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Becoming Fanny – Becoming Eugénie: Who Is the Revolutionary? (Jane Austen versus Marquis de Sade)

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I think it ought not to be set down as certain, that a man must be acceptable to every woman he may happen to like himself.

Mansfield Park, Jane Austen (1814)

It is indisputable that, in the natural condition in which women are born, they enjoy the advantages of all other female animals and, like them and with no exception, they belong to all males.

Philosophy in the Boudoir, Marquis de Sade (1795)

Two fictional narratives: two young girls come of age in revolutionary times. One, the poor daughter of a retired sailor in England, Fanny Price of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), is sent to wealthy relatives to grow up. The other, Eugénie Mistival of Marquis de Sade's *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (1795), is the daughter of a well-off merchant. She is introduced by her author into the closed confines of the libertine boudoir of a married noblewoman of dubious morals, Madame de Saint-Ange, for her training. Each girl grows into her author's fictional notion of an adult woman: Fanny becomes the independent agent of her own happiness, whereas Eugénie turns herself into a tool for the pleasure of her male "masters."

Fanny Price and Eugénie Mistival seem to be diametrically opposed in values and goals. Their authors write out of such vastly different worldviews that there can be very little that these two young people share. Nevertheless, both narratives follow the protagonists' usual pattern of fictional progress into adult consciousness. Fanny, over eight years, and Eugénie, within one violent day, grow through an initial awakening or "rising action," into a "crisis and initiation," and then both finally find their "resolution," or acceptance of their places in their authors' imagined worlds.

Each exemplifies her author's views of what is required in the name of social justice. Much of Austen's England in the 1790s and early 1800s strove to preserve its illusion of domestic peace and order, threatened by the social upheaval perceived to be seeping across the Channel from France, where, in

popular opinion, chaos reigned. Many English subjects, including Austen, saw this threat as a dark and menacing “other,” infecting their own, supposedly, well-governed home with radical values of questionable moral basis. Austen sets up the estate of Mansfield Park to represent her homeland as what appears at first to be a bastion of justice and safety to be preserved against social change infiltrating from beyond its borders.

Sade, on the other hand, himself a victim as well as a perpetrator of violence, writes *Philosophy in the Boudoir* from prison. He is angry, vindictive, and ready to tear down any and all social authority, touting as his justification nature and its necessary changes. He attacks such traditional structures as the family, the Church, and its morality. These are the very institutions Austen, on the surface, will defend. So, *Mansfield Park* seems conservative and orderly, teaching a lesson of decorum and politeness, while *Philosophy in the Boudoir* presents us with all the hellish chaos and revolutionary reversals of Sadean parody. Readers might be tempted to name Sade as the more revolutionary of the two authors. This would be a hasty conclusion.

We shall see that Sade’s Eugénie is molded by those around her for their own purposes. Her promise of happiness is an illusion: it is the happiness of her “masters” that will dictate the process and unjust results of her training as she internalizes their selfish ethos in Sade’s wishful thinking. Shy Fanny, on the other hand, defies all patriarchal authority in the person of Sir Thomas, her uncle and master of Mansfield Park. She learns to stand alone and make her way as a mature individual. It is clear which of these two young women has become the true revolutionary. Fanny Price breaks through as an autonomous person, choosing and seeking her own happiness. This is why Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* is more subversive than Marquis de Sade’s outrageous and self-indulgent exaggerations in *Philosophy in the Boudoir*.

Rising Action

For both girls, fictional progress begins with an invitation. When Fanny Price is ten years old, Austen sends her from her impoverished family in Portsmouth, England, to her mother’s two sisters, Mrs.

Norris and Lady Bertram, at Mansfield Park, the Bertrams' estate. Eugénie enters the boudoir of a sexually experienced friend, Madame de Saint-Ange. Each girl will be exposed to an education of sorts in a situation foreign to her upbringing. Both grow, learn, and adapt.

Fanny is disoriented by the social difference between her own family's cramped spaces and the great ways of a country baronet like her uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram. Austen expresses Fanny's unhappiness in terms of the house itself: "The grandeur ... astonished, but could not console her. The rooms were too large for her to move in with ease; whatever she touched she expected to injure, and she crept about in constant terror of something or other." (1992, 12)

Terror seems to be the defining word for Fanny's early experience at Mansfield Park. Sir Thomas, master of the estate, adds to her fear with his concern for decorum and propriety, concepts new to his young niece. Before Fanny's arrival, he has already decided on "the distinction proper to be made between the girls [his own two daughters, Maria and Julia, and his niece]." (1992, 9) Fanny quickly internalizes this social distinction, feeling that she can "never be important to any one." (1992, 24) Austen presents Fanny, at the opening of the narrative, as unhappily misplaced and sensitively alert. She has been uprooted to a foreign world and has had no say whatsoever in this change. Fanny is the object of other people's decisions and definitions, and she can expect that her life will probably continue to be decided for other people's convenience and economic advantage (in the name of her happiness, of course): "Give a girl a good education, and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one," Mrs. Norris, Fanny's interfering aunt, informs us, "she has the means of settling well, without farther expense to anybody." (1992, 4) We see Fanny as a frightened, insecure child, out of place in a strange world that reifies her. As such, Fanny has an outsider's view of things.

Austen appears to concentrate on the internal life at Mansfield Park at the cost of the great events of the outside world. Her work has often been trivialized because of a supposed lack of interest in the wider politics of her turbulent times. However, the intricate descriptions of life in Mansfield Park cue the reader that the estate itself, in this novel, represents more than meets the eye. Juliet McMaster, in *Jane Austen on Love*, refers to a "succinct code" (1978, 32) employed by Austen to relate more than literal

meaning: what if, for Austen, the fine house, run so tyrannically, under such strict rule, could be seen as a stand-in for Austen's own judiciously governed (so runs the myth) home country? As in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* or Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, such a strategy could allow the author freedom of criticism on the part of her sensitive, displaced main character. We can carry this notion still further: If *Mansfield Park* (read: England) represents all that is order, justice, and tradition, bucolic old country values and "home," at least as long as its monarch, Sir Thomas, is in residence, then, Austen may be implying a threatening "other" to all that supposed orderly peace. Interference from outside of new and questionable morals – the Crawford brother and sister, Henry and Mary, for instance – may represent the menace of a chaotic, poorly run (to the eyes of the English), and immoral post-revolutionary France all too close to their own shores.

Austen plays on her countrymen's suspicion of the revolution in France and its questionable new morals. Sade, two decades earlier, also deals with French revolutionary upheaval in *Philosophy in the Boudoir*. His fantastic tale of sexual initiation unfolds in some "hybrid historical aura," (Plessix 1998, 358) neither pre- nor post-revolution, or maybe both at once, somewhere in France. The strange mix of aristocratic and republican discourse is confusing. This is intentional: by avoiding a historical time or place, Sade universalizes his tale, intended for "Voluptuaries of all ages and sexes ... Lubricious women ... girls ... And you, loveable profligates." (Sade 2006, 1) Not distracted by historical realism, the reader is free to savor the brutal sequence of Eugénie's various violent initiations.

Under Sade's pen, these initiatives are enthusiastically sought by the girl. This is far from Fanny's shrinking timidity. Where Fanny struggles, Eugénie eagerly embraces the new ideas and morals that seem startlingly revolutionary. What is questionable is the direction this girl's growth takes. As the piece unfolds, the author reveals his arcane values and purposes.

Both girls will be instructed and, in one way or another, initiated into life. The implication in both cases is that happiness must be their goal; whose happiness that might be is not initially addressed. Austen's scheme bases personal happiness on goodness. She often demonstrates her values by showing up their lack in many of her characters, for example in the superficial education of Fanny's two female

cousins, who do not possess “... the less common acquirements of *self-knowledge*, *generosity*, and *humility*.” (1992, 17, my italics) These are not Sadean values. Eugénie refers to her early upbringing, largely carried out by her mother, citing the usual modesty, decency, and respect. (2006, 13) Madame de Saint-Ange and her accomplice, Dolmancé, denounce these as “old fashioned virtue[s],” which Eugénie must now “do without.” (2006, 13) The modern world needs new values.

Sade is clear on where we are to find these new values. Dolmancé, Sade’s voice throughout *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, claims that “decency” (one may here include family, motherhood, religion, and many other traditional institutions that stood in the way of Sade’s sexual extravagances) is “another medieval custom ... It is so unnatural!” (2006, 13) The virtues Sade does endorse include such qualities as “pride, ambition, greed ... coldness.” He bases his rejection of traditional virtues like modesty or duty to family on “reason” as being “the organ of nature.” (2006, 23) Happiness must be based in nature. Austen would agree with Sade on this one point. However, who is to interpret or define “nature”?

Austen seems to rely largely on values of innate goodness, like those made popular by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with whose writings she was undoubtedly familiar. Human contact to the “other,” to society (Rousseau) or to bad society (Austen: a society ripped asunder by violent revolution, for example) corrupts us and we lose our native virtue and our way. Fanny hears from her sympathetic cousin Edmund that she has “good sense, and a sweet temper,” and he is sure that she has “a grateful heart, that could never receive kindness without wishing to return it.” (1992, 24) Austen’s notion of virtue contains friendship and connection to other people. Even Fanny’s critical aunt Norris has to admit, “I have always found you a very good girl.” (1992, 23) Fanny is, at this point in the narrative, unschooled and unspoiled by society, in what is arguably a “natural” state, and, in her case, that is undeniably good.

Sade’s version of nature and human nature is not so benevolent. He inverts Rousseau’s popular views, turning people into natural predators. Lucienne Frappier-Mazur, in *Writing the Orgy*, sees this reversal at least partly in terms of class: “the negative intertextuality between Rousseau and Sade often centers on the aristocratic ideology which governs a large part of the Sadean novel, in contrast with the bourgeois ideology of [Rousseau’s] *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.” (1996, 110) Sade, who, after his release from

prison in the 1790s, changed his name to “Louis Desade, man of letters,” and then to simply “Louis Sade”; who “grew ... skilled at revolutionary rhetoric” (Plessix 1998, 312); who served as secretary of his local district, and even as its president for a short time (1998, 312-313); this same pseudo-revolutionary endorsed a crude hierarchy of class, gender, and power. He himself wrote, in a letter quoted in Plessix, “I’m anti-Jacobin ... I hate them to death ... I wish the nobility to regain its luster.” (1998, 314) His fiction from this period agrees. Eugénie’s instructors, Madame de Saint-Ange and the managerial Dolmancé (along with Madame’s younger brother, referred to as the Chevalier) are of the aristocratic class, while Eugénie is only the daughter of a wealthy merchant. Dolmancé explains to Eugénie the role of nature in human behavior: “... nature requires both vices and virtues for perfectly maintaining its equilibrium ... We therefore do no evil following these notions.” (2006, 168) All inequities and transgressions are permitted in the name of “nature.”

Taken to its logical conclusion, Dolmancé’s (Sade’s) philosophy leads to a view of “lesser” beings as objects to be used by the stronger: “... we don’t have to know whether our actions will please or displease the *object* serving us.” (2006, 64, my italics) Servants in the Saint-Ange household are there to be used. Madame offers her gardener, Augustin, who is chosen because “his member is thirteen inches long and eight and a half around.” (2006, 76) Later Dolmancé explains that Madame, when finished using this servant, would “take another, she’d give Augustin no further thought ... she’d immolate him herself ...” (2006, 95). Sade, the Marquis who composes revolutionary polemics and extols the virtues of “courage, stoicism, and enlightenment,” (2006, 168) appears to be doing nothing more idealistic than defending, in the name of nature, his own aristocratic privilege.

Austen, on the other hand, implies that the social inequities observed at Mansfield Park are not only wrong, but also not innate. She provides a subtext of disapproval of snobbism and pompous self-indulgence. Her description of the eldest son of Sir Thomas, young Tom, as “born only for expense and enjoyment,” (1992, 15) is typical. His mother, Lady Bertram, sits “nicely dressed on a sofa, doing some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty, thinking more of her pug than her children, but very indulgent to the latter, when it did not put herself to inconvenience.” (1992, 18) Austen shows us a

woman who is, by nature good and kind, rendered self-indulgent by her social rank. The generosity of spirit Austen has bestowed on Fanny is lacking in many of her social superiors. However, Fanny herself is susceptible: she finds Portsmouth, on her return after eight years, “dreadful” in its “deficiencies.”

(1992, 405)

Money and class ruin people’s natural goodness. Austen’s realistic critique of social inequities is what lifts her body of work above the genre of romantic novels. Social position and income are major preoccupations of her novels, *Mansfield Park* included. One can cite numerous examples of this premise, such as the opening description of the difference in marriage economics among the three Ward sisters (Lady Bertram, Mrs. Norris, and Fanny’s unfortunate mother, 1992, 1-3). Later, Mary Crawford claims that, marriage “is a manoeuvring business” (1997, 139); it is not, according to Mary, a romantic one. Austen’s concern remains, not true love and its ability to conquer all, but rather social justice: a young woman must be permitted to make her own choice in such an important decision as marriage. Free choice, independent of social expectations or pressures, is the question here. Fanny must be allowed to decide her own future, just as Elizabeth Bennett, or Anne Elliot, or any other intelligent woman must. This is a subversive idea.

A socially constructed hierarchy can threaten the natural goodness of humans, Austen warns. As we have already seen, according to Sade, social differences flow from nature; therefore, they are not to be resisted. One supremely important form of natural difference for him, to be exploited by the rulers, is gender difference. His own male gender is, of course, the superior one, on which idea, Frappier points out repeatedly, Sade’s psychic survival depends. She stresses his preference for the male and his denial or obliteration of anything feminine, whether in principle or in body, in order to achieve a ruling and controlling “sameness,” where all sexuality “turns out to be merely a derivative of the masculine.” (1996, 32)

In his lessons for young Eugénie, Dolmancé, begins with female anatomy. He uses Madame de Saint-Ange’s naked body as a model, thus reinforcing the author’s treatment of women as objects. He begins by describing her breasts, which he finds “very *useful* for pleasure,” but neglects to explain whose

pleasure they serve, until he clarifies how a woman sometimes “squeezes and compresses” a man’s member between them. It is now easy to make the leap to what interests him most: “... as for this member, which we must talk about *incessantly*, Madame, isn’t it time we discussed it with our pupil?” So much for female anatomy. Dolmancé instructs, “you will take hold of the *subject*...” (2006, 15, my italics throughout) He and Madame elaborate for pages on the “scepter of Venus,” making clear the author’s preference. It is Sade’s use of words like “useful” or especially “subject” that define his position: by granting subjectivity to the male member, he, by default, relegates female anatomy (along with the female principle) to a thing to be used, or to be annihilated altogether.

There is unspoken fear lurking in Sade’s misogyny, as Frappier indicates: “... the ability to give birth makes woman dangerously incompatible with [Sade’s] model of oneness.” (1996, 44) Sade’s preference for sodomy over vaginal intercourse and his abhorrence of the female body (2006, 75) lead the reader to suspect some deep fear of what Frappier terms “otherness,” and the author’s wish to discredit or destroy it. Regarding conception, Madame, herself a woman, teaches Eugénie that, “the fetus owes its existence purely to the man’s come ... The come that *we* furnish serves only to elaborate.” (2006, 21) Sade, the voracious reader, must have been conversant with the latest theories and must have known that this notion was, in Frappier’s words, a “bizarre and already discredited theory.” (1996, 42) She cites not only Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, but also Maupertius, Buffon, and Pierre Roussel, scientists who all endorse a “bilateral theory” that assigns a role in procreation to both mother and father. (1996, 42) Untrue though Madame’s archaic and misogynistic nonsense is, it serves Sade’s fantasy of a phallogentric utopia. “Does he actually believe in [his own] thesis? (1996, 42) asks Frappier. From shaky science, Madame next draws a moral conclusion: “the child formed with the father’s blood owes his filial love purely to his father.” (2006, 21) This disdain of the maternal, articulated by a woman character to lend it credibility, is an important lesson for Eugénie.

Madame, in true revolutionary form, claims, “the rights of man have been so carefully widened and deepened that girls must stop believing themselves to be the slaves of their families.” Women’s equal rights? Autonomy for girls? One could almost think so. By “heed[ing] nature” and “the laws of

animals,” (2006, 32) Madame “proves” to Eugénie that a girl “at fifteen [must] be her own mistress and become whatever she wishes.” (2006, 33) There seems to be a note of Austen here. Madame leads Eugénie and the reader to believe that all this is about women’s freedom and happiness, but as she continues, her real position comes clear. She defines women’s “natural” place: “A woman’s fate is to be like a she-wolf, a bitch: she must belong to everyone who wants her.” (2006, 33) Madame warms to her theme:

In whatever state a woman may be, my darling – whether girl, woman, or widow – she must never have any other goal, any other occupation, any other desire than to be fucked [note the passive] from dawn till dusk. It’s toward that single end that nature has created her. (2006, 36)

Madame is a convenient female object invented by Sade, carrying a very different message from Fanny’s cousin Edmund, a man who endorses Fanny’s right to choose. (1992, 343-344)

Sade’s exaggerated misogyny, Frappier proposes, must indicate more than the author’s words allow: these women are symbolically representing something. (1996, 59-60) We return to the notion of fear. To Sade, women are enemies and stand for some frightening principle in his world that has been ripped apart by revolution. In his fantasy, men like Dolmancé control women, and any inconvenient by-products will be defined as nothing and done away with. Pregnancy, the great primeval mystery, is not to be trusted; should a child be conceived by some negligence, Madame explains, a mother has the right (therefore the obligation) to destroy what she created (a contradiction to the pseudo-science of before? What *does* Sade believe?). (2006, 61) What at first seems revolutionary, promoting freedom and happiness for women is only skilled jargon aimed at annihilating a mysterious and frightening power.

It is out of his frenzied anxiety that the Marquis develops his highly staged orgy scenes. Frappier writes that Sade must constantly reaffirm “the superiority of the male principle” out of fear and vulnerability. She explains, “Whether the victims of orgy belong to the same class as the masters, or to a lower one, in so far as they are women they belong to a class of inferiors and therefore, in the eyes of the aristocrat agent [Dolmancé or Sade himself], to a class of intruders and enemies.” (1996, 60) Enemies need to be wiped out, and this is the lesson taught to Eugénie from her entrance until the last page of her

drama. She will annihilate any form of the feminine principle, starting with her own mother, to prove her commitment to the masters. This, as Sade explains, will fulfill her natural destiny. Female self-destruction in the name of male pleasure is the ultimate utopia for this frustrated and frightened author. The orgy scenes of his pornographic fiction might be seen as some sort of desperate compensation: an attempt (at least in his imagination and under his pen) to control his world. Frappier defies readers who find a utopia of freedom suggested in Sade's writings; the strict control of his staged orgy scenes denies freedom, except to those privileged few who define themselves as masters. (1996, 73)

While Eugénie embraces her author's misogyny and prepares to act on it for the promotion of someone's pleasure, Fanny is slowly developing her selfhood and her own views. From the beginning of *Mansfield Park*, Fanny's author grants her an inner life and subjectivity, even if many at Mansfield deny it. Fanny, early on, shows a silent awareness of the problems plaguing the supposed good government of her uncle's manor, such as for example, "some recent losses on [Sir Thomas'] West India Estate, in addition to his eldest son's extravagance." (1992, 22) She also takes note of her two female cousins' condescending treatment of herself, although Austen reinforces Fanny's timid insecurity by adding, "She thought too lowly of her own claims to feel injured by it." (1992, 18) However, when the decision to remove her from Mansfield is made, she rises out of silence to voice her dismay to her sympathetic cousin Edmund. (1992, 23)

Attracted by his kindness, she has accepted Edmund's tutelage. (1992, 20) Edmund is to Fanny, at least in the beginning of her story, what Dolmancé is throughout to Eugénie – a male instructor who shapes her mind. Although, according to Juliet McMaster, the master/pupil relationship in Austen's novels is "not parasitic but symbiotic ... mutual and joyful," (1978, 45) we are led to question the subtle dynamic the author builds between Fanny and Edmund. Where Eugénie has no thoughts of her own, Fanny develops independent opinions and ideas. Through separation from her "master," Edmund (over his affection for Mary Crawford), Fanny is able to "graduate from the status of pupil to adult." (1978, 54)

Austen never abandons the subtext of Fanny's criticism. Fanny mistrusts Henry Crawford and finds no good friend in Mary Crawford, despite her 700 pounds a year. She disapproves all indiscretions

perpetrated during Sir Thomas' absence. In short, Fanny thinks for herself. On the other hand, Eugénie is accorded no inner life by her author. Her compliance with the rules defined by Dolmancé in the theatrical orgies he sets up is aimed toward bodily pleasure, which he names happiness. However, it is not Eugénie's happiness or her subjectivity which are important to Sade, but the "happiness" – sexual titillation – of the male aristocratic "masters" and audience of the orgies. Justice, in Sade's utopia, is not equally distributed.

Ultimately, both Fanny and Eugénie are controlled by their authors, since they are created by them. It is no surprise that the girl invented by a middle-class, educated, unmarried English woman has thoughts of her own, whereas the girl dreamed up by the aristocratic male prisoner yearning for a return of his freedom and privilege becomes a tool shaped by her social/gender "superiors." Both girls will grow into their worlds and learn; both will face a crisis and initiation, one embracing them eagerly and with curiosity, if not with emotion, and the other shrinking in timid fear, but nevertheless, not turning away.

Crisis and Initiation

The crisis and initiation into adulthood for Eugénie and Fanny shock us because they are more than what we expect. Fanny rebels against Sir Thomas, and in doing so, this shy girl metaphorically rebels against all accustomed usage, expectation, and patriarchal rule. Eugénie, far from rebelling, gleefully adopts her instructors' ethos. She rapes and mutilates her mother, Madame de Mistival, who has arrived in the secluded boudoir to retrieve her endangered daughter. Eugénie's actions, in full accord with her teachers (and author), viciously negate all things feminine and maternal. Cruelty, for Eugénie's world, is a virtue to the degree that kindness and caring are valued in Austen's fiction. In her acquisition of values, each protagonist exemplifies important themes for her author.

By the mid-point of her story, *Mansfield Park* is no longer too large for Fanny, so that the reader is led to ask, who has changed, *Mansfield* or Fanny? Still timid and unassuming, she seems always to have possessed what her aunt Norris criticizes: "a little spirit of secrecy, and independence, and

nonsense.” (1992, 319) We have already seen this “spirit” rise to speech when her happiness is threatened. The prospect of marriage to the charming but irresponsible Henry Crawford arouses Fanny’s protest to the point of overt rebellion. Eugénie’s path takes an opposite direction, internalizing and acting out every madness her author can dream up for her. Two narratives: two entirely different directions. Both girls set out to become “women,” but what does that mean? For Austen, the concept of *human* supercedes that of woman. “Self-knowledge, generosity, and humility” (1992, 17) are the virtues that, in Austen’s scheme of things, all humans should strive for. Austen, the apparently conservative writer, fosters a revolutionary egalitarianism that is utterly foreign to Sade’s aristocratic authoritarianism. Describing young Tom’s recovery, both of his health and of his natural goodness, Austen tells us that he is no longer the spoiled and selfish child he once was, but rather, “he became what he ought to be, useful to his father, steady and quiet, and not living merely for himself.” (1992, 460) Fanny seems always to have owned “that higher species of self-command, that just consideration of others, that knowledge of her own heart ...” (1992, 90). Overall, we see not only Austen’s concern with a healthy self-knowledge, but also a commitment to other people, a “generosity.” There is a gaping difference between Austen and Sade in this respect.

While Fanny grows into *Mansfield Park*, Eugénie learns her place. In Sade’s fiction, aristocratic men are the natural masters, and women’s happiness is defined in terms of service to their pleasure. The verbose revolutionary treatise that Sade includes in *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (“Frenchmen, Some More Effort If You Wish to Become Republicans,” 2006, 104-149) contains yet another version of this philosophy:

In the purity of natural laws, a woman cannot reject a man’s advances ... no man can be excluded from possessing a woman ... she resolutely belongs to all men ... it is ... incontestable that we have the right to force them all to submit to us ... Indeed, we even have the right to pass laws to compel a woman to yield to the ardor of the man who desires her, whereby violence itself ... can be used legally by us ... (2006, 128).

Nature condones violent rape perpetrated on women by men. This “natural” inequality subverts the polite orderliness of, for example, Austen’s country society. It may sound revolutionary, but it is in reality once

again merely Sade's wishful thinking. Imagining it must have provided, for the imprisoned Marquis, endless consolation.

Sade's notion of utopia extols "calumny, theft, rape, incest, and murder" (Plessix 1998, 359); these so-called virtues are in open opposition to ideals of natural goodness or egalitarian justice held by Austen or Jean-Jacques Rousseau. How seriously does Sade himself take his "virtues"? Between 1790, when he had been released from Charenton Prison, and 1801, when he was arrested again and diagnosed with "libertine dementia," (Plessix 1998, 383) Sade supported himself by writing revolutionary pamphlets. He was apparently good at it. Plessix refers to him as a "survival artist," who grew "increasingly duplicitous in his rhetoric" (1998, 329). His degree of candor is unknowable, but his fiction is so exaggerated as to be wholly unbelievable. He creates his own wild utopias, dream-worlds where all is right for him and justified by his view of nature. Dolmancé, speaking in Sade's voice, holds the "master's" place: Sade is in control, in his fiction, and so he is consoled for the losses of his otherwise scarred life. Had he been satisfied to keep his ravings to himself, the worst he could today be accused of is bad taste.

Sade's wife, Renée-Pélagie, fell under his spell. She became an active enabler in his pre-revolutionary escapades, along with her mother, Madame de Montreuil. They defended and protected Sade's exploits before his first arrest in 1773, at which point Madame de Montreuil turned against him. By the time of his release in 1790, Pélagie, exasperated with his scandalous reputation and demanding selfishness, sought formal separation from him (Plessix 1998, 302). It is no wonder; Pélagie had been used. According to Plessix, Sade felt "impelled to seek dominance over the only realm available to him ... Pélagie" (1998, 234). He made outrageous demands for exotic items such as chocolate cakes and boxes of face powder (1998, 233). "He holds his unfortunate wife captive," complained Pélagie's mother (quoted in Plessix, 1998, 167): "[he] forces her to be the agent of his infamous maneuvers." Both women at first, then later Pélagie alone, served Sade as useful objects. This was his life; this was not fiction.

When Austen writes of Tom's conversion through sickness and woe at the end of the book, she refers to his becoming "useful to his father." (1992, 460) Austen's idea of usefulness is different from

Sade's exploitation of the weak. Usefulness for Austen is what "ought to be" for all; it applies to Tom as well as to his sisters, or to Fanny, or to Henry Crawford. Gender does not play a role in what is right. Austen is not the monarchical Sir Thomas, whose "orderly" realm is riddled with lying, envy, anger, and adultery. She envisions a world in which children ought to respect their parents, a world quite different from Dolmancé's, where "nothing is more illusory than ... children's sentiments for their progenitors" (2006, 162).

Austen's notions of innate virtue are based mostly on a Rousseau-like assumption of intrinsic goodness and connection among people, but there is also a seductive hope for the idea of a balanced patriarchy. Sir Thomas is the monarch of his home, just as King George III was the monarch of England. Flawed though the king was by illness, he was, until the Regency Act of 1811, king, and for the English he seemed to represent in an unexamined way, solid English values in opposition to the threat of the French. Sir Thomas is also flawed. He behaves like a benevolent monarch, but his lack of self-knowledge and his arbitrary acts of kindness doled out to suppress opposition, reveal him to be unenlightened. His random kindness is bought at a high price: his assumption, and everyone else's as well, that his will is law. Fanny's refusal of Henry as a possible husband defies Sir Thomas, who reproaches her with "wilfulness," "self-conceit," and "independence of spirit." He finds these characteristics "offensive and disgusting" (1992, 313): vehement words which show that Sir Thomas considers himself to be the one who "surely [has] some right to guide" Fanny (1992, 314). Our sympathies rest with Fanny's insistence on her own right to choose. With Sir Thomas' assertion that she "[does] not quite know [her] own feelings," (1992, 311) Austen's "succinct code" (McMaster 1978, 32) cleverly undermines the unquestioned authority of the monarch. Who is the revolutionary?

In the end, timid Fanny wins out, yet Sir Thomas is still the patriarch. As a stand-in for king in Austen's narrative, this ruler returns home tired out by serious worries in his colonies, (1992, 174) only to find insurrection at Mansfield Park: his house has been torn apart for the purpose of a scandalous home performance of Kotzebue's *Lovers' Vows*, a play that defies conventional morality by explicitly presenting issues of female sexuality. His task becomes, like Odysseus, to set his house in order. He

takes his regal place as master, and the disturbed world becomes again orderly. He presides over dinner and burns every copy of *Lovers' Vows* that he can find (1992, 187) and Mansfield Park, “under his government ... was an altered place ... it was all sameness and gloom” (1992, 192). Order and propriety: how much of a good thing does Austen recommend? Fanny remarks to Edmund that “there was never much laughing in his presence ... I cannot recollect that our evenings formerly were ever merry” (1992, 193).

If Sir Thomas stands in for the English monarch and Mansfield represents England, then we may be getting a glimpse of Austen's view of the injustices of English colonialism. Sir Thomas returns from the poorly governed West Indies even more autocratic than he was before. Fanny recognizes in him what Claudia L. Johnson calls “the model paternalist,” whose tyranny masks itself as kindness that alleviates his slaves [Fanny, along with the rest of the Mansfield household] from the burden of thinking or choosing for themselves (1988, 107) . When Edmund admonishes Fanny for her silence in family gatherings, she defends herself by asserting that she speaks to “[Sir Thomas] more than [she] used” (1992, 194). Sir Thomas has grown more distant and monarchical, and Fanny speaks to him more; therefore it must be that Fanny has grown more courageous: “Did you not hear me ask him about the slave trade last night?” An ill-chosen topic; she is not yet quite brash enough to pursue it: “there was such a dead silence!” (1992, 194)

Henry Crawford proposes marriage to Fanny and crisis ensues. She refuses, of course, despite his help in acquiring the position of Second Lieutenant for her brother William, (1992, 296) a move designed to influence her. She agonizes that she “had never known a day of greater agitation,” (1992, 305) and then her uncle confronts her. This meeting is far more distressing, and indeed, it is what Margaret Anne Doody, in her excellent introduction to *Sense and Sensibility*, calls a “folding structure”: (1990, xli) the turning point for Fanny. It serves as the crisis that jolts her into initiation. She feels fear and mortification at his anger, but still she remains firm. She stammers, “I – I cannot like him, Sir, well enough to marry him” (1992, 311). Her moral tact – her wish to hide from the conservative father

Maria's imprudent behavior with Mr. Crawford and her own fixation on Edmund – has left her vulnerable. It is unthinkable in Sir Thomas' ordered, economic world that a young girl of no means could refuse a well-placed young man who is not entirely repulsive. Sir Thomas delivers the most powerful verbal blow yet: "[Henry] has been doing *that* for your brother, which I should suppose would have been almost sufficient recommendation to you" (1992, 311). Despite age difference, class difference, reverence for decorum, respect for parents, and deep gratitude to her uncle and patriarch, Fanny miraculously defies him.

Could it be that one insignificant girl's personal happiness, weighed against conventional practice, might win out? Here is Austen's challenge. Fanny's scruples, her secret affections for Edmund, and her observations of Maria and Henry's indiscretions, are all irrelevant. What is important here, in her crisis, is that under Sir Thomas' merciless attack she does not give in. She blushes and weeps, but she refuses to relinquish her right to choose her own fate and make her own life, even under Sir Thomas' aggressive onslaught. She still fears him, and reveres him as well, but Fanny has become an autonomous adult. As Doody puts it, "In order to be [a] moral [being, Fanny] must resist agreeing with what society so emphatically tells [her]" (1990, xii).

Her struggle is not over. Others at Mansfield Park try to convince her through what Claudia L. Johnson calls "the drapery of decency," "The pretense of choice," which coerces politely without explicit command (1988, 100-102). Henry, intrigued by opposition, (1992, 322) is encouraged to press his case with Fanny. Lady Bertram rises out of lethargy to voice a moral lesson: "...you must be aware, Fanny, that it is every young woman's duty to accept such a very unexceptionable offer as this" (1992, 329). Mary, the would-be sister-in-law, assures Fanny that Henry "is attached to you in a way that he never was to any woman before" (1992, 360). Mary slyly includes a reference to Fanny's brother's commission as proof of his love. But the most complex pressure applied to Fanny's resistance is that by Edmund, who endorses Henry wholeheartedly (1992, 331). The "drapery of decency" seems to allow Fanny her freedom of choice; however, Edmund exerts tremendous pressure, seeing "Crawford's proposals as most advantageous and desirable" (1992, 343). It is when Edmund suggests that Fanny prove herself "grateful

and tender-hearted” (1992, 344) that she falters. She is poorly equipped to deny Edmund, whom she admires and more. But she withstands the pleas of the entire household.

The significance of her action is enormous. This crisis amounts to a revolution in Mansfield Park. Through Fanny’s refusal of Henry, Austen sets personal happiness against smooth government, which would deny women sovereignty over their lives. The values that Austen ascribes to Fanny are those that she considers to be naturally found in all humans when undisturbed by social custom: self-knowledge, generosity, honesty, humility, and of course, kindness. There is no gender-link: men and women alike demonstrate their worth by practicing them. Fanny’s insistence on the importance of her own happiness – convenient or inconvenient to social custom – is, for Austen, the very affirmation of her humanness.

And so Sir Thomas is forced to try another strategy – one that comes close to success. Fanny will return to her home in Portsmouth, where “her Father’s house would, in all probability, teach her the value of a good income” (1992, 366). Sir Thomas himself admits that this decision has “nothing at all [to do] with any idea of making her happy,” (1992, 365) but rather with the hope of shocking her into acceptance of Henry Crawford and his four thousand pounds a year. Still at Mansfield, her hopes rise: she yearns for consolation and to be “loved by so many... to feel herself the equal of those who surround her” (1992, 366). The reality of her parents’ home is a shock to her. “The smallness of the house” (1992, 379) repels her; Mansfield Park has, in the last eight years, become her standard by which to measure “home.” Austen again implies the contextuality of our sense of reality: Fanny Price has become a snob! She finds only an “abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety. Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to be” (1992, 386). There is no “drapery of decency” in her father’s house. Worse yet, she is forced to admit that “she could not respect her parents, as she had hoped” (1992, 386).

Guided by memory, Fanny has no high hopes for her father, and so she is only mildly disgusted by his coarseness, negligence, dirt, and constant swearing (1992, 386). It is for her mother that Fanny reserves the most bitter criticism. She hoped for consolation or some sort of motherly solicitude. She is

so deeply disappointed that Austen employs a vocabulary she has never, for the past 387 pages, resorted to:

[Fanny] must and did feel that her mother was a partial, ill-judging parent, a dawdle, a slattern, who neither taught nor restrained her children, whose house was the scene of mismanagement and discomfort from beginning to end, and who had no talent, no conversation, no affection toward herself; no curiosity to know her better, no desire of her friendship, and no inclination for her company (1992, 388).

The series of negatives is damning, especially when we recall Fanny's ongoing solicitude for Sir Thomas' sense of decorum and her awe and respect for his paternal authority.

Mansfield has molded Fanny. Social class is learned and not inherited, Austen shows, and Fanny has acquired aristocratic (if not self-indulgent) tastes. She still possesses respect, but not for noise, narrowness, or disorder. Just as Tom Bertram has to learn to become "as he ought to be," so does Fanny. For better or worse, Mansfield Park is her home, and so the Portsmouth household can be taken as a symbol of the chaotic "other," the dangerous outsider, opposite to the "home" of Mansfield Park, where strict decorum rules, at least when the sovereign is in residence. Henry and Mary Crawford introduce moral chaos, but Portsmouth offers a jumble of trouble; no one is happy there, and its disorder is destructive to all. The source of this threat to Fanny's well-being is her "slattern" mother. She battles with feelings of guilt, but her complete rejection of the inept parent is a shock to her, as well as to us.

Sade's Eugénie has no scruples at all, regarding her antipathy toward her mother. Dolmancé challenges his young pupil with, "Be frank, Eugénie. Have you never wished death on somebody?" Eugénie responds, "Oh, yes, yes, yes ... an abominable creature, who, I wish, were dead" (2006, 52). This hated enemy turns out to be her mother, and this conversation is the commencement of her initiation, much as Fanny's resistance to the performance of *Lovers' Vows*.

Before the true crisis, however, Sade provides for Eugénie a trite path to female adulthood by a man's penetration of her body. He describes two crude rapes, one anal (2006, 55) and the other vaginal (2006, 101), both of which result in blood and pain, then in cries of "Go on! ... Tear me to shreds ... Kiss me, my executioner ... I adore you!" (2006, 101) Sade's dream-creation acts her part in an exemplary way for her imprisoned author's titillation. This is, however, only preliminary to the real

initiation. This deflowering of a virgin is Sade's nod to convention; he has reserved a more sinister initiation for Eugénie.

We have seen how Sade's misogyny includes a hatred of all things concerned with pregnancy or motherhood, inspired, according to Frappier, by envy and jealousy (1996, 19) and fed, according to Plessix, by his own mother's absence and neglect (1998, 20, 25). Sade's disgust for the female sex in general, and mothers and motherhood in particular, are evident in, for example, his characters' preference for anal intercourse over vaginal, affirming male sexuality over female and denying procreation as a legitimate purpose. Out of this combined envy, fear, resentment, and general mistrust grow the angry author's irreverence for parents, especially mothers. What in Sade's fiction appears to be a radical subversion of the family is really his thinly veiled mother-hate. As has been seen above, he rationalizes his preference for the male in reference to antiquated and discredited pseudo-science. Eugénie cites her experience: "... in my heart I feel the proof of what you're saying, for I'm crazy about my father, but I feel that I hate my mother." Dolmancé justifies such rebellious sentiments as "quite natural" because "we owe absolutely nothing to our mothers" (2006, 21). Madame moves the action forward by proposing an "evil deed" to Eugénie, who can only respond in the abstract: "nothing on earth matters less than whether one does good or evil" (2006, 31). Eugénie is eager to prove herself, but as long as she is incapable of verbalizing it, she still needs prompting. Madame returns to her theme of nature's denial of parents, especially mothers. Primed, and then challenged with a call to "spirit and courage" (2006, 52), Eugénie begins to think concretely, but not yet to name. Madame pronounces the words, "your mother!" (2006, 57) This seems to free up Eugénie: "I abhor her, I detest her ... I have to take her life no matter what the price!" (2006, 57) We can contrast this outburst to Fanny's list of negatives: one girl acknowledges the truth of what is in her heart. The other leaps over logic from hatred to murder.

One hundred pages later, Eugénie gets her chance; Madame de Mistival arrives in the closed boudoir to retrieve her daughter. She is met with concerted resistance: "We all protect Eugénie" (2006, 162). Unlike Fanny, who must stand alone before Sir Thomas, Eugénie's instructors defend her; they once again reverse tradition, accusing, "You [Madame de Mistival] wanted to teach her mores as if a

girl's happiness weren't the product of debauchery and immorality" (2006, 163). Proof by assertion.

These "punishable" acts might be seen as revolutionary if they were not so very convenient to the male directors of the orgy. The only structure to be preserved in this parent-negating utopia of Sade's making is the one that supports his own privilege. It is obvious that Eugénie's happiness is not and has never been the goal.

These thoughts do not dampen Eugénie's zeal. She and her accomplices officially declare Madame de Misitval a victim, with the legal permission of her own husband, Eugénie's father, in the form of a letter (2006, 165). They rape her several times, torture her, and lecture her on nature and cruelty. They threaten to kill her (2006, 166-169). Eugénie's final and true initiation brings the scene to culmination, when she commits an act of violation on her mother, raping her with an oversized dildo. Thus she denies love, respect, and loyalty, as well as moral tradition: "I'm committing both incest, adultery, and sodomy ..." (2006, 167). The shock effect is strong, as Sade intended. But Eugénie has not finished.

The final brutality perpetrated on the mother's body by Sade's frustrated fury is designed by its author to finish his narrative in an orgy of utter annihilation of the detested maternal principle. Madame de Mistival is raped by a syphilitic valet and then sewn shut by Eugénie to finalize the diseased act of revolutionary subversion.

Resolution

Eugénie has grown into Sade's notion of an adult woman. Has she surpassed her teachers? When it comes to confession time, all that the verbose Dolmancé can manage is "Atrocities ... I've perpetrated horrors" (2006, 89). Madame offers more detail: she brags of having been used by more than ten thousand men in the last twelve years (2006, 41-42). Then, "... fifteen men in a row ... ninety times in front and in back within twenty-four hours" (2006, 47). The list goes on. Eugénie's contribution is a typical Sadean combination: "... if we let the imagination ... transgress the ultimate boundaries

prescribed by religion, decency, humanity, virtue – indeed all our alleged duties – then wouldn't the deviations ... be prodigious?" (2006, 48) She does just that.

By the last pages of the book, the libertines have been sated. Eugénie's culminating violation of her mother seems gratuitous, but to a mind (and body) trapped in prison, a mind trained on its own native privilege that has been denied freedom, the imagination is the only faculty that is a liberty to transgress. Madame points out to Dolmancé, "Whenever you get a hard-on, you love to recite horrors, and perhaps you're passing off as truth the licentious marvels of your inflamed imagination" (2006, 89). Very astute. The idea of transgression seems to have been a requirement for the author's lust to come off, and the more that transgression affronts "religion, decency, humanity, or virtue," the richer the results. Sade's many frustrations, hatreds, and fears led his fertile imagination to the improbable events of *Philosophy in the Boudoir* as well as his other pornographic writings; they served him as an outlet. Had Sade's solipsistic meanderings remained inside his prison cell, they could cause little harm other than to the dreamer himself. However, they were published (anonymously) and eagerly bought up. Here lies the problem: many took his ravings as serious objections to the dominant philosophy of Rousseau and other enlightenment thinkers. Blurring the fragile border between fiction and life, or between thinking/imagining and doing, is risky.

By the end of Eugénie's story, no one is dead, which is an exception in Sade's pornography. However, atrocities are aimed at Madame de Mistival in particular and the maternal principle in general, what Frappier refers to as "a fiction that attacks reproductive organs ... the destruction of the maternal body" (1996, 44). For this crowd, though, "nothing is a crime," (2006, 151) and what Eugénie and her companions have accomplished is a murder of sorts, a rite of passage in brutality, separating the young initiate from her mother. Eugénie's metaphorical murder is expressed in excessively violent terms, but for the *Boudoir* set, hurting people is an aphrodisiac, and sexual pleasure is all there is. In Sade's fiction, the ruin of a human life is nothing; it is only part of the destructive process of nature, and that justifies it.

Fanny also "kills" her mother. When she returns to Portsmouth, her expectations are crushed. For kind and loving Fanny to voice the unspeakable, to call her mother a dawdle or a slattern, guilty of

mismanagement and disorder, is a form of murder. She has removed the unacceptable from her life. In the sense of active separation, both Eugénie and Fanny are matricides. There is a difference, though. Eugénie, within her narrative, wields weapons and draws blood; she maims her mother. She derives pleasure from the other's pain. In Dolmancé's words, "You are in the world for your sake ... you must live only for yourself" (2006, 163). Austen does not believe in the possibility of happiness from selfishness. Unlike Eugénie, Fanny's refusal of her mother is silent; it occurs in her heart and mind, but never in deeds. Fanny's version of "murder" separates without hurt. Being alert to herself and her own feelings, she is aware of her increasingly critical outlook, but Mrs. Price never hears from Fanny that she is a slattern of no talent. Fanny is the better citizen of the two.

Austen has drawn a fine distinction in Fanny Price, who has, by the end of the story, become autonomous within her community, courageous enough to stand alone. She has also become mature and realizes that there are consequences to her actions. In refusing Henry Crawford, Fanny sets off a series of events that result eventually in divorce and disgrace to the Bertrams and Crawfords. Mary blames Fanny (1992, 454): her brother's happiness has been ruined, Mary accuses; however, her author disagrees. For Austen, autonomy never denies social justice; it is not ruthless isolation. Austen's finest protagonists, by the resolution of their narratives, have all come into self-knowledge and assertion of their own choice, but they have also learned to be concerned for the people around them. Fanny's happiness is connected to the happiness of all the residents of Mansfield Park. One of the details that raises this remarkable novel above the usual "ladies' fiction" is Fanny's connection to Edmund: "Exactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so," (1992, 469) Edmund finally discovers that "[Fanny's] warm and *sisterly* regard for him would be foundation enough for wedded love" (1992, 468, my italics). Despite McMaster's contention that Edmund has all along loved Fanny unconsciously (parallel to his conscious love for Mary, 1978, 36) Austen nevertheless manages to de-emphasize the marriage and stress community. This is not a "happy-ever-after" froth, but rather a tale about individual happiness and a young woman's right to her own choice.

Sade's fiction, while also unconcerned with the traditional marriage plot, mistrusts community, along with the other troublesome old values (like modesty or humility), that render Austen's protagonists successful and happy. What in Austen's fiction becomes a theme of self-recognition, in Sade smacks of frenzied fear: happiness is desperately crowded at the height of an orgasm or preached endlessly in words and more words. Dolmancé, as Sade's persona, for example, never stops. Even during coitus, he stubbornly clings to his subjectivity. Sade asserts control in his fiction through speech. Discourse, for him, is a means of forcing the fictional world into a manageable shape. The gap between the master's control and the "collapse of social barriers" (Frappier 1998, 15) is important: the craziness of the outside world, where Sade has no control, fades in his dream-orgy. Sade, the writer, creates a world critical of outside rules and laws, seemingly subversive, but in reality compliant to his commands. He uses several tactics to achieve this fiction of control. We have already seen his arbitrary definitions of nature and women. His meticulous listings strike many readers as dullingly repetitive. Most importantly, his fiction serves to make him (through his speaker) creator of the rules. He himself becomes the supreme patriarch. Sade is an aristocrat to the roots of his being; in the world of his fiction, he rules absolutely.

In order for this Sadean hierarchy to unfold within his fiction, the author isolates his orgy-space from society. His first novel, experimental and arguably his most exaggerated, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, illustrates this well: four "masters," all male aristocrats, choose an orgy site at a remote castle in the Alps. They import sufficient supplies and victims and then wait until winter causes an impassible barrier. It is the perfect orgy, although possibly interesting only to its imprisoned author. *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, shorter and more unified, is less fantastic. The boudoir is separated from the outside only by servants. Nevertheless, it is a closed space, as Frappier writes, where it "... can function only within small, protected and codified circles." (1996, 46) Outsiders, except for victims, are not admitted.

Sade's isolation is personal as well as social. Simone de Beauvoir proposes in her 1951 essay "Must We Burn Sade?" what she names Sade's "autism" (1966, 22): she explains that the author lacked the ability to "merge" with another human during coitus. Imprisoned in his subjectivity, like Dolmancé, he remains a lonely "master" who reifies his partner in a dynamic of subject-object (1966, 21-22). We

see this illustrated in the ideal toward which Dolmancé and Madame instruct Eugénie: she – in fact all women – is the *object* for the male masters' use. They alone retain subjectivity. Thus Sade remains isolated in his person, in his prison cell, and in his fantasy orgies. His “autism,” it would seem, underlies his creative drive as well as his verbosity.

Is Austen more connected to her society? She has been accused of being an apolitical writer, of giving literary weight neither to domestic policy in England, nor to the turbulent politics of the world outside England. The accusers have a point; she is concerned with “home.” She uses the structure of *Mansfield Park* to symbolize her own country: when Sir Thomas is in residence, his estate seems to run smoothly and with stability. However, Mansfield is anything but orderly, and there is no true justice there. Questionable influences from outside, in the form of, first Henry and Mary Crawford, and then Tom's friend Mr. Yates, infiltrate when the master of the estate is away. Insurrection threatens when the young people suggest a house performance of Kotzebue's *Lovers' Vows*. In order to preserve propriety and modesty, Edmund suggests isolation. It is of vital importance for Edmund to limit the performance of this “paradigm for the novel” (McMaster 1978, 55) to only the inner company at Mansfield. When his brother Tom suggests including Charles Maddox, an acquaintance who is “gentlemanlike,” (1992, 147) Edmund becomes desperate to preserve privacy (1992, 152). To what degree is Edmund's anxiety merely a rationalization to join the group as Mary's partner, and to what degree is his fear of outside infiltration genuine? Fanny is not certain either.

If Mansfield Park is a stand-in for England, Austen must be suggesting that her homeland would be better off following a policy of isolation, avoiding contact with outside influences like French social upheaval, or maybe abandoning its colonies. “Home” for Austen ought to be stable and just; Fanny sums it up: “Portsmouth was Portsmouth; Mansfield was home” (1992, 428). Foreign ways, outside of Mansfield Park, pose a threat to Fanny, as they do to Austen.

According to Frappier, in Sade's fiction, “the main symbols of closure” are “incest and sodomy” (1996, 57). We meet both in his orgy scenes, but of course, such offences to propriety do not occur in Austen's writing. Marriage schemes suggested in Mansfield, however, might surprise us. Proposed:

Mary Crawford will marry Edmund Bertram; Fanny Price will marry Henry Crawford. We see a closed quadrangle, a central core of Mansfield's next generation. This comes to nothing, since the intruders representing a new and foreign morality, Mary and Henry, both show themselves lacking in virtue. What does occur, at "exactly the time when it was quite natural that it should be so," (1992, 469) is that Edmund and Fanny marry: first cousins. The same occurred in Austen's own family; one marries whom one knows, and that with "full and mutual engagement of head and heart," (McMaster 1978, 46) in Austen's fiction. But this union may also indicate an attempt to preserve the "small, protected and codified" circle. Isolation is a strategy for maintaining order and stability in a world gone mad with revolution. This may be Austen's point.

Who Is the Revolutionary?

The French Revolution was a turning point in European consciousness. Its abrupt changes worked their way into the fiction of these two authors. Both struggle with new ideas like social justice and political equality. Both employ literary techniques of irony and parody to convey meaning. They both also occupy marginal positions in their societies, Sade as a feudal lord in a time of enlightenment and then as a prisoner, and Austen as an unmarried, educated, and articulate woman of the English middle-class. Their social distance allows each the perspective from which a sensitive author can carry out critical observation. That is what they share. However, their messages take very different roads from one another. Austen seems to endorse the widely accepted old values of her countrymen, but shows up their inconsistencies and insists on an ideal of autonomy for women. Sade appears to back the Republican principles of equality and freedom, but in life, as in his fiction, he stubbornly clings to a feudal hierarchy. Both fill their narratives with ideas of what women are and can be.

Austen demonstrates a strong suspicion of the upheaval and violence of the French Revolution and its difficult aftermath. Her reaction is an apparent attempt to preserve stability and good government at home. She uses Mansfield Park as the image for an isolated sanctuary set against a world torn apart by subversive new morals. The estate stands for England and old English values. The neighbor, France,

becomes the dark “other.” None of this seems particularly revolutionary, but it is only the framework for her deeper theme: Fanny Price’s rebellion against a rigid patriarchy that denies her rights on the basis of her gender and class. This is not good government. Sade seems, on the surface, to be the more subversive of the two in his radical and violent attacks on tradition. On closer inspection though, Austen’s criticism of the rigidity of patriarchy is far more subversive than Sade’s self-serving endorsement of his feudal rights and privileges, depicted in unrealistic excess.

Both authors skillfully create a gap in meaning between the literal and its subtext, hinted at but not explicitly drawn out. This time-honored tactic subverts straightforward narration by forcing the reader to supply meaning; one can never be entirely certain. This uncertainty appears in Austen’s texts as irony, a gentle but thoroughly critical humor, and sometimes more seriously as parody. Johnson has pointed out the “bitter parody of conservative fiction” (1988, 96) in Austen’s depiction of the perfectly governed home, Mansfield. Sir Thomas’ iron grip has not brought justice at all, but rather the opposite. The novel ends with what Johnson refers to as a “perfunctorily opted anticlimax,” when Fanny and Edmund finally marry. It is a fantasy “the narrator washes her hands of” (1988, 114). Austen undercuts the conservative tradition of the romance novel, and her message is all the sharper for being coded in parody. The author’s voice, not always Fanny’s, nor Edmund’s, disconcerts us; it is a shape-changer, unlike Sade’s facile one-on-one correspondence with Dolmancé. We never know where the author is in Mansfield.

Austen’s irony is also subversive. Her treatment of Lady Bertram lampoons this character’s indolence and selfishness. Tom proposes soothing his mother’s anxiety with *Lovers’ Vows*; immediately, Austen offers a portrait of the “anxious” Lady, “sunk back in one corner of the sofa, the picture of health, wealth, ease, and tranquility” (1992, 125). It is not the first time we see her so. Later, when the family pressures Fanny to accept Henry’s proposal, Lady Bertram pronounces her strongest argument: “the next time pug has a litter you shall have a puppy” (1992, 329). With humor and wit, Austen has here done more to undermine the privilege of wealth and social position than all Sade’s rambling harangues.

His form of subversion is blatant parody, and we wonder whether he himself believes what he feeds us. He reverses Rousseau's philosophy into a natural tendency in all humans toward evil and destruction. Sade's treatise, employing his best radical prose, parallels and reinforces the ideas of his leading characters on justice, morals, family, Christianity, and much more. He may be parodying himself, Frappier suggests, or, "he may have been in part sincere." She asks, "How are we to decide between belief and mimicry?" (1996, 123) Dolmancé's lengthy stagings of orgies make us suspect that Sade's fetish for control is again operative:

I would like Eugénie to kneel down and suck his cock during that time! In this position, she'd expose her derriere to the Chevalier, who'd fuck her up the ass, while Madame de Saint-Ange, mounted on Augustin, would present her buttocks for me to kiss. If she'd lean slightly forward, she could, I believe, do a fine job of whipping the Chevalier with a handful of rods; nor would this stimulating ceremony cause me to spare our trainee ... (2006, 155-156).

It is no accident that Dolmancé gives such intricate directions again and again, to the point of repetitive tedium: the master is in control here. Perhaps Sade has to convince himself.

He tries to convince us of his egalitarian sentiments in his alleged endorsement of sexual freedom for women and his utopian good of universal pleasure. However, this is also illusion. We have seen that it is only the masters who benefit from his proposed utopia. Women are held in common for men's pleasure. There can be no rape because there can be no denial to male desire, and what is masked as social equality is a strict hierarchy based on gender and class, with Sade in control. Austen treats inequities differently. She undercuts autocratic rule and ridicules selfish snobbism, arguing in her fiction in favor of freedom for women to pursue their own happiness. There is no room for social pretension, and leadership, success, and most important of all, happiness are grounded in sincerity, self-knowledge, and compassionate connection to others.

So we see that by far the more revolutionary of our two authors must be Jane Austen. She creates a mythology of traditional values in which the fictional world of Mansfield Park runs smoothly, and then she shows it up for what it really is: flawed to the core and based on illusion. At first glance, this critique seems mild, compared to Sade's raving cries for change and his wish to rip apart the "hybrid historical"

France he has created. What he is unwilling to tear asunder, however, is the very patriarchal backbone of the entire structure: his own male, aristocratic master's privilege. Austen is also concerned with social position, but her concern renders her an articulate representative of an undervalued class of people: all women caught in a system that ignores their bid for happiness in life. She offers a strong voice for social justice, freedom of choice, and at least a chance at happiness. The structure she attacks is nothing less than the patriarchy itself. To paraphrase Eugénie's comment after hearing Sade's pseudo-revolutionary tract, "Now that's what I call a very smart [revolution]" (2006, 149).

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