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Hekma, G.

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# The relevance of Sade for society today

*Gert Hekma*

**Abstract:** Sade is still relevant today for academia, politics and sexual citizens because of his strong criticism of religious and secular (“Enlightened”) thought. In his presentation, nature is not good but violent; his work is a criticism of dichotomies of gender (male versus female), sexuality (hetero versus homo) and of private and public and of clear-cut identities; there is no unity of love and sex and laws should not restrain pleasure.

**Keywords:** Sade, relevance, controversy, politics, enlightenment

## Opening Sade

The work of the Marquis de Sade has been mainly discussed in terms of philosophy and literature, or in the light of his biography, but rarely whether it could be interesting for sexual and social sciences, politics or personal lives. Although his work is very much about sexuality and gender, contemporary queer, sexual and gender studies have rarely taken the oeuvre of Sade into serious consideration, almost as if his books have no relevance for these fields of study.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding this neglect, the Marquis’ ideas have often been applied to cultural and personal practices: in porn, in movies, in the arts and recently – and finally – in relation to queer theory by William Edmiston.<sup>2</sup> Building on these foundations, I will continue this line of thought and focus on Sade’s social relevance for academia, society and individual.

The work of Sade is highly controversial. People often object to its violence, sexism and/or fascism, even going so far as to compare him to Hitler.<sup>3</sup> Others see his oeuvre as highly inspirational for the themes I will discuss here. It is, in the words of Foucault, not the truth but a toolbox.<sup>4</sup> The ideas of Sade come mainly in the form of novels and letters, and not as academic literature. Even in the absence of truth

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1 See for example the journals *Sexualities*, *GLQ*, *Journal of Homosexuality*. I have done myself once an article “Sade, masculinity and sexual humiliation”, in *Men and Masculinities* 9:2 (2006) 236-251 and a review article “Rewriting the history of Sade”, in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1:1 (July 1990) 131-136.

2 Edmiston WF 2013, *Sade: queer theorist*, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford.

3 Onfray M 2014, *La passion de la méchanceté. Sur un prétendu divin marquis*, Autrement, Paris. Lode Lauwaert gives a clear explanation in his (2014) *De markies de Sade*. Pelckmans, Kalmthout, in the chapter on Klossowski, on some of the philosophical reasons for the violence in the marquis’s work.

4 Foucault M 1974, 1994 *Prisons et asiles dans le mécanisme du pouvoir*, in: *Dits et Ecrits*, t. II. Paris: Gallimard, pp. 523-4.

claims, the ideas and principles found in Sade's work remain highly relevant for academia, politics and pleasure, for the polemics that his novels still create and for the visceral emotions they still manage to raise two centuries after his death

## Eighteenth-century thought on sexuality and gender Enlightenment perspectives

Sade's work is an extreme version and at the same time a strong criticism of mainstream Enlightened thought. It has been seen as beyond good and evil or as a radical transgression of norms but the question is what the good and normal were in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible to identify five main premises of Enlightenment views regarding sexuality during this time period."

Sexuality belongs to nature and culture is, essentially, a corruption of nature. What is natural is good and what arises from culture is bad. The natural flow of life should be from innocence to heterosexuality and reproduction, and the reverse of these natural tendencies are onanism or self-pleasuring and perversion. In the discussion of masturbation, Tissot and others indicate what corrupts children: not only erotic novels, wrong friends or vicious educators, but also hot beds, sleeping on the belly instead of the back, spicy food, strong drinks, horse riding, pockets in trousers that allow touching of the genitals and so on. Prevention of these contacts and habits is essential to guarantee innocence and chastity.<sup>5</sup> There is a strong relation between onanism and fantasy. Mental and cultural corruption of imagination and feeling leads to vicious pleasures that stimulate desires to experiment further and is what makes people sink deeper into decadence and disease, into perverse dreams and to venture further from the natural erotic flow – that apparently develops by itself without external stimulation or cultural labor. According to Montesquieu, prevention of what generates sodomy or the crime against nature is needed, and if done so, "one will immediately see nature either defend her rights or recover them".<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, a new gender dichotomy developed that saw male and female as polar opposites instead of a scale with degrees of variation. Before 1800, male and female bodies in medical anatomy books were viewed – according to Thomas Laqueur – as similar (apart from the genitalia) and as equally sexual. However, since the French Revolution, males and females began to be seen as totally dissimilar, with men being sexual and women asexual (chaste, Victorian) and, contrary to prior held beliefs, no need of female orgasm (hence, sexual pleasure) for fertilization. Prior, during the Christian era, men had to control their own sexuality and even more so that of their dependents (wives, children and others). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century women became asexual Victorians who apparently needed less control.<sup>7</sup> Prostitution, in the past seen as being caused by an excess of female lust, now was explained by bad socio-economic con-

5 Laqueur TW 2003, *Solitary Sex. A Cultural History of Masturbation*, Zone Books, New York.

6 In: Merrick J & Ragan BT (eds) 2001, *Homosexuality in Early Modern France. A documentary collection*, Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, p. 154.

7 Laqueur TW 1990, *Making Sex: Body an Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA & London.

ditions: poverty and/or abusive families. This gender dichotomy was the foundation of heterosexuality (including marriage, reproduction, coital sex) and would form the basis for what was to be seen as sexually “normal” and what, in contrast, would be deemed perverse in the coming century. The subtitle of Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia sexualis* (1886) was “with special reference to sexual inversion” which indicates that homosexuality was in those times the exemplary perversion, at least in Germany.

Not only were state and church separated, but also citizen and state which created space for a private separate from a public world – the third point. The state should not interfere in this personal realm of the (male) citizen. Sexuality belonged to this intimate sphere and public indecencies became crimes with serious consequences for those who could not rely on their own space for erotic encounters (youth, queers, women and so on). This distinction became part of the new laws governing sexuality in France established in 1791 and 1810. These *Code Pénals* listed for the first time in history the crime of public indecency (“*outrage public à la pudeur*”). Sexuality – homo, hetero, exhibitionist and sometimes including nude bathing, urinating and defecating or general visibility of the genital area – should only happen behind closed doors (bedrooms, toilets) and not outside.<sup>8</sup> Prostitution became known as a public vice where sex workers had to rely on public space for their activities. As long as they didn’t have sex with their clients on streets or in parks, their soliciting would be met with some clemency. This policy applied more for the clients than for the women, as sex work was regarded as a necessary evil stemming from the natural heterosexual drives of unmarried males. Creating the option of public sex work offered those men an escape.

The private/public distinction was strongly related to – and that is the fourth point – the emergence of the individual and the rise of sexual identities that would be seen as innate in human beings (compare Rousseau’s *Confessions* as the model for erotic identification). This sexual self received negative sanctioning from the beginning due to the demonization of self-pleasuring during adolescence. Internalizing the view that solo-sex was bad for health, morals and society, this proved to be a miserable starting point for the future of young people’s erotic lives. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the struggle against onanism by doctors, educators and clergymen was developing and meant a crucial step for the emergence of new kinds of sexophobia. It was the highway to produce culpable sexual selves ridden with feelings of shame.

Finally with the advent of Romanticism, the idea became that love and sexuality could well go together while before sexuality was evil and love heavenly – opposites rather than emotions that could be combined. The ideas of romantic love became more important and started to include sexuality and, in the long run, were accompanied by the demands of heterosexuality and gender equality. Slowly, being in love would become the precondition for engaging in sex and having sex without love shunned.

The mainstream Enlightened perspectives on gender and sexuality were most evidently applied in modern sexology. It was created and spread by “perverts” themselves and psychiatrists at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and taken up by Freudians,

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8 See for a history of article 330 of the Code Pénal Iacub M 2008, *Par la trou de la serrure. Une histoire de la pudeur publique XIX-XXIe siècle*, Fayard, Paris.

popular presses and media, novels, politics and law-making.<sup>9</sup> Ideas of nature, heterosexual norms, privacy, identity, love and sexual evil, whether it was masturbation or perversion, were basic to sexology. Sade's ideas remain to this day so interesting because he went against this ideology of sexuality and gender, among much more.

## The views of Sade

Sade knew well the works and views of the Ancients and his contemporaries on sexuality (see Hubbard in this issue) and developed very different perspectives on these five themes.

For Sade, nature was destructive and violent. Life and death were both part of it and (lust) murder belonged to the logics of nature: it was Eros and Thanatos. For him there was no such thing as a 'good' barbarian, no such thing as a good nature corrupted by culture, but rather a cruel nature that culture should not impede and by extension neither should it hinder people's lusts. Contrary to Malthus, he thought about nature not in terms of scarcity, but of abundance, as well as a surplus of life and sperm. He did not worry about lack (as in the presentation of Tissot on masturbation, or of Freud in terms of the development of desire) and also did not object to murder, as nature needs death for its survival. There can be no life without death, and out of dead material develops new life. Nature offers plural possibilities and there is no need to see nature in terms of restrictions (gay gene, heterosexual drive, "we are our brain"). Violence offers thrills to Sade and is directed against others, but also against the self, at least in erotic fantasy, for example when he gets off after he has heard his image had been burned ("in effigy") in Aix-en-Provence after a condemnation to death for the crimes of poisoning prostitutes and sodomy.<sup>10</sup>

For Sade, there exists no dichotomy of male and female, but genders in plural forms including masculine women with big clitorises and men who can be both effeminate and tough. When it comes to sexuality, people can enjoy many sexual possibilities beyond homo and hetero. They may have specific preferences, but their curiosity and fantasy bring them beyond fixed identities like homo, hetero, bi, lesbian or trans. Sade inverts the heterosexual coital norm of church and state with his focus on sodomy.<sup>11</sup> There is more appreciation for incest than for monogamy. Marriage

9 See for example Oosterhuis H 2000, *Stepchildren of Nature. Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. He makes clear the role of perverts writing their case histories for psychiatrists while CF Michéa, KH Ulrichs, and KM Kertbeny invented the terms philopédie, uranism and homosexuality respectively while personally being involved; for Michéa, see Féray JC 2015, *L'impossible conciliation ou la vie héroïque du Dr. Claude-François Michéa*, Quintes-feuilles, Paris. Schaffner AK 2012, *Modernism and Perversion*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills for the interrelation between sexology and literature.

10 Sade, 1967, *The 120 days of Sodom and other writings*, Grove Press, New York, 495: "Everyone knows the story of the brave Marquis de S\*\*\* who, when informed of the magistrates' decision to burn him in effigy [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.'"

11 See Edmiston, Sade, 41–72 on gender and 195–221 on the queerness of the marquis. Beauvoir, S de 1951, *Faut-il brûler Sade*, various editions, who also remarks on Sade's preference for sodomy in opposition to coitus – the back against the front. Consider also the title *The 120 days of Sodom*.

is in *The 120 days of Sodom* plural: the libertines have triple marriage: with boys, male fuckers and women – the last preferably resulting from incestuous relations. Sex within the family incites lust because it inverts religious and secular norms, just as anal sex is positioned as opposite to coital sex.

The dichotomy of private and public is undermined in Sade's work. That most sexual acts in his novels are not private but orgiastic indicates that Sade went beyond ideas of privacy. Sexuality takes place in boudoirs – where street and bedroom met – or in castles in the form of orgies. Public and private are rather a continuum than a binary, upsetting the idea of public indecency in his oeuvre. The destructiveness in Sade's work prevents the establishing of any singular identity. People have preferences that he sometimes sees as natural, but they may change due to learning, experience, principles or demands of pleasure. Sexuality and gender are fluid in his novels. People who might be heterosexual rarely have aversions against other sexual pastimes. The only and strongest case is coital sex, which is seen by some of his characters as abject, probably by its imposition: the only kind of sex being allowed in his times by church and state. He reinforces this point by poking fun at the homophobia of straight men who become angry and violent because of homosexual propositions as in the exchange between the Chevalier de Mirvel and Dolmancé in *La philosophie dans le boudoir*.<sup>12</sup> Sade's oeuvre is about sex and not about love. In his novels, no link is made between people in terms of love. He may have been in real life a loving partner for his wife and other persons. He may say that wolves don't eat each other, meaning libertines don't betray each other as partners in crime, but it nonetheless happens between the different female libertines in *Histoire de Juliette* who show little consideration for their intimate friends. Declarations of eternal love or friendship are not taken serious in Sade's work and he is beyond jealousy because he is an extreme individualist for whom the primary pleasure that matters should be one's own.<sup>13</sup>

## The relevance of Sade today

Sade is interesting because his work goes against the grain of Enlightened thinking about sex – that is generally liberal whether it concerns Kant, Voltaire or Bentham, but not so when concerning sexuality or gender. He takes ideas on nature to its extremes and in doing so he shows the limits of much enlightened thought that still defines our present-day views. It is interesting to engage with his criticism of those philosophers and their views on topics of intimacy, as he was much more explicit and outspoken than they were. Sade also goes beyond the well-known and a bit exhausted themes of queer theory: beyond the gender and sexual dichotomy, in favor of instability and fluidity. He raises many interesting questions that are rarely covered in those fields

12 Sade, DAF de 1965, *Three complete novels: Justine; Philosophy in the bedroom, Eugénie de Franval and other writings*, Grove Press, New York, p. 190.

13 It is amazing that Foucault did see rather the disciplinary than the ironic and queer sides of Sade, see (1975) 1994 "Sade, sergent du sexe. Entretien avec G. Dupont", in: *Dits et écrits*, T. 2. Gallimard, Paris, 818–22 and Foucault M 2013 *La grande étrangère. A propos de littérature*, Éditions EHESS, Paris, 155–218.



of study: of sexual violence apart from victimology, of fantasy as the foundation for sexual practice, of consent and a concrete sex education, of minimizing legal interference, of bordello's, of pornography, by inverting the relation between coitus and sodomy and between the nuclear family and incest in terms of demonization. He goes beyond the alphabet soup of LGBTTTTIQQAA (lesbo-gay-bi-transsexual-transvestite-transgender-intersexual-queer-questioning-aseexual-ally) to sexual variations such as BDSM, scat and pedophilia and focuses on sexual practices instead of identities. His oeuvre offers a full-fledged set of ideas for politics, academia and life.

## For politics

Discussions of sexuality are rarely public unless it concerns law making and criminal cases (child abuse, prostitution). In the past and continuing into the present, religious people may discuss sexuality in terms of morals, but that most often refers to what is allowed and what are sins according to religious dogma – and often most sex is bad. But pious beliefs should not be relevant for secular politics, certainly not with agnostic Sade. Gossiping and joking is another main form of sexual discourses among the general population; and the media add to these by focusing on scandals or the intimate lives of the famous. A staple of TV documentaries on “nature” is the sexual world of animals, which often includes rape and murder. Sexology has been mainly a science that discusses “disease” (STD's, “perverted” behavior or physical hindrances to have sex). Sexuality may be central to human life, but not so for politics or sciences, although this has recently been changing a bit.

When it comes to politics, the situation of neglect of sexual issues is general. The simplest explanation is that sexuality is seen as a natural and private affair, and therefore is not of political concern. In the past, churches showed eagerness to involve themselves with these private issues and provided a dogmatic ideology of morals and human sexual nature that politicians nowadays rather leave to scientists who are no less dogmatic in this regard – most espouse heteronormativity in one form or another.

Nevertheless, politicians permanently busy themselves with sexual issues and their consequences and continue to do so, thus invading the citizen's private realm, often without public discussion, rather using medical “expertise” (Foucault's bio-power). This includes topics like marriage, divorce, adultery, homosexuality, sex education, prostitution, pornography, children and age of consent, public sex, erotic advertising, spaces for cruising, dark rooms, zoning rules for sex businesses and so forth. The problem with non-religious political parties is that they rarely have a comprehensive sexual ideology, but nevertheless create sexual politics all over the place, mostly following medical and social science advice, volatile social prejudice and public opinion. They may have developed programs regarding economics, care, criminality, terrorism, army and police and ecology, but rarely about sexuality, and if so, on a limited scale.

Sade does not offer a political utopia but his ideas about plural sexual and gendered possibilities, the family and incest, bordellos, personal preferences or sex

education could stimulate different forms of politics and could inspire lively debates about how to deal not only with economic and political, but also with sexual citizenship.<sup>14</sup> His ideas to reduce legislation are interesting in a time that laws are being multiplied and becoming ever more specific. Alternatively, one could read Sade's views as a call to contextualize crime rather than to apply the law indiscriminately to all citizens – what in fact often does not happen due to issues of gender, class and race. Sade's constant reminder that sexual politics are culturally bound could make law-makers more critical on their legislative work, or on moral panics that come and go without helping victims, perpetrators or third parties, but bring profits to those promulgating the victimization and proposed amends. Frank Furedi<sup>15</sup> has argued that one of the main results of the pedophile scare is the inhibition of tender relations and physical proximity between young and old, as the fear for sexual harassment did for men and women and homophobia for heterosexuals. Sade's endorsement of visceral and physical human qualities are in opposition to the world that we nowadays see where most intimacies have become suspect. It is doubtful that the request to create sexual politics would provide better politics because a first requirement is that politicians have adequate sexual knowledge and experience with and openness for these issues. They suffer from the same heteronormative and phobic attitudes as most voters – religious or not.

## For academia

His work is not sexology (see Mazaleigue-Labaste in this issue), but is highly interesting for academia because he goes beyond the tenets of queer theory. It raises questions regarding sexuality, gender and violence that may be both abhorrent and seductive. It is relevant for philosophy, social, political and sexual sciences and the humanities. How deep are vehement passions ingrained in our sexual (fantasy) life as many people have rape fantasies and masochistic desires, and were excited – as well as abhorred – by the cruelties of Roman arenas, paintings of saints being tortured, public executions, scenes of slavery and defeat or pictures of Abu Ghraib humiliation<sup>16</sup> and so on. Sade underlines that violence is inherent in social life and intimate relations.

Much abuse is not physical but mental. In fact heteronormativity is a form of violence probably a bit worse than homonormativity as it is backed by the perceived normal and natural. This is embedded in every-day life, in habitus, behavior and language. Much of it returns in mental states and fantasies. Violence is often seen as negative, denying its duality: the pleasure people sense in being victims, or BDSM-ers feel in pain, the incentive it has created – queer bashing, murders of gays, suicides and so on – for the queer movement, and in comparable ways for feminism. Violence of society gets replicated in cruel fantasies of citizens which may again

14 See the pamphlet "Français, encore un effort" in his *La philosophie dans le boudoir*.

15 Furedi F 2013, *Moral Crusades in an Age of Mistrust. The Jimmy Savile Scandal*. Palgrave Pivot, Houndmills.

16 See f.e. Eisenman SF 2007, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*. London, Reaktion; Cameron D & Frazer E 1987, *The Lust to Kill*. Polity Press, Cambridge; Black J 1991, *The Aesthetics of Murder*. John Hopkins UP, Baltimore.



create intolerable pains and unimagined pleasures. Sexism, racism and homophobia in BDSM-activities are more replications of social conditions than originating in those sexual pastimes. Such ambiguities need research and reflection.

Fantasy has rarely been acknowledged as important, for example in sex surveys, but Sade underlines that to have sex one needs fantasies. Sexual deeds don't come naturally from some uncontrolled drive or biological instinct, but are driven by narratives that society implants in us, and that we act upon. They often present a heterosexual and coital character, but also many in a kind of reverse discourse being homosexual, queer, orgiastic, sadist, masochist, transgender and so on. Against the discursive turn of Michel Foucault, some critiques have foregrounded the materiality of bodies, gestures, and physical contacts. But apart from materializing queer theory and engaging with viscerality or the not so conscious, there is still a highly discursive imagination, a bridge between self and society and inspiration of acts and theories. The sexual fetishes we adore evoke fantasies and narratives about bodies and body parts from hair to feet, about clothing (material) such as uniforms, leather, satin or neoprene, about certain acts like oral and anal, but also such that are beyond the genitals, about situations from prisons, barracks and hospitals to slave markets, whippings and executions – as in Sade – or about characteristics from sweet to cruel or from unmasculine to tough.

The imagination offers food for thought and practical pleasures, stimulates encounters and is stimulated by these. It stirs desires and this was the reason why doctors, educators and clergymen fulminated against “onanism” – that people might love to fantasize and pleasure themselves. A major part of the struggle against masturbation was meant to inhibit the sexual imagination and Sade offered with his works an ideal opportunity to do exactly that, and made a case for its importance in erotic activity. His works can in fact be read as sexual fantasies he elaborated in prison for his own solitary diversions.

The importance of fantasies and fetishes in everybody's minds helps to counter ideas of fixed identities. They go beyond hetero, homo and any part of the alphabet soup. People never only belong to determinate groups with specific erotic or other interests, but always enjoy idiosyncratic pleasures that go beyond labels.<sup>17</sup> The question is not of adding more identities, but of finding commonalities in fetishist preferences that may be experienced and practiced in and beyond identity communities.<sup>18</sup>

Another interesting feature in Sade for academic methodology is the use of the literary form as a way to write his work. A fixed discipline cannot be attributed to him. Nevertheless, his novels have offered more food for thought and debate than most other authors: from philosophy departments, art schools and cinema to the simple reader or student. His novels are open-ended and, notwithstanding all cruelties, are not dogmatic and invite debates. I have used his work as a way to open discussion in class: on gender and sexuality; motherhood, family and incest; violence, force and consent; the role of clitoris and vagina; the fluidity of erotic identities; of pleasure. He may discuss extreme topics, but his way of writing encourages these debates

17 Diamond LM 2009 *Sexual Fluidity. Understanding Women's Love and Desire*. Harvard UP, Cambridge MA.

18 See my 2015 *ABC of Perversions*, Speakeasy, Amsterdam for the variety of fetishes, and their backgrounds. There I suggest to create dark rooms with sexual story tellers to spark fantasies and stimulate sexual practices.

with his fictional examples. His perspective is open and not closed in itself, as most academic writing must be to get accepted.

## For his readers

The oeuvre of Sade is more literature than a political pamphlet or an academic essay. Politics and philosophy are hidden throughout his works, and in *La philosophie dans le boudoir*, a pamphlet, "Français encore un effort si vous voulez être des vrais républicains", is included. His books are the typical mixture of sex, politics and philosophy in a literary form that was so typical of 18<sup>th</sup>-century pornography. Before the sexual revolution of the 1960s, his work was often forbidden and only afterwards it became available to the general public. It was often seen as pornography, but some sex radicals took it for political inspiration: surrealists, philosophers, provo's, perverts. His books instigated artists to write novels, to create films, comics, paintings and so on. They offer inspiration and create curiosity.

The curious girl, that staple of 18<sup>th</sup>-century pornography and of Sade's work, is exemplified by Eugénie in *La philosophie du boudoir*. She changes from a puritan to a pervert little girl thanks to the stories and lessons of the libertines that inspire her curiosity and to break away from restrictive morals and to discover, or better yet, invent new pleasures. Curiosity enhances personal pleasures, as it would do academic and political endeavors.

Pornography was a literature that one reads with one hand – the other being used for solipsistic sex. With the sexual revolution of the 1960s, Sade had risen from underground to mainstream status,<sup>19</sup> and many presses had a good business translating and producing Sade's books and works inspired by him. Surely the growth of pornography contributed to the popularity of his work but as sudden as it became available it fell from grace because people found it too extreme, missed the irony, wanted to see images more than read texts or rather preferred soft porn to explicit politics. The popularity of his work was soon lost due to its violence, visceral character, explicit non-normative sexualities and gender representations, the monotony of sex acts and the availability of other explicit material that was more to the taste of a general public. But for those who could skip their aversions or in fact liked the diversions and irony, the content of his work continued to be a surprise even in a world that should have become more liberal and tolerant of sexual diversity. Sade remained a radical who could still amaze militants with his work which Annie LeBrun described as "Sade, suddenly an abyss", a chasm that, according to her, stayed even beyond the grasp of those philosophers who took an effort to unravel the mysteries of his views.<sup>20</sup>

19 Hekma G & Giami A (eds.) 2014 *Sexual Revolutions*, Palgrave, Houndmills, passim.

20 LeBrun A 1986 *Soudain un bloc d'abîme*, Sade, Pauvert, Paris.

## Opening Sade for the future

Sade offers insights and criticisms that are highly inspiring for political and academic work and for all citizens because of his ideas on sexuality, gender and many other themes. His undogmatic views encourage debates and new ways of thinking and acting that go beyond contemporary moral tales. His work is food for thought, and for action. Occidental nations that often claim to be so tolerant and liberal on sexual topics, fail with their heteronormativity and bodily fears to take a step further into a wilderness of sexual fantasies and create little possibility to act upon them. We could say take a step beyond Sade: inhabitants of this world, you need to try harder if you want to be truly global sexual citizens.<sup>21</sup>

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21 The concept sexual citizenship fits a Sadian worldview as it bridges private (sexual) and public and politicizes sexuality. See f.e. Reynolds P “Disentangling privacy and intimacy. Intimate citizenship, private boundaries and public transgressions”, in *Human Affairs* 20 (2010), pp. 33–42.