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Sade Today

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Sade Today

Guest Editors: Lode Lauwaert & Gert Hekma

On October 14, 2014, the exhibition *Sade. Attacking the sun*, with the famous Sade scholar Annie Le Brun as curator, was opened at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. The fact that his literary works, exactly 200 years after his death, were at the same time also the subject of another exhibition in Paris (*Sade, marquis de l'ombre, prince des Lumières*) would have been more than likely against the Marquis' will. This can be derived from Sade's testament, which he wrote a few years before his death in 1814. Indeed, it expresses the wish that after his death acorns should be sown on his grave, so that all traces of his death would disappear. This wish was in line with another, namely that after his death his writings and name would be effaced from the minds of the people. That this wish would not come true, became clear quite soon, as two decades after his death, the eponym 'sadism' was already included in a French dictionary. Furthermore, over the course of the nineteenth century, Sade's oeuvre was read by many prominent writers, and various psychiatrists and sexologists wrote studies about 'le divine marquis', as he was often called. In the following century, they were followed by the surrealists, biographers, philologists, and a large number of philosophers. This shows that Sade, other than he had hoped, would not disappear from the people's minds, and that over the past 200 years his oeuvre was discussed from very different perspectives. However, little attention has been paid to his work in the social sciences and to the relation between Sade's transgressive ideas and contemporary views of sexuality and gender that received their shape during the Enlightenment. A thorough investigation of this relation and of the actuality of Sade's work was the aim of the one-day international conference *Sade Today* that took place on his 200th anniversary, December 2, 2014, in the Casa Rosso in Amsterdam. The majority of the presented texts were subsequently reworked to an article and can be read in this collection. While it is certain that Sade's texts nourish the human imagination, we hope that these articles presented here stimulate the intellect in one way or another.

Lode Lauwaert & Gert Hekma