

Games of Idealized Courtship and Seduction in the Paintings of Antoine Watteau and Jean-Honoré Fragonard and in Laclos' Novel, Dangerous Liaisons.

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Games of Idealized Courtship and Seduction in the Paintings of Antoine Watteau and Jean-Honoré Fragonard and in Laclos' Novel, Dangerous Liaisons.

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Although courtship is frequently referred to as a game because it is understood to have rules that follow a particular sequence when the individuals in a couple are getting to know each other, one has argued that it is really two very different games. This dissertation examines two versions of the game of courtship. In the first version, called the game of idealized courtship, the players follow certain pre-determined rules thus ensuring that the game is fair and equal. It is also mutually consensual and each player has the right of refusal to continue the game at any point. The second version is called the game of seduction. This game is one in which one player corrupts the rules of idealized courtship through the use of deceit and secrecy to trick the other player into having a sex

turn the other player into having a sexual relationship. This game must consist of a seducer and a victim who play using very different rules. As a result, this game cannot be fair or equal. Consent and the right of refusal are subverted because the seducer is willing to lie to win the game. One way in which these games can be seen is through an examination of these themes in paintings and literature. Selected paintings of Antoine Watteau and Jean-Honoré Fragonard along with Choderlos de Laclos' novel, *Dangerous Liaisons*, were chosen to illustrate these concepts because they successfully show the games of idealized courtship and seduction. As three of the most important examples in painting and literature found in 18th century society, these works reflect the enlightened view of the individual particularly with regard to a psychological emphasis on love and sexual relationships. The works of scholars in the disciplines of verbal and non-verbal communication, art history and the theory of games and play create the theoretical basis for the dissertation. Research for this dissertation focuses on three key rules of idealized courtship. These rules involve a combination of the principles of play and the definition of games, the inclusion of signs and symbols that represent love, and the communication cues that demonstrate consensual courting behavior. Once the rules are identified, it is then shown how the game of seduction breaks all of these

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