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Violence in de Sade (*comoedia*)

Abstract:
Violence occupies a regal position in the work of de Sade. It manifests itself in two forms: sexual persecution (excesses, manias, perversions, cruelty) and enlightened reasoning (unabashed promotion of naturalism, rationalism, hedonism and atheism). De Sade uses his most precious instrument as a *semblance*, by creating a magic spectacle of a gothic novel, and as *truth*, when he presents himself as a metaphysician and moralist. What kind of reading of de Sade deserves the title of the most adequate one? Does de Sade exist in *text* only? Is he the liberator, so praised by surrealists? Or does his transgressive nature go beyond the postulates of moral or social-political liberalism and penetrate the sphere of existence, demanding such actions that could be performed only by an individual consciously aiming at its doom? In his *theatrum* of passions and arguments, de Sade returns to the motif of rivalry between good and evil, simulating various narrative positions: from impulsive libertinism to dark Gnosticism, and reaches for complementary means of expression: from apology of crime to a lyrically tinted martyrological emphasis. Reading de Sade need not cause indignation. If one remembers that he is a transhistorical philosopher, one can deal with him in the way suggested by Chantal Thomas – euphorically. The reading of de Sade, like all other texts, depends on the times; in his case, the best atmosphere is provided by the mental and political atmosphere created by liberal democracy. He can be read there with open mind and physically relaxed, lightly – as becoming for a *comoedia*.

Keywords:
cruelty, evil, liberal democracy, martyrdom, morality, transgression, violence

Violence reigns in the works of de Sade, principally in the forms of sexual persecution and enlightened sophistry. These two are responsible for the odium that fell upon him. The society will accept neither his cheekiness with respect to the matters of sex nor the conclusions drawn by the self led only by the strict logic and ruthless instructions of reason. Or, perhaps, by eristic dialectics, which undermines the conclusions of reason to such extent that if it were allowed to experiment, it would destroy the interiorized order no matter how much (or how little) accepted it is. Or, maybe, by the inexorable drive for unmasking the hypocrisy that supports and consecrates this order. Violence in de Sade may have some features of truth, which we would never want to accept, regardless of our proclamations to be its seekers, namely that we are tiny specks of life, from the very beginning tending towards death and beyond salvation, and that for a human being understood in such a way there is no sensible way of self-fulfillment except the egoistic use and abuse, that is yielding to the primary sexual and murderous drives.

All the work of culture is focused on refuting the exterminatory truth and producing illusions we believe in, either sincerely or *nolens volens*. As the most subtle of all animal species, we are experts in life saving tactics of illusions. De Sade invades this meticulously arranged order of ours, demolishes the principles of our worldview which seeks continued existence, accumulation, immortality, or at least leaving a trace. This aggression is somewhat difficult even for him. Their revolutionary determination notwithstanding, the libertines sometimes fail to deliver on their promise: temporal limitations and necessities of nature clip their wings and so we find them complaining on the frustrating disproportion between the invocations of phantasy and that which is possible.

In his original plan, however, de Sade remains an embodiment and quintessence of transgression, the urge to go beyond the order fortified with prohibitions that perpetuate it. Why does he do it? And does he do it in his own name? Thanks to Georges Bataille the reply to the first question, in as much as it is placed on the theoretical or metaphysical plane, seems easier to us than it was to readers contemporary to de Sade, or to those who could read him only in secrecy in the nineteenth century. Formerly, de Sade was a sensation, scandal, or entertainment. De Sade owes it to Bataille[1] that he is treated as an emblem of transgressions necessary for a man who passionately desires to disjoin himself from his domesticated and sickeningly foreseeable world, and calls for a deeper world from its depths.[2] One of the more penetrating commentators of de Sade has written that it is enough for her to skim any of his books to feel overtaken by enthusiasm.[3]

We approve prohibitions because they save us (they attach to our identities) from the inferno apprehended by our instincts. Yet, at the same time, we reject them as signs of the shabbiness of our profane existence, reduced to work, everyday chores and trivial pleasures. De Sade personifies the impetus and intensity of the "no" directed at the world of foreseen behavior and unsatisfactory goals. He is the sign of excess, which crushes the monotony of discontinuity, so repulsive for the body and the soul. One might think that Bataille,

1) He also owes it to other twentieth century analysts of his thought, so lamentably disdained by Michel Onfray, who, by the way, as a declared materialist, hedonist and atheist, should have recognized de Sade as an ally but was unable to forgive him his feudal mentality, pretended republicanism, criminal excesses and misogyny. Cf. Michel Onfray, *La Passion de la méchanceté. Sur un prétendu divin marquis* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2014).

2) Cf. Georges Bataille, "La valeur d'usage de D.A.F. de Sade," in *Œuvres complètes*: *Écrits posthumes 1922–1940*, vol. II (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1970); There is also a revised edition: Georges Bataille, "La valeur d'usage de D.A.F. de Sade," in *Œuvres completes*: *Écrits posthumes 1922–1940*, with afterword by Mathilde Girard, revised edition, vol. II (Paris: Éditions Lignes, 2015); Georges Bataille, "Sade et l'homme normal; L'homme souverain de Sade," in *L'Érotisme* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1957); Georges Bataille, "Sade," in *La littérature et le mal* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1957); Georges Bataille, "Le mal dans le platonisme et dans le sadisme," in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. VII (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976); Georges Bataille, "Sade et la morale," in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. VII (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976).

3) Cf. Chantal Thomas, *Sade* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994).

known for his fondness for mysticism, can hardly be called a naturalist. Still, Bataille's rejection of discontinuity, and his worldview that is exonerating excess, transgression and sovereignty extending to the threshold of death, can clearly be seen to proceed from the extreme naturalism of de Sade. In fact, mysticism turns out to be a correlate of hyper-radical naturalism, which offers resistance to the opportunism and conformism of the anticipated utilitarianism. The zeal of Sadean libertines, who strive to break into the world of true experience, cannot be distinguished from the determination of St. Theresa, who desired to "wither in praising God". That one of these desires leads towards transcendence while the other, towards nothingness, is not due to any essential difference on the metaphysical level, but only on the epiphenomenal level of tradition, religious convention, or custom. In Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa*, Jacques Lacan saw the intensity of sexual desire that annuls all provisional distinctions.

Another question: should we treat all the libertine feats described in his books and the irredentist worldview as the voice of de Sade himself, the voice exhorting the reader to reject scruples in the name of gratification of instincts? To a degree, yes, especially if we take into account the tensions caused by resentment. De Sade wished to set his account straight. The society and its oppressive institutions deserved to be avenged for his illegal imprisonment motivated by superstitions. What nonsense is it to tie up instincts and natural needs in the name of fictitious rules and the phantasmal continence of social conventions! All the more so, when the sanctimonious obligations are pronounced by hypocrites who are unable to fulfil their desires only because of a lack of opportunity or rigidly confessional education. Why should he refrain from using his talent to articulate his protest on paper?! After all, a *written* revenge will be heard forever! Recognition of this motive allows us to distance ourselves from the arbitrariness of the entry on de Sade in the *Oxford Dictionary*, the author of which labels him as "lunatic and pervert", or from the epithet "proto-fascist", so readily employed by Onfray and insinuated by Pierre Paolo Pasolini in his intolerably veristic *Salò*.

Indeed, the world invented by de Sade is one of a skilled gothic novelist, where good and evil, the two eternally dueling forces, the fundamental elements of reality, perform their perennially actual, metaphysical spectacle. De Sade, whose dispute continues the tradition of the Gnostics, orthodox theologians, and heresiarchs is undeniably an unsurpassable advocate of evil. His apology, however, does not refer to him as a man but to his deliberately assumed position as a moralist. His allegedly professed Satanism could hardly be believed, unless one accepts as genuine the masterly, empathic descriptions of Justine's martyrdom, in which he speaks with a voice of an evangelist, and which – when translated into pictures – can be associated with the vivid presentations of tortures in the style of Grünewald, as well as by accepting Sadean lyricism, the ingredient which he uses to build the oxymoronic aura of his works. Naturally, it is all the "matter of style", phantasy and skill of an experienced writer. Still, it is difficult to deny that "the lyrical de Sade of martyrdom" is yet another mask of his personal sensitivity, which excludes the self-obsessed sadism. De Sade's presentation of evil is equally as attractive as his declaration in favor of the good and of mercy, even though he excels in denigrating and slandering the latter. Evil seems to provoke him to ever more strongly demonstrate his oratory talents.

Should it be astonishing for us? Pascal thought that evil is easier. For Emil Cioran, temporality, the dynamics of matter correlated with motion, bears the fruit of frenetic activity, striving to succeed at all costs (thus generating aggression and rivalry), and thus visibly favors evil more than good. Besides, a moralist achieves a desired effect only when he shows good as vanquished, appropriately to the myth in question. Classical preachers prophesized that it would be victorious someday, or at least kept silent about it. De Sade formally exposes the absurdity of such a view. Yet, we should not be so petty or so naïve as to see in his final proclamation of the triumph of vice something else than irony or an astounding play of symbols.

When analyzing Sadean performances, with their polyphony of voices and sophistic bidding, one would gladly agree with Philippe Sollers, who reduces de Sade to *text* and thus removes the fear of the threat for the

society constituted by the latter.[4] One can read de Sade without dread: it is nothing but words filled with a specific kind of humor. This interpretation is in agreement with the surrealist one – de Sade is a *libertador* of passions and, *a fortiori*, a destroyer of the existing order[5] – which was considered to be *bourgeois* by Bataille. According to him, de Sade places himself on the heterogeneous side, which marks the extra-linguistic sphere and engages in actions that go beyond even the most radical social critique. De Sade's work is an extra-textual transgression, whose ingredients are anomaly, perversion, scatology and death. Consequently, it does not transport one into the sphere of greater permissibility but it deregulates identity and opens into the continuity, the sense of which is radically expedient, disowning and mortal.

The possibility of various readings of de Sade makes one aware of the capacity of his thought, but also of its equivocal character. After all, what should we choose, the banal statement about the triumph of vice and ever victorious evil, or the latent pedagogy promoting good, virtue and mercy, without which the world, reduced to the rivalry of egoisms, would not survive? De Sade's subversion lies not so much in blasphemy but in a notorious confounding of sanctimony. Could we really follow the Sadean *raisonneurs*, whose voices sound like emanations of common sense or crystal-clear rationality? Where is the boundary, and after crossing, can we no longer treat seriously their ornate yet rigorous enunciations? De Sade is, therefore, subversive if he makes us aware of the contractual character of boundaries, instability of the world and our own enigmatic nature, which we try to overcome with the help of intangible principles and the terror of axiological dogmas. What de Sade undermines is the certainty of convictions. This is why surrealism, which wanted to see him as a liberator, presents a shallow reading of his thought. For social revolt, de Sade is only of limited and tactical use. But there is more to him. It is the exaggeration, which leaves nothing as it used to be in the profane world; it is the entry into the destabilizing excess, which makes one lose moral ground and direct oneself mentally towards doom. Is this De Sade's madness? Only as much as it can be seen as the record and exegesis of the madness of human existence.

Note on Raisonneurs

A spectacular variant of Sadean violence can be found in the activity of the *raisonneurs*. For the lack of space, I devote only a short note to it. De Sade lends an apodictic tone to his pontificating libertines. Most often, their subject is man's dependence on Nature (which pleasantly justifies all vice, or confounds the subject by showing them the limits of their autonomy), the praise of sexual perversion, a contesting of social institutions, an apology for crime, and an unrestrained attack on religion, paired with fervent atheist propaganda.[6] There are also more specific dissertations and treatises devoted, for instance to women, love, hell, soul, and inequality. In all of them, the tone is passionate and categorical, and the author's position is bravely defended. They are not conciliatory debates but strong presentations of ideas by speakers completely convinced about their points. After all, it is a fight against superstition, in which only victory matters: *the end justifies the means*. In the mind-boggling

4) Cf. Philippe Sollers, "Sade dans le texte," in *L'écriture et l'expérience des limites* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1968).

5) Cf. André Breton, "D.A.F. de Sade," in *Anthologie de l'humour noir*, extended edition (Paris: Éditions Le Sagittaire, 1950 [1940]). Paul Eluard, "D.A.F. de Sade écrivain fantastique et révolutionnaire." *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 8 (December 1926), 8–9. Paul Eluard, "L'intelligence révolutionnaire: le marquis de Sade," in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II (Paris: Éd. Gallimard, 1968). Robert Desnos, *De l'érotisme considéré dans ses manifestations écrites et du point de vue de l'esprit moderne* (Paris: Éditions Cercle des arts, 1952 [1923]).

6) For more information on the motif of *raisonneur* in de Sade, see Krzysztof Matuszewski, "Sade – feerie dekadencji Oświecenia," in *Oświecenie*, eds. Beata Szymańska, Piotr Mróz, and Anna Kuchta (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2017), 377–479; Krzysztof Matuszewski, "Ateizm Sade'a (z suplementem)," in *Ateizm. Próba dokończenia projektu*, eds. Szymon Wróbel and Krzysztof Skonieczny (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2018), 105–137.

enunciations, when arguments of reason are brought to the extreme bordering on the grotesque, de Sade turns out to be, possibly on purpose, both a demagogue and an advocate of passions and desires, which we, as sovereign beings, refuse to discipline. In contrast to it, as citizens and beings confronted with our peers, we make the effort to restrain ourselves. Even for citizens, however, de Sade prepared a confounding phantasmagoria in his manifesto *Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains*.

The Labyrinth of Sex

With regard to de Sade, one thing is certain. He is an expert in sexual violence. Hence the use of his name for one of the most spontaneously condemned perversities. In our society, the branding of sadism can hardly be disregarded. At best, it can be tolerated, guarded by various caveats, in a secluded niche. The odium of sadism notwithstanding, the sadism of de Sade is really special. Its distinctive feature is, first of all, its written form: the realm of its execution is literary fiction. Secondly, the creation of thematic episodes engaged his imagination, sharpened by years of incarceration and repressed sexuality. Thirdly, his interest in the commercial success of his books induced him to escalate piquant scenes to the degree that the world he presented there became phantasmagorical. Fourthly, de Sade's writing is characterized with humor, which often colors violence with a liberal dose of comedy. Pointing at these characteristics is not meant to tame or accommodate the sadism of de Sade. Bataille's statement that he explains the esoteric texture of humanity better than conventional knowledge still holds. It is worth remembering, however, that the work of de Sade is not a book of Satanism but the product of a writer, philosopher and moralist, who skilfully garnishes his writing with ingredients of inventiveness and humor, and creates an astounding gothic show with some elements of excess, the reaction to which should not be the reader's escapism, overexploiting the category of *mimesis*, but enthusiasm.

Voluptuousness

Sexual violence is justified by the priority of voluptuousness, which is, in turn, one of the hard conclusions drawn from naturalism by de Sade's characters. If we are determined by Nature – seen as violent and evil because of its recklessness in creating and destroying – the only principle an intelligent man can accept if he does not want to swim against the current is to strive – *per fas et nefas* – for his own benefit and happiness so as to satisfy his natural, instinctual needs; obviously, corporeity, sensuality and passions will be privileged in such striving. The care for their well-being knows no limits in de Sade and becomes a life beacon of a conscientious egoist: even our smallest pleasure is incomparably more important than the greatest suffering of another (Dolmancé). This is a starting point for the road leading to the promotion of debauchery, as well as to the total instrumentalization of the other, whose life ceases to be a taboo. Dolmancé considers sensual pleasure to be the sole deity and warns against continence, which may have a bitter consequence in belated remorse when the time of youth is gone. Mme de Saint-Ange asks rhetorically: "What would be life without voluptuousness?"[7] And when she finally managed to win the favors of Dolmancé, who pedantically guarded his preferences, she exclaimed: "Oh, sweet power of debauchery!" Eugénie, initiated by this libertine duet of wardens (and a group of their suitably endowed acolytes) and willingly following their instructions, commented on her newest experiences: "I am sorry for the girls who did not dare to try this for fear of pain. How much supreme delight they lost by their refusal to accept a moment of discomfort!"

7) All quotes from De Sade's novels will be given as direct translations without references. Formal citations of mentioned characters will be given at the end of the essay. All translations of De Sade's novels are by Mark Gensler.

De Bressac praises lasciviousness during an orgy at Gernande's, the participants of which do not limit themselves to attractions of the table and conversation. Having refuted the superstitions about the other world, and its duties and penalties, in his treatise, Clairwil recognizes only those duties that are "required by our pleasures" and will reject indignantly all the social duties, "since there is none which should not be extinguished for the sake of the smallest of our desires." In the *Société des Amis du Crime*, a libertine group which is a blend of a sect and an elitist brothel, games are prohibited as plebeian amusement and only debauchery is promoted. Thanks to the efforts of Delbène, the abbess of the multilaterally emancipated convent (its residents and alumnae are philosophers-dissolutes), Juliette can give a sensible lesson to chaste and timid Justine: it is unwise to be concerned with a virtuous life rather than to strive for a voluptuous one. Dubourg, one of the cohort of tormentors of Justine, crudely presents the male point of view in the beginning of her martyrdom: the chastity of women is worthless, and their innocence, boring; what is important is using them and for this they have to be dissolute.

Danger does not prevent one from leaping into debauchery. Here are two examples of rejected calculations. When she is about to accept the offer of Chevalier, Eugénie reacts with words in truly Shakespearean style: "He will surely kill me… Yet the flames of passion push me to this trial…" Similar heroism is shown by Juliette in her brawl with the Carmelite Claude: "I had no time to stop him. Besides, would I be able to do so?… And would my deranged mind dare to do it? Ah, do we think of danger when we are captured by delight?!"

Passions

It is easy to excuse succumbing to passions by reference to naturalism. It is laudable to yield to the most violent ones, because that which endowed us with them is nature, the only tier of the law that is free from mystification. Libertines are unwilling to answer questions about free will, responsibility, or empathy. According to their interpretation, nature is an indifferent sphere of energy loss and recovery, which fosters the vigor directed towards surfeit and self-destruction. Declining intensity is not only a physical weakening of an individual but also their mental degradation: when we are no longer passionate, we become stupid. Spicy libertine pleasures are an offer for the intelligent people, not for simpletons; this is the instruction that Delbène gives to Juliette, resting his argument on the premise that "the more a man is filled with spirit the more efficiently he rids himself of restraints." This kind of eristic is employed not only in the description of desired relations with one's neighbors reduced to slavery, it can also be used for promotion of the progressive worldview: "philosophy kindles its fire with that of passion." It destroys the religious nonsense and "the hideous chimaera, in the name of which people slaughtered one another over the ages." Even staunch libertine atheism can be suspended when aggressive sophistry requires it. Pontificating about non-existent hell, Clairwil exposes the nonsense of the Christian condemnation of the passions, since they are given to man by God, he must have foreseen – as omniscient – even their worst effects. When she muses about crime, which does not offend God because he does not exist, Juliette finally confesses and asserts the ontological autonomy of man, and his monadic nature based on the passions; they are the source and driving force of our being and we are bound to follow them: "Regardless of their character, I would sacrifice everything for them!" The thoroughly educated Dubois teaches her brother about the power of the passions and that their taming is always provisional: "All moral and religious principles vanish quickly in the face of passions." She advises him not to hesitate in appealing to them with respect to Justine and that through that he will learn how swiftly an overpowered woman takes over the views of her conqueror.

Manias

Manias are variants of sexual violence and de Sade delights in enumerating their distinctions; Fourier, who, by the way, knew de Sade from his own reading experience, thought that one that does not have them is stupid.[8] In her talk with Juliette, Clairwil confesses that she can no longer communicate with men without wishing their death. Charlotte can hardly stop Clairwil determined to face Francavilla, who has just showed off his Uranus feats, in his favorite field: "He has demonstrated just a sample of his possibilities. Actually, he won't be scared even by ten battalions. Trust me, do not bet with him!" Vespoli can be satisfied only by a performance with patients from the asylum he runs, who perform the roles of saints. Durand and Juliette taste both necrophilia and voyeurism when, hidden in a chapel, they spy on the father playing on a catafalque with the body of his daughter, whom he had poisoned for an alleged betrayal: "I can hardly describe the monstrosities we saw! Still I have to. I speak of the straying of the human heart and I should not keep anything under my hat." Bandole, who specializes in always successfully impregnating women and drowning their offspring in a pond eighteen months later, enjoys assisting deliveries too. His excitement, caused by the presence of Justine, has some adverse effects on his midwifing skills, making his assistant comment on the result of his actions: "No doubt, sir, you have performed a beautiful operation here!" Another grand example of a physician whose profession is masking pure lust, is Rodin. Excused, as he says, by science, for severing blood ties, he intends to perform a terminal operation on the hymen of his daughter. His scientific motivation has been strengthened by another reason. As an uncompromising atheist, he has discovered that a priest sneaked into his house to give clandestine religious instruction to Justine and Rosalie, even though the latter seemed to have been successfully dissuaded from religious antics. The injured heart of the atheist knows no mercy: "You wanted to know God?! As if there was some other god apart from my voluptuousness!"

Jerome, now a resident in the Abbey of Saint Mary in the Wood, which unexpectedly became a place of torment for Justine even though she had expected to find rest there, recalls the times of his frenetic youth, when he, thanks to his ecclesiastical connections, dressed up as a monk for fun. To a woman, who confessed her sins to him and begged for intercession with God, he replied: "I shall not compromise the role of mediator given to me by heavens with such things! To demand it from me is a new crime, for which you will surely receive an extra penance!" Before he slaughters his whole seraglio, once he has achieved satiety with that form of entertainment, and sets for a trip to Africa, he hosts a chemist, Almani. With his help, he fulfils his dream to become as destructive as a volcano and reduces to ruins a large part of Messina by means of skilfully placed explosive devices. He recalls with sentiment his confrère, Chrisostome, whose mania pushed him to lustful acts with a poisoned woman in her death throes. It seemed at first that her convulsions would prevent him from achieving his goal. "Yet, Chrisostome succeeded and his rapture reached the level of incredible flush and utter madness." Gernande is a phlebotomist, who administers such treatment to each of his successive wives. Thus, they hardly have any chance for a long cohabitation. The current Mme de Gernande complains: "There is not a single place on my tormented body, which would not have been bled for his enjoyment." De Bressac, fascinated with the misogynist tone of the treatise on women, congratulates Gernande on the message and fervor: "Now I can see that you are incorrigible." In his reply, the libertine emphasizes his hardened heart and sinking in vice: "For this reason, I do not advise anyone to force me to move back. There is no way it can be done. I detest human superstitions too much, I hate human civilization, virtues and gods too much ever to sacrifice my tastes for them."

8) Cf. Simone Debout, *L'Utopie de Charles Fourier* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 1998), 89.

Excesses

It is difficult to expect that sovereign passions will accept any offer of sublimation. Rather than channeling sexual drives into safe forms, libertines prefer excesses. In de Sade, one can find so many varieties of them that they could fill dozens of exciting books. Having enchanted Claude during their confessions, Juliette and Clairwil engage him in a show of debauchery and then take that opportunity to arrange a date with his *confrères*: "I assure you that they will make you beg for mercy." What mattered more to them than the promised attack by the crowd of monks – "the siege, after which we were no longer in need of anything" – was obtaining the trophy Clairwil had been dreaming of. First, they immobilized the aroused Claude with the help of five women and then, with the help of her own skills as a surgeon and tanner, she produced "the weirdest and most beautiful dildo you can think of." Dazzled by Juliette, Olympia prepares a surprise for her in a brothel near Cours. The libertines freely choose the most handsome clients there. This time, Juliette has some problems with the surfeit: "There were so many of them and, moreover, so monstrously endowed that I had to beg for mercy." She learns that these problems do not beset Olympia: she visits the place every now and then, spends a whole day there offering her backside, and only after her front side is torn apart. For herself, Juliette and Olympia, Clairwil demands ten dragoons from Borchamps's regiment. Having used up their powers the libertines ask matter-of-factly: "What can you do with such men?" Given the obvious answer, they order another twenty to slit their throats. The corpses become the setting for a "superb dinner": "drunk with debauchery, we mix the pieces cut out from the bodies of those wretches lying on the table with the dinner courses." Juliette and Clairwil offer fast working poisonous pills to fishermen from Naples and bravely face their attack, which is going to be their last one. Juliette thus describes the results of her arousal: "That perfidious certainty that the man whom I hold in my arms will free himself from them only to fall in the arms of death added such spice to my voluptuousness that I fainted during orgasm." Clairwil envies Vespoli's excesses with his patients. She demands that he proclaim her and Juliette insane and orders them to be stripped and thrown into cells: "The idea has seemed splendid. Vespoli presently executes it. He sets ten madmen on us one after another."

On her arrival at Saint Mary in the Wood Justine asks Dom Severin to hear her confession with a hope of comforting her heart after so many unpleasant adventures and before the expected change of fate. The aroused monk turns the sacrament grotesque with increasing boldness, but Justine, numbed by her piety and yielding to the authority of the church, does not notice it at all: "Her spirit was so much elevated towards heavenly matters that her oppressor would not hear a word of complaint even if he started butchering her. Emboldened by the stupor of his penitent, the monk was less and less restrained." It will be too late to escape when, completely naked and under assault, she understands what she is part of. She will hear that it is better for her if she accepts her status as a captive of six thugs in habits: "any resistance against our caprices will bring you death." Benedictines from Saint Mary in the Wood plan to celebrate the annual feast of their patroness with "some visible miracle", which would strengthen their reputation in the eyes of their notoriously duped and milked flock. They dress up Floretta as the Blessed Virgin and tell her to "appear" in the culminating moment of the mass: "the congregation spoke with elation about the miracle and gave a generous offer to the Virgin." This was followed by blasphemous acts during a mass turned into sacrilege because of the intercourse with Floretta, spread on the altar: "seeing it pious Justine fainted." To get her accustomed to such a liturgy, Jerome proposes to her to take the place of Floretta. When "Justine is finally taken down, she is numb. Being object of such horrors made her lose her senses".

Jerome, who has got to know a couple in love, lusts for a murderous play with them. He shoots Alberoni dead and makes him an important piece of stage property in a bloody drama he has invented and directed. Heloise, who has fainted because of fear and grief, is resuscitated by special actions performed on her clitoris:

"Come on, my lovely one! A little more courage!" To make her a more accessible object for his lascivious caresses he decides to rest her on something: "I put her on the corpse of her lover and joined them in such a way that their lips united." Next, he abandoned the girl to concentrate on the "still warm" Alberoni; then returned to her to whip her, "so cruelly that her blood soon mixed with the blood oozing from the wounds of her lover." Then he forced her to actions, the least drastic of which was "licking the wounds of Alberoni," and, gradually, he yielded to his passion, which had not yet reached its climax: "With one hand, I grab Heloise by her hair, with the other, armed with a dagger, I give fifteen blows to her womb, bosom and heart." After a period of ecstasy comes "a while of peace." And then, a desire to do the same with the corpse of the mistress as he did earlier with the corpse of the lover comes over him: "Heloise was still beautiful. Her snow-white complexion, her superb hair thrown around, the intriguing grimace of her beautiful face…."

In the torture of his wife, Verneuil, bored with visual sensations, exchanges them for auditory ones, as they are more stimulating for the imagination. A helmet with a tube put on her head will change her cries into a roar of an animal, the last chord of life: "I have never heard anything so exquisite. It is over – at last, I am a widower."

Machines

That machines and violence are synonymous can be best seen in the explanations Dali gave with respect to the oblong and liquid character of his clocks in his *Persistence of memory* (1931). De Sade, even though he lived at the threshold of the industrial era, does not introduce machines because he shares the enthusiasm of inventors and of the proponents of capitalist progress. His libertines are feudal aristocrats by blood, or at least in spirit. For them work is something done best with the hands of others. There is no need to spoil the beauty of gardens with alien forms, noise, or with unpleasant fumes. Machines, therefore, are not a tool of industrial violence serving the fetish of efficiency to increase profit. It is, however, a means for the stimulation of the senses, for a more efficient trigger of sensual stimuli, enhancing and multiplying them, on the whole – it is a more vivid intake of voluptuous perceptions. The Sadean feudalism, so disturbing for Onfray, which found its articulation in a naturalistic worldview, efficiently defended vital sovereignty against the technological changes already looming on the historical horizon: reduction, standardization, functionalism, and, *a fortiori*, reification and alienation. Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian stated that capital produces human masses, whose existence is reduced to notorious attempts at providing the means of life and is not life itself. Moreover, the mediations and abstractions it introduces into our lives must result in an aggregation of artefacts leading to a catastrophe.[9] Among the prophets of progress seen as regress, who could appreciate the technological innocence of de Sade, we can mention such names as Musil, Hesse, Bernhard, and Cioran.

In Minsky's bedroom, there is a mirrored recess with sixteen columns of black marble. At the end of the day, Minsky often relaxes with the torment of women chained to them. Two strings attached to the bed-head allow him to start a machine that simultaneously serves various tortures: "I love to fall asleep with the thought that I can commit sixteen murders at the same time and that my faintest whim suffices to do so." In Francavilla's garden, there is a sodomy machine working to the tune of charming music. Juliette, Clairwil, Olympia and Charlotte were allowed to test it. The women use comfortable kneelers. In front of them, there are men exposing their only attributes relevant for the occasion from behind a black drapery. Special trapdoors make it possible to replace them with others after performing their services. Ingenious devices, together with acolytes of both

9) Cf. Bolesław Leśmian, "Znaczenie pośrednictwa w metafizyce życia zbiorowego," in *Dzieła wszystkie*, *Szkice literackie*, vol. 2, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2011), 38–39.

sexes attached to them, make it possible to expediently fulfill the oral, vaginal and anal dispositions of our bacchantes, especially the latter ones: "It is difficult to imagine the easiness and swiftness in sequence of all variants of that performance: we had not even a while of rest. I was exhausted. Olympia felt sick and had to give up; only Clairwil and Charlotte withstood all attacks with astounding bravery." Ferdinand, who already organized counter-progeniture shows for his guests, recommends an attraction, a machine for the extermination of pregnant women: "We take the last two left. We strap them to two iron bars placed one over another in such a way that the bellies of the strapped women are exactly opposite to one another…. The distance between two bars is ten feet…." One of the stops on Justine's tormenting peregrination is Grenoble. Mme Dubois, whom she has met there, introduces her to a local bishop. His extraordinary interest in her neck is soon explained when they move to his private apartment. Its central object is a sophisticated guillotine. After he used it on Eulalie, the bishop gets ready for dinner, at the same time ordering his assistant to prepare another machine, "which burns, cuts and breaks bones at the same time." Justine manages to save her life when she sneaks out during the feast, after the bishop, indulging himself in consumption, falls under the table with Mme Dubois.

The Glamour of Sodomy and Saphism

Unconventional sexual preferences were greatly esteemed by de Sade. There high status is found in their voluptuousness and counter-normativity (in context of the epoch). Homosexuality and anal sex between men and women, as well as saphism (or tribadism) are celebrated on numerous pages, and outnumber those devoted to conventional sex. They often serve as a mode of pleasure offered by partners to one another but are also scrupulously applied in the preferred violent actions and for outwardly sadistic satisfaction.

Let us start with a bit of apology. Dolmancé: "What in the world can match this pleasure!" Mme de Saint-Ange warrants with her word as an experienced woman that whoever has found delight in it once, will never give it up. Not all Carmelites were persuaded to indulge themselves with the charms of Juliette and Clairwil. From those of them who preferred youths, the ladies heard: "There is no way you can compensate us our infidelity. Even if you offered to us the altars, on which we usually perform our rites, their neighborhood is too monstrous for us to risk doing so there." In the narrative background, one can spot a reference to Martialis: "A woman tries in vain, turns over in vain. She will always stay a woman." Vigorous Gernande is completely lost, when, on his demand, his acolytes show their nudity from the wrong side: "Hide it from me, I beg you! Otherwise, you will get nothing from me. And you will not manage to revive me even for a month!" Minsky, almost numbed by the surfeit of sensations, can, nevertheless, speak tenderly about his preferences: "I love that feeling infinitely, there is nothing in the world that could be sweeter!" After a fiasco with Justine, Dubourg finally gets satisfaction with an older and not so beautiful, but turned over, pander Delmonse. Clairwil states: "When it comes to obtaining pure voluptuousness, I know of nothing more unjust than the principle of mixing sexes." Recalling her first meeting with Clairwil, Juliette utters a paean of her ability to make women hot. In turn, the meeting with experienced Mme Durand leaves in her memory the picture of her partner's anus, "relaxing and tightening up again like a cup of a flower under a gentle sprinkle of dew drops."

Juliette, who enjoyed carnal pleasures in the arms of experienced women, happens to hold intercourse with other flowers, too – symbols of ethereal and pure charm. Duchess Honorine de Grillo, who remained a virgin at the side of a recently married "old faun", falls prey to her when, after two ceremonial visits, Juliette, pushed by lust, decides to pay her a third, not so courteous one. Her meek virtue yields to cheekiness relatively quickly: "It seemed that Honorine is about to faint amidst my skilful manipulations that so effectively have led her towards delight." After a tender beginning, it is time for a more advanced stage. Honorine, brought to ecstasy again, would like to reward her. The experienced partner suggests a way to do it: "Suck me, my love,

take me all…. Good heavens, what more can we do?!" Finally, Juliette promises Honorine that for the next meeting she will get prepared to have intercourse with her like a man. She no longer encounters any fear or resistance: "Oh, please, do with me whatever you wish! Multiply the testimonies of your love and I will double the most sacred proofs of my own love to you." An important stimulator for this radiant relation will be nudity: "Devoured by desire to see her completely naked, I lift her, free her from her clothes. She also wants to see me naked. Oh, what is it for my burning soul! Honorine was looking at me, scanning me with her eyes, and I felt absolutely happy."

At last, de Sade speaks for himself (in joke, irony, or frankly?) in one of the notes to *La Nouvelle Justine*: "How wretched is he who has never had to do with a boy or did turn his mistress into a boy! Whoever has not tried any of those things is still a novice in voluptuousness."

A few words must be said about confusions or slipping into violence. The love struggles of Bressac with his footman serve only his rapture. Its scale is reflected by the veritable anthem to male love sung by the count: "How voluptuous are the spurs of this heavenly predilection! We wish our lover, more robust than Hercules, to pierce and open us." For Justine, however, who happened to witness those actions, the view is not attractive: "The scene is long, shocking, full of episodes, in which debauchery and lewdness created a mixture perfectly suited for scandalizing the girl, who was still gnashing her teeth in the memory of similar horrors she had recently experienced herself." Later Justine will have to take part in an even more shocking spectacle. De Bressac, who has made up his mind to mitigate his mother's invigilation and pedagogical endeavors, first baits her with his hounds and then engages in sodomy incest with her, at the same time as he is serviced by Joseph. Even the narrator seems to be moved by the scene: "What a view! Hidden from human eyes, yet visible for you only, great God! But you are not thundering! Your powerless thunder does not fall! Your insouciance with human depravity is real if you have not been angered by the commitment of this crime!"

Minsky is so monumentally endowed by nature that even if he had, as an exception, no murderous intent, intercourse according to his preferences always ends with the death of his partner/victim. Rodin is annoyed with the fuss about sexual distinctions. What is important is that which catches his attention when he is aroused. The intimate deal with Rombeau sanctions the surgeons' brotherhood. They have already given the verdict about Rosalie: "It seems we are both resolute about our plans." Duke Henri, who, "imitates women but hates them at the same time," warns Josephine that he will not be too much *au courant* with respect to her feminine charms. Their announced profanation will be more than completed in a scatological performance satisfying his preferences only. D'Estervals, who welcome travelers into their large inn so that they can crown the excesses of sodomy with tasting the delights of necrophilia, are completely indiscriminate in their actions. Roland promises Justine a hard ride: "Have you ever seen anything like it? I never use women in another way. You must be torn apart as well, therefore." And when he has murdered another of his slaves, he eagerly gets ready to use the dead: "They say it is the surest way to taste the tightness of women." The Bishop of Grenoble, so fond of girls' necks, hears the last confession of the tortured Eulalie, informed about the imminent execution. On the scaffold, the first intercourse with the victim, appropriately bent, takes place when she is still alive, the second, when she is already decapitated.

Cruelty

The most visible form of violence in de Sade is cruelty. We are not only shown it, but it is justified and advertised to us. Dolmancé points out that it is our inborn ingredient, a reflex easy to spot in children, but suppressed by education, which tries to obstruct Mother Nature's attempts to make us egoists and criminals by incriminating mercy as a whim of those who lack vital energy. The odium on cruelty characteristic for our civilization could

be eliminated if we rejected the laws and conciliatory habits in the name of nature, favoring the domination of the strong and submission of the weak. Happiness, measured by the number of voluptuous pleasures, can be achieved only through cruelty, which feeds on pain, the strongest emotion that moves "the heavy tangle of nerves" within us. When Chevalier de Mirvel invokes nature, in the manner of Rousseau, to defend empathy, compassion, tenderness and mercy, and to extol the joy of a clear conscience from the depths of a "pure heart", Dolmancé retorts with harsh criticism of his youthful naivety, ignorance of human cunning and mistaking "frailty of mind" for kindness. The latter is supported by women. Madame de Saint-Ange quips: "You are a good lover but a pathetic preacher." Eugénie, who quickly discovered a knack for simple negotiations and debauchery, says: "Believe me, Chevalier, to win a woman one has to arouse her passions rather than pontificate about virtue." Having acknowledged the worthlessness of the object of his delight and the absurdity of attempts to reciprocate pleasure, Dolmancé sings the praises of male despotism, a natural advantage that could be renounced only by "idiots". Man no longer needs to court the "insolent Dulcinea" and to carry out slavish attempts to win her favors. Such macho orations are only a foreplay for the show of torture of Madame de Mistival. Feverish Eugénie prematurely starts her hypocritical lamentation over her, after she fainted of pain. When she comes to after a whipping, she can barely whisper her complaint: "Why do you bring me back to the horror of life?" A while earlier, Dolmancé, angered again by Chevalier's objection, presented a philippic against humanity. He criticizes the young man's timidity and shallowness. "Humanity" is merely a weakness masking fear and egoism. It is an overestimated concept, "unknown to courageous and wise people."

An apology for cruelty, supporting Dolmancé's praise of self-satisfaction and indifference for the sexual object, is presented by Clement, who is the opponent of kindness to women. Clement reduces women to the status of "pleasure machines", and is an admirer of that delight which is born from administering pain to a victim, allowing the torturer to relish in vividly sensed suffering: "What an idea that a reasonable man could think that tenderness has any importance for delight? It would be mad to pay attention to the feelings of one's partner when it might adversely affect our own." Delcour, the executioner from Nantes, an advocate of cold "principles" who has a similarly servile attitude to the law and his own inclination, claims that insisting on a connection between murder and evil is a superstition. Saint-Fond, who built a religious system, the center of which was an omnipotent evil god, proclaims that suffering is necessary for salvation. In the eyes of the supreme demon, it is a merit to perpetrate it.

De Bressac, who cannot stand his mother, who keeps nagging him for debauchery, sets his hounds on her to get rid of her at last. Justine, who is forced to assist this torture, adds her jeremiads to the shrieks of the tortured woman. The quiet place, which is the setting of the scene, is suddenly filled with a "duet of lamentations" that only intensifies the ecstasy of the young man. Because the dogs finally got tired, Madame de Bressac was taken to the palace. There, de Bressac, "forces a dagger into the hand of Justine and leads it, against all resistance the poor girl could offer, to the heart of the unfortunate mother, who dies praying to God for mercy to his son."

Celestine, Rodin's sister and trusted companion in his crimes, successfully caresses despairing Justine. Her brother comments on it with satisfaction: "I enjoy forcing a woman in tears to get hot against her mood." After a ritual of initiation performed on the body of the new captive, Benedictines order Justine to be placed on a high pedestal, from which she is forced to observe the next episodes of the continued orgy with fear and disgust. A merciful girl of fifteen, who tried to win favors of the stylite almost collapsing out of tiredness, is soundly beaten. Silvestre does not fail to comment on the torments that are so sweet to his eyes: "No mercy, no compassion! Humane treatment is death of voluptuousness!" When the fate of Omphale, one of the girls for consumption in Saint Mary in the Wood, has been sealed, Severino relishes in frightening Justine by showing her the inevitable perspective: "She goes first, to prepare a place for you in the kingdom of Pluto. Calm down, Justine, wipe your tears, you will follow her presently; you do not part for long." Jerome, tired of constant adora-

tion by fatally love-struck Josephine, tries to get rid of her by all means. No method, however, seems appropriate for his growing hatred. Finally, he manages to rid himself of the conflict with her thanks to his marine talents. He ties naked Josephine to a mast of a ship loaded with gun powder. After a liberating explosion, he gives the following comment: "It was truly voluptuous to see the remains of one who once loved me so much disappear in the depth of the sea."

Roland foresees that his money forgery business, which allows him to wallow in excess and debauchery, will lead him to the gallows. After he has lured Justine to his secret dwelling, he makes her help him in checking whether death by hanging is really preceded by any voluptuous sensations. If so, then there is no need to fear it. First, however, to gratify his cruel lust he will hang Justine. She saves herself thank to a good reflex and a sickle. After some time, the performance is repeated in a different arrangement and preceded with a perfidious competition. Justine and Susanne are both charged to make Roland aroused. The one who is more successful in it loses and is put to death. Susanne has that misfortune. Both women complain about the unfair rules of the game. Justine intercedes for her mistreated companion. Roland, however, recalling masters of cruelty known from history, blames himself for his small efficiency in torture: "Oh, yes, I am too clement! I know too little about it, I am just a wretched apprentice." His farewell to Susanne will be preceded by a speech to her vagina, which becomes a subject of brutal actions, following the spectacular torture of her breasts that won for her the sad victory: "Oh, temple of my past ecstasies! The time has come for me to abandon thee." Everything is to be crowned with Roland's favorite hanging. Justine manages well, Susanne worse, because the sickle she was given has turned out to be quite blunt. Knowing that he can trust good Justine more than anyone else, Roland asks her for help, which will allow him to expect his death unperturbed. Justine does what she is expected, i.e. cuts the rope in time to save the hanged Roland. The fortunate verification of the hypothesis has fulfilled his great hopes, making him happy. Her services are paid with exemplary disloyalty. He eagerly breaks his promise to set her free and after another sequence of torments, he bids his former savior a last – as he thinks – good-bye with the following speech of a man proud of his ingratitude: "It is time for us to part company forever. Deranged girl, taste the fruit of your virtue! Consider whether it would be better for you not to rescue me, when we met for the first time, rather than hand me thus all that is needed for a torturer to prepare a most cruel death for you."

As a result of intrigues, Justine has been accused of arson and many other crimes. She looks for help in Antonin and Saint-Florent, who demand a high price for it, forcing the paragon of virtue and honor to make painful concessions. Taken from prison, she is transported, in a blacked-out carriage, to judge Cardoville's palace. He is to help her in her conflict with the law, but it soon becomes clear what kind of help it is. She is tied up and immobilized. When they take the blindfold from her eyes, they let her acknowledge her situation as a prospective participant in a dark orgy. The dialogue between Cardoville and his friend Dolmus sounds ominous. "My God, what are you going to do with me?! We will submit you to the most terrible tortures, the records of which will stain with utmost cruelty the pages of history." A large group of torturers gathered to do so, among them, two monumental Africans. Dolmus suggests a democratic way of sharing the charms of Justine, which, according to the common opinion of the lascivious company, have not been overestimated by Saint-Florent. Let each member choose one part of her body to prey upon. Later, Justine gets into a wheel, experiences a prickled ball in her vagina, is sewn up from both ends and immediately deflowered. They put her on a cross with nails, place a globe with caustic substance in both intimate places one after another, and finally, after several runs of flogging, they make her the object of their monstrous sexual appetites: "Jackals get her on the ground and in a short while hand her over for further mistreatment to hungry Blacks." When Zulma, Dolmus's daughter, and others want to copulate on the cross, Justine is hanged above them and poked with a pole so that she pours her blood all over them to increase their ecstasy. "In the end, they put down the flaccid body, which is only a shapeless mass covered with horrible wounds."

Con Bravura, Con Dolore

The adventures of Justine, following the path of martyrdom, ever discredited and ridiculed, call for a *grande finale*. De Sade does not waste an opportunity for a show. Some of his readers could be surprised, because even though he is usually associated with portrayals of satisfied tormentors in action or freely talking about their feats, we also find in him not just the language of the blond beast but also of the elegiac one. One can notice it in the exclamations of Justine, in the descriptions of her tortures, or in the commentaries on the life of embodied virtue, which consisted in her carrying her own cross and being crowned with the Golgotha in an empty road, soaked by the rain and struck by thunder. Libertines dream of space as an object of their destructive conquest. Justine finds such immensurable space in God, to whom she directs her love. Incomparably less ambitious than the lustful oppressors, she cares only for her neighbors and her little virtue, so much ridiculed, humiliated, and soiled. De Sade treats this emblematic ruin with care. In such situations, he sounds a bit like a naturalistic fatalist or a dark gnostic, convinced of the structural monstrosity of the world and the inevitable catastrophe of human existence. In part, he is also like a hagiographer (in the latter role, Huysmans will take over for him one hundred years later, as the author of the extravagant life of St. Lydvine of Schiedam).[10] Dejected by what befalls her, Justine calls death a savior several times: 1) After a welcome rape in the monastery: "What a dreadful situation for a girl who placed all her hopes for glory and happiness in virtue!" Devastated Justine could no longer stand the monstrous thought about the state she was reduced to by those from whom she could naturally expect help. Tears run profusely from her eyes, her mournful moans raise up the vault. She rolls over the floor trying to tear her bosom, tears her hair, implores her torturers to kill her. 2) Resuscitated by flogging after she fainted during the gang rape on the corpse of Madame de Gernande, placed on the banqueting table: "A hundred times would I prefer death to the monstrous life I live." 3) When Roland, after he finished off Susanne, threatens Justine that she will meet a similar fate: "I prefer death to such horrible existence that you prepared for me. Can life have any value for such wretched beings as we?" 4) After the tortures at Cardoville's: "Oh, if God's hand could take me in this moment, I would not complain in the least! For me, thrown in front of those raging beasts, the only comfort is the hope of a swift departure!" 5) After the condemning verdict of judge Cardoville: "Justine falls on the floor in despair. Her cries fill the court room. She is hitting the stone slabs with her head in the hope of precipitating death."

For the Passion-like ending, de Sade uses a well-sharpened quill. Miraculously saved from one calamity only to fall into another, Justine leaves prison thanks to the guard, bribed with the money he made her steal from a wealthy fellow prisoner. In Essonnes, on the way to the capital, where she planned to find her sister and ask her for help, she meets an elegant lady in the company of four men – the lady turns out to be Juliette. Invited to her castle, astounded with her position and wealth, she comments sadly: "When I have barely managed to survive, you seem to lack nothing!" Juliette replies to it: "Timid bunny! There is nothing to be astonished about! All of it could have been predicted. On the path of vice, which I chose, I found only roses. You, less philosophically disposed, followed the stifling superstitions, which made you worship chimeras. See, where it has brought you." Justine tells her sister about her misfortunes. In return, Juliette presents the story of her life to her sister and two of her acolytes. The other two, Noirceuil and Chabert, who already know it, are sent for a short visit to the village. After a few days, Justine, still blushing after the shocking story of Juliette, is attacked by the libertines recruited in the village. In the end, since Juliette refuses to take care of "the innocent one", they all debate

10) Cf. Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Sainte Lydwine de Schiedam* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1901). For the new edition with the preface by Claude Louis-Combet, see Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Lydwine de Schiedam figure de proue*, with preface by Claude Louis-Combet (Lyon: Éditions À rebours, 2002).

about what to do with her. Send her off immediately? Torment her for some more time? Finally, they accept the idea of Noirceuil, who likes risk but also trusts the unfailing success of vice. He proposes that Justine be thrown out into the oncoming storm: "Let's offer that creature to thunder. I will convert if she survives." Neither the forecast nor Noirceuil's gambling failed. They throw her out not giving her anything and even confiscating the small possessions that she had. Confused, humiliated by such depravity and monstrosities she had to suffer, but ultimately satisfied that she may escape an even worse shame, Justine, offering thanks to God, walks along the avenue leading from the castle to the public road. As soon as she gets there, she is struck by a lightning that pierces her through. The witnesses of this favorable intervention of nature, who followed Justine, are euphoric. They call Juliette: "Come admire the work of the Heavens! Come see how it rewards virtue!" The corpse of the pierced Justine, which the thunder, "entered through the mouth and left through the vagina," becomes again an object of a libertine Sabbath by the ecstatic maniacs. "At last, they withdraw. They abandon the body refusing it the last rites." The narrator's voice sounds like the lament of a Greek chorus over her discarded remains: "Oh, wretched creature, it has been written in heaven that even rest in death shall not be for you a salvation from the cruelty of crime and human depravity."

DAFS/LD

In the debate concerning the reading of de Sade, whether it should be reduced to the context of its epoch (this is the opinion of Jerzy Łojek,[11] which seems to be shared also by Michel Onfray[12]) or has a global character, I take the side of Bogdan Banasiak, who treats de Sade transhistorically and in his sadological *summa* nominates him the philosopher of the twentieth century.[13] This capacity of de Sade's thought has been noticed by his modern French commentators (Apollinaire, surrealists, Heine, Lely, Klossowski, Bataille, Blanchot, Paulhan, Alexandrian, Brochier, Pauvert, Delon, Annie Le Brun, Henaff, Foucault, Barthes, Lacan, Sollers, Chantal Thomas, Lever, etc.), who were able to justify it persuasively enough to stop further discussion about the universalist interpretation. It seems clear, however, that the social environment, in which de Sade is read, influences the reception of his work. This correlation, by the way, refers to all important products of culture, whose interpretation changes with time. The "era of furnaces" or widespread and ever strengthened fear yields a different reading from the period of historical quiet, when human energy can be used for achieving more refined goals than investment in anxiety and attempts, usually motivated by Darwinism, at defense against various threats. There is no doubt that liberal democracy is propitious for de Sade, since it allows one to slacken one's muscles and quietly engage the brain. Then his work can be safely labelled as *comoedia* and read in the same mood and with the same benefit as that of Chantal Thomas.

11) Cf. Jerzy Łojek, "Markiz de Sade, czyli natura ludzka zdemaskowana," in *Wiek Markiza de Sade*, second edition (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1975), 227–428.

12) Beside the above mentioned book, see also: Michel Onfray, "Sade et 'les plaisirs de la cruauté'," in *Les Ultras des Lumières*, *Contre-histoire de la philosophie*, vol. 4 (Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 2007).

13) Cf. Bogdan Banasiak, *Integralna potworność. Markiz de Sade. Filozofia libertynizmu, czyli konsekwencje «śmierci Boga»* (Łódź-Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Thesaurus, 2006).

Characters

1. Dolmancé, Mme de Saint-Ange, Eugénie de Mistival, Mme de Mistival, and Le Chevalier de Mirvel.[14]
2. Justine, Alberoni, Almani, Antonin, Bandole, bishop of Grenoble, De Bressac, Mme de Bressac, Cardoville, Celestine, Clement, Chrisostome, Dolmus, Zulma Dolmus, D'Esterval, Dorothée d'Esterval, Dom Severino, Dubois, Dubourg, Eulalie, Floretta, De Gernande, Mme de Gernande, Heloise, Jerome, Joseph, Josephine, Omphale, Rodin, Roland, Rombeau, Rosalie, Saint-Florent, Silvestre, and Susanne.[15]
3. Juliette, Borchamps, Chabert, Charlotte, Clairwil, Claude, Delbène, Delcour, Durand, Ferdinand, Francavilla, Henri, Honorine de Grillo, Minsky, Noirceuil, Olympia, Saint-Fond, Verneuil, and Vespoli.[16]

Translated by Marek Gensler

14) Marquis de Sade, *La philosophie dans le boudoir*, in *Œuvres* Vol. III, ed. Michel Delon, in collaboration with Jean Deprun (Gallimard, Paris 1998 [1795]), 3–178.

15) Marquis de Sade, *La Nouvelle Justine, ou les Malheurs de la vertu*, in *Œuvres*, vol. II, ed. Michel Delon (Gallimard, Paris 1995 [1799]), 391–1110.

16) Marquis de Sade, *Histoire de Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice*, in *Œuvres*, vol. III, ed. Michel Delon, in collaboration with Jean Deprun (Gallimard, Paris 1998 [1801]), 179–1262.

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