Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author’s right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author’s permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage. [http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback](http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback)

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the [Library Thesis Consent Form](http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz) and [Deposit Licence](http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz).
An Unblinking Gaze:
On the Philosophy of the Marquis de Sade

Geoffrey T. Roche
ABSTRACT

Throughout the 20th Century, a number of philosophers, writers, artists and film makers have implied that there is some profound significance to the work of Donatien Alphonse François, the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814). The project at hand is to evaluate the claim that Sade, in some sense, is a philosopher, and to assess what his philosophy amounts to. There are two aspects to this task. Firstly, I will consider the various philosophical interpretations of Sade’s work. This part of the study will serve as a guide into the Sadeian labyrinth, and will establish some of the more central interpretive themes, in particular the claim that Sade’s thought anticipates that of the Nazis, or that he brings early Modern thought to its logical conclusion. Secondly, I will inquire into Sade’s writings themselves. Of particular interest are Sade’s thoughts concerning the nature of sexuality, psychology, and the human condition in general, his critique of conventional morality, and his description of the nature of power.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thanks are due to my supervisors, Stefano Franchi and Robert Wicks, without whom this project would have been both unthinkable and impossible. In particular, I wish to thank Stefano for helping with the construction of the thesis, and his insistence that deeper insights were available in regions where I could only see an inky darkness. I am also indebted to family and friends who aided this project in less direct ways, in particular my parents, for their encouragement and support over the years. I also wish to thank Caroline Warman, David Martyn, Jeff Love, Robert Nola, Dennis Robinson, Stephen Davies, Charles Pigden, Karen Riley, Tim Rayner, Barry Moffatt, Amanda Lennon, Sterling Lynch, Adèle de Jager, Lauren Ashwell, and Robert C. Solomon, for suggestions, advice, support and assistance. I thank Sébastien Charles, Masha Mimran and Sylviane Charles for providing copies of unpublished articles. For helping me with my French, I thank Rosemary Arnoux, Selma Kradraoui, and the teachers at Alliance Française in Lyons. I also thank The Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, Tuapapa Rangahau Putaiao, for the award of Bright Futures Scholarship (Doctoral) 664, and the opportunity to attend conferences overseas, and the University of Auckland for both the Doctoral Scholarship and, with the assistance of the Overseas Exchange programme, the opportunity to study in Lyons. I am also grateful to Tessa Laird, David Carman, Astrid Scott, Brian Soppit and the late John Park, for their inspiration.
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 to suit other people! 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 alter it; and if were, I’d not do so.

Sade (in a letter to his wife; 1783).

...philosophy, Justine, is not the art of consoling the weak; it has no other aim but to bring soundness to the mind and to uproot prejudices.

Sade *La Nouvelle Justine* (1797)

He preaches his horrible doctrine to some; to others, he lends his books.

A.A. Royer-Collard (psychiatrist, in a letter to the police; 1808).
Contents

Key to Abbreviations, Sources and Translations viii
Preface 1
Introduction 5

Chapter I. Reconnaissance
1.1 Geoffrey Gorer: Citoyen Sade 17
1.2 Juliette de Lorsange, CEO: Angela Carter on Sade 20
1.3 Sade and Nazism in Secondary Literature 25
1.4 Sade and Absolute Revolt 27
1.5 Sade and Dialectics: Adorno and Horkheimer 28
1.6 The Worm at the Core: Crocker on Sade 33
1.7 Sade and Mainstream Philosophy 37
1.8 The Unique One: Maurice Blanchot on Sade 40
1.9 Annie Le Brun on Sade 43
1.10 A Cloacal Eye: Bataille on Sade 51
1.11 The Language of Unreason: Foucault on Sade 71
1.12 Conclusion 91

Chapter II. Machine Man: Ontologies
2.1 Introduction 93
2.2 God and Creation 94
2.3 The Non- Uniqueness of Humans 96
2.4 Death 98
2.5 Naturalism vs. Non-Naturalism 101

Chapter III. Enigma of the Will: Psychology
3.1 Introduction 103
3.2 Theory of Pleasure: Materialist Model 104
3.3 Theory of Pleasure: Intellectual Aspect 107
3.4 Theory of Pleasure: Aesthetics 111
3.5 Apathy 114
3.6 Triumph of the Will 120
3.7 Power Over Others 122
3.8 Sadism as Syndrome 125
3.9 The Enigma of Sadism 132

Chapter IV. Sterile Pleasures: Sexuality
4.1 Introduction 133
4.2 The Bataille Doctrine 135
4.3 The Benthamite Doctrine 142
4.4 Outcome of the Rejection of the Traditional Teleology 144
4.5 Homosexuality 145
4.6 Sade contra Rousseau on the Role of Women 147
4.7 Against Reproduction 154
4.8 On Love and Friendship 157
4.9 On Marriage 161
4.10 Joy Divisions 164
4.11 Conclusion 166

Chapter V. Swimming with Sharks: Ethics I
5.1 Introduction 167
5.2 Moral Nihilism 168
5.3 Treatment of Rival Ethical Theories 173
5.4 The Free Will Problem 177
5.5 Why Be Immoral? 180
5.6 The Imprudence Argument 181
5.7 The Self-Harm Argument 184
5.8 The Don’t Be a Schmuck Argument 186
5.9 Monsters, Inc. 190
5.10 The Anti-Social Contract 195
5.11 Doctrinal Dispute 197
5.12 Conclusion 201
Chapter VI. Rome vs. Jerusalem: Ethics II
6.1 Introduction 203
6.2 The Antichrist 203
6.3.1 Non-Transcendent Teleology: the Adoration of Kali 206
6.3.2 Non-Transcendent Teleology: The Beast in Man 210
6.3.3 Non-Transcendent Teleology: Property and Theft 212
6.4 The Slave Revolt in Morals 218
6.5 The Sadeian Caste System 221
6.6 The Extermination of Christianity 230
6.7 Historical Context of the Pagan Return 231

Chapter VII. The Government of Reason: Politics
7.1 Introduction 239
7.2 Antipodes 241
7.3 How to Philosophize with a Brick in the Face 253
7.4 Anarchy 256
7.5 The Pleasure of Control 259
7.6 Despotism without Tears 263
7.7 Anus Mundi 266
7.8 The Anatomical Gaze 274
7.9 Excremental Assault 281
7.10 Conclusion 286

Conclusion. 291
Appendix: Sade and Nazism 295
Bibliography 307
KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS,
SOURCES, AND TRANSLATIONS

I have used English translations where available. No English translation presently exists for *La Nouvelle Justine* or *Aline et Valcour*. I have modified translations wherever necessary to preserve relevant aspects of the original text, where the translation is in error, or for stylistic reasons. Where I have done so, I have given a page reference to the original French text. If no translation is cited, the translation is my own. Unless otherwise noted, references are to the texts listed below.

*AV*: *Aline et Valcours ou le Roman philosophique*. ed. Jean M. Goulemot
(Paris: le livre de poche, 1994)


*J*: [the story of] *Juliette* [or, *Prosperities of Vice*] trans. Austryn Wainhouse


*MV*: *The Misfortunes of Virtue and other Early Tales* trans. David Coward
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). (This is the first version of *Justine*).


