THE LIE OF THE FOX:

Rousseau's Theory of Verbal, Monetary
and Political Representation

Marc Shell

Maître Corbeau sur un arbre perché
Tenoit dans son bec un fromage,
Maître Renard par l'odeur alléché,
Lui tint à peu près ce langage.
" Eh! bon jour, monsieur le Corbeau!
Que vous êtes charmant! que vous me sembles beau!
Sans mentir, si votre ramage
Répondoit à votre plumage,
Vous seriez le Phénix des hôtes de ces bois."
A ces mots le corbeau ne se sent pas de joie.
Et pour montrer sa belle voix
Il ouvre un large bec, laisse tomber sa proye.
Le Renard s'en saisit et dit: " mon bon monsieur,
Apprenez que tout flateur
Vit aux dépends de celui qui l'écoute.
Cette leçon vaut bien un fromage, sans doute."
Le corbeau, honteux et confus,
Jura, mais un peu tard, qu'on ne l'y prendroit plus.

LaFontaine's "Le Corbeau et le Renard"
as quoted in Rousseau's Emile

Aristotle warned that Aesopian fables were dangerous to the political order." Despite his warning, however, the fables are usually read as apolitical stories with nice moral endings. During the eighteenth century, for example, John Locke urged that young students memorize Aesop. Locke thought that the fables were devoid of "useless trumpery" and "principles of vice and folly;" and that they were perfect pedagogic devices "apt to delight and entertain a child." In France, Voltaire insisted that LaFontaine's translations were "elegant naïvetés." Referring to "Le Corbeau et le Renard" he argued that children should memorize fables because they are simple and moral. "LaFontaine," he wrote, "est pour tous les esprits et pour tous les âges." Against this happy view Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued throughout his writings. Re-introducing the Aristotelian problem of rhetoric and politics (as the study of society) into the study of the fable and literature in general, he lifted to a higher level the debate
about the merits of the fable. Rousseau's interpretation of "Le Corbeau et le Renard" plays an integral role in his theory of verbal, monetary and political representation.

In the Emile Rousseau begins his analysis of "Le Corbeau et le Renard" with apparently childish "naiveté." Maître -- the first word of the poem -- is the first item in an interpretative catalogue of signs: "Maître! Que signifie ce mot en lui-même? Que signifie-t-il au-devant d'un nom propre? Quel sens a-t-il dans cette occasion?" No catalogue of signs can teach the child what is mastership before he reads the word "maître," all irony (on which the adult fable depends) must be lost to him. It is dangerous for the child to memorize the masterful fable before he understands it.

Words (such as maître) which seem to signify things are a fundamental problem for Rousseau as he considers memorization and education. A child should be taught signs only after he knows the things signified by signs: ideas, objects, and passions. "Que sert d'inscrire dans leur tête un catalogue de signes qui ne représentent rien pour eux? En apprenant les choses n'apprendront-ils pas les signes?" (Emile, 350). Whenever possible the tutor should teach by experience rather than by mere verbal memorization. The child, for example, must be injured before he can understand justice. In La Nouvelle Héloïse (578-80) Julie suggests that the tutor should wrong the tutee (as the tutee has wronged his sibling) in order to teach him the experience of being injured. Through such play-acting the child can come to know injury and finally justice. To encourage "la mémoire des mots," argues Rousseau, is to cultivate "la mémoire au profit d'éducation." The work of memorizing mere words is not worth the tears which it costs (coute) the student. Verbal memorization is harmful. "Ce [n'est] rien que d'instruire un enfant à se payer de mots, et à croire savoir ce qu'il ne peut comprendre." Julie's children do not memorize the fables of poets, or even the catechism. "Fables sont faites pour les hommes," argues Rousseau, not (as Voltaire urged) for all spirits.

In the Emile too Rousseau argues that a price must be paid for memorizing mere words, "C'est du premier mot dont l'enfant se paye" (Emile, 350). The properly tutored child should not begin to memorize or study words, such as "maître," until he has erred (e.g. by mistaking flattery for praise). "Le temps des fautes est celui des fables" (Emile, 540). Verbal memorization is dangerous to an inexperienced child because he cannot understand the relationship between sign and thing signified.

Rousseau flatters us, readers and potential tutors, by pretending that we do understand things. He speaks of a "science des mots" which have no significance for the student but which may have significance for the tutor. Rousseau carefully holds in abeyance the problems of how to teach things to children (e.g. by sight or speech) and of how words do signify, as he proceeds to the next word whose meaning may be questioned by the tutee.

Corbeau is the second in a series of words which Rousseau
seems to empty of meaning. "Si l'enfant n'a point vu de corbeaux, que gagnez-vous à lui en parler?" To speak to a child about something he has not seen is -- even if one speaks the so-called truth -- a kind of flattery, relying as heavily on mere signs as does the fox.

At this point Rousseau slips into a discussion of signs for which there can be no things signified in natural life, but of which there can be false ideas. There is a retreat of the reality of the things signified. Even if the child has seen a crow, it is unlikely that he has ever seen a crow carrying cheese in its beak. It is certainly impossible to see a crow understanding the human language of a fox. The image is unnatural. Rousseau, of course, argues that we should always make our images according to nature, and that children should be taught only "la vérité nue."

The word phénix represents an extreme in this series of ever more unnatural signs. It is even more unlikely that the child has ever seen a phoenix (to which the fox, waxing poetic, compares the crow), than that he has ever seen a crow holding a piece of cheese in its beak and listening to a speaking fox (which LaFontaine, waxing poetic, describes). As Rousseau comments: "Qu'est-ce qu'un phénix? Nous voici tout à coup jetés dans la menteuse antiquité." The child is not so sophisticated to understand the nature of such lies. And a tutor can hardly put himself easily into the place of a child on the threshold of learning language. "Nul de nous," writes Rousseau, "est assis philosophe pour savoir se mettre à la place d'un enfant." For the child the strange statement of the fox -- "Vous seriez le phénix des hôtes de ces bois" -- is surrounded by all the mystery of the noun phénix and the hypothetical and subjunctive copula, seriez, which articulates the metaphor. "Vous seriez le phénix . . ." was the favorite line of Voltaire who wrote of it approvingly: "Il est bien naturel de nommer phénix un corbeau qu'on veut flatter." But in this same line Rousseau discovers the enemy of the tutor and the unnatural corrupter of children: the fox-flatterer who makes senseless words seem sensible and who pretends that children are as wise as philosophers. He interprets metaphor itself as a kind of flattery (or unnatural verbal trickery). Metaphor can be as harmful (in the pen of the poet) as the fox's flattery.

Phénix, like seriez, is an abstract, algebraic cipher. There is no reason to question the correspondence of the song of a phoenix to its plumage, since phénix has no natural significance.

From the discussion of signs without natural significance (based on a theory of natural imitation) Rousseau proceeds to a discussion of the possibly unnatural process which is the fox's metaphor itself. The recitation of the speaking fox is a metaphorical poem-within-a-poem which Rousseau strips naked. Rousseau's contemporary, the Marquis de Marsais, defined metaphor as a figure "par laquelle on transporte, pour ainsi dire, la signification propre d'un nom (j'aimerais dire d'un mot) à une autre signification qui ne lui convient qu'en vertu d'une comparaison qui est
The spirit, however, errs, especially when it is flattered. Rousseau fears the Heraclitean state in which anything can be exchanged for one thing and then re-exchanged for any other thing; the state in which it will appear to the "child" that there is no need to understand things but only words which compare or can be exchanged for things. The lie of the fox depends not only on série but also on répondait.

Sans mentir, si votre ramage
se répondait à votre plumage.

As if trying to stress the importance of speaking correspondences, Rousseau changes LaFontaine's rapporte to répondait. No longer focusing on the metaphorical relationship between words and things, he turns his attention to the related problem of metaphorical correspondence or metaphor itself. "Répondait!" The child asks, "Que signifie ce mot?" The tutor, if he is wise, knows that the supposed correspondence of ramage (or a bird's song) and plumage is a mensonge. The two cannot be compared except by unnatural metaphor or by harmonious rhyme, as illusionary as the ramage itself. To compare ramage (which one hears) and plumage (which one sees) is to compare music and painting. Rousseau argues in the "Essai sur les origines des langues" and elsewhere that there is a dangerous and "fausse analogie entre les couleurs et les sons." Painting and music are of two different économies: the first is diachronic, the second synchronic. Rousseau is as critical of the comparison of music and painting as he was of the word phénix.

For adults, perhaps, the lie of the fox is easy to spot; the lie of the poet (who made the fox) is less evident. We are all craven ravens. It is childish to identify only with the fox. The flattered crow confuses painting and music; he loses his cheese in an attempt to show (montrer) the supposedly beautiful voice (belle voix) which the fox suggested he had. One cannot show a voice but only a painting. It is as impossible to show a voice as to compare a plumage with a ramage. The flattered crow imitates in life the impossibilities suggested to him in language by the fox.

The crow drops the cheese from its mouth as he opens it to sing. No sound -- not even a caw -- issues. "Il ouvre un large bec, laisse tomber sa proye." The cheese -- sa proie -- is exchanged in this line, in which it is unclear whether the fox or crow is the antecedent of sa. While falling, of course, the cheese is the property of neither animal: the fall signals that transfer of property which the reader of the fable cannot see but which he believes that he hears. Rousseau admires the harmony of the verse. "Ce vers est admirable; l'harmonie seule en fait image. Je vois un grand vilain bec ouvert; j'entends tomber le fromage à travers les branches." Rousseau admires the clever rhyme of oix and oùe. He praises onomatopoeia, the imitation of the sounds of nature by the probably conventional sounds of human language.
In the "Essai sur les origines des langues," however, Rousseau argues significantly that harmony is the potential enemy of melody or natural imitagon. Harmony, in fact, is rejected by Rousseau "as a mistaken illusion of consonance within the necessarily dissonant structure of the moment." Melody does not partake of this mystification. "It does not offer a resolution of the dissonance, but rather its projection on a temporal diachronic axis." Melodious music, in fact, is naturally imitative because its melody imitates directly the inflexions of the human voice ("Essai," 533); and because, as indirect sign of the human voice, music is the catalyst that creates in its listeners an emotion like that created by other things. 13 Harmony takes its energy of expression from melody, but it is a supplement to the human voice. "En voulant faire mieux que la nature (as does the crow duped by the fox) vous faites plus mal" ("Essai," 533). Unnatural harmonious music, when stripped of melody, is the perfect tool of the fox. Harmonious praise is the power to which the crow falls prey. Fontenelle writes that, "La louange est la voix la plus harmonieuse." 15

LaFontaine puts the foxy moral of our fable into the mouth of the speaking animal. "Apprenez que tout flateur / Vit aux dépends de celui qui l'écoute." As Rousseau himself puts it in the "Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité," men "ne purent... s'agrandir qu'aux dépends des autres" ("Discours", 175). The flatterer depends on the flattered and lives at his expense. It is costly (couteuq) to listen to (écoutet) a flatterer. Rousseau doubts, however, that a child can ever understand the economic relationship between the value of what the flatterer gives (words) and what the flattered receives (cheese). As Rousseau comments, "Il y aura bien peu d'enfants qui sachent comparer une leçon à un fromage et qui ne préférassent le fromage à la leçon." Rousseau doubts that a child can understand the terrifying common denominator which makes possible the economic exchange of flattering words (which the fox gives) and objects (which the fox receives).

Rousseau studies the fable -- and implicitly all literature -- from the point of view of its propensity to obscure the operation of linguistic and economic representation and exchange. In the Emile he contends that the fox in LaFontaine's "Le Corbeau et le Renard" is a subversive who exchanges flattering words for cheese. Speaking animals confound the proper distinction between words and things by exchanging one for the other. Rousseau argues that the fable corrupts the student's innocent (and pedagogically useful) distinction between verbal and economic representation and teaches him to respect the representation more than the thing represented. The corrupting power of language changes the very nature of things by exchanging them for words. Rousseau, therefore, does not wish to teach young students this meaning of the fable. He would rather teach us -- readers and potential tutors -- the meaning of the fable and of literature in general for those who live in the modern age. If there is a retreat of the signified in Rousseau's interpretation of the fable, it is to the end of bringing us to the adult world in which not animals,
but humans seem to speak of things.

The fox supplements nature, as does a usurer. "De tous les usuriers," writes Ségur, "les flatteurs sont les pires." A student of the fox is a student of usury and finance. The fox desires to eat the cheese because he -- like us -- is hungry and needs to eat; or he desires to trick the crow because his foxy nature asserts itself. The mediating economic go-between man's desire and its satisfaction, is language itself. Verbal flattery is the art of supplementing (or even creating) nature with words so that the listener, not acquainted with nature or willing to forget it, believes more in words than in things. A fox-admiring child, become adult, will make use of the fable in duping others. He will make use of the fable as the fox makes use of the poem which he recites within the fable. The words that are coins teach the child to consider words as mere symbols of exchange. Fables train children to become financiers. Modern society is filled with such adults who are victims of misunderstanding the economic and verbal media. To the language, economics and politics of this society Rousseau devotes his attention throughout his writings.

The economist and professional etymologist Turgot was the first thinker to present a systematic comparison of words and money as social symbols of exchange. For Rousseau, who goes well beyond Turgot's analogies between monnaie and langue, the description of discourse is like that of money. Other thinkers argued that language and money could accomplish the same end; Rousseau considered that they accomplished it in the same way. As Derrida writes, "all the thought of Rousseau is a critique of representation, whether in the linguistic or the political sense." Rousseau's comparison of language and money includes the argument that coins, like words, are mere signs. "L'argent," he writes, "n'est pas la richesse, il n'en est que le signe" ("Sur le Gouvernement de Pologne," 1008). Rousseau argues that asking a child to memorize what he does not understand is like giving him pieces of money the value of which he does not understand. It is as difficult to explain money to a child as to explain the operation of words such as sériez and phénix. The child, moreover, can be subverted by monetary exchange as by verbal memorization.

In the Emile, Rousseau writes that "la société... du commerce consiste en échanges de choses; celle des banques en échanges de signes et d'argent" (Emile, 461). Banks and other financial institutions exchange not things (by barter) but only their signs (by monetary transactions and transfers). Rousseau fears their effect on men. Society, however, is founded necessarily upon mesures communes. Conventional equality and measure between things "a fait inventer la monnoye" (as opposed to the law) "car la monnoye n'est qu'un terme de comparaison pour la valeur des choses de différentes espèces (Emile, 461)." Money, then, is the great trope -- a comparative term for the value of things of different species. In the fable, metaphor compares ramage and plumage; so money (the measure of value) compares legon and fromage. "La monnoye," writes Rousseau, "est le vrai lien de la société" (Emile, 461). In the modern age men as well as things are equalized, but only because they share the same comparative relation of equality to the maître. "The modern age," writes
Rousseau in "Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité," is one of extreme equality. "C'est ici le dernier terme de l'inégalité, et le point extrême qui ferme le Cercle et touche au point d'où nous sommes partis: C'est ici que tous les particuliers redeviennent égaux parce qu'ils ne sont rien... Les Sujets n'ont plus d'autre loi que la volonté du maître" ("Discours," 191, adapted).

Money, the development of which plays a crucial role in the origin and development of inequality, is like modern commercial language. Both are perversely equalizing common denominators in a one-dimensional society, depending on a false sense of "universal inequality."

Monetary and verbal representation are principal targets for Rousseau. Modern men, like children, are able to understand nothing about things and their representation. They are crows educated by foxy tutors. As things can be alienated by money, so too can these men be alienated by political symbols of exchange, so-called political representatives. In a chapter of Du Contrat Social entitled "Des Deputées ou Réprésentants," Rousseau -- like Plato -- complains that many citizens are more interested in their private bourse than in public service (CS, 428). Money (as language) distorts the proper relation between things and signs, and corresponds to private greed in the bad city. From the good city both political representative and financial institutions are, like poetry and word-merchandize in Plato, absent. "Ce mot de finance," writes Rousseau, "est un mot d'esclave; il est inconnu dans la Cité" (CS, 429). There is no money in the good city because money, which can seem to be an exchange for all things, corrupts. Rousseau's dictum, both in Du Contrat Social and in "Essai sur l'origine des langues," is: "Donnez de l'argent et bientôt vous aurez des fers" (CS, 429).

As finance -- economic representation -- enslaves, so too does the institution of political representatives. The legislative power of the people cannot be represented. "Political sovereignty cannot be represented." The good ancients, Rousseau argues, did not even have a word for political representation. "L'idée des Réprésentans est moderne" (CS, 430). Not the representative but the thing or person supposedly represented is important, for precisely the reason that representation is impossible. John Locke is wrong to confuse political representation with sovereignty, as he is wrong to urge students to memorize fables. Rousseau argues that the English are a nation of shopkeepers, free only at the moment they exert their sovereignty and elect their Members of Parliament. At other times they are slaves of commissioners.

There is a language of slaves as well as a politics and an economics. In the "Essai sur les origines des langues," Rousseau presents an apocalyptic vision of the "signal" language of slaves in which only signs circulate. "Les sociétés ont pris leur dernière forme: on n'y change plus rien qu'avec... des écous; et comme on n'a plus rien à dire au peuple, sinon, donnes de l'argent on le dit avec des placards au coin des rues" ("Essai," 542). A language which has thus come full-circle is "one-dimensional." It is the language least favorable to liberty.

The language of modern men is spoken language imitating written language. Rousseau considers modern abstract alphabetic writing in
which all sounds can be represented, not, as in direct hieroglyphics, all possible things. Alphabetical signs, in fact, encourage the reader to forget things: the representation must pass through sounds rather than directly to things. For Rousseau the historical development of the alphabet corresponds to that of a monetary economy and to that of a police state. "L'alphabet," writes Rousseau, "convient aux peuples polices" ("Essai," 508). Rousseau explains the origin of commercial language, and, perhaps, what we call "commercials": "Cette manière d'écrire, qui est la nôtre, a dû être imaginée par les peuples commerçans, qui, voyageant en plusiers pays et ayant à parler plusiers langues, furent forcés d'inventer des caractères qui puissent être communs à toutes" (Essai, 508). These characters are common measures of sounds, or alphabetical symbols, which permit translation through signs of sounds of words. Such characters are like money, which is a common measure not of all languages (as the alphabet) but of all commodities. Monetary characters permit the translation of these commodities; similarly alphabetical characters (and puns) permit the sonal representation of two languages in one medium. The fox, having well digested the power of the double-entendre, turns out to be an excellent poet. He makes language, alien and alienating, serve his own ends, as did the Greek sophists. He is the banker-tyrant of the modern world.

Voltaire assumed perhaps too readily that the fable is an unimportant form of literature. He argued that it was merely a minor genre, and that LaFontaine, though excellent in his own way, could not be considered so excellent a writer as Corneille, because the drama is a greater form than the fable. For Rousseau, however, the fable is potentially as important as any other genre. His interpretation of "Le Corbeau et le Renard" implies, in fact a consideration of its relation to one of the revolutionary genres of the eighteenth century: the novel.

Not the fable but the novel is the literary genre most associated with the modern age. One of the first novels, Richardson's Pamela, lays claim to a moral purpose, not unlike that of his Aesop. Richardson is interested in generic and moral criticism of literature about economic life; Rousseau, however, is more interested in the deepest internalization of economic representation into the narrative itself. Rousseau suggests a theory of narration in the novel.

Rousseau's theory of the novel -- like his theory of all literature -- begins with his distrust of language. Rousseau claims that he hates all books. "Ils n'apprennent qu'à parler de ce qu'on ne sait pas" (Emile, 454). More than other books, however, Rousseau admires Robinson Crusoe. In the Emile he gives an interpretation of Defoe's novel which opposes it to the Aesopian fable, which was Locke's favorite reading for children. Rousseau wishes to convince so-called adults to teach children first "ce que sont les choses en elles-mêmes" (Emile, 458) by transporting them in the imagination to the island of Robinson. Rousseau depends on islands, such as those in the Rêveries or in La Nouvelle Héloïse. They serve him as necessary tropes or ciphers standing at the center of his theory
of language and economics and informing his theory of literature. Robinson Crusoe lives on an island with no language and no money. Imagining himself on such an island (without exchange) the tutee can come to know things as they are. The fiction of such an island makes it possible for fathers to teach children "ce que sont les choses en elle-mêmes." The islands of Robinson, and the Rêveries, are fertile, but they are also infantile and asocial. "Nulle societé," argues Rousseau, "ne peut exister sans échange" (Emile, 461). The island is a pedagogic hypothesis with which to teach things to children. The great power of Defoe's narrative derives from the attempt to establish the true value of things. The famous scene in which the uselessness of representative signs or money is described is, for the tutor, the happy theoretical foundation upon which his understanding of the novel is based. In Robinson Crusoe, however, the intersection of the verbal and economic systems of exchange and representation remains insular.

Rousseau's integration of economic and linguistic theory is a comprehensive contribution to the social study of literature. Like Turgot and Rousseau, Karl Marx offers a theory of economic and linguistic exchange and representation (in which, however, the description of money is not identical to that of discourse). Marx did not devote as much time as he would have liked to the description of discourse, which he sometimes interpreted as a mere reflex of economic conditions. His thought therefore does not appear to be so wide in scope as that of Rousseau. For example, Marx does not integrate his theory of representation (whether of money or of language) and his interpretations of works of literature (such as Robinson Crusoe in Das Kapital). Despite its apparent incompleteness, however, Marx's analysis is more rigorous than that of Rousseau. For example, Rousseau's pedagogically useful disassociation of word and thing, or coin and commodity, is misleading. Rousseau himself admits that gold can be both coin and commodity, so that sign and thing can be one. Such admissions are integrated into Rousseau's theory of representation in the form of questions of which the tutor himself is hardly aware, questions about the ontological status not only of signs but also of things. The illusion of the presence of things in themselves is supported by the foxy diachrony of language representing supposedly synchronic images of them.

Rousseau never offers that sustained analysis of representation which Marx offers in the first part of Kapital. He does, however, exemplify how political and ideological criticism must study money and discourse together, whether or not they are structurally similar components of society.

Rousseau (and Marx after him) laid the groundwork for an inclusive social study of literature. Lesser Marxists than Marx, and lesser enemies of literature than Rousseau, argue for a very general correspondence between the history of the novel form and the history of economic life. They neglect, however, the study of language itself as monetary sign, and its relation to the narrative as a whole. They avoid discussing precisely what Rousseau and Marx found most revealing in the study of language and ideology.
Rousseau's attack on literature is also an attack on social exchange value. The exchange value of literature itself is often misunderstood. Barthes, for example, asks an incomplete question about the narrative: "Contre quoi échanger un récit? Que vaut le récit?" He means to discover the exchange value of récits within novels in which the narrator receives his own life in exchange for the story he tells. The récit of the fox in "Le Corbeau et le Renard" is a clever exchange of words for cheese which sustains the life and foxy nature of the fox. Rousseau suggests that bad tutors and LaFontaine himself are exploiters like the fox. The fox's claim that his leçon is worth a cheese is, on a level deeper, perhaps, than even LaFontaine's irony, a claim that the fable itself contains a worthy leçon. The fox bargains on behalf of the poet, and ultimately on behalf of his tutor who teaches the poem or encourages his tutee to memorize its words.

LaFontaine's fable (like the fox's récit) turns out to be a kind of merchandise. It is something to be exchanged for something else as a commodity. At the same time it is itself a process of apparently counterfeit linguistic metaphors, or purchases and sales of meanings. The novel too is about counterfeiting, which one theorist has called its Subject.9 If that which is imitated has no ontological status, however, then literature cannot even be counterfeit, for there is not original of which it can be a copy.

That literature has exchange value does not mean that it has politically good value. The fable, in fact, is harmful to the tutee; and the system of exchange and representation by which it operates is potentially harmful even to the fox (himself a victim of society). Some would argue that literature precipitates a catharsis. But for the child there is no catharsis, but only a new disease which he catches from the fox. Lessing's translation of Richardson's version of "Le Corbeau et le Renard" is, in this negative wise, a safer pedagogical device. The food, which the fox takes from the crow, turns out to be poisoned. The fox is punished for flattering the crow. The terrified fox-admiring tutee will be less subject to perversion by Lessing's than by LaFontaine's fox. Despite this apparently moral twist, Lessing's fable would probably not have appealed to Rousseau, because it omits a crucial part of the articulation of words for things. The crow does not carry its booty in its mouth and is not flattered for the supposed beauty of its voice.38 Lessing's fable cannot exemplify -- as Rousseau shows that LaFontaine's version can exemplify -- the subversion of human society by the falseness of language.

Rousseau suggests in his interpretation of "Le Corbeau et le Renard" both an economics of literature and a theory of the narrative. He attacks the language of modern society, in which representation is necessarily -- and despite the intentions of the speaker -- politically dangerous. He reveals a mensonge at the center of society.

Rousseau himself, of course, writes in the medium which he deplores. He flatters us with language; willy-nilly, he lies to us. Rousseau, however, recognizes two kinds of untruths: lies proper, which harm or steal from the listener; and fictions, or
Platonic noble lies, which benefit the listener, as a tutor is supposed to benefit the tutee. In his relentless attack on human society, Rousseau hopes to show how literary fictions -- perhaps even his own -- can help men to understand and change their world.

NOTES

1. Rousseau, *Emile*, p; 353f. All quotations from Rousseau are from the Pléiade edition, unless otherwise noted.
2. Aristotle tells how Aesop once gave a clever interpretation of "The Fox and the Hedgehog," in which a fox refuses the kind offer of a hedgehog to remove the fox's fleas. The fox prefers to keep the fleas he has, since they are already sated with his blood, and the new fleas, who would certainly replace them, would take even more blood from him. Wishing to defend the tyrant or incumbent flea of Samos, Aesop concludes thus: "You men of Samos, let me entreat you to do as the Fox did; for this man, having got money enough, can have no further occasion to rob you; but if you put him to death, some needy person will fill his place, whose wants must be supplied out of your property" (Aristotle, *Rhet.*, 2.20.6). The fables of Aesop were written "during the suppression of free speech in the Age of the Tyrants" (Marian Eames, "John Ogilby and his Aesop," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, LXV, 1961, p. 78).
8. Rousseau changes LaFontaine's être to the hypothetical série.
11. Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, Paris, 1970, p. 535. The tutor must consider whether it is best to teach students to watch or to listen. In the *Emile* Rousseau writes that "l'impression de la parole est toujours foible et l'on parle au coeur par les yeux bien mieux que par les oreilles" (*Emile*, 645; compare *Essai*, 503). Vision, however, is not always possible. "J'entends dire qu'il convient d'occuper les enfants à des études où il ne faille que des yeux; cela pourrait être s'il y avait quelque étude où il ne failut que des yeux; mais je n'en connais point de telle" (*Emile*, 348). What one can see, moreover, is not always true. John Locke wished his translation of Aesop to be replete with pictures (Locke, 190). A picture, however, may be merely the visual sign of an idea of something-which-is-not. One who relies too much on vision, moreover, may become too unwittingly the subject of sound. "L'impression successive du discours... vous donne bien une autre émotion que la présence de l'objet même, où d'un coup d'oeil vous avez tout vu.... Concluons que les signes visibles rendent l'imitation plus exacte, mais que l'intérêt s'excite mieux par les sons" (*Essai*, 503).
13. "L'art du musicien consiste à substituer à l'image insensible de l'objet
celle des mouvements que sa présence excite dans le cœur du contemplateur
... Il ne représentera pas directement ces choses, mais il excitera
dans l'âme les mêmes sentiments qu'on éprouve en les voyant" (Essai, 537).
Plattery, like music, excites in the listener sentiments like those the
listener would experience in the presence of an object. Plattery, how-
ever, depends on the actual absence of the object anywhere except in the
esprit.
14. "... il faut ... dans toute imitation, qu'une espèce de discours
supplée à la voix de nature" (Essai, p. 534).
15. Quoted by Prosper Soullié, Critique Comparative des Fables de La Fontaine,
16. "On achette l'agrément aux depends de la clarté" (Emile, 352).
17. Fromage (the food which enters into the mouth) and langage (the words which
exit from the mouth) are "tenable." (See "teneit un fromage" and "tint ce
langage.") They rhyme with and are exchanged for each other.
18. Quoted by Soullié, p. 14
19. In the Emile, Rousseau refers briefly to a student of "Les Deux Muletts"
who will become a financier (Emile, 542).
20. Turgot, "Tableau philosophique des progres successifs de l'esprit humain"
21. Derrida, Gram., 423. Compare Jean Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle,
23. Compare "Essai," 536: " ... un son quelconque n'est rien ...
 naturellement.
25. "Si vous pretendiez expliquer aux enfans comment les signes font néglig-
ger les choses, comment de la monnayez sont nées toutes les chimères de
l'opinion, comment les pays riches d'argent doivent être pauvres de tout,
vous traiteriez ces enfants non seulement en philosophes mais en hommes
gages, et vous prétendriez leur faire entendre ce que peu de philosophes
mêmes ont bien conceu" (Emile, 462).
26. "La Loi n'étant que la déclaration de la volonté générale, il est clair
que dans la puissance Législative le Peuple ne peut être représenté"
(CS, 430). The inability of both things and popular sovereignty to be
represented does not make them ontological equals. Nature (in the
Rêveries), however, is similar to the political General Will. One loses
oneself asocially in Nature as one loses oneself socially in the General
Will.
27. "La Souveraineté ne peut être représenté par la même raison qu'elle ne
peut être aliénée ... Les députés du peuple ne sont donc ni ne peuvent
être ses représentants" (CS, 429).
29. Pamela, Letter 29. On the relationship of Richardson's Aesop to Pamela,
see Catherine Hornbeak, "Richardson's Aesop," Smith College Review of
Letters, 1938.
30. See Jacques Ehrmann, "The Minimum Narrative," Substance, II.
31. In "Economie" (La transparence et l'obstacle), Starobinski suggests that
the same distrust of money leads to a supposedly good society (Clarens)
in LH and a supposedly bad action (theft) in the biographical Confessions.
32. Robinson does maintain, however, a diary and an account of daily "expen-
ditures."
33. In the "Cinquième Promenade," Rousseau admits that his ecstasy depends on separation from the rest of the world (Rêveries, 1048). The state of inner repos (Rêveries, 1046, 1048) for which he wishes opposes the terrestrial social flux from which he would escape. "De rien d'extérieur à soi, de rien sinon de soi-même et de sa propre existence, tant que c'est état dure on se suffit à soi-même comme Dieu" (Rêveries, 1047).

34. Outfoxing the fox, De Man interprets Rousseau's dictum, "Commençons donc par écarter tous les faits," as though faits referred to all the "things" represented by signs. "Rousseau's theory of representation," writes de Man, "is not directed towards meaning as presence and plenitude but towards meaning as a void de Man, p. 127)."


37. W. W. Holdheim, Theory and Practice of the Novel, 1968, p. 259. Other theorists argue that the novel is informed by the heroic search for authentic value in a worthless or counterfeit world.

38. Lessing's "Der Rabe und der Fuchs" (Lessings Werke, ed. K. Wölfel, Frankfurt am Main, 1967, pp. 37-38) begins with a decisive change from LaFontaine's "Le Corbeau et le Renard." "Ein Rabe trug ein Stück vergiftetes Fleisch... in seinen Klauen fort." The Rabe does not put its poisonous prey into its mouth. It is able to do what the corbeau cannot do: speak to the fox without dropping its prey. In order to make the Rabe give him the piece of meat, the Fuchs must flatter something other than his voice. He calls the Rabe a messenger of the gods: "Sehe ich denn nicht in der siegreichen Klaue die erfreute Gabe, die mir dein Gott durch dich zu schicken noch fortfahrt?" The flattery works. The Rabe does that for which he is flattered (giving) just as the corbeau does that for which he is flattered (opening his mouth to sing). What the fox flattered as a divine Gabe turns out to be Gift.

39. The fox insists that he does not lie. "Sans mentir!" writes Rousseau. "On ment donc quelquefois?" "Où en sera l'enfant, si vous lui apprenez que le Renard ne dit, sans mentir, parce qu'il ment?" (Emile, 354).

Children cannot understand signs of things-which-are-not, such as phénix (about which the fox speaks) or speaking animals (about which the poet writes). (On the latter see Emile, 353, and LNH, 581). The tutor is hard pressed to explain these mensonges and to distinguish them from moral apologies (Emile, 540, and LNH, 581). In the Rêveries Rousseau distinguishes among kinds of mensonges by referring to economic categories such as theft and counterfeiting. "Je me souviens d'avoir lu dans un Livre de Philosophie que mentir c'est cacher une vérité que l'on doit manifester. Il suit bien de cette définition que taire une vérité qu'on n'est pas obligé de dire n'est pas mentir; mais celui qui non content en pareil cas de ne pas dire la vérité dit le contraire, mont-il alors, ou ne mont-il pas? Selon le définition l'on ne saurait dire qu'il ment; car s'il donne de la fausse monnaye à un homme auquel il ne doit rien il trompe cet homme, sans doute, mais il ne le vole pas (Rêveries, 1029). "Mentir sans profit ni préjudice de soi ni d'autrui n'est pas mentir," writes Rousseau. "Ce n'est pas menteuse, c'est fiction" (Rêveries, 1029). Good tutors and Rousseau himself (in the fabular "Cinquième Promenade") sometimes tell necessary untruths, which Rousseau defines not as "vérité nue" but as beneficial "vérité due" (Rêveries, 1033).