

Sade, Masculinity, and Sexual Humiliation

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During the eighteenth century, new ideals, theories, and practices of masculinity and sexuality developed in the countries of Northwestern Europe. This article discusses these ideals mainly using the example of the life and the works of the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814). While old ideals of Christian or noble masculinity demanded chastity or restraint and new Enlightened ones vigor and control, Sade's perspective that stressed sexual humiliation was in stark conflict with both the old and new ideas on male honor, masturbation, and same-sexual acts. The article discusses his life and some of his works before reviewing his philosophy and his views on masculinity and sexuality. It ends with the importance of Sade's work for his own times and for contemporary discussions.

Key words: Sade; sexuality; humiliation; eighteenth century; queer studies

Various authors have examined new ideals of masculinity developing in the eighteenth century. Trumbach (1998) in discussing England has pointed to the origin of the heterosexual male in the 1730s who had to prove that he was no "molly" (homosexual in contemporary parlance) by visiting whores. The Europe-wide struggle against masturbation, starting around 1710 in England and getting full force with the work of Tissot (1760), can be analyzed as both a sexualization of male culture and a subsequent plea for its chastity while making sexuality the core of a new educational system (Foucault 1976; Tarczylo 1983; Stengers and Van Neck 1984; Lütkehaus 1992; Stolberg 2000; Laqueur 2003). Laqueur (1990) has pointed to the invention of a biological sex dichotomy at the end of the Age of Reason, with males becoming the superior sex. Solomon-Godeau (1997) has discussed major changes in male representations from feminine and libidinous to brave and chaste around 1800. She attributes this change to the political ideals of bourgeois citizens who exemplified the new virtues in more sober clothing. Regal exhibitionism and splendor became female instead of male privileges. The new ideals of the French Revolution separated public and private, leaving the political field to men whose freedoms in the private realm included

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the control of women and children. Mosse (1985) has indicated the impetus both the studies of Johann Joachim Winckelmann on ancient Greek art and the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon's armies gave to the development of nascent ideals of muscular masculinity.

The new masculine ideals were quite ambiguous. While the English males Trumbach discusses were obliged to prove their heterosexuality, the male friendships in England and Germany of the late eighteenth century that Mosse discusses were highly homoerotic. The double bind of the obligation of sexual chastity as well as of showing off heterosexual exploits must have been difficult for men. These ambivalences have of course produced feelings of guilt that kept the masters of the world themselves under control. The proscription of onanism will not have contributed to a decline in self-stimulation, as boys always got more chances to masturbate, but to a rise in their feelings of shame. Processes of male individualization were at the same time processes of onanization. While self-stimulation as solitary vice (male hand on penis) can be seen as a homosexual act, mutual masturbation between males is this for sure, endangering the self-evident straight masculinity of young men.

The homoeroticism of public life, including education, politics, and the military, has largely contributed to same-sexual emotions, relations, and acts. But the men involved in such relationships received the social message that homoeroticism should not lead to homosexual behavior. As sodomy, such acts were prosecuted as capital crimes nearly all over Europe during the eighteenth century. In much literature of the time, the borderline of passionate friendship and its physical expressions was discussed. The German philosopher Johann Georg Hamann (1759; he lived from 1730 to 1788) posed the question, during the so-called Socratic wars, of whether Socrates was a pederast. His conclusion was that it was better for Christianity to overlook this vice in the revered philosopher. Hamann continued: "One cannot experience a vital friendship without sensuality, and perhaps a metaphysical love sins more grossly against the fluids of the nerves than does a bestial love against flesh and blood" ["Man kann keine lebhaftige Freundschaft ohne Sinnlichkeit fühlen, und eine metaphysische Liebe sündigt vielleicht gröber am Nervensaft als eine thierische an Fleisch und Blut."] (Hekma 1989; Derks 1990, 69-70). Ambivalence indeed ruled, but Hamann expressed remarkably more trust in physical than in metaphysical love among men and did not separate body and soul. This position was quite uncommon for his times.

SADE'S LIFE AND WORK

It is interesting to read the work of Marquis Donatien Alphonse François de Sade against this background of changes in masculinity and sexuality because he gives a completely different view on male honor and desire than

most other authors. Both his work and his life have become over the last two centuries the epitome of perversion and sexual abuse, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing used his name for a sexual perversion. But the common opinion that Sade was a sadist is mistaken. He was more on the masochist side. The desires of Sade, as they appear both in his work and his life, were to be whipped and sodomized. If his wishes were denied, he could become cruel. In the flow of sexual activities, he as well as the characters of his novels would subsequently move on to other pleasures. But his starting points were humiliation and passive sodomy—which he transformed into the most interesting and radical theory of masculine sexuality in modern times.

Sade had no qualms about same-sexual pleasures and described them lasciviously. He went even much further than the homosexual rights movement that started a century later and that denied the importance of anal sex in homosexual relations, as did Ulrichs (Kennedy 2001, 127; Raffolovich 1896) and the first confessing Dutch homosexual (see *Geneeskundige Courant*, April 8, 1883). For Sade, sodomy was to the contrary central to his practices and theories. Both he himself and the libertines of his novels gained their main pleasures from passive and active sodomy.

His straight marriage was an arrangement of convenience between the rich family of recent nobility of his wife and his own impoverished family of old heritage and great distinction. The continuous devotion of his wife to the charming but irate Marquis during the many years of his imprisonment, against the sentiments of her own mother, was a sure sign of a largely unrequited love. The letters they exchanged are a touching, well-written testimony of their devotion. But love and sex were different practices for Sade, and although Sade's wife was perhaps an accomplice in his sexual endeavors, she was certainly not its object.

Sade's life and work has been the subject of numerous biographies (Lever 1991; Bongie 1998; Gray 1998; Schaeffer 1998) and studies (LeBrun 1986). On several occasions, the libertine Marquis was involved in sexual scandals. The two first Parisian cases involved a prostitute who was beaten and had to perform blasphemy under pressure from Sade after she had refused to whip and abuse him. The setup is typical for the desires of the Marquis. He only abused the women after they refused to revile him and to insult God. He became a sadist when his submissive propositions were refused. The most interesting scandal was the 1772 affair in Marseilles where Sade organized an orgy with some prostitutes and his servant. Being whipped and sodomized by his servant in the presence of the whores offered Sade major stimulation. The whores however filed a complaint because they thought the aphrodisiacs he had offered them were venomous. Sade and his servant received the death penalty for sodomy and poisoning, but because they had fled, only their portraits were burned. Sade's sentence was later commuted, but then he was imprisoned on his family's request for an indeterminate period with a "lettre de cachet." Sade entered the Vincennes and Bastille prisons, leaving just

before the latter was destroyed by the Parisian population on the 14th of July 1789. In these prisons, he wrote some of his major works including *Les cent vingt journées de Sodome*. These works confirm Sade's major sexual interests, already known from the scandals, but pressed to their extremes.

Sade had, in modern terms, masochist and homosexual but also masturbatory interests. Seeing the abomination that self-stimulation had become, it is interesting to read Sade's prison letters. His wife sent him on request specifically produced dildos that he used regularly to sodomize himself during his solitary pleasures. The stories in *Les cent vingt journées de Sodome* indicate the flow of desires but they can be also read as a progression of fantasies used for masturbatory practices. In Sade, there is no shame or anxiety involved in self-stimulation. The lack of scenes of masturbation in his works may be attributed to the circumstance that most solitary acts make use of fantasies that include partners, surely when they are put into text. Sade's interests in sodomy, pederasty, and onanism, and in violence directed against the self, evidently invert nascent ideals of masculine sexuality.

Sade's writing is part and parcel of the philosophies of the Enlightenment. Its sexual excesses bring to an extreme what many libertine novels had exposed before him. They also included this mixture of moral philosophies, political essays, and sex scenes which are so typical of Sade's work (Kraakman 1999). His philosophy builds on the work of the main exponents of the French and British Enlightenment such as Voltaire, LaMettrie, Rousseau, Diderot, Condorcet, d'Holbach, Helvetius, and Hobbes (see Delon 1972; Deprun 1977; Camus and Roger 1983; Michael 1986). Sade has literal quotes from these authors in his works, and often he parodies their opinions, especially those of Rousseau. He is well-read in ancient literature where principles of pleasure are lent from Lucretius. The murderous violence and sexual transgressions of his work are inspired by his reading of archival material and historical works on Roman emperors and European monarchs which he used in several of his novels and stories. The brutality of his times and of his own fate—sentenced to death for what today would not be considered a crime—made him very much aware of cruelty as a basic principle of human relations and of the state in particular.

Two Novels

In this article, I will discuss two of Sade's novels *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir* (London 1795) and *Les 120 journées de Sodome ou l'école du libertinage* (written in the Bastille before July 1789; first completely published in Paris 1931–5). These novels are most explicit on his sexual philosophy. The first book offers a short and not too brutal entry to Sade's work. In the boudoir of Madame de Saint-Ange, the libertines, le Chevalier de Mirvel, her brother, and Dolmancé, introduce Eugénie, the beloved of Madame, into a life of lust.

The initiation is a mixture of libertine discourses and sexual practices. Halfway, a servant of madame is summoned in because of the size of his genital, and at the end the mother of Eugénie enters. She tries to take her daughter home, but instead becomes the victim of libertine lusts.

The boudoir of the title is incorrectly translated into English as bedroom, but a boudoir is a space between bedroom and street, between public and private where the owner of the house receives his guests. For Sade, sexual pleasure is not a private but a semipublic affair. The separation of state and citizen that came with the French revolution meant privatization of sexual desire and criminalization of “public indecencies.” Different from this dichotomy of private and public, Sade picks up with his boudoirs and orgies in castles and bordellos—middle terrain between the two sides of the dichotomy. For him, sexual privacy has less attraction than a game of exhibitionism and voyeurism. Sade may have been critical of the Ancien Régime, but he fit perfectly in its royal culture of spectacular and public splendor. All the while, he opposed in his work enlightened ideas on state and sexual privacy.

The play with looking and being looked at is also a regular theme in *Les cent vingt journées de Sodome*. This novel tells the story of an orgy of four libertines who take a winter retreat in the Castle of Silling in the Black Forest that not even birds are able to enter during the orgies. One of them, the duke, gives before the orgies start a lecture to the victims that includes a self-description of the libertines: “Beings of a profound and recognized criminality, who have no god but their lubricity, no laws but their depravity, no care but for their debauch, godless, unprincipled, unbelieving profligates, of whom the least criminal is soiled by more infamies than you could number . . .” (Sade 1967, 251).

The group of people that is dragged off to this hidden prison consists of the four wives of the libertines and eight boys and eight girls of the greatest beauty around age 15 who have been chosen out of a much larger group. Not against their will have come eight male fuckers around age 25 whose main quality consists in the size of their cocks and four madames who come from the world of bordellos and whose main task it is to tell sexy stories. Four other women embody depravity with their old, diseased, and ugly carcasses. Monstrosity inspires even more lust in Sade’s libertines than beauty. The last group consists of six women who do the cooking of the most delicious dishes and serve the drinks. The dinners are copious, the drinks so abundant that nobody has to go to bed sober. The novel discusses in detail the first month with stories of shit and sex while the stories of anal sex, cruelty, and murder for the three following months are only handed down in stenographic notes. The well-written stories of the madames are followed by rather crude descriptions of the sex acts that the stories have inspired. At the end, only 16 of the 46 persons who came to the castle will leave the fortress alive.

Beyond Good and Evil

Sade's work was in many ways typical of the pornography that was produced during the Enlightenment, being a collation of sexual tales, philosophy, and political criticism in a literary and humorous style. It is outstanding in its field because of the quality of its style and the extremities of its philosophy and sexual games. Because of its distinction, it entered recently the heaven of French literature, the Pléiade. It is also a work difficult to deal with because it blurs the boundaries between treatise and novel. Sade's oeuvre is often read as an exposition of his ideas, but because of its literary form, he created a distance between content and author. He even refused to acknowledge the authorship of many of his works for the obvious reason that his work was considered obscene and as such subject to criminal prosecutions. One of the main pamphlets he wrote, "Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains," is embedded in his *La philosophie dans le boudoir*. It is a text that the main libertine of the novel, the passive sodomite Dolmancé, the person who looks most like Sade himself, has bought on the streets of Paris just before the orgy in the boudoir takes place. So, Sade distances himself five times from this text in a text that is an anonymous product of the revolution, brought in by this sodomite, and read by one of the other libertines in a novel of which Sade denied the authorship.

This little essay has often been read as a synopsis of the philosophy of Sade as exposed in his novels. The main argument is quite straightforward. The text proposes to form free citizens while opposing the twin oppressions of royal serfdom and religious superstition. The state should not block the natural lusts of man, which include incest, rape, whoring, sodomy, pederasty, and murder. The last thing the state should do would be to punish such pleasures with the death penalty (that Sade faced twice). Lust murder was more acceptable to Sade than capital punishment. He was not a male chauvinist who saw prostitution as work by women for men, but he included all forms of prostitution, of men for men and women and also of women for women. He was in favor, one could summarize, of a general circulation of bodies. A major criticism that could be directed against his libertarian message is Sade's assumption that he as a nobleman of some fortune will pull the strings of the sex games. His sexual utopia has a tyrannical side.

Christianity had made a distinction between good and bad, while Sade clarifies in many of his works that it is better to spit on God and derive lust from blasphemy. Man should go beyond good and evil, and enjoy evil as well as good, beauty as well as ugliness and filth. The persons, regrettably mainly women, who have succumbed to catholic doctrines of charity and desire for the just, will suffer because evil is as much of part of life as good. It is better to enjoy both pleasure and pain, because a one-sided belief in the just will make

the believer suffer from evil. Life is not good or evil, not Eros or Thanatos, but both together. Lust murder is one of the ways to enjoy violence in pleasure. Murder is the destiny of people who remain attached to Christian ideals. As Dolmancé says, “wolves don’t eat each other.” The effort for republicans is apparently to become wolves. The debauchee will incite his partners in crime to many evil acts, but do them no harm. Also in this respect, Sade is not consistent in his work.

Sadian Inversions

The philosophy espoused by Sade in his novels is often an inversion of ideas that became popular with the Enlightenment. Sade’s work can in many parts be read as a critique, parody, or negation of the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and other philosophers of his time. Of course, some others offered him more positive inspiration. While society moved towards heterosexual ideals and started to propagate reproduction as a demographic device, Sade stressed the self-evident pleasures of sodomy. Most of his libertines prefer the arses of young males above those of women, and like to be fucked themselves along that canal. In *La philosophie dans le boudoir*, not only horror is expressed at coital sex, but also the main “good” character, a mother and wife, has her cunt sewn shut after she has been infected with a venereal disease. In a sense, she has become again a virgin and as such one of the few coital objects of desire, next to pregnant women. The only reason why Sade’s libertines support marriage and reproduction is to be able to commit incest and adultery and to blur family relations. For some of them it is a dazzling experience to fuck someone who is the offspring of incestuous relations with mother, wife, sister and daughter at the same time.

At a time that heterosexuality inside marriage was coded as natural, Sade expressed in *La philosophie dans le boudoir* that incest, prostitution, sodomy, pederasty, and violence are natural expressions of desire. His novels can be read as the most elaborate catalogue of sexual perversion ever written. His gender position is well defined. Although most of his leading libertines are men, women who have learned to enjoy the pleasures of evil and the pains of justice have an equal footing with men. Most women have however fallen prey to the doctrines of the church and thus become easy victims for libertines. While Malthus was proposing his theory of scarcity (Laqueur 1992), Sade believed in the abundance of nature. In stark contrast with the antimasturbation theory of Tissot and others who stressed the necessity to spare sperm for procreation, Sade indicated its abundance and suggested that spoiling it without an aim like reproduction made its expenditure all the more exciting. Spoiling sperm posed no problem at all as it is produced in endless quantities by the male body.

MASCULINITY

Perhaps we could deduce the ideals of masculinity in the late eighteenth century by the way Sade discusses them. His work is so revealing because he brings to the surface what in most material of his days is kept secret or is not discussed. Of course, his persuasions are usually the opposite of general opinion. In the opening scenes of *La philosophie dans le boudoir*, the straight and well-hung knight of Mirvel discusses his sexual exploits with the queen Dolmancé. He says he is only available for such bizarre inclinations if a charming person insists on it. The last thing he would do is to show attitude or to beat up the person who suggests such relations as other antisodomitical males apparently do: "I've none of that ludicrous arrogance which makes our young upstarts believe that it's by cuts with your walking stick you respond to such propositions" (Sade 1965, 188). This kind of inclination is in nature, and why should the person thus afflicted not act upon his desires. For Mirvel, such proposals are a compliment, and he has no intention to refuse them or to harass the concerned person. He not only fucks Dolmancé, but afterwards returns the pleasure. Sodomite Dolmancé had been very excited and asked Mirvel: "deign, O my love, deign to serve me as a woman after having been my lover, and enable me to say that in your divine arms I have tasted all the delights of the fancy I cherish supremely" (Ibid, 190). Thus happens while Mirvel at the same time sodomizes another male present at this scene. In his acts, the straight Mirvel shows that he does not doubt his masculinity or heterosexual preferences by having sex with men not only in the active, penetrating position but also as passive and penetrated. He is simply not interested in proving his masculinity or heterosexuality; he is interested in sexual pleasures whatever those may be.

In Sade's work, there is always a strict division of male and female roles with which he confirms apparently the sex dichotomy that developed, according to Laqueur, in the eighteenth century. But Sade is a master of inversion and all his male libertines like Le Chevalier prefer at times the so-called female roles. The four main protagonists of *Les cent vingt journées de Sodome* have, like Dolmancé, a strong propensity for sodomy, particularly in its passive form. One libertine still fucks from the front, but he does so because his enormous dick makes the practice for the concerned women an act of violence. Another of the men has a predilection for oral sex while the bishop who has the strongest inclination for males, abhors cunts, and can not get a hard-on for half a year after he has seen one. They are all of the opinion that boys look best when they are adorned with female attributes, and girls when they resemble most closely men.

In *Les cent vingt journées de Sodome*, the libertines have married wives who are the daughters of their partners in crime and who have been raped by their fathers. The bishop marries the daughter of his brother who is a result of

his own sperm—the only time he ever fucked coitally. In the end, the women are the wives of all men making it possible for their husbands to combine several crimes simultaneously like rape, sodomy, incest, and adultery. The wives, who have to be obedient to their husbands according to ecclesiastic law, are treated as the lowest servants and face the worst destiny in the orgies in the castle of Silling. Here, the laws of marriage are not inverted, but driven to their extreme logic: if women have to be submissive to their husbands, those can exploit them until the utter limit which will be in this novel lust murder for three of them.

The libertines are not only married to their wives but are at the same time the husbands of four of the kidnapped beautiful boys. Four of the so-called fuckers become again the husbands of the libertines who function as their wives. The example of the Roman emperors Nero and Heliogabal is followed but broadened by Sade's libertines. They marry as males each other's daughters and moreover young boys while they marry as wives the well-endowed young men. They enter a triple instead of a double marriage. The eight kidnapped young girls are left out of this arrangement. They are obliged to marry the remaining four young boys for the amusement of their masters. The libertines are rude and cruel to their wives, more so for the women than for the boys, but submissive, slutty, and shameless facing the fuckers whose wives they are.

The libertines take their shamelessness a step further, as Durcet acknowledges: "Nothing more logical than to adore degradation and to reap delight from scorn. He who ardently loves the things which dishonor, finds pleasure in being dishonored and must necessarily stiffen when told that he is" (Sade 1967, 495). The libertines not only love to be fucked in their asses, but their humiliation implies other acts. Being beaten is a major pastime in most of Sade's work, while lust for shit is the main topic of the first month in the castle of Silling. Piss sex, eating shit, licking filthy assholes are discussed in all their variations.

The enjoyments of sodomy, shit, and scourging are usually considered to be humiliations for male persons and to threaten their masculinity. In Sade, the reverse is true. Access to sexual pleasure is offered by such disgraces. His interest in debasement goes so far that he prefers for the wildest orgies ugly female carcasses lost in misery above the beauty of young boys whose innocence awakens more anger than lust on the pivotal moment: "is it not true that it is always the crapulous individual who best executes the infamous deed?" (Ibid, 516) In a clear reference to his own life, Sade has Curval tell the story of his penalty: "Everyone knows the story of the brave Marquis de S*** who, when informed of the magistrates' decision to burn him in effigie [his image], pulled his prick from his breeches and exclaimed: 'God be fucked, it has taken years to do it, but it's achieved at last; covered with opprobrium and infamy, am I? Oh, leave me, leave me, for I've got absolutely to discharge;'

and he did so in less time than it takes to tell" (Ibid, 495). The idea of the utter debasement of being executed brings the horniest ejaculation.

The people, who believe in Christian morality and do not know sexual pleasure, need some force to get beyond norms of honor and morality. This is precisely a scheme that again and again returns both in the life and work of Sade. Some people refuse and resist sexual pleasure because they are victims of systems of morality. Women and priests are often faithful to catholic doctrines and reject what they consider to be evil. Most men at the other hand are entrapped in ideas of masculine honor and unmasculine shame. For Sade, women have to stop being puritanical Christians and men trying to keep their honor. Only the loss of Christian morality and male honor offers a chance of pleasure. Only beyond honor and religion can lust be found in shamelessness and unmasculinity. Those who believe in the good and the just will perish because of the realities of evil.

In *La philosophie dans le boudoir*, Eugénie starts off as an innocent girl who knows the religious doctrines her mother has poisoned her with. Madame de Saint-Ange falls in love with the girl and asks her brother Mirvel and Dolmancé to introduce her fresh lesbian lover into the pleasures of libertinism. In one day, she will be deflowered from front and back, have endured with some pain the enormous cocks of Mirvel and the servant of Madame, while all fuck from behind, the women using a dildo. The higher techniques of jerking, rubbing, and sucking are taught. The whip is not spared on any ass. In this one day Eugénie proffers to be a very good pupil who starts off with innocent questions but knows after an exposé by Dolmancé that the answers most often will be the opposite of what she learned from her catholic mother. The expected male respect for the girl's virginity is inverted and the girl very much enjoys the loss of it. The pamphlet "Français, encore un effort" is the pinnacle of the verbal instruction. The sexual zenith is with her mother who comes to pick up Eugénie at the end of the day. She will be raped, infected with venereal disease and have her cunt and ass stitched closed, this last act performed by her own flesh and blood. There are no regrets for blood bonds in Sade, to the contrary. It seems as if in Sade's novels, women have to learn from others the pleasures of libertinism while men need less education. What men have to learn are the varieties of eroticism and the hedonist philosophies that stimulate desire. From the beginning, they are more sexual than women. Here, Sade reproduces social prejudice instead of subverting it. This begs the question why libertinism has not already since long taken over the world. But Sade gives a utopian vision of libertinism and cares little for sustained historic arguments.

Sade ridiculed ideals of masculinity. When he comes to Christian doctrines of sexuality, he gets very harsh—the more so because he was himself a victim of the consequences of catholic teaching. He was sentenced to the death penalty both during the Ancien Régime and by the Jacobins, which explains his criticism not only of catholic doctrines, but also of Enlightened

philosophies. His lust ideal has removed him very far from the codes of honor of his social class. Sade was the essential outsider of the late eighteenth century. Shortly after the Jacobins sentenced Sade but just before they were to put him to death, they themselves became victims of the guillotine. Sade's destiny however remained harsh. Both under Napoleon's regime and the Restoration, he was imprisoned, now not so much any longer for what he did but for what he wrote. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, his work would remain forbidden, at most published illegally or in expensive rare editions. Sade's perversions and his devastating irony regarding male ideals made his work impossible for a remarkably long time.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SADE'S WORK IN HIS TIMES

Sade made fun of the sexual morality and the masculine ideals of his times. At the same time, he expressed in the most offensive way the libertine pleasures many men craved. He brought out into the open hidden desires of both the men who espoused old ideals of masculinity and sexuality and those who developed new ideals. As a man of high nobility and as a predecessor of modern times, he mocked both the old privileges of his class and the promised freedoms of the Enlightenment, and thus criticized both systems. He did to some extent—and described in its extremes—what would have given many men pleasure. His voice can be analyzed as a countermelody in the field of newly developing views. His libertines inverted in various ways the developing masculine and sexual ideals of his times. They do not care much about spoiling their sperm or about being humiliated, whipped, and sodomized, acts that provoked great repugnance among males who believed in their male honor and active sexual roles.

While Trumbach's straight males had to prove their masculinity by denying same-sex interests and by visiting prostitutes, Sade's libertines certainly use prostitutes, but not to prove their masculinity or the absence of same-sex inclinations. The men Trumbach describes had to deny pleasures available to them, while Sade's libertines do whatever they like. That is often less abusive than what the men did who succumbed to ideals of male honor and shame while it offered a richer practice. For Sade, being put to shame and submitted to humiliations is the way to get access to lust. Sade's work is his testimony to the ideals of freedom that the Enlightenment promised but did not bring. The liberties it promised appeared to be subjection to an intrusive and omnipotent state. Sade offered a divergent perspective on nascent masculine sexual ideals that lingered on as an undercurrent in European history (Praz, 1970). It remains a question whether the necessity of sexual humiliation for experiencing lust was an essentialist or historic strategy for Sade. Was it for all eternity the only access to sexual pleasure, or rather time-bound and proposed against a background of catholic doctrines of chastity and noble beliefs of

male honor? I would go for the historic answer: shamelessness opens a way beyond Christian doctrines and male honor and beyond the new masculine ideals of the late eighteenth century.

Sade fits quite well in the transformation of male representations that Solomon-Godeau describes. His masculinity is still libidinous, exhibitionist, and ostentatious in the old, prebourgeois fashion of nobility. This style will be lost in the new masculine order, although revered by decadent writers of the late-nineteenth century. But while Solomon-Godeau (1997, 216) opposes the male's earlier exhibitionism with his later scopophilia (or voyeurism, erotic pleasure in looking, in this case particularly at women), Sade already combines both. His gender performance is subversive.

It could be worthwhile to extend the gender system by a new terminology. Sade's libertines are not masculine according to the ideals of his times. As wives to their husbands-fuckers these debauchees are neither effeminate nor transgendered. They refuse both the powerless effeminacy of fops and sodomites of an older generation and the domineering heterosexual masculinity of a new generation. They themselves are not androgynous, although they love it in boys and girls. It might be helpful to describe their refusal or transgression of masculine, feminine, and androgynous roles with a terminology of unmasculinity. Men who make a choice for feminine roles may combat the sex dichotomy but remain within a gender dichotomy that unmasculine men shatter. Unmasculinity is different from effeminacy, femininity, or transgenderism in its rejection of the gender opposition. Sade also wrecks the gendered dichotomy of looking and being looked at, of exhibitionism and voyeurism. At both ends, his lechers find pleasure, which is, of course, a consequence of the multiple, passive and active, positions his orgies require. Sade is in this perspective a forerunner of dandies, queers, transgenders, and multisexuals.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SADE'S WORK IN OUR TIMES

We are living in the shadow of another "sexual revolution," and again, Sade's criticism has not lost any of its urgency. Many of his points are still relevant while some others are indeed outdated. Lasting results of the "revolution" of the 1960s were a change from eternal to serial monogamy, a flood of erotic imagery in the media and some minor progress in the field of women's sexuality and gay and lesbian emancipation. Sexual cultures have however not changed fundamentally over the last four decades. We still have to deal with the social impossibility of an easygoing sexual culture, stagnation with the sex dichotomy, a continued belief in sexual privacy, and the primacy of love over sex. In most respects, Sade had already shown a different libertine Eros without sexual privacy or a tyranny of love and with gender inversions, confusions, and transgressions. The contemporary sexual ideology with its

sex dichotomy and beliefs of love and privacy impedes an easygoing sexual culture for obvious reasons. Sexual expressions are more than private affairs and often in direct opposition to ideals of love. Heterosexuality especially is inhibited by the sex dichotomy as is obvious through a comparison with a much more sexualized gay culture where no sex dichotomy limits a circulation of bodies for sexual pleasure (compare Schmidt 1996; Béjin 1998[1990 IN REFS]; Hekma 2005).

Sade's tales of initiation underline the necessity of a sexual socialization that is not based in ideas of a development from innocence to knowledge, but in a sexy discourse that helps the kids to find their own sexual ways. Innocence is not a natural but an imposed state. The blank stupidity of innocent people leads on many occasions in Sade's novels to impediments to lustful situations, and his main characters have to turn from the young and beautiful to the old and ugly to find solace for their excitements. His emphasis on violence stresses his difference from the hippies who declared, "make love, not war." After the sixties, many hopes of sexual liberation were shattered because of the unveiling of a hidden world of rape, assault, and harassment. Although Sade may have exaggerated the violence in sexuality, he nonetheless underlined pointedly the ferocity in sexual relations. Such furor is part of all social relations. Violence and conflict are not outside the field of a peaceful sexuality, but as much parts of it as of any other social phenomenon like maternal love, coupling, marriage, politics, or sports.

In one respect, Sade followed more or less the lines of Enlightened thinking. He very much believed in nature and used in accordance with his times the terminology of inborn dispositions to explain and defend his desires. His lusts are repeatedly stated to be in nature. But while most philosophers only thought heterosexual and reproductive relations to be innate, Sade included pederasty, prostitution, adultery, incest, and lust murder among the natural inclinations. He more or less asserted that all sexual variations are in nature, and that there is no reason to object to them or forbid them. For him, all human and also "inhuman" passions are innate and should be recognized in culture and society.

Masculine ideals slowly got their imprint of bourgeois citizenship in the eighteenth century, but Sade took a great distance from these ideals, as did some other dissident members of French nobility and the learned classes. The focus of Sade's criticism was the lack of hedonistic quality in these ideals. His approach to transgress honor and shame and to indulge in humiliating experiences ran and runs counter to expectations of male behavior. The development has in fact gone in the opposite direction with new ideals of sexual democracy and gender equality. While men formerly put women in submissive positions, this is no longer well received. Humiliation is refused in both genders and being a victim is not silenced any longer but spoken out loudly and publicly. Only in an s/m-underground culture, degradation is still desired—but often in its more symbolic forms. An s/m-discourse of

consensual sex, contractual relations, code words that interrupt ongoing scenes, and situations that are dictated by the submissive is itself submitting to dominant discourses of equality and democracy (Thompson 1994; see Noyes 1998 for a history of s/m).

Humiliation, one could argue, has nowadays been made into a “culture of the victim.” In the past two decades, confessing to have been a victim of sexual abuse or harassment has become widespread and well regarded (Jenkins 1998). This has led to a general feeling that sexual violence is morally wrong while definitions of abuse have been stretched far to include harassment and erotic conversations or sexual acts with younger people. Sade’s approach to enjoying the pleasures of violence is now off limits. Victims of sexual violence often experience feelings of excitement during the act but are afterwards ashamed of such emotions. Disapproving attitudes towards such sexual violence create negative feelings not only regarding sexual behavior in general but also various forms of sociability. It could be worthwhile, following Sade, not only to accept the pleasures of abuse, but also to prepare children in sexual education for such contradictory sentiments that are not specific to cases of abuse but also exist in erotic situations of mutual consent. The dichotomy of villain and victim, of amoral and innocent is as unreal and ineffective as male-female or gay-straight dichotomies. We have gone very far in discourses of sexual abuse, but such negative approaches not only impede erotic pleasures, they also contribute nothing much to the prevention of future abuse. Discourses of victimization do not help victims of sexual abuse to get beyond feelings of violation or to accept pleasure beyond pain. Impediments to sexual pleasure in a sexualized culture may only force offenders to continue their crimes.

Many men seem nowadays to be on their way to giving up ideals of honor and practices of domination and have tempered these down in favor of half-baked ideals of equality. Does this mean, to follow Sade, that lust also fades away and sex becomes boring while humiliation and submission are disappearing? There is no immediate answer to this question that Sade poses. There is in many situations nothing against democracy, as demonstrated by Sade’s libertines who have equal relations among themselves. But why should we oppose bonds of inequality that for sure will not wither away, between neither old and young, rich and poor, male and female, nor the beautiful and the ugly. Equality in sexual desire is for Sade unimaginable, and therefore his libertines have to force their wishes upon their often unwilling victims. Perhaps we could say that sexual equality is only possible in societies that have straightened out difference. But, to the contrary, it might well be that democracy functions best not based on equality or indifference but on a continuous production of endless differences including gender and sexual performances. Following Sade, combining democracy and equality could lead to a tyranny of mediocrity and extinguish pleasures of inequality and diversity. One way to produce diversity and oppose forms of domination is

inverting hierarchical dichotomies as Sade continuously does—by preferring sodomy above coitus, ugliness above beauty, spoiling above sparing sperm. The way to connect to other persons in this diversity could go by the principle of curiosity, so well developed by the madames who tell stories from their sexual practice to incite the lust of the listeners.

Sade seems to offer a utopia of multigendered and varied sexual pleasures that are produced through inequality and differentiation. It is amazing that capitalist societies that function in a similar way regarding capital and commodities refuse to create a comparable world of circulating bodies and pleasures.

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