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**‘Spectacles of woe’: Sadean Readings  
of Contemporary European Drama**

**by**

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## Abstract

A distinctive feature of Sade's writings is the amount of theatricality involved in libertine activities. Every episode of libertinage is charged with an awareness of performativity on behalf of the characters, and a conscious employment of theatrical vocabulary on the author's behalf – e.g. the participants are often called *actors*, the events *drama*, and so on. At the same time, I have noticed how there are close resemblances in specific contemporary European drama to what constitutes Sadean intersubjectivity. These resemblances occur most specifically when the dramatic text is addressing a paradoxical concept, where paradox is defined as that which confronts common opinion or *doxa*.

The intention of this research is, first, to establish what comprises Sadean theatricality, and second, to examine how Sadean intersubjectivity is represented in selected dramatic texts. This objective calls for a comparative approach and a focus on meta-theatricality. I begin with exploring definitions of libertinage before and through Sade, with particular attention paid to performative and theatrical properties of libertinage. Next, I proceed to investigate, in each chapter, one aspect of libertine intersubjectivity in certain dramatic texts.

The main challenge in this research is to create a balanced dialogue between two analyses which occur simultaneously. Even so, I have found that studying Sadean intersubjectivity in parallel with contemporary drama facilitates the isolation of those elements within the Sadean text which are required for a paradigm to be formed. Similarly, observing contemporary dramatic texts through a Sadean lens offers a novel way of looking at concepts such as violence, apathy, and a self/other interaction that feeds on the desire for absolute autonomy. A dialectic conversation between the two narratives, I maintain, generates a better understanding of how Sade's paradoxical ethics is theatrically represented in our time.

## Introduction

### An Exhibition

In December 2014, The Musée d'Orsay hosted an exhibition titled 'Sade: *Attaquer le Soleil*' to commemorate the bicentenary of the death of the Marquis de Sade. The title translates into 'Sade: Attacking the Sun', which refers to an admission made by a libertine judge who describes the ultimate crime as the ability 'to attack the sun, to deprive the universe of it, or to use it to set the world ablaze'.<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, also an implication of Sade's assault on the Enlightenment. The exhibition featured an adult-rated promotional video, showing an entanglement of naked bodies in an orgiastic arrangement which coincidentally resembled one of the murder tableaux imagined in the HBO series, *Hannibal*. In both the drama series and the Orsay video, human bodies appear as material carefully arrayed in order to produce a spectacle for a detached gaze: one, that of God (in *Hannibal*), and the other, that of the museum visitor. The promo constituted the most Sadean element in the entire exhibition.

The purpose of the exhibition was to display works inspired, either directly or indirectly, by Sade's writings. The expected shock value of any art piece related to Sade was emphasised as both a selling point and a reason to consider the marquis's works of relevance to today's audience. Visitors entered the exhibition through a relatively dark and small foyer from whose ceiling monitors were suspended, showing excerpts from such films as Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, Luis Bunuel's *L'Age d'Or*, Michael Powel's *Peeing Tom*, and Victor Flemming's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. From then onward, mostly paintings and sculptures were on display, interspersed with occasional textual material. I distinctly recall an escalating sense of anticipation as I heard a repetitive, rather ominous thumping sound, which I immediately attributed to a probable performance piece located in one of the upcoming rooms. Nevertheless, on entering

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<sup>1</sup> The Marquis de Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom or The School of Libertinage*, trans. by Will McMorran and Thomas Wynn (London: Penguin, 2016), p. 154.

the room, I realised the throbbing sound originated from the metro underneath, and not an installation in the vein of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart'. The exhibition's most controversial room – before entering which the visitors were warned by a placard about potentially offensive material – held a collection of vintage sex toys, comic phenakistoscopes, and postcards, replicas of which could be bought at the museum's shop. That is not to say the exhibited pieces by themselves did not offer any confrontational interest; on the contrary, individually, most artworks (some of great canonical value) depicted intense instances of violence capable of provoking critical response from the observer. Even so, collectively, they lost a degree of their disruptive agency, similar to the bodies present in the promo arrangement: exposed before the eye of an apathetic beholder.

Sadean narrative does not intend to shock; hence readers looking for a haunted text will be disappointed. Sade warns the reader to refrain from reading his book if they find the scheme outlined in the prologue scandalising, since 'its execution will be even more so'.<sup>2</sup> Nor is it a strictly pornographic chronicle; Samuel Beckett relates the narrative's excessive 'obscenity of surface' to its inability to act as a pornographic text.<sup>3</sup> The main challenge in reading Sade is in the presence of a continuous struggle between affect and intellect. This binary conflict does not concern the reader alone, but also the characters who appear in Sade's works. In fact, the entire premise of Sadean discourse revolves around the constitution of autonomy on the basis of an absolute mastery of intellect over affect.<sup>4</sup> To Sade's libertines, acts of violence are no more than a collection of performances, viewed by a dispassionate spectator. This research aims to analyse the role of theatricality in the aestheticization of the other's suffering in Sade's oeuvres, and how this phenomenon is presented in contemporary dramatic texts.

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<sup>2</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> 'The obscenity of surface is indescribable,' Beckett writes in a letter to Thomas McGreevy on the subject of Sade's *120 Days*. 'Nothing could be less pornographical. It fills me with a kind of metaphysical ecstasy. The composition is extraordinary, as rigorous as Dante's' (*Letters* 2009: 607).

<sup>4</sup> As such, Sade's assault on the Enlightenment is carried out through an employment of the latter ideology's own rational instruments.



### A Concise Biography

Donatien Alphonse François, the Marquis de Sade, was born in 1740, to Jean-Baptiste François Joseph de Sade and Marie Eleonore de Maille de Carman. His father was a Versailles courtier and diplomat, and his mother a relative of the princely house of Condés.<sup>5</sup> The young marquis's ferocious temper disqualified him from being raised as a friend of the Prince de Conde, as his parents had intended for him, and so at the age of four he was sent to live with his grandmother. Later, aged seven, he was relocated to Provence to live with his scholarly uncle, Abbé Jacques François de Sade, dubbed the 'sybarite of Saumane', who was to influence the boy's education.<sup>6</sup> Sade's next source of instruction was the prestigious Jesuit school, Louis-le-Grand. 'Among the most distinctive traits of Jesuit schools in eighteenth-century France,' writes Francine du Plessix Gray in her biography of the marquis, 'were their emphasis on corporal punishment, their reputation for sodomy, and their tradition of staging lavish theatrical productions'.<sup>7</sup> Some Sade biographers attribute the prominence of all three traits in Sade's fiction to the school's influence. At fourteen, Sade joined the King's Light Cavalry, where he was praised for his bravado.<sup>8</sup> Following the Seven Years War, in 1763 his regiment was demobilised and he returned to Paris with a discharge letter that cited him as 'deranged, but extremely courageous'.<sup>9</sup> The same year, his father arranged his marriage to Renée-Pélagie de Montreuil, daughter of a wealthy bourgeois judge.<sup>10</sup> The couple were housed by the Montreuils for the first five years of their marriage, during which

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<sup>5</sup> Francine du Plessix Gray, *At Home with the Marquis de Sade*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), pp. 20-1.

<sup>6</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 49.

time Sade staged amateur theatricals with family members as performers.<sup>11</sup> The relationship between Sade and his wife was complex to say the least, and the couple had three children in their lifetime. A few months after the wedding, Sade rekindled his libertine activities, causing enough scandal in the following years to warrant the wrath of the law as well as his in-laws, specially his mother-in-law, the *Présidente de Montreuil*. Before providing a brief summary of his scandalous deeds and subsequent imprisonment, I will have a look at his passion for theatre.

Sade was very fond of the *Château de Lacoste*, a Provençal estate bequeathed to him by his father. When not travelling or evading the law, he spent most of his time at Lacoste, where he installed a private theatre that had ‘a stage space of some three hundred square feet and a hall that could seat an audience of sixty’.<sup>12</sup> Commenting on Sade’s ‘thespian ambitions’, Plessix Gray recounts several anecdotes where the Marquis acted in the capacity of an ‘ambulant theatre director’, travelling for miles with his family (who were also his actors) to the neighbouring communes in the Provence to perform dramatic pieces in local festivals. Plessix Gray ascribes the energy displayed by Sade in mounting these performances, while facing lack of time and resources, to the central role of theatre in his life. ‘What is more relevant,’ she explains, ‘is that the *mise-en-scène* of his sexual exploits... suggest that Sade was continually *onstage*, if only for his own voyeuristic delight’.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Sade’s greatest ambition seems to have been for him to become a respectable dramatist.<sup>14</sup> Sade critics often regard the fact that he became an author as a consequence of his imprisonment. The energy and focus he used in composing his prison writings attests to this fact.

Up until 1772, the marquis was arrested a number of times for criminal activities pertaining to mistreatment of prostitutes and blasphemy. In June 1772,

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<sup>11</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 89.

<sup>13</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 120.

<sup>14</sup> After the French Revolution, he joined the Society of Authors and declared himself a writer by profession. His dramas were moral and conventional compared to his prose pieces.

Sade was accused of poisoning and sodomy after an orgiastic episode in Marseilles where he administered Spanish Fly to the women he had asked to accompany him. Following the conviction, he fled to Venice with his sister-in-law, Anne-Prospère. He was subsequently arrested on December 8th in Savoy and sent to the Fortress of Miolans, in adherence to a *lettre de cachet* acquired by his mother-in-law for his imprisonment. He escaped in April 1773 and returned to Lacoste. This episode marked a long-lasting and consequential estrangement and animosity with the Montreuil. Complaints of further misdeeds arose in the following years, with the marquis continually dodging arrest. Finally, in January 1777, on entering Paris to visit his allegedly dying mother, he was apprehended and sent to the chateau of Vincennes.<sup>15</sup> Sade remained incarcerated in Vincennes until February 1784, when he was transferred to Bastille. He finished his final draft of *The 120 Days of Sodom* in Bastille, and *Justine* was also completed in the same prison. Ten days before the sack of Bastille, on July 4th 1789, he was transferred to the Charenton mental asylum on account of being an unruly prisoner who incited the crowds to assault the prison. He was released from Charenton in April 1790, after the National Assembly abolished the authority of all *lettres de cachet*.

Freed from prison, Sade tried to visit his wife, who had been pensioned in a convent, a practice normal for the day. She refused to see him, however, and filed for divorce. Other than his eldest son, he did not see much of his family from that point onward. Sade – now known as Citizen Sade – was politically active. He lived in one of the most radical sections of post-Revolutionary Paris, *section des Piques*, where he later became a president for a short period of time. While he was free, Sade continued writing plays which were mostly doomed to obscurity. His political writings, on the other hand, which he referred to as ‘civic productions’, were so popular among his colleagues that copies were often sent to the other districts of Paris and, on occasion, to the entire constituency of the French army.<sup>16</sup> Sade’s

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<sup>15</sup> In June 1778 his appeal of the verdicts of sodomy and poisoning was successful, but he remained imprisoned by force of the *lettre de cachet* obtained by his mother-in-law.

<sup>16</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 316.

political career was not to last, however. Ironically, he proved to be too compassionate to make a good Republican. He made himself unpopular by protesting against what he considered inhuman edicts, and openly objected to some of Robespierre's proposals. Moreover, his clandestinely published novel, *Justine*, played a role in his being considered a dangerous man.<sup>17</sup> In 1793, he was arrested once more, this time on political as well as immoral charges.

During his second term of imprisonment, Sade published other novels such as *Aline et Valcour*, and illicitly published *Philosophy in the Boudoir*. He was released eventually, but again arrested in 1801 for writing immoral novels and was sent to the Saint-Pélagie prison without trial. After a period of being moved from prison to prison, he was transferred to the Charenton asylum. Sade's Charenton stay proved somewhat fortuitous for him as he got along pretty well with the asylum's director, Abbe Coulmier. 'Coulmier had long been engrossed by the therapeutic potential of theatrical performance,' explains Plessix Gray. 'Moreover, this interest was shared by Charenton's chief physician, Dr Gastaldy, a man of Provençal origin who had considerable sympathy for Sade'.<sup>18</sup> In collaboration with Coulmier, Sade staged several plays at Charenton. He took on a variety of roles in these stagings, from ushering to repairing costumes to playing master of ceremonies. The plays were so well-liked that prominent, fashionable personages came all the way from Paris to watch the inmates perform. Not everyone approved of this method of curing madness, however. In 1813, the government ordered Coulmier to close the Charenton theatre.<sup>19</sup> Sade died in his sleep in 1814, aged 74.

### **Sade's Modern Relevance**

In December 1791, Sade wrote the following lines to his lawyer, Gaufridy, about his sentiments regarding his political activities and writings:

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<sup>17</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 347.

<sup>18</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 392.

<sup>19</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 410.

For me as a man of letters, the obligation to write daily, at times for one side, at times in favour of another, creates a mobility of opinion that informs my entire way of thinking.<sup>20</sup>

As Sade himself admits, this ‘mobility of opinion’ is key to many aspects of his writings. Not only do they abound in polemic dialogues that never seem to reach a conclusion and kept being repeated, Sade’s writings tend to elude categorisation. Moreover, extended prison sentences, without trial or any notion of when freedom would be granted, developed an acute sense of paranoia in the marquis which resonates in his letters to his wife and to his valet.<sup>21</sup> Lack of control, in the marquis’s case, lead to an insatiable desire for control. The same propensity to have power over everything is present in all of Sade’s libertines, who are distinct in their imaginative excesses and ruthless cruelty from the gentler, less cynical philanderers present in 18th-century novels. The horror that is entrenched in the works of the marquis is not of the gothic variety – which he himself affirms in an essay on his reflections upon novels – but rather a psychological horror which is modern in the sense that it differentiates his works from those of his contemporaries. The psychological aspect of Sade’s works contributed to the increased interest of 20th-century philosophers and psychologists in his writings. Plessix Gray considers Sade’s view of the human psyche quite novel and revolutionary for his time:

He was aware that dual forces of Eros and Thanatos, as Freud would later call them, coexist in self-love as well as in the love of others and that our impulse to self-destruction can be as powerful as our instinct of self-preservation.<sup>22</sup>

Another reason for a modern interest in the marquis is his investigation of materialist and rationalist philosophies, which he evaluates to the extreme through the activities and reasoning of his libertines. This rational view to pure materialism

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<sup>20</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 318.

<sup>21</sup> In many of these letters he interprets the numbers mentioned (e.g. number of candles his wife has sent him) as illicit hints on the length of his prison sentence.

<sup>22</sup> Plessix Gray, p. 385.

in an egotistic society translates well to late 20th century and early 21st century. Pasolini's *Salò* is an excellent example of the applicability of Sade's paradigm of phlegmatic violence to the WWII era. Recently, in Berlin, Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* was adapted into a play the setting of which was a mega-supermarket wherein all manners of atrocity such as cannibalism and rape occurs against the backdrop of rows of groceries and other types of merchandise. The materialistic aspect of Sade's works is particularly provocative in that it represents materialism in a context of human intersubjectivity, where empathy is replaced by the physical and psychological consumption of the other, who is at the same time force-fed with an alternative narrative that facilitates the individual's submission to a corrupt system. One critical aspect of this materialism is the relationship between the subject and the other-as-machine. The digital age has arguably augmented the possibility of the formation of a relationship between man and machine which could not exist before.<sup>23</sup> Ethical questions surrounding the relationship between the human and the inhuman are among subjects that can be explored in Sade's writings, particularly since they feature a subversive transformation of the human into the inhuman when no ethical considerations are made.

Moreover, the 'safety' of private libertine utopias resembles to some degree the digital space in their surreal possibility of absolute subjectivity and autonomy, in offering a freedom to exist beyond need for a substantial and qualitative connection with the human other. Liberty is an important component in Sadean practices, in which the participants are divided into the master population and the slave population. The greater one's freedom is in a Sadean space, the greater is one's autonomy, which itself is realised in a physical and mental capacity to set others into motion. This moving of the other is taken to the extreme when it transpires into the deconstruction of the other. What generally dictates the direction of this movement is paradox, or that which goes against *doxa* or common sense, in

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<sup>23</sup> Sade's aesthetically driven mechanisation of the other comes close to online socialisation in early 21st century. Lynne Hall likens sex with robots to online interpersonal encounters, where the 'dangers of intimate engagement, such as disease or unpleasant encounters' are avoided (Hall 2016: 130). In a Sadean context, this 'danger' extends to the absorption of the self by the other.

a Barthesian sense. Hence, Sadean practices often follow certain scenarios that are antithesis to social ethics and norms without being necessarily progressive or conducive towards bettering human life. The significance of these scenarios, the necessity of their existence and the fact that they need to be performed in public, in addition to the previously mentioned desire for control, altogether create a theatrical framework that is reflected in the Sadean libertine's activities.

### **Research Topic and Methodology**

The questions I have raised in the present research concern issues some of which were also prominent in the Orsay exhibition, consisting of: what is considered to be *Sadean*? How does one exhibit or perform the *Sadean*? What makes Sade's works worth analysing in a theatrical sense? In answer to these enquiries, my research topic is concerned with the nature of Sadean subjectivity as represented in a theatrical framework. Subjectivity is a key concept in this context, since the Sadean space – and to that extent, anti-ethics – is very much reliant on a solipsistic worldview. The inherent paranoia underlying a Sadean attitude plays a significant role in introducing theatricality into the discourse; the reason being, while pathological exhibitionism in itself is deemed desirable by the libertine, it needs to be under strict control and in accordance with a traumatic scenario which is carefully directed by the self.

My thesis also explores the means through which a theatrical tendency separates the Sadean libertine from the libertines who have preceded or followed them. Due to the centrality of the libertine character to Sadean studies, I have presented the libertine as the main focus of my research. It is the libertine's subjectivity that I examine in my thesis, and not Sade's, the reason being that Sade's libertines offer a far more concentrated picture of a Sadean subject than Sade himself does, due to the very utopian-theatrical nature of the stage upon which his libertines appear. As for choice of wording, I have decided to keep the term *libertine* instead of finding a modern equivalent, since the root of the term is associated with liberty, a pivotal notion when it comes to observing Sadean subjectivity.

Apart from his obsession with theatre, Sade was an avid reader of a variety of texts whose views did not necessarily match each other. From among these, the writing of French philosopher, La Mettrie, provides a clue to Sade's interest in materialist philosophy. Sade had read Thomas More's *Utopia* and quotes passages from it in his works. Moreover, his interest in maintaining a polemical dialogue, even within his own narrative, allows Sade's works to be interpreted as distinctly parodic (Rousseau's philosophy has been parodied, for example). Indeed, parody is an important element of Sadean practices which seek to invert and subvert canonical sensibility. His choice of pornography as a vehicle for communication is of utmost importance in this respect, considering the historical usage of the genre in its satirical capacity.

Interest in Sade was revived in mid-nineteenth century by English poet and writer, Algernon Charles Swinburne, and later by French poet, Charles Baudelaire. Sade's significance increased after the WWII and unsurprisingly with the advent of a post-modern school of thought. Various philosophers, scholars, writers, and critics have written about Sade, notable among them: Roland Barthes, Maurice Blanchot, Simone de Beauvoir, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Susan Sontag, George Bataille, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Sade was an inspirational figure for the Surrealist movement, having been raised to prominence by their chief proponent, Guillaume Apollinaire. Psychoanalysis found the marquis of great interest as well, and his categorising of pathological desires have provided valuable case studies and inspired such practitioners as Jacques Lacan. In my research, I have made references to the analysis produced by the persons named above, and made an eclectic use of their various interpretations of what constitutes a Sadean paradigm.

My methodology consists of, first, examining the definition of Sadean theatricality, and second, exploring how this paradigm manifests in contemporary drama. The novelty of my methodology is reflected in the simultaneous implementation of these two tasks, through my examination of each Sadean characteristic in juxtaposition with one or two contemporary dramatic pieces in each chapter. My approach is essentially a dialogic reading which aims to study the



theatrical pattern in Sade's texts while at the same time a Sadean attribute is explored in a chosen theatrical piece. This methodology has not only enabled me to cast a fresh look at the textual material involved (both Sade's and the dramatic text), but also helped me create an intertextual discourse between said materials while preserving the agency of both texts. The result is that the research question is no longer only: why is Sadean subjectivity theatrical? But also: when does intersubjectivity become Sadean? How and to what effect?

A question that has surfaced during my research revolves around my choice of dramatic texts. How do I justify using some and not the others, since other than being written after WWII, the dramatic pieces seem to come from a variety of backgrounds? In answer to this question, I confirm that my choices by no means represent the only instances where Sadean theatricality and Sadean subjectivity appear in dramatic texts. In effect, by means of this research I am hoping to create an example for what can be more or less considered a Sadean reading. My choices of case studies have been partly influenced by my own preferences, and otherwise based on my discovery of certain Sadean patterns which were also present in the Orsay exhibition, or that have been mentioned in existing Sade scholarship. The dramatic pieces I have chosen are similar in that they invariably address matters of subjectivity, particularly when it comes to enquiring the role of violence and paranoiac tendencies in intersubjective formations. Since in most cases I have been examining Sadean theatricality within dramatic texts, the latter material tend to be meta-theatrical compositions.

### **Chapter Preview**

This research is divided into seven chapters. Among Sade's oeuvre I have mainly made reference to his four major works: *The 120 Days of Sodom, or the School of Libertinage* (written in 1785, first published in 1904); *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue* (1791); *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (1795); and *Juliette, or the Prosperity of Vice* (1797). For ease of reference, from this point onward I refer to these works as respectively: *120 Days*, *Justine*, *Philosophy*, and *Juliette*. My reason for choosing Sade's novels instead of his dramatic works is that his plays tend to shy away from

articulating a radical notion of libertinage. As Franco Tonelli argues, evil is portrayed as an autonomous force in Sade's novels, while his drama make use of evil in a didactic measure.<sup>24</sup>

**Chapter one** examines the meaning of the word *libertine*, and the practice of libertinage in the context of Restoration rakehood, Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses*, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The chapter also introduces the Sadean libertine, while establishing the differences and similarities between Sade's libertines and their predecessors. Throughout this chapter, libertinism has been observed in its relation to performance and theatre.

**Chapter two** is an exploration of the notion of self/other in the context of Sadean libetinage, and its interpretation as a master/slave or subject/object model, in relation to Beckett's *Not I*, with references to Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. Other than establishing the duality of the Sadean self (who never separate from the other), this chapter places an emphasis on the inherent ambiguity of the role of the woman in a Sadean context.

The study of gender relations in a Sadean space is continued throughout the research. Among the following chapters, chapters three and four are concerned with the genesis of the Sadean self, while the libertine's treatment of the other is the subject of chapters five and six.

**Chapter three** offers a take on the will to act in Sade, and its derivation from natural forces. The dramatic piece examined in this chapter is Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, in which meta-theatricality and lack of willpower are looked at as effects of the character's inability to diverge from a predestined scenario. Sadean autonomy, in this chapter, features as a conformation with predetermined theatricality and the attempt to direct said scenario.

**Chapter four** is a study of Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love* in accordance to the concept of Sadean apathy, with focus placed on motherhood in Sade. In this

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<sup>24</sup> Franco Tonelli, 'From Cruelty to Theatre: Antonin Artaud and the Marquis de Sade', *Comparative Drama*, 3.2 (1969), p. 79.

chapter, I investigate four sources of the Phaedra narrative, the other three being Ovid's, Seneca's, and Racine's renditions of the myth.

**Chapter five** examines the Sadean other as an animalised entity in Fernando Arrabal's *Garden of Delights*. This chapter analyses what separates the human from the animal in the view of the libertine, and the distinction between the libertine-animal and the victim-animal is brought to light.

**Chapter six** explores the mechanised Sadean other, as a manifestation of a quantitative other who can be processed numerically. The plays I look at in this chapter are Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* and Giuseppe Manfredi's *The Cuckoos*. The latter, for its incorporation of a Sadean orgiastic narrative upon which the machine runs, and the former, in respect to the *other* appraised as exchangeable matter.

And finally, **chapter seven** is a conclusion of the notion of Sadean subjectivity, observed as a spatial entity that exists at the same time in a utopia and a dystopia. The play I have selected for this chapter is Jean Genet's *The Balcony*, which provides a pertinent groundwork for studying revolutionary subversion in a socio-politico-erotic context.

## **Chapter 1: The Libertine before and with Sade**

To understand the role of theatricality in Sadean intersubjectivity, it is necessary to first examine the pivotal figure of the libertine subject. Philanderers as well as philosophers, Sadean libertines inadvertently use a discourse which includes equal measures of rationalisation and profanity. Sade's libertines feature in his writings as outsiders who continually seek to evolve their radical disposition. Since the direction of this revolutionary will to cultivate the self is rooted in the concept of libertinage before Sade, this chapter explores libertine subjectivity prior to its realisation by Sade, before presenting a study of the Sadean libertine in a theatrical context. It must be noted that Sade's libertines are not always men, and there are recurrent examples of female libertines in his novels. However, male libertines tend to surpass female libertines in numbers and rank – with occasional exceptions – which is why for the purpose of this research I will refer to the libertine character as a *he*, unless a particular female libertine is being mentioned. In the following sections, first the meaning of the word *libertine* will be addressed, followed by an examination of the Restoration rake, the French libertine, and Don Giovanni, concluded with an analysis of the Sadean libertine.

### **A Terminological Enquiry**

*What is libertinage?* When Catherine Cusset asks the question from Phillippe Sollers in an interview on the subject of libertinage, he replies: '[a] particular ease with the body that philosophically implies that one knows exactly how to say what one is doing with it'.<sup>25</sup> Sollers's description suggests not only an extensive knowledge of the body, but also the possession of an exhaustive lexical knowledge. This emphasis on critical as well as performative prowess sets the libertine character apart from the casual sensualist; a difference which manifests, as we shall

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<sup>25</sup> Phillippe Sollers, 'What is Libertinage?', *Yale French Studies*, 94 (1998), p. 200.

see, in the libertine's tendency towards an excessive proficiency which is almost encyclopaedic in nature.

*Libertine* is derived from the Latin root of *libertinus* which refers to '[a]n emancipated slave; a freedman'. The word *libertine* first appears in English language texts in the second half of the 16th century, when it is used to convey such meanings as: 'a free-thinker in religion; a nonconformist'; '[a] person (typically a man) who is not restrained by morality, esp. with regard to sexual relations'; '[f]ree or unrestrained in disposition, behaviour, or language'; and later, when applied to literary style or translation, the word comes to denote 'extremely free; loose'.<sup>26</sup> Hence in a historical context, the word *libertine* is used in two capacities, referring either to free-thinking scholars, or licentious individuals. The Early Modern era recognises libertinage as divided into philosophical and practical branches, representing either 'religious dissension' or 'epicurean libertinism'.<sup>27</sup> Among the word's various connotations, regardless of the context it is used in, some manner of freedom is often implied.<sup>28</sup> More specifically, a freedom which has been granted after an episode of bondage, or gained through rebelling against or dismissing established codes of conduct which were deemed to have a binding quality; an active or a reactive freedom, in a sense. Rather than suggesting a state of carelessness, libertine freedom implies an acute awareness of necessity and an endeavour to find mastery over said necessity. Liberty is achieved in this context not only after a bout of arbitrary indulgence that opposes inhibition, but as a result of the reflexive evaluation that accompanies any instance of excessive revelry. Sollers sees libertinage as a meta-discursive exercise, which at the same time closely associates the body with language.<sup>29</sup> In other words, without language there

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<sup>26</sup> 'Libertine', *OED Online*, <<http://0-www.oed.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/Entry/107892?redirectedFrom=libertine>> [accessed 17 September 2017].

<sup>27</sup> Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, 'Libertine and Libertinism: Polemic Uses of the Terms in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century English and Scottish Literature', *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 12:2 (2012), pp. 13-8.

<sup>28</sup> In a religious context, libertinism was often used to indicate Calvinists (Cavaillé 2012: 15). Proponents of Calvin's ideology, the Puritans are often seen as promoters of 'individual freedom' (Spurr 1998: 2).

<sup>29</sup> Sollers, p. 202.

is no libertinage. Care must be taken, however, not to prioritise the lexical over the physical, since libertine freedom depends on individual sovereignty based on the juxtaposition of the body and the word, the consequence of which is an embodiment of language in a manner from which pleasure can be drawn. In this sense, liberty becomes a question of boundless creativity, represented in libertine discourse in the multiplicity of choices in a performative sense and a lack of censorship in the lexical sense.

Roland Barthes describes ‘ultimate censorship’ not as an act pertaining to the suppression of information, but as intellectual compliance and a lack of curiosity, ‘in taking for nourishment only the received word of others, the repetitious matter of common opinion’. He explains:

The real instrument of censorship is not the police, it is the *endoxa*. Just as a language is better defined by what it obliges to be said (its obligatory rubrics) than by what it forbids to be said (its rhetoric rules), so social censorship is not found where speech is hindered, but where it is constrained.<sup>30</sup>

What Barthes is referring to is a complex species of censorship which can be practised by the individual upon the self, an act of self-censorship which may occur with or without the individual’s awareness. Censorship in this form transpires as an acceptance of the *endoxic* discourse, or in a reversal of Pink Floyd’s lyrics it can signify: an exchange of change for cold comfort.<sup>31</sup> Barthes recognises paradoxical invention – and ‘not provocation’ – as the definitive act against censorship. That is to say, in the case of the individual, to prevent self-censorship the *endoxic* discourse must be subverted. The result of this ‘revolutionary act’ is the creation of a radical, novelistic language.<sup>32</sup> Sade’s accomplishment, according to Barthes, was his ability to invent a contra-censorship narrative. Inventing a paradoxical discourse, one that

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<sup>30</sup> Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. by Richard Miller, (London: Cape, 1977), p. 126.

<sup>31</sup> The song referred to is ‘Wish you were here’, where the presumed addressee is asked whether they think they can exchange ‘cold comfort for change’.

<sup>32</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 126.

is in disaccord with common opinion, is only possible through radical aesthetic distortion; hence instead of a Schillerian beautiful soul, in Sade the reader is confronted by a subject whose ‘beauty’ is confirmed through an existing harmony between a duty and an inclination both of which insist upon upholding individual interest at the expense of the other.<sup>33</sup> ‘For Sade,’ writes Alan Corkhill, ‘following one’s natural impulses and drives (*Neigung*) was a duty in itself’.<sup>34</sup>

Paradoxical liberty, therefore, depends on the existence of an *endoxic* moral and aesthetic code from whose subjugation the libertine is expected to free himself. Sveltana Boym distinguishes between ‘liberation’ and ‘freedom’ by describing the latter as a ‘heterotopic’, creative force, while the former is described as destructive and ‘engaged in master-slave power struggle’.<sup>35</sup> With its dependence on a libertine/victim binary, libertinage comes close to Boym’s concept of ‘liberation’. The element of repetition, however, practised both in form and content in the course of Sade’s oeuvre, and recognised by Barthes as an aspect of his inventiveness, brings about a sense of ‘freedom’ in that an illusion of innovation is maintained. Libertine creativity is paradoxical precisely because it is carried out through an act of destruction. As such, libertine discourse and practice requires the pre-existence of a suppressive ethical system, which will then be successfully upturned. Thus, it is no surprise that the libertine figure finds such prominence in England during the Restoration period that follows an oppressive Puritan regime.

### **‘No protestations of modesty’: Restoration Rake and Paranoia as Performance**

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<sup>33</sup> Schiller sees ‘beauty of expression’ in a state that represents neither ‘absolute government of reason over sensuous nature’ or ‘the government of sensuous nature over the reason’, but in a state where ‘reason and the senses, duty and inclination, are in harmony’. The result, he writes, is a realisation of ‘the beauty of play’ (Schiller 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Alan Corkhill, ‘Kant, Sade and the libertine enlightenment’, *Libertine Enlightenment: Sex, Liberty and Licence in the Eighteenth Century*, eds by P. Cryle and L. O’Connell, (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> Sveltana Boym, *Another Freedom*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010), p. 16.

A notorious example of the Restoration rake is John Wilmot, the 2nd Earl of Rochester. Courtier and poet during the reign of Charles II, Rochester benefited from the king's continual friendship, interspersed with episodes of disfavour. Libertinage in late-seventeenth century was a performative lifestyle in a sense that it required the possession of certain attributes such as wit and the ability to charm, as well as an aptitude for scandalous behaviour that was expected to shock and delight the observer. Jeremy Webster describes Restoration libertinage in its capacity to display 'a reputed scepticism of public institutions combined with a need for public attention'.<sup>36</sup> Restoration rakes, Webster continues, were 'public performers of private pursuits'.<sup>37</sup> The court's acceptance of outrage as entertainment permitted Rochester and his fellow libertines to freely exercise their activities in public without fear of persecution.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, Rochester's persistent criticism of Charles II, and his excessive (oftentimes destructive) revelry, resulted in his exile from the court on more than one occasion. One such instance of exile led to Rochester's assuming the identity of the Italian mountebank, Dr Bendo. Rochester lived in the City of London for a while under that guise, until he was forgiven by an amused king and readmitted to the court. 'Rochester's dramatization of Bendo serves as a striking example of seventeenth-century libertine culture,' writes Kirk Combe, explaining how such an act represented a union of 'political and social critique with the sensuous experience of baroque theatricality'.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Laura Linker observes Rochester's characterisation of Dr Bendo as a parody of 'court culture', signifying at the same time 'libertinism's love of performance'.<sup>40</sup> The effect produced by Rochester's employment of parody is

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<sup>36</sup> Jeremy W. Webster, *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court; Politics, Drama, Sexuality*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Webster, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Webster, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Kirk Combe, 'Making Monkeys of Important Men: Performance Satire and Rochester's *Alexander Bendo's Brochure*', *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 12:2 (2012), p. 60. Combe identifies Dr Bendo's brochure, a prose piece written by Rochester, as an example of 'performance satire'.

<sup>40</sup> Laura Linker, *Dangerous women, libertine epicures, and the rise of sensibility, 1670-1730*, (Burlington: Ashgate, c2011), p. 3.



that libertine performance is no longer spatially confined to the court, even if the audience are still courtiers since the performance is conducted at the expense of common people and not for their amusement. Yet another extra-palatial venue for a performative representation of Restoration rakehood was the theatre, allowing for a further subversion of late-seventeenth-century ‘dominant discourses’.<sup>41</sup> Wilmot’s original demonstration of performativity of the self (or selves), as well as his reputation as an infamous libertine, resulted in his being selected as inspiration for contemporary playwrights such as George Etherege and Thomas Shadwell, who respectively portrayed him as Dorimant in *The Man of Mode* and Don John in *The Libertine*.

The most accurate expression of Restoration libertinage, I claim, is the portrait of Rochester crowning a monkey with a laurel wreath.<sup>42</sup> In this unique portrait, Rochester at once demonstrates his disregard for the traditional symbol of poetic excellence and the criteria according to which the accolade is rewarded, while subverting contemporary principles of portraiture.<sup>43</sup> Hence, two transgressions take place, in form and in content. The instrument used for realising these transgressions is Rochester’s fluid wit. Augustan England identified wit as ‘an inexhaustibility of thought and sentiment’ that is inspired by an active imagination,<sup>44</sup> a view which resembles Restoration opinion on the nature of wit. The Restoration rake was celebrated for his unrestricted wit and sexual performance,<sup>45</sup> traits deemed inseparable in the discourse of the era, promising ‘the kind of stylish confidence that turned outrage into amusement’.<sup>46</sup> With regard to the

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<sup>41</sup> Webster, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> *John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester*, circa 1665-1670, artist unknown.

<sup>43</sup> Rochester’s deliberate choice of using a portrait as a vehicle for subversion is quite significant since otherwise he could have chosen illustrative caricature.

<sup>44</sup> Endre Szécsényi, ‘Freedom and Sentiments: Wit and Humour in the Augustan Age’, *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)*, 13:1/2 (2007), p. 90.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Even antagonistic critics confirm the fusion of wit with libertinism and the intimate connection of sexual body and poetic gift’ writes James Grantham Turner (2007: 243). Though it must be noted that this glorification was not universal. For instance, the Tunbridge lampoon condemned both libertinage and Puritanism for suppressing free speech (Turner 2007: x).

<sup>46</sup> James Grantham Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics and Literary Culture, 1630-1685*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), p. 242.

choice of subject matter and the execution of his portrait, Rochester's wit is flexible in its exhibition of a critical sense of humour. Such *humidity* is indeed a token of an age that was witness to 'a universal liquefaction' of 'norms and boundaries', not only pertaining to the rules governing the body, but also literary conventions.<sup>47</sup>

The fluidity of Rochester's gaze allows him to arrange objects differently than how they are normally represented in portraiture; thus, a monkey replaces the poet, Rochester replaces the monarch appointing the poet laureate, and the scrap of paper in the monkey's hand indicates a poem. The operation is paradigmatic in form and suggests a revolution of roles that is structurally echoed in the following lines from Rochester's 'A Satyr against Reason and Mankind':

Were I (who to my cost already am  
One of those strange, prodigious creatures, man)  
A spirit free to choose, for my own share,  
What case of flesh and blood I pleased to wear,  
I'd be a dog, a monkey, or a bear,  
Or anything but that vain animal  
Who is so proud of being rational<sup>48</sup>

The poem above has been recognised to be highly indebted to 'the tradition of *le libertinage* generally'.<sup>49</sup> Apart from the sentiment of outrage that resonates throughout the verse, the interchangeability between a monkey, a dog, a bear and mankind strikes as a paranoiac measure of creativity, similar to the pictorial depictions seen in Salvador Dalí's *Invisible Sleeping Woman, Horse, Lion* (1930). Both Rochester's poem and Dalí's painting question stability of form through merging human and animal modes of existence. In a surrealistic context, paranoia is appreciated as the creative ability to associate delusions with the purpose of

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<sup>47</sup> Turner, p. ix.

<sup>48</sup> John Wilmot, 'A Satyr against Reason and Mankind', *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. by David M. Vieth, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2002), p. 94.

<sup>49</sup> *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. by David M. Vieth, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2002). p. 94.

constructing novel signifiers outside the sphere of iconic symbolism.<sup>50</sup> Objective reality is thus substituted by subjective super-reality, granting the artist a measure of deconstructive autonomy. Rochester likewise performs the act of subversion by bending moral and discursive frameworks, with the purpose of fashioning his own fluid scope of being.

Rochester's adoption of the character of Dr Bendo – a rather pertinent pseudonym in this case – can be interpreted as a phantasmagorical means of seeking liberation, taking into account phantasmagoria's function as a mode of presentation that 'opens up nonlinear potentialities of action and imagination' in order to reconcile the individual with his or her 'inner strangers'.<sup>51</sup> Boym does not recognise inner plurality as a 'threat to individual integrity', rather she sees it as an enabling factor that promotes free thinking.<sup>52</sup> Imagination is thus identified as the sole medium through which any notion of alterity can be conceived, allowing the individual to consider "what if" and not only "what is".<sup>53</sup> Rochester's quest for liberty echoes Boym's concept of freedom arrived at through an acceptance of ambiguity, nevertheless the fundamentally subversive nature of Rochester's performance demands a degree of destruction that renders any version of alterity temporary. A systematic destabilisation of identity may liberate the Restoration rake from *endoxic* codes of conduct; even so, he is left with the task of having to repeatedly construct a new identity for himself. The uncertainty produced in the wake of the rake's paranoiac enquiries jeopardises his quest for the creation of an authentic self, particularly when authenticity is procured at the expense of integrity. At the same time, the very fact that Restoration libertinage is a form of performance belies the existence of an *a priori* paradigm whose growing popularity poses a risk to the rake's alleged individualism. Hence outrage must follow outrage, in order for

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<sup>50</sup> Salvador Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí, as Told to André Parinaud*, trans. Harold J. Salemsom, (London: W. H. Allen, 1976), p. 142. Dalí describes his method of painting as 'the conquest of the irrational' and 'the systematic objectification of delirious associations', mirroring the workings of a paranoid mentality (Dalí 1976: 141-2).

<sup>51</sup> Boym, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> Boym, p. 26.

<sup>53</sup> Boym, p. 27.

a sense of liberation to be prolonged and continuous creativity to be maintained. To ensure that his performance retains its transgressive value,<sup>54</sup> the libertine must prove the paradoxical nature of his identity, in an imitation of – and alternate interpretation of – the last line of ‘A Satyr against Reason and Mankind’:

Man differs more from man, than man from beast<sup>55</sup>

Stephen Jeffreys aptly portrays the libertine desire for remaining undefinable in *The Libertine*, a play based on Rochester, the prologue of which begins with the following monologue addressed to the audience by John Wilmot:

Allow me to be frank at the commencement: you will not like me. No, I say you will not. The gentlemen will be envious and the ladies will be repelled. You will not like me now and you will not like me a good deal less as we go on.<sup>56</sup>

Having advised the audience about the dangers of a willingness on their part to sympathise with him, Wilmot – which is how I refer to the character in Jeffreys’s play so as to avoid confusion with his historical counterpart – concludes his speech by professing that he claims ‘no protestations of modesty’ and provides the spectators with a final warning: ‘I do not want you to like me’.<sup>57</sup> Apart from the in-ner-face quality of the warning, it serves to demonstrate the speaker’s refusal to accept any compromise. There is also an indication on the libertine’s behalf towards a propensity for remaining unknowable, since liking a character presupposes a prior, intimate knowledge of the character’s personality (though the reverse is not true). That the audience’s dislike is expected to increase as the play advances suggests, however, that the eponymous libertine does not wish to be disregarded altogether. What matters is that his actions remain outside *endoxic* intuition. Despite his

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<sup>54</sup> Reputation is a fundamental element of Restoration libertinage, especially since masculinity in that period of time was assessed in accordance to the individual’s social reputation (Stephanson 2).

<sup>55</sup> Wilmot, ‘Satyr’, p. 101.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen Jeffreys, *The Libertine*, (London: Nick Hern, 1994), p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Jeffreys, p. 3.

rebellious drive, the libertine ultimately desires to have others in his power,<sup>58</sup> which explains why Wilmot makes the following demand: ‘What I require is not your *affection* but your *attention*’.<sup>59</sup> Wilmot’s request for attention, rather than affection, reflects a Spinozian act of contemplation: ‘An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it’.<sup>60</sup> Since libertine discourse appeals to rationality (even if the logic is perverse), a rational gaze from the spectator is infinitely more welcome than a passionate gaze which might efface the desired distance. The requirement here is from the spectators to distance themselves from the character and transform their regard into a calculated dislike which indicates an acknowledgement of difference, thus confirming the libertine’s individualism. Moreover, the vulgar vernacular employed by Wilmot serves to create a paradoxical language, further setting him apart from the audience, in view of his immodesty. Thereby, Wilmot retains his polycephalic aspect and remains a man after his own paranoiac image(s).

Constant unknowability and multiplicity of character provides the libertine with a potent virility derived from an existence-in-motion in-between identities. Nonetheless, to perform this virile, fluid libertinage, the Restoration rake needs the attention of an audience against whose common sense he can unleash his paradoxical outrage. As the age of Restoration comes to a close, however, libertinage forgoes much of its theatricality, leading to a lessening of its radical ardour. Libertine performance henceforth relocates from the public to the private sphere.

### ***Les Liaisons dangereuses* and 18th- Century Libertinism: Vanity as Performance**

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<sup>58</sup> Linker, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Jeffreys, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed and trans. by Edwin Curley, (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 163.

The eighteenth century witnessed the libertine's entrance into the novelistic domain, where his pursuits became increasingly domestic. Novels of mostly French origin – for instance, Crébillon fils's *Strayings of the Heart and Mind* – present the reader with a strictly sensualist libertine,<sup>61</sup> while his appearance in sentimental novels such as Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* serves as a didactic lesson on the dangers of immorality. Most novels categorised as libertine literature, however, preserve the libertine's quest for autonomy, even if autonomy is achieved through covert seduction schemes rather than open outrage, and inside the bedroom rather than within the scope of the court or the theatre. This change of milieu, coinciding with the consumer's quantitative reduction from a theatre-going public to an individual reader, instils a sense of complicity into the act of perception. The reader is no longer distanced from the libertine by virtue of his corporeality, instead the reader is invited to share the libertine's thoughts and intimate pleasures, particularly whenever textual material is pornographic. Not all libertine novels demand the reader's affective engagement, however; some hold the ability to provoke the reader's attention, as Jeffreys's *Wilmot* would have put it.

Catherine Cusset divides libertinism into two categories:

The first, which we find mainly in Marivaux, Crébillon, and Fragonard, is a 'surprise' of the senses, or what Crébillon calls 'the moment': a point in time when circumstances suddenly make you oblivious to any other reality but physical pleasure. The second form of libertinage, to be found in Laclos and Sade, involves control over one's own instincts and feelings along with the manipulation of others.<sup>62</sup>

Cusset classifies these two aspects of libertinage as respectively *passive* and *active*, maintaining that the latter represents a logical conclusion of the former. Active libertinage is portrayed in Choderlos de Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons* through the

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<sup>61</sup> I borrow the term *sensualist* from the translation of Ihara Saikaku's novel *The Life of an Amorous Man*, where the protagonist is recognised as a sensualist for his tendency towards enjoying the pleasures of the moment after the Japanese *Ukiyo-e* frame of thought.

<sup>62</sup> Catherine Cusset, 'Editor's Preface: The Lesson of Libertinage', *Yale French Studies*, 94 (1998), p. 2.

desire for dominance erupting from letters exchanged between the Marquise de Merteuil and the Vicomte de Valmont.<sup>63</sup> The plot revolves around the sexual exploits of Valmont (a pleasure-seeking young aristocrat) and Merteuil (a young, wealthy widow with similar interests), and the entanglements that are formed between them and other characters in the interim, presented through a series of letters written by said individuals. The novel's epistolary format situates the reader in the position of a voyeur perusing private documents, an act that is replicated within the novel whenever the two libertines share with each other letters they have received from their paramours. Exhibiting one's conquests is the quintessence of the variety of libertinage Valmont and Merteuil partake in. Neither is satisfied by merely seducing the chosen target; instead, what they find most gratifying is to put their manipulative proficiency to display. Likewise, the active libertine's enduring agenda involves not only the accumulation of hedonistic delight in the boudoir, but also looking to garner calculated pleasure from specific circumstances such as untried manners of seduction or the erotic education of the uninitiated. The ultimate aim for libertines such as Merteuil and Valmont is the indulgence of their own vanity.

Vanity comprises the novel's fundamental theme. If outrage embodied Rochester's muse and functioned as a conduit for his performance of the self, the libertines of *Dangerous Liaisons* find performative inspiration in vanity. Cusset closely links the concept of libertinage to vanity, remarking how libertine literature exposes 'the role of our self-image in our acts'.<sup>64</sup> In this context, vanity does not denote futility, but an excessive, narcissistic regard for how one is perceived by others, as well as by oneself. Lenard Berlanstein considers vanity of 'supreme value' to the characters of libertine novels, whose main objective is to attain recognition from 'a knowing and often critical audience of peers'.<sup>65</sup> In that vein, a significant

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<sup>63</sup> A distinguishing element of *Dangerous Liaisons* is Laclos's inclusion of a non-stereotypical female libertine who unlike her female counterparts found in libertine literature – such as *Thérèse the Philosopher* – is neither an apprentice-libertine, nor an abbess or a prostitute.

<sup>64</sup> Cusset, 'Libertinage', pp. 7-9.

<sup>65</sup> Lenard R. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the Fin de Siècle*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001), p. 34. 'No

moment in the novel consists of the marquise acquainting the vicomte with the cause of his losing the love of a woman towards whom he has experienced a deep attachment:

Yes, Vicomte, you very much loved Madame de Tourvel, and you still do. You were madly in love with her, and yet since I amused myself to mock you, you bravely sacrificed her. You would have sacrificed thousands, before suffering an embarrassment. To what depths can vanity cast us! The wise man said it well, when he declared vanity an enemy of happiness.<sup>66</sup>

Valmont's inability to foster an empathic relationship is thus attributed to the prioritisation of his reputation as a libertine to any affective consideration. What Merteuil neglects to mention is her own excessive pride which contributes greatly to her vindictiveness and her eventual downfall. The opening scene of Stephen Frears's 1988 film adaptation of *Dangerous Liaisons* pictures the marquise and the vicomte each being prepared by their lady's maids and valets to make their public appearances. The film begins with the marquise gazing at her own image while seated before a vanity and it ends with her again sitting in front of a mirror, this time lamenting her loss of reputation as she frantically removes her make-up, signalling an end to her performance. This directorial decision hints at the specularity of libertine subjectivity in Laclos's narrative. Not only are Valmont and Merteuil 'mirror for the other's narcissism',<sup>67</sup> their pursuit of autonomy is highly dependent on a keen observation of the self in the midst of others. The result of this comprehensive observation is that the libertine gains an enhanced consciousness concerning the rubrics of social interactions and the psychology of taking comfort in illusions.<sup>68</sup> Paradoxical liberation hence surfaces in *Dangerous Liaisons* as an

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wonder,' writes Berlanstein, 'that the most common metaphor for Le Monde was the theater'.

<sup>66</sup> Choderlos de Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, trans. by P. W. K. Stone, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 209. My translation.

<sup>67</sup> Dianne Alstad, 'Les liaisons dangereuses: Hustlers and Hypocrites,' *Yale French Studies*, 40 (1968), p. 156.

<sup>68</sup> Alstad, p. 157.



exercise in self-mastery, stemming from acute self-awareness pitted against the perceived naivety of others.

With regards to self-mastery, Merteuil seems to be more adept than Valmont, who makes the mistake of falling in love. Or more correctly, according to the marquise, he makes the mistake of assuming he has fallen in love with his prey. Upon challenging Valmont to leave Madame de Tourvel, Merteuil instructs him to send the deserted lover a letter filled with various reasons – penned by the marquise herself – for ending the affair. Expressed with utmost sangfroid, the vicomte's pretexts invariably end with: '*ce n'est pas ma faute*'.<sup>69</sup> The instruction is meant to gauge Valmont's willingness to set libertine principals above all else. The content of the note is of import especially since the first excuse, as it were, mentions nature as the culprit behind the libertine's change of heart. Another line goes like this: 'if nature has not accorded men with consistency, while she has furnished women with obstinacy, it is not my fault'.<sup>70</sup> Merteuil hereby seeks to reconcile a capricious disposition with the Enlightenment's dispassionate discourse: if the self is performative, volatile, multifaceted, the justification lies in Nature. In effect, the marquise is reminding the vicomte of the rational worldview that accompanies libertine ethics, appealing to him to put an end to self-deception. In the meanwhile, she is proving her dominance over another libertine by inadvertently controlling his actions, in addition to offering a subversive critique of the Enlightenment by presenting herself as a woman who is by nature inconstant. In a remark about Crebillon *films*'s libertines, Thomas Kavanagh describes them as exhibiting 'a paranoid insistence on remaining the masters of every situation they choose to exploit'.<sup>71</sup> The same aptitude can be observed in the marquise who throughout the novel machinates the destruction of several bonds and reputations. In fact, Merteuil is the only character in the novel who remains *free* from interpersonal attachment, owing to her recognition of compromise as a threat to libertine autonomy. A paranoid rejection of social norms, according to Lacan, condemns 'the agency of

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<sup>69</sup> Laclos, p. 201. 'It is not my fault'.

<sup>70</sup> Laclos, p. 201. 'It is not my fault'.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas M. Kavanagh, 'The Libertine Moment', *Yale French Studies*, 94 (1998), p. 90.

the ego' to a fictional territory.<sup>72</sup> In which sense, libertine agency becomes self-referenced and to some extent solipsistic. I said earlier that the marquise *seems* to possess more self-mastery than the vicomte, since in the end she fails to prevent the unveiling of her performance when her letters are publicised following Valmont's demise.

The fragility of an autonomy founded upon vanity explains why Merteuil and Valmont crave control. The 'defining premise' of Laclos's novel, writes Kavanagh, concerns 'the complete subordination of the private to the public'.<sup>73</sup> In order to resist a public surveillance of the private space, both characters must conceal their libertine performance from society by means of yet another performance, this time in protestation of modesty. The strain of paranoia manifest in Valmont's and Merteuil's demeanour signifies an ability to manoeuvre between two modes of performance: the ethical (*endoxic*) and the anti-ethical (paradoxical). If the libertine's display of her or his achievements before other libertines is an instance of performative vanity, so is the manner of performance that is meant to conceal said feats. Dominique Hölzle attributes the 'construction of libertine ethos'<sup>74</sup> to either discursive or descriptive rhetorical techniques. Discursive ethos, Hölzle maintains, concerns itself with the speaker's reputation and rhetorical skill, while descriptive ethos is essentially an 'exercise in self-portraiture'.<sup>75</sup> A striking feature of libertine ethos is that it is built through a discursive procedure that entails repeated performances of self-portraiture. In other words, vanity, like outrage, requires continuous reinvention. *Dangerous Liaisons* in a sense illustrates libertine subjectivity as divided into several *tableaux vivants*, each representing a triumphant moment sequenced one after the other in accord with the choreographic designs of Merteuil and Valmont. Set in motion, the collection of these *tableaux vivants* represents a performance of vanity.

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<sup>72</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I', *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 2-3.

<sup>73</sup> Kavanagh, p. 95.

<sup>74</sup> In the sense of disposition and character, not custom.

<sup>75</sup> Dominique Hölzle, *Le Roman libertin au XVIIIe siècle une esthétique de la seduction*, *SVEC* 2012:05, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation 2012), p. 106.

Treating each instance of intersubjectivity as a *tableau vivant* has consequences, the most substantial of which is the fate of the participants who, other than the libertines themselves, are transformed into so many props. Insofar as the other can be regarded as an object of itemised attention, a manner of trans-physical command over the other is established. The like of such bureaucratic sovereignty can be seen in Don Giovanni's careful crafting of an inventory of his amorous encounters, the analysis of which is the subject of the following section.

### ***'Il catalogo è questo': Don Giovanni's Quest for a Libertine Constitution***

Don Juan has posed a continual interest as a subject in European literature of the past few centuries. He features notably in such dramatic works as Moliere's *Dom Juan*, Shadwell's *Don John*, and Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*, among others. This section focuses exclusively on Mozart/Da Ponte's operatic exploration of the character in *Don Giovanni*, with the purpose of analysing the concept of liberty as it appears in the opera and the genesis of Don Giovanni's catalogue. The main point of reference in this section has been the 2009 production of *Don Giovanni* in Rennes, for its singular portrayal of the characters to be observed in the following paragraphs.

Premiered in 1787 in Prague, *Don Giovanni* is one of Mozart's most frequently staged operas. The plot consists of the adventures and eventual demise of the libertine aristocrat, Don Giovanni. The opera commences with Leporello, valet to Don Giovanni, complaining about having to wait outside for his master while he indulges in seducing various women. Leporello's aria is interrupted when Don Giovanni hurries out of a house, followed by Donna Anna and later her father, the Commendatore. Don Giovanni engages in swordfight with the Commendatore and kills him before fleeing the scene with his valet. Donna Anna is comforted by her fiancé, Don Ottavio, for whom she had initially mistaken Don Giovanni; the couple vow to seek revenge for the Commendatore's murder. Following his escapade, Don Giovanni is confronted by a previous lover, Donna Elvira, who has come looking for him. To facilitate his master's escape, Leporello distracts Donna

Elvira by showing her an extensive list composed of the libertine's conquests. From then onwards, Don Giovanni proceeds to seduce a young peasant bride, Zerlina; however, his attempts are continually thwarted by Donna Elvira. At the end of Act I, Don Giovanni hosts a wedding banquet in his estate for Zerlina and her betrothed, Masetto. His plan to seduce the bride is frustrated by the intervention of Donna Elvira, Donna Anna, and Don Ottavio, who attend the party in masquerade. Act II begins with Don Giovanni quarrelling with Leporello who is tired of his master's dangerous exploits. Consoled by money, Leporello agrees to help Don Giovanni seduce Donna Elvira's maid. Disguised as his master, Leporello goes off with a tricked Donna Elvira, providing Don Giovanni, disguised as his servant, with an opportunity to serenade the maid. His efforts come to naught when Masetto, accompanied by a group of armed peasants, comes in search of him. Having beguiled the party by sending them in the wrong direction, Don Giovanni strikes Masetto and flees. He is reunited with Leporello in a cemetery, where they happen upon the statue of the Commendatore standing above his tomb. In jest, Don Giovanni instructs Leporello to invite the statue to dinner, and is surprised to hear the statue accepting the invitation. Later that evening, Don Giovanni is having dinner at his house, when he is visited first by Donna Elvira and later by the statue. The spectral Commendatore refuses to eat Don Giovanni's food and invites him instead to dine with him. Upon the libertine's acceptance of the invitation, the statue grips his hand and demands that he repents. Don Giovanni refuses to repent and is subsequently cast into hell. The surviving cast join one last time to rejoice the libertine's downfall.

The Rennes production of *Don Giovanni* is distinct in its depiction of the opera's last scene where everyone appear holding a bible in their hands, except for Leporello who is playing with Don Giovanni's catalogue as one would with an accordion. This gesture can be seen as an interpretation of the role of the list as a vehicle for the libertine's accumulation of anti-ethical continuity. The catalogue, compiled by Leporello, contains information about 'all the beauties' Don Giovanni has made love to, the numbers of which sums up to the following:

In Italy 640;  
 in Germany 231;  
 100 in France, and in Turkey 91;  
 but in Spain, there are already 1003!<sup>76</sup>

Leporello explains that his master is attracted to women of every class, age, and looks. Each woman, according to her physical appearance, is expected to act in a specific manner (the blondes are kind, for example), and serve a particular preference (in summer he likes the slender ones). As long as ‘she wears a skirt’, she is considered worthy of the chase.<sup>77</sup> Kierkegaard attaches a measure of importance to the number of women seduced by Don Giovanni in Spain, that is, 1003. The ‘oddness’ and the ‘accidental’ quality of this number suggests to Kierkegaard the incompleteness of the list and the fact that Don Giovanni’s quest is far from over.<sup>78</sup> Don Giovanni’s attachments, Kierkegaard maintains, exist in the moment,<sup>79</sup> and his life consists of ‘the sum of the moments’.<sup>80</sup> The catalogue thus separates Don Giovanni from the previous libertines mentioned so far in this chapter, in that his aim is no longer momentary enjoyment for its own sake or the maintenance of his reputation before his peers. Instead, Don Giovanni concerns himself with cataloguing each moment with the intention of achieving a sense of permanence that in turn enables him to establish a libertine constitution.<sup>81</sup> Since Don Giovanni desires the ‘common’ rather than the ‘uncommon’, that is to say he adores each and

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<sup>76</sup> Burton D. Fisher, *Mozart’s Da Ponte Operas [electronic resource]: the Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, Così Fan Tutte*, (Miami: Open Journeys, 2007), p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> Fisher, p. 16.

<sup>78</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, ‘The Immediate Stages of the Erotic or the Musical Erotic’, *Either/Or*, trans. by David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson, 2 vols. (New York: Anchor, 1959), I, p. 92.

<sup>79</sup> Kierkegaard, p. 93.

<sup>80</sup> Kierkegaard, p. 95. Positing that ‘[l]anguage involves reflection’, Kierkegaard considers the immediate to be musical, since articulating immediacy through an act that requires reflection is impossible (1959: 68-9). He deems Don Giovanni a musical entity, ‘daemonic’ in essence (1959: 91), an interpretation that endorses the significance of the *moment* in libertinage.

<sup>81</sup> Camus believes Don Giovanni’s operations represent ‘an ethic of quantity’, ascribing his habit of collecting to a will to reject regret and live in the present (*Sisyphus* 1975: 69).

every woman,<sup>82</sup> the principals of his constitution – rather than prescriptive – are encyclopaedic in quality, representing the laws of nature. The question here is that of freedom of not only choice, which is understood as availability of several options, but of acting in accordance to one's desires. Blanchot views the catalogue as a site where 'joyful desire recognizes itself in numbers',<sup>83</sup> and Don Giovanni as a man of possibility whose relationships revolve around 'power and possession'.<sup>84</sup> In this context, possession is not permanent, but signifies mastery over a moment of absolute freedom. The catalogue serves to measure Don Giovanni's liberty,<sup>85</sup> in the same sense that Rochester's liberty was measured by the outrage experienced by his audience, and Merteuil's and Valmont's liberty was measured through each other's specular appraisal.

In an aria<sup>86</sup> sung prior to Zerlina and Masetto's wedding celebration, Don Giovanni announces his objective of adding ten more women to his list before dawn's arrival. The banquet is therefore presumed to increase the libertine's freedom; even so, it produces the opposite effect. Upon their arrival in the vicinity of Don Giovanni's house, Donna Anna, Don Ottavio, and Donna Elvira are invited to join the feast, even though their masks render them unrecognisable to the host. Indeed, the appearance of masked guests must necessarily appeal to Don Giovanni's love of theatricality. Citing the importance of the *moment* in Mozart's opera, Peter Brook asserts that the role of Don Giovanni demands a singer who is also an able actor: 'What is needed is an actor with the ability to change, one who can live the character of Don Giovanni moment by moment'.<sup>87</sup> Conversely, Don Giovanni's changeability confirms the fact that he is a good actor himself, reflected

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<sup>82</sup> Kierkegaard, p. 96.

<sup>83</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. by Susan Hanson, (Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 1993), p. 188. Blanchot likens Don Giovanni to Sade's libertines in his partiality towards numerical repetition.

<sup>84</sup> Blanchot, *Infinite Conversation*, p. 189.

<sup>85</sup> For example, the greatest quantity of freedom enjoyed by Don Giovanni has been in Spain.

<sup>86</sup> *Fin ch'han dal vino*

<sup>87</sup> Jean Stein, 'A Conversation: Peter Brook on Mozart's *Don Giovanni*', *Grand Street* 66 (1998), p. 26.

in his experiencing each act of seduction as a performance, to be recorded in memory as a *tableau vivant*. The theatrical scope of *Don Giovanni* is played upon in the Rennes production by the director's choice of having all singers wear masks. Hence, in the ball scene the three guests are twice masked.<sup>88</sup> In a welcoming gesture, on the entrance of the masquerading guests, Don Giovanni sings:

*È aperto a tutti quanti,  
viva la libertà!*<sup>89</sup>

The trio join the host in repeatedly singing ‘*viva la libertà!*’. Charles Rosen maintains that the liberty mentioned in these lines cannot be overtly political, since otherwise the opera would have been banned. Nevertheless, considering the ‘martial rhythm’ of the accompanying music, as well as the temporal proximity of the opera’s premiere to the American and French revolutions, it can be presumed that the audience would have recognised ‘a subversive meaning’ in the passage.<sup>90</sup> Nonetheless, liberty as celebrated in the lines above by Don Giovanni is in nature individualistic.<sup>91</sup> If Don Giovanni declares that in his house freedom is to be shared by *tutti quanti*, it is only on the condition that everyone plays by the rules of the game and adheres to his philosophy of counting each moment’s significance on its own (musical) accord. Donna Elvira, Donna Anna, and Don Ottavio to some extent acknowledge the libertine codes of conduct by attending in masks; a compromise on their behalf, as they prepare themselves to perform multiple identities despite their hitherto moral objection to pretence. The spirit of complicity demonstrated by the banquet’s attendants occasions a pseudo-utopian atmosphere reflected also in the dance arrangements. Rosen explains how in the ball dances of the three different classes are presented in ‘complicated cross-rhythms’, which nevertheless

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<sup>88</sup> In the beginning of the Rennes adaptation of the opera, Don Giovanni is implied to have entered Donna Anna’s bedchamber wearing the mask depicting Don Ottavio. Later, when the real Don Ottavio attempts to console Donna Anna, she repeatedly removes Don Ottavio’s masks to ensure he is truly who he says he is.

<sup>89</sup> ‘The door is open to everyone, long live liberty!’

<sup>90</sup> Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*, (London: Faber, 1971), p. 94.

<sup>91</sup> Though it should be noted that in the years preceding the French Revolution sexual freedom had strong ‘political connotations’ (Rosen 1971: 323).

encompass a collective harmony.<sup>92</sup> The concurrence of the dances produces ‘a surreal temporal compression’,<sup>93</sup> which in turn leads to the distortion of social boundaries.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, Don Giovanni retains his role as the master of ceremony, as it were. As the only person with the will to desire incessantly, he has directive power over the others’ actions. During the dance in the Rennes production, Don Giovanni is placed in the middle of the stage, holding lengthy ribbons with which he controls the movements of the main guests, attached as they are to the other end of the ribbons. The resulting scene is a visualisation of the libertine’s dominance over the manner of intersubjectivity which is allowed in his ‘utopian’ domain.

One consequence of the trio’s masquerading is that it deprives them of any chronological substance with regards to the history of Don Giovanni interactions, transforming them into faceless matters for the libertine’s present enjoyment.<sup>95</sup> The situation is altered when, one by one, Donna Elvira, Don Ottavio, and Donna Anna remove their masks and reveal their identities. As individuals, each of these characters represent a threat to Don Giovanni’s autonomy. Donna Elvia’s pursuit of Don Giovanni, in particular, exemplifies an antithesis to libertine etiquette,<sup>96</sup> since she insists on chasing the same person, as opposed to the libertine aim of acquiring the same experience through a variety of persons. Throughout the opera, her quest for bondage serves to affirm Don Giovanni’s freedom.<sup>97</sup> Don Giovanni’s confrontations with Donna Elvira can be interpreted in the light of his endeavour to test the merits of his libertinage against her romantic aspirations. At the same time, his conduct towards her is also a form of education: first, he shows her the list, then he tricks her into exchanging the amorous discourse with Leporello, and lastly he

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<sup>92</sup> Rosen, p. 323.

<sup>93</sup> John A. Rice, *Antonio Salieri and Viennese Opera*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998), p. 473.

<sup>94</sup> Elisabeth Laurel Zeiss, ‘Permeable Boundaries in Mozart’s “Don Giovanni”’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 13:2 (2001), p. 117.

<sup>95</sup> The Rennes production renders gender identities ambiguous as well when Donna Anna’s mask is that of a man, while Don Ottavio’s depicts a woman.

<sup>96</sup> The literal meaning of the word *etiquette* is traced to a list of prescribed behaviour (*OED*).

<sup>97</sup> In libertine discourse there is no difference between *bonding* and *bondage*.



invites her to partake in his mode of existence. A decisive encounter between Donna Elvira and Don Giovanni occurs in the opera's fourteenth scene, when she intrudes on his dinner and entreats him to relinquish his iniquitous regimen. Don Giovanni responds by asking Donna Elvira to either join him at his table or leave him be,<sup>98</sup> before singing:

*Vivan le femmine, viva il buon vino, sostegno e gloria d'umanità!*

Comparing the above toast to the one Don Giovanni makes to liberty in the finale of the first act provides us with yet another clue as to the mode of liberty he favours. Donald Sutherland describes Don Giovanni's sentiments towards women as an 'appetite'.<sup>99</sup> '[W]omen for him are like a meal', likewise conjectures Peter Brook. 'The memory of a glass of wine does not help us to refuse another glass the following day'.<sup>100</sup> The consumptive nature of Don Giovanni's inter-activity heralds the introduction of a crucial dimension into libertine performance: the ephemerality of the object of attention. While Valmont and Merteuil invested on the existence of an abandoned victim as the cornerstone of their narcissistic fortresses, Don Giovanni's consignment of 'the conquered' to a list removes a necessity for their embodied existence. Hence the libertine comes one step closer to achieving independence through the objectification of the other, in this instance by converting the other into a digit. '*Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral,*'<sup>101</sup> declares Macheath in the Brecht/Weill *Die Dreigroschenoper*. In *Don Giovanni*, first comes food, then an immorality whose foundation is based on rules of consumption.

Aside from portraying Don Giovanni's digestive system of operation, eating comprises an important gesture in the opera. When the statue of the Commendatore enters Don Giovanni's house, he declines to eat the food on account that he now gains sustenance from celestial repasts. Don Giovanni likewise accepts the Commendatore's invitation to dinner, but his refusal to repent presupposes the fact that he will not be sharing the statue's meal. Drawing on his analysis of both

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<sup>98</sup> '*Lascia ch'io mangi. E se ti piace, mangia con me.*'

<sup>99</sup> Donald Sutherland, 'Don Giovanni', *Prairie Schooner*, 37:1 (1963), p. 83.

<sup>100</sup> Stein, p. 25.

<sup>101</sup> 'First comes food, then comes morality.'

Kantian and Sadean requirement of apathy in ethical regulation, Charles Ford describes Don Giovanni and the Commendatore as ‘negative and positive personifications of the same “apathetic” personality’.<sup>102</sup> It is no wonder then that neither is capable of persuading the other to change his ethical point of view. In a sense, *Don Giovanni* is a portrayal of failure. Within the timeline of the opera, Don Giovanni is never seen to have succeeded in having sexual intercourse with his target – Donna Anna fends him off, Zerlina escapes him, and his seduction of Donna Elvira’s maid is disrupted by Masetto. The catalogue remains the only entity through which Don Giovanni is able to perform his libertinage. With neither a Restoration public to witness his paradoxical activities, nor a peer to scale his achievements against, Don Giovanni is left with no immediate audience to perform for – except for Leporello, whose sole interest is in money and not the performance. The list’s existence, however, allows Don Giovanni to expect spectatorship from posterity.

Earlier in this section I argued that the catalogue is a device for measuring Don Giovanni’s liberty. In that view, performance becomes analogous to liberty in libertine discourse. With Sade, the concept of a libertine constitution founded on cataloguing as a methodology is refined and imagined *in extremis*. There is also a shift from performance appreciation to an awareness of theatricality. The next section of this chapter provides an analysis of this shift.

### **The Sadean Libertine: ‘*c’est celle des autres*’<sup>103</sup>**

In a letter to his wife from Vincennes prison, Sade writes:

My manner of thinking, so you say, cannot be approved. Do you suppose I care? A poor fool indeed is he who adopts a manner of thinking for others! My manner of thinking stems straight from my considered reflections: it holds with my existence, with the way I am made. It is not in my power to

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<sup>102</sup> Charles Ford, *Music, Sexuality and the Enlightenment in Mozart's Figaro, Don Giovanni and Così fan tutte*, (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 207.

<sup>103</sup> ‘It is that of others’, taken from Sade’s letter brought above.

alter it; and were it, I'd not do so. These manners of thinking you find fault with is my sole consolation in life; it alleviates all my sufferings in prison, it composes all my pleasures in the world outside; it is dearer to me than life itself. Not my manner of thinking but the manner of thinking of others has been the source of my unhappiness. [...] If then, as you tell me, they are willing to restore my liberty if I am willing to pay for it by the sacrifice of my principles or my tastes, we may bid one another an eternal adieu, for rather than part with those, I would sacrifice a thousand lives and a thousand liberties, if I had them.<sup>104</sup>

The passage above provides a pertinent point of departure for an exploration of libertinism as portrayed in Sade. Reflected in these lines are: a Rochesterian dedication to individualistic liberty exhibited in a lack of compromise; a deterministic will in the vein expressed by Merteuil and Valmont ('it is not my fault'); and the resistance to repentance demonstrated by Don Giovanni when confronted with the Commendatore's statue. Sadean libertinage, nevertheless, is rooted in stretching all philosophical and physical boundaries to their extremes. Durand, an intersex libertine in *Juliette*, defines libertinage as 'a sensual aberrance which supposes the discarding of all restraints, the supremest disdain for all prejudices, the total rejection of all religious notions, the profoundest aversion to all ethical imperatives'.<sup>105</sup> What stands out in these lines is the recurrent usage of superlatives that point towards the radical nature of Sade's style of libertinage.<sup>106</sup> If the Restoration rake had claim to no protestations of modesty, libertinism in Sade actively professes an unapologetic willingness to reveal an anti-social agenda. Moreover, a place where neither constraints nor morality exists can only find

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<sup>104</sup> Marquis de Sade, *Letters from Prison*, trans. by Richard Seaver, (London: Harvill, 2000), p. 327.

<sup>105</sup> Sade, Marquis de, *Juliette, or the Prosperity of Vice*, trans. by Austryn Wainhouse, (New York: Grove, 1968), p. 1115.

<sup>106</sup> Sade's writings are strewn with all manners of superlatives and adjectives that reflect extravagance. In a letter written in Bastille, he orders a diet containing an 'excellent soup', '[t]wo succulent and luscious breaded veal cutlets', and a 'mouthwatering half chicken' (Plessix Gray 1999: 234).

incarnation as a temporal and mutative alternative, where all codes of conduct are necessarily theatrical.

Sade makes the following remark about the characters that appear in *120 Days*:

But as there are many characters in action in a drama of this kind (notwithstanding the efforts we have made in this introduction to portray and describe them) we shall include a table containing the name and age of each actor, with a brief sketch of his likeness.<sup>107</sup>

*120 Days* is not a dramatic piece; as a literary work it evades categorisation into existing genres altogether. The closest I can come to describing the text formally is that it comprises a subjective encyclopaedia.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, Sade's consistent awareness of theatricality manifests itself in the quote above in his reference to the characters as actors, and in emphasising on his understanding of the events as dramatic. The latter attitude is also displayed by the four libertines around whose requirements the narrative of *120 Days* is shaped. The story occurs during the reign of Louis XIV and begins when the Duc de Blangis, his brother the Bishop of \*\*\*, the President de Curval (a judge), and Durcet (a financier) declare that they are bored with ordinary revels, and decide to organise a four-month orgy at the financier's impenetrable castle, Silling. Throughout these 120 days the libertines intend to indulge in every possible manner of 'unnatural' debauchery. In this regard, Sade explains:

Understand that any decent pleasures, or any prescribed by that beast you endlessly evoke without knowing and that you call Nature [...] shall be expressly excluded from this collection, and should you stumble across

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<sup>107</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 60.

<sup>108</sup> Subjective, since the work cannot be classified as simply an encyclopaedia of sexual deviations, given that the text is expected to produce some readerly pleasure. Sade explains his reason for presenting the '600 passions' as part of a frame story by claiming that to bring them 'one by one' would have been too monotonous (Sade 2016: 60). Sade's process of creating *120 Days* is at once paradigmatic (same scenario with minute changes) and syntagmatic (all scenarios are brought in succession).

them by chance it shall only be in cases where they shall be accompanied by some crimes, or tainted by some infamy.<sup>109</sup>

Victims are abducted from all over France and mercenaries are hired to prevent their escape. In order to ensure a systematic progression of events, the four libertines employ the services of four experienced prostitutes, each of whom is expected to narrate one hundred and fifty stories about various sexual deviations. From the simplest (voyeurism), to the most complex and criminal (murder), all reports are then simulated by the four libertines and their victims. The setting for these activities is a semi-circular room, with four niches constructed in the curved wall containing ottomans for each libertine to sit on. The victims and guards are dispersed throughout the room. Meanwhile, the storyteller is seated on a ‘throne’ placed in the middle of and against the flat wall:

[A] position which not only meant she was facing the four alcoves intended for her listeners but also, as the circle was small, ensured she was not too far from them, and indeed that they would not miss a word of her narration, for she was placed there like an actor on a stage and the listeners in the alcoves looked on as if from the stalls.<sup>110</sup>

‘In this theatre, everyone is actor and spectator,’ writes Barthes, describing the room as a space where mimesis and praxis converge.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, everyone is aware of the inevitability of performance, particularly the four libertines who view the whole enterprise as interactive entertainment. A similar propensity towards theatricality can be observed in *Justine* and *Juliette*, in separate episodes rather than as a holistic experience such as we see in *120 Days*. *Justine* tells the story of an orphaned young woman whose attempts at leading a virtuous life is repeatedly frustrated by the various libertines she meets during her arduous wanderings. A counterpart to *Justine*, *Juliette* is a narrative told by Justine’s sister, who chooses a life of vice and accumulates substantial wealth thereby. A closet drama, *Philosophy*

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<sup>109</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 59.

<sup>110</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 45.

<sup>111</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 146.

is an account of the schooling of Eugénie by the libertines Madame de Saint-Ange, and her brother Chevalier de Mirvel, and their friend Dolmancé.<sup>112</sup>

Tonelli argues that the variety of theatricality which appears in Sade's oeuvres prefigures Artaud's theatre of cruelty,<sup>113</sup> ascribing the similarity of their ideas on theatre to a belief that 'an intuitive knowledge of the beyond is achieved only in a supreme paroxysm where all the senses are exacerbated'.<sup>114</sup> This argument is in some ways valid, but not entirely so. Sade's strain of theatricality certainly echoes Artaud's demand for the existence of a theatre that 'upsets all our preconceptions'.<sup>115</sup> With the exception of a therapeutic intent, Artaud's cruel theatre seems complementary to the Sadean will to transcend beyond given limits,<sup>116</sup> as well as the paradoxical disposition of Sadean philosophy which seeks to upset *endoxic* ethics. Similarly, Artaud's invoking of surrealistic imagery from such painters as Grünewald and Hieronymus Bosch as 'a good enough idea of what a show can be'<sup>117</sup> anticipates to some degree the formally paranoiac humanoids that are crafted through the Sadean libertine's objectification of his victims. The polychromatic design of Artaud's theatre and its ritualistic physical arrangements<sup>118</sup> are equally comparable to the Sadean introduction of a participatory element into

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<sup>112</sup> While the libertines of the latter work do not explicitly invent theatrical situations, their frequent observations on the nature of libertinage has been of great relevance to this research.

<sup>113</sup> Tonelli, p. 83.

<sup>114</sup> Tonelli, p. 85.

<sup>115</sup> Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. by Victor Corti, (Surrey: Oneworld Classics, 2010), p. 60.

<sup>116</sup> Artaud seeks to construct theatre on the basis of a 'drastic action pushed to the limit' (2010: 60).

<sup>117</sup> Artaud, p. 62.

<sup>118</sup> Artaud outlines the 'show' as follows:

Every show will contain physical, objective elements perceptible to all. Shouts, groans, apparitions, surprise, dramatic moments of all kinds, the magic beauty of the costumes modelled on certain ritualistic patterns, brilliant lighting, vocal, incantational beauty, attractive harmonies, rare musical notes, object colours, the physical rhythm of the moves whose build and fall will be wedded to the beat of moves familiar to all, the tangible appearance of new, surprising objects, masks, puppet many feet high, abrupt lighting changes, the physical action of lighting stimulating heat and cold, and so on (2010: 66).

baroque theatre. Artaud illustrates his ideal auditorium as a ‘single, undivided locale’ where ‘[d]irect contact will be established between the audience and the show, between actors and audience’.<sup>119</sup> Silling’s semi-circular theatre, in this sense, serves as a structural example of an Artaudian stage.

Although cruelty, as embedded in Artaud’s notion of theatre, is a manifestation of ‘a kind of strict control and submission to necessity’,<sup>120</sup> what Artaud calls for is a jubilant celebration of collective submission to natural tendencies, rather than an individual will to exercise mastery over all and sundry as we see in Sade. Both Artaud and Sade consider cruelty as a force that designates the greatest degree of interaction possible between individuals; and yet, what Sade has in mind is not a Dionysian metamorphosis of suppressed pain into a collective will-to-motion, so much as a transgression of cruelty to the point where no amount of violence can be said to be cruel.<sup>121</sup>

At the conclusion of his first manifesto on Theatre of Cruelty, Artaud includes among the proposed productions:

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<sup>119</sup> Artaud, p. 68.

<sup>120</sup> Artaud, p. 73. In a letter to Jean Paulhan, Artaud describes his understanding of cruelty as ‘not sadistic or bloody, at least not exclusively so’. He continues: ‘From a mental viewpoint, cruelty means strictness, diligence, unrelenting decisiveness, irreversible and absolute determination’ (2010: 72).

<sup>121</sup> It should be noted that Artaud’s understanding of cruelty somewhat changes, or rather expands, after his confinement to various mental asylums. Artaud’s writings following his release from Rodez tend to reflect on cruelty as a form of forced normalisation imposed on the individual by society. In ‘Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society (1947)’, Artaud identifies this manner of institutionalisation as an ‘organized crime’ (1976: 483), and his appellation of psychiatrists as ‘erotomaniacs’ (1976: 484) who rely on nothing but language to control pain bring his notion of cruelty closer to that of Sade. For more information on Artaud’s treatment, his thoughts on electro-therapy and his creative output during his confinement, see Sylvère Lotringer, ‘The Art of the Crack Up’, *100 Years of Cruelty: Essays on Artaud*, ed. by Edward Scheer (Sydney: Power Publications, 2002), 175-200. For Artaud’s views on his disenchantment with life and his previous writings, see his letter to Peter Watson in Antonin Artaud, *Oeuvres Complètes XII* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 230-39.

One of the Marquis de Sade's tales, its eroticism transposed, allegorically represented and cloaked in the sense of a violent externalization of cruelty, masking the remainder.<sup>122</sup>

A production of this kind would be essentially anti-Sadean, since libertine discourse intentionally avoids allegory and any form of literary apparatus that veils or otherwise substitutes the discursively forbidden with *endoxic* parallels. Barthes identifies theatricalization as an operation necessary for the creation of a paradoxical language. He sees theatricalisation not in 'designing a setting for representation', rather in 'unlimiting the language'.<sup>123</sup> One such ultimate instance of aversion to censorship, manifest in an unlimiting of expression, is the presence of death on the Sadean stage. The death of the actor or the audience, explains Josette Féral, violates the 'law of reversibility', resulting in the termination of 'the alterity of theatrical space'; subsequently a shift occurs from theatricality to reality. That is to say, the theatrical illusion is dependent on the participants respecting a set of prescribed agreements.<sup>124</sup> A distinctive feature of Sadean theatre is the role of death in differentiating the subject from the object. Since death befalls only the victim, the latter's reality is in effect a spectacle in the libertine's eyes. Indeed, the victim's death is deliberately programmed and performed, and the greatest degree of theatricality is incorporated in the most gruesome of murders. Drawing on Geoffrey Gorer's observation that 'the sadist is acting out a play with an audience of one',<sup>125</sup> André Loiselle argues that as a performance, sadism relies on 'the willingness of the spectator to play along'.<sup>126</sup> A close observation of the Sadean narrative leads to the negation of this statement, however, since the libertine's audience is never a masochist other. The masochist, as such, does not feature in the Sadean sphere,

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<sup>122</sup> Artaud, p. 71.

<sup>123</sup> Barthes, p. 6.

<sup>124</sup> Josette Féral and Ronald P. Bermingham, 'Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language' *SubStance*, 31:2/3 (2002), p. 104.

<sup>125</sup> Geoffrey Gorer, *The Life and Ideas of the Marquis de Sade*, (London: Panther, 1964), p. 230.

<sup>126</sup> André Loiselle, 'Cinéma du Grand Guignol: Theatricality in the Horror Film', *Stages of Reality: Theatricality in Cinema*, ed. by André Loiselle and Jeremy Maron, (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2012), pp. 14-6.



since the sadist's ideal victim, as Deleuze points out, is not supposed to receive pleasure from pain: 'a genuine sadist could never tolerate a masochistic victim'.<sup>127</sup> None of the victims of Sadean libertines are ever shown to take pleasure in pain, for the very reason that enjoying pain is an attribute that contributes to the subject's agency in Sadean praxis.<sup>128</sup> As mentioned in the section on the Restoration rake, affective contact is seldom a libertine objective. On the other hand, theatricalisation of the victim's distress becomes a necessary means for acquiring absolute autonomy founded on paradox.

While Don Giovanni added his objects of desire to a list, the Sadean libertine crosses his victims off the list. Sade provides the following assessment about the characters of *120 Days* by the end of the four-month sojourn:

Slaughtered before 1 <sup>st</sup> March in the 1 <sup>st</sup> orgies . . . .	<u>10</u>
since 1 <sup>st</sup> March . . . . .	<u>20</u>
and those returning . . . . .	<u>16</u> people
Total	<u>46</u> <sup>129</sup>

Although this account is written by the author as a personal reference,<sup>130</sup> the same obsession with detail is perceptible in Sade's libertines who demonstrate an acute need to measure, itemise, and codify every aspect of their practices. John Phillips attributes Sade's 'manic use of numbers' to a regulatory need, as well as a strategy used for 'normalising the abnormal'.<sup>131</sup> In the same context, Joan Dejean describes *120 Days* as a 'memory theater'. Silling's 'two-dimensional' and 'combinatory' architecture, she maintains, serves the purpose of facilitating 'computation in the

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<sup>127</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*, (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 40.

<sup>128</sup> The libertines, on the other hand, frequently display masochistic tendencies.

<sup>129</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 396.

<sup>130</sup> *120 Days* is an unfinished work, hence the manuscript contains several meta-textual notes which provide great insight into the construction of the text as a whole.

<sup>131</sup> John Phillips, *Sade: The Libertine Novels*, (London: Pluto, 2001), p. 54.

creation of an all-inclusive, flawless system’ whereby it becomes possible to ‘recreate the perfect libertine discourse’.<sup>132</sup> In Sade, there is little trace of Rochester’s glorification of ambiguity. Instead, the Sadean libertine is a proponent of an alterity encased in a rigid edifice posing as the new normal. Whenever there is a tolerance of ambiguity in Sadean discourse, it appears as an instance of reversibility – of gender roles, for example – which is nevertheless thoroughly engineered by the libertine.

The Sadean libertine’s adamant will to control all aspects of expression leads to his evaluation of theatricality as a form of technology; theatre becomes a tool for testing the boundaries that separate imagination from reality. ‘[E]verything that deepens sensation belongs to the realm of libertine philosophy’ maintains Sollers,<sup>133</sup> identifying knowledge, in its capacity to deepen sensation, as a focal element of libertine ideology.<sup>134</sup> A theatrical framework is an optimal component in libertine practices, since it brings together visual, aural, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory sensations.<sup>135</sup> Note, for instance, the importance of auditory clarity in Silling’s amphitheatre as mentioned earlier. Lighting is of equal importance in Sadean theatre: ‘Four candles shall burn in each of the closets, and fifty in the [semi-circular] chamber’.<sup>136</sup> During the libertines’ assembly sessions nothing should remain out of sight. According to Barthes, embodiment in Sade corresponds to the effacement of individuality, since the body is seen ‘from a distance in the full light of the stage’.<sup>137</sup> I would argue that the distance referred to in Barthes’s statement is affective in quality, rather than geometric, since the victim’s body remains always at hand, consumable, and destructible.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Joan DeJean, *Literary Fortifications: Rousseau, Laclos, Sade*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), p. 317.

<sup>133</sup> Sollers, p. 204.

<sup>134</sup> Sollers, p. 205.

<sup>135</sup> Sade’s technological awareness is also depicted in a Bastille letter where he asks his wife to send him the ‘architectural plan for the new Théâtre des Italiens’ (Plessix Gray 1999: 234).

<sup>136</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 54.

<sup>137</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 128.

<sup>138</sup> Elena Russo describes the libertine as a detached observer who is capable of retaining an inner distance that allows him to see society as a theatrical illusion (1997: 388).

Peter Greenaway links the advent of privatised art – such as oil painting as opposed to a more public fresco – to an endeavour in producing a greater quantity of sexual representation in a higher definition:

You can imagine that, let's say, [when] Titian was painting a nude, it could conceivably have come out of his imagination, so it doesn't have to be an original naked person there. But as soon as you jump to photography, of course there has to be [a real person], so it comes close to you, the intimacy is greater. When you start moving those photographs to make cinema, that's the original nude [who] is moving. And now, [we have] the sort of manipulations which virtually [...] contain temperature and humidity on Second Life, and it gets closer and closer and closer.<sup>139</sup>

In view of the passage above, Sadean theatricality can be understood as an endeavour to deepen the libertine's experience of the moment by bringing him closer to the cite of action, even as the object of desire becomes increasingly impersonal and redundant – recall Don Giovanni's partiality towards the common over the unique. In his analysis of Sade's dramatic oeuvres, Thomas Wynn proposes that the 'ideal Sadean gaze' does not apply to spectatorship as a shared activity; rather, it belongs to a 'semi-private' setting where 'selfhood' is performed 'in solitude or before chosen company'.<sup>140</sup> Kavanagh takes this argument further to suggest that Sadean libertinism 'refuses even the possibility of an opposition between the private and public'.<sup>141</sup> These two views can be reconciled through the acknowledgment that within the semi-privacy of Sadean space there is no distinction between public and private. In this light, the pornographic nature of Sadean discourse can be seen as a radical culmination of the letters exchanged between Valmont and Merteuil. Immured in a secure castle, the four libertines of

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<sup>139</sup> Peter Greenaway, *Peter Greenaway on Goltzius & the Pelican Company* | BFI 2014, 2014, < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTOQoVknSpo> > [accessed 17 Sep 2017]

<sup>140</sup> Thomas Wynn, *Sade's Theatre: Pleasure, Vision, Masochism*, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2007), pp. 144, 161. Wynn brings the example of the *cabinet* (closet or any small private chamber) as an eighteenth-century equivalent for this 'semi-private space' (2007: 160-1).

<sup>141</sup> Kavanagh, p. 99.

*120 Days* are provided with an opportunity to not only act without restraint, but invent a dialogue that excludes any consideration for *endoxic* decorum;<sup>142</sup> Silling is a space of total freedom, so long as one is prepared to exhaust discursive and performative possibilities.<sup>143</sup>

Sadean theatricality is formulated through a radical combination of: Rochester's paradoxical performance of outrage; the narcissistic will-to-control exhibited by the libertines featured in *Dangerous Liaisons*; and Don Giovanni's contrivance of liberty as the cataloguing of a digital other. The libertine's paranoiac insistence on exercising directorial mastery over time, space, and the participants of his scenarios necessitates a theatrical stage, frequently enclosed in a quasi-utopian fortress. The presence of theatricality in Sadean narrative has the purpose of providing the libertine with a technical vehicle for constantly re-inventing and refining his autonomy. The following chapters offer an exploration of Sadean subjectivity and intersubjectivity in a theatrical context, in parallel with close readings of specific contemporary dramatic works.

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<sup>142</sup> Libertines are not often recognised as 'system builders' but system critics (Russo 1997: 384). Sade is an exception in this regard, seeing as Sadean criticism is in essence systematic. It is not building a system that Sade is interested in, per se, but the act of system-building itself, which explains why any reflection on theatricality in his works is about the potentials of theatre.

<sup>143</sup> Libertine creativity is formed on the assumption that 'nothing is that is not spoken' (Barthes 1977: 4).

**Chapter 2: The Sadean Self/Other Dialectic and Samuel Beckett's Not I**

A few minutes before *Not I*'s 2013 London performance, a representative of the Royal Court announced that, as requested by Samuel Beckett at the time of the play's premiere, all lights in the auditorium would be switched off, including health and safety signs. This was an exceptional gesture meant to reflect the venue's respect for the playwright's wishes. Absolute darkness contributed to an atmosphere of discomfort. I could feel the consistent nervous trembling of my neighbour's knees throughout the performance. I myself had to breathe deeply a couple of times in order to keep calm, and when the performance came to an end a mood of collective relief could be sensed. Alexander Gilmour of *Financial Times* describes his encounter with the staged play as follows:

It is impossible to follow intellectually. There is time – just – to hear the words, but not to process them. It is an abstract, visceral experience. Horrors lurk behind the language and the image of the disembodied mouth is ghastly. It looks like it has been sliced off and suspended in black air – it oscillates. The effect is hypnotic and semi-obscene.<sup>144</sup>

Reviews of the original production are not quite different in the impression they express regarding the spectator's experience. In December 1972, Edith Oliver of the *New Yorker* calls the content 'not a story', rather 'something' which 'comes through from a dementia that is compound of grief and confusion'.<sup>145</sup> A year later, Benedict Nightingale writes in the *New Statesman* that the play is 'unusually painful' to watch: 'tearing into you like a grappling iron and dragging you after it, with or

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<sup>144</sup> Alexander Gilmour, 'Not I, Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, Royal Court, London – review', *The Financial Times*, 23 May 2013, <[www.ft.com/content/cba2524c-c2c4-11e2-bbbd-00144feab7de](http://www.ft.com/content/cba2524c-c2c4-11e2-bbbd-00144feab7de)> [accessed 13 March 2017].

<sup>145</sup> Edith Oliver, 'Edith Oliver in "New Yorker"', *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 329.

without your leave'.<sup>146</sup> The sense of unease and helplessness, while shared by the audience, is also an integral element of the narrative of *Not I*. In this chapter, my focus will be on the concept of pain, not the audience's pain specifically, but the suffering experienced by the play's main – and sometimes only – character. Through an exploration of the female voice as an expression of pain in Sadean discourse, it is my intention to revisit the self/other divide in *Not I*. This juxtaposition, I expect, will in turn offer novel insight into the theatricality of the self/other formation in Sade's oeuvre. The first half of this chapter focuses primarily on Sade, in order to establish an understanding of the relation between women and cruelty in his writings, as well as the role of the female narrator. Afterward, I will examine how a similar pattern resurfaces in Beckett's *Not I*, and what happens to Mouth as a result.

### **Woman and Cruelty in Sade**

An analysis of the Sadean self as female might seem counterintuitive to begin with. Nevertheless, considering the central role of women in Sade's writing, and the fact that he chose female protagonists for his two most notorious novels,<sup>147</sup> renders this endeavour a necessity. Furthermore, a study of suffering requires an examination of what constitutes femaleness in Sade, given how women and pain are inseparable entities in the Sadean discourse. In *Justine*, the monk Clement, who is a resident of a fortified monastery much like a simpler version of the castle of Silling in *120 Days*, justifies his partiality for cruelty accordingly:

The pleasurable feeling is nothing more than a sort of vibration in our body produced by the impact on our sense brought about by the imagination aroused by the memory of a lubricious object, or by the presence of this object, or better still by irritation felt by this object of the kind that excites us the most. [...] Now, there is no more vivid sensation than pain. Its

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<sup>146</sup> Benedict Nightingale, 'Benedict Nightingale in "New Statesman"', *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 330.

<sup>147</sup> *Justine* and *Juliette*.

impressions are sure, they do not deceive like those of the pleasure that women constantly feign and which they practically never feel. Moreover, how much self-esteem must one need, how much youth, strength, and health, to be certain of producing in a woman that dubious and unsatisfactory impression of pleasure? The impression of pain, on the contrary, does not require the least thing. The more faults a man has, the older he is, the less lovable he is, the better he will succeed.<sup>148</sup>

Quite ironically, by virtue of the unspectacular quality of their pleasure, women are presumed to be theatrical objects who feign, rather than feel, pleasure. What is most striking in this passage – especially since it is being spoken by a self-styled cruel libertine – is that cruelty is partly ascribed to an innate sense of infirmity in the individual by whom it is exercised. The latter attribution gives rise to a paradox: if cruelty is best implemented by the physically ‘inferior’, and if in a Sadean universe women are considered to be an inferior species,<sup>149</sup> then in theory women should make better villains. And it seems that according to Sade women do make better vehicles for dispersing cruelty, provided they desire it strongly enough. In *The Sadeian Woman*, Angela Carter posits that Sade’s writing hosts ‘a museum of woman-monsters’.<sup>150</sup> Sade’s female libertines, Carter maintains, are crueller than their male counterparts since they are after revenge, concluding that ‘[a] free

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<sup>148</sup> Marquise de Sade, *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue*, trans. by John Phillips, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), pp. 140-1. In *Juliette*, the Minister Saint-Fond says more or less the same thing: ‘I’ve never cared much about seeing pleasure’s lineaments writ over a woman’s countenance. They’re too equivocal, too unsure; I prefer the signs of pain, which are more dependable by far’ (1968: 362).

<sup>149</sup> Almost all of Sade’s male libertines think of women as lesser beings, while female libertines with few exceptions view male libertines as their superiors. In *Justine*, The Count de Gernande, whose chief fetish is blood-letting his wife, describes woman as:

A puny creature, who is always inferior to man, infinitely less handsome than he, less ingenious, less wise, constituted in a disgusting fashion, entirely opposite to what may please a man, to what may delight him... [...] tyrannical if she is accorded rights, base and grovelling if she is in subjection, yet always false, always mean, always dangerous (2012: 177).

Gernande later justifies his maltreatment of his wife by brining examples from how women have always been oppressed in every civilisation.

<sup>150</sup> Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History*, (London: Virago, 1979), p. 26.

woman in an unfree society will be a monster'.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, Sade views a woman's cruelty in a markedly different light. For a male libertine exerting cruelty is a prerogative, an act as Natural as the wolf's devouring of the lamb.<sup>152</sup> A female libertine, on the other hand, chooses to be cruel, in part to escape victimhood. Juliette's friend and mentor, Madame de Clairwil, instructs her to treat men as she is treated by them. Her advice to Juliette is to enjoy her lover's company while making 'the most profitable use of his moral and physical faculties'. She further warns Juliette that she should:

[N]ever for one instant forget that he belongs to an enemy sex, a sex bitterly at war with your own... that you ought never let pass an opportunity for avenging the insults women have endured at its hands, and which you yourself are every day on the eve of having to suffer.<sup>153</sup>

This is a rare moment where a libertine is readily admitting to the possibility of having to endure suffering at the hands of the other, since most libertines make it their agenda to actively deny any hints of vulnerability about their person. That is not to say women are not considered to be naturally cruel in Sade's writings. For instance, Juliette's cruelty is often said to spring from her natural disposition; nevertheless, cruelty is often presented as an offshoot of societal injustice when it comes to the female sex.

Simone de Beauvoir recognises cruelty as a 'complex' phenomenon in Sade. She writes that while cruelty features in Sade's writings as 'the extreme and immediate fulfilment of the instinct of coitus' and 'the jealous destruction of what cannot be greedily assimilated', it also suggests a foretaste for 'premeditation'.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Carter, p. 27. '[S]ince he is not a religious man but a political man,' writes Carter of Sade, 'he treats the facts of female sexuality not as a moral dilemma but as a political reality' (1979: 27).

<sup>152</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 143.

<sup>153</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 527. Earlier in the novel Clairwil admits the following to Juliette:  
I've nothing against giving a woman an occasional pummelling, but as for total material dissolution, you understand... I'd have to have a man. Only men rouse me to serious cruelties; I adore revenging my sex for the horrors men subject us to when those brutes have the upper hand (1968: 294-5).

<sup>154</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *Must we burn Sade?*, trans. by Annette Michelson, (London: Peter Nevill, 1953), p. 42.



Hence, through contemplating the act of cruelty that is being enacted before his eyes, the libertine achieves an understanding of the ‘consciousness-flesh unity’ which he is unable to apprehend and experience otherwise.<sup>155</sup> Sade identifies cruelty as not only the privilege of the strong as well as a pathological penchant,<sup>156</sup> but also as a sign of the libertine’s apathy towards the object of his desire. Absence of interpersonal dependence, Sade explains, leads to sadistic practices ‘if the individual in question is unfortunately made in such a way that he can get excited only by producing painful sensations in the object that serves him’.<sup>157</sup> By forcing a teatro-mechanical connection between himself and his victim, as opposed to reciprocal intersubjectivity, the libertine finds the means for constructing a sense of selfhood based on the contemplation of the other’s suffering and arriving at the conclusion that he is in fact a separate being. Since selfhood, constructed in this manner, is a vicarious experience, the cruel act needs to be repeated indefinitely. Furthermore, the complexity of cruelty in Sadean discourse is such that, since it ultimately leads to premeditation, the latter becomes more fundamental to the formation of libertine subjectivity than the cruel act itself. Which is why, I presume, Barthes pinpoints *sadism* as ‘only the coarse (vulgar) *contents* of the Sadian text’.<sup>158</sup> All the same, the sadistic element of Sade’s writings should not be overlooked, or there is a risk that the cruel content might be dismissed as arbitrary and its role in fostering discomfort devalued. There is also the fact that sadism does not only consist of corporeal abuse, but also a psychological exploitation that can be quite systematic and thus formally telling.

Cruelty is manifest in Sade’s writings in two interconnected modes: physical and verbal. When physical, cruelty is presented as rape, beating, whipping, and any other form of violence exacted upon the victim’s body. Verbal cruelty, in the form of offensive language or lengthy invectives against *endoxic* ethics, is shown to have the capacity to cause as much pain as physical cruelty. Justine is

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<sup>155</sup> Beauvoir, p. 43.

<sup>156</sup> Clement sees imagination, which features as an aspect of the psyche in Sade, as the result of ‘the type of mental organization with which Man is endowed’ (2012: 135).

<sup>157</sup> Sade, p. 139.

<sup>158</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 170.

frequently horrified by what she hears from the libertines and in many occasions she is brought to tears. ‘[B]e gone! I am not going to add the despair of hearing your horrible words to the torments you are inflicting on me,’ protests a girl Justine is imprisoned with in a libertine castle.<sup>159</sup> Verbal violence, moreover, is often accredited with more potency than physical violence, seeing as words have the power of condemning the victim to the same sufferings repeatedly without necessarily exhausting the victim’s body. In the same castle mentioned above, the libertine Roland informs Justine that he is about to bury her alive in a subterranean chamber full of corpses. She is lowered into the chamber by a rope but drawn out once Roland is sexually gratified by the sight of her anguish. Later, he promises her that she is to perish by that method when the day comes.<sup>160</sup> To torment Justine physically would have afforded Roland a one-time pleasure, while this manner of psychological abuse can occur over and over again, proving the economic superiority of words as instruments of torture. Adding the latter fact to the libertine fascination with stories, an intriguing conundrum is presented to the reader, since the main storytellers in Sade are women.

### **The Female Narrator**

As I briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, *120 Days* features a cast of four storytellers whose function is to amuse the four libertines by recounting sexual episodes that will be re-enacted shortly afterward. In a similar vein, Justine’s story is told by the eponymous character when, on route to be hanged, she happens to meet her sister (whose identity is unbeknownst to her) and proceeds to tell her story in order to explain why she is innocent of the crimes she has been accused of. On learning her sister’s identity, Juliette then begins to relate the events in her life and how she came to be a wealthy, titled woman by choosing the criminal path. Marcel Hénaff maintains that in Sade ‘women sustain and uphold the narrative and are its

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<sup>159</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 211.

<sup>160</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 215.

necessary social, economic, and therefore logical figure'.<sup>161</sup> Hénaff continues to observe how Sade only accords women with 'the privileged function of the narrative *I*' and gives them such titles as '*historienne*' or 'storyteller'.<sup>162</sup> It must be noted, nonetheless, that not all women are given the ability to speak in Sade. Indeed, what separates Justine from other Sadean victims is that not only is she capable of telling her story, but she tells it in her own – *endoxic* – prose. There is even an implication that she enjoys speaking, and not merely with her fellow inmates. When the Comte de Bressac asks Justine to inform him of her past, she explains: 'I skilfully recounted all of the misfortunes that has assailed me since I came into the world'.<sup>163</sup> On other occasions, she actively seeks to speak with the libertines who hold her prisoner. Although the author's intention in giving Justine the power of speech is mostly due to his desire to provide the loquacious libertines with an opportunity to challenge her beliefs, the fact remains that she can express her pain through means other than screams and tears.<sup>164</sup> She never fully achieves agency, however, since ironically her view of herself is entirely subjective and she cannot see herself through an objective lens – that is, within the context of the grotesquely cruel world she lives in.<sup>165</sup> Justine's situation is conspicuously similar to that of *Westworld*'s robot character, Dolores Abernathy, who in insisting to see the world from a specific point of view – 'Some people choose to see the ugliness in this world, the disarray. I choose to see the beauty'<sup>166</sup> – is stuck in an unending loop that prevents her from escaping a scenario of abuse.

Richard F. Mollica identifies storytelling as a means for facilitating the traumatised individual's transmittance from the past into the present and the future.

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<sup>161</sup> Marcel Hénaff, *Sade: The Invention of the Libertine Body*, trans. by Xavier Callahan, (Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 1999), p. 257. Hénaff uses this element of Sade's writings to refute claims regarding the misogynistic nature of his writings (1999: 258).

<sup>162</sup> Hénaff, *Invention of the Libertine Body*, p. 258.

<sup>163</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 50.

<sup>164</sup> An intriguing attribute of Justine's lamentations is that they are sometimes echoed by Sade in his prison letters, a fact which gives the heroine's discourse a sense of autobiographical urgency.

<sup>165</sup> Carter describes Justine as 'a selfless heroine of Rousseau in the egocentric and cruel world of Hobbes' (1979: 47).

<sup>166</sup> 'The Original', *Westworld*, written by Jonathan Nolan, Lisa Joy and Michael Crichton, dir. by Jonathan Nolan, (HBO, 2016).

At the same time, he argues, ‘the telling of the story makes room for the disturbing thought that the suffering of the past can and will extend into the future’, which in turn prompts victims to want to remain in the past, lodged solely within the safe confines of the trauma story. Mollica calls ‘prenarrative’ those stories which, secretive and repetitive, tend not to ‘actively reveal the storyteller’s interpretation of the traumatic events’.<sup>167</sup> Storytelling obtains an empowering aspect with the shift from prenarrative to narrative, whereby the story ceases to be about ‘powerlessness’, ‘shame and humiliation’, ‘being totally dominated by someone else’s reality’, or ‘being the victim of one’s own society’, but is developed around notions of ‘human dignity and virtue’ as well as ‘human prejudices and the weaknesses of co-called human civilizations’.<sup>168</sup> In view of Mollica’s theory, and considering Hénaff’s suggestion that ‘[e]ntry into libertinism coincides with entry into narration’,<sup>169</sup> Justine’s story can be recognised as a prenarrative as opposed to Juliette’s story which belongs to the category of narrative. The reason for this comparison is that the sisters go through more or less the same experiences, while their perspective regarding said experiences is radically different.

Throughout her ordeal Justine becomes her pain. ‘I existed only in the violence of pain,’ she describes an instant where she is being tortured, and her tormentors react by applauding the spectacle she is providing them with.<sup>170</sup> In another episode, she relates how the only proofs of her living are ‘my pain and my tears, my despair and my remorse’.<sup>171</sup> At the very end of the novel, once the heroine has been rescued from persecution by her *deus ex machina* of a sister<sup>172</sup> and is now free to enjoy a comfortable life, the reader is informed of Justine’s continued restlessness:

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<sup>167</sup> Richard F. Mollica, ‘The Trauma Story: The Psychiatric Care of Refugee Survivors of Violence and Torture’, *Post-Traumatic Therapy and Victims of Violence*, ed. by Frank Ochberg, Psychological Stress Series, (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 311.

<sup>168</sup> Mollica, p. 312.

<sup>169</sup> Hénaff, *Invention of the Libertine Body*, p. 372.

<sup>170</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 50.

<sup>171</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 110.

<sup>172</sup> Like Medea, Juliette has an uncanny ability to turn events to her own advantage, though she accomplishes this through her wealth and earthly connections rather than incantations. This concept will be explored further in chapter six.

For several days in a row, in the bosom of her protectors, she wept tears of happiness, when suddenly her mood changed without its being possible to work out why. She became sombre, anxious, and dreamy, occasionally crying in the midst of her friends without herself being able to explain the reasons for her anguish. [...] nothing could calm her.<sup>173</sup>

Justine's end is (sur)realised through her being struck by lightning. If the passage above is viewed as a description of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome, the implication is that Justine's storytelling has not produced a remedial effect. And why should it, when by relating her story she is seldom met with understanding unless by those who are in a similarly perilous situation? As such, Justine's prenarrative is a failed attempt at effecting an intersubjectivity which cannot exist between her and the libertine characters. Justine's subconscious quest for a pain she does not enjoy – and it is a quest, since she insists on receiving kindness from merciless personages – in essence echoes Faust's request to Mephistopheles. When the latter promises the former wealth and material comfort, the doctor replies:

Have you not heard? – I do not ask for joy.  
I take the way of turmoil's bitterest gain,  
Of love-sick hate, of quickening bought with pain.  
My heart, from learning's tyranny set free,  
Shall no more such distress, but take its toll  
Of all the hazards of humanity.  
And nourish mortal sadness in my soul.  
I'll sound the height and depths that men can know,  
Their very souls shall be with mine entwined,  
I'll load my bosom with their weal and woe,  
And share with them the shipwreck of mankind.<sup>174</sup>

Juliette, in contrast, utilises pain as a stimulant. Not only does she learn to enjoy receiving and inflicting pain, she sees the story of her 'painful' encounters as

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<sup>173</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 262.

<sup>174</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust: Part One*, trans. by Philip Wayne, (London: Penguin, 1949), pp. 89-90.

an asset that will enable her to gain accomplices and wealth, much like the narrators of *120 Days*. While in Sadean discourse words can serve as agents of cruelty, they can also function as means through which mastery is gained over pain. ‘The victim is not *he or she who submits*,’ writes Barthes, ‘but *he or she who uses a certain language*’.<sup>175</sup> The difference between Justine’s and Juliette’s experiences is in how they use their imagination to shape their perceptions of what befalls them. Madame Delbène, Mother Superior of the convent where Juliette is being educated at the beginning of her narration, explains to her pupil how forgoing religious and social prejudices can be initially an uncomfortable act. She advises Juliette that by multiplying activities that at first seem painful she can overcome any moral inhibitions.<sup>176</sup> ‘I had a rigorous apprenticeship to undergo,’ recalls Juliette, ‘these often painful first steps were to complete the corruption of my morals’.<sup>177</sup> In a similar manner, Juliette learns to subdue her aversion to physical pain by measuring the financial advantages of suffering. ‘I no longer know in what part of my body the pain is worst,’ she remarks about an instance where she is brutalised by a client. Comparing her lot with that of her lamenting companions, she concludes: ‘I, prouder, of sterner stuff and more vindictive, I thought of nothing but material revenge’. The episode ends with her stealing a considerable sum from the client.<sup>178</sup> Later, when the Minister Saint-Fond asks her to literally kiss his behind, she justifies her compliance thus: ‘though my misgivings were not negligible, I vanquished them; it was to my interest to prove myself mettlesome’.<sup>179</sup> In the words of David Lean’s *Lawrence of Arabia*: ‘The trick, William Potter, is not minding that it hurts’.<sup>180</sup> Even though Juliette’s story is hardly an exposition of ‘human dignity and virtue’ as required by Mollica of a therapeutic narrative, it nevertheless contains an example of an objective outlook which can divest the narrator with a degree of autonomy in a fundamentally corrupt universe – and it certainly is not a testimony

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<sup>175</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 144.

<sup>176</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 18.

<sup>177</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 103.

<sup>178</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 198.

<sup>179</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 218.

<sup>180</sup> *Lawrence of Arabia*, written by Robert Bolt and Michael Wilson, dir. by David Lean, (Columbia, 1962).

to shame. I wrote before that Don Giovanni performs his libertinage through his catalogue; in the same sense, Juliette performs her mastery over pain through her narrative, just as Justine performs her victimhood through her prenarrative. Juliette's story, moreover, represents trauma theatricalised and narrated to an audience who, lacking in feelings of pity and empathy, appreciates the narrator's capacity to turn pain into pleasure. This capacity, other than verifying Juliette's advanced discursive faculties, establishes her as successful entertainer.

Hénaff advances the theory that in a Sadean sphere, a man cannot function as a storyteller, since storytelling requires that one has a story worth telling. 'For his story to be told,' writes Hénaff, 'a man would have to be put in the position of a woman: the position of having nothing and being forced to conquer all'.<sup>181</sup> Worth, in this sense, amounts to a libertine endeavour which consists of achieving liberty by breaking through *endoxic* bonds; since in Sade women tend to be less socially and financially secure, naturally their libertinage would make more lucrative material for a narrative. Given that initially Juliette has nothing in her possession but her body, writes Hénaff, the subject of her story is self-prostitution.<sup>182</sup> Hénaff further explains:

Juliette's body – Infinitely marketable, exchangeable, and enjoyable – is for that very reason distinguished by a mouth able to recount all the events that affect this body, and all the thoughts that run through it. [...] Her body – whose mouth, uttering what the body does, produces an absolutely performative speech – is completely coextensive with the narrative that produces this body<sup>183</sup>.

Whereas Justine exists through her pain, Juliette exists through her pleasure, which in turn is defined by her libertine client's pleasure. Consequently, both women share the same characteristic of identification with their story. Seeing as speech always precedes praxis in Sadean discourse, the effect of Juliette's narrative is patently

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<sup>181</sup> Hénaff, *Invention of the Libertine Body*, p. 269.

<sup>182</sup> Hénaff, *Invention of the Libertine Body*, p. 276.

<sup>183</sup> Hénaff, *Invention of the Libertine Body*, pp. 279-80.

visceral; she literally moves the listener by arousing him or her into action.<sup>184</sup> On the other hand, the sadistic content of the tales is tangibly disturbing. This somatic quality reminds me of the reviews written about Beckett's *Not I*, and how, as Benedict Nightingale puts it, the play is capable of 'tearing into you like a grappling iron and dragging you after it, with or without your leave'. Beckett himself is said to have conveyed to the actress Jessica Tandy his lack of concern about the play's 'intelligibility' to the audience, insisting rather that it affects 'the nerves of the audience, not its intellect'.<sup>185</sup> Which makes me wonder: what kind of narrator is Beckett's Mouth? Is she a Justine or a Juliette? Or perhaps a bit of both? If so, how?

### Mouth of the Narrator

*Not I* consists of a ten-to-fifteen minute monologue, spoken rapidly by Mouth who is represented on stage as a red mouth without a body. The only other character in the play is a silent Auditor who, dressed in a djellaba, stands at a side and makes occasional gestures of 'helpless compassion' at certain points of Mouth's narrative.<sup>186</sup> Scholarly analyses of the play are divided on the point of whether Mouth is a helpless or an empowered entity. Peter Gidal describes Mouth as a de-sexed and dehumanised figure, the like of which populate Beckett's later works.<sup>187</sup> In a contrary criticism, Kathleen O'Gorman sees Mouth as 'a sexualized female' whose likeness to a vagina suggests that she is 'hysterical, diminished, dismembered, powerless'.<sup>188</sup> O'Gorman posits that Mouth is '[o]bjectified and fetishized' due to her reduction to a body part, and because she is unable to return the Auditor's and the audience's aggressive gaze.<sup>189</sup> In both criticisms, Mouth's

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<sup>184</sup> In addition, Sade's many footnotes make suggestions that the reader should follow the examples provided by Juliette.

<sup>185</sup> Enoch Brater, 'The "I" in Beckett's *Not I*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 20:3 (1974), p. 200.

<sup>186</sup> Samuel Beckett, 'Not I', *The Complete Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett*, (London: Faber, 2006), p. 376.

<sup>187</sup> Peter Gidal, 'Beckett and Sexuality (Terribly Short Version)', *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1992), p. 187.

<sup>188</sup> Kathleen O'Gorman, "'so that people would stare": The Gaze and the Glance in Beckett's *Not I*', *Modern Language Studies*, 23:3 (1993), p. 33.

<sup>189</sup> O'Gorman, p. 37.



presence or absence of sexuality is believed to contribute to her vulnerability. Ann Wilson, while considering the compassionate Auditor as ‘an ideal audience’, perceives Mouth’s fragility in her refusal to narrate an autobiography, resulting in her story to become ‘the representation, rather than revelation, of the self’.<sup>190</sup> On the other hand, Julia Kristeva observes Mouth’s potential in the fact that her narrative generates ‘the most minute corruption of meaning in a world unflinching saturated with it’.<sup>191</sup> Stephen Thomson likewise refuses to see Mouth as an objectified being since she does not offer herself to the reader/spectator as a ‘patient, satisfyingly whole’ and ‘reassuring’ thing that all *good* objects are expected to be.<sup>192</sup>

What seems evident in the above analyses is that while Mouth’s sexuality or the lack thereof poses as a problematic phenomenon, her being given an opportunity to speak can induce a sense of puissance in the character. Moreover, Mouth’s speech is implied to be cruel in the sense that it works towards effecting confusion and discomfort. ‘With *Not I*,’ writes Mary Catanzano, ‘Beckett dared to write a play of short staccatos whose language does violent things’.<sup>193</sup> Catanzano’s interpretation of the ‘realm’ portrayed in *Not I* as a space where ‘there are no absolute limitations, only linguistic variations’<sup>194</sup> gives the play a Sadean angle. Like Justine and Juliette, Mouth *is* her narrative. That is, her narrative embodies her subjectivity, and the extra-personal nature of her existence is yet another means for explaining the nomination of the dramatic piece as *Not I*. As to whether she can be looked at as a portrayal of either sister in Sade’s novels, I believe she has a bit of both in her, or rather Mouth represents the transition from Justine to Juliette. Dina Sherzer describes Mouth as ‘a body taken over both by torment and by exhilaration’,

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<sup>190</sup> Anne Wilson, “‘Her Lips Moving’”: The Castrated Voice of *Not I*, *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1992), p. 193.

<sup>191</sup> Julia Kristeva, ‘The Father, Love, and Banishment’, *Samuel Beckett*, ed. by Jennifer Birkett and Kate Ince, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 254.

<sup>192</sup> Stephen Thomson, “‘A tangle of tatters’”: ghosts and the busy nothing in *Footfalls*, *Beckett and Nothing: Trying to Understand Beckett*, ed. by Daniela Caselli, (Manchester: U of Manchester P, 2012), p. 74.

<sup>193</sup> Mary Catanzano, ‘Recontextualizing the Self: The Voice as Subject in Beckett’s *Not I*, *South Central Review*, 7:1 (1990), p. 38.

<sup>194</sup> Catanzano, p. 39.

for whom ‘speaking is both a relief and a torment’.<sup>195</sup> Sherzer reasons that because of Mouth’s outsider status there is ‘no possibility of intersubjectivity’ between her and others.<sup>196</sup> I would argue, however, that through a painful effort which entails her learning to see herself as the other, as ‘she’, Mouth is looking to establish a theatrical intersubjectivity between herself and the listener – whether it be the Auditor or the audience. Theatrical in the sense that her pseudo-subjectivity is a temporal phenomenon since the space she occupies as an autonomous being is equal to the length of her performed speech. Mouth is midway in the process of constructing herself as a subject-self when we meet her: like Justine her prenarrative has not yet achieved the function of bringing her relief, and again like Justine she continues on a nomadic existence ‘walking all her days...’;<sup>197</sup> and yet like Juliette in order to survive she is striving to present herself in an objective light – ‘... what?.. who?.. no!.. she!.. SHE!..’<sup>198</sup> – while the energy and originality of her utterance have the power to move.

This movement, apart from engendering a strong reaction in the audience, is generated by Mouth’s force of utterance in an act of cruelty since it suggests the total elimination of the other/listener as one who is capable of showing compassion. ‘... so no love... spared that...’ Mouth speaks of her first interaction with the world, ‘... no love of any kind... at any subsequent stage...’.<sup>199</sup> Godelieve Mercken-Spaas speculates that unlike Rousseau, in Sade’s writings ‘[n]ot pity but cruelty characterizes the relationship between the Self and the Other’. Mercken-Spaas sees pity and cruelty as polar opposites in that while pity appeals to empathy – ‘an identification with the Other’ – cruelty signifies the individual’s inability or unwillingness to empathise:

Pity and cruelty, rather than being reversals of one and the same phenomenon, express a perception and consciousness of the Other as a

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<sup>195</sup> Dina Sherzer, ‘Portrait of a Woman: The Experience of Marginality in *Not I*’, *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1992), pp. 204-5.

<sup>196</sup> Sherzer, p. 203.

<sup>197</sup> Beckett, ‘Not I’, p. 380.

<sup>198</sup> Beckett, ‘Not I’, p. 382.

<sup>199</sup> Beckett, ‘Not I’, p. 376.

subject (pity) or a desire for the Other as an object (cruelty). Cruelty is the ongoing effort to avoid an identification.<sup>200</sup>

Moreover, to be able to show pity the individual must benefit from a degree of agency,<sup>201</sup> otherwise the prospect of the other as a subject may pose a threat to what can be described as a fragmented notion of the self.<sup>202</sup> The inhabitants of the world wherein Justine and Juliette are situated are under constant threat of a loss of agency.<sup>203</sup> The sisters are orphans with no financial security, and the libertines owing to their criminal tastes are ever aware of the possibility of exposure – they always live in garrisoned spaces. Similarly, Mouth has always been an outsider in her world; someone who ‘... practically speechless...’ has a hard time surviving a foray into a ‘... busy shopping centre...’ where she has to tolerate standing in the ‘... middle of the throng...’.<sup>204</sup> When characters have no pity on themselves or on others, they cannot imagine the other as a compassionate being, which is where Sadean imagination (otherwise extremely fertile) reaches its limits. The other is therefore banished into objecthood, becomes a ‘throng’, with the only possibility of intersubjectivity consisting in interactions that are based on cruelty. Hence, the Auditor’s helplessness, whose ability to show compassion is lessened throughout the play until by the fourth time he makes the gesture it is ‘scarcely perceptible’.<sup>205</sup>

In a letter written in 1974, Beckett attributes his creation of the Auditor to his observation of ‘Caravaggio’s *Decollation of St John* in Valetta Cathedral’. In this painting, it was allegedly the old woman who, onlooking the act of beheading with visible horror, served as inspiration for the Auditor.<sup>206</sup> On my visit to the Musée d’Orsay’s 2014 Sade exhibition, I noticed how Salome was one of the recurring themes explored in relation to the marquis’s writings. While Salome

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<sup>200</sup> Goselieve Mercken-Spaas, ‘Some Aspects of the Self and the Other in Rousseau and Sade’, *SubStance*, 6/7:20 (1978), p. 73.

<sup>201</sup> It is important to note that pity is shown, and hence spectacular, like how cruelty is realised in Sade.

<sup>202</sup> Blanchot describes cruelty as ‘the negation of the self, carried so far that it is transformed into a destructive explosion (*Lautréamont and Sade* 38).

<sup>204</sup> Beckett, Samuel. ‘Not I’, p. 379.

<sup>205</sup> Beckett, Samuel. ‘Not I’, p. 375.

<sup>206</sup> Knowlson, James and John Pilling. *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett*. London: Calder, 1979, p. 196.

herself is not present in the Caravaggio painting, what the old woman is looking at is in effect a realisation of Salome's diction. By announcing a death sentence for St John the Baptist, Salome declares her absolute authority through the transformation of the other into the ultimate object, that is, one which is inanimate, therefore 'patient' and 'reassuring', using Thomson's terminology. Oscar Wilde aptly illustrates the gradual processes of the prophet's objectification through Salome's paradigmatic construction and deconstruction of the prophet's identity by subjecting him to cosmetic ornamentation initially and later devaluation.<sup>207</sup> In Wilde's play, the death sentence is a Sadean consummation of what began as a wordplay, such as Salome's comparison of the prophet's mouth to red pomegranates and so on. The recovery of lost agency in this manner necessitates both victims and spectators. Without others to see her victory over Jokanaan, Salome's dominance is void of meaning for the reason that there can be no subjectivity without intersubjectivity. Michel Foucault maintains that '[p]ower is a way of acting upon the acting subject by virtue of their being capable of acting',<sup>208</sup> and as Jacques Ranciere suggests, there is no a priori opposition between 'viewing and acting'.<sup>209</sup> What happens in Sade is that the victim and the spectator are merged into a paralysed, yet impressionable (literally) entity, as if the severed head of Jokanaan can yet observe and weep. In *Not I*, narrative authority is taken a step further when dictator, victim, and spectator are summed up in a subject/object amalgamation – Beckett's removal of the Auditor from later performances is ultimately a sign of its redundancy.

In a Sadean sense, Mouth is a woman who can perceive the unsatisfying impression of her own pleasure: '... just as the odd time... in her life... when clearly meant to be having pleasure... she was in fact... having none... not the slightest...'.<sup>210</sup> At the same time, her existence is closely linked to suffering,

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<sup>207</sup> Aida Bahrami, 'Ekphrasis and the Art of Cosmetics in the Decadent Literature of Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, and Arthur Symons' (unpublished master's dissertation, University of Durham, 2011).

<sup>208</sup> Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, 8:4 (1982), p. 789.

<sup>209</sup> Jacques Ranciere, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott, (London: Verso, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>210</sup> Beckett, 'Not I', p. 377.

revealed in such moments when she is surprised by the acknowledgement that she might not be or have been suffering: ‘... as she suddenly realized... gradually realized... she was not suffering... imagine!.. not suffering!..’.<sup>211</sup> It is not in the content but in the formation of her narrative, nevertheless, that Mouth’s anguish is most audible. The most painful parts of Mouth’s speech are the moments when she is compelled to correct herself, signalled by a ‘...what?..’. Every *what* is an indication of her having forgotten to say something more, which she is then reminded to insert into her story. The reason being that Mouth’s transition from exhibit (object) to exhibitionist (subject/object) cannot take place unless she keeps no secrets either from herself or from her audience. Similar to Juliette’s relinquishing of her prejudices at the instruction of Delbène, Mouth’s mounting obsession with entering into a diction where everything is said – a ‘tout dire’ sphere<sup>212</sup> – is an agonising operation. The individual’s assumption of this diction is necessary as a proof of their status as a self-governing entity, since in a Sadean space, as Hénaff argues, saying nothing indicates lack of credibility. ‘All libertine violence is contained in the cynical provocation that bares the link between power and discourse’.<sup>213</sup> To a lesser degree, the importance of discursive potential is evident in *Les liaisons dangereuses* when Valmont takes charge of the love affair between Cécile Volanges and the Chevalier de Danceny by dictating their respective letters to each other. Valmont’s violation of the young couple’s intimacy is brought about by their naivety, in which case knowledge serves as a dividing factor between the master and the victim. Once everything is said, an encyclopaedic utterance is produced whereby subjective desire take on a vestige of objectivity, hence universality. For this to happen, however, the utterance must occur systematically. The lack of subconscious filtering in *Not I* has prompted Catanzano to liken the play to Artaud’s conception of ‘a theater without representation’.<sup>214</sup> At

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<sup>211</sup> Beckett, ‘Not I’, p. 377.

<sup>212</sup> Maurice Blanchot, ‘*L’insurrection, la folie d’écrire*’, *L’Entretien infini*, (Paris: Gallimard 1969), p. 341-2. Blanchot sees the will ‘to say all’ as the kernel of Sade’s philosophical discourse.

<sup>213</sup> Marcel Hénaff, ‘Naked Terror: Political Violence, Libertine Violence’, trans. by Lawrence R. Schehr, *SubStance*, 27:2 (1998), p. 12.

<sup>214</sup> Catanzano, p. 46.

the same time, as Gontarski argues, ‘Beckett’s attention to structure’ in *Not I* negates the idea that this is a Surrealist play.<sup>215</sup> The fact that *Not I* ushers a union between the subconscious and formal structure suggests the play’s Sadean scope. Consequently, the only manner through which Mouth can overcome the embarrassment over her sudden urge to spew out words is to learn how to say them: in the third person, and with as much detail as possible.

### **Invention of the Ambiguous Woman**

‘One is not born but becomes a woman,’ Beauvoir famously writes in *The Second Sex*.<sup>216</sup> Similarly, in Sade femaleness is an intricate structure that is defined through a series of stereotypical behavioural patterns. The four libertines of *120 Days* decree strict codes of conduct for every aspect of existence within the castle of Silling, including their own manner of verbal communication:

[A]s regards their tone, it shall always be at its most brutal, most severe and most imperious with the women and the little boys, but submissive, whorish, and depraved with the men, whom the friends, when playing the role of wives to these, must regard as their husbands.<sup>217</sup>

In the passage above, both women and men are presented as roles. It would be hasty, however, to conclude as Carter does that in a Sadean context ‘male means tyrannous and female means martyred, no matter what the official genders of the male and female beings are’.<sup>218</sup> Although both male and female libertines are capable of performing the role of either sex, for female libertines the assumption of the male sex is often charged with political significance, while male libertines indulge in sex-change roleplaying in order to satisfy a whim. When Juliette dons breeches, it is so that she can commit the crimes she has in mind with greater freedom. Following

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<sup>215</sup> S. E. Gontarski, ‘Beckett’s Voice Crying in the Wilderness, from *Kilcool* to *Not I*’, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 74:1 (1980), p. 47.

<sup>216</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (New York: Bantham, 1952), p. 249.

<sup>217</sup> Sade, Marquis de. *The 120 Days of Sodom or The School of Libertinage*. Translated by Will McMorran and Thomas Wynn. London: Penguin, 2016, p. 54.

<sup>218</sup> Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman: an exercise in cultural history*, p. 24.

Beauvoir's formula that women are made women, for Juliette to become a *man*, she must first undergo a deconstruction of her womanhood, which by Sadean criteria means she must become brutal, harsh, and imperious. The Bride from *Kill Bill* comes to mind, who claims: 'It's mercy, compassion and forgiveness I lack. Not rationality'.<sup>219</sup> In her study of women in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's writings, Sabine Wilke cites Gertrude Lenzer's argument that a male masochist's ideal 'is nothing other than a disguised man'<sup>220</sup> to draw attention to the phallic presence of '[t]he cruel woman'.<sup>221</sup> The same can be said of Sade's female libertines,<sup>222</sup> in also a Nietzschean sense, owing to their intellectual propensity. 'When a woman has scholarly inclinations there is usually something wrong with her sexuality,' writes Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*. 'Unfruitfulness itself disposes one to a certain masculinity of taste; for man is, if I may be allowed to say so, "the unfruitful animal"'.<sup>223</sup> It is no coincidence that in Sade libertine women are often 'unfruitful', or if they become a mother, like Juliette, it is only so that they can commit infanticide. The female libertine, writes Jane Gallop, is in effect 'liberated from motherhood'.<sup>224</sup> The consequence is that if a woman's feminine pleasure is considered to be deceptive, then her pleasure made masculine is no less theatrical in that to prove her enjoyment she needs to take on a specific role.

The undoing of the female, while not so graphic as its parallel in Sade, which includes the act of dismemberment itself, is visible in part in *Not I through Mouth's*

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<sup>219</sup> *Kill Bill: Volume 1*, written and dir. by Quentin Tarantino (Miramax, 2003).

<sup>220</sup> Gertrude Lenzer, 'On Masochism: A Contribution to the History of a Phantasy and Its Theory', *Signs*, 1:2 (1975), p. 313.

<sup>221</sup> Sabine Wilke, 'The Sexual Woman and Her Struggle for Subjectivity: Cruel Women in Sade, Sacher-Masoch, and Treut', *Women in German Yearbook*, 14 (1998), p. 252.

<sup>222</sup> In a footnote in *Juliette*, Sade writes that 'woman is simply man in an extraordinarily degraded form' (1968: 511), in which case it makes sense for him to make woman masculine in order to 'upgrade' her, a phenomenon that occurs frequently in comic books where powerful women such as Superwoman are depicted as feminised versions of their male counterparts.

<sup>223</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 101.

<sup>224</sup> Jane Gallop, 'Sade, mothers, and other women', *Sade and the Narrative of Transgression*, ed. David B. Allison, Mark S. Roberts and Allen S. Weiss, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), p. 98.

diminution to a pair of lips, a set of teeth, a tongue, and a voice. There are also implications that she is unfruitful, ‘... an old hag already...’,<sup>225</sup> or if she has had any offspring they are not significant enough to her identity for her narrative to make any mention of them. Her verbal discharge, moreover, has an anal quality since it is said to happen in the ‘... nearest lavatory...’.<sup>226</sup> Most palpably, however, Mouth seeks to relieve herself of her female persona by projecting her painful experiences upon a ‘she’ who is clearly ‘not I’. Even so, as I explained earlier in the chapter, projecting one’s pain on another for the purpose of gaining mastery over said pain means that the other becomes an indispensable component of the self. Subsequently, by attempting to forgo her femaleness, Mouth is forever condemned to acknowledge that she is at least to some extent a woman. Which explains the repetitiveness of her narrative, given that what she is after ultimately denotes an impossible quest. It is of import to note that Mouth’s story contains both screams – ‘... should she feel so inclined... scream... [*Screams.*] ...then listen... [*Silence.*] ...scream again... [*Screams again.*] ...’<sup>227</sup> – and streams of ejaculatory words as well as laughter – ‘... brought up as she had been to believe... with the other waifs... in a merciful... [*Brief laugh.*] ...God... [*Good laugh.*] ...’<sup>228</sup>. The Sadean victim is one who ‘chooses to scream’, Barthes maintains, concluding that: ‘if she ejaculates she is a libertine’.<sup>229</sup> It is perhaps too ascetic an assumption to claim the victim has the choice to scream; rather the other way around is true: it is the libertine who has the choice to laugh because he is cognizant of the very possibility of choosing. Likewise, Mouth does not have the ability to control her screaming, unless in the meta-discursive context of the narrative where she is speaking about the act of screaming. Her double position, in the sense that she is both the autonomous narrator and the story’s helpless character, reflects the Sadean phenomenon of reaching ‘the limits of sameness’ through a vehement insistence ‘that I am not the other’.<sup>230</sup> Lois Oppenheim recognises *Not I* as a text which hovers ‘between

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<sup>225</sup> Beckett, ‘Not I’, p. 380.

<sup>226</sup> Beckett, ‘Not I’, p. 382.

<sup>227</sup> Beckett, ‘Not I’, p. 378.

<sup>228</sup> Beckett, ‘Not I’, p. 377.

<sup>229</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 143.

<sup>230</sup> Sollers, p. 210.



anonymity and individuation', where the narrator 'alternatively loses herself within the universal structures of Being and identifies herself through the differentiation of her ego from all that it is not'.<sup>231</sup> Oppenheim sees Mouth as an entity that 'simultaneously appropriates two primary dimensions of lived experience',<sup>232</sup> reflected in an 'act of self-perception'.<sup>233</sup> In contrast, Brater proposes that by drawing an analogy between the Jungian concept of the infant's inability to differentiate between the self (I) and the other (not I), we can come to observe Mouth's 'disconnected psychological state'. This analogy, he states, becomes rather remarkable if the I in *Not I* is seen 'not as pronoun, but as Roman numeral'.<sup>234</sup> I am inclined to disagree with Oppenheim on her point regarding self-perception, since as Brater suggests, Mouth does not possess the self-knowledge that accompanies an ambi-scient point of view. While Brater considers the Auditor as the II of the play, however, I would argue that any duality or indeed multiplicity implied in the title is more likely a reflection of Mouth's kaleidoscopic identity.

Interestingly, Mouth's transition from Justine to Juliette is made complete in the film version of *Not I*. Linda Ben-Zvi posits that the TV production of the play excludes Mouth's reality by eliminating the suffering actor. Quoting Walter Benjamin, Ben-Zvi argues that the audience's 'identification with the camera' leads to the 'dehumanization of the actor'.<sup>235</sup> Apart from the audience's appropriation of the video recorder's gaze, another element that contributes to their lack empathy with the actor is the fact that they are no longer seated in a darkened auditorium but in a (hypothetically) more comfortable circumstances. While I cannot accept Ben-Zvi's suggestion that the pain which is evident in the play is transferred into a pain of 'embarrassment' on TV – 'the gigantic mouth trapped and naked, writhing before the indifferent perceiver' – I agree with her view of Mouth's television portrayal as

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<sup>231</sup> Lois Oppenheim, 'Female Subjectivity in *Not I* and *Rockaby*', *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Linda Ben-Zvi, (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1992), pp. 219-20.

<sup>232</sup> Oppenheim, p. 225.

<sup>233</sup> Oppenheim, p. 226.

<sup>234</sup> Brater, pp. 194-5.

<sup>235</sup> Linda Ben-Zvi, '*Not I*: Through a Tube Starkly', *Samuel Beckett*, ed. by Jennifer Birkett and Kate Ince, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 263.

‘more obviously a fragmented female body part’ that bears a closer resemblance to an object.<sup>236</sup> This objectivity, I maintain, is in part achieved through the fact that Mouth can now be reproduced in greater numbers with better quality. Hence she becomes commercialised, which in turn contributes to the ‘worth’ of the story. Rather aptly, on film Mouth seems more entertainingly comical, less of a tragic figure, unless her tragedy is seen in a Platonic light: a tale of suffering that nevertheless serves to entertain the spectator<sup>237</sup> – Sollers sees suffering as libertinism’s ‘most intimate resource’.<sup>238</sup> Ben-Zvi’s assertion, after Benjamin, that ‘the film version allows ‘a deepening of appreciation’’,<sup>239</sup> is not entirely incongruous with Mouth’s mass-mediated production. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the main goals of libertinage is the augmentation of sensations by bringing the self ever closer to the locale of the other’s suffering. Note that suffering still exists in Mouth’s story in the film production, with the difference that the narrator does not give the impression that she too is in pain.

The televised Mouth’s lack of suffering, while she speaks about someone else’s suffering, renders her more of a monster when juxtaposed with her comically enlarged organs of speech. The mesmerising redness of Mouth’s lips in close-up bring to mind the Mae West sofa designed by Salvador Dali: an accommodating and dazzling object of delight. These uncanny objects are monstrous both in proportion (the space they occupy) and their ability to maintain a continuous existence (their iconic lifespan). The significance of the monster-object’s existence for the libertine, who is constantly hyper-aware of the communicative orifice, ultimately results in the libertine’s own objectification. Indeed, Sade’s writings is populated by objects, rather than subjects. This materiality of the individual is represented in Sade partly through the plasticity of bodies. Nearing the end of her misadventures, Justine explains her treatment by the judge, who is to oversee her case regarding the crimes she has been falsely accused of, and his associates:

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<sup>236</sup> Ben-Zvi, p. 264.

<sup>237</sup> Ranciere, p. 3.

<sup>238</sup> Sollers, p. 210.

<sup>239</sup> Ben-Zvi, p. 265.

A brief respite followed these cruel orgies, and I was allowed to breathe for a few moments. I was black and blue, but what surprised me was that they healed my wounds in less time than they had taken to inflict them, and not the least trace of them remained. The orgies recommenced.<sup>240</sup>

The miraculous resilience of Justine's body makes her physical torment seem almost theatrical in its unreality – psychologically, she is still scarred of course. It also bestows a mechanical tone to the orgy, as if now as a repaired machine Justine can be reinserted into the orgiastic factory. Juliette also has an elastic flesh, and she makes occasional remarks about how her body has retained its original shape despite enduring years of whipping.<sup>241</sup> John Phillips writes of Sadean imagination that it has the effect of 'liberating man from the fixity of bodily identity'.<sup>242</sup> In the above examples, the body's identity is not only made plastically pliant, but there is a threat of an effacement of physical particularity altogether. In *Not I*, every time Mouth uses the word '...imagine!..', it is in order to mark an unexpected change in her narrative:

. . . no idea . . . what she was saying . . . imagine! . . . no idea what she was saying! . . . till she began trying to . . . delude herself . . . it was not hers at all . . . not her voice at all . . . and no doubt would have . . . vital she should . . . was on the point . . . after long efforts . . . when suddenly she felt . . . gradually she felt . . . her lips moving . . . imagine! . . . her lips moving! . . . as of course till then she had not . . . and not alone the lips . . . the cheeks . . . the jaws . . . the whole face . . . all those— . . . what? . . . the tongue? . . . yes . . . the tongue in the mouth . . . all those contortions without which . . . no speech possible . . .<sup>243</sup>

Mouth's corporeal identity is thus being continually overridden, reprogrammed even as a memory of an old event is replaced by a novel outlook on that memory.

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<sup>240</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 252.

<sup>241</sup> The humour with which these statements are made mark the author's acknowledgement of the theatricality of his creations.

<sup>242</sup> Phillips, p. 162.

<sup>243</sup> Beckett, 'Not I', p. 379.

The male libertine is no less objectified in Sade, not only in his insistence on reimagining his body – sometimes as a monster-object made up of a tangle of bodies<sup>244</sup> – but also through subjecting his own body to the same treatment as his victim is going through. An example of this is given in a remark by Justine who explains that libertines never go through a torture they have not inflicted on themselves: ‘If you ask him, will he admit to being cruel? He has done nothing that he does not himself endure’.<sup>245</sup>

All relations between individuals in a Sadean discourse can be defined in interobjective terms. The omnipresence of this web of interobjectivity by no means indicates a total loss of agency. Bruno Latour posits that ‘[c]omplex social interaction preceded humanity’,<sup>246</sup> by which hypothesis he extends interactive agency to the non-human. ‘Any time an interaction has temporal and spatial extension,’ he writes, ‘it is because one has shared it with non-humans’.<sup>247</sup> Thus Latour recognises objects as not mere ‘means’ but ‘mediators – just as all other actants are’.<sup>248</sup> In other words, a notion of the self cannot be reached at unless the object-as-other is taken into account; according to which logic, the solitary libertine is not entirely solitary even if he surrounds himself only by objects. The fact remains that no matter how disconnected he feels from his victims, even in objectification of the other the libertine is displaying a willingness to communicate. Latour sees the use of the symbolic (language, for example) as a structural fallacy when the aim is to introduce a hierarchy that would ensure a subject/object dialectic.<sup>249</sup> It is quite apt then that the main difference between the libertine object and the victim object is the power of speech. Similarly, it is of utmost import to the foundation of her agency when Mouth – again like Dolores Abernathy in *Westworld* – begins to realise that the dictating voice she has been hearing in her head does not belong to an other but to herself:

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<sup>244</sup> Justine describes how in an orgiastic episode all participants seem to have become a single mechanical entity (2010: 252).

<sup>245</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 111.

<sup>246</sup> Bruno Latour, ‘On Interobjectivity’, *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 3:4 (1996), p.229.

<sup>247</sup> Latour, p.239.

<sup>248</sup> Latour, p.240.

<sup>249</sup> Latour, p.234.

... when suddenly ... gradually ... she realiz— ... what? ... the buzzing? ... yes ... all dead still but for the buzzing ... when suddenly she realized ... words were— ... what? ... who? ... no! ... she! ... [*Pause and movement 2.*] ... realized ... words were coming ... imagine! ... words were coming ... a voice she did not recognize at first so long since it had sounded ... then finally had to admit ... could be none other ... than her own ... certain vowel sounds ... she had never heard ... elsewhere ...<sup>250</sup>

Since an artificial structure cannot force an organically non-existent hierarchy, however, any instance of manufactured subjectivity is contractual and temporal. The theatricality of the master/slave contract results in the libertine's continual struggle to re-enact his mastery over the victim, thus establish his chimerical sovereignty. Hence the repetition that is present in both Sadean discourse and Mouth's narrative. This constant conflict also explains Sade's employment of women as storytellers as well as victims. As much as it might seem pertinent to claim Sadean discourse is inherently masculine, this would be an uninformed assumption, since like Surrealistic paintings the content is about the precarious sameness and otherness that exists between the two sexes. What is particularly unique about Sadean interaction is that although the structure can be seen as a satirical treatment or a subversion of perceived social constructs, Sade's characters always arrive at the same conclusion about the implications of interobjectivity. Beckett similarly explores a concept of subjectivity that cannot subsist without the subject's acknowledgement of herself as an object. *C'est celle des autres*, declares Sade, and not I, since *I* has no meaning in absolute isolation. In the upcoming chapters, I examine the libertine's effort to bring a divide between the self and the other, while at the same time he seeks to redefine and challenge all the boundaries that separate the other from the self.

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<sup>250</sup> Beckett, 'Not I', p. 379.

### Chapter 3: The Sadean Will to Act in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

In 2014, Terrence Turner directed a documentary called *Poetry in Bronze*, portraying the art of Parviz Tanavoli, one of Iran's most prominent sculptors. The motif Tanavoli repeatedly employs in the creation of his sculptures is 'nothingness'. Nothing, or *heech* in Farsi, is depicted by the sculptor in a calligraphic format: sometimes the word *heech* is a bronze statue that stands in solitude, sometimes it blends with objects such as a chair, a table, a cage, or with another *heech*. In the documentary, when asked whether his *heech* is an indication of nihilistic beliefs, Tanavoli responds in the negative: 'my *heech* is beautiful, not bitter'.<sup>251</sup> What I find particularly interesting in this description is the sculptor's division of nothingness into two opposing aesthetic categories; one is expected to produce pleasant sensations, while the other is a source of displeasure. Tanavoli's perception of nothingness may be interpreted as an active form of nihilism as defined by Nietzsche, given the implication of deterministic acceptance. And yet the two concepts differ in that for Tanavoli the pleasure of *heech* indicates a state of peaceful resignation in the face of a humane lack of omniscience, with no particular desire for 'reaching out for power'.<sup>252</sup> Meanwhile, the Sadean view of nothingness falls on the other side of the spectrum. For Sade, nothingness has yet another signification in that it comes very close to the Nietzschean notion of active nihilism while retaining an unapologetically bitter taste. In this chapter, I look at the correlation between nihilism and will to power in Sade, and how this liaison presents a subversion of Nietzsche's theory regarding the two concepts. Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, a humorous and at the same time extremely sombre play about two minor courtiers in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, acts as a seminal text whose metatheatrical nuances and attention to the question of

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<sup>251</sup> Parviz Tanavoli, *Poetry in Bronze*, dir. by Terrence Turner (Timothy Turner and Tandis Tanavoli, 2014).

<sup>252</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (1901), trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), p. 347. Nietzsche defines activeness as 'reaching out for power'.

deterministic inaction serve as pertinent material for the present enquiry. I begin the investigation with an exploration of Sadean nihilism, followed by an intertextual study of respectively the concepts of death, counting and accountability, and willpower in Stoppard and in Sade. The overarching aim of this chapter is to see how the Sadean libertine constitutes his selfhood after the model of a tyrannical Nature whose boundless will to act is one of its two distinguishing features – the other being apathy, which is the subject of next chapter.

### **Sadean Nihilism and Natural Tyranny**

As a term, nihilism has undergone numerous interpretations. The word itself is constructed from the Latin root *nihil* or nothing, and is often associated with the concept of negation.<sup>253</sup> Of what? Nietzsche finds the answer in values: ‘*That the highest values devalue themselves*. The aim is lacking; “why?” finds no answer’.<sup>254</sup> The consequence of nihilism, Nietzsche explains, is ‘the belief in valuelessness’, whereby a weariness overcomes the individual who has hitherto believed in artificial values.<sup>255</sup> Psychological nihilism, according to Nietzsche, is arrived at in three stages: first, the moral enquirer becomes disenchanted when confronted by absence of any meaning in events; second, he loses belief in universal systems of values; and the third stage consists of a postmodern variety of realisation that implies the impossibility of truth as such.<sup>256</sup> ‘The feeling of valuelessness was reached,’ Nietzsche pronounces, ‘with the realization that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept of “aim,” the concept of “unity,” or the concept of “truth”’. Loss of belief in what Nietzsche deems fictitious values will then translate into the renunciation of said values, later resulting in an enhancement of the overall value of a universe whose hitherto idealistic contemplation disappointed the individual.<sup>257</sup> In other words, the fault is with false

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<sup>253</sup> Ashley Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, (Aurora: Davies Group, 2009), p. 7.

<sup>254</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 9.

<sup>255</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 11.

<sup>256</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>257</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 13.

values, and not the universe. Once fictitious values have been discarded, the individual is rewarded with a liberation that comes with the recovery of agency.<sup>258</sup> Hence Nietzsche recognises two types of nihilism: one is active, wherein nihilism is ‘a sign of increased power of the spirit’; and the other is passive, with nihilism featuring ‘as decline and recession of the power of the spirit’.<sup>259</sup> While the passive nihilist remains encumbered by his disillusionment, the active nihilist is violent and seeks to destroy idealistic values in order to liberate himself.<sup>260</sup> In the wake of its destructiveness, active nihilism is seen as a creative force, since having removed the impediment of previous values, the individual can now construct a new system of values which are expected to be nobler for being more honest and truer to the spirit of the individual.

Both species of nihilism are present in Sade.<sup>261</sup> Returning to the previous chapter, one can describe Justine as a passive nihilist, while her sister Juliette represents an active nihilist. There is indeed a masochistic element in passive nihilism, insofar as the masochist, in René Girard’s words, refuses to forgo the metaphysical desire for perfection which is necessarily connected with unhappiness. The masochist, Girard writes, ‘chooses to see in shame, defeat, and enslavement not the inevitable results of an aimless faith and an absurd mode of behavior but rather the signs of divinity and the preliminary condition of all metaphysical success’.<sup>262</sup> The masochist transforms into a sadist when ‘[t]ired of playing the part of the martyr’, he elects to replace the mediator whose role is to deny the subject

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<sup>258</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 14.

<sup>259</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 17.

<sup>260</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 18. Nietzsche writes that nihilism is not ‘merely the belief that everything deserves to perish: one helps to destroy.—This is, if you will, illogical; but the nihilist does not believe that one needs to be logical’.

<sup>261</sup> In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno compare Sade and Nietzsche with regards to their similarity in their realisation of the truth of the Enlightenment. To this end, they present speeches spoken by Sade’s libertines parallel with passages from Nietzsche, producing the effect that sometimes it is not immediately obvious whether we are reading Nietzsche or Sade. The latter two come close particularly in their treatment of such notions as compassion and pity, crime and cruelty, and their insistence on the *ratio* (2002: 119).

<sup>262</sup> René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. by Yvonne Freccero, (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1961), p. 177.



the object of his desire (ergo increasing its value) .<sup>263</sup> The goal of the sadist, according to Girard, is to appropriate the position of the mediator by way of imitation, which is expected to help him acquire a manner of divine autonomy.<sup>264</sup> While active nihilism's propensity towards the destruction and subsequent replacement of a system of values correlates closely with the Sadean libertine's establishment of paradoxical ethics, there is a fundamental difference between the two: active nihilism in Nietzsche is expected to result ultimately in the creation of a powerful individual capable of independently navigating his own existence, whereas in Sade once old values have been obliterated the libertine repeatedly comes to the conclusion that there is nothing to replace them with.<sup>265</sup> Sade's libertines are seldom content with the institution of new values, whose dependence on passions guarantees their loss in appeal once the said passion has been fulfilled. For Sade, what is of real worth is the act of outraging itself, rather than any values that are meant to be negated or instated. Durcet, the financier libertine of *120 Days*, admits his inability to fully outrage Nature:

I must confess that my imagination has always been in this respect beyond my means, I have always conceived a thousand times more than I have carried out and I have always railed against Nature, who, in giving me the desire to offend her, always robbed me of the means to do so.<sup>266</sup>

The confession is followed by another from Curval (the judge) who admits that there are only one or two crimes which are worth committing, after which 'there is no more to be said'. The crime he truly wishes to commit – as opposed to their current *misdeemeanours* – is 'to attack the sun, to deprive the universe of it, or to use

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<sup>263</sup> Girard, p. 184.

<sup>264</sup> Girard, p. 185.

<sup>265</sup> Mediocrity is despised both in the Nietzschean and the Sadean cosmos; to escape it what amounts to an extreme form of individualism has been prescribed. For Sade, the libertine is the antithesis to mediocrity, while for Nietzsche this place is occupied by the Übermensch. If they part ways, it is for example when Nietzsche expounds 'biological idealism' (1961: 97), or in Zarathustra's treatment of the pale criminal (*Zarathustra* 1961: 65).

<sup>266</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, pp. 153-4.

it to set the world ablaze'.<sup>267</sup> This is active nihilism stretched to the utmost extreme, where individuality itself ceases to exist in a desire for continual devaluation. Hence, the bitterness of Sade's nihilism.<sup>268</sup>

As observed in the quotation above, Nature plays an important part in the formation of Sadean nihilism. I use *nihilism* instead of *atheism* deliberately, since in my opinion Sade's atheism is a by-product of his nihilism,<sup>269</sup> which makes the latter a more pertinent topic of discussion. Nature is recognised by Sade as a force that is 'always acting, always moving',<sup>270</sup> otherwise described as 'nothing but matter in action'.<sup>271</sup> All movement is said to originate from Nature and by yielding to their desires human beings cannot possibly affront Nature.<sup>272</sup> Accordingly, every desire – Sade uses the word 'mania' – is considered to be natural,<sup>273</sup> the proof being that otherwise we would not find them pleasurable.<sup>274</sup> Pleasure, in this context, does not denote a serene manner of enjoyment – for instance, one that would correspond with Tanavoli's nihilistic aesthetics – but a Nietzschean understanding of pleasure 'as a feeling of power'.<sup>275</sup> Nietzsche posits that it would be 'enlightening' to understand the thing which living beings struggle for is *power*, rather than *happiness*. In this light, he explains,

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<sup>267</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 154.

<sup>268</sup> Blanchot recognises the Sadean narrative as 'negation itself: his oeuvre is nothing but a work of negation, his experience the action of a furious negation' ('Right to Death' 1995: 321).

<sup>269</sup> Atheism comprises a vast portion of the Sadean discourse. His libertines, with a few exceptions, continually seek to prove the lack of divine existence. In *Philosophy*, for example, Dolmancé identifies God as the '*ne plus ultra* of human reason, merely the phantom created at the moment this reason can advance its operations no further' (2006: 22).

<sup>270</sup> Marquis de Sade, *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel, (New York: Penguin, 2006), p. 24.

<sup>271</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 25.

<sup>272</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 37.

<sup>273</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 44.

<sup>274</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 50.

<sup>275</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 347.

[P]leasure is only a symptom of the feeling of power attained, a consciousness of a difference (--there is no striving for pleasure: but pleasure supervenes when that which is being striven for is attained: pleasure is an accompaniment, pleasure is not the motive--).<sup>276</sup>

‘In is not in pleasure that happiness consists, it is in desire,’ claims Durcet in *120 Days*, ‘it is in breaking the chains that hold back this desire’.<sup>277</sup> Perceiving Nietzsche through Sade by bringing nihilistic and Natural activity in parallel with each other results in a direct link between action, pleasure, and power. Apart from sharing the end goal of power with active nihilism, Sadean Nature is equally partial towards destruction. In *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, Dolmancé conceives of destruction as ‘the primary law of Nature’,<sup>278</sup> and later he concludes that since Nature’s acts are all essentially egoistical, for the libertine to ‘submit to nature’s laws’, he should follow Nature’s example and become an egoist in kind.<sup>279</sup> However, as implied earlier, the Sadean libertine is no Übermensch. The reason for this, apart from the pessimistic tint of his nihilism, is that Sade perceives of pleasure as directly related to the other’s pain, whereas Nietzsche’s active nihilist is an antiheroic rebel.

‘[R]ebellion is not, essentially, an egoistic act,’ Albert Camus writes.<sup>280</sup> Camus describes rebellion as a positive force that has the capacity for revealing humane values,<sup>281</sup> and he recognises Sade as a metaphysical rebel for whom rebellion is only ‘an absolute negative’.<sup>282</sup> Even though Sade the author may be a rebel, the same cannot be said of his libertines who follow a purely egoistical ideology. Sade’s libertines are rather actors, in the sense that their nihilism is

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<sup>276</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 366.

<sup>277</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 151.

<sup>278</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 51.

<sup>279</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 96.

<sup>280</sup> Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. by Anthony Bower, (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 22.

<sup>281</sup> Camus, *Rebel*, p. 25.

<sup>282</sup> Camus, *Rebel*, p. 32. ‘Metaphysical rebellion,’ Camus explains, ‘is the means by which a man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation. It is metaphysical because it disputes the end of man and creation’ (1971: 29).

derived from the desire to invent micro-theatres modelled after the Natural will to move. As such, even their principles are a set of dramatic compositions. In *Philosophy*, for example, while Dolmancé expounds on Nature's lack of tolerance for any opposing forces, Madame de Saint-Ange proposes that propagation 'is simply tolerated by nature', whose intentions are fundamentally destructive.<sup>283</sup> This latter case is a proof of the libertine's use of Nature as an excuse for gaining power – and pleasure thereof – over another human being, in this case Eugenie, a young libertine apprentice. Sade himself intimates his awareness of the contradictory views of his libertines when in *Juliette* he devises the following dialogue between two libertines. '[Y]our principles seem to me without rhyme or reason: you are a tyrant yourself, and you detest tyranny; [...] explain me these contradictions,' Emma tells Borchamps, who responds by saying that he does not despise tyranny but the fact that he is not the one who causes it – 'they who hate despotism today will use it to perfect their happiness tomorrow'.<sup>284</sup> In such a universe, there are no real values, which explains why Sade's nihilism has a postmodern appreciation of unreality that contributes in turn to the theatrical consequences of his libertines' Natural tenets. Will Slocombe considers postmodernism nihilistic for its rejection of 'an economic and historical Real'.<sup>285</sup> Drawing upon Lyotard's theory on 'the mercantalization of knowledge', Slocombe describes postmodernism as 'a discursive network of the "unreal" or the "non-real"' whose origin corresponds with the concept of 'information as a commodity'.<sup>286</sup> Madame de Saint-Ange's and Dolmancé's use of their libertine knowledge as a means to educate Eugenie poses as a good example of this phenomena, especially since their actual aim is to find access to and rule over the girl's body. Likewise, the non-reality of their discourse

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<sup>283</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, pp. 60-1.

<sup>284</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 860.

<sup>285</sup> Will Slocombe, *Nihilism and the Sublime Postmodern: The (Hi)Story of a Difficult Relationship from Romanticism to Postmodernism*, Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 89.

<sup>286</sup> Slocombe, p. 91.

transforms their philosophy into a dramatic exercise, which is then rendered theatrical when acted upon.<sup>287</sup>

For Nietzsche, explains Shane Weller, art functions as a vehicle for surpassing nihilism ‘in its being free of morality and in its affirmation of life not through the faithful representation of that life but through its radical transformation’.<sup>288</sup> Sade makes similar use of theatrical aesthetics, with the difference that in overcoming nihilism he arrives at an even more radical version of nihilism. Annie le Brun proposes that the entire premise of Sade’s atheism is directly connected to theatre: ‘Sade’s life and work fuse around the imaginary space of both real and virtual theatre to generate a new realm of the mind, or what I call the first theatre of atheism’.<sup>289</sup> The upshot, she argues, is that Sadean ‘sovereignty is established by the reality of the body alone’.<sup>290</sup> The impact of this ‘theatrical revolution’,<sup>291</sup> as Le Brun calls it, is that by situating a strictly corporeal nihilism as the site of his philosophy, Sade challenges the significance of the body. A nihilistic perception of the body in Sade amounts to the eventual negation of the body’s existential value, even if the body’s value is elevated as a philosophical substance. With the body thus reduced to matter, the question is: what happens to death? With this question in mind, the next section seeks to offer a response to the following two

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<sup>287</sup> It is no surprise then that Sade wrote *Philosophy* as a closet drama.

<sup>288</sup> Shane Weller, *Modernism and Nihilism*, Modernism and... (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 40.

<sup>289</sup> Annie Le Brun, ‘Sade or the first theatre of atheism’, trans. by John Phillips, *Paragraph*, 23:1 (2000), p. 38.

<sup>290</sup> Le Brun, p. 38. In which sense, Le Brun suggests theatre provides Sade with ‘the best means of taking free thinking beyond the limits of philosophy’. In an insightful passage, Le Brun expresses the great significance of the theatricality of Sade’s atheism:

Thought is never simply abstract in his world, there being always someone or something that excites the imagination, which in turn excites the body, and so on, so that the movement, the rhythm, the development of thought manifest themselves in Sade as very physical processes (2011: 45).

<sup>291</sup> Le Brun, p. 46. Le Brun considers Sade’s introduction of the body as the sole site of philosophy as ‘an unprecedented change of perspective’ that can be considered as ‘a theatrical revolution’ which challenges both the limits of philosophy and theatre.

enquiries: a) are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern dead? and b) what is the consequences of their being dead and/or alive in a Sadean sense?

### ‘over your dead body’

The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes death in general as ‘[t]he act or fact of dying; the end of life; the permanent cessation of the vital functions of a person, animal, plant, or other organism’. In a religious context, death can infer spiritual demise in the sense that the individual exists in ‘a state of sin’, incurring eternal damnation; while from a civil perspective death denotes a ‘[l]oss or deprivation of civil rights’ that results from or leads to social alienation.<sup>292</sup> Both Sade and Stoppard, however, utilise the concept of death in a manner that is much more complex than the definitions provided here, while still retaining some of their aspects in a combinatory form.

For the purpose of this study, I consider the title of Stoppard’s play to have an informative meaning; that is, I take it that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern – from here onwards: Ros and Guil – are indeed dead. The reason for this conjecture is that, apart from the title, there are at least three clues in the dramatic text all of which point towards the two characters’ existential condition as a species of ontological death. The first evidential instance comes early in the play while Ros and Guil, who have been summoned by Claudius, are waiting for further instructions from the king. During a rather absurd dialogue which sets the tone of their subsequent conversations, Ros remarks upon how fingernails have the ability to grow after death, while toenails do not. When a ‘bemused’ Guil asks Ros why he thinks this is the case, the latter replies:

**Ros** [...] It’s a funny thing – I cut my fingernails all the time, and every time I think to cut them, they need cutting. Now, for instance. And yet, I never, to the best of my knowledge, cut my toenails. They ought to be curled under

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<sup>292</sup> ‘Death’, *OED Online*, <<http://www.oed.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/Entry/47766?rskey=Fr1wg6&result=1&isAdvanced=false>> [accessed 20 July 2017].

my feet by now, but it doesn't happen. I never think about them. Perhaps I cut them absent-mindedly, when I'm thinking of something else.<sup>293</sup>

Ros's insertion of the body into the discourse serves as a reminder of the corporeality of the existential status of the characters. In which sense, his forgetfulness regarding his body – that seems to be unchanging – indicates the possible deficiency of the said body as a living organism. A statement that corresponds with Guil's later assertion that he has no desires.<sup>294</sup> Another clue as to the condition of the two characters is found in Guil's repeated explanation of death as 'the absence of presence, nothing more...'.<sup>295</sup> Seeing as the dramatic substance of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is composed of chiefly those moments when Ros and Guil are absent from the text of *Hamlet*, the play itself can be interpreted as an elegiac exercise.<sup>296</sup> This argument is supported by the protagonists' own suspicion of other absent characters as deceased entities:

**Guil** (*retiring*) Somebody might come in. It's what we're counting on, after all. Ultimately.

(*Good pause.*)

**Ros** Perhaps they've all trampled each other to death in the rush. Give them a shout. Something provocative. *Intrigue* them.<sup>297</sup>

A third argument for my assumption is that if we are to follow the logic of *Hamlet*, where a play within a play demonstrates events that have happened previously, then the fact that Ros and Guil have an opportunity to watch their own deaths in the mime sequence performed by the Tragedians suggests that they have already died. What, then, does their death imply?

In the conclusion of the previous chapter, I mentioned Latour's theory of inter-objectivity. Latour, I explained, permits objects an interactive agency which

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<sup>293</sup> Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, (London: Faber, 1967), p. 9.

<sup>294</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 7.

<sup>295</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 116.

<sup>296</sup> 'If death is absence, absence is also a kind of death,' writes Anthony Jenkins in his analysis of the play (1987: 46).

<sup>297</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 51.

produces a profound effect on the human understanding of the boundaries that define the self. Latour's concept of objects as actant mediators, when applied to Girard's theory of the sadist as one who aspires to be the mediator-as-persecutor, emphasises the interobjective relation between the Sadean libertine and his victim. In other words, if objects function as mediators, then a libertine – who constructs his identity not upon the reality of his personhood but on the basis of his role as a mediator – is likewise no more than an actant object. Subsequently, within the Sadean space death acts as merely a transformative agent that defines the affiliation between two or more given objects:

What we call the end of an animal's life will no longer be an actual end, it will be a simple transmutation based on perpetual motion, which is the true essence of matter, and which all modern philosophers accept as one of the supreme laws of matter. Hence, death, according to these irrefutable principles, is nothing but a change of form, an imperceptible passage from one existence to another – and thus we have what named 'metempsychosis'.<sup>298</sup>

The term metempsychosis here can be misleading, since what Sade frequently refers to as transmigration in death does not extend to the soul, in whose existence he does not believe. Rather, his concept of death is a purely materialistic exchange, in which sense death loses its value as an *endoxic* or a symbolic entity. Jean Baudrillard regards death's lack of significance as a marker of modernity. In a modern society, Baudrillard maintains, the dead 'are no longer beings with a full role to play, worthy partners in exchange,' and the exile of the dead by the living ensure that death loses its *normal* status and becomes 'nothing more than the social line of demarcation'.<sup>299</sup> Like any other paradoxical (since not normal) phenomenon, death obtains a measure of vigour as a forbidden commodity which in turn makes its jurisdiction a prerequisite for dominion. 'Power,' writes Baudrillard, 'is possible only if death is no longer free, only if the dead are put under surveillance, in

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<sup>298</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 140.

<sup>299</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, (London: Sage, 2012), p. 3.



anticipation of the future confinement of life in its entirety'.<sup>300</sup> Quite fittingly, one of the main obsessions of Sadean libertines is the achievement of control over death.<sup>301</sup> In *120 Days*, Duclos narrates the story of a libertine whose passion is to feign death and have a woman wrap him in a shroud, transfer him to a coffin, recite the prayer for the dead and nail the coffin shut, at which point the confined man reaches his sexual climax. Once the story has been told, Curval – the libertine judge – makes the following comment: 'That's a character keen to familiarize himself with the idea of death, and who has found no better way of doing so than to link it to a libertine idea'.<sup>302</sup> According to Baudrillard, the estrangement of death is the principle that sustains all other social stratifications of dualistic nature, such as divisions between 'the soul and the body, the male and the female, good and evil, etc.'.<sup>303</sup> In a Sadean context, the main partition is between the self and the other; nevertheless, by extending the process of death's devaluation to the extreme, Sade comes to the same conclusion that he does when attempting to produce an unsurpassable fissure between the self and the other: if there is no *other* then there is no *self*, and if there is no *death* then there is no *life*. 'In all living beings the principle of life is no other than that of death,' reasons the libertine Pope, Braschi.<sup>304</sup> This view of death is linguistic inasmuch as *to be dead* reflects the way in which the term is defined in most dictionaries as: *not to be alive*. The interrelatedness of the conditions of living and death, and their simultaneous lack of value, gives their association an interobjective status which may bring a Sadean perception of the world to a stalemate. Sade, nonetheless, solves this problem in the same manner he endeavours to bypass the non-binary connection between the self and the other: by theatricalising death. So when Baudrillard posits that separating death from life promises the flourishing of 'the agency of mediation and representation',<sup>305</sup> for

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<sup>300</sup> Baudrillard, *Exchange and Death*, p. 5.

<sup>301</sup> 'Libertinage knows no *Todestrieb*, no death instinct, before Sade' write Jean-Pierre Dubost in 'Libertinage and Rationality: From the "Will to Knowledge" to Libertine Textuality' (1998: 69).

<sup>302</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 264.

<sup>303</sup> Baudrillard, *Exchange and Death*, p. 6.

<sup>304</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 769.

<sup>305</sup> Baudrillard, *Exchange and Death*, p. 6.

Sade the implication is that the living and the dead become theatrical roles. Accordingly, Braschi further explains that death as we know it ‘is only imaginary, it exists figuratively but in no other way’.<sup>306</sup> Jonathan Bennet reflects this concept in his study of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* when he makes the remark that in Stoppard’s play ‘[e]very exit is an entrance somewhere else, and so whenever Shakespeare writes “*exeunt* Rosencrantz and Guildenstern” we follow them off Shakespeare’s stage on to Stoppard’s’.<sup>307</sup>

In a Sadean sense, the death of Ros and Guil fits in the same category as the condition forced upon the female victims of the Chateau de Silling in *120 Days*, who are warned on the first day by the Duc de Blangis that ‘you are already dead to the world and it is only for our pleasures that you are breathing now’.<sup>308</sup> That is to say, they are dead because they are powerless. Much later, on a boat, at the very end of the play, when Ros and Guil realise they are to be executed upon arrival in England, the duo make the shrewd observation that their execution makes no sense since they lack the value to prove the enterprise worthwhile:

**Ros** They had it in for us, didn’t they? Right from the beginning. Who’d have thought that we were so important?

**Guil** But why? Was it all for this? Who are we that so much should converge on our little deaths? (In anguish to the Player.) Who are we?

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<sup>306</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 769. Braschi continues:

Matter, deprived of the other portion of matter which communicated movement to it, is not destroyed for that; it merely abandons its form, it decays—and in decaying proves that it is not inert; it enriches the soil, fertilizes it, and serves in the regeneration of the other kingdoms as well as of its own. There is, in the final analysis, no essential difference between this first life we receive and this second, which is the one we call death. For the first is caused by a forming of some of the matter which renews and reorganizes itself within the entrails of mother earth (1968: 769-70).

This last image is of great consequence to the Sadean theatre, since most of the latter’s performances of the transfiguration of victim-matter occur in subterranean caverns or otherwise enclosed – intestinal, one could say – spaces whose product is more than often waste substance in the form of corpses or even less than that.

<sup>307</sup> Jonathan Bennet, ‘Philosophy and Mr. Stoppard’, *Philosophy*, 50:191 (1975), p. 9.

<sup>308</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 56.

**Player** You are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. That's enough.<sup>309</sup>

The Player's response is typically Sadean in its metatheatrical awareness: since it is determined that they should die, die they must. Guil is not convinced, however, and having derided the tragedian experience of death as a concluding necessity, he stabs the Player with a dagger, after which the sequence below takes place:

*The Tragedians watch the Player die: they watch with some interest. The Player finally lies still. A short moment of silence. Then the tragedians start to applaud with genuine admiration. The Player stands up, brushing himself down.*<sup>310</sup>

The Player then informs Guil, who previously believed him to be dead, that the dagger was a prop with a retractable blade. While death for Ros and Guil poses as a reality, the Player displays a libertine panache in advertising his knowledge of the various categories of death he is able to perform:

**Player** (*activated, arms spread, the professional*) Deaths for all ages and occasions! Deaths by suspension, convulsion, consumption, incision, execution, asphyxiation and malnutrition-! Climatic carnage, by poison and by steel-! Double deaths by duel-! Show!<sup>311</sup>

At the Player's command, his troupe perform the death scenes from Hamlet, on and off stage, while the Player himself, '[d]ying amid the dying-tragically; romantically,' continues: 'So there's an end to that-it's commonplace: light goes with life, and in the winter of your years the dark comes early...'<sup>312</sup> Guil's response establishes their position as slaves in a universe where the master is a postmodern connoisseur – 'death is not a game which will soon be over...' Guil declares. Unbeknownst to him, Guil's definition of death as 'the absence of presence' is not any different from the Player's equation of life with light and death with darkness, both comprising a description of death as it occurs on stage, as a phenomenon experienced by the

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<sup>309</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 114.

<sup>310</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 115.

<sup>311</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 116.

<sup>312</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 116.

observing other. The difference between Ros and Guil and the Player is that the latter is cognizant of the reversibility of a theatrical death and hence is able to manipulate it to his advantage. Guil and Ros, on the other hand, are so entrenched in the idea of irreversibility that they cannot even destroy the letter that sentences them to death, once they have become aware of its existence.

‘Nothing arouses me like the sight of death,’ Clairwil declares in *Juliette*, her eyes fixed on the departed victim.<sup>313</sup> Arousal as a sign of heightened power, when procured from the sight of death has the double import of increasing the vivacity of the libertine when he compares himself to the inert victim. Guil’s earlier reference to ‘little death’, assuming Stoppard is playing with the phrase’s meaning as orgasm – which he likely is, given his fondness for wordplay – entails the irrelevance of Ros’s and Guil’s pleasure, adding another dimension to their powerlessness in a Nietzschean sense. The importance of enjoying the sight of the other’s misery is such that in *Juliette* the libertine Cornaro divides individuals into the groups of oppressors or victims based on their tolerance of witnessing scenes of torture: ‘Death is decreed for those who prove unable to bear the spectacle, or who wilt before it, or weep’.<sup>314</sup> In essence, if the individual, like Ros and Guil, does not comprehend the arbiters of death, they belong to the caste of the dead.

At the same time, Ros and Guil display a postmodern understanding of the *real* when they concur that the reality of an experience depends on how many persons have shared it and thus believe in its veracity. Guil brings the example of a man who has seen a unicorn, an incident which he describes as ‘mystical’, until another man claims he has also seen a unicorn, followed by yet a similar declaration from another:

Guil: [...] A third witness, you understand, adds no further dimension but only spreads it thinner, and a fourth thinner still, and the more witnesses there are, the thinner it gets and the more reasonable it becomes until it is as thin as reality, the name we give to the common experience...<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 474.

<sup>314</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 1125.

<sup>315</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, pp. 11-2.

The above logic is used by the Sadean libertine in reverse: as long as the self believes in the unreality of an experience, then that experience is unreal. Belief founded upon a sensory intake remains the rationale, which now becomes paradoxical (against common sense). Hence, if the death of the other has no implications for the self, and if the self cannot possibly experience death, then death is essentially unreal. One outcome of this manner of thinking is that *seeing* becomes a requisite for autonomy, resulting in such instances where the libertine – Saint-Fond in this case – having poisoned his victim, laments his inability to ‘witness the deaths’ of everyone he has murdered by the same method. ‘Alas! one cannot be everywhere at once’.<sup>316</sup> Yet another consequence of the unreality of death is that pretence can be employed in the place of reality. The first narrator in *120 Days* speaks of a libertine who has a woman pretend to be dead. His valet arranges the girl in a coffin in the following manner:

[H]e had her mouth and eyes assume pained expressions, let her hair fall over her naked breast, placed a dagger beside her, and smeared chicken’s blood over her heart to make a wound the size of a fist.<sup>317</sup>

The libertine then arrives and contemplates the beauty of death, while wishing he had been witness to the supposed assassin’s delivery of the fatal blow.<sup>318</sup> By linking sexual desire to art, the above scene has the same controversial effect as most of Greenaway’s films in that it advances the idea that all aesthetic depictions of violence function as substitutes for a repressed will to destruction. Elisabeth Bronfen and Sarah Webster Goodwin identify death as a cultural construct which nevertheless has a direct impact on the structure of a civilisation’s culture. Culture itself, they maintain, is ‘an attempt both to represent death and to contain it, to make it comprehensible and thereby to diffuse some of its power’.<sup>319</sup> While art in a common sense may serve to mute the violence of death through its

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<sup>316</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 229.

<sup>317</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 299.

<sup>318</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 300.

<sup>319</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen and Sarah Webster Goodwin, ‘Introduction.’ *Death and Representation*, ed. by Elisabeth Bronfen and Sarah Webster Goodwin, Parallax Re-visions of Culture and Society, (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1993), p. 4.

representation,<sup>320</sup> Sade aims to tap into the potential of non-art – i.e. an art that uses real bodies and real lives as material. Stoppard, similarly, explores the aesthetics of non-fictional violence in the Player’s answer to Guil’s question about whether death can be acted. The Player recounts the many ways in which the Tragedians are able to perform death, before proceeding to explain that they can also ‘kill beautifully’.<sup>321</sup> Quite interestingly, the Player’s subsequent admission that some actors are better at killing while others are better at dying can be interpreted as a Sadean perception of the libertine/victim positions as a matter of roleplay. Guil takes the opposite discursive position when he declares that the fact of death has ‘nothing to do with seeing it happen’, and that death is an irreversible ‘exit’.<sup>322</sup> ‘You die so many times,’ Guil further protests, ‘how can you expect them to believe in your death?’<sup>323</sup> The Player reacts by arguing that in fact theatrical death is more believable than real death which the audience find unbelievable since they have not been conditioned enough by repeated exposure to its spectacle.

Since ultimately death has no real value as far as Sade is concerned, even its theatrical rendition produces limited capacity for entertainment. Duclos’s story prompts the Duc de Blangis to re-enact the scene with his daughter, who is pretending to be dead. When Curval congratulates the Duc for having contrived two crimes – incest and necrophilia – from one act, the Duc replies: ‘I should very much like them to be more real!’<sup>324</sup> The Duc’s disappointment is not so much in the fact that the crimes he is committing are games of pretence – in this case, incest is quite real – but that according to libertine philosophy crimes do not exist. ‘There is nothing more unconvincing than an unconvincing death,’ says the Player in Stoppard’s play.<sup>325</sup> When the performance of death becomes unconvincingly tedious to affect libertine sensibility, Sade’s characters resort to mathematics to make death count.

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<sup>320</sup> ‘Any representational discourse implies the muteness, absence, nonbeing – in short, the death – of the object it seeks to designate’ posit Bronfen and Webster Goodwin (1993: 7).

<sup>321</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 75.

<sup>322</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, pp. 76-7.

<sup>323</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 76.

<sup>324</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 301.

<sup>325</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 69.

### ‘We count for nothing’

Throughout Stoppard’s play the main duo is repeatedly observed using the word ‘count’ when they speculate whether their existence stands for anything, or if they can count upon the arrival of another character, and so on. The implication here is that the significance of counting is such that the character’s being or nonbeing depends upon it. Alain Badiou argues that under the rule of the number, for the individual to exist he or she must be able to give a ‘favourable account’ of herself or himself. ‘No one can present themselves as individual without stating in what way they count, for whom or for what they are really counted’.<sup>326</sup> The logic behind an accountable existence is also reflected in Guil’s definition of death as a condition according to which the individual is ‘here one minute and gone the next and never coming back,’ and later as ‘the endless time of never coming back’.<sup>327</sup> Likewise, as stated in the previous section, when in the beginning of the second act Guil warns Ros to stop his nonsensical behaviour lest someone should walk in, he justifies this belief by reasoning: ‘It’s what we’re counting on, after all. Ultimately’.<sup>328</sup> Ros’s conjecture afterwards is that they may be dead, which would mean that their eventual appearance literally cannot be taken into account. Robert Egan argues that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* differs from *Waiting for Godot* – with which play it is frequently compared – since the worlds where events of each play occur are essentially dissimilar. ‘To begin with, the equivalent of Godot for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrives early in the play,’ Egan maintains, concluding that Ros and Guil live in a more orderly universe that contains predictable proceedings.<sup>329</sup> It may be true that Stoppard’s protagonists do not suffer as much disappointment when it comes to waiting, but compared to Didi and Gogo

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<sup>326</sup> Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, trans. by Robin Mackay, (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>327</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 116.

<sup>328</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 51.

<sup>329</sup> Robert Egan, ‘A Thin Beam of Light: The Purpose of Playing in “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead”’, *Theatre Journal*, 31:1 (1979), p. 59.

their world seems to encompass a much lesser degree of hope. The fact that Godot never arrives induces a mystical dimension into the tramps' experience of waiting, while for Ros and Guil the encounter with the other is a common phenomenon – *as thin as reality* – which explains why they cannot find any special meaning in the fact of their existence despite all the enquiry and why they are so desperate to discover what counts and what does not. What they anticipate, ultimately, is death.<sup>330</sup> Since absence counts as death while presence counts as life, it is essential for the characters to find a unit of measurement that reflects the extent to which they exist. Often they find the answer in time, as evident in Guil's reference to the unexpected pace of death which happens in a moment, and Ros's speculation that human beings are born with the knowledge that death-ward is the only direction to go 'and time is its only measure'.<sup>331</sup>

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer consider an obsession with 'computation' a legacy of the Enlightenment which holds suspect any entity that does not 'conform to the rule of computation and utility'.<sup>332</sup> Slocombe advances this theory further by associating, after Paul Virilio, the postmodernist enchantment with speed to its genesis as 'the culmination of the Enlightenment Project', leading to a nihilistic devaluation of a humanity whose members are condemned to be forever on the move.<sup>333</sup> This absence of respite is conspicuously present throughout Sadean episodes of libertinage, wherein every action needs to occur with clockwork precision. In *120 Days*, Sade outlines an extreme version of a temporal fixation when the four libertines meticulously plan the progression of events in the Château de Silling. The following passage highlights an article from their code book regarding the daily routine of the castle's inhabitants: 'Everyone shall rise each day at 10 o'clock in the morning'.<sup>334</sup> At eleven they have a tour of their harem and have

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<sup>330</sup> Baudrillard grants death an 'irreversible meaning' only when it concerns the 'infinitesimal space of the individual conscious subject,' positing that even as experienced by the individual 'death is not an event, but a myth experienced as anticipation' (2012: 31).

<sup>331</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 63.

<sup>332</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002), p. 6.

<sup>333</sup> Slocombe, pp. 94-5.

<sup>334</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 48.



breakfast. From one to two in the afternoon, one-third of the victims are allowed to defecate in the chapel while the libertines watch.<sup>335</sup> From two to five, the libertines are served afternoon meals, and from five to six coffee and liqueur.<sup>336</sup> ‘At six o’clock precisely Messieurs shall enter the great chamber destined for the narrations [...], the storyteller shall begin her narration, which the friends may interrupt at any moment they see fit; this narration shall last until ten o’clock in the evening’.<sup>337</sup> Supper is served at ten, followed by orgiastic sessions that will come to an end ‘at precisely two o’clock in the morning’, after which they retire to their bedchambers.<sup>338</sup> It goes without saying that, as masters of ceremonies, the four libertines are the only individuals who have power over time. Should one of them desire to recreate an act the description of which they have just heard, he is free to do so. ‘The narration shall be suspended for as long as it takes to satisfy the friend whose needs interrupt it,’ the rules dictate, ‘and shall resume as soon as he is done’.<sup>339</sup> This ritualistic devotion to time, especially setting the time of the narratives in the amphitheatres from six to ten, suggests an awareness of the performativity of the events. Timing the performances beforehand and dedicating a specific room to each performance gives the atmosphere a theatrical and, to some degree, carnivalesque aspect. Silvija Jestrovic describes the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque as one that involves ‘a sense of communal body that undermines the distinction between observers and participants,’ noting how ‘carnival brings about a temporary defamiliarization of the well-known environment and its conventions, where liberation from subscribed norms is only permitted within the duration of the carnival festivities’.<sup>340</sup> In *120 Days*, every scheduled interlude is

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<sup>335</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 49.

<sup>336</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, pp. 50-1.

<sup>337</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, pp. 51-2.

<sup>338</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 53. Additionally, weekly festivals are to take place during the seventeen weeks that the sojourn lasts. Every Saturday, during the orgies, any disobedience which has been recorded during the past week is dealt with. Everyone except for the libertines is reprimanded via torture; the libertines pay fines as their punishment.

<sup>339</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 52.

<sup>340</sup> Silvija Jestrovic, ‘Theatricality as Estrangement of Art and Life In the Russian Avant-Garde’, *Substance* 98/99, 31:2 & 3 (2002), p. 52.

designed as a miniature carnival, albeit in a perverted sense since its function is to familiarise the conventionally unfamiliar by means of repetition. '[T]his was sometime a *paradox*, but now the *time gives* it proof,' to quote Hamlet (3.1.113-114).<sup>341</sup> Timing activities, moreover, anticipates habit formation which is used by the libertines as a subjugating method, as seen in the example where even the victims' bowel movements is regimented.

'The accumulation of time imposes the idea of progress,' writes Baudrillard, comparing the said practice to the hoarding of knowledge, both procedures which can function as methods of objectification.<sup>342</sup> However, for Sade, the mere accumulation of time is never enough to guarantee the invention of a paradoxical regime. Rather, as any other unit of endoxic systematisation, time must be reformulated to have any utility in libertine praxis. In a Sadean sense, time is dead matter; that is, a matter that has lost its universal agency. An example of the latter phenomenon is observed in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* at the very beginning of the play when the protagonists are playing a betting game by tossing coins. The outcome is without exception 'heads', which prompts Guil to look for a justification for the fact that they have gotten the same result after eighty-nine tries. The first explanation he comes up with is that he is *willing* the score as a subconscious wish to atone for a forgotten past crime, given he has been betting on 'tails'. 'Two: time has stopped dead, and a single experience of one coin being spun once has been repeated ninety times... (*He flips a coin, looks at it, tosses it to Ros.*) On the whole, doubtful'. Guil's third guess is 'divine intervention', and the fourth pertains to the fact that the incident is not surprising at all since a coin may come down as either head or tail, and the exhaustion of one possibility is only a matter of chance which nevertheless is in accord with laws of probability.<sup>343</sup> Although Guil does not believe in the death of time,<sup>344</sup> his second hypothesis provides insight into

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<sup>341</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, (London: Arden-Bloomsbury, 2006).

<sup>342</sup> Baudrillard, *Exchange and Death*, p. 19.

<sup>343</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 6.

<sup>344</sup> His doubt is in itself doubtful since he later admits to having to notion of time:

the notion of dead time as that which is measured by repetition within the Sadean space. In absence of chronological or historic validation, Sade's libertines rely on the prerogative of numbers to lend credence to their arguments – since in a postmodern sense time is nothing but numbers.<sup>345</sup> 'Everything [...] is converted into the repeatable, replaceable process, into a mere example for the conceptual models of the system' Adorno and Horkheimer write of the Enlightenment agenda, which they then connect to the Sadean strategy.<sup>346</sup> In comparison, in Ros's and Guil's 'question game' – where the participants are only allowed to answer with questions – repetition is strictly forbidden:

**Ros** Are you counting that?

**Guil** What?

**Ros** Are you counting that?

**Guil** Foul! No repetitions. Three-love. First game to...<sup>347</sup>

To repeat a question sets precedence for a practice that will eventually bring the game into a halt, disrupting the state of 'difference in a display of similarity' that Brian Massumi attributes to and sees as a product of the 'ludic gesture'.<sup>348</sup> Resisting a manner of Sadean conditioning via repetition, the game played by Ros and Guil situates them in 'a register of existence where what matters is no longer what one does, but what one does stands-for'. The result is that the time of Ros and the time of Guil is of equal value,<sup>349</sup> justifying the reason why they use so many games in

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**Guil** We have been spinning coins together since I don't know when, and in all that time (if it *is* all that time) I don't suppose either of us was more than a couple of gold pieces up or down (1967: 8).

<sup>345</sup> Badiou calls our time an 'empire of number' where the question is no longer that of thought 'but of realities' (2008: 1). If numbers can be used to define reality, such objective concepts as time will also be subject to whatever degree of realness statistics can afford them, hence a postmodern urgency of the unreal comes into being.

<sup>346</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 84.

<sup>347</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 33.

<sup>348</sup> Brian Massumi, *What Animals Teach Us About Politics*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2014), p. 4. Playing in this sense facilitates 'the staging of a *paradox*', which is benevolent, I argue, as opposed to the Sadean paradox.

<sup>349</sup> Massumi, p. 5. 'Two individuals are transported at one and the same time,' writes Massumi, 'but without changing location, by an instantaneous force of transformation'.

their time of absence from the *Hamlet* narrative as a means to evaluate their existence.<sup>350</sup>

Numbers are at the same time used by Sade to devalue the items to which they are ascribed. To quote Badiou, the ‘reign of the number [...] imposes the fallacious idea of a bond between numericality and value, or truth’,<sup>351</sup> and this value can certainly be in the negative. In *Juliette*, when Clairwil postulates the merits of a cruel act in spite of the fact that it might ‘perhaps mean death for a number of persons of little account’, she is in effect calculating the worth of the victim, or the lack thereof, according to a system that considers their temporal contribution of no value.<sup>352</sup> That is to say, the victim’s time stops dead when he has no role to play in the grand drama, as is the case with Ros and Guil in Stoppard’s play. In the first chapter, I briefly discussed the importance of numbers to Sade and his libertines, and how their digital mania forms the fundament of paradoxical systematisation. The Sadean obsession with numbers goes much deeper, however, to the point that the management of entire populations becomes merely an exercise in mathematics.<sup>353</sup> On a syntactic level, whenever Sade uses the phrase ‘a number of this or that’ – which he does frequently – it is always the victims who are referred to. Otherwise, the author seems to exhibit much delight in adding or subtracting victims to create ‘perfect’ combinations. The process of choosing female victims in *120 Days*, explained in detail by Sade, is such that a hundred and thirty women and girls are accumulated, whose numbers are first reduced to fifty, then to twenty, ‘and how were they to whittle down this number of creatures who were so utterly celestial one would have thought them the very work of divinity?’, and finally to eight. The same procedure is repeated for the male victims, with the different

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<sup>350</sup> In a similar vein, Jim Hunter emphasises the importance of games in Stoppard’s dramatic works by suggesting that the playwright not only treats playing is a ‘respectable’ activity, but in his plays it is ‘not playing which may be ruinous’ (1982: 17).

<sup>351</sup> Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, p. 213.

<sup>352</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 280.

<sup>353</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer identify number as ‘the canon of the Enlightenment’ (2002: 7), the latter which they posit acts towards things as a dictator would towards men: ‘He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them’ (2002: 9). In this light, the libertine pursuit of knowledge paves the way for a better exploitation of the victim, which is chiefly carried out by the victim’s numerical categorisation.

numbers of: 150, 100, 50, 25, and 8.<sup>354</sup> It follows that in every Sadean ritual the number of the victims is always mentioned. Pleasure itself becomes a mathematical concern when Noircueil tells Juliette that if she multiplies the pleasures of Saint-Fond, then ‘proportionally you augment the size and number of your own’.<sup>355</sup> Later, Clairwil advises Saint-Fond to ‘cease killing the same individual a thousand times over [...], instead, assassinate individuals by the thousand,’ and to place his trust in Juliette, ‘she is clever, she is capable, only say the word and she will double the number, triple it, give her the required money; you’ll want for nothing, your passions will be satisfied’.<sup>356</sup> It may seem that quality cannot exist without quantity in Sade, and indeed in one episode Clairwil rather indignantly informs a fellow libertine, who has suggested they employ fewer but a better quality of men for their pleasure, that ‘I see no reason to reduce the number. To the contrary, in addition to quality I demand quantity’.<sup>357</sup> Nevertheless, the ever increasing quantity of the objects of (des)ire ultimately implies that quality becomes non-existent as a factor.<sup>358</sup> ‘The unity of the manipulated collective consists in the negation of each individual,’ maintain Adorno and Horkheimer, reasoning that individuality cannot possibly accept a society ‘which would turn all individuals to the one collectivity’.<sup>359</sup> Correspondingly, the Sadean libertine’s collective treatment of the victims erodes any quality that they might have to offer, since in the best of scenarios quality would have no meaning when everyone is equally valuable.<sup>360</sup> While numbers do count in the Sadean system, death remains valueless. What gains value instead is minute variations.

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<sup>354</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, pp. 33-5.

<sup>355</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 260.

<sup>356</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 395.

<sup>357</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 941.

<sup>358</sup> Unless the quality of the experience itself is being discussed, in which case quality indicates intensity, as seen in *120 Days* where the last narrator, Madame Desgranges, is expected to relate ‘the greatest atrocities and abominations’ in her stories (2016: 31).

<sup>359</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 13.

<sup>360</sup> And/or equally worthless. Speaking of Sade’s dislike of philanthropism, Camus explains: ‘The equality of which he sometimes speaks is a mathematical concept: the equivalence of the objects that comprise the human race, the abject equality of the victims’ (1971: 35).

‘Times being what they are,’ is the phrase the Player repeatedly utters, while trying to sell his and the Tragedians’s services to Ros and Guil. He first offers them sexual favours, which Ros is too naïve to comprehend, and eventually he ends up advertising the variations of dramatic performances the troupe can enact:

**Ros** What is your line?

**Player** Tragedy, sir. Deaths and disclosures, universal and particular, denouements both unexpected and inexorable, transvestite melodrama on all levels including the suggestive. We transport you into the world of intrigue and illusion... clowns, if you like, murderers – we can do you ghosts and battles, on the skirmish levels, heroes, villains, tormented lovers – set pieces in the poetic vein; we can do you rapiers or rape or both, by all means, faithless wives and ravished virgins - flagrante delicto at a price, but that comes under realism for which there are special terms. Getting warm, am I?<sup>361</sup>

His proposal takes on a Sadean hint when the Player allows Ros and Guil the possibility of voyeuristic delights which can transform into interactive pleasures, again using the pretext of ‘times being what they are’.<sup>362</sup> One way to interpret this phrase is that since time, as experienced by the Stoppard’s characters, is measured by a series of meaningless activities, what pleasures that may be had manifest themselves as variations of dramatic scenes.<sup>363</sup> The Sadean discourse extends these variations from scenes to victims and other objects of interest, though drama remains the focus of attention. ‘[F]inally came the dessert,’ Sade writes in *120 Days*, describing one of the many mealtimes, ‘which included a prodigious variety of fruit despite the season’.<sup>364</sup> In this context, the Sadean project can be seen as a subversion

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<sup>361</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 14.

<sup>362</sup> The fact that he describes the ‘times’ as wickedly *indifferent* is yet another attribute that fits a Sadean universe, and which will be discussed in the following chapter, on apathy.

<sup>363</sup> Following John Barth’s theory on ‘The Literature of Exhaustion’, Michael Hinden uses the term ‘theatre of exhaustion’ to refer to Stoppard’s plays, explaining that by exhaustion he means ‘the used-up-ness of certain forms or exhaustion of certain possibilities – by no means necessarily a cause for despair’ (1981: 1). Brought parallel to Sade’s, Stoppard’s project may seem as an exercise in exhausting *Hamlet*-variations.

<sup>364</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 83.

of Jeremy Bentham's estimation of happiness as the greatest quantity of pleasures combined.<sup>365</sup> Delbene's remedy for remorse, for example, is the repetition of crime: 'the ease with which he arrives at these excesses is only increased by the number of transgressions he must commit and the quantity of virtues he must contemn preparatorily.' Applied to the individual, quantitative utility is used as a means for negating the moral value of remorse in a nihilistic act that later results in happiness: 'What is most wonderful about it all is that he believes himself happy—and is'.<sup>366</sup> The main function of variations in Sade, nevertheless, is to provide the libertines with a measure of free will by offering a sense of power in ensuring the sustenance of pleasure; i.e. liberty in numbers.

### **Free Will versus the Will to Act**

In the section on eighteenth-century libertinism in chapter one I wrote about the fatalistic liberty which results from associating a lack of choice to Natural determinism. In *Les liaisons dangereuses* lack of free will featured in a strategy deployed by the Merteuil whilst instructing the Valmont to discard Tourvel – 'it is not my fault', he wrote repeatedly in his letter. With Sade a similar tactic turns into a policy that informs all libertine activities. Delbene's treatise against guilt includes a passage that attributes all regretful sentiments to the individual's adherence 'to some doctrine of freedom or of free will', which the abbess finds absurd due to her belief that all creatures are driven 'by a force more puissant than ourselves'.<sup>367</sup> She further argues – with an animate zeal that reminds one of Voltaire's Dr. Pangloss – that everything occurs in accordance with Nature's 'grand design', barring the possibility of the individual's exercise of free will. Having accepted the 'absolute sovereignty' of a tyrannical Nature,<sup>368</sup> the libertine hence makes the decision of acting as an extension of Nature, acquiring the pretext to become a tyrant himself.

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<sup>365</sup> David Boyle, *The Sum of Our Discontent: How Numbers Make Us Irrational*, (New York: Texere Thomson, 2004), p. 16.

<sup>366</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 89.

<sup>367</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 14.

<sup>368</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes tyranny as 'absolute sovereignty'.

In *Justine*, the monk Clement theorises his sadistic tendencies in the following argument:

[A]re we masters of our tastes? [...] If Nature were offended by these tastes it would not inspire them in us. It is impossible for us to receive any urge from her that is designed to outrage her, and in this absolute certainty we may indulge in all our passions, whatever form they may take and however violent they may be, quite sure that any disadvantages occasioned by their impact are merely part of Nature's plan, of which we are the involuntary instruments.<sup>369</sup>

The above hypothesis abides to Thomas Hobbes's view of liberty as 'the absence of all the impediments to action that are not contained in the nature and intrinsic quality of the agent'.<sup>370</sup> The example Hobbes brings to support his theory comes from nature, by which he seeks to prove that liberty comprises of an entity's ability to make full use of its natural faculties.<sup>371</sup> Lack of liberty, in contrast, implies the agent's refusal or inability to do what he has the power to do. That is, the only force that opposes the self's liberty is the other. In addition, Sade's deterministic worldview<sup>372</sup> is comparable to Hobbes's assumption that 'nothing takes beginning

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<sup>369</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 141.

<sup>370</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*, ed. by Vere Chappell, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), p. 74.

<sup>371</sup> Hobbes writes:

As, for example, the water is said to descend freely, or to have liberty to descend, by the channel of the river, because there is no impediment that way; but not across, because the banks are impediments. And though the water cannot ascend, yet men never say it wants the liberty to ascend, but the faculty or power, because the impediment is in the nature of the water and intrinsic. So also we say he that is tied wants the liberty to go, because the impediment is not in him but in his bands; whereas we say not so of him that is sick or lame, because the impediment is in himself (1999: 74).

<sup>372</sup> It must be noted that while Hobbes's determinism falls into the category of Compatibilism, which looks to reconcile a the existence of some manner of free will with deterministic necessity, Sade's perspective may be considered as Hard Determinism, according to which there is no possibility of free will. Stoppard's own view is closer to that of Hobbes. With respect to his interest in quantum physics and its effect on human behaviour, Stoppard remarks:

I thought that quantum mechanics and chaos mathematics suggested themselves as quite interesting and powerful metaphors for human behaviour, but about the way,



from itself, but from the action of some other immediate agent without itself'.<sup>373</sup> There are no voluntary actions, Hobbes argues, since all actions are necessitated by prior causes. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* represents an analogous deterministic outlook through the character of the Player who informs Ros and Guil that '[t]here is a design at work in all art' which demands that '[e]vents must play themselves to aesthetic, moral and logical conclusion'.<sup>374</sup> John Fleming maintains that the overall tone of Stoppard's play is that of a commentary on the assumption 'that life and the world are a combination of chance and determinism'.<sup>375</sup> It must be noted, nevertheless, that this is the view held by Ros and Guil, who are for the majority of the time uninformed characters. In answer to Guil's question about the specific design behind *their* case, the Player explains:

**Player** It never varies – we aim at the point where everyone who is marked for death dies.

**Guil** Marked?

**Player** Between 'just deserts' and 'tragic irony' we are given quite a lot of scope for our particular talent. Generally speaking, things have gone about as far as they can possibly go when things have got about as bad as they reasonably get. (*He switches on a smile.*)

**Guil** who decides?

**Player** (*switching off his smile*) *Decides? It is written.*<sup>376</sup>

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in the latter case, in which it suggested a determined life, a life ruled by determinism, and a life which is subject simply to random causes and effects. Those two ideas about life were not irreconcilable. Chaos mathematics is precisely to do with the unpredictability of determinism (*Conversations* 1995: 84).

<sup>373</sup> Hobbes, *Liberty and Necessity*, p. 74. 'And that, therefore, when first a man has an appetite or will to something, to which immediately before he had no appetite nor will, the cause of his will is not the will itself, but something else not in his own disposing' maintains Hobbes.

<sup>374</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 71.

<sup>375</sup> John Fleming, *Stoppard's Theatre: Finding Order amid Chaos*, Literary Modernism, (Austin: U of Texas P, 2001), p. 55.

<sup>376</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, pp. 71-2.

The Player's response betrays a particularly Sadean penchant for catastrophic progression based a tyrannical Nature who shows power in creative variations on the theme of death. The Player's take on tragedy, like Sade's, is that it is a natural occurrence that only ever has any value if its spectacle proves entertaining. R. H. Lee sees the brilliancy of Stoppard's dramaturgy in his decision to use a tragic play – *Hamlet* – as a fatalistic model in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. 'A tragedy becomes the vehicle for a sense of tragedy in another play,' explains Lee.<sup>377</sup> This is the same technique that is used in *120 Days* and the other three works by Sade studied in this research, where storytelling consists of an act of (re)counting that precedes practice, with the ensuing performance containing an additional variation whose existence ensures the continuity of the grand narrative.<sup>378</sup> And yet, how does Sade reconcile the natural law with human ethics?

In 'Kant and Sade: The Ideal Couple', Žižek explains how Lacan interprets the absence of the enunciator of moral law in Kant as an act of repression. Sade, Lacan argues, renders the enunciator visible by presenting him as 'the figure of the "sadist" executioner-torturer... the agent who finds pleasure in our (the moral subject's) pain and humiliation'.<sup>379</sup> The essential question for Žižek is whether 'the Kantian moral Law [is] translatable into the Freudian notion of superego or not'. For Žižek, a positive answer would constitute the fact that 'Sade is the truth of the Kantian ethics', while a negative answer would present Sade as the 'perverted realization' of Kant's ethics.<sup>380</sup> Lacan argues that if Kantian ethics forbids the agent of law to take pleasure from the other's punishment, 'then Kant is the antitotalitarian par excellence'.<sup>381</sup> Conversely, he describes the attitude of the 'sadist pervert' as follows:

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<sup>377</sup> R. H. Lee, 'The Circle and Its Tangent', *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 33 (1969), p. 40. 'Death is the goal of the design of all tragic art, and the actor can manoeuvre only in the determining of the kind of death, and the moral attitude to death' (1969: 41).

<sup>378</sup> This concept will be addressed in chapter five, in the section on orgy.

<sup>379</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Kant and Sade: The Ideal Couple', *lacanian ink*, 13 (1998), p.2, <<http://lacan.com>>

<sup>380</sup> Žižek, 'Kant and Sade', p. 3.

<sup>381</sup> Žižek, 'Kant and Sade', p. 3.

It's not my responsibility, it's not me who is effectively doing it, I am merely an instrument of the higher Historical Necessity... The obscene *jouissance* of this situation is generated by the fact that I conceive of myself as exculpated for what I am doing: isn't it nice to be able to inflict pain on others with the full awareness that I'm not responsible for it, that I merely fulfill the Other's Will...<sup>382</sup>

According to Lacan, what makes the sadist liable despite having realised an 'externally imposed necessity,' is that he subjectively assumes this 'objective necessity... by finding enjoyment in what is imposed on him'.<sup>383</sup> This theory reflects an episode in *Juliette* where the Chief Justice of the Parliament in Paris is accused by a fellow libertine of taking carnal pleasure from pronouncing death sentences. 'True, that not uncommonly happens,' he replies, 'but where is the disadvantage in converting one's duties into pleasures?'<sup>384</sup> As mentioned earlier, since the Sadean concept of pleasure is not distinct from power, in a narrative where dispositions are predetermined by Nature and all necessity is purely mechanical, there is no possibility of subjective autonomy unless through active enjoyment of externally imposed necessities. However, this does not so much manifest itself in the Sadean libertine's ability to justify the infliction of pain upon others, but in his taking responsibility for it. Rather than there being a question of exculpation, which finds no meaning in a nihilistic setting, suffering is inflicted by the libertine on his victim in order to grant the libertine a higher quantity of agency. Contrary to what Lacan and Žižek suggest, the libertine is ultimately counting upon being seen as the individual who is responsible for inflicting pain upon the other.<sup>385</sup> What he does not wish to believe in is that tormenting the other is unjust.

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<sup>382</sup> Žižek, 'Kant and Sade', p. 3.

<sup>383</sup> Žižek, 'Kant and Sade', p. 3.

<sup>384</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 222.

<sup>385</sup> As discussed earlier in the chapter, if there is one fact that repeatedly frustrates the Sadean libertine, it is his inability to outrage nature, that is, to commit a crime that is unnatural. The question of remorse only comes up when fledgling libertines are concerned. The senior libertine does not merely wish to fulfil the will of the Other, he wishes to replace the Other, a point that differentiates Sade's libertines from their fictional counterparts.

In the Sadean space, justice as such does not exist. If *jouissance* is denied to moral law, then the enunciator – which is considered identical to the law – will become analogous to the laws of physics. Consequently, the law will be denied the power to act. Sade refuses the moral law the ‘privilege’ of practising capital punishment ‘because, unfeeling in and of itself, the law cannot be accessible to the human passions that legitimize the cruel act of murder. [...] Since the law does not have the same motives, it cannot possibly have the same rights’.<sup>386</sup> In other words, since the law cannot *desire* or *will* to act, it cannot act if it is to be purely objective. Moreover, in absence of a common reality, there cannot be any possible grounds to act as a legislative foundation. An instance of this postmodern lack of common sense is shown in Stoppard’s play in a lexical capacity when the characters cannot understand each other even if the sentences are grammatically correct:

**Player** The old man thinks he’s in love with his daughter.

**Ros** (*appalled*) Good God! We’re out of our depth here.

**Player** No, no, no – *he* hasn’t got a daughter – the old man thinks he’s in love with *his* daughter.

**Ros** The old man is?

**Player** Hamlet, in love with the old man’s daughter, the old man thinks.<sup>387</sup>

To Sade, the only objective enunciator of the law is Nature, which is at the same time active and apathetic. In this light, moral law in its perfected form comprises a set of mechanical regulations which can be summed up in the following statement: *if it is possible, it is permitted*. In the case of the Sadean libertine, *id* and *superego* are identical: the perfect *I* is the *I* who seeks to best indulge my instinctual desires which are mechanical regulations dictated by Nature. Desire, in this sense, is reduced to a will to move. ‘The first principle and the finest quality of Nature is the movement that constantly drives her,’ remarks the Comte de Bressac in *Justine*, ‘but this movement is nothing but a perpetual succession of crimes’.<sup>388</sup> In other words, *crime* consists of the desire to transform matter from one mode into another.

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<sup>386</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 119.

<sup>387</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 60.

<sup>388</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 63.

The latter ideology comprises the entire premise of *120 Days* where each month is dedicated to one passion or *crime* in the original French. ‘Before Sade,’ writes Jean-Pierre Dubost, ‘libertine self-justification is sporadic and fragmentary, or mostly cited as an individual “petit systeme” of justification’. He goes on to explain Sadean libertinage ‘as the modern epic of willpower,’ which has as its primary drive ‘a power to be moved as intensely as possible’.<sup>389</sup> The Natural puissance that manifests as the will to move is translated in Sade into a theatrical will to direct. The reason for this is that since the libertine wishes to imitate Nature, he needs to construct an environment that is under his absolute control. Moreover, to be moved as intensely as possible, the libertine must necessarily move others with him if he wishes to keep in harmony with the principle of exhausting all mathematical variations.

‘At least we are presented with alternatives... But not choice,’ says Guil to Ros when they hear their names used interchangeably by Claudius and Gertrude,<sup>390</sup> observing a glimpse of freedom in a moment of unreality.<sup>391</sup> Nietzsche counts play-acting ‘as a consequence of the morality of “free will”,’ in which sense in a situation where lack of power is perceived, play-acting can furnish the individual with an illusion of choice.<sup>392</sup> Wanting in Nietzschean optimism – i.e. that perfection is possible and ‘[a]ll perfect acts are unconscious and no longer subject to will’<sup>393</sup> – Sade’s libertines regard theatre as the only means for assuming that they are capable of willing their own perfection. From a Sadean point of view, the Player’s ominous ‘*[i]t is written*’ takes on a metatheatrical rather than philosophical aspect.<sup>394</sup> The

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<sup>389</sup> Dubost, pp. 56-7.

<sup>390</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 30.

<sup>391</sup> Blanchot maintains that names give man power over objects (‘Right to Death’ 1995: 322), in which sense the confusion in Guil’s and Ros’s names can be seen as a variety of freedom.

<sup>392</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 163.

<sup>393</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 163.

<sup>394</sup> Both Gabriele Scott Robinson and Jenkins describe the Player as a *sinister* character: ‘But his superiority and air of menace are only assumed and, in contrast to the appealing vulnerability of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the Player, forever unmoved, is a somewhat sinister figure’ (Scott Robinson 1977: 39); ‘in the original production at the Old Vic his tone and manner were peculiarly sinister’ (Jenkins 1987: 47).

Player's knowledge can be categorised as libertine, since as William E. Gruber puts it, he strives to convince us that '*mimesis* represents the only valid mode of knowing'.<sup>395</sup> Nietzsche describes the will to power as: a drive for 'commanding of other subjects, which thereupon change',<sup>396</sup> as a phenomenon that depends on the interrogation of the 'scene for truth',<sup>397</sup> 'an insatiable desire to manifest power [...] or as the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive, etc.'.<sup>398</sup> Sade's theatrical will to act follows the exact same rules, specifically when it comes to the composition of the dramatic text itself, the paradoxical direction of which fits the Nietzschean definition of the will to power as a force that 'manifest[s] itself only against resistances'.<sup>399</sup>

Joachim Fiebach describes theatre as 'a type of social communication whose specificity is, first, the ostentatious display of audiovisual movements'. The crux of intricate theatrical forms, he explains, lies in 'the creative cooperation of several bodies', and aesthetic pleasure is ultimately driven from our observation of 'the staging human abilities'.<sup>400</sup> Hence, theatre allows the libertine to exhibit his will to power, while enjoying the freedom that comes from both 'self-direction', and more importantly, other-direction.<sup>401</sup> As a dictator/director, it is the libertine's will that drives the events. As soon as he ceases to take pleasure or is satisfied, the movement stops. To keep their interest level high and perpetual, Sade's libertines base their actions upon a philosophy that is always reactionary and *à rebours*. In

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<sup>395</sup> William E. Gruber, "Wheels within wheels, etcetera": Artistic Design in "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead", *Comparative Drama*, 15:4 (1981-82), 291-310.

<sup>396</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 271.

<sup>397</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 272.

<sup>398</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 333.

<sup>399</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 346. In a Hobbesian sense, Nietzsche's will to power surfaces when a dam is built on the river.

<sup>400</sup> Joachim Fiebach, 'Theatricality: From Oral Traditions to Televised "Realities"', *Substance* 98/99, 31:2 & 3 (2002), p. 17.

<sup>401</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 375. Nietzsche writes:

"All happiness is a consequence of virtue, all virtue is a consequence of free will!"  
*Let us reverse the values:* all fitness the result of fortunate organization, all freedom the result of fitness (--freedom here understood as facility in self-direction. Every artist will understand me).

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Guil acknowledges their existence in a similar universe when he explains to Ros the hopelessness of their situation:

**Guil** Wheels have been set in motion, and they have their own pace, to which we are... condemned. Each move is dictated by the previous one – that is the meaning of order.<sup>402</sup>

Likewise, Ros often admits that they ‘have no control. None at all...’,<sup>403</sup> and later suspects that a theatrical death might be his only means for escaping dramatic determinism:

**Ros** I wish I was dead. (*Considering the drop.*) I could jump over the side. That would put a spoke in their wheel.

**Guil** Unless they’re counting on it.

**Ros** I shall remain on board. That’ll put a spoke in their wheel.<sup>404</sup>

The fact that any amount of freedom they might experience is ‘within limits’,<sup>405</sup> is a consequence of Ros’s and Guil’s unfamiliarity with the script according to which the events unfold. That is to say, they are not in know as to ‘what is written’. In contrast, the Player is ‘always in character’,<sup>406</sup> to the point that he feels cheated if no one is observing his performance: ‘You don’t understand the humiliation of it – to be tricked out of the single assumption which makes our existence viable – that

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<sup>402</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 51. J. Dennis Huston goes so far as to posit Stoppard as a Sadean director when he argues that the ‘paralysis’ that engulfs Ros and Guil due to their powerlessness ‘is a measure of Stoppard’s power’ (1988: 6).

<sup>403</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 63.

<sup>404</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>405</sup> Note the following exchange:

**Guil** ... We are not restricted. No boundaries have been defined, no inhibitions imposed. We have, for the while, secured, or blundered into, our release, for the while. Spontaneity and whim are the order of the day. Other wheels are turning but they are not our concern. We can breathe. We can relax. We can do what we like and say what we like to whomever we like, without restriction.

**Ros** Within limits, of course.

**Guil** Certainly within limits (1967: 107-8).

<sup>406</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 25.

somebody is watching...'.<sup>407</sup> Furthermore, the Player displays a Sadean consciousness of actors as 'the opposite of people', for the very reason that they are aware of the narrative that precedes theatrical action.<sup>408</sup> Ros is subsequently disturbed when he realises the Player can actually witness his thoughts.<sup>409</sup> The Player's relative liberty is further demonstrated in his possession of a will to move: 'I can come and go as I please',<sup>410</sup> an instance which serves to prove the substitution of free will with will to power.

Foucault identifies the feudal notion of a 'sovereign power' as one which pertains to the right over the subject's life and death.<sup>411</sup> In this chapter, I analysed Sade's feudal tendency for establishing the power of the self over the other by what Foucault describes as 'a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself'.<sup>412</sup> Seen through a Sadean lens, what Stoppard achieves in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is an inventive inversion of Hamlet's endoxic limits, which results in the revelation of a theatrical will that reflects the Sadean Natural tyranny in its preference towards willpower over free will. If *Hamlet*'s universe permits the protagonist to benefit from free will but deprives him of willpower, here we have a reversal of circumstances where free will does not exist and a will to act is the only solution for acquiring autonomy. 'As civilisation advances in complexity, liberties

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<sup>407</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 54. A point to justify the Player's viewpoint that they are trapped in a theatrical environment is that there is no privacy in Stoppard's play; Ros describes their condition as something akin to 'living in a public park' (1967: 67), as opposed to *Hamlet* where privacy is a given (soliloquys are never heard by other characters). Blanchot considers lack of privacy a characteristic of the Reign of Terror, along with the fact that choices are reduced to 'Freedom or Death' ('Right to Death' 2002: 319).

<sup>408</sup> Jenkins holds that 'Stoppard makes us see Ros and Guil as both actors and people' (1987: 44). However, considering Bennett's argument that the difference between an actor and a real person is that '[a] real person can initiate actions, spontaneously generating them out of his own needs and wants and ideals and appetites, whereas the actor [...] must act according to the given text' (1975: 11), it is much more likely that Ros and Guil are actors who do not know they are actors, a theory which suits their deterministic universe.

<sup>409</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 55.

<sup>410</sup> Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, p. 57.

<sup>411</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols (London: Penguin, 1976), I, p. 135.

<sup>412</sup> Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, p. 136.



give way,' writes Stoppard in a *Guardian* article on the subject of freedom, while at the same time acknowledging the dangers of desiring too much liberty: 'So be it, but it's as well to know and name the retreat of liberty for what it is, and not to call it something else, before the retreat becomes a rout'.<sup>413</sup> *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* may as well be his playground for testing this theory, and for challenging the boundaries between a will to power and a will to act/play.<sup>414</sup> It is a 'will to act' that ultimately guarantees the Player's revival once he is stabbed by Guil; the eponymous characters, however, remain dead.

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<sup>413</sup> Tom Stoppard, 'On Liberty: Edward Snowden and top writers on what freedom means to them', *Guardian*, 21 Feb. 2014, < <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/feb/21/on-liberty-edward-snowden-freedom> > [accessed 20 July 2017].

<sup>414</sup> In 'Theatricality as Estrangement of Art and Life In the Russian Avant-Garde,' Jestrovic notes how Evreinov's notion of theatricality, as something 'inherent in humans as the will to play', echoes 'in a way Nietzsche's will to power' (2002: 43).

**Chapter 4: Sadean Apathy and the Myth of Phaedra/Hippolytus**

Late in 2011, I attended an interactive adaption that merged five of Harold Pinter's plays, produced by Hydrocracker at the Shoreditch Town Hall. The chosen plays were: *One for the Road*, *The New World Order*, *Precisely*, *Mountain Language*, and *Press Conference*. Throughout the performance, the audience were guided from one room to another to witness each scene in a well-choreographed sequence that made the entire event appear seamlessly absorbing. I use the term *witness* deliberately, since the entire procedure felt like the observation of criminal scenes. We watched silently as political prisoners were interrogated, followed rebels in a conspiratorial mood, became the public when the attention of one was necessitated, etc... Given the freshness in my memory of the many anecdotes I had heard about the abuse detained protestors had been subjected to following the 2009 presidential elections in Iran, I found the torture sequences especially difficult to watch.<sup>415</sup> My frustration was mainly rooted in the helplessness I felt at not being able to step forward and put an end to the abuse, and due to the fact that remaining a witness presented me as a 'good' spectator in a theatrical sense. The company's investment on generating a bystander effect, hence, resulted in an emotionally and intellectually provoking performance, capable of leaving a vivid imprint on the mind. Sade and his libertines make use of the same strategy for quite a different purpose; that is, in order to instil apathy in the spectator. In which sense, I argue that his technique is essentially meta-theatrical, rather than radical. While nowadays most mention of apathy comes in close association with a person's political stance or the lack thereof, in this chapter I will look at indifference from more of an individualistic perspective. The reason for this choice is that in Sade, as Adorno and Horkheimer clarify, 'private vice constitutes a predictive chronicle of the public virtues of the

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<sup>415</sup> Following the 2009 presidential election, there were widespread rumours that the election had been rigged. Young people were especially frustrated to see their moderate candidate brushed aside in favour of a right-wing candidate, which led to many protests taking place in Tehran and other major cities.

totalitarian era'.<sup>416</sup> Sadean apathy is modelled after Nature, just as Sadean willpower is, as discussed in the previous chapter. 'God is actually only Nature,' declares Durand the libertine sorceress, 'and Nature does not discriminate, neither does she deign to judge: in her eyes, all her creatures are equal and equally indifferent'.<sup>417</sup> Natural indifference in Sade is very much akin to the Nietzschean concept of nature. 'Think of a being such as nature is,' Nietzsche writes, 'prodigal beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without aims or intentions, without mercy or justice, at once fruitful and barren and uncertain'.<sup>418</sup>

The final section of the previous chapter discussed the concept of Natural will to act as it appears in Sade's oeuvre. The contention I arrived at was that desire in Sade is modelled after Natural tyranny which manifests itself in the form of the will to move. Through mimicking a tyrannical Nature, the libertine seeks to ascend to a position of power which ensures his sovereignty over the other. Exercise of power includes its maintenance, however, which is achieved by the libertine's resistance to the other's desire. That is to say, the Sadean libertine finds as much autonomy in causing the other's suffering, as he does in remaining unmoved by the sight of the other's pain and humiliation. In this context, *unmoved* refers to the libertine's lack of identification with the other's sorrow; otherwise, movement towards pleasure is considered to be a valued commodity. Sade's division of psychosomatic movement into two categories is a subversion of the Stoic stance on the subject of desire. According to the Stoics, the main purpose of life was to live in harmony with nature, with the 'virtuous life' as one that is devoid of passions, 'which are intrinsically disturbing and harmful to the soul'. Be that as it may, 'appropriate emotive responses conditioned by rational understanding and the fulfillment of all one's personal, social, professional, and civic responsibilities' are thought of as desirable. Stoicism recognises the four passions of pleasure, distress, appetite, and fear, which are considered to disobey reason and therefore act in opposition to nature. Pleasure and appetite are categorised as passions that pertain

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<sup>416</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 118.

<sup>417</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 541.

<sup>418</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 39.

to objects that are '[i]rrationally judged to be good', while distress and fear concern objects '[i]rrationally judged to be bad'. Whereas pleasure and distress belong to the present, appetite and fear belong to the future.<sup>419</sup> Sade likewise advocates total compatibility with Nature; nevertheless, he seeks to rationalise passions. In the Sadean narrative there are no traces of *appropriate emotive responses*, instead affective movement is condensed into passions. Pleasure and appetite are recognised as positive passions and are restricted to the libertines, while distress and fear belong solely to the victims. Indeed, appetite and fear, and pleasure and distress are imagined as specular reflections of one another, often roused in reaction to the same object – e.g. being whipped. Delbène, Mother Superior of the convent Juliette initially resides in, defines happiness as a matter of perspective:

We alone can make for our personal felicity: whether we are to be happy or unhappy is completely up to us, it all depends solely upon our conscience, and perhaps even more so upon our attitudes which alone supply the bedrock foundation to our conscience's inspirations.<sup>420</sup>

Delbène admits that her 'scorn for public opinion' forms the basis of her philosophy.<sup>421</sup> Thus, a paradoxical attitude is what separates Sade from the Stoics and from Kant. Whereas the latter two centre their interests on inventing interactive formulae that are expected to improve communal existence, the Sadean libertine observes interpersonal involvements as modes of entertainment realised as the enhancement of the self's pleasure and appetite at the expense of the other's distress and fear. In this sense, Natural indifference can be seen as the spectator's refusal to be moved since nothing that happens is outside the laws of nature.

This chapter examines the libertine agenda of achieving Natural apathy. I begin with analysing the characters of Phaedra and Hippolytus and the nature of their desire and apathy respectively, followed by a study of the role of the mother in Sade, and conclude with an enquiry on *Phaedra's Love* as a terminal version of the myth in a Sadean sense. The Phaedra/Hippolytus myth tells the story of a

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<sup>419</sup> William O. Stephens, 'Stoic Ethics', *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/stoiceth/>> [accessed 18 September 2017]

<sup>420</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 9.

<sup>421</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 9.

Grecian queen – wife of Theseus – who falls in love with her stepson. When Phaedra's pursuit of Hippolytus remains unsuccessful, she takes her own life, in some versions accusing her stepson of having raped her in her suicide letter. The wife's death leads Theseus to curse and banish his son, which ends in Hippolytus's demise after his horses are frightened by a monster sent from the sea by Poseidon. The textual material examined in this chapter are from treatments of the myth by Euripides, Seneca the Younger, Ovid, Jean Racine, and Sarah Kane.

### **Phaedra's Desire**

Euripides's *Hippolytus* introduces the gods as the main motivators. Problems faced by mortals originate from the whims and fancies of the gods. Aphrodite, a chief perpetrator, inflicts Phaedra with a passion for her step-son: 'And so it is that Aphrodite sent a fearful sickness of impious passion that crushed her heart'.<sup>422</sup> Phaedra herself has no power to eradicate her desire save through committing suicide, implying that Phaedra's desire is inseparable from Phaedra's self. The gods of Phaedra's world, like Sade's Nature, are indifferent towards mortals, and yet the opposite is not true. All human suffering in *Hippolytus*, Jerker Blomqvist maintains, results from attempts on their behalf to imitate gods.<sup>423</sup> Blomqvist outlines the theme of the play as a conflict between the actions of the humans versus the gods, which he recognises as 'two different modes of reacting to the same stimuli, one primitive, violent, and egocentric, the other reflective, mature, and characteristic of a more developed society'.<sup>424</sup> Blomqvist further describes the actions of the gods as 'ultimately characterized by a ruthless egotism', which nevertheless manifest in the guise of a priori justice in their primitivism.<sup>425</sup> Considering the latter statement,

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<sup>422</sup> Euripides, *Medea and other plays*, trans. by John Davie, (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 156.

<sup>423</sup> Jerker Blomqvist, 'Human and Divine Action in Euripides' *Hippolytus*', *Hermes*, 110:4 (1982), p. 398.

<sup>424</sup> Blomqvist, p. 398.

<sup>425</sup> Blomqvist, p. 407.

it would be pertinent to recognise the gods' actions as a form of super-egoism, rather than egotism. A super-egoistic enunciator of law, in turn, corresponds to the Sadean concept of Nature, and of passions as positive motivators. When Sade's libertines deem to elect themselves as deities, it is often with the aim of reconciling their primitive desires with the natural law. In the company of Noircueil, Saint-Fond professes his misanthropic sentiments towards human beings: 'many a time have I blushed at having been born in the midst of such creatures'.<sup>426</sup> Immediately, in a passage that is not devoid of sarcasm, Juliette asks the two libertines whether they truly think of themselves as humans, and provides the answer herself thus: 'no, when one bears so little resemblance to the common herd, when one dominates it so absolutely, it is impossible to be of its race'. Saint-Fond happily agrees with Juliette's response, concluding: 'we are so many gods; as it is with them, so it is with us – do we not have but to formulate desires to have them satisfied instantly?'.<sup>427</sup> This is an attitude that seems to be shared by the Olympian divinities that seek to influence the mortals in Phaedra's world. Given the significance of movement, the passion inflicted on Phaedra fundamentally follows the laws of physics: when there is motion, there is heat. Ovid's *Heroides IV*, portraying Phaedra's letter to Hippolytus, and Seneca's *Phaedra* respectively cite the *burning* effect of the queen's desire:

Love has come to me, the deeper for its coming late – I am burning with love within; I am burning, and my breast has an unseen wound.<sup>428</sup>

PHAEDRA: ...my pain burns in me like the burning heart of Etna.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> 'Be he powerful, the man is dangerous, and no tiger in the jungle can match him for wickedness. Is he puny, weak, woebegone? then how base he is, how vile, how disgusting within and without!' (*Juliette* 1968: 242).

<sup>427</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, pp. 242-3.

<sup>428</sup> Ovid, 'Phaedra to Hippolytus', *Heroides [electronic resource]*, trans. by Grant Showerman, (Cambridge (MA): Harvard UP, 2014), p. 45.

<sup>429</sup> Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Thyestes, Phaedra, The Trojan women, Oedipus, with Octavia*, trans. by E. F. Watling, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 102.

CHORUS: Love's fire is everywhere. Love stirs the leaping flame of youth, and warms the dying ash of age, kindles the first fire in a maiden's heart, brings gods from heaven to walk the earth in strange disguises.<sup>430</sup>

The comparison of Phaedra's passion to Mount Etna endows it with a libertine potential. Libertine desire is often described as volcanic, and one of the fiercest libertines who appears in *Juliette* lives in an abyss at the vicinity of a volcano in Italy. 'Such is the power of the climate that a man who changes climates feels the effects despite himself,' writes eighteenth-century French materialist philosopher, La Mettrie, arguing in favour of the power of atmosphere over mankind in determining their behaviour.<sup>431</sup> Sade, frequently referring to La Mettrie in his writings, has a similar view of ethics as not only pertaining to geography but also to climate. 'For the human conscience... is not at all times and everywhere the same, but rather almost always the direct product of a given society's manners and of a particular climate and geography,' declares Delbène.<sup>432</sup> Sade's thermo-ethics is ever in favour of Natural acclimatisation. Catherine Cusset, moreover, identifies a rupture of (familial) ties as the main imperative of Sadean libertinage.<sup>433</sup> In which light, the Sadean solution to Phaedra's immolation would be for her to deem her appetite for Hippolytus rational and seek to gratify her desire by acting as a conduit for Nature/Aphrodite. Otherwise, there is a risk that emotion might substitute motion. In the Sadean context, emotion is a passion that is judged to be rationally detrimental, whereas motion is judged to be rationally beneficial. Clairwil describes herself as callous and impassive, mistress of her soul's 'movement and affectations'.<sup>434</sup> Clairwil's impassivity means she can no longer find delight in noncriminal pleasures; however, she sees her apathy as a necessary component in the prevention of committing impulsive crimes which, she holds, 'speedily bring

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<sup>430</sup> Seneca, p. 110.

<sup>431</sup> Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Machine Man and Other Writings*, trans. by Ann Thomson, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>432</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 9.

<sup>433</sup> Catherine Cusset, 'Sade: de l'imagination libertine à l'imaginaire volcanique', *French Forum*, 18:2 (1993), p. 151.

<sup>434</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 274.

their author to the gibbet'.<sup>435</sup> Meanwhile, Phaedra's passion is out of her control and drives her towards madness:

Now too – you will scarce believe it – I am changing to pursuits I did not know; I am stirred to go among wild beasts. The goddess first for me now is the Delian, known above all for her curved bow; it is your choice that I myself now follow... now again I am borne on, like daughters of the Bacchic cry driven by the frenzy of their god, [...] For they tell me of all these things when that madness of mine has passed away; and I keep silence, conscious 'tis love that tortures me.<sup>436</sup>

Phaedra's association of love with a Dionysian lack of control<sup>437</sup> contrasts Clairwil's Apollonian treatment of desire. The libertine may act as an instrument of a destructive Nature, yet the receptor of the damage caused is always the other and never the self.<sup>438</sup>

In my study of apathy as presented in Sadean discourse, I distinguish motion as a pre-social affect originating from within, and emotion as a post-social affect that is induced upon the individual by external forces. The difference is that of internal versus external stimulation, and while motion is fuelled by the self's imagination, emotion is expected to foster obedience towards others. This analysis originates from my understanding of Sade's take on affect as an extreme version of the Spinozan viewpoint on the topic of cause and effect. In *Ethics*, Spinoza divides causes into the two categories of adequate and inadequate (or partial). An adequate cause produces a readily comprehensible effect, while an inadequate cause cannot generate a sufficiently comprehensible effect.<sup>439</sup> The difference between these two

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<sup>435</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 279.

<sup>436</sup> Ovid, p. 47.

<sup>437</sup> In his translation of Euripides, John Davie explains in the endnotes that 'madness or delusion was commonly attributed to the influence of some god, often a deity associate with wild nature or ecstatic celebrations (e.g. Bacchus, Cybele or Pan)' (2003: 187).

<sup>438</sup> In chapter six I explore how Sadean industry puts the other to use in order to sustain self-interest.

<sup>439</sup> Spinoza, p. 69.



species of causes comes from lack of understanding. Hence, if a cause is inadequate, the implication is that our knowledge of the nature of the cause is inadequate, which in turn suggests that the cause has other authors besides us. Spinoza identifies the latter situation, where an individual is ‘only a partial cause’, as one in which the individual is being ‘acted on’.<sup>440</sup> To Spinoza, an affect is an *action* when the individual is its adequate cause, otherwise he considers an affect a *passion* if the individual is being acted on.<sup>441</sup> Libertine paranoia pursues the removal of the possibility of personal inadequacy through knowing all. Indeed, in libertinism paranoia is developed since there is a need to consider the possibility of emotions to better have them under control; that is, paranoia marks the morphing of emotions into thoughts. Since emotions have unpredictable causes (others), to *think* all possible emotions that may be roused as reaction to an external stimulus is to imagine a surreal landscape that merges several strategic maps. Sade’s naming of crimes as passions in *120 Days* is an endeavour to turn passions into thoughts via categorising manias as encyclopaedic entities. Likewise, his insistence on proclaiming passions as adequate affects ensures that his libertine characters remain perpetually active. ‘If we separate emotions, or affects, from the thought of an external cause,’ writes Spinoza, ‘and join them to other thoughts, then the love, or hate, towards the external cause is destroyed, as are the vacillations of mind arising from these affects’.<sup>442</sup> The Sadean libertine achieves emotional exclusion by first displacing emotion into the realm of doxa, and then seeking to justify a paradoxical state of self-sufficiency. An emotion such as pity, for instance, is dismissed as a social and not a natural necessity, and therefore not necessary at all. As we have seen so far, one of the most conspicuous oversights in Sade’s writings is a lack of reconciliation between the social and the natural.<sup>443</sup> The result is that all social functions are expected to occur in theatrical confines.

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<sup>440</sup> Spinoza, p. 69.

<sup>441</sup> Spinoza, p. 70.

<sup>442</sup> Spinoza, p. 163.

<sup>443</sup> Elena Russo maintains that Sade ‘unlike Rousseau, [...] believes it is possible to reintroduce the state of nature within modern society’ (1997: 391).

Returning to Clairwil's remark about impulsive crimes, it should be noted that her mention of the gibbet lends a spectacular angle to the punishment. Public execution or shaming is about the only fantasy that is not included in the libertine register of theatrical delights. In fact, Sade's libertines almost invariably hold exalted public offices;<sup>444</sup> they are judges, clergymen, noblemen, etc., who are deemed to be respectable in society to the point that their victims, once betrayed, are always surprised. The libertine's dislike for public opinion does not stretch so far as to fashion a paradoxical martyr out of him,<sup>445</sup> and his desire to be acknowledged as the author of the other's pain extends only to a select audience of victims and fellow libertines. The apathy that is essential for maintaining the privacy of the spectacle, nevertheless, can force the libertine into a state of boredom, since his passions are seldom non-orchestrated – recall that the libertine must always pursue a passion that he judges to be *rationally* good. 'Ordinary things have long since palled...' Clairwil explains to Juliette. 'To be moved ever so slightly, I must have recourse to refinements so coarse, episodes so potent,' and to a quantity of 'monstrous thoughts, of obscene gestures, actions'.<sup>446</sup> The libertine's admission in this case corresponds with Nietzsche's prediction of the advent of 'a kind of tropical tempo in competition in growing, and a tremendous perishing and self-destruction, thanks to the savage egoisms' which turn against one another while no longer bound by limitations imposed by external threat in a prosperous society.<sup>447</sup> In Seneca, Phaedra's nurse uses a similar reasoning to explain the madness which is tormenting her mistress as '[v]ain fancies conceived by crazy minds':

NURSE: [...] Venus' divinity and Cupid's arrows! Too much contentment and prosperity, and self-indulgence, lead to new desires; then lust comes in,

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<sup>444</sup> The exception is when the libertines are outlaws. However, Sade sometimes mixes the two to produce the category of the noble outlaw: an aristocrat who indulges in banditry for amusement.

<sup>445</sup> Sade frequently describes his libertines as cowards.

<sup>446</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 285.

<sup>447</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 200-2.

good fortune's fatal friend; everyday fare no longer satisfies, plain houses and cheap ware are not enough.<sup>448</sup>

The nurse denies the divinity of ruinous emotions (passions, in Sadean discourse) and instead attributes fatality to excess: it is not the gods that instil desire in human beings, but boredom rooted in excess. Euripides has the nurse recommend Phaedra to refrain from indulging in excess, even though this time it is an excess of restraint she advises against:

NURSE: [...] A life of strict, unswerving conduct more often leads to failure, they say, than to happiness, and is no friend to health. Excess then, wins no praise from me. 'Know when to stop' – that's my life's rule, and the wise will say I'm right.<sup>449</sup>

Hence, it is in spirit of moderation that the nurse suggests Phaedra seduces Hippolytus. This suggestion places the nurse outside the endoxic discourse, a fact which is pointed out by the chorus:

CHORUS-LEADER: Phaedra, this woman's advice is more helpful in meeting your present trouble, but I take your side. Yet this praise will please you less than her words and grate more on your ear.<sup>450</sup>

The Chorus is never permitted to act directly or to interfere in the ongoing events, and instead it acts as an embodiment of doxa in Greek Tragedy (even in the changeable nature of its opinion).<sup>451</sup> One of the most significant features of the chorus is that it helps the audience determine the characters' reputation. Blomqvist isolates reputation as Phaedra's 'main concern' throughout the play, emphasising the fact that reputation finds no meaning outside 'a social context'. The only characters who do not suffer from ill-repute are the gods, he explains.<sup>452</sup> Even though it presumes the existence of an audience, in principal reputation is an anti-

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<sup>448</sup> Seneca, p. 106.

<sup>449</sup> Euripides, p. 143.

<sup>450</sup> Euripides, p. 149.

<sup>451</sup> Phaedra recognises the role of the chorus as a representative of ethical wisdom when she tells the Chorus-Leader: 'Your task is to give me good advice' (Euripides 2003: 155).

<sup>452</sup> Blomqvist, p. 412.

theatrical entity due to the spectator's ethical, rather than aesthetical, gaze. However, like any other manner of excess, an excess of rigid anti-theatricality can be utilised in libertinism in the invention of a novel form of performance. Racine's *Phèdre* foregrounds the importance of honour in a passage spoken by Phaedra's nursemaid, Oenone:

OENONE: But even if some innocent blood should flow, that's nothing to lost honour in the world's eyes, honour too precious ever to compromise. Whatever honour orders you must do. Honour takes precedence above everything, above virtue even.<sup>453</sup>

Such uncompromising interpretation of honour recalls the performative prowess of the libertine characters in *Les liaisons dangereuses* and the significance of being a proficient ethical actor in a social context. Sharon A. Stanley proposes that 'the most truly sadistic manifestation of libertine sociability' is the 'predatory art' that enables the libertine to 'exploit the gap between appearance and reality in society for the sake of personal glory'. She brings the example of 'Diderot's portrayal of the talent of the actor in *The Paradox of the Actor*' in reasoning that an expert social actor maintains an apathetic distance between the self and the other as a sign of 'self-mastery'.<sup>454</sup> Likewise, Sade's libertines perform the role of the good citizen in public, while in private they play at gods in their toy theatres. On the other hand, Phaedra is unable to perform ethically since she fails to master her desire. Unlike Blomqvist's identification of reputation as the central theme of the play, Barbara E. Goff posits Phaedra's desire as the play's focal point. 'When characters speak,' she maintains, 'they speak, either directly or indirectly, of Phaidra's desire; when they are silent, it is that desire which they suppress'.<sup>455</sup> Nonetheless, Goff's zero-sum balancing of the expression as opposed to the silencing of desire inevitably

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<sup>453</sup> Jean Racine, *Racine's Phaedra*, trans. by Derek Mahon, (Loughcrew: The Gallery Press, 1996), p. 41.

<sup>454</sup> Sharon A. Stanley, *The French Enlightenment and the Emergence of Modern Cynicism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), p. 93.

<sup>455</sup> Barbara E. Goff, *The Noose of Words: Readings of Desire, Violence and Language in Euripides' Hippolytos*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), p. 31.

introduces reputation into the equation as an antagonistic motive.<sup>456</sup> The moment Phaedra utters her desire, or even her distress for sheltering said desire, she transforms into an unethical enunciator (as opposed to the enunciator of the law) who has no claim on a good reputation.<sup>457</sup> Goff describes Phaedra's desire as 'restless and mobile', capable of launching the narrative.<sup>458</sup> I would argue, however, that Hippolytus's resistance is an equally important factor in ensuring that the narrative remains in motion, since it guarantees Phaedra's continual affective endeavour. In a Spinozan sense, Phaedra is being acted on, while Hippolytus's apathy renders him rationally active. 'Are you possessed, sweet lady?' the Chorus asks Phaedra after witnessing her sorrow,<sup>459</sup> and she is certainly possessed by her desire. Hippolytus, in contrast, seems to be in possession of his faculties, though whether this is the case remains to be seen.

### Hippolytus's apathy

Whereas heat is an indicator of motion in Sadean space,<sup>460</sup> coldness is observed as the preferred option whenever resistance to being moved is advantageous. When Noircueil informs Juliette that he has poisoned her parents, her reaction is as follows:

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<sup>456</sup> In *Reproducing Rome: Motherhood in Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, and Statius*, Mairéad McAuley considers the Senecan Hippolytus's denomination of Phaedra's desire as 'unspeakable' as a technique on the playwright's behalf to expose the stereotypical association of step-mothers with unspeakability (2015: 235).

<sup>457</sup> In *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow*, drawing on Aristotle's consideration of the suffering body as a prime source of 'emotional excitation' or pathos, Charles Segal sees Euripides's *Hippolytus* as a theatricalisation of Phaedra's suffering (1993: 89-90). Phaedra's passion, Segal maintains, exposes the public to 'feminine emotions that would usually reach neither the ears nor eyes of men' (1993: 116). He further explains: 'In tragedy the language of woman is part of her sexuality and cannot escape being, in some way, eroticized. Her speech is like her "bed" or "body": when it is brought outside the house, to men, it causes shame and trouble' (1993: 117).

<sup>458</sup> Goff, p. 32.

<sup>459</sup> Euripides, p. 140.

<sup>460</sup> In *120 Days* the four libertines ensure that room reserved for the orgies always stays warm.

A sudden quaking laid hold of me, to the core of me I shuddered; but straightway upon Noircueil I bent a stare, the phlegmatic, apathetic stare of the wickedness with which, in spite of me, Nature was at once burning and freezing my heart: ‘Monster,’ I repeated in a thickened voice, and speaking slowly, ‘thou art an abomination, I love thee’.<sup>461</sup>

At this point of the narrative, Juliette is still young and under training. Much later, when she finds out that her real father is alive but destitute, her thoughts on the matter are much more dispassionate, to the point that she is not even moved to begin with:

Undeniably, pathos abounded in the wretch’s speech; but there are hearts which harden rather than melt before the efforts of those who strive to appeal to them. Like the kind of wood that toughens when exposed to fire, it is in the very element which one would suppose ought to consume them that they acquire an added degree of force.<sup>462</sup>

Juliette’s indifference towards both Noircueil and her father demonstrates her idea of emotional vulnerability as a subjugation to external influence that leads to loss of autonomy. Josué Harari explains that Sadean apathy warrants ‘the libertine’s mastery over *jouissance*’.<sup>463</sup> In the case of Hippolytus – as he appears in the Greek, Roman, and French editions of the narrative – apathy may indicate ‘scepticism about the endurance of present values’.<sup>464</sup> That is, rather than willing to exercise a perverse grip over his desire for Phaedra, Hippolytus may simply not imagine the liaison worth the pursuit. Even so, his indifference does not suggest that he adheres

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<sup>461</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 149.

<sup>462</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 467.

<sup>463</sup> Josué Harari, ‘Sade’s Discourse on Method: Rudiments for a Theory of Fantasy’, *MLN*, 99:5 (1984), p. 1057.

<sup>464</sup> Michael Neumann, ‘A case for Apathy’, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 7:2 (1990), p. 201. In this regard, Michael Neumann writes:

They may, instead, have learned from experience that an avidly desired and pursued goal is always more valued before than after its attainment, and that setting a low initial value on a goal may actually increase its final value. If the values of various alternatives are adjusted in the light of such knowledge, apathy looks much more rational (1990: 195).

to endoxic logic, since his *sophrosune*<sup>465</sup> (common sense) is ‘idiosyncratic’ owing to the fact that his rationale ‘resolutely ignores social relations with other people’.<sup>466</sup>

The violence of Hippolytus’s interactive stance is depicted in his excessive frigidity. Unlike Phaedra, he is frequently described as callous and cold. Racine’s Phaedra calls Hippolytus ‘icy and inhuman’,<sup>467</sup> and the closest she herself approaches his level of coldness is when, having taken poison and on the verge of death, she feels ‘a strange frost about [her] heart, and [...] at peace at last’.<sup>468</sup> And yet, Racine’s *Phèdre* portrays Hippolytus as far less a Stoic in his attitude than his counterparts in Euripides and Seneca.<sup>469</sup> Whereas in the Greek and Roman versions of the play Hippolytus is more or less a recluse, Racine’s Hippolytus readily confesses to his ambition to make a name for himself. He addresses his father like so: ‘Before you’d reached my age now, more than one tyrant, more than one monster had known the weight of your displeasure; [...] while I, despite your fame, am still unknown; even my mother’s name is greater than my own’.<sup>470</sup> This acknowledgement of the significance of reputation foreshadows the later events of

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<sup>465</sup> In ‘The Articulation of the self in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, Christopher Gill cites Helen North in explaining the ambiguous meaning of the Greek word *sōphrosunē*, which depending on the social context may denote chastity, virtue, self-control, wisdom, etc. ‘[T]he play seems to explore and exploit this diversity of meaning,’ Gill maintains (1990: 80). My choice of using ‘common sense’ as the translation of the word is owing to the endoxic nature of the traits mentioned above as well as the capricious nature of common opinion.

<sup>466</sup> Goff, p. 41. ‘While *sophrosune* is traditionally understood as an inner-directed virtue, it has necessary ramifications for one’s behaviour with others’ writes Goff, explaining that ‘*sophrosune* is a site of ambiguity’ in Euripides’s play (1990: 41).

<sup>467</sup> Racine, p. 52.

<sup>468</sup> Racine, p. 65.

<sup>469</sup> Note that Racine departs from the idea of Hippolytus as an individual entirely unable to fall in love. He is in love with Aricia, his contender to the throne of Athens, and although this is against his will and he considers it a loss of independence, he recognises his affection for her and reconciles himself to it. Even his mentor, Theramenes, urges him to welcome love:

HIPPOLYTUS: ... Even were I to lose my independence [in love]

THERAMENES: ... But why be frightened of a real emotion? Do you still cling to your harsh isolation? (1996: 14)

<sup>470</sup> Racine, p. 42.

the play once Phaedra's superior ethos acts in her favour when she accuses Hippolytus of rape.<sup>471</sup> In his defence, Hippolytus reasons that his reputation is pure, since greater crimes are preceded by smaller ones, and his innocence of smaller crimes should therefore exonerate him from suspicion of having committed adultery: 'It's this my name is known for throughout Greece, an almost *comical* extreme of virtuousness'.<sup>472</sup> His claim is nevertheless dismissed by Theseus who interprets Hippolytus's celibacy as a mask to conceal the fact that he is only capable of enjoying a Sadean manner of *jouissance*. '[O]nly Phaedra pleases your prurient eye,' Theseus speculates, 'while your indifferent soul disdains the fire of any natural love or innocent desire'.<sup>473</sup> Theseus's response is in effect an inversion of Hippolytus's logic in turning his argument against him: if Hippolytus is immoderately chaste, the reason could only be his desire for his step-mother, hence implying that Hippolytus may well be a libertine in disguise.

If Hippolytus shows libertine tendencies, it is in the sense that his lack of desire is as paradoxical as Phaedra's passion, and therefore reveals an in-depth yearning for individuation seen as freedom. In Seneca, Hippolytus's worship of Diana, goddess of chastity and hunt, suggests his preference for an isolated state of existence that he recognises as exceptionally 'true to man's primeval laws'.<sup>474</sup> His description of the solitary man as 'a stranger to the sins that breed in populous cities,' and one who 'has no need to wake in guilty fear at every passing sound, or guard his speech with lies',<sup>475</sup> betrays a cynical outlook that rivals the Sadean libertine's, with the difference that Hippolytus is apathetic without possessing a will to theatrical motion. Furthermore, it is revealed that in his idyllic sanctuary *might* does not equal *right* when Hippolytus laments the loss of peace, 'wickedly destroyed by the accursed lust for gain,' and voices his aversion towards the notion of the 'strong

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<sup>471</sup> Implied when Theseus wonders at how Phaedra might be a criminal when she does not look like one: 'How can the face of an adulterer shine so with the light of conscience?' (Racine 1996: 46).

<sup>472</sup> Racine, p. 48.

<sup>473</sup> Racine, p. 48.

<sup>474</sup> Seneca, p. 117.

<sup>475</sup> Seneca, p. 118.



preying upon weak; might standing in the place of right'.<sup>476</sup> He does not look to become a mover himself and his idea of nature is predominated by a sense of tranquillity which is in no manner volcanic. Instead, he attributes destructiveness to women.<sup>477</sup> Euripides's Hippolytus is known to avoid women and even goes so far as to reproach Zeus for making women necessary for procreation:

HIPPOLYTUS: [...] If you wished to propagate the race of men, it wasn't from women you should have provided this; no, men ought to enter your temples and there purchase children at a valuation, each at its appropriate price, depositing in exchange bronze or iron or weight of gold, and then live in freedom in their homes without women...<sup>478</sup>

His apathy towards the female sex escalates into revulsion when he specifically admits to detesting clever women, identifying them as particularly dangerous since they are able to transform their promiscuous urges into deeds. In Seneca, Hippolytus's main argument against women is that women are the 'prime mover of all wickedness':

HIPPOLYTUS: [...] Let one example speak for all: Medea, Aegeus' wife, proclaims all women damned... I hate them all; I dread, I shun, I loathe them. I choose – whether by reason, rage, or instinct – I choose to hate them. Can you marry fire to water?<sup>479</sup>

Hippolytus's antipathy towards the other-mover reaches its zenith with Phaedra. 'Women... he hates the whole sex, he avoids them all, he has no heart, he dedicates his youth to single life,' Phaedra's nurse remarks, adding: 'marriage is not for him – which proves him a true Amazonian'.<sup>480</sup> Referring to Hippolytus's foreign lineage – his mother, Antiope<sup>481</sup> was an Amazon – is the source of his exile from the ethical sphere of Athens, implying the negative weight of his reputation. His reluctance to

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<sup>476</sup> Seneca, p. 119.

<sup>477</sup> All except Artemis/Diana.

<sup>478</sup> Euripides, p. 153.

<sup>479</sup> Seneca, p. 120.

<sup>480</sup> Seneca, p. 107.

<sup>481</sup> Alternately, the Amazon queen Hippolyta is named as the mother of Hippolytus.

wed is understood as an aversion to civil codes of conduct, and the origin of his hatred for women is traced to his hatred for the civilised queen. ‘Will his hatred cease for you,’ the nurse reminds Phaedra, ‘when, very like, it is for hate of you he hates all women?’<sup>482</sup> In an attempt to convince Hippolytus to return Phaedra’s love, the nurse asks him to think about his mother and her warrior women who worship Aphrodite. His response reveals, however, that he feels equally indifferent towards the Amazons and his birthmother: ‘One thing consoles me for my mother’s death: there is no woman now whom I must love’.<sup>483</sup> Thus, Hippolytus refuses to perform according to either the ethical principles of his father’s civilisation or his mother’s tribe<sup>484</sup> – note that ethical conduct becomes ethical performance in a paranoiac atmosphere where more than one endoxic narrative is valid. Caught between two climates, he sees no choice but to invent an ethic of apathy that interestingly enough allows him to remain both faithful to the Amazon reverence of wild life and the civilised requirement for virtue. This postmodern ethical arrangement fails, nevertheless, when his disillusionment with the maternal figure prevents him from considering motherhood as a non-theatrical phenomenon.

### Motherhood in Sade

In Seneca’s version of the narrative, Phaedra does not ascribe her passion to a Bacchic fit of madness; rather she acknowledges her suffering as a curse suffered also by her mother. ‘What does it mean? What is this passion for woods and fields?’ She enquires. ‘Is this the evil spell that bound my mother, my unhappy mother?... O mother, I feel for you... Love lies not lightly on any daughter of the house of Minos; We know no love that is not bound to sin’.<sup>485</sup> The curse forced upon Phaedra

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<sup>482</sup> Seneca, p. 107.

<sup>483</sup> Seneca, p. 121.

<sup>484</sup> In the first volume of *Inner Purity and Pollution in Greek Religion*, Andrej Petrovic and Ivana Petrovic interpret Hippolytus’s ‘sense of entitlement to shape his life in an individualistic way and outside the common societal patterns’, among other motifs in his behaviour, as a factor that introduces him as a liminal character. His conduct, they explain, put him in danger since – as Blomqvist also suggested – it is one that is ‘reserved for gods’ (2016: 215).

<sup>485</sup> Seneca, p. 103.

and her mother is Sadean in essence: they cannot experience a *jouissance* that is not pathological. As a result there is no conventional cure for their suffering: ‘Reason? ... What good can reason do? Unreason reigns Supreme, a potent god commands my heart...’.<sup>486</sup> Elissa Marder points out that, in Racine’s treatment of the story, Phaedra’s referral to her mother’s misfortune is an indication of her ‘refusal to speak’, which in turn links her desire to her mother’s.<sup>487</sup> Earlier I mentioned how the fact of Phaedra’s suicide transforms her into the embodiment of her desire; when her desire is not separate from a notion of maternity, Phaedra herself is stripped of her personhood and invested with the mask of the mother. When she finally confesses her desire for her step-son, the nurse reacts by comparing her confession to the birth of a monstrous child, thus associating transgression itself with the maternal figure.<sup>488</sup> The transgressive nature of their interpersonal involvements situates both mother and daughter in a Sadean locale where empathy becomes a risk under the threat of self-abnegation. In *Juliette*, the Comte de Belmor delivers a lengthy speech on the dangers of love, which includes the following passage:

Of all man’s passions, love is the most dangerous and that against which he should take the greatest care to defend himself. To judge whether love be madness, is not the lover’s distraction sufficient proof of it? or that fatal illusion he entertains, which causes him to ascribe such charms to the object he dotes upon and goes scampering about praising to the skies?<sup>489</sup>

The eighteenth-century conception of maternity as self-sacrifice marks the mother<sup>490</sup> – as she appears in the novels of the time – as an ideal target for libertine

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<sup>486</sup> Seneca, p. 105. Here, as before, whenever a god is mentioned the implication is that the character wills to act paradoxically, or has lost control.

<sup>487</sup> Elissa Marder, *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Deconstruction*, (New York: Fordham UP, 2012), pp. 197-8.

<sup>488</sup> Marder, p. 199.

<sup>489</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 509. Love is particularly dangerous for the controlling libertines since as a concept love has numerous connotations but no fixed denotation, which makes it impossible to contain encyclopaedically. The last sentence in the this passage is particularly telling in that it reveals a narcissistic treatment of love as an either/or sentiment, present also in the logic promoted by Hippolytus, who places an ideal of motherhood that approaches the virgin goddess far above the human women he encounters.

<sup>490</sup> In *Matrophobic Gothic and Its Legacy*, D. Rogers associates the ‘matrophobic discourse in eighteenth-century England’ with the ‘self-sacrificing construction of motherhood’ in

wrath. Julie Kipp brings the example of a female Romantic writer's poem in which the author presents a nuanced evaluation of pregnancy as a situation through which the woman is confronted with an 'alienation from self', while she at once celebrates and dreads the arrival of 'the child captive' who is also a prisoner of the mother. Kipp reads the poem as a testament to the mother's metamorphosis into and identification with the other.<sup>491</sup> Sade's view of motherhood, while incorporating some Enlightenment and Romantic properties, resembles or perhaps exposes the gothic fascination with the utilisation of maternal love as 'a perfect vehicle for the examination of individual and social diseases, physical and psychological imprisonments, and those dark forces supposed to be illuminated by enlightened reason'.<sup>492</sup>

Sade's libertines dislike their fathers as well as their mothers.<sup>493</sup> Yet it is the mother who is subject to the most brutal assault. There is no explicit explanation for this hatred of the mother, other than she is usually portrayed as the dialectical opposite to the libertine father who is admired. When the Duc de Blangis asks Duclos why she and her sister hate their mother, she responds: 'as nothing overt occurred to give rise to it, I should judge it most likely that this sentiment was

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the novelistic form: 'The repression of the mother becomes an organizing absence at the center of the rise of the novel, a genre that develops as a locus for the radical displacement of matrophobia' (2007: 8).

<sup>491</sup> Julie Kipp, *Romanticism, Maternity, and the Body Politic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), p. 6. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism. This poem is a rather rare example, however. Regarding the more popular treatment of mothers in Romanticism, Kipp writes:

Romantic-period mothers were caught in a fascinating double bind, indicted indiscriminately for following and/or rejecting their presumed natures. This is to say that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century mothers were deemed monstrous either way: they were 'dangerously good' if they loved their children too generously, too indiscriminately; and "naturally bad" if they did not love them enough. This either/or neither/nor trap positions Romantic mothers outside the standard good/bad oppositions endorsed in mainstream Enlightenment writings (2003: 11).

<sup>492</sup> Kipp, p. 56.

<sup>493</sup> '[I]f there is in all the world a single deed I esteem justified, legitimate, it is this one,' says Noirceuil about parricide (*Juliette* 1968: 252). *Philosophy* features the libertine Dolmancé who loves his father but despised his mother, as does his pupil Eugenie; the vice versa almost never occurs, unless the libertine is female and the mother figure is actively adopted by her.

inspired in us by Nature'.<sup>494</sup> Meanwhile, libertine women do not look favourably upon producing progeny. Both Juliette and Madame de Saint-Ange condone infanticide, and the latter admits there is 'no greater certainty on earth than a mother's rights over her children'.<sup>495</sup> If they do give birth to a child, it is either for the purposing of putting them to some libertine use, or for a purely materialistic reason. Juliette sums up her relationship with her daughter in a passage where she explains her reasons for having left the child in the care of a monk:

I left my daughter in his wardship; he promised to take the very best care of her—my concern for the child was of course motivated by material considerations rather than by any motherly affection, there being neither any place in my heart for such a sentiment, nor any justification for it in my beliefs.<sup>496</sup>

The maternal figure exists in three forms in the Sadean discourse. The first being Mother Nature who is essentially an apathetic dictator. 'Let thy father, thy mother, thy son, thy daughter, thy niece, thy wife, thy sister, thy friend be no dearer to thee than the lowliest worm that crawleth on the face of the earth,' decrees Mother Nature. She considers filial and fraternal allegiances, as well as all manners of affection a sign of weakness, and therefore the transgression of these bonds has no effect on her: 'tis all one to me... Cease to engender, destroy absolutely all that exists, thou shalt disturb not the slightest thing in my scheme or workings'.<sup>497</sup> Dolmancé describes Nature, 'mother to us all,' as an amalgamation of the Freudian id and super-ego, whose egotistical message is to 'prefer thyself, love thyself, no matter at whose expense,' but also be aware of the fact that all individuals have the same right to extreme egotism and therefore permitted to take revenge on you for your maltreatment of them: 'Fine! Then might alone will make right!'<sup>498</sup> This representation of Nature goes beyond the Olympian and is better comprehended as

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<sup>494</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 293.

<sup>495</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 61.

<sup>496</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 563.

<sup>497</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 781.

<sup>498</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, pp. 65-6.

a Titanic force that sees no difference between creation and destruction. In a psychoanalytic study of motherhood in Sade, Jane Gallop defines the relationship between the libertine and Mother Nature in the context of a ‘Neronic myth’, which she describes as a subversion of Freud’s oedipal theory.<sup>499</sup> In this dynamic, the libertine both admires and abhors Mother Nature, strives at once to imitate and outrage her. The Mother Superior comes next, or various abbesses who usually oversee convents and who are extremely immoral. In an illuminating passage, Delbène advises Juliette to remove her sons from her ‘immediate vicinity’ should she ever have some, for the reason that sons often betray their mothers. ‘Should they tempt you, resist the desire,’ she continues, ‘the discrepancy in age is sure to breed disgust, its victim will be you. There’s nothing very piquant to that variety of incest [...]’<sup>500</sup> Delbène’s advice is unique in that it delineates the only instance where a category of incest has been discouraged by a libertine. In its promotion of maternal indifference, it foreshadows Phaedra’s downfall and sees her mistake not in her lack of consideration for family ties but in her lack of sangfroid.<sup>501</sup> The Mother Superior features in Sade as an antithesis to the birthmother. She is sterile,

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<sup>499</sup> According to Freud, the oedipal child’s ambivalent ‘emotional cathexis’ towards the mother – the child simultaneously loving the mother and loathing her lack of phallic authority – is realised as love for the mother and hatred for the father. ‘In Sade’s Neronic myth,’ Gallop proposes, ‘the ambivalence is kept intact and focused entirely on the mother. [...] This universal ambivalence toward the mother is reflected in the Sadean libertine’s attitude toward Mother Nature, model and source of all crime’ (1995: 128). Should the first mother’s place be usurped by the second mother, the ‘stepmother’ then turns into a tyrant (phallic figure): ‘In this scenario the Neronic ambivalence toward the mother has been divided into love for the first mother and hatred for the second’ (1995: 133). Hippolytus is in a comparable situation, where relieved from the duty of having to love his mother, he now focuses his hatred on Phaedra.

<sup>500</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 83.

<sup>501</sup> Observe how Delbène’s view compares with Phaedra’s in Ovid’s *Heroides*, where the latter employs a paranoiac device in suggesting that her being Hippolytus’s step-mother does not matter since is it just an ‘empty name’ and an endoxic anachronism that contrasts Nature’s will:

And, should you think of me as a stepdame who would mate with her husband’s son, let empty names fright not your soul. Such old-fashioned regard for virtue was rustic even in Saturn’s reign, and doomed to die in the age to come. Jove fixed that virtue was to be in whatever brought us pleasure; and naught is wrong before the gods since sister was made wife by brother. That bond of kinship only holds close and firm in which Venus herself has forged the chain (2014: 53-5).

yet sensual. She follows Mother Nature in desiring libidinal motion, while remaining (pedagogically) destructive. That is to say, her social function does not interfere with the exigency of her desire. Third is the birthmother, who only exists in Sadean texts in order to be annihilated. Motherhood or the condition of pregnancy is often exploited in the most graphic and disturbing episodes of sadistic practices. The natural mother's love for her children is often utilised as a means to provide spectacular pleasure for the libertine. Juliette relates an episode where rather than being moved by the empathy of a mother for her children who were being tortured, she becomes sexually stimulated. She describes the mother's distress as 'a heart-rending tableau of sorrow and woe,' concluding: 'But souls like ours, you know, do not readily melt, every appeal to their sensibility acts as further fuel to their rage'.<sup>502</sup> Juliette's apathy is the more emphasised for the fact that she knows the witnessed torment is not fictional and yet chooses to treat it as if it were. This scene can also be read as Sade's criticism of the aesthetic portrayal of motherhood as self-abnegation. In their exploration of the performativity of maternity in Early Modern England, Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson consider manifestations of motherhood in that period as something that exceeded 'far beyond the obvious areas of pregnancy, childbirth, childrearing and domestic government to include spirituality, medicine and health, politics, the supernatural, as well as the many and complex facets of gender'.<sup>503</sup> In the Sadean narrative, likewise, the theatricality of maternity begins where nature comes to an end; that is, as soon as the mother loses her desire to move, she becomes a victim. I use the term *theatrical*, rather than *performative*, since this particular manner of maternal performance occurs in a novelistic framework on a meta-textual level. As a theatrical product, the birthmother is treated as an aesthetic variation.

In Seneca, when Phaedra confesses her love for Hippolytus, he asks her what troubles her, and they have the following conversation:

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<sup>502</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 989.

<sup>503</sup> Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson, 'Embodied and Enacted: Performances of Maternity in Early Modern England', *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, ed. by Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 1.

PHAEDRA: Light troubles speak, the heaviest have no voice.

HIPPOLYTUS: Yet tell me what your trouble is, mother.

PHAEDRA: Mother – that is too fine and great a title for my condition; better a lower one – sister, Hippolytus – or call me servant; Yes, servant; I will do you *any* service.... Be regent in my place, and let me be your slave.<sup>504</sup>

Phaedra's statement suggests her awareness of the performativity of the role of the mother and the fact that once she becomes a mother she is not allowed to be a woman and cannot have any nonconforming desires. In her essay, 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother', Luce Irigaray writes: 'The relationship between desire and madness comes into its own, for both man and woman, in the relationship with the mother'.<sup>505</sup> The patriarchal law, she maintains, forbids the desire of the mother. I would argue against her theory that Western culture functions 'on the basis of a matricide',<sup>506</sup> however, and suggest instead that the assault on the maternal comes rather as a *coup de théâtre*. The reason for this argument is that while the son needs to inherit the father's position, the daughter is expected to imitate rather than replace the mother – as seen in Hippolytus's accusation. Hence while the father is eliminated, the mother is stereotyped. Hippolytus's response is not cruel because he rejects Phaedra; rather, his cruelty lies in his apathetic re-assignment of Phaedra into the role of the (bad) mother: 'O woman, first of all womankind in wickedness, worse than your mother! – as your sin is worse than hers who was the mother of a monster'.<sup>507</sup> When he calls her 'first of all womankind in wickedness', following his previous comment about women as 'the mover of all wickedness', he is in effect admitting that she has the greatest power to move him; a power that conflicts with maternal performance and signals a relapse into the Natural. At the same time, the

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<sup>504</sup> Seneca, p. 122.

<sup>505</sup> Luce Irigaray, 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother', trans. by David Macey, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. by Margaret Withford, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 35.

<sup>506</sup> Irigaray, p. 36. Irigaray writes that Freud speaks of the murder of the father, but not of the mother, which is 'archaic' and 'necessitated by the establishment of a certain order in the polis'.

<sup>507</sup> Seneca, p. 125.



Natural mother's violence provides the necessary drive for the continuation of the narrative.<sup>508</sup> Nevertheless, it is not until Kane's rendition of the narrative that we see discursive violence at an apathetic altitude.

### **Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love***

Phaedra's destructive desire is nowhere as visible as in Kane's version of the story. 'Kane insists on Phaedra's role as an agent and calls attention to her desire as a phenomenon,' argues Jozefina Komporaly, proposing that Phaedra's desire is potent enough in this version of the play for us to consider Hippolytus as her invention.<sup>509</sup> On a similar note, Aleks Sierz calls *Phaedra's Love* 'a study in extreme emotion',<sup>510</sup> but the play is also about an extreme lack of emotional expression. Hippolytus's absolute apathy towards all events, and his resistance to emotional stimuli, is the realisation of Sadean Natural indifference in theatrical context. Kane's Hippolytus is not only emotionally absent, he is also lacking in physical movement. 'He never moves,' says Strophe.<sup>511</sup> His response to violent spectacles is intrinsically Sadean in its purely somatic articulation. The play starts with him sitting in an armchair, watching a violent film on the television:

**Hippolytus** *watches impassively.*

*He picks up another sock, examines it and discards it.*

*He picks up another, examines it and decides it's fine.*

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<sup>508</sup> In 'Tragedy: Maternity, Natality, Theatricality', Olga Taxidou points out a correlation between the 'theatricality of tragic action' and a 'strong attachment to its mothers, as protagonists, and as tropes and theatrical conventions', maintaining that 'monstrous mothers' tend to have a particularly potent effect on the reinforcement of the theatricality of a narrative (2017: 44).

<sup>509</sup> Jozefina Komporaly, *Staging Motherhood British Women Playwrights, 1956 to the Present*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2007), pp. 84-5.

<sup>510</sup> Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face- Theatre*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p. 107. British Drama Today.

<sup>511</sup> Sarah Kane, 'Phaedra's Love', *Complete Plays: Blasted, Phaedra's Love, Cleansed, Crave, 4.48 Psychosis, Skin*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), p. 70.

*He puts his penis into the sock and masturbates until he comes without a flicker of pleasure.*

*He takes off the sock and throws it on the floor.*

*He begins another hamburger.*<sup>512</sup>

Hippolytus's actions are mechanical and repetitive from the onset. His minimal reaction to his surrounding objects and characters suggests a meta-theatrical awareness: nothing is real for him since nothing moves him, as if he lives in an alternative reality. His lack of responsiveness is emphasised by the fact that he is sexually active but unable to accomplish intimacy or enjoy sex. 'You only ever talk to me about sex,' Phaedra remarks, to which Hippolytus responds by saying sex is his main interest.<sup>513</sup> Yet he derives no visible pleasure from sexual activities:

**Phaedra** Have you ever thought about having sex with me?

**Hippolytus** I think about having sex with everyone.

**Phaedra** Would it make you happy?

**Hippolytus** That's not the word exactly.

**Phaedra** Not, but-

Would you enjoy it?

**Hippolytus** No. I never do.<sup>514</sup>

Hippolytus's typically Sadean view on sex means his interest in the act is purely formal. His Apathy, likewise, is a theatrical technique.<sup>515</sup> Since Kane's

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<sup>512</sup> Kane, p. 65.

<sup>513</sup> Kane, p. 77.

<sup>514</sup> Kane, p. 79.

<sup>515</sup> Marcel Hénaff describes Sadean apathy as follows:

[T]ransformer that converts instinctual matter into 'scenes' within the imagination so that the sex organs become wired up to the brain, desire takes possession of language, and the instinctual is inscribed into the symbolic. As a technique for bringing about a lapse (not a negativity, but a suspension) of consciousness, apathy

Hippolytus is not celibate, he is not threatened by Phaedra's attempts at seduction. His libertine indifference is achieved through both thinking about the threatening act of connecting with the other and doing it repeatedly until he becomes desensitised to the threat. And yet, in absence of a will to move, Hippolytus's sexual activity onstage is extremely passive. When Phaedra approaches and performs fellatio on him, he continues watching television and 'eats his sweets' without looking at her. His lack of reaction prompts Phaedra to cry. 'There. Mystery over,' say Hippolytus.<sup>516</sup> This remark can be interpreted as a deconstruction of the Phaedra/Hippolytus myth where the former's desire for the latter is never satisfied. In a meta-theatrical sense, he is announcing that the suspense inherent in the narrative has been removed, which is in itself an act of diminishing the potential of dramatic tension for moving the audience, thereby reducing the audience into a state of apathy. Allan Weiss describes the Sadean project as 'a sort of "Summa Pornographica",' whose function 'is to overload and collapse the symbolic register by saying everything, in a pastiche of the Encyclopedia'.<sup>517</sup> Kane's subversion of the narrative is similarly realised through the Sadean practice of 'saying all' with the effect that what has been said loses its power to move. '[U]nless you acquaint yourself with everything, you'll know nothing,' Delbène informs Juliette, reasoning that her only choice for finding mastery over Nature is to yield to her natural desires.<sup>518</sup> Subsequently, the modern Hippolytus's solution to his paradoxical situation as an outsider (to reality) is to resist the rage felt by his dramatic predecessors and become completely unfeeling. About her characterisation of Hippolytus, Kane is noted to have said that '[i]nstead of pursuing what used to be seen as purity, [he] pursues honesty – even when that means he has to destroy himself and everyone else'.<sup>519</sup> Hippolytus's honesty in this instance is expressed in

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isolates primary process from instinct and disconnects its socially normative object cathexes, in order to open it up to the endless polyvalence of desire's combinative operation (1978: 86).

<sup>516</sup> Kane, p. 81.

<sup>517</sup> Allen S. Weiss, 'Impossible Sovereignty: Between "The Will to Power" and "The Will to Chance"', *October*, Spring 36 (1986), p. 135.

<sup>518</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 19.

<sup>519</sup> Sierz, p. 109.

a libertine lack of compromise which does not allow anything to be left unsaid. It is also the reason why Phaedra is attracted to him:

**Phaedra** You're difficult. Moody, cynical, bitter, fat, decadent, spoilt. You stay in bed all day then watch TV all night, you crash around this house with sleep in your eyes and not a thought for anyone. You're in pain. I adore you.<sup>520</sup>

In other words: *thou art an abomination, I love thee*. To better understand this attraction, it is pertinent to examine Phaedra's paradoxical ethics. Christopher Gill outlines Phaedra's 'ethical stance' in Euripides as one who 'not *only* want[s] to "keep up appearances" (regardless of what underlies those appearances),' but also wishes to separate 'herself emphatically from the hypocritical wives [...] who live in this way'.<sup>521</sup> Kane, in her habitual aptitude for excess, introduces the audience to a Hippolytus and a Phaedra who have entirely broken away from endoxal ethics perceived as theatricality and entered a realm of Sadean meta-theatricality.

As with the previous versions of the play, maternity is a central motif in Kane's play. Hippolytus calls Phaedra *mother*, which displeases her. 'Why shouldn't I call you mother, Mother? I thought that's what was required. One big happy family,' followed by a 'Hate me now?'<sup>522</sup> To him it makes no difference that Phaedra is his stepmother; it is only an ethical requirement to define them as a family. The fact that the mother figure is for him an ethical matter means it is also a linguistic matter. Barthes describes the family as 'a lexical area' in Sade.<sup>523</sup> Similarly, Hippolytus finds the naming of the mother a recreation to relieve boredom. He indulges in further Sadean lexical games when Phaedra compares him to his father for not caring to please his sexual partners:

**Hippolytus** That's what your daughter said.

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<sup>520</sup> Kane, p. 79.

<sup>521</sup> Christopher Gill, 'The Articulation of the self in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.' *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality*, ed. by Anton Powell, (Abingdon: Routledge 1990), p. 89.

<sup>522</sup> Kane, p. 78.

<sup>523</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 137.

*A beat, then **Phaedra** slaps him around the face as hard as she can.*

**Hippolytus** She's less passionate but more practised. I go for technique every time.<sup>524</sup>

The symmetry is completed when it is revealed later that Strophe, Phaedra's daughter, has also slept with Theseus. This represents a perfect picture of the Sadean family where every member is connected to the other through sexual but not emotional investment, and where the only problematic relationship is that of the mother and the son. Nonetheless, Hippolytus's main objective for calling Phaedra *mother* is to incite her hatred as a means of interrupting her obsession with him. When asked by Phaedra why he hates her, his response is: 'Because you hate yourself',<sup>525</sup> implying his view of Phaedra's desire for him is an act of self-sacrifice. Komporaly maintains that Phaedra's love introduces a critical dimension into her relationship with the rest of the family, insofar as she is forced to revise her stance in the familial sphere. 'In Strophe's case, Kane simply reverses the situation,' Komporaly writes, 'opposing Strophe's matter-of-factness fuelled by experience with Phaedra's hesitation rooted in innocence,' hence the 'caring role' is relegated to Strophe.<sup>526</sup> Kane's choice in presenting Strophe as the motherly advisor destabilises performance tropes through highlighting the maternal propensity of the Chorus, the objective honesty of whose motives are thereby questioned.

Earlier we observed that in the Greek and Roman versions of the story, as well as Racine's, Phaedra's suicide is considered as ultimately ethical, since it is an act through which she preserves her reputation. In Kane's text, however, Phaedra's suicide is situated outside the ethical realm since it does not serve to maintain her honour or even prove her accusation. 'Ironically it is Phaedra's death that provides the incontrovertible proof needed for Hippolytus to be convinced to her love for him,' contends Graham Saunders. 'Hippolytus sees Phaedra's sacrifice as "her

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<sup>524</sup> Kane, p. 83.

<sup>525</sup> Kane, p. 85.

<sup>526</sup> Komporaly, p. 85.

present to me”, an act that finally provides a release from his own torment’.<sup>527</sup> I would argue against this statement, nevertheless, since my interpretation of Phaedra’s suicide is that it represents an extreme instance of apathy – recall Racine’s heroine’s experience of a frosted coldness on approaching death. Hénaff distinguishes Sadean apathy as a structure that connects various passions while lessening the value of each:

Apathy acts as a solvent upon causality. It constitutes not one set among others but the element that circulates among them in order to detach them from one another and, as a result, flatten them out on the surface of the table of possibilities. Relativity invalidates relationship.<sup>528</sup>

Hence, Phaedra’s suicide can be seen as a theatrical cue, at best an inspiration for Hippolytus to embark on a new game. Hippolytus never truly acknowledges Phaedra’s suicide as an act of love, since even if he tries to console Strophe and repeatedly asks her to ‘blame me’,<sup>529</sup> he never relinquishes his spectator’s gaze. His first act, in reaction to Phaedra’s accusation, is to adopt the role of the rapist – even though he confesses to Strophe that he has not raped her mother – signifying a shift from indifference to a will-to-play. From this point onward, the rules of the game change from Hippolytus having to remain unmoved to his striving for self-destruction.<sup>530</sup> Quite aptly his response when he hears that rioters are about to burn the palace is: ‘Life at last’.<sup>531</sup>

Hippolytus’s conversation with the priest later in his cell has a distinct Sadean tone to it, imbued as it is with instances of libertine rage: ‘If there is a God, I’d like to look him in the face knowing I’d died as I’d lived. In conscious sin’,<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> Graham Saunders, *‘Love me or kill me’: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes*, (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), p. 77.

<sup>528</sup> Marcel Hénaff, *Sade: l’invention du corps libertin*, (Paris: PUF, 1978), p. 88.

<sup>529</sup> Kane, p. 90.

<sup>530</sup> The catastrophic consequences of his activeness is revealed when in the end all main characters including Strophe and Theseus die.

<sup>531</sup> Kane, p. 90.

<sup>532</sup> Kane, p. 94.

or ‘I can’t sin against a God I don’t believe in’.<sup>533</sup> The prince’s acquiring now the role of the God, now that of the Priest, throughout this conversation betrays his treatment of the event as a paranoiac game of roleplay. This attitude continues up until the moment of his death, which he also views as a form of entertainment, wishing: ‘If there could have been more moments like this’.<sup>534</sup> Considering the Sadean proclivity of the characters’ observations in Kane’s play, Hippolytus’s wish can be interpreted as a moment of meta-theatrical omniscience on his behalf at the knowledge that his theatrical death will indeed be repeated for as long as the play is in production. Indeed, the representation of death in Kane’s play is an important element in separating her vision from that of the other playwrights mentioned in this chapter. While in an endoxal text death is treated as either just or unjust, the Sadean discourse estimates death as a dramatic inevitability and not an ethical matter, an outlook which is also appropriated by Kane. Euripides depicts the Chorus’s impression of Phaedra’s death as an endoxically painful event:

CHORUS: [*Antistrophe*:] And so it is that Aphrodite sent a fearful sickness of impious passion that crushed her heart. And foundering now beneath her cruel misfortune she will fasten a hanging noose to the beams of her bridal chamber, fitting it around her white neck; bowed with shame at her loathsome fate, she will choose instead the fame of fair repute and rid her heart of its painful longing.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> Kane, p. 95. ‘His sexual voracity seems to be modelled on the debauched poet/protagonist from Kane’s abandoned *Baal* play, a figure who is given over to “a vision of life of self-indulgent amorality”. Yet, whereas Baal’s philosophy is one of “extracting the maximum intensity of pleasure from each passing moment”, Kane seems to base her Hippolytus on the physical deterioration and slothful boredom drawn from accounts of the reclusive Elvis Presley of the 1970s’ (Saunders 2002: 74). The conclusion of this conversation marks Hippolytus’s surrender as an act of surrender to a dramatic fate. While in previous versions of the narrative studied in this chapter Hippolytus denies having committed rape, Kane’s Hippolytus decides to accept the accusation and take delight in his ability to choose, even if the choice he has made is self-destructive. ‘Last line of defence for the honest man,’ he says. ‘Free will is what distinguishes us from the animals’ (Kane 2001: 97).

<sup>534</sup> Kane, p. 103.

<sup>535</sup> Euripides, p. 156.

Nonetheless, the ethical desirability of her death is made clear with mention of the whiteness of her neck which makes the image of her demise seem beautiful. The death of Hippolytus in Seneca has similar aesthetic implications: ‘The ground was reddened with a trail of blood; his head was dashed from rock to rock, his hair torn off by thorns, his handsome face despoiled by flinty stones; wound after wound destroyed for ever that ill-fated comeliness [...]’<sup>536</sup> Aesthetic loss is associated with ethical loss, realised in the punishment of innocence. ‘That beauty, that form, to come to this!’ The Chorus laments.<sup>537</sup> In contrast, the corpse of Kane’s Hippolytus’s (who is not conventionally handsome to begin with) is reviled and no one mourns him since his death is not an ethical loss. ‘Here is a father building, limb by limb, a body for his son...’ Seneca’s Theseus grieves the loss of his son.<sup>538</sup> whereas in Kane his reaction is much less paternal and markedly apathetic:

**Theseus** Hippolytus.

Son.

I never liked you.<sup>539</sup>

Perhaps the most apathetic feature of Kane’s play is her depiction of Hippolytus’s death as a gruesome affair that happens on stage. He is strangled, castrated and disembowelled. Sierz found the Gate Theatre’s atmosphere ‘hot, claustrophobic’ at the performance’s premier, ‘with the action happening all around, the feeling was one of eavesdropping on a problem family... Being in the middle of the action made you feel complicit in the horror...’<sup>540</sup> Kane’s mimetic approach is in contrast with the Greek version of the play where the report of the character’s violent death is always diegetic. Visual violence, although initially utilised to stimulate libertine imagination, has the double function of making the spectator immune to sympathetic sentiments when they are exposed to the spectacle repeatedly. Clairwil’s advice to Juliette on how to become insensitive to the suffering of others is to ‘gaze often and long upon spectacles of woe’.<sup>541</sup> The effect produced by

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<sup>536</sup> Seneca, p. 141.

<sup>537</sup> Seneca, p. 142.

<sup>538</sup> Seneca, p. 149.

<sup>539</sup> Kane, p. 102.

<sup>540</sup> Sierz, p. 108.

<sup>541</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 284.



Kane's technique then is that the death scene becomes less ethically moving, since theatricalised violence compels the audience to eventually readjust its gaze into that of apathy.

**Chapter 5: The Sadean Animal in Fernando Arrabal's Garden of Delights**

In 1989, Henri Xhonneux and Roland Topor released the film *Marquis*, which tells a highly fictional account of Sade's life in Bastille. Apart from Surrealistic clay animation episodes depicting various Sadean metamorphosis of multiple bodies, a peculiar element of the film is that all actors wear animal masks, with the marquis himself portrayed as a dog with a talking penis named Colin who occasionally stages theatrical performances. Considering how Sade was very much fond of dogs, and the prominence of philosophical dogs in anthropomorphic fiction,<sup>542</sup> the choice of animal here seems quite apt. Moreover, it can be understood as a tribute to the patent significance of animality in Sade's writings, and its function in both stratifying and uniting the characters that populate his world. This chapter studies the role of the animal in Sadean narrative and the theatrical process through which two distinct levels of animalisation occur. The same process is examined in Fernando Arrabal's *Garden of Delights*, with the intention of recovering a dialogic divide between the self and the other specifically in instances where animal interaction is present in the play.

'Feeble, fettered creatures, destined solely for our pleasures,' the Duc de Blangis addresses the female inhabitants of Château de Silling, having mounted the storyteller's throne:

[Y]ou shall not I hope have flattered yourselves that the power – as absurd as it is absolute – that you are allowed in the outside world shall be granted you in these surroundings;<sup>543</sup> a thousand times more submissive than any

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<sup>542</sup> In *Varieties of Literary Thematics*, Theodore Ziolkowski writes about the ambiguous position of the dog in literature, bringing examples from tales where the devil disguises himself as a dog (1983: 93). '[T]he philosophical dog,' he writes, is used 'for the purpose of cynical social comment that has been conventional since Lucian. For these dogs [...] exemplify modern society and its discontents (1983: 121-2).

<sup>543</sup> Considering how Sade writes repeatedly about how women are persecuted in every corner of the world, the highlighted line could be interpreted as a jest on the author's behalf. Indeed, this entire passage can be seen as a parodic treatment of an 'outside world' where women are equally advised to practise the virtue of obedience.

slaves would be, you should expect nothing other than humiliation, and obedience is the only virtue I advise you to practise – it is the only one suited to the situation in which you find yourselves.<sup>544</sup>

Delivered on the outset of the four-month long revelries/ordeal in *120 Days*, the Duc's speech constitutes a series of guidelines that at the same time explain the consequence of the women's transference from the *endoxic* into the Sadean territory. The Duc further recommends the women to observe 'meticulousness, submission and [...] complete self-abnegation' and demands of them 'to listen only to our desires'.<sup>545</sup> The Duc's speech hence seeks to replace the addressee's self-awareness with absolute other-awareness, which commences through an act of listening. The victim has no identity separate from the need of the libertine; should the master have no needs, the slave will cease to exist. This close correlation between the exigency of the libertine's desire and the other's actuality is amplified when the Duc's demands aggregate to a point where they seem outright absurd:

Moreover, do not expect us always to specify the orders we wish you to execute; a gesture, a glance, often simply an inner feeling on our part shall indicate these, and you shall be as severely punished for not having guessed and anticipated these as you would have been had you been notified of them and shown signs of disobedience; it is for you to decipher our movements, our looks, our gestures, to decipher their meaning and above all not to misread our desires.<sup>546</sup>

In practice, punishment seems inevitable, which is partly the libertine's objective, since the victim cannot possibly predict his every whim. Theoretically, however, to be able to realise the libertine's dictates, the victim has two choices: either to cultivate a libertine intuition, or engage in an animal mode of living. 'Remember that it is not at all as human beings we see you,' the Duc explains finally, 'but purely as animals fed for intended service, and heavily beaten when they refuse such service'.<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 55.

<sup>545</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 56.

<sup>546</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 57.

<sup>547</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 58.

The Sadean animal is not only an ethically problematic phenomenon, but it is also subject to formal ambiguity. It is a non-self-mover (non-agent) in a sense that the victim is animated solely by the other's desire; at the same time, the victim-as-animal is expected to benefit from an almost telepathic consciousness which enables it to be a self-mover (agent) in the service of the other. As such, the Sadean animal resembles a smart-machine who, unlike the conventional machine, does 'exhibit typical biomechanical motions' and is able to 'adjust well to local environmental problems'.<sup>548</sup> The Sadean animal retains a non-mechanistic animality, nevertheless, since its capacity to suffer is acknowledged by the libertine, and indeed heavily counted upon. Hence the question, 'can they suffer?',<sup>549</sup> provides a perverse justification for the libertine's cruelty. Donna Haraway recognises technologies as 'compound' entities, comprised of a diversity of agents.<sup>550</sup> As a suffering machine, the Sadean animal is in effect a technological agent. Silling is a compound not only because it is 'an impregnable citadel',<sup>551</sup> but since in a zoological sense the castle represents 'a composite of individual organisms, an enclosure of zoons, a company of critters infolded into one'.<sup>552</sup> The seeming complexity of the animal-machine hybrids that populate Sadean compounds can be explained by the fact that, in this context, the difference between animal and machine is a quantitative, rather than qualitative, distinction. On its own each victim is an animal, while a group of victims represent a mechanistic

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<sup>548</sup> Helen Steward, 'Animal Agency', *Inquiry*, 52:3 (2009), p. 222.

<sup>549</sup> Jeremy Bentham poses this question in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* in order to justify animal rights.

<sup>550</sup> Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2007), p. 250.

<sup>551</sup> In his speech, the Duc informs the women that they are physically isolated from the rest of the world and that there is no likelihood for them ever being rescued:

[H]ere you are far from France in the depths of an uninhabitable forest, beyond steeped mountains, the passes through which were cut off as soon as you had traversed them; you are trapped within an impenetrable citadel; no one knows you are here (2016: 56).

Interestingly, the libertine's acknowledgement of the victim's desperate circumstances, as opposed to the denial of said circumstances, makes Sade's writing a literature of despair as much as a literature of cruelty and lends his narrative a candid, if cynical, voice.

<sup>552</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 250.

compound. The former, that is, the individual other as animal, is the subject of this chapter. The next chapter focuses on the mechanistic condition of the collective other in a Sadean space. I argue, moreover, that the victims are not treated as real animals; not even in the Cartesian understanding of the animal as automata, precisely since, as Derrida maintains, ‘Descartes appeals to a man who sees an animal that doesn’t see him’,<sup>553</sup> whereas the Sadean animal is expected to be the perfect spectator. Rather, animality is established through a theatrical contract, with the compound acting more as a circus than a kennel or a zoo. In the following paragraphs, I proceed to read Arrabal through Sade and vice versa, in an attempt to explore the concept of otherhood as represented by the theatrical animal.

Born in 1932, Fernando Arrabal Terán is a prolific Spanish playwright, author, and the founder of Panic Movement along with Alejandro Jodorowsky and Roland Topor. Arrabal’s *Garden of Delights* is a surrealistic play depicting various achronological episodes in the life of Lais and her ‘playful’ struggle with guilt as she confronts personages from her past and present life. ‘Arrabal seems to indicate that memory and the imagination are practically the same mental process,’ writes Thomas John Donahue in his observation of Arrabal’s dramatic works, drawing attention, nevertheless, to the ‘uncontrollable’ characteristic of past events in comparison to the relatively controlled experience of ‘a delving into the future’ which is possible only through a fertile imagination.<sup>554</sup> The imaginary ambition to invent a future memory is a feature that is present in Sade’s writings as well, betraying a utopian penchant for the composition of an enclosure where no outside elements can interfere with the flow of events.<sup>555</sup> In *Garden of Delights*, Arrabal describes the setting as a ‘*huge space with many columns as far as the eye can see: they form a kind of labyrinth*’.<sup>556</sup> This labyrinth is the residence of Lais, a glamorous,

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<sup>553</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, (New York: Fordham UP, 2008), p. 82.

<sup>554</sup> Thomas John Donahue, *The theater of Fernando Arrabal: A garden of earthly delights*, (New York: New York UP, 1980), p. 32.

<sup>555</sup> Refer to the final chapter for an in depth analysis of the utopia/dystopia condition as depicted in Sade’s works.

<sup>556</sup> Fernando Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, *Guernica and Other Plays*, trans. by Helen Gary Bishop and Tom Bishop, (New York: Grove, 1974), p. 304.

mysterious actress who makes her first appearance in a fittingly baroque costume. Her only communication with the outside world is through a series of telephone interviews. During one of these interviews, a fangirl asks her if it is true that she lives alone in 'a huge castle away from everybody', to which question Lais responds in the negative, explaining that she lives with her memories and her ghosts: 'I speak to them and they live with me as though they were flesh-and-blood people'.<sup>557</sup> Donahue attributes this scene with great significance, since it reveals the possibility that the entire events of the play occur within the confines of Lais's mind.<sup>558</sup> Lais's utopian labyrinth accommodates a variety of characters, including nine lambs who are very dear to her. One notable inhabitant is introduced before the rest:

*Suddenly a tremendous roar is heard, like the lamentation of a savage beast. LAIS runs to turn on a light. She seems frightened. The stage lights up entirely. Above we make out a cage, and inside it the beast who roared.*<sup>559</sup>

The occupant of the cage is Zenon, 'a creature which resembles a man, but is hairy like an animal, with gestures like an ape... He is in his natural state, half-naked. Now he is groaning with pleasure'.<sup>560</sup> Zenon is not capable of speaking; to express himself he utters monosyllabic words and sounds rather than complete sentences and he stutters. 'It is clear that he has an adoration for LAIS. She seems to have a tender affection for him'.<sup>561</sup> In the beginning of the play their relationship is hardly harmonious:

*ZENON jumps down from a column and falls upon LAIS as he tries to take her into his arms; instead he knocks her to the floor and hurts her.*

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<sup>557</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 310.

<sup>558</sup> Donahue, p. 48. Donahue identifies this play as 'another example of a play within the framework of illusion and thus stands as an exemplary expression of Arrabal's Panic Theater. It includes all the elements that now have become part of his repertory: the games, ceremonies, polymorphism of the characters, the sadomasochistic cruelty, and the love-hate relationship' (1980: 47).

<sup>559</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 306.

<sup>560</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 308.

<sup>561</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 308.

LAIS (*angry*) Look what you've done! You struck me in the breast. I could get cancer. You brute! I can't let you out for two minutes. You break everything and hurt me. I should keep you locked up all day long!<sup>562</sup>

The contrast between the eloquent, repressively sheltered, beautiful actress and the savage ape-man who acts only to satisfy his desires, as well as the dominant-submissive nature of their relationship, marks a Sadean tendency towards fostering a master/slave dialectic of *jouissance*. Zenon is not an animal-victim, however. When in *120 Days* the Duc advises the women to see themselves as exclusively animal in the libertines' regard, he does not imply that they should become Zenon-like creatures with such intense animalism that they no longer observe the rules set for them by their masters. However, animals like Zenon do exist in Sadean narrative, which brings me to the point that the animal in Sade consists of three species: 1) the actual animal that is mostly mentioned during episodes of bestiality; 2) the victim as animal; 3) the libertine as animal. My concern in this chapter is with the latter two conditions, that is, when a human being is appropriated with the characteristics of a non-human animal.

### **The Other as Animal**

On day twenty-nine of the winter sojourn in *120 Days*, Duclos, who is one of the female narrators, recounts the story of a libertine 'whose mania, though perhaps [...] humiliating, was not [...] sombre,' consists of having a woman pretend to be a dog. The libertine asks Duclos to remove her clothes and get down on her hands and knees:

'Let's see,' [he] says, talking about the two Great Danes he had by his side, 'let's see who will be the most – my dogs or you. Go fetch!' And at this he throws some large roast chestnuts across the floor – and, talking to me as if I were an animal, 'Fetch! Fetch!' he tells me. I race on all fours after the chestnut, with the aim of entering into the spirit of his fantasy and of bringing it back to him, but the two dogs, dashing after me, soon overtake

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<sup>562</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 309.

me; they snaffle the chestnut and bring it back to their master. ‘You are downright clumsy,’ the owner tells me. ‘Are you afraid my dogs will eat you? Don’t be scared of them – they won’t do you any harm, but inwardly they’ll hold you in contempt if they see you’re less agile than they. Go on – it’s your chance to get even... Fetch!’<sup>563</sup>

‘Fail again, fail better,’ in a Beckettian sense.<sup>564</sup> During a two-hour session, Duclos only manages to bring the chestnut only once, without ever being harmed by the dogs, whom she believes think of her as one of their own. Other than portraying the dogs as much more civilised characters than their owner, this episode presents Sadean animalisation of the other as an essentially theatrical operation: the victim must act as if she is an animal, and the libertine spectator must be prepared to believe that the victim is an animal. Moreover, a scenario is required in order for Duclos to be able to perform dogdom. Anthropomorphism is generally considered to enhance the human agent’s comprehension of the non-human agent’s actions. ‘In the absence of social connection to other humans [...] people create human agents out of nonhumans through anthropomorphism to satisfy their motivation for social connection’.<sup>565</sup> Conversely, a reverse procedure that entails the attribution of non-human traits to human agents can be employed to generate a lack of perceived similarity. This transformation is not so much a becoming-animal as suggested by Deleuze and Guattari,<sup>566</sup> but rather a domestication of the other-as-animal who is castle-trained to perform certain functions. ‘Politics supposes livestock,’ as Derrida posits.<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 302.

<sup>564</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, (London: Calder, 1983), p. 7.

<sup>565</sup> Nicholas Epley, Adam Waytz, and John T. Cacioppo, ‘On Seeing Human: A Three-Factor Theory of Anthropomorphism’, *Psychological Review*, 114:4 (2007), p. 866.

<sup>566</sup> In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari propose the theory of becoming-animal, which concerns the metamorphosis of a minority into a creative, symbiotic, condition of allied animality that grants paradoxical agency to its members.

<sup>567</sup> Derrida, p. 96. Derrida considers the ‘becoming-livestock of the beast’ as an essential factor in ‘political constitution’.



A similarly domesticating act of dehumanisation is practised in Arrabal's *Garden of Delights* by the character Teloc, first introduced as a figment of Lais's memory of the time she escaped the convent she was raised in as an orphan:

*She continues to roll around and finds herself suddenly at the feet of a man (TELOC) who stands, legs apart, and laughs aloud. He holds a trumpet in his hands. LAIS tries to run away but TELOC catches her.*

TELOC Where are you going, you who run in these woods?

LAIS Don't tell the sisters!

TELOC *laughs.*

TELOC (*with authority*) Sit down here at my feet. (*He laughs again.*)

LAIS You won't tell anyone that I ran away?

TELOC Don't worry, little girl... tell me what happened.

LAIS The sisters beat me and I ran away.

TELOC Do you see those fields?

LAIS Yes.

TELOC Do you see those mountains?

LAIS Yes.

TELOC Do you see those birds flying?

LAIS Yes.

TELOC Well, you are just as free as they are. And like them your eyes sing of your love for liberty.

LAIS They do?

TELOC Yes. Now clean my shoes with your skirt, they're very dirty.

*LAIS seems a little frightened, but she executes the order very attentively.*<sup>568</sup>

Teloc's comparison of Lais's freedom to that of fields, mountains, and birds is a paradigmatic process that resembles the libertine propagation of a Natural liberty, which nevertheless sentences her to a novel hierarchy even as she is freed from a previous order of familiarity – note that he does not tell her that she is as free as he is. Teloc's tone is not that of a libertine addressing a victim, however, but that of a libertine in conversation with an apprentice.<sup>569</sup>

The above dialogue between Lais and Teloc, Donahue maintains, is the beginning of Lais's 'initiation into the world of panic',<sup>570</sup> which will ultimately result in her becoming a panic woman: 'a person who is at peace with herself, who is whole'.<sup>571</sup> Meanwhile, Kenneth S. White describes the universe of Arrabal's plays as 'a sort of playful quasi-paradise where children's naughty games turn into handcuffed and chained torture, even to unrepentant murder,' where the '[o]bsessive tension of victims confronting torturers' is dramatized mythically.<sup>572</sup> Panic, in this sense, does not constitute a state of chaos, but an acceptance of paradox as an alternative narrative that inevitably contributes to objective wholeness.<sup>573</sup> This surrealistic, postmodern wholeness encompasses the 'baroque deformation' which Arrabal finds indispensable to his aesthetic enterprises,<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', pp. 317-8.

<sup>569</sup> When upon meeting Noirceuil, Juliette professes that she knows her lot is dependence, the former objects, saying that she belongs to the class of the strong. Nevertheless, he explains to her that what he requires of her is to be 'a woman and a slave unto me and my friends; a despot unto everyone else' (*Juliette* 1968: 207).

<sup>570</sup> Donahue places the origin of Arrabal's panic theatre in a meeting 'at the Café de la Paix where Arrabal, along with Jodorowsky, Roland Topor, and Jacques Sternberg, founded what they were to call the panic movement' (1980: 28).

<sup>571</sup> Donahue, p. 51.

<sup>572</sup> Kenneth S. White, "'Panic Theatre': Arrabal's Mythic Baroque", *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association*, 25:3 (1971), pp. 98-9.

<sup>573</sup> 'The Great God Pan, or Totality, claims Arrabal, inspires his "Panic Theatre"' (White 1971: 100).

<sup>574</sup> White, p. 98.

while the panic character can be defined as one who is adept at invoking and manoeuvring theatrical illusions.<sup>575</sup> Teloc is a quintessential representative of the panic man, whose animality – his dedication to the half-beast, half-man deity, Pan – is best reflected in his ludic use of language as a device for calibrating (as in moulding) the rules of the game.<sup>576</sup> Teloc’s imagination is omnipotent in quality; his will modifies spatial as well as temporal elements to the point that he can send Lais back and forth in time. ‘My soul does everything I want it to,’ he informs Lais. When she asks him to summon ‘a red parachute with a purple fringe [...] with a crystal ball holding a goldfish with wings inside it,’ he does exactly what she has asked him to.<sup>577</sup> ‘The *limits of my language* mean the limits of my world,’ Ludwig Wittgenstein proposes in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*,<sup>578</sup> reasoning that logic, and therefore language, cannot traverse beyond ‘the limits of the world’, in which sense it is impossible for us to express that which cannot be imagined.<sup>579</sup> ‘In fact what solipsism means, is quite correct, only it cannot be said, but it shows itself,’ Wittgenstein concludes.<sup>580</sup> Teloc’s conjuration of a parachute is likewise a literal demonstration of a libertine imagination whose boundless vocabulary charts a solipsistic dominion. It is not only Teloc’s words that are incredibly powerful. The potency of Teloc’s voice is also evident in its having an individual theatrical identity; there are moments when his voice alone is ‘present’, detached from his physical presence. With regards to the linguistic significance of libertine praxis, Barthes writes that ‘Sadian characters are *language actors*’.<sup>581</sup> My interpretation of this statement is that Sade’s libertines cannot exist outside a theatrical sphere, since their subjectivity is built upon a theatrical understanding of the other which is governed through speech – the Duc’s, for example. The animal-other, on the other

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<sup>575</sup> White, p. 100.

<sup>576</sup> In *What Animals Can Teach Us about Politics*, Brian Massumi raises the following question: ‘Why not consider human language a reprise of animal play, raised to a higher power?’ (2014: 8).

<sup>577</sup> Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, p. 319.

<sup>578</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness, (London: Routledge, 1961), p. 56.

<sup>579</sup> Wittgenstein, p. 57.

<sup>580</sup> Wittgenstein, p. 57.

<sup>581</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, pp. 143-4.

hand, is deprived of a directorial speech for the very reason that the victim cannot acknowledge the game as such<sup>582</sup> – or like Justine, the victim insists on playing by their own rules. Sadean animalisation of the other does not necessarily mean that the victim cannot speak; rather, the victim cannot speak the master's language. A fact which has tangible consequences in a universe such as *Garden of Delights* where characters like Teloc have the power to turn imagination into alternate reality.

Teloc's zoomorphic alteration of Lais is made more extreme when they engage in a pseudo-consensual role-play wherein he asks Lais and her childhood friend Miharca to act as mares:

TELOC That's very good, children, very good. Well now, let's see what else you know how to do. (*He takes a whip and snaps it in the air.*) All right, let's hear you whinny, loud and clear.

MIHARCA *whinnies*. LAIS *remains mute and doesn't move*.  
TELOC *becomes furious*.

What now, you won't whinny? Grab her.

MIHARCA *grabs LAIS by the hands and TELOC hits her with the whip. Angrily*.

And the next time, it'll really hurt. (*He sounds like an animal trainer.*) All right, my little mares, whinny together.

*He snaps his whip and they whinny together.*

There now, that's much better. And now I want to see you trot about like a pair of mares. Go on.

*He spans his whip. They break into a little trot and whinny.*

Perfect! Now kiss the soles of my boots.

MIHARCA *rushes to obey the order*. TELOC *points to LAIS*.<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> Note that even Duclos who is aware of the rules of the game plays it not for pleasure but to earn money.

<sup>583</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 373.

She's being difficult again. Hold her!

*Before MIHARCA has a chance to move, LAIS quickly kisses the boots.*

Perfect, that's much better.

*Circus music is heard and the two women trot and whinny about the stage.*

Now it gets a bit more difficult. I want you to go through the hoop of flames. (TELOC spins a flaming hoop.)

*MIHARCA and LAIS go through it. Fireworks. Projection of following images: Inquisition. Bosch. Cartoon strips. Garden of Delights.*<sup>584</sup>

Compared to Lais's lambs who do not do much but bleat, and Zenon who resembles an untamed beast, Lais and Miharca's mares have the ability to perform. Their performance of animality is primarily realised by their use of animal utterances, and secondly by series of closely administered gestures. Instead of granting the women 'a sense of power, speed, and almost reckless freedom' that would allow them to transcend the limits of female sexuality, as is often accredited to a girl's imitation of, or association with, a horse,<sup>585</sup> their performance serves as a means for further codifying their behaviour. The fact that they form a pack does not help in effecting their liberation either.<sup>586</sup> Domestication occurs in this case with the libertine character's exposition of the other to pain and humiliation. It is not enough that the other is made to act like an animal; rather, the animal-other must be aware of their shame. Indeed, a conspicuous feature of Sade's writings is that all characters are

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<sup>584</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 374.

<sup>585</sup> Jane C. Desmond, 'Commentary: Kinaesthetic Intimacies', *Animal Acts : Performing Species Today*, ed. by Una Chaudhuri and Holly Hughs, (Michigan: U of Michigan P, 2014), p. 133.

<sup>586</sup> Deleuze and Guattari consider animal becoming, which is expected to generate paradoxical liberation, a matter of forming alliances. 'A becoming-animal always involves a pack [...] a multiplicity,' they argue. 'What we are saying is that every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack' (2013: 239).

acutely aware of the presence of shame, even if they do not share in the sentiment themselves.

Playtime over, the libertine who had Duclos imitate a dog now instructs a footman to bring food for the ‘animals’, which is brought in the form of a feeding trough that contains delicately chopped meat:

There was nothing for me to say – I had to obey, and, still on all fours, I stuck my head into the trough and, as everything was very clean and very tasty, I began to graze with the dogs, who very politely left me my share without fighting over it in the slightest; this was the moment our libertine came – the humiliation, the degradation to which he reduced a woman inflamed his wits to an incredible degree.<sup>587</sup>

This is a rather strange episode. The libertine in question is evidently kind to his dogs, so it cannot be said that he hates animals. It cannot also be assumed that he truly thinks of Duclos as an animal, since otherwise he would have no reason to be cruel to her. Therefore, his dogged determination that she is an animal can only betray his awareness of the fact that she is as much a human as he. ‘Contact between humans and wild animals is above all this complex system of avoidance and tension in space,’ remarks Jean-Christoph Bailly, describing the human/animal interaction as ‘an immense entanglement of uneasy, self-concealing networks in which, once in a while, we have the privilege of pulling a thread’.<sup>588</sup> By forcing a connection between himself and the animal within the other, it is as if the libertine is engaging in an endeavour to recreate a similar systematic tension. Indeed, for the libertine the climactic moment is only arrived at owing to an extreme measure of conflict, whose inherent *tension* is inseparable from *attention* given the spectacular quality of the event<sup>589</sup>. This effort is represented also in the libertine’s animalisation of the self,

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<sup>587</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 302.

<sup>588</sup> Jean-Christoph Bailly, *The Animal Side*, trans. by Catherine Porter, (New York: Fordham UP, 2011), p. 6.

<sup>589</sup> In chapter one, I write about the libertine insistence on procuring *attention* rather than *affection* in an interpersonal context, bringing the example of John Wilmot’s address to the audience in Jeffrey Stephens’s play *The Libertine*.

which is carried out through a vastly different procedure and one which deliberately omits the element of humiliation altogether.

### **The Libertine as Animal**

The liberating promise of animality proves a tempting prospect to an individual whose ideology revolves around perpetuating excess and subverting boundaries of selfhood. We see in Sade's writings libertines who are compared to animals or who assume the guise of one. Moberti, for instance, whose discharges are 'more like a volcanic eruption than anything else' is described to behave like 'a wild animal rather than a human being'.<sup>590</sup> In *120 Days*, Duclos recounts the story of a libertine who has himself bound, 'hand and foot like a wild beast – he is covered in a tiger's pelt'.<sup>591</sup> He is then whipped and beaten while opposite him a naked woman is tied whom he attacks as soon as he is released by his captors. '[h]e roars and cries out like an animal, and comes as he roars'.<sup>592</sup> The Sadean libertine's animal becoming is complicated when he negates any difference between human and non-human animals. 'What is man, and how does he differ from all the other plants, from all the other animals in nature?' asks the 'Republican' pamphlet in *Philosophy in the Boudoir*.<sup>593</sup> To recognise himself as an animal poses a threat to the libertine's claim on sovereignty. If there is indeed no difference between man and beast, then comparing the victims to animals cannot serve as a basis for constructing a hierarchy. A dilemma is born, characterised to some degree in the following lines from Alexander Pope's 'Essay on Man':

What would this man? Now upward will he soar,  
And little less than angel, would be more;

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<sup>590</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 1097.

<sup>591</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 350.

<sup>592</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, pp. 350-1. The latter example can be interpreted as a nuanced subversion of the Perseus and Andromeda myth, wherein Perseus and Cetus, the sea monster, have been fused into one entity. A paradox is created when the endoxic trope of maiden saved from monster by hero is perverted to produce an alternative aesthetic.

<sup>593</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 139.

Now looking downwards, just as griev'd appears  
To want the strength of bulls, the fur of bears.<sup>594</sup>

Sade's libertines wish to preserve the feudal caste system, but in the absence of a god and in the light of an ideology that insists all living creatures are equal in worthlessness,<sup>595</sup> hierarchical structures can only come into effect through a violent, self-justifying subjugation of the other. In other words, invention of categories of authority only becomes a possibility when and where violence is present.<sup>596</sup>

In *Juliette*, Saint-Fond recognises in Nature two classes of men 'vastly unlike' not only in shape but also in their needs. Having denied the possibility of disparities arising in men due to circumstances such as availability of education and wealth, he makes the following conjecture regarding the *superior* and the *inferior* man:

The man of the people is simply the species that stands next above the chimpanzee on the ladder; and the distance separating them is, if anything, less than that between him and the individual belonging to the superior caste. And why should Nature, who so assiduously observes these gradations in all her works, have neglected them here? Are all plants alike? No. Are all animals the same in aspect and strength? No...<sup>597</sup>

In other words, all men are equally animal; and yet not all animals are equally ranked. Not only is the stronger animal encouraged to take 'full advantage' of its superior position, but also to worsen the situation of others.<sup>598</sup> Sadism, in this sense, is not merely a sexual mania but a political point of view whereby the animal-other is relocated from an interobjective natural habitat to a spectacular circus. In his study of power and animality in Kafka's writings, Zoltan Balazs recognises the

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<sup>594</sup> Alexander Pope, 'An Essay on Man', *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. David Fairer and Christine Gerrard, eds. 3, (New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), p. 189.

<sup>595</sup> In *Lautréamont and Sade*, Blanchot explains that in Sade's philosophy all human beings are considered equal in their interchangeability and their lack of worth (1963: 24-5).

<sup>596</sup> In 'Sloughing the Human', Steve Baker proposes that animality is intrinsically connected to creativity, drawing on Brian Luke's theory that pursuit of new active possibilities situate the individual in a 'feral' mode of existence (2003: 147-9).

<sup>597</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, pp. 322-3.

<sup>598</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 323.



political implications of animality and its elucidating effect on human relations.<sup>599</sup> Balazs considers animality to have a potential for ‘a sense of secrecy, hiddenness, a dynamism of life different from that of humanity,’ features which are also intrinsic to power. ‘There are two ways of covering up reality,’ he writes, ‘either [by] erecting a wall; letting down a curtain behind which the real things would happen; or [by] constructing an accessible, visible, yet contrived, fake kind of reality.’<sup>600</sup> In the light of Balazs’s theory, libertine animalism functions in the capacity of furnishing the individual with an aura of self-mystifying dynamism, while his animalisation of the victim cultivates an opportunity for conjuring an artificial version of reality. It goes without saying that a proposition of comradeship between the two species of Sadean animals is, in Noirceuil’s words, ‘as futile as would be this one addressed by the lamb to the wolf: *You mustn’t eat me, I am four-footed too*’.<sup>601</sup>

A predatory<sup>602</sup> display of ascendancy is portrayed by Arrabal in Zenon’s killing of Lais’s sheep. At the conclusion of the second act of the play, envious of Lais’s affection for her sheep – who unlike Zenon are almost ‘always quiet’<sup>603</sup> – he slaughters them. Lais is much distressed and kneels next to her sheep to lament their death, while Zenon watches from inside his cage suspended above where she is seated. Lais notices a liquid dropping from the cage. When she asks Zenon what he is doing, he replies: ‘To... get your... a... attention... to me... I... sh... shit on... you’.<sup>604</sup> The fact that Zenon is in a cage only serves to confirm his animal freedom, since the implication is that, should he be let out, he would not be bound by any moral restrictions. His scatological attempt at communication is a likewise testament to his lack of ethical consideration, and at the same time an integral gesture in his performance of animality. Žižek defines culture as mankind’s

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<sup>599</sup> Zoltan Balazs, ‘Power and animality in Kafka’s *The Castle*’, *Journal of Political Power*, 8:1 (2015), p. 86.

<sup>600</sup> Balazs, p. 91.

<sup>601</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 177.

<sup>602</sup> The predatory nature of animality is revealed mainly in the animal’s nocturnal preference for activity (Balazs 2015: 91), represented in *120 Days* by the libertines’ timing of their orgies from dusk till dawn.

<sup>603</sup> Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, p. 348.

<sup>604</sup> Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, p. 350.

response to the question of how we should deal with ‘embarrassing excesses’. Lacan, he explains, ‘put it that one measure of the passage from the animal to the human kingdom is what to do with shit... [A]n animal by definition just shits wherever, for humans shit is always an embarrassment’.<sup>605</sup> As an endoxic phenomenon, culture and its by-products are often rejected by the Sadean libertine. One symptom of this rejection is that excess is never considered embarrassing, and consequently neither is excrement. The same libertine who has the penchant for disguising himself as a tiger has a further requirement of his prey: ‘the girl has to shit – he will eat her turd off the floor’.<sup>606</sup> Ingestion of the victim’s faeces is a meta-animalistic performance, one which necessitates a prior knowledge of transgression. Hence, even if the libertine-as-animal shows minimal awareness of his performance by endeavouring to lose himself in the moment, the fact that he knows eating excrement would take his animality a step further reveals his human condition. Zenon, similarly, is aware of the ‘wrongness’ of his deed, which is why he expects it to garner him attention in the first place. The presence of excrement ushers the narrative into the realm of the grotesque, where rigid boundaries are trespassed and redrawn. As an apeman, Zenon represents a human-animal hybrid that is as uncanny a construct as the tiger libertine: there is something off with both their humanity and their animality, and it shows in how they react to shit.<sup>607</sup>

Bakhtin identifies excrement as ‘the most suitable substance for the degrading of all that is exalted’.<sup>608</sup> Sade makes paradoxical use of excrement by reserving it as means for grading – rather than degrading – authority. When Juliette first meets Saint-Fond, he asks her to let him appraise her buttocks and he is dismayed to find it clean. ‘I like them perfectly foul,’ he explains and proceeds to suggest an alternative activity:

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<sup>605</sup> Slavoj Žižek, ‘On Culture and Other Crimes’, interview by Kerry Chance, *Exchange*, 28 October 2014, <[ucexchange.uchicago.edu/interviews/zizek](http://ucexchange.uchicago.edu/interviews/zizek)> [accessed 8 August 2017].

<sup>606</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 351.

<sup>607</sup> Freud describes the uncanny (*unheimlich*) as a product of repressed childhood traumas (8). Note that, in comparison, Lais’s mare and Duclos’s dog can be interpreted as a libertine effort to reinvent a *heimlich* experience, without sacrificing the grotesque aspects of trauma that fuel his drive.

<sup>608</sup> M. I. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, c1984), p. 152.

Well, we shall have to resort to another; here you are, Juliette, behold mine – it is the way I wanted yours to be, you’ll find shit in there aplenty. Kneel facing it, adore it, consider the honor I accord you in permitting you to do my ass the homage an entire nation, nay, the whole wide world aspires to render it—oh, how many people would be overcome with joy could they but exchange places with you! if the very gods were to descend into our midst it would be to vie for this favor.<sup>609</sup>

In exchange for her services, Saint-Fond makes her the following promise: ‘and you will likewise feast upon my shit when we become truly well acquainted’.<sup>610</sup> In a post-cultural, meta-animalised society, the consumption of excrement becomes a method through which libertines can form bonds. Such activities are rites the members of the higher animal species must go through in order to be admitted into the desired echelon. In *Garden of Delights* when Lais confesses her affection for Miharca, the latter’s response is to lift her skirt and show Lais her buttocks, demanding: ‘If you love me so much, kiss my ass’.<sup>611</sup> This gesture is but a minute sample of Sadean interobjective connectivity, wherein the body acts as a linguistic extension, and bodily fluids substitute oaths.<sup>612</sup> Barthes holds that while Sade’s language is not paradigmatic in itself – due to its resemblance to a dictionary – its usage is: ‘to hold out one’s hand for one’s partner’s turd is disgusting in the victim’s language, delightful in the libertine’s language’.<sup>613</sup> Nevertheless, in the Sadean space, excrement does not comprise the only linguistic currency that is capable of producing a division between the master and the victim. Another such ejaculatory device is laughter.

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<sup>609</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 218.

<sup>610</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 218.

<sup>611</sup> Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, p. 312.

<sup>612</sup> Excrement’s linguistic function is stronger than any other bodily fluid in Sade; its disgust value (unlike blood and more than urine) and its association with death (unlike semen), as well as its demarcation of the animal proves its unique paradoxical potency. Interobjectivity, when defined scatologically, is another symptom of the nihilistic worthlessness of the ‘objects’ involved.

<sup>613</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 134.

Laughter is closely associated with fluids originating from the bodily lower stratum. ‘When death and birth are shown in their comic aspect,’ writes Bakhtin, ‘scatological images in various forms nearly always accompany the gay monsters created by laughter in order to replace the terror that has been defeated’.<sup>614</sup> Laughter, in this regard, has a distancing effect; it separates the spectator of the scatological horror from the possibility of destruction, reminding them that they are not the afflicted ones, or that the affliction has now passed. For the Sadean libertine excrement is no laughing matter; laughter, however, has an excremental value. As a species of anti-social discharge, rather than functioning as a means for expressing joy, it serves the purpose of drawing the line between the libertine and his victim. Juliette describes the laughter of her libertine friend, Clairwil, as ‘one of those wicked laughs wherein the mischief outweighs the gaiety’.<sup>615</sup> Another accomplice, Olympia, assists Juliette in torturing a victim, during an episode where laughter is brought in parallel with corporeal emissions:

Both of us completely tipsy, without quite realizing what we were doing or saying, we vomited, belched, farted, and pissed – all that confusedly – and we tortured our victim amain. The wretched creature screamed away, but neither her cries nor our wild laughter were heard by any living soul, the precautions having been well made against it.<sup>616</sup>

Likewise, in *Garden of Delights* Teloc is first introduced standing with his legs apart, laughing. We never see him sad; either he is laughing (which is never *happily* and is usually in a manner to signify his authority), or he is angry, or he is statuesque (petrified), as when Miharca and he visit Lais on the night of her premiere and for a moment he sits in an armchair, seeming ‘*absent, and suddenly very old*’.<sup>617</sup> Later, Miharca laughs wildly when she acquires dominance over Teloc. Lais is seen to laugh awkwardly and uncomfortably in the earlier stages, but at the conclusion of

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<sup>614</sup> Bakhtin, p. 151.

<sup>615</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 290.

<sup>616</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 670. Apart from acting as a source of laughter, the libertine body is grotesque: it is connected to its surroundings by orifices, it is a limitless body at ‘a point of transition in a life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception’ (Bakhtin 1984: 318).

<sup>617</sup> Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, p. 368.

the play when she and Teloc are about to murder Miharca, '[t]hey are laughing uncontrollably, like children playing a wild game. They circle around MIHARCA, shouting and screaming laughter. TELOC passes over MIHARCA. She howls'.<sup>618</sup>

Sadean laughter is dismissive, derisive, violent, and conspiratorial. In an animalistic sense, it represents a predatory roar of triumph. As a performative token, Sadean laughter is a matter of pride, in the word's implication of both vanity and a pack – to borrow the words of Scar from *Lion King*. Unlike the animal pack delineated by Deleuze and Guattari, however, the Sadean pack is not a symbiotic arrangement, since it seldom consists of 'beings of totally different scales and kingdoms',<sup>619</sup> even if the alliances that come into being are strictly non-Oedipal and veer towards the demonic.<sup>620</sup> The Sadean pack is rather a homogenous organisation wherein animalism is treated as a theatrical potential that augments the possibility of 'molecular proximity'<sup>621</sup> in hope of creating an interobjective correlation for a designated duration that is nevertheless temporary. An interesting feature of Sadean becoming-animal is that it serves as a performance of masculinity, despite Deleuze and Guattari's objection to the fact that this may be possible.<sup>622</sup> The reason being that many animals, given the agency, tend to act in the 'warlike, strategic, stalking, viriloid' patterns associated by Derrida with masculine behaviour.<sup>623</sup> If considered

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<sup>618</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 381.

<sup>619</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 238. Sadean libertines frequently belong to the two classes of the very rich and the outlaws, both of whom exist outside the law.

<sup>620</sup> Deleuze and Guattari recognise three kinds of animals: 1) Oedipal animals each with its own petty history, "my" cat, etc. 2) State animals [as in science or myths, has to do with structure and archetype]. 3) demonic animals, packs or affect animals (2013: 240-1).

<sup>621</sup> Deleuze and Guattari consider 'molecular proximity' as an outcome of becoming-animal (2013: 274).

<sup>622</sup> They see becoming-man as a non-option, due to the 'minoritarian' nature of all becomings (Deleuze and Guattari 2013: 291)

<sup>623</sup> On this subject, Derrida writes:

(Evil intended, harm done to the animal, insulting the animal would therefore be a fact of the male, of the human as *homo*, but also as *vir*. The animal's problem [*mal*] is the male. Evil comes to the animal through the male.) It would be relatively simple to show that this violence done to the animal is, if not in essence, then at

as a minoritarian movement, the purpose of a Sadean performance of becoming-animal is to portray alternative forms of domination. When Juliette asks Saint-Fond<sup>624</sup> whether his scatological obsession does not compel him to sacrifice his pride, he responds in the negative: ‘There’s no contradiction here, it’s all of a piece: for minds conformed like mine, the humiliation implicit in certain acts of libertinage serves only as fuel to the fire of our pride’.<sup>625</sup> Sade expands upon Saint-Fond’s theory in a footnote: ‘The paradox is readily to be explained: one does that which no one else is able to do; hence, one is unique in one’s species. It is this singularity pride feeds upon’.<sup>626</sup> Hence, by embracing his animality, the libertine seeks to prove himself a paradoxical sovereign whose autonomy remains untouched by any possible threats to his social integrity. In other words, no one can insult a man who takes pride in consuming excrement for sport. Since a ‘unique feature of the pride expression is that, unlike basic emotion expressions, it is not limited to facial musculature,’<sup>627</sup> the libertine’s animality can be interpreted as a performance of pride. His negation of codes of conduct, moreover, situates him in an animal state where he can pretend to be ‘[n]aked without knowing it,’ and therefore spare himself any ‘consciousness of good and evil’.<sup>628</sup> Only when animality is not linked to shame can it act as a liberating force; a fact which marks the main difference between livestock and wild beast in Sade, manifested as the presence or absence of shame.

### **The Animal as Sacrificial Matter**

Jean-Michel Rabaté describes Lucky’s attempt to think like a pig in *Waiting for Godot* as an excessive performance that ‘joins the bestial and the divine in a self-

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least predominantly male, and, like the very dominance of that predominance, warlike, strategic, stalking, viriloid (2008: 104).

<sup>624</sup> Saint-Fond is introduced by Sade as an ‘infinitely proud’ man, and one who acknowledges his hatred for the entirety of mankind, hence a minority of in his own regard.

<sup>625</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 218.

<sup>626</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 218.

<sup>627</sup> June Price Tangney and Kurt W. Fischer, *Self Conscious Emotions: the Psychology of Shame, Guilt, Embarrassment and Pride*, (New York: Guilford, 1995), p. 270.

<sup>628</sup> Derrida, p. 5.

canceling obliteration of human rationality'.<sup>629</sup> Sadean animalism comprises a similar outcome in its paradoxical insistence on inventing an animal, or nonhuman, rationality.<sup>630</sup> To achieve this semi-bestial, semi-divine condition, a sacrifice is necessary, since as I mentioned earlier without an act of violence no system of ascendancy can be established. Sadean sacrifice mimics in intent Mesoamerican sacrificial performances traced back to circa 3000 B.C.E:

Sacrificial rites performed by divinely ordained priests or kings maintained the social and cosmological orders mandated by gods at the time of creation. Constant human sacrifice was therefore considered a necessity, manifesting the economic and military power of the state.<sup>631</sup>

According to Nietzsche, tragic theatre comes into being by a juxtaposition of the Dionysian Greek theatre in its original collective and celebratory form – ‘a community in which boundaries separating individuals are dissolved’ – with the Apollonian ‘principle of individuation’.<sup>632</sup> From a Nietzschean perspective, tragedy entails the suffering of Dionysus as he goes through a process of individuation (dismemberment), thereby positing individuation as the source of all suffering. ‘Nietzsche traced back the origin of Greek tragic theatre to a ritual,’ writes Erika Fischer-Lichte, ‘a very particular ritual, in fact: a sacrificial ritual, the ritual of dismemberment’.<sup>633</sup> Dismemberment in Sade is operated through a variety of ritualistic (scripted) torments. Barthes considers Sade’s insistence on the preservation of the ritual throughout libertine proceedings what separates his writings from other transgressive texts.<sup>634</sup> Apart from *Justine*, where subjectivity is treated as a source of suffering when evaluated in an objective universe,<sup>635</sup> tortuous

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<sup>629</sup> Jean-Michel Rabate, *Think, Pig! Beckett at the Limit of the Human*, (New York: Fordham UP, 2016), p. 12.

<sup>630</sup> Laws, when they exist, are always traced to Nature in Sade and not to a human source.

<sup>631</sup> Tobin Nellhaus, ed. *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 74.

<sup>632</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre*, (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 18.

<sup>633</sup> Fischer-Lichte, p. 18.

<sup>634</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 167.

<sup>635</sup> Discussed in chapter two.

rituals are never treated as tragic events in Sadean narrative. In Sade, the definition of tragedy as described by Nietzsche is inverted, since tragedy always befalls the other. Instead of elevating an individual above others, sacrifice and dismemberment dissolve any possibility of individuation as far as the victim is concerned. The spectator, on the other hand, experiences individuation through celebrating the victim's demise.

Whereas in Greek tragedy sympathy is given to the victim and it is with him the spectator identifies, Aztec ritualistic sacrifice locates sympathy toward the deity or the spectator before whom the sacrifice is being made. Bataille writes on ritualistic sacrifice:

The victim dies and the spectators share in what his death reveals... A violent death disrupts the creature's discontinuity: what remains, what the tense onlookers experience in the succeeding silence, is the continuity of all existence with which the victim is now one.<sup>636</sup>

Death, in other words, represents continuity only if it is theatrical, and the more violent the sacrifice, the more spectacular it becomes. The other's death presents the libertine with a possibility of continuation which explains why the victim's suffering is directly related to the libertine's ejaculation. 'The same man who had made Duclos eat with his dogs has a young boy devoured by a lion in front of him,' explains Sade in *120 Days*. In what appears as a parody of gladiatorial games, the boy is given a stick to defend himself with; 'this only enrages the beast further against him; he comes when the boy is completely devoured'.<sup>637</sup> The act of spectatorship here enables the libertine to experience the victim's destruction by proxy, which gives the illusion that he has absorbed the lion's agency. Hence, the ambiguity of the animal presence in this passage ushers the libertine into a state of theatrical divinity.

Sacrifice is afforded with great significance in Arrabal's *Garden of Delights*. The exigency of ritual murder, that is incurring death for a spectacular purpose, is hinted at when Zenon kills Lais's sheep in the end of Act I. From adolescence,

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<sup>636</sup> Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, trans. by Mary Dalwood, (London: Boyard, 1987), p. 82.

<sup>637</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 380.



Lais's goal has been to obtain freedom.<sup>638</sup> To achieve the sort of liberation Teloc has to offer her, Lais requires a sacrifice. Miharca prophesises this when she tells Lais about a dream she has had in which the latter murders the former:

LAIS But why did I kill you?

MIHARCA You killed me in order to win, to enter into the garden of delights... it was sacrificial... Swear that you don't hate me.<sup>639</sup>

It is later revealed that Miharca is a willing participant in her own sacrifice.<sup>640</sup> Presenting Miharca's death as a sacrifice, rather than murder, robs the event of its tragic implications and situates it in a Sadean sphere.<sup>641</sup> Since libertine freedom is a theatrical phenomenon, Lais is liberated by becoming an actress. It is Teloc who predicts Lais will be an actress one day and imbues her metamorphosis with a divine flavour: 'the reincarnation of God on earth'.<sup>642</sup> When asked why she takes delight in the idea of becoming an actress, Lais replies that she wants to 'live a thousand lives [...] And to know that even though I'm just me I can become all the others and that gives me the power to make all the heroines of the world more human and transform myself into an ever-changing kaleidoscope'.<sup>643</sup> Formally, her response betrays a libertine proclivity for acquiring a state of alterity. Once her wish has been granted and she becomes an actress, however, she is subjected to guilt and is resolved to rid herself of the vanity of acting. Lais's decision in this case is reminiscent of Phaedra's resolution when she wishes to shed her passion for (or alternately to follow) Hippolytus by relinquishing the society of human beings. 'As of tomorrow I will give up theatre and I'll go far away,' Lais declares. 'I'll go hunting in the virgin forest and I'll live alone with the beasts'.<sup>644</sup> Up to this point,

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<sup>638</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 326. She tells Miharca: 'Let's do something; travel around the world, be free... let's do it now!'

<sup>639</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 340.

<sup>640</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', pp. 389-90.

<sup>641</sup> Entrance into the garden alludes a libertine species of freedom, since the joys depicted in Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* panel are essentially hedonistic and approaching paranoiac in form, which is comparable to the Earl of Rochester's surrealistic hybridisation of human bodies.

<sup>642</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 343.

<sup>643</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', pp. 343-4.

<sup>644</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', p. 345.

Lais's view of animality is strictly civilised, mimicking a Rousseauian attribution of innocence to nature. Miharca's sacrifice serves as a turning point whereby the animal acquires a Sadean aspect and is shown as a possible vessel for divine agency.

'[P]rimitive man saw the animals as no different from himself,' writes Bataille, 'except that, as creatures not subject to the dictates of taboos, they were originally regarded as more sacred, more god-like than man'.<sup>645</sup> While mankind attempts to free himself from the violation of death by means of civilisation, he may once again approach animality 'under the secondary influence of transgression'.<sup>646</sup> That is to say, as soon as human beings transgress the social lexicon, they are transported into the realm of the animal, and of excess – and to that extent, excrement. Arrabal celebrates excess by introducing a baroque element into his drama:

For me baroque means very exactly a profusion that hides a very rigorous ordering of things, a solid architectural structure. More vaguely one can interpret the baroque as a lack of moderation... a lack of moderation in the sense that can be at the same time most disgusting and marvellous, excess – Beauty, through excess.<sup>647</sup>

Likewise, in Sade, beauty is always a matter of excess. One of the requirements outlined by the four libertines of *120 Days* is that four ugly, old, and extremely repulsive women – diseased and covered in filth – be among the inhabitants of the château. Sade justifies this requirement as follows by pointing out the complexity of ugliness as compared to the simplicity of beauty. Ugliness, Sade reasons, leaves a stronger impression on the beholder and so has more power to move and excite.<sup>648</sup> These four grotesque women, who are to act as overseers to the victims, are described in detail by Sade. So are the libertines themselves, whose physical features are by no means presented under a pleasant light. Meanwhile, the 'beautiful' girls and boys are never described in detail, beyond the fact that they are pretty and

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<sup>645</sup> Bataille, *Eroticism*, p. 81.

<sup>646</sup> Bataille, *Eroticism*, p. 83.

<sup>647</sup> Donahue, p. 33.

<sup>648</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 41.

have charming features that resemble such and such work of art. Barthes distinguishes two types of portraiture in Sade, one which is ‘realistic, they painstakingly individualize their model, from face to sexual organs’ while the other is ‘unrealistic... that of subjects for debauchery... this portrait is purely rhetorical, a topos’.<sup>649</sup> Sadean aesthetics is strictly anti-ethical, which explains why beauty is never paid realistic attention to, since beauty generates no criminal consequences. ‘I dare not paint these beauties,’ writes Sade, ‘they were all so equally exceptional that my brushstrokes would inevitably become monotone’.<sup>650</sup> Sade’s boredom with beauty is frequently reflected in the victim’s aesthetic destruction by the libertine. In contrast, he obviously enjoys describing ugliness, to the point that I would argue Sade acknowledges the usage of ugliness as an expressive instrument in a theatrical sense and utilises *laideur* – which means *ugliness* as well as *monstrosity* in French – as another vehicle for an animal performance.<sup>651</sup> Sade’s valorisation of ugliness is likewise a direct antithesis to a Romantic sensibility that excludes the animal from the realm of the aesthetics.<sup>652</sup>

In *Juliette*, we encounter a libertine called Minski (the giant<sup>653</sup>) who is perhaps the most animalistic character in all of Sade’s writings – Juliette describes him as a ‘species of centaur’.<sup>654</sup> He introduces himself as a man of forty-five, who cannot ‘retire for the night without having discharged ten times’. He ascribes his

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<sup>649</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 21.

<sup>650</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 35.

<sup>651</sup> It is interesting to note that during the French Revolution physical ugliness was seen as a revolutionary trait when attributed to a leader. In ‘Revolutionary Monsters’, Marie-Hélène Huet explains how Robespierre’s face was described to have ‘something of the cat and the tiger about it’ (1997: 88), and another person who had never met him gives the following description: ‘Robespierre is not quite a human being, nor can he be assimilated to a single animal species, for his voice suggests a wild beast endowed with an abnormal quality of speech’ (1997: 89). A more popular revolutionary, Danton was frequently described as a minotaur (1997: 92). ‘It is said that Danton himself once soberly acknowledged his powerful ugliness by saying that nature had endowed him with “*l’âpre physionomie de la liberté*” [the rude physiognomy of liberty]’, writes Huet (1997: 93).

<sup>652</sup> Peter Heymans, *Animality in British Romanticism: The Aesthetics of Species*, (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 4.

<sup>653</sup> Bakhtin closely links giants with the grotesque ‘conception of material-bodily wealth and abundance’ (1984: 344).

<sup>654</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 577.

virility to his consumption of human flesh: ‘whoever tries this diet is certain to triple his libidinous capacities, to say nothing of the strength, the health, the youthfulness such fare assures’.<sup>655</sup> Like an Aztec high-priest soaking the power of his sacrificial victim, Minski has a vampiric ability to appropriate his victim’s life source. Bataille describes the ‘process of appropriation’ as ‘characterized by a homogeneity,’ and excretion as a heterogeneous act.<sup>656</sup> Sade converges these two processes: Minski first appropriates his victim’s flesh, then turns it into excretory (ejaculatory) material in a deconstructive ritual. He is the ultimate libertine animal-machine whose function consists of converting the homogenous (uniformity) into the heterogeneous (alterity). Both in constitution and in appetite Minski resembles an animalistic god, rather than a human being – when aroused, he ‘rattles off a string of oaths, he whinnies as animals do, etc...’ – a fact which he does not deny, in fact celebrates:

Much philosophy is needed to understand me, yes, I realize it, I am a monster, something vomited forth by Nature to aid her in the destruction whereof she obtains the stuff she requires for creation; I am without peer in abomination, alone in my kind ... oh yes, all the invectives they gratify me with, I know them by heart; but powerful enough to have need of nobody, wise enough to find sufficiency in my solitude, to detest all mankind, to brave its censure, to jeer at its attitude toward me; experienced enough, intelligent enough to explode every creed, to flout every religion, to send every god to hell for the devil’s fucking; proud enough to abhor every government, to refuse every tie, to ignore every check, to consider myself above every ethical principle, I am happy in my little domain; in it I dispose of all a sovereign’s privileges, in it I enjoy all the pleasures of despotism, I dread no man, and I live content...<sup>657</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 582.

<sup>656</sup> Georges Bataille, ‘The use value of D.A.F. Sade’, *Sade and the Narrative of Transgression*, ed. by David B. Allison, Mark S. Roberts and Allen S. Weiss, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), p. 21

<sup>657</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, pp. 582-3.

One could call him a post-modern titan, in the sense that his primitivism is systematically contained in a micro-theatre of his own making. ‘Anguish is what makes humankind, it seems;’ Bataille contemplates, ‘not anguish alone, but anguish transcended and the act of transcending’.<sup>658</sup> That Minski is devoid of any sentiment of anguish in his solitude excludes him further from humankind.<sup>659</sup> He solves the problem of discontinuity which is posed by his singular existence through engaging in human sacrifice (his murders are frequently theatrical) which provides him with not only the spectator’s pleasure of witnessing continuity in death, but also the satisfaction of the animal deity to whom the sacrifice is being offered.<sup>660</sup>

Bataille maintains that in comparison to human sacrifice, animal sacrifice is rooted in failure, since animal death does not have the same potential ‘to disturb and terrify’.<sup>661</sup> For Sade, animal and human are equal in that both their deaths remain unremarkable as far as the libertine is concerned. Minski sacrifices Juliette’s companion in an elaborate ritual including a contraption designed by himself through which he can commit sixteen murders of various descriptions at once.<sup>662</sup> His infernal inventiveness extends to other aspects of his environs. One of the most notable features of Minski’s abode is its furniture. Juliette describes the dining room as follows:

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<sup>658</sup> Bataille, *Eroticism*, p. 86.

<sup>659</sup> Minski can be seen as either a caricature or an extreme personification of Nietzsche’s concept of the ‘great man’ as a person whose will extends beyond the boundary of his person, who has no reservations about the opinion of others – ‘If he cannot lead, he goes alone; then it can happen that he may snarl at some things he meets on his way – and who requires no sympathy but rather ‘servants, tools’. ‘There is a solitude within him that is inaccessible to praise of blame,’ Nietzsche writes, ‘his own justice that is beyond appeal’ (1967: 505).

<sup>660</sup> Minski also hunts for his victims himself. The hunt à force subordinates its animal to its human participants in several ways,’ writes Susan Crane in *Animal Encounters*, ‘but more intriguingly, it makes intimate knowledge of animal bodies and minds the highest expression of aristocratic authority’ (2012: 7). This theory adjusts very well with the Sadean libertine’s obsession with literally turning the victim inside-out.

<sup>661</sup> Bataille, *Eroticism*, pp. 87-8.

<sup>662</sup> The purpose of the sacrifice, claims the host, is to prove that he does not wish his guests to imagine he is willing to act according to principals of hospitality, even though he has promised earlier that he would not engage in penetrative intercourse with any of the guests and limit their participation to a spectator’s: ‘I’d better not fuck any of your four, it would kill you; but you can at least cooperate in my pleasures... you can watch them: I believe you worthy of being roused’ (*Juliette* 1968: 585).

Minski snaps his fingers and the table in the corner of the room scuttles into the middle of it; five chairs dispose themselves around the table, two chandeliers descend from the ceiling and hover above the table.<sup>663</sup>

‘There is nothing mysterious about it,’ Minski explains, one would imagine with some delight since he seldom has visitors who can appreciate his decorative flair. ‘You notice that this table, these chandeliers, those chairs are each made up of a group of girls cunningly arranged; my meal will be served upon the backs of these creatures’.<sup>664</sup> This level of dehumanisation of the other extends to a point where the libertine is utilising his victims as sentient objects with a hive mind that is controlled by one master. In *Garden of Delights* Zenon similarly occupies the position of a furniture for Lais in the beginning of Act II where we see her sitting and singing:

*When her song is finished, she jumps with joy. Then we realize that ZENON, in a kneeling position, was acting as a chair for LAIS.*<sup>665</sup>

Human furnishings are part of a ritual, portending the other’s transformation into post-sacrificial, excremental matter, which supplies the substance of Sadean institution.<sup>666</sup> Throughout the play, Teloc attempts to establish an institutionalised possession over Lais, mirroring the owner’s possession of an animal. In the second Act, Lais’s relationship with Teloc becomes progressively sadomasochistic.<sup>667</sup> Upon meeting him after many years of separation, she requests: ‘Put a string around my neck and I’ll be your trained flea, or put a spiked collar on me and I’ll be your

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<sup>663</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 584.

<sup>664</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 584.

<sup>665</sup> Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, p. 351.

<sup>666</sup> ‘The sadist is in need of institutions,’ writes Deleuze, ‘the masochist of contractual relations... The sadist thinks in terms of institutionalized possession, the masochist in terms contracted alliance’ (*Masochism* 1967: 20-1).

<sup>667</sup> Like all libertines, Teloc himself shows masochistic tendencies. According to Miharca, Teloc asks her to beat him sometimes (1974: 370). And when he goes into a catatonic state on his visit to Lais with Miharca in the second Act, Miharca asks Lais to kick him:

MIHARCA Spit on him, I said. He loves it. Give him a kick in his parts, go ahead... (*She laughs her mad laugh.*) He doesn’t even know what’s going on.

LAIS Either he doesn’t know or he’s enjoying it (1974: 368).

watchdog and protect you'.<sup>668</sup> Later, she pulls a cart he is sitting in '*as though she were a horse*'.<sup>669</sup> A distinguishable feature of these animals is that they act as utilities: the trained flea entertains, the dog is a guard, the horse provides vehicular movement. As animal-furniture hybrids, they reflect the Freudian concept of the uncanny as originated in 'anxious ambiguity', samples of which are present in the Surrealist 'confusion between the animate and the inanimate, as exemplified in wax figures, dolls, mannequins, and automatons'.<sup>670</sup> Minski's animalisation and subsequent cannibal consumption of the other, as well as his domestic objectification of his victims, may result in the loss of his own subjectivity,<sup>671</sup> which is precisely what he desires since through a deconstruction of *endoxal* identity he can obtain material for creating a novel corporeality for himself and in his own grotesque image.

Since for Sade existence is inseparable from objecthood and the difference between various objects is defined by their degrees of 'off-ness', he portrays liberty as a meta-theatrical practice that entails an individual shapeshifting from one object form to another. In this light, Lais's gradual transition into Zenon, as depicted throughout the second Act, can be explained as the logical culmination of her fondness for acting. Through acting, she can affect a strong enough interobjective bond with the other that she can actually become the other. The marriage role-play enacted between Lais and Zenon anticipates this other-becoming when Zenon insists they play each other's part.<sup>672</sup>

ZENON *returns, thrown together in what looks like a bride's gown.*

*Upon seeing him, LAIS laughs, awkward, uncomfortable.*

LAIS Are you going to be the bride?

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<sup>668</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', pp. 357-8.

<sup>669</sup> Arrabal, 'Garden of Delights', pp. 362-3.

<sup>670</sup> Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, (Cambridge (MA): MIT, 1993), p. 7.

<sup>671</sup> 'Interestingly enough, it is by animalising woman and treating her as a tasty piece of meat that man loses control over both himself and woman,' remarks Peter Heymans (2012: 116).

<sup>672</sup> This ceremony closely resembles libertine paradoxical rituals, to be discussed in the final chapter.

ZENON (*happily*) Yes, yes, me... bri... bride... you... husba... band.

[...]

LAIS (*playing priest*) Zenon, do you take this man Lais as your husband, to honor and feed, to give him your groin of flames and honey, till death do you part?

ZENON *grunts* “uh huh” *happily*.

Say “yes, I swear.”

*The phone rings. LAIS goes toward the phone as she takes off the tuxedo.*<sup>673</sup>

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the theatrical contract as the origin of animalism in Sade. In all instances of Sadean animality, the theatrical contract is made between a group of libertines, or between a libertine and a prostitute, or indeed between the libertine and himself, without involving the victim. Lais’s success in conceiving a theatrical pact with Teloc is demonstrated in the height of their sacrifice of Miharca when, in a change of roles, Teloc becomes Lais’s horse: ‘TELOC and LAIS appear on stage. TELOC plays the horse and LAIS, the rider. They are laughing uncontrollably, like children playing a wild game’.<sup>674</sup> Lais’s metamorphosis is made complete when in the conclusion of the play she imprisons herself inside a giant egg with Zenon. As Zenon eats Lais’s soul, represented as a jar of jam, he gains Lais’s ability to speak while Lais loses her power to articulate. Zenon thus consumes Lais’s continuity,<sup>675</sup> indicating her transition into the realm of the animal where she no longer is aware of her human consciousness, hence cannot be subjected to human discontinuity. As the egg ascends above the stage: ‘We hear the animal laughter of LAIS in the egg while ZENON sings clearly and well’.<sup>676</sup>

<sup>673</sup> Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, pp. 324-5.

<sup>674</sup> Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, p. 381.

<sup>675</sup> Bataille recognises the ambiguous state during which an asexual entity is in the process of dividing into two beings as one that disrupts the agent’s continuity (1987: 96).

<sup>676</sup> Arrabal, ‘Garden of Delights’, p. 391.



In the Earth panel of Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, mankind, animals and plants intermingle to suggest motion – compared to the Heaven panel where homogeneous tranquillity reigns. The possibility of a surrealistic fusion is thus created, which nevertheless is realised fully in the Hell panel of the painting. Bosch's Inferno features a great deal more ambiguity of identity compared to the Earth panel: there are acts of mutilation, cannibalism, vomiting, defecation, etc... all of which represent dizzying motion surpassing what is portrayed on Earth. Entirely novel creatures spring forth (frequently from orifices) in Hell, injecting paranoiac grotesqueness into the surreal. In this chapter, I examined the human/animal dialectic in Arrabal's baroque grotesque, the theatricality of this relationship, and the paradoxical stance of the animal in the Sadean space. The next chapter discusses the transition from animalisation/animalism to mechanisation and the orgiastic production of the infernal machine, indicating the mass-possession of the other by the libertine.

### Chapter 6: Sade's Infernal Pleasure Machines

In Act I of Jacques Offenbach's opera, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, the protagonist Hoffmann catches a glimpse of and falls in love with a young woman by the name of Olympia, whom he later discovers to be a mechanical doll, much to his chagrin. Hoffmann expresses two contradictory sentiments in this tale: one is the fear that the beloved might be an automaton, which reflects a Gothic/Romantic anxiety rooted in the individual's reaction in confrontation with supernatural objects of affection;<sup>677</sup> the other is a Baroque desire for the object of affection to be an automaton insofar as mechanic precision represents perfection.<sup>678</sup> Whereas in Romantic discourse the uncanny beloved is treated as potentially dangerous and a threat, from Baroque perspective the automaton other is more often than not a source of curiosity and a promise of possibility. French materialist philosopher, La Mettrie, displays such optimism when he remarks that the invention of a 'speaking machine [...] can no longer be considered impossible, particularly at the hand of a new Prometheus'.<sup>679</sup> Olympia epitomises Hoffmann's desire for an aesthetically superior being who is nevertheless horrifying for her lack of human sensibility. The same trope is explored in Alex Garland's film, *Ex Machina*, with Alicia Vikander portraying the immaculate AI agent, Ava, whose mind has advanced beyond human capacity to the point where she regards humanity irrelevant to her own existence. Sade continues in the vein of the Baroque tradition and takes it a step further by actively proposing the mechanisation of the other, while he still maintains the Gothic conviction that the result of such an invention would be a monster. Lucienne

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<sup>677</sup> Anxiety, in this sense, is a result of the removal of fixed boundaries between such binary definitions as human/monster, self/other. In her essay on posthumanism, 'The Body', Francesca Ferrando proposes that 'human identity' is formed against a series of 'performative rejections' directed towards what is constituted as the Other (2014: 217). With Romanticism, there is always a danger that the monstrous other can be a mirror image of the self.

<sup>678</sup> An example of this latter prospect is portrayed in Federico Fellini's *Casanova*, during the episode where the eponymous character is introduced to a female automaton with whom he falls in love with momentarily.

<sup>679</sup> La Mettrie, p. 34.

Frappier-Mazur separates the Sadean approach from the Fin-de-Siècle – the conclusion of the Romantic treatment of the automaton other – by reasoning that Sade’s stories advocate a ‘positivist utopia of sexual mechanics’ while the latter links ‘the utopian dream to nostalgia, melancholy, and even at times remorse and self-chastisement’.<sup>680</sup> Unlike the Romantic and Post-Romantic focus on harnessing the fear aroused in a confrontation with the machine, Sadean discourse entrenches itself in the question of opportunity and the potential for increasing autonomy to monstrous proportions, through acknowledging the self’s and the other’s mechanistic actuality. A subversion of the Baroque notion of prowess through invention, the Sadean system correlates dominance directly to the submission of the other to the self’s inventiveness. This chapter looks at Sade’s mechanistic reinventions of the self and the other, through first examining paradoxical narrative as the machine’s programme, and second by looking at the machine on a materialistic level. Giuseppe Manfridi’s *The Cuckoos* is utilised as a dramatic point of departure for the former analysis, with focus placed upon the role of the orgy in contextualising a libertine paradigm. Mark Ravenhill’s *Shopping and Fucking* provides the analogous material for the latter half of the chapter, specifically with regards to the Sadean consumption and industrialisation of the other. But first: what is a machine in a Sadean context?

### **The Sadean Machine**

The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes ‘machine’ as ‘[a] structure regarded as functioning as an independent body, without mechanical involvement’. One now obsolete but no less pertinent meaning pertains to a ‘scheme or plot’. Historically, the word machine could imply ‘[a] bicycle or tricycle; a motorcycle. Formerly also: a dandy-horse or velocipede,’ that is, a device that can serve as an extension of the body in order to enhance movement. A more detailed meaning of the term describes it as ‘[a] complex device, consisting of a number of interrelated parts, each having

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<sup>680</sup> Lucienne Frappier-Mazur, *Writing the Orgy: Power and Parody in Sade*, (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996), p. 30.

a definite function, together applying, using, or generating mechanical or (later) electrical power to perform a certain kind of work’, and not uninterestingly: ‘[a] living being considered to move or act automatically or mechanically, rather than of its own volition; *esp.* a person who acts mechanically or unthinkingly, as from habit or obedience; a person who acts with mechanical precision or efficiency’. Finally, in a vernacular context machine refers to ‘[t]he penis; the female genitals (*rare*)’.<sup>681</sup> In Sade, the word *machine* typically refers to real or artificial phallic objects (penis or dildo) and to a lesser extent the vagina. Other instances include torture or pleasure machines invented by the libertines to realise their fantasies. ‘Deliciously inspired by the music, I polluted my hostess for another hour and a quarter in her voluptuous machine,’ speaks Juliette about a swing designed by a friend,<sup>682</sup> who is coincidentally called Olympia.<sup>683</sup> A more extreme example appears in the final story in *120 Days* featuring an elaborate chamber comprising fifteen machines that produce fifteen variety of tortures, creating a semblance of hell:

The subterranean apartment into which the girls tumble is furnished with fifteen different assortments of frightful torture machines, and an executioner, wearing the mask and emblems of a demon, wearing also the colors of his specialty, presides over each apparatus.<sup>684</sup>

The libertine inventor of this chamber – whose mania is known as ‘hell passion’ – spends fifteen minutes contemplating each operation, and when he is ready to ejaculate ‘he falls into a comfortable armchair whence he can observe the entire spectacle’.<sup>685</sup> Throughout the Sadean narrative, the individual body is also known as a machine. The Duc de Blangis describes himself as nothing ‘but a machine for her [Nature] to operate as she wishes, and there is not a single one of my crimes

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<sup>681</sup> ‘Machine’, *OED Online*, <http://www.oed.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/Entry/111850?rskey=r0T7xS&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>, [accessed 14 August 2017].

<sup>682</sup> Possibly inspired by Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s *The Swing*.

<sup>683</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 662.

<sup>684</sup> Sade, *The 120*, p. 667.

<sup>685</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 669.

that does not serve her [...]; I should be a fool to resist her'.<sup>686</sup> Described as such, the Sadean body becomes independent of transcendental influence, yet subservient to a set of natural laws that favour destruction.<sup>687</sup> Since the only organ referred to in the text as an *engine* is the penis, the instinct that the body-as-machine obeys is predominantly sexual – especially since eating, the other driving force, is a libidinal activity in Sade, which I will get to later in the chapter. '[T]his tool is my god,' Noircueil speaks of his penis, further referring to it as a 'despotic engine,' whom he would like to see in the guise of a 'terrific personage' raining death onto everyone who fails to please him.<sup>688</sup> The personification of the phallus as a tyrannical deity gives libertine imagination a dramatic angle, since contrary to what the Duc claims, it is ultimately the mind that stimulates the body in Sade and not vice versa. Priority is given to contemplation over passion, which is understandable considering how without a transgressive scenario sex itself does not excite the libertine. Madame de Clairwil reproaches Juliette for being spurned towards committing crimes only when she is sexually aroused:

One must proceed calmly, deliberately, lucidly. Crime is the torch that should fire the passions, that is a commonplace; but I have the suspicion that with her it is the reverse, passion firing her to crime.<sup>689</sup>

The stimulating value of imagination is often emphasised in Sade and its contribution to libertinage duly acknowledged; Sadean libertines tend to recognise one another by virtue of their imagination and not merely promiscuous tendencies. 'The irregularity of your imagination sets mine in a ferment,' Juliette informs

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<sup>686</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 10. 'We think, and we are even honest citizens, only in the same way as we are lively or brave,' writes La Mettrie, materialist philosopher whose works Sade had read and whom he mentions by name in *Juliette*, 'it all depends on the way our machine is constructed' (1996: 8).

<sup>687</sup> I posit that Sade situates the body in the domain of the 'Mechanistic Age', which is marked, as Roger Hahan argues, by the displacement of 'teleology in favor of a search for laws that link phenomena in regular, repeatable patterns of behavior' (1991: 150).

<sup>688</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 185.

<sup>689</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 475.

Noirceuil,<sup>690</sup> which is by far the highest praise a libertine can offer another. The Minister Saint-Fond likewise confesses to Juliette that '[e]ndowed with a very puissant imagination,' he is no longer capable of enjoying 'everyday pleasures'<sup>691</sup>. The real engine hence is the mind, a *deus ex machina* of Sadean theatre capable of saving the day when boredom threatens<sup>692</sup>.

The previous chapter explored the place of the animal in Sadean discourse and the theatricality of both the process of animalisation and a profession of animalism on the libertine's behalf. The shift from animal to machine, that is, from animalisation to mechanisation, occurs primarily when victims increase in number. Mechanisation is also deemed necessary to give effect to the following principals of: greater efficiency, greater scale, more combinations, and a more potent ejaculation; all of which combined contribute to the mass production of pleasure. Therefore, the main difference between animal and machine for Sade is a question of technological scale, measured by the complementary elements of quantity and quality.<sup>693</sup> An instance of this phenomenon is the infernal machine mentioned earlier which allows one act of murder to be multiplied by fifteen. My concern in this chapter, however, is mainly with the treatment of the other as a mechanical entity. As the number of victims participating in each scenario increases, there is a need for the libertine to exert greater authority over each person. Sadean sovereignty over the many (as opposed to the one) is established through the creation of a corporeal machine: the orgy. At the orgiastic level, the Sadean machine is the conglomeration of a number of bodies. Sadean orgy, it must be noted, is not

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<sup>690</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 184.

<sup>691</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 231.

<sup>692</sup> In 'Animals, Humans, Machines and Thinking Matter, 1690-1707', Ann Thomson explains that a question that occupied the minds of philosophers and theologians 'at the turn of the eighteenth century' was whether 'matter and motion can think' (2010: 19). Sade characteristically takes the anti-theological position by proposing that matter *can* think, and therefore that the god is indeed in and *a cause de* the machine.

<sup>693</sup> Daniel R. Haedrick describes technology as methods through which human beings gain control over their environment 'beyond what they can do with their bodies'. Haedrick considers artefacts as well as 'domesticated animals' as technological entities when used by humans. 'The history of technology is the story of humans' increasing ability to manipulate nature', he concludes, explaining how this manipulation results in an 'instrumental' but not moral superiority (2010: 3).

a chaotic affair. The destructive nature of the performances demand a great degree of orderliness, lest participants perish or become injured before the desired moment. This is an important factor that influences my terming of the orgy as a machine, for although its members are living human beings, the orgy itself is not an organic, living entity. Daniel Koshland describes the living organism as ‘an organized unit, which can carry out metabolic reactions, defend itself against injury, respond to stimuli, and has the capacity to be at least a partner in reproduction’.<sup>694</sup> In Sade, the orgy is carefully programmed, compartmentalised, secluded as a system, and admits a high level of improvisation and adaptability (with ‘response to pain’ being ‘essential to survival’), it has movement as its core function (‘[I]f life as we know it involves movement’), and it has regenerative abilities (parts are replaced, the members rest and eat). The orgy does not, however, promote any reproduction that is not purely aesthetic: the number of participants entering the orgy is always greater than those who survive the orgy. Much like any torture device that makes an appearance in Sade, the orgy is designed to serve as an extension of the libertine’s body and will,<sup>695</sup> as well as a system through which (preferably) all possible interactive combinations are explored and all possible resources are exhausted. When exhaustion does occur, it is rapidly overcome when the exhausted body is revived by an imaginative discourse. Narrative acts in the capacity of a programme whose aesthetic idealism supplies the fuel, but it is also a product of the orgy, guaranteeing the sustainability of pleasure, which is otherwise temporal. ‘I would like [...] to find a crime which, even when I had left off doing it, would go on having perpetual effect,’ Clairwil suggests at one point:

[I]n such a way that so long as I lived, at every hour of the day and as I lay sleeping at night, I would be constantly the cause of a particular disorder, and that this disorder might broaden to the point where it brought about a

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<sup>694</sup> Daniel E. Koshland Jr., ‘The Seven Pillars of Life’, *Science*, 295:5563 (2002), pp. 2215-2216. The seven pillars of life according to Koshland are: program, improvisation, compartmentalisation, energy, regeneration, adaptability, and seclusion.

<sup>695</sup> Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and J. Benjamin Hurlbut identify technologies in general as ‘extensions of human agency’ (2016: 4).

corruption so universal or a disturbance so formal that even after my life was over I would survive in the everlasting continuation of my wickedness...<sup>696</sup>

Juliette's answer to Clairwil's conundrum is that she should engage in what Juliette calls 'moral murder', achieved through 'counsels, writings, or actions'. Narrative, in other words, is the apathetic medium that connects one orgiastic episode to another.<sup>697</sup> It is therefore important that the orgy is conducted within a theatrical framework; there needs to exist not only a preordained scenario, but also a spectator who can transform the event into a new narrative, as do the storytellers of *120 Days*.

Spectacular mechanisation of the other in Sade obeys yet another principal. In his book on *Embodiment and Mechanisation*, Daniel Black associates the 'design of machines and our emotional reactions to them' with the human beings' perspective of their own bodies. 'Conversely, how we understand our own bodies can be seen to be fundamentally influenced by their association with technology,' he writes. 'We see ourselves in the things we create'.<sup>698</sup> This is a significant factor in libertine praxis whose narcissistic inclination demands that the other be viewed as a component of the self and not as a separate entity capable of exercising agency. The Sadean victim, therefore, is considered by the libertine to be no more than a high-tech prosthesis.<sup>699</sup> Moreover, it is necessary for the process of mechanisation that the other is perceived and presented as technological matter.<sup>700</sup> Black proposes that to see the body in isolation from other bodies is a consequence of seeing the

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<sup>696</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 525.

<sup>697</sup> In chapter four, I discussed the role of apathy as a bridge between two or more libertine activities.

<sup>698</sup> Daniel Black, *Embodiment and Mechanisation: Reciprocal Understandings of Body and Machine from the Renaissance to the Present*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 11.

<sup>699</sup> Vivian Sobchack writes of her experience of living with a prosthetic leg that a prosthesis is 'a techno-body that has no sympathy for human suffering, cannot understand human pleasure and, since it has no conception of death, cannot possibly value life' (1995: 213). Ironically, the Sadean libertine's perception of the victim as a prosthesis indicates ultimately that the libertine himself is a nonhuman entity, since he has no sympathy for life.

<sup>700</sup> In raising the question 'what is a human body?', Black pinpoints the importance of how we look at human bodies and how our gaze defines the meaning of the human body (2014: 13-6). 'Our experience or perception of the body shifts depending upon the circumstances and our perspective on it,' he writes later on (2014: 22).



body as separate from the mind,<sup>701</sup> a fact which reveals an interesting element in the writings of Sade, whose insistence on a materialistic existence is so intense that bodies merge into each other as a proof of lack of transcendental affect. According to Black, machines are fundamental components of the human desire for establishing an epistemology of the self for ‘their capacity to either magnify the efficacy of bodily movement, or take its place’. The upshot is that in their close connection with human bodies, machines are endowed with a degree of human vivacity.<sup>702</sup> This latter quality, I argue, gives machine performance a theatrical angle in a sense that machines – like the Duc’s penis – are continuously personified.<sup>703</sup> Alfred Nordmann maintains that machines cannot truly simulate human behaviour, which results in an unsurpassable distance that prevents the scientific observer to use machines in order to learn more about human beings. Nordmann explains how in the eighteenth century the automata were expected to ‘generate theoretical insights or practical skills regarding the physiology of humans and animals’ in a way that came ‘directly from beholding the machine’, which nevertheless resulted in disappointment.<sup>704</sup> The libertine’s mechanisation of the victim goes beyond a fondness for automata – since knowledge of the self is always employed towards increasing power – and enters the realm of robotics when Sade introduces the concept of labour into the orgy.<sup>705</sup> Black sees work as the differentiating factor between the robot and the automaton:

Rather than a philosophical experiment aimed at recreating attributes of the living body so as to further understanding, the robot begins with a belief in

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<sup>701</sup> Black, p. 18.

<sup>702</sup> Black, p. 37.

<sup>703</sup> This phenomenon is also visible in human conduct towards pets who are given the human attributes of their owners, hence theatricalised into playing the role of another being other than themselves.

<sup>704</sup> Alfred Nordmann, ‘Enhancing Machine Nature From the Myth of the Machine to Sociotechnical Imaginaries of Nonmechanical Machines’, *Perfecting Human Futures: Transhuman Visions and Technological Imaginations [electronic resource]*, ed. by J. Benjamin Hurlbut and Hava Tirosh-Samuels, (Springer VS, 2016), pp. 204-5.

<sup>705</sup> ‘The Sadian machine does not stop at the automaton (the century’s craze),’ writes Barthes, ‘the whole group of the living is conceived, constructed like a machine’ (*Sade* 1977: 152).

the possibility of mechanically recreating attributes of the living body and seeks to use this to free the human worker from labour.<sup>706</sup>

I explore the above concept in depth later in the chapter; for now, suffice to say that the nature of the robotic labour imposed on the other requires the same theatrical interactivity that is expected of the personified machine, given the arbitrary nature of instrumental sovereignty.<sup>707</sup>

Numerous episodes feature in Sade's oeuvre where the libertines form an orgiastic tableau, followed by re-formations of the group in alternative combinatory poses – at the same time care is taken to ensure roles are exchanged, by no means democratically, but as desired by the libertine. Barthes finds the analogy between Sadean assemblies and *tableaux vivants* as a means for the libertine to invent a fetish object. He associates the immobilisation inherent in such forms of representation with the act of cutting up that occurs in the course of fetishising. Function is introduced into the tableau when the spectator-voyeur relinquishes his seat and joins the group, incorporating himself 'into its game': what we have now is a 'moving scene'.<sup>708</sup> The Sadean scene, Barthes explains, 'is a tableau vivant in which something beings to move; movement is added sporadically, the spectator joins in, not by projections but by intrusion; and this mixture of figure and labor then becomes very modern'.<sup>709</sup> The orgy, however, does not exist for the sake of creating the *tableaux*, rather the *tableaux* exist as scenes in a greater project: 'Saint-Fond, eager to prolong the game to the utmost, varies his tableaux and his festive doings

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<sup>706</sup> Black, Daniel, p. 186.

<sup>707</sup> As a theatrical phenomenon with mechanistic affinities, the Sadean orgy merges the three simulacral categories described by Baudrillard as:

[T]he *operatic* (the theatrical status, fantastic machinery, the "grand Opera" of technology), [...] the *operative* (the industrial status, production and execution of power and energy), [...] and the *operational* (the cybernetic status, uncertainty, the flux of the "meta-technological").

<sup>708</sup> The chapter on the Sadean will to act examined the importance of motion in libertine practice. This chapter analyses what happens to the 'objects' that are thus forced to move in tandem with the will of the libertine.

<sup>709</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 156.

too'.<sup>710</sup> Conversely, at times the libertine chooses to step outside the group in order to watch the *tableau* as a means to increase his apathy in order to be able to sustain measured proceedings. Admitting the centrality of movement to the narrative, Juliette states the following passage about one of the events she has just finished recounting to her companions:

But words cannot describe that divinely voluptuous scene; only an engraver could have rendered it properly, and yet it is doubtful he would have had time to capture those many expressions, all those attitudes, for lust very quickly overwhelmed the actors and the drama was soon ended. (It is not easy for art, which lacks movement, to realize action wherein movement is the soul; and this is what makes engraving at once the most difficult and thankless art).<sup>711</sup>

In contrast to *120 Days* where the erotic narrative is immediately re-enacted by performers, in this paragraph we see a desire for the erotic narrative to be recorded in what is an anticipation of animation on paper – which brings to mind Peter Greenaway's remark about pornography's demand for technology. Citing movement as the greatest priority and the main function of the Sadean machine has an inverse consequence for the notion of hierarchy: all participants of the orgy are considered parts of the machine and therefore equally important or equally insignificant.<sup>712</sup> '[W]e are but stupid machines of the vegetation whose secret workings, explaining the origin of all motion, also demonstrate the origin of all human and animal activity,' remarks Olympia.<sup>713</sup> What creates a god in the machine is, in addition to the will to act, a desire for self-knowledge which furnishes the libertine with the alleged privilege of projecting his vision of his self on the other-as-machine. In other words, Sade's libertines, while acknowledging the mechanical nature of their own bodies, endeavour nevertheless to prove themselves less 'stupid'. Sade's hierarchical vision of machines is futuristic in the sense that while some

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<sup>710</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 338.

<sup>711</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, pp. 221-2.

<sup>712</sup> In the previous chapter I examined how the same problem is posed during the animalisation of the other.

<sup>713</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 743.

machines are delegated with labour, others are expected to process information and find solutions.<sup>714</sup> This level of intelligence is achieved in Sade by manipulation of the other, such as was shown in Garland's *Ex Machina* where the most intelligent character turned out to be the robot who managed to outwit the other two due to her acting prowess and her lack of empathy. Mechanical manipulation occurs in Sade on the level of form as well as content. The following section investigates the former, that is, the libertine production of a paradoxical programming for the purpose of changing the sequential structure of the machine.

### The Paradoxical Programme in Giuseppe Manfridi's *The Cuckoos*

‘After having thrown a sheep six times from the top of a tower,..  
by the aid of a machine called a *parachute*,  
without the animal receiving any damage,  
he [*sc.* Montgolfier] prevailed upon a man to try the experiment,  
which was performed with the utmost safety.’

--1784 *Gloucester Jrnl.* 8 Nov. 3/3

‘It is therefore with a feeling of great pleasure that I direct a highly original play that starts as a comedy about anal sex under a parachute,’ writes Peter Hall of his experience of directing Manfridi's play,<sup>715</sup> a tragicomedy that is a highly imaginative parody of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*. *The Cuckoos* opens with Beartice (in her forties) and Tito (in his twenties) interlocked after engaging in anal sex. With some difficulty they manage to fetch a parachute from a closet to cover their bodies while they wait for the arrival of Tito's father, Tobia, who is a gynaecologist. Tobia

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<sup>714</sup> ‘Futurologists have proclaimed the birth of a new species, *Machina sapiens*,’ writes Terry Winograd, ‘that will share (perhaps usurp) our place as the intelligent sovereigns of our earthly domain. These “thinking machines” will take over our burdensome mental chores, just as their mechanical predecessors were intended to eliminate physical drudgery’ (1991: 198).

<sup>715</sup> Peter Hall, ‘And the little one said, roll over’, *Guardian*, 18 March 2000, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2000/mar/18/books.guardianreview5>> [accessed 8 August 2017].

sets to working on separating the pair and during the conversation that takes place it is revealed that he and Beatrice used to be romantically involved in their youth, and that Tito is in fact Beatrice's son. A young Beatrice was unable to keep Tito and had to give the infant to Flavio, a mutual friend of hers and Tobia's and the latter's brother-in-law. Having promised Beatrice to find Tito a good home, Flavio sells the infant to Tobia without giving him any information about the boy's origins. Back in the present: Beatrice and Tobia assume Tito is their son, but he is in fact the son of Beatrice and Flavio, whose bedroom she had entered by mistake when they were students (while Tobia mistakenly slept with his own sister, Gianna, Flavio's future wife). Excited at having discovered a new parentage, Tito admits to having admired Flavio and his hobby of skydiving, and boasts about having packed Flavio's parachute on his last jump. Much to his distress, however, Tobia informs him that the cause of Flavio's death (who died a few years ago) was skydiving with a defectively packed parachute. A dejected Tobia then leaves the apartment without having been able to separate Beatrice and Tito. Just before an ambulance arrives, Beatrice uses a cake knife to commit suicide beneath the parachute, out of horror of being discovered in an incestuous entanglement with her son.

In his diary on directing *The Cuckoos* for the Gate Theatre in the year 2000, Hall expresses his concerns regarding staging a play that in his own words 'questions the barriers of taste' and 'pushes our suspension of disbelief to the limit'. Despite the challenges, Hall was happy with the result and praised the playwright's work for its audacity in confronting the uncomfortable, and instead of 'getting away with it' to face the problematic; an approach which, he writes, leads to 'riotous excess'. During the production, one of Hall's main worries was the technical issue of whether the actors would be able to move under the parachute and if they would be able to act in such circumstances. Hall later discovered that his concerns were unfounded, and he writes of the parachute: 'It is strange and beautiful - and also functional'.<sup>716</sup> The parachute comprises a focal object in *The Cuckoos*. Its real function – i.e. protection from fall – is not employed in the play; indeed, it is revealed that the parachute fails to live up to its expected utility. As a device that

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<sup>716</sup> Hall.

appends two characters together, the parachute becomes instead a unit in a micro-machine, the other two units of which are Tito and Beatrice. Other than operating as a uniform (both in sense of clothing and that which generates co-dependent uniformity), the parachute is used by Manfridi as a plot device for having caused Flavio's death. The *strangeness* of using a parachute, moreover, produces an added comic and surreal effect that would not have existed if the characters were to use bedsheets or other articles of clothing in its place. As a component of the humorous layer spread by Manfridi over the myth of Oedipus Rex, the parachute acts in a counter-catastrophic capacity, diminishing the effect of the ultimate anti-climactic revelation and its consequences to the point of absurdity. In his review of *The Cuckoos*, Charles Spencer mentions the ending as his 'only quarrel with the play', since the sequence of events does not justify 'the bloody denouement'.<sup>717</sup> Spencer's complaint implies that Manfridi both strips tragedy of pathos and comedy of a happy ending. The same procedure occurs in Sade's stories where suffering is treated as a comedy and intersubjective happiness is deemed to be catastrophic. Susan Sontag likens comedy to pornography in that they both involve characters who are at the focus of outrage: 'The personages in pornography, like those of comedy, are seen only from the outside, behaviouristically. By definition, they can't be seen in depth, so as truly to engage the audience's feelings'.<sup>718</sup> The discomfort present both in Sade and Manfridi originates from the authors' exposure of meta-narrative strategies that allow the audience to distance themselves from the site of suffering through acquiring a comic glance. The character Tobia, for example, outlines the capacity of repetition to transform a tragic event into a comedy when he makes the following remark about Beatrice and Tito's predicament: 'I met Fredo on the stairs... and it was as I was telling him that I began to see the funny side of it. It was at that point I began to laugh, to be precise'.<sup>719</sup> Tobia even explains how

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<sup>717</sup> Charles Spencer, 'The double entendres just keep coming.' *Telegraph*, 26 June 2003, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3597401/The-double-entendres-just-keep-coming.html>> [accessed 8 August 2017].

<sup>718</sup> Susan Sontag, 'The Pornographic Imagination' (1967), *Story of the Eye*, by George Bataille, (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 100.

<sup>719</sup> Giuseppe Manfridi, *The Cuckoos*, trans. by Colin Teevan, (London: Oberon, 2000), p. 21.

the more he repeated the story, the greater quantity of laughter was produced. Through what I would call a parachute-effect, the Sadean narrative aims to reduce the impact of the tragic fall *ad absurdum*, without removing the reality of the fall – the characters are still living in the worst of all possible worlds and the ending is destruction.

In *The Cuckoos*, the Sadean machine's discursive programme is realised in the form of a paradoxical perversion of catastrophic, dramatical tropes. These tropes function as *uniforming* agents through generating a narrative whose paradoxical content fuels the Sadean machine.<sup>720</sup> Since the machine is modelled after Nature – '[a] single mover governs the universe, and that mover is nature,' claims Dolmancé<sup>721</sup> – the narrative that the libertines utilise pursues an essentially natural agenda, insofar as natural implies counter-civilised. In the following sections, I look at the three tropes of sodomy, incest, and parricide, with respect to their formation of an orgiastic narrative in *The Cuckoos*. The orgy, in this context, is studied on a metaphysical, discursive level, and not necessarily corporeal – though the characters are physically connected in a historical sense.

### Sodomy

In a biblical context, sodomy is the term used when referring to all manner of 'unnatural' acts of sexual nature: 'going after strange flesh'.<sup>722</sup> During the Renaissance, sodomy was associated with 'witches, demons, werewolves, basilisks, foreigners and, of course, papists,' signifying 'a wide range of practices including prostitution, underage-sex, coitus interruptus and female transvestitism'. Jonathan Dollimore explains how in a social context sodomy could entail heretical acts as well as 'political treason', while the word's metaphysical connotations carried implications of anarchic opposition to the divine creative will: 'not a part of the

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<sup>720</sup> Uniformity enables tyranny in the orgiastic sense.

<sup>721</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 168. The French text – '*un seul moteur agit dans l'univers, et ce moteur, c'est la nature.*' – uses 'motor' or 'engine' to refer to nature.

<sup>722</sup> Jude 1:7.

created order but an aspect of its dissolution'.<sup>723</sup> 'Unnatural', in this sense, implies 'unconventional'. In the time when Sade was writing his novels, sodomy suggested a form of socio-political rejection. It was also seen as a subversive act in a sense that it went against organic reproduction and suspended the line of progenitor, symbolising 'a unitary economy of nonreproductive *jouissance*'.<sup>724</sup> In its presentation of various paradoxical possibilities within the confines of a single word, it can be imagined how Sade would have found sodomy as an invaluable source of inspiration. Anal sex is by far the activity most favoured by Sadean libertines.<sup>725</sup> 'The ass, Madame, the ass,' demands the Archbishop of Lyon;<sup>726</sup> and later Saint-Fond voices an almost identical request: 'Ass, Madame, give me *ass*'.<sup>727</sup> This demand is repeated throughout the Sadean narrative to the point that the ascendancy of anal arrangement becomes a decree which, in turn, increases the mechanical potential of the orgy.<sup>728</sup> 'Every practice engaged in during the Sadean scene has its parallel on the purely textual level,' Frappier-Mazur writes, selecting '*parricide, sodomy, and coprophagia/coprophilia*' as the three libertine activities that offer the most parodic potential.<sup>729</sup> Sodomy, she concludes, 'refers first and foremost to imitation'; that is, formation of paradigms that favour 'intellectual production' over 'biological production/reproduction'.<sup>730</sup> Even so, imitation in Sade is never absolute; a variation is introduced at each turn, giving a self-parodic capacity to Sadean texts. Variations, otherwise referred to as *refinements* by the libertine, are

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<sup>723</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power and in the Drama of Shakespeare*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. lxxi. In 'Sodomy and Society: The Case of Christopher Marlowe', Jonathan Goldberg explains how the creation of a sodomitic Other granted a manner of '*double agency*' to the Elizabethan society (1984: 373). In this sense, sodomy acts in a paranoiac capacity that sits well within the theatrical domain of libertinism.

<sup>724</sup> Frappier-Mazur, p. 173.

<sup>725</sup> The same propensity seems to be absent in most libertine literature of the time, or if mentioned it is with much trepidation and sometimes accompanied with a display of alleged disgust by the author.

<sup>726</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 132.

<sup>727</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 360.

<sup>728</sup> Donna Haraway identifies non-reproductive sex as a component of cyborg existence: 'Cyborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction' (2000: 292).

<sup>729</sup> Frappier-Mazur, p. 164.

<sup>730</sup> Frappier-Mazur, p. 174.



one of the main factors of pleasure-production in Sade.<sup>731</sup> Each deviation from the social norm adds value to the pre- and post-orgiastic narrative, ensuring that the machine never produces the same scenario as the one it was fuelled by, thereby warranting continuous discursive motion and the existence of future orgies. One such Sadean variation in *The Cuckoos* is the addition of sodomy, in the form of anal intercourse, to the myth of Oedipus. The *anality* of the situation is the parodic anchor around which the play orbits, and since sodomy is in essence parodic, its insertion into the narrative supplies the drama with a meta-parodic stance. As comic elements sodomy and the parachute are interlinked: ‘First remove your son from my rectum, then I’ll remove the parachute,’ says Beatrice.<sup>732</sup> Sodomy is, moreover, the reason why the oedipal nature of the relationship between the three characters is later revealed, since anal sex leads to Beatrice and Tito being stuck together, which in turn prompts Tito to ask for his father’s help, and so on... Since the narrative ultimately feeds the machine, a demand for anality is in effect a re-wiring of the orgiastic mechanics with the intention of creating a novel scenario, one that transgresses the Oedipal motif.

Lytard identifies the story of Oedipus as the model for Freud’s analysis of repetition as a method utilised by the patient to gratify his or her subconscious desires through replicating a dramatic scenario. ‘The life of the patient subject to desire thus set up would take the form of a fate or destiny’.<sup>733</sup> In other words, repetition engenders fate. Lyotard maintains that in *Oedipus Rex* as well as the Freudian analysis the subject seeks to remember (repeat) the cause of his or her suffering in order to unmask the cause. The search for truth, in both cases, leads to the development of a detective narrative: ‘And so what I would call a second-order plot is woven, which deploys its own story above the plot in which its destiny is fulfilled, and whose aim is to remedy that destiny’.<sup>734</sup> Lyotard’s comparison of the

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<sup>731</sup> Also discussed in chapter three.

<sup>732</sup> Manfridi, p. 24.

<sup>733</sup> Jean François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991), p. 27.

<sup>734</sup> Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, p. 27.

story of Oedipus to a detective novel suggests that some manner of delight is expected to be had at the revelation of the crime. Crime thus fuels the narrative in a manner that reflects the Sadean project, particularly in *120 Days*. With pleasure added to the equation, the search for the perpetrator of the crime transforms instead into an obsession with the ‘second-order plot’ or the detective story: a meta-narrative. ‘[Through] a simple process of remembering,’ Lyotard remarks, ‘one cannot fail to perpetuate the crime, and perpetrate it anew instead of putting an end to it’.<sup>735</sup> What Oedipus achieves by his investigation is not the prevention of his (un)desirable fate, but the actual occurrence of it.<sup>736</sup> The anal impasse in *The Cuckoos* is a metaphor for Oedipus’s fate, while the anality of the situation connotes his obsession with at once knowing and repeating said fate. Attention to meta-narrative pleasure in turn raises the question of form, or the question of position in a theatrical context:

TITO: You should relax, you know?

BEATRICE: Relax?! If you were in my position – ?

TITO: I am in your position.<sup>737</sup>

The position they are in is revealed to be an inverted picture of pre-natal mother-and-son relationship where the son is attached to the mother from behind rather than the front. This position is suggestive of the parodic nature of the drama reflected in the Sadean perversion of the original narrative and the narrative of origin (reproductive bond).

Beatrice is keen to conceal their condition, which prompts her to repeatedly ask for the parachute. On the way to get the parachute, Tito and Beatrice transform into co-dependent parts of a machine and realise they need to move in concert:

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<sup>735</sup> Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, p. 28.

<sup>736</sup> ‘By endeavouring to find an objectively first cause, like Oedipus, one forgets that the very will to identify the origin of evil is made necessary by desire. For it is of the essence of desire to desire also to free itself of itself, because desire is intolerable’ (Lyotard 1991: 29).

<sup>737</sup> Manfridi, p. 9.

*She moves, he doesn't.*

TITO: Can we please synchronise our movements?

*They commence hobbling across the stage. BEATRICE is in front on all fours, TITO behind on his knees; each must support the other.*<sup>738</sup>

Once the parachute covers their bodies, it doesn't change their position but merely hides it, bestowing upon their union a vestige of machine-like homogeneity,<sup>739</sup> which nevertheless does not extend to their frames of mind. The argument that breaks between the two plays on the Sadean notion of paranoiac potentiality which is inherent in sodomy:

TITO: 'From behind' you said. Not much ambiguity in that. It was almost an order.

BEATRICE: That has many interpretations.

TITO: Like what, for instance?

BEATRICE: This is neither the time nor the place.

TITO: Means only one thing in my book.

BEATRICE: You should read more widely.<sup>740</sup>

There is almost an educational lesson to be learned by Tito, taught by a cynical Beatrice in a caricatured guise of a libertine explaining the possibility of linguistic interpretations pertaining to sexual activities. The oedipal cycle of discursive repetition is made complete when Beatrice informs Tito about her only other experience of anal intercourse, which unbeknownst to them both involved Flavio, Tito's father. 'How did it end?' Tito asks, to which Beatrice replies: 'It ended, at

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<sup>738</sup> Manfridi, p. 11.

<sup>739</sup> Later Tobia describes their condition as a *chain reaction* in exceedingly mechanical terms: 'He swells, you contract. The contraction brings on the swelling, the swelling causes contraction. A vicious circle, a sum to infinity... stalemate' (Manfridi 2000: 23).

<sup>740</sup> Manfridi, p. 13.

least. We emerged, looking at the stars and went our *separate ways*'.<sup>741</sup> Here, ending both implies the culmination of pleasure, as well as cessation and separation. In other words, a pleasure that ends pleasure. A problematic concept in Sade, since movement depends on unending stimulation and the repetition of crime.<sup>742</sup>

Sade's libertines behave in the manner of an Oedipus who knowingly pursues the fated crime. Indeed, crime itself is never enough for the libertine, who rather looks to ensure its repetition. It makes sense then when Sontag finds the polemical discourse in Sade analogous to 'principles of dramaturgy',<sup>743</sup> since the ultimate goal of libertinage is the continuation of the drama. 'Doesn't every narrative lead back to Oedipus?' Barthes enquires, positing the wish to articulate the conflict between individual desire and the law as the subject of storytelling.<sup>744</sup> Likewise, Juliette's advice to the Countess de Denis – who has met with a libertine's block – corresponds with the guidance given to a writer who is short of inspiration. Juliette counsels the countess to refrain from indulging in or thinking about libertine activities for a fortnight. At the end of this period, she should lie on her bed and give free rein to her imagination while masturbating. Her fantasies should be free from fear and from consideration for others. Above all: 'let it be your head and not your temperament that commands your fingers'. From amongst the variety of crimes that are conjured up in her mind, she must then isolate the one she finds most stimulating:

Once this is accomplished, light your bedside lamp and write out a full description of the abomination which has just inflamed you, omitting nothing that could serve to aggravate its details; and then go to sleep thinking about them. Reread your notes the next day and, as you recommence your operation, add everything your imagination, doubtless a

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<sup>741</sup> Manfridi, p. 14.

<sup>742</sup> Sontag perceives of Sade's idea of 'the body as a machine and of the orgy as an inventory of the hopefully indefinite possibilities of several machines in collaboration with each other' as the libertine's pursuit of 'a nonculminating kind of ultimately affectless activity' (1979: 99).

<sup>743</sup> Sontag, 'The Pornographic Imagination', p. 99.

<sup>744</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller, (London: Cape, 1976), pp. 47-8.

bit weary by now of an idea which has already cost you fuck, may suggest that could heighten its power to exacerbate. Now turn to the definitive shaping of this idea into a scheme and as you put the final touches on it, once again incorporate all fresh episodes, novelties, and ramifications that occur to you. After that, execute it, and you will find that this is the species of viciousness which suits you best and which you will carry out with the greatest delight.<sup>745</sup>

For Sade there is always more pleasure in the conceptualisation of crime than in its execution. Moreover, given the intensely solitary nature of Sadean pleasure and the significance of constant arousal, the libertine must indulge in a form of consummation that excludes emotional gratification and tranquil joy. Remember, motion and not emotion is what the libertine wishes to be moved by. For this reason, the orgy does not tolerate love:

TITO: Well, couldn't all of this mean I might love you?

BEATRICE: Good God! Tell me more about your father.<sup>746</sup>

Sadean interaction does not presuppose intimacy. 'Love her?' Saint-Font rejoins when Juliette asks him if he feels any affection for his daughter. 'I love nothing, nobody, none of us libertines loves anything at all'.<sup>747</sup> Similarly, there are no lasting friendships between libertines. Saint-Fond warns Juliette to refrain from mentioning friendship, since he considers it 'as empty, as illusory as love. [...] I believe in the senses alone, I believe alone in the carnal habits and appetites... in self-seeking, in self-aggrandizement, in self-interest'.<sup>748</sup> Perceiving the precarious ties that bind Sadean libertines to each other, Barthes construes that all relationships in Sade evade exclusivity:

[T]he *couple*, whenever possible, is substituted by the *chain*... The meaning of the chain is to posit the infinity of erotic language (isn't the sentence itself

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<sup>745</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, pp. 640-1.

<sup>746</sup> Manfridi, p. 15.

<sup>747</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 237.

<sup>748</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 232.

a chain?), to break the mirror of the utterance, to act so that pleasure does not return to its point of departure.<sup>749</sup>

Elimination of pairs supports the extension and expansion of the narrative. Crime – i.e. solitary enjoyment at the expense of others – is perpetuated, and so is motion. In other words, there is no happy ending in Sade since that would bring the story to an end. Likewise, in *The Cuckoos* conversation returns to the father and to the issue of literally and figuratively disentangling the mystery in the most tragic manner possible, so as to avoid interpersonal intimacy. Tito prefers not to talk about his mother, and the mother is hidden further from view when upon Tobia's arrival Beatrice tucks her head under the parachute: 'I simply refuse to show my face'.<sup>750</sup> Revelation of the crime is not accomplished without naming the law. The enunciator of the law, as discussed in chapter three, needs to be placed outside the dramatic discourse in order to gain insight of the narrative. Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* has the protagonist's fate revealed by the oracle of Apollo, and later by the blind prophet Tiresias. Manfridi gives this role to Tobia, whose main purpose is that of a narrator. Beatrice, in the meanwhile, does not wish to be addressed as a mother – similar to Phaedra. Even so, when Tobia asks her whether he is permitted to speak about fathers, she says it is permissible to do so. Beatrice and Tobia fail to get along, however, since Beatrice finds the conversation 'more humiliating than the actual situation'. Beatrice finally protests that she merely made a mistake in hoping that by repeating the experience of anal sex she could feel the same tenderness she felt in the prior encounter.<sup>751</sup> Hence, in an ironic twist, sodomy functions as a chain that connects the past to the present, facilitating a repetition that is Sadean for its exclusion of intimacy. The role of anal intercourse is further expanded when the case of incest is brought to fore.

### Incest & Parricide

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<sup>749</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 165.

<sup>750</sup> Manfridi, p. 20. Refer to chapter four for an analysis of how the mother is stereotyped to suggest intimacy and empathy in a Sadean context.

<sup>751</sup> Manfridi, pp. 33-4.

In order to console and distract Beatrice, Tobia shows her childhood photos of Tito, which she observes under the parachute. Silence ensues when in one of the photos she recognises Tobia as her love-interest from the last year of their school: '*she lets out a scream; she pulls her head out from under the parachute*'.<sup>752</sup> At this point, the presumptive connection between Beatrice, Tobia, and Tito is revealed (to some degree), marking the end of Act I. Sodomy is now linked to incest in a Sadean exercise where the re-enacting of the first 'crime' or 'passion' is accompanied by an addition of another; whereas in Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* the destiny is played out exactly as predicted with no variations involved. In Sade, incest is usually thought to proffer sexual activities with added libidinal value. '[A]h, what would I not have given to have had a father or a brother,' laments Juliette when she observes the incestuous delights enjoyed by other libertines.<sup>753</sup> Yet incest is seldom a solitary crime; like sodomy, incest is often a link that connects two or more libertine passions, and most importantly it ensures the protraction of crime within the family, in such a way that even waiting for an offspring to be born becomes a criminal joy. Sadean propagation is paradoxical in that the product is not meant to extend the lineage but the narrative. 'A friend of mine lives with the daughter he sired with his own mother,' Dolmancé relates to Eugenie, adding how the said friend has had a son from this daughter/sister, and that he intends to marry his son/brother/grandson to his mother. 'I know he's planning to enjoy the fruits of this marriage, for he is young and hopeful'.<sup>754</sup> While the above mentioned libertine's pleasure depends on the passage of time and an incestuous *mise-en-abyme*, other libertines use a combination of incest with other crimes to procure a more immediate effect. Having requested Juliette to poison his father, Saint-Font takes his daughter to his dying father's bedside, accompanied by his friend, Noirceuil. The Minister then informs his father that his death was his son's doing, before raping his daughter in front of the dying man. At the same time Noirceuil first sodomises Saint-Font, then his

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<sup>752</sup> Manfridi, p. 37.

<sup>753</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 440. It is revealed later on that Juliette does indeed have a living father, whom she gets herself pregnant by and murders at the same time as she conceives.

<sup>754</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 50.

daughter. The Minister forces his father to manually pleasure him, while he strangles his father to death. He reaches orgasm at the moment his father dies:

Ah, the joy that was mine! Foul accursed unnatural son who all at one stroke was guilty of *parricide, incest, murder, sodomy, pimping, prostitution*. Oh, Juliette, Juliette! never in my life had I been so happy.<sup>755</sup>

Or so in control of the narrative, one could say. In the above passage, what Freud calls the ‘the most important event, the most poignant loss of man’s life’<sup>756</sup> – i.e. death of the father – undergoes a Sadean *refinement* into becoming the son’s grandest pleasure. Consequently, parricide is shown to be the culmination of incest. ‘[T]he crime consists in transgressing the semantic rule,’ writes Barthes with respect to incest in Sade, ‘in creating homonymy: the act *contra naturam* is exhausted in an utterance of counter-language, the family is no more than a lexical area’. The greatest outrage possible, Barthes explains, is that of language: ‘to transgress is *to name outside the lexical division*’.<sup>757</sup> Subsequently, since incest is a discursive matter in Sade, narrative itself becomes libidinally incomplete without incest or any other sexual transgression. Speaking about her seduction of her father, Juliette mentions ‘straying hands wandering up the paternal legs to unbutton the paternal pantaloons,’ in which sense the emphasised violation of the boundary surrounding the concept of *paternity* plays an important role in augmenting pleasure.<sup>758</sup> The orgy ultimately runs on a deconstruction of lexical necessity.

When in the third act of Manfredi’s play, Tobia’s incestuous encounter with his sister is revealed the orgiastic chain is finally established through his discovery of the convoluted extent of the first-order plot. This added detail acts yet as another Sadean development, meant not only to prolong the narrative, but to multiply the absurdity of the situation to warrant a more intense dramatic climax. ‘Is it not enough that we must know the truth without having to say it?’ asks Beatrice, in an

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<sup>755</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 266.

<sup>756</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. by A. A. Brill, (London: Wordsworth, 1997), p. xxvi.

<sup>757</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 137.

<sup>758</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 471.



imitation of Sophocles's Jocasta, as she anticipates the approach of the dénouement.<sup>759</sup> Her warning is nevertheless ignored by Tito, who refuses to relinquish the detective work:

TITO: And therefore you are not my father?

TOBIA: You could look at it this way; you might have lost a father, but you've gained a mother.

TITO: And I am my own brother!

BEATRICE: Costatino!

TITO: Who's he?

BEATRICE: You!<sup>760</sup>

Hence in a paranoiac and symmetrical reversal of fortune, Tito realises Tobia is not his real father, and that Beatrice is his mother. Along with the increase in incest variations comes a sense of uniformity of paradoxical transgression. The semi-parodic pamphlet featured in *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, 'Yet Another Effort, Frenchmen, If You Would Become Republicans', posits the question of whether incest is dangerous or not, and justifies its utility in its faculty for loosening familial ties: 'and therefore strengthens the citizens' love for their country', a thing of great import for a 'regime based on brotherhood'.<sup>761</sup> And yet, a couple of acts before the pamphlet is read, Dolmancé declares the law against incest a 'misunderstood policy, generated by the fear of making some families too powerful'.<sup>762</sup> Although the two hypotheses that incest benefits both an aristocratic and a republican society may seem incongruous, what Sade ultimately suggests is the capacity of incest to induce homogeneity in any given circumstance – much similar to the parachute's ability to produce uniformity. As Tito admits to having packed Flavio's parachute, Tobia

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<sup>759</sup> 'What good can worry do a person?' insists Jocasta. 'Chance controls our fortunes. No one sees ahead. What's best is just surviving day by day. Forget about your mother's nuptials. Many a man has shared his mother's bed in dreams, and living life is easier for those who simply disregard the fact' (Sophocles 2011: 60).

<sup>760</sup> Manfridi, p. 67.

<sup>761</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, pp. 133-4.

<sup>762</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 49.

conjectures that Tito is Flavio's murderer,<sup>763</sup> and so the narrative circle is complete. When Noirceuil informs Juliette that he considers no crime more 'justified' than parricide,<sup>764</sup> he is considering not only the issue of inheritance but that of discursive potential. Sadean parricide amounts to the removal of the author of the scenario, hence opening a place for the son. With the absence of Apollo or an omniscient godlike figure to decree the overriding fate, Flavio is the closest god-figure in *The Cuckoos*; subsequently, parricide equals deicide. In comparison to Sophocles's version of the story, here Laius and Apollo are one. The death of the father then at the same time fulfils the prophecy and removes the enunciator of the prophecy.<sup>765</sup>

In his psychoanalytic study of Sophocles and Shakespeare, Nicholas Ray explains how Freud associates the murder of the primal father by his sons with the genesis of ritualistic performance as a means to eradicate guilt: 'Their implicit purpose is to be both a triumphant repetition of the first libertarian deed and a commemorative homage to its victim'.<sup>766</sup> While Sadean theatricality celebrates the liberating deed, repetition is used as a means not to commemorate, but to render the victim insignificant.<sup>767</sup> Similarly, each time Tito gains or loses a parent, the scarcity

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<sup>763</sup> Manfridi, p. 70.

<sup>764</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 252.

<sup>765</sup> '[Sade] assigns the hatred of the mother's body to the realm of the instinctual drives,' writes Frappier-Mazur, 'the hatred of the father targets the socio-political order, with an occasional instinctual component' (1996: 165).

<sup>766</sup> Nicholas Ray, *Tragedy and Otherness: Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Psychoanalysis*, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 51.

<sup>767</sup> 'Without the logic of estrangement from life, of man's ontological fall from grace, there can be no authentic "tragedy",' writes George Steiner in *Rethinking Tragedy* (2008: 32). Secular conflict, he argues, falls under the category of melodrama (2008: 35-6), unless conflict originates in the very absence of the god, in other words, from negation. Outrage against divine absence is a theme which is extensively explored by Sade, and I examined in previous chapters how the libertine is often actor and spectator at the same time; however, Sade shows no interest in portraying 'an aristocracy of suffering, an excellence of pain' (Steiner 2008: 37). Quite the contrary, authenticity in Sadean tragedy originates from the fact that there is nothing aristocratic or excellent about suffering:

The great thing about this scene, my friends, the thing in which I could take pride, was its complete authenticity: I had unearthed these wretched victims of Saint-Fond's injustice and rapacity, I now presented them to him in the flesh, to reawaken his wickedness (*Juliette* 1968: 246).

The above passage is spoken by Juliette once she has finished describing a feast she has organised for Saint-Fond. After supper she takes him for a walk in the gardens of her estate

of the parental role is questioned. ‘Of all readings, that of tragedy is the most perverse: I take pleasure in hearing myself tell a story *whose end I know*,’ Barthes writes, describing the pleasure of reading akin to the pleasure taken from a fetish object. ‘I know and I don’t know, I act towards myself as though I did not know: I know perfectly well Oedipus will be unmasked, that Danton will be guillotined, *but all the same*...’<sup>768</sup> Likewise, criminal passions for Sadean libertines are so many make-belief games. While travelling in Italy, Juliette ‘deceives’ a Piedmontese duke by presenting her companion to him as his long-lost daughter, for whose trouble of raising which she requests that he pays her a designated sum. The duke is impressed by Augustine’s beauty, ‘and the allurements of incest contributing their heavy share to his joyous anticipations,’ he declares he recognises his daughter.<sup>769</sup> And yet not every manner of incest is approved of by Sade. As mentioned in chapter four, libertine mothers are advised against the dangers of mother-son incest. The reason for this is that incest is generally viewed as a system through which, as Frappier-Mazur points out, women are placed in the market.<sup>770</sup> Foucault notes how antiquity considered loss of seminal fluids as a loss of economy or agency in incestuous dreams. Father-son incest, in particular, implied conflict over authority.<sup>771</sup> On the other hand, if the son dreams of sleeping with his mother it could portend favourable omens such as agricultural fecundity, return from exile, and generally it prophesized good fortune.<sup>772</sup> And yet sodomitic incestuous

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and they happen upon a hut inside which they find a widow whose husband has been detained by the Minister, along with her two children. The entire scene represents an immersive theatrical experiment for Saint-Fond’s entertainment, but the victims are real or ‘authentic’ as Juliette admits. The meaninglessness of suffering on the victim’s part can be seen as an intentional or unintentional outrage against the absence of a god (generator of fate); and yet, the theatricality of Sade’s presentation of suffering is more suggestive of a paranoid perspective of suffering as an agent for generating both pleasure and pain, depending on the framework the spectacle of suffering is presented in.

<sup>768</sup> Barthes, *Pleasure of the Text*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>769</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 571.

<sup>770</sup> Frappier-Mazur, pp. 46-7.

<sup>771</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume I*, trans. by Robert Hurley. (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 21.

<sup>772</sup> Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, p. 22.

engagement signified ‘futile activity’.<sup>773</sup> Sadean treatment of incest is akin to its interpretation in dreams by antiquity, due to the dramatic nature of omens, and since incest has linguistic bearings while infertility is favoured.<sup>774</sup> Moreover, Sade perceives of agricultural infertility as a sign of industrial prolificacy. In the light of the incestuous circulation of women as goods,<sup>775</sup> and the fact that incest ultimately leads to the destruction of the familial other in Sade, the intention of incest is nihilistic consumption. The destructive nature of consumption in Sade, explains Caroline Warman, comes from the Sadean system’s foundation on the belief that the concentration of life in a body removes creative energy from natural circulation: ‘it is therefore, [...] an act of creation and not a crime to release matter into nature’s reprocessing machine’.<sup>776</sup> A theory which explains why the narrative must be sustained through added degrees of criminality and theatrical homages to liberation. Given that perpetual circulation is a characteristic of the hyper-market,<sup>777</sup> next section looks at the nuances of the Sadean marketplace and the consummation of the machine other.

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<sup>773</sup> Foucault, *Will to Knowledge*, p. 25.

<sup>774</sup> Actual incest in antiquity did not have the same implications. Socrates prohibited parent-child incest for the following reasons:

He sees the proof of this in the fact that those who break the rule receive a punishment[...] regardless of the intrinsic qualities that the incestuous parents might possess, their offspring will come to no good[...] Because the parents failed to respect the principle of the ‘right time,’ mixing their seed unseasonably, since one of them was necessarily much older than the other: for people to procreate when they were no longer ‘in full vigor’ was always ‘to beget badly’ (Foucault *Sexuality* 3 1990: 59).

<sup>775</sup> Lyotard maintains that a ‘genuine merchant’ would only exchange the female body in its ‘sterile’ mode, which proves to be more economically feasible in circumstances where human reproduction is switched to ‘reproduction of money’ (*Libidinal Economy* 1993: 168).

<sup>776</sup> Caroline Warman, *Sade: From Materialism to Pornography*, (Oxford: Voltare Foundation, 2002), p. 81, *SVEC*.

<sup>777</sup> Jean Baudrillard, ‘Two Essays’, trans. by Arthur B. Evans, *Science Fiction Studies*, 55:3 (1991), < <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/55/ baudrillard55art.htm>> [accessed 8 August 2017].

### **Mechamorphism and Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking***

Reviews of the 2015 Volksbühne production of *120 Days* described Johann Kresnik's endeavour a (sometimes anachronistic) critique of consumerism. While the reviews were mixed, they were unified in agreeing that the production was certainly not baroque. Removing the baroque element from a representation of *120 Days* defies Sade's portrayal of a systematic and apathetic consumption of violence. There is one aspect of the production, however, which has been repeatedly praised by the critics and which provides a fascinating Sadean, if I may say, variation: the setting is a supermarket. A peculiarly unsettling feature of this particular supermarket is that it seems to consist of unlimited rows of goods. The impact of this spatial infinity is that everything, including the props and the actors, transforms into material fit for consummation and nothing exists beyond the vanity fair. Moreover, the fact that everything is for sale equates the acts of violence practised by the four libertines and their mercenaries with shopping. In *Libidinal Economy*, Lyotard holds that Sadean *jouissance* resides in consumption as dictated by 'cold machines whose calculable automatism' serves in an evaluating capacity.<sup>778</sup> This section looks at Sadean mechamorphism (mechanical metamorphosis), both of the self and the other, against the backdrop of Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking*. My focus will be on the concepts of mechanical consumerism and exchange, the edible/robotic other, as well as the exigency of non-participation.

*Shopping and Fucking* consists of two parallel stories that eventually merge. One is the account of the relationship between Mark (who has recently left a rehabilitation centre) and Gary (an underage prostitute). The other story revolves around Lulu and Robbie (Mark's housemates/possessions) and their dealings with Brian, a talent agent and a drug dealer. Looking for a no-strings-attached relationship, Mark solicits Gary. At the same time, Robbie and Lulu agree to work for Brian in order to provide for themselves without the help of a broke Mark. Robbie ends up freely giving away the ecstasy pills he is supposed to sell at a club. To repay their debt to an enraged Brian, Robbie and Lulu resort to opening a

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<sup>778</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. by Iain Hamilton Grant, (London: Athlone, 1993), p. 80.

telephone sex service which fails when Lulu finds herself unable to continue with the job. At the conclusion of the play, Mark brings Gary home to meet Lulu and Robbie. They engage in a roleplay game which ends with Gary's demise.

The opening scene occurs in Mark's flat, described as '*once rather stylish, now almost entirely stripped bare*'. Lulu and Robbie are persuading Mark to eat takeaway food:

**Lulu** Come on. Try some. *Pause*. Come on. You must eat. *Pause*. Look, please. It's delicious. Isn't that right?

**Robbie** That's right.

**Lulu** We've all got to eat. Here. Come on, come on. A bit for me.

**Mark** *vomits*.

**Robbie** Shit. Shit.

**Lulu** Why does that alw ... ? Darling – could you? Let's clean this mess up. Why does this happen?<sup>779</sup>

Mark's excuse for not eating is that he is exhausted, unable to control neither his 'guts' nor his 'mind'. This scene resonates, among others, with the twelfth scene during which, when Robbie refuses to eat, Lulu pushes his face into the food while repeatedly saying: 'Eat it. Eat it. Eat it'.<sup>780</sup> In a play that focuses on consumerism, rejection of food signifies a desire for non-participation in the materialistic culture.<sup>781</sup> A similar attention to food is evident in Sadean rituals where eating comprises an imperative element in performing the orgy. The libertines take great delight in their meals, and even though they rarely respect anyone who is not their peer, they tend to have a special regard for cooks. At the end of *120 Days*, Sade mentions that there are sixteen survivors altogether, 'three of whom were cooks'<sup>782</sup> – the rest of the domestic staff are murdered. The pleasure of eating is, moreover, combined with the pleasure of sexual activities, for the fact that the former is

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<sup>779</sup> Mark Ravenhill, *Shopping and Fucking*, (London: Methuen, 1996), p. 1.

<sup>780</sup> Ravenhill, p. 60.

<sup>781</sup> Eating and materialistic philosophy were thought to be connected even during the eighteenth century when the death of La Mettrie, which occurred while he was dining, prompted Voltaire to send a letter to Richelieu, making the conclusion that the incident 'was one obvious proof that materialism was a philosophy for pigs' (Wolfe 2016: 65).

<sup>782</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 672.

believed to fuel the latter.<sup>783</sup> In *Sade*, the libertines have a marked preference for using the same lexicon reserved for describing desirable food when speaking of their victims. ‘It strikes me that some spices could be included in the dish,’ Juliette speaks when referring to an orgiastic episode. Her companion similarly suggests that they should be ‘glutting’ themselves on the screams of their victims while ‘drinking’ their tears.<sup>784</sup> Association of sex and food is not unique to *Sade*, of course. Carol J. Adams recognises this connection as one of the main strategies of modern-day advertisement. ‘*Advertisements can only imply, pornography can show*’, she writes, establishing the link between the two by describing pornography and advertisement as two sides of a coin.<sup>785</sup> The difference with *Sade* is that the brutality of his pornography renders explicit the apathetic violence of food consumption.

Ravenhill’s play explores the violence of indifference in a scene where, after her trip to the supermarket, Lulu relates the encounter to Robbie as follows:

**Lulu** Student girl behind the counter. Wino is raising his voice to student. There’s a couple of us in there. Me – chocolate. Somebody else – TV guides. (Because now of course they’ve made the choice on TV guides so fucking difficult as well.)

And wino's shouting: You've given me twenty. I asked for a packet of ten and you've given me twenty. And I didn't see anything. Like the blade or anything. But I suppose he must have hit her artery. Because there was blood everywhere.

**Robbie** Shit.

**Lulu** And he’s stabbing away and me and TV guide we both just walked out of there and carried on walking. And I can’t help thinking: why did we do that?<sup>786</sup>

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<sup>783</sup> ‘The human body is a machine which winds itself up, a living picture of perpetual motion. Food maintains what is aroused by fever,’ writes La Mettrie (1996: 7).

<sup>784</sup> *Sade*, *Juliette*, p. 645.

<sup>785</sup> Carol J. Adams, *The Pornography of Meat*, (New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 46.

<sup>786</sup> Ravenhill, pp. 26-7.

‘It’s like it’s not really happening there – the same time, the same place as you,’ she concludes. ‘You’re here. And it’s there. And you just watch’.<sup>787</sup> Lulu’s apathy is fittingly reflected in her use of food terminology while referring to the other persons present – i.e. chocolate and wino, who are identified by what they consume. Lulu’s desensitisation to the sight of suffering develops in a Sadean catastrophic pattern when later she finds Robbie’s bruised body attractive. While masturbating Robbie, she urges him to tell her about his assault ‘[s]ort of describe what they did. Like a story,’ arguing that ‘I don’t want to just imagine’.<sup>788</sup> In other words, she wishes to consume Robbie’s painful experience for her own pleasure, revealing that her interest is only in the detective plot. ‘They are not pleasures you must cause this object to taste, but impressions you must produce upon it,’ Noircueil explains about the treatment of the victim by the libertine.<sup>789</sup> Unlike the libertine, the victim is not recognised to have any sensory experiences that do not relate to pain, since the victim never hungers.<sup>790</sup> As a spectator, and one who is aware of his position as a spectator, the libertine is separated from his victim while still existing in the same theatrical space where his pleasure is realised in consuming the victim’s expression, later this consumption extends to the victim’s body.<sup>791</sup> Lorna Piatti-Farnell considers eating as a process of that ‘involves the familiarisation with tastes, smells,

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<sup>787</sup> Ravenhill, p. 27.

<sup>788</sup> Ravenhill, p. 33.

<sup>789</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 269.

<sup>790</sup> Timo Airaksinen maintains that most Sadean victim are devoid of individualistic characteristics. ‘In fact, they are pleasure machines, and have exactly the same degree of identity as any machine,’ he writes, attributing this mechanistic existence to the victim’s lack of desire (1995: 73).

<sup>791</sup> The Sadean libertine’s pleasure in witnessing the other’s pain is an aesthetic pleasure with no ethical implications whatsoever, which goes against the Aristotelean treatment of tragic spectacles as a means of eliciting empathy. In his view of the tragic scene, Sade diverges both from Plato and Aristotle in that unlike the former he does not consider any threat of sympathy in witnessing self-pity. Far from ‘dethroning reason in favour of feeling,’ as Plato maintains (2001: 246), a repeated view of the suffering of others destroys any sympathetic sentiments the spectator might be moved to feel. Against Aristotle’s concept of catharsis, the Sadean libertine is never ‘lifted out of himself’ in order to become ‘one with the tragic sufferer’. While in a Platonic sense, Sadean theatre results in ‘a man [becoming] many’ (2001: 266), the process is nevertheless purely mechanical. The spectacle, by virtue of being a spectacle, never produces any genuine feelings in Sade.



and textures, and the acceptance of something “unknown” coming into our bodies’.<sup>792</sup> As an activity that removes the boundary between the self and the other, eating contributes to and reflects cultural definitions of transgressions.<sup>793</sup> Therefore, the libertine’s consumption of the victim is a means for exhibiting disrespect for ethical boundaries. Although *Shopping and Fucking* does not feature cannibalism, the catastrophic progression of other-consumption is shown, for instance, when on opening their phone-sex business, Lulu receives a client who derives sexual pleasure from watching the murder of the student as described above.

‘How powerful a meal is! Joy revives in a sad heart...’ remarks La Mettrie, proceeding to explain how the quality and essence of the food is associated with the temperament of the human consumer, so that while eating ‘[r]aw meat’ can make men more ferocious, ‘coarse food’ makes the consumer lethargic.<sup>794</sup> The Sadean consideration of food as a facilitator of libidinal imagination follows the same principles – given Sade’s admiration of La Mettrie. In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J. Adams associates meat eating with sexual violence, maintaining that both correspond to an awareness of the other as animal and vice versa.<sup>795</sup> Meanwhile, Sade extends this perception of the comestible other from animal to machine in the context of the orgy, specifically in dinner scenes. In the previous chapter, I mentioned how the libertine Minski both ate his victims and used them as furniture to decorate his lair with. A similar episode occurs in *Juliette* during Durand’s dinner reception for four cannibal libertines. Juliette describes the dinner as a sumptuous affair comprised of eight courses: ‘Eight stewardesses of fourteen, with delicious faces, served the brandy: they had it in their mouths, and when beckoned, they would step forward and from between their rosy lips squirt it down the guest’s

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<sup>792</sup> Lorna Piatti-Farnell, *Consuming Gothic: Food and Horror in Film*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 4.

<sup>793</sup> Piatti-Farnell, p. 14.

<sup>794</sup> La Mettrie, p. 7.

<sup>795</sup> Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 54. ‘In addition, the bondage equipment of pornography – chains, cattle prods, nooses, dog collars, and ropes – suggests the control of animals,’ Adams explains with regard to sexual violence against women. ‘Thus, when women are victims of violence, the treatment of animals is recalled’.

parched gullet'.<sup>796</sup> Several other individuals attend the guests throughout this dinner. In the same vein that the countenances of the stewardesses are described as 'delicious', age, gender, and ethnicity comprise a diversity of aesthetic flavours, much like a display of exotic goods in a supermarket. A connection that is also made by Ravenhill in a scene where Lulu refers to her collection of ready-made food as an 'empire under cellophane. Look, China. India. Indonesia'.<sup>797</sup> As with other libertine banquets, in Durand's dinner party there is no distinction between food and victim, human and domestic appliance – animate decanters, in this case. The population of the orgy is divided into two castes: the consumer and the consumed, and those whose services are consumed today will have their bodies consumed tomorrow.<sup>798</sup> In *Shopping and Fucking* in comparison it is revealed that Robbie and Lulu were bought by Mark in a supermarket. 'I'm watching you,' Mark reminisces the encounter. 'And you're both smiling. You see me and you know sort of straight away that I'm going to have you. You know you don't have a choice. No control.' Mark is approached by a man who asks him whether he is interested in buying the 'the pair by the yoghurt', to which Mark consents.<sup>799</sup> While the association of the pair with food (yoghurt) is subtle in this example, they are still presented as consumable machines.<sup>800</sup> Donna Haraway defines modern human beings as 'hybrids of machine and organism', whose 'utopian' characteristics is expected to relieve them from the tyranny of 'organic wholeness'. 'No longer

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<sup>796</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 1112.

<sup>797</sup> Ravenhill, p. 59.

<sup>798</sup> In *Cannibalism in Literature and Film*, Jennifer Brown describes cannibalism as inherently ambiguous since 'it both reduces the body to mere meat and elevates it to a highly desirable, symbolic entity' (2013: 4). In Sade this ambiguity is clarified with the implication that as long as the victim's body can be absorbed within the self, it is desirable, which means the edible other becomes the most desirable other.

<sup>799</sup> Ravenhill, p. 3. Consumption is not limited to individuals in *Shopping and Fucking*; individual characteristics are fit to be consumed as well. Brian's treatment of Lulu's abilities are similar to the libertine's cataloguing of the victim's 'charms'. His impression of Lulu is summed up in his writing down Lulu's individual traits – instinctive, appreciates order, etc – on a pad (1996: 7). Defining Lulu based on her achievements is likewise a form of mechanisation, given Black's outlining of the robot as an entity the purpose of whose existence is to recreate certain human attributes.

<sup>800</sup> The association of machine and food in Sade mirrors the connection between narrative and anal intercourse, creating a paradoxical pattern that reduces the body to two holes, one for production (mouth) and the other for consumption (anus).

structured by the polarity of public and private,' Haraway suggests, 'the cyborg defines a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the *oikos*, the household'.<sup>801</sup> For Sade and Ravenhill, however, technological hybridisation does not necessarily result in the foundation of a utopian republic. While Haraway maintains that the advance of robotics promises a non-patriarchal, Republican, division of labour,<sup>802</sup> the Sadean vision is closer to Hannah Arendt's description of the stratified nature of work/labour in Ancient Greece. In Greek society, Arendt explains, slaves were given tasks that were meant to relieve necessity, while artisans had jobs whose purpose was to produce a durable product. Liberation from labour meant that patricians were expected to engage in political activities.<sup>803</sup> Hence, even though technology may become efficient enough for the concept of labour as a means to relieve necessity to entirely cease to exist, there is always a need for the mastery over the other. Desire for mastery, as seen in Sade, becomes more urgent the wealthier an individual becomes, precisely since absence of labour breeds ennui, rising the demand for entertainment. Moreover, due to its theatrical nature, Sadean domination requires the hybrid other who is neither purely machine, nor purely human.<sup>804</sup> Mark, for instance, would have no use for a nonhuman Lulu and Robbie, evident in his preference for them over the yoghurt.

As mentioned in the section on Manfridi, given the purely ceremonial nature of libertine friendships and their brevity, the consumers can themselves become consumed in a sudden change of category from machine to meat. This is due to the fact that the operator of the machine is inseparable from the machine, a condition

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<sup>801</sup> Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', *The Cybercultures Reader*, ed. by David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 292-3.

<sup>802</sup> Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto', p. 301.

<sup>803</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1958), pp. 80-1. Arendt calls the first *labour* and the second *work*. Slaves, moreover, were confined to the private space, while workmen were free to enter the public space. Slavery was meant to 'exclude labor from the condition of man's life. What men share with all other forms of animal life was not considered to be human' (1958: 84).

<sup>804</sup> Lulu and Robbie, as well as the victims in Sade, are similar in their status to futuristic sex robots, since as Jason Lee explains in *Sex Robots: Future of Desire*, 'the problem with sex robots is that they are all about consumerism' (1996: 8).

that is also evident in the interactive nature of Sadean orgy. When Mark visits Gary to purchase his sexual favours, his involvement in the transaction situates him within the exchange machine. Nevertheless, his insistence that Gary does not need to pretend to be who he is not is dismissive of the paranoiac performance that is expected of the other-as-automaton in libertine practice.<sup>805</sup> Gary is understandably surprised, since a demand for lack of theatricality not only conflicts with the libertine system's prohibition of non-participation, it also negates the principle of continuous labour. 'As labor moves outside the factory walls, it is increasingly difficult to maintain the fiction of any measure of the working day,' writes Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire*.<sup>806</sup> Sade's confinement of labour to a theatrical framework is yet another strategy for redefining all intersubjective relations as interobjective ones. 'The Sadean machine,' remarks Barthes, 'will tolerate no one's being solitary, no one's remaining outside of it... the machine *in toto* is a well-balanced system... and open'.<sup>807</sup> Solitude and non-participation are threats to libertine economy in their negation of the desire to maintain libidinal exchange, lest

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<sup>805</sup> Suspecting that Gary might be underage, Mark enquires about his true age but his question is evaded by Gary:

**Gary** How old do you want me to be?

**Mark** It doesn't matter.

**Gary** Everybody's got an age they want you to be.

**Mark** I'd like you to be yourself.

**Gary** That's a new one (1996: 20).

<sup>806</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge (MA): Harvard UP, 2000), p. 402. Hardt and Negri maintain a positive view of the 'hybridization of human and machine', so long as the process involves the increase of technological knowledge (200: 405-7), that is an awareness of mechanistic meta-narratives, which is what the libertines are constantly striving for.

<sup>807</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 153. The open nature of the orgy-as-machine occasions the transformation of the body into what Nick Land calls the 'industrial-informational body'. Land describes this body as follows:

Since the body is a partial- or open-system, transducing flows of matter, energy and information, it is able to function as a module of economically evaluable labour power. The industrial-informational body is deployed as a detachable assembly unit with the capacity to close a production circuit, yielding value within a commodity metric 1995: (202).

boredom decreases the will to act that ensures libertine autonomy.<sup>808</sup> Once Juliette has successfully proved her mettle, Clairwil introduces her to the Sodality of Friends of Crime and their quasi-utopian system of sharing partners:

These exchanges multiply and thus, you see, in a single evening every woman enjoys a hundred men, each man as many women; in the course of these forgatherings characters develop; one has an opportunity to study oneself; the most entire freedom of taste or fancy holds sway there.<sup>809</sup>

Freedom in this instance transcends beyond the personal and becomes mathematical. ‘There are perhaps three main dangers in modern civilization,’ suggests F. L. Lucas, ascribing the first two to man’s loss of stature in cityscapes and man’s loss of independence in a social environment. The third danger is a loss of individuality in the advent of ‘science and mechanization. There are too many machines in the world, too many people, and too few individuals’ (*Tragedy: Serious Drama in Relation to Aristotle’s Poetics*, 168). What we see in Sade is the multiplication of individuality to a degree where there is nothing left but the machine. In the orgy described above, every member needs to exert themselves with great precision and temporal mindfulness, otherwise the entire scheme will fail. Even though the libertines function as overseers, they cannot afford to bring a halt to the machine.

To reside inside the machine and remain master of the machine may seem contradictory. Sade’s libertines resolve this problem with money. The richer a libertine is, the more elaborate his micro-theatre. ‘I idolize money,’ Clairwil declares with joy, ‘I’ve often friggged myself sitting amidst the heaps of *louis d’or* I’ve amassed, it’s the idea that I can do whatever I like with the money before my eyes, that’s what drives me wild’.<sup>810</sup> Money not only transforms the imagination into reality, but it also allows the libertine to become more imaginative. Clairwil’s

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<sup>808</sup> The danger of inertia in Sade can be understood by Baudrillard’s description of a machine as a thing that ‘either works or it does not’ (*Exchange and Death* 2012: 30), in which sense the libertine’s mechanical perception of the world contributes to his viewing movement as a matter of survival.

<sup>809</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 296.

<sup>810</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 286.

enjoyment derives from the unending possibilities her wealth promises her, even those opportunities she is unaware of as of yet. ‘As a closed system, money was bound to fascinate Sade,’ writes Frappier-Mazur. ‘Understood as both the means to sexual pleasure and its symbol, money shares the ritual character of orgy and possesses semi-magical qualities... Ritual mediates experience and money mediates transactions’.<sup>811</sup> Since libertine experiences are entirely made up of transactions, money finds a theatrical value in its ability to transform a pleasurable idea into a tangible product at the expense of others – which is what theatre also achieves in Sade. As soon as money is paid, the object loses any value outside the libertine’s area of interest. In other words, money acts as a nihilistic medium for theatricalising and rendering unreal the value of the individual. Ravenhill taps into this concept in his portrayal of Gary’s objectified status during his first appointment with Mark when there is a ‘*distant sound of coins clattering*’. Gary explains to Mark that the sound is coming from the arcade downstairs. ‘Good sound, int it? Chinkchinkchinkchinkchink.’ When they engage in sexual intercourse, there is again a sound of ‘*[c]latter of coins*’.<sup>812</sup> In an earlier scene, Mark explains to Robbie how his affair with someone did not count since it was ‘[m]ore of a ... transaction. I paid him. I gave him money. And when you’re paying, you can’t call that a personal relationship, can you?’<sup>813</sup>

Last we see Brian, he is counting money, and he delivers a lecture that ends with: ‘Civilisation is money. Money is civilisation. And civilisation – how did we get here? By war, by struggle, kill or be killed’.<sup>814</sup> In the context of the Sadean machine, violence and wealth co-exist and are interchangeable due to the libertine desire to remain both civil and primitive. Industrialisation of pleasure facilitates the movement from might to wealth; or rather, monetary exchange becomes a representative of violence, similar to how exchange of fluids and expressions is representative of violation in a material sense.<sup>815</sup> ‘[T]he passions are more strongly

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<sup>811</sup> Frappier-Mazur, p. 22.

<sup>812</sup> Ravenhill, p. 23.

<sup>813</sup> Ravenhill, p. 16.

<sup>814</sup> Ravenhill, p. 85.

<sup>815</sup> Sadean currency on a material level consists of bodily fluids and on an abstract level (but still consumed by the senses) it consists of the spectacle of the other’s pain (on

fired by whatever is obtained through force than by anything granted voluntarily,' Saint-Fond advances:

When it is logically established that the degree of violence characterizing the action committed is the one factor for measuring the amount of happiness of the active person – and this because where the violence is greater the shock upon the nervous system will be sharper.<sup>816</sup>

In the light of the above theory, Mark's past happiness at making money can be interpreted as his assumption of an active place in the machine. 'I used to know what I felt. I traded. I made money. Tic Tac. And when I made money I was happy, when I lost money I was unhappy,' Mark tells Gary.<sup>817</sup> When he informs Gary of his desire to know if genuine feelings truly exist, Gary's response is to offer him pot noodles: 'Beef or Nice and Spicy?'<sup>818</sup> No connection can be established in the Sadean space without some manner of consumption, because the connection then would not seem economical. When Gary tells Mark about his having been raped by his step-father, which was the cause of his leaving home, Mark is alarmed that he might become attached to Gary through feeling sympathy for him. 'I have this personality you see?' He says. 'Part of me that gets addicted. I have a tendency to define myself purely in terms of my relationship to others. I have no definition of myself you see'.<sup>819</sup> Mark's fear of succumbing to his empathetic nature is an outcome of his awareness of existing in a Sadean universe. There is a moment that it seems he might escape libertine narrative; however, when Gary relates to Mark details of his disappointing visit to the council to report the rape, Mark's interest in Gary's narration is purely Sadean in that he insists on knowing the details: 'Does he spit up you?'<sup>820</sup>

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witnessing the pain the libertine receives confirmation that the connection has been established).

<sup>816</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 317.

<sup>817</sup> Ravenhill, p. 31.

<sup>818</sup> Ravenhill, p. 32.

<sup>819</sup> Ravenhill, p. 30.

<sup>820</sup> Ravenhill, p. 38.

During scene thirteen, all characters – except Brian – come together in Mark’s flat. To help Gary, Robbie suggests they play a game of storytelling. They charge Gary for the service and engage in a roleplay through which they re-enact Gary’s masochistic fantasy. When Gary requests that they penetrate him with a knife, Lulu and Robbie leave. However, Mark consents to continue. Later Mark prophesies a dystopic vision of a future where much has changed but the principals are the same with a more pronounced notion of master/slave interactivity:

**Mark** So it’s three thousand and blahdeblah and I’m standing in the market, some sort of bazaar. A little satellite circling Uranus. Market day. And I’m looking at this mutant. Some of them, the radiation it’s made them so ugly, twisted. But this one. Wow. It’s made him ... he’s tanned and blond and there’s pecs and his dick ... I mean, his dick is three-foot long.

Mark buys the mutant and decides to set him free, but he refuses, claiming that he does not know how to take care of himself. Mark sets him free, all the same.<sup>821</sup> In what seems like a utopian/dystopian compromise, the play ends with Mark, Robbie and Lulu taking turns ‘*to feed each other as the lights fade to black*’.<sup>822</sup> Dystopian, since their relationship is still based on consumption, and utopian since they share the food which can be a sign that there might be some hope out of a Sadean machine – as Noircueil informs Juliette: ‘shared, all enjoyment becomes dilute’.<sup>823</sup> This development in character is in contrast with Lulu’s earlier refusal to share her box of ready-made food, since they are made for individual consumption. A sentence which can be used to also describe a Sadean perception of utopia. While the notion of mechanical sexual engagement, particularly with robots, is a motif that is utilised mainly in dystopian literature,<sup>824</sup> Sade employs the same concept in a utopian context. The result is the formation of a utopian/dystopian universe willed by an

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<sup>821</sup> Ravenhill, pp. 87-8.

<sup>822</sup> Ravenhill, p. 89.

<sup>823</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 269.

<sup>824</sup> Lee uses excerpts from Margaret Atwood’s *The Heart Goes Last* as an example of a dystopian treatment of sex robots (2017: 6), later describing the concept of sex with robots as a tragi-comedy which resembles Ballard’s portrayal of ‘sex orgies [...] during moment of decay’ in *High Rise* (2017: 27).



apathetic self throughout the oppression of the animal/machine other. The final chapter of this research examines the society that is founded on the doctrines of Sadean libertinism.

**Chapter 7: The Sadean Utopia/Dystopia and Jean Genet's The Balcony**

Tristan Foxe, protagonist of Anthony Burgess's dystopian novel *The Wanting Seed*, begins his history lecture by describing the two modes of Pelagian and Augustinian governments to his students, the former which translates into a progressive government that believes in the 'perfectibility' of human beings, while the latter represents a conservative outlook whereby members of society are deemed incapable of forgoing selfishness.<sup>825</sup> Burgess's vision of dystopia in this particular novel consists not of a totalitarian state of claustrophobic terror, the like of which is portrayed in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*, or a meticulously controlled utopia devoid of freewill, such as the society portrayed in Aldus Huxley's *Brave New World*, but an alternating shift of power which occurs in three phases: Gusphase (Augustinian), Interphase (the in-between phase), and Pelphase (Pelagian). Each phase ends in the violent cessation of either the Gus or the Pel governments and its replacement with the rival ideology. In other words, the root of Burgess's dystopia is in a paranoiac conjunction of two modes of governance whose theatrical excesses contribute to escalating violence. In its simplest meaning, dystopia is described as '[a]n imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible'.<sup>826</sup> Latent in this description is a sense of stability, suggesting that what we consider to be the worst cannot change forms and that 'as bad as possible' is an attainable condition. Whereas in Burgess's novel, the worst possible mode of existence is realised in a continuous exchange of one variety of failure for another. Failure, in this sense, concerns the inability of the individual and the government to establish a mutually agreeable contract on the matter of agency. The

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<sup>825</sup> Tristan explains:

Pelagianism was thus seen to be at the heart of liberalism and its derived doctrines, especially Socialism and Communism... Augustine, on the other hand, had insisted on man's inherent sinfulness and the need for his redemption through divine grace. This was seen to be at the bottom of Conservatism and other *laissez-faire* and non-progressive political beliefs (Burgess 1962: 10).

<sup>826</sup> 'Dystopia', *OED Online*, <<http://www.oed.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/Entry/58909?redirectedFrom=dystopia#id>> [accessed 13 September 2017].

Pelagian ideology, in an Aristotelian attempt to tip the scale of power in favour of the individual, must resort to presuming that the subject is by default willing to compromise his agency in favour of social harmony. The Augustinian view, on the other hand, in maintaining a Platonic belief regarding individual selfishness, seeks to sacrifice the subject's freedom for the good of the society. Foucault recognises two meanings to the term 'subject': 1) subject to the other, and 2) subject to the self. 'Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to'.<sup>827</sup> Burgess's dystopian power-play reflects a conflict between self-restraint (subject to self) and restraint imposed by an Other (subject to the other). A similar contention comprises the core of the Sadean vision of utopia. While the libertine perspective is distinctly Augustinian in its pessimism regarding social harmony, the concept of selfishness is reversed from sin to virtue. Moreover, lack of belief in the existence of life after death creates the impression that individual perfectibility is contemporaneously possible and, according to libertine reasoning, self-improvement is only achievable through a practice of extreme selfishness. Negating the necessity of restraint, and to that extent compromise, Sadean utopias (dis)solve the question of agency by equating the subject with the law, i.e. the Other. As a result, a system of privileges is created where each individual dreams up their own unique utopia. It is the discrepancies between so many micro-utopias that give the Sadean narrative a dystopian semblance. Hence, my usage of the phrase *utopia/dystopia* in the title of this concluding chapter, which examines the dialectic nature of utopian/dystopian alterity in a Sadean context. While previous chapters explored the theatricality of Sadean subjectivity/objectivity, in this chapter I analyse the consequences of the Sadean understanding of what constitutes the self and the other on a social level. The dramatic point of reference for this study is Jean Genet's *The Balcony*. Sade's and Genet's writings are in many ways similar, and specifically so in the case of *The Balcony* which features the same array of characters as *120 Days*: Narrator/Madame, Duc/General, Bishop, Judge, and Banker(s). Like Sade's libertines, Genet's protagonists are, as Richard N. Coe describes them, 'fundamentally *negative*', meaning that they are in essence

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<sup>827</sup> Foucault, 'Subject and Power', p. 781.

paradoxical members of society who are always situated on the outside.<sup>828</sup> Kenneth Tynan writes of Genet's *The Balcony* that 'it seeks to relate sexual habits to social institutions',<sup>829</sup> a strategy which is dominated also the Sadean narrative. Some scholars have directly mentioned the similarities between the two authors: In her essay 'Jean Genet, or, The Inclement Thief', Françoise d'Eaubonne compares the spirit of Genet's writing to Sade's. Meanwhile, Robert Brustein considers Sade as one of Genet's 'most important ideological influence[s]'.<sup>830</sup> John Elsom likewise writes about the significance of Genet's 'constant preoccupation with sadism' in his essay 'Genet and the Sadistic Society'.<sup>831</sup> The present study looks at the utopian/dystopian potential of Genet's play in the light of the Sadean representation of the same concept.

Before proceeding to explore *The Balcony*, I will first look to define the nature of utopia as seen by Sade. The play's analysis will occur in three sections on the role of mirrors and the importance of costumes in the utopian inventions, followed by an examination of the Sadean utopia/dystopia in the context of video games, the latter which I explore as an extension of the theatricality of Sadean discourse.

### **Libertine Utopia**

The Duc de Blangis describes Silling as an isolated castle situated 'far from France in the depths of an uninhabitable forest, beyond steep mountains', informing the victims that the paths through which they travelled to reach the castle have been demolished in their wake.<sup>832</sup> Sade remarks on how the reader should notice 'the

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<sup>828</sup> Richard N. Coe, *The Vision of Jean Genet*, (London: Peter Owen, 1968), p. 252.

<sup>829</sup> Kenneth Tynan, 'The Image of Power', *The Theater of Jean Genet: A Casebook*, ed. by Richard N. Coe. (New York: Grove, 1970), p. 86.

<sup>830</sup> Robert Brustein, 'The Brothel and the Western World', *The Theater of Jean Genet: A Casebook*, ed. by Richard N. Coe, (New York: Grove, 1970), p. 101.

<sup>831</sup> John Elsom, 'Genet and the Sadistic Society', *The Theater of Jean Genet: A Casebook*, ed. by Richard N. Coe, (New York: Grove, 1970), p. 194.

<sup>832</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 56.

care with which this remote and solitary retreat had been chosen, as if silence, isolation, and tranquillity were potent vehicles of libertinage'.<sup>833</sup> Sade explains at length how and why Silling is impenetrable: after travelling to Basel, one has to cross the Rhine, go through the Black Forest and pass a village whose inhabitants are 'thieves or smugglers' who have been instructed by Durcet – the financier libertine and the owner of the domain – to defend the château against intruders. Having climbed a mountain for five hours, one comes across a chasm that divides the summit into two halves. Durcet, Sade continues:

had these two faces – between which a precipice plunges over a thousand feet deep – linked by a very handsome wooden bridge that was destroyed as soon as the last crews had arrived, and from this moment on there was no possible means of communication with the castle of Silling.<sup>834</sup>

The plain on which the castle is situated is surrounded by crags, the castle itself has a moat and is encircled by a thirty-feet-high wall, and so on... A remote site of libertine activity is not unique to *120 Days*. Frequently, Sade's libertine inhabit castles, abbeys, and caverns, all of which are secluded and well-defended or otherwise naturally inaccessible. In this respect, the Sadean setting resembles to some degree Thomas More's island of Utopia, an equally solitary space which is excluded from the mainland. The inhabitants of Utopia benefit from ease of commerce thanks to a bay around which the island is spread, however:

The harbour mouth is alarmingly full of rocks and shoals. One of these rocks presents no danger to shipping, for it rises high out of the water, almost in the middle of the gap, and has a tower built on it, which is permanently garrisoned. But the other rocks are deadly, because you can't see them. Only the Utopians know where the safe channels are, so without a Utopian pilot it's practically impossible for a foreign ship to enter the harbour.<sup>835</sup>

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<sup>833</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 43.

<sup>834</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 44.

<sup>835</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. by Paul Turner, (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 69.

Likewise, More explains that the island was at first ‘not an island but a peninsula’.<sup>836</sup> Its conqueror, Utopus, then decides to make the peninsula into an island by separating it from the continent. ‘[H]e immediately had a channel cut through the fifteen-mile isthmus connecting Utopia with the mainland’.<sup>837</sup> The capital of Utopia, Aircastle, is surrounded ‘by a thick, high wall, with towers and blockhouses at frequent intervals. On three sides of it there’s also a moat’ that is set with ‘a thorn-bush entanglement’, while on the fourth side a river runs.<sup>838</sup> Brought in parallel to More’s Utopia, Silling’s moral as well as geometrical isolation suggests the four libertines’ aspiration toward creating a utopian space. This is no coincidence since Sade had read *Utopia* and he even gives a criticism of the book in a passage which will be discussed later in the chapter.<sup>839</sup>

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines utopia as a place envisioned by Sir Thomas More<sup>840</sup> in the form of ‘[a] plan for or vision of an ideal society, place, or state of existence, *esp.* one that is impossible to realize; a fantasy, a dream,’ or ‘[a]n imagined or hypothetical place, system, or state of existence in which everything is perfect, *esp.* in respect of social structure, laws, and politics’; alternatively, ‘[a] real place which is perceived or imagined as perfect,’ and ‘[a] written work (now *esp.* a fictional narrative) about an ideal society, place, or state of existence’.<sup>841</sup> In all these definitions, without exception, the element that is attributed to utopia is its being an imaginary construct. As a place whose creation rests upon the imagination of the creator, utopia strikes as an ideal setting for libertine activities. The fact that imagination determines the aesthetic characteristics and the theatrical quality of the

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<sup>836</sup> More, p. 69.

<sup>837</sup> More, p. 70.

<sup>838</sup> More, pp. 72-3.

<sup>839</sup> Sade’s epistolary novel, *Aline and Valcour*, contains a subplot featuring the utopian land of Tamoe and a dystopian land called Butua (Fink 1980: 74-5). Whether it is Sade’s intention to parody the utopian ideology is not the focus of this chapter, given the author’s tenacious resistance to offering either a fully serious or a fully humorous narrative.

<sup>840</sup> ‘With capital initial. An imaginary island in Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), presented by the narrator as having a perfect social, legal, and political system’ (*OED*).

<sup>841</sup> ‘Utopia’, *OED Online*, < <http://www.oed.com/pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/Entry/220784?redirectedFrom=utopia#eid> > [accessed 13 September 2017].

Sadean space bestows it a solipsistic tint, augmented by the self-centric nature of libertine discourse. Frank Cioffi argues that solipsism and utopia are similar in that they both ‘impose an order on the universe – one, an internal self-ordering; the other, an “ideal” social order’.<sup>842</sup> The reason why the Sadean space is both solipsistic and utopian can be explained through the understanding that within the libertine’s solipsistic imagination, there is little difference between the self and the other, given that the agency of the former wholly overwhelms that of the latter. Although the Sadean utopia follows the same non-universal ideals as the numerous utopian creations which follow More’s classical tradition, it approximates the modern utopian imagination in the fact that ‘the path to utopia’ comprises an essential component of its institution. ‘The question of the individual in utopia revolves around whether or not individuals are free to leave the community or if they are free to change the community from inside’ writes Mark Jendrysik.<sup>843</sup> In which sense, the Sadean utopia’s inaccessibility and its rigid regime produces a distinctly dystopian effect where the victims are concerned, and which constitutes an important aspect of the utopian/dystopian duality in Sade’s writings.<sup>844</sup> Unlike the modern utopia’s socialist aspiration which demands a manner of generalisation, however, libertine utopias are intrinsically narcissistic<sup>845</sup> – which is an extreme form of solipsism. The change from solipsism to narcissism occurs in the violent

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<sup>842</sup> Frank Cioffi, ‘Solipsism and Utopia: Fredric Brown, Charles Yu, Ludwig Wittgenstein’, *The Individual and Utopia: A Multidisciplinary Study of Humanity and Perfection*, ed. Clint Jones and Cameron Ellis, (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 137.

<sup>843</sup> Mark Jendrysik, ‘Fundamental Oppositions: Utopia and the Individual’, *The Individual and Utopia: A Multidisciplinary Study of Humanity and Perfection*, ed. Clint Jones and Cameron Ellis, (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 27.

<sup>844</sup> One of the most interesting aspects of *Justine* is that the dialogic format of the discussions that occur between the protagonist and the libertines serve to prove that the existence of dialogue itself does not guarantee a utopian sphere, and that both speakers need to benefit from equal agency in order for the discourse to not descend into a utopian/dystopian dynamic. In this light, a truly utopian text would be one which is written by more than one author.

<sup>845</sup> Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel explain in their work, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, that while utopian literature of the eighteenth century and before mostly engaged an Elysian mode of escapism, utopias of the nineteenth century were chiefly political platforms that analysed the methods through which a population can be made happier (1979: 3-4). ‘The ideal condition should have some measure of generality, if not universality,’ they further suggest, ‘or it becomes merely a narcissistic yearning. There are utopias so private that they border on schizophrenia’ (1979: 7).

act of the other's objectification, which in Sade is taken to the extreme. Žižek sees the violence inherent in 'the liberal project' – which in my opinion is not dissimilar to the libertine project<sup>846</sup> – as a tribute paid for gaining access to this form of utopia.<sup>847</sup> Moreover, as a narcissistic domain, the Sadean utopia acts as a mirror to the libertine's imagination, one which needs to remain isolated in order to remain ideal. As such, the specular nature of activities in libertine gatherings produces an illusory state of unity in multiplicity, where multiplicity is the product of the sovereign agent's repeated reflection. In the following section, the importance of utopian mirrors in Sade's writings and in Genet's play is examined.

### **The Mirror(ed) Stage**

The setting of Genet's play is *The Grand Balcony*, an exclusive brothel that specialises in realising the many fantasies of its clientele. Irma, the brothel's Madame, calls it a 'house of illusions'.<sup>848</sup> Throughout the first three scenes, a make-believe bishop, judge, and general respectively engage in erotic scenarios in three different chambers which are observed by Irma. Most of the clients happen to be bankers. Irma is worried about an ongoing civil war and its impact on her business as well as on her own safety. Her assistant, Carmen, informs her that one of the prostitutes, Chantal, has left the brothel to become a revolutionary. Later they are joined by George, who is a chief of police and Irma's lover. The latter is disappointed to find his profession absent from the fantasies enacted by the brothel's clients. In the meanwhile, Chantal is chosen as the symbol of the revolution. Escalation of the war eventually leaves *The Grand Balcony* in a ruinous state, at which point an envoy from the palace arrives to inform the chief of police

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<sup>846</sup> The reason for this belief is that the Sadean utopia aims for the same elimination of all manner of morality that is also, according to Žižek, the aim of liberal utopianism. 'Market is here exemplary: human nature is egotistic, there is no way to change it - what is needed is a mechanism that would make private vices work for the common good' Žižek writes ('Violence' 2008: 15).

<sup>847</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'The Violence of the Liberal Utopia', *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 9:2 (2008), p. 9.

<sup>848</sup> Jean Genet, *The Balcony*, trans. by Barbara Wright and Terry Hands, (London: Faber, 1991), p. 34.



that the queen may (or may not) be dead. Irma is asked to replace the queen, a plan which is successfully fulfilled amidst the ongoing chaos, while Chantal is assassinated on the balcony. The three clients who were roleplaying as a bishop, a judge, and a general are appointed as the real bishop, judge, and general. The chief of police is declared the hero of the revolution and the queen orders a tomb to be built in his honour. Soon after, another rebellion is ignited. Irma asks the chief of police for protection. However, once the first client to request his role castrates himself during the act, George loses interest in worldly matters and descends into a chamber in the brothel dedicated to his tomb, where he intends to remain for the rest of his life. Sensing another imminent reversal of roles, Irma returns to her activities as the owner of the brothel, sending the bishop, the judge, and the general away to their homes.

Genet's *The Balcony* makes prodigious use of mirrors. On the right wall of the room in the first scene there is 'a mirror, with a carved gilt frame, reflect[ing] an unmade bed which, if the room were arranged logically, would be in the first rows of the orchestra'.<sup>849</sup> A similar mirror covers the walls of rooms from the second and third scenes. The fourth scene is set in a room 'the three visible panels of which are three mirrors in which is reflected a little old man, dressed as a tramp...'<sup>850</sup> Genet further explains that '[t]hree actors are needed to play the roles of the reflections'.<sup>851</sup> In the fifth scene, Irma's room is shown to be the room that was reflected in the mirrors from the first three scenes. Realistically this should not be possible, since the brothel's cells are supposed to be private spaces. This reflexive connection is therefore only a matter of formal interaction on a meta-theatrical level, complemented by the revelation that in Irma's room there is 'an apparatus by means of which IRMA can see what is going on in the studios'.<sup>852</sup> There have been various critical interpretations of Genet's use of mirrors. To Jeannette L. Savona, the utilisation of mirrors in *The Balcony* indicates 'the superiority of illusions over

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<sup>849</sup> Genet, p. 7.

<sup>850</sup> Genet, p. 27.

<sup>851</sup> Genet, p. 28.

<sup>852</sup> Genet, p. 28.

reality’,<sup>853</sup> with the added effect of hypnotising the spectator when the actor merges with his reflection in the mirror.<sup>854</sup> Brustein maintains that the brothel itself in ‘is a mirror of society’ and vice versa.<sup>855</sup> According to Payal Nagpal, when the prostitutes gaze at themselves in the mirrors, they forget their identities and believe in the authenticity of their assumed characters. Nagpal considers this as a technique used for controlling the women, who subsequently come to see themselves as mere roles.<sup>856</sup> Arguably, the same thing happens to the customers, especially if we take note of Pier Paolo Pasolini’s description of libertines and victims as equally monstrous phenomena.<sup>857</sup> The latter comment was made by the director with respect to his last film, *Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom*. Daniele Fioretti interprets this remark as Pasolini’s understanding of victimhood as a ‘commodification of the human subject’ in a consumerist society.<sup>858</sup> If the replacement of a singular identity by a multiplicity of roles is a mode of commodification, the customers represented in *The Balcony* are no less commodified through an act of self-observation when they are in-character than are the prostitutes. The difference, however, between the prostitutes and the customers is that while the latter benefit from the utopian privilege of leaving the brothel whenever they like, the former are trapped in a dystopian state of continuous theatricality – such as is portrayed in *The Wanting Seed*. Richard N. Coe considers the mirror as ‘the most obsessive symbol in Genet’s thought,’ recognising three forms of specularity in Genet’s writings: ‘God is a mirror that magnifies; the Other, a mirror that distorts; Good is the mirror-opposite of Evil’.<sup>859</sup> Coe’s analysis can be seen as a fragmentation of the mirror’s function

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<sup>853</sup> Jeannette L. Savona, *Jean Genet*, (New York: Grove, 1983), p. 85. Grove Press Modern Dramatists.

<sup>854</sup> Savona, p. 86.

<sup>855</sup> Brustein, p. 102.

<sup>856</sup> Payal Nagpal, *Shifting Paradigms in Culture: A Study of Three Plays by Jean Genet – The Maids, The Balcony and The Blacks*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2015), p. 36.

<sup>857</sup> Daniele Fioretti, *Utopia and Dystopia in Postwar Italian Literature: Pasolini, Calvino, Sanguineti, Volponi*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), p. 83. Italian and Italian American Studies.

<sup>858</sup> Fioretti, p. 84.

<sup>859</sup> Coe, p. 7.

in Sade who combines the three form of reflections described above into one. To better understand the role of mirror in Sade, and specifically how the Sadean utopia is a specular invention, it is pertinent to have a look at Lacan's notion of the mirror stage.

Lacan grounds his theory of the mirror stage in his observation of the 'spectacle of the infant in front of the mirror,' recognising this phase as one of identification. Of the infant's behaviour at this crucial juncture, Lacan writes:

The jubilant assumption of his specular image... would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in a dialectic of identification with the other, and before languages restore to it, in the universal, its function as subject.<sup>860</sup>

The creation of the primordial Ideal-I, according to Lacan, predates the entry of the self into the interpersonal realm of communication between the self and the other. The Ideal-I at this stage is equivalent to the ego. However, this does not mean that the ego's definition finds stability and unity through this process. Indeed, Lacan argues that during the mirror stage the ego's agency is a pre-social entity which is situated 'in a fictional direction'.<sup>861</sup> The reason for illusory identification is that what the infant sees in the mirror is only a part of a whole, presented to him 'in an exteriority in which this form is certainly more constituent than constituted'.<sup>862</sup> The danger of a solipsist discovery of the self is thus revealed as the self's inability to recognise and differentiate between the real and the fictional, or at least the degrees to which they can be separated. Lacan proposes that, on a developmental level, a person afflicted with paranoia is confined within the mirror stage, for the reason that he is unable to identify with an other that is not his own reflection. Considering

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<sup>860</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I*', *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 2.

<sup>861</sup> Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage', p. 3.

<sup>862</sup> Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage', p. 3.

that narcissism is one of the conditions that precedes paranoia,<sup>863</sup> it is not unexpected that the narcissist – and his more extreme form, the sadist – is likewise trapped in the mirror stage. In the myth of Narcissus, when the young man looks at his own image in the lake, the projection he sees confirms the existence of an autonomous and even perfect(ible) self. He returns every day to receive the same confirmation from a situation which is utopian in its harmony and perfectionism. When he ceases to remember the make-believe nature of his image, his existence ends in self-destruction. To escape this fate, the Sadean libertine attempts to stay aware of the theatricality of his ego-ideal. Apart from deflecting catastrophe, an awareness of the potentials of mirroring not only provides the libertine with the paranoiac ability to deconstruct established ethical identities, he can also use this knowledge to justify the reversibility of ethical perspectives.

*Justine* contains an extensive dialogue dedicated to a comparison of the individual's imagination to a mirror. 'I am sure you have seen mirrors of differing shapes,' the monk Clement begins his argument with Justine, continuing:

[S]ome of which reduce objects in size while others enlarge them; the latter make them look awful while the former lend them charm. You can now imagine that if each one of those mirrors combined the creative with the objective faculty, they would each give a completely different image of the same man who looked at himself in it. Would this image not derive from the way in which the mirror had perceived the object?<sup>864</sup>

Clement then reasons that if the mirror could feel, it would have the capacity to like or dislike the object standing before it, based on how the object is perceived by the mirror. At first glance, an analogy between the mirror and the libertine seems unnecessarily longwinded, but what it does essentially is that it situates the libertine observer in the place of the Lacanian Other, or the ideal-I, which is nevertheless a paradoxical imago. The Other becomes responsible for either distorting or adulating

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<sup>863</sup> Alistair Munro, *Delusional Disorder: Paranoia and Related Illnesses*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), p. 64.

<sup>864</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 135.

the observer's image, removing any responsibility and agency from the individual even as he is objectified. The character of the Judge in Genet's *The Balcony* exhibits a similar mode of thought when he addresses the Executioner, whose task is to torture the Thief, as follows: '... Mirror that glorifies me! Image that I can touch, I love you'.<sup>865</sup> It is the quintessence of Sadean identification for the libertine to wish to assimilate the torturer in an act of self-objectification that helps approximate the self to the objectivity of the Other. Given the theatricality of ego formation and the specularity of master/slave duality in Sadean discourse, any performative deviation from what the role demands may result in a reversal of hierarchical positions. 'You're my two perfect complements...' the Judge tells the Thief and the Executioner. 'Ah, what a fine trio we make!';<sup>866</sup> later informing the Thief that she takes priority over him and the Executioner, because if she refuses to be a thief the other two would have no function and his pleasure would cease to exist. The Thief's subsequent refusal to plead guilty places her in a position of authority, while the Judge becomes increasingly servile. The Executioner, meanwhile, represents the only stable force of power, since his role consists of the personification of violence itself – much like the Sadean Nature who acts as the ultimate Other.

*Juliette* presents the concept of the mind as a mirror from another point of view. '[I]s it not true that the greater an individual's wit and instruction the better accoutred he is to taste the amenities of voluptuousness?' Juliette asks Madame Delbène, whose answer proposes that an intellectual person is expected to show more tendency towards breaking restraints; subsequently she will make a better, more imaginative and daring, libertine: 'the more highly polished the mirror, the better it receives and the better reflects the objects presented it'.<sup>867</sup> Hence, what featured in *Justine* as a mental deformity or a matter of taste, in *Juliette* is described as a refinement and a sign of intellect. By this standard, Surrealist art, for instance, would seem exceptionally refined due to its imaginativeness. Indeed, this manner of specular projection can be defined as an exercise in aesthetic invention. The

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<sup>865</sup> Genet, p. 18.

<sup>866</sup> Genet, p. 19.

<sup>867</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 54.

General's fantasy in the second scene of *The Balcony* demonstrates a combination of specularity and iconic conceptualisation which is comparable to Sadean aestheticisation. The General imparts his posthumous desire to his 'mare', explaining that it will be fulfilled when he is 'close to death... where I shall be nothing, though reflected *ad infinitum* in these mirrors, nothing but my image'. His death needs to be theatrical, he desires a 'formal and picturesque descent to the grave'. When his companion remarks that even in death the General is unusually eloquent, he responds by saying that his florid speech is in fact posthumous. 'What is now speaking, and so beautifully, is Example. I am now only the image of my former self'.<sup>868</sup> The General's 'beauty' portrays the aesthetic refinement of the Sadean victim after death, whose perfectly objectified spectacle transforms into an image of idolised martyrdom. Which explains why the General cannot possibly attain celebrity until he is dead. He even admits that he wants to be a general not only for himself: 'but for my image, and my image for its image, and so on. In short, we'll be among equals'.<sup>869</sup> In a conventionally Sadean pattern, the General's vision of afterlife is not that of an Edenic existence, but a postmodern mise-en-abyme of interconnected imagos, which nevertheless in a libertine context commemorates crime – recall how Clairwil wished to commit a crime that would perpetuate itself even after she was dead.

Mirrors do not appear in Sade's works in only a metaphorical capacity. The mirror as an object has a constant presence in libertine settings. 'A great stock of furniture and mirrors' are among the objects mentioned to have been brought to *Silling*.<sup>870</sup> Inside the castle, the amphitheatre room where the narrations are delivered has 'four alcoves lined with vast mirrors'.<sup>871</sup> Various rooms in *Juliette* are panelled with mirrors. Catherine the Great's chambers, for example, are furnished with 'Turkish sofas, surrounded by mirrors and beneath mirrors affixed to the ceiling, cried to be put to voluptuous use'.<sup>872</sup> Various Sadean scenarios include

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<sup>868</sup> Genet, p. 26.

<sup>869</sup> Genet, p. 27.

<sup>870</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 43.

<sup>871</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 45.

<sup>872</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 879.

mirrors as active participants. Duclos, one of the storytellers of the *120 Days*, recalls a client who wishes to have his body covered in excremental matter, and he later ejaculates while ‘he admired himself in the mirror’.<sup>873</sup> As the stories advance in brutality and intricacy toward the end of *120 Days*, so does the complexity in utilisation of mirrors. Champville, another narrator from *120 Days*, recounts the story of a libertine who situates six female couples ‘at the same time in a hall of mirrors’. His pleasure consists in watching ‘both the couples and their doubles in the mirrors’.<sup>874</sup> In *Philosophy*, Madame de Saint-Ange explains the use of mirrors to Eugenie in the following manner:

By reflecting the positions in a thousand different images, the mirrors infinitely multiply the same delights in the eyes of the people enjoying them on this ottoman. That way, no part of either body can be concealed: everything must be exposed.<sup>875</sup>

While the above passage explains how pleasure is derived from possession of an omniscient point of view, a second manner of satisfaction that is produced by the incorporation of mirrors in Sadean scenes is purely egotistical. Watching himself amongst and in control of his victims confirms the libertine’s autonomy in that he sees himself not only as the sole director of the scenario but also as an appreciative audience. Lacan maintains that the mirror stage operates towards establishing ‘a relation between the organism and its reality’.<sup>876</sup> In the case of the libertines mentioned above, the function of the mirror is to establish a connection between the self and a self-constructed theatrical illusion. The Sadean process is, in effect, a reversed mirror stage, through which the libertine seeks to escape the lexical realm and enter the theatrical-primordial scene where id and ego-ideal are one and the same. The latter is the basis of the Sadean utopia. The Grand Balcony likewise is a space where desire is equated with the ideal. Not only the bankers can become whomever they want to be, their fantasies are comprised of so many imagos that

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<sup>873</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 169.

<sup>874</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 321.

<sup>875</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 17.

<sup>876</sup> Lacan, ‘The Mirror Stage’, p. 4.

unlike ordinary sexual fantasies have no hint of shame or dishonour. In the mirrored chambers of the brothel, paradoxical activities become the accepted norm, the new utopia. The same process of specular multiplication, on the other hand, can produce a dystopian scenario. In the sixth scene, when a leading figure from the revolution comes to take Chantal away from her lover and fellow revolutionary Roger, the three of them argue over the question of her ownership. Who does she belong to now that she has become the symbol of rebellion?

Chantal (*standing up*): To nobody!

Roger: ... To my section.

The Man: To the insurrection!<sup>877</sup>

Roger admits Chantal is no longer her previous self now that she embodies the revolution as well as '[a] hundred women. A thousand women and maybe more. So she's no longer a woman... In order to fight against an image Chantal has frozen into an image'.<sup>878</sup> The dystopian aspect of this metamorphosis is in that although, like the General, Chantal has now become immortal, she has entirely lost her subjectivity in that her desire does not match her imago. Quite characteristically, Chantal's farewell with Roger occurs in the form of loving words which are nevertheless mirrored with a fearful symmetry: 'You envelop me and I contain you,' says Chantal, and he repeats the exact phrase.<sup>879</sup>

In their article on 'Mirror Neurons and Intersubjectivity', Pier Francesco Ferrari and Vittorio Gallese explain the function of mirror neurons in helping the individual understand actions of others through mimicking said actions. Ferrari and Gallese consider the 'congruence between the seen and the executed actions,' of

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<sup>877</sup> Genet, p. 56.

<sup>878</sup> Genet, p. 57.

<sup>879</sup> Genet, p. 58. While Chantal's transfiguration does not occur during direct contact with mirrors, this particular sentence demonstrates that the specular process is possible on a discursive level.



great substance during the process.<sup>880</sup> Consequently, this manner of intersubjective imitation allows the formation of empathy, which comes with our understand of the motives of others:

With this mechanism we do not just ‘see’ an action, an emotion, or a sensation. Side by side with the sensory description of the observed social stimuli, internal representations of the body states associated with these actions, emotions, and sensations are evoked in the observer, ‘as if’ he/she would be doing a similar action or experiencing a similar emotion or sensation.<sup>881</sup>

Conversely, when libertines gaze at their own images in the mirror, instead of gaining empathy with the other, they reinforce the solipsistic nature of their praxis. Other than that, in the light of the passage above, the importance of the body in libertine use of mirrors finds a novel meaning that explains why practice is such a fundamental part of libertinage. Under Spartan influence, argues Jendrysik, ‘utopian theorists have rejected utopias of sensual pleasure or the “body utopia”’.<sup>882</sup> Both Sade’s writings and Genet’s *The Balcony* comprise an exploration of one such sensual or body utopia owing not only to their attention to the erotic, but also their detailed consideration of the corporeal symbolic value in utopian/dystopian inventions. Viewed in the mirror, the body not only remains close and distant at the same time, it also becomes an aesthetic matter open to violent reformation. It is quite apt then that in his description of the impact of mirrors in the orgy, Barthes writes: ‘A criminal surface is thus created: the working area is *coated* with debauchery’.<sup>883</sup> Barthes’s use of the word ‘coated’ is significant in that the mirrors, in effect, act in the same way as a uniform would through generating a symbolic cover that encloses the body within the narrative.<sup>884</sup> The following section

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<sup>880</sup> Pier Francesco Ferrari and Vittorio Gallese, ‘Mirror Neurons and Intersubjectivity’, *On Being Moved: From Mirror Neurons to Empathy*, ed. Stein Bråten, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), p. 74.

<sup>881</sup> Ferrari, p. 85.

<sup>882</sup> Jendrysik, p. 32.

<sup>883</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 139.

<sup>884</sup> Barthes uses the French word *nappé*, which means ‘coated’ or ‘clothed’. As a vestment, mirror plays the part of a high level fetish, described by Valerie Steele in her book *Fetish*

addresses the importance of the role of clothing in paradoxical habit formation Sade and in Genet.

### The Sadean Habit

‘I am launching a new style in masculine and feminine dress which leaves all the lust-inspiring parts, and the ass especially, exposed in their virtual entirety’, claims Saint-Fond in *Juliette*.<sup>885</sup> Clothing comprises an important component of Sadean discourse, not only through its presence but also in its absence. The Sadean victim is always forcibly denuded. While clothing provides a continuity which echoes endoxic habit formation, the libertines’ removal of the victim’s dress can be seen as an act of ethical interruption. There is, however, another meaning to nakedness in Sade. A sign of greeting between most of Sade’s libertines is to shed their clothing and observe each other in naked form. ‘Let’s undress,’ proposes Durand, ‘one cannot enjoy oneself properly save when naked’.<sup>886</sup> The Society of the Friends of Crime requires its members to enter the libertine club while leaving their belongings in ‘a spacious cloakroom, where trustworthy women relieve them of their clothing and are held accountable for it’.<sup>887</sup> Nudity and libertine conversation are often inseparable in the Sadean space, echoing the relentless frankness of libertine discourse which considers any manner of reservation as a sign of either self-censorship or deceit. ‘We think it an outrage to modesty when we expose ourselves naked to the sight of others...’ Noircueil asserts. ‘There is a country in India where respectable women are never seen in clothes; these are only worn by courtesans, the better to excite concupiscence. Think of that; quite the opposite, isn’t it, of our conventional notions concerning modesty?’<sup>888</sup> Apart from being laden with utopian exoticism, in this statement it is inferred that modesty is a means

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to occur when ‘[s]pecific stimuli *take the place* of a sex partner’ (1996: 11). When fetishism crosses paths with sadomasochism the result is the ‘devaluation of a human love object’ (Steele 1996: 24).

<sup>885</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 320.

<sup>886</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 1032.

<sup>887</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 425.

<sup>888</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 182.

of deception whereby the woman, in a Lacanian sense, is hiding her lack of the symbolic phallus in order to increase the observer's desire. The implication is that not only does the woman's coverage of her body mark her as a vendor of lack, it also implies that her body is undesirable and needs to be hidden.<sup>889</sup> Hence, the female libertine needs to actively disavow modesty in order to find entry into libertine conversation, as well as the utopian sphere. 'Thomas More also wanted engaged couples to see each other naked before their nuptials. How many marriages would be foiled if that law were practiced! You must admit that the opposite truly means buying a pig in a poke!' Sade writes in *Philosophy*,<sup>890</sup> a remark which, rather than More's, edifies Sade's own utopian vision of uncovered interconnection. Saint-Fond's utopian/dystopian brand, in this sense, directly challenges the 'erotic-chaste tension' that according Fred Davis has been culturally relevant from the late eighteenth century onwards.<sup>891</sup>

Seeing as the victim is seldom allowed to speak, her nakedness is a temporary condition that has to do with physical usage rather than communal inclusion.<sup>892</sup> There are numerous instances in Sade's writings where articles of clothing are likewise utilised as means of subjugating the victim. In *Justine*, the protagonist is captured by a group of monks who explain to her their system of categorising the captives into age groups, each of which is associated with a certain colour. The youngest wear white, while the colour green is designated to the second

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<sup>889</sup> One of the chief efforts of most male libertines is to destroy the feminine signifiers in women.

<sup>890</sup> Sade, *Philosophy*, p. 133.

<sup>891</sup> Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992), p. 94. 'In so robbing modesty of its protective claim to clothing,' writes Davis, 'nudism extinguishes eroticism' (1992: 95). Saint-Fond's intention to create a new fashion can be seen as a parody of what Richard Wrigley describes as the increasing importance of official costume 'in the creation of a new régime' during the French Revolution (2002: 86). 'At the same time, precisely because of this complex contest of meaning, vestimentary appearances emerge as a crucial site for the articulation of new forms of socio-political identity' (2002: 87).

<sup>892</sup> In the beginning of the *120 Days*, the outfits of the residents of the castle are drawn out in detail by the four libertines, who nevertheless make note that 'the lower half of the body shall never be constrained in any way and the removal of a single pin shall be enough to bare all' (2016: 52). This decision is in accord with a utopian mentality that, according to Corrigan, places emphasis on the functionality of the working subject's clothing (2016: 30).

group, the colour blue to the third, and the oldest among the victims are dressed in reddish brown.<sup>893</sup> A similar manner of sartorial objectification happens through a systematic use of accessories in *120 Days*, which is more elaborate in that it demonstrates a direct connection between the colours and the consumptive value of the victims. ‘The colors of clothing are signs’ writes Barthes in his observation of an episode in *Justine* where male victims are dressed in certain colour schemes according to their age, a relationship which he maintains to be arbitrary and unmotivated. ‘However, as in language, a certain analogy is set up, a proportional rapport, a diagrammatic relationship: the color increases in intensity, brilliance, fire, as the age increases and sensual pleasure ripens’.<sup>894</sup> Not just colour, but clothing itself, as Davis suggests, has a linguistic potential which is nevertheless a manner of ‘quasi-code’ due to the ambiguous and ‘shifting’ nature of ‘the meanings evoked by the combinations and permutations of the code’s key terms’.<sup>895</sup> Genet’s *The Balcony* features the use of colours as a differentiating factor in the folding screens at the background of each chamber. Hence the Bishop’s room is decorated in red, the Judge’s room is brown, and the General’s dark-green. The aesthetic value of the roles of the Bishop, the Judge, and the General is enhanced through emphasis on their appearance, particularly on their apparel. All three characters are described as ‘larger than life’, with the actors wearing ‘tragedian’s cothurni’ to make this distinction visible to the audience.<sup>896</sup> The Bishop himself is aware of the utopian essence of his clothing;<sup>897</sup> once they have been removed, he looks at them and says: ‘Ornaments, laces, through you I re-enter myself. I reconquer a domain. I beleaguer a very ancient place from which I was driven’.<sup>898</sup> Hence, he recognises his true self as a bishop, suggesting that he identifies more with the role of the bishop than with who he is in reality – which is unimportant in the context of the play to the point

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<sup>893</sup> Sade, *Justine*, p. 115.

<sup>894</sup> Barthes, *Sade*, p. 153.

<sup>895</sup> Davis, p. 5.

<sup>896</sup> Genet, p. 7.

<sup>897</sup> Peter Corrigan writes of the importance of clothing in a utopian context that ‘clothing in imaginary communities is usually coded in such a way that all the social distinctions relevant to a particular society are clearly indicated through apparel’ (2008: 17).

<sup>898</sup> Genet, p. 13.

that we never learn his name.<sup>899</sup> Similarly, the libertine Pope, Braschi, acknowledges the correlation of agency and sartorial authority as follows:

My friends, if we were to go about thus in the streets of Rome, we would be not so much revered. Now if our raiments alone inspire respect, are we really nothing at all without them?<sup>900</sup>

This sentiment is repeated by Irma in *The Balcony* who, when asked by Carmen whether by ‘real’ she is referring to the Bishop, the Judge, and the General who are inside the brothel, provides the following response: ‘The others. In real life they’re props of a display that they have to drag in the mud of the real and commonplace. Here, Comedy and Appearance remain pure, and the Revels intact’.<sup>901</sup> In other words, the vestments of the three characters are far more significantly charged than the functions of their roles in the real world. In the chapter on ‘Sadean Animal’, I brought an example of a libertine who dressed in a tiger’s skin in order to better perform the role of the animal. Another example from the same novel where choice of clothing is directly associated with power is when during a dinner party hosted by Juliette, she proposes that her libertine guests don ‘savage attire,’ and wear headdresses resembling ‘a dragon or serpent in the Patagonian manner.’ This arrangement is supposed to frighten the victims into submission, ‘and it is terror one should inspire when one wishes to wallow in crime’.<sup>902</sup> Presence of apparel can therefore be as effectual in fashioning an either utopian or dystopian milieu as its absence, depending on whether the chosen garment increases or decreases the wearer’s agency.

In the beginning of *The Balcony*, Irma is described to be wearing ‘a black tailored suit and a hat with a tight string’.<sup>903</sup> She later changes into a ‘cream-coloured négligé,’ when she is waiting for Arthur to arrive.<sup>904</sup> The contrast between

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<sup>899</sup> The same is with the Judge and the General, the latter who places great emphasis on the role of his boots throughout the roleplay. They must be bloody (Genet 1968: 23).

<sup>900</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 754.

<sup>901</sup> Genet, p. 36.

<sup>902</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 315.

<sup>903</sup> Genet, p. 7.

<sup>904</sup> Genet, p. 41.

these two modes of apparel, and the degree of Irma's independence while dressed in the one or the other, introduces a rather interesting dynamic regarding the significance of clothing in the play. A principal function of costume in Sade involves the act of crossdressing. As with other recurrent libertine fantasies, crossdressing can apply to either the other or the self, and it is perceived by the libertine to produce a paradoxical effect. 'Morals are very free, conduct very loose in Florence,' Juliette recounts her visit to the city – which sounds rather like an alternate reality. 'The women go about costumed as men, men as girls'.<sup>905</sup> When applied to the other, crossdressing is either used in a roleplaying context, such as the caprice of a man who requires his flogger to wear a woman's dress in *120 Days*. Alternatively, the practice is meant to produce a new formal variety for the amusement of jaded libertines, an example of which is an episode in *120 Days* where 'the sexes of the quadrilles were reversed' with girls wearing boys costumes and vice versa. Sade writes: 'Nothing inflames lust like this sensual little switch'.<sup>906</sup> This fantasy is further complicated when it is combined with a subversive enactment of the wedding ceremony. During one of the most convoluted Sadean fantasies, Noirceuil informs Juliette of a scenario he has come up with after extensive contemplation:

I should like to marry ... I should like to get married, not once, but twice, and upon the same day: at ten o'clock in the morning, I wish, dressed as a woman, to wed a man; at noon, wearing masculine attire, I wish to take a bardash for my wife. There is still more ... I wish to have a woman do the same as I; and what other woman but you could participate in this fantasy? You, dressed as a man, must wed a tribade at the same ceremony at which I, guised as a woman, become the wife of a man; next, dressed as a woman, you will wed another tribade wearing masculine clothing, at the very moment I, having resumed my ordinary attire, go to the altar to become united in holy matrimony with a catamite disguised as a girl.<sup>907</sup>

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<sup>905</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 623.

<sup>906</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 128.

<sup>907</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 1175.

Noirceuil's fantasy uses every possible combination that can be structured on the theme of matrimonial crossdressing, and it is made more complicated by the fact that three of the participants are Juliette's daughter and Noirceuil's two sons. '[Y]ou will be content to know that everything transpired decently, punctually, and in strictest accordance with tradition...' Juliette informs her audience, 'nothing was lacking. Costumes and paint artistically disguised the two sexes, embellished them where necessary'.<sup>908</sup> Since this event occurs in an endoxic location (the church) and not a libertine space, emphasis is placed on the part played by the characters' costumes and make-up to generate the required theatricality.<sup>909</sup> Husband and wife transform into fabricated constructs, and here again the mirror becomes a locus for theatrical action, when Juliette is required to imitate Noirceuil.<sup>910</sup>

One aspect of Noirceuil's fantasy is that although extremely methodical, it is also quite playful in the same capacity as a complicated children's make-belief game. Due to the necessity of a novel power structure in this playful alternative reality, however, such accessories as costumes are indispensable. Subsequently, in Genet's *The Balcony*, when not engaged in roleplaying, the Bishop refuses to relate details of his fantasy to Irma. 'No, no. Those things must remain secret, and they shall,' he stresses. 'It's indecent enough to talk about them while I'm being undressed. Nobody. And all the doors must be closed. Firmly closed, shut, buttoned, laced, hooked, sewn...' <sup>911</sup> It is noteworthy that even the vocabulary he uses to effect the concealment of his fantasy links it immediately to vestimentary activities. Nagpal maintains that while '[s]artorial accessories [...] identify the Bishop', the mirrored reflections make the role seem 'as being larger than life' in a manner that

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<sup>908</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 1176.

<sup>909</sup> If the participants of this drama had been naked, none of the transgression (civil or religious) would have occurred. This fantasy has nothing to do with same-sex love or a desire for the equality of the sexes, rather it is a game of formal creation – this is also one of the rare libertine fantasies where sexual activity has no direct impact. The symbolic stance of dress elevates it into a lexical status, justified by the fact that the ceremony has been conducted 'traditionally'.

<sup>910</sup> Allen Weiss interprets the 'pure theatricality' of this fantasy as a means for suppressing intersubjectivity, with mirrors playing an instrumental part in the process ('Exchange' 2006: 203).

<sup>911</sup> Genet, p. 8.

is also a parody of the importance of the image.<sup>912</sup> In a way then mirrors and their cartoonish parodying effect, as seen in the symmetry demanded by Noircueil, help usher the fantasy into the world of games. ‘In addition to the suggestion of ritual, these outsize costumes and tall shoes also connote children at play’ writes Lewis T. Cetta in his study of *The Balcony*.<sup>913</sup> An interesting question that arises, if one were to read Sade through Genet, is whether the four libertines in *120 Days* are truly an aristocrat, bishop, judge, and banker, or simply playing the roles of these characters to enact a fantasy? This is an admittedly farfetched question; however, it is the nature of the Sadean narrative to retain at all times a playful – if not pleasantly so – attitude, which I argue is one of the defining factors of the utopia/dystopia envisioned by Sade, as well as the self/other dialectic that is based upon it. The next section looks at the notion of Sadean utopia/dystopia in the context of games, particularly video games, and its relation to Genet’s playful construction of *The Balcony*.

### **Dystopian Games**

The success of *The Grand Balcony* as a market for happiness is derived from, first, the house’s consisting of several micro-utopias and thereby recognising the individuality of *jouissance*, and second, an implicit agreement between the employees and the clientele regarding the transience of these micro-utopias. When the clients fail to show respect for the latter principal, Irma has to remind them that they are running out of time and should leave: ‘It’s time. Come on! Quick! Make it snappy!’<sup>914</sup> A third component of the brothel’s success is yet another implicit acknowledgment about the necessity of pretence, or as the Bishop puts it, make-belief:

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<sup>912</sup> Nagpal, p. 45.

<sup>913</sup> Lewis T. Cetta, *Profane Play, Ritual, and Jean Genet: A Study of His Drama*, (Alabama: U of Alabama P, 1974), p. 48. *Studies in the Humanities Literature*.

<sup>914</sup> Genet, p. 9.



The Bishop: ... But our holiness lies only in our being able to forgive you your sins. Even if they are only make-believe.

The Woman (*suddenly coy*): And what if my sins were real?

The Bishop (*in a different, less theatrical tone*): You're mad! I hope you really didn't do all that!<sup>915</sup>

The fact that the Bishop relinquishes the theatrical mode when his partner implies that her 'sins' may have been truly committed suggests that his power to act relies directly on the woman's ability to act also. If the transgressions happen to be true, however, her client will not be able to enjoy himself knowing that there might be real consequences to his enjoyment. This is not so much a differentiating factor as far as a comparison between Sade and Genet is underway; although in Sade the crime does occur, it is nonetheless never acknowledged as a crime, since an element of Sadean strategy consists of denying the possibility of committing crimes – all crimes are considered as make-believe by libertines. The difference between Genet and Sade in this respect is a matter of degrees, since although the prostitutes in *The Grand Balcony* are freer than victims of libertines, as mentioned earlier they have little to no choice over the direction of the game.<sup>916</sup> Later when a scream is heard, the Bishop is again alarmed: 'That wasn't a make-believe scream'.<sup>917</sup> The Bishop's displeasure at any likelihood of reality indicates his anxiety over possible banishment from the imaginary utopian space. Moreover, the fact that he shows the same reaction to the sound of machinegun fire demonstrates a lack of willingness on his behalf to admit the dystopian background to his utopian interlude. Philip Thody writes on the threatening presence of the ongoing revolution in *The Balcony* that '[w]ere it not for the revolution, the various characters could continue to play their games in the enclosed and a-historical atmosphere provided for them by

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<sup>915</sup> Genet, p. 10.

<sup>916</sup> It should be noted that in Sade prostitutes happen to be the freest of all victims precisely due to their awareness of the rules governing make-belief scenarios, even if they have little control over the outcome.

<sup>917</sup> Genet, p. 11.

Madame Irma'.<sup>918</sup> In contrast, Sade's libertines aim to make dystopia a part of their utopia by means of its inclusion into the game, and thereby minimising its harmful effect.<sup>919</sup> It can even be argued that the main purpose of Sadean games is to make dystopia seem like a utopia, and to that extent pain a pleasure.<sup>920</sup>

In *The Empathic Civilization*, Jeremy Rifkin proposes that there is no empathy in either 'heaven or utopia' for the reason that the lack of 'suffering and death' makes empathy redundant.<sup>921</sup> While a comparison between utopia and heaven is debatable,<sup>922</sup> it is interesting to note the solitary individualism of Rifkin's view of utopia, since what he suggests amounts to the theory that: a state of harmony that excludes empathy eliminates the possibility of inter-subjectivity altogether. Likewise, the Bishop's sensual utopia is more of an individual's paradise than a state of harmonious compromise with the other – unless monetary transaction can be seen as adequate compromise. The Bishop is only able to realise his libertinage under the guise of roleplaying,<sup>923</sup> which is when he is able to pronounce the very libertine adage that there is no possibility of doing evil in The Grand Balcony since all residents of the brothel live in evil. The Sadean libertine, in a culmination of the above mentality and in absence of ethical consequences, sees life itself as a theatrical event. 'De Sade's philosophy was the philosophy of meaninglessness carried to its logical conclusion,' writes Aldus Huxley, in his introduction to Sade's *The Crimes of Love*, continuing:

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<sup>918</sup> Philip Thody, *Jean Genet: A Study of His Novels and Plays*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), p. 179.

<sup>919</sup> When this exercise occurs on a novelistic level, Sade's treatment of the revolutionary ideology becomes parodic.

<sup>920</sup> This argument fits the author's circumstances as a prisoner for most of his life without knowledge of when or if he would be liberated, prompting him to invent a make-believe freedom for himself through literary activities.

<sup>921</sup> Jeremy Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis*, (New York: Jeremy P. Tatcher, 2010), p. 168.

<sup>922</sup> Nancy L. Nester raises this issue in 'The Empathetic Turn: The Relationship of Empathy to the Utopian Impulse'.

<sup>923</sup> Roleplaying in children is a practice that teaches them how to empathise, i.e. put themselves in the place of another person and understand their frame of mind. The clients' roleplay as adults, however, is meant to let them assume the guise of someone they know and admire, an ideal ego.

Life was without significance. Values were illusory and ideals merely the inventions of cunning priests and kings. Sensations and animal pleasures alone possessed reality and were alone worth living for. There was no reason why any one should have the slightest consideration for any one else.<sup>924</sup>

In a utopian context, this meaninglessness is reflected in the libertine's treatment of all interpersonal interactions as games. Throughout his oeuvre, Sade's libertines refer to their activities in ludic terms. When Juliette and her accomplice plan a robbery – 'it's a subtle game' – without informing their employer, they consider that she is 'not in the game'.<sup>925</sup> Much later, having gained experience as a libertine, Juliette reminds her friend Olympia that 'all this world abounds in is nought but game meant for our pleasures; that every last one of these creatures you see waiting about is Nature's gift to us'.<sup>926</sup> In *120 Days* the pre-requisite for having a playful attitude is the absence of guilt; indeed the elimination of remorse becomes a 'thrill of its own'.<sup>927</sup> In one instance, the person in charge of the activity is dubbed '*le directeur des plaisirs du mois*' (director of the month's pleasures), which in a contemporary diction could be synonymous to the *game master*.<sup>928</sup> In his study of video games and their place in posthumanism, Jonathan Boulter observes games as essentially utopian in a posthuman manner since 'in some sense the experience of gaming is just that, utopian, cyborigan: the space of play is no-where (u-topia)'.<sup>929</sup> In which sense, the playfulness of Sadean utopia can be seen as an extension of the mechanisation that I explored in the last chapter. It is the unmitigated focus placed upon aesthetic predominance, I argue, which brings the Sadean game closest to video games among all other manner of games.<sup>930</sup> Such awareness of the world as

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<sup>924</sup> Aldous Huxley, 'A Note on the Marquis de Sade', *The Crimes of Love: Three Novellas*, trans. by Lowell Bair, (New York: Bantam, 1964), p. viii.

<sup>925</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 110.

<sup>926</sup> Sade, *Juliette*, p. 711.

<sup>927</sup> Sade, *120 Days*, p. 191.

<sup>928</sup> Austryn Wainhouse's translation is also 'master of games', as opposed to McMorran's and Wynn's who use the phrase 'friend in charge of that month' (2016: 251).

<sup>929</sup> Jonathan Boulter, *Parables of the Posthuman: Digital Realities, Gaming, and the Player Experience*, (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2015), p. 8.

<sup>930</sup> In *Aesthetic Theory and the Video Game*, Graham Kirkpatrick considers 'video games are primarily aesthetic objects' (12). 'Aesthetic experience occurs,' he explains, 'when we

a sandbox necessitates mastery over roleplay, the like of which is exemplified in *The Balcony* through Chantal's behaviour toward her lover, Roger. When Roger discloses his suspicion about her pretending to love him, she confesses to knowing 'all the roles' from her days at the brothel and therefore being good at acting.<sup>931</sup>

The episode with the Judge adds another insight into the rules of the game, which has to do with the repetitive nature of the fantasies enacted by the clients. In the beginning, the Judge is seen to be submissive toward the Thief. The exact situation is arrived at the end of this episode, suggesting the circular nature of a fantasy during which the Thief and the Judge exchange attitudes of dominance and submission. The ritualistically hierarchical and triangular bound that exists between the Judge, the Thief, and the Executioner is juxtaposed to a *normal* conversation that takes place between the three about the state of the civil war when they are interrupted by the sound of machinegun in the background. These intervals are insightful examples of how, as Gordon Calleja puts it, 'a game becomes a game when it is played; until then it is only a set of rules and game props awaiting human engagement'.<sup>932</sup> Similar shifts from roleplay to reality happen in the scene with the General and the woman who plays his horse. The General's pleasure is derived from pretending to have fallen in battle while listening to his sad mare telling the story of his victory in a florid and poetical language. Nevertheless, he interrupts the roleplay to enquire briefly about the chief of the police: 'What's the Chief of Police been doing?'<sup>933</sup> This constant crossing of boundaries that separate private utopia and public dystopia are also reflected in the brothel's name, The Grand Balcony,

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find that something is pleasing to us by virtue of its form' (2011: 23). He also proposes that video games are defined by their 'worlds' (2011: 162), which is also a feature of the Sadean *world* as I understand it. Kirkpatrick draws upon Angela Ndaliansis's study of contemporary media to call video games 'neo-baroque' products (2011: 169). Libertine games – especially the events of the *120 Days* – tend to include the motives listed by Chris Bateman as belonging to multiplayer video games: social, thrill-seeking, curiosity, problem-solving, acquisition, representation, narrative, horror, and agency (2016: 6-14). Most importantly though, what makes Sadean theatre comparable with video games is the lack of any real consequences for the libertines.

<sup>931</sup> Genet, p. 59.

<sup>932</sup> Gordon Calleja, *In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation*, (Cambridge (MA): MIT, 2014), p. 8.

<sup>933</sup> Genet, p. 26.

since as a part of the house the balcony has the quality of being both a private and a public space, at once a site of spectatorship and of performance. As such, the balcony is the ideal paranoid space for Sadean games.<sup>934</sup> At the same time, there seems to be an awareness in *The Balcony* of the inherently anti-utopian nature of the utopia/dystopia synthesis that occurs in Sade. According to Boulter, the only limitations that govern the game-world are the narrative and time: ‘one cannot be in the game forever’, a factor which he sees as a ‘criticism of Haraway’s utopianism’.<sup>935</sup> While Sade solves this issue by assuring the sustainability of narrative – as discussed in chapter six – and through effecting the death of time – refer to chapter three – Genet’s characters actively seek to remind themselves of the fact of the game. In Scene Five, Irma and Carmen discuss the necessity of both ‘a real detail’ and ‘a fake detail’ for the fantasies to function. ‘They all want everything to be as true as possible...’ Irma explains. ‘Minus something indefinable, so that it won’t be true’.<sup>936</sup> In other words, the clients not only need to be aware of the theatricality of the situation in order to take delight in their fantasies, they also need to know they can step out of the scenario whenever they wish.<sup>937</sup> Despite such precautions to maintain a boundary between the unreal and the real, several slips occur between these two states, producing confusion among the characters and leading to such absurd dialogues as the one below:

Irma: ... It’s the plumber leaving.

Carmen: Which one?

Irma: The real one.

Carmen: Which is the real one?

Irma: The one who repairs the taps.

Carmen: Is the other one fake?<sup>938</sup>

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<sup>934</sup> This is reflected in Pasolini’s use of a balcony in *Salò*.

<sup>935</sup> Boulter, p. 34.

<sup>936</sup> Genet, p. 36.

<sup>937</sup> The details mentioned here recall the methods used by the characters of Christopher Nolan’s *Inception*.

<sup>938</sup> Genet, p. 33.

Likewise, when sending Arthur to go look for the Chief of Police, Irma has to clarify to him that she is earnest in her request, that she is ‘no longer playing. Or, if you like not the same role’.<sup>939</sup> Eventually, when the Chief of Police arrives, his main concern is not about the civil war, but whether any of the clients have expressed the desire to play his role. ‘The time’s not ripe,’ Irma reasons with him. ‘My dear, your function isn’t noble enough to offer dreamers an image that would console them. Perhaps because it lacks illustrious ancestors?’<sup>940</sup> The reference to a lack of illustrious ancestors insinuates that the role of the Chief of Police has not yet achieved an aesthetic value whose perversion would bring transgressive pleasure. All the same, the Chief of Police protests that his image is increasing in size. ‘It’s becoming colossal,’ he affirms. ‘Everything around me repeats and reflects it’.<sup>941</sup> Once the discussion is turned to the civil war and Irma professes her concern over the safety of herself and her house, the Chief of Police dismisses her worries by saying that the rebellion is no more than a game. ‘But supposing they let themselves be carried beyond the game?’ Irma posits, adding:

I mean if they get so involved in it that they destroy and replace everything. Yes, yes, I know, there’s always the false detail that reminds them that at a certain moment, at a certain point in the drama, they have to stop, and even withdraw... But what if they’re so carried away by the passion that they no longer recognise anything and leap, without realizing it, into...<sup>942</sup>

‘You mean into reality?’ The Chief of Police completes her sentence, maintaining that he will be able to manage the situation even then, since he has more authority than the rebels. Given that the Chief of Police seems to be excluded to some degree from the game, he has an overseeing vantage point which allows him to move the other characters like certain chess pieces. An analogy which is interesting if the role of the characters as Queen, Bishop, General/Knight, etc. are taken into

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<sup>939</sup> Genet, p. 44. Irma’s admission can be seen as an acknowledgement of the ludic nature of her profession in that she recognises the existence of what Cajella terms ‘alterbiography’, a phenomenon which can be found in games that incorporate narratives that help the player create novel characters whose biographies are different from his own.

<sup>940</sup> Genet, p. 47.

<sup>941</sup> Genet, p. 48.

<sup>942</sup> Genet, p. 50.

consideration. In the capacity of a chess master, the Chief of Police's authority can be described in the light of Foucault's remark that '[p]ower is a way of acting upon the acting subject by virtue of their being capable of acting',<sup>943</sup> that is to say, power is measured against the acting subject's ability to abide by the rules of the game. Correspondingly, for the libertine to maintain his authority, his objects must benefit from a degree of subjectivity; they must be acting subjects.

During the eight scene the play, Irma acquires the role of the Queen at the Envoy's suggestion. She appears on the balcony of the house in the company of the Bishop, the General, the Judge, and the Hero. 'All are of huge proportions, gigantic'<sup>944</sup> – except the Hero, that is, The Chief of Police'. After a beggar shouts 'Long live the Queen!', Chantal comes up to the balcony but is shot dead.<sup>945</sup> The Bishop explains in the next scene that Chantal has been declared a martyr of the Revolution as the three officials are being photographed by journalists. The last photograph features the Bishop accepting the host (which is in reality the General's monocle) from the Judge (only his hand is visible). 'It's a true image, born of a false spectacle' the Envoy says about the picture,<sup>946</sup> indicating the photo as a pure signifier. Meanwhile, the Bishop, the Judge, and the General inform the Chief of Police that they are no longer fantasies, but that they are now 'tied up with human beings,' and have therefore decided to add some function into their roles. This idea is opposed by the Chief of Police who claims they have no power, denies them the possibility of their intersubjective involvement in order to preserve his position as the only acting subject, hence condemning the trio to a Sadean utopia/dystopia where they effectually become nothing but roles.<sup>947</sup> 'I shall be not the hundred-

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<sup>943</sup> Foucault, 'Subject and Power', p. 789.

<sup>944</sup> The persisting disproportion of these characters' physiques suggests what Vassiliki Rapti and Dr Gavin Parkinson recognise as the nonsensical quality which belongs to surrealist theatre (2013: 175). Unlike the 'non-mimetic' attitude of surrealist theatre, however, *The Balcony*'s protagonists follow the specular precision that abounds in Sadean games. Hence the gigantism of the characters implies their higher level in the subjective hierarchy.

<sup>945</sup> Genet, p. 70.

<sup>946</sup> Genet, p. 75.

<sup>947</sup> The other three are confined to a Sadean utopia where they are nothing but roles. Of their fantastical state, the Bishop says:

thousandth-reflection-within-a-reflection in a mirror,' he declares, refusing to share his authority with the other three, 'but the One and Only, into whom a hundred thousand want to merge'.<sup>948</sup> The Chief of Police's anxiety is a by-product of his recognition of what Eyal Amiran identifies as the 'digital utopianism' of the Sadean mode of thought which comes from the demand for total exposure – with the help of 'mediation (the mirrors)'<sup>949</sup> – and which leads to the absolute nihilism of digital existence.<sup>950</sup> The Chief of the Police remains in power until finally a client appears in the brothel who wishes to enact his role: 'Gentlemen, I belong to the Nomenclature!'<sup>951</sup> The setting for this particular fantasy is the Hero's tomb and Roger – Chantal's former lover – is the client. Carmen, who is guiding Roger to the mausoleum studio, explains to him that all fantasies are 'reducible to a major theme', which is 'Death'.<sup>952</sup> Unlike the General's death-fantasy which is celebrated in public, the Hero's death occurs in an underground tomb in the company of a Slave who later leaves to tell the story to others. 'The truth,' says Carmen, is that 'you're dead, or rather that you don't stop dying and that your image, like your name, reverberates to infinity'.<sup>953</sup> The dependence of the master on the slave for his signification to take form – his story to be told – results in a Sadean dialectic. 'I claim that such aimless drifting is capable of demonstrating utopian propensities,' Ellis writes about the victim counterpart in Delany's *Hogg*, 'in terms of its

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we were content there, and it was you who came and dragged us away. For ours was a happy state. And absolutely safe. In peace, in comfort, behind shutters, behind padded curtains, protected by a police force that protects brothels, we were able to be a general, judge and bishop to the point of perfection and to the point of rapture! You tore us brutally from that delicious, untroubled state (Genet 1991: 80).

<sup>948</sup> Genet, p. 80.

<sup>949</sup> Eyal Amiran, 'The Rhetoric of Digital Utopia after Sade: Utopian Architecture and the Static Subject of Digital Art', *Discourse*, 32:2 (2010), p. 190.

<sup>950</sup> Irma exhibits her awareness of this fact when, on deciding to take on the role of the Queen, she asks Carmen to 'smash the mirrors or veil them' (Genet 1991: 68).

<sup>951</sup> Genet, p. 86.

<sup>952</sup> Genet, pp. 87-8.

<sup>953</sup> Genet, p. 92.



affiliations with abjection and borderline ego loss'.<sup>954</sup> The Slave's departure from the mausoleum reflects a similar utopian wanderlust which also resembles Justine's drifting from one Sadean micro-utopia to another for the purpose of narrative construction. The loss of the Hero's libertine agency begins with Roger's destruction of the fantasy's phallic element and the actualisation of his desire. He resists Carmen's demand that he should leave the studio once his time is up. 'I've a right to lead the character I've chosen to the very limit of his destiny...' Roger declares, 'no, of mine... of merging his destiny with mine...' and castrates himself.<sup>955</sup> Since Roger is the first person to have ever enacted the role of the Hero, his action sets a precedence which defines the history of the role. Castration for the sake of pleasure in a Sadean space is an act of ultimate paradox, one which realises absolute *jouissance*. The perfection of Roger's performance literally leaves *nothing to be desired*. An act of paradox within paradox, with its counter-specular effect, removes the necessity of paranoia and brings an end to the revolutionary phase. 'Though my image be castrated in every brothel in the world, I remain intact,' the Chief of Police proclaims, thus stepping outside the theatrical domain. He descends into his tomb, implying he has lost the will to act, and has 'won the right to go and sit and wait there for two thousand years'.<sup>956</sup> The drama, nevertheless, finishes with the sound of machine gun heralding the advent of another revolution. Irma sends home the three clients who previously played the Bishop, the Judge, and the General, and extinguishes the lights.

In the beginning of my research, I mentioned how Peter Greenaway links the advent of cinematic technology with the visual consumption of the sexual object of attention. This idea is brought to a culmination through Sade's creation of theatrical textopias that resemble the video game paradigm. Irma's extinguishing of the lights at the end of the play signifies an exit from such virtual space. Cajella writes of 'all-encompassing media experience' as an interest of André Bazin,

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<sup>954</sup> Cameron Ellis, 'Abject Utopianism: On the Silence, Apathy, and Drifting of Psychic Life in Samuel R. Delaney's *Hogg*', *The Individual and Utopia*, ed. Clint Jones and Cameron Ellis, (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 253.

<sup>955</sup> Genet, p. 93.

<sup>956</sup> Genet, p. 94.

‘whose influential 1946 essay “The Myth of Total Cinema” argued that the ultimate goal of cinema’ is to produce ‘a perfect illusion of the outside world in sound, colour and relief’. The latter theory, Calleja believes, foreshadowed the dawn virtual reality games.<sup>957</sup> This theory is also quite effective in establishing a contemporary framework for Sadean theatre as a form of game, since ultimately a libertine definition of intersubjectivity is founded on an illusory perspective. Matt Omasta and Drew Chappell hold that games and theatre have always been interlinked,<sup>958</sup> and in this chapter I have explored them as mirror images of one another. In his ‘Manifesto for a Ludic Century’, Eric Zimmerman points out that while the ‘twentieth century was the century of information’,<sup>959</sup> the twenty-first century is a ‘ludic century’ or ‘an era of games [...] [w]hen information is put at play, game-like experiences replace linear media’.<sup>960</sup> Zimmerman’s idea of a powerful agent in the ludic century is one who can think like a game designer, that is one who has ‘game literacy’, otherwise her or his relationship with the increasingly postmodern system will be passive.<sup>961</sup> In this respect, Sade’s writings come very close to our times, given their incorporation of dramatically charged games and an apathetic awareness of gamefulness which views the other and his/her pain as an alternative (un)reality. Meanwhile, although the expansion of virtual realities promises an encyclopaedic access to and control over information as well as interaction, there is a risk that the impression of self-sufficiency that is generated through this achievement may have a deteriorating effect on human-human relationships, whose nuances go beyond micro-utopian imaginings. In my specular reading of Sade through dramatic texts and dramatic texts through Sade, I aimed to clarify this phenomenon, and to bring my research to a conclusion that incorporates a redefinition of the self/other dialectic that starts with theatre and ends in games.

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<sup>957</sup> Calleja, p. 17.

<sup>958</sup> Matt Omasta and Drew Chappell, ‘Introduction’, *Play, Performance, and Identity: How Institutions Structure Ludic Spaces*, (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 16.

<sup>959</sup> Eric Zimmerman, ‘Manifesto for a Ludic Century’, *The Gameful World: Approaches, Issues, Applications*, ed. by Steffen P. Walz and Sebastian Deterding, (Cambridge (MA): MIT, 2014), p. 19.

<sup>960</sup> Zimmerman, p. 20.

<sup>961</sup> Zimmerman, p. 21.

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