

# The Marquis de Sade and the Cinema of Transcendence

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# **THE MARQUIS DE SADE AND THE CINEMA OF TRANSCENDENCE**

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is an enquiry into the Marquis de Sade, his writing and the perversion known as sadism. The narrower focus of this thesis investigates the problem of the meeting of violence and language in Sade's novels and the implications for cinema.

The procedure has been to adopt the Critical and Clinical approach to philosophy that brings together both the literary style of Sade and the clinical symptoms of sadism. This method canvasses a number of Sade's novels to consider his writing and then considers the psychoanalytical definition of sadism before moving on to discuss the expression of sadism through language. Finally, the model of sadism and language is then applied to a number of films to discuss how violence within the context of sadism functions through language within cinema.

The general results show how speech and action can be defined as equivalent forms of sadian violence when expressed through language in both literature and cinema. This occurs, furthermore, through the transcendent model of violence where both speech and action refer to a higher order of violence and this is put at the service of the senses through language.

The major conclusions reached suggest that language in literature and cinema can be a demonstrative form of the higher order of violence. Sadism draws out the violence and excess of the world by reflecting it within language. In doing so, violence is designated with a quality of the erotic through this excess. Finally, each act of violence within literature and

cinema is an attempt to overcome taboos through transgression. The breaking of a taboo creates an amount of excess but also reinstates the taboo in what becomes an empty act of transgression. The excess is expressed through violence within language and deed according to a transcendent function of language in literature and cinema.

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*It is a question posed in a moment of quiet restlessness, at midnight, when there is no longer anything to ask*  
(Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 1).

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## INTRODUCTION

The word *sadisme* officially entered the French lexicon when it was included in the 1834 edition of the *Dictionnaire Universel* (Plessix Gray 1998: 413). This entry proved the Marquis de Sade's legitimacy as a writer and the word sadisme as a designation for his writing rather than his perversions. "Now that he was officially categorised as a novelist, it might be possible to see him as someone who imagined, rather than acted out his 'turpitudes'" (ibid). This was the beginning of a series of official categorisations that would promote the difference between writing about and practising sadism.

From then on, the "monstrous and anti-social system revolting to nature" (ibid) that sadism was defined as became construed as writing, rather than murderous behaviour on the part of the Marquis de Sade (1740 – 1814). This historical example also shows how, from the first, Sade's novels were construed as a feature of Sade's perverse nature. It was not until psychoanalysis was understood and accepted that Sade's writing was perceived as being separate from his life.

Freud and other psychoanalysts, such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840 – 1902), presided over a further distancing of Sade the writer from sadism the perversion. They defined sadism as a perversion to do with the human psyche and the presence of instincts. Throughout the work of psychoanalysis there is little regard given for either Sade the writer or his novels. This situation remained<sup>1</sup> until the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1920 –

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<sup>1</sup> It must be noted, however, that Pierre Klossowski wrote a great deal about Sade from 1930 onwards and many of his theories regarding sadism and psychoanalysis were incorporated into Deleuze's analysis of Sade in *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (1991). Klossowski's work appears in French journals, such as *Reven de*



1995) reappraised Sade's work and questioned the psychoanalytical basis of sadism. Deleuze introduced language and literature back into the model of how sadism performs violence. His work further entrenched the division between Sade the writer and sadism the perversion by conversely explaining how sadism is expressed *through* language.

Nearly 200 years after his death, Sade's ideas continue to excite the popular imagination and the number of films and books testify to the continuing interest in his life and writings. To those interested in his work, his stories and ideas are no less relevant today than they were during the French Revolution and the reign of Napoleon. Debates today rage, as they did in Sade's time, about the importance of cultural expression versus the need to protect innocents and the unstable.

This thesis intervenes in these debates, without addressing them directly, by linking the expression of violence in sadism to language and cinema. Cinema has taken its place alongside literature as a medium for the exchange of ideas about life and society and has inspired an entirely new currency in storytelling. Rather than seeking to cancel out whole theories or bodies of work, this thesis is an attempt to show how violence can be expressed *through* language and action within literature and cinema. It explores the definition of violence through sadism and challenges the notion that cinema 'inspires' violent behaviour. Instead it explains that, with sadism, violence is pre-existent and is expressed equally through language and action. By suggesting the parity between language and action, violence is shown to have more than one mode of expression and is carried out on behalf of a higher ideal that explains the meaning and purpose of sadian violence.

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*Psychanalyse* (1933) and books, such as *Sade: Mon Prochain* (Editions du Seuil: 1947).

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE MARQUIS DE SADE: APPROACHING LIFE AND LITERATURE

*Sade didn't create the taboos, but they liberated him as a writer and also imprisoned him as a man*  
(Plessix Gray: 1998).

Philosophy poses questions and attempts to answer them through analysis, speculation and reasoned argument. In the broadest sense, philosophers consider the world and the place of human beings within the world. Often, however, the most revealing part of philosophy is the method used to reach certain conclusions. The path of philosophical reasoning provides much more than a limited set of conclusions because it is in the method that bias, presuppositions and accepted conventions are revealed. More or less, twentieth century Western philosophers have become much more self-conscious of the philosophical process and of what is involved in creating philosophy. However, this does not mean that they avoid relying upon taken-for-granted assumptions and practices when carving up the world in the philosophical endeavour.

Philosophy and philosophers are interested in unravelling, or at least problematising, notions of life, truth, language, ontology, epistemology, subjectivity and the world. This list is by no means exhaustive but is indicative of the preoccupations of philosophy and how the categories themselves are a product of particular schools of philosophy. Philosophy very often takes up at the precise point where science, history, medicine and economics leave off. It provides the framework to life and the limits of knowledge. However, many philosophers are interested in finding alternatives to rigid forms of knowledge.

The French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, produced many books on his own and in collaboration with Felix Guattari. In doing so, Deleuze's philosophical quest ranged from the broad treatment of science, psychoanalysis, philosophy and art, to specific studies of particular painters, writers and other philosophers. Throughout his work, he returned to the question of what constitutes philosophy. In his studies on Kant, Spinoza, Nietzsche, subjectivity, language, cinema, painting, literature, history and science, Deleuze also

discussed the nature of philosophy. He was concerned with finding alternatives to fixed notions and categories within philosophy.

At its most fundamental level, philosophy is the art of creating and inventing concepts (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 2). Deleuze believed that it is a creative undertaking to form concepts philosophically. Others might disagree, but for Deleuze, this defined his philosophical processes and intentions. However, having explained this, the inevitable next question becomes what a concept is. In a sense, answering the question of what a concept is, answers the question of what constitutes philosophy. Simply put, a concept is an “act of thought” in relation to something and concepts are an assemblage formed in relation to this something (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 21). Through the act of thought, philosophy creates concepts, but it is not a solitary action.

Philosophy engages with literature and other domains, such as medicine and science, in the creation of concepts. Philosophy, Deleuze insists, “cannot be undertaken independently of science and art; it always enters into relations of mutual exchange and resonance with other domains, though for reasons that are always internal to philosophy itself” (in Smith 1997: xii). Philosophy acts as an “intercessor” or “mediator” with other domains. As such, Deleuze writes as a philosopher and not a critic when writing about literature. His interest is in how philosophical concepts can be generated by creating an affinity between philosophy and art, literature and science.

What relevance might this have to the Marquis de Sade? It is unlikely that Sade considered himself a philosopher. He might have described himself as a writer or prisoner, but philosopher may not have been at the top of the list. Inadvertently, however, he has

created a philosophy of the bedroom that has reached well beyond the bedrooms of revolutionary France. The Marquis de Sade has thus contributed a great deal to philosophy — not least of which has been through the writings of Deleuze. Sade, in his way, created new concepts for literature and Deleuze, through his analysis of Sade, created new concepts for philosophy. Others have taken an interest too. For some he is a martyr. Simone de Beauvoir asked *Must We Burn Sade?* (in Sade 1990) For others, he is a product of domestic disharmony. Francine du Plessix Gray thought to look *At Home with the Marquis de Sade* (1998). George Bataille thought of Sade in terms of Sovereign Power and *Eroticism* (1993). In all of these studies, a picture emerges of how Sade was a troublesome figure for society and how his novels sit uneasily with literature.

When approaching literature, Deleuze does not “read works of literature primarily as texts or treat writing in terms of its textuality” (Smith: xv). It is not a process of deconstructing texts (as in Derrida) for their textuality, nor is it a matter of commenting on the methods of deconstruction. Deleuze does not promote the approach to textuality that treats writers themselves as clinical cases, like so much contemporary cultural criticism. He does not advocate searching writers’ work for signs of their neuroses. Engaging with literature through philosophy is for the purposes of seeing to what use the text can be put in the “extra-textual” space, thereby creating an affinity between literature and philosophy (Smith: xvi). Deleuze showed how this could be achieved with Sade. Through philosophy, Sade’s writing is prolonged outside of the strictly textual space of literature and given a use with reference to psychoanalysis, language and cinema.

The method is one of evaluation, not judgement according to a set of pre-existing criteria. It seeks to evaluate the text for the “vitalism” that infects it. This creative power of writing

is the manifestation of the positive energy of creation and invention. The creation includes new styles and syntax, new affects and percepts, as well as new modes of existence and the creation of the world (Smith: lii). Writing, therefore, participates in the “production of new possibilities of life” (ibid). It can create new modes of existence and through an affinity of mutual resonance new concepts of philosophy can be created.

## **A Connection Between Literature and Life**

The connection between Life and literature is significant because it is not a haphazard or coincidental link. Literature, through the process of writing, can offer new possibilities for language, thought, Life and the world. But this does not fully explain the concept of “Life” that is related to literature. With Deleuze, Life becomes an almost mythical notion that expresses a “tenor” and “vitality” which is created through the text. It is the lived experience but it also reaches further to include a “nonorganic” and “impersonal power” (Smith: xvi). Life includes the actual experiences of the lived as well as the possibilities for the livable world. What is at stake in literature are the possibilities for, and style of, Life. Writing is able to traverse the passage of Life and in doing so has as much capacity to enliven as well as darken the vitality of Life.

The connection between Life and literature is most easily expressed by examining writers themselves and their literary works. Writers such as Sade are inspired by the vitality and possibilities inherent in Life, which infects their writing, compels them to write and supports their creative endeavour (Smith: xvi). This vitalism is not to be confused with a replacement for neuroses. Sade’s literary techniques reveal a dual power of literature to

express a certain *mode* of Life and a *process* of Life (xv). Sade's writing expresses a mode of Life known as libertinage and a process of Life known as sadism. His literature expresses these styles, but it is through philosophy that the use has expanded.

Going beyond lived experiences, Life is enlivened by literature through the act of writing that connects back and feeds into the vitalism of Life. Where literature suggests new ways of living, Life provides the extra-textual space that prolongs the text. The dual power of Life can only be explained by evaluating literature in two ways that relate to the mode and process of Life. As a result of the resonance between Life and literature, Life ceases to be merely personal and the literary work ceases to be merely textual.

A literary work implies a diagnosis of a mode of existence that is both a *way* of living and a *form* of living. These correlate to two types of literary evaluation — the critical and clinical. Deleuze states that “every literary work implies a way of living and a form of life, and must be evaluated both critically and clinically” (Smith 1997: xv). The critical aspect concerns the styles and techniques used in writing, and the clinical element concerns the signs of Life that are evident. “The literary technique and style of the writer (the critical) is directly linked to the creation of a differential table of vital signs (the clinical)” (ibid). The philosopher does not look for the clinical signs of neurosis when judging writing. Rather the work is evaluated for the clinical style of Life offered through the critical appraisal of techniques. Writers set forth the clinical symptoms of Life in their work through the style that animates them. The clinical implies a diagnosis of a particular mode of existence. Yet not merely a diagnostic tool or role, it also concerns the criteria according to which the potentialities of Life are assessed in a given work.

Deleuze invented the Critical and the Clinical project specifically in relation to the Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher Masoch (1835 – 1895). It began in 1967 with his essay on Masoch and developed as he encountered other writers (Smith: xi). His book of essays on other literary figures, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1997), confirmed the importance of this approach. But it was with Sade and Masoch in *Coldness and Cruelty* (1991) that he showed the most outstanding example of the Critical and the Clinical. The book is an extended essay on Masoch and Sade and represents the “articulable relationship between literature and clinical psychiatry” (Smith: xix). Deleuze sought to unpack the seemingly irreducible entity “somasochism” and turn it towards Life by referring both to psychoanalysis and the style of writing of Sade and Masoch. He argued, firstly, that the original judgement of the clinician was biased towards sadism and, secondly, that it was necessary to approach splitting somasochism through the literary style of Sade and Masoch “since it is from literature that stem the original definitions” (Deleuze 1991: 14). “The idea was not to apply psychiatric concepts to literature, but on the contrary to extract non-preexistent clinical concepts from the work themselves” (Smith 1997: xix).

Deleuze’s aim was to separate sadism from masochism by showing that the original literary styles were different and that, on this basis, the clinical definitions must also be distinct and separate. In doing this, Deleuze looked at how the names of the literary figures Sade and Masoch became the descriptions of two basic perversions in psychoanalysis. The project was to show that “the critical (in the literary sense) and the clinical (in the medical sense) may be destined to enter into a new relationship of mutual learning” (Deleuze 1991: 14). Deleuze showed how the clinical specificities of sadism and masochism were not separable from the literary values of Sade and Masoch. On the clinical side, sadism and masochism have different symptoms and, on the critical side, the literary styles are related to their



particular symptomatology (Smith 1997: xviii). Their literature expressed a different mode and process of Life.

Both writers, Deleuze said, take language to a “higher function”, although their literature and symptoms are different. With Sade, an Idea of pure reason (absolute negation) is projected onto the real which then produces a speculative–demonstrative use of language that functions through repetitions in number. Masoch, in his literature, expresses a dialectical–imaginative use of language that operates through qualitative suspense. To further highlight the differences, Deleuze pointed out how the new modes of existence and new uses of literature their writing revealed were linked to political acts of resistance that defied political regimes in different countries. Sade wrote in defiance of the bloody French revolution and the reign of terror, while Masoch wrote against the treatment of minority groups in the Austro–Hungarian empire (Smith 1997: xviii). By defining their work in this way, Deleuze took their writing well beyond the strictly literary space and prolonged its use outside of psychoanalysis and in doing so defined the Critical and Clinical approach.

The clinical definition of sadism as it relates to psychoanalysis will be explored in the second chapter. The third chapter will more fully explain the symptomatological method that Deleuze uses in the Critical and Clinical approach in explaining the demonstrative use of language in Sade’s literature. The final chapter will explore possibilities in cinema for the creation of concepts to do with the demonstrative use of language. It will look at whether the language that Sade created through political acts of resistance to the French revolution has any meaning or relevance for recent cinema. But before examining the other uses of Sade’s language, it is necessary to begin with the critical styles and techniques of Sade and his writing.

## **The Novel Life of the Marquis de Sade**

Donatien Alphonse Francois de Sade was baptised in the parish church of Saint-Sulpice on 3 June 1740.<sup>2</sup> He was born the previous day in the Conde mansion in Paris. As a young boy Sade spent some years in Avignon and other regions of France staying with relatives and mixing with the children from other families of nobility. A Frenchman whose family had remote connections to minor nobility, the Marquis' father, Comte de Sade, was instrumental in designing Sade's formal school life. He arranged for Donatien to be housed with his uncle, the Abbé Amlet, in Paris when he was in his mid-childhood, during which time he attended a nearby Jesuit college. Subject to a strict and Spartan regime that included regular whippings, Donatien had a regimented school life and little close familial contact during this time.

Upon finishing his schooling, Sade spent time in the military and was employed in some minor managerial and clerical positions. At the age of 23, Sade married Renée Pelagie, a woman he was reputedly not wildly in love with, for the sake of the family's "delicate" financial status. Donatien and Renée-Pelagie's first child, a son, Louis-Marie, was born in 1768. This was followed in 1769 by Donatien Claude Armand, their second son. Madeleine-Laure, their third child and only daughter, was born in 1771. During this time and in the years that followed, Sade engaged the services of numerous prostitutes and chased his folly in the form of various infatuations and affairs with other women. Sade came to the attention of the authorities and appeared in court for poisonings, beatings,

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<sup>2</sup> The discussion of Sade's life refers to both Paulhan's essay "The Marquis de Sade and his Accomplice" (in

capture and sodomy. He endured many lengthy stints in prison and mental hospitals throughout France and came to the attention of key figures in French history, in particular Napoleon and Robespierre.

His various imprisonments and eventual release were often subject to the favour of those in power, the political conditions of the time and the persuasive power of his wife, the Marquise de Sade. He corresponded regularly with his wife and others whilst he was incarcerated, and many of his legendary letters were eventually published. Sade was a popular figure of defiance to many in the asylums and he regularly staged small plays using the “local talent” in the prison or hospital. He was said to have enjoyed a life of high drama and brinkmanship with those in positions of authority. Sade’s adult life was marked by a pattern of imprisonment and release that eventually engulfed him in death. He was in and out of prison and asylum, and spent a total of 27 years of his life hospitalised or incarcerated. Sade eventually died 2 December 1814 at the age of 74 whilst imprisoned in Charenton. He was not able to have his scheduled appointment with Abbé Geoffrey, which was to have been the following morning. Against the wishes expressed in his will Sade was buried in the Charenton cemetery.

The complex character and life of the Marquis de Sade was very much a product of his will to unearth the seed of perversity and pleasure in people. Of the many facets that contributed to his work it has been said that

In examining the Marquis de Sade’s life, there are a number of component parts that become obvious. Sade was a husband, a writer, a political activist,

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Sade 1991: 3) and the early chapters of *At Home with the Marquis de Sade* (Plessix Grey: 1998) for general biographic details and information.

a patient, an inmate and for some, a scapegoat. It's impossible to overlook these aspects of de Sade when examining his novels. His novels were originally written and published in a time and place with very different cultural values than the present day (Plessix Gray 1998: 14).

While it is accurate to say that Sade's novels were written in a time very different to the present, equally, it could be said that in terms of taboos against sexual crimes and violence, the conditions were not that dissimilar. There is probably less clandestine trade in his novels, but there is still a vivid debate about what constitutes acceptable violence in film and literature. During his periods of imprisonment, Sade wrote furiously and feverishly; some of his most descriptive, disquieting stories were written during these times.

Sade's writing is known for its readability and humour as much as its scandalous content, morally deficient characters and violent scenarios. His many written works include novels, plays, essays, letters, collected volumes, histories and political pamphlets. In 1785 Sade completed the manuscript for *The 120 Days of Sodom* whilst imprisoned in the royal dungeons of the Bastille. It was published posthumously even though it is one of his earliest written works. The novel was thought to have been lost or destroyed when Sade abandoned the Bastille after its capture, but was later found and brought to print. His many other books include *Dialogue Between a Priest and a Dying Man* (1782), *Eugenie de Franval* (1788), *Justine, or Good Conduct Well Chastised* (1791), *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795) and *Juliette* (1800).

Some of the early editions of Sade's novels were printed with erotic drawings that only served to enhance their popularity. As a result, his infamy spread from the local folk to the highest levels of French society and he eventually came to the attention of Napoleon, who

sought to have Sade imprisoned for his activities. A number of unpublished novels were found after Sade's death and numerous manuscripts thought to have been destroyed were eventually recovered and identified. Sade's published works and recovered manuscripts have been reprinted many times over the nearly two centuries since his death. Repeatedly described as violent and pornographic, it is his novels that will be used to illustrate the arguments in the present study.

### **Inventing the Libertines**

Sade invented the libertines as characters in his novels and it is through them that he explored the limits of human violence and sexuality. The libertine society includes Chevalier and Dolmance of *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. As the name suggests, the novel is a philosophical treatise on Nature, destruction and violence that came after the Reign of Terror and the execution of Robespierre. It has been described as “philosophical speculations and dissertations on morality, history and religion that commingle with typical Sadian fantasies” (Seaver and Wainhouse in Sade 1991: 180). It consists of seven dialogues of a particularly black humour between a number of characters, principally Madame de Saint-Ange, Eugenie, Dolmance and Le Chevalier de Mirvel. The four protagonists — a virgin, a 26-year-old woman of “extreme lubricity”, her brother and a dangerous and corrupt man, Dolmance, conduct a series of dialogues. They typify the libertines of Sade's novels because they draw the line at the boundary of cruelty. In discussing the nature of violence, destruction and human nature, the libertines are attempting to chart the depths of cruelty to become independent and have dominion over others who would seek to harm them.

Sade addressed his libertines directly in the opening to *Philosophy in the Bedroom* and admonished them against becoming enchained by the “coldly insipid moralists” who would put them in fear of their own passions (Sade 1991: 185). In addressing the libertines from the start of a novel, Sade is appealing not only to the libertines who appear between the pages of his stories, but perhaps his intended audience of readers. Entitled ‘A Letter to the Libertines’ Sade called out: “Voluptuaries of all ages, of every sex, it is to you only that I offer this work; nourish yourselves upon its principles: they favor your passions...” (ibid). The libertines then are both the characters in Sade’s novels and the readers of his novels. This suggests that Sade saw beyond his stories to a community of readers who might also be interested in favouring their passions — through the novel or through life. The libertines as people, real or imagined, are taken to be interested in an exploration of the philosophy of the bedroom. An exploration that may or may not lead to their destruction, the libertine’s journey nonetheless follows the principle of passions and pleasures.

## **Laws, Rituals and Codes of Libertine Life**

*Justine* is the story of a virtuous and compassionate girl who is raped, robbed, assaulted and charged with murder, theft and brigandage (Paulhan 1991: 12). Yet when she is beset by such violence, Justine only knows one response — that of the pure heart and sensitive soul. However, this proves inadequate time and again. “Here’s a novel which bears every resemblance to those edifying works in which vice is seen punished every time, and virtue rewarded. Except that in *Justine* it’s the other way around” (Paulhan 1991: 12). Justine is a virtuous girl who is punished for her virtue by the libertines. As she expects to triumph over her lack of virtue, Justine is unprepared for all that befalls her and undergoes terrible

torture only to be struck down, like many other characters in Sade's stories, at the height of her glory (Blanchot in Sade 1991: 49).

This story shows how each act of punishment is meted out for the equivalent amount of virtue and nothing is remiss about the manner in which punishment is conducted. Libertine society is governed by rules, laws, codes and rituals that are intended to regulate each part of libertine life. Everything from waking and sleeping times to the regularity of beatings are structured around a set order. In *Justine*, Omphale gives a glimpse into the order and structure of daily life.

We rise at exactly nine every morning, and in every season, we retired at a later or an earlier hour ... This first ceremony concluded, we breakfast; ... but at seven o'clock in summer, at six in winter they come for those who have been designated (Sade 1991: 584).

The libertines use ritual to structure daily life and are able to support the regularity through an ordered and highly organised set of instructions. Codes for behaviour and roles are drawn up from the instructions into a contract. The pattern of regularity includes erotic activity, meal times, clothing and sleeping patterns. Instructions are even given on adhering to the rituals and which things constitute taboos and are to be avoided. Omphale addresses Therese to give instruction on a number of articles.

In the first ... what pertains to the house; in the second ... what regards the behaviour of the girls, their punishment, their feeding habits etc; the third article will inform you of the arrangement of these monks' pleasure, of the manner in which the girls serve them; the fourth will contain observations on personal changes (1991: 578).

The need for regularity extends to the way punishments are meted out for failing to correspond to any of the rules. In libertine society, even torture is an organised affair. From *Justine*: “The monks stand in queue and all the sisters file before them and receive whiplashes ... each monk steps forward to expose her to the torture of his choice ... after having meted out punishment, takes his pleasure” (573).

In libertine society, deviations from the accepted pattern incur punishment. The inability to stick to the correct behaviour, role and ritual results in punishment determined according to a set schedule. The punishments were dealt out according to a code and applied to particular crimes. From *Justine*

Failure to rise in the morning at the prescribed hour, thirty strokes with the whip ... improper dress or an unsuitable coiffure, twenty strokes; failure to have given prior notice of incapacities due to menstruation, sixty strokes ... negligence, incompetence or refusal in connection with luxurious proposals, two hundred strokes (1991: 581).

And so the litany of wrongdoings and punishments is expanded to cover every conceivable misdeed within libertine society.

Libertine practice is ruled by a notion of order; irregularity is strenuously punished and vice is expressed in an unbridled, but ordered way. However, an excerpt from *Philosophy in the Bedroom* shows how it is not always possible to so tightly control the demeanour and behaviour of everyone in libertine society.



The company rose at the customary hour. The Bishop, entirely recovered from his excesses and who, waking at four in the morning, was deeply shocked to find they had let him go to bed unaccompanied, had summoned Julie and his fucker for the night to come and occupy their posts. When, in keeping with regulations, breakfast had been taken in the girls' quarters, Durcet went on his rounds and ... further delinquencies appeared to his eyes. Michette was guilty of one kind of fault and Augustine, whom Curval had ordered to keep herself throughout the day in a certain state, was found in the absolutely opposite state ... both names were inscribed on the list of punishments to be executed come the first Saturday (1990: 283).

Whatever bizarre or frightful acts of punishment they carry out, the libertines attempt to create an order. Herein lies the dilemma within libertinage: how to conduct torture and punishment without the frenzy normally associated with extreme violence. In their attempt to control violence, the libertines step away from fervour, but they are left with empty ritual.

The laws that govern the bizarre and other acts are not imagined or devised entirely by the libertines. They believe that the organising principle for the tortures and punishment comes from Nature itself. Many of the punishments are things that are based on or thought to exist in nature, such as the destructive power of nature, the rule of sovereign strength and the redemptive power of punishment. Just as nature is harsh and at times cruel, the libertines are also strict and affirm retribution as “natural fancy” (Sade 1991: 274). Dolmance says,

In libertinage nothing is frightful, because everything libertinage suggests is also a natural inspiration. The most bizarre acts, which most arrantly seem to conflict with every law, every human institution ... are not frightful, and

there is not one amongst them all that cannot be demonstrated within the boundaries of nature (ibid).

In addressing Eugenie, Dolmance is justifying the libertine's extreme and often violent behaviour as a representation of the way nature carries out its laws.

However, where the theory of libertinage contradicts itself further is in relation to Nature. As Nature is a chaotic, unruly, even haphazard, force that the libertines follow, they do so in an attempt to create an order out of violence. Yet it is not clear that this has been achieved and that they have gained control over unruly violence. While Sade admonishes his libertines against moralists who would have them fear their own passions, he nevertheless shows that the libertines attempt to control their own passions by ordering their violent outbursts. These overblown attempts to create a sense of order through their regulations and rituals are in themselves just natural fancy.

## **Pleasure Through Humiliation and Punishment**

In addition to the schedule of punishments, there is a strict division between roles within libertine society. Libertines are expected to adhere to these in receiving and carrying out the punishments. Each person has a role of master or slave and knows what is expected of them to fulfil that role. The master is the one who carries out the punishment and the victim or slave is the one who receives the punishment. The division between master and victim is the central ordering formation, which supports their rules and codes and runs throughout the libertine society. "The principal protocols of Sadian society attests to the

same grouping — libertines and victims” (Barthes 1976: 25). This division between the role of master and slave is intended to be strict and unbridgeable. However, when contrasting the characters Justine and Juliette, it shows that there are other qualities that affect the division. Virtue and vice also determine whether the victim experiences pleasure or pain in punishment.

As Justine is destroyed by her tortures, Juliette is emboldened by them and gains pleasure from punishment. Juliette is put into prison, flogged, tortured and sentenced to the rack but the tortures are a delight. “Juliette and Justine undergo the same tortures, but for Justine they are terrible and for Juliette they are sources of pleasure” (Blanchot 1991: 49). By contrasting the two characters and their stories, the difference between virtue and vice in libertine society exemplifies the difference between pain and pleasure. For Justine, virtue is the source of pain and humiliation because “if virtue were eliminated what was painful becomes pleasurable” (Blanchot in Sade 1991: 49).

The libertines punish Justine’s virtue. In doing so, she becomes a source of pleasure for the master or libertine who enacts the punishment. The pleasure that the libertines gain from any sort of punishment or humiliation is an important part of the routine of libertinage. In contrast, without virtue, Juliette gains pleasure from the experiences that the virtuous Justine finds painful. *Juliette* illustrates how pleasure and pain relate to the position that one has within libertine society. Here again the libertines attempt to dictate an order for the roles of master and slave. *Justine* and *Juliette* show how both girls are victims of violence and in the inferior slave positions but they have very different reactions to their punishment. There is a contradiction at the source of libertine society about whether they

can really align pleasure and pain with master and slave when it is complicated by the qualities of virtue and vice.

Justine experiences only pain and no pleasure through the tortures carried out on her by a master.

Two hours passed and then the monk did indeed awake in a prodigious agitation and seized me with such force I thought he was going to strangle me; his respiration was quick and labored, his eyes glittered, he uttered incoherent words which were exclusively blasphemous or libertine expression; he called for whips and started in again with his flogging of us both, but in yet a more vigorous manner than before having gone to sleep (1991: 611).

In this example, the monk is the libertine master who metes out the punishment the victim has to endure. The law of victim and master that underpins libertinage is the law that incarnates power in the master. The monk is the master and has the rule of libertine law on his side that provides pleasure in his punishments and power through the act of carrying out the punishment. The master is supposed to experience pleasure and the slave pain, but *Justine* and *Juliette* show how this is not always the case. It is not just whether they are a victim or a master, but it is the particular quality of virtue that determines if the victim experiences pleasure in punishment.

Speech is another form of regulation in libertine society. Within their erotic episodes there is a particular set of behaviours that each victim and libertine is meant to abide by. The master is the one who is permitted to speak while the victim is not permitted to speak. However different their experience of the tortures and their degree of pleasure, Juliette and

Justine are themselves both victims and subject to this codification. The harangues are addressed solely to Juliette and Justine.

The victim is prevented from discourse because he has no right to receive the master's word ... The agent is not he who has power or pleasure, but he who controls the direction of the scene and sentence (Blanchot 1991: 31).

While the victim may gain pleasure from the punishment, they are nevertheless not entitled to speak. They can be addressed, but must not respond and must remain silent throughout.

Justine retells her story of punishment at the hands of the Count that she underwent without speaking.

When no article of clothing is left upon me, I am secured to the tree by a rope attached around my waist ... The arrangements completed, the Count, very much moved, steps up to have a look at my expression, he turns and passes around me (Sade 1991: 528).

In the paragraphs before and after this section the Count speaks of Justine's naked flesh; he handles her with malicious intent and admonishes her for poisoning her aunt. Putting her into the hands of law and justice would have taken away her life for her poisonous efforts. Instead, the Count's libertinage role affords him the ability to meter out the punishment — to be mauled by dogs — that will spare Justine's life. "I cried with much bitterness, it is impossible for my soul to give vent to any virtuous impulse without my being instantly and very severely punished for it!" (Sade 1991: 664).

The following excerpt shows how the libertines seek to gain pleasure in the suffering of others. In *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, Dolmance says

There is no possible comparison between what others experience and what we sense; the heaviest dose of agony in others ought, assuredly, to be as naught to us and the faintest quickening of pleasure, registered in us, does touch us; therefore, we should, at whatever the price, prefer this most minor excitation which enchants us, to the immense sum of others' miseries, which cannot affect us ... should it happen that it renders agreeable to us the sufferings of our fellows (Sade 1991: 283).

Dolmance, the Count, the monk and the other libertine masters in Sade's novels gain power in the torture of others. The power they acquire is through their pleasure, but it is not as straightforward as this. They must *identify* with pain in order to recognise it in their victims. It is then a question of to what degree the master experiences the pain of the victim in order to feel the concomitant pleasure.

## **Transgression and Taboo**

The torture and punishment the libertines carry out are of a particularly violent and invasive kind that contravene many accepted social, moral and religious interdictions. Sade railed against these interdictions and through his fiction tried to pose the question of what might happen if these laws were broken or ignored. His novels describe the breaking or transgression of the laws and the pleasure to be acquired in doing so.

*The 120 Days of Sodom* has been described as many things, but most generally is regarded as a catalogue of perversity. A long and thorough list of sexual depravity and crimes against nature, it depicts a period of extreme sexual expression, freedom and exploration. The book is an encyclopaedic account of the extremes of violence and a verse on the cruel passions that is at once thought to be both the pinnacle of Sade's work and its foundation stone. *The 120 Days of Sodom* defines the sadian extremes of pleasure through pain and perversity. As an inventory of aberrations and anomalies it allows the libertines to be at the mercy of nothing by experiencing everything (Blanchot 1991: 50). It is a catalogue of taboo and an attempt at transgressing most, if not all, of those taboos. This novel brings to the fore one of the most significant questions in Sade's work: to what extent can the libertines achieve transgression by constantly seeking to break taboos?

In order for the libertines to experience pleasure it is expected that they will contravene certain moral and societal limitations. Torture and violence transgress the legal and moral limits that are set in place in regular society. Transgression is a sacred act that breaks a prohibition.<sup>3</sup> The pleasure to be gained from following the passion for punishment arises through the torture carried out on the victims. Maurice Blanchot summed it up thus, saying that "the reason the libertines assign limitations to their excesses is to harvest the pleasure which comes from exceeding them" (Blanchot 1991: 48).

The breaking or transgression of a prohibition amounts to contravening a law for the sake of pleasure in the name of punishment. Each limit that is transgressed provides an amount of pleasure in the libertine derived from the act of transgression. The pleasure is therefore

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<sup>3</sup> In *A Preface to Transgression*, Foucault wrote that sexuality, from Sade to Freud, had become defined by its limit and the empty purity of transgression (1977: 31). The discussion of limits and transgression refers to Foucault's article for definitions and as a background.

reliant upon that very limitation. As the agent of the violent action, the master is the person who controls the direction of the scene. The master determines how and when the punishment is carried out and to what severity. The libertines sought to transgress these boundaries and interdictions in a nonetheless structured and strict manner. An excerpt from *The 120 Days of Sodom* gives an indication of the libertines' attitude to perverse acts that are a transgression of the prohibition against seeking pleasure in violence.

Durcet gleaned shit from Augustine, and the Bishop, firmly erect, had Fanny suck him while she shat in his mouth, discharged, and as his crisis was violent, he brutalized Fanny somewhat but, unhappily failed to find adequate grounds for having her punished, great as was his apparent wish to arrange something for her. A greater tease than the Bishop never lived; no sooner would he finish discharging than he would wish for nothing better than to see his pleasure-object gone to the devil (1990: 413).

Madame de Lorsange from *Justine* is a priestess of Venus and possessor of sovereign power through title and misdeed and proves that women too can be libertine masters and experience the pleasure in torture.

Her fortune is the product of a pretty face and much misconduct, and whose titles, pompous though they are, are not to be found but in the archives of Cythera, forged by the impertinence that seeks, and sustained by the fool's credulity that bestows them ... a trifle wicked, unfurnished with any principle, allowing evil to exist in nothing, lacking however that amount of depravation in the heart to have extinguished its sensibility; haughty; libertine; such was Madame de Lorsange (Sade 1991: 458).



Each act of punishment brings together speech and crime through the characters and the setting. The libertine punishment amounts to a transgression of a law. Transgressing the law amounts to breaking the law, but also reinstating the law through misdeed. Madame de Lorsange, haughty and libertine, gains her power through misdeed, speech and the performance of violence, punishment and humiliation. Sovereign power and pleasure is what the libertines seek and acquire in the negation of a prohibition. Madame de Lorsange, the monk and the Count transgress the law to gain pleasure and power but each transgression reinstates the prohibition. Each time a taboo is broken it is reinstated by the act of transgression. Limit-points ensure the continuation of the taboo but prove that their transgression is an empty act of hollow sovereign power. Yet by reinstating the prohibition the libertine ensures that it holds steadfast to regulate pleasure through the act of punishment.

To the casual critic, the life of the Marquis (Donatien) de Sade could easily be dismissed as one that exemplified depravity, perversion and illness. The serious critic could dismiss the man as a recalcitrant who betrayed his wife, humiliated his family and took pleasure in some of the most deprave sexual acts, real or imagined. Accordingly, his writing might easily be categorised as pornographic and not at all what is considered worthy of the title “Literature”. Indeed there have been many critics of the man and his novels, both in his day and in the present day, who have done just this. However, if the burden of religious, moral and legal doctrine is lifted from the life and fiction of the Marquis de Sade, a picture emerges of a writer caught between taboos that prohibit crimes against the body and literature’s role in reflecting the world and the violence it contains.

The Marquis de Sade has spawned an industry devoted to studying his writing and analysing its themes of violence, humiliation and punishment. The industry includes science, psychology, philosophy, literary analysis and film studies. The vast number of books published about Sade and his writings, both academic and popular, attest to the continuing quest to understand his work. It is his particular relationship to psychoanalysis and philosophy that offers some of the more complex and challenging theories about Sade's language and literature. In constructing the libertine world through his novels, Sade was able to link speech and crime in a way that has had a profound effect on the approach to understanding the psyche and interpreting language. Freud took up the challenge of understanding the psyche and its role in sadism. The namesake "Sadism" was 'invented' by psychoanalysis and has become widely known and accepted for its veracity in explaining the condition in which people gain pleasure from the humiliation and punishment of others.

The French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, explored the definition of sadism within psychoanalysis and sought to link it more closely to its original expression in literature. He argued that the link between literature and Life is the reason that Sade's literature is able to "contain" the symptom of sadism diagnosed by psychoanalysis. Indeed the connection is much stronger than a casual linkage and Deleuze's theories about sadism and literature have implications for language and violence specifically, and philosophy and the world generally. Although it needs to be said that not everyone considers violent behaviour from the point of view of Sade, the present study is concerned with the meeting of psychoanalysis and philosophy with regard to sadism. Gilles Deleuze, by revising and problematising psychoanalysis, has been able to describe the particular relationship between the human psyche, violent expression and language. His model of literature and

sadism exemplifies the links between sadian violent expression and literature by suggesting that the expression of sadism is connected to language. By elaborating on the critical style of Sade's writing, the following chapters will focus on the clinical definition by Freud and the signs of sadism within Sade's writing by Deleuze.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **FREUD AND THE CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS OF SADISM**

One hundred and sixteen years before Sigmund Freud was born, the Countess de Sade gave birth to a son in Paris. It wasn't until after his schooling and much later in life that the Marquis de Sade started writing and having his erotic tales published. When the books began to circulate there was a great outcry at the portrayal of sexual violence and punishment. The Marquis de Sade, therefore, left an indelible mark on the world as the "first man" of sadism. He is granted this title partly on the basis that psychoanalysis first took an interest in sadism through his stories about pain, punishment and torture. *Justine*, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, *Juliette* and Sade's many other stories shocked and appalled many in their day for their characters who sought pleasure in creating pain in others. It was these stories which the early pioneers of psychoanalysis used to define sadism. Yet the relationship between Sade's literature and the reinvention of sadism as a psychopathology is not as straightforward as it would seem.

Freud, through his research and theories of the mind, defined sadism as a perversion to do with the psyche. Psychoanalysis determined sadism as to do with the processes of the mind and the existence of instincts. However, for Sade, sadism was as much to do with language as the expression of pain and violence *in literature*. Freud all but overlooked this point, even though he paid brief homage to Sade as the point of departure for his analysis of sadism. He underestimated the part that language plays in sadism (and by which it first came to his and other researchers' attention). Seldom did Freud seek to understand what role language plays in the expression of violence. As a result of being defined by psychoanalysis, sadism became a problem of the psyche and not one of language or literature.

Chapter three will show how Deleuze revised Freud's theory and the importance of language with regard to sadism and masochism. Both for Sade the writer and sadism as a perversion generally, language is an integral part of the mechanism of expressing violence. Deleuze made this point explicit when he wrote that the expression of violence manifests itself as much through language as through deed for the sadist (1991: 134). The following chapter will explore how, with Deleuze, sadism becomes a problem more to do with violence and language than sexuality. Yet although Deleuze criticised psychoanalysis, particularly in relation to masochism, he nevertheless relies heavily on its theories of the mind and the instincts to re-define sadism and explain the particular relationship between violence and language that sadism exposes. This meeting of violence and language can also be explored within cinema. However, it is necessary firstly to explain how sadism became an invention of psychoanalysis and defined as essentially a problem of the human psyche.

## **The Linking of Sade and Sadism**

Born in 1856 in Moravia, then part of the Austria–Hungary State, Sigmund Freud spent most of his working life in Vienna.<sup>4</sup> He began studying medicine and after graduation concentrated on neuroanatomy and neuropathology. After working for a significant period of time with older colleagues, such as Joseph Breuer (1842 – 1925) who has been described as the grandfather of psychoanalysis, Freud made a radical departure from physiology. He moved beyond examining individual cases of neurosis to examine the structure and development of the psyche in a project known as “Scientific Psychology” (1991b: 17).

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<sup>4</sup> Popular editions of Freud's essays contain detailed descriptions of his working life and the development of his ideas. A general precis of his working life has been extracted from the text (Strachey in Freud 1991b: 13).

Through his research, Freud developed, among other ideas, the theory on the tripartite division of the psyche, as well as a coherent theory on instincts, libido, fetishism, psychosis, neurosis, homosexuality and the development of sexual identity in human beings. Studying the workings of the mind, healthy or sick, Freud's systematic approach and the theories he developed created psychoanalysis.

It was with the work of the German psychiatrist Krafft-Ebing that the terms sadism and masochism were first linked to a clinical diagnosis of a psychical disorder. Previously the terms had more to do with the infamy of the Marquis and his scandalous stories. Krafft-Ebing defined sadism and masochism as the desire to inflict pain upon the sexual object and its reverse. Yet in his essays, Freud was not interested in studying Sade's writings, nor was he willing to spend time examining Krafft-Ebing's definition, even though this is where his study began (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973: 401). There is a brief mention made of the psychologist Schrenck-Notzing (1899) who gave the name "algolagnia" to the desire to inflict pain on a sexual object. Schrenck-Notzing's terms emphasises the pleasure in pain and cruelty (Freud 1991a: 71). However, Freud preferred Krafft-Ebing's terms because they gave prominence to pleasure in any form of humiliation or subjection. Freud used Krafft-Ebing's terms and his analysis showed how sadism was defined through a particular set of variables that link it to sexuality and cast it as a violent perversion.

Freud introduces his discussion of both sadism and masochism in the first of his three essays on sexuality entitled, "The Sexual Aberrations" (1991a). Freud was interested in both sadism and masochism and saw them, in some way, as complementary. He believed, like Krafft-Ebing and others, that sadism and masochism stem from the same instinct for pain, but correspond to the active and passive polarities respectively. Freud was of the opinion

that sadism represents an aggressive component of the sexual instinct which has become independent, exaggerated and, by displacement, usurped the leading position in the sexual instinct (1991a: 71). The aggressive component is the active or violent attitude towards the sexual object. According to the perversion, satisfaction is conditional upon the humiliation and maltreatment of the object.

Maltreatment and humiliation are the active expressions of the sadistic or aggressive impulse, whereas in the case of masochism, the component of the sexual instinct is passive. Freud wrote on the polarity between active and passive that “the contrast between active and passive is among the universal characteristics of sexual life” (1991a: 72). In most people, the impulses co-exist, although the active or passive aspect of the perversion may be stronger and be the predominant sexual behaviour. The active and passive components exist simultaneously, allowing sadism and masochism to be complementary, or at least to be related to each other. In this way, Freud was able to assert that “every pain contains in itself the possibility of a feeling of pleasure” (1991a: 72). This is significant in explaining Freud’s belief that masochism is a turning inwards of the sadistic impulse.

In summary then, Freud’s theories on sadism centre on its links to sexuality and its definition as a sexual perversion that involves the humiliation and mistreatment of others. It was viewed originally as a perversion to do with sexuality where pleasure results from causing pain in another. However, Freud gives more than just this strict definition of sadism when discussing the aggressive instinct. He gives sadism a broader definition by explaining it as resulting from an original aggressive instinct that is not properly repressed or sublimated. In these cases it becomes “an association between sexuality and violence used against others” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973: 401). At the same time, a note of



caution is offered by some against unnecessarily conflating sadism and aggressiveness in all cases (ibid). A broader account of Freud's theories shall now be given in order to situate the theories of sadism within them. It begins with the structure of the psyche.

## **Mapping the Mind**

Freud was originally led into psychoanalysis, with its theories on the mind and its latent parts, through the use of hypnosis and the analysis of dreams. Through this work with patients, Freud developed theories on the psyche that divide the mind into three areas with specific roles and responsibilities. These three areas are the conscious, preconscious and unconscious; or the Id, ego and superego. The tripartite division is at the basis of all his subsequent theories on deviations, dreams, instincts and sexuality. It is thus necessary to explain these tripartite structures of the psyche to understand how the instincts are later directed according to the development of normal or abnormal sexual identity. The tripartite division represents the general structure of the psyche.

Freud's first theory on the division of the psyche was in the essay, "The Unconscious" (1915), in which he explained how the mind is divided into the conscious, preconscious and unconscious. Freud offered a radical insight into the notion of consciousness and subjectivity by suggesting that consciousness is only one quality of the psyche. In this theory, the overarching framework that structures the mind is the division between the conscious and the unconscious.

The division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premise of psychoanalysis; and it alone makes it possible for psychoanalysis to understand the pathological processes in mental life ... and to find a place for them in the framework of science (Freud 1991b: 351).

Word associations, mnemesis and the notion of repression also supported the theory of the conscious and the unconscious as the main division of the psyche.

When Freud tried to distinguish between the conscious and the preconscious he used the example of how an idea is able to move in and out of consciousness. An idea that may come into the mind is in a state of consciousness, but it may no longer be conscious moments later. The preconscious, which is an area of the conscious, is also explained as being an area through which thought must pass in order to be expressed and acted upon. His view was that there are different areas of the psyche, as well as different forces brought to bear on mental phenomena, which move in or out of the different areas. For example, in the interval between an idea becoming conscious and unconscious, it is latent. At this time, it has the quality of being capable of becoming conscious at any time.

If we say that it was unconscious, we shall also be giving a correct description of it. Here 'unconscious' coincides with 'latent and capable of becoming conscious' (Freud 1991b: 352).

Yet the latent unconscious is also called 'preconscious' and the term 'unconscious' is, strictly speaking, largely restricted to the dynamically repressed unconscious.

After making these assertions, however, Freud was eventually led to admit that they did not sufficiently serve all of his theories. In revising the theory of the conscious, unconscious and preconscious, he developed a second three-way division to do with the sections of the mind that control instincts and libido. To the theory of the mental arrangement of the conscious, unconscious and preconscious, he added another layer of structuring — the Id, the ego and the superego. Although he had developed notions of the ego earlier, it was only with the later revision of the tripartite structure that the Id and the superego were introduced. Freud's first essay dealing exclusively with the Id and the ego appears in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920). His essays on the ego and Id date from 1923 and appear in the volume *On Metapsychology* (1991b).

The ego is the name for the coherent organisation of mental processes that are attached to consciousness and the discharge of excitations into the external world (Freud 1991b: 355). It is also the means by which repression proceeds. Those things that are repressed produce powerful effects without themselves being brought into consciousness. The Id is the reservoir of uncoordinated instinctual trends and the superego is the critical and moralising function (Freud 1991b: 22). The tripartite division of the psyche into the Id, the ego and the superego is the groundwork upon which most of Freud's later theories of the mind and the development of subjectivity rely. Sadism is accounted for in this second revised tripartite division. It is described as the death instinct's representative and is explained through the way that this instinct develops from first existing in the Id to being charged to action by the ego and eventually taking over the superego to become all destructive force.

## **The Polarities of Sexual Life**

In “mapping” the mind Freud put together a coherent theory on the development of sexuality that occurs from infancy to adolescence. According to his schema, a child is faced with a series of crises along the path of sexual development and the way these are overcome affects the final makeup of sexual identity. The “correct” resolution of these crises creates “normal” sexuality, while the “incorrect” resolution of the crises results in the development of abnormal sexuality. Where any of the crises are not resolved according to the dictates of the polarities between active and passive, masculine and feminine, and other rules, abnormal sexual identity develops. The normal development of each polarity, from childhood to puberty, produces normal sexual expression in adolescents. In the realm of abnormal sexuality, Freud offered some of his most interesting and radical hypotheses. It is in this realm that sadism is located.

The relations between polarities and oppositions must now be discussed in the context of the explanation of sadism. A polarity develops from an original biological or physiological opposition. For example, the opposition male–female becomes the polarity masculine–feminine through the formation of sexual identity. The polarity develops out of the initial opposition as each crisis is resolved or overcome through childhood to puberty. Unlike an opposition, however, a polarity has degrees in between the two extreme poles. This allows for it to take different forms and different modes of expression. There are a number of polarities that shape and determine sexual life. The three polarities are: active–passive, ego–external world and pleasure–unpleasure. The active–passive polarity corresponds to the polarity which relates to biology; the ego–external world polarity exists at the level of the

real; and the pleasure–unpleasure polarity is an economic polarity. According to Freud, all instinctual impulses are subject to the influence of these three major polarities (1991b: 138).

A fourth polarity between masculinity and femininity develops through engaging with these three other polarities within instinctual impulses and sexual behaviour. For example, the masculine–feminine polarity is aligned with the active–passive polarity. According to normal sexuality, masculinity corresponds to the active expression of the impulse in sexual behaviour and femininity correlates to the passive aim of the impulse and its expression in sexual behaviour. The two impulses co-exist and this explains how one or the other may have a more prominent expression in sexual behaviour. This, in part, explains how masculinity and femininity can have normal and abnormal expression depending on which is given greater prominence and whether this occurs in women or men.

The polarities coexist in the infant in a less determined fashion in the auto-erotic phase. This early phase of the development of the ego is called narcissism and it is the stage where sexual instincts find auto-erotic satisfaction. Yet later the three polarities will develop in accordance with the tensions they indicate. All three polarities imply an active engagement with psycho-sexual development. The antithesis ego–external world means that through muscular action, internal stimuli can be silenced, but this is not the case for external stimuli. The polarity of pleasure–unpleasure is a part of a scale of feelings, which determines action which in turn folds back on the development of the psyche. The active–passive antithesis means that something receiving stimuli is passive and when it acts on it, it is active. “The ego–subject is passive in respect to the external stimuli but active through its own instincts” (1991b: 124). This all leads to a tremendous complexity within psycho-sexual development, but the active–passive polarity will eventually “coalesce” with the masculine–

feminine to be complete by the final stage of sexual development. The initial aggressive instinct from which sadism develops is subject to these polarities over the course of sexual development.

In summary, each of the three polarities, together or separately, determine the direction and expression of sexual instincts, which in turn characterises sexual behaviour and subjectivity. Whether a polarity exists singularly or in combination with another one, it takes effect through influence on the instincts. The changes the instincts undergo are a result of “the subjection of the instinctual impulses to the influences of the three great polarities that dominate mental life” (Freud 1991b: 138). The instincts pre-exist in the child and its early stages of sexual development and are shaped and directed according to the dictates of the development of sexual identity. As mentioned earlier, two sides of polarities of instincts, such as the active–passive polarity, can co-exist. Or, for example, the love–hate instincts can co-exist, even if later separated and directed at the pregenital stage of sexual organisation. This is significant in understanding the development of sadism and it will be revisited.

## **Theories on the Development of the Instincts**

As with so much of his work, Freud made a number of attempts to define his theories on instincts and account for their existence. For example, Freud referred to the origin of the instincts in the body, but offered no further explanation for the existence of instincts other than that which can be provided generally by the sciences of biology, chemistry and physics. Indeed, he said that it is beyond the scope of psychology and psychoanalysis to

attempt any further explanation for instincts other than to point to a possible chemical release or original biological impetus that is responsible for the creation of instincts. This arises in a “mythical” sense from a “single, great basic antagonism” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973: 216) from which develop the instincts and instinctual behaviour. The mythical antagonism arises between Hunger and Love, which Freud later revised to Love and Discord. The instincts originate as a force within the body as a result of this initial clash.

In his 1905 paper, “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality”, the distinction was given between ego-instincts and sexual instincts. And it is here that Freud relies on the distinction between Hunger and Love to explain the eventual development of these ego and sexual instincts. The original antagonism between Hunger and Love is responsible for the “instinctual manifestation” that develops from the conflict between self-preservative or ego-instincts and sexual instincts (1973: 216). This pair of instincts develops from the beginning of sexuality when the sexual instinct separates itself from its reliance on the self-preservative function (responsible for the ego-instincts).

Some years later, writing in “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, the instinctual dualism between the life instincts and the death instincts was drawn from the antagonism between Love and Death. In setting up the conflict between Love and Death as responsible for the life and death instincts, Freud shifted the two poles and, in doing so, altered where and how the instincts arise. The location of the instincts shifts to the “instinctual reservoir” in the Id (1973: 216). As well, the function of the instincts alters from that of self-preservation through hunger and nutrition to that of “fundamental principles” that are responsible for how the organism functions (ibid). But whether Freud was discussing Hunger and Love or

Love and Discord, he was describing the way in which an original stimulation produces a pair of instincts. In each case, a single antagonism produces dualistic instincts of the kind Love versus Hunger or afterwards Love versus Discord. What remains the same is that the organism (as Freud referred to it) cannot deter the constant excitation that results in the dualistic instinctual set. With each pair of opposites, the instinctual antagonism arises and this excitation provides the basis for the functioning of the psychical apparatus.

Freud's theories include how the pleasure principle and the reality principle shape and determine the expression of the basic pair of instincts that now take on the terms Eros and Thanatos. Derived originally from Ancient Greek, Freud used the word Eros to designate the life instincts (1973: 153). The opposition between libidinal and destructive instincts becomes transformed into the life and death instincts. To the Greeks, Eros was seen as the opposite of Thanatos. Yet these words were used as philosophical or mythical references in Freud's theories in order to give an explanation of the life and death instincts that was otherwise beyond the scope of psychoanalysis. According to Laplanche and Pontalis, Freud does not refer to Thanatos directly in his own writing as the death instinct and the opposite of Eros, although he is thought to have used it in conversation (1973: 153). Deleuze takes the liberty of applying the term Thanatos to the death instinct when discussing the Pleasure Principle in his revision of Freudian psychoanalysis and sadism (Deleuze 1991: 30).

To return to the origin of the instincts from a stricter psychoanalytic viewpoint, the source of stimulation that gives rise to the instincts is internal to the body and is a continuous process of excitation that is not interrupted by breaks or changes in intensity. An instinct then is defined as "the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation" (Freud 1991b: 38). This constant excitation is given a representation



in the psyche as an instinct. The origins of an instinct are in sources of stimulation that are internal to the organism and are a constant force in their own right. In “Instincts and their Vicissitudes” (1915), which is one of Freud’s more widely known essays, he approached the explanation of instincts in a systematic way, at times using the example of sadism. One of two explanations for sadism is that the original aggressive instinct is given expression in adult sexuality. It has not been repressed or sublimated, but is turned outward towards a victim. The term “aggressive instinct” was used here to refer to the death instincts “in so far as they are turned towards the outside world” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973: 16). The aim of the aggressive instinct is destruction. Freud uses the descriptions “death instinct”, “destructive instinct” and “aggressive instinct” so often and in so many different instances that they almost appear to be interchangeable terms. However, the major condition for sadism is that the aggressive instinct is not internalised, but is always directed outwards in its aim and choice of object.

In general, it can be seen how the initial antagonism between Hunger and Love, or later Love and Death, sets off a process by which instincts come into being. Regardless of their number, instincts have the same qualities. Therefore, although they are not all identical, instincts are numerous and arise from the same source.

Instincts are qualitatively the same, arise from the same process of internal stimulation which is given psychical representation yet there are great differences between them. Instincts develop quite different behaviours and are differentiated by the amount of energy they carry (Freud 1991b: 120).

At the same time, each instinct has a different source and object for expression. What gives instincts their commonality is that they arise in the same way from the same source of

excitation and seek expression. The common elements are pressure, aim, object and source. What differentiates them is the object through which they seek release. The choice of object means each instinct has a different expression or a different form of release. The aim of every instinct is always satisfaction, which can only be obtained by removing the state of stimulation at the source of the instinct.

The difference between instincts is given as that which “distinguishes [them] from one another and endows them with specific qualities in their relation to their somatic sources and to their aims” (Freud 1991b: 38). Crucially with regard to sadism and masochism, for example, active or passive instincts are only passive or active in their aim. There are also various paths leading to that aim and consequently various nearer or intermediate aims. An object can therefore be taken to be the thing through which the instinct is able to achieve its aim. The object is not originally connected with it, but becomes assigned to the instinct as a consequence of making satisfaction. It may be attached or extraneous to the body. An object may be internal or external, and it may change over the course of the existence of the instinct. This alteration of the instinct can have a significant impact on the development and expression of the instinct. Freud believed that highly important parts were played by the displacement of the instincts (1991b: 119).

The pressure that an instinct brings to bear is the amount of force or the measure of the demand for work it represents. The pressure demands something of the instinct and forces it to undertake some activity. “Every instinct is a piece of energy” (Freud 1991b: 118). Because an instinct is an uninterrupted stimulation, it is an even flow of energy. In this regard, an instinct is contrasted with a stimulus, which relates to single excitations that are external to the body. The source of an instinct originates in an organ and is a process of

excitation. The aim is the removal of the stimulus. There are two kinds of excitations that are of relevance to sadism. These are, as has been mentioned earlier, ego-instinct and sexual instinct. From the two kinds of excitation, Freud said, two types of instincts develop. It is now important to note that they do not originate in the same way.

## **The Development of Sexual Instincts and Ego-Instincts**

Freud's original theory of the instincts, with its opposition between ego-instincts and sexual instincts, came together between the years of 1910 and 1915 (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973: 146). To recap, the ego-instincts are identified as the self-preservative instincts and they are opposed to the sexual ones, although in many ways they are as much a part of each other as they are opposed.

The ego or self-preservative instincts originate as narcissism in the early phase of the development of the ego. The self-preservative instinct remains and develops through its aim and its choice of object. While a portion of the sexual instinct remains with the ego-instinct, it mostly separates off and becomes defined by the aim of organ pleasure. The sexual instinct arises from internal pressure but, as distinct from the ego-instincts, Freud posited that sexual instincts are answerable only to the pleasure principle (which is the principle of the reduction of unpleasure). The sexual instincts are originally attached to the ego but gradually become separated in their search for external objects of satisfaction. When sexual identity is obtained, the sexual instincts enter the service of the reproductive function and then become fully recognisable as a sexual instinct. The portion of the sexual

instinct that remains with the ego-instinct stays throughout life and furnishes them with an amount of libido energy.

As mentioned, Freud later revised this dualism, describing instead the life and death instincts. This dualism, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, represents a “clinical antithesis” and differs from the antithesis between self-preservative functions and sexual instincts — the “genetic antithesis” — that arises at the beginning of human sexuality (1973: 146). Freud redefined the sexual instincts as a force seeking to ‘bind’, which is to construct and preserve vital unities. In this later revision, the sexual instincts were assimilated into the category of life instincts or Eros, with the death instinct functioning according to absolute discharge.

Yet it is perhaps the genetic antithesis, with the changes to the ego-instincts and sexual instincts, that demonstrates instincts are readily able to change their objects and are therefore capable of sublimation. The changes affect their aim or object and can include reversal into its opposite, turning around upon the subject’s self, repression and sublimation. When an instinct undergoes a reversal into its opposite, it may change, for example, from activity to passivity. But it is only the aim of the instinct that is affected. (It is also possible for there to be a reversal of the content of an instinct, but this occurs only in the instance of the transformation of love into hate.)

This type of reversal occurs when there is a shift from sadism to masochism. When sadism changes to its opposite masochism, the aim of torturing becomes the aim of being tortured. Masochism develops as the turning around of the instinct toward the subject’s self. However, this has been disputed by Deleuze in his account of masochism (Deleuze 1991:

123). According to Freud, it is possible because the aim remains the same, but the object changes. The sadistic aim is to cause pain and to humiliate, and when the object changes it becomes inflicted upon the subject's own self. The masochistic aim becomes experiencing the unpleasure of pain in the self. This masochism can in turn be reversed in to a kind of sadism conditioned initially by masochism.

For while these pains are being inflicted on other people, they are enjoyed masochistically by the subject through their identification with the suffering object. The enjoyment of pain would thus be the aim which was originally masochistic, but which can only become an instinctual aim in someone who was originally sadistic (Freud 1991b: 126).

The subject identifies with the pain being inflicted on an external object, but identifies with the object masochistically and enjoys the pain as if it were being inflicted upon themselves. This is particularly relevant for some of Sade's characters who gain pleasure in being flogged and tortured. The sadian libertine carries out the torture, but enjoys the pleasure. Juliette, for example, gains pleasure from the deeds of pain-creating torture. Repression is another way in which an instinct can undergo a change that alters its aim or object. When repressed, the sadistic aim of causing pain can arrive "retrogressively". In other words, the aim of causing pain is achieved through an indirect object.

Experiencing both pleasure in pain and pain in pleasure is often the case with the libertines and this suggests that they may not be strictly sadian. Ambivalence is the term given to the coexistence of opposite instinctual impulses, which occurs when both parts of a polarity are expressed. In these cases, pairs of instincts, such as sadism and masochism, can appear in an ambivalent manner. With the libertines, the active impulse for sadism exists alongside

the passive, opposite instinctual impulse for masochism. This ambivalence expresses the original aim of the libertine to inflict pain externally and the opposite aim of experiencing pain internally. The active and passive polarity coexists and so both internal and external expressions of pain coexist.

In the case of ambivalence, the aim of sadism, which normally points to an object other than itself for expressing pain, points to an object that is part of the subject's own body. This recalls the coexistence of instinctual impulses that characterises the auto-erotic phase of sexual development. This is not surprising because in this initial phase of sexual development in infancy, love and hate, sadism and masochism, and activity and passivity coexist. As has been previously discussed, in normal development these polarities and the changes they undergo mark the development of sexuality, which occurs in three stages. However, in the case of ambivalence, the polarities continue to coexist and are expressed together despite having conflicting aims.

### **Sadism as Sexual Development Gone Awry**

Freud articulated two clear stages of sexual development out of which subjectivity and sexual identity are formed. These two stages are from infancy through childhood and adolescence to puberty. The only interruption is the period of latency that disrupts the establishment of the genitals as organs for sexual reproduction. Freud described in great detail the passage from childhood to puberty and how it is structured by the development of reproductive sexuality and the genitals.

The final outcome of sexual development lies in what is known as the normal sexual life of the adult, in which the pursuit of pleasure comes under the sway of the reproductive function and in which the component instinct, under the primacy of a single erotogenic zone, form a firm organisation directed towards a sexual aim attached to some extraneous sexual object (1991a: 116).

The first phase of sexual development is described as the oral phase. In the oral phase, sexual activity has not yet separated from the ingestion of food. In this phase, “sexual activity is no different from the ingestion of food; nor are opposite currents with the activity differentiated” (Freud 1991a: 117). Expressed as the desire for mastery over an object, the infant achieves this through the oral incorporation of the object. Neither the ingestion of food nor the desire for mastery are separated in their aim, which is the incorporation of the object. The organisation of the libido is charged with the act of obtaining erotic mastery over an object and this coincides with that object’s destruction. The sadistic instinct has not separated from the libido and is expressed as the desire for the destruction of the object in the act of incorporating it.

In this phase, the impulse for cruelty arises solely from the instinct for mastery. The instincts in this first stage exist in their “pure” form, unattached to the libido and not subject to the constraints of the reproductive function. The instinct for cruelty and knowledge (and other instincts) remain separate from intimate relations with genital life until after infancy. Also, because the super-ego has not taken hold in the ego, there is no sense of shame or guilt. In this phase, the impulse for cruelty arises from the instinct for mastery. Like the second phase — the phase of sadistic-anal organisation — the oral stage is a pregenital stage because the genital zones have not yet taken over their predominant

role determining sexual reproduction. Even though they are characterised by different aims and have different crises, both the first and second stages are therefore defined as pregenital.

The sadistic-anal phase is the second stage of sexual development. The tension between active and passive, and the sadistic instincts and anal instincts — a tension that runs through all of sexual life — is already developed at this stage. However, if the opposition between the sadistic and anal instincts is not properly resolved, this is the start of what will most likely become a perversion for sadism.

A disposition to perversions is an original and universal disposition of the human sexual instinct and that normal sexual behaviour is developed out of it as a result of organic changes and psychical inhibitions occurring in the course of maturation (Freud 1991a: 155).

The sadistic-anal phase is characterised by sadistic and anal eroticism and the later expression of sadism in puberty will be linked with this original instinct, as Freud's quote above explains. In normal circumstances, in the second phase, the sadistic instinct separates from the libido and becomes distinct. The activity of this phase is put into operation again by the instinct for mastery, this time through the organ which represents the passive sexual aim — the anus (Freud 1991a: 117). During this phase, the anal and sadistic currents have objects which are not identical. The aim of the anal current is ingestion of an object; and the aim of the sadistic current is mastery over an object. At the same time, sexual polarity and an extraneous object also begin to be observable. The sadistic and anal currents are expressed at this time without being attached to the feminine–masculine polarity. Although the polarity between active and passive *is* expressed within the sadistic and anal currents,



the two currents cannot yet be described as “masculine” and “feminine”. Further, the organisation and subordination of the currents to the reproductive function is still absent.

As with the other instincts, the instinct for sadism exists in an original and universal form in the infant. In the first stage, it is expressed with the ingestion of food and as the desire for mastery over the object. By the second stage, even as it is expressed more clearly, the “psychical inhibitions”, or organising principles that are part of the development of normal sexual behaviour, inhibit the sadistic instinct. Freud explained how the perversions of abnormal sexuality are a result of the original instincts not having developed properly through the correct resolution of each crisis. “Every pathological disorder of sexual life is rightly to be regarded as an inhibition in development” (Freud 1991a: 128). Indeed after the development of sexual identity, all of the instincts are intended to be subsumed by the reproductive function and any lingering expressions are a result of the process having gone awry. Where previously there have been a number of separate instincts and erotogenic zones, after the second stage they no longer act independently of one another and are no longer able to each pursue a certain sort of pleasure as their sole aim. The final part of sexual maturity is the stage of genital primacy where the libido takes on the purpose of reproduction. The function of the libido is to overpower the sexual object to the extent necessary for carrying out the sexual act.

By puberty, the aim of sexual development is the final establishment of the role of the genitals in the service of reproduction. The genital zones now contribute decisively to determining sexual life. In children, the final phase was only developed as far as the primacy of the genitals. So the process of establishing genital sexuality occurs in two waves: the first begins between the ages of two and five and is brought to a halt by the onset of

the latency period. It is characterised by the infantile nature of the sexual aims. The second wave sets in with puberty and determines the final outcome of sexual life. Through both waves, the genital organ that takes over the leading role is the penis. The female genitals have remained undisclosed. The phallic phase, contemporaneous with the Oedipus complex, does not develop further to define sexual organisation in females because it is submerged and succeeded by the latency period, whereas in males in this phase the penis becomes the object around which sexual development coalesces (Freud 1991a: 361).

At the point of the determination of sexual identity, the erotogenic zones become subordinate to the primacy of the genital zone. The sexual instinct is now subordinated to the reproductive function. Although the results of the infantile object-choice are carried over to the later period, they are obliged to be disposed of at the pubertal stage. By now sadism is supposed to have been forced out of the ego and has pointed the way for the libidinal components of the sexual instinct.

For sadism to develop, things do not proceed 'normally'. The super-ego manifests itself strongly as criticism and the guilt is the ego answering to this criticism. The result is that "when ego-instincts dominate the sexual function, in the sadistic-anal organisation, they impart qualities of hate to the instinctual aim" (Freud 1991a: 116). Love and hate are at first indistinguished in the pregenital sadistic-anal organisation. It is when genital organisation is established and the sexual instincts and the ego-instincts have separate aims that love becomes the opposite of hate. However, wherever the original sadism has undergone no mitigation or intermixture, according to the sexual instincts and the ego-instincts, there develops the ambivalence of love and hate that seep into each other in erotic life. This enables the destructive component to entrench itself in the super-ego and turn against the

ego. In this situation, there is a pure culture of death instinct that may succeed in driving the ego into death. If the ego does not fend off its tyrant in time it may turn around into mania.

Such crises are not the only ones. In each stage, there are a number of crises that require resolution for the development to progress. These include the Oedipus complex, object choice, the renunciation of the father and the realisation that the mother does not possess a penis. The outcome of each crisis determines the final nature of sexual identity and sexual expression. Freud was adamant, however, that there are only two possible outcomes through the resolution of each crisis — normal and abnormal sexuality. His thesis was that the “correct” choice at each crisis produces normal sexuality, while the “incorrect” choice produces abnormal sexuality.

With the attainment of sexual identity, the primacy of the genitals in the service of reproduction may well be established. In the case of normal sexuality, with the arrival of puberty, the sexual instinct is supposed to find a sexual object. However, there are cases when this is only partially established and the sexual life after puberty does not develop as normal. When this happens, the sadistic impulse does not fully separate from the sexual instinct. The two may coexist in an ambivalent form. If this happens, the primacy of the genitals in the service of reproduction when incompletely effected turns “awry” in the final form of sexual life after puberty. What develops is the erotogenic effect (applicable to both the sadistic and masochistic impulse) where the sadistic impulse attaches itself to intensely painful feelings. In sadism, the humiliation and torture become linked to painful feelings in the victim. In masochism, the torture inflicted upon the victim — the subject’s own self — becomes linked to painful feelings in the self.

According to Freud, children witnessing sexual intercourse between adults will regard it as ill-treatment or subjugation. They see it in a sadistic way because it represents the desire for mastery over an object. The sexual aim has not been established for them and they do not see sexual intercourse in a sexual way. This kind of impression contributes to a sadistic displacement of the sexual aim. The sexual aim becomes suffused with the sadistic impulse where the impulse for sadism predominates in an ambivalent form of sexual organisation. As ambivalence is the coexistence of different instincts, when the sexual impulse coexists with the sadistic impulse, it represents a disruption to the path of development. The instinct for mastery that seeks to dominate an object mixes with the sexual instinct and sexuality becomes the carrying out of pain on another for the benefit of pleasure through domination. The next part is understanding how the existence of instincts in the Id are carried forward and expressed through the ego, while a portion of energy goes into creating the superego.

What began in infancy were sensations of a pleasurable nature, which were not inherently impelling. Whereas unpleasurable sensations impel towards change and discharge, pleasurable ones have no driving force. What becomes conscious is pleasure, whereas unpleasure behaves like a repressed impulse — it can exert driving force without the ego noticing the compulsion. Once there becomes a resistance to the compulsion, there is a break in the discharge and the reaction becomes conscious as unpleasure. The entity that starts out as preconscious processes becomes redefined as the ego. In another ‘part’ of the mind, which behaves as though it were unconscious, is the Id (Freud 1991b: 362). By investigating instincts and the three phases of sexual development, Freud showed the importance of the Id and the linking of the ego and its cruel counterpart, the superego, in

the development which channels impulses and can finally result in the linking of libido to cruelty in sadism. In the final or genital phase of sexual development, sadism becomes an expression of the death instinct put to the aim of the libido through the sexual impulse expressly related to the genitals. Freud's psychoanalytic definition of sadism links it to the love-hate instinct, its manifestation as cruelty and violence towards the sexual object and the primacy of the genitals in its expression.

### **Beyond the Psychoanalytical Definition of Sadism**

It is a shame that Freud was so adamant about the divide between normal and abnormal sexual behaviour, because some of his most interesting theories revolved around the incorrect object choice and abnormal sexuality. Infantilism, fetishism, homosexuality, sadism and even women's sexuality were regarded by Freud as the result of sexual development which had gone awry. For example, one of Freud's theories on sadism is that it originates as an initial aggressive instinct and predominates quite normally in the first stage as the desire for mastery over an object. However, when it is expressed within sexuality after infancy it is abnormal behaviour. Many of the instincts that predominate in young children are repressed, sublimated or bound to the genitals and reproduction for the development of normal sexuality. Impulses exist in infancy and are expressed for a period of time, but are overtaken by a progressive process of suppression.

Alternatively, despite the strict divide he created between the normal and abnormal definitions of sexuality, Freud regarded sexual development as itself a disruption to the "true" expression of instincts as they exist in infancy. Seen in this way, what Freud gave

was a brilliant and thorough analysis of the psyche and the process by which sadism takes hold in sexuality. The ‘evidence’ for Freud’s theories on the importance of sadism abounds in the world: violent, sexual crime, sadomasochism in sexuality and the popularity of violent pornography, even the theoretical and academic interest in the ideas of sadism and its depiction in art, cinema and literature. Indeed the many forms of art, erotica and pornography that contain the theme of sadism make the sadistic impulse and expression more commonplace than first thought. If, as Freud declared, the sadistic instinct pre-exists in infancy or exists as an aggressive instinct, it should be more commonplace than is often recognised. And yet despite Freud’s far-reaching conclusions, the original expression of sadism in Sade’s novels — the specific relations between violence, sadism and their literary expression — went untouched and unexamined.

As French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901 – 1981) reinterpreted Freudian subjectivity in relation to the signifier and the signified, Deleuze carried out a similar reappraisal in relation to language and sadism and masochism. Deleuze gave the language of sadism and masochism considerable thought in writing *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (1991). His aim was to release masochism from the inferior position in the linguistic entity sadomasochism and define masochism as independent, not the inversion of sadism. He argued for masochism to be seen not as the failed aim of sadism, but instead as the separate and distinct expression of the passive sexual instinct. In doing so, Deleuze was able to shift the field of study to the question of how language functions in relation to the perversions of sadism and masochism. Deleuze asserted that through an excess in stimulation, the literature of Sade and Masoch describe a “counterpart” to the world that is able to express the violence and excess of the world (1991: 37). Their role was not to describe the world, but rather to reflect the excess in stimulation that creates eroticism and puts it at the service

of the senses. Language and literature are the means by which this excess is expressed in ways quite different to sadism and masochism as direct forms of psycho-sexual expression.

Rather than individual acts of sadism and masochism, in literature there is the play of taboo and transgression. The rule of law and society sets taboos and excess is created in the breaking or transgressing of these taboos. Sade, and Masoch, through their literature, attempt to transgress taboos against violence, sodomy, incest, rape and torture, each time creating an excess in stimulation through the transgression, only to reinstate the rule of law. Language is the medium through which this was achieved. But what of other forms of excess? Perhaps cinema also creates an excess of stimulation through the language of film. Might cinema create another counterpart to the world capable of containing its violence and excess? The counter-language of Sade is the language of transgression and the limit. Similarly with cinema, certain films contain a counter-language that reconstructs the world through excess. The erotic achieves its expression in the world by drawing out the violence and excess on screen. The next chapter will discuss the link between sadism and literature before the question of sadism and cinema is addressed directly in the final chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **SADISM, VIOLENCE AND THE TRANSCENDENT FUNCTION OF LITERATURE**



Words both create meaning and carry forceful effects. The Marquis de Sade knew well enough how literature does both these things. His writing led to him being imprisoned for years at a time and yet it still ruled his mind, propelling him to continue to write. Had he not written, Sade might have avoided many of his stints in asylums and not suffered the notoriety that dogged his name. Sade's family might have preferred it this way, but it was not to be. His literature, in combination with his misdeeds, sealed his infamy in France and beyond. His name entered the dictionary and the encyclopedia as a term for perversion. Yet it also became a style of literature. It was the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze who addressed the style of Sade's literature and its meaning. Deleuze looked at Sade's literature in order to explore how the novels became linked to the psychoanalytical definition of sadism. The errors and omissions within the connections between sadism, psychoanalysis and Sade thus provided the inspiration for Deleuze's project.

Deleuze examined the definition of sadism given in Freud's psychoanalysis but exceeded this, studying the intrinsic function of language and literature in relation to the expression of sadism. He was interested in the relation of language to violence that Sade's novels construct. Indeed, it could be said that the central question in Sade's novels is how language has a role in relation to the expression of sadism. Deleuze's answer relies partly on psychoanalysis and partly on philosophy. Further, this answer both agrees and disagrees with psychoanalysis in explaining how sadism is as much an expression of violence as a function of language.

When studying novels, Deleuze was always interested in their "use" in the "extra-textual" space of literature and beyond (Smith 1997: xvi). He believed that by examining the use to which a text could be put, it "prolongs" the text and reveals its extra-textual practice.

Deleuze saw novels as revealing an aspect of the Critical and Clinical method of philosophy. He approached them using the symptomatological method of textual practice, in which novels are seen as a collection of symptoms of life itself rather than just a representation of life. Deleuze argued that Sade's novels perform an original and unique role with respect to language and violence. His thesis was that Sade's novels set forth the signs of sadism as a perversion to do with violence, but also as a perversion to do with the expression of violence within language. In drawing attention to this, Deleuze prolonged Sade's novels and, it is hoped, the present study will prolong them further in relation to cinema. The particular relationship between language and violence that is revealed in Sade's novels will be discussed in relation to cinema in the following chapter. But to reach cinema it is necessary to first retrace Deleuze's steps to understand language as a transcendent function of violence.

## **Literature and Psychoanalysis**

*Philosophy in the Bedroom*, *Juliette*, *Justine* and *The 120 Days of Sodom* are the better known novels of the Marquis de Sade. Although he is regarded mostly as a novelist, his other writing included plays, letters and speeches, and they are no less provocative for their themes of violence, incest, sodomy, torture, rape, punishment and incarceration. It was quite a calling card of perversion and depravity that Sade left behind. Sade's stories have remained popular, even relevant, long after the end of the French Revolution and his death. His contribution to literature was substantial — his books numerous, with some well over 1000 pages in length, and many speeches, plays and political essays were also found after his death. He has been depicted in films, such as *Quills*, as having a fervent need to

write that overtook his physical surrounds, his body, his blood and even his excrement. A fitting dramatisation for a man so thoroughly linked with the profane.

In psychoanalysis, Krafft-Ebing was one of the first to refer to the stories of the Marquis de Sade. Freud installs Krafft-Ebing's usage of the words sadism and masochism at the start of his own discussion. This reference inextricably linked the writing of Sade with the perversion defined as sadism by psychoanalysis. Thanks to psychoanalysis then, Sade has become an 'example' of sadism — a condition to do with the human psyche in which people gain pleasure from inflicting pain on others. However, Freud paid scant attention to Sade's actual stories and instead focused on his own theories of sadism, sexuality, instincts and metapsychology. As shown in chapter two, Freud described at least two dominant types of sadism, but admitted that he wasn't conclusive about either type being predominant or exclusive. He initially interpreted sadism as a perversion to do with the instinct for mastery expressed in the sadistic-anal phase of sexual development in infancy. Later he added another theory that an original aggressive instinct is involved in the development of sadism.

Sade's 'contribution' to psychoanalysis has been to lend his name to one of the most well-known and 'popular' perversions. His name has become the eponym for 'sadism'. Yet Sade's popularity and relevance *as a writer* is still strong in the present day. It is this that interested Deleuze as much as the psychoanalytic approach to sadism. Were it not for Deleuze, Sade's role with regard to psychoanalysis might have eclipsed his status as a novelist, playwright and satirist. The starting point for Deleuze's study of Sade was the relationship between sadism and language. Instead of describing Sade himself as a sadist, Deleuze argued that the signs and symptoms of sadism are *contained* within his literature. He

showed how the clinical definition of sadism in psychoanalysis is paralleled in the critical or literary *expression* of sadism *in literature*.

## **Deleuze's Symptomatological Approach**

Deleuze delved into the stories of the Marquis de Sade when divining the truth about sadism and its relationship to language and literature. In parallel, he investigated the stories of Masoch who became the namesake for masochism. Where psychoanalysis had all but ignored Sade and Masoch's fiction, Deleuze saw it as integral to the expression of sadism and masochism. In each study, Deleuze looked at separate perversions, but his method and general conclusions were the same. He compared the force of the literature with the psychoanalytical definition to illustrate the Critical and Clinical method of analysis. The Critical and Clinical approach is underpinned by the belief that clinical symptoms can be discerned within literature. The Critical and the Clinical is an encounter between medicine and literature made possible by the symptomatological method of literary analysis. In this case, Deleuze believed that psychoanalytical definitions of sadism and masochism could be developed by examining the literature of Sade and Masoch.

In medicine, the symptomatological method consists of the study of signs of illnesses. The doctor or clinician isolates the symptoms by distinguishing cases of the disease that were previously grouped together differently. The doctor creates an "original clinical concept" (Smith 1997: xvi) and the signs and symptoms are the components of the concept of the illness. The convergence of symptoms is identified and named after the doctor or clinician. Deleuze borrows this process for the study of literature — in this case the study of Sade

and Masoch. Despite the obvious differences between the two perversions, Sade and Masoch share a similar approach to language and literature. Deleuze believed that the stories of Sade and Masoch “isolated a particular way of existing and set forth a novel symptomatology of it” (Smith 1997: xvii).

Deleuze described Sade and Masoch as symptomatologists because their language contains a set of symptoms that denote two basic perversions — sadism and masochism. Like doctors and clinicians, Sade and Masoch diagnosed the symptoms of sadism and masochism within their literature. The symptoms of sadism are contained within the pages of Sade’s books, such as *The 120 Days of Sodom*. Similarly Deleuze saw the signs of masochism contained within Masoch’s stories, such as *Venus in Furs* (1989 English). The literary figures, Sade and Masoch, became the names to designate two basic perversions to do with pleasure, pain and humiliation. It is irrelevant whether they suffered from the disease, but what is important is that they identified in their literature the symptoms associated with the disease. Sade and Masoch’s literary works isolated a particular way of relating to pain and pleasure, and their novels set forth its symptomatology. The point that Deleuze stressed with his method is that their novels *contained* the *symptoms* of sadism and masochism. He thus showed the importance of language to the expression of both sadism and masochism.

In calling Sade and Masoch symptomatologists, Deleuze made the link between violence and language significant with reference to sadism and masochism. Deleuze revealed how language is a medium in itself for the expression of sadism and masochism. He believed that, as one of the great clinicians, Sade carried out his own diagnosis and definition of sadism through literature. The basic premise is that the words of Sade’s literature create a

“counter-language” that defines a “counterpart” to the world, one that is capable of containing its violence and excess. As a result, Sade’s literature is like a “perverse mirror” that is capable both of reflecting the excesses of the world, and drawing out its violence (1991: 37). Likewise Masoch’s literature contains the signs of masochism.

In *Coldness and Cruelty*, then, Deleuze introduced the Critical and Clinical approach and expands on its implications for sadism, masochism and language. His aim in the book was to show that sadomasochism — sadism and masochism in complementary conjunction — is only a linguistic *contrivance* and not a single, definable perversion. At the same time, he appealed to language, reappraising Freud’s theories of sadism and masochism, arguing that they are quite different and distinct perversions. The idea that there can be a direct transformation or reversal from sadism to masochism, Deleuze explained, is wrong because sadism operates as a “transcendent” function and masochism operates as a “dialectical” function (1991: 23). They include many of the same elements, such as violence, language and pain, but the means through which they create pain and pleasure is different in each case. Masochism in literature is animated by a dialectical spirit, which displaces or transforms elements through a dialectic, reduplicates roles and has a discourse that operates on various levels (1991: 22). Sadism in literature, in contrast, operates by a function of partial negation that is eventually transcended by total negation. Deleuze singled out the notion of an original aggressive instinct as the basis of the move towards total negation in sadism.

To understand how the transcendent function operates in sadism, and its implications for language, it is necessary to explain step by step the picture that Deleuze built of sadism. He began with the divisions used to explain the transcendent function. In each case, a division

exists between a lower level element that relates to the sadist's actions and speech, and a higher level that is referred to in each action or speech. The lower elements refer to or transcend towards the higher level in sadism. The most significant division occurs within the sadist's nature between primary and secondary nature; the next between personal and impersonal elements; and finally between partial and total negation.

The first is a simple but profound division between the higher order of primary nature and the lower order of secondary nature. The division originated with Sade's own distinction between secondary and primary nature (1991: 26). Yet Deleuze did not address the distinction between primary and secondary nature in depth as it is developed within Sade's writing. He referred instead to Pierre Klossowski (1905 – 2001) who also explained the importance of the distinction between primary and secondary nature in sadism (1991: 27). At the most fundamental level, the division between primary and secondary nature within the sadist explains how the violence of sadism operates. Deleuze said that this division supports the split between the violent actions and speech of the sadist expressed within secondary nature, and an unmediated or pure violence contained in primary nature. Primary nature does not have an active role in sadism and does not rely on anything else for its existence. In contrast, secondary nature has its own rules and laws that dictate how it is expressed and organised. Primary nature supplies secondary nature with its power to act, but is itself the higher level where complete negation resides. This pure negation supports the division between the two natures. Secondary nature is where acts of physical violence and violent speech are expressed. Secondary nature contains both destruction and construction and thus expresses only partial negation.

The division between primary and secondary nature is further entrenched by the split between the personal and the impersonal.

The distinction between the two natures [primary and secondary] corresponds to and is the foundation of the distinction between the two elements, the personal element ... and the impersonal element (1991: 28).

Here Deleuze begins to describe the second distinction between the personal element and the impersonal element. The personal element represents secondary nature and the personal actions of the sadist, while the impersonal element represents primary nature and “the way in which the sadist negates secondary nature along with his own ego” (ibid). The personal element of language represents the imperative and descriptive, while the impersonal represents the demonstrative factor of language. The personal directs and describes the personal violence of the sadist. The impersonal identifies with violence that is of a pure element. The personal is about gaining enjoyment and is expressed through destruction and construction. The purely impersonal element is of the nature of the perversion and is aligned with the “Idea of pure negation”. The impersonal is also the “Idea of pure reason” because it is violence in its pure form. The Idea of pure reason is able to “account for the endless repetitions, the reiterated quantitative process of multiplying illustrations and adding victim upon victim” (1991: 20). As a function of primary nature, violence in its pure form is the Idea of complete destruction that is the impersonal element that guides the expression of violence in secondary nature.

The division between partial and total negation is the final distinction between higher and lower functions in sadism. Deleuze wrote that, “underlying the work of Sade is negation in



its broadest and deepest sense” (1991: 26). At this point, it becomes clear that the distinction between partial negation and total negation is the linchpin that explains all of the other higher and lower transcendent functions of sadism. (Deleuze used “pure” interchangeably with the words “total” and “complete” negation.) More than the distinction between primary and secondary nature, and the personal and impersonal elements, the division between partial and total negation motivates the actions and speech of the sadist. This division involves the instincts, the psyche and their connection to violence.

There is a progression in sadism from negative to negation, that is, from the negative as a partial process of destruction endlessly reiterated, to negation as an absolute idea of reason (Deleuze 1991: 126).

The split between partial and total negation forms the basis of the demonstrative function of language, where acts of speech stand in for a higher form of violence. The notion of complete destruction as an Idea and partial destruction through acts of violence and speech becomes clearer when explained in relation to the instincts and the superego. But first it is necessary to explain the distinction that Deleuze drew between partial and total negation.

In Sade’s stories, the libertines are intent on hurting, humiliating and debasing victims. This is, however, partial negation, aligned with secondary nature and reproduced, or actual, acts of violence. Pure negation, in contrast, is a “totalising Idea” that is aligned with primary nature (1991: 27). Pure negation “overrides all reigns and laws, free from the necessity to create, preserve or individuate [and] needs no foundation and is beyond all foundation” (ibid). Hence the explanation of primary nature as “pure” negation that contains nothing

but negation and exists in opposition to secondary nature. Pure negation is like a complete, absolute and abstract “no” which does not exist except as an idea and can only be given in experience through secondary nature. It inspires the sadist’s “dreams of a universal, impersonal crime” (Deleuze 1991: 28). This is only a delusion, but nevertheless it is the dream that each act of violence or partial negation is based upon. Pure negation cannot be expressed directly, but pure negation seeks out and attempts to totalise partial negation by “contravening, ignoring or overriding” all restrictions and barriers (1991: 27). Each act of partial negation is therefore a way for pure negation to seek out aspects of an additive or “totalised” complete negation.

## **Repetition and Negation**

The act of violence demonstrates the Idea of pure negation only partially, so pure negation directs and multiplies violence.

The libertine is confined to illustrate his total demonstration with partial inductive processes borrowed from secondary nature. He cannot do more that accelerate and condense the motions of partial violence (Deleuze 1991: 29).

However, although the pleasures to do with violence may be bound to secondary nature, the act of violence is still pure negation condensed by the coldness expressed in partial violence. Condensed violence arises from secondary nature and the partial process of

negation, but it is violence's attestation to the Idea of complete negation that animates the sadist.

Describing total negation as an Idea suggests that it acts as a reference point and an inspiration rather than a direct physical urge. Pleasure resides in partial negation and it is not pleasure that explains how a partial process of negation can add up to pure negation as a totalising Idea. The move towards total negation involves repetition rather than the pleasure of the act itself. Repetition of crimes, numbers of bodies and amounts of torture are all examples of partial acts of negation that are intended to add up to total negation and attest to the Idea of pure negation that takes hold in the sadist.

The whips are picked up ... his blows become both much more powerful and far more numerous ... but new pleasures call ... a little girl of thirteen is the boy's successor and she is followed by another youth who is in turn abandoned for a girl. Rodin whips nine: five boys, four girls; the lad is the last of fourteen ... he sends him back to class. Such are the words I heard, the scenes which I witnessed (Sade 1991: 539).

The quote above, from *Justine*, demonstrates how each child and each blow is added together and one by one they give rise to an amount of negation that is intended to totalise partial negation towards the Idea of a complete negation. Through repetition, the sadist attempts to act in complete accord with primary nature and not the derivative, reproduced acts of violence that arise from partial negation in secondary nature. The crime is repeated again and again, not for the sake of pleasure, but because the demonstration is a condensed version of pure negation.

In a sense, then, the sadist *repeats* violence in “cold blood” and is not really under the sway of inspiration, impulse, reaction or even pleasure. The cold-blooded actions of the sadist are partial negation but they attest to a higher form of violence arising in primary nature as pure negation. This holds sway over secondary nature, forcing the sadist to act — ‘coldly’ (Deleuze 1991: 29). The cold blood involved is that of demonstrative reason. Deleuze does not really address how pure negation can never be expressed itself and yet is condensed through the cold-blooded action of partial negation. His only hint at the apparent contradiction is to say that pure negation as an Idea is a “delusion; but it is a delusion of reason itself” (1991: 27). This is a neat and convenient way of saying that there is a reason to each act of violence inasmuch as the sadist subscribes to the delusion of complete negation. However, it is not only a delusion — it is also an Idea. Here the ‘Idea’ is always capitalised to indicate that it is a singular entity in multiple repetition. To the extent that pure negation exists, it is carried out in each act of partial negation. In terms of the psyche, pure negation cannot be expressed directly because it is an Idea based within the delusion of the superego that acts out the Death Instinct.

What accounts for the cold-blooded repetition of violence in the psyche of the sadist are the life and death instincts. The life and death instincts explain the existence of the negative as a partial process and negation as an Idea of complete negation. Here Deleuze is happy to revert to Freud. He uses Freud’s notion of the life and death instincts as defined in his essay, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. In this essay, Freud explained the life and death instincts and how they co-exist in the unconscious and are governed by the Pleasure Principle. As Laplanche and Pontalis point out, Thanatos is the Greek term for death and is used by analogy with Eros as the opposite term in the duality of instincts. On this point,

however, Deleuze incorrectly attributes to Freud the definition of 'Thanatos as the opposite pole of Eros. It was perhaps used verbally by Freud or inferred in discussing Eros in relation to the life and death instincts; however, 'Thanatos appears nowhere in Freud's writings, either by itself or in combination with Eros (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973: 447).

While Deleuze's definition of the life and death instincts relies most heavily on psychoanalysis, it is also the point where Deleuze makes his most radical departure from Freud's theories. Deleuze makes a more 'profound' distinction between the death instincts and the Death Instinct from Freud's original distinction between Eros and 'Thanatos, or the life and death instincts. Deleuze creates the latter term with the emphasis on capitalisation to designate it as a single and original instinct.

Deleuze accounts for the existence of the Death Instinct beyond or outside of the psyche while at the same time being involved in the application of its derivative within the psyche — the death instincts. Eros and 'Thanatos are alterable when expressed within the psyche; this variation comes about as the life and death instincts within the psyche combine to affect 'Thanatos as that which exceeds the psyche.

The combination of the death instinct with Eros is the precondition for the 'presentation' of 'Thanatos [the Death Instinct]. So that destruction and the negative at work in destruction, always manifests itself as the other face of construction and unification as governed by the pleasure principle (1991: 30).

Deleuze, therefore, thinks that Eros and Thanatos are incorrectly aligned with the life and death instincts. Instead he posits that the life instincts (Eros) in combination with the death instincts are actually responsible for the secondary expression of Thanatos, or the Death Instinct. The Pleasure Principle governs the life and death instincts in the unconscious, but Thanatos is “absolute negation” and as such cannot therefore be “given in psychic life, even in the unconscious” (1991: 30).

Further, the death instincts and the Death Instinct are aligned with secondary and primary nature, and the personal and impersonal element respectively. At this point, it is possible to construct a two-layer table to reflect the transcendent function of sadism from lower to higher. The lower layer is the cold-blooded actions of the sadist. It includes the life and death instincts and the personal violence of the sadist that is expressed in secondary nature through partial negation. The higher layer is the Death Instinct, impersonal element, primary nature and the Idea of complete negation. This structure explains how each act of violence refers to a higher form of violence and eventually when the superego has taken over the sadist, an act of violence is transcended towards complete destruction of secondary nature represented by the ego.

The movement within sadism is therefore a transcendent one from partial to complete negation. An act of violence or a speech about violence is endlessly reiterated and is propelled by the Idea of complete destruction that is subject to the Death Instinct. The sadist is thinking out and acting out the Death Instinct in action and speech but it is a movement aimed at reaching complete destruction. Repeated again and again, the action and speech are being added together to try to reach an amount of destruction that will qualify as complete destruction.

The sadistic hero appears to have set himself the task of thinking out the Death Instinct (pure negation) in a demonstrative form, and is only able to achieve this by multiplying and condensing the activities of component negative or destructive instincts (Deleuze 1991: 31).

It would seem that Deleuze has created the 'blue print' for the way violence enters language and action. The written and spoken violence testifies to a higher form of violence (the Idea of pure negation arising from the Death Instinct); language transcends towards this higher form of violence. Each crime also attests to something greater than the physical pleasure of violence. This is often expressed as a desire for possession. The libertine may seek something beyond just the physical or verbal violence and try to carry out the complete destruction of the other in the possession of them in the repeated act of violence. In *Juliette*, Noirceuil says to Juliette:

By means of a crime I got possession of her; and this inheritance I have usurped, I spend upon pleasures so sweet that nothing I do is not crime. I am, through my behaviour toward her, nothing but criminal. I am perpetually in a state of crime; not one of my pleasures is untainted by it (1968: 1162).

In the preceding quote, the libertine, Noirceuil, continually seeks crime and is continually in a state of crime, which his pleasures do not alter. It is clear from this example that the libertine seeks crime for repetition and not only for pleasure. Guided by each act of violence, he moves towards total negation and this he does by the agent that controls the Death Instinct in the sadist — the superego.

## Repetition as the Movement that Expels the Ego

The superego is the *agent* that instructs the violence of the sadist and controls the repetition of crime. Indeed it is the “vicissitudes” of the superego that are responsible for the movement from the negative as a partial process to complete negation ‘inspired’ by the Death Instinct. The sadist becomes immoral<sup>5</sup> through the dominance of the superego and the victim represents the ego as external or expelled counterpart. All this is expressed through the senses. For example, in *The 120 Days of Sodom*, Durcet says:

Our senses, nothing else, must guide all our actions in life, because only their voice is truly imperious. [The Bishop replies] But God knows how many thousand crimes may be the result of such a doctrine” (1990: 427).

This exchange suggests that feeling and crime are linked — one guided by the other. It is not a moral or other doctrine that directs the libertines, but their feelings for all of the actions of their life, which are guided by the immoral agent of the superego.

The movement is always one of repeated acts of violence that are intended to be added together to represent complete negation, the sadist’s superego having taken hold and expelled the ego onto the external victim. The endlessly reiterated violence is the superego attempting to destroy the ego which has been projected onto the victim and is now outside of itself. “Insofar as the sadistic superego expels the ego and projects it into its victims, it is

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<sup>5</sup> “What normally confers a moral character on the superego is the internal and complementary ego upon which it exerts its severity, and equally the maternal element which fosters the close interaction between ego and superego. But when the superego runs wild, expelling the ego along with the mother-image, then its fundamental immorality exhibits itself as sadism” (Deleuze 1991: 124).



always faced with the task of destroying something outside of itself again and again” (Deleuze 1991: 126). In acting on the victim, the sadist’s superego is attempting the complete destruction of its own ego in the victim, bringing the superego into total alignment with the Death Instinct.

Deleuze describes the irony of the sadist projecting the ego outward to create pain in something outside of themselves, which is the sadist’s expelled ego. The pleasure in causing pain in another is conversely a way of creating pain in the sadist. “The libertine enjoys suffering the pain he inflicts upon others; when the destructive madness is deflected outward it is accompanied by an identification with the external victim” (Deleuze 1991: 125). This leads Deleuze to speculate on the types of masochism created by his definition of the ego-superego arrangement. It defines a kind of internal pseudomasochism in the sadist. For the purposes of understanding the transcendent function of sadism, however, these questions must be left to one side.

## **The Dual Processes of Desexualisation and Resexualisation**

Within the sadist, the superego has assumed an exclusive role and now that it is without the ego it has therefore become unrestrained, fundamentally immoral and wild. As we have seen, the Death Instinct overtakes the superego and expels the ego by the process in which partial negation is totalised toward complete negation. This movement from partial negation to complete negation is aided by the process of desexualisation and resexualisation. The dual process of desexualisation and resexualisation affects the quality

of energy which constitutes thought in the superego. This movement desexualises and then resexualises an amount of thought in the superego.

Thus the superego represents the apex of the desexualisation process specific to sadism: the operation of totalizing extracts a neutral or displaceable energy from the combinations in which the negative only features as partial process. But at the culmination of desexualisation a total resexualisation takes place, which now bears on the neutral energy or pure thought. This is why the demonstrative impetus, and the speculative speeches and statements which embody this energy are not extraneous complications of Sade's novels, but the essential components of the instantaneous operation on which the whole of sadism is based (Deleuze 1991: 127).

The initial process of desexualisation is only partial destruction. The act of totalising each act of negation adds together all of the neutral or displaceable energy from the combinations in which the negative is only a feature of the partial process. This leads to the cold purity of thought in the superego. Simultaneously another process occurs that resexualises the displaced energy. The resexualisation takes the neutral energy and reinvests it this time with the pure *thought* of destruction. "The essential operation of sadism is the sexualisation of thought and of the speculative process as such, insofar as these are the product of the superego" (Deleuze 1991: 127). Where Deleuze spoke of the cold-blooded action of the sadist animated by the Idea of complete negation, it can now be seen that the coldness arises with the cold purity of thought in the superego through desexualisation and resexualisation.

Any reasoning or speculative processes have become condensed and multiplied into acts of partial violence by being structured according to the move towards complete negation in repetition and addition. The “demonstrative reason” of the superego is the demonstration of pure negation, based on the Death Instinct, which is directed towards the external ego-object as the victim. Each act of violence is added up and as such refers to “the cold purity of thought in the superego” that seeks to transcend all mediated, partial violence towards the Idea of pure negation (Deleuze 1991: 127). All thought, therefore, is of destruction and it is this that directs the cold-blooded action of the sadist. In short, when it acts according to the Death Instinct, the superego assumes the character of thought.

In action, however, the process is endlessly reiterated. The repeated acts of violence are added together again and again to make available a portion of neutral energy that the Death Instinct can effect in the superego. As the negative as a partial process of destruction becomes pure negation, even the superego is overwhelmed by the destructive–aggressive instinct, moving towards complete destruction and cold, pure negation. In this way, the Death Instinct — as an object of thought — comes to rule the superego in the cold purity of complete negation.

## **The Transcendent Function of Language**

It is the language of the sadist that speaks of the pure negation of the superego. The Death Instinct that invades the sadist’s superego and assumes the character of thought also instructs the speeches of the libertines. The obscene descriptions in the language of sadism attest to a “higher” function of violence that is the pure negation of the Death Instinct.

The commands, descriptions and bodies are like diagrams used to demonstrate the higher form of violence that inspires or animates the sadist. *Juliette*, *Justine* and *Philosophy in the Bedroom* are more than just sequences of obscene descriptions, violent commands or tortured bodies. Each description and command refers to something beyond that episode. And it is not just physical violence; Sade's literature is "descriptive" and attests to a "higher" function beyond language (Deleuze 1991: 19) in which "reasoning itself is a form of violence" (1991: 18).

The libertines indeed give great importance to speeches, instructions, lists of rules and descriptions of punishments. From "The Twenty-Sixth Day" of *The 120 Days of Sodom*.

The Libertines sought by every imaginable means to trip their subjects into states of delinquency, and so procure themselves the joy of chastising their hapless victim ... having convoked an extraordinary assembly ... they added several articles to the household regulations (Sade 1990: 517).

This reasoning does not have to be shared by the victims. They are merely the hapless victims who are chastised or addressed in assembly or referred to in articles that regulate the household. "The point of the exercise is to show that the demonstration is identical to violence" (1991: 19). Violence can be demonstrated through address, chastisement or assembly as much as through boot, whip or rope.

Deleuze refers to the higher function of language as transcendent (1991: 25). "Demonstration as a higher function of language makes its appearance between sequences of description, while the libertines are resting, or in the interval between two commands" (1991: 18). The transcendent feature of Sade's language is linked to primary nature and

pure negation. The lower function of Sade's language describes naked bodies, explicit violence and blatant torture. There are no games, frolics, teasing or subterfuge. In *Juliette*, the Minister speaks to Juliette and he directs her to the following:

Indulge yourself, oh, my Juliette, without fear, proudly surrender to the impetuosity of your tastes, to the irregularity of your caprices, to the blazing ardour of your desires (1968: 343).

It is an imperative direction for Juliette to give way to any or all of her desires. Elsewhere, in *Philosophy of the Bedroom*, Eugenie commands, "I beseech you, let us follow in detail the manners by which a young person, married or not, may preserve herself from pregnancy" (1991: 228). (While there is much fertile material on which to base an analysis of gender, sexuality and subjectivity, the focus at this point remains on understanding the dual nature of Sade's language and its role in relation to violence and negation.)

Deleuze is quite specific about the role of violent action and speech in Sade's novels. It is explained in that partial negation refers to a higher form of complete negation. "It would appear that the obscenity of the descriptions in Sade is grounded in his whole conception of the negative and negation" (Deleuze 1991: 30). The obscenity or descriptions that are spoken about, read out or written down are acts of partial negation that *refer* to the totalising Idea of pure negation. For example, Juliette says to Braschi:

The second thing I would have from you is a dissertation upon murder: I myself have murdered rather a lot, and have my views upon the question; I am eager to hear yours (Sade 1968: 756).

The sadist describes things to refer to more than that episode of violence itself. Juliette is willing to give a dissertation on murder and wants to hear of others. The libertines carry out their punishments and then repeat them by speaking about them. Each dissertation is a way to add together the partial negation of punishment towards the Idea of complete negation. Speech and action are therefore forms of repetition.

In sum, the Death Instinct produces an excess in stimulation and this in turn animates the superego and creates violence as excess. Accompanying this, thought and language are inspired by the Idea of complete destruction, which is in turn put at the service of the senses by the superego. The superego directs equally the actions and language of the sadist. The whole process is repeated as the superego identifies with its victims as the expelled, external ego and seeks to destroy it. Under the sway of the Death Instinct, language and action are equivalent forms of violence. When they are animated by the Idea of pure negation, the speeches are equally as violent as the whips. Beyond the violence, however, the existence of the Death Instinct testifies to the excesses of the world.

Yet in Sade's books all this — violent action, speeches and demonstrative reason — occurs within writing. It is here that the differences between Freud's and Deleuze's interests are most apparent — and these differences lead to slightly different theories of sadism. Deleuze revealed how language is the medium for the expression of sadism and masochism. The basic premise is that the words of Sade's literature create a "counter-language" that defines a "counterpart" to the world that is capable of containing its violence and excess (1991: 37). The commands and descriptions are not merely orders or descriptions but are demonstrations of a higher form of violence that are referred to but beyond language. The "perverse mirror" of Sade's literature reflects the violence and excess

of the world and in doing so puts violence at the service of the senses, but *through language* (ibid). This is why Deleuze described the literature of Sade and Masoch as “pornological” in favour of pornographic, because the obscene descriptions have a specific function in relation to violence (1991: 18).

And what of Masoch? Deleuze writes that Masoch’s descriptions are dialectical because they alter the function and roles in relation to violence. They are about ego and externalise the superego. Yet, like Sade’s writings, Masoch’s counter-language also creates and refers to counterworlds of violence and excess. Violence is designated as “erotic” when it takes on this excess in a counterworld. This is the basis for a definition of eroticism — an excess in stimulation that is reflected back to the world.

Sade was reported to have said “I describe the world as I see it” when charged with inventing violent, obscene stories. The libertines of *The 120 Days of Sodom*, *Juliette* and *Justine* deliberately undertake tortures and humiliations in a way that creates violence and excess through an excess of physical, aural, sensory and oral stimulation. Each act of sodomy, incest, rape, torture, cruelty and punishment creates an excess of stimulation that draws out the violence and excess of the world *and replaces it with a quality of the erotic*. Within this eroticism, the libertines seek constantly to transgress limits, but this only serves to reinstate them as limits to transgress. Transgression creates a quality of excess but reinstates the limit in what is fundamentally an empty transgression, though a transgression which is productive of repetition. This implies that, apart from its transcendent existence through the Idea, pure negation is impossible. There is therefore repetition of the movement between excessive stimulation and empty transgression.

The language of excess discussed in this chapter appears in literature. Yet this is only one of many possible mediums for the creation of excess. The Clinical and the Critical approach provides for an analysis of film in a similar way to literature. It too can contain the symptoms of sadism. Language and images in film are invested with the same erotic excess that arises from the cold purity of thought in the superego. Dialogue, speech and even humour show how the violence of sadism is an overcoding by the pure destruction of the Death Instinct. In a manner that limits language to the creation of eroticism through violence and excess, language and images in cinema can also replace the excess of stimulation with an empty transgression of the taboos of violence. The cinema analysis proceeds by transplanting the transcendent model onto the dialogue and language of cinema with a view to seeing if it is compatible. The basis for this test is the belief that cinema, like literature, connects with Life and that there is an exchange of mutual resonance between cinema and Life.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CINEMA: VIOLENCE AND THE LANGUAGE OF TRANSCENDENCE**

This chapter looks at to what degree the sadian definition of violence extends to cinema by investigating a limited number of twentieth century films. The choice of films, limited though it is to five — *Salo*, *Quills*, *Sade*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *American Psycho* — is arbitrary to the extent that some of the films deal exclusively with the life or writing of the Marquis de Sade, while others exhibit features in common with his novels. The narratives range from fictionalised accounts of the Marquis de Sade (*Quills* and *Sade*) and a treatment of one of his stories (*Salo*) to two very different approaches to violence and language (*A Clockwork Orange* and *American Psycho*). The selection includes English, French and Italian films and a mix of mainstream and art house. Despite the limited number, it is nonetheless a varied range on which to base the investigation of the transcendent function of violence in cinema. Remembering that the critical is a mode or process of the text and that clinical contains the signs and symptoms peculiar to sadism, these films need to bring together both the critical and clinical elements of sadism. The characters, their dialogue and the plot development function as the critical elements while displaying the clinical signs of the perversion. Scenes within the films can be discussed in the context of how they operate with the transcendent function of violence.

The importance of language is as the means of expression of sadism as the Death Instinct gone awry under the superego. It will be shown how the symptoms of sadism are contained within a counter-language of cinema and how the taboos against punishment, violence and torture are transgressed by sadism within cinema. Each of these points indicates a theme of analysis and a point of confluence or difference between literature and cinema to do with the transcendent function of violence. In this chapter, the analysis is more focused on the function and use of language and less on other technical elements of cinema that may or may not support the analysis. In addition, the chapter is not intended to

suggest that films on or about Sade are necessarily sadian in the transcendent way, nor is it too suggest that all violent films are inherently sadian or transcendent. It is more to speculate to what extent certain violent films have features common to those of the transcendent function of violence in Sade's novels. To this end, the dialogue needs to stand in for the higher form of violence and the action needs to refer to the higher form of violence. The film discussion is specifically matched with the points of analysis provided in the previous chapter that explain the transcendent function.

## **Enacting Pain and Pleasure**

One of the defining features of sadism is the relationship it enacts between pain and pleasure. It is also a key point of difference between Freud and Deleuze's definition of sadism: the psychoanalytic definition is that sadism creates pain for pleasure but Deleuze argued against this view. He believed that the sadist creates pain for the purposes of repetition and that pleasure is produced as a result of repetition, but is not the guiding force. Pain and pleasure are expressed through the personal violence of the sadist and refer to the impersonal Idea of pure violence. In film, pain and pleasure relate to the narrative and are also expressed through the personal experiences of the characters. These experiences are able to refer to an impersonal Idea in much the same way as it happens in literature. Much of the outcry against films, such as *Salò*, revolves around the ability of the film to refer to the Idea of pure violence by problematising pain and pleasure. This is shown to good effect with the Italian film *Salò* and the politics around when and how it has screened.

Pier Paolo Passolini's film *Salo*, made in 1975, was originally titled *The 120 Days of Sodom* after Sade's book of the same name. It was the last film made before Passolini's murder in 1975. Before his death, he made numerous other films including the 'Trilogy of Life' that comprised *Decameron*, *Canterbury Tales* and *Arabian Nights*. *Salo* transposes the story of Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* to Italy and Mussolini's Fascist state of Salo, which was run by a puppet regime and propped up by the Nazis at the end of World War Two. It was made in Italian and later given English subtitles. The complete version is approximately 130 minutes, but it has rarely screened outside Europe. In London it has screened in an edited form with an "explanatory" prologue and epilogue that was designed to explain the extreme forms of violence and torture as a commentary on extreme forms of power, such as fascism. *Salo* was screened at the Encore Cinema in Sydney for a brief season in 1995.

In the film, Sade's libertines have become wartime Fascists who round up men and women and incarcerate them in a villa in the countryside of Salo. Using imagery borrowed from Dante's *Inferno* (earliest publication dated 1314), the villa-prison becomes the scene of extreme forms of violence, torture, brutality, sodomy and human degradation. The libertines have become sadists who belong to a political regime and the victims of libertinage have become political prisoners. The violence and excess of Sade has been directly transferred to the cinema via the events that took place in Salo, Italy. *Salo* shows the way that sadism is expressed in the name of politics and political will. The men and women are gathered together, stripped naked and paraded in front of the Fascists for their pleasure in witnessing such humiliation. The pain of torture, the humiliation of being stripped and examined, the revulsion of being forced to consume excrement creates an amount of pleasure for the sadist. Their pleasure is equal to the pleasure that the libertines of Sade's novels gain but it relates to an amount of political power. In the film, political

power is expressed through the pleasure gained in the humiliation and torture of others. However, as Deleuze has shown, it is not pleasure that rules the organisation of torture. The political power and pleasure are related to the personal element of the sadist and the expressions of their personal negation but refer to something beyond the political regime. In *Salò*, political violence, power, humiliation and pleasure refer to the Idea of pure violence.

The men and women are used to carry out the impersonal pain of the sadist but the pleasure the sadist experiences is in the repetition of crimes, humiliation and punishment. The repetition of crimes is an attempt to add up an amount of violence towards the Idea of pure violence. The Idea of pure violence is referred to through the crimes but crime does not create pleasure and pleasure does not inspire the pain. The debate about the extreme violence of the film misses the point of understanding how pain and pleasure are linked by referring to an Idea of pure violence but are not themselves pure violence. Often, if a film fails to take a moral stand on violence, it is mis-read as condoning violence. The either-or judgement obfuscates the many other arguments that a film can mount about the meaning of violence.

Directed by Philip Kaufman, *Quills* is a fictionalised account of the Marquis de Sade and his time in the Charenton insane asylum. Despite containing scenes of violence, torture and humiliation these did not come to the attention of the censors and it was not restricted to an 18+ age limit or banned from screening. The film treats pain and pleasure as results of sadism in which violence creates pleasure and is punished with pain. It depicts the demise of the Marquis de Sade and therefore suggests that seeking pleasure in pain will eventually be punished. The following is an exchange between Doctor Royer Collard and the Abbé

Coulmier. The Doctor is famous for his (self-described) “aggressive course of treatment” designed to cure patients of their illnesses and perversions. The Abbé Coulmier, however, intends to help patients see their wrongdoings for what they are and guide them towards more virtuous behaviour.

Doctor Royer Collard: I understand he [Sade] practices the very crimes of his fiction. I have the means to cure him. [Indicates to the metal cage, dunking chair and other tools.]

Abbé Coulmier: What, so he'll learn to fear violence and not see virtue for its own rewards?

The Doctor represents the scientific approach to mental illness that seeks to cure violence, perversion and other behaviour through severe physical torture. Patients are chained into rotating chairs and repeatedly dunked backwards into vats of water. Some others are locked into upright metal cages. In contrast, the Abbé's approach is to try to teach patients of their illness and encourage them to seek a cure through redemptive means. The Doctor intends to cure the Marquis's violence, expressed through his writing, with the pain of physical torture. Any pleasure he gains from his writing will be beaten out of him. In the film, writing is regarded as both the expression of a perversion by the Doctor and a likely cure by the Abbé. In both cases, despite the different approaches taken by the Doctor and the Abbé, language is regarded as expressing the signs of the perversion both for expressive and curative purposes.

The Marquis writes feverishly with the approval of the Abbé for “restorative” purposes to purge the things that drive his vile, filthy mind.

Marquis: I've all the demons in hell in my head. My only salvation is to vent them on paper.

At least that is the purpose the Abbé sees for the Marquis's writing. Unfortunately, however, the naive and idealistic Abbé does not realise that he is being deceived by the Marquis and the chambermaid Madeleine who hides Sade's manuscripts and passes them out of the asylum. The stories reach publication to the dismay of the Abbé, the wrath of Napoleon and the horror of France.

The Doctor and the Abbé act as two poles around the expression of violence in language. The Doctor sees violence as the answer to cure Sade of his perverse need to write violent stories, while the Abbé seeks to use the pleasure of writing as a cure in itself. The Marquis is seen as the model of sadism and the film asks whether a cure can be achieved through physical punishment or purged through writing. The irony is that Sade is imprisoned as a means of punishment for his violent writing and the supposed cure is physical violence through torture and punishment, or even continuing to write.

The film shows that there is a great contradiction in the violent approach to punishing violent writing. In doing so, Sade's writing is taken to have a greater meaning and significance than just words on the page. Sade's personal expression of violence through language is taken to refer to the Idea of pure violence. It relies on the further split between the personal and impersonal forms of violence that is part of the division in the transcendent function of sadism.

## Personal and Impersonal Violence

Like each act of violence, each speech or address is an act of personal violence that is intended to refer to the impersonal Idea of pure violence. In literature, the libertines use language to enact violence by addressing and haranguing the victim or giving speeches about the importance of torture and punishment. Similarly in film, characters use language to refer to the Idea of pure violence. They give addresses or dissertation on murder, or use language in a way that contains violence.

The French film *Sade* is a wordy, philosophical interpretation of the Marquis de Sade and the period after the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. French actor Daniel Auteuil's Marquis is housed in a country estate that has been turned into a prison for the aristocracy. Bored and mourning his freedom, the Marquis writes, dreams of life outside of the estate and engages other inmates in discussions and debates about nature, violence and the world. Directed by Benoît Jacquot, the film depicts Sade's mental explorations into science and philosophy and how these underpin his literature and the theory of libertinage. The film is restrained and analytical, but it nevertheless includes scenes of beheadings during the revolution and the virgin's rape. Through his monologues, the Marquis reasons that violence is inherent in nature and the world. His speeches embody the personal violence of the sadist as he uses this reasoning during his episodes with another of the inmates.

During his imprisonment, the Marquis's attentions turn to the young virgin Lancris and he envies her journey through sexual awakening that is only just beginning. The Marquis



speeds up the journey as he engages her in philosophical debates on lust, love and sexual nature, and she in turn is interested in his philosophy of the bedroom. “Only in excess can you find liberty,” the Marquis declares and he sets out to liberate the young girl who is housed with her parents on the same estate. Excess is depicted through the river of blood in which liberty can be found through living excess rather than through political means. The film shows the importance of speech-making to libertinage which announces the violence and instructs in how to carry it out.

It is not so much a representation of repeating crimes to add up to pure violence as an Idea that exists and yet can never be expressed. *Sade* declares that sadism is about enacting the philosophy of the bedroom and countering the hypocrisy of a violent regime that incarcerates someone for violence. By educating a young woman to seek answers in philosophy and knowledge in sexual experience, the Marquis problematises Life through the language of violence and the philosophy of the bedroom. As with *Quills*, it questions the violence of civil society that kills its citizens, imprisons its writers and tortures its elites and yet prohibits fictional stories of torture and imprisonment.

*American Psycho*, directed by Mary Harron, is based on the book of the same name by Brett Easton Ellis. The film is a devastating satire on the world of Wall Street investment bankers in the 1980s. It is a black comedy in which one colleague kills another because he has a better looking business card. The film suggests that the killer, Patrick Bateman, may be delusional, because questions remain over exactly who and how many he has killed. Yet, to his colleagues, he is a friend with a great suntan who is occasionally uptight about getting a booking at the *right* restaurant. The film questions what is truth and illusion and where violence intervenes between petty competitiveness and murderous rage.

Played expertly by Christian Bale, Patrick Bateman is a tanned and manicured specimen of a man. He cleanses, tones and primps with the precision of a surgeon. The analogy is a strong one given his predilection for taking bodies apart with various instruments. However, his instruments can be as delicate as a knife or scalpel, or as indelicate as an axe, a staple gun or a chainsaw. His patients are victims who don't have the benefit of anaesthetic, or of living after the "procedure".

In *Quills*, Doctor Royer Collard's personal violence is carried out on the patients. The impersonal violence of the Idea of pure violence is represented by the cure. In *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman's uncontrollable murderous "blood lust" is the Idea of violence that instructs his personal violence. And it has a direct impact on the senses (and the bodies) of his victims. He may not subscribe to the theory of libertinage, but he lives according to the rule of violence that seeks to create pain through repetition. Patrick Bateman does not seek nor does he gain pleasure in his violence. Unlike the libertines, he does not belong to a society and his prison is of his mind and not a villa or chateau. He does not offer his crimes for the pleasure of others, but is a lone torturer.

In a nightclub with friends and some models, over the pulsating beat of 1980s disco music, they try to hold a conversation:

Blond girl: So what are you into?

Patrick Bateman: I'm into murders and executions.

Blond Girl: That's interesting, because most guys I know who are into mergers and acquisitions don't really like what they're doing. How do you like it?

Patrick Bateman: I like it just fine thanks.

Patrick is into murders and executions while his colleagues satisfy themselves with mergers and acquisitions. It's a neat wordplay that is used to good effect in a scene that shows the shallowness of their lives and the humour of Patrick Bateman's misheard confessions. Despite his Cerruti shirts and Valentino suits, he is a violent killer who maintains the facade of a sharp businessman during the day but at night his blood lust takes him to the streets, prostitutes or nightclubs in search of victims. When Deleuze says that the personal violence of the sadist is directed towards the impersonal Idea of violence, he might well have been describing Patrick Bateman. His personal violence is extreme, messy and manifold. The impersonal Idea of pure violence is his blood lust that can never be satisfied despite his many murders and executions.

Where language is concerned, Patrick Bateman exemplifies the 'speech equals violence' rule in sadism. Like the Marquis of the French film *Sade*, Patrick Bateman's soliloquies and speeches represent his personal philosophy. Unlike the Marquis, however, he is not interested in making speeches about philosophy in the bedroom; instead, he sermonises about music and pop culture. Before murdering his colleague Paul Allen with an axe, he delivers a treatise on Huey Lewis and the News and their place in the pop culture pantheon. Always delivered in a flat, monotone voice, his analysis is puerile and silly. Before having sex with two prostitutes, who he cuts and harms in the process, he delivers a mini-essay on Phil Collins and his band Genesis. Both scenes are a startling display of his

lack of emotion and of his cold-blooded approach to violence in which his sadistic superego has taken over and reproduces acts of violence. In the film, speeches carry the personal element of the violence of sadism and demonstrate that repetition of crimes is an integral feature of both the language and deed in the transcendent function of violence.

## **Repeated Acts and Repeated Speeches**

It has been shown how repeating crimes and acts of violence is an attempt to apprehend pure violence that exists as an Idea. Each act of personal violence by the sadist (through language and deed) is repeated in a bid to add together violence towards the Idea of pure negation that resides in primary nature. The act of adding bodies to bodies and multiple crimes of violence creates an excess of stimulation that is designated as erotic but it is an attempt to totalise all of the partial violence. It is less about language admitting or denying violence, but instead is about creating an excess that seeks to tap into the pure violence of the Death Instinct in primary nature. In film, repetition is shown through dialogue and action and supports the notion of repetition as an attempt to totalise violence towards the Idea of pure violence.

*American Psycho* problematises the way wealth and privilege can lead to boredom and corrupt one's values. However, the film stops short of suggesting that a murderer of the magnitude of Patrick Bateman is created simply through boredom. The scenes of him taking prescription pills suggest that he has some kind of illness for which he has received treatment and therefore medication. The magnitude of his list of crimes is substantial, although even he doesn't really know how many people he has killed for certain. After

going on a rampage and fearing he is about to be caught, Patrick rings his lawyer and confesses to killing people.

Patrick Bateman: [Hears the recorded message of his lawyer.] Tonight I had to kill a lot of people, but I'm not sure I'm going to get away with it this time ... I think I've killed 20, maybe 40 people ... an old girlfriend from university ... a young girl from NYU I met in the Park ... I ate some of their brains ... I tried to cook some of them a little ... and Paul Allen ... I killed Paul Allen ... He's not in London ... I killed him [sobs and hangs up].

In his retelling, Patrick Bateman adds victim upon victim in a way that multiplies bodies and adds up crimes. His crimes are multiplicitous, his murders many and his executions various. Each act of violence inflicted on the victim is a demonstration that testifies to a higher form of violence. Killing and torturing, he acts out the Idea of pure violence that exists in an impersonal element in primary nature. It cannot be reached directly but is expressed through the personal element of secondary nature and reiterated violence.

In another scene, a woman crazed with fear runs through his apartment trying to escape before he kills her. As she opens cupboards, doors and closets she discovers to her growing panic that there are bodies hung up like jackets in the closet, heads stacked up in the fridge, a body in the bathroom and human remains in another bedroom. Bateman repeats his crime, not to create pleasure for himself, but because he acts with the instinct for aggression and the desire to create pain. It is pain and not pleasure that rules his need for violence and the pure violence of primary nature acts through each murder. He has a near complete accord with sadism because he is interested in mastering an object, ingesting it and possessing it in a sexual way. He represents the pure negation which overrides all

reigns and laws. He and his actions have become a delusion of reason itself and acts out the Death Instinct of primary nature. In a restaurant trying to break up with his girlfriend, Evelyn, Bateman offers reasons why they are not compatible. Evelyn objects to his request to split up.

Evelyn: Why Patrick? Why? Tell me what I should do? ... We have a history ... We have a past ... We share the same friends.

Patrick Bateman: You can keep all of the friends. It's not working Evelyn. ... I think, Evelyn, it's over ... [She turns and catches the eye of a friend in the distance.] My need to engage in homicidal behaviour on a massive scale cannot be corrected. But I have no other way to fulfil my needs.

Evelyn: Oh, no, Patrick ... no ... [sobs]

Unbelievably, Evelyn misses the confession in between her own shock at hearing Patrick wants to break up and her distraction at seeing a friend in the distance who is showing off her new gold bracelet. In his confessions, Patrick Bateman is pervaded by acts of violence and the Death Instinct. His language admits violence when he speaks of his crimes and tells people how he wants to hurt them. He acts out the pure Death Instinct and speaks its words and uses its language. Like the sadist, he acts with the cold-blooded action of condensation and acceleration.

Unlike *A Clockwork Orange*, where violence and excess is admitted into language in an indirect way through the use of strange words and a sub-language, in *American Psycho* violence is expressed in a direct way. His actions demonstrate the Idea of pure violence of the Death Instinct and his language expresses pure negation that overrides laws and

restrictions. In *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman has expelled his ego onto his victims to negate secondary nature and he has become all cruelty and punishment. He is immoral superego acting with pure negation. His actions and speech are of the cold sadist acting in accord with the superego gone awry under the Death Instinct.

## **The Language of Incarceration**

Deleuze has said that Sade created a counter-language that contains the violence and excess of the world. Sade's counter-language is also the language of violence and torture through incarceration and imprisonment. Besides rebelling against the bloody, violent revolution, Sade spoke out about the nature of imprisonment. Many, if not all, of Sade's stories deal with the themes of imprisonment and incarceration in a variety of forms. His settings include prisons, gaols, asylums and many other institutions. Those of his novels not directly situated in institutions are often set in secured villas, secluded chateaux, remote castles and intricately designed premises that can be locked up, closed off and shut out.

Sade's time in prison or asylum not only gave him the opportunity to witness and experience violence and torture, but gave him the language with which to write about it. Sade was a victim of imprisonment and therefore his language of violence and humiliation is the language of the victim. It suggests that to write about violence is to know violence and to know violence is to be the victim of violence.

Sade is not alone in his imprisonment in Charenton in the film *Quills*. He keeps the company of a variety of misfits and malcontents. These include the large, lumbering

Bouchon who has a shaky grip on the line between life and fiction. He suffers badly from the persuasive power of suggestion and is a willing participant in Sade's plays and stories. In *Quills*, the Marquis's words have a direct impact on the other inmates of Charenton. Madeleine, the laundry maid, like Bouchon, enjoys reading Sade's stories.

Explaining to the Abbé why she reads Sade's stories:

Madeleine: It's a hard day's wages slaving away for madmen. What I've seen in life, it takes a lot to hold my interest. I put myself in his stories. I play the parts. If I wasn't such a bad woman on the page, I'd hazard I couldn't be such a good woman in life.

This quote shows that she enjoys reading his stories, but that there is a distinction between reading and acting the stories. Earlier, Bouchon had made an attempt to rape her during one of the Marquis's lewd plays. Later one of the Marquis's tales is transmitted by word through the prison from the Marquis to Madeleine who is transcribing it. Bouchon retells the story to Madeleine of a woman who has her tongue cut out for giving out a horrendous scream after being mutilated. However, for her virtuousness, Madeleine eventually suffers a cruel fate. She dies a virgin at the hands of Bouchon who cuts out her tongue and dumps her in a laundry vat full of water. Madeleine is muted just as the woman in the story is because Bouchon cannot discern well enough to know that fiction is not to be acted upon.

With Bouchon, Sade's counter-language has affected the senses with diabolical results. The words of his counter-language have become instructions for the deranged Bouchon. To avenge Madeleine's death, there must be justice and retribution. Acting well outside of his "advisory capacity" in the asylum the Doctor Collard calls for justice for Madeleine from



the Abbé who still remains in charge. The Abbé turns to the Marquis and sees his writing no longer as catharsis, but as dangerous.

Doctor Royer Collard: Bouchon was so impressed with the Marquis' tale he chose to re-enact it on the chambermaid. Tell me Abbé, when you are called before God, how will you answer for Madeleine's death?

Abbé: [Turning to the Marquis] Murderer. Your words drove Bouchon...

Marquis: Suppose one of your precious inmates attempted to walk on water and drowned, would you condemn the bible? I think not.

Abbé: An innocent child is dead.

Marquis: So many authors are denied the gratification of a concrete response to their work.

The Marquis's language has acted directly on the senses of both Bouchon and Madeleine. His language of what it is to be a victim has made a victim out of Madeleine and Bouchon. In addressing what it is to be a victim, the film explores the relationship between vice and virtue and whether once someone has crossed over into vice they can be cured or restored to see the merit of virtue. The film uses violence carried out in Sade's name to ask if violence can be contained within Sade's language. It suggests that the Idea of pure violence can be explored in film and contained in language.

Abbé: In order to know virtue, we must acquaint ourselves with vice, for only then do we know the full measure of vice.

The Marquis in the film claims that he represents the world as he sees it. Unfortunately, not everybody sees the world as he does or wants to see the world the way he portrays it in his novels. The Marquis echoes Deleuze's statement that Sade held up a perverse mirror to the world and reflected its violence and excess. However, sadism in the film is less about merely creating pain in another and more about the tyranny of virtue by a man who had "been to hell and not just read about it".

The Marquis in *Quills* relishes the irony of Doctor Collard's "aggressive form of treatment" which favours torture and deprivation for their curative effects.

Marquis: The Doctor is a man after my own heart.

The Abbé believes that the depth of vice is a measure of virtue. The Marquis and the Doctor are in agreement that vice and virtue are not necessarily connected in this manner. Bouchon, Sade and even the Doctor are characters who seek the complete expression of their desires. In Sade's stories, literature becomes a counterpart capable of mirroring the violence and excess of the world of the asylum. Unfortunately, as *Quills* shows, some people don't much like what they see in Sade's stories. They are less interested in characters given a complete accord with their desires and more keen to see true crime and evil punished properly.

In contrast to *Quills*, which links virtue and vice to the notion of a what it is to be a victim, in both *A Clockwork Orange* and *Salo*, dialogue, setting and events graphically show what it means to be a victim. The films are highly explicit but paradoxical in that they revolt and revile rather than revel in violence and humiliation. How could someone who has not

experienced pain and humiliation recognise torture? Through the Fascist libertines, the twenty-two men and women are fed Sade's language, but through the film the world is fed the horror of institutionalised power. The paradox is that violence is depicted to show its pain and unpleasantness. *Salo* illustrates the excesses of institutionalised power and torture in the hands of captors who might also have been liberators in the confused political climate. *Salo* problematises institutional power and *A Clockwork Orange* problematises language. *Quills* problematises punishment and *Sade* problematises sexual philosophy.

## Cold Deeds and Cold Words

Directed by Stanley Kubrick and based on a novel by Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* is a dark comedy about Alex and his “droogs” — or mates — who indulge in violent sprees. The trailer for the film flashes suggestive words “witty”, “sardonic”, “metaphysical”, “bizarre” and “frightening”. *A Clockwork Orange* opens with Alex and his droogs — Pete, Georgie Boy and Dim — in the Korova Milk Bar drinking milk with “vellocet or synthemesc or drencrom”. These additives help the boys get ready for the night's activities of violence and mayhem.

Alex: This would sharpen you up and make you ready for a bit of the old ultra-violence.

Afterwards, Alex and his droogs find an old wino and beat him up. Continuing their violent spree, they break into the home of a writer and his wife and rape her, tie him up and then kick him while he lays curled up on the ground. The film has an ‘R’ rating in

Australia for its violence, but the scenes of violence are mostly at the start of the film. The film shows how words are a form of violence and how violence committed by the sadist is carried out in cold-blood.

The language of Alex and his other droogs acts in a similar way to their violence. Their language is an expression of the cold-blooded violence — that of the impersonal Idea of pure violence. Alex and the droogs speak a language made up of strange words, altered intonation and child-like abbreviations. Their make-up, stylised clothes and odd movements give it a cartoon-like feel, and the sets and music push the film into satire. But the language makes meaning more cryptic and therefore less direct. The meaning of many words is more easily discerned from the actions of the characters and the place where the word falls in a sentence. The droogs approach the writer's house in the second scene.

Georgie Boy: What we were after now was the old surprise visit. That was a real kick and good for laughs and lashings of the Ultra-Violent.

Alex: Come and get one in the yarbles, if you have any yarbles you eunich jelly thou.

Words such as “viddy” mean see or look. Others like “sophistos” mean sophisticates; “a pain in the gulliver” is the same as a pain in the head and “svook” means sound. Much of their violence is contained within their language and they create a counter-language out of the hybrid, altered words that substitute for English words meaning the same thing. Their language expresses violence whilst also denying it by not giving it its true, proper names. Many of the words are derived from Russian words that have been truncated or altered in some way. Violence is denied by language in the ordinary sense, but admitted into language

that is not common language. Like Sade's libertines, the droogs are a band of people seeking violence as an end in itself and their language proves them as part of the same society. Their coded language only makes sense and relates to each other. They speak of violence, but to their own kind and of their own kind of violence.

Dim [To Alex]: Sorry about the pain. Using the gulliver [head] too much like maybe. Giving orders and disciplining and such perhaps.

Their language hides violence in made-up words, strange phrases and non-typical pronunciations. The droogs use their self-styled language to talk about violence, the pleasure of hurting others and the need for a bit of "ultra-violence". Each piece of language refers to violence; each statement of violence points to an action of violence.

In *A Clockwork Orange*, the partial effects of language add up to a totalising effect. Each spoken phrase of violence adds up to a total effect of violence. The droogs live under the sway of the Idea of pure violence that is apprehended by sadism. Their personal language is directed not merely towards their victims and those on whom they inflict their cruel humiliations, but toward the impersonal Idea of violence or the pure reason of violence. They might be resentful and rebellious school-age criminals, but they live by the rule of violence that refers to pure negation. Alex, Pete, Georgie Boy and Dim live by the rule of violence that has infiltrated their language. Violence dictates their consumption of milk with special additives, their attitude to authority and how they engage with people whom are unfortunate enough to cross their path.

In order to act in cold-blood and have language spoken in coldness, the sadist goes through the desexualisation and resexualisation of the libido. *A Clockwork Orange* shows Alex's incarceration in jail, his rehabilitation and his attempts to carry on living when he is eventually released. A recording of Beethoven's Ninth symphony is used throughout the movie as it is Alex's favourite music and becomes the soundtrack to his violence. It eventually becomes instrumental in his rehabilitation through the Ludavico treatment. The doctors set out to enact their own desexualisation and resexualisation on Alex through the use of the Ninth and violent film footage. Alex's sexual and violent urges have been decoded of pleasurable sensations and recoded with unpleasant sensations. For Alex, the process of desexualisation and resexualisation is a measure of the coldness of sadist violence.

His sadist instincts for violence and torture are reduced to a state of coldness by the Ludavico treatment. Alex's appears to be cured by the treatment, devoid of libido and he becomes nauseous and faint when thinking about hurting someone. His personality appears bland and dull, and without the strong distinguishing traits that he once exhibited. (If the censors watching *Salò* had taken note of this treatment they might have seen some use in allowing people to witness torture and humiliation on screen at least to highlight its unpleasantness.)

However, the political machinations behind the scenes mean that eventually Alex has to be re-cured of the initial cure due to political pressure about a looming scandal around the Ludavico treatment. And so ironically his resexualisation occurs with Beethoven's Ninth played to him to reinvest his libido with violent urges and 'prove' to him that the nausea and weakness no longer hold sway over him. Alex is eventually restored to his former state

and ironically he (once again) is deemed to be cured. Towards the end of the film, the Minister responsible for corrective services visits Alex in hospital to show the onlooking media how well he has been restored.

Minister: Good, good boy. Oh yes, I understand you're fond of music. I have arranged a little surprise for you.

Alex: Surprise?

Minister: One that I hope you will like as a symbol of our new understanding.

Alex: I was cured alright. [Fades out with scenes of Alex and a woman having sex. The Minister and other bystanders watching on.]

Where primary nature exists as an Idea and secondary nature as an application of primary nature, Alex shows how the sadist's primary nature can never be altered directly. Only Alex's secondary nature was connected to his subsequent re-cure. His primary nature, which apprehends violence, was not altered. All that happened was that his secondary nature was suspended for a time and shocked into an alternative object for the expression of violence — nausea. After the rehabilitation, Alex was still prone to violent urges, but he was not well enough to act on them. His primary nature, which relates to the Idea of pure violence, was not affected. Alex received what Sade could never get — a reverse cure, an apology from the Minister and a respectable, well-paying job provided by the government. Over the course of the experiment, Alex is “cured” of the coldness that inspires his violence and his speech. However, when the treatment is reversed he is restored to the cold purity of violence.

## The Fantasy of Transgression

The final frontier for the sadist is transgression. Transgression seeks to overcome a limit-point by contravening the prohibition against something. It drives the sadist to break the taboos against murder, torture and punishment to harvest the erotic excess that comes through transgression. Yet the very act of transgression is an empty act of defiance because each taboo transgressed only serves to reinstate the taboo as a limit-point. It brings into doubt what limit the libertines can transgress and to what extent sadism is able to break or even challenge taboos.

*Quills* and *Salo* demonstrate the inherent contradiction in creating an order by which to seek transgression. The Marquis in *Quills* creates a state of disorder in Charenton by transgressing the limits on his writing. The film's plot carries his transgression to its most violent and extreme ends. Despite this, however, the inmates are finally overcome by the authority of the cure and the taboos are reinstated. *Salo* treats order and transgression somewhat differently, but still it is not clear that transgression has been achieved. The film uses one of Sade's stories to illustrate how the transgression of violence and punishment creates a new order that inverts the rule of punishing vice and rewarding virtue. Under the extreme rule of Fascism, the taboos against torture and humiliation are challenged within the nation-state, and in the prison-villa in *Salo* this is taken to its most revolting conclusion. However, under normal rules of governance, the taboos against torture and punishment would be steadfast, which questions whether transgression under a state of extreme political conditions is an equivalent form of transgression.



In *Quills*, *Salo* and *A Clockwork Orange*, transgression is an act that is intended to break certain taboos, but, in so doing, it expresses the limit-point that structures the sadist's violence. They are instructed by the limits that order and structure their murders, punishment and torture. Violence is an attempt at breaking a taboo in an ultimately empty action that expresses the order and limits on sadism. The ultimate limits are the set of taboos and the overriding order governs the rules that guide taboo and transgression. They are violent in a nonetheless ordered and structured way that is cold, calculating and controlled. Their desire for violence eventuates by affirming order that both seeks to express and control violence through transgression. This holds good for the three films mentioned above; however, *American Psycho* is not as straightforward. Where this film is a shocking critique on monetary excess it also functions as a sardonic critique of transgressive excess.

In a voice-over at the end of the film after he has confessed on the phone to his lawyer, Patrick Bateman declares:

Patrick Bateman: I want my pain inflicted on others. I want no one to escape ... This confession has meant nothing. My punishment continues to elude me ... There are no more barriers to cross. All the barriers I have now surpassed.

By his own admission, Bateman has surpassed all of his personal barriers and society's barriers against murder, torture and execution. After his confession, Bateman awaits his punishment but it has not arrived as the film ends. He has avoided the grasp of the law and evaded the grip of his conscience. Patrick Bateman has become pure excess. He has been

carried to the limit. He is able to grasp the significance of his violent impulses, but is unable to move away from the frenzy that inspires them. He is aligned with the Death Instinct that relates to the sadistic superego of primary nature. He has become pure superego that is fundamentally immoral and negates the ego of secondary nature in the form of his victims.

Patrick Bateman creates and lives violence and excess in both his counter-language of violence and the counter-world of murders and executions that he inhabits. He has become pure erotic excess. By the end of the film, he has become both sadian and anti-sadian. He speaks, like Sade, as the victim of pain, which he wants to inflict on another, again and again. He has become the Idea of pure violence because nothing else exists within him. And yet he is anti-sadian because he has transgressed the limits on violence and excess. He proves the existence of violence and excess contained within language and yet he disproves the sovereign nature of violence. He feels only pain and no pleasure because he cannot harvest pleasure from breaking a taboo because he has not been punished. He has moved beyond transgression. Sade died in prison. Alex is re-cured and restored to violence. But Patrick Bateman transgresses violence. His voice-over is all that is heard at the end of the film. His language is disordered transgression.

Patrick Bateman: I am simply not there. It's an abstraction.

Carried to its limit, violence and excess that are contained within a counter-language and make up the counter-world become the erotic excess that is pure transgression. Patrick Bateman apprehends violence and in so doing exists beyond transgression to become the Idea of pure violence. He has crossed over and lives a life of pure transgression. He apprehends nothing and is only apprehended by violence. He has become excess.

However, he has become pure violence only as an Idea. He floats and exists as a referential that language can contain. Beyond transgression is the Idea of pure violence that exists without mortal existence and without form or shape. He is no longer mortal and has become formless and exists only as a voice-over. He is the Idea of pure violence.

And yet despite all of this, there is a sense at the end of the film that it is a delusion. If he has not been caught and is so sketchy about the number of dead, perhaps he is more delusional than he realises and invents the murders. Perhaps his afflictions are grandiose delusions rather than homicidal tendencies. The film indulges in the fantasy of absolute transgression that is left wanting after all of the murders and the many confessions. The fantasy of absolute transgression is that it once again falls back into order and limit. If it does succeed it is no longer transgression. Like Patrick Bateman, extreme expressions of sadian violence become abstractions that are repeated again and again in the hope of reaching pure violence, which is ultimately unreachable, because it is an Idea that exists in primary nature and cannot be expressed directly. Violence is an Idea in language effected through the senses.

Deleuze believed that Sade's language contains the violence and excess of the world. Using a transcendent model, he showed how the personal violence and speech are repeated in an attempt to add up to the Idea of pure violence of the impersonal, primary nature of the sadist. Violence and excess are contained within language because language is an expression of the personal violence of the sadist. Language contains the signs and symptoms of sadism because it is a form of expression of the violence of sadism. In cinema, therefore, language that refers to a higher form of violence and acts directly on the senses performs with the same transcendent function. The five films discussed show, to a greater or lesser degree,

how many of the same functions hold true for cinema. They also demonstrate, however, how the various elements can be altered with a cinematic structure.

Disordered transgression shows how cinema creates movement between order and repetition of violence. But film also shows the delusion of transgression and how ultimately violence relies on language but falls back on limit and order. Where the problematic of Life is concerned violence lives on as an Idea that can be expressed or referred to through secondary nature. The Idea of pure violence is apprehended in secondary nature to be contained within language and the world. The instinct for mastery over an object or for violence exists as both an instinct for behaviour and as an Idea that dictates the sadistic superego. Cinema serves to reflect to Life the violence and excess of the world.

## CONCLUSION

As a novelist and writer in revolutionary France, the Marquis de Sade attracted many critics and persecutors alike. His particular style of writing was not to everyone's taste or liking. Many of his stories are long, distasteful and thin on plot and character development. But, leaving the critics aside, this is of less concern to philosophy than the particular model of literature and Life that his writing reveals. Sade's writing shows how the vitality and fervour of Life infect literature and, in turn, the style of writing enlivens the dynamic possibilities for the expression of Life. This is the basis on which the philosopher Gilles Deleuze conducted his analysis of Sade's writing. Sade, Deleuze believed, expressed the clinical symptoms of sadism through his particular style of writing. In doing so, he created a transcendent model where language and deed refer to a higher form of violence.

Deleuze's analysis of how the transcendent function of sadism operates is both based on, and a critique of, Freudian psychoanalysis and the original definition of sadism. Freud and psychoanalysis defined sadism as a perversion to do with sexuality and aggression. However, this overlooked the part that language and literature played in its original expression. Through philosophy, Deleuze redefined sadism and asserted that language was the original means of expression of the perversion. Concurrently with the study of Sade, Deleuze investigated and liberated the definition of masochism from psychoanalysis. He showed how Masoch's language contains the symptoms of masochism through a dialectical function of literature. The result of this dual study and the approach that considers both literary and medical features of writing became known as the Critical and the Clinical.

Deleuze's Critical and Clinical approach to literature was based on the idea that the literary values (the critical) peculiar to Sade and Masoch express and contain the symptoms (the clinical) of sadism and masochism. The clinical in the medical sense and the critical in the literary sense become two parts of a literary analysis that is about evaluating and not judging literature. Deleuze approached literature through philosophy and as a philosopher, not a critic. As such, he sought to evaluate a text based on the use to which it can be put, rather than judging it against a set of fixed, pre-existing criteria. By engaging with literature through philosophy his aim was to create concepts for philosophy. Deleuze believed that philosophy creates an affinity with literature through an exchange of mutual resonance. This means that philosophy interacts *with* literature and not *in* literature with the aim of creating concepts that provide a *use* for the text in an extra-textual space. Through philosophy, writing is enlarged in its use in the extra-textual space that prolongs the text.

By adopting the same philosophical approach to cinema as Deleuze took to writing, it then becomes possible to ask to what extent the transcendent function of literature applies to cinema. It has been shown how philosophy engages with cinema as it engages with literature and so it follows that the model of the transcendent function of violence holds good for cinema. Sadian violence operates in film through language and action in a transcendent function to refer to the Idea of pure violence. Cinema draws out the violence and excess of the world and reflects it to the world in a similar way as literature. Cinema shows that there is a great range of movement between transgression and taboo. It can engage in a play of limits to suggest a complex arrangement between transgression and taboo.

The next avenue of research is the obvious choice of studying Masoch's language with regard to literature and cinema. Deleuze believed that Masoch was a fellow symptomatologist of Sade who expressed the symptoms of masochism in his literary style. The Masoch project would look at how the dialectical function of his writing expresses masochistic violence. Again transposing the analysis to cinema could prove revealing when considering how the audience might be implicated in the expression of pleasure and pain.

Or alternatively, other avenues of research could focus more on the Critical and Clinical approach by examining other writers to discover other models of literature and Life. There may be many more similar or different models to the transcendent and dialectical models shown in Sade and Masoch's work. These models could have implications for the expression of pain, pleasure, violence, fetishism, homosexuality and subjectivity in language and Life. In all, there is a rich field of study in which to make an encounter between violence and its expression within language and the comparison between models for literature and cinema

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## APPENDIX I

### Internet Resources

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## APPENDIX II

### Video Resources

#### ***American Psycho*** (2000)

Directed by Mary Harron

Including: Christian Bale, Willem Dafoe, Reese Witherspoon, Samantha Mathis, Chloë Sevigny and Jared Leto

Length: 103 minutes

#### ***A Clockwork Orange*** (1971)

Directed by Stanley Kubrick

Including: Malcolm McDowell, Patrick Magee, Adrienne Corri and Aubrey Morris

Length: 137 minutes

#### ***Quills*** (2000)

Directed by Philip Kaufman

Including: Geoffrey Rush, Kate Winslet, Joaquin Phoenix and Michael Caine

Length: 124 mins

#### ***Sade*** (2000)

Directed by Benoît Jacquot

French with English subtitles

Including: Daniel Auteuil, Marianne Deniscourt, Jeanne Balibar, Isild Le Besco, Grégoire Colin and Jean-Pierre Cassel

Length: 100 minutes

#### ***Salo*** (1975)

Directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini

Italian with English subtitles

Including: Citti Sergio, Baragli Nino, Colli Tonino Delli, Morricone Ennio and Grimaldi Alberto

Length: 131 minutes