

# Representing Homosexuality

## Sodomy and Lesbianism in Eighteenth-Century English and French Erotic Literature

**Astrid Van Campenhout**

Presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Western Literature.

Supervisor: prof. Beatrijs Vanacker

Academic year 2014-2015.

159.796 characters

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## **Introduction**

This master's thesis will compare the way in which male sodomy and lesbianism are portrayed by John Cleland and the Marquis de Sade in their respective novels *Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748-49) and *La Philosophie dans le boudoir, ou Les Instituteurs immoraux* (1795). In order to firmly understand how and why each author depicted the aforementioned topics in a particular manner, both they and their corresponding novels must be placed within an appropriate historical context. Thus, Chapter 1 will compare the spiritual, social and legal mores in eighteenth-century England and France, as well as explain the homosexual and erotic literature subcultures in both countries. Chapter 2 will enumerate and detail a selective number of perspectives concerning both novels that will support the claims and analyses made pertaining to *Fanny Hill* in Chapter 3 and *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* in Chapter 4.

Before launching into the topic of homosexuality in the eighteenth century, an abridged biography of each novelist is called for, which will historically place the authors within the narrative of erotic literature.

### **John Cleland<sup>1</sup>**

John Cleland was most likely born in September 1709. He joined the service of the East India Company in Bombay in 1728 (Nussbaum 21), where he most likely wrote the first draft of Volume I of *Fanny Hill* (Wagner, "Fanny Hill in Bombay"). Soon after, Cleland left for the Continent, trying his hand at almost every popular genre before returning home to England in 1741 (Nussbaum 21). He was arrested for unpaid debts and imprisoned in Fleet Prison in 1749 (Burwick 45), where he "altered, added to, transposed, and in short new-cast", to use his own words" his manuscript of *Fanny Hill* (Wagner, *Eros Revived* 243). The publication of *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* in 1748-49 led to the arrest of its author; publisher, Griffiths; and printer, Parker, on the charge of "corrupting the King's subjects" (Busby 7). All were found guilty and charged with producing a lewd book that was immediately withdrawn from circulation (Sabor 192).

Subsequently, in 1750, Cleland was commissioned to strike out the offensive parts of his work and compile a novel from it that would not be perceived as offensive. This second

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for a comprehensive biography of John Cleland.

edition, *Memoirs of Fanny Hill*, was less than two-thirds the length of the original (Sabor 194) and was promoted as an enlightening, didactic, virtuous book (Sabor 193). However warrants were once more issued for the arrest of Cleland, Parker and Griffiths (Sabor 192-93) who all seemed to have escaped prosecution and *Memoirs of Fanny Hill*, unlike its antecedent, has always been legally available in England (Sabor 194).

Cleland attempted a life in letters, but was unable to match the artistry and commercial success of *Fanny Hill*. He died in obscurity on 23 January 1789 (Busby 7).

### The Marquis de Sade<sup>2</sup>

He was born Donatien Alphonse François, on 2 June 1740, in a distinguished family from the Provence (Brochier 9-11). The Marquis de Sade became a cavalry officer in the French army and with his father's financials failing, he entered a fiscal marriage with René Pélagie de Montreuil, daughter of one of the presidents of the Court of Aids, in 1763 (Brochier 11-12). Although his wife was devoted to him, Sade much preferred the company of her sister, whom would later become the inspiration of *Juliette* (Hyde 122-23).

Sade led a less than virtuous life, during which he spent months in prison for his philandering and clandestine affairs, the indecent flagellation of a thirty-six-year-old woman – after which he was exiled from Paris – and accused of the crimes of poisoning and sodomy (Brochier 12-14). The charges were eventually dropped, after which Sade was once again arrested upon returning to Paris in 1778 (Brochier 16-17) and confined to the Bastille.

The Marquis de Sade spent eleven years in the Bastille, during which time he turned to writing (Brochier 17). He wrote *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (1785), finished *Les Infortunes de la Vertu* (1787) – from which would arise *Justine* and *La Nouvelle Justine* – started his novel *Aline et Valcour* (1786) and penned a few mediocre plays and short stories (Brochier 21).

Upon his discharge, Sade published his greatest works; *Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu* (1791), *Aline et Valcour* (1795), *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795), and *La Nouvelle Justine ou les Infortunes de la vertu* (1797) – an amplification of *Justine* (Brochier, 27-28). The novels *Justine* and *Juliette* were sold to the public, until Bonaparte's censure removed them from the market, after which Sade was once more imprisoned in 1801 (Brochier 28). Sade resorted to pursuing his novels until his passing on 2 December 1814 (Brochier 30-32).

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2 for a comprehensive biography of the Marquis de Sade.

## **Chapter 1. Sodomy and Lesbianism in Eighteenth-Century England and France**

The terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” first appeared in the nineteenth century and to this day act as a delineation between what is perceived as “acceptable” and “unacceptable” sexualities (Peakman 2). The caption “homosexual” encompasses various eighteenth-century demeanours including female “friendships” and lesbian-like behaviour, fraudulent marriages between mollies and cross-dressers, and sodomy (Peakman 9). Thus, homosexuality in the eighteenth century was not characterized by a sense of identity as it is today, but by sexual acts. Therefore the majority of eighteenth-century men who committed acts of sodomy did not consider themselves as part of a subculture or as having a distinctive self-identity. They would have considered having sex with other men as an extension of human sexual behaviour, and not as an infringement of the mores of their own society (Hitchcock 63-64). Moreover, Randolph Trumbach claims that a sexual revolution took place in the first decade of the Enlightenment in Western Europe that changed the model from the bisexual libertine to the effeminate “molly” who was exclusively homosexual (Norton 60).

The focus of this chapter lies primarily on the diversified attitudes surrounding acts of sodomy between men, with a small by-line on lesbianism in order to provide an abridged context for the analysis of the representation of homosexuality in both chosen novels.

### **1. Spiritual Mores and Social Norms**

Sex and sexuality were generally regulated by a country’s religion and supposedly unlawful sexual acts were those deemed sinful by church authorities. Before modern secular state laws depicted crimes and punishments, it was the ecclesiastic authorities that dealt out severe sanctions for what was then only a religious sin, which became popular belief and moral taboos (Peakman 12-13).

Alongside religious authorities, the regulation of sexuality also depended greatly upon the observations of family members, neighbours and people in the community (Smith 108). Gossip could affect reputations; thus both regulating behaviour and threatening official legal and social structures (Smith 108-09). Parisian police reports, for instance, provide us with a distinct idea of the reactions and hostility ordinary citizens had regarding sodomites in the network of small villages that was Paris, where neighbours monitored each other’s behaviour (Rey 182). Another interesting aspect worth mentioning is the way police reports, and therefore eighteenth-century contemporaries, repeatedly referred to aristocrats, as “les gens de



la Manchette” or “les chevaliers de la Manchette.” This description depicted the noblemen as the common folk saw them, as powdered, pomaded, refined, and most importantly, effeminate males. Thus, as long as this costume was linked to a specific and accepted social condition – that of the upper class – it was tolerated but once adopted by the lower classes, it was viewed as social sin and firmly reprimanded (Rey 189).

The antipathy towards homosexual men increased during the course of the eighteenth-century and once an individual identified as a ‘molly’ or a sodomite, he would face extreme public reaction in London (Hitchcock 73).

### 1.1. The French Enlightened Approach to Sexuality

Libertinism is usually linked to “individuals with loose sexual principles who resist all moral and social constraints” (Cherbuliez 218) and intricately connected to homosexuality, especially as the debate on sodomy and divine law raged between defenders of religious doctrine and philosophers of the Enlightenment (Delon 123). Libertines primarily celebrated heterosexual lust and contended the older religious doctrines stating sexual desire was corrupting. These philosophers criticized the Church for celebrating chastity and irrationally repressing a natural desire that never did anyone any harm. Diderot, for instance, stated that celibacy brought no benefits whatsoever to the abstinent individual or to society as a whole, instead believing that pleasure was the principle of life and energy that drove human beings. The desire for sex, much in the same way as ambition, compelled humans toward each other and prompted not only love, but sociability, industry and society itself. The enlightened philosophers rejected the idea that conventional morality came from God and instead chose to focus on Nature as the origin of right and wrong (Clark 51-53).

For the majority of the libertine thinkers, sexual pleasure was understood to be exclusively heterosexual, between a man and a woman. Enlightened French philosophers for the most part represented sodomites as men who rejected the natural imperative to love women and procreate, while more radical thinkers – especially found in the pornographic genre – challenged the connection between procreation and pleasure, asserting that deliberately non-procreative forms of pleasure were acceptable (Clark 51-53).

The Enlightened French thinkers tried to laicize morality and most of them stood firmly against the ideal of virtue held exclusively by the Church. There are two branches of ideas encompassed in this movement; the first sees nature as a “normative principle that replaces

divine order” in which “homosexuality remains an unnatural and social, but not religious sin”, while the second identifies nature as “a principle of reality that accepts the world’s contradictions” in which homosexuality is accepted (Delon 124). Voltaire clearly represents the former category in his *Dictionnaire philosophique* in which the entry entitled “Amour nommé socratique” discusses the uncertainty of human love, reduces homosexuality to pederasty, and condemns it as a moral sin (Delon 124-25). Diderot, on the other hand, embodies the latter category with *Le rêve de D’Alembert* and *Suite de l’entretien* in which he refuses to publicly approve homosexuality but also recognizes that he has no genuine qualms against it. He attempts to define homosexuality as polymorphous, not dividing desire into homo- and heterosexual inclinations but focusing on attraction, no matter the sex. Although Enlightened France will never be the paradise Diderot dreams of, the eighteenth century did transform sexuality as their “polymorphous *body of pleasure*” replaced the “*body of glory of theology*” (Delon 126-30).

Michel Foucault based his approach on the evolution of sexuality and identity in his *Histoire de la Sexualité* on Diderot’s aforementioned ideology. The Enlightenment secularized sex and transformed the theological approach to sex – which saw sexual behaviour as the meeting line of the body and the soul, and understood any perceived abnormal behaviour as sinful – to a secular, rational logic of sex – which eventually replaced God with Nature and linked sexual deviancy with unnaturalness, not with sinfulness (Bauer 160-61). According to Foucault, this is also related to the need to “articulate sex”, to catalogue every detail in order to be able to interpret desire as something morally acceptable (71). Thus, indecent sexual behaviour became a focal point in sexual discourse, particularly because it was broached by ecclesiastic and civil law (Foucault 51-53). Homosexuals, for instance, became individual personas with a past, a particular character, and a specific morphology, anatomy and physiology (Foucault 59).

## 1.2. Popular Beliefs and Culture in England

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, England was a nation in which the main struggles of the Enlightenment had already been overcome, including feudalism, monarchical absolutism and ecclesiastical narrow-minded thinking. Therefore, the dogmas put forth by the rational writers were primarily practical and encompassed within a broad Christian foundation (Porter 1-2). At the time there were two strong ideologies one could follow; seventeenth-

century Puritanism beliefs or the culture found in the Restoration court. Puritans believed that sensuality was associated with sin and “folk wisdom and proverbs predicted that those who wallowed in the lusts of the flesh paid for their pleasures” with venereal diseases and bastards (Porter 2-3). In the Restoration courts, on the other hand, as well as in its erotic prose, sexual libertinism was abundant. This literature was obscene, rife with the desire to arouse, shock, and even disgust because sexuality and pleasures were still guilty, all the while being cynical about love and marriage (Porter 3).

Enlightenment writers both rejected traditional plebeian modes of behaviour and traditional courtly and aristocratic forms, instead turning to conduct based on a proper science of human nature. Dismissing Calvinist notions of original sin and corruption of the flesh, philosophers demonstrated that Nature was the origin of good and evil. Man should strive to realise human nature. And if Nature was good, then desire and sexuality, instead of being sinful, became enviable, and sexual instincts turned into natural desires. These beliefs that sex was pleasurable, and that pleasure was natural and therefore not sinful, formed the basic structure of the Enlightenment thought about sexuality (Porter 3-4). This was reciprocated in many works of the time, such as in Cleland’s *Fanny Hill* (1749) in which the protagonist was “guided by nature only” and where the ‘principle of pleasure’ was presumed to be the *raison-d’être* of human action (Porter 5).

In the age of the Enlightenment, there was an extraordinary openness to sexuality, in contrast to other time periods. Sex and sexuality quickly became a large part of society, more evident in larger towns, above all in London: there were easily over a hundred brothels in London at any one time, pornography was sold in a majority of the print-shops, there was a certain omnipresence of prostitutes, etc. All these items pointed to a certain tolerance for sexual indulgence that was not merely limited to the libertine elite (Porter 11-12).

Another distinct point to make is that although Enlightenment thinking supported sexual liberties, its freedoms applied principally to males and extended only as far as heterosexuals. Even though clubs existed for other sexual orientations in London, sodomy remained a capital crime. Some of the most notorious homosexual men of Georgian England found it more prudent to emigrate (Porter 15-18).

Most of the important Enlightenment figures stood by their claim for physical pleasure, without neglecting the pleasure of the mind. Nevertheless, Enlightenment values strongly opposed the purely animalistic indulgence of sexual desires. In other words, for sex and sexuality to be enjoyable, it had to be refined, decent and polite. This civilised pursuit of

pleasure took on various forms. More often than not, the emphasis was placed upon the rational quest for sexual release – Fanny Hill even describes one of her older lovers as a ‘rational pleasurer’ – and sometimes the emphasis fell on gentility and politeness – Fanny Hill portrays her encounters as harmonizing the “refinements of taste and delicacy with the most cross and determinate fortifications of sensuality.” A sexual etiquette of sorts needed to be negotiated, which would guarantee pleasure without embarrassment (Porter 18).

## 2. The Homosexual Subculture of the Eighteenth Century

### 2.1. Molly Houses and Homosexual Cruising Areas in Eighteenth-Century London

From the beginning of the Enlightenment, a palpable and well-organized homosexual subculture was evident in the capital. Alongside mainstream homosexual cruising areas, sodomites would also frequent coffeehouses or taverns called “molly houses” where they could engage in effeminate behaviour amongst themselves, sing and dance, and sometimes even get “married.” Although there were similar homosexual networks in large cities in Britain such as Bristol, molly houses seem to only have prevailed in London (Norton 63). Other cruising grounds in the big city, often referred to as molly markets, were located in places where large numbers of people gathered, such as public parks, streets outside theatres during evening hours, and around bridges (Norton 63). There was a distinct culture of gesture, expression and dress that allowed homosexual men to recognise each other in the outdoor meeting places, and to contextualise their sodomitical acts within a type of sophisticated ritualised framework (Hitchcock 67).

Even though homosexuals have often been represented as effeminate, most eighteenth-century homosexuals were referred to as *sodomites*, *baggerers* and *indorsers*, rather than mollies. According to the prosecution’s reports, effeminacy was more or less confined to the molly houses, suggesting that this attitude was especially characteristic of those who actively partook in the organized subculture rather than broadly characteristic of the homosexual in general (Norton 67).

### 2.2. Homosexual Cruising Grounds in Eighteenth-Century Paris

The cruising grounds in Paris were similar to those found in the homosexual subculture in London. Much like eighteenth-century molly houses, Paris had specific taverns frequented by

sodomites after having found a “date” in local pickup places such as the area surrounding the Pont Neuf. Along with these “couples”, groups of fifteen to thirty homosexual men would meet in the taverns, where they would dance, sing, use female nicknames, and perform sexual rituals. In 1748, around eight such taverns existed (Norton 70-71). Other common cruising areas in Paris included the Tuileries, Luxemboug and the Palais-Royal Gardens, the Champs-Elysees, as well as public squares and river embankments. When a tavern was lacking, couples often engaged in sexual activity in any public place that was somewhat sheltered from view (Rey 180).

### 2.3. The Lesbian Subculture in the Enlightenment

Although there is a clear lack of works describing the attitudes towards lesbianism at the time (Hitchcock 86), we do have proof, or at least suggestions that illustrate the beginnings of a lesbian subculture in London. The use of the slang terms *tribades*, *tommies* and *sapphists* (Norton 77) in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, and the comments made in existing pamphlets – such as *Satan’s Harvest Home* from 1749 – both suggest the outset of a public awareness of a lesbian subculture (Hitchcock 84).

The equivalent of molly houses didn’t exist at the time, neither in France nor in England, although there are various references to an alleged lesbian club called the Order of Anandrynes, which supposedly flourished in Paris in the 1780s. Although the existence of the club is questionable, the presence of a genuine network of lesbians in France’s capital was certain (Norton 79-80).

The rise of the “romantic friendship” provided the eighteenth century with alternative language to describe female relationships and for most women, this particular friendship was the public face of a real and physical love. This ideology also in a way legitimised same-sex relationships and provided an identity for women who loved other women. It created categories in which these specific women could situate themselves. Lastly, as opposed to the prospering of the male homosexual subculture that created an impasse and split the homosexuals from their heterosexual counterparts, the romantic friendship assured that lesbianism remained more or less tolerable in female society (Hitchcock 87).

The understanding and characterisation of lesbian love was process to change throughout the eighteenth century. The assumption that women were aggressively salacious was soon replaced by the theory that they were more likely to be sexually passive. This doctrine was

further substantiated by eighteenth-century medical studies that placed male and female genital organs were permanently placed into distinct categories (Hitchcock 81). At the beginning of the century, it was possible for lesbians to think of their sexual behaviour within the heterosexual framework but by the end of the century, with the spread of the romantic friendship and the idea of the ‘passionless’ woman, a new identity had become available for them, one defined in opposition to heterosexuality (Hitchcock 91-92).

### **3. Crime and Punishment. The Model of the Law**

Between 1650 and 1820, several radical transformations in the history of homosexuality took place in Western Europe. On the continent, laws against same-sex relationships were significantly altered or overturned and even in England, they were subjected to intense scrutiny and often judged to be too severe or prejudiced (Norton 57). Despite the forward legal thinkers and enlightened philosophers, homosexual behaviour was more actively prosecuted and monitored during this period than in preceding centuries (Norton 57-58).

Many sources speak of the emergence of the homosexual sodomites during the Enlightenment as if this was a new reality – with its own social networks, cruising grounds and subcultural rituals – but it may only be their *visibility* that is new. This faction of society was only now discovered because of new networks of government surveillance, more specifically, through the use of undercover agents who infiltrated these communities (Norton 72).

#### 3.1. From The Buggery Act of 1533 to the Societies for the Reformation of Manners in Eighteenth-Century England

Sodomy had been a capital crime under ecclesiastic law but became a civil crime under the Buggery Act of 1533, the country’s first civil sodomy law, which advocated the “detestable and abominable Vice of Buggery committed with mankind or beast” to be a capital crime punishable by hanging (Norton 61). This particular piece of legislation was continuously repealed and re-enacted under the rule of various English monarchs until it was eventually lifted in 1861 (Norton 61) and under the Buggery Act, hundreds of people lost their lives on the scaffold in England. Authorities determined in the early seventeenth century that the capital conviction could only be acquired by proof of penetration and ejaculation, alongside the testimony of two witnesses who could attest to both factors having taken place

(Hitchcock 60). However, this ‘full sodomy’ being hard to prove, the majority of homosexuals were instead regularly prosecuted for having attempted sodomy, a misdemeanour that was easier to prosecute and usually penalized by public humiliation in the pillory, a fine, and/or imprisonment for up to two years (Norton 62).

In 1690, a group of young Christian men in East London formed the Societies for the Reformation of Manners in order to strive against the constant profanity heard in the public streets, the open solicitations of prostitutes and the steady rise in street crime (Norton 62). They wanted a social reform by eliminating religious ignorance, idleness and, most importantly, blasphemy and lewdness (Hitchcock 71). These societies were most famous for their aid when the police finally raided Mother Clap’s molly house in 1726, after over a year of surveillance and infiltration. Over forty men were arrested: half a dozen of them were pilloried, fined and imprisoned for up to two years, and three were hanged for sodomy (Norton 65-66). There were similar raids on molly houses throughout London between 1698 and 1798 (Hitchcock 67), which also hold an important historical significance because they appear to be the first organised attempt to persecute homosexuals in England in large numbers, which in turn also started to identify the homosexual as a type of person (Hitchcock 71-72).

### 3.2. The French “*Mouches*” and the Pederasty Patrols

The French of the Enlightenment were far less bloody-minded than the English. Although sodomites were still burned to death on the Place de Grève in Paris up until the middle of the eighteenth-century, there were only a handful of executions for sodomy, as opposed to the previous two centuries (Delon 122-23).

In Paris, especially between 1723 and 1747, *mouches* or entrappers hired by the police arrested and prosecuted numerous sodomites. And just as our knowledge of the homosexual subculture in London is directly linked to the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, we owe our awareness of the pederast community in Paris to the use of the *mouches* (Norton 70-71).

In the mid-eighteenth century, homosexuality was no longer regarded as a mere religious sin, but also a secular vice, which explains why from 1738 onwards, the word *sodomite* was replaced by a non-religious and more neutral word, *pederast* in police records (Norton 72). This secular notion was visible on all fronts. By the mid-eighteenth century, enlightened

philosophers attempted to create a new “rational” approach to sodomy that would focus more on the prevention, rather than the prosecution of the “criminal” behaviour (Bauer 177). In *De l’esprit des lois* (1748), for instance, Montesquieu made a typical Enlightenment plea for the prevention of sodomy, and noted that there were only three crimes that were considered capital offences and punished by fire, namely witchcraft, heresy and sodomy. This underscored the magnitude of overlap between clerical and modern civil law (Norton 82-83). Finally, in 1791, the Constituent Assembly decriminalised sodomy, categorizing it as an “imaginary crime” alongside bestiality, heresy and witchcraft (Norton 82).

### 3.3. Prosecuting Lesbianism in the Eighteenth Century

Sex between women was rarely illegal in enlightened Europe, although there were occasional cases in which female same-sex fornication was prosecuted (Norton 77). “Passing women” (Friedli 81) were arraigned for fraud for wearing men’s clothing, be it to be able to join their husbands in the army or navy, to earn better wages as labourers, or even to marry other women. The latter case is known as the “female husband”, which evolved from the “romantic friendship,” or the contemporary way to define women who loved women. There are two distinctive cases of female husbands; those who, like Ann Marrow, impersonated men in order to marry women for their money – she was pilloried and pelted mercilessly by a crowd – and those who married for love. Sarah Paul was married to a woman for several years and following a lovers’ tiff, her “wife” brought up charges of fraud against her in 1760. Mary East lived with another woman together as man and wife for over eighteen years in a public house in Popling. Such topics can also be found in contemporary literature such as Henry Fielding’s twenty-four-page pamphlet from 1746, *The Female Husband*, (Norton 77-79) a fictional reworking of the case of Mary Hamilton, also known as Dr Charles Hamilton, who posed as a man and was ultimately convicted of fraud. She was publicly whipped in four market towns and imprisoned for six months while her case was reported in numerous newspapers that gave no inkling that her deception was seen as a sexual crime. This is the element in particular Fielding chooses to focus on in his pamphlet. Furthermore, his work has a lot in common with the genre of pornographic fiction that was steadily gaining popularity at the time. Much like *Fanny Hill* (1749), *The Female Husband* incorporates the familiar themes of the “contagious vice of nature, corruption of innocence and the absolute sanctity of male



and female roles”, as well as depicts a young woman being initiated by another woman who was sexually knowledgeable (Friedli 238-40).

Some critics have argued that this paucity of legal persecution does not reflect the lack of desire to punish deviant lesbian behaviour, but was more an attempt to suppress the concept of lesbian love from the social imagination. A better argument depicting why the law seemed to tolerate lesbian sex was because of the existing presumption that it could never be fully satisfying and therefore could never pose any real threat to heterosexuality – and, in turn, to the patriarchal structure of society (Hitchcock 78-80).

Anecdotes of women who dressed up as men featured ordinarily in newspapers and periodicals, they were less common in medical studies and only appeared sporadically in court records. In the latter case, women were only persecuted if they married or attempted to do so, in which case they were arraigned for fraud, as opposed to homosexual men who were prosecuted in relation to homoerotic behaviour and often charged with sodomy, a categorically sexual offence (Friedli 235). This suggests that the major issue in these cases was deception and the ensuing apprehension of rights and privileges; rather than acts of sexual deviance themselves (Friedli 237).

#### **4. Erotica and Pornography. Sodomy in Eighteenth-Century Literature**

Italy was at the foreground of the emergence of what was considered “modern” pornography in the West between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century. By the mid-seventeenth century France’s manufacturing quickly outweighed Italy’s. In England, on the other hand, pornography took longer to establish itself and in the eighteenth century, it only existed in the form of badly written bawdy erotica that often included botanical terminology and by the 1770s, double entendres linked to the discovery of electricity. Then, in the eighteenth century, while the British were experimenting with erotic poems and prose, the French took charge and developed full-blown pornographic novels that quickly surpassed anything that had previously been written. Their works primarily attacked religious taboos, as well as the state, royalty and politicians (Peakman 29-31).

When it came to deviant same-sex behaviour, eighteenth-century western pornography usually omitted homosexuality, but when it was mentioned, it generally cropped up as a humorous pun in obscene novels about female prostitution or in political satire prose (Norton 74).

#### 4.1. Pornography in Libertine France

*L'École des filles, ou La Philosophie des dames* (1655) embodied the enlightened thought process by advocating education based on experience, which would develop critical reasoning. Additionally, it reflected the libertine ideal that Nature, as opposed to God and religion, determined the construction and functioning of the universe and society. The manual barely refers to Christian moral, instead focussing on the principle of pleasure (Crawford 203-04). But pleasure could be problematic, especially when it came to the representation of homosexual desire in erotic literature. Even in libertine France, as revolutionary as it was, homosexual inclination was rarely permitted to be described as a mere innocent natural act in contemporary erotic fiction (Norton 74). The Marquis de Sade, on the other hand, insisted on the importance of pleasure, which led him to exempt any other possibility. In *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795), Dolmancé lectures Eugénie on the natural and rational aspects of sexual pleasure, defending sodomy as natural because nature never intended all sexual acts to be procreative. In his mind, physical pleasure is the only true evidence of the natural purpose of sex, and the numerous drawn-out sexual group sessions are meant to illustrate this primacy of pleasure. As obscene and shocking as his writings may be, Sade clearly depicted the values of the Enlightenment based on the principle of Nature guiding man and that man must conform to it (Crawford 211-12).

With the rise in literacy, the French soon realized that erotica could be used as a powerful weapon on the political front (Dawson 229). As authorities in France came under attack, pornography grew more vicious and obscene, standing firmly against organized religion and the monarchical political structure. It tore down political figures and institutions in the same way it undermined clerical authorities, by degrading them with immorality and sexual scandal (Crawford 212). Early anti-ecclesiastic pornography, such as *Vénus dans le cloître* (1683) mainly emphasized the hypocrisy of supposed celibates seducing innocent victims, but by the 1740s, French anticlerical erotica moved to critique clerical sexuality. From *Histoire de Dom Bougre, portier des Chartreux*, to Mirabeau's *Ma conversion* (1783), Diderot's *La Religieuse* (1796) and finally to a few of the Marquis de Sade's pornographic narratives such as *Justine* (1787) and *Les 120 journées de Sodome* (1785), the works grew more daring in pointing out sexual deviancy which included but was not limited to orgies, secret mistresses, lecherous clerics, and homosexuality (Crawford 215-16).

There were obviously social rules governing sexual discourse in the eighteenth century, at a time when *libertinage* embodied both sexual and intellectual license. Sade insisted upon the necessary alliance of the two, combining the polite society and the philosophical dedication to freedom and individualism. This decisive break in the use of scandalous sexual terms took place near the end of the century with Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795) and *Justine* (1787) in which the novels managed to assert their right to complete linguistic freedom in sexual reference (Ellrich 217).

Pornography on the mainland was wedded to the dialogue structure from Aretino's early works in sixteenth-century Italy in which an experienced woman gradually introduces a novice to the complexities of sexual intercourse. This tradition continues all the way to Sade although he broadens it with the sheer perversity, violence and cruelty of his work. In other words, French pornography has kept its dialogue structure and remains marked by its anti-clerical and anti-monarchy content. The scenes depicting clergy or aristocrats participating in lewd sexual libertine behaviour were an essential part of the Enlightenment itself as a form of worldly social critique (Hitchcock 18).

French erotica following the French Revolution was not nearly as political as that preceding it; it was no longer the principle central focus of such works of literature (Crawford 217). From 1789 onwards, most of the pornographic pamphlets in print were directed against members of the royal family and this set off a period of lewd and obscene books, of which Sade is the most obvious example (Dawson 230). In this period leading from the reign of Louis XV to and through the French Revolution was distinctly marked by a general loosening of moral, what with the explosion of illegitimate births and the wide-spread epidemic of syphilis primarily linked to the sexual revolution and to sexual promiscuity (Pasco 31). The Enlightenment period was accompanied with a somewhat thorough sex education through, for instance, conduct manuals. Although information about sexual activity is virtually non-existent in these texts, they do reveal the ideology of the time rife with morality and the various patterns of behaviour of the contemporary society. These manuals were laced with Christian beliefs and continued to educate young women on the importance of chastity, obedience, and virtue in general (Pasco 30). By the end of the seventeenth century, conduct manuals were very much established as a type of literature, so much so that even pornographic borrowed this instructive structure, as seen in Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795) (Pasco 32).

Alongside the conduct manual, the eighteenth century also hosted confessors' manuals, which were primarily written in vernacular but often switched to Latin – even mid-sentence – when describing sins of the flesh, supposedly not to corrupt or entice people into deviant behaviour (Scott 53). Moreover, these manuals generally perceived same-sex relations as acts against nature and God, alongside bestiality and masturbation (Scott 58). These confessionals were most likely the only place people could confess their sodomitical sins without fear of retribution or prosecution (Scott 59).

#### 4.2. Erotic Literature in Enlightenment England

Sex was a preeminent part of the written and printed culture of eighteenth-century England. Pornographical journals became a regular part of daily life around the 1770s, with for instance *The Covent Garden Magazine or Amorous Repository*, which consisted of stories about sexual intercourse and advertisements for brothels and prostitutes. Newspapers were laden with obscene and explicit sexual references to royalty and politicians – Pitt the Younger was often referred to as 'The Bottomless Pitt', 'stiff to everyone but a lady'. Popular themes in tantalizing novels such as *The Innocent Adulteress* (1777) and *Fatal Follies* (1788) included adultery and the idea of corrupted innocence. These topics were elongated through the Gothic novel, which multiplied the sado-masochistic thrills (Porter 8-9).

Little was available in England in the way of pornographic novels until John Cleland's *Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749). The importance of the work lies in the way it broke out of the literary conventions of contemporary pornography and combined these with the customs of the newly popular novel (Hitchcock 19). It contained the first extended and realistic homosexual scene to appear in erotica, which was so obscene and unthought-of at the time that Cleland was immediately arrested and prosecuted for disorderly and lewd behaviour and the homosexual section was removed from the novel's next edition in 1750. Additionally, this novel also contained pseudo-lesbian scenes in which women instructed the heroine on the pleasures of heterosexual sex. This lesbian instructive framework was often used in bawdy homosexual tales at the time such as *The Sappho-an*, which also appeared in 1749 (Norton 76-77), both in English erotica as in that found on the mainland, primarily in Italy and France (Hitchcock 17).

As the Enlightenment accentuated the importance of the status of Nature, it provided a strong basis of pleasure as the "natural" purpose of sex. This meant that instead of focussing

on the mind or the soul, the spotlight would now lie on the physicality and the embodiment of pleasure and desire. These concepts were often depicted through the representations of the female body either metaphorically – such as Thomas Stretzer’s *A New Description of Merryland* (1741), which was a forged travelogue that described the female body as “foreign” lands – or literally, if not fictionally, as in John Cleland’s masterpiece (Crawford 210-11). The former method had always been the traditional approach to taboo topics because of its distancing effect, which acted as convenient protection for the author. It was therefore the most popular way to describe sexuality, by masking it in other discourses so that the jargon of law and medicine as well as metaphorical poetry formed the ideal excuse to talk and read about sex (Hitchcock 16). Even Cleland, who adapted the way one generally read pornography, still upheld this practice: theoretically, his novel did not shock chaste eyes because notorious vocabulary was diligently avoided (Bouc  203). In *Fanny Hill*, the reader follows the young protagonist as she discovers sexual pleasures of all sorts, such as lesbianism, heterosexual intercourse, flagellation, male homosexual sodomy, and true love – of which only sodomy is depicted as unacceptable. Pleasure is the yardstick that measures Fanny’s encounters, and her transformation from naïve young girl to woman of pleasure is perceived as the natural course of her experience (Crawford 211).

The metaphorical nature of the English pornographic works, as well as their tendency towards crude humour portrays that, contrary to France and its audience consisting primarily of educated elite, erotica in England was mainly directed at a plebeian audience. This can also be demonstrated through the vicious and explicit humour of the printed pamphlets, which combines contemporary appreciation of sexual humour with a status-conscious prudery (Hitchcock 8-9). Especially when taking Cleland’s work into account with its novelistic structure, we can ascertain that while French pornography wanted to turn people to critical thinking and political and religious dissent, the main role of English erotica was to encourage domestic complacency – “albeit a contentment based on the assumption of male promiscuity and the availability of commercial sex” (Hitchcock 19).

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review of Fanny Hill and La Philosophie dans le Boudoir**

Both John Cleland and the Marquis de Sade have been examined for decades by critics worldwide. The secondary literature pertaining to their work is thus considerable and cannot all be mentioned in this chapter. Thus a selection has been made which will highlight the material in direct correlation to my analysis of the representation of homosexuality in both *Fanny Hill* and *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*.

### **1. Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure**

*Fanny Hill* is commonly claimed as the first pornographic novel and most critics consider it “the single most read pornographic novel of all time” (Hunt 21), hence the extensive secondary literature and criticism surrounding it. I have selected a few themes that seemed interesting and pertinent to the literary analysis I will pursue in the following chapter.

#### **1.1. Instructional and Narrative Voyeurism**

Voyeurism plays an intricate role in *Fanny Hill*, both in the storyline and in the way the narrative influences the reader. The novel’s characters, especially its heroine, are often unintentional witnesses to sexual encounters. The almost unwillingness to observe transforms into a desire to watch, followed by a need to watch; thus placing the passive characters in an active situation (Dachez 262). Fanny is in a way initiated into the carnal pleasures through consecutive acts of voyeurism, that function as introduction and as trigger to the heroine’s autoeroticism – the scene between Mrs Brown and her client (Dachez 266) – as well as serve as means of enhancing pleasure – the ‘party of pleasure’ in Mrs Cole’s brothel (Simmons 60). Voyeurism is thus a powerful theme within the novel as it is continuously conducted either openly or behind closed doors and plays an important role in Fanny’s sexual initiation and further education. Later on, as the heroine matures and gains sexual experience, voyeurism also provides an opportunity for her to exercise moral judgment, as seen through Fanny’s cautionary tale following the sodomitical scene (Simmons 60).

“Central to this novel’s manipulating strategy is the development of a voyeuristic narrative that becomes a powerful means of representing and constructing the reader’s subjectivity” (Simmons 43). By reading the novel, the reader actively participates in acts of voyeurism; he always finds himself removed from the fictional experience because he is

viewing everything through Fanny's eyes (Markley 349). Furthermore, the narration takes the shape of Fanny looking back on her life as a prostitute and a kept woman, which places her in the role of voyeur. This memoirist's perspective thus enforces the reader's part as secondary observer as Fanny "invites the reader's complicity in the pleasure of the voyeuristic act; this invitation serves to sanction the transgression" (Simmons 54-55). Moreover, the void of obscene words that has been filled with metaphors and euphemisms for sexual organs and acts entices the reader to take a "sympathetic and imaginative participation in the voyeuristic narrative" (Simmons 57-58). Lastly, through the reading of the acts of voyeurism transpiring in the novel, the reader gets the same benefits as the voyeurs he is following – i.e. education, pleasure, and practice in making moral judgements (Simmons 61).

## 1.2. Gender Ambiguity

Felicity Nussbaum believes that *Fanny Hill* "liberates female sexual desire in order to channel it away from autoeroticism and homoeroticism toward bourgeois heterosexual pleasure" (23). Fanny's homoerotic initiation with Phoebe could conflict with this analogy but according to Nussbaum, Cleland assigns the responsibility for a woman's primary sexual education to other women, and thus sexual desire for the same sex is necessary, but it must be rechanneled toward men in order to be fully satisfying (Nussbaum 23). Nussbaum accentuates the gender ambiguity found in *Fanny Hill* by, for instance, pointing to the scene depicting Fanny and Will's first time together, which "except for the mention of Fanny's petticoats, [...] could be read as an instance of homosexual [...] intercourse" (24). Every element, from the mixture of pain and pleasure, to the resistance of the orifice upon penetration, obscures the precise body opening involved and "allows the reader to imagine the receptor as either vagina or anus, male or female" (Nussbaum 24). The critic places this in direct contrast to Fanny and Will's second time together, a scene during which Fanny's body is described as quite specifically female (Nussbaum 24). Gender fluidity is thus also present in the masquerade scene between Emily and her domino, as well as the full-blown homosexual scene. According to the critic Lee Edelman, Fanny witnesses this latter scene from a "heterosexual-male-identified" position, which destabilises "the binary logic of before and behind," thus creating ambiguity when it comes to the gender of both participants and reminding readers that bodies of either sex may be similar from behind (Nussbaum 25).

Antje Anderson, on the other hand, emphasizes the female plot of excess – which assigns infinite orgasmic capacity to women and restructures the climactic moment of the plot into multiple, repetitive climaxes – which undermines the traditional male plot model and shapes a new narrative (110-11). However, critics often describe *Fanny* as “an embodiment not of female sexual excess, but of a female sexuality that is exactly like its male counterpart” (Anderson 114). *Fanny Hill* is thus modelled on the already available story of male sexual initiation and incorporates remnants of the static model of female sexual identity such as the moment of defloration, which becomes the narrative’s new climactic moment – as opposed to the male climax (Anderson 112-13). Furthermore, the notion of female excess is enhanced when the climactic moment of the heroine’s loss of virginity is multiplied into repetitive series of real and figurative deflorations in *Fanny Hill* (Anderson 114), which undermines the male linear plot of Fanny’s sexual initiation and education (Anderson 117) until the end of the novel, when Fanny gives up her excessive sexual pleasures for a monogamous marriage (Anderson 120); and the hegemonic, patriarchal, heterosexual male standards of narrative and sexual pleasure are reinstated (Anderson 114).

### 1.3. Vice and Virtue. Balancing Libertinism and Bourgeois Values

“On the one hand, *Fanny Hill* celebrates a libertine existence cut loose (more or less) from moralistic denunciations of sexuality; on the other, the novel rigorously defines what is and is not sexually desirable or acceptable” (Markley 344). It is this paradox that makes *Fanny Hill* more than a mere pornographic novel, in which Cleland produces ambivalent descriptions of sexual activity in an attempt to celebrate both libertine and bourgeois notions of sexual liberty. The heroine of the novel embodies this contradiction as she voices contrasting responses to sexual pleasure throughout the narrative; she prefaces her sexual escapades with protestations of natural modesty and innocence but nonetheless engages in them pleurably (Markley 348). Furthermore, by enticing the reader to peruse the novel, Cleland is inviting him “to cross the boundary of conventional morality and sample the pleasures of sexual warfare” (Simmons 44).

Although the story ends in a way reminiscent of sentimental novels such as Richardson’s *Pamela*, the moralistic comments in the narrative are immensely rare. This notwithstanding, *Fanny Hill* celebrates bourgeois sexuality and thus only legitimates a small fraction of sexual options; lesbianism is discouraged, male homosexuality abhorred, diverse fetishes are referred



to as ‘small trifles,’ and oral-genital contact is almost non-existent (Markley 351). Many critics refer to *Fanny Hill* as bourgeois pornography because, unlike the more radical works of Sade and anticlerical French erotica, Cleland’s novel does everything in order to obscure its infractions by, for instance, restoring Fanny to conventional morality and bourgeois values (Simmons 45). By concluding the novel in this manner, with Fanny marrying Charles and speaking of love and motherhood, Cleland is not only having his protagonist embody bourgeois values, but he is also describing her as the heroine of a very different story than the one she has led as a prostitute and kept mistress (Kibbie 575).

## 2. La Philosophie dans le boudoir, ou les Instituteurs immoraux

The Marquis de Sade is a worldwide recognized figure in erotic literature as his work portrays reason, eroticism, libertine pleasure and a disdain of emotional passion, and has led to the production of a specific genre of literature that has since born his name (Wagner, *Eros Revived* 216). The themes and motives depicted here below have a direct correlation with the literary analysis that is to follow.

### 2.1. Instructional and Narrative Voyeurism

Many critics balk from Sade’s work because it is perceived as lewd and cruel, but Lorna Berman contradicts these beliefs by stating his work does not fit the universal parameters of obscenity, which are “bad language, express[ing] or arous[ing] a morbid interest in sex and excretion, or [...] immoral[ity] and thus an incitement to anti-social behaviour” (59). Furthermore, Berman adds her own criteria to the list by drawing inspiration from two other critics. Marshall McLuhan believes that “it is “fragmentation of sex” which produces pornography, [...] nudity [...] is less pornographic than semi-nudity” (Berman 59) while George P. Elliott suspects it is “invasion of privacy which makes descriptions of sex [...] obscene” (Berman 60). Berman breaks down these specifications one by one. She concludes that Sade’s work is not improper because it contains a rather clinical language, which suggests and hides nothing, as well as abstract vocabulary (60-61). Additionally, the philosophical analyses tend to dull the effect of sexual descriptions, along with characters that are difficult to identify with (Berman 62). Although destruction and cruelty figure prominently in Sade’s work, the reader is generally told very little of the victim’s physical suffering, instead reading the reflections this latter character makes on the perversions

committed against him by his tormentors (Berman 63). Furthermore, human beings have always had a desire for destruction and human suffering; Sade was only the first to consciously emphasize it (Berman 67-68). Timo Airaksinen further expands upon this notion of the pre-existing desire for pain and destruction. He believes that the educational process into vice applied onto the passive subjects in Sade's work, the initiates, only actualizes the submissive student's cruelty (105-06). "[Eugénie's] education is an initiation or baptism into the cult of vice which she already knows. [...] Education does not create anything new, but explicates Eugénie's innate propensities" (Airaksinen 107).

Berman concludes her analysis by stating that alongside this framework, "Sade's work cannot be truly effective as obscenity without the reader's imagination conjuring up certain images which Sade does not specifically outline" (Berman 61). John Phillip agrees with this idea of the reader's imagination being in ultimate control. He asserts that imagination "enables [the libertine and the readers] to exceed the bounds of nature, [...] enables Man to best nature" (Phillips 38).

## 2.2. Gender Ambiguity

When it comes to gender roles in Sade's work, critics are far from reaching an agreement. Airaksinen believes there are no fundamental differences between men and women in the Marquis's books because he "plays with the transgression of sexual roles, and this may entail that women must be similar to men" (74-75). According to him, men tend to have too little virtue and women too much, which is why Sade exaggerates female vice, allowing his female characters to overpower male official roles and break into the male world of power. Thus, Sade's women are both helpless victim and brutal victimizers (Airaksinen 76-77). This is also why the Marquis constantly praises sodomitical sex, "which allows the vagina to be forgotten and makes women similar to men in many respects" (Airaksinen 78).

John Phillips, on the other hand, states the majority of Sade's female characters are consistently represented as objects – both of desire and contempt – while only a minority are accepted as equals by their male counterparts (30). These latter women are only represented as positive female role models because they strongly resemble men. They may be anatomically female but they never fail to don artificial phalluses with which they actively penetrate both men and other women, and they enjoy both active and passive sodomitical roles (Phillips 31-32). Furthermore, Phillips links the ambivalent attitude to women with the

conflicting attitude towards mother nature – the Phallic-woman – who should simultaneously be worshipped and vilified (36). According to him, “nature leads women to conceive and give birth, but it also gives them sexual power over men” (Phillips 39). While the sodomitical man cannot reproduce, woman reminds him of his dependency on nature, which is why he must “reassert his authority over her body by taking something from her – blood [...], beauty, virginity, [...] and of course, life itself” (Phillips 39).

While Kate Parker agrees that Sade’s libertines both hate and admire the female body, she believes that the orgy system “complicates the rigid juxtaposition of a virile cruel male hero against his passive female victim” (412). According to her, it is the female body that invites and embodies the moments of social cohesion between the libertines through the orgy (Parker 413). Accordingly woman is superior to man in Sade’s works. In *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, for instance, Dolmancé is often considered to dominate the scenes by his initiation and structuring of the orgies, but it is Mme de Saint-Ange who truly monopolizes the setting (Parker 414). Furthermore she creates an education for Eugénie that is both practical and philosophical, thus empowering the initiate and preventing subjugation or victimization by her male counterparts (Parker 418). This contradicts Phillips’ notions of female victim and male aggressor because it is woman who controls her own body, and according to Mme de Saint-Ange, the best way to enjoy it is to “let anyone you wish enjoy it” (Parker 418). This creates a communal mutual sexual experience that provides pleasure for all its participants (Parker 425). By structuring the sexual scenes, and sodomizing Eugénie – somewhat against his preferences – Dolmancé renounces his individual sexual pleasures, allowing a collective pleasure to emerge and “his gratification depends on maintaining and participating in this heightened collective act” (Parker 426). Parker pushes her ideas even further by stating that Dolmancé is not only inferior to Mme de Saint-Ange, a woman who finds pleasure in a variety of perverse sexual acts, but is also marginalized by his preferred role as sodomite (Parker 426-27). She thus concludes “even as the male body is limited by its predilections, the inherent possibilities of the more pliable female body draw him out of these compulsive, repetitive proclivities” (Parker 428).

### 2.3. Vice and Virtue. Balancing Libertinism and Bourgeois Values

Airaksinen links morality to a loss of individual identity. According to him, “if a person is perfectly moral, he is not an individual but like any other bearer of these same values. [...]

Only on the condition that he becomes unpredictable can he be an individual.” Thus, in order to be singular, one must break with the social laws (98). However, Sadean pleasure results in the same problematic because in orgiastic pleasure, the libertines also become identical in their passionate throws. Thus, a morality of vice is needed that relies on a method of individuating oneself (Airaksinen 98-99). Nevertheless, one should not oversimplify this morality of vice by stating vice is virtuous and virtue is toxic; the fact of the matter is that the Sadean universe is simply lacking moral motivation (Airaksinen 101). Airaksinen sums up his argument by stating “a virtuous character exists only in a context of virtue, a reasonable social order [and] none of these conditions is present in Sade’s fictional world [...] therefore vice cannot be made virtuous” (102).

William Edmiston accentuates the notion that in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, Sade emphasizes both sides of the moral façade. The Marquis departs from a philosophical tradition that attempts to establish a link between nature and moral conduct but he differs from his predecessors in the radical conclusions he draws concerning nature as a basis for social behaviour (Edmiston 122). He has his characters follow four distinct stages when viewing nature: 1. an existential view of nature as a phenomenon that exists in everything (Edmiston 122); 2. an attack on traditional Christian prohibitions that are denounced as anti-natural (Edmiston 123); 3. a critique on acts and sentiments valorised in Western ethics which are perceived as unnatural (Edmiston 124); and 4. attacks on ‘virtues’ and advocacy of so-called ‘crimes’ that actually serve nature (Edmiston 125). These stages can then be transposed to any alleged sexual perversion, such as sodomy, in order to rationalize it into a natural act (Edmiston 126-27).

However, Edmiston notes that although these so-called crimes are presented as natural, the language used within the book is that of felony and debauchery. Thus, “the text at once denies the existence of crimes and prompts us to commit them” (Edmiston 128-29). He introduces Beatrice Fink’s concept of juxtaposing forbidden terminology with authorized and conventional language in order to empty the former of its semantic value and render it more ambivalent (Edmiston 129).

Lastly, Edmiston mentions that Sade seems to invalidate his own libertine dialogue by having the Chevalier de Mirvel contradict the prevailing message. This character represents a more conventional eighteenth-century attitude toward nature and religion, a sort of cautionary tale that inevitably fails to convince (Edmiston 130).

Using these aforementioned themes alongside the abridged context described in the first chapter, it is already possible to construct a preliminary idea of the individualistic perception of homosexuality that both Cleland and Sade hold, an image that will be further discussed in the following chapters.

### Chapter 3. Literature Analysis. Virtue and Homosexuality in *Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*

*Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* is more complex than a simple “country girl made good” narrative and cannot solely be classified as obscene under the pornographic label.<sup>3</sup> Even its descriptions of sodomy and lesbianism are not as straightforward as they might seem at first glance. Thus the themes of voyeurism, gender ambiguity and the distinction between vice and virtue, as well as the context of eighteenth-century England, have a direct correlation with Cleland’s specific representation of sodomy and lesbianism in *Fanny Hill*, in a similar way that these themes and the French context influenced Sade’s perception of homosexuality in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*. This will be discussed in the following two chapters, during which each author’s approach to sodomy and lesbianism will be analysed using the themes of virtue and voyeurism. However, before diving into this particular subject matter, an abridged description of the novel’s genre and language is required.

#### 1. Genre and Discourse

The epistolary novel was a popular form of fiction in the eighteenth century and was often used to reinforce the sense of actuality in tales, to indulge the taste for scandals and pseudo-histories, and to analyse the female heart (Shipley 104-05). The double enunciation structure of the epistolary novel further gives the reader the illusion that he is receiving true facts, primarily because this form of fiction favours the use of the first-person narrative, therefore allowing each letter to promulgate the intimate reflections and feelings of its writer, and leaving the reader to face the voice of the characters head-on, without interference from the author (Aron, Saint-Jacques, and Viala 186-88). From the very first page of the novel, we are presented with Fanny’s innermost thoughts and beliefs as she reveals “*the loose part of my life, written with the same liberty that I led it*” (Cleland 9) that has shaped her into a woman of pleasure. Alongside this subjective characteristic, epistolary novels are generally unable to prepare readers for the future as the characters narrate past and present events with no knowledge of the larger outcome in which these may ultimately play a role (MacArthur 3-9). However, in contradiction to this, Fanny, as main character and narrator of the story, does

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 3 for a full summary of *Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*.

make insinuations about the future throughout the narrative of both her letters by, for instance, conveying the shape of events yet to come with dramatic immediacy (Trudeau, “Introduction”). A clear-cut example of this foreshadowing is, for instance, when Mrs Jones discovers that her boarders, Fanny and Charles, are not married; Fanny mentions that this is “*a circumstance which far from displeased her, considering the designs she had upon me, and which, alas! she will have, too soon, room to carry into execution*” (Cleland 61), thus referring to the advantageous situation Mrs Jones will soon find herself in.

Erotic fiction often depicts the lives of female characters who wrestle with sexual temptation and virtue, and who feel that the only way to express themselves honestly is by confiding in a trusted friend through letters. From the sixteenth century onwards, the epistolary structure was often used on the European continent – and in England – to recount the trials of illicit and prohibited love, while paying a great deal of attention to questions of morality (Trudeau, “Introduction”). Furthermore, this genre can be regarded as the continuation of the tradition of the “whore’s dialogue” (Simmons 51), a subgenre that made its first appearance in the early sixteenth century (Wagner, *Eros Revived* 226). It was initially meant as satiric and bawdy entertainment but became increasingly more explicit in its descriptions of sexual detail in order to arouse the reader (Wagner, *Eros Revived* 225). From this category arose the “chronique scandaleuse,” which encompassed fact and fiction presented in a series of memoirs. It provided risqué scenes in a sensual atmosphere that, combined with moral indignation, conformed to the sexual taboos and social censures (Wagner, *Eros Revived* 218-19). This also applied to the pathetic-sentimental type of fiction, which, though erotic, focused primarily on innocence, virtue and the danger of seduction (Wagner, *Eros Revived* 219). *Fanny Hill* thus materializes as a merger of these pornographic subgenres as the novel attempted to combine both the sensual and the sentimental (Wagner, *Eros Revived* 219-20).

*Fanny Hill* is an erotic novel whose content is reminiscent of that of a sentimental novel and a bildungsroman, and follows the instructive framework of a conduct manual. These ideals are further reflected in the language used throughout the narration. Words such as “instruction”, “pupil” and “tutoress” are commonly used when referring to Fanny’s initiation into prostitution and “college” and “academy” to refer to the brothel itself, where Fanny is ‘educated.’ Fanny often attributes herself the title of “novice”, especially early on in the novel. However, the tables turn rather quickly as she finds herself in the role of the professor, teaching novices of her own, such as Norbert and Will, in the practices of sexual pleasures.

When describing the bodily parts engaged in pleasure seeking and the act of sexual intercourse itself, Cleland makes extensive use of the popular metaphorical tradition in England. This particular custom was used to broach taboo topics because of its distancing effect, which acted as a convenient protection for the author from censure. It was also rather popular in the eighteenth century because it reflected the development of such sciences as topography, geography, obstetrics and botany (Boucé 203). Along with the most common forms of metaphors in English erotica, such as chthonic and pelagic erotic topography (Boucé 203), *Fanny Hill* also makes use of those playing off the conflict between aggressive terms and the lexis describing sex as a celebration of life through referring to Greek mythology, particularly to Venus and Mars (Boucé 208-09). Venus is ever present in English erotica through the celebration of the forces of life, by diffusing the myth of man producing the precious balm of life (Boucé 208), which Cleland incorporates with phrasings such as “balsamic sweets” or “the dear relief of nature.” Furthermore, throughout Fanny’s sexual initiation, bodily pleasures are often dubbed “the mysteries of Venus” and woman’s genitals, the “sphere of Venus.” Lastly, these terms are essential in their contradiction to the aggressive words used to describe the act of sexual intercourse and the tool used to achieve this “amorous combat” (Boucé 209), such as “the main attack,” an “invasion” or the “murder[ing] at once [of] my maidenhead.” In compatibility, man’s genitals are often described using terminology reminiscent of war and devastation, such as “that terrible weapon”, “the engine of love assaults” or “the battering-piece.”

This particular rhetoric is interesting when combined with the themes of virtue and homosexuality because it simultaneously encompasses the notion of procreation – which can be placed in conflict with sodomy – and that of hostile descriptions of sexual intercourse – which are in direct correlation with a virtuous narrator. Additionally, the genre of erotic fiction and the structure of the epistolary novel allow these themes to fully develop within the narrative. Thus, both virtue and homosexuality play intricate roles in Fanny’s sexual initiation as do they elicit specific responses and consequences, all of which will be examined in this chapter.

## **2. The Theme of “Virtue”**

The gradual loss of virtue and subsequent prompt regain of it form the underlying base of the narrative in *Fanny Hill*. The story comes to us in letters written by Fanny to a certain



‘Madam’ in which she describes her fall into debauchery, and consecutive climb out of it. We meet two main figures in the novel, Fanny as narrator and Fanny as heroine, whose story the former describes and comments upon.

## 2.1. The Narrator’s Auto-portrayal

Fanny-narrator looks back upon her past of vice from a seemingly ‘virtuous’ perspective. Even before she embarks on the description of the heroine’s odyssey, the narrator attempts to emphasize her morality and virtue at the moment of redacting her letters: *“ungracious then as the task may be, I shall recall to view those scandalous stages of my life, out of which I emerged, at length, to the enjoyment of every blessing in the power of love, health and fortune to bestow”* (Cleland 9). This notion is reinforced in the last pages of her second letter when Fanny-narrator concludes her tale with a moral of sorts in which she highlights the superiority of the pleasures achieved through virtue compared to those of vice: *“looking back on the course of vice I had run, and comparing its infamous blandishments with the infinitely superior joys of innocence, I could not help pitying, even in point of taste, those who, immersed in gross sensuality, are insensible to the so delicate charms of VIRTUE, than which even PLEASURE has not a greater friend, nor VICE a greater enemy”* (Cleland 191). The narrator thus praises virtue over vice, which seems hypocritical of sorts considering the obscene acts she has committed and the pleasure she obviously took from them.

Furthermore, Fanny-narrator wills the reader to believe her virtue and yet she describes in great detail the illicit acts she witnesses and participates in. She is aware this could negate her virtuous status and therefore, from the very first sentence of her first letter, attributes the blame to her recipient who apparently ‘requested’ these facts: *“Madam – I sit down to give you an undeniable proof of my considering your desires as indispensable orders”* (Cleland 9). In the beginning of her second letter she renews the sentiment: *“Madam – If I have delayed the sequel of my history, it has been purely to allow myself a little breathing time not without some hopes, that, instead of pressing me to a continuation, you would have acquitted me of the task of pursuing a confession”* (Cleland 97). By condemning her beneficiary, Fanny-narrator clears herself of all charges of obscenity, thus needing to make *“no further apology, than to prepare you for seeing the loose part of my life, written in the same liberty that I led it”* (Cleland 9). Furthermore, she feels not only obligated but permitted to reveal the *“truth! stark, naked truth”* (Cleland 9) because she finds herself writing to a confidant, which favours

her to *“paint situations such as they actually rose to me in nature, careless of violating those laws of decency that were never made for such unreserved intimacies as ours”* (Cleland 9). The reader as well feels ‘protected’ from violating the laws of decency because he too finds himself encompassed within this circle of friends.

Additionally, Fanny-narrator maintains her innocence by concluding her second letter stating *“if I have painted vice in all its gayest colours, if I have decked it with flowers, it has been solely in order to make the worthier, the solemn sacrifice of it to virtue”* (Cleland 192), thus justifying her explicit tale within the framework of instruction and desire to prove the predominance of virtue. This provides a sort of double satisfaction for the reader who is obliged to witness erotic scenes while remaining safely enclosed on the side of virtue.

However it is noteworthy to point out that the author of *Fanny Hill* played around with conventions and restrictions while redacting his novel. He has his narrator mention in her second letter, *“I must therefore trust to the candour of your judgment, for your allowing for the disadvantage I am necessarily under in that respect; and to your imagination and sensibility, the pleasing task of repairing it, by their supplements, where my descriptions flag or fail”* (Cleland 97). According to Berman, as previously mentioned, this would allow the author to sidestep the libel charge because a novel “cannot be truly effective as obscenity without the reader’s imagination conjuring up certain images which [the author] does not specifically outline” (61). In fact, Cleland mocks the tradition of the moral frame embedded with the erotic novel by having Fanny-narrator explicitly state her tale is nothing like *“a writer [...] think[ing] to shield a treasonable libel, by concluding it with a formal prayer to the King”* (Cleland 192), which is exactly what the author attempts.

## 2.2. The Narration of the Heroine’s Story

Another manner in which Fanny-narrator seeks to prove her virtuous state is through continuously affirming her claim at correcting vice throughout the narrative. In the first stage of her first letter, on more than one occasion, she embarks on the story-telling by emphasizing the virtue she had held as a fifteen-year-old child, *“all my foundation in virtue was no other than a total ignorance of vice, and the shy timidity general to our sex, in the tender age of life, when objects alarm or frighten more by their novelty than anything else”* (Cleland 10). She thus justifies the acts that are to ensue by highlighting the moments in which she is misled by persuasive discourse into prostitution: *“I [...] interpreted [her shrewd smiles and shrugs] as*

*marks of being pleased at my getting into place so soon: but, as I afterwards came to know, these beldames understood one another very well, and this was a market where Mrs Brown, my mistress, frequently attended, on the watch for any fresh good that might offer there, for the use of her customers, and her own profit”* (Cleland 15). Fanny-narrator deliberately stresses the fact that her fifteen-year-old self is a naïve innocent girl who cannot imagine what she is getting involved in, *“then she ran out into such affected encomiums on her good mistress [...] such as would itself have started suspicious in any but such an unpracticed simpleton [...] who took every word she said in the very sense she laid out for me to take it”* (Cleland 16). The narrator does so repeatedly, such as when she mentions *“the care of dressing and tricking me out for the market was then left to Phoebe”* (Cleland 21), a notion Fanny-heroine overlooks, *“to my shame, be it confessed, that just was my invincible stupidity or rather portentous innocence, that I did not yet open my eyes to Mrs Brown’s designs”* (Cleland 24).

Once Fanny-heroine has immersed herself in the lands of vice and indecency, the narrator approaches every narrative event from her cocoon of modesty, purposely commenting on the sinful acts taking place. Fanny-narrator repeatedly reminds the reader she did not become a prostitute by choice, nor did she participate in her actions entirely voluntarily. Her first line of defence is to declare the heroine is corrupted by others, which leads her to crave sexual intercourse, *“hitherto I had been indebted only to the girls of the house for the corruption of my innocence: their luscious talks, in which modesty was far from respected [...] had given me a tolerable insight into the nature and mysteries of their profession”* (Cleland 31). Furthermore, once initiated – at least introspectively – into the carnal pleasure, nature is to blame for her excessive desire, *“whilst they were in the heat of the action, guided by nature only, I stole my hand up my petticoats, and with fingers on fire, seized and yet more inflamed that centre of all my senses”* (Cleland 33). Later, shortly after Charles’ departure, Fanny-narrator attributes the next sexual encounter to her grief, and accentuates the fact that one’s virtues depend solely on one’s circumstances, *“unexpectedly beset as I was, betrayed by a mind weakened by a long severe affliction, and stunned with the terrors of a jail, my defeat will appear the more excusable, since I certainly was not present at, or a party in any sense to it.”* (Cleland 68). Fanny-narrator thus justifies her first sexual rendezvous, in which she was but a passive participant, by blaming the series of events that had led her to it – her lover’s departure, a miscarriage, debt, the risk of prison, and grief that overwhelms her senses. Mere moments later, Fanny-heroine and Mr H engage in a second round of sexual intercourse,

during which she is a more active participant but the narrator accuses Fanny's companion of having laced her wine with an aphrodisiac, which would explain her sudden awakened lust, "*I had now got down at least [...] three or four glasses of wine, which he compelled me to drink by way of restoring nature, but whether there was anything extraordinary put into the wine, or whether there wanted no more to revive the natural warmth of my constitution, I began no longer to look with that constraint, not to say disgust, on Mr H*" (Cleland 69). Fanny-heroine is seemingly above suspicion; she is but a victim of circumstance.

Additionally, the narrator stresses the heroine's lack of choice. To avoid finding herself without a home or capital, she must adhere to the norms of disorderly houses, "*I made a vice of necessity, from the constant fears I had of being turned out to starve*" (Cleland 30). The protagonist is regularly persuaded by those surrounding her to engage in immoral acts; be it by her governess "*Mrs Cole on this, taking me by the hand, with a smile of encouragement, led me up the stairs*" (Cleland 117), or a fellow prostitute, "*as we went up, Louisa whispered me 'that she had conceived a strange longing to be satisfied [...]; begging, at the same time, my assistance in procuring her this satisfaction'*" (Cleland 166). Moreover, not only does her situation have the heroine participate in acts the narrator deems disgraceful, "*[Emily and I] took care, on this occasion, not to wrong our training at Mrs Cole's, and agreed to [bathe with clients] with as good a grace as we could*" (Cleland 171-72), but it also has her overlook her governess' true intentions, "*yet, plain as Mrs Brown's views were now come out, I had not the heart, or spirit to open my eyes to them [...] I sought to deceive myself with the continuation of my good opinion of her, and choose to wait the worst at her hands, sooner than be turned out to starve in the streets, without a penny of money or a friend to apply to*" (Cleland 27). As Fanny-narrator looks back on her profession, she explains she had no other alternative to entering this world of vice, having no money or friends to speak of, and thus justifies Fanny-heroine's choice of approaching Mrs Cole in search of a position in her brothel. In other words, the narrator concludes the heroine did the best she could within her circumstances.

However, her participation in acts of debauchery within the restrictions of her bawdy-house does not imply the protagonist found pleasure in these sexual encounters. On occasion, Fanny feels remorse following her actions, "*he [...] employed himself with the utmost tenderness to calm the transports of remorse and madness at myself, with which I was seized, too late, I confess, for having suffered on that bed, the embraces of an utter stranger*" (Cleland 67); shame, "*I had not, however, so thoroughly renounced all innate shame, as not*

*to suffer great confusion at the state I saw myself in*” (Cleland 127); and even anger at herself, *“but when my new master [...] applied himself to appease me, as my whole rage was levelled at myself, no part of which I thought myself permitted to aim at him”* (Cleland 67-68).

Fanny-narrator also uses a rather distinct terminology when describing the sexual encounters the heroine of the novel experiences. She refers to her botched attempt at fornication with her first would-be suitor as *“my dreadful trial”* (Cleland 25); and her first loveless experience at sexual intercourse is described as an event she *“suffered, tamely”* (Cleland 67). These same basic notions are repeated when an aroused Fanny-heroine happens upon a sailor, *“I was overtaken by a young sailor [...] he seized me as a prize [...] made me give a silent consent [...] I suffered myself to be towed along as it were by this man-of-war”* (Cleland 145); and when she continues her affair with Mr Norbert, *“I passively humoured every caprice of pleasure”* (Cleland 147). Fanny-narrator further describes her clients with peculiar fetishes, which she refers to as *“fooleries of a sickly appetite”* (Cleland 158). She lingers on a certain Mr Barville who *“was under the tyranny of a cruel taste: that of an ardent desire, not only of being unmercifully whipped himself, but of whipping others”* (Cleland 148). Following his departure, she comments she *“was not [...] re-enticed to renew with him, or resort again to the violent expedient of lashing nature into more haste than good speed”* (157-58). Even when she describes her first sexual experience with the love of her life, Charles, the narrator exploits this same aggressive rhetoric, *“I found myself [...] in the arms of the sweet relenting murderer of my virginity, who hung mourning tenderly over me, [...] my eyes, however, moistened with tears, and languishingly turned upon him, seemed to reproach him with his cruelty and ask him, if such were the rewards of love”* (Cleland 49). Thus, from her modest perspective, Fanny-narrator describes all acts related to sexual intercourse as lewd and violent behaviour. However, she seems to advocate the pleasures of straightforward heterosexual intercourse and when describing sexual deviations, she accentuates her disapproval and emphasizes her considering them inferior substitutes to forthright sexual intercourse. The only sexual acts this narrator somewhat condones are the heroine’s encounters with Charles, which – although technically committed out of wedlock – are acts that combine the sensual with the sentimental. This line of thought finds its climax in her explicit denunciation of sodomy, which will be discussed in the following pages.

Fanny-narrator thus comments on the acts in which the heroine participates, almost taking on a censorial role to the story. Disregarding the fact that the narrator rails against the very crimes she presents to the reader in explicit detail, her comments and descriptions – even

within the erotic and explicitly pornographic content – imply a concluding defence of virtue. This virtuous outcome of the novel takes place in two parts: her encounter with a certain sixty-year-old bachelor and her reflections following the return of her lover. The former made her believe “*that [she] had such a portion of [her] worth bestowing some regard on*” (Cleland 179) and was the first to teach her “*to be sensible that the pleasures of the mind were superior to those of the body; at the same time, that they were so far from obnoxious to, or, incompatible with each other, that [...] the one served to exalt and perfect the taste of the other*” (Cleland 179). Upon his untimely demise, as his sole heiress, the heroine reflects on the joys in her life at her present possessions, which are “*poisoned by the regret of the absent one*” (Cleland 180), namely her beloved Charles. Unexpectedly, she runs into him and after reconciling in the bedroom, he forgives her sinful past and asks for her hand in marriage. Subsequently, Fanny-narrator launches into a moral of sorts in which virtue comes out triumphant over vice, where she emphasizes how “*Virtue’s [...] pleasures cannot stand in comparison with those of vice; [...] how comparatively inferior [vice’s] joys are to those which virtue gives sanction to*” (Cleland 192).

However, even though virtue clearly embodies a rather positive and paramount role in *Fanny Hill*, as distinctly accentuated by the narrator, Cleland seems to personify the idea that virtue is but a construction as the protagonist apparently loses her virginity thrice throughout the novel. Firstly, Charles takes her actual maidenhead and subsequently disappears from her life. Thereafter, once a kept mistress, following her companion’s infidelity, Fanny-heroine takes on a lover, Will. She loses “*a kind of second maidenhead*” (Cleland 83), thus reinforcing the idea that virtue and virginity are images. In Mrs Cole’s brothel, Cleland takes it a step further by having the heroine fabricate a counterfeit virginity, which she promptly sells to a client. Fanny-heroine takes on an active role in this deception, “*put[ting] so much innocence, simplicity, and even childishness, into my answers, that on no better foundation, liking my person as he did, I will not answer for it, he would have been sworn for my modesty*” (Cleland 133). She plays her part well; putting up a firm resistance, even admitting her defiance is stronger for this false virtue than it was for the loss of her authentic maidenhead. The further she delves into the playact, the more she realizes “*deceiving him came so easy*” (Cleland 139). Nonetheless, the narrator rectifies this slightly by stating the heroine enjoyed this “*perception of pleasure [...] little or none*” (Cleland 142).

Thus, the narrator describes the events that transpire from a moralistic and virtuous point of view, in order to incite the reader to create a particular image of the heroine as a character

who experiments with sexuality, while maintaining her virtue. As an innocent young novice, Fanny is initiated to the carnal pleasures, and her sexual evolution becomes apparent. This transformation is intrinsically linked to the act of voyeurism, through which our protagonist is not only inaugurated into the world of bodily pleasures, but also actively learns in order to eventually master the role of woman of pleasure. This also allows both the heroine and the narrator to take on a judgmental moralistic perspective upon the events witnessed, thus accentuating the boundaries of social norms.

### 3. The Role of Voyeurism

Voyeurism is a stereotypical theme in erotic literature and plays a variety of elementary roles within the narrative of *Fanny Hill*. Initially, we face a narrator describing events witnessed by her past self. This is the first instance in which the reader is confronted with voyeurism, and by assuming the role of voyeur, Fanny-narrator provides the reader with a model for relating to the text. In turn, the reader, himself, becomes a secret observer, watching the scenes unfold.

Secondly, voyeurism is an important theme in the narrative itself. One of the heroine's first contacts with the world of bodily pleasure is through an act of voyeurism as she happens upon Mrs Brown's closet moments before the latter enters the room with a client. Thus, Fanny-heroine unwittingly partakes in an act of voyeurism and witnesses for the first time what carnal pleasure truly entails. Although feeling ill, she cannot stop herself from observing her mistress entertain her companion, and cannot prevent her body from reacting to the scene. This event is immediately followed by a second act of voyeurism – this time intentional – during which Fanny-heroine not only watches but also actively gives herself over to Phoebe's lesbian ministrations, which consecutively ignite her desire for true sexual intercourse with a man, as will be discussed further on.

Voyeurism does not encompass solely acts of monitoring, but also involves variants such as listening to erotic conversation. Upon the protagonist's arrival in Mrs Cole's brothel, the women of pleasure entertain her by swapping stories of "*that critical period of [their] personal history, in which [they] first exchanged the maiden state for womanhood*" (Cleland 102). This not only adds to the explicit pornographic content of the novel, but also serves to emphasize the heroine's virtue. When compared to her companions – Emily who lost her virginity to her travel companion she later parted with; Harriet who was for all intents and

purposes raped; and Louisa who supposedly inherited the lure to the forbidden pleasures from her unfaithful mother – Fanny-heroine comes across a virtuous woman who lost her maidenhead for love, which, in the eyes of the narrator, is completely acceptable. This vibrant discussion leads to a ‘party of pleasure’ that is to be the protagonist’s initiation into Mrs Cole’s bawdy-house. Once again, the heroine engages in voyeurism as she observes three couples perform sexually before she is encouraged to take pleasure in her acts with her companion, under their watchful gaze. In other words, she observes each couple engage in straightforward heterosexual intercourse, as though learning the moves to follow, before having her companion lead her to the stage and undress her. Thus, voyeurism is clearly an essential part of Fanny’s education; it is through her eyes and ears that she learns the norms and expectations linked to her role of woman of pleasure.

However, not all these events draw a positive reaction from Fanny. What could possibly be considered to most interesting and conflicting voyeuristic scene is the event featuring male homosexuality. Accordingly, the heroine observes two young men fornicate in an adjoining guestroom, which generates unfavourable observations from both her and the narrator.

#### **4. The Mise-en-scène of Homosexuality. Lesbianism and Sodomy**

As previously illustrated, the more the heroine evolves on a sexual level, the more she participates in acts of deviant sexual pleasure, be it voluntarily or coerced, such as sadomasochism and other peculiar fetishes. Even so, Fanny-narrator steadily champions traditional heterosexual intercourse, accentuating her disapproval of all other sexual acts, which finds its turning point with the male sodomitical scene in the novel. As appalled as Fanny-narrator may seem from the male homosexual acts the heroine witnesses, her reaction to lesbianism is far less severe. As a result, a conclusion can be made that both female and male homosexuality play essential, albeit utterly singular roles throughout the narrative.

##### 4.1. Lesbianism

In *Fanny Hill*, we are confronted with a handful of lesbian scenes, which appear as necessary educational tools in the instructive framework of Fanny’s initiation to the worldly pleasures, in which voyeurism also plays an intrinsic part. These sexual events are thus continually linked with acts of observation, through which the character enhances her instruction or finds pleasure – such as Phoebe who utters, “*you must not, my sweet girl, think*



*to hide all these treasures from me. My sight must be feasted as much as my touch*” (Cleland 20).

As with every sexual scene depicted in *Fanny Hill*, the lesbian scenes transpire in two parts: initially, the narrator embarks in a thorough description of the characters involved, and only then are they forced into action. In the first lesbian scene in the novel, Phoebe, after having witnessed the heroine undress, is described, and subsequently carries out her desires. This particular scene is also introduced in a distinctly innocent way, downplaying the sexual aspect all the while stressing the importance of Fanny’s ignorance and purity, and Phoebe’s instruction. In this event, we also encounter all virtuous aspects previously discussed, such as the narrator emphasizing the heroine’s innocence when Phoebe embraces her, which she attributes *“to nothing but pure kindness [...] it might be the London way to express in that manner”* (Cleland 18). The passiveness of the heroine throughout the scene is further accentuated, *“I lay there all tame and passive as she would wish”* (Cleland 18), and is also used to justify her actions, *“the flattering praises she intermingled with these invasions, contributed also not a little to bribe my passiveness”* (Cleland 18). Her unfamiliarity with sexual encounters likewise legitimizes her actions, *“I was transported, confused, and out of myself [...] My heated and alarmed sense were in a tumult that robbed me of all liberty of thought”* (Cleland 19). Thus Fanny-narrator emphasizes how her senses overwhelm the heroine until she is unable to react, *“I saw myself stretched naked, my shift being turned up to my neck, whilst I had no power or sense to oppose it”* (Cleland 20). Furthermore, the narrator accentuates the immorality of the act taking place, *“every part of me was open and exposed to the licentious courses of her hands”* (Cleland 18), describing Fanny’s intention of resisting, *“had she not proceeded by insensible gradations that inflamed me beyond the power of modesty to oppose its resistance to their progress, I should have jumped out of bed ad cried for help adjacent such strange assaults”* (Cleland 19). Lastly, the censorial role of Fanny-narrator is further highlighted by her unwillingness to describe Phoebe’s apparent climax, *“what pleasure she had found I will not say”* (Cleland 20). Thus the narrator incorporates all the narrative elements used to justify the heroine’s action in other sexual scenes into her description of the lesbian events in order to rationalize them.

On the other hand, Fanny-heroine’s condensed second and only other detailed encounter with lesbianism occurs in combination with voyeuristic incidents as well as virtuous characteristics. Through *“the peeping hole”* (Cleland 39), Phoebe and the protagonist observe a fellow woman of pleasure entertaining a client, which arouses them both. Once again, the

narrator emphasizes the heroine's passiveness, “[she] guided me as near the door as possible, all passive and obedient to her least signals” (Cleland 39). Following this scene, she further mentions that neither Phoebe's lesbian manipulations nor the heroine's autoeroticism can quench the flames of Fanny's aroused sexuality as she “pined for more solid food, and promised tacitly to myself that I would not be put off much longer with this foolery of woman to woman, if Mrs Brown did not soon provide me with the essential specific” (Cleland, 41), thus accentuating the mere substitutive role lesbian sex holds in contrast to heterosexual intercourse.

Although at times Phoebe's lesbianism appears harmless and somewhat satisfying, more often than not the opposite takes place. Even though the heroine does not quite fully comprehend the acts that transpired, Fanny-narrator does deduce that lesbian sex can be just as detrimental to virtue as heterosexual intercourse. However, Fanny-heroine's initiation to erotic pleasure is a lesbian act, and what is to be her first real heterosexual adventure with a male customer results in attempted rape and ultimately spoils the protagonist's sexual appetite. It is voyeuristic experiences and Phoebe's gentle instruction that rekindle Fanny-heroine's sexual desire. Ergo, although Fanny-narrator denounces the lesbian acts the heroine participates in, Cleland seems to hold them to a higher regard because he gives them such a significant function in the narrative, and has the initial heterosexual encounter seem scandalous in comparison. Moreover, this point of view and narrative ploy seems to reappear when describing the sodomitical scene in *Fanny Hill*.

#### 4.2. Sodomy

Sodomy appears in two distinctive forms in *Fanny Hill*, namely heterosexual pseudo-sodomy and homosexual male sodomy. Although the attitude in regards to both types is more or less identical – in the sense that they are both perceived as exceedingly unacceptable and, in some cases, criminal offences – both the narrator and the author deal with each case in a particular way.

The encounters with pseudo-heterosexual sodomy throughout the narrative are rather benign and thus easily missed. However, this does not prevent the narrator from commenting unfavourably upon the deviant behaviour she describes. The first scene involving attempted sodomy is thus presented as the heroine being “overtaken by a young sailor” (Cleland, 145) upon whom she looked “with a beginning of anger and indignation” (Cleland 145). As he

bends her down across the table, Fanny-narrator mentions she “[was] feeling pretty sensibly that it was not going by the right door, and knocking desperately at the wrong one” (Cleland 146). The heroine speaks up, only to receive his dry reply, “my dear, any port in a storm” (Cleland 146). However, the sailor seems to uphold her wishes and “directly rectif[ies] his course, and lowering his point, he fixed it right” (Cleland 146). Thus pleased with the encounter, the protagonist heads home. The second pseudo-sodomitical scene develops in much the same manner as the first, although both the heroine and the narrator are only second-hand witnesses to it. Louisa and Emily, fellow women of pleasure, attend a drag ball dressed respectively as a shepherdess and shepherd. Upon their arrival, Emily is accosted by a handsome man who “took her really for what she appeared to be, a smock-faced boy; and she, forgetting her dress, and of course ranging quite wide of his ideas, took all those addresses to be paid to herself as a woman, which she precisely owed to his not thinking her one” (Cleland 159). He brings her to his apartment without realizing the deception in play. It is only upon divesting her of her garments that he discovers her sex and mournfully exclaims his disappointment. After recovering from his shock, still favourable to the illusion of Emily in her masculine garments, he impels her to lean down, baring her posterior to him. Wanting to complete “his first illusion”, the gentleman is “fairly set on a misdirection, as to give the girl no small alarms for fear of losing a maidenhead she had not dreamt of” (Cleland 160). Once again, man abides his female companion’s wishes and he “turn[ed] his steed’s head, he drove him at length in the right road” (Cleland 160). The scene is prolonged when Emily recounts her tale to the governess the next morning, with visible remains of fear and confusion, following which the reader is confronted with the narrator’s own contemptuous personal thoughts on both homosexuality and the act of sodomy, she “could not conceive how it was possible for mankind to run into a taste, not only universally odious, but absurd, and impossible to gratify; since, according to the notions and experience I had of things, it was not in nature to force such immense disproportions” (Cleland 161).

Thus both pseudo-sodomitical encounters end in a ‘happy’ note, during which the women are able to redirect their men to the ‘right road,’ where they manage to find their ‘journey’s end.’ Both Fanny-narrator and the author seem to abhor the notion of heterosexual sodomy, clearly specifying their preference for straightforward intercourse instead of using the ‘wrong road.’

The male sodomitical scene is introduced by the narrator as “so disagreeable a subject” (Cleland 161) that she will describe once in her letter as to “not return again to [it]” (Cleland

161). She starts her narration in scorn and with regrets. Furthermore, Fanny-narrator as moral instructress also faces a rather prominent dilemma. She must repress immorality by proliferating its portrayal, thus speaking of offensive behaviour in terms that shall not give offence to the reader, which will allow her to keep her modesty intact. However, this is the case for most of the acts described within the novel.

Upon Fanny's arrival at the inn, she spots a single horse-chaise pull up, out of which dash two young gentlemen that take their lodgings in a neighbouring room to Fanny's. The heroine explains it is out of curiosity, not out of suspicion of any kind that she chooses to examine their behaviour. The scene is thus introduced as just another sexual encounter in a public house; similar to those Fanny has herself partaken in. Furthermore, the heroine's desire to witness this act has but an educational value in moving forward in her sexual odyssey, which once again reiterates Fanny's novice statute. Once more relying on "*a peep-hole*" (Cleland 162), the heroine thus sees what she believes is two young men "*romping and pulling one another about, entirely, to my imagination, in frolic and innocent play*" (Cleland 162), which accentuates her own naivety. Fanny then launches in a detailed physical description of both participants, followed by a specific depiction of the sexual acts that occur. The description of the scene thus develops similarly to those of other sexual encounters. When she spots them starting to embrace, Fanny foolishly concludes that the younger of the two participants is a girl in disguise, but still refers to their proceedings, that appear to be sodomitical, as a "*project of preposterous pleasure*" (Cleland 162). Upon realizing both actors are male, she narrates their actions; stressing how she finds it odd both participants are not repulsed by it and continue without opposition. Fanny remains in disbelief at what she witnesses, and remarks that "*ignorance of a vice is by no means a guard against it*" (Cleland 163), in other words, that her oblivion of such sin does not protect her from witnessing it first-hand. She presses on to explain in great detail the coupling of the two young men, in a similar way that she has detailed her own pairings and other encounters she has witnessed throughout her stay in London.

However, in contrast to other sexual scenes she describes, the narrator uses no aggressive terminology when enumerating what transpires. Instead, she relies on phrases such as "*amorous intention*" (Cleland 162) and "*long-breathed kiss*" (Cleland 163), as well as describing their fornication as follows, "*[the sexual attentions] all received by the boy without opposition than certain wayward coynesses, ten times more alluring than repulsive*"

(Cleland 163). Later on, she also phrases their escape as a “*safe retreat*” (Cleland 164), almost as though relieved they eluded prosecution.

Notwithstanding, the narrator does reiterate that it is a “*criminal scene they acted*” (Cleland 164) and stresses that she observed the entirety of it merely to “*gather more facts and certainty against them in my design to do their deserts instant justice*” (Cleland 164). Filled with rage and indignation, the heroine trips and falls senseless to the ground, which prompts the leave of the two gentlemen and gives them the necessary time to make a safe retreat. As she later tells Mrs Cole of this adventure, her governess observes that “*these miscreants*” (Cleland 164) will eventually be punished and that her fall is a blessing in disguise because the whole affair would have brought Fanny nothing but trouble, “*as to the thing itself, the less said of it was the better*” (Cleland 164). Furthermore, what Mrs Cole finds most shocking of the vice that is homosexuality is that these men willingly render themselves worthless and despicable, “*stript of all the manly virtues of their own sex, and filled with only the worst vices an follies of ours*” (Cleland 164), which makes them hypocrites, “*loathing and condemning women, and at the same time apeing al their manners, airs, lisps, scuttle, and in general, all their little modes of affectation, which become them at least better, than they do these unsexed, male misses*” (Cleland 164-65). The reader once more faces an unfavourable attitude toward homosexuality, after hearing a rather sympathetic approach from the narrator. At this point in time, the narrator pursues this negative line of thought and depicts this homosexual vice as filthy and repulsive, a though that she highlights by mentioning she “*wash[es] her hands of [the homosexual]*” (Cleland 165) when concluding her story and broaching the next subject. Following this scene and the conversation with Mrs Cole, the subject of sodomy seems to completely disappear from the narrative and the marriage plot takes over, which has Fanny-narrator renounce all illicit indulgences of the flesh.

Nevertheless, it is odd that Fanny-narrator, who clearly abhors homosexuality, even characterizing it as criminal, goes into this much detail in her narration. It is as though she feels obliged to explain every detail in order to pass on her sheer horror at witnessing such a vile act onto the recipient of her letter. Furthermore, the narrator uses no clear-cut negative discourse when describing the homosexual act itself; she only precedes and follows the event with unfavourable terminology, classifying it as despicable and criminal. This adds to the idea that her morality is rather hypocritical, as the narrator in her censorial role rails against the very crimes she presents to the reader. It is also worthwhile to notice that although the

narrator describes Fanny as “*burning with indignation*” (Cleland 164), the heroine still waits patiently for the men to “*re-adjust themselves; and prepare to go out*” (Cleland 164) before she wills herself to “*raise the house upon them*” (Cleland 164). This, combined with Cleland’s plot twist of having the protagonist trip and fall senseless, thus giving the ‘criminals’ time to escape, seems to project the idea that the author is promoting sodomy.

## Chapter 4. Literature Analysis. Virtue and Homosexuality in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir, ou Les Instituteurs immoraux*

*La Philosophie dans le boudoir, ou Les Instituteurs immoraux* is one of the Marquis de Sade's most renowned works.<sup>4</sup> It encompasses the fundamental principles of his philosophy of pleasure, which involves rationalizing sodomy and disavowing virtue in a rather intriguing way. Similarly to Cleland, de Sade is influenced by his own French eighteenth-century context that, combined with the themes of voyeurism gender ambiguity and the distinction between vice and virtue, illustrates his vindication of sodomy and lesbianism. Sade's personal approach and insight to homosexuality will be thoroughly discussed in the following chapter, utilizing the themes of virtue and voyeurism. However, to fully grasp his libertine reasoning, an abbreviated insight into the genre and language used throughout the novel is prescribed.

### 1. Genre and Discourse

It has proven rather difficult to classify *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* as pertaining to one particular genre seeing as the novel encompasses various characteristics related to different genres, including but not limited to the play and the philosophical dialogue. This theatrical novel is cut up into seven dialogues between a handful of characters, reminiscent of the acts in a play, and the progression in the narrative further stresses this notion: the first two acts reflect the exposition, the third and fourth acts display the rising action – that includes the loss of the sodomitical virginity – leading to the climax in the fifth act – i.e. loss of virginity – which precedes the falling action in the sixth act and the dénouement in the seventh (Biet and Kuntz, “Théâtre occidental”). Furthermore, Sade also respects the three Aristotelian unities of classical theatre: the unity of place, the narrative must exist in one single physical space – i.e. the boudoir –; the unity of time, the action in a play should occur over a period of no more than 24 hours; and the unity of action, a play should concentrate on one main dramatic interest with various subplots – i.e. Eugénie's initiation (Marmier, “Unités règle des trois”). Lastly, the theatrical genre is obvious through the alternation between physical episodes and calm moments of discussion that, before becoming monotonous, are replaced by erotic pornographic scenes, up until Mme de Mistival's arrival, which serves as a dramatic reversal that aids in the resolution of the novel.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 4 for a full summary of *La Philosophie dans le boudoir, ou Les Instituteurs immoraux*.

The second major genre this novel reflects is that of the philosophical dialogue. According to Armengaud and Misrahi, this is highlighted by an encounter of various points of view, mixed with evolving behaviour and utterances, and reflected by an expansion of knowledge and a growth in understanding new concepts (“Dialogue”). The dialogue is thus a space where one encounters otherness and contradiction, which will inevitably lead to a resolution. It is also an ideal manner to humanise philosophical discourses that could otherwise be considered abstract and complicated by, for instance, relegating particular positions of the argument to distinctive characters. What is even more worthwhile is that the characters in the novel can ask the questions the readers may be thinking, leading to detailed explanations mixed with playfulness and humour. All these elements are rather impossible to achieve in a philosophical sermon, much like the one found in the fifth dialogue entitled “*Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains*” (Armengaud and Misrahi, “Dialogue”).

The philosophical dialogue emphasizes the instructive framework of Sade’s novel because it allows the author to focus on the intellectual, psychological and spiritual evolution of his character(s) through debate and discussion surrounding the essential topic of society’s mores and beliefs. This notion of education is further reflected throughout the narrative by the language used, as seen with, for instance, the subtitle of the novel, “Les Instituteurs immoraux”. Dolmancé and Mme de Saint-Ange often refer to themselves as “instituteur”, “savante” and “maître”, while the Chevalier and Augustin are defined as “modèle” or “mannequin” to be used in class to demonstrate the body parts and sexual actions described. Eugénie is depicted as an “élève” and “écolière” by her professors while she refers to herself as “novice” and “innocente,” highlighting more her lack of knowledge than her student capacity. The boudoir, where the classes take place, is represented as the “lycée où se ferait le cours” and Eugénie’s journey into sexual vice is described as “dissertations théoriques” or “les premières leçons de libertinage”. Further vocabulary including “instruire”, “former”, and “initier” is used to define Mme de Saint-Ange and Dolmancé’s actions pertaining to Eugénie during the entire course of the novel.

Alongside this straightforward instructive terminology, the novel includes a rather technical and accurate jargon used to describe the bodily parts relevant to sexual intercourse. The penis is “vit” or “membre”; the testicles are “boules” or “couilles”; the sperm is “sperme” or “gouttes de foutre”; the breasts are referred to as “tétons”, “globes de chair”, “seins” or “mamelles”; the vagina is “con” or “vagin”; and the anus “trou du cul” or “orifice.”



Similarly to the metaphorization popular in England at the time, the European continent made use of archaic Greek mythology in sexual description, which is prominent in Sade's work. Both Venus and Mars have a compelling presence in the novel. Venus is used to portray a woman's breasts as "*les deux monts de Vénus*" (Sade 55) and the man's penis as the "*sceptre de Vénus*" (Sade 56), but also in diffusing the myth of the sperm perceived as the precious balm of life (Boucé 208), as seen with "*cette précieuse liqueur, méchamment dérobée à sa destination d'usage*" (Sade 97). The bodily pleasures in which Eugénie is to be initiated are also referred to as "*les plus secrets mystères de Vénus*" (Sade 49). This terminology struggles against the aggressive language related to the god Mars, such as Dolmancé who "*veut qu'on le déchire*" (Sade 43), the Chevalier who will take Eugénie's virginity by any means necessary, "*dût-elle en être pourfendue, déchirée, il faut, double-dieu, qu'elle y passe!*" (Sade 181) and Eugénie, who is at times referred to as "*la victime*" (Sade 59).

In an entirely similar way to the terminology found in Cleland's novel, this latter rhetoric of life and hostility is interesting when compared to the themes of virtue and homosexuality because, as previously mentioned, they encompass the notion of procreation – in unambiguous conflict with sodomy – and a rather straightforward but aggressive description of sexual intercourse – which wholly contradicts the very idea of virtue. This alone reveals Sade's inclination toward discussing precarious subject matter and additionally, by relying on the genre of the philosophical dialogue, he discloses the persuasive form his work will take on, in which he will demonstrate and justify his predisposition for sodomy and an 'unethical' perception of sexual encounters. However, this particular genre also indicates the presence of conflicting opinions surrounding these themes, which will be debated thoroughly throughout the narrative in order to reach a consensus of sorts. Furthermore the philosophical dialogue further accentuates the notion of education, both within the narrative – i.e. involving the characters – and outside of it – i.e. the reader.

## 2. The Theme of "Virtue"

From the very first pages of *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, the idea of 'virtue' is made abundantly clear, in the sense that one must relegate it to the sides in lieu of natural sexual pleasure. The importance of this particular theme is further emphasized by Sade's immediate address to his reader – "*Aux libertins*" – in which he instructs his readers to follow the

principals broached in the narrative that foster the desires the moralists in society have depicted as vice because these yearnings are the only factors that can bring an individual happiness (Sade 37). The beneficiary of this introduction is two-fold: Sade simultaneously addresses those who are already convinced by the libertine doctrine and have been actively pursuing it; and those whom he would like to educate, much in a similar way his characters teach the young Eugénie. It is through this second mind-set that Sade urges his readers to emulate his characters: he advocates lewd women to let the voluptuous Saint-Ange be their model and to despise, by her example, all that contradicts the divine laws of pleasure; he implores young maidens to emulate Eugénie and renounce the ridiculous doctrine of virtue instilled in them by their parents; and he advises male readers to follow Dolmancé's example of selfishness and consideration for nothing but his own enjoyment (Sade 37-38) – which we will soon learn has much to do with sodomy.

With this preface from the author, the moral instructive is moved from the text to the paratext – and therefore also made explicit. The subtitles – *“Les Instituteurs immoraux”* and *“Dialogues destinés à l'éducation des jeunes Demoiselles”* (Sade 39) – add to the educational structure of the novel, as well as reiterate the counter-virtuous notions encompassed within by highlighting the immoral and unethical approach taken by the professors. The instructive framework is further highlighted in the first three dialogues when the characters disclose the act that is about to take place, i.e. Eugénie's initiation. The protagonist's education takes the shape of a binary course – *“je veux joindre un peu de pratique à la théorie”* (Sade 45) – in order to simultaneously explain and physically demonstrate the topic of discussion, as well as justify the acts taking place.

Contrary to *Fanny Hill*, where the reader faces an omniscient narrator of sorts who comments upon the events and who occasionally succumbs to pseudo-internal monologues; in Sade's play, the reader interprets the events unambiguously as he reads what each character has to say. However, certain narrative phrases do somewhat steer the reader towards a particular perspective, such as the section following Sade's lecture to the reader and preceding the very first dialogue; *“La scène est dans un boudoir délicieux.”* (Sade 51). This alone manipulates the reader in a way by determining the mind-set in which he must place himself to read the story. He is persuaded to leave his notions of virtue and modesty behind in order to embrace the idea of delicious pleasure.

Following his letter to the reader in which the author gives him a glimpse of the characters involved in the narration, Sade immediately has Mme de Saint-Ange and the Chevalier

provide us with a description of every individual who is to be involved in the plot sequence, and their particular role in Eugénie's initiation. Thus, the singular point of view Sade puts forth in his preface is expanded. Mme de Saint-Ange is portrayed as a devout libertine, open for any and all sexual experiences, who will take on the leading role in the novice's initiation. Dolmancé is initially described through his lifestyle choice, as a sodomite with equal penchants for active and passive sexual roles and who has never known straightforward heterosexual pleasure. He is to fill Eugénie's head with the fundamental principals of libertinism, "*Préviens Dolmancé [...] pour que le venin de ses immoralités [...] parvienne à déraciner dans peu d'instantes toutes les semences de vertu qui pourraient germer [dans ce jeune cœur] sans nous*" (Sade 46) and inspire the young girl's desire by introducing her to "*la moisson [...] des roses de Sodome*" (Sade 45) – i.e. sodomy. He is the optimal candidate to educate Eugénie because he incarnates all the notions Mme de Saint-Ange wishes to instil in her pupil, "*l'irréligion, l'impiété, l'inhumanité, le libertinage*" (Sade 46). Thus Dolmancé will obviously take over the brunt of Eugénie's teachings. The Chevalier's preference for women is repeatedly accentuated, although he is amenable to experiment with more peculiar tastes, such as sodomy. He will initiate the novice to "*la moisson des myrtes de Cythère*" (Sade 45) – i.e. heterosexual intercourse. Finally, Eugénie is presented to the reader as a young innocent girl Mme de Saint-Ange met in a convent and who is plainly open for sexual experimentation. She is referred to as "*une aimable innocente que j'attire dans nos filets*" (Sade 45).

Every pertinent character is introduced in such a way that they embody a particular image within the mind of the reader, who also grasps the clear-cut notions of what Eugénie's initiation will entail, which both the Chevalier and Mme de Saint-Ange describe as "*la corrompre, [...] étouffer dans ce jeune cœur toutes les semences de vertu et de religion qu'y placèrent ses institutrices*" (Sade 46) and "*la pervertir, pour dégrader, pour culbuter dans elle tous les faux principes de morale dont on aurait pu déjà l'étourdir*" (Sade 46). Thus, Sade presents a completely different concept than Cleland, accentuating the professors' desire to rid the initiate of any trace of virtue and modesty by introducing her to all sorts of so-called deviant behaviours, which includes sodomy. Sade outright scorns the very idea of virtue but does place one of his main characters, the innocent student, in a convent, which stands in sharp contrast to Cleland's seemingly virtuous narrator who relives her downfall as an apprentice-prostitute. The two paths contradict each other quite symmetrically: where Cleland's narrator attempts to describe a life of vice in a way to make it appear virtuous, Sade

operates with a character originating from a place that is the epitome of virtue and corrupts her, even suggesting she be sent back to taint her fellow initiates in the convent. A further distinction between the novices in both novels is their gullibility and naivety, that is to say Fanny may be innocent and naïve at the start of her journey, but she soon masters her role as woman of pleasure. Eugénie, on the other hand, is continuously perceived as ignorant and childlike.

Although Eugénie willingly places herself under Mme de Saint-Ange's instruction, it seems she is under the impression her education would only involve one professor. When, in the third dialogue, both women head for the boudoir only to run into Dolmancé, Eugénie is quick to voice her feelings of betrayal, "*EUGÉNIE, très surprise de voir dans ce cabinet un homme qu'elle n'attendait pas : Oh ! Dieu ! ma chère amie, c'est une trahison !*" (Sade 51). She feels duped, disgraced and confused, and defends her honour, balking from Dolmancé's crude suggestions in the name of decency – "*EUGÉNIE, se défendant : Finissez donc, monsieur !... En vérité, vous me ménagez bien peu*" (Sade 52). However, she is quick to change her stripes as Mme de Saint-Ange rapidly persuades her to follow her example, thus enabling Eugénie to throw herself at Dolmancé, her humility forgotten – "*Mme DE SAINT-ANGE : [...] Imité-moi. – EUGÉNIE : Oh ! je le veux bien ; de qui prendrais-je de meilleurs exemples*" (Sade 52). The same pattern occurs twice more; upon the Chevalier's and Augustin's subsequent arrivals. And much in the same manner as the first scene, Eugénie is quick to forget her shame, and eager to follow her professors' instructions. Obviously nothing will prevent her from accomplishing her willing desire of sexual education, "*je suis venue ici pour m'instruire et je ne m'en irai pas que je ne sois savante*" (Sade 50).

Thus Eugénie's glaring desire for sexual intercourse facilitates Mme de Saint-Ange's persuasive manoeuvres to entice her initiate to do her bidding. Even when Eugénie would prefer to lose her vaginal maidenhead to Dolmancé, Mme de Saint-Ange is quick to sway the young girl's opinion toward the Chevalier. She acquiesces, "*j'en mourrai, cela est inévitable... Mais le désir ardent que j'ai d'être foutue me fait tout hasarder sans rien craindre*" (Sade 181). Thus, Eugénie's carnal desires triumph over her virtue and even, at times, her own free will. Her naivety extends considerably to the point that she admits she would rather be sodomized than participate in straightforward heterosexual intercourse, thus disregarding the most common pleasurable act that is still unknown to her – i.e. she has yet to lose her maidenhead – for one she used to fear but has come to appreciate. Mme de Saint-

Ange exclaims her surprise, *“la naïve et délicieuse fille ! Elle vous demande précisément ce qu’on a tant de peine à obtenir des autres !”* (Sade 156).

Virtue also appears as a wildly discussed theme within the narrative, which allows it to play an essential role within Eugénie’s initiation. It emerges on various occasions, during the reflective discourses that alternate with the physical classes and is, more often than not, presented as a notion that should be refuted. After being described by Mme de Saint-Ange as a belief that should be corrupted, virtue is discussed following her alternative use of the word *“putain”* (Sade 66). Eugénie is quickly persuaded by her mentor’s assertions, however she also questions whether this assessment – as well as their various sexual escapades – contradicts the very essence of virtue, *“la vertu ne s’oppose-t-elle pas à une telle inconduite et ne l’offensons-nous pas en nous comportant comme nous le faisons ?”* (Sade 66-67). Dolmancé launches his first lecture on virtue in which he stresses the paramount need for his pupil to forgo all virtues. Virtue is a disease that goes against all pleasure, making it – and not one’s desires – unnatural. It is best to listen to one’s passions, which are the only *“organe de la nature”* (Sade 67), than to one’s virtue which is but the result of *“la sottise et du préjugé”* (Sade 67). To emphasize his point, Dolmancé mentions that *“une seule goutte de foutre éjaculée de ce membre, Eugénie, m’est plus précieuse que les actes les plus sublimes d’une vertu que je méprise”* (Sade 67). We must keep in mind that the character voicing these thoughts, Dolmancé, is first and foremost a sodomite. Sodomy was, in the eighteenth-century, one of the most atrocious crimes and therefore utterly immoral. Thus, it behoves Dolmancé to discredit virtue, characterizing it as foolishness, prejudice and unnatural, in order to legitimize his sexual preferences.

This tirade naturally roles into a consecutive one on atheism and religion during which Dolmancé renounces all beliefs in God, and in which he even reverses the very definition of religion in order to prove that Nature is man’s creator and she should therefore be respected and celebrated, *“n’appellez-vous pas religion le pacte qui lie l’homme à son Créateur, et qui l’engage à lui témoigner, par un culte, la reconnaissance qu’il a de l’existence reçue de ce sublime auteur ? [...] s’il est démontré que l’homme ne doit son existence qu’aux plans irrésistibles de la nature, [...] il n’est qu’une production nécessitée par l’existence du globe, et qui ne doit la sienne à qui que ce soit”* (Sade 68). Thus man owes his existence to Nature, and must worship her by doing her bidding, i.e. giving into pleasures. This lecture prompts Eugénie to give in to her professor’s ideals and renounce the very existence of God but she determinedly holds on to the notion of virtues. She wonders whether there might still be

virtues that contribute to one's happiness. Thus, even though the young initiate is quickly cajoled to fall in line with her professors' line of thought, she manages to hold on to some of her ideals. However, once an adequate response received to her questions, Eugénie tends to substitute her own beliefs with those of her mentors. For instance, following these thoughts, Dolmancé enumerates the so-called decent virtues and concludes that "*les vertus ne font que des ingrats*" (Sade 76) and that, more importantly, 'vice' and 'virtue' do not form part of a universal terminology – this outcome, clearly accentuates how Dolmancé's underlying sodomitical desires steer his perception on vice and virtue. Accordingly just as no action is truly criminal, none is truly virtuous because all is depicted according to a society's respective mores. These lectures inspire in Eugénie the desire to become a legitimate libertine, demonstrating her willingness to relinquish her ideology.

Dolmancé also reiterates his opinion on naivety and modesty every time Eugénie succumbs to these virtues – i.e. with the appearance of another male character. He reminds his pupil that modesty has never been a virtue, a notion he firmly defends; "*si la nature eût voulu que nous cachassions quelques parties de nos corps, elle eût pris ce soin elle-même ; mais elle nous a créés nus ; donc elle veut que nous allions nus, et tout procédé contraire outrage absolument ses lois*" (Sade 139), thus reiterating the libertine belief that Nature created man and that she created him with pleasure in mind. In this manner he legitimizes libertine passions, "*toutes nos actions, et surtout celles du libertinage, nous étant inspirées par la nature, il n'en est aucune, de quelque espèce que vous puissiez la supposer, dont nous devons concevoir la honte*" (Sade 147-48).

On the subject of virtue, the reader is only confronted with Dolmancé's opinion, which Eugénie at times questions, before ultimately accepting it as her own. However, it is clear from the narrative that all three professors – Dolmancé, Mme de Saint-Ange and the Chevalier – hold the same perspective, at least when it comes to virtue. These beliefs are subsequently passed on to their pupil who wills herself to become a well-rounded libertine.

Thus, Eugénie is persuaded to renounce all virtues and forsake the very idea of a God, which she does, "*je méprise toutes ces rêveries dégoûtantes, et ce Dieu même, auquel je tenais encore par faiblesse ou par ignorance, n'est plus pour moi qu'un objet d'horreur*" (Sade 75); to accept that all vices are naturally tolerated and that to abstain from them is a crime, "*il me paraît que, d'après tout ce que vous me dites, Dolmancé, rien n'est aussi indifférent sur la terre que d'y commettre le bien ou le mal ; nos goûts, notre tempérament doivent seuls être respectés*" (Sade 79). It is through both the methods of theory and practice

that the initiate is pushed to abandon her ethical beliefs, through the philosophical lectures – “*EUGÉNIE*, d’abord à Dolmancé : *Je ne puis dire à quel point vous me persuadez*” (Sade 124) – but also through turning theory into practice. For instance, following a lengthy lesson on the scarcity of universal crimes, Eugénie summarizes her newly acquired values, which subsequently take on a practical mantle as she is promptly sodomized, thus proving that crimes are non-existent and desires meant to be followed. Following the pattern of the novel, the physical scene leads to another theoretical lesson in order to legitimize the actions transpired, “*il est nécessaire de continuer maintenant nos dissertations sur les différents caprices des hommes dans le libertinage [...] nous venons d’initier notre élève dans quelques mystères de la pratique, ne négligeons pas la théorie*” (Sade 119-20). Dolmancé embarks on a lesson on the different sexual whims of libertine men, such as sodomy, sacrilegious fantasies and cruel taste, after which he thoroughly encourages Eugénie to corrupt the other girls in her convent – “*amusez-vous-en et corrompez-les, soit par des exemples, soit par de conseils, soit par tout ce que vous pouvez croire, en un mot, de plus capable de les pervertir*” (Sade 126) – and to give herself freely to any man that might desire her – “*soyez de même extrêmement libre avec les hommes ; affichez avec eux l’irréligion et l’impudence : loin de vous effrayez des libertés qu’ils prendront, accordez-leur tout ce qui peut les amuser sans vous compromettre*” (Sade 126) – which would prove her education a success.

Eugénie’s libertine initiation comes to a close in a favourable manner, following a heated discussion on matters of the heart in conflict with those of reason. Dolmancé condenses her teachings in a single phrase, “*n’écoutez jamais votre cœur, mon enfant ; c’est le guide le plus faux que nous ayons reçu de la nature*” (Sade 253), which provokes the Chevalier to retaliate. He might agree with his companion’s opinion regarding religion but scuffs at his desire to abandon all virtues sensibility has taught them because, “*ce ne sera jamais qu’en les pratiquant que nous goûterons les jouissance de l’âme les plus douces et les plus délicieuses*” (Sade 255). According to the Chevalier, one can be libertine and capable of debauches of the spirit, as well as listen to one’s heart, which remains pure. Dolmancé retorts that the heart deceives man and that this causes weakness of the soul, stating, “*si les vices des uns rendent dans les autres ces vertus dangereuses, n’est-ce donc pas un service à rendre à la jeunesse que de les étouffer de bonne heure en elle ?*” (Sade 256). Instead of agreeing with the Chevalier on the dangers of vice and the need of some form of virtue, Dolmancé believes that because vices can sometimes render certain virtues dangerous, all virtues must be extinguished. Both Eugénie and Mme de Saint-Ange side with Dolmancé, commenting that

the Chevalier's words have brushed upon their soul but Dolmancé statements have seduced it; *“adressez-vous plutôt aux passions qu'aux vertus quand vous voudrez persuader une femme [...] ne nous donne ici que ton foutre ; nous te faisons grâce de ta morale ; elle est trop douce pour des roués de notre espèce”* (Sade 257-58).

Eugénie concludes that no matter what the Chevalier tries, he will not convince her otherwise because, *“votre ouvrage est fini ; ce que les sots appellent la corruption est maintenant assez établi dans moi pour ne laisser même aucun espoir de retour, et vos principes sont trop bien étayés dans mon cœur pour que les sophismes du chevalier parviennent jamais à les détruire”* (Sade 257). This proves Eugénie has absorbed her libertine professors' teachings and relented all her previous ethical and moral values. She believes in vice over virtue, in passion and desire over crime; ideas she is willing to demonstrate in the last dialogue of the novel, when Eugénie actively dominates and corrupts her own mother, *“me voilà donc à la fois incestueuse, adultère, sodomite, et tout cela pour une fille qui n'est dépucelée que aujourd'hui”* (Sade 278). Her professors applaud her enthusiasm and initiative, all but the Chevalier who believes they are taking it too far; *“ce que vous nous faite faire est horrible ; c'est outrager à la fois la nature, le ciel et plus saintes lois de l'humanité”* (Sade 279). The Chevalier seems to play devil's advocate by representing the morals and values of society, but his meagre voice is instantly overruled in lieu of debauchery and pleasure.

The novice thus becomes a master in the arts of pleasure and desire, renouncing all morals and virtues society has taught her. She opens herself not only to physical sexual experimentation but also to philosophical discourse in order to understand how certain sexual behaviours come to be and why they should not be criminalized, because *“l'homme [n]est [pas] le maître de ses goûts”* (Sade 42). Hence her libertine education was two-fold – i.e. theoretical and practical – and involved numerous sequences of observation and imitation.

### 3. The Role Of Voyeurism

From the third dialogue onwards, once Eugénie's education begun, the heroine regularly watches the action unfold between her companions before imitating them and taking on an active role in the sexual scenes. From Eugénie's very first sexual encounter, she is urged to emulate her professors' conduct, *“Mme DE SAINT-ANGE : [...] Imite-moi. – EUGÉNIE : Oh ! je le veux bien ; de qui prendrais-je de meilleurs exemples”* (Sade 52), which she



repeatedly does and after which she generally questions them on her performance, “*Est-ce ainsi, mon cher maître?... fais-je bien?*” (Sade 142).

Part of her teachings develop during physical classes Eugénie observes, which she is subsequently not only encouraged to mimic, “*prends son vit dans ta bouche, et suce-le quelques instants*” (Sade 112), but also willingly wishes to emulate, “*Oh! ma chère amie, laisse-moi branler ce beau membre!*” (Sade 57). Other lessons unfold from philosophical teachings, which at times could be perceived as lewd because of their pornographic content, and thus also pertain to the category of voyeurism. Following a lecture of the benefits and acceptability of sodomy, Eugénie is pressed to partake in a sodomitical scene in order to fully grasp the nature of the act, “*Allons, Eugénie, placez-vous; exécutons le tableau que j’ai trace, et plongeons-nous tous trois dans la plus voluptueuse ivresse*” (Sade 113).

There is only one scene Eugénie is not permitted to observe to further her education. In the fifth dialogue, Dolmancé takes Augustin to another room because “*certaines choses [...] demandent absolument des voiles*” (Sade 263) and “*en vérité, cela ne peut pas se dire*” (Sade 264). Mme de Saint-Ange and Eugénie do not remain in the dark long as the Chevalier informs them on the actions that will transpire behind closed doors, to which Eugénie appears horrified and disgusted. Thus, she is not allowed to witness this obscene sodomitical scene first-hand but hears of it from a second-hand source, which in some measure also prolongs her sexual initiation. This particular scene will be analysed more extensively in the adjoining pages.

Accordingly, Eugénie witnesses and participates in numerous lewd acts; including incest, masturbation, cunnilingus, rape and sodomy. However, not all are openly and instantly embraced as justifiable sexual acts, such as sodomy which requires intensive examination and consideration.

#### **4. The Mise-en-scène of Homosexuality. Lesbianism and Sodomy**

Throughout her initiation, Eugénie comes into contact with a large variety of sexual behaviour, most of which she welcomes, while others demand further questioning and philosophical reflection before eventually being accepted, thus forming her into a full-fledged libertine. While sodomy is rather prominent throughout the heroine’s education; lesbianism seems to wither away and disappear behind the collection of bodily encounters and both behaviours evoke intrinsically different responses from the heroine.

#### 4.1. Lesbianism

Purely lesbian scenes are not only harder to discern because most, if not all, sexual action takes place in multiplayer orgies, but they are also nearly non-existent in the novel. Excluding the very beginning of the third dialogue, the possible lesbian behaviour blends in with the sodomitical background.

Following a detailed exposition of both the male and female anatomies, Dolmancé and Mme de Saint-Ange explain the inner working of masturbation and immediately turn theory into practice in order to legitimize their actions and convince their student of their beliefs. Eugénie must learn to abandon all her senses to pleasure, “*[que le plaisir] soit le seul dieu de votre existence ; c’est à lui qu’une jeune fille doit tout sacrifier, et rien à ses yeux doit être aussi sacré que le plaisir*” (62). This milder lesbian scene serves as introduction to the practices of pleasure, thus initiating Eugénie to supposed obscene and unlawful behaviours in order to stimulate the abandonment of her preconceived notions for libertine values. By initiating her through a milder form of sexual deviancy, her mentors let Eugénie come into contact with the notion of natural pleasure over virtue, a particular lesson she will place onto other sexual practices, such as sodomitical intercourse.

The second pseudo-lesbian scene occurs in the very last dialogue, during which Eugénie actively abuses her mother. Although this scene involves sodomy, it takes place between mother and daughter, and therefore implies a variety of other characteristics such as lesbian behaviour and incest. Following her extensive sexual initiation, Eugénie rounds back to the type of sexual conduct that started her education but combines it with all she has thus far learned. With this scene, Eugénie shows just how far she has come, and more importantly, does so by victimizing the very individual who filled her head with ethical and virtuous notions and who attempted to prevent this libertine teaching.

#### 4.2. Sodomy

From the first dialogue, the reader faces the professors’ desire to rid young Eugénie of any trace of virtue and modesty by introducing her to all sorts of lewd and deviant behaviours. Thus virtue is immediately put in conflict with a rather large extent of sexual practices and presented as a notion that should be refuted. Eugénie is eased into this philosophy with a lecture on the scarcity of universally considered criminal acts and legitimately virtuous

conducts. Accordingly, virtue becomes a disease that goes against all pleasure, therefore becoming an unnatural entity, all the while sodomy is portrayed as “*étant inspirées par la nature, il n’est aucune [d’action], de quelque espèce que vous puissiez la supposer, dont nous devons concevoir de la honte*” (Sade 147-48). Thus, Dolmancé turns virtue into a vice that is to be warded off because it is only by renouncing virtue that he can legitimize his sodomitical acts. He further accentuates this notion by illustrating that sodomy “*fait perdre ainsi les droits de la propagation et contrarie de cette manière ce que les sots appellent les lois de la nature*” (Sade 97), thus contradicting the Church’s condemnation of certain sexual pleasures for reasons of sterility – i.e. they are unnatural because they do not lead to procreation – which would imply the only reason to participate in these rituals is for pure carnal pleasure – i.e. the reason Nature supposedly placed man on earth, “*si son intention n’était pas que nous foutions des culs, aurait-elle aussi justement proportionné leur orifice à nos membres ?*” (Sade 144). Furthermore, Dolmancé accentuates that in Nature, destruction is found alongside creation and thus, contrary to religious doctrine, anything preventing reproduction is not a transgression of nature because one cannot offend nature by refusing to create, “*il est faux que la nature veuille que cette liqueur spermatique soit absolument et entièrement destinée à produire ; si cela était, [...] elle ne permettrait pas que cet écoulement eût lieu dans tout autre cas*” (Sade 159).

These particular concepts are also covered in what is to be perceived as the longest and most thorough philosophical lecture of the novel, which takes the form a pamphlet Sade copied as it stands into his play, “*Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains*” (Sade 185). It is presented as an answer to young Eugénie’s inquiry, “*je voudrais savoir si les mœurs sont vraiment nécessaires dans un gouvernement, si leur influence est de quelque poids sur le génie d’une nation*” (Sade 185). Following a lengthy portrayal of the need to expunge religion from the government, the topic of mores is broached, more particularly that of ‘moral crimes,’ which include prostitution, adultery, incest, rape and sodomy. The leaflet characterizes sodomy as “*ce prétendu crime*” (Sade 231) because the only supposed crime is “*la perte de semence*” (Sade 232), and circles back to Dolmancé earlier arguments, “*or je demande s’il est vraisemblable que cette semence soit tellement précieuse aux yeux de la nature qu’il devienne impossible de la perdre sans crime*” (Sade 232). The pamphlet mentions how inhumane society’s laws are, “*est-il possible d’être assez barbare pour oser condamner à mort un malheureux individu dont tout le crime est de ne pas avoir les même goûts que vous ?*” (Sade 231).

These aforementioned notions are all based on Dolmancé's opinion and personal relationship to sodomy. Not all characters share these ideals and each individual has his or her own singular preferences. The Chevalier, who generally does not have an active role in the philosophical lectures, sums up his sexual preferences as, *"il est bien certain [...] que [l'anus] est la meilleure place ; mais quoi qu'on dise, tout cela ce sont des extravagances que je ne préférerai jamais au plaisir des femmes"* (Sade 44). Dolmancé has a clear penchant for male sodomy, particular with young boys, *"le cul d'un jeune garçon, il faut en convenir, me donne encore plus de volupté que celui d'une fille"* (Sade 98) but *"néanmoins, il consent à essayer les femmes, ce n'est qu'aux conditions qu'elles seront assez complaisantes pour change de sexe avec lui"* (Sade 41). Mme de Saint-Ange seems to relish all acts of sexual intercourse, but clearly prefers sodomitical pleasures, *"[le con] est sa route ordinaire... la plus usitée, mais non pas la plus agréable' recherchant un temple plus mystérieux, c'est souvent [l'anus]"* (Sade 56).

On the other hand, Eugénie, at least at the start of the narrative, has no desire to be sodomized because of the pain it will no doubt engender, *"mais, ma chère amie, lorsque ce membre énorme, qui peut à peine tenir dans ma main, pénètre [...] dans un trou aussi petit que celui de ton derrière, cela doit faire une bien grande douleur à la femme."* (Sade 57-58), and when she eventually does lose her sodomitical maidenhead to Dolmancé, it is not without any agony, *"Ah ! vous me déchirez ! [...] jamais je n'éprouva d'aussi vives douleurs !"* (Sade 113). Eugénie is also a novice that not only needs to be introduced to sexual pleasures but must also be persuaded of their legitimacy. This scene follows a comprehensive description of both heterosexual and homosexual sodomy, in which Dolmancé states, *"si c'est un jeune garçon, qu'il lui saisisse le vit et le branle ; qu'il chatouille le clitoris, si c'est une fille ; les titillations du plaisir qu'il fait naître, en rétrécissant prodigieusement l'anus du patient, doubleront les plaisirs de l'agent"* (Sade 100). Thus, as the structure of the novel predicts, Eugénie takes on the male sexual role and, armed with a fictitious phallus, sodomizes Dolmancé. Even though she clearly emphasizes her new libertine values – *"EUGÉNIE, s'affublant d'un godemiché : Oh ! volontiers ! Vous ne me trouverez jamais en défaut, quand il s'agira de libertinage : il est maintenant mon seul dieu, l'unique règle de ma conduite, la seule base de toutes mes actions"* (Sade 142) – and mentions she found the act pleasurable – *"en vérité j'y ai ressenti du plaisir"* (Sade 143) – Eugénie is not without guilt or regret – *"ce n'est pas sans un peu de remords ; car vous ne m'avez point rassurée sur le crime énorme que j'ai toujours entendu dire qu'il y avait à cela, et surtout à le faire d'homme à homme [...]"*

*comment votre philosophie explique cette sorte de délit.*” (Sade 156-57). Thus the young pupil seems to preserve her individual morals but, following another of Dolmancé’s lessons, is persuaded to adopt her professors’ doctrine, and is eager to be sodomized.

Her views transform so drastically that when the time comes for her to be deflowered, Eugénie balks at the idea, preferring to be sodomized, *“Oh ! non pas par-devant : cela me ferait trop de mal ; par-derrière tant que vous voudrez”* (Sade 156) and thus becoming the perfect libertine model, *“elle vous demande précisément ce qu’on a tant de peine à obtenir des autres !”* (Sade 156). Now that Eugénie has fully embraced sodomy as acceptable, if not mandatory, sexual behaviour, she is urged to promote its execution within society, *“comme cette manière de foutre est délicieuse, [la femme] doit l’exiger de ceux dont elle se sert”* (Sade 168).

Lastly, Mme de Mistival, Eugénie’s mother, is the only character to utterly spurn the sodomitical act. She thus feels nothing but pain as she is violently sodomized by Dolmancé and her own daughter. Sade even emphasizes her agony through his narration, *“Mme DE MISTIVAL, recevant cette vexation : Ah ! le monstre ! le scélérat ! il m’estropie !... juste ciel !...”* (Sade 277), to the point that she loses consciousness, *“Mme de Mistival, perdant connaissance : Ayez pitié de moi, je vous en conjure, ... Je me trouve mal... je m’évanouis...”* (Sade 278). This particular scene is violent and cruel, yet all the main characters seem to take pleasure from it, thus emphasizing the idea that pleasure exceeds all expectations if it is attained through selfish acts, as portrayed with Dolmancé’s last words in the novel, *“je ne mange jamais mieux, je ne dors jamais plus en paix que quand je me suis suffisamment souillé dans le jour de ce que les sots appellent des crimes”* (Sade 287).

Eugénie’s teachings on Nature, virtue, debauchery, crime and cruelty obviously lead to this particular scene in which she allows her inhibitions to roam free and complete her ultimate Oedipal fantasies. Earlier in the novel Eugénie mentions both her desire to have a victim of her own sex, which she would force to endure all forms of torture and sexual experimentation in order to make her *“la plus malheureuse des créatures”* (Sade 177); and her desire to hurt her own mother. Eugénie abhors her mother, which is a feeling Dolmancé rationalizes – *“uniquement formés du sang de nos pères, nous ne devons absolument rien à nos mères”* (Sade 64-65) – and Mme de Saint-Ange exploits – *“s’il est une mère au monde qui doive être détestée, c’est assurément la tienne ! Acariâtre, superstitieuse, dévote, grondeuse... et d’une pruderie révoltante”* (Sade 65). Thus, Eugénie is instructed that it is natural for her to despise her mother and is encouraged to do so because of her mother’s utter

devotion to society's ethical values. These virtues almost prevent Eugénie from accepting Mme de Saint-Ange's invitation to the boudoir and are the reasons behind Mme de Mistival showing up at the boudoir to retrieve her daughter. However, she encounters a daughter that opposes her mother's wishes and that has been utterly corrupted of all "*les soins que j'ai eus d'elle, l'éducation que je lui ai donnée!*" (Sade 272). Eugénie is eager to put theory to practice and demonstrate her newly acquired libertine knowledge. She enthusiastically sodomizes her mother while stating "*me voilà donc à la fois incestueuse, adultère, sodomite, et tout cela pour une fille qui n'est dépucelée que d'aujourd'hui*" (Sade 278), thus concluding her initiation.

#### 4.3. The Narratological Aspect

Hence sodomy is regarded as a natural act throughout the narrative by all the main characters – excluding Mme de Mistival – however, it is still continuously described using aggressive legal terminology. From the very first dialogue, in which Mme de Saint-Ange refers to sodomy as "*ces voluptés criminelles*" (Sade 45), both heterosexual and homosexual sodomy are repeatedly represented using terms of debauchery, thus maintaining the illusion that the act is a transgression.

These sodomitical scenes come into existence through preliminary discussion and arrangement. More often than not, it is Dolmancé who will "*diriger la scène*" (Sade 138), finding it "*un plaisir que de vous commander des tableaux*" (Sade 262). These scenes are usually of impossible physical proportions and corporal arrangements that seem to defy the laws of gravity; "*Je vais lui mettre mon vit dans le cul, pendant que, courbée dans vos bras, vous la branlerez de votre mieux ; au moyen de l'attitude où je vous place, elle pourra vous le rendre : vous vous baiserez l'une et l'autre. Après quelques courses dans le cul de cette enfant, nous varierons le tableau. Je vous enculerai, madame ; Eugénie, au-dessus de vous, votre tête entre ses jambes, m'offrira son clitoris à sucer*" (Sade 111). The scenes cover every composition imaginable in order to teach Eugénie to fill "*tous les différents rôles de la luxure, il faut qu'elle s'exerce, dans les leçons que nous lui donnons ici, à les remplir tous également*" (Sade 142).

Although the scenes are presented as arrangements following Dolmancé's clear instructions, this does not stop Sade from engaging with his reader. The fifth dialogue ends with Dolmancé and Augustin retreating to a separate parlour because "*il est de certaines*

*choses qui demandent absolument des voiles*” (Sade, 263). This has both Eugénie and Mme de Saint-Ange, as well as the reader speculating on what private pleasures these gentlemen seek. The Chevalier acquaints his student and Mme de Saint-Ange with an explanation that the reader is not privy to. Instead, the reader can only surmise it is a horrendous act through Eugénie’s repulsed rebuke, “*c’est horrible*” (Sade 264). However, having covered nearly every form of deviant sexual behaviour imaginable throughout the philosophical and practical lessons, it is hard to imagine a conduct so atrocious, it must happen behind closed doors. This is Sade’s objective; to desensitise the reader to so-called obscene encounters, by describing their progression as well as explaining their naturalness in such a manner that the reader is unperturbed by the events that take place and cannot envision an act so vile, it could not be accepted by the libertines in the Sade’s boudoir.

Alongside this particular narrative strategy, Sade uses Eugénie to guide the discussion throughout the novel. On numerous occasions Eugénie is the one to instigate the philosophical discussion through a question – “*N’existerait-il pas dans cette religion, toute ridicule qu’elle est, quelques vertus prescrites par elle, et dont le culte pût contribuer à notre bonheur ?*” (Sade 75) – or a well-placed comment – “*je ne m’en suis pas aperçue ; on ne saurait trop dire les bonnes choses ; je trouve cependant quelques-uns de ces principes un peu dangereux.*” (Sade 253). Sade has the young novice initiate the philosophical conversation on the mores of society. This emphasizes the notion that one must be critical of the so-called universal values he is taught. By voicing these questions and critiques, Eugénie thus becomes the embodiment of the reader’s thoughts and doubts. However, Sade is also accentuating the importance of being open to change as well as diversity, open to the idea that not all men and women are made identical but that every choice and lifestyle preference should be respected. Lastly, Sade highlights the importance of combining sexual experimentation with philosophical reasoning. In order to eventually come to accept these sexual deviations and thus complete a libertine education, one must understand all the aspects it incorporates. Nonetheless, he may be taking his conceptions slightly too far by completely negating the notion that not all individuals find pleasure through sodomy.

## Conclusion

Both Cleland and Sade play an essential part in the pornographic literature tradition, both in prolonging and modifying this particular institution. However, even in placing both authors within the erotica tradition, distinctions can be made, which reflect the context and country each work originates from. Each author revitalizes the subplot of erotic fiction, that of a female character wrestling with sexual temptation and virtue, albeit through thoroughly divergent means. Cleland seems to adhere to the established custom of the virtuous protagonist who falls into prostitution and debauchery, and finds herself struggling to keep hold of her morality; which portrays England's early developing stages of the erotic genre. On the other hand, Sade attempts to rid his virtuous heroine of her purity and have her succumb to sexual pleasures; which not only reflects France's dominant role in pornography but also the rise of libertinism within the country. Both writers further perpetuate the instructive framework originally found in conduct manuals and that had been attributed to pornographic novels, as well as continue the metaphorical tradition this specific genre is famous for. Cleland undoubtedly exploits this form while Sade refers to it only on occasion, preferring to rely on distinctive libertine sexual terminology.

By adopting the epistolary genre, Cleland reveals his intentions of creating a scandalous narrative that will pay great attention to the question of morality. Thus his narrator continuously emphasizes her virtue at the moment of redacting both letters, blames the illicit content of her message on her correspondent and justifies this explicit subject matter within the educational framework through which she will prove the predominance of virtue. Throughout her narration of the facts, Fanny repeatedly affirms virtue and corrects vice by emphasizing how the naïve heroine is misled into prostitution and continues with the practice because of her circumstances. This protagonist is further corrupted by her companions and finds little to no pleasure in her actions, which instead bring up feelings of remorse and shame. Additionally, these ideals are reiterated in the distinct terminology used in the narrative. The narrator relies on terminology of defeat and unwillingness, as well as aggressive rhetoric, which, combined with the censorial role of the narrator, reinforces the concluding defence of virtue that takes place through a moral of sorts and an ending reminiscent of the sentimental novel. Thus, Cleland embodies both the puritan sentimental tradition and the libertine one of the Restoration courts by merging them into a refined sexual



experience, neutralizing the purely animalistic indulgence of sexual desires, and combining a rational quest for sexual release with a moralistic resolution.

The narrator downplays the sexual aspect of the lesbian scenes, alternatively accentuating the protagonist's ignorance and purity as well as her companion's instruction. All through the narrative, lesbianism is linked to voyeurism, as both are perceived as educational tools used in the heroine's sexual initiation and the stimulation of her desire. However, the narrator asserts the protagonist's innocence and unwillingness to participate in these acts by continuously mentioning her passiveness, her unfamiliarity with sex and her overwhelmed senses; and takes on a censorial role by describing the scenes as immoral and omitting certain obscene details. On the other hand, Cleland seems to hold lesbianism to a higher esteem as he gives it such significant functions within the narrative; both of the heroine's initial sexual encounter and of the event that rekindles her sexual desire. These perceptions of lesbianism seemingly challenge one another but also accentuate the ideal that lesbian relationships should be tolerated because of the presumption that they are not fully satisfying and will thus never be able to supplant straightforward heterosexual relations.

Sodomy is approached in an equally controversial manner. Both the pseudo-heterosexual and homosexual male sodomitical scenes are at first glance met with contempt from the narrator. They are introduced as crimes and vile behaviour, which are only observed out of initial curiosity and seemingly proof-gathering intentions. However, upon further analysis, no aggressive terminology is used – as opposed to the violent language that describes other sexual encounters, including those between the heroine and her lover, Charles. Furthermore, though outraged by the witnessed scene, the protagonist waits for the sodomites to dress before attempting to warn the villagers of their lewd actions, during which time she trips and falls, allowing them to escape. Although the narrator seems to initially embody the notions of eighteenth-century England concerning sodomy, these latter aspects seem not to condemn but to encourage the sodomitical act.

Sade, on the other hand, utilizes both the theatrical framework and that of the philosophical dialogue, which both reveal an intention towards a resolution through persuasion and instruction. From the moral instructive in the author's preface, virtue is relegated to the sides and must make way for natural sexual pleasures. In fact, the aim of the heroine's initiation is made abundantly clear – that of the corruption of her virtue. Eugénie is presented as a young girl who is gullible and naïve, as well as willing and eager to learn. She is quick to be persuaded to abandon her morals and personal perspective for that of her

professors, thus emphasizing her carnal desire's triumph over her virtue and, at times, her free will. Virtue is further discussed as a concept that must be refuted because it, and not sexual desire, is unnatural and prejudiced and thus goes against Nature and the very essence of libertinism.

The protagonist's teachings occur through observation and imitation, originating from physical classes or philosophical lectures. Lesbianism blends in with the sodomitical background and serves as introduction to sexual pleasure. Through acts of voyeurism, the lesbian scenes serve to stimulate Eugénie's abandonment of her preconceived notions in lieu of libertine values. Later, lesbianism is used to reinforce these libertine ideals and as conclusion to the protagonist's initiation. Thus, much in the same manner as in *Fanny Hill*, lesbianism serves the dual purpose of sexual awakening and further erotic initiation, conforming to the same social ideals of the inferiority of lesbian encounters to heterosexual intercourse.

Sodomy, on the other hand, is continuously referred to as a false crime – virtue is what is unnatural and a vice. Although each professor accepts sodomy, they all have different sexual preferences – ranging from heterosexual intercourse to pederasty –, which are easily passed on to their initiate, who eventually would rather partake in sodomitical encounters than straightforward heterosexual intercourse. Thus, combining to notion of Nature as origin of right and wrong with the the principle of pleasure as life doctrine, Sade lends his voice to the contemporary debate on sodomy and divine law. He condemns the Church for celebrating chastity and irrationally repressing a natural desire, and stands strong between the radical enlightened thinkers who challenge the ecclesiastic connection between procreation and pleasure, thus justifying sodomitical intercourse. Sade's beliefs culminate in the last scene of the novel, which serves as conclusion to Eugénie's education during which she merges her philosophical teachings on virtue and sodomy with her practical lessons by corrupting and abusing her own mother, thus becoming a full-fledged libertine.

By having his main protagonist, the initiate Eugénie, steer the philosophical discourse, Sade injects the reader within the narrative, and has him become the novice in the academy that is Mme de Saint-Ange's boudoir. In this manner, the author manages to instruct the reader of every aspect of the so-called deviant sexual behaviour in order to desensitize him and have him supplant his preconceived morals with libertine values. Sade concludes his teachings with an apparent sodomitical scene nor the reader, nor Eugénie may witness and that is supposedly too horrific for an audience. However, the reader, now a graduate from the

libertine college, has difficulty imagining an act so abominable it would not be accepted by these libertines. Thusly, Sade rounds off his philosophy in the boudoir, which instils the necessary alliance between sexual and intellectual license in libertinage.

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## **Appendix 1. A Comprehensive Biography of John Cleland**

John Cleland was most likely born in September 1709 and raised in London until he stopped his schooling at the age of thirteen for reasons unknown. He travelled to India, where he was first employed as British counsel in Smyrna (Hyde 87) and in 1728, he joined the service of the East India Company in Bombay, where moved up through the ranks to the highest civilian office in a matter of twelve years (Nussbaum 21). This was probably the time he wrote his first draft of Volume I of *Fanny Hill* (Wagner, “Fanny Hill in Bombay”). After disagreeing with the Company, Cleland left for the Continent, where he led a more or less hand-to-mouth existence (Hyde 97), trying his hand at almost every popular genre – including fiction, drama, political propaganda and pseudo-medical and linguistic treatises (Wagner, “Fanny Hill in Bombay”) – before returning home to England in 1741 (Nussbaum 21). He was arrested for unpaid debts and imprisoned in Fleet Prison between 23 February 1749 and 6 March 1749 (Burwick 45), where he “‘altered, added to, transposed, and in short new-cast’, to use his own words” his manuscript of *Fanny Hill* (Wagner 243).

*Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* appeared as two letters in two volumes, published in 1748 and 1749 respectively (Sabor, 194). On 8 November 1749 (Foxon 71), its publication led to the issuing of a warrant for the arrest of its author, its publisher, Ralph Griffith, and its printer, Thomas Parker, on the charge of “corrupting the King’s subjects” (Busby 7). David Foxon, along with most critics, have speculated that it was the sodomitical scene involving two young men in an inn that led to Cleland’s arrest and imprisonment for obscenity (61).

Cleland did his best to distance himself from his creation by writing a letter to the Secretary of State, in which he claimed Charles Carmichael was the one to blame for *Fanny Hill*’s existence. Cleland stated that he wrote the novel in order to prove to his companion that “one could write freely about a woman of the town without resorting to the coarseness of *L’Ecole des filles*, which had quite plain words” (Gladfelder 137). During the trial, Cleland also drew the Secretary of State’s attention to an obscure pamphlet that had emerged in 1749, entitled *Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplified*, written by Thomas Cannon, a man to whom Cleland owed a considerable sum of eight hundred pounds. Cleland attempted to shift the censor’s attention from *Fanny Hill* to this more wicked work that defended sodomy as a form of sexual behaviour (Gladfelder 138). Cannon was prosecuted, alongside his printer, John Purser, and exiled to the Continent (Wagner 35). Cleland, Griffith, and Parker were also found guilty, charged with producing a lewd book that was immediately withdrawn from circulation (Sabor 192).

During the trial Cleland also advocated that his primary motives for writing the book in question were commercial (Wagner 243), which supports the belief of certain critics that Cleland only pursued this line of writing in order to escape the importunities of his creditors (Hyde 97). Unlike Samuel Johnson, “who argued that the purpose of fiction was to provide the (found, ignorant, idle) reader with



virtuous models for imitation”, Cleland believed in painting the world “not as it should be, but as it really exists” (Gladfelder 137). According to him, readers cannot know the “delights of ‘true felicity’ or the ‘true voluptuousness’ of faithful married love” unless they “succumb to the whirl of ‘debauchery’ represented in the novel” (Bobker 1037-38).

Subsequently, in 1750, Cleland was commissioned to strike out the offensive parts of his work and compile a novel from it that would not be perceived as offensive. This second edition, *Memoirs of Fanny Hill*, was published as eleven letters in a single volume of 273 pages, less than two-thirds the length of the original (Sabor 194). The following quote from the novel appeared both on the title page and in the advertisements for the abridged adaptation; “if I have painted Vice all in its gayest colours, if I have deck’d it with flowers, it has been solely in order to make the worthier, the solemn sacrifice of it, to VIRTUE” (Gladfelder 137). Virtue is thus clearly emphasised, which shows that the novel was now being promoted as an enlightening, didactic book (Sabor 193).

In this expurgated version, Cleland removed the phrase that identified Fanny’s profession from the title; inserted an elegy about the triumph of virtue over vice as well as a table of contents, which thus permitted him to guide the readers towards a didactic interpretation of his work; avoided the use of pejorative terminology such as ‘sodomite’; deleted a vast amount of sexual passages; and inserted passages in which Fanny gave moralising commentaries that justified her apparently amoral actions (Sabor 194).

However, on 15 March 1750, Thomas Sherlock, the Bishop of London wrote the Secretary of State, urging him to suppress this newly published work and on the same day the letter was written, warrants were issued for the arrest of Cleland, Parker and Griffiths (Sabor 192-93). They all seemed to have escaped prosecution and *Memoirs of Fanny Hill*, unlike its antecedent, has always been legally available in England but scarcely known (Sabor 194). It was not until 1870 that *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* was sold unchallenged by censors (Busby 7).

Cleland attempted a life in letters, writing two novels – *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* (1751) and *The Woman of Honour* (1768) (Busby 7) – as well as other, philological, works such as *The Way to Things by Words and to Words by Things* (1766), *Specimen of an Etymological Vocabulary* (1768), and *Additional Articles of the Specimen* (1769) (Burwick, 48). He was unable to match the artistry and commercial success of *Fanny Hill* and would forever be plagued by “a stigma on his name, which time has not obliterated and which will be consigned to his memory whilst its poisonous contents are in circulation”, as stated by John Nichols in his obituary (Gladfelder 134). He died in obscurity on 23 January 1789 (Busby 7).

## Appendix 2. A Comprehensive Biography of the Marquis de Sade

Born Donatien Alphonse François, on 2 June 1740, in a noble and distinguished old family from the Avignon region in Provence, the Marquis de Sade spent a great deal of his childhood in Saumane-de-Vaucluse with his uncle, abbot of Eubreuil who served as professor of ethics and literature to the young aspiring writer (Brochier 9-11). He became a cavalry officer in the French army and his father's financials failing, the Marquis entered a fiscal marriage with René Pélagie de Montreuil, daughter of one of the presidents of the Court of Aids, on 17 May 1763 (Brochier 11-12). Although his wife was devoted to him, Sade much preferred the company of her sister, whom would later become the inspiration of *Juliette* (Hyde 122-23).

Sade led a less than virtuous life, during which he spent months in prison for his philandering and clandestine affairs, and the indecent flagellation of a thirty-six-year-old woman, after which he was exiled from Paris. He later administered a powerful aphrodisiac to prostitutes, who proceeded to accuse him of the crimes of poisoning and sodomy. The Marquis was sentenced to death, even though neither crime could be supported by facts, yet he managed to escape to Italy (Brochier 12-14). The charges were eventually dropped but Sade was once again arrested upon returning to Paris in 1778 (Brochier 16-17) and confined to the Bastille.

The Marquis de Sade spent eleven years in the Bastille, from 1778 to 1789, during which time he turned to writing (Brochier 17). He wrote *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (1785), finished *Les Infortunes de la Vertu* (1787) – from which would arise *Justine* and *La Nouvelle Justine* – started his novel *Aline et Valcour* (1786) and penned a few mediocre plays and short stories (Brochier 21). Due to the political troubles occurring in the capital, it was considered too dangerous to have a libertine such as Sade imprisoned in the Bastille. He was transferred to Charenton on 3 July 1789, where he would remain until 1790, when the 'lettres de cachet' were abolished. Sade was released with no money or manuscripts – which had accidentally been left behind by the author and which were believed to have been destroyed when the Bastille was taken under siege during the French Revolution (Brochier 23-24).

Upon his discharge, Sade published his greatest works; *Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu* (1791), *Aline et Valcour* (1795), *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795), and *La Nouvelle Justine ou les Infortunes de la vertu* (1797) – an amplification of *Justine* (Brochier, 27-28). During this period, he barely avoided the guillotine a second time, when a court bailiff failed to correctly identify him (Airaksinen 8). The novel *Justine* and *Juliette* were sold to the public, until the Bonaparte's censure removed them from the market and their author was once more imprisoned in Charenton, in 1801 (Brochier 28). Many critics have considered the possibility that Sade was not incarcerated for his novels but because he was mistakenly identified as the author of the notorious pamphlet *Zoloé et ses acolytes* (1800) which attacked Bonaparte and other political persons (Airaksinen 7). On 15 April

1802, upon request from his family, Sade was transferred to Charenton, which had become a lunatic asylum (Brochier 30). He spent his time creating plays for the madmen, which were banned because they were morally disgusting stage performances and theatrical displays of imaginary cruelty (Airaksinen 6-7). Sade resorted to pursuing his novels until his untimely demise on 2 December 1814 (Brochier 31-32).

Early modern pornographic tradition culminated in the writings of the Marquis de Sade who covered virtually every erotic theme ranging from incest and parricide to sodomy and torture, all of which he associated with sexual arousal. In other words, “he explored the ultimate logical possibility of pornography: the annihilation of the body, the very seat of pleasure, in the name of desire” (Hunt 35). Sade was more interested in content than form, and in his writings he tried to depict realistic characters that would show the reader “what human nature is like in its vacillation between virtue and vice” (Airaksinen 9), thus turning the readers gaze inwards, to the inner aspect of human life it all of its forbidden glamour, and see what should not be seen (Airaksinen 10). The Marquis used his books to prove his ideas in a way that was both empirical and theoretical at the same time through deliberately making his characters partake in odious acts, thus allowing the survivors or onlookers to discuss it afterwards (Kearney 95). De Sade’s works, which portrayed reason, eroticism, libertine pleasure and a disdain of emotional passion, thus led to the production of a specific genre of literature that has since born his name (Wagner 216).

### **Appendix 3. Summary of *Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure***

The novel is written as a series of two letters from Fanny Hill, the protagonist, to an unknown recipient, in which she describes the events leading up to and transpiring during her time as a woman of pleasure. Frances “Fanny” Hill is a fifteen-year-old girl from a small town who is persuaded to head for London following her parents’ untimely demise. After being inexplicably abandoned by her companion, Fanny meets Mrs Brown who offers her room and board. However, Mrs Brown runs a brothel and the night of her arrival, Fanny is initiated to the sexual pleasures by Phoebe, before being forced to spend the evening with an elderly impotent client. Fanny’s would-be suitor attempts to rape her but fails, still causing her to fall violently ill, all the while Mrs Brown sets out to find a suitable patron to take the protagonist’s virginity.

Recovering from her illness, Fanny spies on her governess and masturbates at the sight of seeing her entertain a client. After enlightening Phoebe on her activities, both girls spy on fellow prostitute Polly with her paramour. Now eager to experience sexual intercourse, Fanny meets the nineteen-year-old nobleman, Charles, with whom she instantly falls in love. He helps her escape Mrs Brown’s clutches and brings her to an inn outside London, where they have sexual intercourse over a span of several days. Charles moves Fanny of a flat at St. James’s and for many months he visits Fanny almost daily, making love to her and after a while, Fanny becomes pregnant. Three months into the pregnancy, Charles mysteriously disappears, causing Fanny to miscarry, fall ill and be nursed back to health by the landlady, Mrs Jones. In exchange for these services, Mrs Jones expects payment and convinces Fanny to prostitute herself to a rich man as a way to earn back the money. Fanny is introduced to Mr H, who provides her with an aphrodisiac she unwittingly drinks and has sexual intercourse with her. Fanny concludes sex can be had for pleasure, without love. Her new suitor puts her up in another apartment and showers her with gifts. After a few months, Fanny unintentional discovers Mr H having sexual intercourse with her maid and resolves to seduce Will, Mr H’s young servant as revenge. Their affair lasts until they are discovered by Mr H, who promptly stops supporting Fanny.

The second letter starts just as Fanny is taken in by Mrs Cole, an acquaintance she made through Mr H, who happens to run a small brothel in Covent Garden. On her first night, Fanny meets three fellow women of pleasure, Louisa, Emily and Harriet, who entertain her with stories of their first sexual encounters. Ensues a “party of pleasure” that is to act as Fanny’s initiation, an orgy with her three colleagues and four clients. Fanny and her gentleman begin a relationship that ends a few months later. Fanny subsequently meet Mr Norbert, an impotent vile man who engages in rape fantasies with prostitutes. Unhappy with her paramour’s impotence, Fanny engages in spontaneous sexual intercourse with a random sailor in the streets of London, shortly before Mr Norbert dies. Mrs Cole

introduces Fanny to Mr Barville, a young masochist who requires whipping to achieve climax, and to a series of other clients with peculiar fetishes.

Emily and Louisa attend a drag ball, where Emily meets a young gentleman who believes she is a man. Once the truth unmasked, they have sexual intercourse. This situation confuses Fanny because she cannot understand this first encounter with male homosexuality. Shortly after the incident, Fanny takes a ride in the countryside and takes a room at a public tavern after her carriage breaks down. She spies on two young men engaged in sodomitical intercourse in the adjoining room. Disgusted and outraged by the scene she witnessed, Fanny attempts to rouse the villagers to punish these two men but trips and knocks herself unconscious in the process.

Some time passes, and Fanny observes Louisa seduce the teenage son of a local woman, and is later invited with Emily to a country estate by two gentlemen. Louisa and Emily leave Mrs Cole's, and with Harriet having left the brothel earlier in the novel, Mrs Cole retires and Fanny moves to the country where she meets an old bachelor. After a few blissful months together, he passes away and leaves Fanny a small fortune. She uses this new wealth to attempt to locate Charles and lo and behold, a few months later, she runs into him at an inn. Fanny and Charles reconcile and make love. She confesses what she has been up but he forgives her and asks for her hand in marriage.

#### **Appendix 4. Summary of *La Philosophie dans le boudoir, ou Les Instituteurs immoraux***

The novel depicts the sexual initiation of a young novice, Eugénie, by three libertines, Dolmancé, Mme de Saint-Ange and the Chevalier de Mirvel.

In the first dialogue Mme de Saint-Ange and her brother, the Chevalier de Mirvel discuss his friend Dolmancé, a avid sodomite who, along with the Chevalier, will help Mme de Saint-Ange in educating Eugénie in the theoretical and practical values of libertinism.

The second dialogue is short and portrays Eugénie as a naïve young girl. Mme de Saint-Ange invites Eugénie to enter her boudoir.

In the third dialogue, both women run into Dolmancé, who has arrived earlier than predicted. Eugénie contests his participation in her initiation but is quickly convinced otherwise by her professors. Thus, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* will take on its emblematic structure in which the author with alternate between theory – i.e. long moralistic and philosophical tirades – and practice – i.e. explicitly sexual scenes. Dolmancé and Mme de Saint-Ange start with a detailed anatomy lesson, using their own naked bodies as models, and mention certain impious sexual practices such as masturbation, contraception, sodomy and cunnilingus – i.e. practices that do not allow procreation.

Following Mme de Saint-Ange’s alternative use of the word “putain,” Eugénie questions whether that contradicts the essence of virtue. Dolmancé embarks on an extensive lecture against the very idea of virtue, piety, religion and charity. Eugénie, aroused and utterly convinced by her mentors, wants to become a libertine. Thus, Mme de Saint-Ange enumerates advice on how to act like a libertine while appearing pure in the eyes of society.

Mme de Saint-Ange describes her incestuous relationship with her brother, Dolmancé praises destruction and Eugénie admits she would love to see her mother dead. We return to the practical aspect as Mme de Saint-Ange instructs Eugénie on the art of fellatio and Dolmancé sodomizes her for the first time. Eugénie finds pleasure through it all.

The problematic of matricide is broached once more and a strategy is suggested which would allow Eugénie to commit the murder without consequences. Mme de Saint-Ange lists more libertine tricks and proceeds to explain what abortion entails. Dolmancé praises cruelty, as a natural penchant of man. He aims to prove cruelty gives pleasure regardless of hurting another. The dialogue ends with another pleasurable sexual encounter between all three members, until the Chevalier interrupts them.

In the fourth dialogue, Dolmancé teaches Eugénie about ejaculation and after masturbating the Chevalier, another extensive sexual scene ensues.

The fifth dialogue introduces Augustin, Mme de Saint-Ange’s gardener and all five characters have sexual intercourse, in every position imaginable with a handful of theoretical interruptions in which Dolmancé defends homosexuality, believing it to be natural, and reaffirms the notion of pleasure through pain. We also assist to Eugénie first vaginal penetration, after which she wonders

whether mores are necessary in society. Sade seems to take over and address the reader directly through a pamphlet he placed within the novel, “*Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains.*” It attempts to prove a republican government cannot exist without secularism and a complete overhaul of the French mores. Following the discussion of the pamphlet, the Chevalier disagrees with one of Dolmancé’s arguments; he believes happiness is only possible through beneficence with another. Another extensive sexual scene ensues, after which Dolmancé leaves the room with Augustin, wanting to commit sexual acts so obscene they require privacy.

In the sixth dialogue, a letter arrives from Eugénie’s father, warning the libertines her mother is coming to retrieve her daughter. Eugénie’s father, tired of his wife’s behaviour, gives the libertines permission to do with her what they desire.

In the seventh and last dialogue, Eugénie’s mother joins them in the boudoir and is shocked at what she witnesses. Dolmancé berates her on the ethical teachings she passed on to her daughter and each individual, including Eugénie, rape her mother, with particularly brutal violence. She is then forcefully raped by a servant of Dolmancé’s who has contracted some venereal disease, and later mutilated as she has both orifices sewn shut before she is sent on her way.

## Abstract

Homosexuality and sodomy had long been considered taboo subjects until the Enlightenment revolutionized sexual mores and social perception. Eighteenth-century Europe witnessed the loosening of moral, the rise of sexual promiscuity, and the continuous development of the erotic literature genre.

Although England had overcome the main struggles of the Enlightenment by the time John Cleland wrote *Fanny Hill*, puritan influence still roamed the country. Sexual instincts gradually turned into natural desires, out of which grew a certain openness to sexuality, however, for it to be enjoyed, sexuality had to be refined. Thus, a sexual etiquette formed itself in lieu of a purely animalistic indulgence of sexual desires, which applied primarily to heterosexual men while sodomy remained a capital crime.

Thus, by opting to work within the boundaries of the epistolary structure, Cleland divulges the scandalous content of his novel, as well as its inclination towards morality. His narrator embodies the puritan beliefs of sinful sensuality as she describes the accounts of her younger self from a virtuous perspective. She justifies the illicit subject matter of her letters by blaming others and repeatedly affirms the heroine's virtuous intentions by correcting vice in the narrative. Her terminology further reflects this perspective, both in her description of heterosexual and homosexual encounters. Lesbianism, combined with voyeurism, appears as an educational tool that both initiates the novice and rekindles her sexual desire, all the while the narrator justifies the heroine's participation in the sexual acts from a censorial role. Sodomy, on the other hand, is introduced as a vile criminal act that should be condemned but through the narrative twist and the lack of aggressive language, it seems both the narrator and the author condone, if not encourage this particular behaviour.

France, on the other hand, evolved more rapidly than its counterpart and quickly became the principal pornographic manufacturer of the century. In full bloom of libertinism, the enlightened French debated on sodomy and divine law, focussing on Nature as the origin of right and wrong and establishing the pleasure principle of life. Although sexual pleasure was celebrated, it was also understood to be exclusively heterosexual by the majority of libertine thinkers. Sodomites were still represented as men who rejected the natural imperative to love women and procreate. Near the end of the century, radical thinkers, like the Marquis de Sade, challenged this connection between procreation and pleasure, fought for a rational logic of sex that included both a sexual and intellectual aspect, and came out defending various types of deviant behaviours.

In *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, Sade combines the art of the philosophical dialogue with the theatrical structure to establish an instructive narrative meant to persuade the reader of its libertine content. The author relegates virtue to the background in lieu of natural sexual pleasures, which allows him to advocate for sodomitical intercourse. Through voyeurism, Sade has his protagonist radically transform her religious preconceived morals into libertine ideals, willing the reader to follow suit. Thusly, the reader takes example from the heroine and comes to accept sodomy as a natural act through the numerous philosophical lectures and practical lessons that the libertines use to justify the deviant sexual behaviours.