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## *Petite-Maîtrise:* The Ethics of Libertine Foppery

Peter Cryle

ONE OF THE MOST STRIKING ACHIEVEMENTS of so-called poststructuralist thought has been to establish the understanding that marginal positions are nonetheless positions in some proper sense. Disruptive or subversive figures are themselves enfolded, as Derrida might say, within orderly spaces of representation. That is one reason why postcolonial and gender studies, for example, have come to speak of the Other, with a capital “O”. They analyze racist, sexist, and homophobic discourses in order to understand the semiotic work done by such figures as the Negro, the Whore, the Homosexual. But a significant secondary effect of such analysis—perhaps the more important in the long run—is to point to the diversity of practices and persons that are gathered together and yet paradoxically hidden by capitalized denomination.

This kind of analysis can be extended to the figure of the Libertine. In France and elsewhere, it has long been possible to construct the Libertine as a kind of heroic villain. Reprobatory talk is marshalled around a limited set of literary figures, most notably Molière’s Don Juan, Laclos’s Valmont and Mer-teuil, and a whole series of characters in Sade’s novels. The very same discursive dynamic has made those figures available for heroic roles in narratives of moral and sexual liberation, for the Libertine is a figure of profound ambivalence, both hostage and standard-bearer in an unending battle. In this essay, I want simply to take the figure of the heroic Libertine as known. It will avail us little to rehearse the indignant diatribes and the hortatory tributes that surround and shape it. In the place of all that talk, for the sake of summary generalization, I offer just one text as an exemplum. Luce Irigaray’s “‘Françaises’, ne faites plus un effort” does not actually take one of the standard positions in the old moral debate, but manifests all the better for that the assumptions shared by both sides.

The title of “‘Françaises’, ne faites plus un effort” speaks to (French) women, but the enunciative fiction in the body of the text is an address to “maîtres-libertins.” In that sense, the text is both a call to defiance and a performance of interrogation. The parodic title evokes the revolutionary pamphlet, “Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains” embedded in Sade’s *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, thereby effectively giving Sade’s

novel emblematic status as a representation of gendered libertinism. Yet Sade's Dolmancé, the master of ceremonies in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* and the fictive author of the pamphlet, is not named in Irigaray's text, and is thus denied hero status. He is simply interpellated as one of a whole class of such characters. Interpellation, it should be noted, stops short of denunciation: the master libertines are not allowed here to be the object of the indignation that their own transgressive program anticipates and perhaps requires. Rather, they are disrespectfully interrogated by a womanly figure who stands on the edge, or at the end, of one of their typical scenes.<sup>1</sup>

Those scenes, as Irigaray calls them, are didactic exercises in which an accomplished male instructs a young woman in the art of pleasure. With "une autorité souveraine," Dolmancé and his fellow "instituteurs immoraux" alternate between lectures in libertine philosophy and demonstrations of bodily practice. The young woman is not made to suffer, and is not a victim in the Dworkinian sense.<sup>2</sup> The fact is, however, that her pleasure is not truly her own. It is, one might say, exacted from her, as the master regularly compels her to programmatic "orgasm," always produced on cue. The woman is both patient and pupil, and libertinism is all the more masterful for being systematically magisterial.

One of the defining traits of the libertines' art, Irigaray suggests, is its seriality. She talks about it in psychoanalytical terms as repetition compulsion, pursued to the point of exhaustion. Mastery cannot help performing itself repeatedly, and is therefore, under interrogation, made to appear dialectically as a form of weakness. But a comparable thematic observation can be made without recourse to psychoanalysis. It can simply be observed that master libertines are great exponents of what Sade's Juliette calls "le grand nombre."<sup>3</sup> Sade's four friends at Silling count five passions per day for 120 days, making 600 in all, and Leporello's catalogue records 1003 conquests by Don Giovanni in Spain alone. Counting effectively performs the elimination of difference between successive partners and/or victims, and indeed the abolition of any difference between those two categories.<sup>4</sup>

As if to challenge those conquering libertines, Irigaray invokes parenthetically a legendary feminine figure. *Lassata sed non satiata*, she muses, echoing Baudelaire's slight misquotation of Juvenal. Messalina is said in the *Saturae* to be "lassata necdum satiata" after a night spent in a Roman army barracks having sex with one soldier after another until they are all spent.<sup>5</sup> Far from being brought to climactic pleasure by some master stroke, she is simply tired without being satisfied. She deserves the sobriquet *invicta* for her libidinal resistance, for her capacity to go on desiring after a string of would-be

sexual conquerors have had their way with her. As Irigaray implies, Messalina can only be a parenthetical presence in any address to the master libertines, for there is no classic scene in which a Don Juan or a Dolmancé encounters the Empress of desire. The libertine counting of conquests cannot be measured against innumerable longing, which is claimed by Irigaray as feminine.

The figure of serial conquest, haunted perhaps by the ghost of timeless resistance, stands at the center of what I wish to call capital-L Libertinism. But other, less striking forms of libertinage are lost from view in its display.<sup>6</sup> Chantal Thomas, in her fine book *Casanova: un voyage libertin*, confronts the difficulty of positioning the Venetian adventurer in relation to the illustrious predecessor and successor, Don Juan. Casanova, we come to understand, is not just a small-l version of the libertine, offering less of the same: “Casanova ne tient pas le compte de ses amantes. [...] Casanova ne compte pas, et personne ne compte à sa place.”<sup>7</sup> Not counting, in this instance, is part of a particular libertine practice which Thomas is committed to describing. But it is also, ironically, a thematic and discursive destiny. Libertines who do not follow the heroic pattern tend to be lost from view, whether by admirers or accusers.

Thomas notes that breaking off with a woman is not a significant event for Casanova. That distinguishes him further, not only from Don Juan but also from the libertine characters of *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, who appear not to be addressed by Irigaray: “À l’inverse du libertinage selon Choderlos de Laclos [...], la rupture, ici, n’est pas une figure décisive” (Thomas 207). In marking Casanova’s difference with respect to Don Juan’s “rupture,” Thomas is led to contrast two styles of departure: “Jamais prémédités, ses départs s’exécutent rapidement, à peine sous l’effet d’une décision. Cette légèreté suffirait à distinguer le système de Casanova (si l’on peut appeler système sa détermination à se laisser aller où le pousse le vent qui souffle) et celui de Don Juan” (Thomas 206). Thomas’s careful distinction-making serves as a model for my essay in two respects. It is not just that Casanova’s system might be considered philosophically and aesthetically inferior to that of Don Juan: there is doubt about whether such libertinage deserves to be thought of as a system at all.

Whether the focus is on Casanova or on others of his ilk, there is something to be gained by identifying a whole class of lesser libertines who are, so to speak, below Irigaray’s line of sight, or out of earshot when she asks her questions. That such a class exists as such is consonant with the wide currency during the eighteenth century of the term *petits-mâîtres*. *Petits-mâîtres* tend to be characterized by facile insolence and effete manners. They have their own

rococo speech and engage in pastel-hued display, as Patrick Wald Lasowski shows in his wonderfully benign reading of their practices in *L'Ardeur et la galanterie*.<sup>8</sup> But qualifying them as small, no matter how indulgently, can only confirm the dominant mode of libertinism, since it sustains the mensurative habits of a Dolmancé or a Don Giovanni, measuring the lesser against the greater and counting slightness as such. For what can *petits-mâîtres* be, if not diminished or trivial versions of our master libertines?

The author most commonly associated with the representation of *petits-mâîtres* is undoubtedly Crébillon. Accordingly, it is to some of his texts that I wish to turn in the rest of this essay in order to identify patterns of thought and action that might be discernable there, even if there is uncertainty about whether they constitute a “system.” The figure of the *petit-mâitre* corresponds to a range of characters who fall short of being heroes, since no one in Crébillon’s novels is allowed that status. But we can ask nonetheless: what forms of mastery are in fact embodied by the characters who seem most successful in the libertine arts?

It is surely significant that Sade, the champion of the master libertines, takes Crébillon’s characters as a negative point of reference. In prefaces to *Aline et Valcour* and *Les Crimes de l’amour*, Sade is at pains to distinguish his own libertines from those of his predecessor. He claims that frank depiction and direct moral confrontation in his own work allow vice to be easily identified, and therefore easily rejected. To make his libertine characters less offensive in the manner of Crébillon would pose a greater moral danger to his readers:

L’idée d’adoucir, et quelques discours et quelques nuances, s’est plus d’une fois présentée, nous en convenons; mais l’aurions-nous pu sans affaiblir? Ah! quelque prononcé que soit le vice, il n’est jamais à craindre que pour ses sectateurs, et s’il triomphe il n’en fait que plus d’horreur à la vertu: rien n’est dangereux comme d’en adoucir les teintes; c’est le faire aimer que de le peindre à la manière de Crébillon, et manquer par conséquent le but moral que tout honnête homme doit se proposer en écrivant.<sup>9</sup>

Crébillon, we note, is on the side of “weak” or “gentle” libertinism, but gentleness is held by Sade to be insidiously seductive. “Je ne veux pas faire aimer le vice,” he says in “Idée sur les romans,” “je n’ai pas, comme Crébillon et comme Dorat, le dangereux projet de faire aimer aux femmes les personnages qui les trompent.”<sup>10</sup>

It is a matter of elementary sophistication to unmask the disingenuity of these comments. “Idée sur les romans” includes, after all, a bare-faced denial of the authorship of *Justine*. But we can undo Sade’s duplicitous account of “weak” libertinism without dismissing it. I propose in fact to take it seri-

ously—perhaps more seriously than Sade would have wished. He positions Crébillon so as to condemn him in effect from both sides, for his tepid commitment to libertinage and for his calculating immorality.<sup>11</sup> The Sadian libertine, he suggests in effect, trumps the *petit-maître* both by his capacity for wholehearted vice and by his exemplary failure, which purportedly comes to stand as an invitation to virtue. But what if it were indeed the case that the prancing marquis proved to be more successful in their own way than Sade's red-blooded villains? What if their weakness and smallness counted as a libertine strategy with more promise of success?

Crébillon's novel *L'Écumoire, ou Tanzaï et Néardné* contains no fewer than three male characters who engage in the seduction of women. The hero, Tanzaï, is the first of these, but the least accomplished. The other two are Prince Cormoran and the genie Jonquille, each of whom is presented in laudatory terms. Cormoran wins the heart of the fairy Moustache, who admires him for his extraordinary versatility. Far from having one set of moves, he adapts to every circumstance:

Sa conversation enjouée et sérieuse, satisfaisait également par ses grâces et sa solidité. Austère avec la prude, libre avec la coquette, mélancolique avec la tendre, il n'y avait pas une dame à la cour dont il ne fit les délices, et pas un homme dont il n'excitât la jalousie. La supériorité de son esprit ne le rendait pas insociable; complaisant avec finesse, il savait se plier à tout.<sup>12</sup>

Conversational skill of this kind supposes great sensitivity to what one might call affective or moral register. The point is not to lecture the prude about why she should become a coquette, nor to compel the sentimental woman to programmatic pleasure, but to recognize each of them for what she is, and seduce each on her own terms. Rather than smallness or even softness, this is characterized in Crébillon's text as "pliability." That metaphor deserves further consideration as an alternative to libertine erectness.

The art of seduction, understood thus, is not the classic form of domination that constructs its tableaux, its *journées* in series. It is, as Crébillon reminds us at every turn, an art of the moment. The *moment* needs to be distinguished with care from the instant, which came to be glorified in the nineteenth century as the time of intense pleasure or pain. The *moment* is a constraining moral circumstance, a compelling erotic opportunity. Geneviève Salvan, in her recent book on Crébillon, discusses the notion at some length, characterizing it as the point where nature triumphs over prejudice, and feminine refusal becomes impossible.<sup>13</sup>

So it is that Jonquille, the second successful libertine of *L'Écumoire*, triumphs regularly by his ability to identify the moment, and indeed to bring it

about: “Le génie était aimable, impatient, et dans l’habitude de vaincre: il connaissait le cœur, faisait profit de tout, et ces sortes de gens sont extrêmement dangereux: ils amènent le moment, et ne s’y trompent pas.”<sup>14</sup> Moral suppleness of this kind is called “dangerous” by Crébillon’s decorous narrator, just as it was later to be in Sade’s disingenuous prefaces. And Jonquille is indeed a danger to womanly virtue because “il conn[âit] le cœur”—that is, he reads secret emotions—and knows how to turn every chance development to his own ends. He appears to be, not an eliminator of chance as Sade’s libertines typically saw themselves, but rather a master gambler. Néardné, while married to Tanzaï, finds herself for reasons beyond her control subject to the blandishments of Jonquille. She is, in principle, faithful to her husband, but in Crébillon’s world, principle itself is largely shaped by circumstance. In order to free her husband from a spell, she has but a day to yield to Jonquille and win his agreement. Any practice of virtue is therefore temporally constrained:

Néardné n’avait pas pour faire briller sa vertu le temps que l’on prend d’ordinaire, plus ou moins selon la pruderie, la majesté, et la dissimulation de la personne attaquée. On ne lui donnait qu’un jour; encore n’était-elle pas sûre que sa résistance allât jusqu’au bout. (*Écumeiro* 192-93)

Néardné’s primary motive in consorting with Jonquille is one of uxorial duty. But this is no time to play at being Lucretia, since she must act in the moment. The performance of “virtue” is occasional, in the sense of occasional furniture. Virtue and vice, seduction and resistance are all opportunistic. Salvan goes so far as to claim that the *moment* deprives the woman of any self-mastery: “C’est cette maîtrise de soi que les libertins refusent à la femme qui, quels que soient sa ‘nature’ et ses ‘principes,’ se rend invariablement au moment.”<sup>15</sup>

Crébillon’s *Le Hasard du coin du feu* represents two successful libertines, one who is simply talked about admiringly as Cormoran was, while the other is shown at work in more detail than Jonquille. Norsan, the absent model, is spoken of by Célié as the first man to have made a strong impression on her. He did not do that by any singular display, but by the the extraordinary breadth and variety of his social comportment:

Comme il y a peu d’hommes qui aient une superficie aussi étendue, et aussi variée que la sienne, je ne fus pas moins étonnée de la multiplicité de ses connaissances, que de l’agrément qu’il savait répandre sur les matières qui en sont les moins susceptibles; de la sorte de consistance que les objets les plus frivoles semblaient prendre entre ses mains; de la facilité singulière avec laquelle son esprit se pliait à tous les tons.<sup>16</sup>

This list of qualities might seem rather imprecise, but that very imprecision follows the same pattern as in *L’Écumeiro*, allowing us to build a composite

image of our supposed *petit-maître*: Norsan's pliability of mind is such that he can engage in conversation on any topic. His ethics, one must suppose, are parallel to his rhetoric: both are utterly responsive to the formal requirements of well-turned conversation.

The second libertine in *Le Hasard du coin du feu* is Clerval, who makes and takes a series of opportunities, expounding his own theories and methods of seduction, commenting on Norsan's behavior, and himself seducing Célié. The theory, it must be said once again, is difficult to apprehend as such, for Clerval seems to call into question the very possibility of a proper method. Is it better to advance cautiously, or to surprise a woman by making a bold move? It all depends on the circumstance. There are some women for whom "une témérité imprévue, quoique non désirée" is "très dangereuse"—dangerous for their virtue, of course—and others with whom boldness is bound to fail. How to make the right move, that is the question:

Si l'on savait quelle est, sur cela, la façon de penser d'une femme, on ne l'attaquerait jamais que comme elle a besoin de l'être pour être vaincue, et les deux sexes y gagneraient également: mais, réduit comme on l'est presque toujours, sur une chose si essentielle, à marcher au hasard, et à en attendre tout, le moyen d'appliquer toujours convenablement la témérité, ou la retenue? (*Le Hasard* 181)

This is where the novel's title takes on its full significance. Not only is the action of the novel shown to be governed by chance, but libertines must give chance (or opportunity) a central place when reflecting on their practice. Since each woman has her preferred tempo, and since those preferences are more or less inscrutable, there is only one conclusion to be drawn: "comme il arrive assez communément qu'on manque une femme par la même voie qui vous en a fait avoir une autre, mon avis est, qu'il nous est de la dernière importance de n'avoir pas toujours auprès d'elles la même marche" (*Le Hasard* 181-82). It is a matter of tact, but restraint is not always the best way. It is a matter of tempo, but neither slowness nor speed, nor indeed some compromise between the two, provides assurance of success.

Questions of libertine tempo are nicely *mises en abyme* in the text when Célié complains about the abrupt way in which Norsan made his decisive move to seduce her. He appeared to make no allowance for "ce qu'il devait à mon âge et à la décence de mon sexe, ni la pudeur que, quand il aurait pensé de moi le plus mal du monde, il devait du moins paraître me supposer." She was "révolt[ée]," being made only too aware of the "mépris" he must have felt for her (*Le Hasard* 176-77). Are we to understand by this that Norsan, for all his accomplishments, had fallen victim to a mixture of bad luck and feminine



impenetrability? Should this incident be taken to confirm the general difficulty of seduction, even for one so accomplished, as expounded by Clerval? We ought to hesitate before drawing that conclusion: Norsan's sudden move, though reported by Cécile with indignation, may well be further proof of his remarkable adaptability.

There is evidence in the text, after all, to suggest that Cécile is herself much closer to being a coquette than a prude. Her own moral tempo and her own display of virtue appear to be suited to the speedier end of that quasi-moral spectrum. Early in the story, she declares to her friend the Marquise that these things are matters of social code, unfounded in enlightened morality: "se rendre promptement; se rendre tard; être estimée à cause de l'un; méprisée par rapport à l'autre; tout cela, dans le fond, pure affaire de préjugé" (*Le Hasard* 138). So when Cécile tells Clerval what transpired between her and Norsan, that account should doubtless be taken as a seductive move in its own right, just as Clerval's general description of his own practice deserves to be considered tendentious for the same reason. When Clerval moves to seduce Cécile, he seems to find the same tempo as Norsan did, thereby confirming that even Norsan's apparent clumsiness was probably evidence of skill, if not of mastery in the fullest sense.

The most elaborate version of the *petit-maître* in Crébillon's fiction—named, disparaged, and admired as such—is Versac in *Les Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit*. Madame de Lursay describes him in scathing terms: "Voilà bien [...] le fat le plus dangereux, l'esprit le plus mal tourné, et l'espèce la plus incommode qu'il y ait à la cour! [...] Il parle un jargon qui éblouit: il a su joindre, au frivole du petit-maître, le ton décisif du pédant, il ne se connaît à rien, et juge de tout."<sup>17</sup> But the irony is that these egregious defects are quite systematically the obverse of his qualities. Taken together, in Meilcour's view, they seem to make the perfection of his kind: "Adoré de toutes les femmes qu'il trompait et déchirait sans cesse, vain, impétueux, étourdi: le plus audacieux petit-maître qu'on ait jamais vu et plus cher peut-être à leurs yeux par ces mêmes défauts, quelques contraires qu'ils leur soient" (*Égarements* 96). Versac's accomplishments are judged by women, just as Cormoran's and Norsan's were. They do not include the bravado of a Don Juan, but they do involve a form of daring. Once again they prove difficult to define: "Il avait composé les grâces de sa personne comme celles de son esprit, et savait se donner de ces agréments singuliers qu'on ne peut ni attraper ni définir" (*Égarements* 96-97).

Success makes Versac a likely model for others, but because he cannot be pinned down to a clear set of techniques for producing pleasure, he is extremely difficult to imitate:

Il y avait cependant peu de gens qui ne voulussent l'imiter, et parmi ceux-là, aucun qui n'en devînt plus désagréable. Il semblait que cette heureuse impertinence fût un don de la nature, et qu'elle n'avait pu faire qu'à lui. Personne ne pouvait lui ressembler, et moi-même, qui ai depuis marché si avantageusement sur ses traces, et qui parvins enfin à mettre la cour et Paris entre nous deux, je me suis vu longtemps au nombre de ses copies gauches et contraintes qui, sans posséder aucune de ses grâces, ne faisaient que défigurer ses défauts et ajouter aux leurs." (*Égarements* 97).

Far from being magisterial, Versac is so mobile, so given to improvisation, that he condemns his would-be imitators to failure and ridicule. Pranzi, who is introduced as an "élève et copie éternelle de Versac," is soon condemned as "sot, présomptueux, impudent" (*Égarements* 125-26). Versac himself comes close to all the doubtful qualities visible in Pranzi—that is the nature of his audacity—but he is not reducible to them. And whereas others, Sade included, might have seen Pranzi in his fatuousness as a typical *petit-mâitre*, Crébillon's narrative does not deign to accord Pranzi the honor of naming him thus.

A central paradox of *Les Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit* is that Versac the inimitable should in fact become a model and a teacher for the young narrator-hero Meilcour. Or to put it more carefully, Meilcour constructs himself as Versac's pupil, and his libertine career as a problematic emulation of the diffident master. The paradox is not of course just a matter of unpredictable story development; it has to do with the difficulty of understanding *petite-maîtrise* as a genuine set of aesthetico-ethical practices. And when Versac does finally offer, a little surprisingly, to instruct Meilcour in his art, he does so more or less in secret. He is not prepared to hold the pose of a teacher. It is only generosity of the moment that leads him to take the risk of revealing how concerted is his behavior. "Je serai charmé de vous instruire," he says, adding soon after, "le besoin que vous avez d'être instruit m'a contraint de vous montrer que je sais penser, et réfléchir."<sup>18</sup> Here we see the *petit-mâitre*, for once, tipping his hand, admitting that he is actually following a strategy.

It is not, of course—that much should already be clear—that Versac has a simple recipe for success. The "science du monde" of which he speaks resides in the detail (*Égarements* 218), and that detail cannot simply be communicated through a course of lectures. There will be no classic scene in which the master passes on a set of moral "attitudes" corresponding to a series of bodily moves. Versac's expectation is that Meilcour will not tread the exact path he himself has followed, for the "science" evoked here lies not in the taking of determinate steps, but in the overcoming of prejudice. Meilcour is called on to achieve his own forms of discrimination and assurance: "Ce n'est pas cependant que je me flatte que vous puissiez marcher sûrement d'après mes seuls préceptes, mais du moins ils affaibliront en vous des idées qui

retarderaient longtemps vos lumières ou vous empêcheraient peut-être à jamais d'en acquérir" (*Égarements* 219).

A particular prejudice to be overcome by the aspiring libertine is the very prejudice against foppery. Being a fop may indeed be everyone's natural tendency, to be avoided only by effort, but radical foppery of the kind practiced by Versac requires its own discipline:

Il est sans doute aisé d'être un fat, puisque quelqu'un qui craint de le devenir a besoin de veiller sans cesse sur lui-même, et que cependant il n'y ait personne qui n'ait sa sorte de fatuité: mais il n'est pas si facile d'acquérir celle qu'il me fallait. Cette fatuité audacieuse et singulière, qui, n'ayant point de modèle, soit seule digne d'en servir. (*Égarements* 228)

It might have been thought that ridicule was, in Crébillon's world, something to be avoided at all costs, but Versac reveals a strategy that makes a place even for that. "Voilà l'avantage des ridicules," he explains to Meilcour, "c'est de séduire et d'entraîner les personnes mêmes qui les blâment le plus" (*Égarements* 231). Once again this is the measure of the *petit-maître's* audacity. He knows that libertine success is sometimes to be found on the far side of risibility. Versac manages to be edifying in the very exaggeration of his behavior.

Yet Versac is required by his chosen role(s) to be edifying without being strictly exemplary. After explaining his strategy to Meilcour, he seems to be pulled up short by a sense of impropriety: "Mais la conversation que nous venons d'avoir ensemble a été d'une longueur si énorme qu'avec plus d'ordre, et des idées plus approfondies, elle pourrait presque passer pour un traité de morale" (*Égarements* 239). That is of course exactly what it is, but the stylistic conventions of this milieu require elegant lightness of tone whatever the topic. The *petit-maître* who wishes exceptionally to articulate his ethics is in continual danger of being tiresomely insistent. Unlike the master libertine, he cannot hold forth. With only a brief moment to spell out what must be done, he echoes what was said in *L'Écumoire*:

Croyez-vous qu'il ne faille pas avoir dans l'esprit bien de la variété, bien de l'étendue, pour être toujours, et sans contrainte, du caractère que l'instant où vous vous trouvez exige de vous: tendre avec la délicate, sensuel avec la voluptueuse, galant avec la coquette? Etre passionné sans sentiment, pleurer sans être attendri, tourmenter sans être jaloux: voilà tous les rôles que vous devez jouer, voilà ce que vous devez être. (*Égarements* 229)

This is, quite precisely, an ethics of the *moment*, and can itself be expounded only within a moment of conversation. But it is no less ethical for its lack of formal prescription. It deserves a place—just a small one—in histories of libertinism.

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## Notes

1. Luce Irigaray, "'Françaises,' ne faites plus un effort," *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), 197 ff.
2. On feminine victimhood in pornography, see Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1987).
3. Sade, *Histoire de Juliette*, in *Œuvres complètes du marquis de Sade*, Annie Le Brun and Jean-Jacques Pauvert, eds. (Paris: Pauvert, 1986), 7:127.
4. For a discussion of number in Sade, see Peter Cryle, *Geometry in the Boudoir: Configurations of French Erotic Narrative* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), 120-46.
5. *Saturae* VI, l. 130.
6. Jean-Pierre Dubost reminds us that French prefers with good reason to speak of libertinage rather than libertinism, since "libertinage has no strictly philosophical core" ("Libertinage and Rationality: From the 'Will to Knowledge' to Libertine Textuality," *Yale French Studies*, 94 (1998): 56.
7. Chantal Thomas, *Casanova: un voyage libertin* (Paris: Denoël/Folio, 1999), 25.
8. See Patrick Wald Lasowski, *L'Ardeur et la galanterie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).
9. Donatien-Alphonse-François de Sade, "Avis de l'éditeur," *Aline et Valcour*, in *Œuvres*, Michel Delon, ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 1:388.
10. Sade, "Idée sur les romans," *Les Crimes de l'amour*, in *Œuvres complètes*, 10:80.
11. Cf. Patrick Wald Lasowski, *Libertines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 26-27: "Quoi qu'il en soit, divin, le Marquis condamnera violemment Crébillon dans les petits-marquis duquel il ne verra qu' 'hypocrites,' pâles et froids séducteurs dépourvus de toute inspiration, 'enveloppant de cynisme des immoralités.'"
12. Claude-Prosper Jolyot Crébillon fils, *L'Écumeiro, ou Tanzaï et Néardné*, in *Œuvres complètes* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), 2:136.
13. See Geneviève Salvan, *Séduction et dialogue dans l'œuvre de Crébillon* (Paris: Champion, 2002), 104-13. Thomas Kavanagh, in his valuable book, *Aesthetics of the Moment: Literature and Art in the French Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996), 238, speaks of "the moment as a force compromising the status of the known, the conventional, and the certain." It could be said, however, that he overemphasizes the aspect of freedom, thereby giving a less appropriate account than Salvan of the quite constrained nature of the *moment* as understood by Crébillon.
14. Crébillon fils, *L'Écumeiro*, 193.
15. Salvan 110.
16. Crébillon fils, *Le Hasard du coin du feu*, in *Œuvres complètes* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), 9:175-76.
17. Crébillon fils, *Les Égaréments du cœur et de l'esprit*, in *Œuvres complètes* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), 3:109.
18. *Égaréments* 218-19; cf. 238.