wealth of stories varying in length from the briefest anecdote to a sixty-page nouvelle and probably entering the novel at a variety of different times. In order to understand the function of these subsidiary narratives it is necessary firstly to establish what elements of thought (and argument) exist already in the main narrative, and, secondly, to analyse in what way the "subsidiary" or "incidental" material adds to, or departs from, that thought.

One aspect of this has already been dealt with in the discussion of the "truth" theme and of the function of Jacques's philosophy within the novel. The principal lesson there is to ignore the talk and take a closer look at the action. Apart from what this approach reveals about the ordering both of the lives of the characters and of the structure of the novel, it also leads us to see the possibility of viewing the action in terms of underlying themes.

Much critical attention has been paid recently to the wholly or partially concealed themes of Jacques. Within the scope of this study it will not be possible to add anything to the arguments already advanced, which will merely receive a brief résumé here.

The logic of the journey (which has its origins in the Master's pursuit of Agathe) has already been touched upon. It may be said to represent a concealed theme of deterministic causality standing in marked contrast to the somewhat spurious causality of Jacques's tale. There is also the question of coincidence of Jacques's past with his Master's, the point of coincidence being Desglans' château,

where both, on separate occasions, had paid court to Denise. Thus rivalry exists between the two which may be seen as the underlying cause both of Jacques's attitude towards his Master (for the servant knows of his Master's failure where he himself was successful) and of the Master's towards Jacques. It is to be noted that the words which spark off their great row are the Master's:

"La coquine! préférer un Jacques!" (1)

Thus we also have a theme of psychological determination.

A great deal in the way of muted social criticism can also be detected in the main narratives, though Diderot, typically perhaps, shies away from being too explicit. Thus we are treated, in Jacques's tale and in the journey narrative, to a pretty depressing picture of the state of affairs prevalent in the French countryside - grossly impoverished, badly policed, terrorised by bandits. In the Master's tale and in the ruling of the Lieutenant-Général de Conches on the subject of the "theft" of the travellers' purse, we see the glaring imperfections of the juridical system. The ludicrous exploitation of its clients by an unscrupulous legal profession is depicted - and on this issue, for once (as we have seen),<sup>(2)</sup> the "author" feels strongly enough to enter the lists personally in support of the criticism levelled by his characters. Surgeons too are at once an object of derision in the diversity of their diagnoses, and exploiters of other people's misery. The squalor of the money-lending business merits very full treatment.

With the single exception of the instance of legal costs, the "author" keeps quiet on all these issues, confining himself to a simple recital of "facts". Beyond this, even the two travellers openly discuss only the question of usury. Thus what criticism there is is implicit in the narrative. There is not, of course,

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.170.

(2) See above, pp.147-48.

anything very remarkable in the fact that these themes of social criticism should appear within the "romance" framework of the main narratives: all were, in fact, standard features of the very novels about which Diderot, through the "author", is so scathing. What will be shown to be of interest is the manner in which they are treated at different stages in the evolution of Jacques le fataliste.

It is, of course, possible, on the basis of these "concealed" themes, to produce, as Pruner does,<sup>(1)</sup> an allegorical interpretation of the whole work. Whether or not one is prepared to accept all the implications of such an approach, it is worthy of note that Pruner traces the "allegory" through the principal narrative and through Jacques's story (establishing a clear parallel between the two). The "allegory" of these narratives (which he describes as a journey through "life" - different stages and different aspects of human civilisation) tends to focus on areas of discussion - justice, for example, or reward and punishment - which are then taken up in the "incidental" narratives. Thus, even within his theory of "unity", the different threads of narrative perform different functions.

It will be clear from what follows that issues of social and moral behaviour which are hinted at in the main narratives do indeed receive fuller treatment in the subsidiary ones.

Since we are now confronted with the task of unravelling the threads of Diderot's social critique, as it appears in Jacques, it may be worth considering very briefly at this stage the approach to questions of moral philosophy employed in some of his other later works. Taken together these will be found to contain a fairly comprehensive critique of accepted moral values.

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(1) Francis Pruner, op.cit.

In the contes, for example - Sur l'inconséquence du jugement public<sup>(1)</sup> in particular - a great deal of emphasis is laid on the folly of society's tendency to come to hasty judgements before all the facts of the case are at its disposal: limitations to human knowledge, both of external fact and of internal motivation, inevitably lead to errors of judgement. Again, Diderot's exploration of the original in the Neveu de Rameau reveals many imperfections in accepted ways of social thinking, which make it impossible to understand or come to terms with such a character. But above all, Lui's very existence demonstrates the artificiality of civilised standards, which consist in the superimposing of a veneer of morality (or rather, of conflicting moralities) on to "natural" drives, thus producing both a perversion of the drives themselves and the emergence of hypocrisy and muddled thinking. For all of his complexes, Lui's outlook is less inconsistent than that of society at large.

The "duality" of human nature also figures in the Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville, where much play is made of the supposed "naturalness" of behaviour in primitive society, as compared with civilised society where notions of property, "decency" and religion combine to suppress and pervert human instincts. In particular, Christian teaching and the clergy comes in for some hard treatment, while the idea of sexual constancy, the product both of religious doctrine and of an unreasonable extension of the concept of property, is shown as artificial in the extreme.

Elements of a materialist determinism are of course visible in all of these approaches. "Human nature" is determined by a large number of factors, including on the one hand basic instincts, and on the other all the physical and psychological conditions prevailing in the surrounding society. Attitudes too are conditioned in a civilisation

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(1) The full title of this tale is: Sur l'inconséquence du jugement public de nos actions particulières. It is also referred to as: Histoire de Mme de La Carlière.

in which no one is encouraged to look too hard for the truth about any single issue or about life in general. (And perhaps if the whole truth were known, every event might reveal itself to be necessary ...)

The different types of moral critique appearing in these works have one very pronounced feature in common - a feeling for the inadequacy of accepted methods of assessing human behaviour. Very much the same is true of Jacques le fataliste.

The question of justice, of course, is at the heart of much of Jacques, both in the anecdotal material and in the principal narrative line - particularly (as Pruner has indicated),<sup>(1)</sup> in that part of the novel in which the figure of the magistrate looms large. (The Master's tale, too, is dotted with examples of the imperfections of the legal system.) Not only official justice is at issue, however - more often than not it is the shortcomings of traditional moral judgements of which we are made aware.

One aspect of the inadequacy of our moral reasoning is a conflict of codes - religious, military, civil, aristocratic, bourgeois - which are often mutually contradictory and which combine to make moral decisions inordinately difficult.

On two major occasions - both in sections of the novel which we have some reason to regard as probable late additions - the "author" takes issue with the narrow-minded view of things by the "reader". In his anger against Mme de la Pommeraye, as seen in the postscript by the "author" to the tale ("Ah! la femme horrible! ah! l'Hypocrite! ah! la scélérate!"), the "reader" (i.e. the representative of educated, refined society) shows himself to be biased in favour of the male, inconsistent and shallow. He is incapable of putting himself

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(1) See F. Pruner, op.cit., Ch.V, pp.36-62. 'L'ordre et la confusion des codes'.



in the position of Mme de La Pommeraye because he is incapable even of imagining such intensity of feeling. And yet he would not have condemned her for prostituting herself to obtain advancement for her husband, and he certainly would not condemn a man for killing another in return for a much less grievous insult than that handed out by the Marquis to Mme de La Pommeraye. The "author" shows how both understanding for her predicament and admiration for the consistency of her vengeance are possible.

Similarly, the "reader" refuses to believe in the story of the two duelling captains, because their behaviour is highly implausible. After establishing the truth of his story<sup>(1)</sup> the "author" goes on to show that the incredulity of the "reader" is unjustified - and for more than one reason. Firstly, nature, in the variety of instincts and characters it creates, exceeds the bounds of human imagination. Of this phenomenon the totally unprincipled but amazingly generous Gousse is offered as an example. Secondly, underlying explanations can be found for their bizarre conduct. [

The first such explanation which he offers is the existence of some deep-rooted jealousy between them, but he soon drops this argument as being superfluous:

"Mais laissons tout cela, et disons que c'était leur coin de folie. Est-ce que chacun n'a pas le sien? Celui de nos deux officiers fut pendant plusieurs siècles celui de toute l'Europe; on l'appelait l'esprit de chevalerie. ... Eh bien! nos deux officiers n'étaient que deux paladins, nés de nos jours, avec les moeurs des anciens. Chaque vertu et chaque vice se montre et passe de mode. ... Suivez les inclinations des hommes, et vous en remarquerez qui semblent être venus au monde<sup>(2)</sup> trop tard: ils sont d'un autre siècle."

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(1) See above, pp.145-46.

(2) A.-T. VI, p.72.

But if different codes of behaviour can be responsible for such anomalies, so too can the hidden struggle for survival in society - the conflict which underlies visible jealousies. Might not the captains' duelling be prompted by a desire to find a weak link in the other's moral armour?

"Les duels se répètent dans la société sous toutes sortes de formes, entre des prêtres, entre des magistrats, entre des littérateurs, entre des philosophes; chaque état a sa lance et ses chevaliers, et nos assemblées les plus respectables, les plus amusantes, ne sont que de petits tournois où quelquefois on porte des livrées de l'amour dans le fond de son coeur, sinon sur l'épaule." (1)

A struggle for superiority, then, is the law of society, its motivation often sexual. And is this not precisely the law whose operations we see illustrated in so many of the "incidental" tales and anecdotes recounted in Jacques le fataliste? Again the author has guided us to an issue of central importance.

Between them, the "author's" defence of Mme de La Pommeraye and his dissertation on the duelling of the two captains contain much of the essence of moral thought in Jacques le fataliste. Man's customary response to extraordinary, or "inhuman" behaviour is one of incredulity or shock: either betrays a reluctance to be shaken out of comfortable illusions. But no human behaviour is "inhuman", and extraordinary people do exist. Our apparatus of moral judgement can be tested by its capacity to explain such phenomena.

Thus if one sets out with the idea that a concept of right and wrong exists in every individual (an idea long discredited - thanks to Locke - but tenacious), then Gousse's character becomes inconsistent to the ultimate degree. Again, if one assumes that any man is to be

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.73.

found at some more or less fixed point on the line between absolute generosity and absolute selfishness, Gousse is inexplicable because he appears at or near both extremes. But in fact his is a perfectly consistent character - consistent in ignoring all notions of right or wrong (which are totally meaningless for him), all notion of identity (self, friend or stranger) and simply responding with a logical answer to the need of the hour.

The "author's" defence of Mme de La Pommeraye makes it clear that not only is the original - and our reaction to him or her - an interesting case for study, but the consistency and force of character shown by such a person can make them worthy of admiration.

In this respect, a close parallel exists between the Hudson and Pommeraye tales. In both cases we are put into a position of sympathy - with Des Arcis because he is the victim of the plot, with Richard because he is the victim, because he is young and because the story is presented very largely from his point of view. But, on reflection, our sympathies are misplaced. The author himself points out the cruelty of Des Arcis's treatment of Mme de La Pommeraye, but the whole story betrays his weakness of character, which is at the root of all the trouble: he is weak in his fickleness (though this, at least, is a fact of nature); weak in allowing himself to make protestations of an undying love of which he is incapable; weak in his attempt to make his mistress responsible for the break; weak in using her as counsel for his emotions; weak, above all, in allowing her to lead him by the nose. He is to be punished by his weakness for his weakness, by matrimonial disgrace for inconstancy in love - all very appropriate. Mme de La Pommeraye's choice of method for his punishment is to be applauded (except insofar as it implicates other people - the "author", it should be remembered, leaps to the defence of Mlle d'Aisnon), and her vigour and determination are more praiseworthy than the Marquis' rapid changes of heart.

The Hudson story does not receive a commentary from the "author", but we may assume that we are to approach it in a similar way, being wary of judging too hastily. A closer look at Richard shows that he is not an innocent victim: if he and his colleague have been chosen by the Father General to carry out the investigation, and are able to carry it through with such ability almost to the point of success, they can hardly be totally naive. Moreover, in acting on behalf of a Jansenist Father General in opposition to a Jesuit Father Superior, they are already dirtying their hands in a struggle for power; the debauched, though at present frustrated, monks whose testimony they accept differ only in situation, in strength and in guile from the debauched superior they seek to have removed. Hudson is no worse, no more hypocritical, than his opponents: he is simply endowed with a far greater genius for intrigue, far greater daring and a far more commanding personality.

Another point of comparison between Des Arcis and Richard is that neither in fact suffers as a result of the plot of which he is a victim: the Marquis' love for his bride eventually overcomes all his other feelings, and their marriage is assured some success; Richard is obliged for his own safety to leave the order (he has not yet taken his vows), and thus to spare himself a lifetime within the frustrating, corrupting confines of monastic misery. It is surely no coincidence that the two are fellow-travellers.

The discussion of the two captains also raises the question of duelling within society. We have plenty of examples in Jacques of actual, physical duels, often repeated over protracted periods of time: the two captains' of course; the second captain's (or M. de Guerchy's) with his fellow-gambler; Desglants's with a rival for the affections of his mistress.

The final possible motive suggested by the author for the two captains' behaviour is that each may be seeking out the weak point of a rival - possibly it is implied in the subsequent discussion, a rival in love. In this context we would do well not to forget how the story of M. de Guerchy (or the second captain) begins:-

"Plusieurs officiers entrèrent dans une boutique, et y trouvèrent un autre officier qui causait avec la maîtresse de la boutique. L'un d'eux proposa à celui-ci de jouer au passe-dix; car il faut que vous sachiez qu'après la mort de mon capitaine, son camarade, devenu riche, était aussi devenu joueur. Lui donc, ou M. de Guerchy, accepte."(1)

The ostensible reason for the series of duels which follows this incident is that, in the heat of the game, de Guerchy (or the captain) takes a joke too seriously, wrongly suspects his opponent of cheating and pins his hand to the table with a dagger. But why the insistence on the somewhat improbable circumstances of the dice-game? Why does only one of the officers who enter the shop challenge M. de Guerchy (or the captain)? And why is the latter in the shop in the first place, and engaged in conversation with the proprietress. May not sexual rivalry be at the root of this dispute too?

Certainly in the case of Desglands there can be no doubt. At table he is unable, by the wittiness or the "gallantry" of his remarks, to keep the eyes of his mistress, the widow, on him and off another guest to whom she is beginning to turn her amorous attention. Eventually he cracks an egg over the face of his rival.

"Celui-ci fit un geste de la main. Desglands lui prend le poignet, l'arrête, et lui dit à l'oreille: "Monsieur, je le tiens pour reçu ..." (2)

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.122.

(2) *ibid.*, p.260.

In this manner he forces the issue out to the duelling-field. It is worthy of note that he does not allow his rival any choice in his reply to the move: his immediate interpretation as a challenge of what may have been an instinctive reaction puts the rival into a situation where to back out would be inconceivable.

It is also to be noted that the physical duels are preceded by a duel of words, in which each seeks to impress the widow to the detriment of the other. Similarly, if the sexual interpretation of M. de Guerchy's and his opponent's motives is correct, then they too were engaged in a kind of duel - in the form of a seemingly innocuous game of dice. - enacted before the object of their rivalry.

Individuals may meet each other on the champ d'honneur, but the socio-psychological phenomenon which underlies duelling - the urge to find a chink in the armour of a real or supposed rival - is a universal one. A duel with swords is merely the most obvious and most physical outlet for this urge, which frequently manifests itself in very different kinds of "duel".

In particular, Jacques is engaged in a perpetual "struggle for power" with the Master, a struggle which may well be based upon rivalry for Denise (again a concealed rivalry); the great row at the Grand-Cerf inn, it will be remembered, follows on directly from the Master's remark:

"Eh bien! Jacques, te voilà chez Desglands, près de Denise, et Denise autorisée par sa mère à te faire au moins quatre visites par jour. La coquine! Préférer un Jacques!"<sup>(1)</sup>

Jacques is also involved in the Master's rivalry with Saint-Quin for the love of Agathe - a rivalry which underpins all the events of the main narrative and which leads up to the final but deadly encounter - again a sword-fight - which brings it to a close.

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.170.

For the Diderot of the Supplément, of course, sexual rivalry, like society's insistence (genuine or hypocritical) upon lifelong sexual constancy, is a product of the faulty reasoning which tries to make of another person an object to be possessed. Rivalry does not figure in the cheerful promiscuity of the Tahitians. It is perhaps doubtful that Diderot was himself totally convinced by this extreme argument, with its naive assumptions about "basic" human character. It is however plausible that he regarded the existence within Europe society of these concealed "duels" to be an implicit criticism of our standards in these matters. Significantly, perhaps, the Supplément appears to have been composed at much the same period as the early stages of Jacques - probably 1772, as opposed to the 1771 dating for the earliest reference to the novel.

As regards the dating of the duelling episodes, Jacques's story of the captain (though not, of course, the author's commentary upon it) is inextricably intertwined with the main narrative, to such an extent that it is hard to imagine the novel without it. The Desglants anecdote, too, probably belongs to an early state of the text, <sup>(1)</sup> and, while the same is unlikely to be true of the tale of M. de Guerchy (which is part of a series of interruptions to the Pommeraye story), <sup>(2)</sup> it does seem reasonable to assume that the duelling theme had at least its origins in a very early stage in the development of the text. The fact that it appears to represent an implied criticism of society ties it in well with the "concealed-theme" aspect of the main narratives.

In his determination to demonstrate that the improbable behaviour of the two captains is in fact quite explicable, the author also touches upon another interesting point. For, though this conduct might be "unreasonable" to the eighteenth-century mind, it does conform to at least one code of behaviour - the code of chivalry of the Middle Ages.

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(1) See above, pp.118-120.

(2) See above, pp.107 and 121-25.

The question of conflicting codes becomes no more explicit than this in the 1778-80 text, though arguably it is never far from the author's mind. It is the addition in 1780 of the anecdote of M. Le Pelletier which puts the issue on a clear footing. To give away all one's riches is a laudable act in the eyes of the poor, who can only benefit from such generosity; in the eyes of the rich it is dangerous madness which undermines the whole ethic of property. To receive a slap in the face without seeking satisfaction is sheer cowardice and shameful dishonour to the military man, but the very essence of Christianity. In the event it is also the most efficacious policy, for M. Aubertot is soon begging M. Le Pelletier to accept both his apologies and his purse for the poor.

The argument between the barber-cum-street-orator and Jacques's captain leads into a final summing up by Jacques on the vagaries of human judgement.

" ' - Vous êtes un militaire, et M. Le Pelletier est un chrétien; vous n'avez pas les mêmes idées du soufflet.

- La joue de tous les hommes d'honneur est la même,

- Ce n'est pas tout à fait l'avis de l'Évangile.

- L'Évangile est dans mon cœur et dans mon fourreau, et je n'en connais pas d'autre ...'

- Le vôtre, mon maître, est je ne sais où; le mien est écrit là-haut; chacun apprécie l'injure et le bienfait à sa manière; et peut-être n'en portons-nous pas le même(1) jugement dans deux instants de notre vie!"

Judgements vary from class to class, from individual to individual, and even from one moment to another in the life of an individual. Therefore, it is implied, it is sheer folly to pretend that one's judgement, essentially relative and tentative, can in any sense be absolute or final. Here, of course, we have a link with

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.62.



the theme of the contes.

Another theme which runs right through the incidental narratives of the 1778-80 text - but one which does not correspond so obviously with the moral analyses contained in the contes - concerns the unpredictability of the workings of "Fate". Time and again we see the evil plotted by men against his fellows rebounding in his own face, as conspiracy after conspiracy falls prey to what seems to be an exceedingly even-handed divine justice.

This theme may perhaps be said to begin with Jacques's story of Frère Jean (which we have classified as part of the "framework" of the text), though there is little unpredictability in his discovery and punishment. Properly speaking, it begins with the second Gousse digression. Here Gousse as a character has not changed - in prison, his attitude towards his fellow-prisoners (admiration for the expert in fraud, contempt for the incompetence, though not for the intentions, of the counterfeiter) makes this clear enough. But his originalité is now subordinated to an interest in the irony of his fate, which is the salient feature of the story of his imprisonment. Gousse's tale of the 'cello-player (the third digression) clearly ties in with this same theme, and the parallels between the two are obvious: both men have fallen into traps which they themselves have taken considerable pains to lay, though in the second case it is a disinterested exempt who has turned the tables on the schemer, rather than a treacherous and financially-motivated mistress.

The "author's" next appearance takes the form of a long tirade on the "Bourru bienfaisant" scene, in which he states that this is the kind of scene which he would have preferred Goldoni to use in his last act. In order

to understand the significance of the adaptation, one must view it in terms of the two "Gousse" digressions just discussed. For the ending which Diderot would like to see applied to the Goldoni play, and of which he himself thoughtfully provides an example for our (and his) perusal, is one in which the tables are turned on the ungracious creditor in such a way that he finds himself in the ironical situation of having to beg his debtor to allow him the privilege of bestowing still more money upon him.

Gousse goes to great pains to commit himself to prison; the 'cello-player has a lettre de cachet served on himself; the Landlord pleads with his debtor. Then, in the Pommeraye tale, Des Arcis spends a lot of time and money leading a prostitute to the altar; Mme de La Pommeraye "avenges" herself by securing a happy marriage for the object of her venom; in the Hudson story, Richard's investigations bring about his own disgrace.

The attitude of the "author" to the appropriateness of the kind of punishment meted out to Des Arcis and to the Landlord has been stated openly. From the enthusiasm with which he recounts the stories of Gousse and the intendant, we may assume that he applauds the justice of their imprisonment too. On the other instances he remains mute, but the similarity of theme implies similar approval.

The "framework" sections of the novel contain several examples of the failure of justice to operate. Most notably, Jacques is made by the Lieutenant-Général de Conches to pay for a night's entertainment in the arms of a serving-girl he has never even seen, much less slept with, while the Master has to pay for the upbringing of the son of his rival. In contrast to these failures of justice, Diderot would appear to be delighted to note the existence of a kind of "natural" justice which is able to turn the tables on conspirators. He may thus

seem to be approaching the notion of a providential Fate - hardly in accord with his own materialism.

To some extent the argument is made clearer by Jacques's story (told to him by Richard) of the dying man who refused the last sacraments - a story which forms yet another sequel to the Hudson tale and which again shows a frustration of effort. The attempts of the châtelaine to overcome the sick man's obstinacy are skilful (as the Master is quick to agree) and seem assured of success. Unfortunately for her purpose, however, the patient is decidedly unreceptive, and death comes more swiftly than might have been anticipated - too swiftly, certainly to allow time for her words and the doctor's to take effect. And so her scheme is thwarted: but no one is "punished" and no one benefits from this turn of "Fate".

Where did the lady go wrong? She acted to the best of her ability, but simply could not know what difficulties she faced. (Though, even had she known, of course, her plan of action might not have been different.) Fate is unpredictable.

We are reminded of the conversation between Jacques and his Master much earlier in the novel (and in the "framework" section) on the subject of premonitions. For once the Master, connecting the enthusiastic kiss bestowed by a grateful Jacques upon the public executioner with Socrates' similar treatment of his own executioner, is able to dominate the conversation. He recounts the tale of the woman whose octogenarian husband has to go into town for an operation. In a letter he tells her that at the very moment she is reading the letter he will be undergoing the operation; as she opens the letter, her wedding-ring separates - the half bearing her name remaining on her finger, the half bearing her husband's name falling and breaking in two. She draws the "inevitable" conclusions, until she receives a second letter in which he

states that the operation has been a complete success and that he hopes to be kissing her before the end of the month. Jacques is prompted to ask:

"JACQUES. - Et l'embrassa-t-il en effet?

LE MAITRE. - Oui.

JACQUES. - Je vous ai fait cette question, parce que j'ai remarqué plusieurs fois que le destin était cauteleux. On lui dit au premier moment qu'il en aura menti, et il se trouve au second moment, qu'il a dit vrai." (1)

The "slyness" of Fate" is Jacques's way of putting it. But according to his own philosophy the universe does not operate at random. The apparent haphazardness is merely an effect of the poverty of human knowledge. The result of our actions is "unpredictable" because we do not know all the factors involved. Gousse, for example, does not know of his serving girl's guile or lust for money, or the 'cello player of his "victim's" association with the exempt who will be called upon to implement the lettre de cachet.

Completely accurate, absolute judgements are impossible because of our lack of knowledge, and so too is the ability to predict the future, beyond a certain very limited degree. Jacques might show better-than-average powers in this respect, but complete success is clearly out of the question.

Moreover, the "punishment" aspect of these stories also merits a closer look. Pruner<sup>(2)</sup> has pointed out that none of the prisoners in Gousse's cell is being "improved" in any way by his treatment, and that at least two of them are actively employed in dishonest activities at the time of the author's visit. Certainly the legal system is again under attack. But we have already seen

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.80.

(2) Francis Pruner, op.cit., p.79.

how, in effect, Des Arcis is far from being worse off as a result of his "punishments", and how Richard is saved by his from a life of misery. Indeed, one might ask who is really made to suffer from his sins in Jacques. Perhaps what Diderot is stressing after all is precisely the very absence of that Providence whose justice he appeared to be praising. The conclusion he proposes to the Bourru bienfaisant, one should remember, is only the conclusion he would dearly like to see applied, chosen on grounds of morality rather than of probability. There is, however, one notable exception to the apparent rule that all who tamper with the unknown are doomed to failure - the case of the ingenious abbé Hudson, who is able to turn the tables on his enemies with most remarkable ease through a complicated plot every detail of which comes to fruition as he had intended. This fact forces us to look at the question of "predictability" from a slightly different angle.

From Richard's point of view, of course, Hudson is the unknown quantity best left alone - "Fate", in fact. For Diderot, his significance is best viewed in terms of the general concept of originalité, as it emerges through the pages of Jacques le fataliste.

Hudson himself does not provoke much reaction from characters or "reader", but the equally "unfathomable" Gousse and Mme de la Pommeraye do. And it is precisely the shock, horror and incredulity of the witnesses to these characters' behaviour which aid the execution of their schemes: they are able to manipulate events largely because no one believes them capable of the depths of immorality or guile required to carry their plans to fruition.

This is the strength of the original: he is better able to understand, and predict the reactions of, society at large than society is to come to grips with him. In other words, only he knows the rules of the game. He is thus able to raise himself to the level of determining factor in other people's lives.

But why does Hudson succeed in this social warfare and Mme de La Pommeraye fail? The answer must be that it is merely a question of definition. For Mme de La Pommeraye is successful in manipulating everyone around her with such precision that Des Arcis's very patterns of thought follow the paths which she wishes them to follow. She only "fails" insofar as she is unable to predict how he will react when he is confronted by the totally unprecedented situation of finding himself married to a whore.

The "happy ending", of course - though it illustrates how complex are the factors governing our existence - obscures the rather ominous message of human vulnerability to manipulation. Indeed, the sudden romanesque turn of events has much in common with the way in which the novel as a whole is brought to an end. Might one not regard it as a similar red herring, designed deliberately to cloud the issues in romance? Such an interpretation is supported by the heavily dramatised language of the "reconciliation" theme. It is even conceivable that this conclusion was added - either at the time that the Pommeraye story entered the novel or afterwards - to what the author himself regarded as a completed story.

In a sense, the tale of the Pondicherry poet is a vindication of the boldness of the original: for it establishes that, although man's best-laid plans are subject to a host of unknown factors, certain elements, already determined, can be projected reasonably well into the future and help to build up a picture of events at least likely to be consequent upon a particular

course of action. (1)

There is, of course, a morality as well as a moral in this approach, for one of the factors involved in such decision-making is an assessment - and an acceptance - of people as they are. This is the "positive" aspect of determinism in Jacques noted by a number of critics. (2)

Theoretically, of course (if the major premise on which this is based - absolute determinism - is correct) no "decision", properly speaking, is possible at all. It is perhaps a measure of how far the thought has evolved beyond the mere parody of a discussion on determinism that it should occur to Diderot not to raise this thorny problem.

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- (1) Without the added dimension provided by a diachronic study of the work, it is easy to draw solely negative conclusions from the outcome of these tales. Cf. Vartanian's remark: "In all three narratives, it can be said of the final reversal brought about by the imprévu at the expense of the prévu that, thanks to a capricious turn of events, the intended victim regains the freedom of action which another sought to deprive him of by manipulating fate. Uncertainty about what might follow from any given echaînement des causes et des effets thus becomes the practical equivalent of a measure of personal liberty in the midst of various social determinisms, among which the Machiavellian plot has an exemplary status." (op.cit., p.342) and his appended footnote: "Conversely, the stories illustrate the opposite side of the necessity-freedom dilemma. Mme de La Pommeraye, the chevalier de Saint-Ouin, etc., would seem, from their own standpoint, to be acting with a high degree of freedom, that is, with a lack of customary restraint, in the carrying out of their schemes; whereas, in reality, it is they, not their dupes, who are the playthings of an unsuspected destiny." (ibid., n.1).
- (2) J. Robert Loy and Ronald Grimsley in particular insist upon this approach - see above, pp.165-169.

Of the remaining themes noted in Diderot's works of moral analysis, <sup>(1)</sup> "primitive society" does not figure openly in the 1778-80 text of Jacques, though one of the principal themes of Diderot's "dual nature" theory, that of sexual constancy, does receive a certain amount of stress. We have already seen <sup>(2)</sup> how, in a commentary upon the Pommeraye story, "someone" (Jacques, the Master or the "author") makes a speech in which the ridiculousness of vows of constancy is put in no uncertain terms; how Desglonds's fickle mistress is tormented and driven to despair by the combined force of her own passions and the moral and religious codes of her society which make them reprehensible; how Mme de La Pommeraye expects a degree of constancy of Des Arcis which a man of his temperament can hardly be expected to give, and sets greater store than is reasonable by her own "good name". The miller's dog is held up as a model of constancy, but there can be little lesson in this, for we are concerned with coming to grips with things as they are, not as they ought (perhaps!) to be.

Now, in all probability, the description of the widow belongs to an early stage in the novel's development, and the Pommeraye tale to a rather later stage. <sup>(3)</sup> Arguably, however, the commentary upon the Pommeraye tale postdates the inclusion of the story itself, <sup>(4)</sup> in which case we are definitely faced with a movement towards greater explicitness.

However, that the theme of constancy assumed increasing importance as the novel evolved is demonstrated by Diderot's decision to include the fable of the knife and the sheath in the 1780 Additions, as an appendix to the "O enfants! toujours enfants!" speech, and a better way of conveying the same lesson.

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(1) See above, pp.197-99.

(2) *ibid.*, pp.75-77.

(3) *ibid.*, pp.101-05 and 121-25.

(4) *ibid.*, pp.108 and 120.



As for pre-civilised man, some attention must be paid to Pruner's theories. In his allegorical interpretation of Jacques, he regards the opening pages of the novel - up to (in the main narrative) the travellers' arrival at what turns out to have been the house of the Lieutenant-Général de Conches, and (in Jacques's tale) the hero's arrival at the peasant's cottage - as describing "l'état dit de nature", where everyone is afraid of everyone else and the only law is the law of the jungle.

If such is Diderot's intention, then a marked contrast will be apparent with the thought of the Supplément, where it is precisely the "civilising" forces of religion, morality and law which are held responsible for the "fall" of European man.

It would appear almost as if Diderot were adopting at one moment a Hobbesian; at the next a Lockean interpretation of the "state of nature", arguing in Jacques that man's "natural" state is one of anarchy, of perpetual war with his fellows, and in the Supplément that a simple substitution of "natural" law for the laws of a corrupt civilisation would suffice to bring out all that is best in man.

The spectre of Thomas Hobbes, of course, hangs over much of Diderot's work. Arguably it is the philosophe's inability to demolish Hobbes's view of human nature that makes the moral implications of materialist determinism so alarming: seemingly, philosophical man is obliged to choose between the hypocrisy and intellectual dishonesty of accepting the validity of laws and traditions based on the false assumption of man's free will, and the moral anarchy consequent upon rejecting them. This dilemma is expressed very forcefully in Le Neveu de Rameau. Thielemann<sup>(1)</sup> has examined the relationship of Diderot to the philosophy of Hobbes, and, among other things,

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(1) Leland Thielemann, 'Diderot and Hobbes', *Diderot Studies* 2, 1952, pp.221-278.

indicates that the effect of Hobbes's influence tended to be a restraining one, dampening his enthusiasm for more "optimistic" assessments of human nature.

Of course, neither the Hobbesian nor the Lockean view was entirely typical of Diderot, and it is not surprising that a different context should have produced a different intellectual response. Certainly, within the didactic context of the Supplément, it would be wrong to assume that Diderot was obliged to be personally blind to the weaknesses of the idealised alternative society he is holding up for our examination. He is more concerned with making a case than with weighing evidence. Again, if an allegory is implied in Jacques, there is no reason to suppose that the successive stages of "life" through which the characters progress should correspond in any way to Diderot's own views on the development of civilisation. Conventionally "wickedness" precedes law and morality: for the purposes of the allegory conventional wisdom will do.

As has been indicated, however, <sup>(1)</sup> a strong parallel exists between the Supplément and some of the narrative material of the late additions to Jacques. Here we are indeed presented with the wisdom of a society infinitely more "primitive" than that of the Paris salons - albeit a society much less remote than Tahiti. Again we are faced with an idealisation rather than an attempt at realistic portrayal: economic distress plays no part in this "new" picture of the French peasantry. But there is no need to believe in the existence of a village quite like Jacques's in order to accept the lessons which its life-style has to offer. The author is at the same time spared any accusation of intentional or unintentional naivety by his humorous treatment of the subject. And thus the Hobbesian objection is side-stepped.

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(1) See above, pp.83-84.

What, then, are the virtues of this "primitive" peasant society?

The first of the additions to include the theme of peasant wisdom is Jacques's fable of the knife and the sheath (1780), in which one of the main elements of that wisdom is revealed: a "realistic" approach to human nature, which scorns the very concept of sexual constancy. But it goes further than this: the knife and the sheath are wrong to expect "fidelity" of one another, because such faithfulness is not within their power to determine - it depends upon an outside agency. Thus there is a very definite element of "fatalism" in this realism: it is no doubt significant that the "fable" is put into Jacques's mouth.

The other notable feature of the parable is the very bluntness of the lesson taught - again a consistent element of folk wisdom. Jacques (for once!) deliberately rejects verbose philosophising in favour of the pithiness of the fable. The peasant is down to earth in his attitudes not only to morality but also to the manner of formulating and communicating his ideas.

With the appearance, in the 1786 Lacunes, of the tales of Jacques's youthful exploits, this same quality of directness re-emerges, though alongside other new elements. The attitudes of the villagers to sexual conquests recall the subtitle of the Supplément: in the main they contract their affairs on the sole basis of pleasure, and avoid contaminating them with "misplaced" notions of moral significance, or with the imposition of the stamp of ownership on the illicit partner. It is the Master who underlines the "naturalness" of this approach, in contrast to the possessive attitudes of the society to which he belongs:

"LE MAITRE.- Et tu n'as pas revu ces femmes?  
 JACQUES.- Pardonnez-moi, plus d'une fois.  
 LE MAITRE.- Toutes deux?  
 JACQUES.- Toutes dex.

LE MAITRE.- Elles ne se sont pas brouillées?

JACQUES.- Utiles l'une à l'autre, elles  
s'en sont aimées davantage.

LE MAITRE.- Les nôtres en auraient bien fait  
autant, mais chacune avait son chacun..."(1)

Lester Crocker lays some emphasis on Diderot's cheerful acceptance of the "disorder" inherent in sex.

"The chaos of human life is centered, in Diderot's picture, on three factors: sex, moral judgment, and the drive toward power, superiority and the exploitation of others. The sexual instincts are an irreducible element of disorder in society. Rousseau, recognizing the same fact, sought ways of overcoming it by various means of control; Diderot accepts it as inevitable. The sentimental elements of love, its declarations of uniqueness and fidelity, are illusions. The law of flux makes of romantic "eternal love" a vain human ideal or longing." (2)

Indeed, it is arguable that Diderot preferred this disorder to the psychological and sociological turmoil consequent upon any attempt to tame the untameable.

The chief characteristic of "peasant wisdom", as it is depicted in Lacune no.19, however, has rather more to do with an attitude to life than with an opinion on a specific question of behaviour, and is revealed as much by the tone of the stories' narration as by the words or actions of their characters. It is that quality of directness, or joie de vivre, of unashamed earthiness which Diderot associates with Rabelais. As such it cannot be studied except in terms of the all-pervasive humour of the work and of the relationship between humour and philosophy - the task, in fact of the final chapter of this thesis.

The apparently interpolated central section of Lacune no.19 also brings to a head another of the themes

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(1) Page 217. (This passage opens the interpolated central section of the Lacune - see above, pp.51-52)

(2) Lester G. Crocker, Diderot's Chaotic Order, Princeton and London, Princeton University Press, 1974.

of the subsidiary narratives of Jacques le fataliste (as well as of the Supplément) - that of the perfidy of the priesthood. Jacques's tales of his brother Jean and Père Ange, which probably constitute an "original" element of the novel, paint a fairly familiar picture of the jealousies, frustrations and intrigues inherent in the monastic system. Neither Jacques nor his Master is over-enamoured of the priestly caste.

"LE MAITRE.- Ah! les moines! les moines!

JACQUES.- Le meilleur ne vaut pas grand argent.

LE MAITRE.- Je le sais mieux que toi.

JACQUES.- Est-ce que vous avez passé par leurs mains?

LE MAITRE.- Une autre fois je te dirai cela.

JACQUES.- Mais pourquoi est-ce qu'ils sont si méchants?

LE MAITRE.- Je crois que c'est parce qu'ils sont moines..." (1)

The attack is, of course, resumed in the Hudson story (which has already been dealt with at some length)<sup>(2)</sup> where the whole system (and not just Hudson) is shown to be thoroughly corrupt. Perhaps more interesting, however, in the light of the less-reasoned and more scurrilous approach of the later additions, is the appearance in the Pommeraye tale of the totally irrelevant descriptions of a particularly despicable antiphilosophe priest (possibly intended to be recognised by the reader).<sup>(3)</sup> For Jacques, in an interruption to an interruption to the tale, proposes a toast to the said priest: the Landlady is outraged at the suggestion, but the Master understands Jacques's enthusiasm:

"LE MAITRE.- C'est que vous ne savez pas, notre hôtesse, que Jacques que voilà est une espèce de philosophe, et qu'il fait un cas infini de tous ces petits imbéciles qui

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(1) A.-T. VI, pp.51-52.

(2) See above, p.212.

(3) A.-T. VI, p.128.

se déshonorent eux-mêmes et la cause qu'ils défendent si mal. Il dit que son capitaine les appelait le contrepoison des Huet, des Nicole, des Bossuet. Il n'entendait rien à cela, ni vous non plus..." (1)

The bad priest is an antidote to the good priest, because he allows us to see the hypocrisy of the whole priestly pretension. We are therefore justified in generalising the lesson of Père Ange's persecutors, of Hudson, of the Father-General, of the debauched curate of Jacques's village, for although they may not all be entirely typical, they do all demonstrate the folly and hypocrisy underlying religion, even the religion of the saintly. (2)

Even when, a little later, (3) the Landlady praises her own confessor, the virtues she sees in him are somewhat negative ones. In fact, her reason for liking him is, deep down, his lack of excessive assiduity in the performance of his priestly duties.

The 1780 Additions, with Jacques's "picture" of the coach-crash, and the 1786 Lacunes, with his portrayal of the village curate, maintain this new approach.

Jacques's attitude to the priesthood may be a philosophical one, as the Master claims, but his joy at hearing of a "bad" priest is based upon the fact that such a character will not be received "philosophically" by the populace. And the emotional response produced by his wickedness is what is required to demolish the whole myth of saintliness. The direct, descriptive approach is thus of greater value than a wealth of philosophising. Since this is also the message of

(1) A.-T. VI, p.130.

(2) Indeed, the "bad" priest may be less dangerous. Cf. Pensées philosophiques, V (A.-T.I, p.128): "C'est le comble de la folie, que de se proposer la ruine des passions. Le beau projet que celui d'un dévot qui se tourmente comme un forcené, pour ne rien désirer, ne rien aimer, ne rien sentir, et qui finirait par devenir un vrai monstre s'il réussissait!"

(3) A.-T.VI, p.149.

Jacques's fable and of the more general attitudes of his fellow-villagers (as described in Lacune no.19), the opposition of the direct and down-to-earth to the verbose and "well-reasoned" must have assumed considerable importance in Diderot's approach to Jacques in the later years of his life.

In the very earliest and most basic elements of Jacques le fataliste, the reader has been confronted with a satire of the act of philosophising. Now he is presented the other side of the coin - a depiction of the positive rather than the theoretical aspects of Jacques's outlook, and an insistence upon the merits of a more overtly popular and propagandist approach to society.

In a sense this parallels the movement towards greater explicitness apparent in the development of most of the lines of approach of the contes moraux which constitute the subsidiary narratives of Jacques. For in the case of much of the material discussed in this chapter, the more reason there is, from a structural point of view, to consider a passage to be "original", the more guarded is its approach, while it is precisely those passages showing the clearest signs of having been introduced at a relatively late date which are the most direct and forthright in expression.

Thus the theme of constancy appears first of all in the form of descriptions of two women - one (the widow) who is incapable of enduring passion and drawn irresistibly from one lover to the next, the other (Mme de La Pommeraye) who expects a shallow philanderer to become eternally devoted and utterly monogamous overnight. Neither of these tales may have existed in the earliest state of the novel, but it is in the "O enfants" speech - which as part of the first "cluster" of material interrupting the Pommeraye tale, is quite likely to have entered at an even later date - that the issue becomes rather more explicit, and only in the 1780 fable that it finds its most direct expression.

Similarly, the theme of duelling almost certainly entered the work from the very first - in Jacques's relationship with his Master, in his story of the Captain and in the final dénouement of the work. Whatever the date of insertion of the tales of the second captain (or de Guerchy) and Desglants's not altogether dissimilar exploits, the passage in which the motivations underlying such behaviour is brought out (i.e. the first "Gousse" digression) is, by its obviously intrusive nature, much more likely to belong to a fairly late period of revision. Moreover, it is only this explanatory passage which links physical duelling with the theme of a universal struggle for superiority, concealed in the novel as it is in society. And only in the 1786 addenda, with the appearance of "primitive society" in the guise of French village life, do we find an attack upon the concept of possession at the root of the rivalries which produce such social duelling.

"Originalité" in Jacques le fataliste would seem to have had a similar history. Its first appearance is in the character of the hero himself (that is, in a purely, and blatantly, fictional setting) and of his captain and of his captain's friend. Probable subsequent additions provide the other notable originaux, Mme de La Pommeraye; Hudson and Gousse, with - perhaps among the latest of all - the two monologues by the author (on the subject of the behaviour of the two captains and Mmde de La Pommeraye respectively) to instruct the reader in the manner in which he should view the whole theme. Curious characters are followed by extraordinarily forceful characters, and the question of moral judgement enters to join that of plausibility. And increasingly it is the reader's (i.e., society's) interpretation and understanding that are at issue, rather than the "worth"



of the characters themselves. The extent to which our judgement is corrupt is demonstrated by our sympathy for the weak and destructive Des Arcis, and our antipathy for Mme de La Pommeraye, whose cause is just, and whose choice of action is demonstrably appropriate.

This attack on the reader's whole apparatus of moral reasoning also throws light on the issue of justice which pervades the basic narratives of the novel. Given the confused state of society's reasoning, legal questions are likely to meet with answers every bit as unsatisfactory as those accorded to purely moral issues.

Again it is the later additions which seek to explain some of the reasons for all of this confusion, and to point the way towards a more plausible system. Jacques's story (1780) of M. Le Pelletier draws attention to the existence of a multitude of conflicting codes of behaviour within a single society. No wonder that our values are so muddled when any moral question can receive any one of a dozen different solutions according to the code applied! And why have so many different codes evolved? Because society has travelled a long way from the "village", from the life which man would pursue in a more "natural" state. And the journey has been along a whole series of divergent tracks, with each class and condition of men following the one apparently most appropriate to it.

What of the remedies? The 1786 Lacunes provide two rays of hope. Life can be more "natural", and values less complicated, in a society in which hypocrisy and possessiveness have no place. But Diderot was hardly naive enough to suppose that restoration of the "simple life" was a feasible course of action: such optimism as there is here is inspired more by man's potential than by a sense of the possibility of change.<sup>(1)</sup> On the other

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(1) The history, intentions and implications of this "optimism" will be made clearer in the following chapter.

hand, if society (and therefore the behavioural patterns determined by it) cannot be changed, there is still the possibility of teaching men to accept other men as they are, and to recommend courses of action based (as in the case of the Pondicherry poet) not upon abstract notions of right and wrong, but upon the physical and psychological data of a given situation.

It will by now be apparent how far the development of moral thought in the subsidiary anecdotes of Jacques parallels that contained in the author's more general commentaries, which provide an increasingly positive and explicit guide to the reader's interpretation of the novel as a whole. The movement here is from veiled criticism of a whole series of aspects of society, of the institutions of society, of moral and legal values, through more open attacks upon the same faults and weaknesses, towards an analysis of what is fundamentally wrong and in what way socio-philosophical attitudes need to be changed.

The point of contact between the two developing lines of thought is the story of the young "poet" despatched to Pondicherry by the author, for this is the point at which the philosophy of determinism - apparently in conflict with the very bases of ethics - itself unexpectedly coincides with the moral reasoning of the work.

A similar development may be traced in the humour of the work. Since it is in terms of this humour that all the rest must be viewed, it has been thought appropriate to defer discussion of it until this late stage.

CHAPTER VIIHUMOUR IN "JACQUES"

Of all human emotions, humour is perhaps the most incomprehensible. Of all arts, that of the comedian is the most defiant of analysis. Of all aspects of Diderot's Jacques le fataliste, its humour is the most difficult to approach and the most neglected by critics.

The gravest danger in writing of the humour of a work which is also evidently possessed of philosophy, is of becoming involved in a self-defeating chicken-or-egg controversy. Is the humour of the work a precondition of the philosophical content? Does it dictate the terms in which we are to view the ideas? Or is it merely a tool either for conveying or for rendering palatable the concepts already in the mind of the author? Such a controversy arises largely from a more general tendency to separate too distinctly the author's intentions from his technique. Books do not write themselves, but neither do they usually follow to the letter a pre-determined plan.

Humour has a way of modifying our view of things, and different types of humour, different types of laughter, produce different modifications. Jacques and his philosophy form a key issue in this respect.

The creation of Jacques the philosopher depends far more closely upon language than upon any pre-conceived sympathy or antipathy for "his" theories. (This is precisely why Diderot's "intentions" and relationship with regard to his character have received such diverse interpretations.) Only his language, with its in-built implications of a deity or external agent, differentiates Jacques's "fatalism" from the radical philosophy of materialist determinism, but in that language lies all the humour. We smile at Jacques's references to

"le grand rouleau", we laugh at his "prayer". The fuller the picture of Jacques becomes, the more we laugh, and the more we do so, the less we are able either to agree or to disagree with the substance of his ideas. Used in this fundamentally good-natured way, humour has a distancing effect, becomes a kind of sympathetic satire. The reader, unable to see the author for the brilliance of the character, is forced to look elsewhere for his "proofs".

But Jacques is not merely a philosopher: he is also an impertinent valet. As such the impression he makes on the twentieth-century mind is probably very different from the way an eighteenth-century reader would have considered him.

In considering the humour of the novel it is thus important to bear in mind the likely reactions of a contemporary public. In this respect we must be wary of the reception given to the early publications, which took place during the very different intellectual climate of the revolutionary period. This leaves us with but one very slender piece of evidence - the popularity of the work with Grimm's readers. One might think that if anyone was to take offence at Jacques it would be those who tended to identify with the Master - and Grimm's readership may fairly be said to have represented the ruling class par excellence. But we know of their amusement from the prefatory remarks to the 1780 series of additions and to the first episode of La Religieuse.<sup>(1)</sup> Why should this be?

The answer to this question must lie very largely in the character of Jacques himself. The more one prunes away the subsidiary narrative material in a search for the "original" Jacques le Fataliste, the more central and dominant becomes the figure of the valet-hero. Now, the Master employs Jacques rather

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(1) See above, pp.29-30.

than anyone else largely because Jacques amuses him, and he amuses him because he is outrageous; his philosophy is outrageous, the freedom of his expression is outrageous; above all, his attitude to the Master is outrageous. His function is a combination of the duties of valet, travelling companion and court jester. And, just as a king can afford to laugh at the impertinence of a jester, so too can the Master at Jacques's impertinence - as long as this cannot be construed as a threat to his authority ... And the reader, identifying with the Master, can laugh with him - for Jacques appears to be offered up by the "author" as much for our delectation as for the Master's.

The "author" is thus a purveyor of literary delicacies - which can involve action as well as character - delighting in whetting the reader's appetite for the curious, the humorous and the exciting. It is within these terms that one must view the element of farce in Jacques.

The first incident of the journey is the classic comedy scene of the angry Master beating his servant when the fault is his own. (The implication may not be funny, but the literary tradition to which this scene belongs is a comic one.) Almost immediately afterwards, we have the incident of the surgeon so keen to demonstrate either the great pain or the triviality of knee wounds (we never discover which) that he unseats his lady passenger, causing her to receive a nasty blow to the head and to reveal what she might have preferred not to reveal. A score of burlesque scenes follow.

Like the first incident, however, a large number of these scenes involve Jacques and his Master in dispute. As such they serve as repeated reminders of the paradox of their relationship: the valet, a believer in the unreality of human freedom to boot, taking a positive lead, the Master, a believer in freedom, finding himself

continually led on. A satire is apparent.

Jacques is paid to serve the Master by amusing him, but their relationship is paradoxical. So it is with the author and the reader. The author writes for the reader's amusement; he even contrives to appear personally upon the scene in somewhat buffoonish guise. But things do not stop there. Once upon the scene, he uses his presence to make some pretty direct attacks upon the reader. Since these have already been dealt with at some length, they need concern us only briefly here.

The basic charges against the reader are concerned with the poverty of his intellect. Cultured he may be, and able to quote literary references, modern and classical, but he is unable to see beyond the end of his nose in his reading of Jacques le Fataliste. He cannot discern the "truth" of the work, is blinkered by his own prejudices, is impatient to be entertained by the author, but wishes to dictate terms, which is something this author at least is not prepared to allow.

These accusations are not particularly hilarious. What makes them relevant to the humour of the novel is the reinforcement they give to the parallel between the Master's situation and the reader's. For the Master is the embodiment of many of these faults: he too is a bully, impatient to know the outcome of a story, forgetting that the interest (and significance) lies in its telling; he too shows little understanding of happenings either narrated to him or occurring in his own life; he too is a poor judge - of horses and of men; he too is powerless to control events. Worse than this, however, he is depicted as an automaton, a slave to time and tobacco (though he is never aware either of looking at his watch or of taking a pinch of snuff) a slave to Jacques's moods, an easy victim of Jacques's ploys, a coward, a bully, jealous...

Thus the humour has rebounded. Though it is the valet who is offered up as a humorous subject, it is in reality the Master who is the more ridiculous of the two. Similarly, although the reader employs the writer (though indirectly) much for the same reason as a mediaeval king employed a jester (and as the Master employs Jacques), it is the reader's situation which is preposterous, for once he has embarked upon a book, he has a simple choice: to put it down permanently, or to press on and accept whatever the author may care to throw at him.

This double source of humour is used extensively, and in suitably outrageous manner, throughout the pages of what we may assume to be the earliest version of Jacques. The valet's challenge to the authority of his master is a constantly recurring theme of the "framework" sections of the novel (though the reality of their situations relative to one another is brought out more clearly in the great row which takes place at the Hôtel du Grand-Cerf, part of the thirty pages following the Pommeraye tale which may have entered the novel at a relatively late date). As for the power which the author wields over his reader, this has already been studied at some length,<sup>(1)</sup> but the force and persistence of the taunt cannot be over-emphasised. The "author" clearly enjoys toying with the insatiable curiosity and adventure-lust of his reader, and is out to draw the last drop of satirical humour from the situation.

Already, to some extent, in the satire of the Master and the reader, we are concerned with the humour of interpretation: the more conscious one is at a given moment of the depth of satire implied, the greater reason one has for amusement. Interpretation is certainly very much at the core of any amusement that the search for "truth" or relevance might bring.

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(1) See above, pp.126-142.

Again, the deeper one digs, the more subtlety can be detected in the novel's composition, and the wider in scope the satire becomes. The more one appreciates the parallel between the specious theoretical discussions and the real lessons of the incidents and anecdotes which interrupt them, the more there is to savour.

To the reader's perplexity, however, the deeper he digs, the more he comes up against paradox. It turns out, for example, that Jacques's "chance" interpretation of the journey has been an illusion, and that even the Master's insistence upon love-stories has had a strict psychological motivation. This, of course, further confirms the reader's impression that Diderot is emphasising that the course of one's life is predetermined, though not in the manner which Jacques suggests (because Jacques is not in a position to know all the factors). But it also provides a further convolution of the relationship of the two antagonists. For it is now clear that ultimately, despite all appearances, the Master is master - master of the course of the journey, master of the choice of conversation, master of Jacques's destiny.

Thus far we have concentrated on the humour of the framework narrative of the first hundred pages and the last sixty and of the proclamations of the "author" forming part of it. Moving on to consider the "central" section of the novel, we find a not entirely dissimilar picture, except that the element of farce has, since the arrival of the two travellers at the Grand-Cerf, come more definitely to the fore.



There is nothing gradual about this change of emphasis: the chaos begins with the very first mention of the hostelry.

"Jacques et son maître avaient atteint le gîte où ils avaient la nuit à passer. Il était tard; la porte de la ville était fermée, et ils avaient été obligés de s'arrêter dans le faubourg. Là, j'entends un vacarme... " (1)

Hysterics over a mal-treated dog, the same dog dropped heavily (and disastrously), people running up and down stairs, conversations interrupted by the demands of the inn's customers and staff....

Obviously, once the Landlady has launched into the Pommeraye tale, this chaotic movement is pushed into the background. One would expect it to disappear altogether, but Diderot employs the technique of deliberate, persistent interruption to remind us of the theatrical setting of the narration.

This theatrical (or, more precisely, farcical) aspect is further underlined, on p.135, when the author abruptly halves the hôtesse's narration as he "remembers" that he has forgotten to depict the positions of the three characters. The scene he paints is a static one, but the language he uses is as much that of the theatre as that of the studio:

"Lecteur, j'avais oublié de vous peindre le site des trois personnages dont il s'agit ici, ..." (2)

These interruptions are important to another aspect of the humour, however, for it is worth noting that every time Jacques and his Master halt the narrative in order to comment upon its development the reader's attention is automatically drawn to the artificiality of a tradition which allows one of the characters of a novel to embark upon what is, in style, presentation and

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.91.

(2) *ibid.*, p.135.

content, a novel within the novel. (That is not to deny the importance of the Pommeraye tale to the central discussion of human behaviour, or even the "symbolism" of Jacques's increasing drunkenness as the story progresses.) On each occasion, when the story is taken up again, the Hôtesse resumes her formal style immediately, thus underlining the intrusive nature of the interruptions.

The contrast between the Pommeraye tale and the somewhat incongruous circumstances of its relation is further underlined by the style of the narrative itself - eloquent, formal and in the very best romanesque (i.e. written) tradition. To interpret the Master's remark:

"C'est que cette femme raconte beaucoup mieux qu'il ne convient à une femme d'auberge." (1)

as having as its sole significance the implication that the Hôtesse is of nobler caste than her present position would appear to indicate is to take the character's meaning for the author's and to miss the joke. The Landlady's style is not of even a lady of noble birth telling a story but that of a novelist writing one.

Looking at the material which we have greatest reason to attribute to the hypothetical "third" period in the novel's development (after the re-working of the central section), a very different picture emerges. From the point of view of humour, of course, the rôle of the author's contributions has not changed greatly - though not amusing in themselves, they do direct our attention (and more positively than before) to some of the subtleties of the work. But in terms of bulk, the author's contributions appear to represent a relatively insignificant proportion when compared with the volume of "new" narrative material. And it is hard to think of a single instance of the briefest glimmer

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(1) A.-T. VI, p.117.

of humour in any of the subsidiary narratives - (before the 1780 Additions, that is). Once embarked upon, each and every story lapses into a style of narrative more formal, more serious and more intense than that of the journey narrative.

Thus, if one is justified in regarding even some of the anecdotal material of Jacques as having been inserted after the novel's initial composition, then it will be apparent that the humour of the work underwent something of a watering-down process as the new material was added. The greater the quantity of material belonging to this "middle" period, of course, the sharper the process becomes. It is therefore arguable that the emphasis on humour in the last phases of the novel's evolution (particularly in the 1786 Lacunés) was intended to some extent to redress the balance.

Whatever the reasons involved, however, the humour of the later additions is by no means a carbon copy of what had gone before. The convolutions of the author/reader, valet/Master satire are largely left alone, apart from a few direct attacks upon the reader, while the only real addition to the "concealed proofs" theme is the revelation that Jacques's enlistment was less of a chance happening than we had been given to believe. In place of the subtlety of the "framework" text, we are suddenly faced with the emergence of a far more boisterous, direct sort of humour, far exceeding the scope even of the farce scenes of the earlier portions of the novel. We would thus appear to be confronted with a completely fresh approach. In fact, it is more appropriate to see the additions in terms of a change of direction.

The point of connection is an aspect of the humour of the earlier text which received little emphasis at

that stage - the idea of humour as a philosophy of life. But the humour/philosophy is not of the jovially pessimistic Shandean variety: it has a much more positive ring to it, an emphasis on the admirable and the ridiculous rather than on the universally quaint. As such it is clearly meant to be seen as an imitation of a very different churchman from Sterne. Just how far Diderot's intentions here are "Rabelaisian" (in Diderot's interpretation, of course) should be made clear by the following extract from Roth's excellent edition of his correspondence. The letter is addressed to Prince Alexander Galitzin, and is dated 21st May 1774. It was despatched from the Hague.

"Mon Prince,

"Permettez que je joigne un petit mot pantagruélique à la lettre du prince Galitzin. Premièrement, selon la Bible sainte de ce nom, il faut faire tout le bien qu'on peut; tâcher de réussir; quand on a réussi, s'en réjouir et boire frais avec ses amis.

"Secondement, en cas de non-succès, se signer en disant de coeur et d'esprit la dive formule: Ce faisant; bonne digestion, doux sommeil et vie douce, longue et honorée, toutes choses que vous méritez autant que personne, et qui vous adviendront si, soir et matin, récitez dévotieusement les trois versets: 1. Facere officium suum taliter qualiter; - 2. Sinere vivere mundum quomodo vult; - 3. Semper benedicere de Domino priore.

"L'efficace de ces trois sacro-saints versets est d'assurer prédestination et arrondir le dévot pantagruéliste à vue d'oeil, tenir oeil clair, teint frais, pituite douce, sperme loyal et mirifiquement titillant, chose qui n'est pas à mépriser, comme le cher docteur vous le certifiera et assurera..." (1)

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(1) Diderot, Correspondance (ed. Roth), Vol. XIV, pp.28-33, Letter 843, 'Au Prince Alexandre Galitsine', The Hague, 21st May 1774 (pp.28-29).

According to his daughter, Diderot was occupied at the Hague in writing the Réfutation d'Helvétius, a work which shares with Jacques a common interest in determinism. It has been suggested by some critics that Jacques le fataliste was itself composed at the Hague, though it has been demonstrated that it existed in some form at least some three years earlier.<sup>(1)</sup> It is definitely possible, however, that some revision of, or addition to, Jacques took place at this period. Certainly the combination of Helvetius and Rabelais in the author's mind points in the direction of Jacques. For an explanation of the origin of the Rabelaisian precepts quoted, one can do little better than quote M. Roth's own notes:

"TOURNEUX: 'benedicere ... priore'. Il ne s'agit pas ici de la "sagesse de Salomon" (le prince avait pourtant, dit-on, laissé 90 bâtards à Vienne) mais de la sagesse dite rabelaisienne. Cf.: 'La sagesse du moine de Rabelais est la vraie sagesse, pour son repos et pour celui des autres: faire son devoir, tellement quellement; toujours dire du bien de monsieur le Prieur; et laisser aller le monde à sa fantasia.' - Le Neveu de Rameau (éd. Jean FABRE, p.9) (2)

'Ces trois versets, commente M. Fabre (p.127, note 31), ne se trouvent pas littéralement dans Rabelais. Ils sont peut-être très librement adaptés des chapitres XXXIX et XL du Gargantua. On les trouve sous la forme que leur donne Diderot dans un petit pamphlet de Voltaire critiquant le mauvais entretien des rues de Paris, Ce qu'on ne fait pas et ce qu'on pourrait faire (1742): "Laisser aller le monde comme il va; faire son devoir tellement quellement, et dire toujours du bien de monsieur le Prieur, est une ancienne maxime de moine."

Ajoutons que c'est aussi, sous la plume du même écrivain, la conclusion de Le Monde comme il va (1748). Ces préceptes faisaient partie du folklore étudiantin, et on les retrouve encore dans la Lettre à Messieurs de L'Académie des Inscriptions, de P.-L. Courier;

(1) See above, pp.2-4

(2) Diderot, Le Neveu de Rameau, ed. Jean Fabre, Geneva, Droz; Lille, Giard, 1950, 329p.

ils y sont dans un autre ordre encore,  
et avec la version "quomodo vadit",  
celle de Voltaire..." (1)

The prescription is an interesting mixture of the positive (always to do one's best) and the fatalistic (what attitude to adopt when one's best is not good enough). It may therefore be said to combine one of the chief elements of Jacques's character - his directness - with the more re-assuring aspect of his philosophy. Thus, beneath the Spinoza in Jacques there are shades of Rabelais.

Might it not be argued that the novel was drawn increasingly more in the direction of this "Rabelaisian ethic"? Certainly the whole character of Jacques and of his reasoning underwent a considerable change in the later additions. In the 1778-80 text, his love-story is basically a pseudo-serious exercise designed (superficially) to convince his audience of the validity of his philosophy; his arguments, though they have their comic side, are all reasoned in similarly serious manner. Then suddenly he turns to the technique of ridicule to attack religion, and to peasant wisdom to demonstrate the subservience of sexual love to the dictates of universal determination. And equally suddenly his own love-story is enlivened with a scene of farce, when he decides to describe his operation. (For though farce has been an element of the "journey" narrative, the humour of Jacques's tale - where there is any - has been of a less physical nature.) Similarly, there is a whole change of emphasis in Jacques's amorous past, as it becomes apparent that, though somewhat reserved in matters of the heart, where a purely physical conquest is in the offing he is capable of a very positive - and guileful - approach.

The combined effect of all these changes is to make of Jacques much more a man of action than he appeared in the

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(1) Diderot, Correspondance, ed. Roth, Vol.XIV, p.29, n.4.

earlier state of the novel, much more an example of the vigour of the body and mind which is uppermost in Diderot's interpretation of Rabelais. At the same time, his new rôle as theoretician of prophecy and divination takes him still further from the narrow rationalism of his philosophy, deeper into the world of the lusty, larger-than-life hero.

Moreover, the "author" sides completely with Jacques in his devotion to Bacbuc and to the inspiration of the gourd.

"Ce serait bien ici le cas d'interroger la dive Bacbuc ou la gourde sacrée; mais son culte tombe, ses temples sont déserts. Ainsi qu'à la naissance de notre divin Sauveur, les oracles du paganisme cessèrent; à la mort de Gallet, les oracles de Bacbuc furent muets; aussi plus de grands poèmes, plus de ces morceaux d'une éloquence sublime; plus de ces productions marquées au coin de l'ivresse et du génie; tout est raisonné, compassé, académique et plat. O dive Bacbuc! ô gourde sacrée! ô divinité de Jacques! Revenez au milieu de nous!..." (1)

There is no need to stress to what extent this viewpoint is a Romantic one. In equating poetic inspiration with ivresse and opposing it to the frigid rationalism of his century, in lamenting an age when full rein was given to the imaginative and creative spirit of man, Diderot appears to be foreshadowing the early nineteenth-century view of the artist.

Rabelais is of course, in Diderot's view, the epitome of the creative spirit - and in a variety of ways. His writing is unfettered by the conventions that were to surround the eighteenth-century author, and is directed at an audience less corrupted by rationalism and a fictional tradition tainted with hypocrisy - hence he has no need to serve up a steady diet of love-stories or to remain within the bounds of "romanesque" logic or decency. And, more important, he makes the

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(1) A.-T, VI, pp.225-26.

most of this freedom by allowing the widest scope to his own imagination. Even more than this, however, the philosophy of life which shines out from the pages of his work is, for Diderot, one of total freedom, naturalness and sincerity, of praise for earthy vigour, of delight in the basic drives and functions of man, of whole-hearted contempt for all that smacks of constraint and hypocrisy. At another level, Rabelais' fictional creations themselves, by their larger-than-life ("Gargantuan" quality, stand as symbols of this whole outlook.

It is surely not unreasonable to view the 1786 Lacunes, with their insistence on the inspirational qualities of the gourd, and on the lustiness of Jacques's early love-life, as representing an attempt (somewhat tardy, perhaps) to transform Jacques into a kind of Rabelaisian hero - though of rather more human proportions. In the "éloge de l'obscénité" Diderot makes clear his debt (on the subject of sexual hypocrisy) to Montaigne, long revered by the philosophe, and there would be every consistency in Diderot's turning to Rabelais for the narrative practice where he had turned to Montaigne for the theory.

One might do well here to bear in mind Diderot's avowed admiration for Diogenes. Now the life-style of the Cynic may have been austere, but it was not without a certain lusty sexuality, totally uncontaminated by the false sentiment or venality imposed on these matters by civilised society. In the closing pages of Le Neveu de Rameau, Moi draws Lui's attention to the simplicity, vigour and independence of Diogenes's existence, and to the complete lack of degrading hypocrisy in his dealings with other men. In a way Diogenes represents for Diderot the philosophic (and practical) applications of an outlook of which Rabelais presents the literary manifestation - rebellion against the debilitating and falsifying influences of society.



What are the implications of this change of approach, style and humour for the reader's interpretation of Jacques le fataliste? The Utopian aspect of the life of Jacques's village has already been mentioned, along with the criticism of "civilised" society implied, but it has also been indicated that Diderot could scarcely be recommending a large-scale return to nature.<sup>(1)</sup> It will now be apparent that, as regards this Utopian/Rabelaisian world, the importance lies, not in any morality recommended by the book, but in the book itself. After all his complaints and quibbling, the author has freed himself from the constraints of subject-matter, structure and language imposed by his public, and has used his freedom to present thirty pages at least of Rabelaisian iconoclasm. Thanks to these, what will ultimately most impress the reader is the spirit of the book, challenging the whole ridiculous edifice of conventionality - literary as well as social.

The interesting point here is that all this represents the logical culmination of the "literary" theme of Jacques. The "author"/"reader" relationship, far from being a side issue, is clearly central to the whole question of the function which the novel is intended to fulfil, and as Diderot's concept of that function evolved, so too did the attack upon the reader.<sup>(2)</sup>

In those pages which seem to represent the earliest stage of the novel's development, the reader is clearly the "victim" of a very elaborate satire. Like the Master, he commands, but like the Master he can do nothing to ensure that his commands are carried out. If he chooses to read a book, then he must (in the last resort) do so on the author's terms. And, although the author chooses to set before him a work which not only defies every accepted notion of what constitutes good literature but also

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(1) See above, pp.215-217 and 224-25.

(2) For the remainder of this discussion it seems inappropriate to attempt to distinguish between author and "author", reader and "reader". The use of inverted commas will therefore be dropped.

poses a philosophical problem, the answer which has to be sought through careful study of the text, the reader knows that he can expect little help from the author in coming to terms with this "novel which is not a novel". He is at once challenged to understand and ridiculed for his lack of understanding.

This relationship was to persist until the "post-Pommeraye" phase of the novel's evolution. The thirty pages apparently built around the Hudson story contain the first hint that the reader's weaknesses are moral as well as intellectual: the tyranny he asserts (or tries to assert) over the author is directed specifically at obtaining from him a steady flow of love stories, but he is offended by the use, even in a context where its meaning is plainly rather different, of a verb associated with the consummation of love. At much the same period, however, the reader began to be taken rather more into the author's confidence: on the one hand he was offered a little more guidance as to where the "truth" of the novel was to be found; on the other he was involved by the author in the consideration of a variety of moral issues. And, just as the humour of the work suffered in this phase of development, so too - setting aside for the moment the moral inference - did the force of the challenge (and the insult) hurled at the reader.

The later stages of the novel's evolution, however, saw a reversal of this trend. Certainly, further guidance was offered to the reader - including, in the tale of the Pondicherry poet, a strong clue on the issue of "fatalism" itself - so that he was now in a better position than before to face up to the original challenge. But the double standards of the reader's morality, somewhat obliquely alluded to in the "1778 text", become, in Lacune no.19, the object of a furious attack on the author's part. This attack,

coupled with the earthy vigour of the tales served up in the same Lacune, constitutes a new and very different challenge. Apart from the requirement that he should tackle at the level of the intellect the riddle (or riddles) contained in Jacques le fataliste, the reader is now "invited" to come to terms with a long-forgotten genre - that of honest fiction, presupposing a total lack of hypocrisy on the part of author and reader alike. And, though the reader's response to philosophical riddle and moral reasoning is still important, he is perhaps more likely to be armed for a genuinely radical outlook on life by simply allowing himself to be swept along by the force of that fiction's frankness and humour. It is in this sense that the novel will become a dose of Rabelaisian physic. It need hardly be emphasised how far removed all this is from the theories of fiction expounded by Diderot in his Eloge de Richardson and Les Deux amis de Bourbonne!

### CONCLUSION

In the course of the present thesis it has been necessary to apply methods of textual analysis which, while they are capable of providing a fair assessment of the probable order of composition of given sections of the novel, are nevertheless unable by and large to furnish any definite proof. (This applies both to the study of the 1780 Additions and 1786 Lacunae contained in Ch.I and to that of the 1778-80 text contained in Ch.III). It is hoped, however, that enough has been said in the course of Chs. IV to VII to make it clear beyond reasonable doubt that what is suggested about order of composition by a structural study of the text is, in almost all cases, very much confirmed by a more "literary" study of themes.

It is, for example, extremely unlikely to be mere coincidence that (disregarding the central section of the novel) all the statements by the "author" which form part of (rather than interruptions to) the narrative should be brief and concerned with the theme of power, while those which are clearly delimited (i.e. "detachable") should fall (with just one or two exceptions) into two broad groups: short interpolations concerned with the "truth" of what is being offered to the reader, and longer ones including some illustrative anecdote and dealing with moral questions. Nor is it likely to be mere coincidence that the subsidiary anecdotes most hard to detach from the flow of the principal narrative should be precisely those offering the least explicit (and in the case of the "duelling" theme at least, a wilfully obscure) moral; or that the twin prongs of the humour of the most basic elements of the novel - farce and a convoluted satire of ideas and relationships - should disappear in the "detachable" sections of the 1778-80 text and re-appear in the late additions. It thus appears almost certain that Jacques le fataliste did grow up by stages, and it is hoped that

the present thesis will have made some useful contribution towards delimiting these.

It might be useful at this point to provide a vue d'ensemble of the changing emphases of the novel through the hypothetical phases of its evolution, bearing in mind that our notion of phases (2) and (3) (at least) is extremely vague, and that we may be dealing with a considerably greater number of stages of development.

The first phase, then - presumably closely related to the text read to Pierre Meister in Sept. 1771 and therefore anterior to that date - shows signs of being an extremely carefully and tightly constructed piece (despite everything that has been said about Jacques le fataliste!), a satire not unlike Le Neveu de Rameau. As in the Neveu the work is constructed around a philosophical dialogue in which one of the antagonists advances, in extreme form, an argument which Diderot the scientific philosopher cannot refute, but by the implications of which Diderot the moralist is appalled. More clearly than the Neveu, however, Jacques presents a satire of the predicament of the philosopher and the whole act of philosophising. In addition we are faced with a concealed proof of the very philosophy which is being so ineptly advanced and demonstrated by the hero - and this real proof seems to gain in force the more one realises the spuriousness of the apparent proof (offered by Jacques through his love-story).

Moreover, the validity of the philosophy of materialist determinism is not the only lesson lying concealed in these "original" pages of the novel. On close examination one discovers a social critique embracing a wide spectrum of society, and dwelling in particular on the abuses of the priestly and legal castes, and on hypocrisy - especially that relating to sexual mores and the notion of constancy. An explanation for the behaviour of social man - rivalry, particularly (again) the sexual kind - is also offered, but in so veiled a manner

as to be almost imperceptible to any but the most diligent reader.

At a more superficial level, the "original" Jacques satirised the artistic destructiveness and absurdity of the "romanesque" tradition, by asserting continually the paradox whereby the author had the power to write what it pleased him to write, while the reader (apparently the "master" in their relationship) was in the abject state of being obliged either to swallow the author's jibes or to put down the book. Similarly, the more specifically master/servant relationship of Jacques and his Master (and therefore, by implication, the whole structure of society) was satirised by the demonstration of another paradox - for in the last resort it is the servant, through action, who asserts his freedom and power, while the master is obliged to be served in the servant's terms or not at all.

The humour of the work relates very closely to the different elements of this satire. At one level the reader laughs at the farce and eccentricities of character and philosophy proffered for his delectation, at another he laughs at the paradoxes being so subtly demonstrated - and therefore at his own situation.

There is thus, within the pages of what we may reasonably assume to be the earliest form of the novel, a very consistent pattern of mystification and satire, in a work held together by a very taut (though veiled) structure, based on the pasts of Jacques and his Master, the motives for the present journey, and the inevitability of what is to come.

The limits of the second phase of the evolution of Jacques - (consisting of the re-structuring of the "Pommeraye" section of the novel, and, almost certainly, the inclusion of the Pommeraye tale itself (at least in the form we know) - are hard to establish, and it would be unwise to attempt any very definite conclusions about it. However, it is clear that the Pommeraye tale introduces

into Jacques the debate about our apparatus of moral judgement which is to be found in Ceci n'est pas un conte and Sur l'inconséquence du jugement public. (Indeed, as has been seen, <sup>(1)</sup> it is by no means certain that either or both of the stories of Ceci n'est pas un conte might not have been intended to appear in Jacques le fataliste instead of, or in addition to, the tale of Mme de La Pommeraye and the Marquis Des Arcis.) Apart from this debate, however, and the further emphasis on man's hypocrisy which the story (and our reaction to it) demonstrates (and a further attack on the absurdity of vows of sexual constancy), the Pommeraye section of the novel does not offer anything substantially different from what had preceded it. Certainly the humour derives from much the same kind of sources - consisting largely of the depiction of the chaos of the hostelry - and the rôle of the "author" remains unaltered.

The third phase, however, (consisting of all new contributions up to the appearance of the novel in the Correspondance littéraire) presents a very different pattern. Mostly this is seen in an enormously increased interest in moral issues. Some of the themes seen in the first two phases of development - the hypocrisy of the priesthood, for example - are taken very much further with the appearance of the Hudson story and its various appendages. Of greater importance, however, is a revolution of the "moral judgement" theme brought about by the sub-theme of the "original". Mme de La Pommeraye had already shown the qualities of strength and unorthodoxy which go together to constitute the "original", but it is only with the appearance of her counterparts, the abbé Hudson and, more especially, Gousse, that the issues become clear. For how can we claim to have evolved any understanding of

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(1) See above, p.123.

human behaviour when a character such as Gousse is not merely astounding but totally incredible to us (despite the reality of his existence); or to have any objectivity or consistency of judgement when we condemn Mme de La Pommeraye and Hudson simply because we are horrified by the strength, determination and lack of false sentiment manifested in their conduct, and approve (at least tacitly) of their opponents, who do not exist on a higher moral plane, but are merely weaker and less efficient in their villainy.

This stage of the novel's development seems to have produced little or no extension of the theoretical discussion of "fatalism" or determinism, but it is to be noted that the concept of free will is constantly negated by the almost monotonous consistency with which each of the new tales ends with the failure of a scheme or conspiracy. Superficially these failures may seem to be the result of the intervention of a benign Providence, but the real lesson must be that (as a general rule, at least) human beings do not have the requisite knowledge to predict what the outcome of a given action will be. (And is this not precisely what Jacques had told us, à propos of the consequences of the assistance which he rendered to Jeanne, the woman with the vat of oil?) Thus the "chain of causality" theory is again proved valid.

Again this third stage shows an attempt by the "author" to provide a more positive guide to the reader in coming to terms with the novel and its philosophical implications - the emphasis now is on the diligence required of the reader if he is not to "Prendre ... le vrai pour le faux, le faux pour le vrai". Since the contributions of this "third phase" may in fact have been made over a number of years, it is not possible to say whether this fresh line of authorial attack preceded or followed the introduction of the new anecdotal material, but it is



obvious that the more complex the novel was to become, the more need the reader might be supposed to have of these clues and admonitions.

The chief effect of the changes brought about in phases (2) and (3) has been to alter the nature of the challenge thrown down to the reader. He is now required to apply his intellect not merely to paradox and the hunt for concealed proofs but to a considerable variety of moral issues. Jacques, from having been a taut little philosophical set-piece-cum-satire, has become a wide-reaching exploration of moral attitudes and of the no-man's land between morality and physical science. Clearly an entirely new stage has been reached in the novel's evolution.

The fourth phase, that of the 1780 Additions, presents a very different picture. The "priest" theme returns, in Jacques's "picture" of the coach-crash, but the priest has now become the object not of reasoned concern for his pernicious effect on society, but of ribald laughter. The theme of sexual constancy, seemingly part of the novel from the very first, also re-appears, but this time the futility of vows of fidelity is shown not through irony or moral tale but through a somewhat bawdy "fable".

At the same time this "fable" presents the beginnings of a new attack on the stale philosophy of cultured man, pointing the way to a more rustic and "primitive" form of outlook.

The overall effect of these additions is to enliven the novel with a touch of freshness and vigour. It is not without significance that this goes hand in hand with a restoration to its former importance of the humour of the work - but the new humour is of a more ribald and considerably less cerebral nature than that of the "original" novel.

The fifth phase (consisting of the addition of Lacunes nos. 1-4 and 17-20, with the exception of the central section of Lacune no.19) takes very much further the new trends appearing in the fourth, re-asserting humour (and again it is a very physical humour) as well as the new mood of directness. The "rejection" of cultured attitudes (and therefore of hypocrisy) in favour of the simplicity and vigour of the peasant is made clear, and, with the introduction of the "gourd" theme, we are made to see the disservice which cold rationalism has rendered to the arts as well as to moral thought. At the same time, through the humour and vigour of these passages, Diderot is clearly indicating a way forward - both for literature and for man.

This new movement is accompanied by a kind of "tidying-up" operation, introducing new authorial interpolations which tie together the earlier strands of thought ("power" and "truth"), and, more importantly perhaps, relating, through the tale of the young poet dispatched to the distant outpost of Pondicherry, the themes of fatalism and unpredictability to the more obviously moral thought of the novel.

The sixth phase (consisting of the addition of Lacunes nos.15 and 16 and the central section of no.19) is an extension of the fourth and fifth, re-emphasising the new ribald humour and taking further (through the discussion of the complaisance of Dames Suzanne and Marguerite in knowingly allowing Jacques to conduct affairs with them both simultaneously) the "anti-civilisation" theme. And once more the priest is the object of a scurrilous attack!

Again it is clear that these three series of late additions radically alter the novel's impact. And again a new challenge has been offered to the reader: in addition to the critical use of his intellect previously

asked of him (in deciphering the "truth" of the novel proper, and drawing the appropriate conclusions from the moral anecdotes included in it), he must now show himself capable of sufficient breadth of mind and radicalness of spirit to participate in the light-hearted overthrow of conventional values (literary, moral and philosophical). The completed novel is thus a very different work from either its 1771 or its 1778 counterparts.

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It is a commonplace of critical opinion that Jacques le fataliste is an experimental novel. It is hoped that it will now be clear that that point of view must be revised somewhat to take account of the evolution of the work. For what we know as Jacques le fataliste is, in all likelihood, the fruit of a series of "experiments"<sup>(1)</sup> conducted over a period of a decade or more, and of which we have detected three clearly defined stages - presented by the novel as it stood in 1771 (approximately), in 1778 (at the time of its appearance in the *Correspondance littéraire*) and upon "completion" (that is to say, for practical purposes, the finalisation of the Leningrad MS). A study of these stages will reveal the extent of Diderot's innovatory talent as well as his changing attitudes to questions of moral philosophy.

It will be observed that the first experiment can be seen to correspond to Le Neveu de Rameau, from which it is separated by no more than a couple of years (and by, of Diderot's fiction, only Les Deux Amis de Bourbonne).

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(1) There is, of course, a slight irrelevancy of nomenclature here, insofar as all of Diderot's more literary ventures are consciously innovatory and therefore "experiments". We must, however, continue to use the term since no other would be entirely appropriate.

It is in some ways a more subtle work than its predecessor, however. Where *Moi* and *Lui* had presented, over a wide variety of issues, two opposing extremes of the philosophe's thought, much as Jacques and his Master do on the single question of determinism, the very form of the dialogue structure of the Neveu had by definition precluded the possibility of establishing any conclusions - unless Diderot were to admit that half of himself was in the wrong. The fictional aspect of the structure of Jacques, however, does allow a solution to the problem - for while the characters are busy discussing Fate, Fate (or rather the chain of cause and necessary consequence) is busy directing their lives. (Here Diderot is not so much rejecting one or other philosophical standpoint as satirising his own dilemma.)

The other element of this first "experiment" concerns the relationship between author and reader. This involves an attack on the whole tradition of the roman to which Jacques must necessarily seem to belong, and a heavy satire of the reader himself. But it also requires of the reader considerable diligence in the pursuit of his task. If he succeeds in finding the author's meaning, he will be rewarded with a rich store of paradox to stimulate both his sense of humour and his critical faculties, as well as a subtly concealed and very radical view of man and society. The reader must become the author's accomplice, as Billy puts it:

"Il se moque, mais de si bon coeur qu'on se demande si sa première dupe n'est pas lui-même, étant admis, mais non prouvé, qu'il ait voulu nous duper. Non, il ne l'a pas voulu, il a voulu au contraire nous rendre complices de son jeu." (1)

The second "experiment" includes a more positive attempt to achieve this same goal, by providing the reader

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(1) André Billy, op.cit., p.20.

with a string of advice and admonitions based around the concept of "truth". At the same time the mystification and satire of the first experiment are maintained.

But they are not added to. Rather are the determinism debate, its false proof (Jacques's story) and its real proof (the whole of the pasts of the two characters, together with their present situation and future destination) used increasingly as the framework for a whole series of exploratory investigations into human behaviour, and, more importantly perhaps, into moral attitudes. These "investigations" must be seen in terms of Sur l'inconséquence du jugement public and Ceci n'est pas un conte, with which they may be roughly contemporary (i.e. composed in the early 1770's).

Lester Crocker's penetrating study, 'Jacques le Fataliste, an "Expérience Morale"',<sup>(1)</sup> examines this aspect of the novel in some detail. Of course, the original Jacques would have provided a very useful framework for these new moral tales, its skilfully contrived obscurity making it easy for the author to reveal as much or as little as he wished of his own opinions, and the "fatalism" debate providing a theory with which to compare the reality of events.

There seems little cause to think, however, that this stage of moral investigation contains any real movement away from the determinist standpoint; in many cases the lesson of the tales is precisely that one must attempt to come to terms with people as they are - and in the case of Gousse, this point is put fairly explicitly.

Be that as it may, it is indisputable that this second stage of the continuing experiment added, through its emphasis on anecdote and questions of moral attitude, a radically new element to the novel. But the third stage was to make the whole venture positively revolutionary.

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(1) See above, p.1

By this time, of course (1780-82), Diderot was no longer engaged on any other work of "fiction", so we have nothing with which to effect a direct comparison. There is evidence from the Correspondance, however, that Diderot now viewed fiction in a new and more favourable light, as we see in the following extract from a letter to his daughter Sophie, dated 28th July 1781, and dealing with Mme Diderot's convalescence:

"Elle a acheté un Gilblas pour restituer à M<sup>lle</sup> Goyet celui que vous avez perdu. En attendant l'occasion de le rendre, elle n'est mise à cette lecture qui l'a beaucoup réjouie; et je me suis aperçu que toute la journée s'en étoit ressentie. En conséquence, je suis devenu son lecteur. Je lui administre trois prises de Gilblas tous les jours; une le matin; une l'après dîner; une le soir. Quand nous aurons vu la fin de Gilblas, nous prendrons le Diable boîteux, le Bachelier de Salamanque; et les autres ouvrages gais de cette nature. Quelques semaines et quelques années de ces lectures finiront la guérison. Si j'étois bien sûr du succès, la corvée ne me sembleroit point dure. Ce qu'il y a de plaisant, c'est qu'elle régale tous ceux qui la visitent de ce qu'elle a retenu, et que la conversation redouble l'efficacité du remède. J'avois toujours traité les romans comme des productions assez frivoles; j'ai enfin découvert qu'ils étoient bons pour les vapeurs; j'en indiquerai la recette à Tronchin la première fois que je le verrai. Recipe huit à dix pages du Roman Comique; quatre chapitres de Dom Quichotte, un paragraphe bien choisi de Rabelais; faites infuser le tout dans une quantité raisonnable de Jacques le Fataliste ou de Manon Lescaut, et variez ces drogues comme on varie les plantes, en leur en substituant (1) d'autres qui ont à peu près la même vertu."

Fiction then could be a good remedy - and not just for maladies of the body. What better for the world-weary intellect than the extravagant fancy of the conte plaisant (to employ the terminology of the author's epilogue to Les Deux Amis de Bourbonne)? In other words

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(1) Diderot, Correspondance, ed. Roth, Vol. XV, pp. 252-57, Letter 934 'A Mme de Vandeuil', dated 28th July 1781. (pp. 253-54).

the novel could have a value independent of the moral and philosophical debates it might contain or seek to promote. Excuses were no longer needed. But to be truly salutary the novelist must go much further than Cervantes or Scarron had done: he must seek to rejuvenate the mind of the reader, by demolishing for him all barriers of inhibition, hypocrisy and conventional thought.

The first stage of the experiment had satirised the predicament of the philosopher in the face of a "Destiny" which is even shaping his patterns of thought. It would seem that the main function of intervention by the "author" in the third stage is to broaden the satire to include not just philosophy but the whole culture to which that philosophy belongs. Similarly, the second stage had shown the imperfections of our moral reasoning - but now it is the whole system of attitudes and thought (i.e., in effect, the civilisation) to which our moral reasoning belongs which is shown to be at fault.

Now a theoretical critique of society and thought moving along these lines would need to put forward some kind of alternative social philosophy and to argue the case for its viability. Diderot, because his work is a "novel", is able to propose the alternative (the vigour of "peasant" life and thought) without arguing its viability. Indeed, if he had been confronted with the need to decide once and for all between Hobbes's and Rousseau's views of pre-civilised man, it is by no means clear - despite the evidence of the Supplément - that he would have chosen the latter.<sup>(1)</sup> The point is that no theoretical justification is required, so that Diderot is able here to avoid becoming embroiled in the perennial debate.

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(1) Indeed, it is to be noted that the Hobbesian pessimism seen in the "original" novel (see above, pp. is allowed to persist.

And this is not a let-out. For the aim now is not to convince the reader of the validity of a philosophical point of view (Jacques having all along presented a satire of just such a kind of activity) so much as to help him free himself of the rigidity of thought imposed by "philosophy".

The key to all this is simply enjoyment. Merely by taking delight in the depiction of a happier and more primitive life, merely in reliving Jacques's amorous successes, merely in laughing at the curate's discomfiture, the reader is partaking in the vigour of it all. What matters most now then, is not the philosophical arguments discussed in the novel, or the moral situation it provides for our consideration, but the power of the novel (i.e. the fiction) itself.

This is not to deny the continuing importance of the earlier lines of attack. Indeed, the decision to include the tale of the Pondicherry poet demonstrates how important Diderot considered it to knit together some of the existing strands of thought, and to relate more firmly the question of moral attitudes and the theme of predictability to the basic determinism debate. Similarly, the new authorial interpolations demonstrate a desire both to re-emphasise and to tie up the themes of earlier interruptions by the "author". But the emphasis (and the impact) of the novel has moved very definitely in another (though related) direction.

It will be seen that, in the light of the new requirement: made of the reader - that he should partake of the novel's vigour - the frame of mind in which he approaches the work is of prime importance. The "éloge de l'obscénité", in which the "author" endeavours to shake the "reader" out of the hypocrisy of conventional literary and moral attitudes is therefore crucial.



This passage in a sense represents the culmination of the "special relationship" between author and reader which had been a key element of the novel from the first. The author has constantly held out a challenge, of one kind or another, and an invitation to become his accomplice. The challenge now is for the reader to cast off his hypocrisy; the invitation is to become a participant in a kind of miniature revolution - of a strictly cerebral nature, let it be added!

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Over a decade Jacques le fataliste progressed a very long way. The present thesis has presented only the bare bones of a new assessment of Jacques based on this progression, but it is hoped that some useful signposts at least will have been provided, and that the question of the work's evolution will not be ignored by all future critics as it has been in the past. This is not, of course, to deny the value of a synthetic approach to Jacques, such as that employed by Pruner - particularly in view of the traditional tendency to see complexity as chaos, and playful obscurantism as muddled thinking. But it should be clear that the analytical approach can yield results.

Jacques has been all things to all men. This is clearly due in part to the author's deliberate policy of mystification, but it is also due to the fact that at different times Jacques has in fact been a number of very different things. Many of the apparent contradictions of current criticism are mere reflections of the author's changing attitudes as to what this "novel" which is not a novel" was in reality to be.

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