

The thesis is devoted to the work of the French writer and philosopher Donatien Alphonse François de Sade and three female 20th-century French novelists Laure, Pauline Réage and Jeanne de Berg, whose work draws inspiration from Sade's.

In the first part of the thesis we focus on the Marquis de Sade. First, we recount the key events in Sade's adolescence and family life, his sexual indulgences and particularly his lengthy imprisonment, as these had profound influence on his work. Next we highlight the relevant historical incidents of his time and discuss the position of his work within the so-called *libertin* literary movement. Then we proceed to analyze the themes and motifs of Sade's three pivotal books: *120 Days of Sodom* (*Les Cent Vingt Journées de Sodome*), *Justine* (*Justine ou les Malheurs de la vertu*), and *Juliette* (*Histoire de Juliette*). Our analysis points out a deeper philosophical message that can be found behind erotic themes of Sade's work. In the final sections we describe the fate of Sade's legacy in the 19th century and also his rehabilitation in the 20th century, when his writings have finally been critically studied and his collective works published.

The second part of the thesis concentrates on Sade's female followers in the 20th century: Collette Peignot alias Laure (*Laure: Écrits*), Dominique Aury alias Pauline Réage and her *Story of O* (*L'Histoire d'O*) and Catherine Robbe-Grillet alias Jean de Berg, the writer of *The Image* (*L'Image*). The life and work of these authors are put in proper historical and social context and the connection to Sade's legacy is studied; this is also the perspective from which we perform the analysis of their novels. We pay particular attention to the feminine touch in their interpretation of Sade's themes and motifs.

The concluding section emphasizes the principal differences between Sade and his female followers. Sade's philosophical legacy and troublemaker's attitudes are most closely mimicked by Colette Peignot. Dominique Aury and Catherine Robbe-Grillet have, on the other hand, managed to elevate and successfully apply Sade's free-thinking to the context of their time. Their work played an important role in the 20th-century female emancipation, here specifically in the area of literary eroticism.