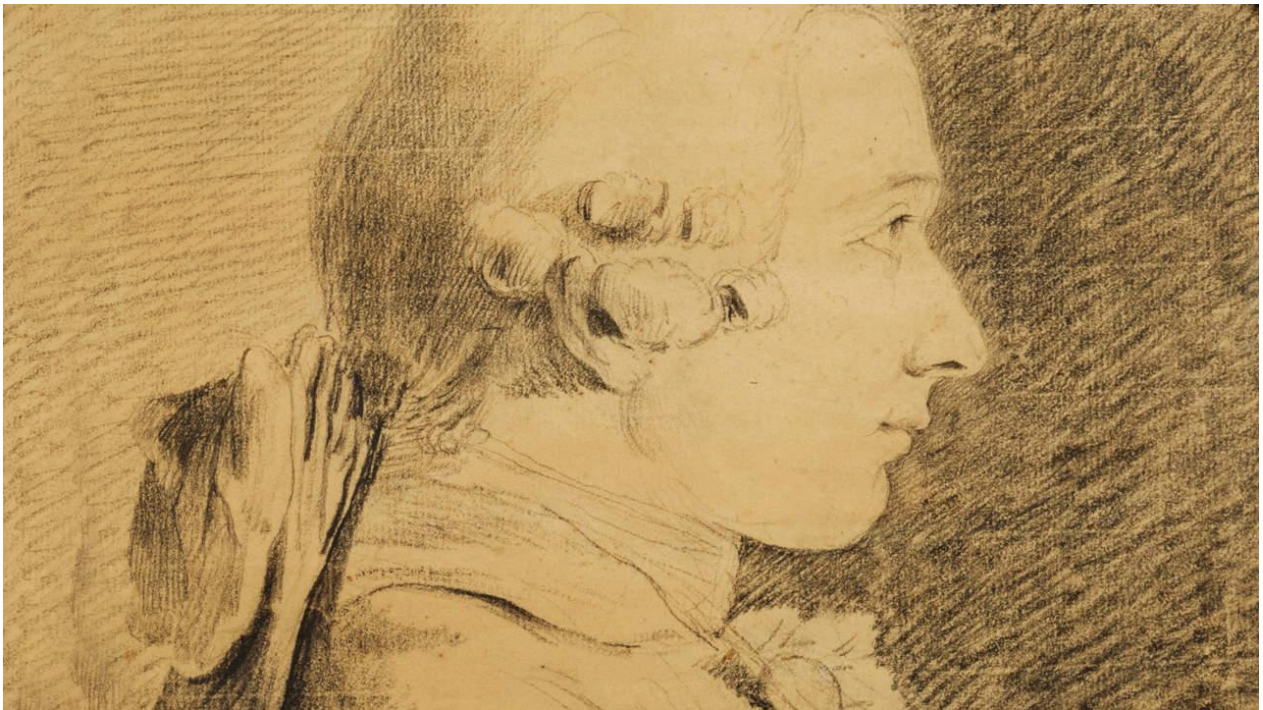


Legacy of a Libertine: The Marquis de Sade [B2]

Un secolo prima che Sigmund Freud collocasse la libido al centro della natura umana, questo iconoclasta libertino aveva già oltrepassato i limiti del desiderio. Considerato ancora oggi un perverso, passò decenni in prigione, ma scrisse alcune delle opere letterarie più influenti e scandalose mai pubblicate.



French aristocrat Donatien Alphonse François de Sade was born in Paris in 1740. He spent his [late teens](#) in the military, where he discovered he liked [rough sex](#). [On leaving](#), he married, but then [engaged in](#) orgies and affairs with women and men. He hired young prostitutes, submitting them to sexual abuses and torture. Some complained that he'd tried to poison them with an aphrodisiac called 'Spanish fly'.

THE BASTILLE

Accused of sexual [deviance](#) and blasphemy (a serious offence at the time), Sade was imprisoned in 1768, and then again in 1777, where he tried to incite a revolt. In 1784, he was transferred to the Bastille prison in Paris.

There, on a roll of paper twelve metres long, he secretly wrote *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (120 Days of Sodom), in which he described in [painstaking](#) detail numerous varieties of sexual perversion, many anatomically impossible. When revolutionaries [stormed](#) the Bastille, the manuscript was thought lost – but it was found, and circulated.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

[Released](#), Sade threw himself into politics, excited by the prospects of the French Revolution. [Thus](#), unlike thousands of others, especially of his class, he managed to [avoid](#) the guillotine. But capital punishment in general horrified him: for Sade, death by passion was a desirable thing, but to rationalise killing by law was barbarous. When he [condemned](#) revolutionary leader Maximilien Robespierre, he was [locked up](#) for a while again.

NAPOLEONIC ERA

In 1787 Sade had written an early version of his most famous novel, *Justine*. He then produced *Juliette* (1800), about her amoral sister. He published both anonymously, but couldn't resist sending a copy of [the latter](#) to Napoleon Bonaparte, the new supreme leader of France. Bonaparte had Sade arrested. In 1803, he was declared [insane](#) and sent to Charenton Asylum. With Sade's ex-wife paying his pension, Sade was encouraged [to stage](#) several of his [milder](#) plays with the [inmates](#) as actors. This was quite a hit with the Parisian public, but in 1809, police orders put him into solitary confinement, and his pens and paper were confiscated. Sade died of natural causes in 1814.

NATIONAL ICON

Although his books were prohibited in France and many other places, Sade acquired many fans over the centuries. Writers and philosophers included Charles Baudelaire, Charles Swinburne, Gustave Flaubert and Friedrich Nietzsche, while among famous directors and artists were Alfred Hitchcock,

Pier Paolo Pasolini and Henry Miller. The French [ban](#) was [lifted](#) in 1957, and today he is considered a national icon in France.

Glossary

- **locked up** = rinchiudere
- **to stage** = trasporre a teatro
- **ban** = proibizione
- **late teens** = fine adolescenza
- **avoid** = evitare
- **Thus** = così
- **the latter** = quest'ultimo
- **milder** = più moderati
- **On leaving** = nell'abbandonare
- **deviance** = devianza, perversione
- **Released** = liberare
- **insane** = pazzo
- **engaged in** = partecipare, impegnarsi
- **stormed** = attaccare
- **condemned** = condannare
- **inmates** = reclusi
- **lifted** = sollevare
- **rough sex** = sesso duro
- **painstaking** = minuzioso