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Armelle St-Martin, *Sade, la Révolution et la finance*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021. 260 pp. €68.00 (cl). ISBN 978-2-406-11977-7; €27.00 (pb). ISBN 978-2-406-11976-0.

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Donatien Alphonse François, the Marquis de Sade, was born in 1740 and died in 1814. As a young man, he attended the Jesuit *collège* Louis-le-Grand in Paris, and then served in the French military during the Seven Years' War. In spring 1763, he married Renée Pelagie de Montreuil, who came from a wealthy and recently ennobled family. That autumn, he was arrested for debauchery and imprisoned briefly in the royal fortress at Vincennes, having shocked a Parisian prostitute with the blend of sexual violence and blasphemous oratory for which he would later become famous. It was but the first of many arrests and imprisonments on charges stemming from his sexual and irreligious proclivities, including a six-month term in 1768, a condemnation to death in absentia in 1772, and another arrest in 1777, which would ultimately land him in the Bastille through the last days of the ancien régime. He was transferred out of the Bastille in July 1789, shortly before the prison was stormed, and was released by the revolutionary government in April 1790. He was arrested again in December 1793, this time for "counter-revolutionary activities," but was spared the guillotine and released again the next October. His final arrest, for having written the erotic novel *Justine*, came in March 1801, after which he was transferred to the insane asylum at Charenton. He remained there until his death in 1814. His novels *Justine* and *Juliette*, along with *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir* and *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (incomplete and lost after the Revolution but preserved and then published in the early twentieth century), have secured the marquis's fame—and infamy—for more than two centuries since. The term "sadism" stems from his exploits and reputation.

Books by or about the Marquis de Sade attract attention, generally on the premise that the contents will titillate, shock, offend, or provoke. While Armelle St-Martin's recent book is about the Marquis de Sade, it is not about *that* Marquis de Sade. St-Martin's focus is not Sade the author and libertine described above, but Sade the economic actor and engaged citizen of revolutionary France. As he appears in the pages of *Sade, la Révolution et la finance*, the marquis was an active participant in the social and political life of the Parisian neighborhood to which he moved after his release from prison in 1790, a dutiful agent of the revolutionary administration in his section, an engaged reader of eighteenth-century works on economic theory and practice, and a capitalist in the bourgeois style, his noble lineage and title notwithstanding. That this part of the marquis's biography has received less attention than his scandalous works and imprisonments is perhaps unsurprising. Nonetheless, St-Martin argues that closer attention to Sade's approach to the Revolution and to his investments in property will help us understand better not only the course

and character of his life and some elements of his literary oeuvre, but also the political culture of the early Revolution, capitalist thought in late eighteenth century France, and, by extension, how the values of the late ancien regime gave way to those of the French Revolution and then to the more assertively bourgeois nineteenth century.

St-Martin's study focuses primarily on the period between the marquis's release in April 1790 and his re-arrest in 1793. The few pages that she devotes to the pre-revolutionary period focus not on the marquis, but on his father, the comte de Sade, whose own business affairs and libertine habits are described as a prelude and point of access by which the marquis would come to know the intertwined pleasures of sex and money. While the marquis's relationship to his father—and to father figures of all sorts—has long been the focus of scholarly attention, it is another of the marquis's relationships that St-Martin emphasizes, and another set of social introductions. Here the critical figure is André-Marie Guzman, described by St-Martin as "l'homme de toutes les situations" (p. 56), a Spanish banker with financial resources and a taste for political chaos.

Guzman was at the center of a coterie of foreign bankers, including Pierre Jean Berthold de Proli, Moses Dobruska (known during this period as Junius Frey) and his brother Emmanuel, and Anacharsis Cloots, among others. St-Martin describes these figures as Sade's "alter egos" (p. 214) and presents them as collectively representative of a social and political climate alive with political and financial energy, activity, and opportunity. In addition to their financial interests and their status as foreigners in a revolutionary land, these men also shared a neighborhood, living and working in the Place Vendôme, later renamed the "section des Piques," and a sense that the Revolution offered them a chance at "renaissance" (p. 77). Settling into this neighborhood, surrounding himself with foreign men of political and financial action, and throwing himself into his work as an "écrivain sans-culotte," Sade hoped "de se forger une nouvelle identité qui réconcilie plusieurs facettes de sa personnalité" (p. 31).

Not yet the hotbed of Jacobin radicalism remembered by many historians, the Place Vendôme was moderate in 1790, reflecting the social and political priorities of businessmen and their affairs. It was located close to the Bourse, "grouillait de banquiers," (p. 40) and was one of the wealthiest sections in the city. This milieu is central to St-Martin's analysis, and she devotes a considerable amount of space and energy to descriptions of the section's social and political character and, even more, to the cast of characters around Guzman. Citing Soboul, she claims that this social biography of the section and prosopography of this social network shed light on the evolving political character of the Revolution and hold the key to understanding how Sade the libertine nobleman came to be an engaged and diligent member of the political community.

With Guzman's support, Sade found his place in the section, entered local political life, and was, by the end of the Legislative Assembly, busily at work in administrative affairs. He served as the section's president and then secretary, worked on a committee organizing the section's cavalry, then on another devoted to hospital care for the indigent. Throughout, he served as a sort of "porte-parole" for the people of the section. This last point can make the marquis himself hard to find in the political work on which St.-Martin focuses. As St-Martin indicates, the documentation of his activities and his contributions is incomplete. More problematically, Sade lent his pen to the causes of his neighbors, associates, and the section administration, blurring the lines between his political actions and theirs. She writes that he managed to "s'efface habilement, sans toutefois complètement disparaître, derrière la voix révolutionnaire pour laisser parler ses lieux communs" (p. 99). While this may sometimes obscure Sade's own view of the work he undertook during the

Revolution, it is nonetheless revealing of how participatory and representative governance often operated, with the written word serving as a bridge between the concerns and interests of the citizenry, on the one hand, and the affairs of the administrative state, on the other. As St-Martin points out, we can see the value of his work as a “porte-plume” in the fact that so many people in his section turned to him for assistance (p. 97). Elsewhere, she describes his work during this period as a “dépotaire d’une certaine mémoire collective” (p. 136).

On this point and others throughout the book, St-Martin is frank about the nature and limits of the evidence before her, about the intuitive or analytic leaps involved in reconstructing Sade’s place in the section and in the Revolution. Some of these come at critically important places in the analysis, though, raising questions about how far our intuitions should guide our reconstruction of the past. For example, in the midst of a substantial treatment of Junius Frey’s biography, political thought, and social activities, St-Martin acknowledges that the link between Frey and Sade is supposed rather than demonstrated. She writes: “Je ne puis douter que le chemin des Frey et de Sade se soient croisés, bien qu’ils n’appartenaient pas à la même section. Frey fréquentait des aristocrates et il avait un goût prononcé pour les femmes” (p. 68). Elsewhere, she notes that while we can demonstrate Sade’s proximity to this social circle, and the interests he shared with its members, he nonetheless remained mute regarding them in his letters and papers, leaving us to surmise how this environment shaped his life as a citizen. Her intuitions on these points seem plausible, though the paper trail is at times thin.

A similar issue arises in the book’s second line of analysis, Sade’s relationship with the economic thought of the late eighteenth century and his character as a “bourgeois capitaliste” (p. 141). St-Martin claims that Sade was “séduit par la physiocratie” (p. 143) and that his reading of the physiocrats led him to develop “une vision capitaliste des rapports économiques qui dépasse l’idée que l’agriculture est la seule source de richesses. Plus largement, c’est toute sa vision du monde qui est modelée par les théories physiocratiques et sa fiction en porte les traces” (p. 147). This is a sizeable claim, but there is relatively little evidence of how Sade read the physiocrats. St-Martin offers her own reading of some of the central tenets of physiocracy and essential works by physiocratic thinkers, but it is hard to know that Sade would have read them in the same way. We are asked instead to see physiocratic principles at work in Sade’s financial dealings and management of his landholdings. Without the more direct link to Sade’s own understanding of physiocratic principles and texts, this can be difficult to maintain, though the more general claim that Sade approached the management of his finances and properties with an eye to profit and gain is more compelling, as is the suggestion that he and the financiers he befriended came to see political, personal, economic, and sexual liberties as interwoven parts of a larger ideological project.

St-Martin concludes by drawing a line back from this “bourgeois capitaliste” to the more familiar Sade of literature, offering “lectures capitalistes de l’oeuvre sadienne” (p. 185). She emphasizes his familiarity with the economic thought of the period and the echoes of Mandeville’s thought in the fates of Justine and Juliette (the former suffering the miseries of virtue, the latter the rewards of vice). She notes the prominent characters in Sade’s novels whose work involved finance or commercial markets and situates Sade’s approach to economic issues within a broader rethinking of early modern French capitalism, one that emphasizes the pursuit of pleasure rather than the Weberian emphasis on abstention in the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (p. 14).

Here, and throughout the book, St-Martin gestures towards larger historiographical questions about capitalism's effects on the political culture of the late eighteenth century, the nobility's attempts to navigate the new social landscape of the late ancien regime and Revolution, and the cultural tensions that shaped revolutionary politics. Sade's own career as an active citizen is clearly meant to shed light on these developments, and because this extraordinary figure cast himself in an important but unexceptional role in the workings of the Revolution, we can trace the current of revolutionary politics in his affairs, administrative and financial alike. At the same time, there are bodies of scholarly literature on these broader historical currents with which St-Martin might have engaged more fully—especially the Anglophone literature—as recent works on the social, political, and economic history of the Revolution have moved refreshingly beyond the battles over the Marxist interpretation noted in her introduction. More specifically, the intersections of money, sex, power, class and status, property, ideology, and revolutionary administration, all themes in this volume, have received attention in a number of important works not cited by St-Martin.[1] Without these bridges to our broader understanding of the period, the focus on Sade and the cohort around Guzman can feel constraining at times, preventing the book from exploring or developing the themes that emerge from the marquis's path into and through the Revolution.

This critique can be read backwards, though, as an indication of how many rich and valuable themes St-Martin succeeds in tracing through the revolutionary career and financial practices of the Marquis de Sade, elements of his biography that have been less often appreciated by other scholars. In so doing, she has produced a book that will be read with interest by scholars of Sade and eighteenth-century culture, the social and political history of the Parisian sections, and the relationship between capitalism and the French Revolution.

NOTE

[1] Among others, titles that would have been germane to St-Martin's work include Rafe Blaufarb, *The Great Demarcation: The French Revolution and the Invention of Modern Property* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Clare Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013); Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005); Rebecca L. Spang, *Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015); and Liana Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). While too recent to have been incorporated by St-Martin, Charly Coleman, *The Spirit of French Capitalism: Economic Theology in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2021) would make a valuable companion to the volume under review.

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