

Abstract

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to scrutinize, through a detailed literary and sociological analysis, the theme of women's emancipation featuring in the epistolary novel, *Dangerous Liaisons*, by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos. This work will principally concentrate on the question of female identity of the three characters, Cecile, Tourvel and Merteuil, in the context of the Enlightenment. We will examine the text by taking into consideration two contrasting approaches, traditional and contemporary, in order to demonstrate the ambiguity of the interpretation. We will attempt to characterize the female protagonists and consequently categorize them on the bases of contextual typology of characters. Simultaneously on the poetic and narrative level, we will attempt to exemplify their emancipatory attempts examining the heroines in connection with their female identity and philosophical conception of the Enlightenment about humanity. Having analysed their portrayals, it will be observed how the novel offers an eventual feminist reading while referring to the possibility of women's emancipation. Ultimately, we will reach the conclusion that Laclos has created a quasi-complete spectrum of female characters interpreted as representing the topos of heroine fatale and through a more contemporary reading, they could be discerned as victims of the patriarchal society.

KEYWORDS

Enlightenment literature, emancipation, feminism, epistolary novel, Laclos, *Dangerous Liaisons*, libertinage

