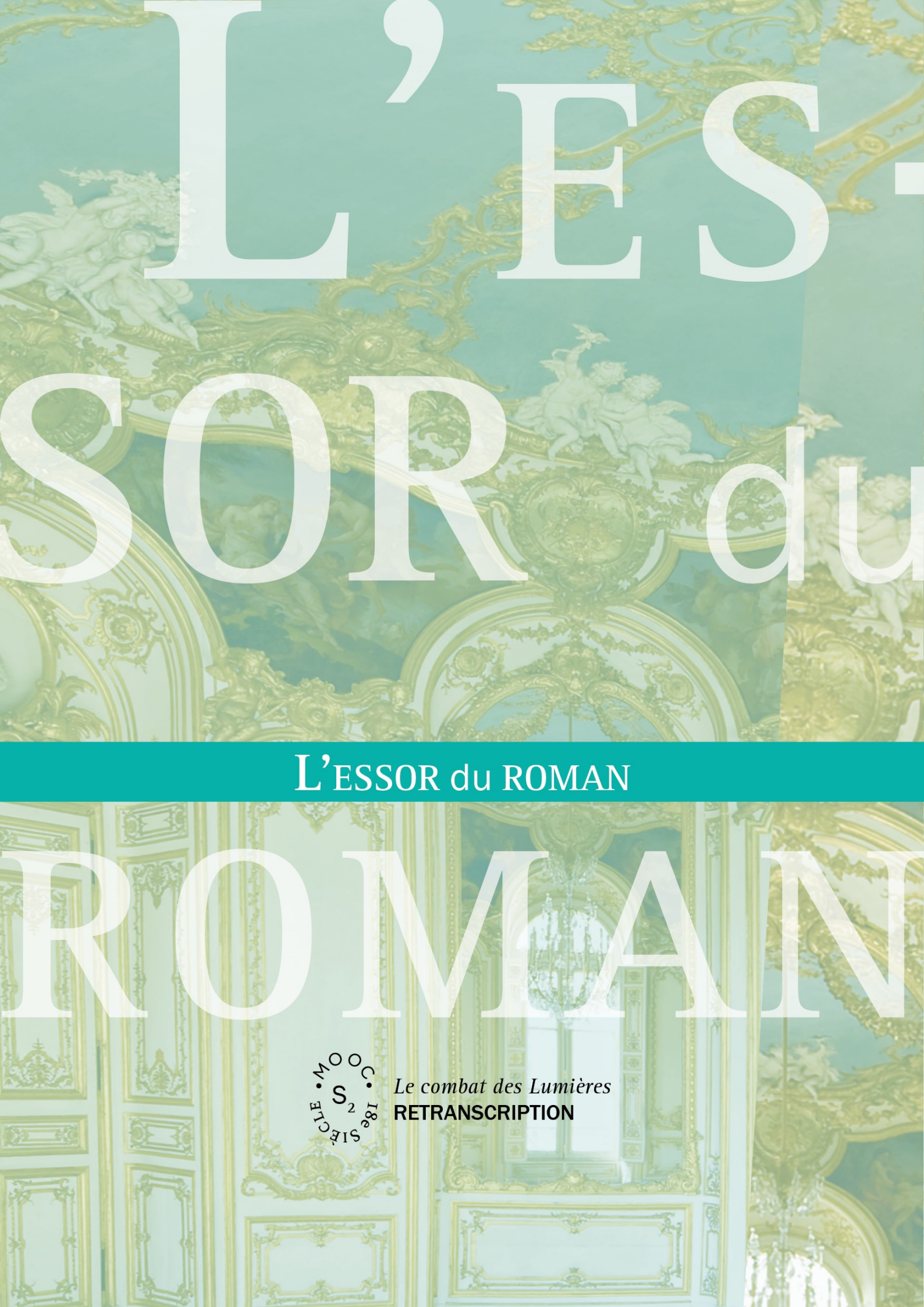

L'ESSOR du ROMAN

MOOC • 18e SIÈCLE • S2

Le combat des Lumières

RETRANSCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

Colas DUFLO, Professor in French Literature, Paris Nanterre University

Part 1 – A minor art seeking legitimacy

Good morning and welcome to the Princess' Salon of the hotel of Soubise. We will now turn to the most inventive and prolific literary genre of the 18th century, the novel.

Today, it goes without saying that the novel is a major genre. When we go to the literature department of a large bookstore, we mainly find novelistic production. 18th-century men would have been astonished to see the importance we attach to the novel. At the beginning of the 18th century, it is still considered a minor genre. It does not really have any classical models. It doesn't belong in the traditional hierarchy of literary genres. It is scorned by scholars, who regard it as easy entertainment for an audience that isn't classically educated, and who criticise its lack of credibility, taste for the extraordinary, unbelievable twists, implausible coincidences, lack of verisimilitude and crudeness in both subjects and language.

Novels can depict the bourgeois life, as for example when Marianne, in *The Life of Marianne* by Marivaux, is placed with a linen maid. Marivaux amuses himself by describing the exchanges of invectives between the maid and a coachman. On the other hand, the novel is viewed with suspicion by civil and religious authorities who begrudge its immorality. By describing passions, and especially love passions, the novel might inspire a longing for love in young people and especially girls and teach them the language of love. "No chaste girl has ever read novels," exclaims Rousseau himself in *The New Heloise'*s foreword, paradoxically one of the most successful novels of the 18th century.

Religious authorities regularly alerted public authorities about the novel's dangers and denounced it as poison for the soul, worried about secularised moral standards conveyed by private reading and so escaping their magisterium, This campaign achieves some success in 1737 with what has been called the proscription of novels, that is to say the Chancellery no longer giving permission to publish novels in France. As they are then published by foreign printers and circulate just as well, the proscription obviously does not last.

The history of the novel in the 18th century is that of the conquest of legitimacy but also the story of the creation of a genre itself. And that's exactly what is interesting. The 18th century is a great period of invention of styles and novelistic contents, which leads the novel to become the dominant literary form from the 19th century onwards.

Part 2 – A new literature for a new audience

It must be said that this literary shift first responds to society changes. Historians testify that from the second half of the 17th century, more and more people learned to read. And this number increases, slowly at first but continuously throughout the following centuries. A new public is formed, including more and more women, bourgeois, artisans, inhabitants of the cities and wealthy peasants and soldiers.

All these readers haven't received a classical education based on Latin humanities, given in universities, and are the driving force behind the success of entertainment literature, which does not presuppose a preliminary culture. Hence the rise of the novel and the scholars' contempt. And as

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more and more people read, more and more novels are being published, in an exponential progression.

Part 3 – The moral world exploration

The rise of the novel isn't only a matter of quantity, it is also a shift in the genre itself, in its forms and in its ambitions. We see examples of this articulated very clearly and under different formulas by the century's greatest authors. Lesage, Montesquieu, Crébillon, Marivaux, Rousseau, Diderot, Laclos or Sade will all at one time or another say what Prevost summarises in the foreword of his latest novel *Le Monde moral*. The novelist, he says, has become an analyst of the moral world in the way a physicist like Descartes is an interpreter of the physical world. He reveals its nature, its deeper recesses and its unnoticed mechanics.

Beyond the entertainment it provides, because the novel never gives up on extraordinary adventures and great emotions, it is looking for a form of psychological truth in the description of feelings and passions. It develops a reflexive dimension, never hesitating to dissert on any subject. It endeavours to explore the characters' interiority. But it also offers a relatively new description of the social world in comparison to the heroic adventures of the great protagonists of the 17th-century Baroque novel. It seeks to explore the difference of circumstances and the effects they produce. It opposes passions to society's frozen frameworks, true love to family's demands, inner identities to social identities.

Conclusion – New literary forms

This new aspiration of profound truth in the philosophy of passions or in the analysis of psychological relations is accompanied by the development of new novelistic forms that favour the narrative's reflective dimensions. The first-person narrative, so dominant today in fictional production, flourishes in the memoir-novel, a genre which peaks in the 1730s with Marivaux, Crébillon and Prevost. The epistolary novel, which allows the confrontation of subjectivities, sees a tremendous expansion in the second half of the century, after the translation of the British Richardson's novels and the publication of *The New Heloise* by Rousseau in 1762.

But these two dominant forms and a few great authors should not hide the diversity and richness of novels in the 18th century, a genre increasingly abundant over the century that will range, depending on the book, from serious to satire, from sentimental to libertine, and from fantasy to philosophical. So many beautiful discoveries and beautiful readings to look forward to.

THE TREND OF MEMOIR-NOVEL

Colas DUFLO, Professor in French Literature, Paris Nanterre University

Audrey FAULOT, Research fellow (CSLF/Lit&Phi), Paris Nanterre University

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Part 1 – Characteristics of Memoir-Novel

CD: The Memoir-Novel is a novelistic form developed at the beginning of the 18th century, which influenced the whole period and, in a way, is still the dominant form today. To understand what a Memoir-Novel is, I invited Audrey Faulot, a specialist of the genre who wrote a doctoral thesis on the Abbot Prevost and his *Memoirs*. Audrey Faulot good morning, thank you for being with us today in this beautiful lounge of the hotel of Soubise. What is a Memoir-Novel?

AF: Good morning Colas Duflo and thank you for inviting me. What we call a Memoir-Novel is very simply a novel written in the form of memoirs. Memoir-Novels are a narrative genre in which an individual, often with a relatively important place in society, revisits at the end of his life the events he witnessed or even participated in. We can mention for example the *Memoirs* of Saint-Simon, which revisit Louis XIV's reign. In these memoirs, an author writes a text that he presents as memoirs, but the narrator of the story has never existed, he or she is a completely fictional character.

The Memoir-Novel therefore has three main characteristics. First, it is retrospective: the memorialist character has already got to the end of his life when he writes about his adventures. Then, it is reflexive: the character scrutinises himself by investigating his past. He writes in the first person. Finally, it is fictitious. The story has been invented from start to finish, even though it can incorporate historical events.

Part 2 – The Memoir-Novel's models

CD: So, before the development of this form of the memoir, weren't there already narratives using the first person that the novel would have taken as a model somehow?

AF: Yes, there are several models. We can first mention authentic memoirs, to which Memoir-Novels are widely related. In some Memoir-Novels, everything is made to give the reader the impression that the text really was written by a historical figure. You can sometimes find a dedication or a foreword explaining how the manuscript would have been bequeathed to another character asked to publish it.

There was at the time what is called pseudo-memoir, a second model. There, the narrator is a historical person but isn't the one actually writing the memoirs. An author renders them authentic. Courtilz de Sandras is a master in the genre. He writes, for example, the *Memoirs of Monsieur d'Artagnan*, looking at the story of the soldier who today everyone knows, but who was at the time a very obscure figure. Courtilz de Sandras creates his story by mixing historical sources and fictional invention.

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The Memoir-Novels takes elements from its models and deepens their fictional aspect. For example, in Prevost's novel entitled *Cleveland*, the text opens on a narration in which a character only named as "Man of quality" explains how the hero passed on to him the manuscript of his father's memoirs after his death. The significance here is to be able to give a meaning to the text's transmission, as it would be for authentic memoirs. The novel, a decried genre, thus seeks to acquire a legitimacy, but let us not fool ourselves, readers are perfectly able to recognise these processes as they become mainstream, especially since many of these readers are well aware that the character who collects the memoirs of Cleveland, the famous "Man of quality" is also a fictional character.

As we can see, Memoir-Novel draw on authentic memoirs by using some of their codes, but they are also able to subvert these codes. Finally, we must acknowledge a third model, the picaresque novels. These are narratives in which a picaro hero, which means vagabond or marginal, tells his story. The genre was developed in Spain in the 16th century and spread to France with works like the *Gil Blas de Santillane* by Lesage. It tells the story of a young boy born in poverty who ends up experiencing some social climbing and who comments on all the social circles he had the opportunity to integrate. The picaresque novel had an important influence on the Memoir-Novels because unlike in memoirs, the hero does not occupy high office, has no legitimacy and therefore must prove his value, especially by putting pen to paper and daring to speak about himself.

Part 3 – Memoir-Novels' potential

CD: What advantages does this style of writing in first-person narrative bring to the novelist?

AF: Choosing a total stranger as protagonist is not without consequences for the narration. The hero or heroine of Memoir-Novel can't put forward the historical interest of the book since this history is fictional. Often, he used to occupy a place of great significance in society. Prevost's heroes generally are uprooted nobles, bastards, exiles and defectors. Because of this identity problem, the memorialist narrator will have to prove its own worth, he will have to appeal to the reader with his subjectivity. Then the choice of the first person allows the writer to explore the hero's inner life.

The character gives thought to his feelings, he also tries to understand, with the benefit of hindsight, why he acted in a particular way. He can also develop personal reflections based on his experience. In Marivaux's *Life of Marianne*, for example, the heroine often digresses to comment on what she sees: coquetry, hypocrisy, the surprise of love, etc.

There is a distance in Memoir-Novels between the character telling his story and the character living it. It is the same character, but a temporal distance separates the narrative instances. The genre lends itself remarkably to psychological and philosophical analysis.

CD: Well, I see it's time to read Prevost and Marivaux. Audrey Faulot, thank you very much.

THE ABBOT PREVOST AND HIS *CLEVELAND*

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Part 1 – Presentation of the Abbot Prevost

One of the most important 18th century Memoir-Novel, in terms of influence over its contemporaries, is paradoxically a work of which we hear relatively little of today. *The English Philosopher or History of Mr. Cleveland* is an extensive novel sequence published by the Abbot Prevost between 1731 and 1739. We will try to better understand Memoir-Novels through this example. Let's begin with discovering its author. Antoine François Prevost, whom we usually know under his title of abbot even if he defrocked, that is to say, broke his vows twice to travel across Europe, wrote this novel. Widely known for *Manon Lescaut,* which has marked generations of readers, Prevost is actually the author of nine Memoir-Novels, his favourite genre.

But we must not confine his career to only that. In addition to historical novels, Prevost was also the main author of a periodical publication, *Le Pour et Contre,* in which he presents and comments on intellectual debates of his time. He has also published an encyclopaedia, *The General History of Voyages*, which includes all travel tales published since the 15th century. Finally, he is also a great translator who has helped to get Richardson known in France. His second Memoir-Novel, *The English Philosopher*, testifies to the immense culture that he both smuggles and criticises. How could we summarise a colossal work including up to fifteen books?

Part 2 – Presentation of the novel

The English Philosopher is a novel whose plot is based on a coup. Prevost chooses for narrator a hero named Cleveland who claims to be the natural son of Cromwell. If the position of bastard is unenviable in the Ancient Regime society, that of son of Cromwell is even worse because Cromwell is a regicide hated throughout Europe. Because of this problematic filiation, the hero lives an extraordinary childhood. His mother, who decided to retreat from the world after her affair with Cromwell, raises him in autarchy. She controls his education from beginning to end. She feeds him philosophical readings, which will allow him to later take the title of "English philosopher" indicated in the title of the novel.

Furthermore, to escape his father's persecutions - as Cromwell wants to eliminate all traces of his past antics - Cleveland and his mother are forced to take refuge in a cave cut off from the world. Cleveland spends most of his childhood and adolescence there, alone. The first book ends when the hero, after the death of his mother, ventures out of the cave, driven by the desire to find civilisation. But he doesn't know anything of the real world.

The whole novel relates the narrator's discoveries and experiences at a time when Cleveland must put his naivety, prejudices and perceptions to the test of reality. It is therefore a great coming-of-age novel revolving around a tireless quest for identity. Who is this "English philosopher"?

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Part 3 – A quest for identity

Is he the bastard son of a monstrous man, as he is constantly reminded when he mentions his origins? Or a child of nature, untouched by harmful influences since he grew up apart from society? Cleveland is haunted by this question as he progresses in his journey. After his exit from the cave, he gets involved in a series of adventures leading him all around the world, especially in search of Fanny, the woman he loves.

His life is a long succession of uprooting, at the end of which he ends up returning to England, back to his starting point. In the form of Bildungsroman, deepened by the critical analysis offered by memoirs, *The English Philosopher* thus raises the question of the influence of parentage on our destiny and the importance left to experiment in the constitution of our identity.

Part 4 – A philosophical quest

In answer to this, Cleveland has a weapon: philosophy, as he claims. Because Cleveland has read everything: Stoic philosophers and Cartesian metaphysics. He has read everything, but he knows nothing. Whenever he suffers a stroke of fate, such as his wife's departure, the death of his brother, and even the temptation of suicide and infanticide, he feverishly returns to his precepts. It is clear that they are not of a great help to him. The final blow comes when Cleveland meets Cecile, a young woman he falls in love with before realising, through a very novelistic reversal of situation, that she is in fact the daughter he thought to have lost, devoured by cannibals during his stay in America.

What can great philosophical lessons do against existential despair or the temptation of incest? The answer given by the novel, which ends with Cleveland’s religious conversion, is rather pessimistic: they can’t do much. We must therefore inscribe these vast Memoir-Novels in the Enlightenment’s reflection on the role granted to philosophy. Behind Cleveland's quest for identity, there is also a philosophical quest.

MARIVAUX'S *LIFE OF MARIANNE*

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Part 1 – Presentation of the author

Many Memoir-Novels were published in the 1730s. Among them, we find Marivaux's *Life of Marianne*. Upon its publication, the book drew criticism because of the stylistic freedom granted to its narrator Marianne. Marivaux, who took the Moderns' side in the quarrel between Ancients and Moderns, was criticised for writing in a style deemed too precious. On the other hand, he was also criticised for writing characters deemed not respectable enough.

First of all, who is Marivaux and what did he write? In 1731, when he published the first part of *The Life of Marianne*, whose different volumes came out up until 1742, Marivaux had already distinguished himself as a playwright. He notably wrote *The Surprise of Love* or *The Game of Love and Chance*, comedies that both reflect on the relations between feelings - especially feelings of love - and language, as in the ability to name, test, or even create that feeling using words. Marivaux developed this ethics, based on the observation of feelings, their complexity and their ambiguity, in his journals as well, composed of a plethora of texts in which he or his multiple narrators are often moralistic.

The two Memoir-Novels that Marivaux wrote during his career, *The Life of Marianne* and *The Fortunate Peasant* extend and deepen his analysis of the human heart in social relationships. Both novels mirror each other, as the former tells the story of a foundling convinced to be an aristocrat, and the latter, that of the rise of a peasant slowly climbing society's ladder. They both explore the metamorphosis undergone by these two characters, through their transition from one environment to another, a metamorphosis on which both narrators wonder tirelessly. At the end of their adventures, both heroes indulge in a long introspection. Now let's discuss more carefully Marivaux's *Life of Marianne*.

Part 2 – Presentation of the novel

Marianne's story begins with a terrible accident. Among all the passengers who died in the attack of a coach by brigands, only one survivor is found, a baby whom no one can identify. Marianne is placed with a parish priest and his sister, in a very modest environment. But Marianne feels in herself a great finesse that leads her to believe she is from an aristocrat family. Drawing on this conviction, Marianne will have to make her way into the world, foiling the shenanigans of her protector, Monsieur de Climal, who hopes to seduce her; and revealing herself worthy of Monsieur de Valville's attentions, an aristocrat who is in love with her. We do not know the outcome of the plot since the novel was left unfinished.

We only know from the novel's title that Marianne eventually acquires the title of countess. But how did she become a countess? Through marriage or by having her parentage established? These two possible interpretations lead to different readings of the novel. Either Marianne is indeed, as she claims, of noble descent and in this case must seek to be recognised as such, or she is a parvenu seeking to seduce her entourage, as she seduces readers to make them adhere to her version of the story. So, there is always a suspicion hanging over Marianne's words, the reader is torn between feeling empathetic for the young woman's woes and being suspicious of Marianne when he notices

how much she controls her story and stages it multiple times in order to foster empathy. For instance, we see this in the well-known scene opening the second part of the novel in which Marianne, who has bought new clothes, goes to Mass where she does her best to capture the attentions of everyone around her.

So, it is possible that Marianne fibs about her origins to present herself in a favourable light. This ambiguity is never solved in the novel and raises the question of the character's value. Is Marianne's worth as a character found in her social status or is any character, even one that has no social legitimacy, able to interest the reader? Marianne answers this question by relying on her own qualities, including her style.

Part 3 – A feminine voice

Indeed, Marianne can only rely on her narrative skills to sway the reader. Her story stands out because she develops a kind of intimacy with the reader. The novel is written in the form of a letter that Marianne addresses to one of her friends. At the very beginning of the novel, a character who introduces himself as the publisher, tells the story of how the manuscript was found in a newly acquired house. This trope of the found manuscript is a recurrent technique in Memoir-Novels. It allows for the text to be introduced as a true story, even if readers are not fooled. Nevertheless, it allows introducing a heroine who speaks freely, a freedom of tone not found much in novels of the time. At the beginning Marianne warns the letter's recipient that she will allow herself to digress through the story.

And she does often interrupt her story to comment on this or that situation, which gives the novel a great depth of analysis. The depth of analysis also comes from Marianne often letting other characters speak. Thus, an episode can be told from two different points of view, which questions the subjective vision of each; like the meeting between two characters for example, where we get the subjective thoughts of each character before hearing the truths of the other. Delegation of speech becomes particularly important in the last parts of the novel. Marianne meets a young nun, Tervire, whose story she tells, leaving her own unfinished. Actually, what we call *The Life of Marianne* rests on these multiple voices interweaving.

So what should we keep from Marivaux's *Life of Marianne*? In the end, the outcome of Marianne's journey isn't what's important. What interested Marivaux was his heroine's metamorphosis and the way she manages to comment her journey by reflecting on herself and on her interactions with other characters.

THE TREND OF EPISTOLARY NOVELS

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Part 1 – The trend of epistolary novels and Rousseau's *New Heloise*

CD: After Memoir-Novel, the other great novelistic form that dominates the 18th century is the epistolary novel, or novel by letters. Stéphane Pujol good morning, you are a specialist in 18th-century French literature, a subject that you teach at Paris Nanterre University. Rousseau's *New Heloise* sparked such a craze that it must have aroused many vocations among writers.

SP: Good morning Colas Duflo. Indeed, we can say that there is a 'before' and an 'after' *The New Heloise* in epistolary novels history, and even more broadly in the history of the novel genre. But if Rousseau's novel was so successful, it is also because others had laid the foundations. French authors, of course, but also English authors like Richardson with *Pamela,* in 1742, a novel that will be a model for Rousseau, for Diderot and even for Sade.

It can be said that *The New Heloise* plays a part in the history of sensitivity in the 18th century, as it creates an unprecedented connection between the fictional text and its reader. Sade claimed his admiration for this novel, probably because it poses a problem that haunted a good deal of literature since Racinian tragedies in a new and acute way. It is the old conflict between duty and passion that the Enlightenment rewrites somewhat, in the form of a latent antagonism between happiness and virtue.

Part 2 – Major epistolary novels written before Rousseau

CD: There were epistolary novels before Rousseau: which ones should be mentioned?

SP: Indeed, there were quite a lot of them. *Letters of a Portuguese Nun*, by Guilleragues in 1699, can be considered the first French epistolary novel. But it consists of only five letters written by the same person and the plot is minimal. Although the letter's recipient, the young nun's lover, does not respond, his voice is nevertheless heard through the words of his victim, seduced and abused. This pattern will be used again in the *Letters from the Marchioness de M***, to the Count de R**** written by Crebillon's son in 1732. We should also note in that the development of the epistolary novel is not unrelated to the development of genuine correspondences, as the Post became a regular service around that time.

Among the novels that became a real success, we can mention, alongside Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* in 1721, Mme de Graffigny's *Letters from a Peruvian Woman*, published in 1747, which tells the story of the young Zilia, torn off from both her homeland and her betrothed, Aza, by French

conquerors, or Madame Riccoboni's *Letters from Mistress Fanny Butlerd*, published in 1757, which revolves around wrongful male behaviour. Let's note that women wrote many of these novels, because they saw in this novelistic form a way to slightly tear the binding social order.

Part 3 – Benefits of epistolary novels and polyphony's function

CD: Similarly, to Memoir-Novel, the epistolary novel allows an immediate expression of the characters' subjectivity. But the multiplicity of characters also allows a plurality of points of view, a narrative polyphony. Can we imagine that this is why many turned towards this novelistic form?

SP: First we must notice a very interesting phenomenon, one that concerns both epistolary novels and Memoir-Novels. They both are "I" novels. Unlike previous centuries, and especially in contrast to future times, third person novels are temporarily overtaken by a novelistic writing opting for subjectivity in the 18th century. We must distinguish between two sub-forms appearing in the 18th century: monological novels, which present only one voice, and polyphonic novels, which multiply senders and recipients. In the latter, which has produced true masterpieces, the multiple voices are arranged in a complex and meaningful order that gives space for narrative suspense effects and interweaving points of view.

The same story can thus be told in several ways, according to the perspective adopted by the writer. And each character is painted in a different light depending on the various correspondents. A letter can be sincere. It can also be deceiving. Although it is supposed to be a faithful depiction of the self, it can also be just a lie or a ploy, as shown through Laclos' *Dangerous Liaisons*.

Part 4 – The epistolary novel's different forms

CD: There are sentimental, philosophical and libertine novels in the 18th century. Are there any form that lend themselves particularly well to epistolary writing?

SP: Even if the epistolary novel is often associated with the sentimental register, it lends itself to all uses. If we consider the wide variety of production in the 18th century, we are struck by this multitude of applications. What subsists in almost all of them, however, is the frequent blend of a love story with social or philosophical considerations. It was already the case in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, it still is the case in Rousseau's *New Heloise*.

Conclusion – Must read epistolary novels

CD: You mentioned Rousseau. Posterity mainly remembers Rousseau and Laclos. Are there any other epistolary novels that you could specifically recommend, that the gentleman of today should discover and keep in his collection?

SP: Absolutely. We must, of course, re-read the *Persian Letters,* which remains a model of the genre

because it perfectly embodies the Enlightenment novel by blending serious topics with playful ones, with constant irony, in all statements and enunciators. Moreover, if we leave aside Guilleragues' monodic novel, Montesquieu appears to be the epistolary novel's inventor, or at least of its polyphonic version. 18th-century readers also liked Madame de Graffigny's *Letters from a Peruvian Woman*, which echoed Montesquieu's foreign point of view. But this one is from a feminine point of view, so both tone and themes will be somewhat transformed. Finally, we can only invite our gentlemen and our gentlewomen to read *The Perverted Peasant* by Restif de La Bretonne, published in 1784, a social fiction about a lady of pleasures, or Senac de Meilhan's *Emigrant* published in 1794, thrusting the readers into the Revolution's torments.

CD: Stéphane Pujol, thank you very much.

ROUSSEAU'S *NEW HELOISE*, A PHILOSOPHICAL AND SENTIMENTAL EPISTOLARY NOVEL

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Part 1 – Storyline of *The New Heloise*

Rousseau published in 1761 this novel entitled *Julie or the New Heloise or Letters From Two Lovers, Living in a Small Town at the Foot of The Alps* collected and published by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which has transfixed generations of readers and marked the entire evolution of the genre. People at the time saw themselves in it its hesitations, troubles and impasses, and saw the prospect of overcoming their own contradictions.

Let us try to understand comprehensively the reasons for its success as well as its characteristics. First of all, we will review the plot of this key work of the 18th century. *The New Heloise* tells the story of an impossible love, replaced by sensible love. Rousseau wanted to transcend righteous passion and rehabilitate it by presenting it in a less austere light. In his correspondence, Voltaire explained that it is a novel, I quote "whose hero goes to brothels and whose heroine has a child with his preceptor". It's malicious and it's a bit short. We can try to summarise it differently. The novel is divided into six parts.

In the first part, Julie d'Etanges, a young aristocrat living on the shores of Lake Geneva, falls in love with her young and poor tutor. Her father, a baron infatuated with nobility, pledged his daughter in marriage to one of his friends, Monsieur de Wolmar. Desperate, Julie gives herself to her lover. Learning the feelings of his daughter, the baron goes into a terrible rage and the young tutor must move away.

The second part allows Julie's lover, exiled in Paris, to critically depict the capital's habits and customs.

Julie's mother discovers the correspondence between the two young people, and her death marks the beginning of the third part. Forced by her father to marry, fearing to have caused her mother's death, Julie admits her commitment to her former preceptor. Her father asks that the commitment be broken. But when Julie falls seriously ill from smallpox, her lover returns and voluntarily contracts the disease. Overwhelmed by this proof of love, Julie plans to continue their relationship. But during the celebration of her marriage with Monsieur de Wolmar she has a change of heart, followed by a period of appeasement and marital happiness. After thinking about suicide, her lover leaves for England.

In the fourth part, Julie lives happily with her husband, her children and her cousin Claire in the small community of Clarens. When her lover finally returns, she confesses her past to Monsieur de Wolmar, which nonetheless invites the young man, to whom Claire gave the nickname of Saint-Preux, to come and settle under the family roof.

The fifth part describes Clarens' perfect home economics.

In the last part, after one of her children has nearly drowned and she has had to run to their rescue, Julie contracts a fatal disease. During her long agony, she admits to the persistence of her love for Saint-Preux and her disappointment at not being able to convert her atheist husband.

Let us now see the reasons for this emblematic epistolary novel's success.

Part 2 – Reasons for its success

The novel's success was immediate and tremendous. Exploiting once more the well-known methods of epistolary novels and Memoir-Novels, Rousseau convinced readers of the veracity of his fiction, presenting himself as only the editor of the correspondence. Many anonymous readers wrote him to share their reactions and feelings. Sometimes they identified with Julie, sometimes with Claire, sometimes with Saint-Preux. For the first time in literature's history, the author and his audience entered an ongoing discussion. Rousseau became a kind of keeper of conscience for readers finding in his novel not a theoretical morality but a desire to live away from the world and its vanities, seeking to reconcile happiness and virtue at any cost.

Madame de Stael described Rousseau thus, I quote: "he who knew how to turn virtue into passion, who devoted eloquence to morality, and persuaded by enthusiasm". Before being an unfinished utopia, the small community of Clarens is first and foremost the fiction of simple happiness. It embodies a form of philosophical ideal through perfect beings that are still human and sensitive. It allows, according to the Rousseau's very word in the *Confessions*, to live, I quote: "in the land of chimeras".

Part 3 – Different interpretations of the novel

We find that *The New Heloise* is scarcely read today, except by specialists or curious people. How can we explain this paradox, which holds true for other best-sellers of the Age of Enlightenment? The modern reader may indeed be put off, not so much by the novel's length as by the dialogues' artificiality or the letters overly logical style, sometimes taking the form of long dissertations.

However, *The New Heloise* should be read. Some excerpts resemble Roland Barthes' fragments of amorous speech, although Rousseau's work is anything but fragmentary. When Saint-Preux returns to Clarens after a two-year exile to find Julie married, he writes, I quote: "The world is divided for me in two regions, one where she is and one where she is not. The first stretches when I go away and tightens as I near, like a place that I could never reach, and is now bounded to the walls of her room. Alas! Only this place is inhabited, the rest of the universe is empty".

All the high points of passionate love, all the doubts, all the uncertainties, all the anxieties are found in this novel, transposed in a universe that is both real, the Swiss campaign, Paris, Geneva, and dreamed, the utopian community of Clarens. Caught between Wolmar's cold atheism and her ardent Christian faith, between her duties as a wife and her affection for Saint-Preux, Julie seems shrouded in holiness. Her renunciation and her death, like a final apotheosis, serve as moral edification.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that *The New Heloise* was read both as a philosophical novel and as an apologetic lesson. Atheism dialogues with religion, rational concerns dialogue with the heart's logic, piety dialogues with passionate love. Julie affects all readers and lends herself to all interpretation, which has contributed to the book's astonishing success. Ultimately, we can be sensitive to the Marquis de Sade's interpretation, which extrapolates from the novel's constitutive tension between what is and what ought to be, one of human existence's major issues.

Quoting Sade: "One cannot reflect on the precepts of morality without being astonished to see them all at once esteemed and neglected, and one wonders the reason for this oddity of the human race, which makes it taste ideas of good and perfection and move away from them in practice". Sade understood that *The New Heloise*'s heroes were not models of virtue, even if they strived to speak its language. They are all that man wants to be, everything he is and is not.

LACLOS' *DANGEROUS LIAISONS*

Colas DUFLO, Professor in French Literature, Paris Nanterre University

Alain SANDRIER, Professor in French Literature, University of Caen

Part 1 – An ongoing success

CD: Good morning Alain Sandrier. A few years ago, you published an edition of Laclos' *Dangerous Liaisons*, which we are going to talk about now. It is a novel that immediately received a remarkable welcome.

AS: Good morning Colas, what a success indeed! It has been an uninterrupted success since the novel's publication in 1782. It must be said that from this point of view, Laclos was more successful than Rousseau, whose *Julie* nevertheless was a phenomenal success. But nowadays, except for specialists and hardcore fans, it is no longer for *Julie* that Rousseau is known. On the other hand, one may well know nothing of Laclos and ignore his other works; the novel immediately imposed itself as the literary quintessence of a specific world, the world of libertinism, which has come to be identified with the century itself, or at least to represent one of its characteristic features. Today I will only talk about the book and its incredible epistolary virtuosity.

Before reflecting upon the epistolary art of the novel, it is difficult not to mention one of the obvious aspects of its success, its privileged relationship to images. We can easily think of its many adaptations to the screen, big or small. It is undoubtedly what led it towards a broader public, a little like in the 18th and 19th centuries, successful novels systematically ended up as operas. *Dangerous Liaisons* has inspired good, and even great, filmed versions. In addition to Stephen Frears', the best known and perhaps the most successful, there are three main adaptations.

The first one is Roger Vadim's in 1960, now forgotten, it marked its time by clearly updating the action; then Milos Forman's in 88 and finally Josée Dayan's TV movie in 2003. Each obviously had its share of stars. But to tell you the truth, this privileged treatment does not date from the time of motion picture. *Dangerous Liaisons* soon had, as did libertine production in general, a special affinity with illustration. In 1787 already an illustrated edition came out, and three other editions, at least, were published during the Revolution. Then, regularly in the nineteenth, then 20th century, black and white or coloured engravings also highlighted the erotic potential of the text.

Part 2 – Anatomy of libertinism

CD: You talk about eroticism. Does this mean it's an indecent novel?

AS: It's not so simple. Laclos, as a disciple and admirer of Rousseau, did not try to circumvent the moral obligation of novels. If the picture of vice may have seemed like an instructive spectacle to the *Liaisons*' author, it is because he believed in the pedagogical virtue of his work. From this point of view Laclos truly was an Enlightenment man, who thought that education and the fight against prejudice were the only remedy to society ills. To understand, to heal the sickness represented by a couple of top-flight libertines such as Merteuil and Valmont, implied knowing the symptoms. Laclos turned into a clinician, the only way to be a good moralist. That is what the epigram borrowed from Rousseau and

which appeared as subtitle of the novel meant: "I have seen the mores of my time, and I have published these letters".

Yet we are far from a model education. We must recognise a certain irony in showing us the pitfalls of an education that flips and overturns morality's basic principles. Lies, in the novel, are no longer just the opposite of truth. They are weapons, allowing people to act with specific purposes in mind. And the purpose here clearly is pleasure. Thus, happiness becomes a matter of adapting means to ends.

It is not surprising that this education, which teaches the exact opposite of commonly accepted precepts, is expressed, first, by means of antiphrasis, that is, a way of saying the opposite of what is said explicitly. For example, in Letter 105, which is one of the best known, the Marquise dee Merteuil gives Cecile a lesson on sentimental Machiavellianism, which is like a parody of motherly counsels.

Part 3 – Letter's pitfalls

CD: In these circumstances, did readers understand Laclos' moral project? I think I remember that Madame Riccoboni, a prominent novelist and friend of the Laclos family, showed some incomprehension. She wrote him in a letter: "You will always be criticised, Sir, for presenting to your readers a vile creature".

AS: Indeed, the ambiguity of Laclos' approach shocked as much as it seduced. It shocked even more because it was a female character that dispensed this perverse education. The novel, which is the genre for women par excellence, is thus the canvas for the worst moral deformities. Would this novel reflect women in a distorted and unflattering way? Obviously Laclos, who was a model husband, could easily exonerate himself from such an accusation. It belonged with Beaumarchais and Condorcet for example, to these men of letters anxious to grant the "weaker sex" as they said, a more important place.

Women's cause was a personal mission for Laclos from his first literary successes, and he wrote essays on the subject, which will then be gathered under the title *On Women and Their Education*. But nothing is to be done, Laclos' "Rousseauism" may have been true, his feminism unsuspected, the reader will always be puzzled by the book's moral purpose. What should be incriminated then is the interpretive dynamic that the novel insinuates. Because there is a form of suspension of judgement orchestrated by the epistolary device.

The plurality of narrators makes it possible to simultaneously grasp the reasoning behind the protagonists' actions and the ones they want to strategically give each other. Several points of view, as allowed by the polyphony, lead to a complexity that encourages perplexity. You only have to read the beautiful and well-known opera sequence that stretches from 135 to 138 to be convinced of it. However, by multiplying the points of view there is always a reason likely to explain, or even to forgive, all vices. As such, Letter 81, which is autobiographical, functions as a real tool for reassessment.

After finishing the book, we can no longer look at the character of Madame de Merteuil with the same severity, if we can believe her, obviously. When there is no longer any instance to fix the judgement as an omniscient narrator can do, we find ourselves in front of the rather disturbing spectacle of a world where, to quote Pirandello, everyone has their truth.

CD: But does this difficulty in accessing the truth affect every character? Is it a game of generalised make-believe?

AS: Without a doubt, the most denigrated and the most ingenuous are not free of opacity in this novel, and it is its great skill and one reason for its undeniable success. To conclude, Laclos has brought to an unequalled point of incandescence the art of innuendo. This is why the novel still provides an intense reading pleasure. The reader feels as though they are part of this game of fools and tries to be up to it.

CD: Alain Sandrier, thank you very much.

AS: Thank you Colas.

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LIBERTINE NOVEL

Colas DUFLO, Professor in French Literature, Paris Nanterre University

Patrick WALD LASOWSKI, Professor in French Literature, Paris 8 University

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Part 1 – Definition of libertinism

CD: Patrick Wald Lasowski, you teach 18th-century French literature at Paris 8 University. You have published two volumes of 18th-century libertine novelists in the prestigious collection La Pléiade. You have also published a *Libertine Dictionary*. So, before we get to the novel, maybe we could go back to the definition of libertinism. Unrighteousness or pursuit of pleasure?

PWL: Big question. It is a major issue indeed to know if the 18th century libertine is an impious man or a debauchee. Sometimes, as you know, we emphasise its scholarly, argumentative and obstinate contestation of religious dogmas, without any relation to pleasure-seeking. This is what is then called "libertinism of mind" or "libertinism of credence", of which philosophers were said to be the dangerous propagators, they who overthrew the frames of Christian thought, them whose nefarious influence led to materialism.

Terrestrial enjoyments then mingled with impiety and built up through deliberate transgression of worship practices. Their strong spirit was strong enough to party on the day of Christ's Passion, to go to the cabaret during Christmas Mass, to take a nun as mistress or to disguise a mistress in ecclesiastical dress to spice things up. Sometimes voluptuousness's abyss is self-sufficient, and so it is that in his *Dictionnaire critique, pittoresque et sentencieux*, the Marquis de Caraccioli wrote that: "The word libertine now only means a debauched man and no longer an impious one", contrary to what some dictionaries say. It was then a debauchery of manners.

To these libertinism of mind and manners, we must add the "libertinism of the pen", of all those the one that interests us particularly: writers, painters, draughtsmen, engravers, sculptors, in short, all the artists who engaged in the representation of scenes of pleasure. In these three cases, the key word was disruption. A libertine man was a being of disruption, the one by whom disturbance arrived, as they say, the one by whom the scandal comes.

Part 2 – Libertine novel

CD: The 18th century saw the emergence and full development of libertine novels, which took as main subject love affairs in every sense of the word. How can we explain this increase of libertine novels in the 18th century? How do you characterise the genre?

PWL: Let me use an expression specific to players, card players and all players who want a game to be interesting. In libertine novels, the representation of sexual scenes is what made the game interesting. This is what was at stake here, with its share of risks, detours, outrage and malice. The success of libertine novels is itself related to the story of the novel, regarded then, as you know, as a minor genre and that quickly went from what we would call " love and adventure stories " to "love

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adventures stories". How many novels benefited then of tacit permission because of their great success, even though they were pursued by censorship, because it was unthinkable, inconceivable to prohibit them.

And see, what an extraordinary project novelistic imagination rubbed against the Enlightenment's philosophical questioning. Scepticism, Hedonism, Epicureanism, encyclopaedic militancy, Providence reconsideration, negation of the soul's immortality, anti-spiritualism based on machinery, all this found in the libertine novel a formidable field of experimentation. To which must be added at the same time the development of a culture of pleasure, which established itself after Louis XIV's death, in the effervescence of the Regency, and which was perpetuated in the best years of Louis XV's reign.

For example, Saint-Simon told us how at Versailles, during the three-Christmas Midnight Masses, Philippe d'Orléans, France's Regent, showed an extraordinary diligence in reading his prayer book. Moved by his faith, his former governess complimented him on the way out. "You are very foolish, Madame Imbert," replied the Regent, "it was Rabelais that I had brought for fear of being bored." As you see, it was books against books, profane books against sacred books. The novel thus worked towards secularisation. The libertine novel was a declaration of atheism.

Part 3 – Obscene or veiled

CD: Can we say that there are different kinds of libertine novels? Should we distinguish obscene libertine novels, which explicitly stated sexual acts, and veiled libertine novels that spoke of it through allusions, euphemisms and metaphors?

PWL: Everything is based in this case, as everything is always based, on language. It is always a question of enriching the means by which language describes pleasure or by which it pretends to refuse it. Gauze is a light silk fabric. To cover with gauze, to veil, was the expression used when one attempted to attenuate licentious remarks. Metaphors, equivocal allusions, as you recall, allow one to show the nakedness of bodies, scandalous, licentious scenes, details of sexual postures, each time covering the text with a veil of decency. Thus, sometimes, it was said that the libertine was the most brilliant man in the world or that he multiplied the proofs of his passion. But sometimes, as the scandalous *Portier des Chartreux* confessed: "I immediately began to heavily hump and give her prick thrusts that she felt up to her heart." On one side cold blood, politeness of the code, allusions and sighs, on the other, brutality, cynicism, frankness of the language.

But beware, veiling obscenities was not thoughtful, used to protect the reader's modesty. It was full of malice. The malice in Crebillon's *The Night and the Moment* for example or in La Morlière's *Angola*. The malice was to describe scenes, situations, and scandalous sexual acts in a language so encrypted that the reader had to wonder about what the lovers were doing exactly.

Part 4 – Forbidden books

CD: There was a whole clandestine trade around these novels.

PWL: Indeed. Hunted by the police, anti-religious treatises, political pamphlets and obscene books shared the same destiny and were more or less pursued by the police depending on the case and depending on the virulence of the poison distilled by these works. Printed outside the kingdom, they were shipped from London, Amsterdam, The Hague and Brussels, Hamburg, Geneva or Lausanne. I could go on.

These "drugs", as they were called then, crossed borders, by land or by sea, through mountain trails, in ships' holds, in sheets, to be stored near Paris. That's when they crossed the capital's gates, in a carriage's double bottom, in pockets, under the skirts of women, before being stitched together by booksellers selling them clandestinely, while for their part peddlers offered them on the quays, in Versailles' gardens or in the Palais Royal's.

But French printers were not left out. In Paris, Rouen, Reims, Avignon, they played an active part in printing these books called "chestnuts". Some printers had a well-established reputation. Those were the ones snitches and police inspectors watched, waiting for a misstep. On the novels' covers, the printing libertine genius announced works printed in Kythera, Luxuropolis, Japan, a hundred miles from the Bastille. The ideal printed location announced Hell or the Vatican.

Conclusion – Libertine images

CD: You recently published a book titled *Scènes du plaisir* devoted to libertine engraving. How is illustration an integral part of these novels?

PWL: Allow me a quote, or rather the memory of a quote. In January 1749, *Les Cinq années littéraires* by Pierre Clement reported that the famous *Thérèse the philosopher*, the Marquis d'Argens' scandalous novel, was very expensive because, has Clement explained, it was new, proscribed and adorned with infamous prints, in a word, libertine in every sense and excesses of the word. We could not imagine a better definition or better advertising for libertine novels.

As we know, novelistic writing's object is the depiction of pleasure. So, how could designers, painters, engravers elude this challenge? Illustrated books were the jewels of libertine libraries. By making sexual spectacle its main motive, the libertine novel called for illustration. See how the *Story of Dom Bougre*, *portier des Chatreux*, included 18 engravings in 1741, 21 in 1748 and 24 in 1787. That is the rule, and it is a golden one: more is always needed.

CD: Patrick Wald Lasowski, thank you very much.

PWL: Thank you.

THE SENTIMENTAL NOVEL

Colas DUFLO, Professor in French Literature, Paris Nanterre University

Laurence VANOFLEN, Lecturer in Literature and Philosophy, Paris Nanterre University

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Part 1 – A novel on private life and sentimentalism

CD: Good morning Laurence Vanoflen. The huge success of Rousseau's *New Heloise* resulted in a flourishing of novels that followed its track. What characterises those novels and how can we describe them?

LV: Good morning Colas Duflo. It is true that until the end of the century, a set of authors took up patterns of a suffering and compensated virtue, in reference to *The New Heloise* or to the subtitle of *Pamela* by Richardson, that Sade will use in *Justine, or The Misfortunes of Virtue.* Those novels were literally recreating internal life's, sentiment in the modern sense, the novelists exploring love stories using the entire registry of sentiments. Thus, novels like *Dolbreuse, Adèle de Sénange* or *Claire d'Albe* talk about loves like Julie and Saint-Preux's, thwarted by familial choices or by social norms. Indeed, *Claire d'Albe,* Sophie Cottin's novel, involves a heroine that is already married when she meets and falls in love with her husband's nephew.

The sentimental novel questioned hierarchies based on wealth and origin, asserted the hearts' rights over social conventions. We thus understand labels put on them afterwards: "sentimental novel", neologism created from the title of Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey,* in 1768, or even "sensitive novel" when emotions overwhelmed fiction in the last third of the century. For example, Loaisel de Tréogate gloated about dipping his quill in his tears. As in drama, the novel uses readers' capacity to identify to someone else. It is what the *Eulogy of Richardson* by Diderot was emphasising. It is therefore not surprising that men and women were interested, that is, cried and were moved by the ups and downs of characters made of paper.

Part 2 – The sentimental novel, a "feminine" genre?

CD: This genre is frequently, but not always, a work popular with female novelists. Laurence Vanoflen, you are interested in women's place in the Ancient Regime. You have worked on novelists like Isabelle de Charrière. How do you explain that the novel is one of the genres where women were most represented since the 18th century, and can we say that this presence evolved as the century wore on?

LV: The novel is a minor genre without rules, as you've said. It is liked by female readers. It was therefore appropriate for women deprived of academic training under the Ancient Regime and also deprived of acknowledged literary ambition. Furthermore, by the time natural aesthetic became the guarantee of fiction's truth, their fluency in conversation and letter-writing advantaged them greatly. Most of female novelists were indeed recognised letter writers.

The critic at that time highlighted this affinity between women and novels, even if Rousseau contested any genius to women using provocative terms, writing: "They don't know how to describe or feel love". But as the century went by, we see that the number of novels published by women was multiplied. The most read were those from Madame de Souza, Madame Cottin, Madame von Krüdener or Madame de Staël. Nevertheless, if the proportion of women in the overall number of authors doubled from 1784 to 1821, it still was only 4% at the beginning of the 19th century. And obviously, the readers of those novels were from both genders.

Part 3 – A few female novelists of the 18th century

CD: In any event, are there female novelists that 18th-century enthusiasts shouldn't ignore nowadays?

LV: Yes, undoubtedly. We can quote Graffigny, Riccoboni and Charrière, who now elicit unanimity. Madame de Graffigny published a single novel, *Letters from a Peruvian Woman*, which blends the heroine's genre with the model of the *Persian Letters* with great success. Thus, it combines an audacious critic of inequality and the fate of women, an itinerary of feminism training and a reflection on the other and on signs. Furthermore, its open-ended story can be subjected to different interpretations. Indeed, Zilia discovers at the end of the novel the infidelity of her lover, Aza, who converted to Christianity. And she refuses the hand of the gallant Deterville, to the great displeasure of many readers who had imagined endings where she married either Aza or Deterville.

We see in this novel's ending, chosen by Madame de Graffigny, a woman's access to consciousness and autonomy, because she pulls through at the end, dedicating herself to study and friendship. But there also might be a protest against patriarchy or maybe an illustration of an Enlightenment ideal, communication and trade of consciences. In a nutshell, the richness of the novel is beyond doubt.

Moving onto Madame Riccoboni, an actress then novelist who met with great success in the middle of the century. Laclos sent her his *Dangerous Liaisons* in 1757, obviously as a tribute to her success. In 1752, she spotlighted the natural aestheticism that Rousseau wrote in *The New Heloise.* Her first novel, *Letters of Mistress Fanny Butlerd*, is composed of monodic love letters published by a betrayed lover. Both a tribute to passion and the story of a deliberate error's that Fanny becomes gradually aware of, this novel is ingeniously questioning the relation between fiction and reality. The denunciation of masculine selfishness was often reported in Madame Riccoboni's writing, and some people saw in it something of narrow feminism. But it should be noticed that she also reacted to contemporary elaboration of utilitarianism.

Finally, our third example, Isabelle de Charrière, published after 1784 novels that subtly thwarted the genre's stereotypes because they generally had an open-ended story. They forced readers to understand the tale's meaning as they wished it to be. By doing so, her novels were subtly contesting the Enlightenment's optimism. Examples are the ideal maternal educations in *Letters written from Lausanne* in 1787 or the optimist relation between happiness and virtue in *Caliste's History* in 1787. Likewise, *Letters of Mistress Henley Published by Her Friend* is a counterpoint to the marital utopia of Clarens, and to *The New Heloise*, because it depicts without pathos the ordinary misfortune of a woman who marries to a reasonable husband, like if he was Wolmar's twin. Hence, the letter writer gives up on writing, pregnant, after her husband refused an important position in London without

consulting her. And the novel ends on these words: “In a year, maybe two, I hope you will learn that I am reasonable and happy or that I have passed away.” The “sentimental” novel not only was the holder but also the hub of the century’s new moral values, including humanity. To historians, it was by the identifying to fictional characters that the bourgeoisie became a private entity in the 18th century.

CD: Laurence Vanoflen, thank you very much.

LV: Thank you, Colas Duflo.

THE TALE

Colas DUFLO, Professor in French Literature, Paris Nanterre University

Carole BOIDIN, Lecturer (LIPO/LCR), Paris Nanterre University

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Part 1 – Antoine Galland's *One Thousand and One Nights*

CD: In 1704, Antoine Galland published *One Thousand and One Nights* with such success that it led to many imitations and sequels, but also to the birth of a whole literary genre, the oriental tale "à la française". Good morning Carole Boidin. You teach comparative literature and you conduct for Paris-Nanterre University's Master of Literature a seminar precisely devoted to this East and West cross-fertilisation. What exactly did Antoine Galland do?

CB: Good morning Colas. You must know that Antoine Galland was first a specialist of antiquity. At the time, an entire international network of ancient things scholars used the commercial and political emulation of great European powers around the Middle East to search this region's antiquity again. It is in this context that France has already seen born, especially since the end of the 1660s, a turkeries' trend and an interest in the religion and customs of Middle Eastern nations, as indicated by the broad success of Thévenot, Bernier and Chardin's travel narratives.

Galland brought back manuscripts, including a travel story that was in fact *Sinbad the Sailor*, which he translated. Then he published more widely *One Thousand and One Nights* at Barbin, a bookseller specialised in fairy tales, which is significant, but also in the travel stories I just mentioned. It is such a success that he soon published a pirate edition. Seven volumes had already been published, and the eighth wasn't from him. It was actually from Pétis de la Croix, a colleague of the College de France who translated stories from a Turkish manuscript for another project, which Barbin then interpolated as an eighth volume. So, it shows a well-rooted trend, soon to become European.

Galland, once this indelicacy fixed, published another four volumes of *One Thousand and One Nights*, sometimes based on handwritten sources, sometimes on stories told by Orientals in Paris at the time or on his own knowledge or readings. Pétis de la Croix published five volumes of his own project that he still entitled *One Thousand and One Days*. So, we can see that what Galland did, and what Pétis de la Croix did too, is that he seriously translated Arab stories which he then acclimated a bit because they were sometimes a little too light or too tedious for the supposed sensitivity of the public of his time.

But on the other hand, what is very interesting is that he turned Scheherazade into a real heroine, saving her kingdom from the cruelty of her husband with the charms of her stories, which constituted a sort of double discourse, a priori moral but also entertaining. Galland insisted a lot on this double aspect by making characters draw lessons from their experiences, which is something he specifically added to the stories.

Scheherazade spoke directly to the French public, explaining Oriental customs and beliefs necessary to the understanding of her stories, which allowed to scatter here and there allusions to current events. It was still very limited in *One Thousand and One Nights,* but it has been very much exploited in later versions of oriental tales.

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Part 2 – The trend of orientalised tales

CD: These oriental tales that have real Persian or Arabic sources, even if they were well dressed in the language of the classics, inspired a posterity of French parodies using the exoticism of the decor and ornamented Oriental styles. What characterises this trend of oriental tales “à la française”?

CB: Galland and Pétis de la Croix actually translated true Arab, Turkish and Persian tales, as continued to do several real translators but nevertheless, you are right, this success manifested itself especially in imitations which were not necessarily but often parodies. Besides a series of *One Thousand and One Nights* sequels like Jacques Cazotte’s, many books were entitled: *The Thousand and One Hours*, *The Thousand and One Quarter-hour*; there even was a rewrite of *The Héptameron* that was entitled *The Thousand and One Favours*. We can clearly see the rise of the oriental or “oriental-ish” tale, which sometimes drew only on the authors’ imagination but sometimes on oriental or Asian resources, mainly translated by students called "language youth".

This ancestral resource, real, so-called or fake, expanded. Thus, an author named Gueullette gathered, among others, Chinese or Mongolian collections but also *Soirées bretonnes* in 1712, which were supposed to be translated from 8th-century Breton texts. Mademoiselle de Lussan published *Veillées de Thessalie* in 1731, some of the texts going back to Antiquity. So we see that in these supposedly translated resources, we find common features: the entrenchment technique gave these collections a potentially infinite length; another very salient feature was the profusion of fantasy, which reigned already in *One Thousand and One Nights* and in fairy tales before it but which will now be multiplied thanks to all the new deities met in all regions of the world, summoned in a serious or parodic way.

It created a multiplication effect, not only of deities, of forms of fantasy, but also of types of characters. There were picturesque descriptions of various settings, whimsical characters, every component that allowed oriental fairy tales, more than other fairy tales, to be free from the constraints of likelihood or even good taste. As far as good taste is concerned, these tales, as you mentioned, used typically oriental stylistic forms that were sometimes caricatured, especially exclamations or slightly sententious formulas. But it is especially characters’ wit and a certain narrative irony that gave the genre its success.

Moreover, the narrators were endowed with a prodigious memory and a clearly displayed moral purpose, which authorised numerous arrangements, just about infinite. And especially since the technique of entrenchment emphasised the effects of stories on the recipient mind. Sometimes it's going to be in a funny way, as was the case in *A Thousand and One Follies* in 1742, by the same Cazotte I mentioned earlier, which insisted on the soporific power of tales.

Part 3 – Philosophy and libertinism

CD: These imitations, these sequels were characterised by an exoticism that is the hallmark of the genre. But there also is an erotic dimension, for example with Crebillon.

CB: Yes, in the context of this orientalist trend in France, the very free structure of the potentially infinite tale, as I said, was exploited by authors who were sometimes more subversive than the simple

translators of whom I spoke. These authors insisted on the exoticism and luxury of the Orient, using those to compose tales that could be openly erotic but also satirical.

So, allusions to current events developed and the oriental location served as a kind of veil to avoid censorship but also to push boundaries. We can mention here Crebillon with *Tanzaï and Néadarné*, in 1734, which earned him a few months in prison, and then the same author's *The Sopha*, in which a character relates in a fun way his transformation into a sofa and then tells us, quite precisely, all the intimate embraces he bore in the course of his travels.

In the 1740s and 1750s, La Morlière's *Angola*, Voisenon's *Sultan Misapouf* or Diderot, quite well-known now, with *The Indiscreet Jewels*, continued in this vein. But what you need to know is that it is paradoxically contemporaneous with a massive return to moralising tales.

Finally, the oriental tale "à la française" may take the form of a philosophical tale, and there I am obviously thinking of Voltaire.

Of course, in *Zadig*'s fictional dedication the Wise Persian who supposedly wrote the dedication warns his recipient against the wantonness of *One Thousand and One Nights* and what he calls tales without reason. *Zadig* stands out while still being an oriental tale. Voltaire has learned much about the Orient, like Montesquieu did, and exploited this "orientalist vein" probably to avoid censorship, but also to rely on knowledge, on Eastern beliefs and to develop utterly original reflections.

He kept from the Orientals, not just a kind of naivety but a certain irony. He used ingenuous characters as critical tools. He also relied on oriental apologues, well-known at the times, including Pilpay's *Fables*, that partly inspired La Fontaine's *Fables*, or another tradition called *The Three Princes of Serendip*, which he used very exactly for one of *Zadig*'s episodes. All these stories, these seemingly simplistic oriental narratives became for him a kind of matrix in which he instilled philosophical content several times, especially in other tales like *The History of a Good Brahmin* or *The White Bull*.

CD: Carole Boidin, thank you very much.

CONCLUSION: TRIUMPH OF THE NOVEL

Colas DUFLO, Professor in French Literature, Paris Nanterre University

Part 1 – A flourishing of fictional works

The 18th century, pursuing a movement started in the second half of the 17th century, was truly the time when the novel developed and became a major genre. We mentioned and commented on some great books during this week of MOOC but we could name a whole crowd of major and minor authors who wrote works that still deserve to be read, and as long as we do the effort of getting used to the time distance, can still be read with much pleasure.

Almost randomly, one could mention *La Mouche* by Mouhy, prolific author who wrote all kinds of fictional work, *The Perverted Peasant* by Restif de La Bretonne, *Faublas* by Louvet de Couvray or the *Lettres neuchâteloises* by Isabelle de Charrière.

Part 2 – Hybridisation and genre interweaving

All these authors developed a genre-blending entertainment and depth, escapism and inner life analysis, fiction and truth, narration and reflection. Since the beginning of the century and even more after *the Persian Letters* or *The Life of Marianne*'s great successes, 18th-century novel is characterised by hybridisation and blending of genres. It was a decisive moment in literary history and 19th-century novels inherited this ambition to describe the true nature of a philosophy of passions and an analysis of human relationships in and by the adventure stories happening to fictional characters.

Part 3 – The novel and the Enlightenment debate

It must be emphasised that the novel is not in a literary bubble, isolated from the world. It received and restructured the debates that cross society and even more, it participated to them. It's *Marianne*, forcing the reader to think about what makes true nobility, birth or merit. It's *Cleveland*, interested, as many Prevost readers were, by the debates on atheistic materialism. It's the controversy of Newtonians and Cartesians at the Academy of Sciences, mocked in Diderot's *The Indiscreet Jewels*, the quarrel over French music evoked in a letter from Rousseau's *New Heloise*, it's the optimistic philosophy, the religious intolerance, slavery or war's misdeeds, reviewed in Voltaire's *Candide*. In short, all of the intellectual debates of the time could be found in novels, sometimes explicitly and sometimes evasively, or in an allegorical form, including certain debates concerning politics or religion that could not take place so directly outside of fiction.

In an absolute and all-Catholic monarchy, fictional literature had the capacity for freedom in indirect speech that serious writing could not always afford. It is no coincidence that Marivaux or Prevost, among the greatest novelists of the time, also wrote in newspapers. "Le Spectateur français" for Marivaux, "Le Pour et Contre" for Prevost, periodicals that echoed debates of the times, anecdotes and topics that were discussed. The novel had the same readers this periodical press did, interested in

the same subjects. More than in other forms of literature, more rigid or standardised, this genre without nobility, without place in the hierarchy and without codes was marked by the circulation of ideas.

We observe that many of the major or minor collaborators of the *Encyclopaedia* had also written novels. Besides the obvious Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire or Montesquieu, we can add forgotten authors like Marmontel or Toussaint. And one can think that the realisation of the novel's ability to transcribe real life has something to do with the attempt of some 18th-century authors like Diderot, Sedaine or Beaumarchais to reform theatre with what has been called "the bourgeois drama".

Part 4 – The novel and moral standards secularisation

It would be an error of perspective to imagine that novels only record and echo debates and thesis thought elsewhere. They fully participate and use the novel genre own resources. Historians of ideas have described the 18th century as a time of moral standards secularisation, which means that morality was no longer thought of solely by religious norms but by social norms. One could show that the novel largely contributed to this secularisation of moral debates.

Novelists forced the reader to live vicarious experiences and reflections that accompany them by telling stories that put them on stage and entrusting them to characters who live and contend with them. The libertine novel, for example, is not just an erotic literature for entertainment. It described scenes that directly conflict with religious moral norms and often accompanied them with dissertations seeking to found morals not on divine commandments but on the requirements of human nature. Thus, it broadly disseminated in a clandestine, but rather widely circulated, printed material a whole heterodox philosophy that was previously communicated in a much more confidential and handwritten form. It also helped articulating it effectively and staging it in the characters' adventures.

Let us say for example that *Therese the Philosopher* probably did much more for the diffusion of heterodox thought in 18th-century society than Diderot's complete work, and the novel as a whole contributed to the Enlightenment debate on a very different level than the *Encyclopaedia*, but no doubt, just as effectively.

BOUCHER'S PAINTING SEEN BY DIDEROT

Colas DUFLO, Professor in French Literature, Paris Nanterre University

Fabrice MOULIN, Lecturer in French Literature, Paris Nanterre University

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Reading by Colas Duflo and Fabrice Moulin.

Salon of 1765.

"I do not know what to say about this man, the deterioration of taste, colour, composition, characters, expression, drawing, following step by step the depravity of manners. What do you want this artist to throw on his canvas? What he imagines; and what can a man who lives his life with low-life prostitutes imagine? I challenge you to find in the whole countryside a blade of grass from these landscapes. And then a confusion of objects piled on top of each other, so out of place, so disparate that it is less the painting of a sensible man than the dream of a madman.

I dare say that this man knows nothing of what grace is. I dare say he has never known the truth. I dare say that the ideas of delicacy, honesty, innocence, simplicity have become almost foreign to him. I dare say that he has not for a moment seen nature, at least one which is made to interest my soul, yours, that of a well-born child, that of a wise woman. I dare say it is tasteless. Between the infinity of proofs that I could give, only one will suffice. In the multitude of figures of men and women that he has painted, I dare us to find four of character belonging to the bas-relief, even less to the statue; there are too many pouts, too many simpers, manners, and affectation for severe art. Although he shows them naked, I still see their lipsticks, artificial beauty marks, pompoms and all the grooming frills. When he paints children, he groups them well but they remain to frolic on clouds.

In this innumerable family, you will not find one to exercise real life actions, to study lessons, to read, to write, to weave hemp. They are romantic, ideal natures, little bastards of Bacchus and Silenus.

My friend, is there no police in this academy? In the absence of a commissioner on the board preventing that from entering, would it not be allowed to kick him along the salon, down the staircase, to the yard, until shepherd, shepherdess, sheepfold, donkey, birds, cage, trees, child, all the pastoral is in the street? Alas no, it must remain in place. But the good taste, outraged, undertakes the brutal but just execution.

And you believe, my friend, that my brutal taste will be more generous to this one? Not at all, I hear it screaming inside me: "Out of the salon, out of the salon!" In vain I repeat Chardin's lesson: "Gentle, gentle", it is aggravated and cries only louder: "Out of the salon!" It is an image of delusion. Right on the front, always the shepherdess Catinon or Favart, lying down and asleep with a nice swelling on the left eye. Why fall asleep in such a damp place? A small cat on her bosom. Behind this woman, starting from the edge of the canvas, and sinking successively to different levels, turnips and cabbage and leeks and a clay pot and syringas in this pot and a big block of stone, and on this big stone block, a large vase, garlands of flowers and trees and greenery and landscape. In front of the sleeper, a

standing shepherd gazing at her. They are separated by a small rustic barricade. He carries a basket of flowers with one hand, while on the other he holds a rose. There, my friend, tell me what a kitten is doing on the bosom of a peasant girl who does not sleep at the door of her cottage.

And this rose in the peasant's hand, is it not of an inconceivable dullness? And why doesn't that idiot bend over, does not take, does not steal a kiss on the mouth that is presented? Why doesn't he step forward slowly? But do you not think that it's everything the painter wanted to throw on his canvas? Oh no! Is there not another landscape beyond? Do we not see rising from behind the trees the smoke probably from a neighbouring hamlet? Same confusion of objects and falseness of colours as before. What an abuse of brush skills."

Salon of 1767.

"Have we not seen in the salon, seven or eight years ago, a woman naked, stretched out on pillows, leg here, leg there, offering the most voluptuous head, the most beautiful back, the most beautiful buttocks, inviting pleasure and inviting it with the easiest attitude, the most convenient to what is said to be the most natural, or at least the most advantageous? No offence to Boucher who had not blushed about prostituting his wife himself, after whom he had painted this voluptuous figure, I say that if I had had voice in this chapter, I would not have deferred saying to him that if, thanks to my caducity and his, this painting was innocent for us, it was very fit to send my son out of the Academy to Fromenteau Street, which is not far from it, and from there to Louis or Keyser's, which did not suit me at all."

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