

**SADE-OMIZING SEXUALITY: DECONSTRUCTING THE GENDER BINARY  
THROUGH THE SADIAN SEXUAL PREDATOR**

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The Marquis de Sade became famous, or infamous depending on one's perspective, for the ferocious depictions of sexual predation which are found throughout his literary works, and consequently, the character of the sexual predator is indispensable to understanding the author's philosophical standpoint. For Sade, the laws of nature determine the sex of the individual, but they also require him or her to satisfy a set of physical needs which reject the masculine/feminine binary as often as they embrace it. This blurring of the lines between masculinity and femininity is thus characteristic of the Sadian sexual predator who must constantly seek satisfaction for his needs regardless of social and religious constraints on his behavior and on the sex of his victim. When examining the myriad variations on this character in Sade's work, it becomes clear that he has transferred the natural law of "survival of the fittest" from a purely physical to a highly intellectual concept and, in so doing, has created a predator who uses mental as well as physical strength to dominate his victim. I, therefore, propose that masculinity mixes fluidly with femininity when examined through the lens of the predator and that by investigating the hierarchy of predator versus prey, the mutability of gender at both extremes of the predatory relationship, and the description of specific acts of predation, it is possible to deconstruct the

gender differences through the strict adherence to the laws of nature observed by Sade's sexual predators.

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## PREFACE

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## I. INTRODUCTION — READING AS PREDATION: WHY DO A GENDERED READING OF SADE?

The relationship between gender and sex is both constant and inconstant: constant through the existence of the bond that connects the two, for there is always a relationship even when it is antithetical, but inconstant in the application and expression of this connection. In recent years with the rise of feminism and the resulting shift in traditional social roles and responsibilities, the possibility of something other than a binary, male versus female, construction takes the fore. The tumultuous evolution of gender from a binary relationship in which sex and gender are tightly bound to an aggregate system that distances the physical sex of the body from the gendered behavior of the individual allows for a degendering of both behavior and the sexed body by redefining the conceptions of both sex and gender. While the shift from a binary to a fluid construction of gender, from a dependence to an independence, continues to be hotly debated by scientists and scholars alike, there has been remarkable progress on both fronts. From the performance-oriented *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) by Judith Butler<sup>1</sup> to the scientific and medical approach taken by Anne Fausto-Sterling in *Sexing the Body* (2000),<sup>2</sup> gender has ceased to be a clear-cut sexual divide. Disagreement about the

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<sup>1</sup> Butler defines both sex and gender as a construct. She posits that gender remains open to constant interpretation and can be redefined through performance.

<sup>2</sup> As a biologist by trade, Fausto-Sterling discusses the scientific implications of intersexuality and the difference between biological, sexual difference and gender.



qualities and definitions of gender being the rule rather than the exception has led to a situation in which the indefinability of the concept has become its only common denominator. Its amorphous nature can be seen as both expanding and limiting the idea of gender; no longer can it be said that there are two genders, the masculine and the feminine, but instead the term itself has been opened up to include multiple definitions that are unrelated to the biological divide. While gender fluidity as a concept has only come into popular consciousness in the last forty years, instances of its practice have always existed; beings who were biologically female but displayed male behaviors, such as Amazons, and those who were biologically male but displayed female behaviors, such as the dandy, stand as prototypes for the modern confusion surrounding the definition of gender. Despite the almost constant apparition of individual examples of gender bending, however, the construction of gender fluidity (or the deconstruction of gender) is most prominently situated in the late 20th and early 21st century.

If gender fluidity is a relatively recent cultural development, why then should its presence be sought out and its implications weighed in the 18th century writings of Donatien Alphonse-François de Sade? The answer to this question lies not only in Sade's depiction of gender and sex but in the common critical approach categorizing his work as pornographic and/or misogynistic, with little or no value beyond that of titillating the sexual desire of the reader. The works of the Marquis de Sade are cited by modern critics as both philosophy and pornography: Dworkin demonizes Sade's work as pornography (70-7), Airaksinen considers Sade a successful philosopher but a failed novelist (5), Klossowski, on the other hand, finds the truth of Sade's philosophy only through his fiction (Neighbor 58), Bloch presents Sade both as a writer of pornography and as capable of transcending the genre but persists in describing his works as

"repugnant and repulsive and repellent to any person save the most degenerate libertine" (212-13), and Carter and Frappier-Mazur acknowledge both sides of Sade's work, but from a feminist perspective.

Michel Foucault points out that Sade takes a novel approach to erotic literature by creating a universe stabilized only by desire within which the structure of power is entirely insulated from reality. In this way, the originality of Sade's work precludes its categorization as strictly pornography or philosophy . Foucault explains:

Dire la vérité, ça veut dire pour Sade, établir le désir, le fantasme, l'imagination érotique, dans un rapport à la vérité qui soit tel qu'il n'y aura plus pour le désir aucun principe de réalité capable de s'opposer à lui, capable de lui dire non, capable de lui dire il y a des choses que tu n'atteindras pas, capable de lui dire, 'tu te trompes; tu n'es qu'un fantasme et imagination.'<sup>3</sup> (Sade)

As Foucault explains, desire in the Sadian universe cannot be disrupted by values from the outside. By putting the sexual desires and fantasies of the individual on display as the "truth" of his narration, Sade makes them the organizing principle of both his narrative universe and his over-arching philosophy. As described by Foucault, the power of desire within the Sadian universe cannot be threatened by reality, and, thus, Sade is free to create a narrative world that is both highly critical of his concrete reality and unrestrained by the necessity of stability. Sade's fictional world is free of constraint precisely because individual desire is always at the forefront. There is no collective consciousness to threaten the individual's ability to enact his or her fantasies, because Sade values the individual over the collective within his narrative universe and

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<sup>3</sup> The transcription of this conference did not include accents. I have added accents to this passage to improve readability.

reverses the values of his actual universe in order to maintain the closed boundaries of the fictional universe.

The freedom from reality that Sade gains by structuring his narrative universe around individual desire opens a pathway to the presentation of a unique relationship between philosophy and sex and to the creation of a new character, the sexual predator, through which to enact this relationship. The Sadian predator, who commits acts of sexual violence and focuses only on its own pleasure, serves as a tool to force a wedge between sex and gender, to free both the body and the behavior from their normative relationship to gender. The repercussions of these two textual innovations drastically destabilize the binary opposition traditionally applied to gender, and their continued importance lies in the fact that society has never succeeded in reaching the level of disregard for the other that the Sadian sexual predator embodies.

The darker side of Sade's corpus, those works that create and define the sexual predator, forces the reader to confront the combination of explicit sex and philosophy as interdependent aspects of the narration; a discomfiting union of intellect and instinct, of a cerebral understanding and a visceral one, which invites the reader to enter into a state of oscillation, scrambling to grasp the reversal of values that has been thrust upon him or her on both levels of his textual consumption and one that opens the door to the degendering process. While the combination of sex and philosophy is not unique to Sade, the graphic and violent content of the sexual encounters helps to distance him from his contemporaries and even more distinguishing is the role of the sexual predator as an agent of Sadian philosophy. Not only are the two presented within one text, they are two halves of the same whole. From a philosophical standpoint, Sade uses the laws of nature as a means of exhorting the reader to renounce the religious and social

status quo, and sexually speaking, the author simultaneously implicates the audience in his crimes, thus lessening its capacity to judge them as criminal. Through the act of reading, the audience may enter into an implicit conspiracy with the author, as even its potential disgust for the depravity of the sexual content or the controversiality of the philosophical content is nullified by the reader's continued engagement with the text. If the readers enter into the text and continue to read despite the “barriers” that Sade puts in their path, they accept to engage with his hypothesis even if they disagree with it. This link offers the reader a window through which gender fluidity, inherent to the text but also often implicit in it, can be seen to flourish because to accept the reversal of philosophy presented by Sade is to accept the sexual repercussions intertwined therein.

While Sade's work was an escalation from the norm, the French Revolution marked an escalation in the content and in the number and variety of destinataries of pornography; no longer was pornography a secret vice aimed at the aristocratic male but instead a product for the masses packed with intense political and clerical criticisms. Pornographers, writers and illustrators alike, sharpened the innocent sexual pleasure now associated with pornography into a weapon which would help to shape and would come to reflect the popular opinion of both the aristocracy and the church. As Hunt explains:

In fact, the French Revolution and pornography had some very intimate connections, both on the personal and the social levels. At least two leading revolutionaries - Mirabeau and Saint-Just - had written pornography before the Revolution, and some of the leading pornographers, of whom Sade is the best-known example, participated directly in the Revolution itself. Politically

motivated pornography helped to bring about the Revolution by undermining the legitimacy of the ancien régime as a social and political system. When the Revolution began in 1789, pornography did not disappear into the flood of new publications; instead, it came to the surface of the new popular politics in the form of even more vicious attacks on leading courtiers and, in particular, on the queen, Marie Antionette. . . . The space for such publications was wider in France than it ever had been before or ever would be again until very recently. (301-2)

Sade's works however went beyond the simple satires of queens and bishops partaking in orgies and integrated a philosophy that encouraged social change and restructuring. From the constant punishment of "good" to the valorizing of "evil," Sade is able to structure his fictional universe according to a new set of rules. Pornography of the time mocked the power structure, but Sade went further by encouraging the destabilization of the existing power structure and the revalorization of the moral order. In his article "Sade ou le philosophe scélérat," Klossowski writes: "C'est conformément à ce principe de la généralité normative de l'espèce humaine que Sade veut établir une contre-généralité" (4). Sade succeeds in creating a world within which values are reversed, and if values, why not gender? Klossowski also makes a case for Sade's propagation of atheism as a means of changing the normative view of the relationship between reason and the "subordination des fonctions de vivre" (4-5). Sade not only brought the existing problems into focus through the general criticism that he incorporated into the narrative fabric of his texts, but he also presented his audience with a philosophy of change. It was not enough to expose sex in the way that pornography does, and thus, Sade brought sex into play with philosophy.

On the relationship between sex and philosophy, Simone de Beauvoir writes: "En vérité, ce n'est ni comme auteur ni comme perversi sexuel que Sade s'impose à notre attention: c'est par la relation qu'il a créée entre ces deux aspects de lui-même" (12). While I disagree with her focus on the author as an individual and her criticism that neither Sade's philosophy nor his "pornography" is valuable in its own right, I agree that marrying sexual freedom to philosophical thought is the means by which he exerted the most influence, giving his works, when read in their entirety, the catalytic power to influence thought in the overall restructuring that took place during the Revolution. Sade was neither philosopher nor pornographer if he could not exist as both at once, if one could not be put into the service of the other; consequently, he was an author whose fiction served his philosophy and vice-versa.

In Sade's sexually explicit texts, the primary agent in this fictitious and exemplary restructuring is the figure of the sexual predator; its relationship with power, and its ability to transform itself for its own survival allow the predator to demonstrate the author's philosophy of strength over weakness, regardless of the moral implications. Sade's universe was different because he created a character who lived out his philosophy and surrounded not only the character but the philosophy itself with a narrative universe that allowed it its ultimate agency. Through this interweaving, Sade elevated his work from pornography, a work aimed only at the production of sexual pleasure, to the dissemination of a philosophy aimed at social, and in turn sexual, change. It is precisely this elevation that serves to define my corpus of study for this investigation into gender because these are the works that make Sade stand out from both his pornographic and philosophical contemporaries. The primary Sadian texts that will be explored in this study are those that combine explicit sex with overt philosophical dialogue and, in turn,

create the sexual predator as an exemplar of the behavior and thought that are espoused within the narration. These revolutionary texts include: *Justine ou Les Infortunes de la vertu* (1787), *La Nouvelle Justine ou Les Malheurs de la vertu* (1797), *L'Histoire de Juliette ou Les Prospérités du vice* (1801), *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795), et *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (1785). The two versions of the story of Justine offer to the reader countless examples of sexual predation in which the predator manifests his power in order to consume a sexual object and in so doing often reveals a penchant for those acts that reduce the prey to a body and negate the importance of sex within that body. *L'Histoire de Juliette ou Les Prospérités du vice* provides a binary opposition to *Justine ou les Infortunes de la vertu* by narrating from the perspective of the predator while maintaining an almost identical narrative structure to that presented in *Justine*. *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* establishes the physical and philosophical tenants of the predator through the training of Eugénie, and the predators therein practice a decidedly bisexual predation. Finally, *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* offers yet more examples of the sexual predator but also helps to reveal the intensity and the mutability of the power struggle between predator and prey. This work also provides copious examples of disfigured bodies. While Sade's other fictions, *Aline et Valcour*, *Les Crimes de l'amour*, and many others, do often deal with sex, it is in a much less explicit way that is very typical of other 18th century novelists. The texts that distinguish Sade, those for which he is best known, are his fictions representing the novel combination of explicit sex and philosophy, and the fact that the sexual predator is an embodiment of these two heretofore divergent topics points to its originality and its significance.

The importance of the sexual predator in the establishment of gender fluidity is reflected by the infiltration of the word *sadisme* into popular vocabulary, an introduction that took place

relatively quickly, within approximately thirty years of Sade's death.<sup>4</sup> Sade's work is seen to represent the combination of pleasure and pain to such an extent that he is remembered for little else by popular culture. *Sadisme* is defined as "perversion de l'instinct sexuel qui fait dépendre la volupté de la souffrance physique ou morale de l'autre," and this definition exemplifies, albeit anachronistically, the importance of the sexual predator to the narrative universe created by Sade (CNRTL). If pleasure is, as it is for Sade's predators, a compulsion that must be fed for the sake of survival, then Sade's philosophical standpoint of survival of the fittest gives the predator license to hunt and, in turn, to feed to the point of satiation. Predation, then, by virtue of its centrality to both the philosophical and sexual aspects of the text, becomes the exemplary character in Sade's narrations and levels the importance of the two by putting them in equitable dialogue one with the other, dialogue that even in contemporary criticism is often rejected or simply ignored.

The heritage of Sade's name and character are not the only markers of the importance of the predator in his work; beyond a simple depiction of the predator as a pornographic archetype, his works can actually be considered acts of predation in their own right. If one were to reexamine the definition above with the writer in the role of predator, Sade could certainly be said to "derive pleasure, especially sexual gratification, from inflicting pain, suffering, or humiliation" on the reader (Merriam Webster). This act of textual predation locks the destitute into a complicit relationship with the author by forcing him or her to play the role of the prey to Sade's predator. This author-to-reader predation certainly applies to the concrete reader who was

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<sup>4</sup> *Sadisme*, according to the CNRTL (Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales), was in usage as early as 1841, and Sade died in 1814.



consuming Sade's text at the time of the Revolution,<sup>5</sup> but it also applies, in a lesser sense, to all those abstract readers of his text. However, the relationship between the abstract reader and the text could also be seen in the reverse sense. The abstract reader could be seen to prey on Sade's text. By entering into the narration, the reader takes on the role of the predator, a consumer, who gains pleasure not only from the text but also from the predatory acts within the text. Sexual predation is thus inherently linked to a sort of textual predation in the case of Sade's texts. This connection between textual and sexual consumption is indicative of the relationship between Sadian philosophy and the sexual content of his work in that the act of reading, of self-education is combined with sexual pleasure. In the same way that Sade's text uses sexual pleasure as an illustration of his philosophy, it also uses the philosophical content to persuade the reader to participate, actively or passively, in sexual perversion. Through continuing to read the text, the audience is complicit not only at the sexual level but also at the philosophical level; both of which combine to support a complicitous relationship at the moral level. If the reader can thus be seen to subscribe to Sade's moral agenda, his nullification of the traditional gender binary through the act of predation based not on sex but on power results in the exportation of his philosophical ideas through sexual relationships that threaten the traditional conception of gender. In other words, the reader's acceptance of Sade's moral, or seemingly immoral universe, endorses and spreads the expansion of the philosophy that his works illustrate through the deconstruction of the gender binary. For example, in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*,

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<sup>5</sup> References to the abstract and concrete reader refer to Jaap Lintvelt's conception of the two. He defines the concrete reader and author as those that exist in the time period when the work is created and released. In other words, the actual author who writes the work and the reader who reads the work in the context within which it was written. The abstract reader and author, on the other hand, have a far more distant relationship with the original context. The abstract author is the cumulative construction of the author based on biography, criticism, and the reader's expectations. The abstract reader is one who is temporally, spatially, and/or culturally removed from the context within which the work was written (16-8).

Dolmancé's philosophical justification of immorality is based on the pleasure of the individual outweighing the pain of the other and on his defense of sodomy, a degendering act that will be discussed at length in chapter 4, as a natural act for which the bodies are designed.

The complicitous nature of the relationship between the sender and the destitutory of Sade's work has created a problematic environment for its criticism. The affront on the reader that is created by the combination of the intellectual and the erotic elicits a response from the reader that in many cases incites him or her to make a personal judgement that then orients the perspective of the criticism. Depending on the personal reaction of the reader, Sade's works have been categorized as pornography or philosophy, but the desire to classify the text as either one or the other seems to force a reduction of the original textual content. As mentioned earlier, even critics such as Bloch who acknowledge the importance of philosophy in Sade's work cannot move past the idea that the text is "repugnant and repulsive and repellent," because it is, first and foremost, pornography (212-13). I believe that it is precisely the relationship of the high and the low, the animalistic sexuality and the philosophical intelligence that set Sade's works apart from either classification and through the exposition of this relationship a structure of power presents itself. Sade promotes this structure through fiction, primarily through the act and the morality of predation, but the reader must embrace it in order to accept the duality of his work. Rather than his reputation as a pornographer who demeans and destroys women, the global reading of Sade's text reveals him as a philosopher who cleverly expresses himself through fiction. It is the above contradiction which reveals the importance of doing a gendered reading of Sade, because from the latter perspective the sex presented in Sade's works should be seen as a conscious decision to use sex as a narrative device designed to compliment the exposition of philosophy presented

within the narrative universe. While we cannot know Sade's exact intentions in writing these works, we can, however, use the exposition of their content to support the supposition that Sade intentionally intermingled scenes of graphic sexual violence with those of intense philosophical discourse. The decision to combine the physical with the intellectual, rather than to separate the two, which would have justified the claims that Sade's works are pornography, was a decision that can comfortably be attributed to the author himself, especially considering the story of *Justine* was rewritten in three different versions which became more sexually explicit with each rewriting.

While the existing criticism on Sade's works is vast, a small group of critics were fundamental in redefining Sade's works and highlighting their value. Bataille, Klossowski, Sollers, and later Barthes and Foucault sought to impose an order upon the Sadian universe. To find sanity within what was deemed insanity and to bring stability to a world of instability, these critics imposed different structural scaffolding that elevated Sade's work by attending to its unique combination of philosophy and sex. Be it transgressive, religious, cultural, or structural value, these critics found value in Sade's works by relying on the consistent elements that were repeated throughout Sade's darker works. Relying on the principle of desire, Foucault focuses in on the organizing principle that unifies all others. The desire of the individual is the central point around which all of the other structures take shape. According to Foucault, "where there is desire, the power relation is already present," and while he is right to focus in on desire within the Sadian universe, his earlier quote exemplifies an understanding of the fact that the relationship between desire and power is what makes Sade's work unique (81). Foucault outlines the negative relationship between desire and power. He acknowledges that desire is either

repressed, controlled, or mitigated by power in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* but that Sade's closed and independent universe is not bound by these same constrictions. The reversal of this dialectic allows Sade to reverse the values of his entire universe, including gender, by binding the intensity of desire to the control of power. The new relationship Sade creates between desire and power brings with it the fluidity that will allow the sexual predator to be born and to thrive within his universe.

Presumably due to the graphic sexual encounters presented within this part of his corpus, literary criticism on the works of the Marquis de Sade can be broadly categorized along the lines of two different trends that must both be addressed in the study of the author's works. On one level, Georges Bataille, Philippe Sollers, Pierre Klossowski, Roland Barthes, and Lucienne Frappier-Mazur dealt with Sade's fictions without applying their own ideological principles to the text; while on another level, John Phillips, Gert Hekma, Raymond Giraud, Andrea Dworkin, Simone de Beauvoir, and Angela Carter have included within their critical arguments personal value judgements of both the author and the text. Although the tendency might be to discard this latter group, they become equally important when one considers the current state of Sadian criticism and whether there is a need to study sexuality in Sade's works, because it is through these critics that can be seen the extent to which the author's own sexual practices have stilted an entire branch of the critical analysis regarding his works. Despite the fact that some of these critics are outwardly pro-Sade, the couching of their criticism in negative terms, often conflating the author and his works, puts them into this second category. Hekma repeatedly uses phrases such as "both in the life and work of Sade" and it is often difficult to distinguish whether she is referring to his life or his work. Giraud writes:

Sade's principal revelation, however, as I have come to see it, is not the physical abuses suffered by Justine, but the embarrassing spectacle of what the sadist himself undergoes. I submit that it took some courage on Sade's part to reveal in such minute detail these mirror images of himself. (47)

Dworkin can only read Sade as pornography, indelibly tying the author together with his works, and despite seeing some redeeming quality within Sade's works, Carter, although she is appreciative of Sade's role in opening a sexual door for women, still calls him "the old monster" (40). If the acts depicted by Sade could be considered as purely fictional rather than as an extension of actual acts committed by the author or as a means of titillation for the author, the narrations might not provoke such a strong ideological response. This blurring of author and text takes place precisely on the sexual plane, which is why, value judgements included, this second stratum of criticism cannot be ignored when dealing with sex and its effects on gender relationships within the text.

Existing criticism regarding Sade's works can be divided into two vast categories: historically and/or biographically based criticism and structuralist/post-structuralist criticism that reacts primarily to the existing criticism. The first category is extremely broad in Sade's case,<sup>6</sup> not only because of the relationship between his character and his writings, but also because of his staying-power as a cultural legend. The breadth of this category requires that it be broken down as follows: biographical criticism, feminist criticism, psychoanalytical criticism. The

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<sup>6</sup> The category is broad if one allows to enter into this category all criticism that delves into the life of the author as either a justification or a reflection of the established critique. This broad category can, however, be divided into sub-categories that differ greatly in the nature of their critiques. Giraud, for example, makes value judgements about both Sade and contemporary examples of Sadism, taking a pro-Sade slant but losing some of his authorial credit by using phrases such as "exceedingly distasteful" (39) and "a strangely fascinating lunatic lucidity" (42).

majority of the criticism on Sade falls into this broad category, or at least slips in and out of it through frequent mention of the life of the author. While in some cases, such as Andrea Dworkin's, the facts of the author's sexual life are the hinge upon which a case is built against his literary works, in other cases, the critical trend of biographical influence is linked in a more objective way. For example, Gilbert Lély's work, entitled *Sade: Sa vie et son oeuvre* (1957), is a divided account of misfortunes resulting from the author's sexual exploits, plot summaries, and popular reception, but it in no way seeks to discredit the author's work.

From a biographical perspective, Lély's work offers as complete an account as possible of the different facets of Sade's life and work, while remaining largely impartial. In Dworkin's work, feminist and biographical criticism merge binding Sade's life with the fictional narrative universe that he created. Countless articles also fall into this category, but while perhaps seeming less important than those mentioned above, they represent a considerable movement in the joining of Sade with his text from a critical perspective. Not all of these lapses into the life of Sade are intended to be pejorative, but they open the door to a negative connotation of the author that becomes difficult to dissociate from the critic's literary views. For example, although Giraud is undoubtedly pro-Sade, he still refers to Sade's works as "the sexual fantasies an obese middle-aged man wrote in prison," which tempers the overall positivity of the message (40).

Within this category, one also finds psychoanalytical approaches to Sade's work with the criticism of both Klossowski and Frappier-Mazur. *Sade, mon prochain*, a critical work by Klossowski, is primarily psychoanalytic in its approach to Sade but again melts the author into the texts at hand. Frappier-Mazur's study, *Sade et l'écriture de l'orgie* (1996) is a psychoanalytical, post-structuralist work, which, although it refers to Sade's life as a reflection

and reaffirmation of the critical findings of the author, deals primarily with the text itself and in this sense seems to straddle the division between the two over-arching categories more than any other critical text. This work focuses directly on the question of gender and hybridity; however, the author portrays this hybridity as a renunciation of the feminine in favor of the masculine, as a reductive masculinization. Because Frappier-Mazur chooses to approach the question of sexual difference through the orgy and its hierarchy, it does not deal with the predator's role as a fulcrum in the degendering process insofar as the author continually establishes the male/masculine as the powerful entity and the female/feminine as the weak entity. The hybridity or sexual (in)difference found in this work seems to rely on the reestablishment of a binary that conforms to, rather than disrupts, the existing gender binary. Frappier-Mazur writes:

The bisexual game entails many heterogeneous effects, but these are always incomplete since bisexuality turns out to be merely a derivative of the masculine. It is true that, for both woman and man, bisexuality contributes to the representation of a polymorphous sexuality, but its discourse and its orgiastic figures develop the traits proper to the male much more strongly in both sexes. This ambivalence is true for both anatomy and behavior. (32)

By reducing the gender binary to a singular, Frappier-Mazur acknowledges the power of Sade's narration with regard to sex and gender, but in re-appropriating the fluidity into a male only structure, she concretizes the system rather than liberating it.

The second group of critics address Sade's works from a structuralist or post-structuralist standpoint, sometimes focusing directly on Sade's text and other times on the established criticism of his work. Angela Carter's work, *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) falls into the second

category of criticism in that she reacts to the feminist criticisms of Sade by re-evaluating the place of the woman in Sade's work, in particular, and in pornography, in general. However, much like Frappier-Mazur, Carter places the man in the seat of power and the woman in the role of the victim: "male means tyrannous and female means martyred, no matter what the official genders of the male and female beings are" (27). Roland Barthes also falls into this category with his purely structuralist look at Sade's universe (in spite of value judgments found in the introduction). Barthes opens his preface by calling Sade unbearable: Sade "makes pleasure, happiness, communication dependent on an inflexible order or, to be even more offensive, a combinative" (3), but he then goes on to dissect Sade's work from a textual point of view with little mention (except in notes) of Sade's biography. With regards to sexuality and gender, Frappier-Mazur, Carter, and Barthes come closest to targeting the concepts that will be dealt with in this project; however, none of their works deals with gender as it specifically relates to predation, the character of the predator, and their relationship to the laws of nature. One could hypothesize that the life of the author, his reputation as a libertine, and the power that he used to dominate his "victims" leads a gendered reading of Sade toward this typical hierarchy of man in power and woman as victim and thus reinforces the gender binary leading away from rather than towards a reading that would degender the predator. However, this reading ignores the marked unimportance of gender in Sade's work. With all of the attention paid to the sex of the victim and to the abuse endured by the women in the Sadian universe, the power structure as it exists, devoid of the relationship to sex and gender and as it is represented through the sexual predator, has been largely ignored. The reasons for this lapse are unclear, but, perhaps, it is due in part to the frequent excerpting of Sade's works, the separation of the pornographic from the philosophic,



or equally possible, to the intensity of the contemporary response on the part of the feminist reader. In much the same way that *Playboy* was scorned by feminists yet opened doors for female sexual freedom, Sade's works of sexual violence have been targeted for their surface-level abuse of women rather than acknowledging the possibility of an implicit freedom.

The importance of the sexual predator in shifting the interpretation of Sade's works from the realm of misogyny to that of supremacy is the primary reason that the Sadian sexual predator has to be treated as the fulcrum upon which gender fluidity is balanced. If Sade's works continue to be treated as examples of male aggression towards the female, one ignores the numerous homosexual encounters, the focus on sodomy, the constantly shifting structure of power, and the philosophical importance of individual pleasure over social expectation. Sade's sexual predators are the means by which each of these issues destabilizes gender rather than solidifying it the way a misogynistic treatment would. Rather than taking for granted that Sade's narrative universe is organized from the point of view of a traditional power structure, I would instead replace male hegemony and social class with a structure built on pleasure. The Sadian sexual predator is the actor that embodies the pursuit of pleasure, but it is ultimately the necessity for and the possible intensity of pleasure that organizes Sade's narrative universe in these works.

While it may at first seem contradictory to equate either Sade or the sexual predator with the concept of degendering, both because of Sade's personal and textual reputation and because of the usually sexually bound conception of the male as predator and the female as prey, it is actually only the character of the predator as Sade creates it that is capable of breaking down the gender binary. The Sadian sexual predator gains its importance through its ability to enact Sade's philosophical ideals hinging on individual freedom. Acting as a point upon which the weight of

social constraint is balanced, it opens the door to a means for the satiation of desire without gender as an important facet. Despite being banned and criminalized and later having limited reprinting well into the 20th century, Sade's works bring sex into the light of day, even if that sex is outlandish or unrealistic at times, and with this sexual revelation comes a forced reevaluation of desire and satisfaction. The desires of the Sadian sexual predator are so strong that social constraint cannot bind them and, thus, the traditional gender roles can be abandoned. Individual pleasure and satisfaction outweigh the common good and, in turn, the destabilization of gender destabilizes society.

The leveling of gender from a binary to a variable, multi-faceted singular is revealed throughout Sade's works and can be studied through a division into the following categories: the conflict between natural law and the laws of nature, differences between the Sadian predator and its precursors, power in the predator/prey relationship, and sodomy and the degendering of the body. Each of my chapters takes up the relationship between gender and the sexual predator: first, by first setting the stage for the creation of the sexual predator and then by examining the role of the predator as a source of degendering.

First, in chapter 1, the question of natural law will bring into focus Sade's importance as an Enlightenment philosopher by comparing his works to those of Rousseau and Hobbes. In so doing, I will show not only Sade's awareness and understanding of these two existent conceptions of natural law but also the marked difference in his own philosophy which strays from the norm to promote the laws of nature and the importance of the individual. This chapter sets the stage for the necessity of creating a narrative universe in which the sexual predator can enact a Sadian system of values, and for this reason, it precedes any in-depth textual examination

of the works at hand. It also serves to lend credit to Sade's works by demonstrating their adherence to the questioning principles of the Enlightenment period.

In Chapter 2, I bring the novelty of the Sadian sexual predator to the forefront by examining its literary precursors. By providing examples from Medieval through 18th century literature, I have delineated the ways in which these fictional characters have merged to create a hybrid character that encompasses aspects of both the rapist and the seducer while maintaining its independence as a new and separate entity. Also, in this chapter, I examine the creation and education of the Sadian sexual predator by providing an in-depth comparison of Eugénie in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* and Thérèse in the anonymous work *Thérèse philosophe*. Serving to define and educate the Sadian sexual predator, this chapter calls on the philosophical underpinnings of Sade's works discussed in chapter 1 and sets the stage for a deeper look at the universe within which the predator functions.

The third chapter reveals the relationship between the sexual predator, the power structure established within the narrative universe, and their repercussions on the fluidity of gender. I posit that gender fluidity is established through the interchangeability of predator and prey. A single individual can pass from one role to the other depending on the context and on the possibility for the greatest reception of pleasure in any single individual. By contrasting the experiences of Justine and Juliette, I reveal the fluid interaction between the sexes and the reversal of the concepts of good and evil. Fluidity in both areas destabilizes the traditional male-dominant structure by providing an alternative to the static power dynamic which, in turn, allows male and female to merge into a new degendered category. This chapter provides a framework for the investigation of the body as it functions within the Sadian power structure.

In chapter 4, I examine the way in which Sade uses the sexual predator to explore sodomy and the alteration of the sexed body with the result of neutralizing what would otherwise be a static relationship. Sodomy allows for the interchangeability of partners through the universality of the anus in order to multiply the possibilities for the sexual predator's pleasure, but it also serves to destabilize the traditional socio-religious views on heterosexual, procreative sex. The body is changed to heighten sexual pleasure in Sade's narrative universe: consequently, the natural deformation is used as a device to increase this body's ability to receive pleasure, while the inflicted abnormality is a means of gaining pleasure through destruction. Each of these alterations serving as a way to blur the line between the binary in the sense that the sexual predator, even the one who professes a marked preference for one sex or the other, is blind to sex when pleasure is at stake. Since sodomy was considered socially disruptive, this chapter relies on the philosophy of pleasure established in chapter 1, the ideals and principles of the predator described in chapter 2, and the fluid power structure laid out in chapter 3.

Through a detailed examination of Sade's fiction, it is possible to delineate the differences between Sade's predators and characters with predatory tendencies that preceded them, to illustrate the ways in which Sade's philosophy is linked to power rather than gender, and to expand upon the sexual characteristics of this degendering. In the conclusion, I will reveal how the Sadian predator represents a veritable apex in the character of the sexual predator and examine the important repercussions of his work on the relationship between sex and gender in the centuries that followed his work.

## II. NATURAL LAW VERSUS THE LAWS OF NATURE: THE CORRUPTION OF PURITY AND THE REVERSAL OF GOOD AND EVIL

Sade's willingness to take a strong stand on the question of Natural Law is not surprising when one considers that he was born into the discourse of the French Enlightenment. Although the debate on the relationship between the individual and society pre-dates Sade, notably with Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writings on the subject were in full bloom during Sade's adolescence and early-adulthood. Sade, having been born in 1740, was 15 years old when Rousseau published *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, which was his first major article dealing with social relationships, and he was only 22 when *Du Contrat social, principes du droit politique* was published in 1762. Rousseau's work was inventoried as having been part of Sade's personal library at the *Château de la Coste*,<sup>7</sup> and his eager intentions of buying the author's complete works is expressed in a letter to Madame de Sade in 1783.<sup>8</sup> Although Sade's writings differ greatly from Rousseau's and Hobbes', they do betray an interest in, and a deep understanding of, both men's work and, despite

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<sup>7</sup> See Laborde.

<sup>8</sup> As documented by Paul Wiedmann: In a letter from Vincennes dated November 23-24, 1783, Sade writes: "Be quite sure, soul of my soul, that the first purchase I will make when I get out, and even the first action of my freedom, after having kissed your two eyes, your two nipples, and your two buttocks, will be to buy at once and at all costs: The *Best Elements of Physics*, the *Natural History* of M. de Buffon in 4°, with the plates, and the totality of the works of Montaigne, Delille, d'Arnaud, St-Lambert, Dorat, Voltaire, J.-J. Rousseau, with the continuation of the *Traveller*, histories of France and of the late Empire, all works that I only have, either not at all, or quite incomplete in my library" (46).

often being ignored as such, offer a philosophical standpoint which elevates Sade from a pulp pornographer to an Enlightenment philosopher who succeeded in pushing the boundaries set by his contemporaries and theorizing a system of thought, based not on obligation but on pleasure that is successfully illustrated through the agency of the sexual predator in his darker works of fiction.

For those who classify Sade's works only as pornography, the question of natural law might seem contradictory, but when seen as an integral part of the Enlightenment, Sade's constant questioning of societal boundaries and governmental establishments creates a level of instability and fluidity that is at the heart of the debate on natural law and, by consequence, aligned with the blurring of gender that takes place within Sade's work. Sade's textual conflict stems from a power structure that is directly related to the privileging of individual pleasure and satisfaction over collective well-being. Power and pleasure combine to support the laws of nature rather than the principles of Natural Law. Although Sade's opinions on Natural Law are often viewed as diametrically opposed to those of Rousseau<sup>9</sup> and Hobbes (albeit the opposition lies in different areas), their obvious differences also make for revelatory parallels in their thinking. In order to contextualize Sade's seemingly radical standpoint with regard to the laws of nature and the abandonment of metaphysics, his principles can be studied through their oppositions and confluences with other representations of the natural state as it was understood in the 18th century, primarily those of Rousseau and Hobbes. These two thinkers come to the

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<sup>9</sup> For example, as Fowler writes: "In the field of philosophy and politics, Edmund Wilson writes, Sade appears as the opposite pole to Rousseau, the mind of Jean-Jacques inspired with the notion of man as good by nature and corrupted by institutions, the mind of the Marquis convinced that man was by nature evil and punished in vain by law and custom" (353). Wilson, whose article "The Vogue of the Marquis de Sade" is summarized here by Fowler, opened the door to the translation and republication of Sade by justifying his place in the bigger picture of the French Enlightenment. I quote Wilson indirectly here because Fowler's summary is far more succinct.

forefront as they not only remain well-known for their writings on natural law but are also diachronically situated with relation to Sade's own work: Hobbes' *Leviathan* being one of the fundamental texts on natural law and Rousseau being very close chronologically to Sade's own writings, thus representing the evolution of natural law through the use of both a foundational and a contemporary text. Positive law is only treated indirectly in Sade's works, in fact only the most virtuous character is actually imprisoned and, in this case, the law is manipulated to suit the needs of the predator, but it is present through its own absence. Sade's rejection of natural law in favor of the laws of nature is also a rejection of positive law, of the infliction of law upon the individual.

The first step toward understanding Sade's concept of natural law will be to outline these two existing conceptions as they relate to Sade's own. When one considers the reversal of values espoused in Sade's narrations, the interplay between these texts takes on a dimension beyond that of simple Manichaean opposition. The final part of this chapter will put these three concepts into dialogue through textual expositions of this ideological reversal taken from *Philosophie dans le boudoir* since it is often regarded as Sade's most overtly philosophical text due not only to the philosophical dialogue that the characters engage in throughout the work, which in turn extends to an author/reader dialogue, but also to the inclusion of the pamphlet entitled: "Français! Encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains."

Constructed in opposition to both Hobbes' and Rousseau's views on natural law, the definition of the Sadian predator to be established in chapter two and the laws of nature as Sade reveals them allow for the creation of a universe in which gender fluidity is free to flourish through the actions of the sexual predator. Although this chapter does not focus overtly on the

predator himself, it does lay the foundation for a narrative world, and an ideal Sadian world, within which the Sadian sexual predator can exist and flourish through the rejection of both natural and positive law. By examining first the ideas of Rousseau and then of Hobbes, I suggest that Sade has created a philosophy in juxtaposition with the commonly held conception of natural law that threatens the notion that the good of the many outweighs the good of the one, and in so doing, negates positive law by reversing the existing system of values. Through the acceptance of Sade's works as a fictional narrative exemplifying a philosophical viewpoint, not only are these texts pulled back from the precipice of pornography, but a door is opened to the gender fluctuations that accompany the Sadian sexual predator.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote extensively on the relationship between the individual and society and, in turn, of the diachronic evolution of this relationship. From his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755) to his *Du Contrat social, Principes du droit politique* (1762), Rousseau promoted not a return to an individualistic natural state but instead a sort of political cooperative that would bind the individual to society through a common reciprocal obligation to promote the communal good. In this way, Rousseau connects man not to his own individual satisfaction but instead requires him to enter into a relationship based on a shared socio-religious necessity for moral and civic order where positive law has intrinsic value. The author is quick to make a distinction between the nature of man and the social convention applied to him, as explained in the opening of *Discours*:

Je conçois dans l'espece humaine deux sortes d'inégalités; l'une que j'appelle naturelle ou physique, parce qu'elle est établie par la nature, et qui consiste dans la différence des âges, de la santé, des forces du corps, et des qualités de l'esprit



ou de l'ame; l'autre, qu'on peut appeler inégalité morale ou politique, parce qu'elle dépend d'une sorte de convention, et qu'elle est établie ou du moins autorisée par le consentement des hommes. (1-2)

These inequalities, as Rousseau calls them, are the dichotomy upon which his arguments are based not only in this text but also in *Du Contrat social*, and the author succeeds in making a distinction between the thoughtlessness of the body's desires and the thoughtfulness of consenting to enter into a state of repression for the common good, an idea with which the philosophy presented in Sade's dark fictions could not be more opposed.

Rousseau posits that the "savage"<sup>10</sup> was primarily "good" before the advent of the organized society in which he and his contemporaries lived. To expand upon this concept, it must be noted that Rousseau does not use the word "good" as a judgment of the pre-societal man but instead as a means of saying that this man was capable of taking care of his own needs without seeking to do harm to another. Because the concept of "good" is determined entirely by societal norms, neither vice nor virtue existed for this man, and it would be impossible to enforce these judgmental terms in retrospect. According to Rousseau, society was formed primarily through the acceptance of nature as property. As the land, the fruits, the animals of the earth began to be claimed as property, and most importantly, as the individual began to accept that these heretofore communal resources were the property of another, the rift between the natural state and that established by convention was formed, bringing positive law into necessity. Good and bad, right and wrong had to be established to control the relationships not only between man and nature but, in turn, between man and his fellow men. Society was further shaped by the

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<sup>10</sup> Used here not with the modern connotation of brutality but instead to signify man as he was before civilization and organized society. A nominal form of "wild" would be a better translation.

establishment of monogamous couples, common languages, the founding of the nation, and the birth of art and culture. With these advancements came a societal organization, including laws created and enforced by man, that allowed the rich and powerful to reap rewards from their position while the poor continued to suffer. As Rousseau explains,

Telle fut ou dut être l'origine de la société et des lois, qui donnerent de nouvelles entraves au foible et de nouvelles forces au riche, détruisant sans retour la liberté naturelle, fixerent pour jamais la loi de la propriété et de l'inégalité, d'une adroite usurpation firent un droit irrévocable, et pour le profit de quelques ambitieux assujettirent désormais tout le genre humain au travail, à la servitude et à la misère. On voit aisément comment l'établissement d'une seule société rendit indispensable celui de toutes les autres, et comment, pour faire tête à des forces unies, il fallut s'unir à son tour. (77)

This quote reveals the origin of Rousseau's belief that society is a corrupting influence on man and that a snowball effect forced the convergence of the individual into a society which necessitated the creation of co-existent societies, and enslaved him to its conventions -- forced labor that Sade will reject on all levels.

Despite seeing the creation of society as a corruption, Rousseau, however, does not advocate for a blatant return to nature. Instead, he touts the idea that men must come together on equal terms in order to form a collective, cooperative society. There will still be laws for the greater good, but these individuals will not feel confined by them because the regulations will be put in place for the greater good of the community. As Rousseau states in *Du Contrat social*: "Ces clauses [those of the Social Contract] bien entendues se réduisent à une seule, savoir,

l'aliénation totale de chaque associé avec tous ses droits à toute la communauté" (23). This belief pushed Rousseau to write in favor of a democratic government, elected by the people with the people's best interest in mind. Rousseau's society would do away with the aristocracy, and while it would bring the lower classes up, it would simultaneously have an inverse effect on the upper classes. One important problem with Rousseau's ideal society rests in the will of the people to make a decision that was actually in their society's best interest. If this could not be done, Rousseau suggested measures to force the people to improve themselves through an almost totalitarian enforcement of those laws that would make the people themselves more virtuous and would, in turn, allow future societies to make better decisions for themselves. Rousseau, thus, promotes a restructuring of positive law, by taking the power from the aristocrat and putting it into the hands of the people suggesting that by defining the laws themselves, the people will feel more at ease within their constraints.

Although Sade can be seen as Rousseau's opposite, one must consider the relationship between their two conceptions of natural law and respect the similarities that are enfolded within their differences.<sup>11</sup> Like Rousseau, Sade, as a student of the Enlightenment, was concerned by the relationship between the freedom of the individual and the constraints of society, but unlike his counterpart, Sade sought to abolish constraints and to consider the good of the one over the good of the many. Sade, in essence, refused to enter into Rousseau's social contract because the communal good often came at the cost of personal good. Pleasure, the driving force behind

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<sup>11</sup> Godelieve Mercken-Spaas article "Some Aspects of the Self and the Other in Rousseau and Sade," outlines the two men's philosophical differences en route to the common goal of republicanism. These differences include audience, tactic, their conceptions of nature and pity, adherence to the legal system, sex, language and more. However, the one major area where Mercken-Spaas believes that Sade and Rousseau's ideas align is that of gender. "Although both advocate equality, neither visualizes woman as a desiring subject" (75).

Sade's sexually explicit narrations, being at the center of this disagreement. He did not, as Rousseau hoped, feel free within the bounds of societal restrictions. As Sade explains through Dolmancé in *Philosophie*, “l'action qui sert l'un, en nuisant à l'autre, est d'une indifférence parfaite à la nature” (149). Those *inégalités naturelles* that Rousseau accepts as a given are at the heart of Sade's conception of Natural Law which refocuses the balance of power between society and the individual and, in turn, favors the laws of nature, the ability of the individual to meet his own sexual and intellectual needs, over the communal good of the society. As Mercken-Spaas' writes:

Sade supports equality in principle yet views inequality as an inescapable condition--it is a natural phenomenon rooted in innate physical differences. Sade bases his views of the Self/Other relationship on the animal model, where Rousseau defends specifically human values. This dichotomy conveys a difference in the concepts of the Self. For Rousseau, the Self, in the sense of classical philosophy, is the subject of perception and consciousness; Sade's concept of the Self, however, approximates that of contemporary psychoanalysis--the Self is the subject of wishing and desire. These concepts explain Rousseau's attempt to trace the move from unconsciousness to consciousness as well as Sade's concern with the maximum fulfillment of passion. (72)

While I agree in large part with the above quote, it does not take into account the constant fluctuation that takes place within the categories of “inequality” and “physical difference” in Sade's textual universe (which will be discussed at length in chapter four) or Rousseau's acceptance of a secret moral fluctuation that could be accepted to preserve individual identity, as

demonstrated in *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*. For example, Mercken-Spaas writes that Sade “views inequality as an inescapable condition,” but I argue that this is only true on a macroscopic scale; the condition of inequality is inescapable in general terms but not on an individual basis. Juliette certainly serves as an example of a character who progressed from low to high in both wealth and power. The physical fluidity created by Sade in his texts is also related to this condition in that it is a way of coping with societal inequality; not only are many of Sade’s characters physical aberrations, his predators often enjoy sexually “abnormal” partners and seek them out to fulfill their desires.<sup>12</sup> From a societally stable male/female dichotomy, Sade opens the door to an unstable sexual power structure through the inclusion of more fluid hermaphroditic bodies and through the valorization of non-normative sexual behavior that threatens the status quo. I would also posit that the delineation between mind and body is not as clear as Mercken-Spaas implies. Sade’s “Self” implies an understanding of both desire and consciousness because in the quest for fulfillment Sade thoughtfully disregards the human values that Rousseau embraces. The “animal model,” as Mercken-Spaas calls it, is only a basis for physical behavior, but the singularity of Sade’s sexual predators originates in the layering on of conscious rebellion to this model, the addition of a philosophical standpoint to otherwise animalistic behavior.

Through the differences between Rousseau and Sade's philosophies, the divergence of positive law is quite evident. Rousseau's society cannot exist without these civil laws, however, he posits that they will not feel constrictive because the object of the law will also be its creator. Sade, however, re-valorizes the entire system of positive law, albeit indirectly, by constructing a

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<sup>12</sup> “Un eunuque, un hermaphrodite, un nain, une femme de quatre-vingts ans, un dindon, un singe, un très gros dogue, une chèvre et un petit garçon de quatre ans, arrière-petit-fils de la vieille femme, furent les objets de luxure que nous présentèrent les duègnes de la princesse” (*Juliette* 144-45).

universe in which the rule-breakers are rewarded and the rule-followers are punished. Obedience to any law other than self-satisfaction is unacceptable in the Sadian narration and the sexual predator is the primary exemplar of this re-valorization.

Despite their inherent differences, Sade's view of contemporary society focuses on many of the same problems that are seen in Rousseau's writings, and from that point of view, the similarities between the two authors lend a level of legitimacy to Sade's work that has often been ignored, and in turn, helps to refocus Sade's narrative universe as a philosophical rather than a purely sexual one. A desire to question and abolish conventions and constraints that reinforce the status quo is at the base of both men's texts and allows for a point of departure for their ultimate philosophical divergence. Sade exposed societal convention not as a corrupting influence but instead as a means of forcing man to adhere to a falsification of his true nature by denying his instinct for pleasure.

For Thomas Hobbes, the natural state of man varies greatly from that of Rousseau but certainly bears some similarities to the behavior of the Sadian sexual predator. Instead of an idyllic natural state where man need not compete with others to sustain himself, in his *Leviathan*, Hobbes wrote of man's inherent equality and thus his need to fight against his fellow inhabitants,

From this equality of ability ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends.  
And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they  
cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end (which is  
principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only)  
endeavor to destroy or subdue one another. (85)

Beyond these basic needs, Hobbes acknowledges the possibility that some men may simply

enjoy the thrill of power and conquest. He believes that unless there is a common power strong enough to force all men to obey, they remain constantly at war with each other “where every man is enemy to every man” (86). Thus, Hobbes, in direct opposition to Sade, wanted a society of tight constraints. He sought to eliminate the constant state of war brought about through man's natural equality by putting in place an overarching power structure that would ensure the rights of the individual and thus render him free to act without the constant threat of the other. Unlike Rousseau's faith in the decision making capability of the people, the establishment of a commonwealth ruled by a “mortal god” is the only possible way for Hobbes to accept the peaceable existence of men living together (119). The Hobbesian idea that man cannot be trusted to rule himself is an obvious affront to Sade's philosophy of sexual and social freedom, and it is also a case for their diverging ideas on positive law. The power structure that Hobbes establishes to ensure the individual's freedom from threat is also a means of inflicting the system of positive law on the individual, a system which runs contrary to the Sadian conception of individual freedom.

With regards to Hobbes, Sade obviously shares a similar view of man's actions in his natural state. Man seeks to satisfy himself, to take that which he needs without concern for the needs of the other. They differ greatly, however, in their reaction to this natural state. Hobbes seeks to remedy the injustice of it through the institution of positive law while Sade embraces this natural state through the acceptance of a constantly changing power structure where the individual has no obligations towards the other. There is also a difference in the two men's conceptions of equality. Whereas Hobbes finds all men equal, or at least the balance of their natural abilities and skills as equal, Sade's universe reveals just the opposite as there is always an

uneven balance of power made even more unstable by its ability to constantly evolve within a given situational context. This fluidity is, in fact, the crux of Sade's ongoing narration of the sexual predator. Consequently, the Hobbesian commonwealth model seeks to remedy the "problem," which allows Sade's universe to both persist and thrive, making it a major point of contention between their two philosophies. While Hobbes seeks to centralize power in an effort to avoid individual tensions, Sade questions centralized power in an effort to free the hand of the individual, which in turn allows for a fluidity in commonly accepted societal conventions, including power, sexuality, sodomy, and gender.

In *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, Sade presents the reader with an overtly philosophical text on the question of the individual in society by including the pamphlet "Encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains" within the body of the text, but even before this text Sade pushes the boundaries of societal and religious convention through the dialogues between Mme de Saint-Ange, Dolmancé and Eugénie, which, although couched within a fictional context, are no less philosophical than the discourse on republicanism. At times, Sade seems to address both Rousseau and Hobbes' conceptions of natural law in a single response. During a discussion on the good of the many versus the good of the one, or in this case, the pain of the many versus the pleasure of the one, Sade, through the response of Dolmancé, explains that individual pleasure should still be taken even when it will harm a large number of people:

... il n'y a aucune comparaison entre ce qu'éprouvent les autres et ce que nous ressentons: la plus forte dose de douleur chez les autres doit assurément être nulle pour nous, et le plus léger chatouillement de plaisir éprouvé par nous, nous touche: donc nous devons, à tel prix que ce soit, préférer le léger chatouillement



qui nous délecte à cette somme immense des malheurs d'autrui qui ne saurait nous atteindre; mais s'il arrive, au contraire, que la singularité de nos organes, une construction bizarre nous rendent agréables les douleurs du prochain, ainsi que cela arrive souvent, qui doute alors que nous ne devions préférer incontestablement cette douleur d'autrui qui nous amuse, à l'absence de cette douleur qui deviendrait une privation pour nous. La source de toutes nos erreurs en morale vient de l'admission ridicule de cette fraternité qu'inventèrent les chrétiens dans leur siècle d'infortune et de détresse; contraints à mendier la pitié des autres, il n'était pas maladroit d'établir qu'ils étaient tous frères, comment refuser des secours d'après une telle hypothèse? mais il est impossible d'admettre cette doctrine; ne naissons-nous pas tous isolés, je dis plus, tous ennemis les uns des autres, tous dans un état de guerre perpétuelle et réciproque? or, je vous demande, si cela serait dans la supposition que les vertus exigées par cette prétendue fraternité fussent réellement dans la nature, si sa voix les inspirait aux hommes, ils les éprouveraient en naissant; dès lors la pitié, la bienfaisance, l'humanité seraient des vertus naturelles, dont il serait impossible de se défendre, ce qui rendrait l'état primitif de l'homme sauvage totalement contraire à ce que nous voyons. (149-50)

Here, Sade begins by addressing the question of natural equality. The Hobbesian assertion that there will naturally be competition amongst men is elevated to a different plane in Sade's text as he goes beyond the survival instinct and focuses on the quality of that survival through the aspects of pleasure and satisfaction. The feeling of the other is not as important as our own, and

this holds true regardless of the consequences for the other (in this case, the victim). Contrary to Rousseau's ideas, Sade rejects a society where each individual must subjugate himself to the needs of his "brothers," in favor of an organization that allows individual freedoms at the expense of the other, which prevents the individual from being chained by social responsibility to his fellow man. Sade then moves on to pick up a line almost directly from Hobbes: "ne naissons-nous pas tous isolés, je dis plus, tous ennemis les uns des autres, tous dans un état de guerre perpetuelle et réciproque?" (150). Hobbes frames his argument differently but follows a very similar thread: "Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man" (56). Hobbes exposes this possibility as the result of a lack of centralized power, but Sade confronts the issue with an eye towards individual liberty and democratic government, warning the reader against the dangers of a power hierarchy topped by a king. Finally, Sade questions Rousseau's assertion that man is naturally good-hearted and non-conflict oriented by pointing out that the virtues touted by society, *la pitié*, *la bienfaisance*, *l'humanité*, are not inherent in the natural state.

Thus, through Dolmancé's response to Eugénie, Sade is able to create a dialogue between the ruling opinions of his time with respect to the question of Natural Law while simultaneously presenting his own opinion on the subject, which reveals a libertine desire for freedom. Sade then proceeds in his philosophical pamphlet to deconstruct the constraints that bind men in his society. By discrediting the religious scaffolding that structures society, Sade attempts to separate organized religion from the governmental structure and thus reduce it to a cult with little influence over societal convention. Sade explains, "ils [the priests] vous renchaîneront à des

rois, parce que la puissance de ceux-ci était toujours celle de l'autre, et votre édifice républicain s'écroulera faute de bases" (169). Following only a few pages later, Sade writes, "Oui, citoyens, la religion est incohérente au système de la liberté, vous l'avez senti, jamais l'homme libre ne se courbera devant les dieux du christianisme. . ." (174). Brought together, these two quotes reveal a reprehension both for organized religion and for Christian dogma. Sade rejects the fundamental Christian values that are espoused by Hobbes and Rousseau, but more importantly he reflects on the danger of allowing the Church to play a role in government. Advocating a separation between Church and state, Sade also recommends avoiding the insertion of religiosity into the educational system. Contrary to Sade, Hobbes invokes religion as fundamental in the establishment of order:

For these seeds have received culture from two sorts of men. . . . but both sorts have done it, with a purpose to make those men that relyed on them, the more apt to Obedience, Lawes, Peace, Charity, and civill Society. So that the Religion of the former sort, is a part of humane Politiques; and teacheth part of the duty which Earthly Kings require of their Subjects. And the Religion of the later sort is Divine Politiques; and containeth Precepts to those that have yeilded themselves subjects in the Kingdome of God. Of the former sort, were all the Founders of Common-wealths, and the Law-givers of the Gentiles: Of the later sort, were Abraham, Moses, and our Blessed Saviour; by whom have been derived unto us the Lawes of the Kingdome of God. (Hobbes 58)

Although Hobbes' description of the relationship between religion and constraint is synonymous with Sade's own, Hobbes touts the benefits of this system while Sade encourages his readers to

divorce religion from the rule of government. He rejects both the idea of the king and that of organized religion and, in so doing, he encourages the individual to spurn compliance. Sade, thus, rejects the fundamentals of Hobbes' necessity of religion to the good of the Commonwealth by prioritizing individual liberties over societally imposed behavioral restrictions like those of religion and positive law.

After proposing the rejection of religion, Sade goes on to deal with *les moeurs*, or the customs and morals of his society. Primarily, he advocates for a society with few laws while rejecting both Rousseau and Hobbes' societal structures. Sade purports:

il ne s'agit pas d'aimer ses semblables comme soi-même, puisque cela est contre les lois de la nature et que son seul organe doit diriger toutes les actions de notre vie; il n'est question d'aimer ses semblables comme des frères, comme amis que la nature nous donne, et avec lesquels nous devons vivre autant mieux dans un état républicain . . . (186-87)

Thus rejecting both Rousseau's cooperative society by creating a hierarchy where individual needs and desires reign and Hobbes' goal to form a society where man need not destroy the other to elevate himself, Sade also rejects both precedents through his desire to individualize laws and reduce or eliminate their influence. He explains that "les lois peuvent être si douces, en si petit nombre que tous les hommes, de quelque caractère qu'ils soient, puissent facilement s'y plier; encore exigerai-je que ce petit nombre de lois fût d'espèce à pouvoir s'adapter facilement à tous les différents caractères. . ." (187). By saying that he accepts a certain measure of law, Sade conforms to the ideas of Rousseau and Hobbes, but by his own definition, he is actually rejecting positive law. The idea that laws can exist that are different for each individual and that can be

changed to match the temperament of any character is to reject positive law as it exists and as both Rousseau and Hobbes' envisioned it. Sade's conception of positive law is also a rejection of Hobbes' commonwealth, which keeps men in line through fear of punishment, as Sade's "laws" are easily adhered to by the individual. Sade has, therefore, set up an ideal society that is not anarchistic but highly unstable in that there must constantly be compromise made and laws suited toward the happiness of the individual rather than towards the communal good.

Finally, if as Rousseau claims in *Du Contrat social*, the first society is that of the family, Sade mortally wounds this form of constraint as well with his conclusion to *Philosophie dans le boudoir*. Not only has the father freed the daughter from traditional societal bonds by sending her to be educated by Madame de St-Ange, he also rejects conjugal love by allowing the despoliation of his spouse, which is accomplished by exposing her to syphilis. Eugénie, with her new found conception of freedom and self-importance, “couse avec soin le con et le cul [of her mother] pour que l’humeur virulente, plus concentrée, moins sujette à s’évaporer, lui calcine les os plus promptement” (261). There are numerous examples of Sade’s abhorrence for procreation throughout his narrative universe, as can be seen through the characters’ preference for sodomitical rather vaginal sex, the fathering of children only for the purpose of forced abortions and incestuous predation, and the philosophical explanations of procreation as an unnecessary constraint. The scene at the end of *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* is, therefore, not only the destruction of Eugénie’s family, but a symbolic destruction of pro-creation and the family unit in general. Whether this is a direct response to Rousseau is questionable, but it certainly dismantles his conception of society from the ground up. Rousseau explains:

La famille est donc, si l’on veut, le premier modèle des sociétés politiques; le chef

est l'image du père, le peuple est l'image des enfans, et tous étant nés égaux et libres, n'alienent leur liberté que pour leur utilité. Toute la différence est que dans la famille l'amour du père pour ses enfans le paie des soins qu'il leur rend, et que dans l'État le plaisir de commander supplée à cet amour que le chef n'a pas pour ses peuples (*Contrat* 8).

Sade's conception of the family is far closer to the governmental version proposed by Rousseau than to the familial one. The reciprocal paternal love that differentiates family and government is absent in Sade's libertine family. If Rousseau's symbolic family holds true, Eugénie represents the people, her father the King and her mother the Queen. Sade's destruction of the family can literally be read as a microcosmic revolution. Eugénie's education and dis-indoctrination represent the uprising of social consciousness and the revolt of the people. Despite the fact that Eugénie does not kill her father, she certainly emancipates and establishes herself as her own being with independent likes, dislikes and, most importantly, desires. The destruction of the family in *Philosophie* thus works on two levels: the first represents Sade's distaste for procreation as often demonstrated in his work by the forced abortions and incest-driven acts of predation, and the second hints at an unwritten popular revolution when read through the lens of Rousseau's microcosmic model of government. The revolution proposed by Sade through the promotion of his own narrative universe allows for a denial of all positive law, which would end in the destruction of the existing civil structure. It is also important to note that while Eugénie receives sexual instruction from Dolmancé, she also receives an intellectual education making the libertine into both a physical and a philosophical being, thereby distinguishing Sade's work from the purely pornographic.

Sade's "Natural Law" is in turn not simply a reaction to Rousseau and Hobbes but an extension through opposition. Falling back on the laws of nature such as self-preservation and unabashed self-satisfaction within a context of constant negotiation with one's surroundings and unending jockeying for a position of power, Sade creates a universe which conforms to his ideal society, to his conception of the laws of nature. By allowing the predator to have free reign within his narrative, Sade creates a constant cycle of discourse, desire, and satisfaction that is repeated throughout his works. Instead of divorcing his philosophy from sex, Sade merges them with the intention of concretizing the relationship between the two. In *Justine, ou Les Infortunes de la vertu*, Sade uses Justine's virtuous character to demonstrate the disadvantages of following the religious doctrine of his time while also abusing of her naïveté to allow other characters the possibility of pontifying on the laws of nature. La Dubois, one of Justine's first teachers as well as her attempted corrupter, explains the benefits of thievery: "La nature nous a fait naître tous égaux, Thérèse; si le sort se plaît à déranger ce premier plan des lois générales, c'est à nous d'en corriger les caprices et de réparer, par notre adresse, les usurpations du plus fort" (14). In other words, everything can be justified to satisfy the needs of the individual, who though created "equal" renders himself more or less powerful through immediate action. Repeatedly, Sade punishes Justine for her virtuous behavior and discourse, thus lending credence to what he will later explain in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*: that religion must be eliminated in favor of freedom. Just as Justine is punished for her virtuosity, Juliette is rewarded for her vice. Most importantly, though, Juliette rejects every social and political convention that Sade deconstructs in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*; she rejects religion, steals, cheats, murders, and is rewarded for her trouble. She follows her own desires instead of conforming to social conventions or

positive law, as Justine does, and Sade favors her for the freedom that she represents, while punishing Justine who represents constraint and repression.

Sade's philosophical standpoint on the laws of nature and its differentiation from existing views are the material from which his narrative universe is woven and as such are the primary ingredients allowing the Sadian sexual predator to thrive within it. The character could not survive outside of Sade's universe, which is why there is no true sexual predator in the pre-Sadian literature. But the inverse relationship is just as important, because it is also true that the Sadian universe could not exist without the sexual predator to push its boundaries and constantly threaten the status quo. The sexual predator is the driving force behind all aspects of the Sadian narration. All of the differences that exist between Sade's concept of natural law and those of his predecessors can be reduced to one simple opposition: stability versus instability. Sade was the only philosopher positing a constantly changing relationship between the individual and his society. As noted earlier, he even suggests that this fluctuation be applied to positive law. Where Rousseau and Hobbes sought a calcification of this relationship that would result in a stable group dynamic, Sade brought the unavoidable, instability, into a place of preference. In so doing, Sade also forced a questioning of the inherent social values such as vice and virtue, good and evil. These concepts, defined only by the society within which they exist, are moot in Sade's universe. If anything, he has reversed their meaning by reversing the hierarchy between the good of the individual and the good of the group. Good becomes that which benefits an individual at a given time and virtue becomes those acts that allow for self-satisfaction by the individual. One can see this exemplified throughout Sade's works: Justine is punished, Juliette is rewarded, and Eugénie's natural inclinations are bolstered and gratified through sexual



exploration. It is, in turn, this instability that allows the individual to mould his environment into a constantly self-satisfying world, but also prevents the individual from becoming complacent through an uncertain power structure. This instability should not, however, be seen as a weak point in Sade's philosophy. It is, instead, what pushes the existing boundaries of philosophy and brings it to a higher level. Sade not only questions the structure within which he exists, but he also acts upon his philosophy. By tying philosophy to sex, questions to action, Sade begins the transition into a more individualistic society and, in turn, opens the door for not only a sexual revolution but a cultural one as well. Situated on the cusp of the 19th century, Sade spurs a re-evaluation of the norm and pushes society forward into a new line of thinking by openly confronting a subject that no one else would dare to conflate with the intellectual.

Since all the other elements of Sade's world are in constant flux, the question of gender is drawn into this same instability. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, gender progresses from a societally imposed convention towards an increasingly unstable, undefinable element in Sade's narration. This process is not only one of the rejection of societal norms, but also one of power and predation. Gender passes from a general stability within the individual to an unstable factor within the group, and its instability is in a constant state of fluctuation. Sade's universe is a carefully crafted representation of his desire for individual liberty. Freedom from societal constraint is sought above all else and achieved both rationally and physically by all of his characters, but especially by the Sadian sexual predator.

The Sadian corpus is tightly linked to the time period within which it was written, not necessarily from the inside of the narrative universe but certainly in the need and ability to address the issue of power. As society is driven by the unhappiness and inequality that spurred

the French Revolution, doors are opened wide on both religious and political fronts and Sade steps in to increase the destabilization that is already taking place. Just as the hierarchy of society, and in turn politics, is being overthrown, Sade is reflecting this instability in his work. Class distinctions certainly still exist in Sade's universe, but they also take on a fluidity that is associated with power. Thieves, for example, gain increased social status due to their criminal behavior, because within Sade's world thievery has positive rather than negative repercussions. Religion is also open to Sade's manipulation. Not only is the king, as God's earthly representative, overturned and stripped of power, but he is destroyed at the hands of the people. The Church as an institution is also destabilized by the Revolution through the passage of laws limiting its power and through the destruction of its iconography. Sade's harsh critique of the church is amplified by his constant philosophical reinforcement of the church as a means to control the behavior of the individual. In the face of this instability, the individual gains greater importance and has the increased autonomy to determine his or her own importance with respect to the collective. Sade takes this natural reaction to societal instability and creates a narrative universe where individuality is key.

One key example of Sade's dismantling of the church as an institution is the encounter between Juliette and Pope Pius VI. Juliette shows disrespect for the Pope's position, and the church in general, by calling him Braschi, emphasizing his secular identity rather than his religious office. She also outlines the sexual proclivities of his predecessors, which are incongruous with the principles of the church. Finally, in the *Cinquième Partie*, an orgy takes place within the church involving not only the Pope but three priests as well, demonstrating that the corruption within the church is not isolated but widespread. Sade writes, "Trois prêtres

étaient en face de l'autel, prêts à consommer le sacrifice, et six enfants de chœur, tout nus, se préparaient à le servir" (*Juliette 2*: 201). Not only do the priests take part willingly, but they take as victims indiscriminately: the children of the church and 20 young women and men, including a pregnant woman. By showing the participation of the church, Sade strengthens his philosophical argument for the disregard of religious constraints. Sade goes so far as to couch the scene within the vocabulary and the context of the church:

La messe se disait, et les ordres donnés pour que mes désirs s'exécutassent avec la même célérité que ceux du souverain pontife. Dès que l'hostie fut consacrée, l'acolyte l'apporta sur l'estrade et la déposa respectueusement sur la tête du vit papal; aussitôt qu'il l'y voit, le bougre m'encule avec. (*Juliette 2*: 202)

The Pope then goes on to execute his victims, one of whom he crucifies upside down like Saint Pierre. Not only does this scene put Juliette on the same hierarchical level as the Pope, it demotes his character to the level of any other sexual predator within the narration. The use of the Host within the sexual encounter symbolizes the despoliation of the sacred ornaments of the church in the pursuit of sexual pleasure. By outwardly taking on the church as an institution, Sade through his fictional narration discredits the principles of the church and in turn the restraints that it inflicts on individual behavior.

Sade's sexual predators are the embodiment of the Enlightenment on an individual rather than a societal level, and through their actions, Sade moves past a simple questioning of the status quo to a quasi abandonment of it. Through sexual predation, Sade manages to marry the philosophical beliefs of the individual to that predator's own physical desires. One might say that the behaviors enacted by the Sadian sexual predators indicate a deeply seated pathology

within the predator and would be supported in this belief by many contemporary scientists, psychologists, and doctors,<sup>13</sup> but rather than align these behaviors with sickness, as has often been done, one could take them as a logical extension of the Enlightenment. Sade's differences from his contemporaries have made him into a marginal and ridiculous character but were they to deal with any context other than sex, they would have fit in nicely with the discourse of the Enlightenment. It seems only suitable that the continuation of the age of reason should value questioning above acceptance. Although Sade may push the envelope in regard to both sex and violence, he uses both as a means of forcing the restructuring of his society, namely the breaking down of the barriers surrounding the act of sex and the definition of gender. Sade's work contributes to the Enlightenment as a means of questioning social norms on every possible level through the behaviors brought to light by his sexual predators. It is this that truly exemplifies the Sadian sexual predator, because there is no happy ending, there is no turn-about to valorize socially accepted behavior. Sade's textual universe follows justly the upheaval of his times. The valorization of reason and the inherent questioning of tradition, customs, morals, and institutions that characterized the Enlightenment are all apparent in Sade's work through the depictions of state officials and clergymen and the general behavior of his main characters. Interestingly, the century that spawned great thinkers also spawned massive revolt. The instability of the state, exemplified by the economic crisis and the reservations regarding absolute power, created an atmosphere that should have opened a door towards the social acceptance of Sade's work. While

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<sup>13</sup> Not only has Sade's name become synonymous with the sexual proclivity we now call sadism, but sadism has come to include a host of other sexual "problems." In his fundamental work *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), Richard von Krafft-Ebing writes that "Sadism must, therefore, like Masochism and the antipathic sexual instinct, be counted among the primitive anomalies of the sexual life. It is a disturbance (a deviation) in the evolution of psychosexual processes sprouting from the soil of psychical degeneration" (54).

Sade's works were widely read, he was jailed, at least in part, for their severity and their rethinking of morality. Sade went further than any other Enlightenment era philosopher in questioning the system of beliefs, the institutions, and the sexual boundaries by bringing to light their artificiality, but in so doing he threatened even the most enlightened men of his era by also showing the fallibility of their beliefs and ideas. His work is relegated to pornography, not only because of its sexual content, but also because it menaces the status quo (a situation which is as true today as it was in the late 18th century).

Sade uses the character of the sexual predator throughout his work as an instigator for individual freedom. Although desire is at the root of their predatory drive, his predators are not just animals feeding their natural sexual urges, but instead, they are philosophers attempting to satiate their urges through whatever means they deem necessary. It is an intellectual rather than a physical decision, and while these deeds are meant to shock and titillate the reader, they are also an evocation of the values of the Enlightenment, in so far as, they provide a venue to question pre-existing conceptions and conditions. Through the sexual predator, Sade asks: Are Rousseau and Hobbes right to rank society above the individual? Is social stability more important than individual happiness? By raising questions about the accepted structure established through natural law, the Sadian predator destabilizes the value of good and evil within the abstract world of Sade's narrative universe. This predator is suddenly not an outcast, as it would have to be for the social good, but now it is a doctor, a priest, an aristocrat -- in short, a deeply rooted member of society. Just as social class and institutional authority lose their stability, gender is equally destabilized. The relationship between man and woman becomes utterly unstable, fluid, open. They become interchangeable both as predators and as victims through a rebalancing of the

power structure, as will be seen in chapter three, and a neutralizing of the body, as presented in chapter four.

Sade not only encourages the reevaluation of all social norms, he also describes in detail the initiatory process that creates a sexual predator who is the embodiment of his philosophical conjecture. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, Sade lays out a process by which the socially indoctrinated individual can evolve to become one who follows his or her own natural inclinations with a lack of inhibitions stemming from social and moral standards, and this is not only a sexual affair but a thorough reworking of the human psyche.

### III. DEFINING THE PREDATOR: PRECURSORS AND PRETERNATURALISM

What is the Sadian sexual predator? In a preface to *La Philosophie dans le boudoir ou les instituteurs immoraux*, Sade lays the groundwork for the creation of the sexual predator by providing a lifestyle guide to individual happiness. Addressing his words to *libertins*, Sade writes:

Voluptueux de tous les âges et de tous les sexes, c'est à vous seuls que j'offre cet ouvrage; nourrissez-vous de ses principes, ils favorisent vos passions, et ces passions, dont de froids et plats moralistes vous effraient, ne sont que les moyens que la nature emploie pour faire parvenir l'homme aux vues qu'elle a sur lui; n'écoutez que ces passions délicieuses, leur organe est le seul qui doit vous conduire au bonheur. . . . Jeunes filles trop longtemps contenues dans les liens absurdes et dangereux d'une vertu fantastique et d'une religion dégoûtante, imitez l'ardente Eugénie; détruisez, foulez aux pieds, avec autant de rapidité qu'elle, tous les préceptes ridicules inculqués par d'imbéciles parents. (*Philosophie* 379)

In this, his most overtly philosophical work, Sade weaves a narrative web that, while depicting the libertine education of Eugénie, educates the reader on this way of life. In order to achieve happiness, he or she, as Sade points out "de tous les âges et de tous les sexes," should go against the grain of society by following the lustful and natural passions. Sade encourages those

"voluptueux" with a predisposition to libertinage to ignore the moral principles that control their sexual urges through fear and intimidation and, instead, to fortify their desires with the sustenance provided by the guiding principles laid out by Dolmancé and Mme de Saint-Ange. Even in this short introduction, Sade goes so far as to threaten the status quo on multiple levels: first, by encouraging young girls to throw aside their virtue in favor of the libertine lifestyle, second, by openly describing religion as *dégoûtant*, and finally, by taking aim at the family structure by recommending the rejection of parental influence. The ideal Sadian way of life is laid out in these principles. Beyond simple praise for the pleasures of the flesh, Sade is already laying the groundwork for the philosophical principles by which the sexual predator must commit these acts of pleasure. Without any fanfare, Sade creates the ultimate sexual predator, who has no need to seduce and no concern for the laws surrounding rape, who melds physical desire with a lack of inhibition and a full understanding of the illegality and inappropriateness of its actions. In fact, the illegality and inappropriateness can serve to enhance pleasure rather than to constrain it. In this simple preface, Sade lays out the sole rule by which the Sadian sexual predator must abide: satisfy desire at all costs.

The term "sexual predator" was not coined until the end of the 20th century,<sup>14</sup> and only then translated and adopted within contemporary usage in French. Even now, *prédateur sexuel* does not yet appear in contemporary dictionaries or encyclopedias of French. *Le Trésor de la langue française* provides the following possibility within the definitions of *prédateur*: "Homme qui vit de rapines, de butins" and cites this as a 19th/20th century definition. By incorporating

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<sup>14</sup> J. Edgar Hoover referred to some perpetrators of sexual crimes as predators in the 1920's, but the term sexual predator came into usage in the late 1980's primarily in a journalistic context. By the early 1990's, it was widely used in newspaper articles. It was then appropriated by writers of crime fiction and has since passed into popular usage.



the ideas of theft and violence while humanizing the term, this definition provides a point of departure from which the *prédateur* could become the *prédateur sexuel*, but standing as a direct translation from the English expression, it seems that this did not occur. Although the term sexual predator is anachronistic, the Marquis de Sade presents the reader with a textual precursor two hundred years in advance through the narrative enactment of the above described lifestyle. Through a quasi-abandonment of a stable male/female, vaginal, procreative, Christian form of intercourse, the Sadian predator opens a portal to the study of gender fluidity and of the relationship between society and sex by providing an unusually high number of intense and diverse depictions of intercourse, the majority of which predict what would today be defined as sexual predation. The connection between the sexual predator and his prey and the mutability of this relationship allow for a study of gender that opposes the traditional sexual binary with one of power; one that, unlike its biological counterpart, is constantly changing. This fluidity in the power binary inherently reflects back on the existing gender binary, thus transforming it into a mutable relationship and, through the process of transferral, allowing gender to be shaped more by evolving situations than by biology. The difference between this power structure as it exists elsewhere and as it exists in Sade's work rests primarily in a redefining of the traditional relationship between man and power. Sade creates a universe in which power can be transferred from one person to another, sometimes amicably other times violently, but without the traditional male lineage or the typical family blood lines. By converging the importance of power and pleasure, Sade allows for the shifting of power from one character to another, as long as this shift allows for the power to rest with the greatest potential center of pleasure and, in turn, satisfaction.

The predator, as presented in Sade's texts, serves to degender its prey textually but is also itself degendered in the process by the lack of stability within the supposed binary. The power structure established between predator and victim allows gender to be imposed upon a person, regardless of sexual identity, or to be manipulated by the dominant party for the heightened reception of pleasure. The importance of studying these predators lies in the fact that their repercussions on sex and gender can be felt both in society and in literature from the moment of their creation through the present day. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to illustrate the ascendance of the sexual predator through those fictional characters that helped to define its archetype,<sup>15</sup> to delineate between the Sadian sexual predator and these prefatory characters, and to examine the specific ways in which Sade defines the sexual predator through the education of his characters, thereby demonstrating the importance of those qualities that he seeks to encourage as they pass from libertines into true sexual predators.

This chapter is in no way meant to offer a comprehensive list of literary rapists and seducers but instead to trace a trend in the evolution of this type of character. While I have attempted to incorporate as many examples as possible in order to gauge the evolving qualities of the archetype, especially in the development of the foundation upon which the evolution will be based, this chapter may not include every character that could be construed to fall within the role of predecessor to the sexual predator. I have also chosen to focus primarily on examples from French literature, although I have included those outside examples that add insight to the definition of archetype, such as Casanova.

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<sup>15</sup> I choose the term archetype for two reasons: First, the Sadian sexual predator was an original character, a starting point upon which all sexual predators could be founded. Second, future versions of the sexual predator are an emulation of Sade's mould, certainly not a copy but at least a diluted reproduction. (Words such as morphology suggest a physical coherence that is not present in the Sadian sexual predator, a character defined by its form rather than its content.)

While the term “sexual predator” is certainly anachronistic to Sade’s works, the archetype is defined within his very pages. No longer are the terms rapist or seducer alone sufficient to describe the character that Sade creates, because neither encompasses the combination of intellectual understanding and physical drives that merge to create the Sadian sexual predator, a character that is specific only to the narrative universe found in this author's works when he combines graphic sex with philosophy. Although 21st century consumers of the text may associate, albeit unconsciously, the sexual predator with the serial killer, the pedophile, or the internet cyber-stalker,<sup>16</sup> all of these associations can be related back to the metaphor of the hunter, which justly suits the physical aspects of Sade’s fiction while lending insight into the intellectual and philosophical aspects.<sup>17</sup> The serial killer finds the victim’s weakness and preys on it, much as the pedophile will prey on the child’s lack of defenses, and as the cat will use its size, instinct, and claws to prey on the mouse. Sade’s predators function in a seemingly similar way with one exception; they hunt as much with their intellect and their ideas as they do with their physicality. This is not to say that there is no intellect in the game of cat and mouse, but

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<sup>16</sup> Serial killers such as the Boston Strangler, thought to be Albert DeSalvo, who raped and sodomized his victims often employing objects from the victims' own homes before strangling them (many, if not most of the victims, were strangled with their own undergarments: hosiery, underwear, brazier, etc). The BTK (Bind, Torture, Kill) killer, bonded, tortured and sexually assaulted his victims prior to killing them. Bianchi and Buono, known as the Hillside Stranglers, also tortured and sexually abused their victims before leaving them naked on hilltops throughout Los Angeles. Jeffrey Dahmer lured men to his home before raping, killing and cannibalizing their bodies. Even Jack the Ripper, who disemboweled his victims, sought them out due to the sexual nature of their work. These and many other serial killers should all be considered “sexual predators” in their own right. Pedophiles are often labelled as sexual predators because of the age difference between themselves and their victims and have become incurably linked with internet child pornography and cyber stalking. Both of these problems have come to the forefront in recent times due to television specials such as NBC television series “Dateline: To Catch a Predator,” which follows covert sting operations in which adults make contact with a child (who turns out to be a covert adult operative) through the internet and arrange to meet with this child to commit illicit/illegal acts.

<sup>17</sup> Although Sade could not have known all the derivations that would evolve from his sexual predator, he certainly sets his texts and his predators up as models to be followed. There are countless mentors of libertinage in all of Sade’s texts: *Philosophie dans le boudoir* focuses on pedagogy, and this same text is recommended as a primer for young women in Sade’s preface to the work.

instead that the intellect displayed by Sade's predators goes beyond that of simple instinct to achieve a level of philosophical justification for their actions and their preferences. These predators are forced to hunt in order to fulfill a hunger within themselves, but this hunger is not only the physical one of sexual gratification; it is also the philosophical hunger for a moral, and thus social, shift that can only be achieved by Sade through the captive audience provided the author through the textual hook of predation. Contrary to the modern criminal definition, the sexual predation within the Sadian narration is not simply sex or titillation but instead a means of invoking change and challenging the pre-existent systems, from the gender binary all the way up to the distribution of governmental power through his textual dismantling of organized religion. Although this intellectually complicated version of the predator would eventually be reduced to a criminalized copy of the original, the contentious attitude found within Sade's texts goes far beyond simple *libertinage* as it pushes the boundaries of philosophical thought, religious doctrine, and written and unwritten social conventions; however, these acts of destabilization are always exemplified by the sexual predator and through the sexual act.

In order to understand the importance of Sade's predators, they must first be delineated from their literary precursors and defined by their actions and their proliferation in his works. The anachronous nature of the term, however, means that there can be no explicit or direct lineage of the character of the sexual predator; not even Sade's characters could have been called sexual predators at the time of publication because the term was not yet in existence.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the

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<sup>18</sup> The existent terms *libertine* and *libertinage* do certainly apply to the characters discussed here as sexual predators, but they lack a certain level of ferocity and philosophical involvement. While the Sadian sexual predator does certainly have a libertine attitude, he/she goes far beyond the simplicity of this term. Other terms, such as *scélérat*, could approach the meaning of "sexual predator" within Sade's textual universe but certainly not outside of it. There is no term that embraces both the physical and intellectual aspects of the sexual predator. In French, the term *violeur* is not even referenced by ARTFL until 1872, and it still pales in comparison to the actuality of the Sadian sexual predator.

precursors of the Sadian predator consist mainly of characters who possess a limited number of traits that would later come to be associated with the sexual predator. Through an analysis of similar literary characters from Medieval through pre-revolutionary times, these characteristics can be used to amass a group of predatorily oriented predecessors but also, divisively, to separate Sade's predators from these characters, who serve as their influential precursors. Examples include rapists and seducers found in stories of courtly love and in didactic tales, such as the fabliaux and the *Lais* of Marie de France, as well as those found in the Marguerite de Navarre, Rabelais, and Diderot. Aggressively manipulative seducers, such as those found in *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, will also be highlighted in an effort to compare the behavioral differences inherent to the division between the rapist and the seducer.<sup>19</sup> Once the primary characteristics of these predecessors have been outlined, I will be able to differentiate the Sadian sexual predator, to delineate the differences that exist between it and past manifestations of predatory characters, and to examine the importance of these differences.

In order to achieve this distancing, it is first necessary to establish a baseline of behaviors that are performed by both the rapists and the seducers with the intent of comparing them with those of the Sadian predator. Once this baseline has been established, it will become possible to identify an escalation in the ferocity of sexual predation as found in the Sadian corpus; the path of this escalation can be traced by focusing not only on the actions of the predators but also on their education. Through these comparisons, the Sadian sexual predator will be proven to exist at the apex of predatory behavior; the incline shown in this chapter will be encapsulated in the

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<sup>19</sup> Just as the Sadian sexual predator is difficult to classify, the characters of Valmont and Merteuil in *Les Liaisons dangereuses* are far from being a simple caricature of the seducer. Like Sade's predators, they display many of the traits associated with the seducer, such as forethought, beauty, and intelligence, at an elevated level.

conclusion of this project by its decline and its eventual impact on the understanding of gender and sex in the years that follow.

Characters that display predatory behavior have always existed in both oral and written storytelling but are especially present in didactic tales; for example the crafty fox who tricks the raven into dropping his chunk of cheese in La Fontaine's "Le Corbeau et le Renard" (1668) is not so different from the wolf in Charles Perrault's "Le Petit Chaperon Rouge" (1697) or even from Choderlos de Laclos' Valmont in *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782). These characters share a common desire to take by trickery or by force the belongings of a weaker party. When the predator's object of desire becomes sexual, he or she seeks to take an object of sexual value from another character, whose vulnerability is made textually explicit by the author; be it virginity, morality, sexual purity, or simply the power of choice. These types of characters will eventually merge into a single archetypical character, that of the Sadian sexual predator, that will combine the sexual and intellectual drives of the stronger character in order to take a given sexual object from the weaker character.<sup>20</sup> The pre-Sadian characters can be widely divided into two main groups: the rapist and the seducer.<sup>21</sup>

Rape is the simplest and most commonly introduced component of sexual predation, presumably because it is a violent act of strength that any man is supposed to be able to inflict

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<sup>20</sup> Although, I posit that the Sadian sexual predator was deeply intertwined with the time period in which it was created; the governmental and religious turmoil that surrounded the French Revolution opened a door to Sade's creation.

<sup>21</sup> The distinction between seducer and rapist seems as if it would have been unclear at the time, especially because the rapist was rarely an altogether "bad" character but often rather a character carried away by his temporary passions. It might seem that the perverse could be considered as a third category but I posit that in pre-Sadian terms the actions of both rapists and seducers would be considered morally perverse.

upon any woman.<sup>22</sup> It requires no particular level of intellect or skill from the offender and is thus traditionally an act definable by sexual difference, by the ability of one sex to perform it upon the other. The term “rapist,” and the semiotic content evoked by the literal and figurative signifier of the term, as it is anachronistically and later synchronically applied to literary characters, is unquestionably bound to the origin and semantic content of the word rape. Rape is defined in the following ways:<sup>23</sup> *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* maintains a consistent definition from its first edition in 1694 to its eighth in 1932-35, originally defining rape as “Violence qu’on fait à une femme qu’on prend par force” and editing this to include “une fille ou une femme” in the fourth edition in 1762. Interestingly, none of these definitions goes so far as to specify that the violence done to the woman or girl is of a sexual nature. They do, however, note that the woman is “taken by force” which leads the reader to a sexual connotation. Interestingly, the expansion of the definition only serves to concretize the marking of the victim as female. Kathryn Gravdal helps to explain the chronological specificities of the term in her book *Ravishing Maidens*: “as early as 1155, the Latin *raptus* in the sense of abduction brings about the shift toward a sexual meaning: *rap* (1155) or *rat* (1235) designates abduction by violence or by seduction, for the purposes of forced coitus” (4). The term rapist or *violeur* is not

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<sup>22</sup> While the modern definitions of rape are far less sexually bound, the male/female dichotomy is markedly present in these earlier examples.

<sup>23</sup> The distinction between seducer and rapist seems as if it would have been unclear at the time. Especially because the rapist was rarely an altogether “bad” character but often rather a character carried away by his temporary passions. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as “the act of taking anything by force,” “the act of carrying away a person, esp. a woman, by force,” and “the violation or ravishing of a woman. Also in mod. usage, sexual assault upon a man” (OED). In the Merriam Webster Dictionary, it is “the crime, committed by a man, of forcing another person to have sexual intercourse with him without their consent and against their will, esp. by the threat or use of violence against them” (MW). And the Random House Unabridged Dictionary gives the following definitions: “the unlawful compelling of a woman through physical force or duress to have sexual intercourse,” “any act of sexual intercourse that is forced upon a person,” and “an act of plunder, violent seizure, or abuse; despoliation; violation” (Dictionary).

recorded until the 1872-77 edition of the *Émile Littré: Dictionnaire de la langue française*. The modern definition from *Larousse*, “rapport sexuel imposé à une personne sans son consentement,” illustrates how this definition has changed, however, by specifying the sexual nature of the act and also doing away with the gender binary. Interestingly, Sade's characters are far less bound by the typical male/female dichotomy of rape than the contemporaneous definitions suggest. While the degendering of rape becomes popularized long after the time of the Marquis de Sade, the effect is already present in his work. Both male and female characters are raped in Sade's universe, and both sexes play the role of rapist. Women sometimes employ *un godemiché*, a dildo, but at other times are able to use their own bodies, as in the case of a woman with an enlarged clitoris.

The differences and slight evolutions presented in the above definitions evoke the majority of the characteristics that can be used to classify the literary character of the rapist. First, as evidenced by the primary definitions of rape seen above, the rapist was, until very recently, a man by default, which consequently results in the sexualization of the victim as implicitly female.<sup>24</sup> From a literary point of view, this assumption is confirmed by the editors of *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* in their introduction:

While we are nowhere claiming that only women are raped, it is generally agreed that the rapable body --even a man's-- is that one which is socially constructed as 'female' and in a position of weakness or ambiguity, able to be taken by force and objectified by those in power. (Robertson 4)

The rapist (the man) commits an act that is both hasty and violent against the victim (the

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<sup>24</sup> The Merriam Webster definition is the only one that consistently allows the sex of the victim to remain vague.



woman), that is simultaneously a physical violation and a public despoliation of her moral and sexual purity.<sup>25</sup> While the sexually bound roles of rape have been amended in modern times, as evidenced by the last definition in the Oxford English Dictionary, which specifies that the rape victim can be male, this alternative can only be considered in a Sadian or post-Sadian context.<sup>26</sup> While it cannot be denied that rape occurred outside of the boundaries of these definitions, one must consider that it most likely would not have been considered “viol.”<sup>27</sup> As seen in the definitions presented above, the gender-specific definition persisted well into the 20th century. The rapist should therefore be considered to be male, to be preying upon a female, to possess physical strength greater than that of his victim, and to be hasty or to have an uneven temper.<sup>28</sup> He is a character who acts out instinctually against the established roles of social (and sexual) decorum with little intellectual forethought and primarily physical motives. The pre-Sadian characteristics of the rapist can be reduced to the following: a hasty, violent, man who acts perversely against the social and sexual hierarchy defining the act of sex.

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<sup>25</sup> Haste is listed as one definition of rape in the OED and included in Gravdal’s book as a connotation that “is coupled with that of force” (4).

<sup>26</sup> The OED lists examples of this type of usage as being post-1970 in date.

<sup>27</sup> As Diane Wolfthal points out: Not only testimony concerning the victim's outcry, but also evidence relating to the victim's appearance was required in court. Courts demanded that the victim show torn clothes and disheveled hair. For example, [Henry de] Bracton's law required that the rape victim produce "her torn garments." As early as 730-744, the Lex Baiuvariorum specified that a rape victim must show fluttering hair ("flatterndem haar") and torn clothes ("zerriBnem gebend"). (44) If a factor as trivial as the lack of disheveled hair was sufficient to annul the charge of rape, the definition of the act itself must be considered in a more transitory fashion. Rape is only rape if the act is confirmable by a set of signs that conform to culturally and socially accepted ideas about its nature. Thus, those rapes that fall outside of the commonly held definition cannot be considered rape at all. The sex roles and violence associated with the rapist are also confirmed by Wolfthal when one considers the importance of the disheveled hair and ripped garments and their female affiliation (Bracton refers to them as “her” garments).

<sup>28</sup> The rape of Ganymede and, in turn, the Ancient Greek tradition of pederasty represent a different relationship to the gender bound roles of rapist and victim. However, the initiatory/educative form of pederasty practiced by the men of Ancient Greece does not carry over into the medieval period in France.

Contrary to the sexual facility of rape, the act of seduction requires a level of physical attractiveness and of skill, because appearance and the ability to use language allows the seducer to avoid the physical confrontation of rape. Although the pre-Sadian representations of seduction are predominantly committed by men, the act itself is not as tightly bound, sexually speaking, as rape has been. As can be seen in the following definitions, semantically, the verb “séduire” does not always contain sexual markers in the modern context; although it is founded, like rape, on a sexual division, it is a more pliable and permeable division than that of rape, as evidenced by its early change from being marked by a gender binary to being gender neutral and including moral, rather than simply physical, implications:<sup>29</sup> in 1606, *Jean Nicot* in *Le Thresor de la langue francoyse* defines *séduire* as “s’efforcer de seduire une fille.” As early as 1694, in the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, this definition had already been amended to “tromper, abuser, faire tomber dans l’erreur” or “corrompre, desbaucher.” This gender-neutral definition persists into modern day French. It is also important that the earliest definition is the most concrete, while the later definitions involve socio-religious issues such as moral corruption. The lack of gender specificity reveals that the major difference between the rapist and the seducer relies on the fact that rape is a physical act of force inflicted by one body on another, while seduction is an intellectual process of manipulation requiring forethought and skill.

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<sup>29</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb to seduce as both “to lead (a person) astray in conduct or belief; to draw away from the right or intended course of action to or into a wrong one; to tempt, entice, or beguile to do something wrong, foolish, or unintended” and “To induce (a woman) to surrender her chastity” (OED). One can pinpoint here both a specific, sexually bound definition of the word and a more popular asexual definition. The Merriam Webster Dictionary provides first “attract (someone) to a belief or into a course of action that is inadvisable or foolhardy” and secondly “entice into sexual activity” (MW). Finally in the Random House Unabridged Dictionary, one finds a third variation of this dual definition: “to lead astray, as from duty, rectitude, or the like; corrupt” and “to persuade or induce to have sexual intercourse” (Dictionary). Interestingly neither of the latter two sources provides a sexually defined interpretation of the word, despite the fact that the definition in the OED that binds the male to the role of seducer and the woman to the role of victim is exemplified as persisting as late as 1789.

While many literary scenes demonstrating seduction have been categorized as rape, the establishment of a marked difference between the two is imperative to the establishment of a separate set of characteristics that will help to define the Sadian sexual predator. From the above definitions, it is evident that, as opposed to the impulsive and hasty nature of rape, seduction is an act which requires forethought and planning: the seducer must first weigh the difference between right and wrong and follow this decision with a strategy of how best to sway the inclinations of the one being seduced. (This is not to say that these premeditations must be made far in advance of the act itself, because they are often practiced and engrained features of the seducer's character. The greater his facility in seduction, the faster these premeditations can be made.) Where rape can be said to be out of character for the rapist, who falls victim to his own compulsions in a moment of passion, seduction is inherent to the everyday character of the seducer. Similarly, the rapist physically despoils his victim and outwardly disparages her morals, but in no way does he damage her inner desire for morality. On the other hand, the seducer corrupts his victim by transposing his own desire to the other, tempting the victim to "do something wrong" (OED). As Patricia Francis Cholakian describes it in her book *Rape and Writing in the Heptameron*, "in seduction the moral onus falls on the victim who has presumably chosen (after having been persuaded) to have sexual intercourse of her own free will; in rape, on the other hand, the guilt is the rapist's, who has deprived her of her right of free choice" (117). This enticement away from sanctity and toward corruption (as it is represented by sex), is the point of difference between the rapist and the seducer. The seducer is a rapist of the mind and soul who goes beyond a mere physical violation of the victim with the intent of lowering his or her moral standards in order to acquire sexual satisfaction.

In an attempt to define the differences between the sexual predator and the rapist or the seducer, it is evident that neither rapist nor seducer alone suffices to capture the essence of the Sadian sexual predator. It is thus a hybridization of the two terms and archetypes that form a more just definition of the sexual predator. Most interestingly, the collapse of these two terms into the definition of the sexual predator is not a reductive process, instead it expands upon the power of both words to define a larger character than either could alone. Rather than combining to create an inferior characterization, the two terms combine to define a character that is larger, both physically and intellectually more powerful, than either the rapist or the seducer could be on his own. This semantic approach is a preliminary indicator of the diachronic incline, at times gradual and at others severe, towards the archetype of the sexual predator, which reaches a high point at the moment of its creation with the freedom, intellect, and power accorded to the Sadian sexual predator.

Examples of the character of the rapist and the seducer in pre-Sadian literature appear frequently within each century and allow for a comparative analysis of their traits and actions. Through a synchronic examination of literary rapists and seducers within each century, it becomes possible to identify the ebb and flow towards the eventual increase in their frequency and the ferocity of their acts from a diachronic standpoint.

The troping of rape in French literature stretches back to the beginning of textual production but finds a niche in the 12th century, where it occurs commonly in multiple genres. The *fabliaux* and the works of Chrétien de Troyes and of Marie de France demonstrate the importance of rape in French literature in an overt, though rarely a sexually explicit, way, albeit with different perspectives on the act and varying descriptions of the transgressor. As my

examples will reveal, the character of the rapist and his gentler counterpart the cad, both staples in the courtly tales and the romances of medieval French literature, are certainly precursors to the sexual predator, since they physically or mentally apply pressure to the victim via her sexuality, but the sexual act often remains implied or metaphorical.<sup>30</sup> Contrarily, the *fabliaux* often present more outright descriptions of sex, but in a much more comical format. Despite being a popular trope in the medieval genres of courtly literature and romances, rape walks a fine line between presence and absence: it is an ever present threat to the sanctity of the woman's body, but it can only be represented in an oblique or metaphorical manner if it is to circulate without reprobation. This open invisibility may be one of the reasons why the majority of the critical focus on rape and seduction in the literature of the middle ages largely concentrates almost exclusively on the victim, presenting only an abstract portrait of the rapist (or adding an act that is wholly out of character to a pre-established, good-natured character within the existent narration) and generally either with a punitive undercurrent of religiosity or as a humorous punch-line. The implicit nature of rape in the middle ages results in an incomplete representation of rape; the rape is often either prevented at the last minute or, if carried out, then with no explicit details revealed to the audience. In other cases, the rape is more evident, but only under the guise of comedy.

The then popular concept of *fin'amors*, which appeared in the 11th century and flourished throughout the Middle Ages, acted both as an opponent and an unwilling advocate for the commission of rape by creating an idealistic environment of fidelity to and idolization of women, while at the same time providing little or no sexual outlet for the young knight. Dr. Debora B. Schwarz synthesizes the situation in the following way:

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<sup>30</sup> I use "she" in this context because of the tight relationship of the sexual dichotomy during this period. "He" is the aggressor and "she" is the victim.

Social historians such as Eric Köhler and Georges Duby have hypothesized that "courtly love" may have served a useful social purpose: providing a model of behavior for a class of unmarried young men that might otherwise have threatened social stability. Knights were typically younger brothers without land of their own (hence unable to support a wife) who became members of the household of the feudal lords whom they served. One reason why the lady in the courtly love relationship is typically older, married and of higher social status than the knight may be because she was modeled on the wife of the feudal lord, who might naturally become the focus of the young, unmarried knights' desire. Köhler and Duby posit that the literary model of the courtly love relationship may have been invented in part to provide these young men with a model for appropriate behavior, teaching them to sublimate their desires and to channel their energy into socially useful behavior (love service rather than wandering around the countryside, stealing or raping women like the knight in the "Wife of Bath's" tale).

(Backgrounds)

While this model may have been instituted with the intent of bettering male behavior, it could also have had the opposite effect. Because the female object of lust is most often unattainable, due to her inevitable superior social class or her marital status, the man is left to struggle with the gap between courtly love and Christian reality. He sees the noblewoman as desirable, but lofty and untouchable, while the average woman is socially and sexually beneath him, according to Christian patriarchal society. This conflict creates an environment in which rape can flourish, because it encourages sexual frustration in regards to the upper class, "untouchable" women,

while giving the young man less respect for and more access to women of the lower classes. One can also extract from this description that the rapist is most generally described as a model person outside of the isolated incidences of rape. It is even suggested by Gravdal that in the Arthurian romances the rape of the maiden may be yet another trial in the *bildungsroman* of the boy, transforming himself into the knight, a manly, medieval rite of passage. When one considers such a situation in comparison with the advice to the reader presented at the beginning of this chapter, it becomes clear that Sade was advocating for the polar opposite of the situation that Gravdal describes. His characters are no less violent, but this violence comes not from extreme sexual repression, but instead from complete mental and physical freedom. While the text is still didactic, the teachings are highly divergent. The redirection of lustful behavior into "useful," socially beneficial behavior is completely contrary to the Sadian principles of pleasure fulfillment.

Rape in medieval literature can be divided into three categories: attempted but failed, completed but implicitly represented, and completed and explicitly represented. Each of these categories serves to reinforce the qualities identified in the definition of rape, but because rape is difficult to represent explicitly in an environment that falls under the control of the Church, however, it can be challenging to target acts that represent rape and even more, so to pin down those characteristics of the rapist that define him as a rapist.

The attempted but failed rapist is often a minor character compared to the victim of the intended act. In "Guigemar," one of the *Lais* written by Marie de France (late 12th century), Lord Mériaduc is defined primarily by his hostility towards Guigemar, for he is known only as the lord against whom Guigemar does battle. When the queen refuses his advances and shows

him her chastity belt, Mériaduc is described as “furieux,” and this anger causes him to lash out physically at the queen; until this point, he has only made verbal advances toward the victim whereas her refusal incites a strong physical response. When the queen faints, Mériaduc attempts to take advantage of her: "Il la reçut entre ses braz. De sun blialt trencha les laz; la ceinture voleit ovrir, mes n'en poeit a chief venir" (62).<sup>31</sup> Despite this lack of overt character description, his attempted rape of the queen, Guigemar’s lover, still conforms to the definition by focusing on the violence of the act, the cutting off of the queen’s clothes and attempted removal of her chastity belt.<sup>32</sup> Mériaduc’s role in the text is that of the attacker, even though the attack is avoided and decorum is upheld.

An allusion to rape can also be found in Chrétien de Troyes’ *Le Conte du Graal* (circa 1181-91); Perceval, the young man on his way to becoming a knight, stumbles upon a beautiful woman in a tent and proceeds to violate her. The extent of this violation is not made entirely clear by the text because while Perceval requests only *un baiser* from the demoiselle, the victim’s resistance, the metaphorical implications of Perceval stealing her *anneau*, and the harsh punishment she receives from her companion upon his return, all indicate a much more serious violation than that of a stolen kiss (Troyes 71). Taking into consideration the hasty, out of

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<sup>31</sup> Modern French translation by Harf-Lancner: "Mériaduc la reçoit dans ses bras et coupe les lacets de sa robe; il voulait ouvrir la ceinture, mais en vain" (63).

<sup>32</sup> While no actual act of rape occurs in this scene, the attempt to remove the Queen’s chastity belt could serve no other purpose than to increase her vulnerability to Lord Mériaduc’s physical desires.



character, physical response of Perceval and the tattered appearance of the *demoiselle* following the encounter, this act fits the definition of rape almost perfectly.<sup>33</sup>

In the *fabliaux*, popularized in the 13th century, sex is often presented in a more overt manner, but this transparency is offset by the comic quality of the work. For example, in Guèrin's *Le Prestre qui abevete*, a priest peeks through a hole at the home of his lover and sees her eating next to her husband. He accuses them of having sex and convinces the husband to switch places with him and to look through the hole himself. The priest penetrates the wife as the husband watches, but convinces him that it is simply an optical illusion created by the peep hole. While this forced sexual encounter does present a woman being unwillingly penetrated by the priest, it is done with such a bawdy and comical tone that it is not taken seriously as an act of rape. Likewise, in *Le Roman de Renart*, the crafty fox commits a somewhat more explicitly

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<sup>33</sup> When Perceval discovers the *demoiselle*, she is in a vulnerable position, a position of weakness; Perceval “voit une demoiselle endormie qui y était, toute seule couchée. Sa compagnie était au loin. Ses suivantes sont allées cueillir les petites fleurs du printemps pour en joncher le sol de la tente” (69). In addition to her lack of protection, Troyes describes the fearful reaction that the knight's arrival has on the *demoiselle* upon awakening: “La jeune femme tremble de peur à la vue du jeune homme, elle le prend pour un fou” (69). When the *demoiselle* refuses him a kiss, Perceval commits an act of violent constraint against the young woman; “Le jeune homme avait les bras solides, il l'a prise dans ses bras non sans gaucherie, car il ne savait pas s'y prendre autrement. Il l'a renversée sous lui, elle s'est bien défendu, elle s'est dégagée tant qu'elle a pu, mais c'était peine perdue!” (71). The text reveals that he then kisses her twenty some times before noticing the ring on her finger and trying to take it. This theft could metaphorically represent the taking of the *demoiselle*'s virginity; when Perceval asks for the ring, the *demoiselle* outright refuses, telling him that he will have to take it by force if he is to have it. In an effort to pry the ring from her finger, Perceval grabs her wrist (“Le jeune homme lui saisit le poignet”) and forcefully removes the ring only to place it on his own finger. In “‘A Hue and a Cry’: Medieval Rape Imagery and Its Transformation,” Diane Wolfthal explains that because the forcefulness of rape and the resistance of the woman were difficult to depict in images, the prevalent image of the man grasping the woman's wrist was an indication of force and was used commonly in the illuminations of medieval texts to illustrate rape. The *demoiselle* also warns Perceval that if he does not return her ring, her *ami* will be angry and will eventually kill Perceval. The idea that the loss of the ring bears greater importance than the forced kisses indicates that the ring is more than a simple object to both the *demoiselle* and her *ami*. After stealing the ring, Perceval is famished and gorges himself to recuperate his forces. His extreme hunger seems to indicate that he has committed a more vigorous act than simply kissing the *demoiselle*, and the act of comestible consumption is often linked the act of sex. Finally, the punishment inflicted upon the *demoiselle* by her *ami* is quite severe. She is not allowed to feed or care for her horse or to change her own clothes. This punishment leads to the bedraggled condition of the *demoiselle* when she reappears later in the romance wearing tattered and torn clothing. Ripped clothing is also noted in Wolfthal's article as being an indicator of rape (34).

described act of rape.<sup>34</sup> After Hersent, the female wolf, becomes trapped head-first in a burrow, Renart circles around behind her and takes advantage of her susceptible position to rape her. It is clear to the reader that this is a forced act and in no way a seduction (as is seen in an earlier encounter between Renart and Hersent). It is not coincidental that this more explicit encounter takes place in an anthropomorphic universe, concretized by the animalization of the protagonists, rather than in a human universe. What better way to present an act as bestial than to show it being performed by actual beasts?

The purpose of these examples is to demonstrate both difference and similarity in the rape scenes of the Middle Ages. It is true that the rapist is presented with varying degrees of clarity and sexual explicitness, but these differences are also an important marker of the fact that rape is either largely opaque in this period or contrarily so transparent as to be farcical. These examples provide three portraits of the rapist, but the reader is presented with a rape that is not a rape and a rapist that is not ordinarily a rapist. One is left with the impression that the rapist, in human form anyway, has committed a transgression that is out of character for his typical self, that has overcome his normally strong moral and social constraints, or in the case of the fabliaux that the rape is not to be taken seriously and that the rapist in turn is nothing but a joke. One reason for this “undefined” character could be precisely that the rapist is otherwise a positive, sometimes even noble, person within the text. Thus, the characteristics that are prevalent in the examples of rape from this period are those that are typically out of character, making the rapist himself much more difficult to define than the rape. The characteristics of the rapist are

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<sup>34</sup> *Le Roman de Renart* exists in many incarnations and in many languages. Pierre de Saint-Cloud produced a version of the story circa 1170, but the story itself would have been widely known during the 12th and 13th Centuries. Proof of its wide distribution and importance lies in the fact that the character’s name (Renart - with varying spelling at the time) replaced the word *goupil* in French as the word for fox.

therefore consistent with those in the definitions provided, because the aspect of sexually bound behavior is unquestionable in the medieval text, as all of the rapists are men, while the hastiness and violence of the act are underlined by the divide between the rapist's typical behavior and his behavior during the rape.

Contrary to rape, seduction is a blatant and persistent motif that appears throughout medieval literature. For all of the opaqueness surrounding rape, seduction and the seducer remain consistently transparent. The undesirable nature of the act of seduction allows for its full exposure in the text as a means of instruction: the woman must learn how to avoid the seducer's advances and to protect herself from his corrupting influence. The *pastourelle* for instance, common to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, often includes a scene of seduction between a knight and a shepherd girl. Charles Fantazzi defines the genre:

In essence, the *pastourelle* is the verbal confrontation of a man and a woman of widely separated classes in a sylvan setting. The love debate, *tenso*, or *contrastio* is common to all medieval literature, but the sharp facing off of two unequal partners is nowhere put to better advantage than in this genre . . . . The debate in the *pastourelle* hinges upon the ancient Greek antinomy of *physis* versus *nomos*, nature versus convention, reality versus illusion. The knight with all his courtly finesse and sophisticated linguistic armament is confronted with the simplicity and common sense of the shepherdess. (389-90)

A parallel can certainly be drawn between this concept and the dichotomy presented in Sade. Taken to much more violent and sexually explicit ends, Sade's quandary is relatively similar: a debate between the sexual instinct and the societal conventions of the time. The difference to be

brought forth in this case is that the *pastourelle* is presenting this as a two sided debate, whereas Sade depicts characters struggling with an internal dilemma, because while they may try to persuade other characters to join them in vice, they are always free to take the object of their desire and are never subjected to regret or remorse for their actions. In one example attributed to Thibaut de Champagne, a knight stumbles upon a shepherdess of fifteen, and despite her objections, attempts to seduce her. As noted, the knight begins the seduction verbally, but when his preliminary attempts are refused, he thinks to himself:

Quant je la vi esfreer // Si durement // Qu'el ne mi daigne esgarder // Ne fere autre  
senblant, // Lors conmençai a penser // Confaitement // Ele me porroit amer // Et changier  
son talent. // A terre lez li m'assis; // Quant plus regart son cler vis, // Tant est plus mes  
cuers espris, // Qui double mon talent.<sup>35</sup> (Champagne)

When his attempts fail, he decides to scoop her up and spirit her away towards the woods, only to be scared off by two approaching shepherds, and he closes the poem insisting that he had done no wrong to the girl.<sup>36</sup> Through this example, the act of seduction is a bending of wills, a desire of one party not shared by the other, unless of course the first party is successful in his efforts. The characteristics exemplified by the seducer in this poem conform to those seen in the definition, but the efforts he puts forth are relatively tame. His seduction is primarily verbal, and only when he resorts to the idea of carrying the shepherdess off into the woods, alluding to rape,

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<sup>35</sup> English Translation taken from poemhunter.com (<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/pastourelle/>).  
“When I saw that she was scared // So thoroughly // That she wouldn't look at me // Or give any other positive sign, // Then I began to think // How to make her // Fall in love with me // And change her mind. // I sat down on the ground beside her, // And the more I looked upon her bright face, // The more it fired my heart, // Which doubled my desire.”

<sup>36</sup> As was noted earlier, the definition of rape at the time period also included the notion of being carried away by the man (the verb *ravir* meaning to kidnap or carry-off).. It seems that this character could be described as having the intention to rape the shepherdess but that his plot is unsuccessful.

does he resort to physicality. As seen from the evidence presented on rape, the physical act had to be well-documented in order for punishment to be brought upon the transgressor. It seems that seduction was a “free” crime from the point of view of punishment. Thus, the man was not punished for his efforts at seduction, as long as they did not include physical force, and he chose to resort to carrying off the woman only when he became so frustrated with his efforts at seduction that he was overcome with desire.

While the seducer and the rapist both play important roles in medieval literature, the entire situation is dealt with more as a standard literary plot than as an actual sexual affront. Both characters seem to exemplify the tension between the idea of courtly love and the practicalities of everyday existence. More often than not, the dénouement of the tension between rapist and victim or seducer and desired revolves around the conflict created between the actual desire of the individual and the conventions that surround him. In the example of the *pastourelle*, class difference played a large role in these societal constraints.<sup>37</sup> The knight himself remarks near the end of the poem that he does not like these sort of people, referring to the shepherds. The origin of the situation that will provoke much of Sade’s work is evident here: the tension between desire and constraint. The examples from medieval literature give a much more tempered vision of this disparity and seem to divide the focus amongst two characters rather than focusing on the internal strife as Sade will, but they do provide a breeding ground for the religious and social values that will later come to bear on the author and his work. The crux of the difference between Sade’s predator and both the rapist and the seducer as presented in medieval literature lies not within the act but within this lack of conflict. Both the rapist and the

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<sup>37</sup> “Deus pastors parmi un blé / Qui venoient huiant / Et leverent un haut cri. / Assez fis plus que ne di; / Je la les, si m’en foi / N’oi cure de tel gent” (Champagne).

seducer struggle with the conflict between the satiation of a desire that will bring pleasure and the constraint of social and civil boundaries. The Sadian sexual predator reveals no consideration for internal strife. Sade's predators do not consider the social or civil repercussions of their actions (unless danger is imminent and self-preservation is necessary) nor do they show remorse. The good of society is held in much higher regard than that of the individual in Medieval literature while the opposite holds true in the Sadian universe.

The difference between rape and seduction as they are represented in the majority of the Medieval texts and as they are portrayed in Renaissance texts is not extreme in that the themes of man's bestiality, sexual tension between classes and the methodology of the art of seduction are carried through into the new century. The areas of difference lie primarily in the framework surrounding the act and to a certain extent in the depiction of the acts themselves. The portrayal of the rapist as he was seen in the middle ages is not greatly changed, but does begin to be more detailed and more frequent as is shown by the slight shift in focus from the victim to the transgressor. For example, Marguerite de Navarre has interwoven the motif of rape into *L'Heptaméron* (1558), her regrouping of didactic tales, with the effect of representing the rapist as a bestial and uncontrolled being. While this bestiality aligns with the portrayal presented in the medieval texts, it proves to be more of a character trait than an aberration in the behavior of an otherwise gentlemanly character. Although this work does deal more openly with both rape and seduction, it could not be described as sexually explicit. The reader is thus left to imagine the majority of the sexual details while still being provided a more detailed portrait of the transgressor. Seduction on the other hand is mocked openly in Rabelais' *Pantagruel* (1532) as the author reveals an in-depth description of the seducer in a much bawdier context.

*L'Heptaméron*, a primary example of both the short story and the frame tale, contains several stories which deal with rape and seduction. In the second story of the first day, told by Madame Oisille, “Une muletière d’Amboise aima mieux cruellement mourir de la main de son valet, que de consentir à sa méchante volonté” (9). The valet professes his love to the mule-driver’s wife and she threatens to have him beaten and run-off by her husband. One night, full of repressed sexual desire, the valet breaks through the wall between his bedroom and that of the mule-driver's wife with the intent to rape her. Being unable to catch and subdue her because she fights desperately for her virtue, he ends up murdering her. Marguerite de Navarre describes the valet in the following way: “Mais lui, qui n’avait qu’amour bestial, eut plutôt entendu le langage des mulets que ses honnêtes raisons, et se montra plus bestial que les bêtes avec lesquelles il vivait” (10). The insistence on the bestial nature of the man in this quote reinforces the definition of the rapist as it was projected during the Middle Ages by presenting a man attempting to "abduct" a woman by taking control of her body with the purpose of forced intercourse. However, in the fifth story of the same day, two monks are duped by the woman they try to rape. They are first described in bestial terms: “deux loups enragés” (30). However, their reaction to the possibility of being caught and imprisoned reveals a much different side of the monks: “La honte mit leur péché devant leurs yeux, et la crainte d’être punis les faisait trembler si fort, qu’ils étaient demi-morts” (30). This behavior might seem to be in accord with the rapist who commits an act which is simply out of character, but the author reveals that the two men “délibérèrent pour la prendre de force” meaning that the decision to commit the physical act was intellectual rather than instinctual. This distinction shows the rapist less as a victim of his own self-control and more as an immoral being consciously willing to go against

religious and social regulations; in this case, the implication is even stronger because the two men are monks. In comparing this behavior to the original definitions taken into account here, the marked difference is that of “intellectual forethought.” These rapists were not entirely “hasty” in their proposed act, but instead took the time to ponder the situation. This difference begins to show an intermingling of the rapist and the seducer, although it is still a far cry from Sade’s predators, who neither have nor show regret for their actions as these characters so clearly do. The Sadian sexual predator would also see these examples as opportunities missed. In the first example, the valet misses out on both the pleasure of committing the rape and the pleasure that he could have achieved in taking her life had he not been pushed into a thoughtless act by repressed sexual desire. In the second example, the monks allow themselves to be shamed for an act that carries no shame in Sade's narration. The disruption of pleasure is contrary to the principles that Sade espouses throughout his works and in the preface that introduced this chapter.

The descriptions of these sexual encounters are also somewhat more tangible in the Renaissance. The overall context of the storytelling in *L'Heptaméron* makes it difficult to interpret the less explicit descriptions in any way other than as sexual. The author frames the tales in such a way that within the stories recounted by the stranded traveling party the virtuous, and thus less sexually charged, characters are held in high esteem while the sexually challenging characters, rapists, seducers, and the promiscuous, are seen as unstable, violent, or conniving. The majority of the rapists and seducers in this text are male, but the solidity of the virtuous female/vicious male dichotomy does begin to be challenged through the act of seduction within the stories and of discourse within the frame of the tale. Although there is no hint of a female



rapist in the *L'Heptaméron*, there are women who begin to play the role of seducer. In the first story of day one, a woman uses sex to manipulate several men, as the description shows:

Dans laquelle la femme d'un procureur, après avoir été fort sollicitée par l'évêque de Sées, le prit pour son profit, et puis, non plus contente de lui que de son mari, parvint à obtenir pour son plaisir le fils du Lieutenant Général d'Alençon, qu'elle fit peu de temps après assassiner par son mari, lequel, bien qu'il eût obtenu rémission de ce meurtre, fut ensuite envoyé aux galères accompagné d'un sorcier nommé Galery, et le tout du seul fait de la perversité de sa femme. (7)

There is thus the possibility of the woman triumphing as something other than a virtuous innocent. During the interim there is often much discussion and disagreement about the actions of the character in the stories, hinting at a less Manicheanistic view of the situations presented. Cholakian describes the difficult situation of a pursued woman, "From a practical point of view, this distinction hinges on whether the woman experienced desire for intercourse before the rape or pleasure during it. In other words, in order to prove that she was raped, the victim is obliged to prove that she did not want to be raped" (117). The woman's desire to prevent her abuser from taking advantage of her led to a discussion between the stories in which the virtuosity of the woman and the culpability of the man were called into question. Simontault begins the conversation by pointing out the evils of the woman in his story: "regardez quel mal il vient d'une meschante femme, et combien de maux se feirent pour le peché de ceste-cy" (24). Oisille responds by searching her memory for "une dont la vertue puisse dementir sa mauvaise opinion" (25). While this remains a far cry from the gender mutability presented in Sade's texts, there is an opening here for the woman to play a role other than victim. A woman using her

sexuality with the intent to manipulate reveals how quickly the binary began to break down with regards to seduction.

In *Pantagruel* (1532), François Rabelais takes on the tradition of the seducer by mocking the qualities that typify the role. In a bawdy tone, Rabelais recounts Panurge's efforts to seduce the "haulte dame de Paris" and the revenge that he enacts upon her when she refuses his advances. While humorous, this chapter does reveal a different attitude towards the typical characteristics of the seducer and simultaneously reinforces the existing definition. The necessity for an attractive seducer is transferred to the beautification of Panurge's *braguette*,<sup>38</sup> and in so doing, Rabelais moves seduction which is primarily focused on emotional rather than physical manipulation into an obvious attempt at sexual gratification. Panurge first attempts to convince the *haulte dame* with what he considers a persuasive argument and then escalates toward a more physical type of aggression: "Madame, il serait fort utile pour toute la république, agréable pour vous, honorable pour votre lignée et nécessaire pour moi, que vous soyez couverte de ma race; croyez-le, car l'expérience vous le démontrera" (433). Thus, like all seducers, Panurge attempts to sway her away from her morality,<sup>39</sup> but unlike the typical seducer, Panurge's argument is thinly veiled to the point of being crass. Rabelais is clearly mocking the traditionally suave banter of the seducer by distorting the nobility of the seducer through both a beastly countenance and harsher than usual language. The *haulte dame* rejects Panurge outright, and Rabelais reconstitutes the two typical reactions of the seducer in a single outlandish act. As Carla Freccero explains:

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<sup>38</sup> ". . . il [Panurge] faisait dès lors bien valoir sa braguette, et il fit moucheter le dessus de broderie à la mode romaine" (451).

<sup>39</sup> It is not inconsequential that this seduction takes place in a church and that Panurge strips the lady of her rosary. Both facts lead to a corruption of the lady's morality as well as to a physical violation.

Thus, in a combination parody of two genres, courtly love and the medieval *pastourelle* (a debate *cum* sexual assault often taking place between a knight and a humble shepherdess), Rabelais both critiques and restages the double bind of early modern sexual politics. . . . That Panurge enacts his revenge on the lady through the agency of dogs -- and commits the murder of a bitch in heat to do so -- demystifies the motives of seduction, revealing the barely concealed violence beneath the rhetoric of courtliness. (106)

Panurge's capturing and killing of a bitch in heat can be considered a conduit for his anger towards the lady, and his scenting the lady with the remains of the bitch an act of revenge. When the lady is then accosted by a pack of dogs on her way from the church, is urinated on by the dogs, and is forced to hide herself behind closed doors until the incident has dissipated. Rabelais writes:

Tout le monde se arrêtoit à ce spectacle, considérant les contenance de ces chiens qui lui montaient jusques au col, et lui gâtèrent tous ses beaux accoutrements. A quoi ne sut trouver aucun remède, sinon soi retirer en son hôtel. Et chiens d'aller après, et elle de se cacher, et chambrières de rire. (455)

Rabelais thus displays both the forced embarrassment often used to threaten the object of seduction into submission by cloistering the lady behind locked doors and also the physical violation of the man forcing himself upon her if one considers the pack of dogs as an extension of the seducer himself.<sup>40</sup> Rabelais' use of scatological language and content also increases the candidness of the sexual material: the dogs' urine is simply the replacement of one bodily fluid

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<sup>40</sup> Freccero also makes the connection between the male dogs and Panurge. She attributes his revenge through the dogs as the result of his damaged masculinity (106).

with another. This scene would seem to represent a far more Sadian situation, while the language is rougher, and the scatology is more outlandish, however, seduction for pure sexual gratification and the intermediary of the dogs would be completely unnecessary in the Sadian universe, because the predator is capable of taking what it wants in spite of a resistant target and without an intermediary. Rather than seduction for a single act of sexuality, the Sadian sexual predator would consume the unwilling victim without resorting to a physical stand-in, and would inculcate the prey with libertine ideals, only if he or she were deemed worthy of becoming a predator.

As sex becomes less veiled in the Renaissance, if only slightly, the rapists and seducers begin to take on a more substantial role in the literature of the period as they come to the forefront of the text. The victim is still often the focus of the work, however, as in Rabelais' text, but the aggressor can also be at the crux of the situation. In accordance with the more sexually revealing stories of the Middle Ages, such as the fabliaux, Rabelais' text accrues sexual leeway through the overall linguistic ambiguity and recurrent comedic episodes that are evident throughout the four novels. However, in the case of *Pantagruel*, Panurge comes out of the seduction unscathed, while the *haulte dame* becomes the butt of Rabelais' joke aimed at the amusement of the audience. The *haulte dame* is however not the only victim, as she also represents the traditional behaviors of seduction. In stark contrast to Rabelais' work, Marguerite de Navarre manages to broach sexual politics while maintaining a serious tone for the majority of the tales and while also toeing the moral boundaries of her society. Prior to the Renaissance, rapists and seducers are primarily rubbing against the grain of society or are seen within such a comedic context that their actions provoke levity rather than animosity. The Renaissance, while

continuing these trends, brings the rapist and seducer closer to the forefront of the story and allows an occasional glance into their decision-making process, which serves to concretize the two characters and to refocus the reader's viewpoint. It is also important to note that while the texts of the Renaissance may push the boundaries of religiosity further than those of the Middle Ages, both Rabelais and Marguerite de Navarre protect themselves and their works by writing either within a moralistic context or with language that is malleable enough to carry an innocuous overt meaning. By contrast, the 18th century will build to a climax with Sade's utter rejection of both social, civil, and religious constraint and a refusal to temper his language or the sexual ferocity of his narrative universe.

The 17th century, marked by a return to classicism and, thus, an undulation in the progress of the evolution of the sexual predator, is both a setback to the ability of the author to present sex within the text and simultaneously a catalyst for this same ability. Being the century of *l'honnête homme*, *les bienséances*, and *le roman pastourelle*, the 17th century brought a tightening of religious and moral standards and a return to the classical Roman and Greek works that led to a quarrel about the quality of modern literary works and a certain level of contempt for what were deemed as the moral shortcomings of the people. As Joan DeJean explains:

From terms that, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, were considered inoffensive enough *to the audience for which these collections* [bawdy anthologies] *were intended* that they could be printed with only the most minimal of veils, these words became, before the century's end, totally unprintable -- except, that is, in works certain to be immediately pursued by censorship. (35)

This restriction of language reveals the overall tightening of religious and cultural constraints

surrounding sex. The examples of rapists and seducers in this century are far more difficult to isolate, although they are brought forward in some of the better known works from the period. The seducer makes his appearance both in Molière's *Dom Juan* (1663) and in d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* (1607-25), but the moralistic pressure is so intense that while these characters can all be deemed seducers, the texts and characters are otherwise very different.

The Don Juan character has maintained its role as an exemplar of seduction all the way from its creation through modern literature. In Molière's *Dom Juan* however, the role was written and played in a way that influences the shape of the character for centuries to come. Molière's *Dom Juan* focuses far more on language than on sexual prowess, and thus the character has changed to portray a man whose linguistic prowess carries great influence with prospective women. The orality of seduction comes to the forefront in Molière's text, which is in part due to the cleverness of the writer's wit, but also to the conservative trend of the time. For example, in this scene, Dom Juan seduces the young fiancée of a peasant:

Quoi? une personne comme vous serait la femme d'un simple paysan! Non, non: c'est profaner tant de beautés, et vous n'êtes pas née pour demeurer dans un village. Vous méritez sans doute une meilleure fortune, et le Ciel, qui le connaît bien, m'a conduit ici tout exprès pour empêcher ce mariage, et rendre justice à vos charmes; car enfin, belle Charlotte, je vous aime de tout mon cœur, et il ne tiendra qu'à vous que je vous arrache de ce misérable lieu, et ne vous mette dans l'état où vous méritez d'être. Cet amour est bien prompt sans doute; mais quoi? c'est un effet, Charlotte, de votre grande beauté, et l'on vous aime autant en un quart d'heure, qu'on ferait une autre en six mois. (2.2)

Dom Juan not only complements her beauty but attempts to persuade her of his honest intentions

by discrediting her fears. He also implies that their union is sanctioned by God by convincing her that divine intervention had sent him to prevent her marriage to the peasant and, in so doing, uses her faith against her. Dom Juan uses his intelligence to anticipate her concerns and speak directly to the precipitousness of his love before she can even voice this question. Charlotte, flattered but unsure of Dom Juan's intentions, expresses her doubts but is eventually won over by the smooth and convincing reassurances of her seducer. Beryl Scholssman compares the seductive style of Molière's *Dom Juan* with that of his Spanish and Italian predecessors. Schlossman sets up the comparison by describing Tirso's *El Burlador*:

Tirso's graphic and occasionally lurid vocabulary of sexuality provides a startling contrast to *Dom Juan*. *El Burlador* confirms its direct visual mode with a similar violence on the level of language: the simultaneous unfolding of elaborately coded emblematics and an anti-euphemistic literalness about the body challenges the refined idiom of the courtier. (1033)

When describing Molière, Scholssman calls him "oblique" and insists that:

Between Tirso and Molière, a major rhetorical shift has taken place. Its effects on *Dom Juan* are articulated in the relation between eroticism and poetic language, and in the new importance of aesthetics within the play. . . . Molière's reshaping of the tradition into a vehicle for an oblique portrayal of desire and an emphasis on rhetoric makes Dom Juan a stylist. (1034)

Although Molière would not be considered particularly "classical" in comparison with other playwrights of the 17th century, the shift from erotic to rhetoric is exemplary of a major trend toward classicism and, thus, conservatism of the time. The seducer, while having always been

associated with linguistic prowess, becomes more articulate and more present in the literature of the 17th century. The rapist, on the other hand, is markedly absent from this century, as his penchant for physical violence conflicts with these new ideals.

*L'Astrée*, Honoré d'Urfé's expansive pastoral novel, presents the love story of Astrée and Céladon, although the dénouement of this central story line is interspersed with the tales of many secondary couples. Astrée's early rejection of Céladon leads him to attempt suicide but, while Astrée believes him dead, he is saved by Léonide and disguises himself as a woman to reestablish a relationship with Astrée. While much of *L'Astrée* is dedicated to the constancy of true love, one character in particular acts as a catalyst for inconstancy. Hylas, in this respect, serves as a foil to the shepherds who profess their love for a single woman. Gregorio describes him as: "the free-thinking Hylas, the only character of major stature who espouses and propagates a code of conduct thoroughly opposed to the socially accepted norm of constancy" (32). This description brings to the fore the important notion that neither rape nor seduction can be associated with true or long-lasting love. The hastiness of rape and the moral corruption associated with seduction distance these acts, and in turn those who commit them, from serving as the basis for a constant relationship. These characters, therefore, represent a challenge to the values of their respective time periods.

Hylas' role as the inconstant lover allows him to espouse a set of values that is similar to that of the seducer. It is also important to note that while Céladon puts his undying love for Astrée in writing, Hylas is skilled in manipulating oral language (Meding 1089-90). Singing verses about the downside of true love, Hylas first enters the text as an interruption of love singing the following lines:



Voyez les, ces amans fidelles, // Ils sont tousjours pleins de douleurs // Les  
souspirs, les regrets, les pleurs // Sont leurs contenance plus belles, // Et semble  
que pour estre amant, // Il faille plaindre seulement. // Celuy doit-il s'appeler  
homme, // Qui, l'honneur de l'homme etouffant, // Pleure tout ainsi qu'un  
enfant, // Pour la perte de quelque pomme ? // Ne faut-il plustost le nommer // Un  
fol qui croit de bien aymer ? (1.1)

These verses reveal Hylas as a counter example to the constant lovers in *L'Astrée*, but they also demean the virility of the man who allows himself to suffer for love. The disdain Hylas shows for love facilitates his ability to move from one lover to another. Meding explains:

. . . Hylas -- who has the singular merit of practicing the inconstancy he preaches and thus eliciting with ease the admiration and love of women -- deftly crafts sophistic paradoxes which support his prolonged beliefs. Moreover, this 'cunning, or cavilling disputer' engages in frequent verbal jousts against his enemy Silvandre, who defends steadfastly the courtly and Neoplatonist tenets of constant love which serve as the standard by which all lovers are judged in the Forez. (1089)

However, his inconstancy results in rejection by the women whom he does "love," so the text does not go so far as to support Hylas' non-normative stance on love.

Much like the importance of verbal acuity in Molière's *Dom Juan*, the ability to seduce in *L'Astrée* is linked to the word, both written and spoken. Seduction as an intellectual ability does reveal it as a powerful tool, for it affords the seducer the capacity to achieve his goal without taking on the moral responsibility for his actions. Although the seducer is committing a wrong,

the victim allows herself to be seduced into the commission of the immoral act, and this protective distance between words and actions that is created by language flourishes in the seventeenth century. Violent actions like rape, while certainly still present, would offend the rules of *bienséance* that come back into vogue during this period.

While the Middle Ages and Renaissance marked a slow but consistent ascent toward sexual predation, the 17th century is in some ways a slip backwards toward tamer depictions of sexuality. On the other hand, the shifting of focus from the rapist to the seducer is in itself a step towards a more intelligent sexual villain. Thus, in spite of a plateau in the progress of the graphic depiction of sex, the 17th century does continue to support the evolution of the sexual predator, in as much as the Sadian sexual predator must be defined through its intellectual and thus philosophical embrace of predation. However, it should also be noted that there is a difference between the sexual seduction of the 17th century and the qualities of seduction seen in the Sadian sexual predator. In the Sadian narration, there is no need to seduce another in the pursuit of sex: the one in power can simply take whatever sexual goods he or she desires in order to fulfill his or her pleasure. On the other hand, verbal seduction is extremely important in the Sadian universe. It is the means by which new predators can be brought into the fold of debauchery. The long philosophical discussions that take place in Sade's works are designed as intellectual seductions that serve to transform the virtuous into the vicious or, when they are unsuccessful, to increase the resistance of the victim, which serves to increase the pleasure of the predator.

Authors of the 18th century begin to broach the subject in a more straight-forward way, to write about sex instead of around it, and to question the sexual constraints put into place through

social expectations, slowly peeling away the layers of social decorum that had heretofore tempered the behavior of the rapist and seducer. Works such as Denis Diderot's *La Religieuse* (1796),<sup>41</sup> the anonymous *Thérèse philosophe* (1748),<sup>42</sup> Restif de la Bretonne's *Le Paysan pervers* (1775-6) and Laclos' *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782) all include sex as a syntagmatic element.<sup>43</sup> While certainly more tempered than the representations found in Sade's works, sex becomes part of the structural integrity of these texts rather than a veiled motif.<sup>44</sup> As will be shown in the following examples, where sex goes, the rapist and the seducer closely follow. It must be noted, however, that a drastic shift has taken place in terms of prevalence. The rapist makes a resurgence from his absence in the 17th century to play an important role in the literature of the 18th century, and the seducer's numbers have greatly expanded as he/she becomes a protagonist rather than a minor player. The century even plays host to Giacomo Casanova, one of the best known seducers in both history and literature.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Though published posthumously in 1796, *La Religieuse* was actually completed around 1780. It is not coincidental that this novel which criticizes the church and the social convention of sending young women to the convent, while presenting shocking sexual abuses within the convent system was not published until 16 years after its completion. The fact that Diderot, well-respected for his work creating *L'Encyclopédie*, left this novel to be published posthumously tells the modern reader much about the social construction of the time (a widespread and blind belief in religion, a powerful ecclesiastical influence, and in turn, a desire to force sex to conform to a moral and social code) and the evident contrast of Sade's views on the subject.

<sup>42</sup> This work has been popularly attributed to Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, the Marquis d'Argens.

<sup>43</sup> Syntagm in this case refers to Saussure's notions of syntagm and paradigm. The syntagm is a group of signs that work in relationship one to another in order to create meaning. Paradigm on the other hand refers to individual signs that can be replaced. The replacement of sex in any of the narrations mentioned would drastically alter the overall plot. See Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*.

<sup>44</sup> Prior to the eighteenth century, the sexual act remained largely a motif in mainstream literature. That is not to say that it was absent from or unimportant in the text but instead to point out that it was rarely used as the theme of a work.

<sup>45</sup> Casanova (1725-98) frequented the upper class and made a career of seducing women of the aristocracy before losing interest in one and moving on to the next. He is a real being who transformed himself into the archetype of the seducer by publishing his autobiography/memoirs.

Written by his own hand, *Mémoires: Histoire de ma vie* (1822)<sup>46</sup> immortalized Casanova and served only to condone his behavior rather than to condemn it. In retrospect, Casanova's life and later its literary reception marked a seachange.<sup>47</sup> The seduction and infidelity found in Casanova's *Mémoires* are certainly not specific to the 18th century, but the attitude surrounding these activities changed significantly between the end of the 17th century and the post-revolutionary period. There is no greater evidence of this change than Casanova's willingness to share the stories of his seductive behavior.<sup>48</sup> Casanova's *Mémoires* gives a frank account of the seducer's tactics and qualities, which were primarily embraced rather than rejected, except in those cases where he managed to seduce the wife of a powerful member of society. In short, his behavior was rebuked on personal grounds much more frequently than on societal or moral ones. The only reticence that Casanova admitted about publishing his memoirs came not from the fear of royal or ecclesiastical retribution, but instead from the knowledge that he might make enemies of those men whose wives he had seduced.<sup>49</sup>

Casanova's lack of remorse seems to relate rather well to the Sadian principles of predation, but there is far too much concern for the other in Casanova's behavior to place him squarely in the Sadian camp. The importance of seduction and, in turn, social decorum in

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<sup>46</sup> This is the date of the first partial publication. This German translation was the basis upon which the first highly censored French edition was based. The first full edition based on the original manuscript was not published until 1960.

<sup>47</sup> I cannot attribute this seachange to Casanova alone. It seems instead that his memoirs have served to immortalize behaviors that were prevalent among the aristocracy of the period. The upper class would have been ripe for seduction and infidelity when one considers that they married primarily for social status and connections rather than for love.

<sup>48</sup> While he replaces names with initials to maintain a level of anonymity amongst those he seduced, he does implicate himself.

<sup>49</sup> See Childs' biography *Casanova, A New Perspective*. Sentiment taken from a 1792 letter written by Casanova.

Casanova's conquests reveals a desire to preserve the social structure, a desire that the Sadian universe does not seem to support.

As Ted Emery argues, not only does Casanova play the role of seducer, but he himself is seduced by Bettina who reveals her own predatory nature in the process (279-80). There is already a marked progression toward evening out the gender binary in this depiction from the 18th century. It is significant that one of Casanova's earliest sexual experiences is that of being seduced by a more experienced woman. It evens the playing field of seduction and reveals a level of female sexual autonomy that is elevated from earlier centuries, mostly due to her physical aggression towards Casanova. The difference between Casanova, as his later behavior will reveal him, and Bettina being that Casanova is using his powers of seduction for sexual conquest while Bettina is moving through the sexual conquest, in order to gain personal power of a non-sexual nature. Nonetheless, the reader sees a female character in a much different light through this episode. She is powerful, aggressive, and overtly sexual. Interestingly, this example does show a blending of verbal seduction and physical aggression that seems to characterize the 18th century. Although the seduction is far more prominent than the physical aggression, the blending of the two characterizes an ascendance towards the Sadian sexual predator.

The 18th century also popularized the libertine novel, and many of these novels, said to be *libertins*, focused on revealing problems within one specific area of constraint: religion. Diderot's *La Religieuse*, for example, mercilessly critiqued the convent system and the social order that placed young women within their walls. Diderot succeeds in demonstrating the inequality of women within the social structure including their lack of options and education.

Similarly, *Les Liaisons dangereuses* showed another side of the danger associated with the poor education received during convent life. After the importance that was placed on religion by the government during the 17th century,<sup>50</sup> a small group of intellectuals expanded into a much larger group of free-thinking individuals during the 18th century. This intellectual expansion allowed for a freer representation of sex, although many controversial authors were still jailed for their questionable writings, with Sade, Laclos, and Diderot among them.

Diderot's *La Religieuse* brought the problems of convent life to light through the predatory characterization of a mother superior. This predator is noteworthy for a number of reasons: she is female, she is persuasive, and she uses her own intellect to take advantage of another's lack thereof. In one scene, she invites her young charge to kiss and caress her forehead, cheeks, eyes, and mouth, an act which brings her far greater pleasure than, Suzanne, her innocent companion can understand. Suzanne explains:

La main qu'elle avait posée sur mon genou se promenait sur tous mes vêtements, depuis l'extrémité de mes pieds jusqu'à ma ceinture, me pressant tantôt dans un endroit, tantôt dans un autre; elle m'exhortait en bégayant, et d'une voix altérée et basse, à redoubler mes caresses, je les redoublais; enfin il vint un moment, je ne sais si ce fut de plaisir ou de peine, où elle devint pâle comme la mort; ses yeux se fermèrent, tout son corps se tendit avec violence, ses lèvres se pressèrent d'abord, elles étaient humectées comme d'une mousse légère; puis sa bouche s'entr'ouvrit, et elle me parut mourir en poussant un profond soupir. (Diderot 194)

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<sup>50</sup> In his preface to *Romans libertins du XVIII siècle*, Raymond Trousson writes: “Au XVII siècle, après le renforcement de l’orthodoxie au lendemain du concile de Trente, le durcissement de la répression après le procès de Vanini à Toulouse en 1619, l’union du catholicisme et de l’absolutisme amènent de plus en plus à condamner comme libertins tous ceux qui s’élignent du dogme soutenu par l’État” (III).

Clearly, the mother superior is experiencing an orgasm brought on by the caresses of Suzanne, who has no understanding of the sexual implications of her attentions. The mother superior preys on Suzanne both physically, by touching her body without permission, and psychologically, by engaging her in an act that she neither understands nor reciprocates. While this is most certainly an act of predation, it is couched within a hierarchy of extreme restraint that dampens the licentiousness of the aggression. Not only is social hierarchy implicit to the story of *La Religieuse*, where an illegitimate child is banished to the convent because she threatens both her mother's marriage and the family's social standing if her secret were to be found out, it is the catalyst for the protagonist's transferral into an even stricter hierarchical structure. Most importantly, the societal and religious structures that guide and effect Suzanne's life lead her through constant restriction to a profoundly unhappy existence. Even the Mother Superior, who experiences moments of sexual pleasure that Suzanne does not share, remains dissatisfied. There is no hope for satiation in this universe, because everyone's behavior is intensely restricted. While Sade's narration would support the predation that takes place in *La Religieuse*, it would never allow for such a tightly regulated environment. If the point of predation in the Sadian universe is pleasure through the satiation of individual desire, Diderot's narration reveals the extent to which the individual can be victimized in that even those characters who serve as predators live within such restraint that they are not free to take pleasure in their predatory acts.

Choderlos de Laclos' *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782) reveals two seducers, one male and one female, who together embody a culmination of the qualities that are associated with the seducer while still falling short of being true sexual predators. The epistolary format reveals their cleverness and the forethought that structures both their actions and their words, but this

same focus on language over action separates Valmont and Merteuil from the Sadian sexual predators. Valmont and Merteuil also stage a very calculated play to ruin the reputations of their victims while still working within the boundaries of social acceptability in order to protect themselves, whereas the Sadian sexual predator would take any sexual currency that it could behind closed doors without concern for the resultant social standing of the victim. The conclusion of *Les Liaisons dangereuses* is perhaps the most telling difference between Laclos' narration and that of Sade, because Valmont and Merteuil suffer heartily for their seductive pursuits as they turn on each other with horrific results. Valmont both loses his love and is killed in a duel, while Merteuil contracts smallpox, loses her beauty, and in turn her social standing. In the final letter, the reader learns:

Le sort de Madame de Merteuil paraît enfin rempli, ma chère et digne amie, et il est tel que ses plus grands ennemis sont partagés entre l'indignation qu'elle mérite, et la pitié qu'elle inspire. J'avais bien raison de dire que ce serait peut-être un bonheur pour elle de mourir de sa petite vérole. Elle en est revenue, il est vrai, mais affreusement défigurée; et elle y a particulièrement perdu un oeil. (380)

The moralistic twist that closes *Les Liaisons dangereuses* reveals a markedly different philosophical stance from that of Sade's narration in that the author punishes his protagonists for their behavior. If anything, the Sadian philosophy would have punished them had they not carried out their devious plans. Sade would never disfigure his predator in a way that would reduce its pleasure. Self-restraint for the purpose of social and religious integrity is the target of punishment in the Sadian narration. While Laclos turns against his main characters at the culmination of the work, Sade maintains a constant relationship between punishment and



restraint. Laclos goes so far as to say in his closing notes to the reader "nous ne pouvons, dans ce moment, ni donner au Lecteur la suite des aventures de Mademoiselle de Volanges, ni lui faire connaître les sinistres événements qui ont comblé les malheurs ou achevé la punition de Madame de Merteuil" (381). The word punishment is quite interesting in this context, as Sade never punishes the individual for fulfilling his or her own pleasure.

Restif de la Bretonne published works depicting similar acts of sexual debauchery but with a very different moral standpoint than Sade. In his works *Le Paysan pervers* (1775) and *La Paysanne perversie* (1784), he tells a story not entirely different from that of Justine or Juliette. The innocent character adapts more or less well in the face of *libertinage* and debauchery. However, Bretonne's works are not, as Sade's works are, a valorization of the pleasure or an element of social destabilization. Instead, they serve to reinforce these constraints. Ursule, like Mme de Merteuil, contracts a disfiguring disease, and Edmond struggles to come to terms with his own commission of libertine acts. The descriptions of sex and cruelty at times rival Sade's own, however, Bretonne's works are consistently couched in a moralistic attitude that supports the status quo.<sup>51</sup> Sade's work, on the other hand, is unapologetic when it comes to debauchery, and most importantly, it puts predation, and in turn the sexual predator, in control of the narration.

The ascent to a Sadian sexual predator can best be demonstrated by a comparison between these seducers and Sade's predators. If Sade can be said to occupy the apex of sexual predation, the seducers of the pre-revolutionary period are the closest supporting characters to his sexual predators. The greatest point of contention between the Sadian sexual predator and these

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<sup>51</sup> To what extent one should take these moralistic sub-texts seriously is questionable, but their presence within the author's works blur a line that is well delineated within Sade's texts.

pre-cursors comes not in the form of action, but in the philosophical underpinnings of the text. Sade will abandon the moralistic and in turn apologetic surroundings of his contemporaries and embrace a revolutionary philosophy of satisfaction.

Sade's sexual predators embody many of the qualities seen in the rapists and seducers of the past, but with an added characteristic of intellectual sophistication accompanied by a marked intensification of violence and, in turn, of the dialectic of power between predator and victim. The Sadian predator can be both rapist and seducer when the situation demands it but does not act with the simplicity of his/her predecessors. Instead he/she values this act, constructing it consciously in accordance with a philosophical standard and without the weight of regret or internal conflict. It is true that the Sadian predator is impulsive, often whisking his/her victim away to a secluded locale and uses wily methods of entrapment, but the simplification of Sade's predators into rapists and seducers is necessarily an oversimplification. While the act may be nothing more than an amplification of rape and seduction as it has already been seen, the motivation is not only different but also complex, because the physical act is combined with intellectual forethought and philosophical justification. Sade uses intellect not only to persuade the intended victim but also to create and justify a universe within which predation is both a necessary and valuable act.

The differences between Sade's predators and their predecessors can be illustrated most clearly by an analysis of their induction into libertinage and their physical and moral education, because it is through these acts that Sade sets up a philosophical dialogue, both within the narration and between the author and the reader. The Sadian sexual predator cannot be considered a literary aberration based solely on Sade's own sexual appetites because they are

accompanied by a well thought out philosophical justification brought to the forefront through the linking of intellect and sexuality in the text. In order to demonstrate that Sade promotes an intensely different type of education as compared to other authors of his time period, it is worthwhile to compare Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* with the anonymous work *Thérèse philosophe*,<sup>52</sup> for both texts present an innocent yet sexually pre-occupied girl who is introduced to the sexual practices of libertine adults.<sup>53</sup> The comparison is made even more salient by the supposed veracity of the situations described in *Thérèse philosophe*,<sup>54</sup> which introduces the possibility that Sade was writing in response, if not to a particular case, then to the sexual education, or lack therefore, of young people at the time, which in turn implicates the Church and the role of the convent system in education at large, and adds to the value of questioning the traditional methodology. After all, Sade does recommend *Philosophie dans le boudoir* as appropriate and instructive reading for young girls in his introduction to the work.

In both cases, the inductee submits to two fundamental tracks of sexual education: the physical and the moral, both of which combine to hone the sexual understanding of the student. The tension between these two representations of sexual education is founded primarily on the

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<sup>52</sup> The similar titles of these two works cannot be overlooked and is indicative of the general trend between the two works. *Thérèse philosophe* indicating either that Thérèse is at the end of her tale a philosopher on the pleasing of ones natural urges or that she “philosophizes” on this same question. Sade’s title, contrarily, brings the question of sex to the forefront in the very title by locating *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, not simply a bedroom but a room of intimacy be it in solitude or in the company of ones closest confidants.

<sup>53</sup> *Thérèse Philosophe* presents a couple who are mutually participating in a secret sexual affair, but the reader is given the impression that their relationship is purely physical and intellectual rather than a love affair. They are also open to including other sexual partners in their escapades as long as these characters are deemed trustworthy and intelligent enough to protect their secret.

<sup>54</sup> In the preface to the 1979 “les classiques interdits” edition of this anonymous work, Pascal Pia explains that the names of the principal characters would have been obvious anagrams to a well publicized trial of the period. The story of D. Dirrag and of Mademoiselle Eradice represented the supposedly true account of Père Girard and Mademoiselle Cadière. “Au temps du Bien-Aimé, il suffisait de savoir lire pour interpréter les anagrammes désignant le Père Girard et son accusatrice, Mademoiselle Cadière” (8).

motivation behind the instruction: Sade aims for complete and irreversible corruption that would transform the inductee into a libertine, while his anonymous counterpart aims for a redemption of God's role in sexuality and a compromise between social boundaries and libertine behavior. Sade went so far as to mention *Thérèse philosophe* as one of many "livres obscènes" in *L'Histoire de Juliette*, and he recognized that, while a step in the right direction, the anonymous author did not take his sexual confrontation far enough:

*Thérèse philosophe* figurait: ouvrage charmant du marquis d'Argens, le seul qui ait montré le but, sans néanmoins l'atteindre tout à fait; l'unique qui ait agréablement lié la luxure à l'impiété, et qui, bientôt rendu au public tel que l'auteur l'avait primitivement conçu, donnera enfin l'idée d'un livre immoral.

(2: 281)

By looking first at the situation described in *Thérèse philosophe* and then overlaying the education of Eugénie in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, the differences of intent and process become starkly evident.

*Thérèse philosophe* begins with an innocent act of masturbation, as the protagonist unknowingly stimulates herself in her sleep, and her mother creates a backlash and has her indoctrinated into the belief that her actions are against God's will and that to pleasure herself again would be a punishable affront, frightening Thérèse into a state of physical desperation. She has been warned to avoid sex and sexuality outside of marriage and tries earnestly to repress her sexual urges. When she is finally sent to a convent, she recounts the priest's urgings: "Ne portez jamais, me dit-il, la main ni même les yeux sur cette partie infâme par laquelle vous pissiez, qui n'est autrement que la pomme qui a séduit Adam" (30-1). Thus, the first step in

Thérèse's education is simple repression: she is physically restrained as she sleeps and made to believe that masturbation is amoral and worthy of persecution:

Enfin, après quelques nuits d'observation attentive, on ne douta plus que ce ne fût la force de mon tempérament qui me faisait faire en dormant ce qui sert à soulager tant de pauvres Religieuses en veillant. On prit la parti de me lier étroitement les mains, de manière qu'il me fût impossible de continuer mes amusements nocturnes. (26)

This dual repression, both physical and moral, opens the door to the internal and external conflict that plagues Thérèse throughout the rest of the novel by opposing her own nature with a false, external system of values that clashes with her internal desires.

In opposition to Thérèse, Eugénie, the main character of Sade's *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, is shepherded into the hands of Mme de Saint-Ange by her own father with the express purpose of familiarizing her with sex and the body. While Thérèse's mother fights against the child's inclination toward masturbation, Eugénie's libertine ways have been fostered by her father. Instead of instilling repressive religious ideals in Eugénie, her tutors do just the opposite by lifting the immorality from the acts to which she is naturally drawn through a revocation of any repressive values that she has learned from society or from her mother. Contrary to Thérèse's experience of being physically restrained from exploring her own body, Eugénie is encouraged to explore the body of both Mme de Saint-Ange and Dolmancé. During their detailed and libertine explanations of the male and female body, Eugénie asks and is encouraged to touch Dolmancé:

Eugénie: Oh! ma chère amie, laisse-moi branler ce beau membre.

Dolmancé: Je n’y tiens pas! Laissons-la faire, madame: cette ingénuité me fait horriblement bander.

Mme de Saint-Ange: Je m’oppose à cette effervescence. Dolmancé, soyez sage; l’écoulement de cette semence, en diminuant l’activité de vos esprits animaux, ralentirait la chaleur de vos dissertations.

Eugénie, *maniant les testicules de Dolmancé*. Oh! que je suis fâchée, ma bonne amie, de la résistance que tu mets à mes désirs! (397)

Although Mme de Saint-Ange denies Eugénie's desire to have her way with Dolmancé, it is clear that Eugénie is touching Dolmancé without the reproach of either adult and that Mme de Saint-Ange is denying her only to prolong the sexual encounter between the three of them. While Thérèse is admonished to never even look at her own body, Mme de Saint-Ange and Dolmancé put their own bodies on display for Eugénie. While Sade successfully re-educates his ingénue in an effort to erase her mother's religious teachings, the author of *Thérèse philosophe* demonstrates the inability to re-educate a "natural" inclination, for Thérèse's bonds do not erase her desire or her impulse to satisfy it.

Moral and religious teachings also pose a significant challenge in both novels, as both characters struggle with their ability to rectify their sexual nature with the morality espoused by their religions. As Thérèse matures, she is faced with religious hypocrisy concerning sex: first through the act of observation and later a philosophical debate. Hidden in a friend's closet, she watches while her friend, both pious and naive, abandons her body to a priest who takes advantage of her sexual ignorance while pretending to elevate her soul through religious exaltation. Thérèse watches with a mixture of horror and curiosity. It is this moment, above all

others, that causes a spike in her sexual desires and behaviors and, in turn, inaugurates her sexual education. In the narration, Thérèse's introduction to sex begins without any intent on the part of her educators. She has been hidden in the closet by her friend who seeks only to demonstrate the skill of the priest and the joy of the religious experience that can be had at his hands, but Thérèse's reaction is one of pure lust. She explains that upon being let out of the closet: "J'étais si émue, qu'à peine lui répondis-je pour la féliciter; mon coeur étant dans la plus vive agitation, je l'embrassai, et je sortis" (65). The scene causes her to push aside her religious indoctrination in favor of physical pleasure. Thérèse takes advantage of her hiding place to masturbate in the darkness. This scene is made remarkable from an educational standpoint because Thérèse gleans more information from this happenstance session than from the series of indoctrinations arranged by her mother. She is also able to apply her own moral code to the events that she observes and is led to the conclusion that the act is tainted by the priest's lies rather than by the sexual act itself. Observing the sexual liaison excites Thérèse while only the abuse of power inflicted on her friend troubles her. The secrecy that surrounds this experience is also very telling of the occluded quality of sexual acts that did not conform to the procreative "norm." Not only is Thérèse sexually excited by the scene that she sees as she hides in the darkness of the closet, but she is also forced to refrain from verbally exploring the observed acts. She feels unable to broach the subject with any of her regular confidants, and it is only later that she speaks freely of the scene and only with a select audience. It is also important that while Thérèse's experience takes place literally and figuratively in the dark, Eugénie's experience takes place in the open and is expressly designed to encourage her "education." Not only is Thérèse hidden in a dark closet, but she is also prevented from exploring her own body and those of the other players, which puts

her in a position of being exposed to a situation that she does not fully understand or even have the necessary vocabulary to recount. Eugénie, on the other hand, learns both the proper and slang terms for all the necessary body parts, both male and female, and is encouraged and allowed to *tâter* them. Madame de Saint-Ange reveals to Eugénie what Thérèse has been forbidden to regard:

. . . examine mon *con* . . . c'est ainsi que se nomme le temple de Vénus; cet antre que ta main couvre, examine-le bien, je vais l'entr'ouvrir, cette élévation dont tu vois qu'il est couronné s'appelle la *motte*, elle se garnit de poils communément à quatorze ou quinze ans, quand une fille commence à être réglée. Cette languette qu'on trouve au-dessous se nomme le *clitoris*, là gît toute la sensibilité des femmes." (400)

The above scene is one of many in *Philosophie* where Eugénie explores the bodies of her mentors but the importance of this situation when compared with that of Thérèse lies in its symbolic representation of Eugénie exploring her future self. She fulfills the desires of Madame de Saint-Ange while learning to fulfill her own desires in the future; contrarily, Thérèse is denied any possibility of physical exploration. As with the 18th century pre-cursors to the Sadian sexual predator, the education of both girls differs greatly with regard to the interplay between the act and how one should feel about having committed the act. Eugénie is taught to play the role of the predator with no regard for the social unacceptability of her actions, but Thérèse is made to feel shame for attempts at attaining pleasure and satisfaction.

One should also note that her voyeuristic experience is quite different than that of Thérèse. Eugénie is not only invited to watch as Dolmancé and Mme de Saint-Ange engage in



different sexual acts with each other but actually participates in them herself. The ability to act is again representative of the lack of shame that Sade instills through the philosophical teachings of Dolmancé and Mme de Saint-Ange. Thérèse's inability to act conversely represents the constraint of marrying desire with social boundaries. Finally, instead of keeping a secret, as Thérèse is forced to do, Eugénie is able to ask questions regarding the morality and the physicality of the act. She is not only invited to discuss what she has seen but is almost required to do so. For example, Madame de Saint-Ange asks "Eh bien! ma mie, comment te trouves-tu du plaisir que nous t'avons donné?" and Eugénie responds, "Je suis morte, je suis anéantie" (402). Thérèse's situation is also different in that she has no sounding board for her experiences. While visiting friends in a country estate, Thérèse is able to reveal the secrets of what she has seen transpire between her young friend and the priest, but only after having observed her confidant in a compromising situation with a libertine fellow houseguest. Thérèse first observes the covert couple by chance and later through intentional planning and deception, but instead of being disturbed by what she witnesses, she is titillated. Not only does the act interest and entertain her, she finds the philosophical debate between the players to be equally stimulating. As Thérèse eavesdrops, Madame C..., her host, and l'Abbé T..., a frequent houseguest, discuss the moral questions surrounding sex and procreation. While both lovers agree that their acts are harmless, they also agree on the existence of God. They believe that they should be free to follow their natural urges and desires but that these urges must not be attributed to "nature" but instead to God himself, who has designed humans to have different sexual drives and needs and to take pleasure in them. Unfortunately, the secrecy with which they discuss these issues is revelatory of

their unacceptability, and their discussions don't convey the actuality of their situation, which requires them to sneak around and keep their affair hidden.

In the second half of *Thérèse philosophe*, Thérèse, alone in Paris and in financial jeopardy following the death of her mother, meets the character of Bois-Laurier. This female character, a hybrid between a prostitute and a kept-woman, serves two important functions in the narration. She embodies and reinforces the values of the libertine that Thérèse learned from Mme C... and l'Abbé T... by a continued desensitization to sex and sexuality through the autobiographical story that she recounts and also facilitates Thérèse's entrance into a new life defined by sexual freedom. She also offers to replace Thérèse's mother, which she does by aligning her with the man who will eventually become her partner. When Bois-Laurier offers to play a mothering role, Thérèse is thrilled and clings to her new companion. This maternity is in striking opposition to the role of the mother in *Philosophie dans le boudoir*. Eugénie's mother is alive and well, but she is rejected by her daughter and even used as one of her first victims of predation. The role of the mother being representative of social order in both cases: Thérèse clings to a matriarch who can guide and control her while Eugénie destroys the family structure she would constrain her libertine behavior.

While *Thérèse philosophe* does raise questions concerning the moral and social norms of the time while also shedding light on the erroneous behavior of the church, it falls short of destabilizing the reader for several reasons. First, the text can hide behind the supposed veracity of the tale. A true story, while disturbing, is simply the recounting of actual events and not, as in Sade's case, the creation of a questionable universe by a single individual. The reflection of a troubled society is not nearly as problematic as a valorization of these troubles. The author also

often uses euphemisms to describe the act of sex and the body parts involved. For example, sex is referred to as “la grosse besogne,” a term which indicates not only an avoidance of any technical or common term but also connotes a negativity toward the act (112). When speaking of the erect penis, the author uses terms such as “son dard,” “la flèche” and “le carquois” instead of speaking directly of the male sexual organs, and when speaking of the female sex organs, terms such as “minon” (168), and “cette partie qui nous fait femmes” are used instead of correct or even slang vocabulary (99). While these euphemisms can be in part accepted as stylistic effect, they have importance in distancing the text from Sade’s work. Mme de Saint-Ange and Dolmancé specifically introduce as many terms as possible while defining the male and female body for Eugénie. In explaining the parts of the male body, Mme de Saint-Ange tells Eugénie: “Le mot technique est *couilles*... testicules est celui de l’art. Ces boules renferment le réservoir de cette semence prolifique dont je viens de te parler et dont l’éjaculation dans la matrice de la femme produit l’espèce humaine” (*Philosophie* 397-98). This frankness of language reveals an important difference in the motivation of these two authors, as Sade seems to desire a free flowing conduit of information, while the author of *Thérèse philosophe* does not want to write too openly of the sexual anatomy or of sex itself. The use of language again reinforces the difference between the acceptance of social boundaries by the majority and the rejection of the limits within Sade's narration.

Despite the fact that the life story of Thérèse mimics, albeit it on a less explicit level, several of Sade’s narrations, there are substantial differences in the sexual behavior and the philosophical standpoint of the characters that distance Sade’s works from *Thérèse philosophe* in ways that can be taken as emblematic of the century at large. First, in accordance with Sade’s

works, the philosophy that is touted in *Thérèse philosophe* is one that champions happiness of the individual and the following of one's natural inclinations where sex is concerned, but contrary to Sade's ideas, it maintains that the social status quo should not be disrupted and that propriety should not be ignored. L'Abbé T... explains the importance of preserving the social order to Mme C..., and in turn to the concealed Thérèse, during one of their secret rendez-vous. He tells his lover, "Nous devons donc nous rendre mutuellement tous les services possibles, pourvu que ces services ne détruisent pas quelques branches de la société établie: c'est ce dernier point qui doit diriger nos actions" (*Thérèse* 147). To the contrary, Dolmancé and Mme de Saint-Ange convince Eugénie that social rules are arbitrary, unnecessary and harmful to the individual because they are meant to stifle nature's will. Eugénie summarizes her understanding of Dolmancé's argument by saying, "Il me paraît que, d'après tout ce que vous me dites, Dolmancé, rien n'est aussi indifférent sur la terre que d'y commettre le bien ou le mal; nos goûts, notre tempérament doivent seuls être respectés?" (*Philosophie* 413). Dolmancé, in turn, responds, "Ah! n'en doutez pas, Eugénie, ces mots de vice et de vertu ne nous donnent que des idées purement locales. Il n'y a aucune action, quelque singulière que vous puissiez la supposer, qui soit vraiment criminelle; aucune qui puisse réellement s'appeler vertueuse" (*Philosophie* 413). These two quotes make the philosophical distance between *Thérèse philosophe* and *Philosophie dans le boudoir* quite apparent. Sade shows no respect for laws in the form of social constructs, although he reveres the laws of nature, while his counterpart places the social status quo above individual satisfaction. By insisting on the locality of the definitions of vice, virtue, and criminality, Sade is neutralizing the concepts by showing that they are defined only by the culture within which they occur and that religious doctrine is determined by culture and thus not

by God. *Thérèse philosophe* purports that exactly the opposite is true by placing God at the root of all pleasure and all determination of value (including the establishment of social constructs).

The importance of happiness in both philosophies is also subjective. It is true that both Sade and the author of *Thérèse philosophe* promote the commission of whatever acts naturally bring happiness to the individual, regardless of whether they are sexual acts outside of marriage. *Thérèse philosophe*, however, promotes those acts that bring mutual happiness to all those involved. Sade's philosophy could not be further removed from that of the author of *Thérèse philosophe* on this subject, because he would allow the predator to achieve happiness at the cost of any other individual. There is a constantly changing power structure within Sade's narrations that is completely absent from *Thérèse philosophe*. The education received by Eugénie in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* allows her to be a true sexual predator, because she can inflict her desires without concern for the other and, in turn, satiate her own drive for sexual pleasure at any cost.

The existence of God as a creator and purveyor of nature as opposed to nature as a usurper of God is another point of contention between these two philosophies. In *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, Dolmancé goes out of his way to convince Eugénie that God does not exist. Sade, through the words of Dolmancé, gives a retelling of the resurrection that exposes what he sees as the hoax of organized religion. Dolmancé explains that after the death of Jesus:

Ses satellites s'assemblent: "Nous voilà perdus, disent-ils, et toutes nos espérances évanouies, si nous ne nous sauvons par un coup d'éclat. Enivrons la garde qui entoure Jésus; dérobons son corps, publions qu'il est ressuscité: le moyen est sûr; si nous parvenons à faire croire cette friponnerie, notre nouvelle

religion s'étaie, se propage; elle séduit le monde entier... Travaillons!" Le coup s'entreprind, il réussit.<sup>55</sup> (409)

This farcical representation is illustrative of Sade's lack of reverence not only for organized religion, but also for the God that it venerates. This attitude sets the stage for a line to be drawn between God and religion, which Sade writes off as cultural icons, dependent on social constructions, and nature, which he identifies as essential to the way mankind survives and relates to others. Contrary to Sade's standpoint, God plays an important role in *Thérèse philosophe*, thereby allowing for a justification of sexual behaviors and the variants in the sexual appetites of certain individuals. As Thérèse listens from her hiding spot, Mme C... asks l'Abbé T...:

Pourquoi ne sont-ils pas [their sexual pleasures] entièrement innocents? . . . Car vous avez beau dire qu'ils ne blessent point l'intérêt de la société; que nous y sommes portés par un besoin aussi naturel à certains tempéraments, aussi nécessaire à soulager, que le sont les besoins de la faim et de la soif; vous m'avez très bien démontré que nous n'agissons que par la volonté de Dieu, que la Nature n'est qu'un mot vide de sens, et n'est que l'effet dont Dieu est la cause . . . (136)

The conflict between nature and God is confronted directly in this passage. The characters show a marked understanding of both the disapproval of their liaison by society and their own natural dispositions for their actions. However, knowing that their affair does not damage society does not prevent them from hiding their relationship, which convinces them to allow only their fellow libertines into their confidence regarding both their relationship and their way of thinking. In

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<sup>55</sup> One wonders if this is not also a depiction of what Sade himself is doing. By interweaving his philosophy with the graphic depiction of sex, he is making his philosophical standpoint more palatable. Unfortunately, the opposite effect has taken place and the philosophy has been overshadowed by the sex.

short, although the author of *Thérèse philosophe* writes of the importance of nature, nature is understood as subordinate to and determined by the God, in whom Sade does not believe. After touting the importance of nature, L'Abbé T... concludes his argument by explaining, "Cependant cette nature n'opère que par la volonté de Dieu" (*Thérèse* 146). Thus, for Sade, nature plays the role of God and allows for the relinquishing of a humanistic God who would have to be negligent, in Sade's opinion, for the ills of the world. Dolmancé paints a picture of a God who must be lazy, bitter, and vindictive, because after creating the world, he chose to punish humankind and to carry out acts that ended in the deaths of many. The author of *Thérèse philosophe* allows God to structure both social structure and private impulse, while Sade forces nature into a privileged position where like a god, it determines the social structure within which the sexual predator exists. This relationship to nature as a god allows for much more freedom regarding the satiation of one's desires because, there can be no judgement, social or religious, of instinct and impulse.

Despite the sexual trysts and the valorization of unmarried sex that make up *Thérèse philosophe*, there is a lack of socially and sexually subversive behavior in the text. The majority of sexual relationships remain monogamous regardless of any official bounds of matrimony: Mme C... and l'Abbé T... maintain an exclusive relationship with each other, Bois-Laurier has a privileged relationship with B... and manages to avoid penetration entirely, and Thérèse, although unmarried, becomes the Count's *maîtresse* entering into a monogamous relationship. Perhaps more importantly, there is no mention of any same-sex couplings as all of the sexual relationships are male/female with the male being the dominant party. L'Abbé T... goes so far as to state that god approves only of male/female sexual relationships, because he built the bodies

of the two sexes to compliment each other. This philosophy leaves no room for anything other than male/female vaginal intercourse. *Philosophie dans le boudoir* exposes an entirely different set of rules regarding coupling. From the onset of the story, Dolmancé professes to preferring male sexual partners to female. In fact, he has to be convinced by Mme de Saint-Ange to participate in vaginal penetration, which he considers a means to “se souiller” (385). Just before his arrival Mme de Saint-Ange describes him in the following way:

. . . ce singulier Dolmancé qui, de ses jours, dis-tu, n’a pu voir une femme comme l’usage le prescrit, qui, sodomite par principe, non seulement est idolâtre de son sexe, mais ne cède même au nôtre que sous la clause spéciale de lui livrer les attraits chéris dont il est accoutumé de se servir chez les hommes? (384)

As opposed to *Thérèse philosophe*, there are of course many different sexual couplings during the course of *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, but both Mme de Saint-Ange and Dolmancé deem anal penetration to be the most preferable form. Thus, the evolution from *Thérèse philosophe* to *Philosophie dans le boudoir* encompasses an abandonment of monogamy within the sexual relationship, a multiplication of orifices through which the body can be penetrated, an openness to same-sex encounters, and of course the privileging of individual pleasure over social order.

Both of these works depict the change of conscience from an innocent young girl to a female libertine, but Sade’s character goes beyond that of a simple sexual extremist to become an actual predator. The difference lies in a marked rejection of social norms and religious doctrine; instead of preserving her purity and virginity, she gives herself freely to her libertine mentors and not only does she abuse her mother, she essentially signs her mother's death warrant. These acts together demonstrate her rejection of the moral, religious and procreative norms of her time and



her adherence to the philosophy that Sade has supplied through the teachings of Dolmancé and Mme de Saint-Ange. The difference in Sade's sexual predator is also the result of an acceptance of nature that goes further than what is evident in *Thérèse philosophe*. Nature, its author, seems to conform to the social conventions of the time because it serves at the will of God. In other words, where Sade embraces the ideals of the Enlightenment, *Thérèse philosophe* does the opposite by promoting the status quo and by demonstrating how his characters can manipulate the system from the inside rather than changing it entirely. Mme C... will never openly have an affair with l'Abbé T... and even though they continue to have a sexual relationship behind closed doors the two restrain themselves in order to keep their secret and to avoid pregnancy. By contrast, Sade's nature is without bounds and the individual is urged to follow his or her desires to fruition. As shown in the previous chapter, unlike his contemporary Rousseau, Sade placed the good of the individual over the good of the social order and, in so doing, attempted to instigate a drastic re-evaluation of the power structures of the time.

Finally, *Thérèse* is never taught or even provided the agency necessary to become a predator. Eugénie, as evidenced throughout this comparison, is provided a voice and a means of satisfying herself through the other. Thérèse is really only allowed one complete mutual sexual encounter in the entire narration, and it is the result of a manipulation on the part of her lover. Primarily, her lack of agency is a lack of social capital. She has no role in society, no status. Most importantly, she seeks to conform rather than to destabilize. This difference is also important when comparing the philosophical education provided for Eugénie and Thérèse, because while Thérèse is never allowed to be a fully functioning independent character, Eugénie is encouraged to pursue her interests at all costs. Eugénie is empowered to follow her natural

desires, whether it means taking a man or woman as her victim.<sup>56</sup> There is no possibility for Thérèse to change roles within her sexual system. She is not encouraged to experiment beyond the traditional male/female relationship and even then, the parameters of sex are very narrow for her. Eugénie, on the other hand, is encouraged to pass regularly from the dominant to the submissive role, from male to female. Sade is creating a libertine who knows what her actions imply for the other players involved in the sexual act. She knows both the pain inflicted and the pleasure gained from each act. She is also constantly questioning her role in the sexual encounter, just as she is her role in the power structure and, in turn, the social structure. She is predatory, rather than just libertine, by value of her ability to disregard those social and religious constructs that she finds inhibitive but also because she is morally unlocked from any chains that would restrain her from her appetites. Sade removes the good of the group from the equation and focuses exclusively on the good of the individual, and even in this he succeeds in reversing values by determining “good” and “bad” based not on social constructs, but instead on individual satisfaction.

In an effort to elucidate the motivations behind the fully-formed Sadian sexual predator, it is beneficial to compare it directly with those characters whose creation falls within tight chronological boundaries of its own. Thus, by way of returning to Valmont and Merteuil, the pseudo predators in de Laclos’ *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, one sees the demonstration of marked similarities with Sade’s sexual predators. For the purpose of comparison, the characteristics of Valmont and Merteuil will be lumped into those of a single entity, as will the characteristics of

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<sup>56</sup> These desires come to her unbidden. With all of the questions that Eugénie asks of Dolmancé and Mme de Saint-Ange, she never expresses a dislike or hesitancy to participate in an activity that gives her pleasure. The teaching provided by her mentors is more an attempt to re-educate her by talking her out of what she has been taught about morality and religion.

the Sadian sexual predator. Like Sade's predators, Valmont and Merteuil are not without intelligence, show a desperate lack of morality when compared with the surrounding characters, and seek to do harm for their own pleasure; they devise a devious plan to avenge Merteuil and sully the reputation of many others through the sexual act with no concern for the overall moral bearing of society and still less for the lives of their victims. These are, however, superficial comparisons when brought into contrast with the characteristics that exemplify the Sadian sexual predator. Within Sade's narration, the sexual predator is so outstandingly intelligent that it often holds a high, learned position in society. Rodin, for example, in *Justine, ou Les Infortunes de la vertu*, is a respected physician. While Valmont and Merteuil make the arrangements for a plan of great complexity, they are nothing more than aristocratic *fainéants* who take advantage of those who are without decent educations, due primarily to having been enclosed in convents. For example, in his seduction of la Présidente de Tourvel, Valmont describes his work to Merteuil: "Je n'eus que le temps de faire une courte toilette, et je me rendis au salon, où ma Belle faisait de la tapisserie, tandis que le Curé du lieu lisait la Gazette à ma vieille tante" (61). The passivity of Valmont's seduction is in sharp contrast to the active attack of the Sadian sexual predator. It is social constraint that prevents Valmont and Merteuil from directly taking what they desire, constraints that cannot exist within Sade's narrative universe.

A second point of contention is the sexual indifference of the Sadian predator; while many of Sade's predators have preferences in sexual orientation, they generally take advantage of the victim at hand, be it male or female. Valmont and Merteuil present a simple sexual opposition. Valmont seduces a girl and falls for a woman, while Merteuil avenges the scorn of a man. Neither ventures beyond the boundaries of the socially acceptable male-female sexual

relationships. Morally, Sade's predators transcend the social norms in favor of a morality that is only constrained by the laws of nature, such as survival of the fittest. Valmont and Merteuil buck the trend in terms of morality but are faced with harsh punishment for their efforts: The Sadian sexual predator takes its role through to the finish with merciless finitude. In Sade, there is punishment, not for the libertine, but instead for the characters that are virtuous and constrained by common morality, such as Justine. Valmont and Merteuil play puppet master with the lives of their victims, but at no point do they match the ferocity of the Sadian predator. The plot of *Les Liaisons dangereuses* would likely have been moot in Sade's universe. Merteuil would have had her ex-lover brought to her in chains, while Valmont would have raped Merteuil rather than working for her. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the motivation of the Sadian predator is one of pure personal and sexual satisfaction, while Merteuil and Valmont plot a simple act of revenge meant to inflict social embarrassment.

The Sadian sexual predator stands alone in its ability to marry the satiation of its sexual desires with a moral certainty of its own creation. The Sadian sexual predator creates its own rules, which run parallel to the actual socio-moral trends, and these rules are malleable on all but the point of individual pleasure. There is a philosophy of predation within Sade's narration that is based on the combination of intellectual and physical power and that gains, rather than loses, strength through constant fluctuation of desire. Returning to the quote that began this chapter, the Sadian sexual predator is the embodiment of the advice that Sade proposed: "n'écoutez que ces passions délicieuses, leur organe est le seul qui doit vous conduire au bonheur" (*Philosophie* 379). The "natural" passions are those that drive the predator to prey on its victims by any means necessary in the pursuit of pleasure and by listening only to these

passions, the Sadian sexual predator is able to shut out all the moralistic and socially bound conceptions of right and wrong, good and bad. It is precisely this process of passion and pleasure over artificial constraint that gives the Sadian sexual predator freedom and, in turn, the power to take action.

#### IV. POWER PLAYS: ESTABLISHING FLUIDITY THROUGH THE PREDATOR/PREY RELATIONSHIP

The act of predation is based on the principle of a primal relationship between two organisms in which one is seen to feed, literally or figuratively, on the other, but while predator and prey are terms that are most often applied to animals, the human being is also subject to a cannibalistic power structure within which it predated its own species. In the case of Sade's texts, the consumption of flesh focuses not on gastric satiation through the literal ingestion of another human being but instead through the use and abuse of that being's sexuality. Rape, sodomy, impregnation, abortion, physical disfigurement of the sexual organs, and murder through penetration all play important roles in the Sadian universe. The critical treatment of the predator/prey relationship in Sade's work has been problematic, primarily because of attempts to stabilize a system that is inherently unstable within the text itself. While the presence of predation remains stable throughout Sade's sexually charged narrations, the constant changing of roles from predator to prey and the interchangeability of the prey with regard to sex create an instability that cannot be controlled by the masculinization of the feminine, as Frappier-Mazur and, to a lesser extent, Carter attempts to do. As I will discuss, Sade's sexual predators, and even his prey, have a mutable relationship with power; every one of these relationships must be considered according to the context within which it occurs, and every character must be reexamined with each new addition to the power structure.

Upon primary evaluation, it might seem that there cannot be a fluid relationship between predator and prey, that the line between hunter and hunted is a static division between power and weakness. However, when the cyclical nature of predation is taken into consideration, the predator shifts from a role of unquestionable power to a role of weakness as it transitions from an alpha character to the prey of another stronger being. This fluctuation of place is not only based on physical strength or intellectual acuity, although these characteristics do play a secondary role, but more so on increased desire and the heightened capacity for pleasure. Fluidity is established through the situation or the context within which the predation takes place, and because there are a variety of characters in any given scene of predation, each character plays multiple roles. In the universe that Sade creates, the malleability of this relationship is at the foundation of the power structure, because the power of an individual is never static. Each and every character, even the sexual predator, is at risk of falling prey to a contextually stronger character, and although physical strength can be important in the hierarchical determination of power, desire plays a far more important role, because the level of desire correlates to the potential intensity of individual pleasure.

While this relationship is often reduced to that of a sexual opposition, where the male character is the predator and the female character is the prey, the reader of Sade's texts is confronted with a multitude of variations on this overly simplified structure. These fluctuations from the norm, along with the instability of the power structure, are evidenced by the acts of sexual predation in Sade's texts, but despite the fact that these sex acts attract the majority of the attention that is focused on Sade's work, their combination with Sade's philosophical discourse reveals more about gender than it does about sexuality. By examining the fluidity between the

roles of predator and prey, a window on gender fluidity is opened to reveal a world in which sex, the state of being male or female, does not determine the potency of the character but is rather a moot point in the quest for sexual satisfaction through domination, where gender, in turn, is questioned intrinsically by the very act of sex itself. Both the hierarchy of power and its effect on gender fluidity reveal the importance of the Sadian sexual predator, because without the existence of this character as Sade created it, with neither compassion nor constraint, the narration would present a static relationship between predator and prey that would close the door on any fluidity of gender difference.

While the relationship between predator and prey runs throughout Sade's fiction, it is nowhere more apparent than in the familial relationship found between Justine and Juliette, the sisters who serve as protagonists in two of his major works: *La Nouvelle Justine, ou les Malheurs de la vertu*<sup>57</sup> and *Histoire de Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice*. By at once establishing paradigmatic symmetry, a unified narrative discourse, a philosophical accord, and a binary opposition between the main characters, Sade brings his standpoint on morality to the forefront through acts of sexual predation. The power of these two works to highlight the importance of predation is, therefore, not only in the stark contrast offered by the characters of Justine and Juliette, but also in the similarity of the narrative world that surrounds them. The author has created two narrative universes that are unabashedly similar (that are, in fact, intertwined to such an extent that they are sometimes referred to as repetitive by critics) and philosophically unified, yet has chosen to orient the reader's journey toward two divergent paths

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<sup>57</sup> This volume has been selected over *Les Infortunes de la vertu* (1787) and *Justine* (1791), because it is the third and final incarnation of Justine's adventures and as such features an expanded story-line and additional characters. As such, it also afforded the author a third possibility to edit the text to his liking. My thesis is supported by the earlier versions of the text; however, the scenes that best illustrate my argument have been reprinted and in some cases expanded in this third version.



that culminate in the same place, although certainly not in the same outcome. Airaksinen goes so far as to write: "His novels are too long, repetitive, and violent" (209). The critique that Sade's narrations always take place in similar locations with both the discourse and the sex acts are overly repetitive allows for the creation of a stable universe, both in terms of narrative structural design and the presence of sexual predation, and this scaffolded stability is precisely the aspect of Sade's work that allows gender to fluctuate. If the narrative universes in *La Nouvelle Justine, ou les Malheurs de la vertu* and *L'Histoire de Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice* were not as similar as they are, the reader could not look at the combination of sexual predation and Sade's philosophical discourse as a determining factor in the perception of gender; there would be no framework within which gender could be examined. The reader anticipates the motifs of travel, escape, graphic sex acts, torture, and domination, and of course the theme of desire, and while this may even be the content that incites him or her to read, it brings into focus the characteristics of power through which the individual is rendered genderless. Reinforced by the symmetrical plot lines of both novels and the shared backgrounds of their protagonists, the reader's expectations allow for greater freedom with respect to gender; thus, the formulaic nature of the text from a structural point of view strengthens the reader's expectations to such an extent that he or she would accept anyone in the role of the predator, be that person male, female, or intersex, and this predator can, in turn, assume behaviors that would not traditionally be associated with his or her sex. The Sadian universe is not one of narrative surprises, but this predictability allows the sexual escapades to take on even more violent and divergent characteristics, since the author can take the reader beyond his or her expectations through a gradual intensification of the expected. Women can dominate men, parents can kill their children, and children their parents,

and both men and women can engage in sodomy; any act is permissible if the predator commits it in pursuit of its prey and in the ultimate pursuit of pleasure.

An analysis of the relationship between predation, power, and sexuality as expressed through the binary oppositions between the characters of Justine and Juliette allows for a leveling of gender that is unexpected and seemingly incongruous with Sade's work. In the face of striking structural similarities in their respective narrations, the differences between these two protagonists allow for the investigation of three key areas in the relationship between sex and power that helps to destabilize gender through sexual predation: the distinction between vice and virtue, the interaction between the sexes, and the social reflection of sexual predation as it relates to the relationship between predation and nature.

Before concentrating on the textual representations of these main areas, it is first necessary to explore three important critical readings of the sexual power structure in Sade's works in order to differentiate my reading from theirs. Andrea Dworkin, Angela Carter, and Lucienne Frappier-Mazur have all weighed-in on the relationship between sex and power; each presenting a variation of the same argument, drastically different as their interpretations may be, in which the male dominates the female both sexually and socially.

Taking the most extreme position of the three, Andrea Dworkin vilifies Sade's fiction as being a vile form of pornography in which the woman is subjugated, and violently so, to the will and desire of the man. In fact, Dworkin's *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1979) not only examines Sade's texts as examples of pornographic writing that encourages the violation and humiliation of women but was largely inspired by an in-depth reading of his works. In this larger work, Dworkin dedicates a chapter to Sade, whom she refers to as "the world's foremost

pornographer,” throughout which she outlines the damage done to women by both the author and his text (70). In the opening of this chapter, Dworkin describes Sade and the Sadian text in the following way:

In him, one finds rapist and writer twisted into one scurvy knot. His life and writing were of a piece, a whole cloth soaked in the blood of women imagined and real. In his life he tortured and raped women. . . . In his work he relentlessly celebrated brutality as the essence of eroticism; fucking, torture, and killing were fused; violence and sex synonymous. (70)

When one considers, Dworkin’s agenda to lump all pornography together into an industry controlled by men and controlling of women, her inability to separate Sade’s actions from his work is anything but surprising.<sup>58</sup> Dworkin posits that, sexually speaking, Sade’s texts work in only one direction: male predator over female prey. She goes on to write that “in Sade, the authentic equation is revealed: the power of the pornographer is the power of the rapist/batterer is the power of the man” (100). While the hierarchy of man over woman is often the case in Sade’s works, it is certainly not the sole model of the sexual power structure in his narrative universe. Dworkin admits this point in her own writings: “In the bulk of Sade’s work, female victims greatly outnumber male victims, but his cruelty is all-inclusive. He manifests a pansexual dominance -- the male who knows no boundaries but still hates women more” (93). As future examples will prove, there are a plethora of predators that do not fit this unidirectional vision of male hegemony. The contrast between Dworkin’s assertion that it is exclusively men dominating women in Sade’s works and her confirmation of “pansexual dominance” is striking

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<sup>58</sup> As mentioned in the introduction to this work, the conflation of Sade with his works is used as a means of discrediting the text by tying it to the criminal exploits of its author. By calling Sade a "rapist and writer" in one, Dworkin criminalizes the text itself.

(93). Pansexual would seem to indicate a high level of sexual inclusivity and would certainly allow for the mutations in gender that take place in Sade's texts. The presence of this short aside in Dworkin's chapter is very telling. Clearly, these two claims cannot both be accurate, yet Dworkin manipulates her concession of sexual fluidity by insisting that the man is in a position to hate the woman and to a greater degree than he hates men. The dominant party could be female in Dworkin's assertion, a possibility that she chooses not to explore, and there is a marked lack of evidence in Dworkin's work to prove that this male power figure hates women more than men or hermaphrodites. It should be noted that while Sade's text is often read as pornography that demeans women and encourages violence towards them (even pro-Sadian critics like Bloch and Airaksinen persist in calling these works pornography), the text can be read as providing precisely the opposite opportunity for women by placing them on an equal playing field with the male characters (Carter makes this case but doesn't follow the idea through to its fruition because she masculinizes the the predator and feminizes the prey). It is no longer their sex that determines their lot in life but instead the decisions they make, and in this role, the woman has, for once, the ability to control her own destiny. Interestingly, this self-destiny is fulfilled by Dworkin, who perpetuates a male-dominated power structure by using Sade's text to build her case rather than seeking out an alternate interpretation within it.

A more temperate view of Sade's work can be found in Angela Carter's *The Sadeian Woman* (1978), which not only acknowledges the power struggle between the sexes but brings the male-female construction to the forefront. Carter acknowledges that the different sexes can play multiple roles in the Sadian text, but she associates the male with the position of power and the female with that of weakness, regardless of the sex of the characters involved in each role.

Much like Dworkin, Carter classifies Sade's texts as at once pornography and satire and, thus, can appreciate them as functioning on a level beyond that of pure titillation. In spite of their satyric value, Carter cannot classify these works outside the mode of pornography and, in turn, reflects the spirit, if not the letter, of Dworkin's claims. Pornography (synonymous in this critical description with Sade's work) is an endless repetition of male power dominating female weakness. Carter explains this power structure in the following way:

He describes sexual relations in the context of an unfree society as the expression of pure tyranny, usually by men upon women, sometimes by men upon men, sometimes by women upon men and other women; the one constant to all Sade's monstrous orgies is that the whip hand is always the hand with the real political power and the victim is a person who has little or no power at all, or has had it stripped from him. In this schema, male means tyrannous and female means martyred, no matter what the official genders of the male and female beings are.

(27)

By at once acknowledging the importance of the satire, the fluidity of sex roles, and the hierarchy of the power structure, Carter agrees with the hypothesis of sexual predation dictating a high level of gender fluidity, but she then goes on to bind, categorically and without any possibility of fluctuation and without any real explanation, the male sex with power and the female sex with weakness. This point serves as a divergent one between the role of Sade's texts as typical, albeit intelligent and satyric, pornography and their application to a de- or less gendered social structure that is reflected in post-Sadian literature. Seemingly unknowingly, Carter wants to have it both ways: pornography with all its nasty male-dominated stereotypes

and consumptive sexual inequalities but also political satire that is at once prolific and socially challenging. However, if one were to follow Carter's logic to its just end, power would not break down to a sexual binary. The gender of the beings is not to be ignored in Sade's texts but instead to be valorized as an equalizer within the narrative power structure.

The third and final critic to posit a relationship between gender and power in Sade's works is Lucienne Frappier-Mazur in *Writing the Orgy: Power and Parody in Sade* (1991). Frappier-Mazur takes the male-dominated schema to an even more extreme stance. She not only sees the male as master and power-monger but as an eraser of women. The female sex is reduced to its reverential function of the male body, more precisely of the phallus. She writes of sex not as a degendering force but as a reduction of gender to a unified masculine gender in which the female and femininity in general disappear under the weight of the male. "The orgy," for Frappier-Mazur "relegates women to immanence and mirrors their social inferiority by forcing them to 'have no character'" (64). This lack of individuality allows the woman to convert to the desire of the male and to adapt "her" desires to those of the man to whom she is subjugated. In Frappier-Mazur's view, "Sade's novel strongly connects this cliché of pornographic fiction to phallic sovereignty and thus gives the cliché a quite different satiric significance" (64). In a chapter on the hierarchy of power in Sade's orgy scenes, she finds the woman to be an entity that exists to become male; a being who exists as a blank slate waiting and ready to be written over by male desire. The woman exists in a state of fluctuation that requires her to have no characteristics of her own but that allows her to satisfy the other. In reinforcing this concept, she describes the situation in the following way: "Without phallus, without personality, without power, the woman is soft wax" (64). Frappier-Mazur goes on to state that

Sade's predatory characters dream of organizing the orgy "according to the phallogentric goal of oneness," which leads to the reduction of the masculine and feminine genders into a single gender which both is, and aspires to be, male (45). In the absence of a binary that the critic proposes, however, one could question the possibility that this oneness is phallogentric. It is precisely the existence and the rupture with the other that inspires a desire in some characters to reduce the feminine to a non-category, but it cannot fully convert the female to male, because the existence of each is maintained by an ability to transcend the power structure as it is presented by all three of these critics: male power versus female weakness.

While Frappier-Mazur proposes Sade's narrative universe as a world in which the gender binary can be disrupted, she will not allow for the completion of this disruption. There are two possible reasons for this emphasis on male hegemony that pervades the text: the biographical circumstances of the author and the subscription to the continued existence of a male-dominated society. In reference to the latter, Frappier-Mazur never makes any mention of gender equality or the possibility there-of in her work. Each of these critics takes on the question of sex and gender in Sade's sexually explicit texts, but each also fails to take a two-sided approach to the problem. Dworkin classifies Sade as a woman-hater and, in turn, cannot find a sense of equality in these works: Carter brings the woman to the forefront, but chooses to feminize the role of the prey which forces femininity into a position of weakness, and Frappier-Mazur describes a masculinization of the woman. None of these critics acknowledge the possibility of a system that is not structured by sexual difference, but I believe their approach ignores the power of alternate sexes in Sade's work and fails to focus on the philosophical support for the sexual predator's actions. In fact, all three critics take a markedly feminist approach to Sade's works,

but if they were to focus on power rather than sex, the importance of the individual could negate what they see as a male power structure. By associating the woman with the victim, it is the critics who make it impossible for her to achieve pleasure, which makes it equally impossible to gain power. As Foucault explains:

In Sade, sex is without any norm or intrinsic rule that might be formulated from its own nature; but it is subject to the unrestricted law of a power which itself knows no other law but its own; if by chance it is at times forced to accept the order of progressions carefully disciplined into successive days, this exercise carries it to a point where it is no longer anything but a unique and naked sovereignty: an unlimited right of all-powerful monstrosity. (149)

Power rules the Sadian universe, not male or female, but power, and I would add that pleasure is the primary motivator for the exercise of this power. From Dworkin's extremes of repression to Frappier-Mazur's more tempered gender convergence, a feminist approach to Sade ceases to exist the moment that one accepts Sade's sexual predation as a degendering factor. It logically follows that the classification of Sade's text as yet another example of male domination would allow for a continued presence of the feminist agenda. In short, it provides fodder for the cause. The former is a much more pervasive connection of the author's biographical circumstances to the narrations that he produced; while this link can certainly be instructive, it can also lead one to associate the author's sexual exploits with his textual production to such an extent that the motivation behind Sade's writing becomes attributed to his lengthy prison sentence or to his, supposedly, incomparable sexual deviance rather than to a decision made by the author. Frappier-Mazur puts Sade's biographical circumstances at the center of his literary production,



she writes:

Taking the "known dangers of society" as our point of departure in the search for the themes of body pollution and the potential concordance of these agencies [pain and pleasure, agents and victims], we may ask against whom the defilement is directed, or, in other words, who is in danger? . . . The answer to these questions no doubt evolved over the course of Sade's career, but its nature never changed. It is obviously Sade who is in danger, both as an individual and as an aristocrat. (12-13)

There is truth in the statement that Sade was in danger, but the violence in the author's work and the threat posed to him as an individual and to his class as a whole reduce the author's textual choices to an instinctual reaction to his circumstances and, in turn, discredits the work of the author by denying his artistic existence which has the effect of determining his work exclusively according to biographical elements.<sup>59</sup>

Each of these three critiques will be brought to bear on the four categories of comparison that comprise the binary oppositions that exist between *La Nouvelle Justine, ou les Malheurs de la vertu* and *Histoire de Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice*: the divide between vice and virtue, the interactions between men, women and hermaphrodites, the societal reflection of sexual predation, and the relationship between predation and nature. This study of oppositions will raise questions regarding the validity and the usefulness of the critiques outlined by Dworkin, Carter, and Frappier-Mazur by re-orienting the study of Sade's texts from the obvious and overt idea of male domination to one that identifies not a reversal of this power struggle, because the

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<sup>59</sup> It seems quite paradoxical that even though Frappier-Mazur sets out to do a post-structural study of Sade's orgies, her conclusions are often historically oriented with a psychological slant.

male can and does dominate the female at times within the text, but certainly a challenging of it.

The first confrontation of the gender binary comes at the moment when the spark of difference is revealed between Justine and Juliette. Both sisters were born to the same parents, lived a similar existence, and had equal status within the convent where they were sheltered, but when a moment of choice confronts the girls, Juliette willingly chooses pleasure over virtue, while Justine refuses to compromise her virtue, no matter the consequences. This choice is the turning point in the lives of both sisters and a telling indicator of the gender equality that Sade establishes in his work as it establishes the framework for two divergent story lines both with female protagonists. There are two primary ways in which the decision between vice and virtue interacts with predation to allow women to play all of the roles that the above mentioned critics have denied them while still fulfilling those upon which these critics insist: the act of choice and the interaction between sexually divergent characters.

First, and perhaps most crucial, to the degendering process of predation is the act of choice itself. It establishes a level of cerebral freedom that one would not generally associate with young girls of approximately fourteen and fifteen years old in the 18th century. If the claims of Dworkin, Carter, and Frappier-Mazur were unequivocally true, an orphan girl sheltered in a convent and then condemned to be evicted into the world would not have the choice between virtue and vice that Justine and Juliette are accorded. Granted that both girls seem to follow their natural inclinations when making their decisions, either could have chosen to follow the other's path and, so, radically changed the experiences and outcome of her life. The choice of vice pushes Juliette into a position of power because she has chosen the path that will fulfill her desire and give her the most social and sexual freedom, and in turn the most pleasure, whereas,

Justine's choice forces her to constantly defend herself against the corruption that surrounds her and thus lowers her status in the power structure, making her not only a frequent victim but one of whom advantage is easily taken, and one who suffers constant abuse and unhappiness.

An early scene from *La Nouvelle Justine, ou Les Malheurs de la vertu* reveals how Justine and Juliette came to their decisions. Both girls are given twenty-four hours to leave the protection of the abbey where they live, and as they lament their fate, Juliette consoles herself by lifting her skirts to reveal her sex and masturbating in front of Justine.<sup>60</sup> She attempts to teach Justine that the pleasures of the flesh can diminish her sorrow, that the satiation of desire results in heightened pleasure, but the virtuous Justine is horrified at the possibility. Even at this early juncture, Juliette knows that following the path of pleasure would be preferable to the unhappiness of denied desire. Juliette goes on to describe the life of vice that can save them both from hunger and homelessness:

“Tu es folle de t’inquieter, poursuit cette voluptueuse fille, en venant se rasseoir près de Justine; avec la figure et l’âge que nous avons toutes les deux, il est impossible que nous mourions de faim. ... Il faut bien se garder de croire, ajouta-t-elle, que ce soit le mariage qui rende une jeune fille heureuse; captive sous la loi de l’hymen, elle a, avec beaucoup d’humeur à souffrir, une très légère dose de plaisir à attendre; au lieu que, livrée au libertinage, elle peut toujours se garantir des mauvais procédés de l’amant, ou s’en consoler par le nombre.”

(*NJ* 1: 34)

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<sup>60</sup> This act itself can and should be considered as a declaration of power. While Justine is incapable of doing anything to help herself and persists in playing the victim, Juliette takes matters into her own hands, takes control of the situation, and finds a way to console herself, as well as a passage through which she can survive.

In this passage, Juliette rationally speaks to Justine about the value of pleasure. Her comments on marriage reveal a rejection of traditional values and a willingness to ignore social constraints in order to gain status and pleasure. Justine's reaction is consistent with the apogee of virtue that she will prove herself to be. She not only refuses to participate in her sister's plans but equates Juliette's path with death: "Justine frémit de ces discours. Elle dit qu'elle préférerait la mort à l'ignominie" (*NJ* 1: 34-35). Thus, for Justine, the compromise of her virtue would be synonymous with death. In fact, just moments after revealing the entirety of her in-virtuous adventures to her sister and brother-in-law,<sup>61</sup> Justine is struck down by a rogue bolt of lightning. If the god of the pious Justine does exist, this is certainly a metaphysical judgement on the virtuousness of her actions.

Juliette, on the other hand, makes her decision to abandon virtue long before the moment of eviction. In the convent of Panthemont, Juliette begins a descent into vice at a very young age and is spurred on in her course by the mother superior, Madame Delbène, and an acquaintance, Euphrosine, who abandoned her family home for the pleasures of libertinage. Of her initiation into the world of libertinage, Juliette explains:

Douée du tempérament le plus actif, dès l'âge de neuf ans j'avais accoutumé mes doigts à répondre aux désirs de ma tête, et je n'aspirais, depuis cet âge qu'au bonheur de trouver l'occasion de m'instruire et de me plonger dans une carrière dont la nature précoce m'ouvrait déjà les portes avec autant de complaisance.

(*Juliette* 1: 54)

From this passage, the reader learns that not only does Juliette respond to and satisfy the desires

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<sup>61</sup> Up until this point in the text, Justine has always convinced herself that her virtue remains intact. Each time she is violated, she consoles herself by her inability to feel pleasure in the sexual acts that are thrust upon her or in her inability to prevent them.

of her flesh, she does so with relish and seeks to learn new and better ways to fulfill her sexual will. Juliette does not take on the role of the predator by force but by choice, because she finds that it suits her natural inclinations toward vice. While Juliette's case may seem an isolated one, the convent is populated by many women who will appreciate and encourage her libertine desires. In the absence of men, these women learn to find pleasure on their own and with their female comrades. Justine explains the relationship between the women in the convent: "...ce n'est pas la vertu qui les lie, c'est le foutre; on plaît à celle qui bande pour nous, on devient l'amie de celle qui nous branle" (1: 54). There is already, within the walls of the convent, a predatory nature at play, and as such, the Sadian philosophy of the individual's desire taking precedence over the communal good is threatened even in the supposedly sacred environment of the convent. The women use each other for pleasure and often use unwilling victims for their own pleasure when circumstances allow it.

When these two decisions are put into opposition one with the other, it is clear that while nature has predisposed the two protagonists to choose either virtue or vice, the choice is still a conscious one. Justine is not only virtuous; she would rather die than live a life of vice. Juliette refuses virtue on the grounds that it will make her unhappy and concludes that pleasure at any cost is her sole ambition; the need to live a virtuous and moral life at the expense of her own happiness is unthinkable to her.

The act of choice in each case relates directly to the role that each girl will play in the hierarchy of power that exists throughout both narrative universes and that is bound to the act of predation. When Juliette lifts her skirts to masturbate in front of Justine, she is already taking on the predatory role. She is preying on Justine's virtue by attempting to compromise it. Contrarily,

when Justine states that she would prefer death to the life of vice proposed by her sister, she foreshadows the role of victim that she will play during the majority of the narration. It is also possible to see the way in which both Justine and Juliette play a double role. While both girls are victims of the situation into which they have fallen, some would say that Juliette is simultaneously the victim of her female initiators, namely Delbène, and predator of both her sister's virtue and, as the reader will find out later, the young Laurette, whom she deflowers and in turn immolates. The choice of virtue by Justine often puts her into the role of prey, of victim, but it is also true that in making this choice she goes against the grain by selecting the more difficult of the two paths. She shows a strength that is associated with the predator, despite her inability to transform this strength into power. At the end of *La Nouvelle Justine* when she is at risk of being jailed for a crime that she did not commit, Justine's captor offers her a way out but it would require murdering a man who is himself a murdered. Asked if even this would go against her principles, Justine responds:

N'en doutez pas, madame, répondit Justine. Ce n'est pas dans la vue de corriger le crime que vous me proposez cette action; c'est dans le seul motif d'en commettre un vous-même. . . N'eussiez-vous même pour dessein que de venger l'humanité des horreurs de cet homme, vous feriez encore mal de l'entreprendre. (2: 512).

Justine's adherence to the virtuous path earns her a severe beating from her captor la Dubois. Justine is often offered a choice between vice and virtue and were she to choose vice, she could avoid much of the pain that befalls her, but she will not accept this path.

There is, however, a second way in which the act of choice relates to the act of predation, because like the choices of the predators in Sade's works, the only motivation behind this

decision is one of fulfilling the needs of nature, following the natural impulses in order to attain pleasure. Although Justine and Juliette come from the same background, their natures are undoubtedly opposed. While Juliette's penchant for vice is instructed and augmented by the skills that she learns from her initiators, it is in her nature to fulfill the needs of her body, to attain pleasure. Madame Delbène and Euphrosine do instruct Juliette in the arts of libertinage, but Juliette points out that "le germe de tous les vices naquit au fond de mon coeur" (1: 53). The idea that vice comes from the inside of Juliette rather than from the outside confirms that she is, in her own nature, predisposed to vice, that it is her natural state.

Similarly, Justine is of a virtuous nature according to the author's description. She is both "sage et vertueuse," which allows her to look down upon Juliette's behavior with horror. Sade explains that she received "de la nature un caractère sombre et romantique, ... douée d'une tendresse, d'une sensibilité surprenante, au lieu de l'art de finesse de son aînée, elle n'avait qu'une ingénuité, une candeur qui devait la faire tomber dans bien des pièges" (*NJ* 1: 33). Both of these descriptions are made before Justine sets out on her own, distancing herself from her sister because of the dangerous life of debauchery that Juliette represents. It is in Justine's nature to deny the laws of nature in favor of a virtue that Sade demonstrates repeatedly as without reward, but it is her own nature that compels her to rebel against the laws of nature. Juliette, contrarily, chooses to follow the laws of nature by choosing self-satisfaction over any societally imposed law, be it civil or moral. The opening lines to *La Nouvelle Justine* are a testament to the veracity of these claims:

Le chef-d'oeuvre de la philosophie serait de développer les moyens dont la fortune se sert pour parvenir aux fins qu'elle se propose sur l'homme, et de tracer

d'après cela quelques plans de conduite qui pussent faire connaître à ce malheureux individu bipède de la manière dont il faut qu'il marche dans la carrière épineuse de la vie, afin de prévenir les caprices bizarres de cette fortune qu'on a nommée tour à tour Destin, Dieu, Providence, Fatalité, Hasard, toutes dénominations aussi vicieuses, aussi dénudées de bon sens les unes que les autres, et qui n'apportent à l'esprit que des idées vagues et purement objectives. (1: 31)

Knowing, as the reader does from the content of both novels, that Sade's universe is an atheistic one, the fate that he writes of cannot be a path chosen by God, despite the fact that God is one of the names attributed to it. In the absence of a god, the only acceptable substitute for a guiding force in the Sadian universe would be nature. Throughout both *La Nouvelle Justine* and *Histoire de Juliette*, Sade's philosophers consistently deconstruct the myths of religion in order to replace them with a system that can be found in nature, with the laws of the natural world. Sade's libertines go so far as to mock the possible existence of God and, in so doing, enumerate the examples in nature that preclude the existence of such a being.

The choice is thus one that is highly influenced by the nature of Justine's and Juliette's characters, but these characters are defined by fate and, in turn, in the Sadian universe, by nature on a larger scale. On the other hand, Sade seeks the masterwork of a philosophical overlay of nature, an intellectual justification of the natural drives. The decisions made by Justine and Juliette are the epitome of this combination of the philosophical and the natural; based on each girl's decision, she will follow the advice that Sade sets forth in this opening paragraph. Justine's refusal to cede her virtuous lifestyle for one of vice is demonstrated through her denial of the philosophical stances of her abusers and her attempts to convince them that they have gone



astray. Nature has called for her to be a victim, and she finds a philosophical, albeit religious, stance to support her decision to follow nature's will, even if, admittedly, this virtuous philosophy is surmounted by the overall philosophy of Sade's work. Similarly, Juliette accepts openly the philosophy of her cohorts because to follow nature, to prey without hesitation on those who are weaker than she, allows her to find the pleasure she is seeking. The philosophy of individual pleasure overcomes that of social good.

The choice between virtue and vice that Justine and Juliette each face is a means of confirming their roles in the power structure. Physically, they are both beautiful young women, but for Justine, her beauty will cause her nothing but despair, while for Juliette, it will earn her a life of relative comfort and pleasure. Mentally, Juliette is crafty, as a predator should be, while Justine is naive, as is common with easy prey. The act of decision orients each girl towards a cerebral understanding of the fate that nature has dealt her and, as Sade alludes in his opening, helps them to better manipulate the situations that confront them. They have received from nature the gifts that will allow them to fulfill their role in the power structure, but they are also subject to the shifts that can take place in this hierarchy. Despite Juliette's natural inclinations to predation, she will still not be strong enough or crafty enough to escape the possibility of being preyed upon by a more robust, more intelligent predator. Each sister represents one extreme of the power continuum and so reveals that the woman must not be seen as purely the victim in Sade's work. While Dworkin believes that Sade's female characters serve no end other than to be dominated and Carter writes that power is only associated with maleness in the Sadian text, Juliette expertly manipulates both men and women who fall prey to her, but more importantly, she does not suffer in taking these actions. Instead she revels in the physical pleasure that she

receives from the accompanying acts. And despite Frappier-Mazur's claims that there is a disappearance of the woman in Sade's novels, that she is a ball of clay that molds itself to a man's preferences, Justine refuses to bend her virtue to fit her abusers' desires, and similarly, Juliette does not go without satisfaction for her own desires. The mere fact that Juliette has desires of her own contradicts Frappier-Mazur's claim. Finally, the fact that both women refuse to alter their choice to please the other is a confirmation that they are strong characters in their own rights are openly representing two opposing camps, despite their moral distance and their vastly different locations on the food-chain of predation.

The interaction between the sexes is the second and perhaps the most obvious negation of the fallacy of a power structure based on male hegemony. The reader finds men, women, and hermaphrodites of all kinds on various and constantly shifting levels of the power structure that makes up Sade's universe. It is simply not a static man on the top, woman on the bottom construction; no matter how Dworkin, Carter, and Frappier-Mazur choose to justify their stances on male domination, within their own discourses, they are all forced to admit that this construction is at times abandoned in Sade's works. By following three exemplary characters from *La Nouvelle Justine* and *L'Histoire de Juliette*, one can see the mutability of the power relationships and, in turn, of gender. Juliette, Madame d'Esterval, and the Comte de Bressac represent the three sexes as Sade conceives of them, and each also changes from predator to prey and back again. By examining the ways in which each sex interacts with the other two, it is possible to isolate the relationship between sexual predation and gender in order to reconstruct the Sadian power structure without basing the hierarchy on the sex of the individual characters.

Juliette can be taken as a representative of the female in Sade's text; she is beautiful and physically pleasing to her admirers, be they male or female. Although she may not be considered the most typical female character when one considers the overall number of women who serve as prey in Sade's text, she is typical of a character who serves as both prey and predator. As has already been shown, she is capable of playing both the role of the predator and that of the prey in a way that is inconceivable to the critics discussed above, because they discount the possibility of flexibility within the power structure. However, there is even more significance to be found in her various roles than it may at first seem; Juliette's interactions with the other sexes demonstrate her ability not only to play two alternate roles but to play two roles at the same time. Instead of shifting genders, she is actually both genders simultaneously, as she can be playing to different sexual roles with respect to different individuals at the same time. She takes pleasure in both roles and transcends the boundaries of gender as she does so. She thus adds a layer of dimension to the mutation of predator and prey, because she sometimes chooses to take the role of prey in order to heighten her sexual experience. The critical approaches of Dworkin, Carter, and Frappier-Mazur portray the woman as an unthinking victim who is adrift and incapable of exercising control over her situation, but Juliette is exactly the opposite. In these moments of duality, Juliette's ability to make decisions about her own destiny helps to nullify the idea that the woman must play the role of victim. She puts her own pleasure above the pleasure of her partner. That is not to say that she does not seek to please her partner in these moments as well, but she does not do so at any cost to herself; she enjoys her dual role as both predator and prey when she is able to manipulate the situation to her advantage.

One example of the complex, chameleonic relationship between Juliette and her male companions is found in the encounters between Juliette and Saint-Fond. When the two meet for the first time, Juliette allows herself to become Saint-Fond's prey, because it will be beneficial to her own cause, permitting her to gain freedom and escape criminal charges. In this first encounter with Saint-Fond, Juliette masters her own feelings in order to comply with his sexual demands. Their relationship begins with Juliette in the role of prey. She explains:

Et quelles que fussent celles [les répugnances] que j'éprouvais, je les vainquis ; mon intérêt m'en faisait une loi. Je fis tout ce que désirait ce libertin : je lui suçai les couilles, je me laissai souffleter, péter dans la bouche, chier sur la gorge, cracher et pisser sur le visage, tirailler le bout des tétons, donner des coups de pied au cul, des croquignoles, et, définitivement, foutre en cul, où il ne fit que de s'exciter, pour me décharger après dans la bouche, avec l'ordre positif d'avalier son sperme. (*Juliette* 1: 248)

In this scene, she is a victim; she represents everything that the feminist critics have found reprehensible in Sade's work. She is at the mercy of her circumstances, much the same as Justine, but from this point she is able to manipulate the terms of her relationship with Saint-Fond through her own compliance with his sexual demands. However, the fact that she makes a decision to allow this to happen because it works to her advantage shows that she is not simply a victim. She can play the role of the victim while still reaping the benefits of her circumstances, which would not be possible if she took the unyielding standpoint that Justine represents. The true disconnect between the existing analysis of this situation and the rest of the text comes when Juliette takes it upon herself to arrange a false attack upon Saint-Fond in order to increase his

sexual enjoyment and satisfaction by arousing his fear. She orders the demission of Saint-Fond from predator to prey, and he enjoys the shift in roles. Just as his transition is seamless, Juliette has passed from prey to predator even though she is not yet using her own body to prey on Saint-Fond. She is the creator and the controller of this fantasy rape. She decides to actively attack Saint-Fond, to go from his victim to his dominator.

At this juncture in the text, Saint-Fond has just stomped two babies to death while sodomizing their mother. All of them were impoverished and starving, because, knowing full well that he was innocent of any crime, Saint-Fond had condemned the patriarch of the family to jail and then to a death sentence. He shivers and declares his extreme cowardice to Juliette when he sees two armed men approaching. These men proceed to tie Saint-Fond to a tree, pull down his pants, whip him, sodomize him and then exchange roles in order to whip and sodomize him a second time. After what would normally be a harrowing experience, he responds to Juliette in the following way:

O Juliette, je ne cesserai de te le dire, tu es divine! ... Mais sais-tu que j'ai eu bien peur! Il est délicieux de donner à ses nerfs cette première commotion avant que de leur imprimer celle de la volupté: voilà de ces gradations que les sots ignorent et qui ne devraient être connues que de gens tels que nous." (*Juliette* 1: 276)

Thus, despite the fact that Juliette generally plays a subordinate role in her relationship with Saint-Fond, in this case she arranges for his bondage and rape and willingly submits herself to his sexual fancies, but she suffers no ills from his mistreatment and instead comes to enjoy it. While this may at first seem to confirm Frappier-Mazur's claim that the woman replaces her own desires with those of the man, it must be taken into consideration that despite the fact that Saint-

Fond enjoys the staged attack, he never expressed this desire to Juliette before this encounter. It is not that her desires have been replaced with his, but, in fact, that his desires conform to hers. She constructs a situation in which Saint-Fond is abused, and she is allowed to participate. The fact that Saint-Fond's sexual desires are met does not preclude the possibility of Juliette's own desires being enacted and fulfilled. It is also very telling that Saint-Fond seems to put Juliette on equal footing with himself when he explains that pleasures such as those experienced in this situation can only be experienced by "gens tels que nous." By using the *nous* form, Saint-Fond is elevating Juliette to the role of an equal regardless of her sex. She has power within the narration that the critics would discount through their feminist critiques of the text.

Juliette's relationships with other women in the text are equally as fluid as those that she maintains with men. Early in the text, Juliette is introduced to sexual pleasure under the tutelage of Madame Delbène and, in this relationship, takes on the role of prey. Madame Delbène instructs Juliette both intellectually and physically in the ways of the predator, in the satisfaction of self, in pleasure; she serves as a role model to the impressionable Juliette. Delbène frequently takes young girls from the convent and uses them to meet her own sexual needs. On the first afternoon that Juliette finds herself alone with Delbène and her friends, she is molested by the mother superior but instead of recoiling, she enjoys the act and participates in it. Sade describes the scene from Juliette's point of view: "Au sein de la plus tendre ivresse, la Delbène m'emporte sur son lit et me dévore de baisers" (56). Madame Delbène preys on Juliette in much the same way that an animal devours its prey, but instead of devouring her outright, she devours her with kisses and brings her to orgasm. Juliette is certainly a victim of Delbène in the physical sense

but is never tormented by this victimization. In fact, she does not even perceive herself as being a victim, because the role is so immensely pleasing to her.

Not only does Delbène initiate Juliette in this way, but she also teaches her that religious doctrine is a myth designed to control humankind, to rob him of his instincts in favor of socially bound expectations. It is this mental liberation as much as the physical one that allows Juliette to take on the role of predator, to inflict her desires upon the other without the burden of remorse. Juliette progresses quickly in the role of predator, and when Delbène offers her the opportunity to choose a victim upon which she can experiment, Juliette is in a state of frenzied desire as she waits for the act to take place. She is no longer a victim of circumstance but a victimizer who gains pleasure by taking advantage of another's misfortunes. Juliette chooses Laurette for her victim: "Son enfance (à peine avait-elle dix ans), sa jolie petite mine éveillée, l'éclat de sa naissance, tout m'irritait... tout m'enflammait pour elle" (1: 76). Juliette's desire for pleasure at the expense of another person shows that she has passed from a passive participant in these acts to an active predator that disregards everything except the attainability, the powerlessness of the victim. The use of words such as *s'irriter* and *s'enflammer* show the ferocity of the desire that has grown within Juliette over a very short time. She comes of age as a predator and physically dominates the young Laurette as she robs her of her virginity:

Cependant le déchirement est affreux: Laurette n'a pas encore dix ans, et mon membre postiche a huit pouces de tour sur douze de long. Les encouragements qu'on me donne, l'irritation dans laquelle je suis, l'extrême désir que j'ai de consommer cet acte libertin: tout me fait mettre à l'opération la même activité, la même chaleur qu'eût employées l'amant le plus vigoureux. (1: 135)

It is evident in this passage that Juliette is complicit in this act despite the fact that Delbène and others are present and taking part in the process. The words *irritation* and *extrême désir* show motivation on Juliette's part that cannot be denied. It is a fitting contradiction to Laurette's suffering that Juliette has herself just been penetrated for the first time and found tremendous pleasure in the act. In the opposition of these two deflowerings, one can see the extent of the difference between Juliette's "victimization" and that of Laurette. It is also evident that a character, in this case Juliette, can play the roles of predator and prey within the same orgy scene. She is first preyed upon and then predated Laurette.

Juliette's role as woman and her capacity to assume the role of predator are a key to the undoing of the feminist critical approach. One cannot question that Juliette is defined by her sex, but that definition does not arbitrarily place her in the role of victim. She surmounts this superficial classification, because while she is female, she is not gendered. Her actions are not those of a woman, man or hermaphrodite, but those of a predator. She preys on her victims, and when she is not powerful enough, she is preyed upon. Sex, however, is not a determining factor in the hierarchy; if it were, Juliette would not be able to assume the role of predator so effortlessly and certainly not at a point in her life when any power that she might have comes directly from another woman.

From the male perspective, the comte de Bressac plays an equally degendering role in the story of Justine but from the opposite end of the sexual spectrum. From the critical point of view, Bressac is a man and as such should be in an infallible position of power. While he does certainly play the role of the predator and manipulator, he also puts himself in the more passive role of prey in his relationships with other men. From a modern point of view, Bressac would be



categorized as homosexual, or at least bisexual, because he prefers to engage in sexual activity only with men and most preferably only in the passive role of the penetrated rather than the penetrator. However, while it can certainly be argued that Bressac is not the typical male character in Sade's work, his interactions with the sexes raise even greater questions than those of the typical man precisely because of the qualities that separate him from his peers. While the argument can always be, and often is, made that Juliette is financed, supported, and free only thanks to her relationships with men, no such argument can be made for Bressac's character. No man who is capable of victimizing a woman, as Bressac's character does, despite his homosexual tendencies, should ever desire to take on the female role or to equate himself with a woman if the feminist approach to Sade's text holds true.

When Justine first encounters Bressac, she stumbles upon him in the act of being sodomized by his valet. And while the act is utterly consensual, Bressac remains passive, adamantly refusing to take on the role of the penetrator. This man who hates women puts himself in the role of the woman in order to find pleasure and utterly rejects the supposed role of the man. "Le jeune maître fut toujours femme; et quoiqu'il fit paraître un fort beau vit, que branlait le laquais, tout en le foutant, et qu'il pût par conséquent devenir homme à son tour, il n'eut pas même l'air d'en concevoir un instant le désir" (*NJ* 1: 110). Sexually speaking, Bressac puts himself in the female position according to Sade's feminist critics; he is certainly not in this sexual act the predator because his partner, the valet, engages willingly with him and plays the active role by penetrating his master. If Bressac plays any role in this sex act, it would have to be the role of prey; even though he willingly submits to this role, he still relinquishes the power that critics would associate with his sex. As the quote above says directly, he could well have

"become" the man but that he simply did not have the desire. He preferred the role of the woman. Justine who has spied all of this behavior from a distance is then subjected to an act of predation at the hands of both men, and although, she is not physically penetrated by either man at this juncture, she is stripped, manhandled, and suspended between four trees before being taken into servitude by Bressac. It is an impotent act of predation but certainly sexual in nature and having at its root the powerlessness of the victim.

Bressac's hatred of women is all the more interesting when put into dialogue with his latent desire to become one. He states outright that he detests women, and on many occasions, he refuses the possibility of having sex with a woman. He despises women to such an extent that he punishes his mother by having her whipped and sodomized by his valet and then sodomizing her himself before finally killing her. He will also sodomize Justine in the course of an orgy at his uncle's castle, but the only woman that he finds of any true interest is Madame d'Esterval who is a hermaphrodite with an elongated clitoris which give the impression of a penis. In spite of all of this outward despise for women and the female body, Bressac explains to Justine the reasons behind his preference for men:

Si tu pouvais en connaître les charmes, si tu pouvais comprendre ce qu'on éprouve à la douce illusion de n'être plus qu'une femme! ... qu'il est délicieux d'être la putain de tous ceux qui veulent de vous! et pourtant sur ce point au dernier période le délire et la prostitution, d'être successivement, dans le même jour, la maîtresse d'un crocheteur, d'un valet, d'un soldat, d'un cocher; d'en être tour à tour chéri, caressé, jaloué, menacé, battu; tantôt victorieux dans leurs bras, et tantôt victime à leurs pieds. (*NJ* 1: 118)

As is evident from this passage, Bressac's character is bicephalous in nature with regards to the role of the woman; he seeks to have power but also to be stripped of it. He is a predator but wants to be preyed upon, to relinquish his power. The internal conflict in Bressac's character is revelatory because it allows the reader to see the weakness that is inherent within this predator. Reflecting upon the feminist critique, Bressac can be seen to support the argument of unquestionable male hegemony if one looks only at his outward behavior toward women, but when one considers his inner motivation for these actions and his desire to be a woman when compared to other men, it is difficult to justify Bressac's valorization of being a woman and taking the woman's role in the sexual act. If the adoption of the woman's role would strip Bressac of power to such an extent that he would not be able to maintain his social role, it seems unlikely that he would glorify this role. I can therefore hypothesize that the gender shift which takes place in Bressac's sexual acts cannot be damaging to his social standing. This desire to reunite masculinity and femininity, to be both the penetrated and the penetrator simultaneously reveals not a male hegemony but a leveling of genders of which Bressac is a key component and thus an opponent of the feminist critique when his character is considered in its entirety.

While Bressac may not be a typical male character with regards to his feelings toward women, the massacre of Cloris, a seemingly typical man, by Saint-Fond presents the reader with another example of the importance of the power relationship outweighing that of the sexual one. Cloris' wife and daughter, Julie, are chained, raped, whipped, sodomized, and eventually decapitated while the restrained Cloris must watch and then participate. Cloris, despite his sex and his superior strength, is submitted to these same tortures by Saint-Fond and his henchman Delcour (*Juliette* 1: 351-60). It is therefore not the sex of the players that determines their roles

as either predator or prey but instead their strength that allows them to take the role of predator or their weakness that condemns them to the role of prey. While the predation in this scene is committed primarily by Saint-Fond and Delcour, it must also be noted that it is Juliette who has arranged for the entire orgy to take place, and although her compliance with Saint-Fond's ideas is certainly to her advantage, she has no scruples that prevent her from arranging and participating in these events.

The final example of a character that serves as a degendering force, rather than acting in support of the binary, is the hermaphrodite as represented by Madame d'Esterval. She would seem to support Frappier-Mazur's argument that Sade seeks to masculinize the women in the text, because though she lives as a woman, her body has many masculine characteristics. She is tall and muscular with a hairy chest and an elongated, penis-like clitoris. Sade describes her in the following way:

une grande et belle femme d'environ trente-six ans ; excessivement brune ; les yeux d'un éclat étonnant ; la taille belle et fine ; les cheveux du plus beau noir ; velue comme un homme ; point de gorge ; le cul petit, mais bien coupé ; le con sec et pourpré ; le clitoris long de trois pouces et gros à proportion ; la jambe parfaitement belle ; infiniment d'imagination, de vivacité ; des talents, de l'instruction ; très scélérate, et tribade au suprême degré. (*NJ* 2: 295)

Madame d'Esterval is a combination of both woman and man, bearing the physical characteristics of both, and her behavior mirrors the duality that her body portrays. During sex, she can be penetrated both vaginally and anally, but she is also capable of penetrating her victims as if she were a man. This ability allows her to take on the role of the penetrator and even to

sodomize Bressac. Through Monsieur d'Esterval, Sade explains the situation to Bressac: “ma femme t'en servira quand tu voudras: elle a le plus beau cul et le goût le plus grand pour y loger des vits... un clitoris d'ailleurs plus gros que le doigt, et par le moyen duquel elle te rendra tout ce qu'il te plaira lui donner” (*NJ* 2: 115). The use of the verb *rendre* shows that she is capable of taking action in the same way as a man. The result is two sexually amorphous characters that trade the roles of predator and prey back-and-forth with each other, but each of them also serves as predator of other characters.

The role of Madame d'Esterval is similar to that of Bressac in that their characters are both one sex in the view of the external world and another variant of that sex in their internal relationships; while Bressac's transformation is purely behavioral, that of Madame d'Esterval is both physical and behavioral. Although the physical anomalies associated with Madame d'Esterval confirm Frappier-Mazur's argument of masculinization, the results are arguably very different. The role of the masculinized woman when put into dialogue with the feminized male character of Bressac is quite different than the character of Madame d'Esterval taken in isolation. Taking both cases into account, it could be seen as an attempt by Sade to push the gender of the character to the opposite extreme from that of the sex of the individual. The leveling of gender that is evidenced by the relationships between the sexes also reflects upon the leveling of the social power structure.

Despite the inherently unstable quality of these sexual variations, those in the above mentioned characters combine to create a stable environment within which gender can be examined. The differences can be traced directly back to the opposing choices of vice and virtue made by Justine and Juliette. Those characters who accept vice are free to follow their instincts

toward predation and can thus exercise their power over any equal or weaker character in the text, because their pleasure is of the utmost concern. By contrast, those characters who choose virtue over their natural desires are constrained by both religious and social conceptions of right and wrong and are therefore unable to dominate a character who has chosen vice, even when they are physically better endowed to do so.

*Les Infortunes de la vertu*, the first incarnation of Justine's story, was published in 1787 just two years before the storming of the Bastille. The second version, *Justine*, and the third, *La Nouvelle Justine, ou Les Malheurs de la vertu*, were published in 1791 and 1797 consecutively. *L'Histoire de Juliette, ou Les Prospérités du vice* appeared four years later in 1801. The fact that the publication dates of these works straddle the years of the French Revolution creates the possibility for a parallel between the upheaval of the social power structure of late 18th century France and the disintegration of a power structure based on sex.

The definition of revolution includes the notion of a power struggle; be it governmental or social, a revolution consists of the uprising of one group against another. The French Revolution being no different, the class struggle that marked this period of history is also presented in Sade's text through sexual predation. The higher classes tend to be composed almost entirely of predatory characters while the lower classes are most often prey. Were this relationship entirely consistent, the power structure would be easily definable and predictable, but, as one finds in Sade's texts, there is room within the existing hierarchy for a shift in values if not in the system itself.

Many of Sade's sexual predators in *Justine* and *L'Histoire de Juliette* come from the upper class. They are either noble, rich, members of the clergy, or highly educated. It is easier

for these characters to prey on their victims for two major reasons: first, they are involved in a network of powerful people, including lawyers and judges, which not only protects them from prosecution but can be turned against a member of the lower class who is unwilling or resistant to the desires of the predator. Second, they have unlimited funds that allow them to travel, to seclude themselves, to hire facilitators, such as lackeys, who are used to entrap victims, and to simply buy-off both objects of prey and their families. In *Sade / Fourier / Loyola*, Roland Barthes confirms the lack of social determiners among the prey in Sade's works but presents a link between the libertine and the upper class. Although this connection would seem to link the predator to the upper class as well, it instead achieves a necessary degree of differentiation between predation and *libertinage*. Barthes describes the social delineation between victim and master in the following way:

This grouping [of Sadian humanity] does not include social division, although Sade is not oblivious to it. Victims are of every rank, and if noble subjects are given a primacy of rank, it is because 'bon ton' is a prime operator of rank, owing to the victim's increased humiliation: ... And if the masters themselves always belong to the upper classes (princes, popes, bishops, nobles, or wealthy commoners), it is because one cannot be a libertine without money. (23)

Consequently, and contrary to Barthes assertion, while this structural hierarchy is a commonality in the stories of Justine and Juliette, sexual predation is not attributable exclusively to the upper class. As will be shown, the importance lies not on the social status or even the wealth of the predator but on its ability to disregard constraint in favor of the fulfillment of its own desires.

The existence of predators from lower classes and the valorization of both thievery and the brigand serve only to dismantle the construct of a unilateral power structure.

Justine's inability to abandon her religious beliefs, her virginity, and in turn, the social constraints that she accepts to have imposed upon her is fundamentally opposed to Sade's insistence on the laws of nature in his philosophical statements. When contrasted with the moral, sexual, and social flexibility of Juliette's character, the conflict between the laws of society and the laws of nature comes to the forefront. Aristocracy can facilitate predation, but it is not a defining factor, because Sade promotes a universe in which the laws of nature prevail, in which each person should take what he or she wants or needs whenever the opportunity arises. In both novels, it continues to be the most powerful player in any given relationship that preys on the weaker player, and this hierarchy is neither determined by sex, nor social class, nor wealth. Despite the fact that these two distinctions can sway the Sadian power structure, they cannot and do not unequivocally define it.

If one looks first at *La Nouvelle Justine*, one finds that Justine, the daughter of a formerly rich banker, is preyed upon consecutively by the following characters: M. Dubourg and La Delmonse, la Dubois and her band of *brigands*, and Saint-Florent, a wealthy merchant and supposed relation of Justine. By way of Madame Desroches, a devious and capitalistic procurer of sexual pleasure, M. Dubourg and La Delmonse, one male and one female but both affluent and of the upper-class, abuse of Justine to varying degrees. When their efforts to deflower Justine are thwarted, they have her prosecuted for theft, and while in prison, she makes the acquaintance of la Dubois, the leader of a troop of bandits who succeed in freeing both women by burning down the prison. Justine's allegiance to la Dubois leads her to stay with the bandits



despite their questionable morals, and she is there subjected to the sexual fantasies of Brise-Barre, Sans-Quartier, and Coeur-de-Fer. Yet again, fate intercedes and Justine remains a virgin. The arrival of a traveler on horseback distracts Coeur-de-Fer, who is on the verge of raping Justine, and after capturing the interloper and threatening his life, the over-agitated bandit must put off his plan to prey on Justine until the following morning. During the night, Justine escapes with Saint-Florent, the now captive traveler, but the seeming gentleman will be the predator who finally succeeds in taking the heroine's prized virginity.

By examining this consecutive string of predators, it can be shown that the structure of power is not a product of social class but instead of individual power. Monsieur Dubourg and Madame Delmonse are both wealthy, upper-class characters, and thus, the imposed hierarchy of social classes is maintained in the opening scenes of debauchery. However, the shift in the power structure is quite drastic with the transition to the second group of predators that Justine encounters, because la Dubois is not only of the lower class but also a thief and a murderer who surrounds herself with men who cannot control their primal sexual urges. And finally, Saint-Florent, a very wealthy merchant and purportedly Justine's own uncle, rapes Justine after knocking her unconscious, because despite the fact that she saved his life, he cannot, or more exactly does not feel the need, to control his sexual urges. Both the highest and lowest members of the class system are represented in the acts of predation that take place both in *La Nouvelle Justine* and in *L'Histoire de Juliette*. The contexts within which each act of predation takes place are quite different, but the predators themselves embody two extremes of the social class system while existing at least temporarily within the same register of the Sadian power structure.

These acts of predation can be equated with the crimes committed by la Dubois and her troop of bandits in that they are the enactment of individual desires with little or no regard for the other. La Dubois and Coeur-de-Fer both seek to explain the value of crime to Justine. Restraint should only be exercised when it benefits the criminal, because to refuse to act for the good of another being would be to deny oneself the satisfaction of consumption, to subjugate one's own needs to those of another. La Dubois justifies the criminal actions of her troop to Justine in the following way:

Tant que l'on punira les voleurs, ils assassineront pour ne pas être découverts. Où prenez-vous d'ailleurs, continua cette mégère, que deux cents louis ne valent pas six meurtres? Il ne faut jamais apprécier les choses que par la relation qu'elles ont avec nos intérêts. ... conséquemment, si le plus petit intérêt s'offre à nous avec l'un de ces cas, nous devons, sans aucun remords, le déterminer de préférence en notre faveur; ... parce qu'il n'y a aucune proportion raisonnable entre ce qui nous touche et ce qui touche les autres. (*NJ* 1: 87)

This discourse by la Dubois can be applied as judiciously to predation as to thievery or murder, because the predator thinks only of its own desire, and the sole consideration that it gives the fear or resistance of its victim is as an added stimulation to its sexual pleasure. Mme Dubois explanation reflects the laws of nature that Sade underlines throughout his text, because it exemplifies the following key concepts: the good of the individual takes precedence over the good of the group, societally imposed laws are abandoned in favor of those activities that fulfill the individual's desires, and religion is abandoned as being a chimeric obsession that only serves to constrain its believers. The difference between Justine and her sister is that while Justine

resists this philosophical standpoint, Juliette embraces it. Justine refuses to follow the philosophical standpoint that Sade touts throughout these two novels, and thus, she is continuously in a place of weakness vis à vis the other characters and must suffer for her failure to conform to the system of self-fulfillment at any cost. However, since both characters are female, it is evident that it is not the sex of the character that brings weakness but instead the philosophical and intellectual standpoint.

Juliette, on the other hand, encounters many of the same situations as her sister. She is preyed upon, man-handled, whipped, and raped, but she never suffers the same level of humiliation or shame as Justine, because she chooses to participate in the system and, thus, allows herself to enjoy fulfilling the desires of other libertines just as she enjoys using others to fulfill her own needs. In the fourth part of *L'Histoire de Juliette, ou les Propérités du vice*, Juliette recounts a scene in which she and three other women are abused, albeit willingly and for profit but still abused, by an ambassador:

Bernis releva contre moi une espèce de tablette d'acier semblable au banc d'une stalle, et dont la partie qui touchait mon ventre était aussi tranchante qu'une lame de rasoir. Pressée par cette tablette, vous imaginez bien que je rejetai mes reins en arrière; voilà précisément ce que voulait Bernis: je n'avais jamais fait si beau cul. Armé d'une poignée de verges, le paillard commence à me flageller ... heureusement que, faite à cette cérémonie dont je faisais souvent mes délices, je pus sans inconvénient endurer toute l'opération. (*Juliette 2*: 89)

In this scene, Juliette speaks of her torture with zeal stating that she had never done so well and that she was easily able to withstand the pain because it often plays a role in her sexual pleasures.

Her ability to mix sexual pleasure with the pain inflicted upon her by others allows her to be victimized without suffering the trauma of victimization. Unlike Justine, she accepts to take part in the fulfillment of another person's libertine desires and even when these experiences cause pain, Juliette does not suffer. She explains to one of the Italian libertines that the "femmes de notre rang qui, peut-être aussi riches que toi, dis-je en m'adressant au duc, se prostituent par goût et non par avarice" (*Juliette* 2: 28). Juliette prostitutes herself for pleasure rather than for money and in so doing allows herself to be victimized by a predator while still enjoying the sexual acts themselves.

It is in this opposition between Justine and Juliette that the argument of the feminist critics loses authority, because if, as has been shown, Juliette participates to the system of predation, she cannot be lumped into the broader category of abused women created by Dworkin and Carter. She also retains all of the qualities of a woman and, unlike Madame d'Esterval, cannot be seen as the masculinized woman from Frappier-Mazur's hypothesis. In *Sade / Fourier / Loyola*, Barthes breaks down Sade's text into a grammatical equation that resists categorization by sexual practice. He writes:

In the scene [the orgy], all functions can be interchanged, everyone can and must be in turn agent and patient, whipper and whipped, coprophagist and coprophagee, etc. This is a cardinal rule, first because it assimilates Sadian eroticism into a truly formal language, where there are only classes of actions, not groups of individuals, which enormously simplifies its grammar: the subject of the action (in the grammatical sense) can just as readily be a libertine, an assistant, a victim, a wife; second, because it keeps us from basing the grouping of Sadian

society on the particularity of sexual practices . . . Since everyone can be either sodomist or sodomized, agent and patient, subject and object, since pleasure is possible anywhere, with victims as well as masters, we must look elsewhere for the rationale behind the Sadian grouping, which the ethnography of this society has not thus far enabled us to discover. (30-31)

While I largely agree with Barthes, I would add to his explanation the one category that he overlooks: it is not simply the function of the individual that is interchangeable but instead the individual as an individual. When not in control of the pursuit and reception of pleasure, the individual him or herself becomes inconsequential, including that individual's sexual identity which becomes as interchangeable as the roles he or she plays. From a grammatical perspective, Barthes explains admirably the mutability of roles between predator and prey in Sade's work, but in opposition to Barthes' categorization, it is possible to define the rationale behind these sexual groupings if one accepts that they are not static but ever-changing in nature. While the individual characters may play different roles throughout the text or even in the same orgy scene, each episode is guided by the same principles: pleasure and power. In each of these orgiastic scenes, the most powerful player is allowed to enact their sexual desires on the rest of the group. Power in this sense can be defined in any combination of ways: social class, physical strength, wealth, or political rank. However, the definition of power is no more static than the power structure itself; there is not a recognized set of parameters by which it is determined, but instead a context dependent shifting paradigm. The change in power from one principle player to another does not alter the overall structure. The group members, the prey, either participate

willingly or unwillingly, either enjoy the pain or suffer it, but they always cede to the desire of the principle player even when that means altering their own identity.<sup>62</sup>

In conclusion, the fact that the sex acts in Sade's work make up the majority of his contemporary cultural identity<sup>63</sup> reveals that their influence is important not only on a synchronic level but also on a diachronic one, and also that there is more at stake than sex itself. The scenes of explicit sex in Sade's text are cerebrally oriented through a philosophical standpoint; they are physical representations of the principles laid out by Sade through his libertine characters. When the scandalous inflection of the sex acts is taken away and the philosophy is laid bare, one is left with a constant struggle for power that is demonstrated through the character of the Sadian sexual predator. This power struggle, though outwardly couched in the act of sex, implicates a change in the gender binary through the mutable characteristics of the actors and their deeds. Sade's characters have physical sexual attributes that seem to define them, but they lack a definitive gender, because Sade's universe does not allow for gender to be stabilized along sexual lines. His libertine characters act instinctually, without allowing the societal constraints on their sexual behavior to inhibit their acts, but the decision to ignore social and religious boundaries is not an unthinking one; it is the philosophical unleashing of the natural sexual drive. It is thus not the female characters who must be victimized and destroyed, but instead the virtuous characters because they refuse to elevate nature over social constraint. The power that rules the Sadian universe is the philosophical justification of pleasure which cannot be achieved if one refuses to

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<sup>62</sup> Justine's steadfast refusal to alter her moralistic views may seem to contradict this idea, but when one considers that these shifts last only for the duration of the sexual encounter, her inability to stand her ground physically or philosophically against the Sadian sexual predator reveals her weakness within boundaries of the sexual act.

<sup>63</sup> See the reference to the definition of "sadism" in Chapter 1.

accept the good of the individual over the good of society. When the Sadian sexual predator chooses its victim, it does so with the specification not of a particular sex but that the victim must be the individual, regardless of sexual identity, who can bring the greatest realization of pleasure within the given situation.

While Andrea Dworkin, Angela Carter, and Lucienne Frappier-Mazur take a stance against this fluid organization of the power structure and cling to the sexual binary, it is difficult to ignore the contrary evidence that can be found in *La Nouvelle Justine* and *L'Histoire de Juliette*. The ideological constraints of pure feminist criticism seem to overlook the possibility of transcending the binary sexual opposition that underlines their endeavor. They have aligned themselves against Sade, the man and the author, because they find some acts of sex, both in his personal life and his work, to be divergent from their principles as feminists, but this precludes them from looking beyond the acts themselves to the larger implications that they produce in relation to gender. Ironically, they are following Sade's philosophical advice despite their mistrust of his work; they are taking his work and using it to their own advantage. If they were to consider the sexual brutality found in the Sadian universe as a means of loosening the bonds of gender constraint, it would be revealed as an equalizer rather than a divisive element. While this idea will be highly contested, it is important to remember the power of the women within the Sadian narration; Juliette, Clairwil, Mme Delbène, Mme d'Esterval and many more female characters play roles of tantamount importance in Sade's work and in the representation of his philosophy that their role should not be discounted.

In the end, the only stable aspect of gender in Sade's texts is precisely its instability, its indefinability, because in the Sadian universe, there is no sexual division. While the critics are

intent on examining the role of sexual difference, the characters within the narration are capable of ignoring this difference if it conforms to the philosophical ideals by bringing heightened pleasure to the predator. Sade's characters are at once all genders and in turn without gender. It is not an absorption of the feminine, as Frappier-Mazur and Carter purport, but instead a leveling of feminine and masculine that negates the supremacy of either. The Sadian sexual predator uses its prey indiscriminately despite individual sexual preferences; it is an equal opportunity system of power over weakness, of personal philosophy over socially accepted morality, where sex only plays a preferential role rather than a definitive one. Of those predators who interact with Justine and Juliette, their desires to satiate themselves sexually are never questioned, despite their amorphous and mutable nature concerning societally imposed gender constructs. In Sade's power structure, there is no gender; there is only consumption and satiation, with no respect paid to the sexual binary.



## V. BODIES IN MOTION: SADE'S PORTRAYAL OF THE DE-SEXED BODY

The body, through its sex, its shape, its perception, its penetrability, helps to define the individual from the outside in, giving character to the flesh and solidifying the boundaries of being. Male or female, masculine or feminine, the body influences the way one perceives one's self as well as the way one is perceived. The shape of the body, lending itself, or not, to the presupposed attributes of one sex or the other, helps to distinguish the individual. The extent to which the body accepts to be penetrated and the means by which this penetration occurs are generally also seen as markers of identity: homosexual, heterosexual, bi-sexual, sodomite, dominance roles. The body and its interaction with social perceptions create a seemingly stable connection between the individual and his or her society, between the mind, as a thinker of that society, and the body, as an agent of that society. While these categories are usually stable and clear cut for the norm, the Sadian universe reveals the extent to which the body can fluctuate and that the repercussions of this fluidity can overwhelm and eventually condemn this purported stability.

In the last chapter, the relationship between power and fluidity in the Sadian narration revealed an unstable universe where predator and prey were able to reverse roles in the pursuit of enhanced pleasure and where the Sadian sexual predator reigned supreme regardless of physical sex. There are two principle ways in which gender fluidity is furthered within this universe through the exploration of the body: sodomy and the representation of the body. First, the act of

anal sodomy and the universality of the anus enhance the interchangeability of the victim and in turn of the two sexes. By focusing on the orifice of sexual pleasure that is outwardly the most similar in all sexes, Sade allows for his sexual predators to partake of victims of all sexes, and by giving preference to sodomy, he dismantles not only the gender binary but the social and religious reasoning behind monogamy and carnal restraint. As will be shown throughout this chapter, sodomy frequently referred to anal intercourse between two men but was also used as a blanket term for any behaviors that were considered against nature including acts such as zoophilia; however, it is clear by his praise for and the abundance of anal sex in his works that when Sade uses the term, he is referring to anal sex between two individuals, and I will, therefore, apply the term in accordance with his usage. Second, the representation of the body within the Sadian narration serves to destabilize existing expectations. The ability of the body to change in order to increase the sexual predator's pleasure is emboldened by the malformations of the body that present opportunities for enhanced pleasure, and together, through these mutations, the Sadian universe reveals the importance of the body as a means of disrupting the sexed binary and, in turn, the gender binary. Finally, through the study of the importance of sodomy and the body within the Sadian narration, the unimportance of gender becomes evident through its ability to be changed. There is no male or female, no masculine or feminine within Sade's work, only predator and prey and even the stability of this is situational at best.

In this chapter, I will investigate the intersection between sodomy and gender in Sade's narrative universe and then define the relationship between gender, the body, and the Sadian sexual predator. In the first half of the chapter, beginning with a definition of sodomy and its place in the Enlightenment, I will explore, through textual examples, the function of sodomy as a

disruptive force in the Sadian universe at large and more specifically as a destabilizer of gender. Through the character of the Sadian sexual predator, the act of sodomy serves as a representation of Sade's philosophical standpoint with respect to individual satisfaction trumping social well-being. In the second half of the chapter, I will show how the sexual body within the Sadian narration is altered through natural and inflicted deformities in such a way that gender is destabilized while the importance of individual sexual satisfaction, as the satiation of natural desire, is simultaneously brought to the forefront. Whether a natural deformity or one created through predation, the non-normative body within Sade's fictional universe is used to increase the predator's sexual pleasure.

Sodomy is an unspeakable act of which Sade not only writes unrelentingly but elevates unapologetically into a privileged position throughout his works. Many of his characters consider it to be the ultimate form of sexual pleasure, and there is much discussion amongst them about its benefits and virtues. However, sodomy is not “unspeakable” because of the act itself but instead because of the socio-religious stigma associated with it, and it is this convention that Sade so blatantly ignores, allowing it to act as a anti-social act by promoting non-normative values. From the Fourth Edition in 1762 through the Eighth Edition in 1932-5, *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* persists in defining *la sodomie* through a non-definition: the Fourth Edition citing it as a “péché contre nature” and the Eight Edition as “moeurs contre nature” (sodomie). Defined not by what it was or how it was committed but instead by its lack of social acceptability, sodomy was a natural flash point for Sade’s work.<sup>64</sup> It was controversial, amoral (according to the church), illegal, and most certainly being performed on a regular basis

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<sup>64</sup> Other controversial terms of the time were defined in much more concrete terms. Incest for example was defined much more precisely in the same dictionary as early as 1694: “Conjonction, copulation illicite entre les personnes qui sont parents, ou alliez au degré prohibé par l'Eglise” (Inceste).

behind the closed doors of peasants and aristocrats alike, and it has at its root the power of desire and the culmination of pleasure.<sup>65</sup> In fact, in the opening chapter to *Homosexuality in Modern France*, Bryant Ragan, Jr. explains, "Before the eighteenth century, then, it was conceivable that any man or woman might engage in the unnatural act of sodomy, as part of a more generalized 'bisexual' behavior" (12). To suppose that this behavior stopped with the onset of the 18th century is unlikely; instead a re-categorization of same-sex relationships sufficed to make sodomy more, instead of less, scandalous. As shown in previous chapters, there is a high level of reciprocity between Sade's work and the subversive which, in turn, creates a strong relationship between Sade's philosophical standpoint and the act of sodomy. Sodomy, however, plays another instigating role in Sade's text: that of sexual equalizer and thus promoter of gender ambiguity. Men stand in for women, women for men, one man or woman for another, and the enlarged clitoris and non-existent penis of Sade's "monsters" lose their importance through the universality of the anus and its importance within Sade's narrative universe. Through the character of the sexual predator, sodomy can be valorized through action and discourse as a socially destabilizing source of desire and pleasure.

The relationship between the Sadian sexual predator and sodomy is deeply rooted in the individualistic attitude of the sexual predator who actively avoids the tightly bound religious and social models promoting heterosexual, vaginal intercourse for the sake of stability. Sodomy added a level of freedom to the sexual act which, in turn, allowed Sade to value the individual by de-valuing stable sexual relationships to others. If one is only concerned by one's own pleasure, monogamy, reproduction, and reciprocity take a backseat to the achievement of individual

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<sup>65</sup> In an effort to secularize the penal code, Le Code Pénal de 1791 officially decriminalized sodomy in France, but this did not stop the penalization of the act under the guise of debauchery, public indecency, etc. See Merrick and Ragan (82-3).

satisfaction, to the satiation of the predatory drive. In order to understand the importance of sodomy in Sade's narrative universe, it must be examined on two levels while simultaneously recognizing its role as a de-gendering force throughout the entirety of the narration: first, for its value as an anti-social act and, second, for the way in which Sade portrays the act. The culmination of these analyses will show that Sade's use of sodomy as a topos throughout his works carries far more diverse levels of meaning than that of sexual adventurism and has the added result of bringing the entire social structure, and the role of gender within it, into question; all of which can only be concretized through the role of the Sadian sexual predator as a physical, albeit fictional, representative of Sade's intellectual philosophy. Although it might seem that *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* would offer the most thorough examples on the subject of sodomy, it is just one among many works that valorize sodomy and actually has the least philosophical interplay within the text itself. Of all the texts taken into account in this study, *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* comes the closest to falling over the pornographic cliff, but it should also be taken into consideration that, written in prison and subsequently lost to the author, it is the only unfinished work of those discussed and did not undergo any revision by Sade, nor was it published within his lifetime. Sade's lengthy introduction serves only to describe the players and the rules that they have established for their experiment. The multiplicity of narrators in *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* also makes more difficult the use of the overt philosophical discourse found in the majority of Sade's other works. Four sexually experienced women will serve as historical story-tellers to incite the passions of the libertines and provide them with new ideas for their actual sexual conquests. Each woman is to tell her story in the greatest of detail, thus providing sexual fodder for the predators. Because the four libertines have locked up their victims within a

closed system, there is little need to convince them of the value of sodomy; however, it does maintain a place of primacy as the first dinner is reserved for the act of sodomy and the predators do reserve the vaginal and anal virginity of a select number of children for their heightened pleasure. This work gives many examples of sodomy in use but is less explicit about the reasons for this choice. Excerpts from *Justine*, *Juliette*, and *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* are equally if not more revealing with regard to the practice and promotion of sodomy, because they portray not only the acts but provide a philosophical foundation upon which a litany of deviant sexual behaviors are built.

In definition and category, sodomy seems only to maintain one constant: opposition. Against nature, against religion, against the law, sodomy was concretely presented as a destabilizing mechanism beginning in 12th century French literature.<sup>66</sup> As William Burgwinkle explains:

Infamously difficult to define, then and now, sodomy is seen as what disrupts established systems of classification, religious, ethnic, and gender boundaries. Prior to this medieval flowering, there is little mention of sodomy as such in post-classical texts, and when it is evoked the author often cautions that it should not be mentioned at all, lest it lead to dangerous ideas. (1)

Although Burgwinkle's definition draws from the medieval corpus, it brings to the surface three crucial concepts regarding the evolution of sodomy: first, that it is systemically disruptive, second, that it is potentially dangerous, and third, that it is to be avoided if one wants to preserve the status quo. The relationship between Sade and sodomy can be seen even in this broad-

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<sup>66</sup> "Sodomy appears as a topos in the very first mid-twelfth-century vernacular romances after surfacing in the previous century as a catch-all category for all that is evil and unclassifiable" (Burgwinkle 1).

reaching definition through its role as a disruptor, or more accurately, destabilizer of systems and as a corruptor of minds. In fact, much the same could be said of Sade's own works, which show blatant disregard for the religious institution and for social acceptability. It is also important to note that not only are Sade's sexual predators inherently fond of the practice of sodomy but the Sadian sexual predator actually serves the same narrative function as does sodomy, making the combination of the two that much more threatening to the status quo.

The three elements outlined above, and the fact that Burgwinkle references their existence as early as the medieval period, suggest a purposeful intent on Sade's part and hence the use of sodomy not only as a simple incitement to sexual arousal but also as a disruptive force with constructive power. If the reversal of the demonization of sodomy forces a reconsideration of sexual practice and socio-religious law, it also has the benefit of blurring the preconditioned lenses through which the reader views gender and its relationship to the body. Sade's narrative universe creates a framework within which a questioning of all predetermined systems is not only acceptable but desirable because of the power held by the Sadian sexual predator and the reversal of good and evil within the predatory universe. The destabilization of gender becomes implicit within the boundaries of this frame due to the overlapping sexual and philosophical upheaval that Sade creates within his works by allowing his predators, whose tastes are exceedingly unconventional, from a socioreligious point of view, to both wield and relinquish power through their sexual exploits.

Although there are many definitions of sodomy (sometimes called pederasty), including that of Burgwinkle, Michel Delon presents an encompassing, yet simple, definition, he explains that "The classical age with which we are concerned . . . did recognize the legal notion of

sodomy -- an act of varied anal contact or penetration of a man, woman, or beast” (122). While sodomy is, as Burgwinkle points out, “difficult to define,” its fluidity of definition is, on the other hand, met with the concretization of what it is not: heterosexual, procreative, vaginal intercourse. In this way, sodomy has a kinship to a host of other sexual acts including masturbation, mutual masturbation, oral sex, and all of those “non-traditional” sex acts that value individual pleasure over procreation. The abhorrence of vaginal, pro-creative sex within Sade’s narrative universe and, thus, the elevated value of use given to sodomy by its importance to the sexual predator demonstrate a link between the rejection of the communal philosophy associated with natural law and a valorization of the individualistic laws of nature.

As shown in chapter 1, Sade’s narrations show a marked dislike for the traditional family unit, and by extension for the church and the law, and there is certainly a relationship between this despise for social order and the valorization of sodomy within his works. Sade’s literary treatment of sodomy was, however, only reactionary to the treatment of sodomy at large and its haphazard prosecution, which was often only undertaken when convenient or when bundled together with other crimes. The importance of this lack of consistency in prosecuting sodomites is revealed through its use as a convenient crime at the hands of a socio-religious system that Sade brought into question. As sodomy was being used by the system at hand to control the sexual and social lives of citizens, Sade used it in exactly the opposite way by equating it with sexual freedom and blurring the gender lines by combining various types of personalities and physicalities.

Diachronically and synchronically, the level to which individual cases of sodomy were accepted as inside or outside of society varied greatly while remaining dependent upon such key



factors as the social status of the perpetrator, the cultural code of any given era, and the political and thus social stability of the time. Lewis Seifert demonstrates a link between the depiction of sodomy and the political climate of the 17th century. Seifert explains that during the Wars of Religion and the *Fronde* charges of sodomy were conflated with political destabilization, while during peaceful times the satires took on a more innocuous and amusing tone. Seifert purports:

Given that the satires of Henri III and Mazarin appeared at times of severe political turmoil, it is hardly surprising that they invoked the widespread early modern understanding of cosmic or cultural disorder. . . . In satires from the second half of the seventeenth century, by contrast, accusations of sodomy assumed different meanings. . . .they, unlike the political pamphlets that preceded them, make little or no effort to conflate sodomy with cosmic or cultural disorder. (158)

Be it in a political, religious, or social context, the one concept that remains associated with sodomy is that of destabilization, for even the comic representation mentioned above is rooted in an upending of norms and expectations. Sodomy, as it is most typically related to homosexual desire, obviously threatened procreation and, by extension, religious control over the population at large. Seen as the worst of all sins, it was not to be preached against or even mentioned to avoid the risk of curious and deviant adventures on the part of a population that could possibly remain ignorant of the existence of such an act. More interesting, however, when considered from the point of view of the Revolutionary and Enlightenment context within which Sade wrote is the relationship between sodomy and social class. While sodomy was highly punishable, it seems that members of the upper class were able to partake freely in sodomitical acts with little

retribution. As Michel Delon points out:

Sodomy was permitted in the upper classes and often came under the provisions of the law only when sexual partners did not belong to the social elite. Sodomites were burnt to death on the Place de Grève in Paris as late as the middle of the eighteenth century, yet trial records show that aristocratic privilege was equivalent to immunity; it entailed the right to deviant behavior. Such behavior could be claimed by an aristocracy that was characterized by its privilege. Here the operating category was libertinism, the morals of which deviated from the generally accepted norm. (122-23)

As convincing as this statement seems, it raises questions regarding Sade and why his social status was unable to shield him from the punishments brought about by his behavior and his writings. While not writing specifically of Sade, Delon unknowingly presents a hypothesis in respect to this question. He explains that in an attempt to describe same-sex relationships, terms such as non-conformist were often used and that they by extension reflected on more than the individual's sexual behavior. Of one such term "non-conformity," he writes: "The same phrase also means religious heterodoxy; the vocabulary is party to the polemic that condemns the libertinism of ideas as leading to libertinism of manners and vice versa" (123). It is not then only the act of sodomy that is destabilizing but, in fact, simply the idea of sodomy in relation to the freedom of ideas with which it is associated. If sodomy could be brought into the realm of acceptability, then what could not be brought with it? In short, Sade is that much more destabilizing as an author, because he wrote of sexual freedom with an abandonment of the rules of content and style that encouraged the reader to live with equal abandon.

Chronologically, Sade could not have created a narrative universe that merged violence, sex, and philosophy during any time period but his own. Not only did the Revolution bring about the decriminalization of sodomy, it created an environment in which the individual had power and could be encouraged to question the social machinery that influenced his or her everyday life. Sade's use of sodomy can be considered a pointed means of deconstructing the society within which he was forced to live. When one considers the major targets of the Enlightenment, such as the Church, the social structure, and the constraint of freedoms through social and juridical "laws," sodomy can be read as the universal fulcrum on which each of these issues must be weighed. Sodomy threatened the church through the promotion of a sin which was said to be the gravest of all, while simultaneously devaluing procreation and adding value to pleasure. As Delon explains, "homosexual desire and pleasure created a gap between divine order and nature, between a transcendent principle to which religion refers and an immanent principle with which encyclopedic morals profess to be content" (123). As has been established by Delon, sodomy was less punishable among the aristocracy than it was in the lower classes. Sade certainly portrays sodomy with active sodomites being members of the upper class, but he also values active sodomy among the brigands and thieves, as well as the middle class, as evidenced by the inn keepers in *Justine*, who while neither aristocrat nor peasant praise the pleasures of sodomy and willingly partake in the act. Importantly, Sade portrays this social equality as working in both directions, for example, masters also allow themselves to be penetrated by their servants. The heterodoxy with regard to social class reveals a fluidity within the narrative universe that effects many areas of Sade's work, including gender and a desire to break down existing boundaries that is emblematic of the Enlightenment in general. Sodomy's

final threat is to the areas of convention and law. Sade is unabashedly promoting a quasi-illegal act in order to support his own individualistic philosophy. The sodomites that come to the forefront in Sade's work value their own pleasure above the good of society, and in so doing, they bring all laws (conventional and legal) into question.

It is important, however, not to lose sight of the way in which Sade goes about promoting sodomy. It is not simply through the act of sodomy between consenting adults or equal players, but it is instead often through the use of the character of the sexual predator and the unequal distribution of power within given situations. As has already been established, the Sadian sexual predator is the embodiment of Sade's philosophical views and as such lives the type of life that Sade promotes through his works. The fact that the predator often prefers sodomy to other types of sex reveals the important relationship between the sexual predator and the commission of sodomy.

At the crux where the sexual predator and the destruction of convention meet, gender is definitively tied to sodomy. As Sade breaks down the heteronormative legal and social boundaries by blatantly promoting sodomy and sexual pleasure, he reveals a lack of gender normativity in both the predator's philosophy and their behavior through broad-reaching sexual preferences as both the penetrator and the penetrated. The sexual predator maintains power even in a powerless position by defying the socially prescribed, stigmatized ties between sex and gender. In fact, all of the characters within the Sadian universe reject this binary on some level, even those who verbalize a distaste for the other sex, who force the covering of vaginas, interact with his sex indifferently because this interaction produces pleasure.

Just as with its amorphous definition, the way in which sodomy is represented can be considered equally fluid, due to the use of metaphors and allusions, or far more uniform if one considers the use of flowery language, indirect discourse, and satire as a constant rather than a variable. In other words, the ways in which sodomy is represented might be quite different, but the choice to represent it through indirect means remains the same. Burgwinkle takes note of this in the following way:

To use the linguistic and grammatical metaphors favored by many theologians, sodomy involves a deliberate twisting of meaning through the combination of incongruous elements or a faulty combination of elements which can be corrected through proper training. Important to these nuances is the fact that though it makes regular appearances in twelfth-century texts, sodomy is never treated as a topic in and of itself. (3)

As was the case with writing of sex in general, language representing sodomy in fiction was deliberately obscure enough to protect the author, but also transparent enough to allow the reader's imagination to wander. Robert J. Ellrich explains:

. . . intellectually curious adherents to a naturist philosophy and an ideology of freedom could speak of sexual matters, but always and only in coded language. . . . While not officially formulated, the rules governing sexual reference were clearly understood. . . . And in his *Rêve de D'Alembert* (1769) Diderot picks up the image of the veil that must be cast over the language of sexual reference when he has Mlle de Lespinasse warn Dr. Bordeu, as he is about to launch into a discourse on sexuality: "De la gaze, docteur, un peu de

gaze.” (218)

From this we can infer that sodomy, considered a far greater sin than sex, could only be written about in the most roundabout of terms and with a conscious effort towards literary sublimation. It is not until the end of the 18th century, when Sade writes candidly of sex and sodomy in a text that is not purely pornographic, that the taboo is truly broken.<sup>67</sup>

In *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, both the sexual and philosophical presentation of sodomy play important roles in the education of Eugénie. After an in-depth dialogue regarding the precedence of the individual good over the communal one, Eugénie becomes so sexually excited that the following tableau takes place:

Dolmancé: Ne craignez rien; poussez, pénétrez, mon ange, je n’enculerai votre chère Eugénie que quand votre membre énorme me sera bien avant dans mon cul... Il y est; il y est, sacredieu, ah! tu me mets aux nues; point de pitié, ma belle, je vais, je te le déclare, foutre ton cul sans préparation... Ah! sacredieu, le beau derrière!

Eugénie: Oh! mon ami, tu me déchires... Prépare au moins les voies.

Dolmancé: Je m’en garderai pardieu bien; on perd la moitié du plaisir avec ces sottes attentions; songe à nos principes, Eugénie, je travaille pour moi, maintenant victime un moment, mon bel ange, et tout à l’heure persécutrice... Ah! sacredieu, il entre! (484)

In this scene, one sees not only the importance of sodomy, but the lack of importance placed upon the feelings of the victim. As Dolmancé explains, he is working for himself and sees no

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<sup>67</sup> “Only near the close of the century, with Sade’s *Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795) and *Nouvelle Justine* (1797), will the decisive break occur. In the first version of the latter (1787-88), there is not the slightest example of linguistic impropriety” (Ellrich 220).

reason to delay his own pleasure for the comfort of his victim. Also noteworthy in these lines is the shift in passive and active roles of penetration, as Dolmancé is sodomized by a woman and in turn sodomizes Eugénie, and as justification, he explains that Eugénie will also pass from victim to aggressor in a matter of moments. It is also important to note that Dolmancé, who professes to only enjoy sexual intercourse with men, is actively sodomizing a woman. Sodomy seems, in this case, to have overcome his sexual preference and de-gendered his victim. It could be said that Eugénie plays the role of the man to satisfy Dolmancé, but when taken in the context of this scene involving multiple partners, where Dolmancé is being sodomized as he sodomizes, the constructs of male and female disappear. De Sade's graphic depiction of this scene would be considered pornographic if it weren't the sexual enactment of his pre-established philosophical ideals. In the same work, Dolmancé explains to Eugénie that sodomy is in no way a crime but is instead simply an arbitrary preference:

Mais la sodomie, mais ce prétendu crime qui attira le feu du ciel sur les villes qui y étaient adonnées, n'est-il point un égarement monstrueux, dont le châtement ne saurait être assez fort? Il est sans doute bien douloureux pour nous d'avoir à reprocher à nos ancêtres les meurtres judiciaires qu'ils ont osé se permettre à ce sujet; est-il possible d'être assez barbare pour oser condamner à mort un malheureux individu dont tout le crime est de ne pas avoir les mêmes goûts que vous? (521)

Brought together, these two descriptions of sodomy encapsulate the way that Sade pushes the boundaries in a literary sense, by writing blatantly of the act and the body, and in a philosophical sense by abandoning the supposed benefits of natural law in favor of the laws of nature.

The practice of sodomy must hence be considered as a transgressive move that affects the natural as well as the moral orders, and which must be viewed as a narrative demonstration of Sadian ideals regarding the role and the power of man vis-a-vis his context. Just as the sexual predator establishes its domination upon a victim, the Sadian narration takes control of what has been deemed “natural,” and reverts it back to a savage (yet still philosophically justified) state in which the individual seeks only to fulfill and pleasure himself by any means necessary. Through the privilege of self and the ignorance of convention, Sade’s philosophy becomes a sexual carte blanche that breaks down gender by destroying the concept of normativity and replacing it with pleasure. Through the practice of sodomy, the Sadian sexual predator is able to find pleasure in its victim, regardless of whether or not the victim meets society’s sexual expectations or the predator’s own.

Before delving into Sade’s use of the dialogue as a philosophical and sexual interplay, it is important to recognize the distinct lack of filter concerning sex and the body that distinguishes the Sadian text. Instead of alluding to sex, de Sade focuses on blatantly portraying the act and the sexual body in a way that both sets his work apart and opens it up to criticism as pornography. While other authors such as Restif de la Bretonne and the anonymous author of *Thérèse philosophe* also push the boundaries of acceptability with their descriptions of sex, they also cede to the general power structure of their time by couching their works within the religious and philosophical boundaries of their society.

While Sade’s presentation of sex is groundbreaking, the inclusion of sodomy as part of a larger litany of “natural” sexual acts serves to push this limit even further. Sodomy becomes part of the sexual commonplace in Sade’s works and as such opens a portal through which gender



“rules” can ebb and flow, in turn allowing fluctuation within the social perception of the act. For example, Dolmancé answers Eugénie’s query regarding the “natural” quality of sodomy with the following explanation:

Oh! mes amis, peut-il être une extravagance pareille à celle d’imaginer qu’un homme doit être un monstre digne de perdre la vie, parce qu’il a préféré dans ses jouissances le trou du cul à celui du con, parce qu’un jeune homme avec lequel il trouva deux plaisirs, celui d’être à la fois amant et maîtresse, lui a paru préférable à une fille qui ne lui promet qu’une jouissance. (*Philosophie* 472)

Through this dialogue, the reader meets not only the justification of sodomy as a natural act but also the rejection of the legal and social judgements that are typically thrust upon the act. By rejecting the categorization of the sodomite as “monster” and denying the unsuitably harsh legal penalties, Sade seats the “natural” act of sodomy well within his philosophical standpoint by insisting on the double pleasures of the shifting power structure, the ability to be both the penetrator and the penetrated. Through this justification, the ability of the partners to shift gender within their own sex promotes a freedom within the sexual sphere that allows the revocation of “normativity” (in other words heterosexual, reproductive sex) in favor not of homosexual sex but instead of any sexual act that provides a heightened level of pleasure. As Dolmancé explains, two pleasures are preferable to one and in this case, sodomy facilitates increased pleasure for the predator. In fact, the very premise of *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* relies on the idea that the four libertines can have whatever their sexual pleasure might be. As Sade explains, “Quatre fameuses maquerelles pour les femmes et un pareil nombre de mercures pour les hommes n’avaient d’autres soins que de leur chercher, et dans la capitale et dans les

provinces, tout ce qui, dans l'un et l'autre genre, pouvait le mieux assouvir leur sensualité” (22).

Sex can only carry a transitory importance in the Sadian universe. If the libertine will receive an increased level of pleasure by coupling with a specific sex during a given encounter, the sex of the other party plays an important role in this instance, but the overall variety of the predators' tastes reveals an ambiguity that overtakes these individual acts of preference. Again, pleasure is put above all else, and it is the pursuit of increased pleasure that de-genders the victim by negating the importance of its sex and allowing the sexual predator to alter the victim's identity in any way that achieves a more pleasurable end.

Beyond reversing the social and legal conceptions of sodomy as an unnatural act through its presentation as a natural sex act, Sade writes of sodomy, as he writes of other sexual acts, without “la gaze” that was typical of the post-classical period. Sade disguises nothing by using words, both ordinary and crass, to describe the sexual acts in all their detail and although he sometimes uses euphemisms (for example “la route ordinaire” to allude to vaginal penetration) they are never meant to hide the meaning from the reader. In *Les 120 Journées de Sodome*, Sade explains that the men chosen for the first orgy, that which was dedicated to sodomy, were chosen exclusively based on penis size: “On les prenait qu’à la taille du membre, et il devenait presque nécessaire que ce membre superbe fût d’une telle magnificence qu’il n’eût jamais pu pénétrer dans aucune femme” (22). There is an insistence on sex in this passage when one considers the necessity of a male penetrator and the insistence on the penis as a marker of worth, but there is simultaneously an abolishment of the established sex and gender order due to the valorization of homosexual sodomy and a decisive relinquishing of power on the part of the more powerful predators. In order to heighten their own sexual pleasure, the predators seek out a temporary disruption of the class and power systems.

As discussed in earlier chapters, Sade writes of the sexual body using concrete terms from different levels of language, notably in the libertine education of young Eugénie, but also throughout the entirety of his fictional works. This frankness regarding the body overflows into the sexual act and makes Sade's work extraordinary, because it functions on multiple levels of narrative disruption: on the aesthetic level, the reader is faced with a body that is often grotesque rather than beautiful, on the linguistic level, Sade abandons all measures of propriety, and on the social level, Sade promotes illegal and "unspeakable" sexual acts in which the audience becomes complicit through its continued narrative engagement. For example, in *Les 120 Journées de Sodome*, Sade presents the descriptions of a catalog of sexual predators, among which the following description of *le président de Curval* appears:

Couvert de poils comme un satyre, un dos plat, des fesses molles et tombantes qui ressemblaient plutôt à deux sales torchons flottant sur le haut de ses cuisses; . . . Au milieu de cela s'offrait, sans qu'on eût la peine d'écarter, un orifice immense dont le diamètre énorme, l'odeur et la couleur le faisaient plutôt ressembler à une lunette de commodités qu'au trou d'un cul; . . . Au bas d'un ventre aussi plissé que livide et mollasse, on apercevait, dans une forêt de poils, un outil qui, dans l'état d'érection, pouvait avoir environ huit pouces de long sur sept de pourtour; . . . et le président alors enfilait indistinctement tous les trous, quoique celui du derrière d'un jeune garçon lui fût infiniment plus précieux. (*120 Journées* 33)

In this description, the reader is confronted with the grotesque body of an aging libertine, the anti-social behavior of the Sadian sexual predator, both as a sodomite and a pedophile, the

importance of the anus as a sexually neutral site of penetration, and thus sodomy as a gender equalizing act. By describing the man's anus as *une lunette de commodités*, Sade comments not only on the physicality of the man, alluding to the idea that he has passively engaged in sodomy on many occasions, but also on the convenience and utility of the act, the double meanings of *commodités* being lavatory and convenience or usefulness. Sodomy is of course convenient in the sense that it can be performed with any partner regardless of sex and useful in that it avoids unwanted pregnancy. The description also reveals that the man is both a passive and active participant in sodomy, although he partakes of all forms of sex, revealing the facility with which characters can pass from one side of the power structure to the other and continue to do so throughout their existence. While Sade describes the sexualized body of the man, he simultaneously uses sodomy to de-gender him. The body is male, but the man's tastes allow for divergent roles within the sexual universe of the narration.

As the Sadian sexual predators engage in both active and passive sodomy, they not only blur the line between male and female, but also the relationship linking a sex to its corresponding gender. As Sade points out in the description of Dolmancé, both the active and the passive players undergo a shift in gender during the act of sodomy: “Tu les sais, les délices de Sodome lui sont aussi chers comme agent que comme patient; il n’aime que les hommes dans ses plaisirs, et si quelquefois néanmoins il consent à essayer des femmes, ce n’est qu’à condition qu’elles seront assez complaisantes pour changer de sexe avec lui” (*Philosophie* 385). Despite playing the role of *instituteur* and sexual predator in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, Dolmancé enjoys both the passive and the active roles equally in the act of sodomy and prefers either, with a partner of either sex, to vaginal heterosexual intercourse. Also important is the complicity of

Dolmancé with his victim found in Sade's language, accordingly, he writes "pour changer de sexe avec lui" which can be interpreted as indicating that Dolmancé also undergoes a change when he sodomizes a woman. On the other hand, the idea that sodomy can overcome a preference for one sex or the other is reinforced in this description. The sex of the passive player is unimportant as long as he or she accepts to be penetrated anally. The reasons for this unimportance are both that the anus is a sexually neutral site and that sodomy requires the passive player to turn the other sexual markers away from his or her partner, revealing the passive body as desexed and creating a high level of gender confusion.

Sodomy and degendering are related to the Enlightenment in as much as they both raise questions about the status quo, a quality which serves as the epitome of the period. Sodomy is a radical act of rebellion, when one considers that through the promotion of this one act Sade takes on society, religion and the reigning philosophical standpoint. The disruption of these systems through the use of sodomy reveals the powerful connection between non-conformist sex and a new philosophy of individuality in the Sadian narration. To return to the example from Chapter Two, when Juliette and Pope Pius VI enact their acts of debauchery, they do not engage in vaginal sex. She is instead sodomized by the Pope, who in the process despoils the Host, which he uses as an extension of his penis. There can be no greater disruption of the religious hierarchy than Juliette's dalliance with the Pope, and Dolmancé's philosophical justifications of sodomy throughout *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* reveal this same tenacity when confronting the social order.

Being the ultimate incarnation of this philosophy, the Sadian sexual predator demonstrates how the preference for sodomy disrupts not only gender but, through the

degendering process, all of the socio-religious systems that exert control over the lives of citizens. Through the presentation of graphic and eccentric sex, most prominently sodomy, Sade focuses primarily on eliminating the binds placed on individual sexual freedoms, but through dialogue and story telling, he presents an intellectual reason to extend individual freedom as a philosophy standing in counterpoint to natural law. He makes the case in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* that if sodomy increases pleasure, then it must be considered a natural act and, by extension, the religious, legal, and social constraints placed on sodomitical sex are unreasonable and should, therefore, logically be brought into question.

Not only does sodomy disrupt socio-religious convention on a surface level, it goes to the root of the reigning philosophy of the time. Taken as the first building block of community, the family unit is decimated by Sade's counter philosophy. The predator's preference for sodomy is in part due to a distaste for procreation, but the issue delves much deeper into the fabric of the family unit. In this period, a family is based on monogamy and heterosexuality, neither of which can stand within Sade's new system. The individual pursuit of pleasure, sodomitical or otherwise, rests in binary opposition to monogamy and parenting, which are held as prime examples of socio-religious and sexual conformism, because in order to accomplish either, the individual must implicitly repress his own desires and give precedence to the good of the couple or the family. In a similar way, Sade shows a rejection of the overall good of the community by placing the importance on the individual's needs rather than those of the group and by allowing the sexual predator to succeed throughout his narrations. The Sadian sexual predator has no boundaries, and a preference for sodomy is one of the ways in which Sade displays this powerful individualistic freedom. Dolmancé asks the following questions of Eugénie:

direz-vous, par exemple, que le besoin de me marier ou pour voir prolonger ma race, ou pour arranger ma fortune, doit établir les liens indissolubles ou sacrés avec l'objet auquel je m'allie; ne serait-ce pas, je vous le demande, une absurdité que de soutenir cela; tant que dure l'acte du coït, je peux, sans doute, avoir besoin de cet objet pour y participer; mais sitôt qu'il est satisfait, que reste-t-il, je vous prie, entre lui et moi? et quelle obligation réelle enchaînera à lui ou à moi les résultats de ce coït? (*Philosophie* 479)

Sade seeks to dissolve all ties with the other. He at once despoils the virtue of the family as a reduced version of the community and, in turn, contradicts the values of the Church. By admitting the necessity of the other only for the duration of the sexual act, Sade reveals that the importance of the individual does not extend to the other. Once pleasure is achieved, the sex act carries no other importance, and family, communal, and religious ties are all fabricated impositions perpetrated by a philosophy that contradicts Sade's own. Pleasure is the ultimate goal of any Sadian sexual relationship, and once pleasure has been attained there is no need to maintain a more extended relationship, because it has already served its purpose. Unlike procreative sex, sodomy creates no permanent connection between individuals, and because of this, lacks the anchoring effect that is possible with heterosexual, vaginal sex. There is no danger of creating unwanted ties to another individual. Instead, sodomy focuses only on the pleasure of the individual, and therefore the laws of nature are favored over natural law in the Sadian narration, just as the individual is favored over society.

Once all of the socio-religious and philosophical systems have been disrupted, gender becomes even more vulnerable to the softening of what seemed until this point a hardened

difference. By eliminating procreation and monogamy, Sade creates a world within which gender becomes unnecessary. The roles that each sex must play to exist harmoniously within the social boundaries are eliminated and only pleasure determines the behavior of the predator. In reference to masculinity in 17th century France, Seifert writes: “To conform to the dictates of the cultural code of a masculinity that is (seemingly) unambiguously distinct from homosexuality, individual men must police themselves for any signs of homoerotic ambiguity” (151). This quote demonstrates precisely the constraints against which Sade was revolting. First, while certain characters prefer same-sex partners, the universality of the anus and the pursuit of sexual satisfaction prevent the existence of a true "homosexual" within the Sadian narrative universe. Second, the power of the predator is, in exact opposition to Seifert’s statement, the ability to take what one wants when he or she wants it without any repercussions, and sodomy is the epitome of this power, because the Sadian sexual predator can gain pleasure from any victim without the dangers associated with vaginal sex. The need to police one's self is contrary to the over-arching Sadian philosophy.

Sodomy allows the predator the most freedom to degender its prey by turning away all of the distinguishing characteristics that identify the prey as a distinctively sexed individual. By presenting the predator with only the back of the prey, the absence of marked sexuality serves to reinforce the idea that only the predator matters, that everyone else is prey, regardless of sex, and that their feelings are insignificant. The prey plays only one role, and that is to give pleasure to the predator. As Dolmancé explains: “l’action qui sert à l’un en nuisant à l’autre est d’une indifférence parfaite à la nature” (*Philosophie* 478). This statement encompasses Sade’s philosophical standpoint, for there is nothing outside of or beyond the pleasure of the predator in control of a given situation.



Just as sodomy goes beyond being a simple sexual provocation, the body in Sade's works plays a more important role than that of simple titillation. Sade's texts represent the body in all of its possible manifestations: young, old, beautiful, ugly, male, female, hermaphroditic, virginal, licentious, voluptuous and more. The descriptions that he gives of these bodies serve both to expose the existing gender binary through a representation of normalcy, of that which is expected by the reader, and to put this conception of the body into play with the opposing depictions of bodies that fail to conform, that are made to shock the reader. As demonstrated with *le président de Curval* earlier in this chapter, these bodies are often gross exaggerations, aberrations from the norm, but rather than making these characters pariahs and monstrosities, Sade gives them power by giving their abnormality a sexual purpose. By exaggerating certain characteristics of their sex, Sade blurs not only the sex of their bodies but also the traditional expression of their gender and in so doing, he works to change the relationship between sex, gender and society.

One finds two types of de-sexed bodies in Sade: the naturally deformed body and the sexually predated body. By analyzing examples of both types of deformations, I will expose the relationship between the body and gender neutrality. The significance of this neutrality rests on the idea that all characters, be they predators or victims, can change roles, sexes, and genders in an attempt to satiate their pleasure principle.

Despite the focus on gender neutrality, it is important first to note that many critics consider de Sade's works to be precisely the opposite. John Phillips takes aim at Sade's supposed misogyny:

I should like to focus here on this most taboo of all Sadian spaces, in the wider

context of Sade's representation of the female body as a whole. In particular, I shall ask why the female sex organs are in Sade a privileged object of hatred, exploring the possible sources of this gendered violence in his writing. (30)

In contrast to Phillips, I would posit that the violence in Sade's narration is anything but gendered, that it is, instead, another manifestation of privileging personal desire over all else.

As a general starting point, in his book *Sade, the Invention of the Libertine Body*, Marcel Hénaff describes the body in literature as:

the necessary screen onto which everything is projected, the only possible meeting point, and point of articulation, through which the thread of the story or the metaphors of the poem can pass. It is their permanent medium and indispensable synthesizer. (17)

The body in Sade's narration can play precisely this role; the thread of the narration depends upon the body and upon the interaction of bodies, without which the philosophy would fall flat. Primarily in Sade's text, the thread passes not through any body but through the body of the Sadian sexual predator. Even Justine's body could not carry the story forward in the absence of the predator. The body of the predator is driven by its philosophy and without the coupling of the two, Sade's narration would falter, but it is the body of the predator, not its philosophy, that carries the action of the story line forward.

Since the role of the sexual predator is primordial in Sade's text, the importance of the abnormal body can be divided among the deformations of the predators themselves, which are often beneficial to their predatory preferences and the marks of deformation left upon the bodies of their victims. The body, be it that of a naturally deformed predator or that of a victim who has

suffered at the hands of another, is the passage through which Sade's message is conveyed to the reader. However, according to Hénaff, Sade's cold and mechanical descriptions of the body don't allow for this passage of meaning, because they are, in his opinion, without the humanity that would allow for the adoption and expression of a message. He goes so far as to write:

Take a (human) body, strip it of all its symptoms, free this impassive matter of all expression, give a detailed description of its parts, just as you would of a machine's, and connect it to other bodies, for no grander purpose than sexual gratification. In this way, at one stroke, you will drain the metaphorical reservoir, eliminate the infinite network of causality that depends on it, destroy the material "proper" to narrative, and dash the very concept of literature. (19)

Hénaff admits that Sade has changed the rules of literature by avoiding the use of metaphor and describing the body in more concrete, almost scientific terms, but instead of representing a "nonsignifying" body, as he puts it, one could read this clinical approach to the body as a signifier of its overall banality. Even the unusual body fails to shock the reader in Sade's text because the abundance of abnormality actually serves to make the unusual become the usual. In this way, Sade gives his predators unusual "gifts." He bestows upon them abnormalities that suit their nature and increase their pleasure. From an enlarged clitoris, to an oversized penis, to true hermaphroditism, the "deformations" that Sade gives his predators and their victims never serve to diminish the life or pleasure of the predator, but instead to increase and enhance them both. While these natural deformations blur the lines of gender by disassociating the sex of the body from the acts of the individual, the predators often go on to neutralize the sexual bodies of their victims. Just as they ignore the desires of the victims, they also physically negate the importance

of their sexualized bodies through castration, breast removal and inflicted miscarriages. The relationship between the body and gender is broken down by these organic and constructed divergences from the norm, and while the body plays a substantial role in driving the narration, gender does not.

Natural deformations or physical exaggerations are quite common throughout Sade's works, but these organic deviations are "advantages" resting squarely on the side of the sexual predator. All of these deformations, be they deformations of the predator itself or of the victim, serve to increase the pleasure of the Sadian sexual predator. Prime examples of this phenomenon include the elongated clitoris and the over-sized penis. The physical attributes that are exaggerated in these characters serve a dual purpose. First, they reinforce the Sadian idea that difference is good, that the questioning of the norm is a worthwhile endeavor. The "normal" body is less pleasurable and, in turn, less desirable within the Sadian universe. Second, in accordance with the supposition that the body serves as a motor of the narration, the deformities of the Sadian sexual predator add variety and work to move the narration forward.

Mme d'Esterval in *La Nouvelle Justine*, Mme Champville in *Les 120 Journées de Sodome*, and Volmar and la Durand in *Juliette ou les infortunes de la vertu* all possess an overly large clitoris that is used as a source of licentious pleasure. As Peter Maxwell Cryle explains: "This [enlarged clitoris] is, for Sade, a visible gift of nature, a technical bodily advantage enjoyed by tribades allowing them to experience greater or at least more versatile pleasure" (313). Sade has chosen the epicenter of pleasure in the female body and, instead of destroying it as the feminist critics would expect, enhanced it to allow for greater reception of

pleasure. The gift of the enlarged clitoris also provides these women with the additional ability to penetrate their victims which expands their ability to pleasure themselves.

The descriptions of these characters often seem contradictory, in that no one gender seems to take precedence. In *La Nouvelle Justine*, Sade describes Madame d'Esterval in the following way:

une grande et belle femme d'environ trente-six ans; excessivement brune; les yeux d'un éclat étonnant; la taille belle et fine; les cheveux du plus beau noir; velue comme un homme; point de gorge; le cul petit, mais bien coupé; le con sec et pourpré; le clitoris long de trois pouces, et gros à proportion; la jambe parfaitement belle; infiniment d'imagination, de vivacité; des talents, de l'instruction, très scélérate, et tribade au suprême degré" (*NJ* 2: 96).

As evidenced by this description, Sade presents an interesting mixture of traits in Mme d'Esterval, she is both beautiful and monstrous. She has the narrow waist of a woman but is hairy like a man. She has a clitoris, but it is long and round like a penis. She represents physical qualities of both sexes and seems to pass between them seamlessly. Her double nature is reflected in her behavior as well as her body, she plays the role of a kind and welcoming innkeeper, but this kindness is only a ruse to facilitate the acting out of her natural, yet vicious, instincts to abuse and kill her guests. When Bressac visits the inn, he points out the duality of Mme d'Esterval's sexuality: "Non, madame, je ne connais que vous dans le monde qui puissiez me faire infidélité à mes goûts; je n'aime que les hommes" (*NJ* 2: 115). Even Mme d'Esterval's husband describes her with masculine qualities by alluding to the fact that she can return Bressac's sodomitical favors. In addition to being sexually aggressive, Mme d'Esterval, with her

hairy body and her ability to penetrate, rests on far more even ground with her husband than the more feminine wives in de Sade's narrations; as if her physical deformation bears cultural weight. In *Sade et l'écriture de l'orgie*, Lucienne Frappier-Mazur agrees with Marcel Hénaff's estimation that these deformations serve to masculinize Sade's women (32-35). It is, however; important to point out that this masculinization is inherently linked to sexual pleasure in the Sadian universe. Rather than simply making these women into men, Sade increases the size of the clitoris because it is the part of the body upon which their sexual pleasure is dependent, and he, in turn, increases the variety of sexual acts that they can perform and the amount of pleasure that they can receive.

While the enlarged clitoris can be considered to stand-in for the penis, it is also a means of either elevating the status of the woman or demoting that of the man, because it places the characters on a more level playing field. In *Juliette ou les prospérités du vice*, la Durand stands as a more blatant example of this same phenomenon and an important demonstration of the way in which a woman with this deformity can maintain a feminine body. Her body is described as follows:

Il était impossible d'être mieux faite, d'avoir des chairs plus fraîches, plus fermes et plus blanches; Durand avait surtout les plus belles fesses et les plus beaux tétons qu'il fût possible de voir, et un clitoris... oh! de nos jours nous n'en avons vu ni de si longs ni de si raides" (*Juliette* 1: 550-51).

The beauty and the femininity of her body are in stark contrast to this idea of masculinization, but la Durand is able, through her femininity, to play a power role in the narration as she is able to supply Juliette and Clairwil with poisons, victims, and a safe place to enact their sexual

games. Described as a “sorceress” for her ability to concoct and use poisons, la Durand resembles an evil incarnation of mother nature herself. Despite using her enlarged clitoris as a tool of penetration, la Durand maintains not only her female body but her femininity as well. She is masculine in her level of power and her predatory nature while maintaining the traditionally prized beauty of the female form, and is simultaneously able to shift from one role to the other through the use of her enlarged clitoris, not a malformation but instead a gift of enhanced sexual pleasure and seemingly of social status.

As with the enlarged clitoris, Sade often gives his male characters the gift of an oversized penis. These are bestowed more liberally throughout the narration and benefit both the predators, who often have large penises for their own pleasure, and the servants and victims, who use the penis, by choice or by force, to bring pleasure to the predator. M d’Esterval, for example, is described as having “l’un des plus beaux et des plus énormes engins qu’il eût aperçu de sa vie” (*NJ* 2: 121). While, Sévérino, a monk at Sainte-Marie-des-Bois, has a penis so large that Sade paints him as being monstrous: “ce monstre était pourvu de facultés tellement gigantesques que les routes mêmes les plus battues lui eussent encore paru trop étroites” (*NJ* 1: 255). These two descriptions show that while the appearance of the exaggerated penis is presented in different ways, one a beauty and the other a monster, their exceptionality has far more to do with action than with aesthetic because the utility of these body parts is directly related to the achievement of pleasure. On the other hand, the predator does not always possess the gift of the exaggerated sex organ; however, even when the victim is the recipient, the predator benefits through the heightening of pleasure. For example, the father of the last victims to arrive at the inn before the group decamps to Gernande’s estate is also described as having a large penis, and

he serves only as a victim at the mercy of his captors. After watching both the rape of both his daughter and his wife, the father is forced to participate in the hope of saving the lives of his family:

Justine est obligée d'irriter les passions de ce malheureux. A force d'art elle y réussit. On a bien raison de dire qu'il se trouve plus souvent des trésors dans la culotte d'un rustre que dans celle d'un fermier général. Un vit monstrueux s'élève aussitôt: Dorothee tout en feu l'engloutit. D'Esterval, appuyant l'enfant sur les reins du fouteur de sa femme, se plaît à enculer la fille sur le dos du père.

(*NJ* 2: 147)

These exaggerated penises are often used as a way to voyeuristically pleasure the predator as well. Such is the case when Mme Delbène orders two men under her power to take part in the abuse of two young convent girls. After ordering the women to take up their dildos, she orders the men to prepare as well: “Ducroz et Télème, bandez ferme, et que vos vits mutins entrelacent les membres postiches de ces coquines” (*Juliette* 1: 105). Mme Delbène uses the bodies of these men as her predatory proxy. They are tools of her sexual predation and demonstrate the power that she holds over the situation. She goes so far as to tell the men what kind of erection they should have and exactly what to do with it, and while the men may gain pleasure through the acts that Mme Delbène elicits, it is ultimately her pleasure that dominates the power structure within the situation.

The ability to bring pleasure to the predator remains, throughout the presentation of these deformities, the only purpose of their existence. They never serve as a hindrance to sexual pleasure in the predator, although, as in the following passage, the victim in a given situation is



often disturbed or damaged by their sheer size: “- Oh, monsieur! répondis-je, effrayée de la grosseur du vit qui m’était présenté, ce monstre va me déchirer, je n’en pourrai soutenir les assauts!” (*Juliette* 1: 149). In these cases, the victim is of little importance. The predator is not prevented from pursuing its sexual pleasure and, consequently, in many cases, the horror of the victim is an added benefit to the commission of the act. As Dolmancé explains in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, why should an individual deprive him or herself of a pleasure simply because it causes pain to another?

While these “vits mutins” may not seem to fit into the blurring of the gender binary, they do in fact play an important role. Often the characters upon whom these gigantic penises are bestowed are in fact the same characters who enjoy being sodomized by other men. While their large penises should make them more masculine, as the logic of Hénaff and Frappier-Mazur would support, the combination of the large penis with the preference for passive sodomitical pleasure destabilizes the expected dichotomy of the sex equals gender relationship. As Merrick and Ragan point out "male/male sodomy was transgressive -- either corrupt or despicable depending on whether the man assumed a 'masculine' or 'feminine' position" (62). The act of passive sodomy, or as they call it the "feminine position," is incongruous with Sade's gift of the enlarged penis which prepares the man for the masculine role rather than the feminine one.

The natural deformation is therefore always a pleasurable one, but only the characters who agree to partake in Sade's philosophy of individual pleasure above communal good are able to benefit from them. Those characters who refuse to abandon natural law in favor of Sade's system, who uphold morality and legality over their own pleasure cannot benefit from the gift of the sexually enhanced body, and their own bodies become irrelevant fodder for the predator in

the process. Even in those cases where the victim of the predation is the possessor of the deformation, the victim is often brought to a state of physical excitement against his or her will and for the sole purpose of serving the sexual caprices of the predator, but he or she cannot enjoy the act because of the steadfastness of his or her moral principles.

While the natural deformations play an important role in the physical acquisition of pleasure, the forced deformities of predatory abuse are also present throughout Sade's narrative universe and are used as a means of bringing sexual pleasure through a physically oppressive and a voyeuristic approach to sex. The mutilation of the victim's body is at once a representation of the power that the Sadian sexual predator possesses and a means of increasing its pleasure. Many of Sade's predators derive extreme satisfaction from mutilating the bodies of their victims, especially those victims with beautiful bodies. Each time a sexual predator disfigures a victim, this individual's body strays further from the expected body and the physical stability of his or her sex is in turn threatened. These mutilations are violent and destructive, but from a gendered perspective, they are also used to construct a gender neutral body, to degender the victim. Because these beautiful bodies are a perfect representation of the sexed body, their transformation into a grotesque body is enacted through the destruction or removal of those parts that concretize the victim as one sex or the other.

The monks of Sainte-Marie-des-Bois offer one such example of this abusive nature. One of the oldest monks described as used-up and easily exhausted, Clément, takes pleasure not only in torturing his victims, but in being tortured by them as well. "Pincer, battre, piquer, brûler, fustiger, infliger à une femme, en un mot, tous les supplices possibles, et les recevoir à son tour;

tels étaient ses amusements de choix” (*NJ* 1: 255).<sup>68</sup> The infliction of pain in these scenes is most often centered on the areas of the body that the predators associate with their own sexual pleasure: the breasts, the vagina, and the lower back and buttocks are most vulnerable to their desires. In one scene, Clément whips the women:

par cette posture, elles offrent, dans le plus grand écart possible, cette délicate partie qui les distingue des hommes, le barbare y dirige ses coups; les branches longues et flexibles du fouet dont il se sert, pénétrant dans l’intérieur avec plus de facilité que les verges, y laissent des traces profondes de sa rage” (*NJ* 1: 330).

These women are placed so that the greatest marker of their sex is exposed to the whipping and the penetration experienced during this torture shows the depth to which their sexuality will be scarred by the experience. The leaving of marks on the victims bodies is the first step toward eventual deformation. These deep wounds are a way to take pleasure from the victim without permanently disfiguring them, at least on the surface, so that they can be used to bring additional pleasure at a later time. By identifying the vagina as the “part that makes them different from men,” Sade takes aim at the physical difference between the sexes, a difference that can only be mitigated through the act of sodomy. By abusing the vagina and the breasts, the predators take away the femininity of these areas not by making them masculine but simply by damaging them to the point that they lose their identity.

Many critics, including John Philips, have accused de Sade of hating women, but while the abuses are admittedly more frequently committed against women, men are also targeted. In *Les 120 Journées de Sodome*, the four masters become increasingly violent and destructive to

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<sup>68</sup> Note that Clément also puts himself in the more feminized position of receiving this treatment.

both sexes. In a period of forty-eight hours the predators commit all of the following atrocities, “Il lui arrache les couilles et les lui fait manger sans le lui dire” (433), “Narcisse est présenté; on lui coupe les deux couilles. On fait venir Adélaïde; . . . on lui brûle le clitoris, on lui perce la langue, on la fouette sur la gorge, on lui coupe les deux boutons du sein . . .” (433), “Il lui coupe le vit, les mamelles, et le place sur un pieu où il est cloué par un pied” (434). The excision of body parts such as the testicles, the penis, and the breasts reveals the extent to which the bodies of the victim must be de-gendered to render pleasure to the sexual predator. These four predators go so far as to remove teeth, break bones, and cut off fingers, leading to the total disintegration of the victim’s identity. In many cases, their sexuality is neutralized to such an extent that no marker of it is left behind to attest to their previous sexuality. The number of victims taken in such a short period of time is also a testament to their lack of importance compared to the sexual predator. They are truly interchangeable, not just as one victim for another but one sex for the other.

The reception of pleasure through pain is also presented through forced abortion in Sade’s works, which serves to reinforce his philosophical rejection of the links that are created through the family unit. After impregnating two of the women, the monks amuse themselves by torturing their pregnant victims:

au milieu de la chambre, un piédestal haut de dix pieds, sur lequel ces deux malheureuses, liées dos à dos, pouvaient à peine poser une jambe; tous les environs, dans un diamètre de trois pieds, sont jonchés d’épines et de ronces à dix pouces de hauteur; obligées de ne se tenir que sur un pied, . . . il est aisé de voir d’un côté l’intérêt qu’elles ont de ne pas choir, de l’autre l’impossibilité de

maintenir la position. . . . toutes deux jettent les hauts cris, en tombant sur les ronces aiguës qui les reçoivent. Nos scélérats . . . se précipitent comme des furieux sur elles: les uns les battent, les autres les frottent avec les épines qui les couvrent, ceux-ci sodomisent, ceux-là enconnent, tous jouissent, lorsque de violentes mouches, éprouvées par la fille de trente ans, avertissent l'assemblée que la malheureuse va se débarasser de son fardeau." (NJ 1: 285-86).

In addition to the philosophical importance of these forced miscarriages, there is the additional component of neutralizing the sexuality associated with the mother. The pregnant women are used as puppets in the monks' plans for ultimate pleasure. The monks' cruelty is premeditated as they wait until the women are seven and eight months pregnant so that their bodies are contorted by their condition before forcing the miscarriages. The physical and emotional pain that this loss causes the women fuels the monks' pleasure. The speed and violence with which they attack the women is revelatory of the intensity of their pleasure. The loss of the baby is a forced repression of the women's' sexuality, a means of not only physically but psychologically damaging the women to take away the power that motherhood has in society and over the man as an individual. Pregnancy is one of those ties that Sade sees as damaging to the pursuit of pleasure and thus must be destroyed.

The physical disfigurement of the victim is an opportunity for the sexual predator to gain pleasure, but it is also an opportunity for Sade to reinforce his philosophical ideals. If only the predator is important, the victim can be sexually mutilated and in-turn degenerated. The extreme abuse faced by the victims in *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* reduces them to lumps of flesh rather than identifiable individuals with distinct sexes. The interchangeability of the sex of the victim

and the ability to take away identifiable markers of sexuality helps the predator to temporarily retain the stability of his own sexuality. As shown in chapter four, there is such extreme flexibility in the predator/prey relationship that stability is never more than a temporary arrangement. However, more often than not, Sade gives his sexual predators the power to choose to change roles and sexes while his victims are not afforded the same power.

The relationship between altered bodies and gender in Sade's narrative universe is interwoven with the philosophy of individual freedom and the structure of power. The ultimate power is that of pleasure: the ability to receive pleasure at any cost allows the predator to change from an active player to a passive one, to be both masculine in a female body and feminine in a male body, to alter the victim's body, or to force a change of behavior on the victim. Because it is centered around the character of the sexual predator, shifting power allows for the greatest amount of gender flexibility. The predator's lack of boundaries allow for the transgression of the rules of the body and consequently of gender. Just as Sade refuses to abide by socio-religious laws, he ignores the common boundaries of the body and, therefore, replaces the sexed body with one built only on pleasure.

The relationship between sodomy and the body is one of transgression and power. Throughout his narration, Sade values the unexpected, the unstable, and with relation to the body, this appreciation comes in the form of the body itself, even in the most unusual forms, and in the interaction between bodies. The Sadian sexual predator has a unique relationship with its own body and that of its victims in so far as the corporality of the individual is physically linked to pleasure only through sex; however, within Sade's narration, pleasure can only be achieved through the thread that connects the mind to the body. Both sodomy and the valuing of the

defective body force a reevaluation of the socio-religious norms; sodomy in an overt way through the presentation of non-procreative sex, and the exaggerated bodies in a more covert way through the importance placed on physical pleasure which disregards the constraints placed on the individual. With regards to sodomy and the use of the body, the instability created through the reversal of values in the Sadian universe allows both to flourish as "good" instead of "evil." Sodomy and mutated bodies are "good," because they force a reconsideration of the status quo. The only "evil" in Sade's narration is the refusal of pleasure on the grounds of constraints created through social and religious indoctrination. The abandonment of these values makes a strong case for the rethinking of gender within Sade's texts, because if all else gains stability through instability, why would gender be any different? By embracing difference, through sodomy and disfigurement, Sade creates a universe where the traditional relationship between sexual acts and the sexed body is threatened. Sade disassociates the physical sex of the individual by elevating the act of sex and the reception of pleasure to such heights that corporality loses its deeply bound relationship to gender and becomes merely a vehicle towards self-gratification. The philosophical joining of intellect and body brings pleasure to a new level by rejecting restraint, regret, and embarrassment, but it also frees the individual to move away from the solidified normalcy of the "sex equals gender" equation. Any body can take any action as long as the power player is rewarded with the highest possible level of pleasure. Gender ceases to exist as a construct because the scaffolding within which it is constantly and continuously being built is torn away as the value of the body and of its actions is reoriented away from social stability and towards individual freedom.

## VI. DEGENERATING THE PREDATOR: RESULTS AND REPERCUSSIONS

"Comment se fait-il que Sade soit à la fois interdit et admis, interdit comme fiction (comme écriture) et admis comme réalité; interdit comme lecture globale et admis comme référence psychologique ou physiologique?" (Sollers 38)

The above question, which Philippe Sollers both asks and attempts to answer in his article "Sade dans le texte," featured in the 1967 edition of *Tel Quel* devoted to *La pensée de Sade*, lies at the interpretative crossroads of text and reader, an intersection through which Sade forces a meeting of philosophy and sex through an embrace of the intellectual functions of the Enlightenment crossed with an unapologetically vivid, insatiable, and socially unacceptable presentation of sex. The innovative intertwining of philosophical principles with individual sexual satiation exemplifies the importance of Sade's works as a pinnacle of textual production regarding sex, because as Sollers points out, the refusal to read the Sadian text in its entirety, to give equal weight to both the sexual and philosophical aspects of the author's narrative universe, is a refusal to fully enter into the Sadian narration, to accept the unstable as stable, to renege on the social contract. The environment surrounding the French Revolution, which provides a backdrop to Sade's works, mirrored the instability that he created within his narrations because it serves both as example and catalyst. Sade's inability to agree with his concrete context spurred him to create a fictional abstract universe within which he could reverse the values of contemporary society. His fellow philosophers, the laws of the time, the shifting of power structures within the



revolution, all inspired him to respond by intertwining philosophy and fiction. Although Sade's groundbreaking combination of sex and philosophy was born of the tumultuous era during which he lived, the importance of studying the Sadian sexual predator lies not only in the Enlightenment century, during which these texts exposed an open door for sexual, and in turn gender, transgression, but perhaps most importantly in the diachronic progression of sexual fluidity as it has passed through that door into post-Sadian times.

Even now, in the 21st century, Sade's works continue to straddle the divide between the acceptable and the scandalous, between literature and pornography, but this conflict is due less to their salacious sexual content, for sex is far more accessible in the mainstream than ever before, and more to an overarching, diachronic cultural context that discourages the acceptance of a narrative universe in which the normal cause and effect relationship between good and evil is abolished. Each culture, regardless of time period or ruling establishment, indoctrinates its citizens with a set of rules, be they religious, civil, cultural, or moral, that punish those who infringe upon them and reward those who abide by them, and this structure is put into place for the singular reason that the good of the collective must outweigh the desire of the individual. Sade's narrative universe is constrained by no such rules, which consequently increases its importance while decreasing its accessibility. Sade's works are made singular by their use of the intertwining of philosophy and sex for the purpose of destabilizing the existing system of values, but the uniqueness of this pursuit makes the work that much more difficult to understand. Throughout Sade's texts, this reversal of order is nowhere more evident than in the sexual realm, where the lack of constraint opens a pathway for individual sexual exploration resulting in the degendering of normally gender bound acts and bodies. In turn, the sexual predator enjoys a

marked success within the Sadian narrative universe, which is ideally suited to its pleasures. However, the inability to recreate these circumstances explains the continued impossibility of finding a post-Sadian equal to the predator's single-minded and unflappable pursuit of self satisfaction. While the texts themselves have become more physically accessible with time and the fictional space within which the sexual predator can have as much power and freedom as does the Sadian incarnation has remained irreplaceable and largely unreachable. The evidence for this stance rests with the arguments of those modern literary critics that conflate Sade's own biographical sexual proclivities with his textual production or overlay an anachronistic feminist framework.

How does Sade's work straddle the complicated line between acceptable and forbidden?

Sollers provides this answer to his earlier question:

*c'est que nous n'avons pas encore décidé de lire Sade, c'est que la lecture que nous pourrions faire de Sade n'existe pas à l'intérieur de cette société et de cette culture; c'est que Sade, à vrai dire, dénonce radicalement le type de lecture que nous continuons à pratiquer et à enseigner de façon généralisée. (39)*

The key phrase of this explanation is "à l'intérieur de cette société et de cette culture," quite simply because from the inside of any society or any culture, the reading of Sade's work takes on a context of revolt. The reader must set aside his or her social and cultural conventions to be able to immerse him or herself in the Sadian universe, and Sade's focus on sex forces the reader to reevaluate his or her own sexual understanding, thus opening the door for a more fluid conception of the sexual universe in general and of gender in particular.

Sollers makes the argument that society is not yet ready to do a comprehensive reading of Sade's works, that through them, the author brought forth a rupture both of literary standards and of social understanding that when taken holistically threatened the relationship of the individual to his "god" (be it God, Nature, Church or State). Although Sollers wrote this revelatory retort to what he considered the mangled reading of Sade almost 50 years ago, I would argue that this sentiment has become more, rather than less, true with the passage of time and that society is no more ready to accept the arbitrariness of Sade's philosophy in the 21st century than it was in the 20th or even the 19th. The proof of this regression can be found in the reduction of the character of the sexual predator in post-Sadian literature, in its passage from a philosophical exemplar to a contemporary reflection of sexual and social attitudes and in the progression from predator, to seducer, criminal or sexual adventure seeker, to the reactionary creation of a modern archetype with the character of the *mal-baisé*.<sup>69</sup> While the pre-Sadian texts offered building blocks in the evolution of the sexual predator, post-Sadian texts show a sharp descent, leaving Sade at the apogee of sexual freedom, and despite the downturn in predation, the existence of his work allowed for a breakdown of gender binaries that could never entirely be repaired.

Sade's works can be seen as precursors of the literary movements that overtake France in the centuries following his textual production. Romanticism, realism, naturalism, surrealism, and existentialism can all be said to have roots in Sade's works, but never again will they be joined in the creation of a single narrative universe. The Romantic exploration of passion and

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<sup>69</sup> If the Sadian sexual predator sits at the pinnacle of sexual freedom, the *mal-baisé* as seen in Houellebecq's works is the ultimate descent into constraint and displeasure. In *Extension du domaine de la lutte* (1994), Houellebecq presents a protagonist who has resigned himself socially and who does not want to struggle to be a part of society. Sex is one of the key representations of this resignation. In *La Possibilité d'une île* (2005), Houellebecq presents the character of Daniel through centuries of existence (the original Daniel has been cloned many times over) but always as a failure in his sexual relationships.

the subjugation of rationality to emotion are both present throughout Sade's works, although this type of passion is not simply for an individual but instead for pleasure at large and rationality, while seemingly abandoned, is instead restructured. Both concepts have a direct connection to the character of the Sadian sexual predator, who invokes these instinctual responses for the satisfaction of its own sexual drives. Sade's focus on the questioning of established structures and ideals is as realistic a depiction of his period as possible within his narrative framework. Sade simply represented the real instability of his actual world by flipping the values of his fictitious world. Although Sade's works would not be considered naturalistic, they do foreshadow some of the important themes of literary naturalism: when one considers the dichotomy of Justine and Juliette and the ways in which their pre-formed characters in combination with social pressures determine their life paths, the fatalistic side of naturalism becomes evident in the Sadian text. There is also a fine line between the real and the unreal in Sade's depiction of sex, in the sense that he sometimes gives detailed descriptions of sexual acts and sexualized bodies, much as a naturalistic writer might, but he also inflates these descriptions and in turn elevates the natural bodies into very unnatural, physically impossible situations. The surrealists, Apollinaire and others, drew on Sade's works for their own cultural revolution and his works show the stark differences of social class and, through questioning of social imposition, of freedom versus constraint. The existentialist focus on the individual is at the heart of Sade's work, and his emphasis on the instability of right and wrong as cultural constructs allowed the surrealists to use the shocking nature of his work to their advantage. Finally, the explicit sexual content of Sade's work sets the tone for modern pornography which can be considered a genre within itself. However, despite the connections that can be made between Sade and the post-

Sadian narrative production, it is impossible to find a narration that encompasses all of Sade's sexual and philosophical candor.

Sade is taken as a literary aberration, which is certainly true because no author has since succeeded in combining the extremism of Sadian sex with the philosophical power of the unstable universe, but, contrary to the majority of critical reception, the uniqueness and subversiveness of the text do not carry a negative influence into the future of literary production but instead loosen the constraints on it. The reverberations of Sade's sexual influence can certainly be felt in post-Sadian textual production despite the inability to return to it in its entirety. How different is *Bel-Ami's* (1885) Georges Duroy from the Sadian sexual predator? Although the reader has less access to his sexual exploits, Duroy is most certainly a distant relation of Sade's characters as he leaves a string of financially destroyed women in his wake, but gone is the clear headed and unapologetic rationality of the Sadian sexual predator and in turn, gone is the unadulterated pleasure of predation. No matter how successfully Duroy seduces and swindles women, he always finds himself dissatisfied.

The 19th century brings about two phenomena that the Sadian narration cannot accept: first, the great love of the Romantic era and, second, the bourgeois concern with fiscal stability that appears in realistic and naturalistic texts.<sup>70</sup> For example, in *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836), Musset presents the story of Octave, a stand-in for the author himself, who is so distraught by his lover's infidelity that he dabbles in libertinage to ease his pain. After taking home a courtesan and in turn placing pleasure above love, Octave is riddled with regret:

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<sup>70</sup> Although money certainly exists in Sade's universe and even starts the adventures of Justine and Juliette, it is never consequential to the sexual relationship. Justine gains and loses money without changing her situation and for Juliette money is nothing more than a happy consequence to her embrace of the Sadian philosophy. It isn't what drives either character or either narration.

Je sentis en m'éveillant le lendemain un si profond dégoût de moi-même, je me trouvais si avili, si dégradé à mes propres yeux, qu'une tentation horrible s'empara de moi au premier mouvement. Je m'élançai hors du lit, j'ordonnai à la créature de s'habiller et de partir le plus vite possible ; puis je m'assis, et comme je promenais des regards désolés sur les murs de la chambre, je les arrêtais machinalement vers l'angle où étaient suspendus mes pistolets. (574)

Pleasure is no longer sufficient because the reversal of values espoused by Sade has restabilized in the post-revolutionary period. Octave is disgusted by himself to such an extent that his gaze lingers over his pistols decorating his wall evoking the contemplation of suicide and revealing the extent to which constraint has returned to the individual.

In the realistic and naturalistic texts of the 19th century, sexual predation becomes more geared toward profit than toward pleasure. In *Bel-Ami*, the opening lines find Duroy collecting his change in a restaurant and pondering how he will make it through the rest of the month. Maupassant writes, "Lorsqu'il fut sur le trottoir, il demeura un instant immobile, se demandant ce qu'il allait faire. On était au 28 juin, et il lui restait juste en poche trois francs quarante pour finir le mois" (2). The eventual answer to this question is financial gain through sexual predation. He seduces and has sex with women who can provide him some level of financial security, and it is very clear that without these women he would be unable to maintain himself. Along these lines, Zola presents a harsher, naturalistic representation of the same phenomenon in *Nana* (1880). The little girl of *L'Assommoir* (1877) turned whore could be considered the victim of sexual predation, but in the overall understanding of her character, it is clear that she prostitutes herself, willingly seducing men, for money. Whether the men in her life are lovers or clients, she uses them and the money they provide to stabilize herself financially.

The concern with love and money that develops in the 19th century deflate the efficacy of the Sadian universe on two levels: individuality and luxury. First, love requires a relationship with the other that Sade cannot abide. To wallow in displeasure gives another person power over the individual and pleasure is removed from the equation. The value placed on love, and in turn on the other person, forces the individual to constrain him or herself for the good of the other or of the relationship. As is evident in the case of Octave, the ability to achieve pleasure for the sole purpose of pleasure is sullied. The connection to the other also creates a level of introspection that allows for regret and self-doubt based on the idea that the individual buys into the morality imposed by society, which is why the stigma associated with prostitution prevents it from serving as a means of unencumbered pleasure. On the other hand, luxury disintegrates as the century progresses, which is not to say that luxury ceases to exist, because the change of focus from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie reveals the fiscal need demonstrated above and requires the implementation of labor. There can be no work in the Sadian universe because work is the antithesis of pleasure. The demands of work require constraint and the lack of freedom reorients the atmosphere from one of pleasure seeking to one of profit seeking. The misery of the naturalistic era is so oppressive that it leaves no room for the luxury of the Sadian narration where the Sadian sexual predator, whose only need is pleasure, can focus exclusively on sexual gratification.

As the 20th and 21st centuries come into focus, sex steps out of the shadows, and the moralistic constraints begin to ease but only through the creation of a different approach to sex. For some authors, this was not a simple transition by any means. For André Gide, the dichotomy between his tightly constrained moralistic upbringing and the realities of his everyday existence

is evident throughout many of his works. Sex was both a source of guilt and pleasure. In *L'Immoraliste* (1902), the confusion between what is expected and what is desired leads Michel to have a confused relationship with sex. In *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (1925), Gide presents a much freer sexual environment where le Comte de Passavant preys on Olivier by seducing him and altering his personality through corruption. In other cases, sex was embraced through a pornographic slant. Apollinaire, for example, produces *Les Onze Mille Verges* (1907) which represents sex in all its incarnations without the complex of socio-religious guilt; in fact, the title mocks religion openly. Pornographic texts become too numerous to list, but one bears remarkable similarities to situations presented in Sade's work. In *Les Quatres Jeudis* (1979), Bernard Montorgueil presents an illustrated collection of pornographic tales in which a young man submits himself to bondage and sadism at the hands of a group of female dominatrices. The women in Montorgueil's work are most clearly sexual predators, but they are simple sexual creatures. There is no attempt to justify their position on sex, because the work is a pornographic text having titillation as its sole purpose. Also in the second half of the 20th century, Frédéric Dard (San-Antonio) presents us with a frank and fun-loving approach to sex through the adventures of Commissaire San-Antonio who takes a James Bond-esque approach to sexual liberation. He is a "good" man because of his chosen profession, but he can sleep with and discard a seemingly endless string of women because they are only important for his pleasure. Sex in San-Antonio is fun, but the commissaire still has a job to do.

One of the most important changes that takes place in the 20th century is the wide-spread availability of sex through pornography due to technological advancement. While this is too broad a subject to fully examine here, it is also far too important to ignore entirely. The



pornographic narrative universe progresses so rapidly and is multiplied throughout so many different forms of media in the 20th century that it infiltrates the mainstream. The progression from being able to watch pornography in a movie theater, to watching it on VHS in the privacy of the home, to the widespread availability of home movie cameras that allowed for self-made porn, to extended distribution through the internet is so fast and furious that the narrative universe literally explodes. The growth of the porn industry creates an expansion of voyeurism that leads to an unavoidable loosening of the moral boundaries and allows for a type of sexual predation that does value pleasure for its own sake.

Another voyeuristic type of predation also comes into full swing in the 20th century through the relationship between sex and consumption. As advertising begins to use sex to sell products and encourage consumption, businesses large and small begin to prey on the sexual drives of their customers. While this is not exclusive to the 20th century by any means, the means of distribution become so much more advanced that sex is suddenly in the most innocuous of places. Magazines, billboards, televisions are all invaded by overt and covert manifestations of sex. Whether this is the result of freer morals or the catalyst for them is debatable, but what is certain is that sex and the sexed body are no longer private. Between advertisements and pornography, the modern era is one of sexual availability and the question becomes one of popular reaction.

All of these post-Sadian narrations have post-revolutionary relationship to sex; that is to say that they exist in the absence of the Sadian text but in a conscious state of lack. All of the non-pornographic texts in the post-Sadian era show various interactions between morality and sex, but none of them combine with a philosophical discourse that frees sex altogether from its

cultural binds. Contrarily, pornographic texts lift all of the socio-religious cultural restraints away from the act of sex, but, by definition, it cannot engage in discourse with any type of philosophical underpinning. Therefore, the post-Sadian narration is marked by the divergence of instinct and intellect. The non-pornographic text can only present sex as a supporting element of the overall theme of the narration, while the pornographic text can only abuse of intellect as a campy motif for the sex acts which drive the narration. Illicit sex and philosophy therefore become disenfranchised. The relationship that Sade established through the combination of graphic sex and philosophy, attained by the creation of the Sadian sexual predator, is so specific to his narration that it is never recreated. In his narration, Sade builds a world where sex is unencumbered and in so doing linked sex and pleasure on an otherwise unreachable level. The result of this elevation being that sex is exposed on an unmatched level. The desire, the act, the ferocity, the power of pleasure is laid bare in a way that can never be reversed. Even those who have never read Sade's works are aware of the sexual implications and in the absence of this knowledge, a simple understanding of the word "sadism" carries this information to the masses who are unaware of its namesake. The Sadian narration represents the complete and irreversible infiltration of popular culture.

To return to the question posited in the introduction to this work: Why do a gendered reading of Sade? The answer is simple: there is no other moment where gender ceases to be. Sade's narration opened a door that could only be opened in the absence of God and that was quickly slammed shut by the need for a stable social, religious, and legal system of rules. His topsy-turvy world could only exist during the French Revolution because the world outside the narration had briefly become as confused and unstable as the world inside the narration allowing

Sade to take on the government, the church and the reigning philosophy of his time. By reversing the values of "good" and "evil," Sade essentially did away with both and in the same manner freed the individual, through the Sadian sexual predator, to be happy. In the Sadian universe, sex for pleasure is not a religious or social evil; sex is only pleasure, and pleasure disregards everything, even gender. The Sadian sexual predator does not discriminate if there is pleasure to be had. During the brief window of Sade's textual production, gender ceases to exist. One must do a gendered reading of Sade, because Sade's narration represents the zero sum moment, the point at which the slate is wiped clean and the scales are leveled. Once the door closes, new incarnations of sex, and in turn of gender, must be rebuilt.

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