

RECONSIDERATION REQUEST, BACKGROUND & RESEARCH



Fanny Hill (DVD) Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure

TV Mini Series, produced by BBC

Title and credits from container.

Originally produced for television in 2007.

Based on the book by John Cleland.

"Contains nudity and strong sexual scenes."

PUBLISHER'S DVD CASE SUMMARY:

A Bawdy romp based on the 18th century erotic classic.

Screenwriter Andrew Davies (Bridget Jones's Diary, Bleak House) brings all of his sly, stylish wit to this adaptation of 18th-century Britain's most notorious novel.

With a mischievous glint in her eye and plenty of knowing winks, Fanny relates her journey from wholesome naif to worldly woman. After losing her parents to smallpox, the poor country girl travels to London, where she falls into prostitution under the guidance of an infamous madam. Forced to take a series of lovers to survive, Fanny learns to relish sensual delights- but reserves her heart for her one true love.

Showing a playfulness that matches her beauty, newcomer Rebecca Night sparkles in the title role. Samantha Bond (The World is Not Enough), Alison Steadman (Pride and Prejudice), Philip Jackson (Agatha Christie's Poirot), and Hugo Speer (The Full Monty) join her in this unabashedly sexy tale of one woman's appetite for independence and pleasure.

Contains nudity and strong sexual themes

LIBRARY CATALOG SUMMARY:

A naïve country girl becomes a London prostitute to survive, enthusiastically enjoying her profession but reserving her heart for the man she loves.

LIBRARY CATALOG NOTES:

"Contains nudity and strong sexual scenes"

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

[Fanny Hill \(review\)](#)

Full review

By MaryAnn Johnson

Oh, stop your tittering. All you know is that *Fanny Hill* is that naughty bawdy 18th-century novel [[Amazon U.S.](#)] [[Amazon U.K.](#)] that got its author, John Cleland, into so much trouble so long ago, and has since become a byword for the evils of censorship and the necessity of freedom of expression. But if you're looking for something pornographic in this BBC adaptation of the novel, forget it, mister. You might just get a lesson in female backbone and autonomy, though. That's a pretty shocking lesson from 250 years ago, seeing as how we've barely learned it today.

Sure, innocent, innocent orphan Fanny Hill (delightful newcomer Rebecca Night), "fresh from the country" to London in the mid 1700s, gets taken advantage of... as does many a young woman today, what with so many of us still thinking it's "proper" to keep the female of the species as ignorant of her own biology for as long as possible. Tricked by a supposed friend into the clutches of Mrs. Brown (Alison Steadman: [Topsy-Turvy](#), [Pride and Prejudice](#)), who runs a brothel for "respectable" so-called gentlemen, she quickly learns what's expected of her, and — no dummy she — how to make the most of it in a world in which few options exist for a woman on her own. Gosh, it's practically a satire on women's limited options, this *Fanny Hill* (and perhaps Cleland's was, too): when the only way to comfort and security, for 18th-century Fanny, is through a man, is there really any difference between prostitution and marriage?

Ah, but there is a difference, as this *Fanny* — written for the small screen by the oft-acclaimed Andrew Davies ([Brideshead Revisited](#), [Sense & Sensibility](#)) — points out, and that difference is love. Fanny falls for handsome and honorable Charles Standing (Alex Robertson: [Wide Sargasso Sea](#)), even before she "falls" in the house of Mrs. Brown. (Well, Charles's honorableness is debatable, since he does show up as a patron of Mrs. Brown's... but once he meets Fanny, he'll have no other.) They run away together, and she gives herself to him — this time, as this very frank production makes clear, knowing full well what she's in for — and then they're separated, and so begins her adventures as a free and independent woman left to make her own way in a world that is not ready to deal with free and independent women.

"There's no point in being euphemistic," says director James Hawes ([Doctor Who](#)) in one of the bonus making-of featurettes, "The Subject of Nudity." (Extras, on a DVD from Acorn Media? Hoorah, and about time, too.) And there is nothing euphemistic here: this *Fanny Hill* ain't rated X, but it's not for the kiddies, either. They're not kidding when they use Cleland's original title as their subtitle: these "memoirs of a woman of pleasure" make no bones about the kind of pleasure involved. Which is quite refreshing, actually, when that's another thing that even our sex-drenched pop culture can't seem to quite cope with yet: women are sexual creatures too, sometimes even quite apart from men. "I believe that God made our bodies to give us pleasure," Fanny tells us in her framing narration, which makes it very plain that she knows wherefrom she speaks. The whole production — two episodes spread across two hours, which aired originally on BBC4 and is made available to American audiences for the first time with this DVD — is a veritable celebration, and a sweetly romantic one at that, of sex and love, and of sex as a fundamental part of life separate from love sometimes, too.

Deal with it, all you card-carrying members of the Anti-Sex League.

Fanny Hill – the ultimate kiss and tell story from BBC

Excerpt:

Speaking about the new drama, Andrew Davies says: "Fanny Hill is a brilliant story about a young woman learning the ways of the world – and making the world work for her.

"It is, perhaps, the ultimate kiss-and-tell story, with the difference that Fanny is not telling her story to make money, or to settle old scores with former lovers. She is on a mission: she wants to tell the truth about men's dealings with women, and to set down for the first time ever that women's desire is at least equal to men's."

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1054675/awards/?ref=tturv_ql_1

2008 Nominee BAFTA TV Award

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2007/sep/25/bbc.television>

BBC4 is to air a season dedicated to the saucy side of the 18th century this autumn, centred on its adaptation of the racy novel Fanny Hill.

A documentary, The Curse of Success, will tell the story of the novel's author, John Cleland, and examine his belief that the book blighted his career and ruined his reputation.

In another film, The Age of Excess, writer and broadcaster Matthew Sweet will examine the 18th century's bawdy ballads, licentious pamphlets and erotic prints.

Both shows will support the drama series adapted by Andrew Davies and starring Alison Steadman, Samantha Bond and Hugo Speer, with newcomer Rebecca Night playing the lead role of the sexually adventurous Fanny.

"As the 18th century unfolds it seems more and more clearly defined by an 'anything goes' atmosphere, perhaps best symbolised by one of the most controversial novels ever written, Fanny Hill," said the BBC4 acting controller George Entwistle.

"Our new season looks at the forces which shaped this extraordinary time and asks how far the excess of the period explains the prudery and restraint of the Victorian era that followed."

RESPONSES TO PRIOR CHALLENGES

<https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/banned-books.html>

John Cleland's [*Fanny Hill*](#) (also known as *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*) has been frequently suppressed since its initial publication in 1749. This story of a prostitute is known both for its frank sexual descriptions and its parodies of contemporary literature, such as Daniel Defoe's [*Moll Flanders*](#). The U.S Supreme Court finally cleared it from obscenity charges in 1966.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION

The customer, [REDACTED], requests that the library: put an easily identifying mark (a sticker or something else) on the front and spine of the DVD case, large enough and colorful enough to communicate the essential meaning to a casually browsing reader. The customer also states that they are concerned that the DVD case isn't labelled as X-rated.

After convening a committee of three librarians and viewing the entire work, it is the committee's position that we will not add stickers or other identifying labels to this work.

The text on the DVD case clearly states: contains nudity and strong sexual scenes. The fact that [REDACTED] did not see that is a moot point. [REDACTED] states that they read the description on the DVD, which is written above, and clearly describes the content of the film by calling it "a bawdy romp base on the 18th-century erotic classic" and describing how Fanny "falls into prostitution", and is "forced to take a series of lovers" and "learns to relish sensual delights". It's furthered described as an "unabashedly sexy tale of one woman's appetite for independence and pleasure". After reading this description it's very clear what the content of the DVD includes and how no one should have been surprised upon viewing it.

[REDACTED] states that "some people or children might be hurt by hearing and seeing things they do not want to see or hear" as a reason for adding stickers to this DVD. This DVD is located in the **Adult** DVD Room of the owning branches and other adults might enjoy this BBC production as evidenced by the 151 check-outs of the library's 2 copies of this DVD.

The library cannot assign an "x-rating", or any movie rating, to a work at the request of a customer. This work was a BBC program that aired on British television, and then was made available on DVD. The vendor provided the pertinent information on the DVD package to inform consumers of the content.