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**An Unblinking Gaze:
On the Philosophy of the Marquis de Sade**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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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.

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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).

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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 Valcour ou le Roman philosophique*. ed. Jean M. Goulemot
(Paris : le livre de poche, 1994)

CL: *The Crimes of Love* trans. Margaret Crosland (London: Peter Owen, 1996).

GT: *The Gothic tales of the Marquis de Sade* trans. Margaret Crosland (London: Picador, 1990).

J: [*the story of*] *Juliette* [or, *Prosperities of Vice*] trans. Austryn Wainhouse (New York: Grove, 1968). [Part two of] *La nouvelle Justine, ou Les malheurs de la vertu, suivie de L’histoire de Juliette, sa sœur*, the second part of the third version of *Justine*, published in 1797.

LNJ: *La Nouvelle Justine* (2 vols). (Paris: Collection 10:18, 1978).

LP: *Letters from Prison*. trans. Richard Seaver. (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999).

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

MM: *The Mystified Magistrate and other writings* trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2000).

CE: *Œuvres* (3 vols.) ed. Michel Delon, Jean Deprun (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade / Gallimard, 1990, 1995, 1998).

PB: *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom and Other Writings* trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2000).

120: *The 120 Days of Sodom and other writings* trans. Austryn Wainhouse and Richard Seaver (New York: Arrow, 1990).