



The 120 Days of Sodom, and other writings

By Marquis De Sade

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The 120 Days of Sodom is the Marquis de Sade's masterpiece. A still unsurpassed catalogue of sexual perversions and the first systematic exploration of the psychopathology of sex, it was written during Sade's lengthy imprisonment for sexual deviancy and blasphemy and then lost after the storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution in 1789. Later rediscovered, the manuscript remained unpublished until 1936 and is now introduced by Simone de Beauvoir's landmark essay, 'Must We Burn Sade?' Unique in its enduring capacity to shock and provoke, The 120 Days of Sodom must stand as one of the most controversial books ever written, and a fine example of the Libertine novel, a genre inspired by eroticism and anti-establishmentarianism, that effectively ended with the French Revolution.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Sade was one of the most radical minds in Western history, one that touched, with astonishing fusion of madness and cold rationality, on some of the most central aspects of psychic life... He remains a great, horrifying, but also vastly illuminating figure" Newsweek

Language Notes

Text: English, French (translation)

About the Author

The Marquis de Sade, born Donatien Alphonse Francois in 1740, is one of the most famous and notorious figures in French history. The man whose name coined sadism is best known for his violent and blasphemous sexual exploits, which he recorded in his books and plays. After a series of arrests and exiles for acts of sodomy and sexual abuse of a number of prostitutes, the Marquis de Sade was eventually successfully imprisoned in the Bastille in 1784. On 4 July 1789, he was transferred to an insane asylum at Charenton near Paris. Ten days later, the storming of the Bastille, a major event of the French Revolution, occurred at the famous prison. During Robespierre's Reign of Terror in post-war France, Sade obtained his freedom and soon established himself as an important political figure. However, his public criticism of Robespierre ensured he was imprisoned once more. In 1803, Sade was declared insane for the second time and was reinstated at Charenton. He died there in 1814, having conducted a sexual affair with a thirteen-year-old girl.

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